The Reception of Isaiah's Suffering Servant in Thomas Aquinas' Theology of the Cross

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THE RECEPTION OF ISAIAH’S SUFFERING SERVANT IN THOMAS AQUINAS’
THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

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ABSTRACT

THE RECEPTION OF ISAIAH’S SUFFERING SERVANT IN THOMAS AQUINAS’
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Dissertation supervised by Prof. William Wright IV.

This dissertation is a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the presence of Isaiah 53:1-12 in Aquinas’ major theological works. I examine Aquinas’ lecture upon Isa. 53 in the *super Isaiam* as well as all 115 references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes in his biblical commentaries, *Scriptum*, and *Summa Theologiae*. I focus especially upon explaining how the text of Isa. 53 contributes to Aquinas’ speculative theology of Christ’s Passion. Further, I draw attention to the exegetical techniques that Aquinas brings to bear upon Isaiah’s text. This dissertation makes a contribution to the field of biblical Thomism and its task of uncovering the biblical roots of Aquinas’ systematic theology.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Introduction: The Nature, Purpose, and Structure of this Work

This dissertation is about the theological exegesis and biblical theology of Thomas Aquinas. This project has been generated by the conviction that “sustained engagement with scripture needs to be a distinguishing mark of contemporary Thomist theology.”¹ Thomists must be attentive to Scripture because, as this work will demonstrate, Scripture was a foundational and essential feature of Aquinas’ own theological method and works. In order to fully appreciate Aquinas’ theology, one must recognize the omnipresent role of Scripture within that theology. In this work I will cast a spotlight upon the place and function of the text of Isaiah 53 in the theology of Aquinas. Specifically, this work is about Aquinas’ Christological exegesis of Isa. 53 and the role of that biblical text in his speculative theological account of Christ’s Passion.

In this introductory chapter, I will provide a detailed overview of the nature, end, and structure of this dissertation. First, I will explain the purpose, scope, and original contribution of this work. Second, I will describe the methodology that I will employ throughout this project. Third, I will provide a basic overview of the number and place of Aquinas’ references to the text of Isa. 53 throughout his biblical and systematic corpus. Finally, I will conclude this Introduction with a synopsis of the ensuing chapters of this dissertation.

I. The End, Scope, and Contributions of this Work

This dissertation explores Thomas Aquinas’ reception of the text of Isa. 53 throughout his major works of systematic theology as well as his biblical commentaries. In particular, I will explore the role that Isa. 53 plays in Aquinas’ theological account of the nature and saving value of Christ’s suffering and death. Hence, the principal end of this study is to provide an answer to

the following central question: how does Aquinas interpret and use the Suffering Servant text of Isa. 53:1-12 in his theology of the cross?\(^2\) In order to answer this question and achieve my end, in this dissertation I will examine every reference to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes in his biblical commentaries and in his major works of systematic theology.\(^3\) My conclusion is that Aquinas consistently identifies the literal sense of Isa. 53 as a prophecy of the Passion of Christ, and he frequently turns to Isaiah’s text in order to interpret the Gospel narratives. Further, throughout his biblical commentaries and systematic works, Aquinas repeatedly draws upon the text of Isa. 53 in order to shed light upon the origin and nature of Christ’s suffering as well as upon the voluntary and virtuous manner in which Christ bore that suffering.

Given the nature of my end, this dissertation should be understood primarily as a contribution to the historical and systematic study of the theology of Thomas Aquinas. In particular, since my leading task throughout will be to examine the ways in which the biblical text of Isa. 53 contributes to Aquinas’ theological treatment of Christ’s Passion, this project can be specified as a work of “Biblical Thomism.”\(^4\) This species within the genus of Thomism consists in the exploration of one or more of the following themes.

The first theme of Biblical Thomism pertains to the general principles of Aquinas’ biblical theology. It considers issues such as Aquinas’ understanding of the nature of scripture, 

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\(^2\) Contemporary scholarship identifies Isaiah’s Fourth Suffering Servant Song as consisting of Isa. 52:13-53:12. The overwhelming majority of Aquinas’ engagement with that portion of Isaiah, however, consists of engagement with Isa. 53:1-12. Hence, those verses will constitute the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, I will examine Aquinas’ comments upon Isa. 52:13-15 in his lecture on Isa. 52 in the Commentary on Isaiah.

\(^3\) By investigating every occasion in which Aquinas quotes a particular scriptural text within a specific range of his works, I am following in the methodological footsteps of Wilhelms G.B.M. Valkenberg and Matthew Levering. In his Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), Valkenberg analyzes Aquinas’ use of scripture in his treatments of the resurrection of Christ in the Commentary on the Sentences as well as in the Summa Theologiae. In Paul in the Summa Theologiae (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), Levering examines all of Aquinas’ references to the letters of Paul throughout the entire Summa Theologiae.

\(^4\) “Biblical Thomism” is a field of study “in which Aquinas’ thought is being explored through his study of Scripture.” See Piotr Roszak and Jorgen Vijgen, Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2015), x.
the role of scripture as a source in theology, and the methodological tools that Aquinas uses to exegete scripture and derive speculative theological conclusions from the sacred text. The second theme considers Aquinas’ verse by verse commentaries upon particular books of scripture. These biblical commentaries are studied both for their exegetical value as well as for their significance as unique sources of Aquinas’ speculative theology. The third theme analyzes the number, location, and purpose of references to scripture in Aquinas’ works of speculative and systematic theology.

This dissertation will involve inquiry into each of these themes, but my original contribution will come specifically in regards to the second and third themes. There have been many recent studies of Aquinas’ theology of the cross. Further, there have been recent works

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that explore the role of particular biblical texts in Aquinas’ understanding of Christ’s suffering and death. But, none of these studies has explored the presence and influence of the text of Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ theological account of Christ’s Passion. Hence, this dissertation will fill that lacuna. In doing so, this study of Aquinas’ reception of Isa. 53 will be of value not only to Thomists, but also to all those with an interest in the Christological and soteriological meaning of Isa. 53. This dissertation will ensure that Aquinas has a seat at the contemporary table where many valuable discussions are taking place regarding the Christological and soteriological meaning of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant texts.

II. The Methodology of this Study

In this dissertation I will use the following methods as I investigate Aquinas’ references to the text of Isa. 53. First, I will undertake a “quantitative analysis” of the “place” of the text of Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ works. As Wilhelmus Valkenberg explains, a quantitative analysis of Aquinas’ references to scripture “provides an answer to the question: does Scripture play a part

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11 These labels were first employed by Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 2.
in this theological text?”

Put simply, quantitative analysis identifies the number and location of scriptural citations within Aquinas’ theological corpus. Such quantitative analysis can give an indication of the significance of particular biblical texts to Aquinas’ theological projects. That being said, as Roger Nutt has pointed out, merely “noting the quantity of biblical references in Aquinas’ work . . . does little to establish him as a biblical theologian of any merit.” Simply counting the sheer number of biblical citations within Aquinas’ works does not show that he is interpreting those biblical texts in an exegetical and theologically coherent way. Nor does such quantitative analysis on its own adequately indicate the degree to which Aquinas’ theology is informed by particular biblical texts. Quantitative analysis, while foundational, must be complemented by what Valkenberg calls “qualitative analysis.”

Hence, after quantifying Aquinas’ references to the text of Isa. 53, my second methodological step will be to conduct a qualitative analysis of these biblical references within his corpus. This analysis answers the question, “what part does Scripture play in this theological text?” To examine the quality of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 is to analyze how Aquinas is reading that biblical text in each particular context and to explain the role or “function” that Isa. 53 plays in the service of Aquinas’ greater theological task in that specific context. In particular, I will focus upon the functions that Isa. 53 performs in Aquinas’ biblical and systematic accounts of Christ’s Passion. I will explain how Isa. 53 is directing, clarifying, supporting, or even challenging what Aquinas wants to say about Christ’s suffering and death in a specific setting. For the sake of brevity, as I undertake this qualitative analysis I will not

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12 Ibid., 8.
14 Valkenberg, Words of the Living God, 8.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 2.
employ Valkenberg’s practice of labeling any particular scriptural citation by Aquinas as serving a function that is “theologically primary” or “theologically secondary” in relation to Aquinas’ greater theological argument in that context.\(^*\) Rather, following Matthew Levering’s approach in his *Paul in the Summa Theologiae*, I will simply describe what Aquinas is doing with the text of Isa. 53 in each particular context.\(^*\)

Third, I will be attentive to the historical context of Aquinas’ life and works. I will provide a brief overview of the defining features of Aquinas’ life and theological career. I will introduce readers to the central aspects of his understanding of Scripture as well as to his major principles of biblical exegesis. Before probing Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 in a particular work, I will first provide a brief overview of the origin, style and purpose of the work in question. I will also engage Aquinas’ individual works in their historical, chronological order. This historical sensitivity and chronological approach has two advantages.

First, it enables the reader to recognize how Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53 do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, Aquinas’ approach to Isa. 53 was informed by the medieval, religious, scholarly environment of which he was a part. Keeping this context in mind will enable us to better understand and evaluate his reception of Isa. 53. Second, exploring Aquinas’ works in chronological order will help the reader to identify interpretative changes and shifts in emphasis that Aquinas makes over the years in regards to his engagement with Isa. 53. For, as James Weisheipl observes, “Even though the thought of Thomas has a transcendent significance,

\(^*\)Ibid., 51-53. For Valkenberg, Aquinas uses scripture for a “theologically primary function” in his theological writing when he cites a biblical text in order “to indicate the revelation of God as the incontestable source of theology” and to specify “the domain within which theology has to proceed” (51). Aquinas uses the Bible in a merely “theologically secondary function” when he cites scripture “in the same manner as any other source of human wisdom and knowledge,” such as “to give examples and illustrations” (51).

\(^*\)Levering, *Paul in the Summa Theologiae*, xvii-xviii: “Rather than burdening the reader with theoretical apparatus, I simply move through the citations of Paul and discuss each one in relation to the topic that Aquinas is addressing in the article . . . I purposefully keep the interpretative framework quite spare, in hopes of focusing attention on the work that the Pauline quotations do.”
it is wrong to read his works as though they were written in one sitting and devoid of all intellectual development. Thomas, like everyone else, developed intellectually and spiritually. “\(^{19}\)

This attention to the development of Aquinas’ thought is not only of historical value, but also theological. Being aware of the various ways Aquinas interpreted Isa. 53 over the years enables us to dialectically weigh and evaluate the different exegetical moves that he made toward that biblical text throughout the course of his theological career.

My fourth methodological step in this dissertation will be to observe how Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53 are grounded in his Latin versions of the Bible. Acknowledging Aquinas’ reliance upon a Latin version of Isa. 53 is necessary in order to properly evaluate the merit of his interpretations. Aquinas’ exegesis is unique and insightful, but also limited by the fact that he did not have access to the Hebrew or Greek texts of the Old Testament that we have today. Throughout my qualitative analysis of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53, I will point out when and how his theological exegesis of Isa. 53 is based on precise words and phrases from the Latin biblical text(s) at his disposal.

III. Basic Quantitative Analysis of Aquinas’ Engagement with Isaiah 53.

I will now identify the number and place of references to Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ biblical commentaries and major works of systematic theology. I will identify the individual works of

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19 James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D’Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1974), x. After acknowledging that Aquinas’ theological positions developed over the course of his career, Weisheipl then comments, “The amazing fact is, however, that early in life Thomas grasped certain fundamental philosophical principles that never changed. Always there was development, deeper understanding, and even rejection of earlier views. But there was never a metamorphosis in his approach to reality. There was never a ‘conversion’ or violent rejection of earlier thought, but only corrections and modifications that led to a fuller, more human, and more divine appreciation of the basic problems of life” (x). Similarly, in *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), M.D. Chenu comments, “It will be quickly discovered that, from his very first extensive work, Saint Thomas had established his basic positions and that his master intuitions already held sway. Yet, satisfaction will also be found in observing the progress, at times in quality, at times in technique, that the *Disputed Questions* and then the organic purviews of the *Summa* have provided for his genial mind” (272-3).
Aquinas that feature references to Isa. 53 as well as the number of references within those works. This basic quantitative analysis sets the stage for the ensuing qualitative analysis that will constitute the majority of this dissertation.

The number of times that Aquinas cites Isa. 53 in his biblical commentaries and major works of systematic theology can be better appreciated in relation to the overall number of citations that he employs from the book of Isa. as a whole. Excluding his *Commentary on Isaiah* as well as the four *Catena Aurea* on the Gospels, the sum total of explicit references to the word ‘Isaiah’ in Aquinas’ three major works of systematic theology as well as his biblical commentaries are as follows: there are 467 total occurrences of the Latin “Isaias,” where this number includes the Latin equivalent of the word ‘Isaiah’ in its nominative, genitive, accusative, and vocative cases. In addition, Latin abbreviations of Isaiah occur with even greater frequency: “Is.” occurs 1,433 times; “Isa.” has 864 instances, and “Isai.” occurs 92 times. Added together, the total number of explicit references to the word ‘Isaiah’ and its abbreviations in our sample of Aquinas’ theological works is a stunning 2,856.

Among all of these references, explicit references to “53” and “LIII” (Latin for ‘53’) in connection with an explicit reference to the word “Isaias” or one of its abbreviations occurs a combined total of 110 times. This means that 3.85% of Aquinas’ explicit references to ‘Isaiah’ come from Isa. 53. Thus, these 110 cases of Isa. 53, along with the lecture on Isa. 53 and the 5

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20 The ensuing statistics were compiled using the following online index of Aquinas’ work: “Index Thomisticus;” Corpus Thomisticum, accessed May 14, 2021, https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/it/index.age.

21 The Index Thomisticus identifies several additional references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas himself makes in Latin, but he is mistaken; the verses he is quoting are not from Isa. 53. For specifics, see the quantitative analysis provided in chps. 3-8. Further, it is worth noting that these 110 references do not include possible references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas may have made without citing the chapter number. For instance, it is possible that there are times in Aquinas’ corpus where he cites a text from Isa. 53 but does not specify (nor does the editor) that the text he is citing is from chapter 53. This is generally not Aquinas’ nor modern editors’ practice, but it bears stating that any such references fall outside of the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, there are two such references in ST III, q. 47, a. 3, c. which I managed to spot, and so I have included them in the total. Index Thomisticus does not catch these references. See my analysis in chp. 7, on the *Summa Theologiae*. Further, Index Thomisticus mistakenly identifies an additional case of Isa. 53 in the *super Psalmos*, but the text Aquinas quotes is actually from Isa. 52. See Ch. 8.
additional references to the text of Isa. 53 that are contained in the *Commentary on Isaiah*, will be the primary objects that I will investigate in this dissertation. I will now detail how these 110 cases of Isa. 53 are distributed throughout Aquinas’ works.

Several of Aquinas’ biblical commentaries and one of his major systematic works do not contain any explicit references to ‘Isa. 53.’ The commentaries that lack cases of Isa. 53 are on the following biblical books: Job, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The most surprising member of this list is Aquinas’ *Commentary on Job*, given that Job’s experience of suffering while innocent could easily be linked to Isaiah’s Suffering Servant. In any event, this means that seven of Aquinas’ twenty biblical commentaries (excluding the *Commentary on Isaiah*) lack an explicit reference to the text of Isa. 53. In terms of his three major works of systematic theology, namely, the *Commentary on the Sentences*, the *Contra Gentiles*, and the *Summa Theologiae*, only the *Contra Gentiles* has no explicit references to Isa. 53.

The following thirteen biblical commentaries do contain cases of Isa. 53. I will first give the title of the biblical book upon which Aquinas wrote the commentary and then provide in parentheses the number of explicit references to Isa. 53 that are contained in that commentary. This list is organized numerically beginning with the commentary that contains the least number of cases: Lamentations (1 case), 2 Corinthians (x1), Galatians (x1), 2 Thessalonians (x1), 2 Timothy (x1), Romans (x2), Jeremiah (x3), Ephesians (x4), Hebrews (x5), 1 Corinthians (x6), the Psalms (x12), the Gospel of John (x15), and the Gospel of Matthew (x24). Added together, there are 76 total cases of Isa. 53 throughout these thirteen biblical commentaries. Just over half (39) of these cases are contained in the commentaries on Matthew and John alone. Hence, in terms of sheer numbers, the text of Isa. 53 figures most prominently in Aquinas’ exegesis of the
Gospels. When we add the 12 cases contained in the *Commentary on the Psalms* to the 39 cases in the commentaries on the Gospels, we see that these three commentaries account for just over two-thirds (51) of the 76 total cases in the biblical commentaries. Of the remaining 25 cases, there are 18 cases (almost one quarter of the 76 total cases) spread almost evenly across four commentaries: 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, Ephesians, and Jeremiah. The following table summarizes the quantitative analysis provided above by identifying the place and number of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53, beginning with Aquinas’ earliest work and ending with his latest.

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<th>Name of Work:</th>
<th>Number of Cases of Isa. 53:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commentary on Isaiah</td>
<td>5 (outside of the lecture on Isa. 53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Jeremiah</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Lamentations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on the Sentences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on 1 Corinthians</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on 2 Corinthians</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Galatians</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Ephesians</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on 2 Timothy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Hebrews</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on the Gospel of John</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Summa Theologiae</em></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on Romans</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary on the Psalms</td>
<td>12</td>
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We can now quantify Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 in his two remaining works of systematic theology. The *Commentary on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard contains 7 cases of Isa. 53. The entire *Summa Theologiae* (henceforth, ST) contains 27 cases, and 25 of those cases are found in the *Tertia Pars*. So, the *Tertia Pars* and the ST as a whole have more cases of Isa. 53 than any of Aquinas’ other major biblical and systematic works. Of the 110 cases of Isa. 53 that I will be examining throughout Aquinas’ corpus, almost one-fourth (24.5%) of those cases occur in the ST.

The quantitative analysis that I have provided in this section gives a basic indication of how my qualitative analysis will be distributed throughout this dissertation. I will begin with a thorough treatment of the lecture on Isa. 53 and the 5 cases of Isa. 53 that are contained in Aquinas’ *Commentary on Isaiah*. Following this foundational analysis, the majority of this dissertation will focus upon the 78 cases of Isa. 53 that are spread throughout the ST and the biblical commentaries on Matthew, John, and the Psalms. A smaller but still significant portion of this dissertation will examine the 25 cases of Isa. 53 that are distributed throughout the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the biblical commentaries on 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, Ephesians, and Jeremiah. Finally, the briefest portion of this project will be those sections that explore the remaining 7 cases that are divided between the commentaries on Lamentations, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, and Romans.

**IV. Structure and Chapter Synopsis**

I will now conclude this introduction with a description of the structure of this dissertation and with a synopsis of each ensuing chapter. Chapters 1 and 2 will establish the historical, theological and biblical context that is needed in order to properly understand and
evaluate Aquinas’ reception of Isa. 53. Chapters 3 through 8 are the core of this work and constitute the original contribution of this dissertation to the field of Biblical Thomism. In those chapters I conduct the quantitative and qualitative analysis of Aquinas’ reception of Isa. 53 throughout the biblical commentaries and systematic works mentioned above. The final chapter, the Conclusion, will provide a quantitative and qualitative synthesis of the findings from Chapters 3 through 8. In the Conclusion, I will highlight the central quantitative and qualitative features of Aquinas’ engagement with Isa. 53, and I will provide a synthetic exposition of the theology of the cross that Aquinas draws out from Isaiah’s text.

Chapter 1 provides a historical and theological overview of Aquinas’ life, scholarly career, and understanding of Scripture. I describe the various religious and scholarly ways in which he engaged Scripture throughout his life and explicate his understanding of the theological nature of the Bible. I also present the primary features of his exegetical methodology as well as of his account of the relationship between Scripture and theology. With this foundation in place, the reader will be better equipped to understand the various ways that Aquinas reads Isa. 53 throughout his corpus.

Chapter 2 is an overview of the content and manuscripts of the text of Isa. 53. I will first conduct a basic description of the main features and contours of the text of Isa. 53. I will then compare Aquinas’ Latin version of Isa. 53 to the best contemporary Hebrew and Greek editions of that biblical text that we possess today. With these basic observations regarding the content and diverse texts of Isa. 53 in place, we will be better equipped to appreciate the peculiarities of Aquinas’ own exegesis of Isa. 53.

Chapter 3 is the beginning of my analysis of Aquinas’ interpretations and uses of Isa. 53. This chapter will explore Aquinas’ engagement with Isa. 53 in his earliest theological works,
namely, the biblical commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. The structure of Chapter 3 will be mirrored in each ensuing chapter up through Chapter 8. Chapter 3 will begin by historically situating the Commentary on Isaiah and then will proceed to examine the references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes in that commentary outside of his lecture on chp. 53 itself. The majority of this chapter will consist of a detailed explication and analysis of the lecture on Isa. 53. Then, I will proceed to examine the historical context and cases of Isa. 53 in the Commentary on Jeremiah and the Commentary on Lamentations. This chapter, like the ensuing chapters through Chapter 8, will conclude with a theological synthesis of Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53 throughout the various works considered. This synthesis will highlight how the text of Isa. 53 contributes to Aquinas’ theological account of Christ’s Passion.

Chapter 4 focuses upon Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 in his systematic Commentary on the Sentences as well as in the majority of his commentaries on the letters of Paul. The only commentary on the Pauline corpus that will not be featured in this Chapter is Aquinas’ Commentary on Romans, for that work is thought to date to the very end of Aquinas’ life and career. Aquinas’ commentaries on the Sentences and the remaining letters of the Pauline corpus were all produced in the beginning and middle years of his theological career, respectively. I will probe the cases of Isa. 53 in these Pauline commentaries in the chronological order in which they were written, namely: 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, and Hebrews.

22 Details and arguments regarding the dating of Aquinas’ biblical and systematic works will be put forth in ensuing chapters when each work is considered. The chronology employed here is based primarily on the historical analysis provided by Jean-Pierre Torrell, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume 1: The Person and His Work, Revised Edition, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005). For a summary of the dates provided by Torrell and his arguments see Giles Emery, “Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas,” 332-341.
The bulk of this dissertation will unfold in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. These chapters will examine Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, and the ST, respectively. These chapters will show how Aquinas draws extensively upon Isa. 53 in order to exegete the Gospel’s references to Christ’s death as well as their Passion narratives. Further, Chapter 7’s investigation of the *Tertia Pars* will explicate the significant role that Isa. 53 plays in Aquinas’ mature, speculative exposition of the mystery of Christ’s suffering and death.

My chronological investigation of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 will conclude with Chapter 8. This chapter explores the cases of Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ final works, namely, the *Commentary on Romans* and the unfinished *Commentary on the Psalms*. The latter work was interrupted by Aquinas’ illness and death. Hence, while incomplete, it nonetheless contains Aquinas’ final, mature Christological engagement with the text of Isa. 53. In the final chapter, the Conclusion, I will summarize the quantitative and qualitative data that was presented in Chapters 3 through 8. I will identify the overall number of times that Aquinas quoted particular verses from Isa. 53 as well as the places in which those quotes occurred. Finally, I will explicate the major features of the theology of the cross that Aquinas draws out from the text of Isa. 53.
Chapter 1: Contextualizing Aquinas’ Biblical Theology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the historical and theological context within which Aquinas approached the text of Isaiah 53 throughout his biblical and systematic works. This chapter will introduce readers to the major features of Aquinas’ theological career as well as to the essential principles of his biblical theology. I will give a basic exposition of when, how and why Aquinas worked with Scripture in his teaching and writing. Further, I will provide an overview of Aquinas’ understanding of the nature of Scripture, of the fundamental principles of biblical hermeneutics, and of the relationship between Scripture and theology.

Before beginning in earnest, one clarification is in order. This chapter looks to be descriptive, not evaluative. I will set forth a historical description of Aquinas’ understanding of and approach to Scripture, but I will not devote time to critically scrutinizing the merits of Aquinas’ thoughts on these matters. The reason for this is that my task in this chapter is simply to give the reader context which will help them to understand why Aquinas uses and interprets Isa. 53 in the ways that he does. I will explicate Aquinas’ basic principles of biblical theology because knowledge of these principles will enable us to see how his particular interpretations of Isa. 53 are like logical applications of and deductions from those principles. The task of assessing the theological, historical and literary value of Aquinas’ biblical first principles is a far larger one that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Further, such an evaluation has already been offered by others.¹ In sum, rather than convincing readers that Aquinas understood and used Scripture properly, my aim in this chapter is simply to illustrate the role that scripture did play in Aquinas’ theological works. At the very least, I intend that readers will walk away from

this chapter in agreement with Thomas O’Meara, who observed that “medieval theology was hardly waiting for the Reformation’s liberation of the Bible,” and “Aquinas [was] not just decorating metaphysics with biblical citations.”

I. The Role of Scripture in Aquinas’ Religious and Scholarly Life

I begin this overview of Thomas Aquinas’ religious and scholarly engagement with Scripture with a brief chronology of the major moments in his life and work. Thomas died on March 7, 1274, at which point he was somewhere between the age of 48 to 50 years old. Consequently, he would have been born as early as 1224 or as late as 1226. When he was a child, Thomas’s parents desired that he would one day become the abbot of the ancient and influential Benedictine abbey of Montecassino. And so they sent him there to live as an oblate during the period of 1230-1239. After this Thomas went to study at the University of Naples, and while in Naples he entered the Dominican order in 1244. The Dominicans sent Thomas to Paris to receive further education from 1245-1248, and during this time he studied under Albert the Great. From 1248-1252 Thomas was stationed with Albert at the newly established Dominican studium in Cologne, and there his job was to record notes of the lectures that Albert gave. While in Cologne, Thomas was ordained to the priesthood around 1250 or 1251.

Having studied and worked under Albert, Thomas was prepared to begin his first assignment as a lecturer in theology. He was sent to the University of Paris, and there he

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2 Thomas Franklin O’Meara, Thomas Aquinas: Theologian (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 69.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 440.
Thomas lectured as a bachelor of the Bible and of the Sentences from 1252-1256. Thomas earned the title of *magister in sacra pagina* in 1256, and he continued to teach in Paris until 1259. His next assignment was to give lectures at the Dominican house in Orvieto. He began this post somewhere between 1259-1261 and remained there until 1265. From 1265-1268, Thomas was the founding lecturer and leader of a new Dominican *studium* in Rome. At the conclusion of this assignment, he returned to the University of Paris and taught there once more as a *magister* from 1268-1272. Thomas’s final teaching post was in Naples, where he once more oversaw a new Dominican theological *studium* from 1272-1273. While saying Mass on December 6, 1273, he had a mysterious experience that took away his scholarly drive. He ceased all teaching and writing and became physically ill. He died a few months later, in March of 1274.

Having established this basic outline of the major events and periods of Thomas’s life, we can now examine the ways in which he encountered and worked with Scripture. Thomas’s first significant exposure to the Bible occurred when he was a child at the abbey of Montecassino. As Jean-Pierre Torrell explains, Thomas began to live at the abbey when he was “five or six,” and there “he received elementary training in reading and writing” as well as “a first introduction to the Benedictine religious life.” As an oblate, Thomas “had the value of a

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 441.
10 Ibid., 442.
true monastic profession, but it was conditional and temporary.”¹⁴ At the age of “fourteen or fifteen” Thomas left the abbey and went to Naples for more advanced studies, but even there he likely “spent some time at the monastery of San Demetrio,” which was “a lodging place for the Cassino monks in the city.”¹⁵ Hence, prior to his entrance into the Dominican order in 1244, Thomas was for all intents and purposes a Benedictine monk. As James Weisheipl says, Thomas “was at that time a ‘Benedictine’ in the same sense that, when he became a novice in the order of preachers, he was a ‘Dominican’ waiting to profess solemn vows.”¹⁶

Consequently, for at least about ten years of his life Thomas received instruction “in the ways of the spiritual life according to the Benedictine rule.”¹⁷ During that period he would have been exposed to and participated in the Benedictine practices of praying with the Scriptures through lectio divina and the liturgical praying of the Psalms. Thomas O’Meara speculates that “the impact of the monastic life in that great and ancient institution [Montecassino] - communal order in graced tranquility, education joined to liturgy - must have impressed the young Thomas.”¹⁸ Weisheipl claims that “the Psalms were undoubtedly learned by heart” by Thomas while he was at Montecassino as a result of his “daily choral recitation of the Divine Office.”¹⁹ Torrell remarks, “Thomas would all his life retain a deep esteem for the Benedictine ideal.”²⁰ For our purposes, the key point is that Thomas’s intellectual and spiritual life was deeply grounded in Benedictine approaches to Scripture long before he began to study the Church Fathers and pagan philosophers. From the Benedictines he would have learned to appreciate

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¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid., 5-6.
¹⁶ Weisheipl, Friar Thomas D’Aquino, 11.
¹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸ O’Meara, Thomas Aquinas: Theologian, 4.
¹⁹ Weisheipl, Friar Thomas D’Aquino, 11.
²⁰ Torrell, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume I, 14.
Scripture as a source of revelation and prayer, and during those formative years of his youth he developed habits of biblical prayer and study. Consequently, we should not be surprised that the Bible would come to occupy a central place in Thomas’s theological teaching and writing, nor should we be startled by the fact that Thomas did not reduce biblical interpretation to the application of merely natural historical and literary hermeneutical principles.

Thomas’s next significant encounters with Scripture took place in the context of his Dominican religious life. Almost immediately after he joined the Dominicans, Thomas’s parents forced him to leave the order and return to the family castle. During this period of pseudo-house arrest, Thomas supposedly “read the entire Bible.” Then, upon rejoining his brother friars, Thomas’s life became further imbued with Scripture. The principal and unique mission of the Dominicans was to engage in evangelical preaching. As a means to the end of effective preaching, all Dominicans were obligated to “the choral recitation of the Divine Office” as well as to the “assiduous study of divine truth.” Hence, not only as a Benedictine, but also as a Dominican, Thomas’s daily life would have involved frequent prayer of the Psalms and other biblical texts. Further, the study to which Dominicans were obligated focused upon the Bible. As Weisheipl explains, “every Dominican priory had to have a lector whose obligation was to give theological lectures on the Sacred Scriptures to all the brethren,” and “not even the prior was exempt from attendance at these lectures.” As the order grew, the number of biblical lectors in a particular priory grew, and eventually some of these Dominican teachers and their students conducted their biblical courses at major universities such as the one in Paris. In sum,

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21 For more on the influence of Benedictine spirituality and the Psalms in particular upon the life of Thomas, see David Berger, *Thomas Aquinas & The Liturgy*, trans. Christopher Grosz (Naples, FL.: Sapienta Press of Ave Maria University, 2005), 12-15.
24 Ibid., 24.
the Dominican devotion to the biblical prayer of the divine office as well as the scholarly study of Scripture was all meant to give the friars the ability “to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of [their] contemplation.”

In addition to the divine office and scholarly study, Thomas encountered Scripture on a daily basis in the liturgy of the Eucharist. As David Berger explains, “the undisputed center in the life of St. Thomas was the sacrament of the Eucharist, Holy Mass.” As a priest, Thomas himself said Mass once per day, and on a daily basis, he also “heard a second one by his companion or someone else, in which he very often served at the altar.” Hence, not only everyday of his priestly life, but multiple times per day, Thomas encountered the biblical readings and biblical prayers that constitute the core of the Catholic Mass. Consequently, for Thomas the Bible was not merely a text for the classroom and an object of historical and literary analysis. Rather, more fundamentally, for him the Bible was an essential element of the supreme sacramental rite through which God gives himself to humanity and humanity encounters God. In sum, Thomas encountered Scripture every day as a sacramental reality and as the essential form of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

As a Dominican and university teacher, Thomas was consistently tasked with giving courses upon different books of the Bible. Michael Sirilla remarks, “Thomas Aquinas was, by profession, a biblical commentator,” and “lecturing on Scripture was the chief occupation of his academic life.” For instance, at the University of Paris, Thomas had to help teach the following six year curriculum for theology students: years 1-2 consisted of cursory courses on individual books of Scripture; years 3-4 were on Peter Lombard’s Sentences; years 5-6 consisted

25 Ibid., 25.
27 Ibid. Berger is here quoting William of Tocco.
of more in-depth courses on additional books of Scripture.\(^{29}\) From 1252 to 1256 Thomas taught the first four years of the curriculum as a “\textit{cursor biblicus} [cursory reader of the Bible]” and as a master of the Sentences.\(^{30}\) Then, from 1256 to 1259 and again from 1268 to 1272, Thomas was a “\textit{magister in sacra pagina}.”\(^{31}\) In this position, his responsibility was to teach the fifth and sixth year courses on Scripture, and these courses involved “a minute and prolonged exegesis” of a particular biblical book.\(^{32}\) In addition to his duties at Paris, Thomas continued to give courses on individual books of the Bible during his teaching assignments in Orvieto, Rome, and Naples.\(^{33}\) In fact, though Thomas wrote the \textit{Summa contra Gentiles}, the \textit{Summa Theologiae}, and numerous commentaries on Aristotle, he never taught those texts in the classroom. Rather, “what Thomas taught in his classroom as a master of theology was Scripture.”\(^{34}\) Hence, teaching courses on Scripture was a constant and major component of Thomas’s scholarly career.

Further, Thomas’s courses on Scripture served as the foundation for the two other duties for which he was responsible as a master of theology at the University of Paris. M.D. Chenu describes these three “closely linked functions” of the \textit{magister} as follows: “\textit{legere} or to explain the text, \textit{disputare} or to solve by discussion the questions it raises, \textit{praedicare} or to preach it to the faithful.”\(^{35}\) So, in addition to lecturing [\textit{legere}] on the text of Scripture, Thomas’s consequent duty would have been to participate in academic debates [\textit{disputatio}] that relied heavily upon Scripture. The purpose of these debates was to scrutinize logically the theological

\(^{30}\) Ibid., italics and brackets in the original.
\(^{31}\) Sirilla, “\textit{Lectio Scripturae} at the Heart of Aquinas’s Theology and Preaching,” 64.
\(^{33}\) On what biblical courses Aquinas gave when and where see the ensuing discussions in chps. 3-6 and 8 of this dissertation.
content of Scripture and to answer the speculative, systematic theological questions that the biblical text generated. Sirilla explains, “Raising and responding to the difficulties elicited by the text itself, the disputations frequently developed argumentation with scriptural premises and theological conclusions.” Finally, the master’s biblical lectures and consequent systematic disputes gave birth to his ability to engage in biblically grounded and systematically erudite preaching. Hence, the “theological end” of lecturing and disputing was ultimately ordered toward the “pastoral one” of “communicating what has been understood to others by preaching and teaching.” In sum, even Thomas’s intense scholarly engagement with Scripture was not undertaken for secular or purely academic ends. Rather, Thomas taught and disputed Scripture so that he would be able to share the theological truths of the faith with his students and congregations.

II. Aquinas’ Understanding of the Theological Nature of Scripture

Having identified the primary historical moments and features of Thomas Aquinas’ religious and scholarly engagement with Scripture, we are now in a position to take a closer look at his understanding of the theological and sacred character of Scripture. Specifically, in this section I will provide an overview of Aquinas’ understanding of the authorship and senses of Scripture. Aquinas presents his mature understanding of these topics in the Summa Theologiae (ST) I, q. 1, a. 10. “The author of sacred Scripture is God,” he says. This does not mean that

36 Sirilla, “Lectio Scripturae at the Heart of Aquinas’s Theology and Preaching,” 72.
38 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae: Prima Pars, q. 1, a. 10. All references to the Summa are based on the Leonine edition of the Latin text and the English translation by Lawrence Shapcote (edited and revised by the
he denies the existence or significance of the human authors of Scripture. But, as Mary Healy points out, for Aquinas “God is the primary author of Scripture,” and this has important consequences regarding the possible meanings of Scripture and the ways in which readers interpret Scripture.  

Aquinas says that God has the power “to signify his meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves.” These two ways in which God can signify his meanings are the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture, respectively. In what follows I will first explicate Aquinas’ understanding of the literal sense, which is both intricate in its own right and fundamental to his account of the spiritual sense.

As Mark Johnson has pointed out, “Thomas’s teaching on what the literal sense of Scripture is remains constant throughout his teaching career.” Aquinas summed up his understanding of the literal sense in ST I, q. 10, a. 1: the “historical or literal” sense of Scripture is “that first signification whereby words [voces] signify things [res].” As William Wright and Francis Martin point out, Aquinas’ definition of the literal sense here is grounded in “the traditional distinction between words (verba) and things (res),” a distinction that is famously explicated by Augustine in his work *On Christian Doctrine.* Wright and Martin provide a helpful explanation of the relationship between the verba of Scripture, the reader of Scripture, and the res to which the verba refer:

> When a person reads written words, recognizes them as written language (and not random markings or blotches of ink), he or she is conscious not only of the written markings on a page but also of whatever those words present to the

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40 ST I, q. 1, a. 10.


consciousness . . . the person intends [is conscious of] not only the words but also (by going through the words) that to which the words refer . . . language . . . makes the reality or the state of affairs presented by the words to be the proper object of consciousness - not simply the words, texts, or the authors’ ideas per se. These are all means by which a reality is presented to a subject.\[^{43}\]

The *verba* on the page are thus not ends in themselves, but means to the end of the *res*. For Aquinas, when a Christian reads Scripture, their goal is not merely to understand the literary meaning of the words on the page, nor is their task to discover the interior, psychological state of the human author of those words. Rather, the goal of reading Scripture is to become conscious of and understand the divine, moral, and historical realities to which the words on the page refer.

With this context in mind, we can now better understand Aquinas’ further statement in ST I, q. 1, a. 10 regarding the literal sense of Scripture. He says, “the literal sense is that which the author intends,” and then he immediately specifies that “the author of sacred Scripture is God.”\[^{44}\] Whereas Aquinas first described the literal sense as the *res* to which the *verba* of Scripture refer, he now equates the literal sense with the intention of God. Healy explains the relationship between these two ways of describing the literal sense:

> It is crucial . . . not to confuse Thomas’s view with the modern notion of authorial intention. In using the verb *intendere* he was not referring to the psychological intent of the [human] author - the ascertainment of which, as modern literary critics have pointed out, is a dubious and highly speculative enterprise. Rather, he was using *intendere* in its philosophical sense of ‘point to’ or ‘refer to.’ The literal sense is not the subjective intention of the [human] author but the objective realities referred to by the text, whether historical facts or atemporal truths . . . Thomas also differs from modern interpreters in that he does not distinguish between the intention of the human author and that of God; because God is the primary author of Scripture, the literal sense is ultimately to be attributed to him.\[^{45}\]

So, for Aquinas the ‘literal sense’ is the *res* that God intends to lead readers of Scripture to become conscious of through the mediation of the *verba* of Scripture. Readers understand the

\[^{43}\] Wright and Martin, *Encountering the Living God in Scripture*, 197. The words in brackets are my addition.
\[^{44}\] ST I, q. 1, a. 10.
\[^{45}\] Mary Healy, “Aquinas’s Use of the Old Testament in His Commentary on Romans,” 186-7.
literal sense when they become conscious of the *res* that God intends to signify through the words on the page. Hence, Aquinas has no concern for the desperate attempt to discover the invisible aims of the numerous, often unknown human authors and editors of Scripture. Rather, the purpose of exegesis is to move from the *verba* on the page to a share in God’s consciousness and understanding of reality.

Aquinas claims that the *res* of the literal sense can be signified through a variety of literary modes or genres. As Gilbert Dahan points out, Aquinas thinks that Scripture signifies *res* using “narrative,” “parabolic,” and “poetic” literary modes.\(^46\) Regarding parables, for instance, Aquinas says “the parabolic sense is contained in the literal, for by words things are signified properly and figuratively.”\(^47\) A straightforward historical text which strives to speak plainly and precisely about its subject signifies realities in a proper way, whereas a parable signifies reality in a figurative way. History books and parables may signify the same reality, but they use different modes of signification to do so.\(^48\)

Aquinas provides the following example of a literal sense that uses figurative signification: “When Scripture speaks of ‘God’s arm,’ the literal sense is not that God has such a member, but only what is signified by this member, namely, operative power.”\(^49\) That is, the figure of ‘God’s arm’ is a *verba* that signifies the *res* of God’s operative power. Commenting upon this example of a figurative literal sense, Mary Healy explains how Aquinas “include[s] in the literal sense the whole range of devices by which an author can communicate meaning,

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\(^{47}\) ST I, q. 1, a. 10, ad 3.

\(^{48}\) For instance, Aquinas claims that the principle *res* that the Book of Job signifies is the same regardless of whether the book is a historical narrative or merely a parable. See “Prologue” in *Commentary on the Book of Job* (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2016), 8.

\(^{49}\) ST I, q. 1, a. 10, ad 3.
including figurative modes of speech such as poetic imagery, parable, and metaphor. In such cases, the literal sense is not the surface meaning of the words but *that which is signified by the literary figure.*”\(^{50}\) Similarly, Nicholas Healy comments, “Thomas allows ‘literal’ a far broader scope than is usual today. The literal sense includes not only words used in their more or less customary sense, but metaphor and other poetic tropes, too.”\(^{51}\) Consequently, for Aquinas the person who seeks the literal sense of Scripture must first strive to identify the literary mode of the *verba* on the page. Understanding the specific mode of the *verba*, regardless of whether that mode be narrative, parable, or poetry, is essential to discovering the *res* that the *verba* signifies.

In addition to acknowledging that the *res* of the literal sense can be signified through a variety of literary modes, Aquinas also maintains that an individual set of Scriptural *verba* can refer to multiple *res*. In ST I, q. 1, following book twelve of Augustine’s *Confessions*, Aquinas argues that “it is not unfitting” to hold that “even according to the literal sense, one word in sacred Scripture should have several senses.”\(^{52}\) Similarly, in *De Potencia Dei* q. 4, a. 1, Aquinas says “it is part of the dignity of the divine Scriptures that under one letter many senses are contained.”\(^{53}\) That is, a particular word, phrase or sentence in Scripture could refer to numerous realities, all of which are intended by God. Hence, Aquinas does not *a priori* restrict the literal sense of any particular letter of Scripture to merely one *res*. Rather, an individual letter of Scripture can have multiple true literal senses.

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\(^{50}\) Mary Healy, “Aquinas’s Use of the Old Testament in His Commentary on Romans,” 186.


\(^{52}\) ST I, q. 1, a. 10.

\(^{53}\) Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia Dei* question 4, article 1. My translation, from “*hoc enim ad dignitatem divinae Scripturae pertinet, ut sub una litera multos sensus contineat.*” All references to *De Potentia Dei* are from the 1953 Marietti edition of the Latin text, which was transcribed by Roberto Busa and revised by the Aquinas Institute. This text, and an English translation by the English Dominican Fathers which was edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute, are available online at [https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~QDePot.Q4.A1.C.2](https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~QDePot.Q4.A1.C.2). I will generally rely upon this English translation. Exceptions will be noted.
Aquinas grants that Scripture can contain a pluriform literal sense even if those senses were not intended by the human author. He explains,

It is not inconceivable that Moses and the other authors of the sacred Scriptures were given to know the various truths that men would discover in the text, and that they expressed them *under one series of letters* [*et ea sub una serie litterae designarent*], so that each truth is the sense intended by the author. And then, even if commentators adapt certain truths to the sacred text that were not understood by the [human] author, without doubt the Holy Spirit understood them, since he is the principal author of Holy Scripture.\(^{54}\)

Aquinas is saying that the human authors of Scripture could have been aware of and actively willed every possible, true and legitimate interpretation of the words that they wrote. So Moses, for example, could have written an individual *verba* of the creation account in Gen. 1 with the intention of signifying a variety of distinct *res*. Yet, as John F. Boyle explains, even if the human author does not “mean all of those meanings, it does not matter. And it does not matter for one simple reason: the primary author of Scripture is God.”\(^{55}\) Hence, “God could mean all of the literal meanings, and thus one would have multiple literal meanings, but without any such meanings on the part of the human author.”\(^{56}\) For Aquinas, a single series of letters in Scripture can refer to numerous realities precisely because God is the principal author of those letters. In his wisdom, God knows and wills all of the *res* that a single series of *verba* signify.

Consequently, for Aquinas the consideration of what the human authors were thinking as they wrote is irrelevant to the discovery of the literal sense(s) of Scripture. While humans freely wrote the words of Scripture, the innumerable *res* to which those words refer were intended by God, and not necessarily by the human authors. Exegetes can discover a variety of legitimate

\(^{54}\) *De Potentia* q. 4, a. 1. The italicized text is my translation.


\(^{56}\) Ibid.
literal senses contained in Scripture without having to deal with the question of whether or not
the human authors consciously intended those senses.\footnote{This does not mean that biographical information about the human author is simply irrelevant to the interpretation of a biblical text; for, such information could shed light upon the definitions of the words and the nature of the literary modes that the text employs, and this in turn enables the proper identification of the literal sense. At the same time, Aquinas does think that there are times in which the accurate interpretation of the literal sense of a particular biblical text does not require a knowledge of the identity of that text’s human author. For example, this is his position regarding the book of Job, as stated in the prologue to his Commentary on Job.}{57}

Aquinas insists that the literal sense is the foundation for the consequent, spiritual sense of Scripture. If the literal sense is the “first signification” of the \textit{verba}, then the spiritual sense is the second signification of those words.\footnote{ST I, q. 1, a. 10.}{58} The spiritual sense is “that signification whereby things [\textit{res}] signified by words [\textit{voces}] have themselves also a signification,” and this second way of signifying “is based on the literal, and presupposes it.”\footnote{Ibid.}{59} Aquinas is saying that the \textit{res} of the literal sense can itself be a sign of an additional \textit{res}. For example, the \textit{verba} of the book of Leviticus signify the \textit{res} of Jewish priesthood and sacrifice; yet, the Jewish priests and sacrifices are themselves a sign of the \textit{res} that is Jesus, the ultimate priest and sacrifice. The words of Leviticus lead readers to the literal sense (Jewish priests and sacrifices), and the literal sense leads readers to the spiritual sense (Christ as priest and sacrifice). In order to become conscious of the spiritual sense that is Christ, the reader of Scripture must first become conscious of the \textit{res} that signifies Christ.\footnote{For a theological account of the relationship between the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture see Wright and Martin, \textit{Encountering the Living God in Scripture}, 191-216.}{60} Aquinas identifies three ways in which the literal sense signifies a further, spiritual sense: first, when the \textit{res} of the Old Law figuratively signifies the \textit{res} of the New Law; second, when Christ or “the things which signify Christ are types of what we ought to do;”\footnote{ST I, q. 1, a. 10.}{61} third, when those same things signify our eternal glory.\footnote{Ibid. Aquinas names these three distinct types of spiritual senses “allegorical,” “moral,” and “anagogical,” respectively.}{62} In sum, the \textit{res} of the literal sense can
itself be a sign of Christ, his Church and law, our moral duties, and of the eternal destiny of the saints.

The historical situation into which he was born helped Aquinas to recognize the priority and fundamental nature of the literal sense in relation to the spiritual senses. The Dominicans were founded in response to the heresies that were being promoted at the time by the Albigensian and Cathari sects. These heretical groups relied heavily upon figurative and spiritual readings of Scripture in order to justify their errant theological positions. Nicholas Healy states, “the Cathari’s beliefs and practices drew upon a radically spiritual reading that conflicted directly and emphatically with the literal sense, resulting in massive distortions of orthodox Christian doctrine.” As a member of a religious order whose mission was to refute these errors through preaching, Aquinas was sensitive to the fact that so-called spiritual senses could be abused in the service of heresy. Hence, “By insisting upon the priority and normativity of the historical and literal sense of Scripture, Thomas could rule out these and other spiritual interpretations that conflicted with the plain sense of the text accepted by the tradition and embodied in the Church’s defined doctrines and customary practices.” For Aquinas and his fellow Dominicans, the literal sense of Scripture “became the subject of preaching and teaching and the basis for the counter challenge to the new sects.” In sum, Aquinas recognized that the literal sense was the first and fundamental way in which God conveyed his biblical messages to humanity, and thus the literal sense was the primary object of Aquinas’ preaching and teaching.

III. Aquinas’ Exegetical Methods

64 Ibid., 8.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 9.
Having observed Aquinas’ understanding of the authorship and senses of Scripture, we are now able to examine the specific methods that he used to identify the literal sense of Scripture and consequently to adjudicate between true and false spiritual senses. The first thing to realize about Aquinas’ approach to interpreting Scripture is that he did not use many of the textual, historical and linguistic resources that most contemporary biblical scholars use today. For instance, as Eleonore Stump observes, Aquinas “apparently knew very little Greek and virtually no Hebrew, and he does not seem to have been interested in acquiring these languages.” Consequently, Aquinas was limited to reading Scripture in Latin, and “he shows no sign of a concern to try to recover the text in its original[Greek and Hebrew] form either through his own work or through the efforts of others.” Further, the Latin Vulgate “existed in several versions, and Aquinas apparently used more than one of them.” Yet, “he rarely records any concern over the fact that he has differing [Latin] manuscripts of a biblical text; and sometimes, rather than choosing one of the alternatives as the more accurate or genuine reading, he simply incorporates an exegesis of each alternative into his commentary.” In sum, Aquinas’ exegesis of Scripture did not rely upon 1) the identification of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that most accurately reflected the original texts of Scripture, 2) the ability to read any Greek and Hebrew versions of Scripture, and 3) the identification and use of a Latin manuscript that most accurately reflected the best Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 255. Stump notes, “In some cases it is not clear what particular version of the Vulgate Aquinas was using; in other cases we can determine it with some confidence. For example, in commenting on the Psalms, Aquinas uses the Vulgate’s ‘Gallican Psalter,’ although he sometimes also uses the ‘Roman Psalter.’”
70 Ibid. Stump remarks, “In view of these facts, it is not at all clear that Aquinas would have welcomed contemporary historical biblical scholarship if he had known of it” (256).
Therefore, the quality of Aquinas’ exegesis is dependent upon the quality of the Latin translations of Scripture that were at his disposal. For many, perhaps, this observation effectively renders Aquinas’ biblical exegesis as unworthy of consideration. For my part, rather than *a priori* rejecting Aquinas’ Latin exegesis, I will read his biblical texts and interpretations with an analytical lens. In the next chapter I will show how Aquinas’ Latin version of Isa. 53 is in substantial agreement with the best editions of Scripture that we possess today. Even so, as I examine Aquinas’ references to his Latin version of Isa. 53, I will make note of occasions in which his exegetical and theological conclusions are informed by uniquely Latin words and phrases. Hence, readers will be able to observe the ways in which Aquinas’ Latin biblical manuscripts influence his interpretations, and they will consequently be able to judge the value of those interpretations for themselves.71

With that context in mind, we can now examine the exegetical methods that Aquinas actually did employ to discern the literal sense of Scripture. The foundation of Aquinas’ exegetical tools were “two negative principles” that he used consistently when interpreting Scripture.72 The first of these principles is simply that, as Aquinas says in ST I, q. 1, “nothing false can ever underlie the literal sense of sacred Scripture.”73 In *De Potentia*, Aquinas explains that it would be incorrect “to give to the words of Scripture an interpretation manifestly false.”74 That is, “falsehood cannot underlie the divine Scriptures which we have received from the Holy Spirit.”75 It is especially important to avoid any interpretation which views Scripture as asserting

71 In the next chapter I will say more about the value of Aquinas’ exegesis in light of his textual privations.
73 ST I, q. 1, a. 10, ad 3.
74 *De Potentia* q. 4, a. 1.
75 Ibid.
things that are “contrary to the truth of faith [veritati fidei].”

Boyle summarizes Aquinas’ position: “one ought not to assert something false to be found in Scripture, especially what would contradict the faith.”

The God who is truth did not inspire the biblical words in order to trick and deceive humanity; rather, Scripture only asserts what is true. This means that exegetes must reject any interpretation of Scripture that would serve to justify heresy, theological error, or blatantly false claims about philosophical and natural truths.

By embracing this exegetical principle, Aquinas situates himself in continuity with the ancient practice of reading Scripture in light of ecclesial tradition. For Aquinas, the Apostolic Tradition of the Church is the first criteria by which one distinguishes true from false interpretations of Scripture. As Elisabeth Reinhardt explains, this method of reading the Bible “in Ecclesia” means “the ultimate judgment about the canon of books and the interpretation of a particular text belong to the authority of the Church.”

Further, Aquinas “not only consults the Magisterium, but also considers other sources present in the life of the Church as criteria of exegesis, such as the decretal collections of Canon Law, liturgical norms, and the life of the saints.”

Aquinas was aware that Scripture contained passages that could seem to oppose the revealed faith of the Church as well as even obvious natural truths. Nicholas Healy explains how Aquinas dealt with such passages: “when Scripture appears to be claiming something clearly untrue, its divine author must intend a meaning other than the apparent, one that can be true. The interpreter’s responsibility is to find that meaning.”

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76 Ibid. My translation of “veritati fidei.”
78 Elisabeth Reinhardt, “Thomas Aquinas As Interpreter of Scripture in the Light of his Inauguration Lectures,” in Reading Sacred Scripture With Thomas Aquinas, 88.
79 Ibid., 89.
Scripture’s challenging passages contain a divinely given meaning that is consistent with the rule of faith and with natural truths.

Aquinas’ second negative principle of exegesis manifests his sensitivity to the meaning of the words on the page as well as his willingness to embrace a variety of interpretive possibilities. Aquinas states, “every truth that can be adapted to the sacred text without prejudice to the circumstance of the letter [litterae circumstantia] is the sense of Holy Scripture.”81 An interpretation of Scripture is authentic as long as it is not “in conflict with the truth of faith [veritatis fidei]” and as long as it is “compatible [patitur] with the sense of the circumstance of the letter [sensum circumstantia litterae].”82 That is, a valid interpretation must not only be in accord with theological and philosophical truth; further, as Boyle explains, a valid interpretation is one which “more or less fits the words and their content.”83 Exegesis must thus be attentive to the basic meaning of the words on the page and to the literary mode that those words serve. In this sense, Aquinas takes seriously the linguistic and rhetorical content of Scripture. To discover the literal sense, one must understand the literary meaning of the words and their mode.

Yet even sufficient attention to the rule of faith and to the linguistic intricacies of Scripture does not always enable the reader to isolate one legitimate interpretation to the exclusion of all others. This is because, as we have already seen, a single series of letters in Scripture can possess numerous literal senses. Given this reality, Aquinas says that readers of Scripture must not “force” their own interpretation of Scripture in such a way “as to exclude any other interpretations that are actually or possibly true according to the circumstance of the letter.

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81 De Potentia q. 4, a. 1. My translation of “litterae circumstantia.”
82 Ibid. My translation of “veritatis fidei” and “sensum circumstantia litterae.”
83 Boyle, “Authorial intention and the Divisio textus,” 4
As Boyle explains, when Aquinas sees two different ways of interpreting the literal sense of Scripture, he often “does not judge one to be correct, the other not,” for “by his own criteria no such judgment can be made.” For example, Aquinas thinks that Genesis’ account of creation can legitimately be interpreted as saying either that God created all things at once or that he created all things gradually, little by little. Neither interpretation violates the truth of faith or the circumstance of the letter, and so either can be held.

Yet this does not mean that both interpretations are true. For, as Johnson points out, “two mutually exclusive attributes cannot have occurred simultaneously,” and “neither of these two modes of creation admits of the other.” The verba of Genesis are not indicating that creation occurred both gradually and all at once, for this would mean that the verba are signifying two incompatible res. Rather, Johnson says, “unless the context of the text of Genesis, its circumstantia litterae, indicates to us clearly the modality of the creation of things, we shall not know that modality for certain. Thomas contends that the context allows for both accounts.” That is, in reality creation either occurred all at once or it occurred over time, but either view is consistent with the verba of Scripture and the truth of the faith. Neither the articles of the faith nor the words of Scripture sufficiently specify the duration of God’s creative activity, and so exegetes are justified in claiming that Genesis supports either view. In sum, Aquinas interprets Scripture by being attentive to the meaning and mode of the words on the page, and he does so in light of the faith of the Church and truths that are knowable by human reason. Read in this way, Scripture can convey a variety of legitimate literal senses. Further, there are times when the

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84 De Potentia q. 4, a. 1. My translation of “salva circumstantia litterae.”
86 De Potentia q. 4, a. 1.
88 Ibid.
content of the verba can be legitimately interpreted in competing ways, but this does not mean that an individual verba of Scripture signifies multiple, mutually incompatible res.

The third major exegetical method that Aquinas used to interpret Scripture is what Reinhardt calls “explaining the Bible by the Bible.” 89 For Aquinas, “a secure and connatural tool for explaining the Bible is the Bible itself, by using cross references which confirm or shed new light on a certain text.” 90 One part of the Bible can interpret another part of the Bible given Scripture’s “uniformity of teaching (uniformitas dictorum),” which refers to the notion that “all transmitters of revelation have taught the same doctrine unanimously.” 91 There is a “profound harmony existing in the biblical texts, so that they illustrate and enlighten each other.” 92 Given this harmony, as Piotr Roszak explains, Aquinas reads Scripture “as a unity and not as a conglomerate of selected books read in isolation.” 93 Scripture’s unity of doctrine “results from the fact that God is the auctor principalis of the Holy Scripture and He leads the history of mankind.” 94 Since salvation history is directed by God, and since God inspired all of Scripture, this means that “in the Old Testament the New is concealed,” and “in the New the Old is revealed.” 95 Consequently, interpreting the parts of the Bible in light of other parts and of the whole is not only helpful, but is in fact “necessary.” 96

As this dissertation will show, Aquinas frequently quotes Isa. 53 in order to shed light upon related biblical passages, such as the Passion narratives of the Gospels. Conversely, he

89 Elisabeth Reinhardt, “Thomas Aquinas As Interpreter of Scripture,” 84.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 78.
92 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 121.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid. On the various ways in which Aquinas uses a biblical citation in order to illuminate the meaning of another biblical text see pgs. 131-138.
repeatedly draws upon other biblical texts in order to illuminate the meaning of Isa. 53. He puts these various biblical texts into dialogue with one another on the basis of linguistic or thematic similarities that exist between them. In either event, though, Aquinas is putting the variously located *verba* of Scripture into contact with one another in order to help him to discover the *res* that is signified by the main biblical text in question. Aquinas’ method of interpreting the Bible in light of the Bible may seem like a strange method to contemporary readers who are accustomed to methods of exegesis that isolate the individual books of Scripture, and even the various parts within a particular book, from one another. It thus bears repeating that the legitimacy of this practice, for Aquinas, is grounded in the legitimacy of the presuppositions that inform it. Those presuppositions are that God is the principal author of the entirety of Scripture, and that all of Scripture is about Christ, who is “the centre and summit of Sacred Scripture and ultimately the reason for its unity.”

Aquinas’ fourth exegetical method was to interpret Scripture with the help of the exegetical tradition of the Church. In accord with the custom of his age, Aquinas’ exegesis drew heavily upon quotations from the Church Fathers. Leo Elders explains that for Aquinas “the proximity of the Fathers with the apostolic period” makes them “stand in a direct connection with Holy Scripture.” While “the authority of the Fathers is not absolute,” nonetheless they are a generally reliable “source of Christian doctrine in so far as they present and explain what is contained in the Bible and their teachings have been received by the Church.” In the ST Aquinas specifies that the exegetical and theological arguments of the Fathers of the Church

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97 Elisabeth Reinhardt, “Thomas Aquinas As Interpreter of Scripture,” 88.
99 Ibid., 271 and 257, respectively. Aquinas’ reverence for the exegesis of the Fathers is displayed with particular force in his *Catena Aurea* upon the four Gospels, which he composed at the request of Pope Urban IV. See pg. 258.
“may properly be used, yet merely as probable.”

At times Aquinas presents diverse patristic interpretations of a particular passage of Scripture because each of these interpretations help to draw out the numerous res that a particular series of Scriptural verba signify. Yet, as Reinhardt explains, Aquinas’ use of the Fathers “is not only reverential, but also critical and, when necessary, he resolves discrepancies and apparent contradictions between the different patristic sources.”

While willing to disagree with particular patristic readings, often Aquinas does not think it is necessary to choose one patristic interpretation over another. For example, as Bruce Marshall points out, in De Potentia q. 4, a. 1 Aquinas says that both Augustine’s and the Cappadocians’ interpretations of the creation account in Genesis are in accord with the truth of faith and the circumstances of the letter. Hence, despite the tension between the two accounts, either can be held. In sum, Aquinas uses the exegetical views of the Fathers frequently, reverently, and yet critically.

The fifth and final major exegetical method of Aquinas that we will consider here is the divisio textus, or, division of the text. Aquinas’ commentaries on individual books of the Bible always included “an analysis of the [biblical] text into its component parts in order to elucidate their interrelationship and unity,” and “Thomas often divides the text down to the level of the individual words themselves.” Many modern readers find Aquinas’ divisions of the text to be unhelpful and at times even arbitrary. Conversely, Boyle refers to the method of divisio as a “splendid scholastic device” by which “a commentator states some theme that serves as an 

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100 ST I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2.
101 Elisabeth Reinhardt, “Thomas Aquinas As Interpreter of Scripture,” 85.
103 Ibid., 93.
104 Sirilla, “Lectio Scripturae at the Heart of Aquinas’s Theology and Preaching,” 75.
105 For example, see the reservations expressed in Healy, “Introduction,” 9-10.
interpretive key for his commentary,” with the result that “no verse stands in isolation” from that main theme.\textsuperscript{106} On this reading, the \textit{divisio} is best understood as a way of identifying how the various parts of a biblical text serve as means which are ordered towards the end of the book as a whole.\textsuperscript{107} The meaning and purpose of words, phrases, sentences, verses and chapters can all be understood in relation to the ultimate intent of the divine author for a particular book. “This method,” Sirilla explains, “evidently presupposes a theory of scriptural inspiration that discerns meaning in every part of the text.”\textsuperscript{108} For Aquinas there are no superfluous portions of Scripture; while certain words and sections may not be as critical as others in terms of their substance or rhetoric, nonetheless every word of Scripture is in some way ordered towards the end of the text in question. We will see Aquinas’ emphasis on the significance of particular words and sentences of Isa. 53 and other biblical texts throughout this dissertation. Further, in the chapter on the \textit{Commentary on Isaiah}, we will see how Aquinas divides the text of Isa. 53 and relates it to the book of Isa. as a whole.

To summarize: Aquinas deployed five major methods in his exegesis of the literal sense: first, he presumed that Scripture only asserts what is true, and therefore the literal sense of Scripture can never contradict the supernatural truths of the faith or truths that can be known by the natural light of human reason; second, an individual passage may have multiple literal senses as long as each of those meanings is in accord with the basic content of the words on the page; third, since God is the principal author of the entirety of Scripture, and since Christ is the unifying theme of Scripture, particular biblical texts function as keys which unlock and confirm the meaning of other biblical texts; fourth, the Fathers of the Church are an important witness to

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\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{108} Sirilla, “Lectio Scripturae at the Heart of Aquinas’s Theology and Preaching,” 75.
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the meaning of the literal sense given their proximity to the biblical era and the reception of their teachings within the Church; fifth, Aquinas always divided and organized biblical books in a way that enabled him to identify the meaning of particular words, verses and chapters in light of the purpose of the book as a whole. Having examined these five major methods, we can now proceed in the final section of this chapter to explain how the reality of the literal sense fits into the practice of theology.

IV. Aquinas’ Understanding of the Relationship Between Scripture and Theology

Scripture is foundational to Aquinas’ understanding of theology. In the Prima Pars of the ST, Aquinas describes theology as a science, which means that it is a particular kind of intellectual discipline that has its own first principles, methods of discovery, and scope. The first principles of theology are the contents of divine revelation. Using reason and all of the insights of the natural sciences, the theologian strives to understand all that God has revealed about himself and creation. The truths that God has divinely revealed to humanity are preserved and handed down in the Catholic Church’s articles of faith as well as in sacred Scripture. As Thomas O’Meara states, for Aquinas “the scriptural text and the reality to which the text witnessed gave theology’s first foundation and inspiration.” Hence, along with the articles of faith, Scripture is the basis for all theological reasoning, for Scripture contains the divinely revealed truths that function as the first principles of the science of theology.

In addition to providing revealed first principles, Scripture serves two additional tasks to the science of theology. Wilhemus Valkenburg describes these three functions of Scripture within theology as follows:

In the first place, theology proceeds from faith which rests on Scripture as testimony of God’s revelation; in the second place, theology uses Scripture as a proper and cogent element in its scholarly argumentation; in the third place, the theological truth found in this argumentation is confronted with Scripture in order to check whether it is in accordance with divine revelation.¹¹¹

Since Scripture is the foundational testimony of divine revelation, the first task of the theologian is to identify and clarify the content of revelation as it is contained in Scripture. This task involves discerning the literal sense of the text, for only the literal sense “is the basis and norm for any theological argument.”¹¹² As Torrell explains, Aquinas maintains “the priority of the literal sense” to the science of theology, for the literal sense alone is the source and criteria for true theological argumentation.¹¹³ All theological questions, arguments, and conclusions must be based upon the literal sense of Scripture, and therefore the discovery of the literal sense is the first task of the theologian.

For Aquinas, the theologian’s second task is to explore philosophically and answer the various ontological and moral questions that are raised by the literal sense of the biblical texts. In his biblical commentaries, Aquinas frequently stops to consider theological questions [quaestiones] that are generated by the biblical text that he is commenting upon. In order to answer these questions, he utilizes speculative philosophical reasoning and he draws upon the authority of other biblical texts; these additional passages of Scripture function as proofs which

¹¹³ Torrell, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume I, 58.
contribute to his philosophical arguments. Aquinas uses Scripture in similar ways in his systematic works, especially in the ST. There, as O’Meara points out, Scripture’s “words are on every page.” Biblical texts are frequently found in the sed contra, where they provide a basic answer to the question posed by the article and serve as the foundation for the speculative exposition of the answer that will unfold in the body of the article. In this sense, the body of the articles in the Summa are often like short, dense speculative commentaries upon the literal sense of the biblical text contained in the sed contra. Further, the body of the article itself often contains biblical passages that serve to provide further support and clarification to the answer that is being explicated. Biblical passages are also frequently present in the objections and replies within each article, showing that the attempt to answer the question posed by the article must be attentive to the witness of the inspired text. While Scripture is omnipresent in the Summa, O’Meara makes an important clarification: “the subject matter of Aquinas’ theology, however, is not so much biblical phrases as the realities to which they point: God active in history, covenant and incarnation, grace and life.” Aquinas’ systematic works are imbued with the words of Scripture precisely because in those works he seeks to speculatively explore the res to which the biblical verba refer.

The theological works of Aquinas thus manifest an inseparable and mutually enriching relationship between exegesis and speculative theology. Chenu calls Aquinas’ biblical commentaries works of “theological exegesis,” and he says that the “massive dose of direct scriptural elaboration” in the ST renders it a work of “biblical theology.” As Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering point out, in Aquinas’ biblical commentaries “speculative

115 O’Meara, Thomas Aquinas: Theologian, 69.
116 Ibid.
117 Chenu, Toward Understanding Saint Thomas, 253 and 259, respectively.
thinking about divine realities emerges from within biblical exegesis itself,” and there is a “circular movement from biblical exegesis to speculative theology and back again.” Hence, “Biblical exegesis depends upon the exegete’s gifts as a speculative theologian, which in turn depends upon the exegete’s acquaintance with not merely the particular text at hand but indeed the whole Scriptures.” Further, as Nicholas Healy states, those works of Aquinas that today we would call “systematic or doctrinal theology” are in fact “necessarily authorized and informed by exegesis.” Works such as the ST, “which seem more ‘purely’ doctrinal” are in fact “better thought of as a kind of second-level exegesis.” As Chenu explains, Aquinas’ so-called systematic works contain “whole sections of doctrinally elaborated biblical matter and of sacred history,” and throughout the ST in particular Aquinas’ speculative theological analysis “returns always to the Gospel, to the word of God, because it is fulfilled in the thought of God.” In sum, Aquinas’ biblical commentaries focus on expounding the literal sense and engaging the speculative theological quaestiones that are raised by that sense; his systematic works, on the other hand, focus on speculative theological reflection and argument, and yet the foundation, framework and often even the material for those speculative arguments are the Scriptures themselves.

V. Conclusion

119 Ibid.
121 Ibid., 13.
122 Chenu, Toward Understanding Saint Thomas, 259. As Valkenburg points out, Aquinas’ engagement with Scripture in his systematic works increases as his career goes on; see Words of the Living God, 22.
Scott Hahn has pointed out that in most of contemporary academia “Aquinas is viewed” merely “as a medieval systematic theologian.”¹²³ But, Hahn claims, “it is unlikely that Aquinas would be happy in this narrow niche,” for “his days at the University of Paris were spent almost entirely in the classroom as a master of the Sacred Page.”¹²⁴ Further, “the centrality of Scripture for Aquinas is evident in the two Summas, which contain around twenty-five thousand explicit biblical citations,” and which Thomas viewed as “compilations of the truths that were diffuse and sometimes obscure in Scripture.”¹²⁵ This chapter’s historical survey of Aquinas’ theological career and of the biblical features of his works confirms Hahn’s supposition.

Lecturing, disputing, and preaching on the Scriptures were the essential tasks of Aquinas’ career. Even the speculative theological expositions of his systematic works rely upon Scripture for their foundation and heavily utilize the Bible in their arguments. These academic engagements with Scripture were complemented by his personal and religious encounters with the Bible, encounters that began during his childhood years as a Benedictine novice and which continued daily throughout his adult life as a Dominican priest. In both his religious and scholarly life, Aquinas read Scripture as the Word of God, the source of divine revelation. He believed that the proper interpretation of any part of Scripture could not take place without due deference to natural truths, the faith of the Church, and the entirety of the biblical canon.

With this historical and theological context in mind, we will now be better equipped to understand how and why Aquinas uses and interprets the text of Isa. 53 in the various ways that he does throughout his biblical commentaries and systematic works. The various functions of Scripture in Aquinas’ theology that were described in this chapter apply to his engagements with

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¹²⁴ Ibid.
¹²⁵ Ibid., x.
Isa. 53. As we will see, he reads Isaiah’s prophecy as a normative source of divine revelation; as a foundation for speculative and deductive theological reasoning; and as a proof in theological argumentation, both in objections and in replies to objections. At all times, Aquinas analyzes the verba of Isa. 53 in order to pass through them to the divine res that they signify. Having concluded this historical overview of Aquinas’ engagement with and understanding of Scripture, we are now in a position to complete one more contextualizing step before proceeding to the original contribution of this dissertation. In the next chapter, our task is to examine the basic content of the text of Isa. 53 and to compare Aquinas’ edition of that text with our own.
Chapter 2: Contextualizing Isaiah 53

In the previous chapter, I presented the central features of Aquinas’ engagement with and understanding of Scripture as manifested throughout his religious and scholarly career. In this chapter, I continue to establish context which will enable us to better understand and appreciate Aquinas’ Christological interpretations of Isa. 53. Specifically, in this chapter I do two things. First, in Part I, I survey the basic literary and theological features of the text of Isa. 53. This exegetical presentation will introduce the major contours and themes of Isaiah’s text. With this basic understanding of the text of Isa. 53 in place, the reader will be better equipped to understand and evaluate Aquinas’ particular reception of that text. In Part II, I build off of this exegetical survey of Isa. 53 by looking specifically at Aquinas’ Latin version of the text of Isa. 53. I provide a basic comparison of Aquinas’ edition to contemporary translations of critical edition Hebrew and Greek texts of Isa. 53. The textual and exegetical analysis of this chapter will give the reader the basic frameworks that they need to critically examine Aquinas’ various interpretations of Isa. 53 that I will analyze in the remainder of this dissertation.

I. Basic Features and Themes of the text of Isaiah 53

Isa. 53 is the major portion of a text that contemporary exegetes call the “fourth servant song,” and this text consists of Isa. 52:13 – 53:1-12.1 There is debate regarding whether or not the ‘Servant’ of Isaiah’s four servant songs is an individual, a group, or both. Further, among those who agree that the Servant is an individual, many still disagree regarding the identity of that individual.2 Richard Clifford states that the fourth servant song “remains especially

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2 Ibid., 499.
controverted. Who is the servant, ideal Israel or a historical individual? Whose sins has he borne - the nations’ or Israel’s? What is meant by his vicarious suffering, otherwise unattested in the OT?”

Hence, Clifford concludes that there is no “consensus” regarding these issues.

Despite the obscurities of these elements of the fourth servant song, we can nonetheless make some observations regarding the basic content of the text.

The fourth servant song consists of three principal parts. Hans-Jurgen Hermission states that the “clear structure” of the song becomes evident when one pays attention to the “changing speakers” of the text.

God is the one speaking in Isa. 52:13-15 as well as in 53:11b-12. These “two Yahweh speeches” constitute “the beginning and end” of the song, and “in between [them] stands 53:1-11a.” This latter, “central section” is divided “into verses 1-6 and verses 8-11a,” while “verse 7 takes up a special position between the two parts of the text.”

The uniqueness of v. 7 lies in the fact that it alone speaks of “the Servant’s own independent behavior in response to the suffering inflicted upon him,” whereas all of the surrounding verses in the central section “speak only of the fate the Servant must suffer.”

In sum, the fourth servant song begins and ends with two speeches by God (52:13-15 and 53:11b-12) that summarize the fate of the Servant, and the central portion of the song is a dramatic description of the Servant’s suffering, his reaction to that suffering, and the attitude of his peers towards him (53:1-11a).

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3 Ibid., 500.
4 Ibid.
7 Hermission, “The Fourth Servant Song in the Context of Second Isaiah,” 31. Isa. 53:7 states: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
The three major parts of the fourth servant song each have their own subdivisions and thematic emphases. In part I (52:13-15), God “announces the triumph of the servant” and “the amazement of the nations” at the Servant’s victory.\(^\text{10}\) In these verses, God is speaking about the “humiliation” of the Servant in the “past” and proclaiming the Servant’s “future destiny” of “exaltation.”\(^\text{11}\) Part II (53:1-11a) focuses primarily upon the suffering of the Servant. Carroll Stuhlmueller subdivides this part into four sections: the “narrative of sorrows” (v. 1-3), “sorrow as part of the servant’s ministry” (v. 4-6), “sorrow, silently accepted” (v. 7-9), and “good results” (v. 10-11a).\(^\text{12}\) Part III (53:11b-12) features God once again as the speaker, and once again God describes the Servant’s past suffering as well as his future exaltation or “the compensation for his previous fate.”\(^\text{13}\) Further, this final part is “about the good effects of the servant’s ministry.”\(^\text{14}\) The *Navarre Bible* nicely summarizes the major themes of the fourth servant song: “In terms of content, the song is unusual in that it shows the servant triumphing through his humiliation and suffering. Even more than that - he makes the pains and sins of others his own, in order to heal them and set them free.”\(^\text{15}\)

Having established this outline of the major sections and themes of the fourth servant song, we can now take a brief look at each of its verses, with a special focus upon Isa. 53:1-12. My purpose here is not to provide an in-depth, critical analysis of these verses. Rather, my goal here is simply to set forth the basic sense of the words and to give the reader a sense of the


logical flow of the song as a whole. Part I of the song (52:13-15) begins in v. 13 with God proclaiming the future exaltation of the Servant. Then, in 53:14, he acknowledges how in the past the Servant endured intense suffering, such that “many were astonished at him.” In 52:15, God states that the exaltation of the Servant, after his previous, public suffering, will “startle many nations” and silence kings, for they shall recognize the newfound glory of the Servant. Hence, Isa. 52:13-15 summarizes the salvific activity of the Servant: he has suffered and been rejected, and yet God is going to exalt him. When God does so, nations and kings will be amazed.

Part II (53:1-11a) begins in 53:1, where the discourse shifts from God to a different, unspecified speaker. The speaker indicates that no one has believed the proclamation of God about the exaltation of the suffering Servant that was conveyed in 52:13-15. The reason for this unbelief regarding the exaltation of the Servant is precisely because of the great suffering and misery that the Servant underwent publicly. This suffering begins to be presented in 53:2, which describes the miserable origin and appearance of the Servant before the world. Because of this misery, 53:3 explains, the Servant was “despised and rejected by others.” In 53:4, the speaker states how the Servant suffered with the pains that are due to sinners. Hence his peers interpreted his suffering as a punishment which was imposed upon him by God as a consequence for his sins. But, 53:5 offers a corrective to the view of the Servant’s peers: the Servant is not suffering due to his own sins, but rather for the sins of others. Further, his suffering is a source of healing

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17 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the fourth servant song in this section come from the NRSVCE.
for sinners. In 53:6, the reason for the Servant’s suffering is further explained: “all we like sheep have gone astray.” The people have turned away from God through sin, and so for this reason God places the “iniquity” (53:6) of all those sinners upon the Servant. 53:7 explains how the Servant handles his suffering, namely, with silence and passive resignation, “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.” Despite the fact that he was “oppressed” and “afflicted” (53:7), the Servant does not even offer a verbal defense of his innocence.

In 53:8, the speaker states that the Servant is killed, that his death was unjust, and once again that he died as a consequence of the people’s sins. Given that the Servant was rejected even to the point of being put to death, his future exaltation is inconceivable: “who could have imagined his future?” (53:8) 53:9 reiterates that the Servant was killed as if he was a criminal, and yet the truth is that the Servant was completely innocent. In 53:10, the speaker clarifies the role of divine providence in the Servant’s suffering and death. God willed that the Servant endure suffering, and the Servant’s very endurance of that pain was “an offering for sin” (53:10). As a result of his sacrificial, atoning offering of self, the Servant will be personally rewarded by God with offspring and prolonged life. Further, “the will of the LORD shall prosper” (53:10) amidst the people as a result of the Servant’s humiliation and exaltation. 53:11 reiterates that the Servant will be rewarded for his suffering and that his suffering will produce salvific effects for the people.

Part III of the Servant Song (53:11b-12) begins in 53:11b (“my servant shall make many righteous”), where God once again becomes the speaker and proclaims that the Servant will justify the people precisely because he bore “their iniquities.” The song ends with the proclamation of God in 53:12. There, God once more states that he will exalt the Servant precisely because he “poured himself out to death and was numbered with the transgressors.”
Further, God clarifies, the Servant suffered precisely for the salvation of the “many” from their sins, and he gave of himself as “intercession” for them (53:12). Hence, the song ends with God’s declaration that the Servant’s suffering was ordered toward the salvation of sinners, and further with the promise that God himself will reward the Servant for his saving sacrifice.

Having examined the basic structure, content and meaning of Isa. 53 within the context of the fourth servant song, we can now proceed to examine Aquinas’ specifically Latin version of the text of Isa. 53.

II. Aquinas’ Latin Version of Isaiah 53

I will first make a few general observations regarding Aquinas’ Latin text. Aquinas used the same Latin version of Isa. 53 in all of the works that I will examine in this dissertation. There are a few occasions when he paraphrased that text or, quoting from memory, errantly combined phrases from distinct verses into one, original formulation. Hence, in those latter instances his wording departs from the Latin text of Isa. 53 that he typically works with. But, in the overwhelming majority of cases, Aquinas’ quotations of Isa. 53 are accurately taken from a Latin version of that biblical text that he used as normative throughout his theological career, beginning with his *Commentary on Isaiah* and ending with his *Commentary on the Psalms*. In the table below I present this Latin text of Isa. 53 along with the English translation of that text that is provided by the Aquinas Institute. With the exception of a few instances that I will note, throughout this dissertation I will use this English translation.

| 1 Quis creditit auditui nostro? Et brachium Domini cui revelatum est? | 1 Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? |

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2 And he shall rise up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: there is no form in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him:

3 Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not.

4 Truly he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray, every one has turned aside into his own way: and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was offered because he himself willed it, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.

8 He was taken away from distress, and from judgment: who shall declare his generation? because he is cut off out of the land of the living: for the wickedness of my people have I struck him.

9 And he shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his death: because he has done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth.

19 My translation, from “Oblatus est quia ipse voluit.” Unless otherwise noted, throughout this chapter and dissertation I consistently translate Aquinas’ Latin version of Isa. 53:7a in this way.
Having established Aquinas’ Latin version of Isa. 53, we can now compare his edition of this biblical text to other significant editions of that text that are in use today.

In the table below, I put the English translation of Aquinas’ text of Isa. 53 alongside contemporary English versions of Isa. 53 that are translated from Hebrew and Greek editions. The English translation from Hebrew is the version of Isa. 53 that is contained in the *New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*. This translation is based primarily on the Hebrew *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* of 1983, which is itself based on the “Codex Leningradensis” of 1008. As John Bergsma and Brant Pitre explain, *Leningradensis* is “the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew books of the Old Testament” and it “is a complete copy of the Masoretic Text written in Galilee around A.D. 1000.”

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10 et Dominus voluit conterere eum in infirmitate. Si posuerit pro peccato animam suam, videbit semen longævum et voluntas Domini in manu ejus dirigetur;

11 pro eo quod laboravit anima ejus, videbit et saturabitur: in scientia sua justificabit ipse justus servus meus multos et iniquitates eorum ipse portabit.

12 Ideo dispertiam ei plurimos, et fortium dividet spolia, pro eo quod tradidit in mortem animam suam, et cum sceleratis reputatus est. Et ipse peccatum multorum tulit et pro transgressoribus rogavit.

10 And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity: if he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord shall be directed in his hand.

11 Because his soul has labored, he shall see and be filled: by his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he has delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: and he has borne the sins of many, and has prayed for the transgressors.

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21 John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible, Volume I: The Old Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 34. They explain: “*Leningradensis* is almost universally regarded as the oldest and best copy of the Masoretic Text,” and so “when translating or studying the Old Testament today, scholars typically begin from the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text” as contained in an “edition of *Leningradensis*” (35).
the version that is contained in the 2007 *New English Translation of the Septuagint*. This translation is of a contemporary critical edition Greek text that is based on the 4th century Egyptian *Codex Alexandrinus*, which is “our best available witness” to the ancient, Greek version of the text of Isaiah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the Latin:</th>
<th>From the Hebrew:</th>
<th>From the Greek:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?</td>
<td><strong>1</strong> Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?</td>
<td><strong>1</strong> Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> And he shall rise up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: there is no form in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him:</td>
<td><strong>2</strong> For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we saw him, and he had no form or beauty.</td>
<td><strong>2</strong> He grew up before him like a child, like a root in a thirsty land; he has no form or glory, and we saw him, and he had no form or beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden and despised, wherupon we esteemed him not.</td>
<td><strong>3</strong> He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.</td>
<td><strong>3</strong> But his form was without honor, failing beyond all men, a man being in calamity and knowing how to bear sickness; because his face is turned away, he was dishonored and not esteemed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Truly he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> This one bears our sins and suffers pain for us, and we accounted him to be in trouble and calamity and ill-treatment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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23 Silva, “Esaias: To the Reader,” *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 823. As Bergsma and Pitre point out in *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*, the Septuagint translation was begun around 250 B.C.. Further, “the majority of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are taken from the Greek Septuagint,” and “our oldest more-or-less complete manuscripts of the entire Bible come from” the 4th century A.D. “and consist of the Septuagint plus the New Testament in Greek” (36).
5 But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray, every one has turned aside into his own way: and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was offered because he himself willed it, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.

8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

9 They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall

5 But he was wounded because of our acts of lawlessness and has been weakened because of our sins; upon him was the discipline of our peace; by his bruise we were healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; a man has strayed in his own way, and the Lord gave him over to our sins.

7 And he, because he has been ill-treated, does not open his mouth; like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before the one shearing it, so he does not open his mouth.

8 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will describe his generation? Because his life is being taken from the earth, he was led to death on account of the acts of lawlessness of my people.

9 And I will give the wicked for his burial and the rich for his death, because he committed no lawlessness, nor was deceit found in his mouth.

10 And the Lord desires to cleanse him from his blow. If you offer for sin, your soul shall see a long-lived offspring. And the Lord wishes to take away
Because his soul has labored, he shall see and be filled: by his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he has delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: and he has borne the sins of many, and has prayed for the transgressors.

Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The above tables show the basic similarities and differences between Aquinas’ Latin version of Isa. 53 and our contemporary translations of Hebrew and Greek versions of that biblical text. A comparison of these three versions shows that a substantial similarity exists between them on two levels. First, in terms of the overall message. Second, in terms of the language that is used to convey that message. All three versions are clearly referring to the same central res, and they do so in their respective ways by using very similar verba. That is, the Latin, Hebrew and Greek versions of Isa. 53 that are represented above can all be accurately rendered into English in very similar, and often even identical, ways. In light of this, the fact that Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53 are dependent upon a Latin version of that text should not cause us to immediately discount his exegesis on the assumption that his texts are substantially different from the Hebrew and Greek texts that scholars often privilege today.

On the other hand, there are some differences between the three versions of Isa. 53 that are worth noting. The Greek version of 53:4 does not indicate that the Servant’s peers
considered him to be struck by God. Whereas the Latin and Hebrew of 53:6 say that God has laid the iniquity of sinners onto the Servant, the Greek version says that God “gave him over to our sins.” Perhaps most significantly, only Aquinas’ Latin version of 53:7 begins with the statement that the Servant “was offered because he himself willed it.” Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek versions have anything remotely similar to this statement in their seventh verses. Similarly, only in the Latin of 53:8 does it say that God is the one who “struck” the Servant, while the Hebrew and Greek merely indicate that the Servant is indeed stricken and killed. Also in 53:8, the Hebrew uses “his future” instead of “his generation.” In 53:10, the Latin and Hebrew state that the Lord “was pleased” and “will[ed]” to strike the Servant, respectively. Conversely, the Greek version instead says that God “desires to cleanse him from his blow.” Finally, unlike the Latin and Hebrew editions, only the Greek edition of 53:11 fails to explicitly indicate that the Servant’s suffering will justify sinners.

Of all these differences, the most significant for our purposes are those that pertain to 53:7-8. Regarding the latter, Aquinas frequently interprets the ‘generation’ of the Servant in a Christological way, and this Christological reading would likely be lost if he had to use the Hebrew version, which employs ‘future’ instead of ‘generation.’ The most significant, unique feature of Aquinas’ Latin text is the opening clause of 53:7. The reason is that, as we will see throughout this dissertation, Aquinas refers to these words (“he was offered because he himself willed it”) more times than he does to any other passages of Isa. 53, with the exception of the latter portion of 53:7 (“he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter”), which he quotes an equal number of times. Further, Aquinas’ numerous references to the opening clause of 53:7 are often employed in the service of significant, systematic explanations regarding the voluntary nature of Christ’s Passion. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to identify why exactly Aquinas’
Latin version of Isa. 53:7 has this clause.\textsuperscript{24} Nor is it my task at the moment to determine whether the inclusion of this clause is justified from a textual criticism standpoint.\textsuperscript{25} My purpose here is simply to point out that Aquinas makes frequent and substantial theological use of a passage from Isa. 53 that is not present in contemporary Hebrew and Greek editions of Isa. 53.

\section*{III. Conclusion}

The goal of this chapter in relation to this dissertation as a whole has been to establish context which will enable the reader to better understand and evaluate Aquinas’ Christological reception of Isa. 53. In this chapter we have examined the basic structure, features and theological meaning of the text of Isa. 53. By becoming aware of the basic form and content of Isa. 53, we are now in a better position to appreciate the particular ways in which Aquinas reads that biblical text. This chapter has also acknowledged the basic, unique features of Aquinas’ specifically Latin version of Isa. 53 in relation to contemporary Hebrew and Greek versions of that same biblical text. This comparative analysis will enable the reader, in ensuing chapters, to recognize and assess those occasions in which Aquinas’ exegesis of Isa. 53 is based on his specific, Latin version of that text. Now that this contextualizing foundation has been laid, in the next chapter the original contribution of this dissertation will begin to unfold.

\textsuperscript{24} This portion of 53:7 is not referred to in the comments of the medieval Glos\textit{s}sa Ordinaria upon Isa. 53, but it is present in Jerome’s Comment\textit{y} on Isaiah. Hence, Aquinas’ possession and use of this version of 53:7 is by no means unique or new for his time. See Jerome, Comment\textit{y} on Isaiah: Including St. Jerome’s Translation of Origen’s Homilies 1-9 On Isaiah, trans. and intro. Thomas P. Scheck (Mahwah, N.J.: The Newman Press, 2015), 668-9 (book 14, no. 23).

Chapter 3: The Cursory Lectures on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations

In the previous two chapters, we have examined the historical, theological, and textual context that is necessary to understand and assess Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53. With that foundational work in place, we can now proceed in this chapter to investigate the number, place and quality of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53. Thus, this chapter marks the beginning of the primary project and original contribution of this dissertation, a contribution that will unfold up through Chapter 8 as well as in a final concluding chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53 in his three earliest biblical commentaries: the commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations, respectively. The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I will place the Commentary on Isaiah (henceforth super Isaiam) in context and describe the distinctive literary style of that commentary. In the second and third sections of this chapter I will examine the references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes throughout the super Isaiam and will provide a detailed explication of his lecture on Isa. 53 itself. Fourth, I will briefly historically situate the commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations and then will examine their few references to Isa. 53. This chapter will then conclude with a synthesis of the various theological, Christological points that Aquinas draws out from the text of Isa. 53 through his commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations.

I. The Date and Nature of Aquinas’ super Isaiam

There has been some debate regarding when and where Thomas Aquinas wrote his super Isaiam. The editors of the Leonine edition of Thomas Aquinas’ works have identified this commentary as his “first theological work,” and they have “put its composition during Thomas’s
first year of teaching in Paris, 1252-53.”¹ Since then, James Weisheipl has suggested that at least a portion of this commentary as we now have it was written before Thomas ever arrived in Paris. He dates this portion to Thomas’s time in Cologne giving cursory lectures on Scripture as a bachelor of the Bible under Albert the Great.² Weisheipl thinks the commentary should be dated as two distinct parts: a detailed lecture on Isa. 1-11 dating to Aquinas’ later years as a master of theology; and a treatment on Isa. 12-66 “in the form and style of a literal gloss with no theological developments or discussion.”³ The commentary on these latter chapters would thus seem to be from Aquinas’ time in Cologne. Jean-Pierre Torrell follows Weisheipl in dating the super Isaiam to Aquinas’ teaching years in Cologne. Unlike Weisheipl, though, he dates the entirety of the commentary to this period.⁴ More recently, Adriano Oliva has argued that this commentary was in fact written shortly after Aquinas’ return to Paris in 1251-1252.⁵

Regardless of whether the super Isaiam was written in Cologne or Paris, most now agree that it was one of Aquinas’ early works and that it was delivered as a cursory lecture on Scripture. This means, as Joseph Wawrykow explains, that the treatment of Isa. 53 that Aquinas provides here will “typically ‘run over’ quickly the biblical text, noting its principles of organization and pausing only to gloss obscure or especially significant terms.”⁶ For, “the goal of the bachelor is not to plumb to its full extent the riches of the biblical text, or to relate a given

³ Ibid., 369-70.
⁴ Jean-Pierre Torrell, Saint Thomas Aquinas: Volume 1, 27-28. See also the summary of Torrell’s position provided on page 337 by Giles Emery in his “Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas.”

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Further, Torrell explains, in light of the portion of the manuscript of the *super Isaiam* that survives in Aquinas’ own handwriting, we can make some inferences regarding the manner of its composition:

The [lecture] notes for the *super Isaiam* were set down on parchment, day after day, by the young bachelor. He did this with an eye to the lectures that he had to give in a few hours. They bear all the marks of hasty work. This should explain, at least in part, the roughness of style, which seems to increase after the first few chapters. If he had a little time to prepare the first lectures, he had soon used up his prepared texts and was obliged to speak from later texts that were not completely written out.8

Thus, in light of the manner and the purpose for which Aquinas composed his lectures on Isaiah, we need to approach his treatment of the Suffering Servant text in Isa. 53, as well as other references to that text throughout the commentary, with modest expectations regarding their exegetical and theological depth. We will nonetheless find, as Torrell states, that Aquinas’ “exposition of Isaiah, even if it sometimes leaves us a little hungry for more, possesses great riches on certain points.”9 Aquinas’ cursory commentary on Isaiah provides us with both a valuable historical look into the young friar’s understanding of the text of Isa. 53 and a theologically significant exposition of the saving love of Christ enacted on the cross.

**II. Citations of Isaiah 53 throughout the *super Isaiam***

In addition to his lecture on Isa. 53 itself, in the *super Isaiam* Aquinas also makes 5 theologically significant references to the text of Isa. 53 in his lectures on Isa. 1-52.10 The 1st of

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7 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 27.
10 There is a sixth reference in his lecture on Isa. 50, in no. 909, but it is too brief to be considered in depth. Here, Aquinas states that Isa. 50-52 are about impediments to union with God, and then he makes a partial reference to Isa.
these references occurs in his analysis of Jerome’s preface to Isaiah. Jerome claimed that Isaiah was an “evangelist” who “describes all the mysteries of Christ and the Church” with clarity, as if he were talking about events that had already occurred.11 Building on this remark, Aquinas identifies the Passion of Christ as one among the many Christian “mysteries” that Isaiah will prophesy about in an “open and explicit manner.”12 He then demonstrates this by quoting Isa. 53:7: “he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer.”13 Hence, right at the outset of the super Isaiam, Aquinas identifies Isa. 53 as an explicit prophecy of Christ’s Passion. Christ himself is the immediate res to which the verba of Isa. 53 refer, and they do so plainly, without employing figures or symbols.

Aquinas’ 2nd citation of Isa. 53 comes in his treatment of Isa. 8:1-3. Here the text speaks of a son whom Isaiah will have, and Aquinas observes that there are some exegetes in his day who think the child that is being spoken of is Christ. These exegetes claim that the name that is given to the child (“Take away the spoils [spolia] with speed”) is a “circumlocution” for the name of Christ.14 They argue this on the basis of Isa. 53:12, which states that God will do the following for the Suffering Servant: “therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils [spolia] of the strong.”15 That is, both Isa. 8 and Isa. 53 speak of the Christ as one who will take ‘spoils’ [spolia] from his enemies. While Aquinas is hesitant to embrace this Christological interpretation of the identity of the child spoken of in Isa. 8, he nevertheless

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11 Thomas Aquinas, “Preface of St. Jerome,” in Literal Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah. All future references to Aquinas’ Literal Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah will be referred to as Super Isaiam and will feature the paragraph number of the text being cited. All citations and paragraph numbers are from the 1974 Latin Leonine edition and the English translation by Louis St. Hilaire as published by the Aquinas Institute and available at https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Isaiah.C53.v53.12. I occasionally make slight modifications to Hilaire’s translation; I will make a note when any such modifications depart in essence from Hilaire’s reading.


13 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.

14 super Isaiam, 269, quoting Isa. 8:1.

15 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
explains the Christological meaning of the line from Isa. 53.\textsuperscript{16} “Jesus is savior,” he says, “in that he took away spoils [\textit{spoilia}], that is, sinners, from the power of the devil, and plundered hell.”\textsuperscript{17} As a result of his Passion, Christ the savior rescued sinners from the reign of the evil one; he entered the strong man’s house and plundered his goods.\textsuperscript{18} Aquinas will return to this theme in his lecture on chapter 53.

Aquinas’ 3rd use of Isa. 53 is found in his second lecture on Isa. 9. Here, he makes a “note” [\textit{item notandum}] about the meaning of the phrase “‘upon his shoulder [\textit{super humerum ejus}]’” that is written in Isa. 9:6 concerning the child who is to be a “Prince of Peace.”\textsuperscript{19} Aquinas says that these words are about that which “God laid ‘upon the shoulder’ of Christ.”\textsuperscript{20} The first thing that God places upon Christ’s shoulder are “sins, as upon one who makes satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{21} Aquinas immediately follows this statement with a quotation from Isa. 53:6: “‘the Lord has laid upon him [\textit{posuit super eum}] the iniquity of us all.’”\textsuperscript{22} Both Isa. 9:6 and Isa. 53:6 speak of that which is ‘laid upon’ the Christ, and Isa. 53 specifies that at least one aspect of the weight that is laid upon Christ and which he must carry is the responsibility to make satisfaction for the sins of humanity. At this point, Aquinas offers no further explanation of what exactly ‘satisfaction’ is or how Christ’s Passion enacts such satisfaction. In fact, even in his lecture on Isa. 53 Aquinas does not use the term ‘satisfaction’ in reference to Christ’s Passion,

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 270. 
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 269. 
\textsuperscript{18} Mtt. 12:29; cf. Mk. 3:27 and Lk.11:21-22. 
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Super Isaiam}, 310, quoting Isa. 9:6. Such “notes” appear throughout the \textit{super Isaiam} as we have it today. They were originally written by Aquinas in the margins of his written lectures on Isaiah. In the thirteenth century Jacobino d’Asti produced a copy of Aquinas’ lectures and moved these marginal notes (which he called “\textit{collationes}”) into the main body of the text. See Joseph Wawrykow, “Aquinas on Isaiah,” in \textit{Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries}, 50; cf. M.D. Chenu, \textit{Toward Understanding Saint Thomas}, trans. A.M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), who claims that the \textit{collationes} are probably the original work of Jacobinus, not Aquinas (245). 
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{super Isaiam}, 310. 
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
though he will refer to Christ’s suffering as a ‘penance’ for sins. At the very least, we can see that here Aquinas interprets Isa. 53:6’s remarks about God ‘laying the iniquity of all’ upon the Suffering Servant merely as a reference to Christ’s task of offering salvific satisfaction for sins, and nothing more.

The 4th instance in which Aquinas refers to the text of Isa. 53 is found in his lecture on Isa. 16. This chapter of Isaiah begins with the words “Send forth, O Lord, the lamb, the ruler of the earth, from the rock of the desert, to the mount of the daughter of Zion” (Is. 16:1). In a “note” on the phrase “send forth the lamb” [Emitte agnum], Aquinas identifies this lamb as Christ and connects Isa. 16:1 to three other scriptural texts that speak of Christ as a ‘lamb.’

23 Christ is a lamb on account of his “purity of life” (Ex. 12:5) and the fact that his death was an “expiation of sin” (Jn. 1:29). Further, Aquinas says Christ can be compared to a lamb “because of the meekness of his death,” and he then quotes Isa. 53:7 in order to illustrate this point: “‘as a lamb before his shearer, he shall open not his mouth.”

25 Here Aquinas employs Isa. 53 simply in order to highlight the passivity of Christ in response to the attacks of his enemies, as well as to link Isa. 53’s description of Christ as a ‘lamb’ with the lamb terminology used in Isa. 16:1, Ex. 12:5, and Jn. 1:29. In his lecture on Isa. 53 Aquinas will delve deeper into the notion of Christ’s ‘meekness’ amidst his Passion.

Aquinas’ 5th and final significant reference to the text of Isa. 53 in the lectures on Isa. 1-52 occurs in his treatment of Isa. 49. He interprets Isa. 49:7-8 as a prophecy of the exaltation of a king who will liberate the people of Israel from oppression. After saying that this prophecy could be referring to king Cyrus, he goes on to state that it could be interpreted as a reference to

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23 super Isaïam, 450.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Christ. For Christ “was despised [contemptus] in his passion and was judged like a servant: ‘we have seen him despised’ [despectum] (Is. 53:2-3), but afterwards he was literally adored by kings: ‘all kings of the earth shall adore him’ (Ps. 72:11).” Aquinas has linked Isa. 49:7’s description of the exiled people as “despised” [contemptibilem] with Isa. 53’s portrait of Christ as the one who is “despised” [despectum]. Both were initially despised by their peers prior to being exalted by God. Christ was despised in his Passion, and yet was exalted in his resurrection. In his lecture on Isa. 53 Aquinas identifies the exaltation of Christ as one of the chapters’ primary themes. It is to that lecture that we can now turn.

III. The Lecture on Isaiah Chapter 53 in the super Isaiam

A. Aquinas’ Exegesis of Isa. 52:13-15

In order to better contextualize our examination of Aquinas’ lecture on Isa. 53, it will be helpful to begin this section with a brief analysis of Aquinas’ comments upon Isa. 52:13-15. This portion of Isaiah is the beginning of what contemporary exegetes identify as the ‘Fourth Servant Song’ (Isa. 52:13-53:12). Further, since Isa. 52 concludes with v. 13-15, this passage constitutes the transition from Isa. 52 to Isa. 53.

Aquinas’ treatment of Isa. 52:13-15 is brief but noteworthy. He says that beginning with v. 13 Isaiah “foretells the liberation of the gentiles from slavery to sin,” and this liberation is “carried out by the Son of God.” V. 13 is about the “eminence of grace” that Christ the “liberator” possesses. This verse identifies four aspects of the eminence of Christ: first, his wisdom; second, the human nature that he assumed and in which he served; third, his power; and

26 super Isaiam, 901.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 953.
29 Ibid.
fourth, his ascension into heaven and enthronement at the right hand of the Father.\textsuperscript{30} Aquinas then proceeds to v. 14, which is about “the ignominy of his [Christ’s] Passion.”\textsuperscript{31} Christ’s appearance will be rendered “‘inglorious’” by the suffering that he undergoes.\textsuperscript{32} Finally, v. 15 is specifically about the “liberation” of the Gentiles that Christ brings about through “the remission of sins.”\textsuperscript{33} Commenting upon v. 15’s statement that the Servant “\textit{shall sprinkle many nations},” Aquinas remarks: “‘\textit{he shall sprinkle,}’ with the sprinkling of his blood, per 1 Pet. 1:2, and the water of baptism, per Heb. 10:22: ‘having our hearts sprinkled,’ etc.”\textsuperscript{34} Since Aquinas interprets Isa. 52:15 in light of 1 Pet. 1:2 and Heb. 10:22, it will be helpful for us to take a closer look at these texts.

1 Pet 1:2 states that Christians have been chosen “by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood.”\textsuperscript{35} By quoting this text in connection with Isa. 52:15, Aquinas’ point is that the sprinkling of the Servant’s blood upon believers results in their sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Further, this language of sprinkling blood appears to be reminiscent of sacrificial practice. This cultic interpretation is confirmed by Aquinas’ reference to Heb. 10:22, which in its broader context states:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{19} Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, \textbf{20} by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), \textbf{21} and since we have a great priest over the house of God, \textbf{22} let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. Interestingly, Aquinas interprets the people’s “‘\textit{astonishment}’” (Isa. 52:14) towards the Servant as a reference to the astonishment that people will experience in reaction to Christ’s “example, miracles, and teachings,” and he references Mt. 12:23 to justify this.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., quoting Isa. 52:14.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 954.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., quoting Isa. 52:15 and Heb. 10:22, respectively.
\textsuperscript{35} 1 Pet. 1:2 (NRSV-CE)
\textsuperscript{36} Heb. 10:19-22 (NRSV-CE). Bold added for verse numbers.
Heb. 10:19-22 clearly depicts Christ as a priest and sacrificial victim whose blood enables sinners to confidently enter into the sacred presence of God. Further, v. 22 connects the interiorly purifying and sanctifying power of Christ’s blood with the external purification that is brought about by water. For our purposes, the point is this: by interpreting Isa. 52:15 in light of 1 Pet. 1:2 and Heb. 10:22, Aquinas reads Isa. 52:15 as a prophecy of Christ’s priestly, sacrificial, purifying and sanctifying action on our behalf.

We can now conclude our analysis of Aquinas’ treatment of Isa. 52:13-15 and explain how this sets the stage for his engagement with Isa. 53. For Aquinas, Isa. 52:13 is about Christ, God incarnate, who is coming to liberate the Gentiles. Isa. 52:14 indicates that, despite his unmatched eminence in grace, Christ will undergo horrible suffering as a human being. Then, Isa. 52:15 shows that this suffering will be a sacrifice that Christ himself, as a priest, offers for the sake of humanity’s liberation from sin and entrance into the presence of God. With this context in place, we can now turn explicitly to Aquinas’ lecture upon Isa. 53.

B. Aquinas’ divisio textus of Isa. 53:1-12 and his Interpretation of v. 1

Aquinas begins his lecture on Isa. 53 with a detailed division of the text. I have outlined this division in the chart below:

| Aquinas’ divisio textus of Isa. 53:1-12 |
1) Major Elements and Divisions:

1. Primary Theme: The Passion of Christ as the remedy for sin.

2. Two Major Components of the Primary theme:
   ○ v. 1: “the height of the mystery, for the report [about Christ’s Passion] is not easily believed.”
   ○ v. 2-12: “The order of the deed” (v. 2-12), i.e. a description of Christ’s Passion.
     ■ v. 2: “A similitude as to his exaltation”
     ■ v. 2-12: “Explanation of the similitude”
       ● v. 2-7: Christ’s humiliation
       ● v. 8-12: Christ’s exaltation

2) Further Subdivisions Within the Two Major Components:

1. Christ’s humiliation (v.2-7):
   a. Christ’s “humility” (v. 2-6):
      i. “the office of his humility” (v. 2)
         1. humility in “the hiding of his majesty” (v. 2: “there is no form in him, nor comeliness”)
         2. Humility in “the exposing of his infirmity” (v. 2: “that we should be desirous of him . . .[v.3] acquainted with infirmity”).
            a. “A sign of his infirmity” (v. 4: “truly . .”)
      ii. “the contempt of him in humiliation” (v. 3),
         1. “Majesty hidden in the removal of honor” (latter half of v. 3: “as it were hidden”)
      iii. “the fruit of his humiliation” (v. 5).
        1. “The moving reason” (v. 5: “but he was wounded”)
        2. “The consequent usefulness in the reconciliation of peace” (v. 5: “the chastisement of our peace”)
        3. “The imminent necessity on our part, for all are sick” (v. 6: “all we like sheep”)
   b. Christ’s “meekness in humiliation” (v.7).
      i. “He sets out the meekness itself” (v.7)
         1. “As to his voluntary offering of himself” (v. 7: “he was offered”)
         2. “As to his patient suffering” (v. 7: “and he opened not his mouth”)
      ii. “He sets out a similitude” (v. 7: “as a sheep to the slaughter”)

2. Christ’s exaltation (v. 8-12)
   a. “His escape from dangers” (v.8)
      i. “The reward” (v. 8: “he was taken away”)
      ii. “His merit,” “the worthiness of the sufferer” (v. 8: “his generation”)
   b. “Vengeance [“vindication”] against his enemies” (v. 9)
      i. His enemies’ “reward” (v.9: “and he shall give the ungodly”)

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ii. “His merit as to the innocence of his life” (v. 9: “because he has done no iniquity”) and “as to the obedience of his death” (v. 10: “and the Lord was pleased to bruise him”)

c. “The justification of men” (v. 10)
   i. “The reward for the sorrow of his death” (v. 10: “if he shall lay down his life”) and “the reward for the labor of his teaching” (v. 11: “because his soul has labored”)
   ii. “His merit as to the exercise of his preaching” (v. 11: “by his knowledge”) and “as to the torment of his death” (v. 11: “he shall bear their iniquities”), that is, “the punishments for their iniquities.”

d. “His victory over the rebellious” (v. 12)
   i. “The subjection of the enemies” (v. 12: “therefore will I distribute to him”)
   ii. “The reason for their subjection,” namely, “his death” (v. 12: “because he has delivered his soul unto death”)
   iii. “The salvation of those made subject to him” (v. 12: “and he has borne”)

As this chart indicates, Aquinas claims that the primary purpose of Isa. 53 is to describe the Passion of Christ as a remedy against the sins of humanity. Consequently, Isa. 53 builds off of the closing verses of Isa. 52. Isa. 52:13-15 describe the personal glory of Christ, his suffering as a man, and the saving fruits of that suffering, respectively. For Aquinas, Isa. 53 presupposes and expands upon each of these themes, for Isa. 53 describes how [1] the God-man Christ [2] will undergo suffering [3] in order to save humanity from sin. Isa. 53 begins in v. 1 by establishing that the ensuing report about the Suffering Servant is a great “mystery” which “is not easily believed” and “nor is it easily seen.”

This mystery regards the “‘arm of the Lord,’” namely, Christ, “the Son of God [and] the power of God.” The remainder of Isa. 53, namely, v. 2-12, consists of a description of “the order of the deed,” that is, of the actual salvific work of the

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37 super Isaiam, 955.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:1. Aquinas interprets Isaiah’s reference to the “arm” [brachium] of the Lord with the help of a quotation from Job 40:4 (“and have you an arm like God?”).
Servant of the Lord. This description of the “order of the deed” begins in the first part of v. 2 with a “similitude” of the Servant’s activity, and it proceeds in the latter portion of v. 2 through to v. 12 with a detailed exposition of the meaning of that similitude. The detailed exposition of v. 2-12 focuses upon two central themes, namely, Christ’s humiliation (v. 2-7) and his exaltation (v. 8-12). Within these two themes there are further, diverse subpoints.

C. Aquinas’ Exegesis of Isa. 53:2-12

Having established that Isa. 53:1 identifies Christ as the “arm of the Lord” whose suffering will be described in v. 2-12, Aquinas turns his attention to the latter verses and begins his exegesis with an analysis of the “similitude” provided in the first portion of v. 2. This similitude (“And he shall rise up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground”) is a symbol of Christ’s “exaltation.” Christ, Aquinas says, “Shall rise up,’ in being born from the womb of his mother, in rising from the dead, in ascending from the earth into heaven, and into the faith of the gentiles.” Further, that Christ rises “as a root out of a thirsty ground” (53:2) points to the fact of his miraculous conception in the virginal womb of Mary. For Christ “arose from his mother without the moisture of man,” just as a root “out of ground without moisture” rises up. Aquinas thus reads the first part of Isa. 53:2 as a

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40 Ibid., 956.
41 Ibid., 956-7. The “similitude” is “and he shall rise up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground” (Isa. 53:2) and the exposition of the meaning of that similitude begins with “there is no form in him, nor comeliness . . .” (Isa. 53:2).
42 super Isaiaim, 956-7. See the chart above.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 956.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
figurative prophecy of the conception, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as well as the rising up of the gentile nations through their embrace of faith in Christ. The ‘rising up’ of Christ indicated in this verse further specifies the prophecy given earlier in Isa. 11:1: “and there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up [ascendet] out of his root.”

Aquinas views the remainder of Isa. 53’s description of the activity of the Suffering Servant as an “explanation of the similitude” detailed above. This explanation begins with a treatment of the “humiliation” that Christ endured in his Passion (Isa. 53:2-7). This treatment first draws attention to the humility of Christ, which is discussed in the latter part of 53:2 and extends into v. 3. The first way in which Christ’s “humility is shown” is in “the hiding of his majesty,” a hiding of which Isaiah speaks when he says that “there is no form . . . nor comeliness” in Christ. Aquinas explains that in fact Christ does have form (an “abundance of interior goods”) and comeliness (an “abundance of exterior goods”), but that they were “hidden” from the understanding of unbelievers who saw Christ due to “the infirmity he assumed” and “the poverty he observed.” Aquinas thus reads Isaiah as saying that Christ’s humility consisted in his willingness to endure the ignorance of his neighbors in regards to the riches of his majesty. He is willing to endure the pain that results from being misunderstood.

The second way in which Isa. 53:2-3 speaks of Christ’s humility being shown is in “the exposing of his infirmity.” Aquinas cites Hag. 2:8 to indicate that the chosen people were “expecting with desire that he [the Christ] should come as a great redeemer” who would be great

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 957.
50 Ibid.
51 super Isaiam, 958.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 959.
“in dignity” [dignitate], “in prosperity” [prospereitate], and “in power” [potestate]. But, contrary to their expectations, Isaiah shows how the Christ would not come in dignity, prosperity, or power. Isaiah foretells how Christ, rather than being seen as having great dignity, will be viewed as “‘despised,’ inglorious, ‘and the most abject of men,’ because he suffered the most shameful kind of death.” Neither does the Christ come in prosperity, but rather when he comes he is seen as “‘a man of pain,’ as though poor and full of pain.” Aquinas emphasizes the great pain [dolor] with which Christ suffered when he came by citing Lam. 1:12: “‘O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any pain [dolor] like to my pain.’” Both Isa. 53:3 and Lam. 1:12 speak of the great pain [dolor] of the suffering Christ. Finally, Christ comes not in power, but rather as someone who is “‘acquainted with infirmity,’ through experience.” That is, the weakness and infirmity of Christ rendered it such that he could be crucified by his enemies. In sum, Christ shows his humility through the manifestation of his infirmity. His infirmity consisted in the fact that he was weak enough to be put to death in a shameful way, he was despised by his enemies as if he were a criminal, and he endured numerous and taxing pains.

Beginning with the latter half of Isa. 53:3 (“‘And his look was at it were hidden’”), Aquinas sees Isaiah as moving to an exposition of the “contempt” that Christ endured “in his humiliation.” Two points are made here. First, the divine majesty of Christ is “hidden” (“‘as it were hidden [absconditus]’”) in his humiliation, causing those who view him in this state to withhold from him the “honor that was due him” as God (“‘whereupon we esteemed him

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54 super Isaiam, 959. Aquinas’ version of Haggai 2:8 reads: “Ecce veniet desideratus cunctis gentibus” (“Behold, the desired of all nations shall come”).
55 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:3.
56 Ibid. Throughout this paragraph I translate dolor as “pain,” whereas St. Hilaire prefers “sorrow.”
57 Ibid., 959, quoting Lam. 1:12.
58 Ibid., 959, quoting Isa. 53:3.
59 To illustrate this point Aquinas quotes 2 Cor. 15:4, which says that Christ was “crucified through infirmity” [“nam si crucifixus est ex infirmitate”].
60 super Isaiam, 960.
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Here Aquinas sees a connection to Isa. 45:15, which states that “‘truly you are a hidden [absconditus] God.”

By seeing the linguistic connection between the Latin texts of Isa. 45:15 and 53:3, Aquinas can interpret the latter as speaking of the hiding [absconditus] of Christ’s divinity in the humiliation of his Passion. The suffering of Christ hides his Godhead from the view of some.

The second aspect of the contempt that Christ endures in his humiliation is indicated in 53:4. Here, Aquinas discusses “the sign of his infirmity,” that is, the nature of Christ’s suffering and the visible manifestations of that suffering.

Interspersing citations from Isa. 53:4 with his own commentary, Aquinas explains,

Truly, as true man, he has borne, suffered, our infirmities, infirmities, such as hunger and thirst, and carried our pains [dolores] in the sensible passions and in sadness [tristitiam]; or, our infirmities, our sins, he has taken from us; or in our place, he has suffered punishments: he bore our sins in his body upon the tree (1 Pet 2:24). And he sets out the contempt: and we have thought him as it were a leper, unclean and a sinner, and therefore, struck by God, for his sins, as to the punishments he suffered, and afflicted, as to the ignominies he endured: for your manifold wickedness and your infinite iniquities (Job 22:5); they abhor me (Job 30:10).

As a true man, Christ has experienced the pain of hunger and thirst, the pain of yearning for sensible goods, and the pain of sadness in the face of evil and privation. Most intriguing here is Aquinas’ statement that Christ has experienced the “punishments” [poenas] that are due to

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61 Ibid., 960, quoting Isa. 53:3.
62 Ibid., 960, quoting Isa. 45:15.
63 Isa. 53:4 states: “Truly he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.”
64 super Isaiam, 960.
65 super Isaiam, 960. In this passage I have made slight modifications to the English translation by St. Hilaire. The Latin text is as follows, with Scripture citations in italics and within the quotation marks: “Secundo quantum ad infirmitatem ostensam, ponens infirmitatis signum: ‘Vere,’ sicut verus homo, ‘languores,’ infirmitates sicut famem, sitim, ‘tulit,’ sustinuit, ‘dolores’ sensibiles in passione et tristitiam; vel ‘languores,’ peccata abstulit a nobis; vel loco nostri poenas sustinuit, I Petri II 24 Peccata nostra pertulit super lignum. Ponens etiam contemptum: ‘et nos reputavimus quasi leprosum,’ immundum et peccatores, et ideo ‘percussum a Deo’ pro peccatis suis, quantum ad poenas, ‘et humiliatum,’ quantum ad ignominias, Job XXII 5 Propter malitiam tuam plurimam, et infinitas iniquitates suas, et XXXIX Abominantur etc.
sinners. Since this is a cursory lecture on Scripture, he does not provide us with a thorough explanation of the precise meaning of these poenas. But, the context and the citation from 1 Pet. indicates that the poenas that Christ experienced “in our place” [vel loco nostri] are simply his various forms of suffering and ultimately his death by crucifixion. Aquinas does not specify here whether or not and to what degree God wills or is the cause of these ‘punishments.’ Instead, he merely states the material nature of these poenas. What Aquinas does make clear here is that Christ endured his suffering in order to take away our sins. Yet, ironically and tragically, those who see him in his infirmity view him as a sinner whose poenas are inflicted upon him by God as a consequence for his own sins. Hence, despite his great humility and love for sinners, Christ is misunderstood and taken to be a sinner who is suffering on account of the evil he has done.

At this point in his cursory reading of Isa. 53, Aquinas briefly steps aside from his chronological exegesis in order to offer a Christological “note” [nota] on 53:1-2. Regarding the reference in 53:1 to the “arm [brachium] of the Lord,” Aquinas identifies three scriptural texts that describe three different ways in which Christ can be understood to be this ‘arm.’ First, per Ps. 89:10, Christ is an arm [“brachio”] “for scourging demons.” Second, Isa. 40:11 speaks of Christ the arm [“brachio”] as “supporting the weak.” Third, Wis. 5:17 describes

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66 Ibid., 960.
68 super Isaiam, 960.
69 super Isaiam, 961.
70 Ibid., quoting Psalm 89:10, which states “With the arm of your strength you have scattered your enemies.”
71 Ibid., 961, quoting Isa. 40:11, which states “he shall take up the lambs with his arm.”
Christ as the arm ["‘dextera’"] by which the Lord defends the faithful.\textsuperscript{72} Moving on to Isa. 53:2, Aquinas views the identification of the Servant as a “‘tender sapling’ [virgultum]” as signifying that “Christ is a rod” [virga].\textsuperscript{73} Once more, he employs three scriptural citations which possess the word ‘rod’ [virga] in order to expound three meanings of Christ as a virga. Christ is a rod “for striking” (Num. 24:17), “for supporting” (Ps. 23:4), and for “setting right” (Ps. 45:6).\textsuperscript{74} Aquinas then turns to the second clause in Isa. 53:2 (“as a root out of a thirsty ground”) to discuss what it means to say that “Christ is a root [radix].”\textsuperscript{75} Again, the meanings of radix are discerned with the help of other scriptural texts that employ that term: Christ is a root “because he is hidden” (Sir. 1:6), “because he supplies nourishment” (Jer. 17:8), and “because he supports the entire tree” (Rom. 11:18).\textsuperscript{76}

Aquinas does not explicitly link these functions of Christ as the ‘arm of the Lord’ [brachium], a ‘rod’ [virga] and a ‘root’ [radix] to his suffering and death. But, a link is more than suggested by the context: as we have seen, Isa. 53:1-2 (1) states what the remainder of the chapter is about (the revelation of the arm of the Lord), (2) gives a similitude of that content (“he shall rise up as a tender sapling [rod], and as a root out of thirsty ground”), (3) and finally proceeds to actually describe how that revelation and rising up will unfold, namely, through the humiliation and exaltation of the Servant. So, precisely by his humiliation and exaltation, Christ the brachium will scourge demons, support the weak, and defend the faithful. As virga, he will strike our enemies, support his sheep, and set right those who have gone astray. As radix, his divine majesty is hidden from view, yet he nevertheless supplies nourishment and support to the

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 961, quoting Wis. 5:17, which states “with his holy arm he will defend them.”
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 962. My translation, from “Ite super illo ‘virgultum,’ quod Christus est virga.”
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 963.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
tree that grows up above him. It is thus not difficult to see how Aquinas’ notes on these figures of Christ as *brachium*, *virga* and *radix* point to the salvific functions that he carries out precisely in his humiliation and exaltation.

Having completed his notes on Isa. 53:1-2, Aquinas now returns to where he left off and takes up an examination of Isa. 53:5-6. These verses contain three points concerning “the fruit” of Christ’s humiliation and Passion. First, the “reason” [*rationem moventem*] or cause of Christ’s suffering is identified as our sinfulness. Whereas 53:4 indicates a mistaken perception of the cause of the Servant’s suffering (“we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted”), 53:5 clarifies the true nature of that cause: Christ was “‘wounded’ by thorns, nails, and lance ‘for our iniquities [*propter iniquitates nostras*],’” so as to take them away [“*tollendas*”]. This means that Christ’s suffering is not a consequence for his own sins, of which there are none. Rather, his suffering is the consequence of our sins. Second, the useful effect or fruit of Christ’s suffering is identified as “the reconciliation of peace” between God and sinners. By the “‘chastisement’” [*disciplina*] that he endured in the Passion Christ brings peace and “access to God.” Further, the “‘bruises [livore]’” that Christ receives in his scourging bring about “the restoration of [our] broken health.” Aquinas here quotes 1 Pet. 2:24, which has a clear reference to Isa. 53:5: “‘by his bruises [livore] we are healed.’” In a very basic sense, then, Aquinas identifies an element of exchange in Christ’s saving work: his wounds bring

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77 Isa. 53:5-6 states: “But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed (5). All we like sheep have gone astray, every one has turned aside into his own way: and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (6).”

78 *super Isaiam*, 964.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 *super Isaiam*, 965.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., quoting 1 Pet. 2:24.
about our healing, and his suffering causes our peace. At this point, though, Aquinas does not explain how this salvific exchange works. He does not indicate how the wounds and suffering of Christ bring about healing and peace for sinners.

The third point about the fruit of Christ’s suffering is grounded in Isa. 53:6, which for Aquinas points to the “imminent necessity” of Christ’s Passion “on our part.” That is, “all are sick, and thus all need a physician, and no one else can offer a sufficient remedy.” Here Aquinas sees a connection between “‘all we like sheep [oves] have gone astray’” (Isa. 53:6) and 1 Pet. 2:25, which states “‘for you were as sheep [oves] without a shepherd.’” The universal infection of humanity with sin renders it such that all people are in need of “penance” [paenitentia]. So, the necessity of Christ’s Passion is grounded in the fact that sinners need a penance that will take away their sins. Here, Aquinas does not explain what exactly a penance is, nor does he describe how Christ’s Passion functions as a penance for sins. He does not even comment on the latter half of Isa. 53:6, which states that as a result of our sinfulness “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Though, as we have seen, earlier in his second lecture on Isa. 9 Aquinas cites this latter half of Isa. 53:6 and says that it refers to God laying upon Christ the task of offering satisfaction for human sins. So, for Aquinas, Isa. 53:6 speaks of the need of sinners for penance and the fact that Christ provided the penance that they need through his work of satisfaction. Christ’s Passion was a penance/satisfaction that he undertook in order to heal humanity from sin and restore it to peaceful communion with God.

85 Ibid., 966.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:6 and 1 Pet. 2:25, respectively.
88 Ibid., 966. Aquinas appeals to Rom. 3:22-3 to support his point here.
89 See page 4, above.
Aquinas views Isa. 53:7 as the final verse in the chapter that pertains to Christ’s humiliation.\textsuperscript{90} Specifically, he reads this verse as speaking of various aspects of Christ’s “meekness [\textit{mansuetudinem}] in suffering.”\textsuperscript{91} The nature of Christ’s meekness consists in the fact that he made a “voluntary offering of himself . . . to God the Father as a victim for us.”\textsuperscript{92} Here, Aquinas cites Ps. 54:6 to emphasize that the root cause of Christ’s suffering was not a violent external force working against him. Rather, Christ freely made of himself a sacrificial offering: “‘I will freely sacrifice to you.’”\textsuperscript{93} Another aspect of Christ’s meekness is displayed by the fact of “his patient suffering,” for “‘he opened not his mouth.’”\textsuperscript{94} Aquinas views this passage as being fulfilled in the fact that Christ did not “contradict and contend” with the enemies who assaulted him, and he gave no reply during his trial with Herod.\textsuperscript{95} This meekness of the Christ who refused to offer “resistance” to those who killed him is expressed in the “similitude” that speaks of the Servant being led “‘as a sheep to the slaughter.’”\textsuperscript{96} So too, the meek suffering of Christ was spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah, whom Aquinas here cites: “‘I was as a lamb, that is carried to be a victim’” (Jer. 11:19).\textsuperscript{97} In sum, the meek love of Christ for sinners is manifested both in the free handing over of himself to the Passion as well as in the innocence with which he endured that Passion.

Before proceeding to the verses which pertain to the exaltation of the Suffering Servant, Aquinas first pauses to offer two further notes on Isa. 53:3. This verse speaks of the Servant as

\begin{itemize}
\item Isa. 53:7 states: “\textit{He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.}”
\item super \textit{Isaiam}, 967.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., quoting Ps. 54:6.
\item Ibid., 967 quoting Isa. 53:7.
\item Ibid., 967.
\item Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
\item super \textit{Isaiam}, 967, quoting Jer. 11:19. Translation my own, from “\textit{Jer. XII ‘Ego quasi agnus qui portatur ad victimam.’}”
\end{itemize}
“‘the most abject of men’” and “‘a man of pain [dolorum].’”⁹⁸ Aquinas identifies three scriptural texts for each of these phrases from Isaiah in order to draw out their Christological meanings. He says that Christ was “the most abject” of all men first due to “the bitterness of his pain” that he endured.⁹⁹ In order to emphasize the extent of this pain, Aquinas once again cites Lam. 1:12.¹⁰⁰ Christ’s extreme abjection also consists in the “shamefulness of his death” by public crucifixion (Wis 2:20) and in “the greatness of the charge imposed upon him” (Prov 30:2).¹⁰¹ In addition to his extreme abjection, Christ “was full of pain [plenus doloribus].”¹⁰² There were three reasons for his pain, the first of which is the “disease” [morbi] that covered his body “‘from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head.’”¹⁰³ The second reason is for the sake of the “effusion of grace” that proceeds from Christ,¹⁰⁴ and the third is “because of our obligation.”¹⁰⁵ Aquinas does not flesh out the second and third reasons, and so their meaning remains vague. But his fundamental point is clear: in the experience of his Passion, Christ suffered the most extreme abjection and pain that a person could suffer.

Having completed his notes on Isa. 53:3 and his exposition of the humiliation that Christ endured in the Passion, Aquinas turns to Isa. 53:8. Here, the prophet “begins to set out the glory of his [Christ’s] exaltation, which is the reward of his passion, as it says in Phil. 2:9: ‘for which cause, God also has exalted him.”¹⁰⁶ Aquinas thus links Isa. 53:8-12 with the Christological hymn in Philippians 2. Both speak of the vindication and exaltation of Christ by God as a result

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⁹⁸ Ibid., 968 and 969, respectively, quoting Isa. 53:3. Here I consistently translate Aquinas’ references to dolor as “pain,” whereas St. Hilaire prefers “sorrow.”
⁹⁹ Ibid., 968.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., quoting Lam. 1:12: “O all you that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow [dolor] like to my sorrow [dolor].”
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 968.
¹⁰² Ibid., 969.
¹⁰³ Ibid., quoting Isa. 9:6.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 969. My translation, from “propter gratiarum effusionem.”
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
¹⁰⁶ super Isaiam, 970, quoting Phil. 2:9.
of his suffering and death.\textsuperscript{107} Put simply, Christ is exalted following his Passion because of his very endurance of that Passion.

Aquinas draws out four principal points from Isa. 53:8.\textsuperscript{108} First, this verse speaks of the “reward” \textit{[praemium]} that the exalted Christ receives from God.\textsuperscript{109} This reward is Christ’s own resurrection from the dead, and by this resurrection Christ escapes “\textit{from}’ the ‘distress’ of his Passion, ‘\textit{and from}’ the unjust ‘judgment’ by which he was judged by others.”\textsuperscript{110} Second, 53:8 signifies the source of the merit by which Christ merited his resurrection. This merit lies in the “dignity of the sufferer” \textit{[patientis dignitatem]} and the “condition of the person” \textit{[conditio personae]} who suffered.\textsuperscript{111} The divine dignity of Christ is indicated by Isaiah’s words “\textit{who shall declare his generation?}”\textsuperscript{112} These words point to the mystery of Christ’s eternal, consubstantial generation from the Father. These same words can also point to Christ’s mysterious “generation in time, which was from a mother without a father.”\textsuperscript{113} Isaiah’s words indicate that no one can know of the manner of Christ’s generation in eternity or even in time by the mere power of “natural reason,” though the mystery of these generations can be known partially “by divine inspiration.”\textsuperscript{114} Third, the suffering of Christ in death at the hands of his enemies is once more stated through Isa. 53:8’s words “\textit{because he is cut off out of the land of}

\textsuperscript{107} This connection between Isa. 53 and Phil. 2 has also been observed by modern exegetes. For instance, see Richard Bauckham, \textit{Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 41-45, 205-6.

\textsuperscript{108} Isa. 53:8 states: “He was taken away from distress, and from judgment: who shall declare his generation? because he is cut off out of the land of the living: for the wickedness of my people have I struck him.”

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{super Isaiam, 971.}

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{ibid., 971.}

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{ibid., 971.}

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{super Isaiam, 971.}
Aquinas identifies a parallel to these words of Isaiah in Jer. 11:19, which reads “Come... cut him off from the land of the living [terra viventium].”

Lastly, in regards to Isa. 53:8, Aquinas makes an interesting remark on the causal relation of God the Father to the event of Christ’s suffering. He explains how Isaiah “sets out the acceptance of this suffering on the part of God the Father: ‘for the wickedness of my people have I struck him,’ that is, allowed him to be struck.” Here, Aquinas does not state that God the Father actively wills the suffering and death of Christ. Rather, we are simply told that God the Father “allows” or “permits” [permisi] Christ’s Passion and “accepts” [acceptationem] his suffering and death as a sacrifice “for our sins [pro peccatis nostris]” (1 Pet. 3:18). This means that the Father does not actively intervene in human history to afflict his Son with pain and death. Rather, according to Aquinas, the Father permits the Son to experience the pain and death that is inflicted upon him by his enemies. That is, the Father does not actively step in and rescue the Son from the hands of his enemies. At least one explanation for this absence of intervention by the Father is that the Son has freely chosen to endure the suffering that his enemies are inflicting upon him, and he has made this choice specifically for the sake of our sins.

Proceeding to Isa. 53:9, Aquinas sees this verse as speaking of Christ’s burial and his innocence. Bound to the first clause of v. 9 in Latin [“Et dabit impios pro sepultura”], Aquinas interprets these words as saying that Christ was given to the Jews (who themselves where “in the hands of the Romans”) to be entombed, in the sense that they set a guard over his

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115 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8.
116 Ibid., 971, quoting Jer. 11:19.
117 Ibid., 971, quoting Isa. 53:8.
118 Ibid., 971, quoting 1 Pet. 3:18.
119 Isa. 53:9 states: “And he shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his death: because he has done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth.”
tomb. The “merit” from Christ’s “life of innocence” in both deeds and words is indicated by Isaiah’s statement that “‘he has done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth.”

Seeing a thematic and linguistic connection with a New Testament text, Aquinas links this latter half of Isa. 53:9 with 1 Pet. 2:22, in which the Apostle says that Christ “‘did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” So, according to Aquinas, despite his perfect innocence in word and deed, Christ’s corpse was handed over to be entombed by his impious enemies.

While continuing to discuss the merit of Christ, Aquinas turns to Isa. 53:10, where he once more takes up the question of the relation between Christ’s suffering and the will of God the Father. Aquinas’ version of Isa. 53:10 begins with the following, seemingly disturbing statement: “And the Lord willed [voluit] to bruise him in infirmity.” On the surface, this passage makes it seem as if God delights in the suffering of his Servant and actively afflicts him with that suffering. But, we have already seen how, while commenting upon Isa. 53:8, Aquinas claimed that God merely allowed [permisi] Christ’s suffering and death. Now, Aquinas must once again tackle a difficult text which seems to say that God ‘desired,’ ‘willed,’ or ‘was pleased’ [voluit] by Christ’s suffering. Perhaps surprisingly, Aquinas’ explicit engagement with this text of Isa. 53:10 is quite limited. He merely says,

And as to the obedience of his death: ‘and the Lord,’ the Father, ‘desired [voluit],’ and he was obedient [obediens] to the Father unto death, per Phil. 2:8: ‘becoming obedient unto death,’ and 1 Cor. 1:25: ‘the weakness of God is stronger than men.’

Unfortunately, Aquinas’ meaning here is somewhat ambiguous. There are at least two ways to interpret what he is saying.

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120 super Isaiam, 972. My translation, from: “‘Et dabit impios Judaeos, in manus Romanorum, ‘pro sepultura, quia ipsum in sepolcro costodiri fecerunt.’”
121 Ibid, quoting Isa. 53:9.
122 Ibid., quoting 1 Pet. 2:22.
123 Ibid., 972, quoting Isa. 53:10. My translation of ‘voluit,’ which I generally prefer to render as ‘desired’ or ‘willed,’ whereas St. Hilaire prefers ‘was pleased.’
First, on the one hand, Aquinas may be saying merely that God the Father willed or desired *voluit* that the Son endure the Passion, and that the Son obeyed this command of the Father. This interpretation seems the most consistent with the actual text of Isa. 53:10. If this is what Aquinas is saying, then we must be cautious to not read any further into the statement. Aquinas does not say *why* the Father wills the Son to endure the Passion, nor does he imply that the Father actively brings about the suffering of the Son. Rather, he simply is saying *that*, given the attacks which Christ’s enemies are inflicting upon him, the Father wills that Christ as a man endure those attacks. That is, the Father is not going to actively intervene to save Christ nor does he want Christ to use his divine power to escape his suffering. Second, on the other hand, it is entirely plausible here to interpret Aquinas as saying that what the Father fundamentally wills and desires *voluit* is the obedience *obediens* of Christ, an obedience that is prior to and beyond, yet also includes, Christ’s endurance of suffering and death at the hands of his enemies. Aquinas’ citation from Phil. 2 supports this interpretation, as there Paul depicts the exaltation of Christ as a reward for the obedience that Christ gave to the Father throughout his life, an obedience that was continually offered even leading up to and throughout his Passion. Finally, in both interpretations offered above, one thing is clear: for Aquinas, the merit which Christ possesses from his Passion lies in the fact that he endured his suffering out of obedience to the will of the Father. Not the suffering itself, but rather suffering voluntarily endured out of obedience, is the source of the merit that leads to the Suffering Servant’s exaltation.

Aquinas interprets the latter part of Isa. 53:10 as once more speaking of the fruits of grace that are given to humanity as a result of Christ’s free endurance of the Passion. For Aquinas, 53:10’s statement “*If he shall lay down [posuerit] his life*” points to the fact that, unless Christ freely chose to suffer and die, his Passion would not have merited a reward of grace for
humanity. The voluntary, free nature of Christ’s self-offering in death is thus a condition for and cause of the fruits that result from that death. Aquinas shows how Isa. 53:10 is fulfilled, and that in fact Christ’s death was voluntary, by citing Jn. 10:17, in which Christ states “‘I lay down [pono] my life.” Aquinas’ claim that humanity’s reception of certain graces is contingent upon Christ’s free decision to lay down his life for us serves to emphasize the gratuitous, efficacious love of Christ for sinners.

Now, the “reward” [praemium] for Christ’s voluntary death is that, per Isa. 53:10, “‘he shall see a long-lived seed.” According to Aquinas this means that “until the end of the world” Christ shall see “sons for him reborn out of the power of his death.” Given that Aquinas begins his treatment of v. 10 by stating that it concerns the “justification of men,” the rebirth spoken of here would seem to be the justification of sinners in grace. Aquinas cites Jn. 12:24-25 in order to show how Christ himself understood that his death would bring about such a rebirth of souls: “‘unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remains alone. But if it dies it brings forth much fruit.’” Aquinas concludes his exegesis of Isa. 53:10 by saying that, in addition to “rebirth” (justification), Christ’s death will ensure that ‘‘the will [voluntas] of the Lord shall be directed in his hand.’” This means that through the “work” [opere] of Christ in his Passion the “sanctification” [sanctificatio] of humanity will be brought about. Aquinas equates the “‘will [voluntas]’” of God mentioned in Isa. 53:10 with ‘sanctification’ on the basis

124 super Isaiam, 973, quoting Isa. 53:10.
125 Ibid., 973, quoting Jn. 10:17. John 10:18, which immediately follows the verse cited by Aquinas, supports his point even further: “‘No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord’” (RSVCE).
126 Ibid., 973.
127 Ibid., 973.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., quoting Jn. 12:24-25.
130 Ibid., 973, quoting Isa. 53:10.
131 Ibid., 973.
of 1 Thess. 4:3, which states “‘this is the will [voluntas] of God, your sanctification.’” So, as a reward for his voluntary endurance of death, Christ merits from God an outpouring of grace upon sinners that brings about their justification (rebirth) and their sanctification.

Isa. 53:11 offers Aquinas an opportunity for further reflection upon Christ’s work and the rewards of that work. Regarding the first part of this verse, Aquinas explains: “‘because his soul has labored,’ in preaching and discoursing, ‘he shall see’ the gentiles converted to him, ‘and be filled [saturabitur]’ as though having what he intended: ‘I have meat to eat which you know not’ (Jn. 4:32).” The citation from John here serves to show that the food that Christ eats and which renders him ‘filled’ is none other than the work of the Father that he accomplishes (Jn 4:34), a work that is fulfilled through the conversion of the gentiles, the justification of sinners and their sanctification in grace. So, here the teaching and preaching ministry of Christ is viewed as working in unison with his Passion, for both are means by which the rebirth of sinners in grace is brought about. According to Aquinas, Christ “merits” grace for humanity and “justifies many” (Isa. 53:11) not only by his Passion, but also “‘by his knowledge’” (Isa. 53:11), that is, by “the exercise of preaching” and “his teaching.”

While most of Isa. 53:11 has detailed the merits and justifying fruits of Christ’s teaching, Aquinas interprets the final clause in this verse as speaking once more of the merit that Christ has from “‘the torment of death.’” Commenting upon Isaiah’s statement that the Servant “shall bear their iniquities,” Aquinas understands this to mean that Christ will bear “the punishments

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132 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:10 and 1 Thess. 4:3.
133 This does not mean that, for Aquinas, prior to the occurrence of Christ’s Passion in human history no one possessed justifying grace or was filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 107, a. 1, ad 2, he claims that there were some people during the period of the Old Testament who possessed “charity and the grace of the Holy Spirit” even as they awaited the fulfillment of further “spiritual and eternal promises” that would occur with the advent of Christ.
134 super Isaiam, 973, quoting Isa. 53:11 and Jn. 4:32.
135 Ibid., 974, quoting Isa. 53:10.
136 super Isaiam, 974.
for their iniquities [*poenas pro iniquitatibus*].” We have already seen Aquinas use this terminology of Christ bearing the ‘punishments’ [*poenas*] of sinners in his comments upon Isa. 53:4. Here, he does not provide any further specification regarding the nature of these *poenas*. He simply identifies Christ’s bearing of them as a further source of his merit. But, he does not explain why and how Christ’s carrying of our *poenas* is meritorious.

Aquinas now arrives at v. 12, the final portion of Isa. 53. He identifies the general theme of this verse as Christ’s “victory over his enemies,” and in the service of this theme he draws out three subpoints. In order to better contextualize these three points, it is helpful to look at the entirety of Aquinas’ version of Isa. 53:12:

> Therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he has delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: and he has borne the sins of many, and has prayed for the transgressors.

Aquinas says that the first point of the above passage concerns “the subjection of the enemies” of Christ. The “‘very many’” whom God “‘will distribute’” to Christ are “those held captive by demons,” but whom in being given to Christ become believers in him. Christ will “‘divide’” these “‘spoils of the strong’” to his disciples, precisely by “setting different disciples over different nations.” So, Christ subdues the demons precisely by liberating their captives and setting them free with Christian faith. This setting free of the enslaved and entrusting them to his Church is the ‘spoil’ that Christ enjoys. Aquinas’ second point is that Christ subdued his enemies and won his spoil “‘because he has handed over’” his soul to death, and specifically a

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137 Ibid.
138 *super Isaiam*, 975.
139 Isa. 53:12, translation from the Latin: “Ideo dispertiam ei plurimos, et fortium dividet spolia, pro eo quod tradidit in mortem animam suam, et cum sceleratis reputatus est. Et ipse peccatum multorum tulit et pro transgressoribus rogavit.”
140 *super Isaiam*, 975.
141 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
142 *super Isaiam*, 975, quoting Isa. 53:12.
Aquinas here cites Lk. 23:32 and Ps. 88:4 to show how Christ’s death fulfills Isa. 53:12: Christ was crucified with “‘two malefactors’” and was “‘counted among them that go down to the pit.’” That is, the cause of Christ’s victory over his enemies was the fact that he was killed as if he were a grave sinner and criminal.

Aquinas’ third and final point on Isa. 53:12 concerns the nature of the salvation of those who are liberated from the devil and made subject to Christ. Aquinas explains, “He [Christ] does not subject them to himself like a tyrant to abuse them, but to save them.” Christ subdues sinners by liberating them from their sins. To submit to Christ is to be saved from sin. To say that Christ “‘has borne the sins of many’” is thus simply to say that he has come to take away sins and thus bring humanity into subjection to himself. Further, Christ has succeeded in his mission: the salvation which he has wrought is “efficacious” and “sufficient” for all sinners. That Christ came to save us, and not to abuse us as a tyrant would, is manifested by the fact that he “‘has prayed for the transgressors.’” Aquinas ends his lecture on Isa. 53 by quoting Lk. 23:34. On one level, this New Testament verse shows that Christ has fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy of the Suffering Servant who prays for sinners. On a deeper level, the text from Luke is further proof that Christ came not as a tyrant seeking to abuse sinners, but rather as a loving savior who seeks to free his sheep from the snares of sin: “‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”

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143 Ibid., 975, citing Isa. 53:12.
144 Ibid., 975, quoting Lk. 22:32 and Ps. 88:4, respectively.
145 Ibid., 975.
146 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
147 Ibid., 975.
148 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12:
149 Ibid, 975.
150 super Isaiam, 975, quoting Lk. 23:34.
IV. The Commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations

We can now turn to Aquinas’ brief engagement with the text of Isa. 53 in his cursory commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations, respectively. Torrell explains that all cursory commentaries were meant to be “rapid by definition,” and the commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations in particular “exactly correspond to that definition.” As with the super Isaiam, Aquinas likely wrote and taught from these commentaries towards the end of his time as a bachelor of the Bible in Cologne, prior to his departure for Paris in 1252. There are 3 references to Isa. 53 in the Commentary on Jeremiah and 1 in the Commentary on Lamentations. We will now look at each of these references and be attentive to how Aquinas uses the text of Isa. 53 to shed light upon the mystery of Christ’s Passion.

Aquinas’ initial 2 citations of Isa. 53 in the Commentary on Jeremiah occur in his fourth lecture on Jer. 11. This lecture focuses upon Jer. 11:18-23. For Aquinas, the literal sense of this portion of Jer. 11 is about the violent persecution of the prophet by his enemies. In addition, “the persecution of Jeremiah prefigures the passion of Christ.” For, “what is fulfilled in the present in Jeremiah, this he prophesied about the Lord in the future.” Both citations of Isa. 53 occur in Aquinas’ comments upon Jer. 11:19, where the prophet compares his suffering to that of an innocent lamb who is ignorantly led to the slaughter. Aquinas first cites Isa. 53:7 (‘as a lamb..."

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153 Aquinas himself makes a fourth reference in Latin to “Isa. 53” in the *Commentary on Jeremiah*, but he is mistaken; he is actually quoting Isa. 55:6. See chapter 29, lecture 1.
155 *On Jeremiah*, c. 11, l. 4.
156 Jer. 11:19 states: “And I was gentle, like a lamb brought as a sacrifice; and I did not know that they took counsel against me, saying: let us put wood in his bread, and let us destroy him from the land of the living, and his name shall be remembered no more.”
before the shearer is silent, and opens not his mouth’”) in response to Jeremiah’s statement that he will be led to death “‘like a lamb’” who “‘did not know’” of the murderous plans that his enemies had for him.\textsuperscript{157} Aquinas’ points here are that even though both Jeremiah and Christ were violently persecuted as innocent, seemingly ignorant lambs, in fact both had supernatural knowledge of the violent intentions of their enemies against them. Jeremiah knew “through the grace of revelation,” and Christ “as man” knew through the hypostatic union, “by which he knew all things.”\textsuperscript{158} While Aquinas does not mention this, it is worth pointing out that Christ’s knowledge of the malicious plans of his enemies and his foreknowledge that they would attempt to execute those plans is a further sign of the freedom with which he went to his Passion. That is, he always knew of the suffering that was coming to him, and yet out of love for sinners he voluntarily chose not to use his divine power to escape that suffering.

Aquinas uses his 2nd citation from Isa. 53 in the context of a mystical, Christological interpretation of Jer. 11:19. Aquinas compares Isa. 53:8’s prophecy that the Suffering Servant will be “‘cut off from the earth [de terra]’” to Jeremiah’s description of his enemies’ intentions.\textsuperscript{159} When they say to one another “let us put wood in his bread, and let us destroy him from the land [de terra] of the living” (Jer. 11:19), Aquinas views this “mystically” as referring to “the body of Christ on the wood of the cross.”\textsuperscript{160} That is, Christ’s enemies destroy him and cut him off from the earth using the wood of the cross. The reference to the placement of the wood “‘in his bread’” is likewise mystically interpreted in light of Isa. 53:8 to mean that “through the wood of the cross let us stir up scandal at his doctrine, which is his bread.”\textsuperscript{161} In

\textsuperscript{157} On Jeremiah, c. 11, l. 4, quoting Isa. 53:7 and Jer. 11:19, respectively.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., c. 11, l. 4.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., c. 11, l. 4.
\textsuperscript{161} On Jeremiah, c. 11, l. 4, quoting Jer. 11:19
sum, what Isa. 53:8 speaks of literally, Jer. 11:19 speaks of mystically: Christ’s enemies cut him off from the land [de terra] of the living through the wood of the cross, and this destruction leads people to view him as a sinner whose teaching is scandalous.

Aquinas’ 3rd and final citation of Isa. 53 comes in his second lecture upon Jer. 40. He makes brief remarks on Jer. 40: 7-12, in which the prophet describes how the Jewish people who fled during the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem return and submit with confidence to the rule of Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians had put in governance after their departure. Aquinas points out how, in Jer. 40:10, Gedaliah assures the people of Judah that they have nothing to fear from him and that he will protect them against the Babylonians. He will ensure the “security” of Judah and will himself mediate with the Babylonians on their behalf. Aquinas explains, “it is as though he [Gedaliah] were saying: I bear [sustinebo] the entire burden, that you may be in peace.” Immediately following this statement Aquinas first quotes 1 Cor. 4:10 and then Isa. 53:4, saying “‘Surely, he has borne [tulit] our infirmities, and has himself carried [portavit] our griefs.’” Aquinas thus connects Gedaliah’s ‘bearing’ [sustinebo] of the burden of dealing with the Babylonians for the good of the Judeans with Christ’s ‘bearing’ [tulit, portavit] of fallen humanity’s infirmities for the good of sinners. Aquinas sheds further light on his meaning by quoting Jn. 10:11 (“a good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep”) immediately after his citation from Isa. 53. The point is that Christ bears a burden (lays down his life) for the good of his sheep; he dies so that we may live. By connecting Gedaliah with Christ, Aquinas depicts Christ’s Passion as the voluntary bearing of a painful burden that needed to be borne in order to acquire peace for sinners.

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162 Ibid., c. 40, l. 2.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:4.
165 Ibid., c. 40, l. 2, quoting Jn. 10:11.
It now remains to examine Aquinas’ lone citation of Isa. 53 in his *Commentary on Lamentations*. This citation occurs in the lecture on Lam. 4:1-21. Aquinas says that Lam. 4:20 shows that even the kings of Jerusalem were not spared during the attacks of the chosen People’s enemies. Specifically, he says Lamentations’ statement that “‘Christ the Lord is taken for our sins’” refers principally to the Jewish king Josiah, whom the Egyptians killed, even though “he himself was just.”166 The “‘Christ’” referred to by Lamentations could also refer to king Zedekiah.167 But, Aquinas says that this verse of Lamentations is understood “better” [*melius*] of Jesus Christ, and then he immediately quotes Isa. 53:5: “‘He was wounded for our iniquities.’”168 So, while Josiah the just was killed as a consequence of his people’s sins, so too was Jesus, as indicated by Isaiah. Yet, Jesus’s death has the additional aspect of being for our protection from sin. As Aquinas explains, Jesus’s death gave sinners “protection” by bringing them “‘under [his] shadow.’”169 Christ the king was physically killed as a result of his people’s sins, and yet his bodily death results in the protection of his sinful people from the spiritual death of sin.

V. Conclusion and Synthesis

Aquinas’ cursory *super Isaiam* was his first scholarly engagement with the Suffering Servant text of Isa. 53. While this commentary does not contain an exhaustive analysis of Isa. 53, Aquinas nevertheless manages to draw out of that biblical text many significant theological points regarding the mystery of Christ’s Passion. In the first place, it is worth noting that Aquinas sets the stage for his reading of Isa. 53 by his comments upon Isa. 52:13-15. There he

166 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Lamentations of Jeremiah*, chapter 4, lecture 20, no. 86, quoting Lam. 4:20. All references to this commentary will be abbreviated as *On Lamentations* and will cite the chapter, lecture and paragraph number being referred to. All citations are from the 1974 Leonine edition of the Latin text as well as the English translation by the Aquinas Institute, available online at [https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Lam.C4.n11](https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Lam.C4.n11).

167 *On Lamentations*, c. 4, l. 20, no. 86, quoting Lam. 4:20.

168 Ibid., c. 4, l. 20, no. 86, quoting Isa. 53:7.

169 Ibid., c. 4, l. 20, no. 86, quoting Jer. 4:20.
makes it clear that the Servant of whom Isaiah speaks is Christ, that Christ will suffer as a man, and that his suffering is an act of priestly sacrifice that will purify people from their sins and lead them into the presence of God. In his lecture upon Isa. 53 Aquinas once more interprets Isaiah’s description of the Servant in Isa. 53:1-12 as a straightforward and clear prophecy of the Passion of Christ. Yet, Aquinas also acknowledges that Christ’s Passion is a tremendous mystery that is difficult to believe and understand. This was especially the case for the contemporaries of Jesus who were expecting that the Messiah would come with great dignity, power, and prosperity. Instead, Isaiah foretold that Christ would come as a man who is rejected and filled with pain. So intense would be the suffering of Christ that for many it would serve to hide his divine dignity from their eyes. The nature of Christ’s suffering included physical torture, hunger, thirst, death, and all of the sadness that accompanies these pains. These suffering are identified at least materially with the ‘punishments’ [poenas] that sinners endure. Further, Christ’s suffering consisted in the fact that he was misunderstood and considered as a criminal whose pains were a just punishment imposed upon him by God.

In reality, though, God the Father did not actively inflict the pains of the Passion upon Christ. The Father did command Christ to live with a passible human nature and, consequently, to endure virtuously any suffering that came as a result of possessing such a nature. Christ freely obeyed this command. But this is distinct from saying that the Father actively willed that Christ would be arrested and put to death. Rather, the Father merely permitted the pain that Christ’s enemies inflicted upon him in the Passion. Christ voluntarily chose to endure his Passion in order to save fallen humanity from its sins. Every human being is a sinner in need of salvation, but no sinner can perform a suitable penance for their sins. Hence, Christ offered himself in death as a penance for the sins of the world, and God the Father accepted this sacrifice. Christ’s
Passion was thus a work of satisfaction for the sins of the world. For various reasons, Christ merited grace for himself and for sinners. The sources of this merit were the following: the divine dignity of Christ’s personhood; his teaching and preaching ministry; the innocence of his words and deeds throughout his life and during his Passion; the freedom with which he chose to endure his suffering, and the obedience to the Father he enacted in choosing to suffer; the great pain of his death, and the shame of his death among criminals. In all these ways, Christ merited his own resurrection from the dead. Further, he merited for sinners the grace of liberation from captivity to the devil, justification and spiritual rebirth, sanctification and peaceful access to the Lord.

Aquinas’ citations of Isa. 53 in his commentaries *On Jeremiah* and *On Lamentations* are few, and his engagement with the text in these circumstances is very brief. Even so, he provides us with some additional insights regarding the mystery of Christ’s Passion. Aquinas employs Isaiah to explain how even in his human nature Christ, in virtue of the omniscience that he possessed through the hypostatic union, knew full well of the malicious intentions of his enemies and of the slaughter that awaited him. Additionally, though he knew that his death would be a scandal to some and make them reject his teaching, Christ nevertheless freely chose to bear the burden of his Passion for the good of sinners. By bearing the burden of his Passion Christ acquired peace, security and protection for the sinners who dwell under his shadow.
Chapter 4: The Commentaries on the Sentences and the Letters of Paul

In our last chapter we explored Aquinas’ interpretations of the text of Isa. 53 in his cursory lectures upon Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. Beginning with this chapter, the remainder of this dissertation will explore the references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes in his systematic works as well as in the detailed and theologically dense biblical commentaries that he produced as a magister in sacra pagina. In these works Aquinas never departs from the substance of the foundational interpretation of Isa. 53 that he offered in his super Isaiam. Nonetheless, as is fitting, the theological depth of Aquinas’ engagement with Isa. 53 increases significantly in these later works in comparison to the level of analysis that he provided in his earlier, cursory biblical commentaries. Rather than contradicting his earlier interpretations, the interpretations of Isa. 53 that we will see Aquinas offer in this chapter serve to clarify, build upon, and extend the readings that he offered in his cursory commentaries.

Our focus in this chapter is on Aquinas’ Commentary on the Sentences (henceforth referred to as the Scriptum) as well as his commentaries on the letters of Paul. For reasons specified below, the only Pauline commentary that we will not examine in this chapter is Aquinas’ Commentary on Romans. The structure of this chapter contains the following divisions. Part I focuses upon Aquinas’ reception of Isa. 53 in his Scriptum. This part will begin with a brief historical overview of the origin, style and purpose of the Scriptum. I will then provide a detailed qualitative analysis of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 in that work. I will examine the cases of Isa. 53 in the chronological order in which they appear in the Scriptum. In Part II, I will begin by providing a brief historical contextualization of Aqinas’ commentaries on Paul’s letters. I will then proceed to explicate the various interpretations of Isa. 53 that Aquinas provides in each of these individual biblical commentaries. Finally, in Part III, I will conclude
this chapter with a theological synthesis of the various Christological concepts that Aquinas
draws out from the text of Isa. 53 in both the *Scriptum* and in his commentaries on Paul’s letters.

I. The Commentary on the Sentences

Aquinas’ *Scriptum* on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard contains 7 explicit references to
the text of Isa. 53.1 These references are found in books II, III, and IV of the *Scriptum*, and each
one of them is used in order to testify to the nature and saving value of Christ’s Passion. Unlike
the commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, the *Scriptum* is not a cursory exposition
of the immediate, literal meaning of a biblical text. Rather, it is a systematic, deeply speculative
analysis of important theological questions and issues that are generated by the text of
Lombard’s *Sentences* as well as the writings of the Church Fathers and the Bible. Aquinas wrote
the *Scriptum* over a span of about four years (1252-6) while he was teaching courses on the
*Sentences* at the University of Paris.2 This means, as Giles Emery has pointed out, that the
*Scriptum* is very much the “fruit of [Aquinas’] teaching as bachelor of the *Sentences.*”3
However, “that does not mean,” as Weisheipl explains, “that the written work is a report of his
day-to-day presentation in the lecture hall. Rather, it is a carefully elaborated and edited version
of questions discussed in the classroom, polished after the event.”4

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1 The seven cases of Isa. 53 are found in (1) II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, ad 2 (2) III, d. 15, q. 1, a. 1, obj. 6, (3) III, d. 15, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, sc. (4) III, d. 18, a. 5, (5) III, d. 19, a. 3, qc. 2, sc. 2, p. 2. (6) IV, d. 2, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4, (7) IV, d. 4, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 2, ad 1. Aquinas also refers to “Isa. 53:21” in the prologue to book three, and this reference has been preserved in the contemporary Latin text, but Aquinas was mistaken; the actual quote he uses is from Isa. 33:21.
The nature of the *Scriptum* and the manner in which it was composed is worth keeping in mind as we examine Aquinas’ uses of the text of Isa. 53 within. In this work, Aquinas’ principal task is to provide a systematic answer to dense theological questions. He employs Isa. 53 as a foundation for, and an aid to, his reasoning in response to these questions. So, in order to understand how Aquinas is interpreting Isa. 53 in a particular context, we will often have to step back and grasp the greater movement of the systematic analysis that he is undertaking in that context. Having established this context, we can now proceed to a qualitative analysis of each case of Isa. 53 within the *Scriptum*.

**A. 1st Case: SS. II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, ad 2**

In this article Aquinas takes up the question of “Whether every punishment [*poena*] is inflicted for sin?” In order to understand Aquinas’ use of Isa. 53 in this context, we first need to highlight the major points that he articulates in the body of the article regarding the nature and cause of ‘punishment.’ Aquinas first establishes that “every punishment [*poena*] is a kind of harm,” and “one is only punished [*punitur*] by being deprived of something good for him.” He then explains that “a thing can be good for a man in two ways,” namely, either “precisely as a man, or else in common nature, as an animal or as a living thing, and the like.” When treating of the cause of punishment, then, one must first specify the type of goods which the punishment deprives the person of. So, first, the virtues are the unique good that a human possesses precisely as a human, as a rational animal. Regarding the virtues, Aquinas states, “no one has a

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5 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, book III, distinction 36, question 1, article 4. All references to the *Scriptum* will be abbreviated according to the following format: SS III, d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, etc. All citations of the *Scriptum* are from the Latin editions, and the English translations by the Aquinas Institute, available online at [https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.II](https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.II). The Latin text of book II is the 1929 edition edited by P. Mandonnet.

6 SS II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, sc and c, respectively.

7 Ibid., c.
punishment from the privation of these goods except by his own fault.”⁸ That is, a person’s virtue can only be damaged by their own sinful decisions; sin alone deprives a person of virtue. The second category of goods that a person can possess are the “goods of the body, even external ones.”⁹ Humans share these goods in common with other animals and bodily creatures. While the loss of such goods is a type of punishment, Aquinas specifies that “not every punishment of this kind is introduced for his own sin, but it always does follow on some sin, at least the sin of the nature. For if human nature had not been infected by Original Sin, man would not suffer any disturbance or loss in these things.”¹⁰ This means that human beings suffer the loss of bodily and external goods due to the fallen, passible human nature that they possess as a result of original sin and, in addition, at times due to the actual sins of themselves or others.

With this context in mind, we can now adequately interpret Aquinas’ citation of Isa. 53:8 in his reply to the second objection. The second objection argues: “it says of Christ: ‘he committed no sin’ (1 Peter 2:22). Yet Christ bore many punishments [poenas]. Therefore not every punishment [poena] is inflicted for a fault.”¹¹ In response to this objection, Aquinas makes two points. First, he says that Christ “in no way had any punishment that would be a punishment of man’s precisely as man.”¹² For, Christ possessed a “superabundance” of virtue and “suffered no defect in them.”¹³ Yet, second, Christ did have “a punishment as regards common nature.”¹⁴ Given that Christ suffered loss and damage to his bodily and external goods, but not to his virtues, Aquinas concludes: “Thus, it did not have to be the case that there was a fault in him but

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⁸ Ibid.
⁹ SS II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, c.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ SS II, d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, obj. 2.
¹² Ibid., d. 36, q. 1, a. 4, ad 2.
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Ibid.
only that a fault preceded in human nature.”¹⁵ Immediately after this statement, he concludes his reply by quoting the following portion of Isa. 53:8: “‘I struck him for the transgression of my people.’”¹⁶ Aquinas is quoting Isaiah here because it supports his claim that Christ suffered due to others’ sins and not his own. In addition, the argument that he has just provided in the reply to the second objection further clarifies what Isa. 53:8 means when it says that Christ was struck “because [propter]” of the sins of the people. For Aquinas, the fundamental cause of the fact that Christ experiences damage to his bodily goods is the passible animal nature that he possesses in common with all people who are descended from Adam. Further, Christ suffers the loss of corporal goods as a result of the actual sins of the enemies who are inflicting ‘punishment’ [poena] upon him. Aquinas interprets Isa. 53:8 here as saying that Christ is struck because of the sins of those who have gone before him and of those who were against him during his own time.

B. 2nd Case: SS. III, d. 15, q. 1, a. 1, obj. 6

Aquinas’ question here is “whether Christ ought to have received a human nature with defects [defectibus] and infirmities [infirmitatibus]?”¹⁷ In the sixth objection, the objector quotes Isa. 53:2b and 3b (“he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,’ and it follows ‘we esteemed him not”) in order to argue that Christ should not have assumed infirmities.¹⁸ The objector argues that Christ came in order to bring men knowledge of God, but his endurance of infirmities “led us away from knowledge of him,” that is, from acceptance of Christ’s teaching.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8.
¹⁷ SS III, d. 15, q. 1, a. 1. The Latin text of book III is the 1956 edition edited by M.F. Moos.
¹⁸ Ibid., obj. 6, quoting Isa. 53:2.
¹⁹ Ibid., obj. 6.
If, as the objector claims, Isaiah is saying that Christ’s suffering was the reason why people did not believe in his teaching, then why did Christ allow himself to endure such suffering?

In his reply, Aquinas first establishes that Christ came to manifest the glory of his divine nature, not the glory of his human nature. Then, he states that Christ “made God’s glory more transparent through the assumed infirmity, insofar as the weakness of God is more powerful than men.” So in this context, the text of Isa. 53:2-3 is being employed because it raises a challenging theological question for Aquinas. He must look to another biblical text (1 Cor. 1:25) to provide an answer to that question. While Isaiah indicates that Christ’s Passion was a stumbling block for some, Paul asserts that the foolishness of Christ reflected the wisdom of God, and the weakness of Christ demonstrated the strength of God. Aquinas’ answer here is not necessarily meant to be exhaustive. The point is simply to demonstrate that Scripture provides the resources that are needed to answer the questions posed by other parts of Scripture. For Aquinas, 1 Cor. 1:25 sufficiently handles the issue raised by Isa. 53:2-3.

C. 3rd Case: SS. III, d. 15, q. 2, a. 3, qc [questiuncula]. 1, sc.

In this article Aquinas asks “whether in Christ there was true pain [dolor] in the senses?” Aquinas answers this question in the affirmative, and he does so initially with a sed contra that consists exclusively of a quote from Isa. 53:4: “truly he himself has carried our pains [dolores].” Isaiah’s prophecy provides the divinely revealed answer to the question being posed. And so, it serves as the foundation for the further theological reflection that Aquinas makes in response to the question.

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20 Ibid., d. 15, q. 1, a. 1, ad 6.
21 SS III, d. 15, q. 2, a. 3.
22 Ibid., qc. 1, sc, quoting Isa. 53:4.
In the remainder of *quaestio uncula* 1, Aquinas’ theological reflection contains the following points. First, Christ had a true sense of touch and his body was truly wounded (*respondeo*). Even though Christ was God, he still suffered pain from the wounds to his flesh (*ad 1*). The fact that Christ voluntarily chose to suffer did not take away his experience of bodily pain (*ad 2*). Similarly, Christ’s perfect contemplation of God did not eliminate his bodily pain (*ad 3*). For our purposes, the principal point here is that Aquinas has grounded these conclusions about Christ’s experience of bodily pain in the text of Isa. 53:4. More specifically, Aquinas cites Isaiah’s assertion that the Servant of the Lord “‘truly’” [*vere*] suffered. Isaiah shows that Christ’s Passion was not merely a docetic illusion; his pain was real, and thus it can serve as an object of Aquinas’ systematic reflection.

**D. 4th Case: SS. III, d. 18, a. 5**

Here Aquinas asks “whether Christ merited for himself through his passion?”23 In the body of the article, Aquinas states, “every voluntary act informed by charity is meritorious.”24 Then, in the conclusion to the body of the article, he quotes a portion of his version of Isa. 53:7 (“‘he was offered because he himself willed it’”) in order to support the claim that “Christ endured his passion voluntarily.”25 He then adds that this voluntary choice of Christ “was informed by charity,” and so he concludes that “there is no doubt that he merited through his passion.”26 So the immediate function that Isa. 53:7 performs here for Aquinas is simply that of establishing the foundation upon which he builds the rest of his answer. Theologically, Isa. 53:7 testifies to the freedom with which Christ chose to suffer. Without his freedom, and without the

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23 SS III, d. 18, a. 5.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
26 Ibid., d. 18, a. 5.
charity that informed his free choice to undergo suffering, Christ’s suffering would not have been meritorious. That is, Christ’s Passion was meritorious because he freely chose, from charity, to endure the suffering that was inflicted upon him by his enemies. Conversely, a person who is violently forced to undergo suffering against their will does not merit simply based on the fact that they are enduring pain.27

E. 5th Case: SS. III, d. 19, a. 3, qc. 2, sc. 2, p. 2

The primary question that Aquinas addresses in this article is “‘whether through Christ’s passion we are freed from eternal punishment [poena]?’”28 The first quaestio uncula in this article clarifies that Christ freed us from sin, and since “sin is the cause of eternal death,” this means that Christ freed us from hell as well.29 The second quaestio uncula within a. 3 deals with a more difficult issue, namely, the relationship between Christ’s Passion and the human experience of suffering on this side of eternity. The objections which Aquinas fields here deny that Christ’s Passion has the power to take away the experience of “temporal punishment” on earth.30

In his initial response to these objections, Aquinas affirms that Christ’s Passion does take away temporal punishment, and that it does so specifically through the mediation of the “keys of the Church.”31 Then, he employs the text of Isa. 53:4 in the following argument: “Furthermore, God does not punish twice for the very same thing (Nahum 1:9). But God placed on Christ the iniquities of all of us when he bore our pains [dolores] (Isa. 53:4). Therefore he freed us from

27 This does not mean, however, that a person can only merit amidst suffering if they have freely chosen to suffer. For, charity is the source of merit; hence, even if one is experiencing suffering against one’s will, if one preserves and practices charity amidst that trial of suffering this would be a great source of merit. For example, the involuntarily imprisoned person who loves God and neighbor even amidst the pain of their imprisonment merits from the charitable way in which they have endured their suffering, even though they do not wish to suffer.
28 SS III, d. 19, a. 3.
29 SS III, d. 19, a. 3, qc. 1, sc 1.
31 Ibid.
temporal punishment through his passion.”

The immediate sense of this passage can be somewhat jarring for a modern audience: Aquinas appears to be saying that Christ experienced all of the pains of temporal punishment that were due to sinners and, since God does not punish twice for the same offense, this means that sinners are freed from temporal punishment. That is, Christ has already endured the ‘punishment’ \( \text{poena} \) that was owed to sinners, and so now there is no further need for sinners to suffer the pain that Christ suffered in their place. This reasoning from Aquinas, read in isolation, could be interpreted as somewhat legalistic, arbitrary, and even cruel - as if God vents his wrath on an innocent man and as a result is content to let the guilty go free. The text of Isa. 53:4 would thus be used here to prop up a troubling account of the saving efficacy of Christ’s suffering.

Fortunately, the remainder of Aquinas’ response to \( \text{quaestiuuncala} \) 2 clarifies his meaning and thus his use of Isa. 53:4 in this context. There are several important points which need to be noted. First, “a punishment is called ‘temporal’ through which some temporal good is taken away.”

Meaning, ‘temporal punishment’ simply refers to the loss of a temporal good. Second, following original sin, all humans will experience the loss of certain temporal goods as a result of the condition of their human nature. Aquinas explains that every postlapsarian person experiences the temporal punishments of “the necessity of dying, the ability to suffer, the disobedience of the flesh against the spirit, and the like,” for “such things follow from the principles of the nature if the grace of innocence has been taken away.”

With these two foundational points established, Aquinas can then explain the relationship between Christ’s endurance of the Passion and our endurance of the pains that accompany the

\[\text{Ibid. I have translated }\text{dolores} \text{ as “} \text{pains} \text{” in place of the Aquinas Institute’s “} \text{sorrows}.\]

\[\text{SS III, d. 19, a. 3, ad qe. 2.}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
possession of a postlapsarian human nature. Even though Christ experienced the temporal punishment of suffering, as Isa. 53:4 indicates, this does not mean that all human beings are immediately freed from the temporal punishments that are due to their postlapsarian nature. Nor does it mean that one day all people will be freed from the experience of these punishments. Rather, only those who are “partakers” of Christ’s Passion will experience liberation from such temporal punishments, and even they will do so only at the end of time when Christ raises their bodies from the dead.\footnote{Ibid.}

In addition to the temporal punishment that all humans incur in virtue of their postlapsarian nature, Aquinas says that “there are other punishments that are inflicted on certain men specifically.”\footnote{SS III, d. 19, a. 3, ad qc. 2.} One example of this involves “punishing a fault, insofar as fault makes one owe this penalty.”\footnote{Ibid.} That is, sometimes temporal goods are lost as a consequence of a person’s actual sins. Aquinas says that Christ saves us from having to endure these temporal punishments precisely by saving us from the sins that “cause” them.\footnote{Ibid.} Christ does this by making a person a “partaker” in his Passion through baptism and “through a real conformity to him, namely, inasmuch as we suffer with the suffering Christ, which occurs through penance.”\footnote{Ibid.} This active, penitential conformity to Christ can also occur after the commission of actual sins, as a means of reducing the debt of temporal punishment incurred by the sin committed. In this latter case, the penitent will not need to suffer as much as they otherwise would as long as they are united to Christ by charity and so share in the merit of his Passion. The closer that a person is united to Christ in charity, the less temporal punishment is due to that person. In this way Christ “is said
to remove these punishments insofar as he diminishes them.”

One final form of temporal punishment which a Christian can experience in this life involves the suffering of making satisfaction [satisfaciat] for others. Aquinas says that this type of suffering actually increases during this life for those who are united to Christ’s Passion in charity. Such people share in Christ’s medicinal suffering on behalf of others. Even so, in eternal life, Christ will take away all such suffering from these people.

We can now summarize the theological significance of this fifth case of Isa. 53 in the Scriptum. In the sed contra to quaestiouncala 2 (III, d. 19, a. 3), Aquinas employs Isa. 53:4 in a way which suggests that we are freed from the experience of temporal punishment simply because Christ bore temporal punishments in our place. But, in the body of his reply to quaestiouncala 2 Aquinas clarifies and further fleshes out his meaning. Christ’s liberating work on our behalf did not function in terms of a simple exchange: it is not that Christ suffered in our place, satisfied the demands of justice, and so now we do not need to suffer. Rather, for Aquinas, even though Christ suffered our pains, every postlapsarian person must still suffer the pains of nature in this life. Christ’s endurance of pain on our behalf has opened up for fallen humanity the possibility of one day being definitively healed from these natural pains, but this healing will not occur until the eschaton. Further, all are called to participate in Christ’s Passion by suffering with him in this life in order to prevent sin, in order to repair the damages caused by one's own sins, and in order to satisfy for the sins of others. In fact, those who are more closely conformed to Christ in charity will suffer greater temporal punishment as a result of their efforts to make healing satisfaction for the sins of their neighbors. Aquinas employs Isa. 53:4 here as a foundational biblical text in support of all of these soteriological points. Yes, the fact that Christ

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid. See also ad 1 to qe. 2.
bore our pains is the sufficient and efficacious cause of our eventual liberation from all temporal punishment. But in order to receive this gift of liberation, everyone must first be united to Christ and bear his pain with him.

F. 6th Case: SS. IV, d. 2, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4

Here Aquinas is discussing the degree to which the “sacrifices” [*sacraficia*] and “offerings” [*oblationes*] of the Old Testament can be said to prefigure the seven sacraments of the Church.\[^{42}\] He states that these realities “signified, with a certain generality, our sacraments and their cause, namely, the Passion of Christ.”\[^{43}\] Then, he specifies that Jewish sacrifices signified the bodily death of Christ, and Jewish offerings signified “the disposition of the one suffering to his Passion, for he willingly offered himself to his Passion, as in Isaiah 53.”\[^{44}\] So, here Aquinas refers merely to Isa. 53 as a whole, and not to any particular verse. He does so in order to indicate the fact that Christ freely chose to enter into his Passion, and in doing so he made a voluntary sacrificial offering of himself to the Father. Christ’s free sacrificial offering of himself is the antitype which the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament signify.

G. 7th Case: SS. IV, d. 4, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 2, ad 1

In this article, Aquinas considers “Baptism’s effect as to the removal of evil.”\[^{45}\] In his response to *quaestiuuncala* 1, Aquinas establishes that baptism takes away the fault incurred by both original sin and all actual sins. Then, in the response to *quaestiuuncala* 2 he argues that baptism also takes away all of the temporal punishment that is owed to a person on account of

\[^{42}\] SS IV, d. 2, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4. The Latin text of book IV is the 1956 edition edited by M.F. Moos.
\[^{43}\] Ibid.
\[^{44}\] Ibid.
\[^{45}\] SS IV, d. 4, q. 2, a. 1.
their actual sins. Earlier, the first objection to this *quaestio uncala* made the following claim: baptism cannot take away all temporal punishments incurred by actual sin, for God must mete out punishment in response to sins when men fail to do so.\(^{46}\)

Aquinas responds to this objection with a few points. First, he states that baptism incorporates a person into the mystical body of Christ. Second, Christ’s endurance of punishment [*poena*] was an act of satisfaction [*satisfactionem*] which is “reputed” [*reputatur*] to the person who is united to him in baptism.\(^{47}\) For, third, all the members of the body suffer together with Christ in his suffering. Therefore, Aquinas concludes, “God in Christ punished [*punivit*] those sins, as is said: ‘the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all’ (Isa. 53:6).”\(^{48}\)

Aquinas’ fundamental point here, which he grounds in Isa. 53:6, is that God has not turned a blind eye to the evil of actual sins. Such sins have been met with an appropriate consequence which satisfies for the evil committed. That which satisfies for the actual sins of the baptized is the pain that Christ endured in his Passion. Christ’s Passion provided the satisfaction that these sins required, and all those who are baptized into Christ share in this satisfaction. Hence, baptism remits the temporal punishment that was owed on account of their prebaptismal sins. In sum: those who have been baptized into Christ have no need to make satisfaction for their past actual sins, for in his Passion, Christ has already made a perfect act of satisfaction for the sins of all people. Sin and the punishments due to sin are completely forgiven in baptism as a result of what Christ did for us on the cross.

II. The Commentaries on the Letters of Paul [except *On Romans*]

\(^{46}\) Ibid., d. 4, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 2, obj. 1.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., d. 4, q. 2, a. 1, response to qc. 2, ad 1.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:6.
Aquinas’ commentaries on the letters of Paul are undoubtedly the product of the scriptural courses that he taught as a *magister in sacra pagina*. However, there remains considerable debate regarding the exact date in which these works were composed. For, as Pasquale Porro observes, “the editorial sequence of the commentaries on Paul’s epistles is especially complex and it is still an object of discussion whether Thomas might have held a second course on Paul’s epistles at Naples.”

Some have argued that the lectures on 1 Cor. 11 all the way through to the letter to the Hebrews are “to be situated in the Italian period between the two sojourns in Paris, perhaps in Orvieto or more probably in Rome.” The notes from these particular lectures, given between 1261-5 (Orvieto) or 1265-8 (Rome), would have been written down by Reginald of Piperno as he listened to Aquinas’ teaching. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the version of the commentaries on Romans and 1 Cor. 1-10 which have come down to us originated later, during Aquinas’ time in Naples from 1272-3.

I will operate on the presupposition that Torrell’s judgments are accurate regarding the dates in which Aquinas composed his commentaries on the Pauline corpus. I will thus examine Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 in the biblical commentaries that he produced during the middle years of his scholarly career: 1 Corinthians (beginning with chp. 11), 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, and Hebrews. There are a total of 19 references to the text of Isa. 53 across these seven works. There are also 2 additional references to Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ Commentary on Romans. But, since that commentary is thought to have come from the end of Aquinas’ life, I will wait until Chapter 8 of this dissertation to examine its cases of Isa. 53.

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50 Ibid., 189, referring to the position of Jean-Pierre Torrell.
A. Cases of Isa. 53 in the Commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians

Aquinas makes 6 explicit references to the text of Isa. 53 in his Commentary on 1 Corinthians [Super I ad Corinthios]. These references are contained in his treatment of 1 Cor. 11, 14, and 15.\(^\text{52}\) The 1st reference occurs in Aquinas’ fifth lecture on 1 Cor. 11. Here he is commenting upon Paul’s recounting of the Lord’s institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-24). The fact that Christ “‘took bread,’” Aquinas says, is meant to signify “that he voluntarily accepted the passion, of which this sacrament is the memorial.”\(^\text{53}\) Immediately following this statement, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:7: “‘he was offered because he himself willed it.’”\(^\text{54}\) Aquinas thus wants to interpret the institution of the Eucharist, at least in part, as a sign that Christ knew full well that he was going to be handed over to his enemies and that he freely chose to endure that handing over. Aquinas uses the text of Isa. 53:7 here in order to further support this notion that Christ voluntarily chose to endure his Passion.

The 2nd reference to Isa. 53 in the Super I ad Corinthios is a passing citation at the conclusion of Aquinas’ fourth lecture on 1 Cor. 14. Commenting on Paul’s statement that prophecies are a “‘sign . . . not to unbelievers, but to believers,’” Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:1 (“‘Lord, who has believed our hearing?’”) simply in order to provide an example of people “who do not believe.”\(^\text{55}\) The text from Isaiah refers to those who do not believe in the report regarding the Suffering Servant. While Aquinas himself does not say this, his connection of 1 Cor. 14 with

\(^{52}\) The Commentary on 1 Corinthians will henceforth be referred to in its Latin form, Super I ad Corinthios. All references to Aquinas’ commentaries on the Pauline epistles will be from the Latin texts and the English translations available online at https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~1Cor. The Latin text of the Super I ad Corinthios is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Fabian Larcher. References will make note of the chapter, lecture, and paragraph number referred to.

\(^{53}\) Super I ad Corinthios, Chapter 11, Lecture 5, paragraph 656, quoting 1 Cor. 11:23.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., c. 11, l. 5, 656, quoting Isa. 53:7. My translation of Isa. 53:7, from “‘oblatus est, quia ipse voluit.’”

\(^{55}\) Ibid., c. 14, l. 4, 858, quoting 1 Cor. 14:22 and Isa. 53:1, respectively:

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Isa. 53 suggests that Isaiah’s prophecy of the Suffering Servant functions as a sign for believers, though not for unbelievers. That is, those who believe in Christ will see Isa. 53 as a prophetic sign of Christ, while those who reject Christ will see no such sign.

Aquinas’ next 3 citations of Isa. 53 all occur in his first lecture on 1 Cor. 15. Aquinas employs Isaiah’s text in his exegesis of 1 Cor. 15:3-4, where Paul discusses the essential content of the Apostolic Tradition that he has handed over to the Corinthian community. Aquinas cites Isa. 53:8 (“he was stricken for the transgressions of my people”) in order to support Paul’s statement that Christ died “for our sins.” This insistence that Christ died for our sins refutes “two suspicions which can arise about the death of Christ.” The first errant suspicion is that Christ “died for his own actual sins, or [from] original sin.” The second suspicion “is that the death of Christ was by chance or by the violence of the Jews.” Paul further refutes this second suspicion by saying that Christ died “according to the Scriptures.” Aquinas supports this idea that Christ’s death was foretold in Scripture by citing Isa. 53:7, which explains how the Suffering Servant was “like a lamb” who “was led away to the slaughter.” The final case of Isa. 53 in this lecture occurs in support of Paul’s statement that Christ “was buried” (1 Cor. 15:4). Isa. 53:9 provides a biblical support of the truth of Paul’s teaching, as it says that the Suffering Servant’s enemies “made his grave with the wicked.”

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56 1 Cor. 15:3-4 states: “(3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (RSVCE).
57 Super I ad Corinthios, c. 15, l. 1, 895, quoting 1 Cor. 15:3.
58 Ibid., c. 15, l. 1, 895.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., quoting 1 Cor. 15:3.
62 Ibid., c. 15, l. 1, 895, quoting Isa. 53:7.
63 Ibid., c. 15, l. 1, 896, quoting Isa. 53:9.
the dead. So, in this lecture Aquinas employs Isa. 53:7-9 in order to show that Paul is firmly grounded in the witness of the Scriptures when he says that the death and burial of Christ were foreseen and providentially willed by God on account of our sins, and not on account of any human chance or sinfulness on Christ’s part.

The 6th and final occurrence of Isa. 53 in the Super 1 ad Corinthios occurs in the seventh lecture on 1 Cor. 15. Here Aquinas reflects upon why Paul refers to Christ as the “‘last [novissimus] Adam.’” He says that Christ is referred to in this way in order to show that he ushered in the last or final state which human beings can experience. Whereas the “‘first [primus] Adam’” brought about a state of guilt into the world, Christ the last Adam brought a state “of true glory and life,” and “after that state no other one followed in that life.” That is, humanity’s temporal journey on earth is marked by only two states of being: the state of guilt in Adam or the state of glory and life in Christ. No further states of being will be possible on this side of eternity, and Christ’s state is the final, consummate, ‘last’ state that a human being can reach prior to eternity. Aquinas then loosely quotes a combination of Isa. 53:2b-3a in this context because Isaiah’s text also refers to Christ as the ‘last,’ saying “‘we desired him, despised and last [novissimum] of men.’” The Suffering Servant’s peers perceived him to be ‘last’ in the sense of being the least and worst among humans, but Paul shows that in fact Christ is ‘last’ in the sense of being the ultimate, perfect, final realization of the human potential for glory and life in God.

There is 1 case of Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ Commentary on 2 Corinthians. This case occurs in the fifth lecture on 2 Cor. 5, where Aquinas grapples with the following statement from Paul:

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64 Ibid., c. 15, l. 1, 896.
65 Ibid., c. 15, l. 7, 992, quoting 1 Cor. 15:45.
66 Super 1 ad Corinthios, c. 15, l. 7, 992, quoting 1 Cor. 15:45.
67 Ibid., c. 15, l. 7, 992, loosely quoting Isa. 53:2-3.
“Him who knew no sin, he has made sin for us: that we might be made the justice of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Aquinas identifies three ways to interpret the claim that God “made Christ sin for us.” 68 The first way of interpreting this verse is to say that Christ ‘became sin’ in the sense that he offered himself as a sacrifice in reparation for our sins. Second, Christ can be called ‘sin’ insofar as he endured the “punishment of sin,” which simply means that he assumed the “mortal and suffering flesh” that all sinners possess on account of their fallen human nature. 69 Third, one can say that Christ was made ‘sin’ in the sense that “one thing is said to be this or that, not because it is, but because man considers it such.”70 That is, Christ is “regarded as a sinner” by those who persecuted him and witnessed his suffering.71 Aquinas cites Isa. 53:12 in support of this third interpretation, for Isaiah tells us that the Suffering Servant “was numbered with the transgressors.”72 So, when Paul says that Christ was ‘made sin’ for us, this does not mean that Christ actually committed sin, or was guilty, or that God actively willed the suffering that was inflicted upon him in his Passion. Rather, as Isa. 53 indicates, Paul’s saying simply means that Christ was judged to be a sinner by his peers. Further, despite his utter innocence, Christ endured pains which sinners endure, and he offered himself as a sacrifice in order to save humanity from sin.

**B. 1 Case of Isa. 53 in the Commentary on Galatians**

68 Thomas Aquinas, *Super 2 ad Corinthios*, c. 5, l. 5, 201, quoting 2 Cor. 5:21. The Latin text cited here is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation is that which was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Fabian Larcher.

69 Ibid., c. 5, l. 5, 201.

70 Ibid. Aquinas’ threefold interpretation of 1 Cor. 5:21 is an example of his acceptance of the possibility of a pluriform literal sense. See Chp. 1, pgs. 9-20. Cf. Mark Johnson, “Another Look at the Plurality of the Literal Sense,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* vol. 2 (1992), 140.

71 *Super 2 ad Corinthios*, c. 5, l. 5, 201.

72 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
Aquinas’ lone reference to Isa. 53 in his *Commentary on Galatians* comes in the context of his exegesis of Gal. 6. Commenting on Galatians 6:2 (“Bear [portate] one another’s burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ”), Aquinas identifies “charity” as the “law” to which the Apostle refers.73 He then explains how Christ himself “fulfilled” this law and “left us an example [of] how to follow it; for he bore [tulit] our sins out of charity.”74 Aquinas then cites Isa. 53:4 in order to provide further biblical testimony to the fact that Christ “bore” our sins through his Passion: “[‘surely he has borne [tulit] our infirmities.’]”75

Aquinas’ point is that charity should induce us to endure suffering, to bear burdens, for the good of our neighbors. The charitable person takes up the yoke from his neighbor in order to alleviate their burden. Christ did this for us when he assumed our passable nature and voluntarily endured the Passion in order to release us from the burden of sin and all of its consequences. Aquinas concludes by saying that if we want to fulfill the law of charity “then we ought to carry one another’s burdens.”76

**C. Cases of Isa. 53 in the Commentary on Ephesians**

Aquinas’ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* features 4 references to Isa. 53. The 1st case is in the first lecture on Eph. 3. Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:1 (“Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”) in order to support what Paul says in Eph. 3:5, namely, that Christ was not revealed to the people of the Old Testament period in the

73 Thomas Aquinas, *Super ad Galatas*, c. 6, l. 1, 348. The Latin text cited here is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation is that which was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Fabian Larcher.
74 Ibid., c. 6, l. 1, 348.
75 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:4.
76 Ibid., c. 6, l. 1, 348.
same way as he “is now revealed to his holy Apostles and prophets in the Spirit.”\(^{77}\) That is, the actual Incarnation and Passion of Christ in history was a more “clear and complete” revelation of the mystery of Christ than even the very explicit prophecy contained in Isa. 53.\(^{78}\) One way to think about what Aquinas is saying is to recall the distinction between *verba* and *res*. In the Old Testament, people could hear and read the *verba* of Isa. 53, but it was not until the coming of Christ that they could hear and see and touch the living *res* to which the *verba* referred. In this sense, the revelation of the incarnate Lord in 1st century Israel was certainly superior to the revelation that was given through Isaiah.

There are 2 cases of Isa. 53 in Aquinas’ treatment of Eph. 5:2, where Paul says that Christ “loved us and has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness.” Citing Gregory the Great, Aquinas first establishes the principle that love is proven through concrete action. Then, he reasons that Christ truly loved us, for he “‘delivered himself for us.’”\(^{79}\) That is, Christ made the deliberate choice to endure his Passion for us, and this demonstrates his love for us. Aquinas here cites Isa. 53:12 in order to further illustrate this active love of Christ for us: “‘He has delivered his soul unto death and was reputed with the wicked.’”\(^{80}\) Isaiah and Paul are thus both showing that Christ did not merely say he loved us, but he lived out that love in a most radical way.

Proceeding to the latter clause of Eph. 5:2, Aquinas explains how the active love of Christ “was both advantageous and necessary for us” as “an ‘oblation and a sacrifice.’”\(^{81}\) Aquinas first interprets these labels for Christ’s Passion by turning to Lev. 3-4, which he

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\(^{77}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Super ad Ephesios*, c. 3, l. 1, 141, quoting Isa. 53:1. The Latin text cited here is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation is that which was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Matthew Lamb.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., c. 3, l. 1, 141.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., c. 5, l. 1, 270, quoting Eph. 5:2.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., c. 5, l. 1, 270, quoting Isa. 53:12.

\(^{81}\) Ibid., c. 5, l. 1, 270, quoting Eph. 5:2.
interprets as stipulating that sinners were “obliged” [debebat] to offer certain sacrifices and oblations in reparation for their particular sins.82 Further, referring to Lev. 3:9 and 3:16, Aquinas claims that “when someone gave thanks to God, or wished to obtain some favor” they had to offer a sweet smelling sacrifice.83 Aquinas says that Christ “accomplished” each of these types of prescribed sacrifices “through the actions he performed during his life.”84 In support of this point, he then quotes Isa. 53:7, which states that Christ “‘was offered because he himself willed it, et cetera.’”85 So, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:7 here in order to show that Christ’s voluntary deliverance of himself over to the Passion and the manner in which he conducted himself throughout his suffering was a sweet smelling sacrifice offered to the Father in atonement for sins, in thanksgiving, and in petition on behalf of sinners. Aquinas concludes this treatment of Eph. 5:2 by pointing out that sinners “ought to offer spiritual sacrifices to God: ‘a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit.’”86 Thus, through contrition, we participate in the pleasing sacrifice of Christ of which Paul and Isaiah speak.

The 4th and final occurrence of Isa. 53 in the Super ad Ephesios is found in the eighth lecture on Eph. 5. Here, Aquinas engages Paul’s famous exhortation to husbands to love their wives “as Christ also loved the Church” (Eph. 5:25). Aquinas explains, “the sign of Christ’s love for the Church is that ‘he delivered himself up for her.’”87 He then quotes Isa. 53:12 (“‘He has delivered his soul unto death’”).88 The text of Isaiah functions here to further illustrate the point from Ephesians about Christ freely delivering himself over to death. Aquinas’ overall

82 Super ad Ephesios, c. 5, l. 1, 270.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7. My translation of Isa. 53:7, from “‘oblatus est, quia ipse voluit, et cetera.’”
86 Ibid., c. 5, l. 1, 270, quoting Ps. 51:19.
87 Ibid., c. 5, l. 8, 323, quoting Eph. 5:25.
88 Ibid., c. 5, l. 8, 323, quoting Isa. 53:12.
point is that husbands who truly love their wives will lay down their lives for them, just as Christ’s true love for the Church led him to lay down his life for his mystical bride.

D. Cases of Isa. 53 in the Commentaries on 2 Thessalonians and 2 Timothy

Aquinas makes 1 reference to Isa. 53 in both his Commentary on 2 Thessalonians and his Commentary on 2 Timothy. In 2 Thess. 3:2 Paul states that “‘not all men have faith.”’ Aquinas reads this as referring to “false apostles” and “persecutors” of the Church who appear to have faith but in reality do not. He then quotes Isa. 53:1 as a biblical text which speaks of those who lack faith in Christ: “‘Lord, who has believed what we have heard?’” Thus, once again Aquinas reads Isa. 53:1 as a reference to those unbelievers who have refused to believe in the good news about Christ.

In 2 Tim. 2:9, Paul says that he has labored on behalf of Christ “even unto chains, as an evildoer.” Here, according to Aquinas, Paul is describing himself to Timothy “as an example of martyrdom.” Paul’s martyrdom includes enduring the “pain” [poena] of “shame before unbelievers,” and this is what Paul means by calling himself an “‘evildoer.” For, Aquinas explains, in the days of Paul “Christians were regarded as the worst of criminals.” Aquinas then concludes with the following comment upon Isa. 53:12: “For Christ was also condemned as

89 Thomas Aquinas, Super II ad Thessalonicenses, c. 3, l. 1, 65, quoting 2 Thess. 3:2. The Latin version of Aquinas’ text is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation is that which was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Fabian Larcher.
90 Ibid., c. 3, l. 1, 65.
91 Ibid., c. 3, l. 1, 65, quoting Isa. 53:1.
92 Thomas Aquinas, Super II ad Timotheum, c. 2, l. 2, 50. The Latin text cited here is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation is that which was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Fabian Larcher.
93 Ibid., 51, quoting 2 Tim. 2:9.
94 Ibid., c. 2, l. 2, 51.
an evildoer: ‘he was reputed with the wicked.’”\textsuperscript{95} Paul has been rejected by unbelievers and persecuted as a criminal for his faith in Christ. In this way, Paul shares in the suffering of Christ who, as Isa. 53 shows, was also falsely judged and condemned as a criminal. Christians thus need to take heart in the fact that when they are errantly treated as evildoers due to their faith in Christ they are in fact sharing in the suffering of Christ. For they are suffering the same type of unjust rejection that Christ suffered, and thus they participate in the merit of Christ’s cross.

**E. Cases of Isa. 53 in the *Commentary on Hebrews***

The last Pauline commentary that we will examine in this chapter is Aquinas’ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, which features 5 references to Isa. 53. The 1st occurs in the first lecture on Heb. 7. The context needed to understand Aquinas’ analysis of these verses begins with Heb. 6:20, which states that Christ is a “high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedech.” In order to explain what it means to say that Christ is of the “order of Melchizedech,” Heb. 7 highlights certain aspects of the description of this priestly figure in Gen. 14. For Aquinas, Christ is of the order of Melchizedech because the “qualities” of the latter made him a “similitude [similitudinem]” of Christ.\textsuperscript{96} One such Christological quality is mentioned in Heb. 7:3, which states that Melchizdech was “without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” Hebrews says this, Aquinas reasons, “because in Scripture no mention is made of his [Melchizedech’s] father or mother or genealogy.”\textsuperscript{97} One of the reasons for this silence on the part of Scripture “is because the generation of Christ is

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\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.

\textsuperscript{96} Thomas Aquinas, *Super ad Hebraeos* c. 7, l. 1, 326. The Latin text cited here is the 1953 Marietti edition; the English translation is that which was edited by the Aquinas Institute and based on the earlier version by Fabian Larcher.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., c. 7, l. 1, 333. See Gen. 14:18-20 and Ps. 110:4.
ineffable: ‘who shall declare his generation?’” Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:8 here in reference to Christ’s “eternal generation” from the Father, a generation that “is spiritual, as splendor from the sun.” In this spiritual way, the Son was born of the Father before all time. So, for Aquinas, both Isa. 53 and Heb. 7 point to the incomprehensible, eternal generation of the Son from the Father.

The 2nd reference to Isa. 53 in the Super ad Hebraeos occurs in the fourth lecture on Heb. 7. Heb. 7:27-28 contrasts the numerous sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood with the one sacrifice of Christ. Whereas Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices in reparation for their own sins as well as those of the people, Aquinas says that this was not the case with Christ. For Christ “did not offer for his own sins but for ours: ‘he was wounded for our iniquities.’” Aquinas’ purpose here is to contrast the imperfection of the Levitical priests with the perfect priesthood of Christ. Christ was sinless, and therefore he had no need to offer sacrifices on his own behalf, much less to repeatedly offer new sacrifices in response to his daily sins. Rather, as Isa. 53:5 shows, Christ is the unique priest who offers sacrifice solely in response to the sins of others. Thus, in this context Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:5 in order to explain why Christ died, namely, for the good of sinners, and not for himself. In this sense, Isa. 53:5 bears witness to the completely disinterested love of Christ on the cross.

Aquinas next quotes Isa. 53 in his fifth lecture on Heb. 9, while commenting on Heb. 9:27-8. These verses state, “as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so also Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many.” Aquinas acknowledges that Christ, insofar as he died only once, is like all other people. But, there is also a way in which Christ’s

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98 Ibid., c. 7, l. 1, 333, quoting Isa. 53:8.
99 Ibid., c. 7, l. 1, 333.
100 Super ad Hebraeos, c. 7, l. 1, 333.
101 Ibid., c. 7, l. 4, 376, quoting Isa. 53:5.
experience of death differs from the rest of humanity’s way of dying. For Christ “did not contract original sin,” Aquinas explains, and so “consequently, he was not obliged by that statute: ‘for in what day soever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen 2:17).”

Rather, “he underwent death by his own will.” Aquinas then points to the statement of Heb. 9:28 that “Christ was offered [oblatus] once” and connects this with Isa. 53:7: “‘he was offered [oblatus] because he himself willed it.’”

Isa. 53:7 shows that Christ endured death because he freely chose to do so. Unlike all other human beings, Christ did not have to die, but in freedom, he chose to die for us. We are created and born with a passible nature that is subject to death, apart from our decisions. Conversely, Christ freely chose to be conceived and born as a man who would be subject to suffering and death, and his eventual succumbing to death by crucifixion only occurred because he allowed it to happen. In this way, the absolutely gratuitous love of Christ for us is revealed.

The 4th use of Isa. 53 occurs in Aquinas’ first lecture on Heb. 12. Aquinas comments on Paul’s exhortation that Christians should look to the way Jesus endured his Passion as an example and always strive to “think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself” (Heb. 12:2). Aquinas says that Paul exhorts such reflection because “the remedy for every tribulation is found in the cross,” and “an example of every virtue is found in the cross.” He then quotes Isa. 53:7 as a text that witnesses to the virtue of “patience in adversity” that Christ enacted in his Passion: “‘he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.’” Isaiah

102 Ibid., c. 9, l. 5, 477, quoting Gn. 2:17.
103 Super ad Hebraeos, c. 9, l. 5, 477.
104 Ibid., c. 9, l. 5, 477. The translation of Isa. 53:7 is my own, from “oblatus est quia ipse voluit.”
105 Ibid., c. 12, l. 1, 667.
106 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
describes Christ enduring his Passion quietly, innocently, and non-violently. Christ does not even verbally lash out against his enemies as they assault him. Rather, he is a model of the Christian call to persevere in justice even amidst the worst circumstances.

The 5th and final reference to Isa. 53 in the Super ad Hebraeos occurs in the fourth lecture on Heb. 12. Commenting upon the statement in Heb. 12:24 that the blood which Christ shed in his Passion “speak better than that [blood] of Abel,” Aquinas first establishes the basic point that in the Old Testament Abel’s death and the deaths of every just person at the hands of sinners “prefigured” the “shedding of Christ’s blood.” But prefigurement does not mean strict equivalency, for, as Aquinas explains, “Christ’s blood speaks better than Abel’s blood, because Abel’s blood cries for vengeance, but Christ’s blood cries for pardon.” In order to support this statement, Aquinas proceeds to quote, among other biblical texts, Isa. 53:12: “he prayed for the transgressors.” Isaiah’s text shows that the shedding of Christ’s blood was not followed by an act of divine vengeance against the enemies of Christ, but rather by an act of divine mercy.

III. Conclusion and Synthesis

In the Scriptum, Aquinas employs Isa. 53 on 7 occasions in support of his systematic consideration of the mystery of Christ’s Passion. With the help of Isa. 53, he affirms that Christ really experienced the ‘punishments’ [poena] of suffering and death, and that he did so for two reasons. First, he possessed a passible, mortal animal nature in common with all of Adam’s descendants. Second, he experienced the punishment of being physically assaulted by his enemies. Crucially, for Aquinas, Christ did not experience poena due to his own sins, but rather

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107 Super ad Hebraeos, c. 12, l. 4, 712, quoting Heb. 12:24.
108 Ibid., c. 12, l. 4, 712.
109 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
as a consequence of our sins—both original sin and actual sins. Aquinas acknowledges, in light of Isa. 53, that the intense suffering and deformity which Christ experienced in his Passion was an obstacle to some people’s faith in his divinity. But drawing upon Paul in 1 Cor. 1, he says the Passion was still fittingly ordered towards Christ’s revelatory mission, since the cross is a testimony to the wisdom and strength of God.

Christ’s Passion also merited for sinners the grace of salvation, and it did so precisely because he freely chose to suffer out of charity. As an act of perfect satisfaction for all of humanity’s sins, Christ’s Passion results in the removal of all temporal punishments for sinners insofar as they participate in his Passion. Christ’s charity unto death accomplished what justice demanded in response to sin, and we participate in that satisfaction through faith, baptism, charity, and penance. Fallen humanity’s punishment of possessing a passible, mortal nature will not be removed until the eschaton. But the punishments incurred as a result of actual sins are removed by baptism. Christ’s grace empowers us to avoid further actual sin, and thus to avoid the temporal punishments that we would incur as a result of those sins. If we do sin, the need for temporal punishment is diminished in the repentant the more they are united to Christ in charity. But, conversely, the more conformed to Christ’s charity we are, the more we will suffer precisely because we will labor to make satisfaction for the sins of others. Finally, Aquinas interprets the offerings and sacrifices of the Old Testament as signs and foreshadowing of Christ’s voluntary offering of his body and blood in sacrifice to God on our behalf.

In the commentaries on the letters of Paul, Aquinas uses Isa. 53 as an aid in his theological exegesis of Paul’s teaching on Christ’s Passion. Both Hebrews and Isaiah witness to the fact that Christ, the Suffering Servant, is eternally born of the Father in a divine generation which lies beyond the comprehension and experience of humanity. Isaiah shows that the
eternally begotten Son of the Father freely offered himself up upon the cross, just as Paul indicates when recounting the fact that Christ instituted the sacramental memorial of his Passion on the night before he died. Nevertheless, there are many who have doubted and rejected belief in the voluntary, saving death and exaltation of God incarnate. This was especially the case during the Old Testament, when the prophetic revelation of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ in Isaiah was imperfect in comparison to its historical realization in the person of Jesus. Even so, Isaiah makes it clear that Christ did not die from chance: Scripture foretold his Passion and burial which were willed by God for the sake of saving us from sin and which were the necessary preconditions for his resurrection. For both Paul and Isaiah, Christ is the ‘last’ Adam, not in the sense of being the least, most despicable of men, as his enemies thought, but rather in the sense of ushering in and personally realizing the final, glorified state which has been made accessible to all sinners.

Isa. 53 testifies to the reality of Christ’s love, for it shows that he actively chose to deliver himself up for sinners and bear their burden of suffering and infirmity. Similarly, Christians who wish to participate in Christ’s charity and Passion must bear one another’s burdens and deliver themselves up for one another. In addition, all Christians who must endure the shame of being falsely judged as an evildoer by their peers share in the martyrdom of Christ, for he too had to bear the shame and punishment of false judgment. In this way, it can be said that Christ was ‘made sin’ for us, insofar as he was falsely regarded as a sinner by those who condemned him. The reality is that Christ was completely free from sin, and so unlike the Levitical priests who offered sacrifices for their own sins, Christ’s sacrifice was offered exclusively to take away our sins. The Levitical, liturgical sacrifices for sin, thanksgiving and petition are all fulfilled by Christ’s free sacrifice of his body and blood. Christ’s Passion is also the model of all the moral
virtues, for he never failed to exercise perfect justice towards all even amidst his suffering.

Christ suffered and died with perfect patience, and he prayed for those who killed him. In this, the profound mercy of God is revealed.
Chapter 5: The Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew

Our qualitative analysis of Aquinas’s reception of Isaiah 53 will now begin to turn towards the chronological and intellectual summit of Aquinas’s theological career. We have already seen how Aquinas used the Suffering Servant text of Isa. 53 in his cursory commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations. We have also analyzed his use of Isa. 53 in the early, systematic Commentary on the Sentences as well as in his mid-career commentaries on the Letters of Paul. The next three works that we will examine, namely, the Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, the Commentary on the Gospel of John, and the Summa Theologiae may be considered the zenith of our project for a few reasons. First, these three works are among the last that Aquinas produced, and so they bear witness to his mature thought. Second, they are his most theologically and exegetically rich works and they manifest his mature synthesis between biblical exegesis and theology. Third, each of these works contains at least 15 cases of Isa. 53. Up to this point our consideration of Aquinas’s works has been analogous to treading a long, level path, for we have examined a variety of works that all featured relatively few cases of Isa. 53. In the Commentary on Matthew the number of instances of Isa. 53 increases dramatically. It is as if our path has begun to ascend up a mountain with a high peak. At the summit of that peak is the ST. After enjoying the view from that summit we will descend the mountain along the smooth and brief road of Aquinas’s commentaries on the Psalms and the Letter to the Romans.

Our upward journey towards the ST begins with the Lectura super Mattheum. Aquinas most likely wrote this commentary on Matthew’s Gospel during his second regency in Paris between the years of 1269-1270.1 While teaching as a Master of Theology at the University of Paris, Aquinas gave a course of lectures on Matthew’s Gospel. The contents of these lectures

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were written down by two people in attendance, the Dominican friar Peter of Andria and the secular cleric Ligier de Besançon. Each man recorded different portions of Aquinas’s teaching on Matthew, and it is the combination of their distinct reports that constitutes the super Matthaeum as we have it today.²

I. Cases of Isaiah 53 in the Lectura super Matthaeum

In the super Matthaeum Aquinas explicitly quotes the text of Isa. 53 a total number of 24 times.³ He quotes Isa. 53:7 the most, with a total of 12 explicit citations.⁴ The remaining quotations are as follows: v. 4 (4 cases), v. 8 (3 cases), v. 12 (2 cases), v. 2-3 (2 cases), v. 5 (1 case). In this chapter, I will examine each of Aquinas’s quotations of Isa. 53 according to the order of the verses in that chapter of Isaiah. I will begin with the 2 cases of Isa. 53:2-3, and then proceed to the 4 cases of v. 4, and so forth. As with preceding chapters, I will conclude with a theological synthesis of Aquinas’s interpretations of Isa. 53.

A. Cases of Isaiah 53:2 and 3

Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:2-3 once and makes an additional quote only of v. 3. The 1st quote occurs in the third lecture on Mt. 13. Aquinas quotes Isa. 53 in the service of a Christological interpretation of the parable of the mustard seed. Drawing upon Hilary, Aquinas identifies Christ as the grain of mustard seed. Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit, and through

³ The Lectura super Matthaeum will henceforth be referred to as the super Matthaeum. The Latin text cited is the 1951 Marietti edition. The English translation, unless otherwise noted, is by Jeremy Holmes and Beth Mortensen and has been edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute. Both the Latin and English texts are available online at https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Matt. Citations will note the chapter, lecture, and paragraph numbers referred to.
⁴ Isa. 53:7 states: “He was offered because he himself willed it, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.”
his death he sows the Spirit into humanity (i.e. the field). As a result of the Spirit who lives within them, believers grow up and become perfected, like a mature tree that grew from a seed. This is despite the fact that they came from Christ, a seed that “was smallest of all on account of unbelievers’ contempt.”\footnote{Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Super Mattheum}, c. 13, l. 3, 1164.} In order to further testify to the fact that Christ was rejected and counted as one who is of little value, Aquinas quotes a combination of Isa. 53:2b-3a: “\textit{We have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him; despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity.}”\footnote{Ibid., citing Isa. 53:2-3.} Aquinas uses Isa. 53 here in order to indicate what it means to say that Christ the mustard seed was miniature and unimpressive in size: Christ was despised and scorned by countless unbelievers. And yet, through his rejection and death, he sowed the seed that would eventually develop into the mature tree that is the Church.

Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:3 in the sixth lecture on Mt. 26. After describing Jesus’ arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, Mt. 26:56 states, “\textit{all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.}”\footnote{Ibid., c. 26, l. 6, 2266, quoting Mt. 26:56.} Commenting upon this verse, Aquinas boldly claims that Matthew does not specify which biblical texts are fulfilled through Christ’s arrest since the Passion of Christ “is found as it were in all” of the Scriptures.\footnote{Ibid., c. 26, l. 6, 2266.} Nevertheless, in order to prove the evangelist’s point, Aquinas himself quotes Ps. 22:17-18 and then loosely quotes Isa. 53:3a, saying that the Servant of the Lord was “\textit{considered the last of men, a man of pains.}”\footnote{Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:3. Translation my own, from “Et Is. LIII, 3: ‘reputavimus eum novissimum virorium, virum dolorum.’”} Aquinas then explains that Christ’s Passion did not occur because the prophets predicted that it would,
“but rather they predicted it for this reason, that it was to happen.”\textsuperscript{10} This simply means that Christ did not suffer and die in order to vindicate the prophecies contained in Isa. 53 and numerous other Old Testament texts. Rather, these prophecies exist because God knew that he would become Incarnate, suffer and die for our salvation.

\textbf{B. Cases of Isaiah 53:4}

Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:4 a total of 4 times. The 1st instance is found in the first lecture on Mt. 8. In Mt. 8:1-4 Jesus heals a man who is suffering with leprosy, and Aquinas uses this narrative to provide a reflection upon the spiritual significance of leprosy. He points out how the physical illness of leprosy produces external, visible effects upon the body of the ill person. Similarly, there are some spiritual illnesses of the will which cause sinners to perform external, public acts of evil.\textsuperscript{11} These public acts point to the hidden, invisible sickness of the sinner’s will. A spiritual leper may thus be defined as someone whose wicked will is publicly displayed for all to see. Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:4 in order to give an example of such a spiritual leper, though his example is an ironic one: “‘We have thought him as it were a leper.’”\textsuperscript{12} The text of Isa. 53 shows how the visible suffering of the Servant led people to believe that his invisible will was dominated by spiritual illness. The Suffering Servant appeared to be a spiritual leper, but in fact his external symptoms did not accurately manifest the interior health of his will. Christ is viewed as a spiritually ill sinner, when in fact he is the most righteous of all people.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53:4 occurs in the third lecture on Mt. 8. In Mt. 8:14-17 Jesus miraculously heals Peter’s mother-in-law as well as numerous other ill and possessed people.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., c. 26, l. 6, 2266.  
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., c. 8, l. 1, 682.  
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., citing Isaiah 53:4.
Matthew the Evangelist interprets Jesus’ healings as fulfilling Isa. 53:4, which the Evangelist himself quotes in the Gospel: “‘he took our infirmities and bore our diseases.’” Aquinas says that the Evangelist quotes Isaiah here in order to provide additional scriptural testimony to the fact that Jesus healed people, for “it might seem extraordinary that he should cure so many.” Aquinas then explicates the meaning of the text of Isa. 53:4 considered in itself, apart from the way it is used in Mt. 8:17. Isaiah’s claim that the Suffering Servant “‘took’” and “‘bore’” our illnesses can mean that he “removed” or “took away” our sins from us. In this case, Christ liberates us from both “‘infirmities’”[“light sins”] and “‘diseases’”[“greater sins”]. Another possible meaning of this prophecy is that it refers to the fact that Christ himself shared in the suffering and death that we all experience. In a seeming combination of these two meanings, Aquinas concludes this exegesis of Isa. 53:4 by claiming that it speaks of how Christ “accepted passibility for taking away our infirmity and disease.” That is, Christ assumed a human nature that was subject to suffering and death for the purpose of taking away humanity’s sins.

Having considered the meaning of Isa. 53:4 in itself, Aquinas returns to its use in Mt. 8:17. He acknowledges that Matthew uses Isa. 53:4 in connection with Jesus’ physical healings, and this seems unfitting given that the Old Testament text itself is about how the suffering Servant heals people from sin. Nevertheless, Matthew is justified in citing Isa. 53:4 in response to Jesus’ physical healings, for “often bodily diseases are caused by spiritual sins.” So, according to Aquinas, Isa. 53:4 is cited by Mt. 8:17 for two reasons: first, to provide further biblical testimony to the fact that Jesus healed many people; second, to show that Jesus could

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13 Ibid., c. 8, l. 3, 715, citing Isaiah 53:4 and Mt. 8:17.
14 Ibid., c. 8, l. 3, 715.
15 Ibid., citing Isaiah 53:4.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., c. 8, l. 3, 715. This is another example of a pluriform literal sense.
18 Ibid.
heal people’s bodies precisely because he could first heal their souls. By entering into solidarity with suffering, mortal humans, Jesus was able to take away both our sins and our physical ailments. Jesus is the physician who heals both the soul and the body.

The 3rd quotation of Isa. 53:4 is in the third lecture on Mt. 23. In Mt. 23:37 Jesus laments over the sins and unbelief of Jerusalem, saying “‘How often would I have gathered together your children, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not?”19 Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:4 in his explanation of why Christ may have chosen the metaphor of the hen and her chicks to describe his relationship to Jerusalem. He says, “It is said that there is no animal so compassionate to chicks as the hen. The hen defends them from the kite, and exposes her life for them, and gathers them under her wings. In the same way, Christ has pity on us: ‘surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.”20 Like the hen for her chicks, Christ the Suffering Servant exposes himself to pain and death in order to defend his spiritual children against spiritual evils and gather them into the safety of his mystical body. Christ bears the burden of his Passion so that we may be spared the burden of sin and eternal death. Aquinas thus interprets the metaphor of the hen in a somewhat counterintuitive way. While the metaphor does signify the tender love of a mother for her children, this is not a merely comfortable love in which the hen snuggles her chicks safely under her wings. Rather, the love of the hen is a love which risks all and bears all pains for the protection and nourishment of her children.

The 4th and final case of Isa. 53:4 in the super Matthaeum occurs in the first lecture on Mt. 26. Mt. 26:6 says that Jesus went to Bethany and visited “‘the house of Simon the leper.”21 Aquinas draws out a figurative, Christological sense from the name ‘Bethany’ as well as the fact

19 Ibid., c. 23, l.3, 1899, citing Mt. 23:37.
20 Ibid., citing Isa. 53:4.
21 Ibid., c. 26, l. 1, 2128, citing Mt. 26:6.
that Simon was a leper. Aquinas claims that the name “‘Bethania’ means ‘house of obedience.’”\(^\text{22}\) This signifies the obedience of Christ, an obedience that he maintained up to and throughout his Passion. Aquinas quotes from Phil. 2:8 in order to provide biblical testimony to Christ’s unwavering obedience to the Father. In light of this allusion to Christ’s obedience in the name ‘Bethany,’ Aquinas goes on to explain how “it was fitting that he be in a leper’s house,” for “‘we have thought him as it were a leper.’”\(^\text{23}\) The quotation of Isa. 53:4 functions to associate leprosy with the obedience of Christ’s Passion. ‘Bethany’ signifies Christ’s obedience unto death and ‘leprosy’ signifies the fact that the crucified Christ’s peers viewed him as if he was a grave sinner and threat to society. Yet, the truth is that the leprosy of Christ referred to by Isa. 53:4 is actually the result of the unconditional obedience that he offered to the Father, an obedience referred to by Phil. 2:8. The obedience of Christ unto death is viewed as an abhorrent and dangerous leprosy by the world. Christ, the perfectly obedient one, is viewed as spiritually ill.

C. One Case of Isaiah 53:5

The lone case of Isa. 53:5 is found in the second lecture on Mt. 27. Aquinas uses Isa. 53 in the service of a spiritual interpretation of the “‘scarlet cloak’” that the soldiers placed upon Christ along with the crown of thorns.\(^\text{24}\) Aquinas says that this scarlet cloak “can signify Christ’s body, stained with his blood,” and then he immediately quotes Isa. 53:5: “‘he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins.’”\(^\text{25}\) The text from Isaiah here performs the simple function of providing an additional biblical witness to the reality of Christ’s wounds and bruises,

\(^\text{22}\) Ibid., c. 26, l. 1, 2128.
\(^\text{23}\) Ibid., c. 26, l. 1, 2128, citing Isa. 53:4.
\(^\text{24}\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 2, 2349, quoting Mt. 27:28.
\(^\text{25}\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 2, 2349, quoting Isa. 53:5.
on account of which his body would have been covered with blood and red discoloration. Isa. 53:5 testifies to the historical reality of which the scarlet cloak is a figure. Christ’s body was covered in the red of wounds and the red of mockery, and he exposed himself to this suffering in order to save humanity from its sins.

**D. Cases of Isaiah 53:7**

The 1st of Aquinas’s 12 quotations from Isa. 53:7 is found in his second lecture on Mt. 1. Commenting upon the genealogy of Jesus, Aquinas presents a Christological interpretation of a name found in v. 4. The name “‘Aminadab’” means “spontaneous,” and it signifies Christ’s free sacrificial offering of himself. Aquinas provides biblical testimony to the reality of Christ’s free offering by quoting Isa. 53:7: “‘he was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth.’” As we shall see, Aquinas will repeatedly quote Isa. 53:7 throughout the super Matthaeum in order to emphasize the freedom with which Christ endured his Passion.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53:7 occurs in the fourth lecture on Mt. 2. Mt. 2:15 explains how Joseph, Mary and the newborn Jesus went to live in Egypt and remained there until Herod died. The evangelist says that this sojourn in Egypt occurred in fulfillment of a prophecy contained in Hos. 11:1. In Aquinas’s Latin version of Matthew, this prophecy reads as “‘out of Egypt have I called my son.’” Aquinas points out that the immediate context of Hos. 11:1 makes it clear that the ‘son’ referred to here is “‘Israel.’” That is, Israel is the beloved child of God. This observation requires Aquinas to explain Matthew’s rationale in citing Hos. 11:1 in reference to

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27 Ibid.


29 Ibid., citing Hosea 11:1: “‘Israel was a child, and I loved him: and I called my son out of Egypt.’”
Christ. Aquinas says that the New Testament cites some Old Testament texts because they “speak specially [specialiter] of Christ,” such as Isa. 53:7: “‘he will be led as a sheep to the slaughter.’”\textsuperscript{30} But the New Testament cites other Old Testament texts which merely “speak of certain things according as they introduced a figure of Christ,” and such is the case with Hos. 11:1.\textsuperscript{31} The “children of Israel . . . bore a likeness of the true only-begotten Son.”\textsuperscript{32} Whereas Hosea’s prophecy speaks of Christ only in a figurative way, Isaiah’s prophecy speaks of Christ in a straightforward and clear way. Hosea speaks directly of a reality (Israel) that bears a figurative likeness to Christ, but Isa. 53 speaks directly of the reality of Christ himself.

The 3rd occurrence of Isa. 53:7 is in the second lecture on Mt. 10. In Mt. 10:16, Jesus tells his Apostles that he is going to send them on a mission and that they will be “‘as sheep [oves] among wolves.’”\textsuperscript{33} Aquinas points out that the Apostles are thus compared to Christ himself, for in Isa. 53:7 Christ is also called a sheep: “‘he will be led as a sheep [oves] to the slaughter.’” Both Christ and his Apostles are thus sent by God on a mission that involves them entering into danger. They enter into this dangerous context with “meekness,” rather than with weapons, in order to display God’s power.\textsuperscript{34} “For,” as Aquinas explains, “it was a great thing that by paupers, and the despised, and the unarmed so many were converted to the Lord.”\textsuperscript{35} Hence, Isa. 53:7 and Mt. 10:16, read alongside one another, show how Christ and his Apostles are both like peaceful sheep who do “no harm” to anyone.\textsuperscript{36} Christ and his missionaries spread

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., c. 2, l. 4, 216, citing Isa. 53:7.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., c. 2, l. 4, 216.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., c. 10, l. 2, 838, citing Mt. 10:16.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., c. 10, l. 2, 838.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 841.
the Gospel peacefully, without violence, even at great cost to themselves. In this, the power of
God is revealed.

The 4th instance of Isa. 53:7 is in the first lecture on Mt. 12. In Mt. 12:18-21 the
evangelist quotes Isa. 42:1-4 in reference to Christ. Isa. 42:2 says that the Servant of the Lord
“\textit{will not . . . cry out.}” Aquinas says that this text shows how Christ did not act out against
those who opposed him, nor did he verbally complain or emotionally “murmur” about them. Aquinas
provides further biblical testimony to the merciful silence of Christ in the face of his
opposition by quoting Isa. 53:7, which states that the suffering Servant “\textit{will be led as a sheep to
the slaughter, and will be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he will not open his mouth.}”
Thus, Aquinas interprets Isa. 53:7 alongside Isa. 42:2 and concludes that both texts point to the
peaceful nature of Christ’s interaction with his opponents. Christ’s emotions, words and actions
were completely free of violence towards those who rejected him and his message. Christ
remained peacefully silent and passive in the face of those who persecuted him.

The 5th case of Isa. 53:7 is in the second lecture on Mt. 20. In Mt. 20:17-19, Jesus warns
his disciples of his imminent arrest and execution in Jerusalem. As Aquinas points out, Jesus
gives this ominous prophecy while he and his disciples are traveling on their way to Jerusalem.
This is significant, for it shows that Jesus enters into his Passion freely. He is deliberately going
to Jerusalem even though he knows that by doing so he is exposing himself to persecution and
death. In order to emphasize the fact that Christ went to Jerusalem “by his own will,” Aquinas
quotes Isa. 53:7: “\textit{he was offered because it was his own will.}” Christ not only freely endured

\footnotesize{37} Ibid., c. 12, l. 1, 1002, citing Isa. 42:2 and Mt. 12:19.
\footnotesize{38} Ibid., c. 12, l. 1, 1002.
\footnotesize{39} Ibid., citing Isa. 53:7.
\footnotesize{40} Ibid., c. 20, l. 2, 1651, citing Isa. 53:7.
the violence that was inflicted upon him in the moments that it was inflicted. He also freely and knowingly chose beforehand to go to the place where he would be afflicted.

The 6th case of Isa. 53:7 occurs in the second lecture on Mt. 21. In Mt. 21:39, amidst the larger context of Jesus’ parable of the wicked tenants, we are told that the tenants take the son of the vineyard owner and kill him outside of the vineyard. Aquinas explains how this aspect of the parable points to the fact that Christ was crucified outside of the city gates of Jerusalem. Then, he quotes Isa. 53:7: “‘He will be led as a sheep to the slaughter.’”41 The function of the text of Isaiah here seems to be simply to reiterate the basic Christological interpretation of v. 39 in Jesus’ parable, that is, that Jesus is the son who is killed by the tenants. Both Isa. 53 and Mt. 21:39 are pointing to the fact that Jesus will be violently accosted and put to death.

The 7th case of Isa. 53:7 is found in the third lecture on Mt. 25. In Mt. 25:31-46 Jesus describes how he will return to earth in the future to judge the nations. Just as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, so too Jesus will eternally separate the just from the unjust. He will “‘set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.’”42 Commenting upon this passage from Mt. 25:33, Aquinas inquires as to why Jesus compares the just to sheep. He identifies four reasons for this, and each reason pertains to a positive trait of sheep as described by Scripture. Sheep provide abundant, good fruits such as milk and wool. They are also innocent, obedient, and patient. Aquinas provides a biblical witness to the patience of sheep by quoting Isa. 53:7: “‘he will be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and will be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he will not open his mouth.’”43 Isa. 53:7 thus functions here as an interpretative aid for the significance of the sheep analogy employed by Jesus. The just sheep who will receive eternal

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41 Ibid., c. 21, l. 2, 1745, citing Isa. 53:7.
42 Ibid., c. 25, l. 3, 2090, citing Mt. 25:33.
43 Ibid., c. 25, l. 3, 2089, citing Isa. 53:7.
life from Christ are those who, among other things, have shared in the patience of Christ. Just as Christ endured his suffering for the kingdom with patience, and merited resurrection and exaltation as a result, so too those sheep who exercise patience out of love for God will be eternally exalted with Christ.

The 8th instance of Isa. 53:7 is in the second lecture on Mt. 26. In Mt. 26:24, Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper that one of them will betray him. He states, “‘the Son of man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man will be betrayed.’” Aquinas says that the fact that Jesus prophesied his betrayal, and grounded his prophecy in Scripture, indicates that his betrayal and death occurred “by his own will.” He then quotes Isa. 53:7 in order to prove that Christ freely chose to endure betrayal and death: “‘he was offered because it was his own will.’” Aquinas concludes his reflection upon the voluntary character of Christ’s Passion by saying “thus, nothing harms the Son of man, because he himself ordains what comes to pass.” Isa. 53:7 as well as Mt. 26:24 bear witness to the absolute freedom and control of Christ over his destiny. Christ was betrayed and killed only because he allowed himself to be betrayed and killed and because he actively willed to refrain from using his divine power to escape the suffering and death inflicted upon him.

The 9th case of Isa. 53:7 is in the third lecture on Mt. 26. Mt. 26:26 states that during the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper Jesus “‘broke’” the Eucharistic bread prior to giving it to his disciples to eat. Aquinas says that this breaking of the bread is symbolic of three things, namely, the Incarnation, the Passion, and the effects of both upon humanity. Christ

\[44\] Ibid., c. 26, l. 2, 2164-5, citing Mt. 2624.
\[45\] Ibid., c. 26, l. 2, 2164.
\[46\] Ibid., citing Isa. 53:7.
\[47\] Ibid., c. 26, l. 2, 2164.
\[48\] Ibid., c. 26, l. 3, 2177, citing Mt. 26:26.
broke the bread that became his Eucharistic body in order to symbolize the breaking of his body that would occur in the Passion. As Aquinas explains, the broken bread “signifies the mystery of his future passion, for his members were pierced in the Passion.”\textsuperscript{49} He then quotes Isa. 53:7, “‘he was offered because it was his own will,’” and then explains that Christ’s body was broken in the Passion “because he himself willed it.”\textsuperscript{50} That is, Christ freely willed to endure the suffering and death that was afflicted upon him in his Passion. So, Mt. 26:26 is the beginning of the realization of the event prophesied in Isa. 53:7, namely, that the Servant of the Lord will voluntarily offer up his body to be broken for the honor of God and the forgiveness of our sins. Thus, when Christians participate in the sacramental breaking of the bread, they remember Christ’s free handing over of his body to be broken for us, and they encounter that crucified and risen body in its sacramental form.

The 10th and 11th cases of Isa. 53:7 are found in the first lecture on Mt. 27. In Mt. 27:11-14 Jesus is interrogated by Pilate and accused by his adversaries, and yet he remains silent and does not defend himself. Aquinas says that this silence of Christ “fulfilled” Isa. 53:7, which he then quotes: “[he will be] dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he will not open his mouth.”\textsuperscript{51} Aquinas then claims that Pilate wished to free Christ, and so he continued to question him with the hope of finding sufficient cause to free him.\textsuperscript{52} Then, Aquinas inquires why Christ did not respond to Pilate’s questions.

In his explanation of possible answers to this inquiry, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:7 in the service of a rather jarring theological claim. The complexity of this use of Isa. 53 makes it worthwhile to examine the entirety of the immediate context in which it occurs:

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., c. 26, l. 3, 2177. Aquinas is here alluding to Psalm 22:17-18.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2326, quoting Isa. 53:7. My translation, from “per Is. LIII, 7: ‘quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum.’”
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2327.
As to why he did not respond, there can be a reason on Christ’s part, because he was unwilling to be excused from his passion: for he could have been excused from it by speaking, and this is why he was unwilling to speak.\textsuperscript{53} For ‘he was offered because he willed it’ \textit{[quia voluit]} (Isa. 53:7). Also, to give us an example, that one should not slander when one is slandered. Also, because the Jews had seen so many signs that they could have converted, and so he considered them unworthy; ‘where there is no hearing, pour not out words’ (Sir 32:6). And one should notice that he speaks on several occasions, and is silent on several occasions, for if he always spoke he would have excused himself;\textsuperscript{54} likewise if he was always silent, he would seem stubborn. However, he responds to Pilate sometimes, but never responds to the Jews, because Pilate was ignorant, and so he sometimes spoke the truth, but the Jews were obstinate.\textsuperscript{55}

Aquinas appears to be saying that Christ rarely responded to Pilate because, among other things, he did not want to escape the prospect of being violently put to death. By speaking, Christ could have convinced Pilate to set him free. But, as Isa. 53:7 indicates, Christ willed \textit{[voluit]} to be handed over to death, and so he did not speak to Pilate. The problem here is that this seems to imply that Christ wants to be misunderstood and rejected by his enemies. He wants people to commit the sins of doubting him, hating him, and putting him to death. If he did not want this to occur, he would have responded to Pilate’s questions, for this would have led Pilate to exonerate him. Such an interpretation is troubling because it indicates that God actively willed human ignorance and sin of the worst possible kind against God himself. Christ remained silent because he wanted his enemies to continue to doubt him, hate him, and put him to death. This would suggest a problematic conception of God, a conception that is both theologically inadequate and inconsistent with fundamental aspects of Aquinas’s theological vision. If this is what Aquinas is claiming here, with the explicit help of Isa. 53:7, then I think we need to reject this claim.

That being said, there are several indicators that Aquinas is not particularly committed to this explanation of the reason for Christ’s silence. First, it is worth noting that Aquinas begins

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2828. My translation, from \textit{“quia noluti excusare passionem suam: poterat enim eam excusare loquendo; ideo noluit loqui.”}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid. My translation, from \textit{“quia si semper loqueretur, excusaret se.”}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2828.
\end{itemize}
his explanation of Christ’s silence with the qualification that “there can be [potest esse] a reason on Christ’s part.” That is, the suggestion that Christ was silent because he was unwilling to escape death can be an explanation of this event, but that does not necessarily mean it is an explanation that Aquinas is fully dedicated to. Further, what type of possibility does Aquinas mean here - is this explanation possible from a literary standpoint, a theological standpoint, or both? Perhaps such an explanation is possible from a literary standpoint, but it is not possible from a Catholic theological standpoint. Second, Aquinas’s ensuing analysis of Pilate’s behavior towards Christ highlights a different, more intelligible reason for Christ’s silence. Pilate “‘wondered exceedingly’” at Christ’s silence, and Aquinas says one of the reasons for this is that Christ’s silence indicated “that he was not terrified” in the face of criminal accusation and prospective death.\(^{56}\) Christ did not respond to Pilate in order to show that he did not fear his enemies and their threats. From a theological standpoint, this is far more intelligible than saying that Christ was silent because he did not want Pilate to be persuaded to release him.

Third, and most significantly, Aquinas claims that Pilate tried to release Christ on multiple occasions, despite Christ’s silence! When Pilate asks the people “‘whom do you wish that I release to you?’” Aquinas says he did this because he wanted to release Jesus, and he was trying to lead the people to ask for Jesus’ release.\(^{57}\) Pilate did this because he preferred to release Jesus instead of Barabbas, since Barabbas was a violent criminal, but also because Pilate knew that Jesus had been brought to him out of envy.\(^{58}\) If Jesus refused to answer Pilate because he did not want Pilate to try to release him, then Jesus’ strategy failed miserably.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2329, quoting Mt. 27:14.  
\(^{57}\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2332, quoting Mt. 27: 17.  
\(^{58}\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2332-3.
Aquinas provides a particularly important reason for which Pilate sought to release Jesus, namely, that his wife advised him to do so. Pilate’s wife had “‘suffered many things this day in a vision because of’” Jesus.\(^59\) Aquinas offers two possible explanations for this dream: “we can \([\textit{possumus}]\) say that it was caused by God through good angels; or \([\textit{vel}]\) by the devil, who was bent on preventing the Passion.”\(^60\) If the dream is from God, then it was for the sake of preventing “the sin of murder” from being committed by those attempting to have Christ killed.\(^61\) But, if the dream was from the devil, then this was “not because he wanted to prevent the sin” of murder, but instead because he wanted “to prevent the fruit of the Passion.”\(^62\) Intriguingly, Aquinas is saying that we do not know for sure who was the source of Pilate’s wife’s dream. Regardless, what is very clear is that those who are trying to get Christ killed are guilty of the sin of murder, and God does not actively will this sin. In fact, God may have even given Pilate’s wife the dream in a final, supernatural attempt to persuade Pilate to ensure that the sin of murder was not enacted against Christ!\(^63\)

Therefore, when Aquinas employs Isa. 53:7 in support of the possibility that Christ was silent before Pilate because he did not wish to be excused from impending death, this is a tenuous theological and exegetical move. Aquinas’s own claim that Pilate repeatedly attempted to release Christ contradicts the very reason for which Christ is said to have been silent. It is also clear that those who sought to kill Christ were guilty of the sin of murder, and so Christ could not have in any way actively willed to help bring that sin about. Otherwise, Christ would seem to be guilty of both formal and material cooperation with evil. Further, the dream of Pilate’s wife

\(^59\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2334-6, quoting Mt. 27:19.
\(^60\) Ibid., c. 27, l. 1, 2336.
\(^61\) Ibid.
\(^62\) Ibid.
\(^63\) Aquinas further details Pilate’s attempts to release Jesus in C. 27, l. 1, 2338-2342.
could very well have been a miraculous, divine intervention enacted in order to prevent the sin of murder from occurring. Such an intervention would directly contradict the action of Christ if he had indeed been silent before Pilate in an attempt to get himself killed. Hence, in conclusion, it seems that Aquinas’ troubling use of Isa. 53:7 in this context is put forth merely as an initial, literally possible interpretation of the reason for Christ’s silence. But then as his analysis continues, Aquinas himself severely undermines the theological legitimacy of the initial interpretation that he proposed.

The 12th and last case of Isa. 53:7 is found in the second lecture on Mt. 27. Aquinas employs Isa. 53 in the service of another spiritual, figurative interpretation of Christ’s clothes. Mt. 27:31 notes that once the soldiers had finished mocking Christ they took away the scarlet cloak and put his own clothes back on him. Aquinas makes a very brief note on this passage, saying that Christ “is mocked in another’s clothing but led away [ducitur] in his own; which signifies that to be mocked was not his own, but to be killed.” Aquinas does not provide any further explicit explanation of what he means here. He simply quotes Phil. 2:8, and then says “For his [Christ’s] strength was made apparent there.” After this statement Aquinas quotes Ps. 118:16 and then Isa. 53:7: “he will be led [ducetur] as a sheep to the slaughter.” Unfortunately, the theological point that Aquinas is attempting to make here is vague, and so as a result the precise reason for which he is quoting Isa. 53 is also unclear. At the very least, he appears to be observing a linguistic connection between Mt. 27:31 and Isa. 53:7, both of which speak of Christ being ‘led away’ to be killed. Aquinas does not explicitly cite the portion of the Latin text of Mt. 27:31 that contains this phrase, but he alludes to it at the beginning of paragraph

64 Ibid., c. 27, l. 2, 2355.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
when he says that Christ was “led away” [ducitur] to be crucified in his own clothing. The text of Matthew says that the soldiers “led him away [duxerunt] to crucify him.” So, Isa. 53:7 and Mt. 27:31 both testify to the same event, albeit from different historical standpoints. Christ was led away to the slaughter like a helpless sheep.

E. Cases of Isaiah 53:8

The 1st of Aquinas’s 3 references to Isa. 53:8 occurs in the first lecture on Mt. 1. Aquinas is commenting upon Mt. 1:1, where the evangelist begins to set out “the book of the generation of Jesus Christ.”67 Aquinas points out that this attempt to describe Christ’s genealogy appears to be “contrary” to Isa. 53:8, which asks of the suffering Servant: “who will declare his generation?”68 Following Jerome, Aquinas solves this problem by distinguishing between Christ’s eternal generation from the Father and his temporal, human generation from Mary. The former “cannot be recounted,” for not even the angels “can comprehend the manner in which he is begotten” of the Father.69 It is this eternal, divine generation that Isa. 53:8 speaks of, while Mt. 1:1 is concerned with Christ’s human genealogy.70 Hence, while Isaiah alludes to Christ’s divine nature, Matthew’s genealogy highlights Christ’s human nature.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53:8 is found in the fourth lecture on Mt. 22. In Mt. 22:42, Jesus asks the Pharisees “what do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?”71 Commenting on this verse, Aquinas says “this question was most difficult,” and then he identifies the source of the difficulty by quoting Isa. 53:8: “most difficult, because it says, ‘who will declare his

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67 Ibid., c. 1, l. 1, 15; citing Matthew 1:1.
68 Ibid., c. 1, l. 1, 15.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., c. 22, l. 4, 1822, citing Mt. 22:42.
Aquinas is using the text of Isaiah here in order to show how Scripture testifies to the fact that many would be unable to fully identify who the Christ was descended from. Isaiah’s prophecy previews the inadequacy of the Pharisees’ response to Jesus in Mt. 21:42, where they say that the Christ is the son of David. Their answer is true in regards to Jesus’ humanity, but on its own, this answer is incomplete. For, as Aquinas points out, Jesus is also the divine, eternally begotten Son of the Father. In fact, it was specifically in order “to show that he was God” that Jesus asked the question “‘what do you think of the Christ?’” The Pharisees could only answer this question in regards to Jesus’ humanity, and so Aquinas concludes that “they responded insufficiently,” for “they knew him insufficiently.” Hence, Aquinas uses the text of Isa. 53:8 here in order to point to the eternal, divine generation of Christ, a generation which many like the Pharisees do not believe. This divine generation is what Christ speaks of in Mt. 22:41-45 through his Christological exegesis of Ps. 110:1. Christ is both the temporal son of David in his humanity and the eternal son of God in his divinity.

The 3rd case of Isa. 53:8 occurs in the fifth lecture of Mt. 26. Following the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples go out to the Mount of Olives. There, Jesus tells his disciples that they are going to abandon him, and then he quotes Zech. 13:7, which states “‘I will strike [percutiam] the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed.’” Aquinas explains that Christ is the shepherd, and he is “struck” [percusses] in the sense that “God handed him over, for ‘he who spared not even his own Son.’” Aquinas then quotes Isa. 53:8 in order to explain why Christ was handed over to his Passion: “this was on account of our sins, ‘for the
wickedness of my people have I struck [percussi] him.” Both Zechariah and Isa. 53:8 say that God struck [percussi] Christ with the Passion, and Isaiah makes it clear that this happened as a result of our sins and for the sake of saving us from sin. Further, Aquinas emphasizes that Christ freely chose to endure being struck. He says that when Jesus quotes Zechariah as saying “‘I will strike the shepherd’” he is speaking “in his own person.” That is, Christ is the ‘I’ who will do the striking and he is the shepherd who will be struck. Similarly, when Isa. 53:8 says that God strikes the Servant due to the wickedness of the people, the divine agency of God here can be attributed to both the Son and the Father. Now, as we have already seen a number of times, this does not mean that God actively willed the murder of his Son. Rather, it simply means that God did not save Christ from the suffering that was inflicted upon him, and that Christ himself as God freely chose to possess a passible human nature and to endure the suffering that life in the world brought him. In conclusion, Aquinas is using Isaiah and Zechariah here in order to show that Christ freely entered into his Passion and that his Passion occurred as a remedy for our sins.

F. Cases of Isaiah 53:12

The 1st of Aquinas’s 2 quotations from Isa. 53:12 is found in the second lecture on Mt. 1. Mt. 1:3, while detailing the human genealogy of Jesus, mentions that among the descendents of Abraham there was a man named “‘Phares’” who “‘begot Esron.’” Aquinas interprets the name Esron as a figure of Christ. ‘Esron’ can mean “hall” [atrium], and this name is Christological because it signifies the “breadth of [Christ’s] charity.” Christ’s charity is wide, like an atrium, because he loved both his friends and his enemies. In order to prove this point,

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77 Ibid., c. 26, l. 5, 2209, quoting Isa. 53:8.
79 Ibid., c. 1, l. 2, 36; citing Matthew 1:3:
80 Ibid., c. 1, l. 2, 36.
Aquinas quotes several biblical texts, among which is Isa. 53:12: “he has prayed for the transgressors.”\textsuperscript{81} So, Aquinas employs Isa. 53 here in order to provide biblical witness to the reality of Christ’s unconditional love for humanity. Christ does not only seek the salvation of the righteous, he also prays for those who are far from God; all are objects of Christ’s loving concern and beneficiaries of his intercession.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53:12 is also Aquinas’s final quotation from Isa. 53 in the super Matthaeum. This case occurs within the context of Aquinas' comments on Mt. 27:38. The evangelist relates how two thieves were crucified with Christ, and Aquinas explains how this fact indicates that Christ was considered to be “an evildoer.”\textsuperscript{82} In support of this he quotes Isa. 53:12, which states “and he was reputed with the wicked.”\textsuperscript{83} Matthew’s narrative of Christ’s crucifixion alongside two thieves thus fulfills the prophecy contained in Isa. 53, a prophecy which states that Christ would be counted among the wicked and treated accordingly. Despite his perfect innocence, Christ is condemned as if he were a violent criminal. In this we see the radical depths of Christ’s solidarity with humanity. Christ knows what it is like to be completely innocent, and yet to suffer persecution as a sinner, an enemy of the faith and of the state. The Christ of Isa. 53:12 is in solidarity with all those who are falsely accused, condemned, and punished.

II. Conclusion and Synthesis

Aquinas is confident that the text of Isa. 53 is about Jesus Christ. Isaiah testifies to the fact that the Christ would suffer, be rejected by his peers, and die. Isaiah speaks of Christ’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[81] Ibid., citing Isa. 53:12.
\item[82] Ibid., c. 27, l. 2, 2367.
\item[83] Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
\end{footnotes}
suffering in a literal and straightforward way, rather than through the use of symbolic figures. Christ’s historical passion in the first century in Israel fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah as well as various other Old Testament prophecies and so manifested God’s foreknowledge of Christ’s suffering. The prophecy contained in Isa. 53 also points to the incomprehensibility of Christ’s eternal generation from the Father. The Suffering Servant is also the eternal, divine Son of God. In terms of his humanity, Isa. 53 shows that Christ was not a man of appealing looks or reputation. His appearance was repulsive, he was weighed down with infirmities, and he was despised by his peers. He was condemned as a spiritual leper, a man whose invisible will was dominated by evil. Yet, the truth is that Christ never wavered in his obedience to the Father. Even amidst his complete lack of physical and social glory Christ still offered himself in perfect obedience to God, and this perfect obedience amidst utter rejection functioned as the principle that would give spiritual life to the Church.

Aquinas interprets Isaiah’s statement that Christ bore our diseases as referring primarily to the fact that God the Son entered into our mortal human state. The Son assumed a passible human nature for the ultimate goal of taking away our sins. Further, as witnessed in Mt. 8:17, Christ also takes away our infirmities in the sense that he physically heals the sick. By entering into our suffering, Christ is able to liberate us from both spiritual and physical evil. As a hen exposes herself to danger to care for her young, so Christ entered into solidarity with us in suffering precisely in order to take away the causes of our pains. Christ’s suffering was real. He was truly wounded and bruised, bloodied and beaten. He was covered with a red cloak of blood and crucified among thieves. Yet, amidst all the pain which he endured in his body and the pain of being errantly condemned by his peers, Christ nevertheless continued to love both his friends and his enemies. Like an innocent sheep he approached death peacefully and patiently, and he
refused to do any harm to those who sought his life. Emotionally, verbally, and in concrete action, Christ refrained from lashing out against his enemies. Further, he refused to use violence of any kind to defend himself and his message. He completely rejected the sword, and this testifies to the power of God at work in his life and death. For, the crucified one and his apostles were able to convert many despite their refusal to defend themselves or use coercion in support of their message. Rather than cursing his enemies, Christ prayed for those who unjustly condemned him, and he interceded on behalf of all sinners.

Aquinas repeatedly interprets the text of Isa. 53:7 as a witness to the voluntary character of Christ’s Passion. Christ knew what would happen to him in Jerusalem even before he freely made his final journey to the city of David. He knew that he would be betrayed by one of his own Apostles and that he would be arrested and put to death outside of the city. Yet, he freely handed himself over to this fate, for he chose to assume a passible human nature and to abstain from using his divine power to save himself. In that sense, Christ is both the shepherd who is struck and the one who does the striking. Christ’s voluntary choice to undergo his Passion was sacramentally enshrined at the Last Supper when he gave his disciples his broken body in the Eucharist, the same body that he would hand over to be broken upon the cross. While his human enemies were the immediate material cause of Christ’s suffering and death, the fact is that they could carry out their evil designs only because Christ freely chose to endure the brutalities that they inflicted upon him. In doing so, Christ experienced radical solidarity with all those who are errantly persecuted and who experience suffering for the sake of righteousness.

In conclusion, the super Matthaeum features by far the most cases of Isa. 53 that we have seen in a single work of Aquinas’s up to this point. Of those cases, Isa. 53:7 accounts for half of Aquinas’s references to the Suffering Servant text. As in earlier works, Aquinas consistently
interprets Isa. 53 as a literal Christological prophecy which testifies to Christ’s eternal generation from the Father, his real solidarity with passible humans, and his assumption of human pains for the sake of our salvation. In addition, Aquinas stresses the fact that Christ experienced human condemnation as if he were a grave sinner, and yet he loved and prayed for his enemies and freely chose to hand over his body to be broken for the salvation of sinners.
Chapter 6: The Commentary on the Gospel of John

Aquinas’ *Commentary on John* or *Lectura super Ioannem*, like his *super Mattheaeum*, dates to the mature years of his theological career. Both Gospel commentaries are the written reports of lectures that Aquinas gave as a *magister in sacra pagina* during his second stint at the University of Paris towards the end of his life. While the lectures that make up the *super Mattheaeum* likely date to 1269-70, the course that resulted in the *super Ioannem* was given shortly after, probably sometime between 1270-72.¹ The contents of the lectures given in this latter course were written down by the Dominican friar Reginald of Piperno.² While Aquinas referenced Isa. 53 a total of 24 times in his exegesis of Matthew, he cites this suffering servant text only 15 times in his lectures on John.

The fact that the *super Ioannem* features 10 fewer quotations from Isa. 53 than the *super Mattheaeum* may be at least partially due to the distinct ends which Aquinas discerns in these different Gospels. In the prologue of the *super Ioannem*, Aquinas claims that the primary purpose of the synoptic Gospels is to detail Jesus’ humanity. Conversely, the primary end of John’s Gospel is to expound the divinity of Christ. While John also contains teachings about Christ's humanity, his treatment of the human words and deeds of the Lord is always ultimately ordered toward the end of explicating Christ’s divinity.³ This emphasis upon Christ’s divinity makes Aquinas’s *super Ioannem* “a particularly rich source for his theological speculation,

notably on the Trinity, the Incarnation, and grace.”4 In order to explain these divine, heavenly
matters Aquinas provides lengthy and intricate theological expositions of the words of the Fourth
Gospel. Hence, as Weisheipl states, the super Ioannem “is sublime in its theological
profundity,” and “it is a mature work for theologians as well as for students of Scripture.”5 For
our purposes the point is simply that, given how Isa. 53 is primarily about the human suffering of
Christ, it is not unfitting that Aquinas employed Isa. 53 more in the super Matthaem than he did
in the super Ioannem. Isa. 53 is certainly more relevant to expositions of Christ’s human life
than it is to expositions of the Trinity, the hypostatic union, and grace.

Nonetheless, despite the difference in quantity, the quality of Aquinas’s references to Isa.
53 throughout his two Gospel commentaries is quite similar. In both works, Aquinas
consistently employs Isaiah’s text in order to help him explain or support the veracity of the
Gospel narratives. Isa. 53 functions like a key which helps Aquinas to unlock the meaning of
particular passages in the Gospels as well as a foundation upon which he builds specific
exegetical arguments. Throughout both Gospel commentaries, Aquinas typically turns to Isa. 53
in order to make an exegetical or theological point regarding the nature, purpose, and fruits of
Christ’s Passion.

I. Cases of Isaiah 53 in the Lectura super Ioannem

Just as in the super Matthaem, Isa. 53:7 accounts for the majority of Aquinas’ references
to Isa. 53 in the super Ioannem. Aquinas quotes this verse a total of 8 times. His remaining
quotations from Isa. 53 are of the following verses: v. 1 (2 cases), v. 4 (1 case), v. 8 (2 cases), v.

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5 Weisheipl, Friar Thomas D’Aquino, 246.
12 (2 cases). I will examine each of these cases according to their verse order in Isaiah. Then, in the third section I will conclude with a theological synthesis of the interpretations of Isa. 53 that are found in the super Ioannem.

A. Cases of Isaiah 53:1

The 1st of Aquinas’s 2 references to Isa. 53:1 is contained in the seventh lecture on Jn. 8. In Jn. 8, Jesus rebukes those who do not believe in his teaching and who are seeking to kill him. He calls such unbelievers children of the devil, and in v. 46 he asks them, “*If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me?*” Commenting upon this verse, Aquinas claims that Isaiah also “complains” about those who do not “adhere to the truth” about Christ. He then quotes Isa. 53:1, which states “*Lord, who has believed our report?*” Aquinas thus interprets Isa. 53:1 as a prophecy of the fact that there will be people who do not believe in the truth about Jesus. There are those who will reject Jesus’ teaching, whether they heard it directly from his mouth or through the mediation of the Church. Isaiah knew that the truth about Jesus would not be accepted by all.

Aquinas’s 2nd reference to Isa. 53:1 is in his seventh lecture on Jn. 12. In this lecture Aquinas is commenting upon Jn. 12:37-41, which states the following:

> And whereas he had done so many miracles before them, they believed not in him: that the saying of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he said: *‘Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’* (Isa. 53:1) Therefore they could not believe, because Isaias said again: *‘he has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal*

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6 Thomas Aquinas, Super Ioannem, c. 8, l. 7, 1254, quoting Jn. 8:46. All references to the super Ioannem are based on the 1972 Marietti edition of the Latin text. Unless otherwise noted, I use the English translation by Fabian Larcher, edited and revised by the Aquinas Institute. The Latin and English texts are available at https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Ioan. All references will include the chapter, lecture and paragraph number.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:1. My translation, from “*Domine, quis credidit auditui nostro?*”
them.’ (Isa. 6:10). These things said Isaias, when he saw his glory, and spoke of him.⁹

In these verses, the Evangelist quotes two distinct passages from Isaiah. While only the first passage is from Isa. 53, Aquinas’s analysis of the reference to Isa. 6:10 sheds light upon his understanding of Isa. 53. Hence, we will examine Aquinas’s comments upon both of these biblical references in Jn. 12.

Aquinas claims that Jn. 12:37-41 is primarily about the “unbelief” of those who rejected Christ during his earthly ministry.¹⁰ He says that the Evangelist quotes the prophecies from Isaiah in order to show that this unbelief “came about not without reason or by chance.”¹¹ Specifically, the prophecy from Isa. 53 foretells the fact of this unbelief, while the prophecy from Isa. 6 explains “the reason for their unbelief.”¹² Aquinas carefully clarifies that Isaiah’s prophecy in ch. 53 is not itself the “cause” or reason why many people chose not to believe in Christ.¹³ People did not reject Jesus “because” Isaiah said they would.¹⁴ Rather, Isaiah knew that people would reject Jesus, and so he gave a prophecy that “signifie[d] a future event.”¹⁵ This means that the people who rejected Christ did so freely. The prophecy did not predetermine their choices and thus eliminate their responsibility for them. On the contrary, as Aquinas explains, “God, knowing the future beforehand, foretold their unbelief in the prophecy, but he did not bring it about; for God does not force one to sin just because he already knows one’s future sins.”¹⁶ So the existence of the prophecy in Isa. 53:1 is not a cause that took away

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⁹ Jn. 12:37-41, as given at the beginning of super Ioannem c. 12, l. 7. The translation of Isa. 53:1 is my own.
¹⁰ Aquinas, super Ioannem, c. 12, l. 7, 1688.
¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Ibid., 1690.
¹³ Ibid., 1691.
¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid., 1692.
people’s freedom and made them unwittingly reject Christ. Rather, God gave Isaiah knowledge of the future, and the text of Isa. 53 testifies to this knowledge. Isaiah knew that people would freely choose to reject Christ.

Aquinas proceeds to further specify the object of unbelief as well as the content of the ‘report’ that Isa. 53:1 mentions. He first points out that “belief comes in two ways.” 17 People can come to believe in Christ by hearing others proclaim him or by receiving a divine revelation directly from God. 18 When Isaiah says “‘Lord, who has believed our report?’” Aquinas claims that this refers to the first way of coming to believe in Christ. 19 That is, Isaiah is saying that many will not believe what he teaches in ch. 53 about the “birth and passion” of Christ. 20 The birth and passion of Christ are the subjects of “this entire chapter of Isaiah,” and yet many will reject this teaching. 21 This line from Isa. 53 can also be interpreted as referring to the preaching of the Church. On this interpretation, Isaiah is speaking in the person of the Church. He is prophesying the future reality that many will hear the Church’s teaching and yet respond to it with unbelief. 22 So the “report” of which Isa. 53:1 speaks is the human transmission of the divine revelation about the birth and passion of Christ. This report is given by Isaiah himself in ch. 53 and is proclaimed in every age by the Church. What Isa. 53:1 is prophesying is that there are people who will hear this Christological report and yet refuse to believe in it.

Upon finishing his analysis of the first half of Isa. 53:1, Aquinas turns to the latter portion of the verse, which says “‘and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’” 23 He claims

17 Ibid., 1693.
18 Ibid., 1693.
19 Ibid., 1694, quoting Isa. 53:1.
20 Ibid., 1694.
21 Ibid., 1694.
22 Ibid., 1694. Again, Aquinas’ interpretation here grants a pluriform literal sense.
23 Ibid., 1695, quoting Isa. 53:1.
that this section of v. 1 is about “the special way belief comes, by revelation.”\textsuperscript{24} Here, Isaiah is referring to the fact that he has received a divine revelation about Christ directly from God. The “‘arm of the Lord’” that has been revealed to Isaiah is the Son himself.\textsuperscript{25} Isaiah has not heard about the birth and passion of this arm from another human teacher, but rather he has received these truths directly from God. The same can be said about the apostles, who are among the “few” to whom such a revelation was given.\textsuperscript{26} Like the Apostles, Isaiah knew the Son because he received a revelation from God about him.

Aquinas explains why he thinks the “‘arm’” \textit{[brachium]} of Isa. 53:1 is a reference to God the Son.\textsuperscript{27} The Son is appropriately called the arm of the Father since the Son is the one “through whom the Father does all things, just as we accomplish things through our arm.”\textsuperscript{28} Aquinas quotes Jn 1:3 in order to provide biblical support for this claim that the Father does all things through the Son. This biblical text states that the Son is the one through whom the Father created all things. Aquinas then quotes two biblical passages which refer to the ‘arm’ of God in functional ways. Job 40:9 says “‘have you an arm \textit{[brachium]} like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?”\textsuperscript{29} Lk. 1:51 states that God “‘has shown strength with his arm \textit{[brachio]}.”\textsuperscript{30} So Isa. 53 and these other biblical texts refer to the Son as the \textit{brachium} of the Father because it is through the Son that the Father creates all things and displays his power in human history.

Yet, Aquinas notes that both Sabellius and Arius claimed that the biblical references to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 1695.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 1695, quoting Isa. 53:1.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 1696.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 1695, quoting Isa. 53:1.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 1695.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 1695, quoting Job 40:9.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 1695, quoting Lk. 1:51.
\end{itemize}
the Son as the arm of the Father supported their Christological heresies. Sabellius said that the Son must be the same person as the Father, since an arm and the person to whom it belongs constitute one person. Arius said that the Son must be “inferior” to the Father, for “an arm is not equal to the person.”31 In response, Aquinas says that Sabellius and Arius took this biblical metaphor of the arm too literally. Citing Dionysius, he says that “symbolic theology is not argumentative.”32 In symbolic expressions “the similarities are not really adequate, for what we find in creatures does not perfectly represent what is in God.”33 So, it may be true that in humans the arm is not its own distinct person and, insofar as it is merely one of many corporal parts of a person, it is not equivalent to the person per se. But, Scripture is not saying that the Son is literally the arm of the Father. Rather, Scripture is using the notion of arm in a symbolic way, as a metaphor that is meant to highlight a specific aspect of the way in which the Father and Son exercise their divine economy. Isa. 53:1 and other biblical texts refer to the Son as the brachium of the Lord simply in order to draw attention to the fact that “the Father does all things through him [the Son].”34 This specific point about the Son is clear within the broader context of Isa. 53. That chapter is all about the active work of the Son on behalf of sinners; it is about how the Father saves humanity from sin through the Passion and exaltation of the Son. The Son is the arm by which the Father lifts humanity up out of the pit of sin and death. Hence, it is appropriate that Isa. 53 refers to the Son as the brachium of the Father.

After commenting upon the reference to Isa. 6 in Jn. 12:40, Aquinas concludes his lecture by examining Jn. 12:41, which states “these things Isaias said when he saw his glory and spoke

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31 Ibid., 1696.
32 Ibid., 1696.
33 Ibid., 1696.
34 Ibid., 1696.
of him.’” For Aquinas, this statement from the Evangelist indicates that Isa. 53 and Isa. 6 are the written record of “these things” that Isaiah saw. Isaiah saw the glory of God and of Christ in the vision that he writes about in 6:1: “I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne.” Specifically, in this vision Isaiah saw the glory of “the entire Trinity” and “he saw at the same time that the Jews would be blinded” and refuse to believe in Christ, the arm of the Lord. Aquinas clarifies that Isaiah did not see “the essence of the Trinity” as a saint would in the Beatific Vision, but instead he received “an imaginary vision, with understanding,” and he employed “signs” to describe the glory that was revealed to him. Isaiah’s vision of the Trinity and reception of a divine revelation, albeit received and written about through figurative images, is significant because it shows that he had direct, divinely revealed knowledge from God about Christ.

Consequently, as Timothy Bellamah states, Aquinas had “confidence in Isaiah’s capacity for speaking literally of Jesus Christ.” For Aquinas, the literal sense of the prophecy in Isa. 53 is about Christ. The fact that Isaiah saw Christ’s glory refutes “the error of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who said that all the prophecies of the Old Testament bore on some current event, but that the apostles and evangelists appropriated them to the life of Christ.” Theodore’s error, explains Aquinas, “is excluded by the statement ‘and spoke of him,’ just as Christ said of Moses that ‘he wrote of me.’” Aquinas is saying that the words of Jn. 12 indicate that Isaiah intended to write about Christ in his prophecy of the Suffering Servant. Isaiah was not speaking about the

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36 Jn. 12:41.
37 Aquinas, super Ioannem, c. 12, l. 7, 1703, quoting Isa. 6:1.
38 Ibid., 1704 and 1703, respectively.
39 Ibid., 1704. In the Summa Theologiae Aquinas describes three different ways in which humans can receive visions of God. See ST I, q. 12.
41 Aquinas, super Ioannem, c. 12, l. 7, 1705.
42 Ibid., 1705, quoting Jn. 12:41 and Jn. 5:46.
suffering and rejection of some merely human figure from his own time period. In his vision of
the heavenly throne room recorded in Isa. 6, Isaiah received a revelation about the Incarnation
and Passion of Christ. Therefore, when Christians read Isa. 53’s words in reference to Christ
they are not applying these words to a referent of which Isaiah was ignorant. Isaiah also realized
that he was writing about Christ, for he himself had seen Christ’s glory. Consequently, for
Isaiah himself as well as for God, Christ is the first and primary res to which the verba of Isa. 53
refer.

B. One Case of Isaiah 53:4

Aquinas’s only quotation of Isa. 53:4 comes in his fourteenth lecture on Jn. 1. Commenting upon Jn. 1:29, Aquinas proposes two possible ways of interpreting the statement
that Jesus “‘takes away the sins of the world.’” First, Jesus can take away our sins in the sense
that he “removes” them. Second, it can be said that Jesus takes away our sins in the sense that he
“takes upon himself” the sins of humanity. In order to further explicate and biblically ground
this second explanation, Aquinas quotes from 1 Pet. 2:24 and then Isa. 53:4, which states “‘he
bore our pains and carried our infirmities.’” Aquinas provides no further explanation here
regarding what precisely it means to say that Christ takes our sins, pains and infirmities upon
himself. So it is difficult to say with confidence how exactly he is interpreting Isa. 53:4 in this
context. Yet, it does appear that the first interpretation of Jn. 1:29 that he proposes seems to
complement and shed light upon the second. In this light, we can say that Jesus removes our sins
precisely by assuming a human nature that bears the marks of sin, that is, a human nature that is

43 Ibid., c. 1, l. 14, 259, quoting Jn. 1:29.
44 Ibid.
portavit.’”
passible and subject to death. Jesus chose to take upon himself and carry the yoke of human pain and infirmity, and he used this infirmity as a means through which he could take away the various sins and infirmities that press down upon us.

C. Cases of Isaiah 53:7

The 1st of Aquinas’s 8 quotations of Isa. 53:7 comes in the fourteenth lecture on Jn. 1. Once again, Aquinas’s reference to Isa. 53 comes in the context of his comments upon Jn. 1:29, though this time he is dealing with the fact that John the Baptist calls Jesus the “‘Lamb of God.” Aquinas identifies three characteristics of lambs that can be appropriately applied to Jesus. Lambs are pure, gentle, and they bear the fruit of clothing and food for human beings. In order to illustrate the “gentleness” of Christ the lamb, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:7: “‘like a lamb before the shearer, he will not open his mouth.’” Christ approaches his death in peace and treats his enemies with gentleness. Then, slaughtered like a lamb, he becomes clothing and food for sinners. We “‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ’” and we consume the flesh that he gives us “‘for the life of the world.” Isa. 53:7, interpreted alongside Rom. 13 and Jn. 6, shows that Christ is the gentle lamb who becomes our spiritual clothing and whose flesh becomes our spiritual food.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53:7 occurs in the third lecture on Jn. 2 in the context of Aquinas’s comments upon Jn. 2:19. In this verse Jesus states “‘destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.’” In these words, Christ foretold his death at the hands of his enemies, for he “died and was killed by others.” At the same time, though, Aquinas emphasizes that Christ died

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46 Ibid., c. 1, l. 14, 257, quoting Jn. 1:29.
48 Ibid., quoting Rom. 13:14 and Jn. 6:52, respectively.
49 Ibid., c. 2, l. 3, 402, quoting Jn. 2:19.
50 Ibid., c. 2, l. 3, 402.
freely; Jesus was killed by others, “yet with him willing it.”\textsuperscript{51} In the service of this point he quotes Isa. 53:7: “he was offered because he himself willed it.”\textsuperscript{52} So the text of Isa. 53 ensures that one does not fall into the error of thinking that Christ was merely a completely helpless human victim in his Passion. The truth is that Christ knew he would be killed, and yet he permitted this sin to be inflicted upon him. When Christ says “destroy this temple” he was not actively commanding the people to kill him, he was rather stating a “prediction” and a “permission.”\textsuperscript{53} That is, he was prophesying that he would be violently put to death by his peers, but his death would only occur because he allowed it to occur. Aquinas says that it is as if Jesus were here saying “do with my body what you will, I submit it to you.”\textsuperscript{54} So, once again, Aquinas here draws upon Isa. 53:7 in order to support the claim that Christ voluntarily chose to undergo his Passion. Aquinas makes the additional specification here that Christ’s decision to undergo the Passion does not mean that he actively pursued suffering and death, but rather that he permitted himself to endure the violence that was inflicted upon him.

Aquinas’ 3rd quotation of Isa. 53:7 is found in his first lecture on Jn. 12. He employs Isa. 53 while commenting upon Jn. 12:1, which states “Jesus therefore, six days before the Pasch, came to Bethany.”\textsuperscript{55} Bethany is in Judea and lies very close to Jerusalem. Hence, Aquinas explains, “when the Paschal season was at hand, during which the symbolic lamb was immolated, he, as the True Lamb, came to the place where he would suffer and of his own free will be immolated for the salvation of the world.”\textsuperscript{56} Aquinas then quotes Isa. 53:7 in order to provide a biblical testimony to the fact that Christ freely chose to be immolated: “he was offered

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7. My translation, from “oblatus est quia ipse voluit.” Throughout this chapter I will consistently translate this Latin phrase from Isa. 53:7 in this manner.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., quoting Jn. 2:19.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., c. 2, l. 3, 402.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., c. 12, l. 1, 1590, quoting Jn. 12:1.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., c. 12, l. 1, 1590.
because he himself willed it. “”

Unlike the actual lambs that were sacrificed in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, Christ was the lamb who voluntarily chose to be immolated. Isa. 53 shows that Christ was not ignorantly led to death like every other paschal lamb. Rather, he is the paschal lamb who knows his destiny and endures it freely.

The 4th case of Isa. 53:7 is in the fifth lecture on Jn. 12. In Jn. 12:27 Jesus laments, “‘Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause I came unto this hour.’” Aquinas says that Christ’s words here express the fact that he experienced fear and sadness in the “sentient part” of his soul at the prospect of death, but these natural passions did not trouble the “rational part” of his soul. That is, the passions of Christ’s sensitive will were not in themselves contrary to the order of reason and they did not lead Christ to act contrary to reason. Christ chose to experience troubling passions in order to demonstrate the truth of his humanity and to provide an example to us of how to remain steadfast even amidst the terrifying presence of death. Despite his natural experience of the fear of death, Christ resolves to endure his Passion. Aquinas explains that Christ, in his final sentence of v. 27, is essentially saying “it is not right that I be freed from this time of suffering, because I came to suffer; and not as compelled by the necessity of fate or forced by the violence of men, but by willingly offering myself.” Aquinas then immediately quotes Isa. 53:7, “‘he was offered because he himself willed it,” and then he concludes with a quotation from Jn. 10:18: “‘no one takes my life away from me, but I lay it down of myself.” Here Aquinas employs Isa. 53:7 in

57 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
58 Ibid., c. 12, l. 5, quoting Jn. 12:27.
59 Ibid., c. 12, l. 5, 1651 and 1653.
60 Ibid., 1651 and 1653.
61 Ibid., 1652.
62 Ibid., 1659, italics in original.
63 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7 and Jn. 10:18, respectively.
order to emphasize the freedom of Christ even amidst the pain of fear and sadness. Christ experienced the natural dread of death, and yet he nevertheless freely chose to persevere in his mission and to endure the pain that would be inflicted upon him by his enemies. Neither fate nor human violence forced Christ to suffer. Rather, as Isa. 53, Jn. 10 and Jn. 12 show, Christ experienced the pain of his Passion only because he freely chose to do so.

The sixth lecture on Jn. 12 contains Aquinas’s 5th quotation from Isa. 53:7. In Jn. 12:34 Jesus’s interlocutors say “‘we have heard out of the law that Christ abides forever. How can you say: the Son of man must be lifted up?’” Aquinas says that there are two possible reasons why the people knew that when Jesus “spoke of being lifted up, he was referring to [his] death on the cross.” The first reason is simply that people realized that Jesus often spoke to them using “figurative language,” and so they became accustomed to understanding “much of what was said in that way.” The second reason is that in their “wickedness” some of Jesus’ audience “had already thought of doing that very thing,” namely, crucifying Jesus. So when they heard Jesus speak about being lifted up, they recognized this figure of speech because they already intended the action to which it refers. Aquinas thinks that this wickedness of Jesus’ interlocutors made them choose their words very carefully. They did not claim that according to the law Christ “does not suffer,” but rather simply that Christ should live forever. Aquinas says that the reason they do not say that the Christ should not suffer and die is because they know that such a claim is refuted by the Old Testament, which on numerous occasions bears witness to the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. In support of this, Aquinas quotes Ps. 3:7 and then

64 Ibid., c. 12, l. 6, quoting Jn. 12:34.
65 Ibid., c. 12, l. 6, 1678.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 1679.
Isa. 53:7: “‘like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.’” The text of Isa. 53:7 testifies against those who would claim that the Christ will not suffer and die. Here, Scripture shows that the Christ will be slaughtered like a lamb. It is true that he will rise from the dead and afterwards live on forever, but first he must undergo the agony of death.

Aquinas’ 6th use of Isa. 53:7 is in his fifth lecture on Jn. 13. During the Last Supper, after the devil inspires Judas to betray Jesus, Jesus says to Judas “‘that which you do, do quickly.’” Aquinas says that with these words Jesus did not give Judas “a command or a counsel” to betray him, for “sin cannot be commanded or counseled.” The Lord did not actively will and try to bring about his betrayal by Judas. Rather, his words to Judas simply signify “a permission.” The devil is the one who commands Judas to betray Jesus, not God. Judas acted out of malice and intellectual darkness. “Yet,” Aquinas explains, Judas would not have been able to betray Christ “unless Christ himself gave permission.” Aquinas justifies this statement by quoting Jn. 10:18 and Isa. 53:7: “‘he was offered because he himself willed it.’”

Care is needed here in order to identify Aquinas’s essential point and avoid an errant reading of his exegesis of Christ’s words. Aquinas does not appear to be saying that Judas was able to betray Christ only because Christ gave him explicit, verbal permission to do so. It is not as if Judas was asking for Christ’s permission, and that Christ gave it, but that if he hadn’t Judas would have abstained from betraying him. Rather, Judas already intended to betray Christ, and Christ’s words to him simply manifested that Christ was not going to actively prevent Judas from

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69 Ibid., 1679, quoting Isa. 53:7.
70 Ibid., c. 13, l. 5, 1815, quoting Jn. 13:27.
71 Ibid., c. 13, l. 5, 1815.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 1824.
74 Ibid. 1815.
75 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
carrying out his malicious plans. Aquinas’s essential point, therefore, is that Christ knowingly and freely allowed himself to be betrayed and handed over to death. This is what Isa. 53:7 and Jn. 10:18 indicate. Judas’s betrayal did not take Christ by surprise, and the event of the betrayal occurred only because Christ freely allowed it to occur. He chose to abstain from using his power to prevent Judas’ betrayal, for he freely willed to experience the suffering that came to him as a possible human being. Isa. 53 testifies to this absolute freedom of Christ in the face of betrayal and death.

The 7th case of Isa. 53:7 is in the first lecture on Jn. 18. In this lecture, Aquinas analyzes Jn. 18:1-9, which describes how Judas arrives in Gethsemane with a band of soldiers to arrest Jesus. When Jesus identifies himself the soldiers go “‘backward’” and fall “‘to the ground.’” Among other things, the backward fall of the soldiers demonstrates Jesus’ miraculous power, for even though “his enemies came against him” he repelled them with merely his words. Jesus’ miraculous display of power was meant to give Judas and the soldiers “a reason to be converted,” but they did not respond with faith. After displaying his power over the soldiers, Jesus then identifies himself a second time as the one whom they are seeking to arrest. Aquinas says that Jesus does this in order to show that he “voluntarily offered himself to be taken by them” and that “he was captured because he willed it.” Here Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:7: “‘he was offered because he himself willed it.’” Once more, we need to say that this does not mean that Jesus actively willed the soldiers to arrest him; such a reading would mean that Jesus willed them to sin. On the contrary, it simply means that Jesus “gave them the power to capture him.”

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76 Ibid., c. 18, l. 1, 2282, quoting Jn. 18: 6.
77 Ibid., 2283.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 2283.
whereas he “saved his disciples by his own power.”\textsuperscript{81} Jesus was in complete control of the situation in Gethsemane, and Aquinas uses the text of Isa. 53:7 to help him demonstrate this point. Jesus used his miraculous power to ensure the safe escape of his Apostles, but he freely chose to allow the soldiers to arrest him despite his miraculous ability to overcome them.\textsuperscript{82} He was violently taken by Judas’ band only because he freely chose to abstain from using the power that he had to save himself.

Aquinas’s 8th and final reference to Isa. 53:7 in the \textit{super Ioannem} is found in his second lecture on Jn. 19. In Jn. 19:9, Pontius Pilate asks Jesus “‘where are you from?’” but Jesus does not answer the question; he remains silent.\textsuperscript{83} Aquinas provides two explanations for Jesus’ silence. First, Jesus refuses to answer Pilate’s question because “he was unwilling to overwhelm by words and to make excuses, since he had come to suffer.”\textsuperscript{84} Rather than give Pilate a detailed account of his origin or enter into a dialogical argument regarding his innocence, Christ simply preferred to focus upon continuing to bear his suffering righteously. Second, Aquinas says that “at the same time he is an example of patience,” and he “fulfilled what is found in Isaiah: “‘like a sheep that before its shearsers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.’”\textsuperscript{85} Like a silent sheep, Christ’s silence before Pilate is not the silence of guilt but rather the silence of an innocent and “gentle person” who is “being sacrificed for the sins of the others.”\textsuperscript{86} Isa. 53:7 and Jn. 19:9 depict the same reality: Christ is an innocent lamb who exercises patience and gentleness as he is violently led to the slaughter. His gentleness and patience serve as an example to sinners of how to bear suffering virtuously.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 2284.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., c. 19, l. 2, 2390, quoting Jn. 19:9.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 2391.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 2391.
D. Cases of Isaiah 53:8

The 1st of Aquinas’s 2 quotations from Isa. 53:8 is found in the third lecture on Jn. 7. In Jn. 7:27 Jesus’ interlocutors argue that Jesus cannot be the Christ, for they know where he is from, and “‘when the Christ comes, no man knows where he comes from.’” Aquinas inquires why the crowds make this statement about the Christ given that the location of the Messiah’s birth is clearly prophesied in Micah 5:2. He answers that Jesus’ interlocutors must have been drawing upon the text of Isa. 53:8, which states “‘who shall declare his generation?’” In the context about which Jn. 7 speaks, Jesus’ interlocutors are misinterpreting Isa. 53:8 as if it applies to Jesus’ human origin. On the basis of Isa 53:8, their logic is: “the Christ should have a hidden origin; but the origin of this man is known; therefore, he is not the Christ.” Aquinas explains that Isa. 53:8 is actually about Jesus’ eternal, divine origin from the Father. Hence, the fact that they know where Jesus is from on a human level does not mean that Jesus cannot be the Christ. Their argument is founded upon an errant interpretation of Isa. 53:8.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53:8 is in the second lecture on Jn. 8 and it occurs in the context of Aquinas’s commentary upon Jn. 8:14. In this verse, Jesus says that the Pharisees who reject his testimony do so because they “‘do not know where I come from or where I go.’” Aquinas interprets this saying from Jesus as a reference to his divinity. His opponents do not believe in Christ’s teaching because of “their ignorance” of his divinity and his “eternal procession from

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87 Ibid., c. 7, l. 3, 1056, quoting Jn. 7:27.
88 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8. My translation, from the Latin “‘generationem eius quis enarrabit?’”. In this chapter, I will consistently translate this Latin phrase in the above manner.
89 Ibid., 1055.
90 Ibid., 1056.
91 Ibid., c. 8, l. 2, 1150, quoting Jn. 8:14.
the Father.”\(^92\) Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:8 in support of this interpretation: “‘who shall declare his generation?’”\(^93\) Isaiah testifies to the fact that many will not believe in the eternal generation of the Son from the Father and in the consequent divinity of the former. This eternal Son of the Father is the one who will bear humanity’s pains and be handed over to death in order to save sinners. The cross is the death of God.

**E. Cases of Isaiah 53:12**

The 1st of the *super Ioannem’s* 2 references to Isa. 53:12 is in the third lecture on Jn. 8 and occurs in the service of Aquinas’s interpretation of Jn. 8:21-22. In these verses Jesus tells his interlocutors that “‘Where I go, you cannot come,’ ” and in response they say to one another “‘will he kill himself, because he said, ‘where I go, you cannot come?’ ”\(^94\) Regarding the concern that Jesus would kill himself, Aquinas proposes the idea (attributed to Origen) that the people asked this because they had heard Jesus himself say that he would die and because “they had learned from their traditions that the Christ would die willingly.”\(^95\) Aquinas claims that this Jewish tradition about the death of the Messiah is “especially” contained in Isa. 53:12, which he then quotes: “‘I will give him many things, and he will divide the spoils of the strong, because he delivered himself to death.’”\(^96\) So Aquinas thinks it is plausible that at least some of Jesus’ Jewish interlocutors believed, on the basis of Isa. 53:12, that the Messiah would be killed. But they do not properly understand the manner in which he will die; they think Jesus is saying that he is going to kill himself. Instead, Aquinas explains, the truth is that Christ delivers himself to

\(^{92}\) Ibid., c. 8, l. 2, 1150.

\(^{93}\) Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:8.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., c. 8, l. 3, quoting Jn. 8:21-22.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., c. 8, l. 3, 1173.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
death in the sense that “his soul [is] going to depart, leaving his body, when he wishes.” Christ not only freely assumes a passible human nature and willingly endures the violence that is inflicted upon him. In addition, he himself determines the exact moment when he allows this violence to finally overcome his bodily life and cause his soul to depart in death. As Aquinas puts it, in an understated way, “we are unable to do this.” This power of Christ over even the exact moment of his death testifies to the voluntary character of his Passion, and it is to this trait that Isa. 53:12 bears witness. Ultimately, we were not able to kill Christ by our own power; his body was destroyed only because he allowed it to be at a time of his choosing. In this way Aquinas affirms the omnipotence and freedom of the Son even amidst the latter’s seeming helplessness.

The 2nd reference to Isa. 53:12 is also the final case of Isa. 53 in the *super Ioannem*. This case is in the third lecture on Jn. 19 and it occurs in Aquinas’s exegesis of Jn. 19:18, which states that Jesus was crucified with “‘two others, one on each side, and Jesus between them.’” Aquinas thinks that Jesus was crucified with “criminals” in order to add to his “dishonor.” Specifically, he was crucified in the middle of the two criminals so that it would be “implied that the cause of his death was similar to that of the criminals,” that is, that he was being crucified on account of proportionately grave crimes. In order to further support this point, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:12: “‘he was numbered with the transgressors.’” This text from Isa. 53:12 points to multiple aspects of Christ’s Passion: first, Christ was crucified, which is a punishment meant for criminals; second, he was crucified in the midst of other crucified criminals and thus was

97 Ibid., c. 8, l. 3, 1173.
98 Ibid.
100 Ibid., c. 19, l. 3, 2417.
101 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:12.
associated with their crimes. In these two ways, Christ was counted and treated as if he was a wicked evildoer. In these two ways, he publicly suffered excruciating dishonor. In conclusion, Isa. 53 and Jn. 19 depict the ironic and tragic fact that the divine, eternally begotten one, the gentle and patient lamb, was publicly condemned and punished as if he was a violent threat to human flourishing. God was nailed to a tree with criminals.

II. Conclusion and Synthesis

In the super Ioannem Aquinas once again argues that the literal sense of Isa. 53 is about Christ himself. Isaiah had direct, divinely revealed knowledge of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, and he knowingly wrote about these divine mysteries in his prophecy of the suffering servant. Yet, within this same prophecy, Isaiah makes it clear that many will not accept these truths about which he has written and about which the Church preaches. Isaiah knew that there would be sinners who would freely choose not to believe in the truth about the suffering and death of the eternal Son of God.

Isaiah calls Christ the ‘arm’ of the Lord because Christ is the one through whom God creates all things and manifests his power to creation. God works through Christ’s passion to rescue us from sin just like a man employs his arm to rescue a drowning person from the abyss. Yet, Christ is not a merely human instrument through which God works; he is also the eternal, only begotten Son of the Father. The Son’s divine generation and nature is a mystery; many in Jesus’ time reject his teaching because they are ignorant of or refuse to believe that he is the divine Son of the Father. As true God and true man, Christ goes to his death with gentleness, patience, and peace; he acts like an innocent lamb led to the slaughter. Christ’s death, like that of a lamb, produces food and clothing for others. His crucified and risen flesh gives us spiritual
nourishment and clothes us with the power of the Holy Spirit. The gentleness, patience and peace with which Christ endured the Passion is an example to humanity of how to bear suffering virtuously.

Just as in previous works, in the *super Ioannem* Aquinas repeatedly turns to Isa. 53:7 in order to emphasize and explain the nature of Christ’s voluntary acceptance of the Passion. Christ manifested his free acceptance of death on numerous occasions: when he prophesied the destruction of the temple of his body; when he went to Jerusalem even though he knew he would be killed there; when he expressed his acceptance of death even as his sensitive will experienced revulsion at the prospect of the Passion; when he permitted Judas to betray him; when he allowed the soldiers to size him in Gethsemane; and when he maintained silence amidst Pilate’s interrogations. In all these ways, Christ foresaw and freely permitted his Passion; he did not command or encourage Judas to betray him and soldiers to seize him. To have done so would have been to command sin, and God cannot do this. Christ had the power to save himself, and yet he allowed himself to be handed over to suffering and destruction even though he did not actively will that he be handed over. Aquinas draws upon Isa. 53:7 in order to support all of these exegetical and theological claims about the Passion of Christ. Further, Aquinas appeals to the text of Isa. 53:12 in order to explain that Christ’s control over the events of his Passion was so complete that he was even able to decide the exact moment in which he would pass over from this world to the next. In this sense too, he freely handed himself over to death.

In accord with previous works, in the *super Ioannem* Aquinas reads Isa. 53:12 as a testimony to Christ’s radical solidarity with those who are unjustly persecuted. Christ was crucified, a punishment fit for grave criminals. Further, he was crucified in between criminals, as if he shared in their sin and guilt. Hence, though completely innocent, Christ experienced the
dishonor of being judged and sentenced as an evildoer. He experienced the shame, humiliation, pain, and injustice of being errantly condemned by both civil and religious authorities. Thus, Christ is the model for those who must endure unjust suffering and even death at the hands of worldly powers.

In conclusion, despite its focus upon the divinity of Christ, Aquinas’s *super Ioannem* nevertheless offers significant reflections upon the nature and fruit of Christ’s Passion. In this work, Aquinas often interprets and uses Isa. 53 in familiar ways which are consistent with the interpretations that he offered in previous works. But at times, Aquinas’s reading of Isa. 53 in the *super Ioannem* has an exegetical and theological depth to it that surpasses his interpretations in previous works. This is especially evident in his engagement with Isa. 53:7. He consistently looks to this verse to illuminate the meaning of those difficult Gospel texts which testify to Jesus’ conscious and voluntary acceptance of the Passion. In those instances, Aquinas employs Isa. 53:7 in support of sophisticated, carefully distinguished theological points regarding the nature of Christ’s free, deliberate endurance of death. In the next chapter, I turn to the *Summa Theologicae*, where Aquinas continues to use Isa. 53 in the service of precise and dense theological reflections upon Christ’s Passion.
Chapter 7: The Summa Theologiae

In previous chapters, the vast majority of our analysis has focused upon the way in which Aquinas interpreted and used the text of Isa. 53 in his biblical commentaries. In addition to the lecture upon Isa. 53 and the 5 cases of Isa. 53 in the *super Isaiam*, we have explored 69 of the 110 references to Isa. 53 that constitute the object of this study. 62 of those 69 cases occurred in biblical commentaries, and more than half of those 69 cases occurred in merely two biblical commentaries, namely, the *super Mattheum* and the *super Ioannem*. Only 7 of the 69 cases were in the early, systematic *Commentary on the Sentences*. Those 7 cases in the *Scriptum* did not provide enough material to even merit consideration in a chapter exclusively of their own. The same cannot be said regarding the cases of Isa. 53 in the *Summa Theologiae*.

Aquinas began to compose the ST around 1265-66 for the sake of his Dominican students at the newly established Studium in Rome. His task was to prepare Dominicans for the ministry of preaching and hearing confessions, and he determined that a new theological text was needed for this enterprise.¹ He sought to create a manual of theology that would, as Torrell explains, “treat of the whole of theology, both dogmatic and moral, in a comprehensive and organically structured way.”² Aquinas composed the *Prima Pars* during his three years at Rome and likely finished the *Prima Secundae* and *Secunda Secundae* in Paris between 1271-2. He began work on the *Tertia Pars* in Paris between 1271-2 and permanently gave up on the project while in Naples in December of 1273.³ All of the ST’s references to Isa. 53 are found in the *Secunda Secundae* and the *Tertia Pars*.

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Given the above dates, Aquinas composed the *Secunda Pars* and the *Tertia Pars* around the same time that he was delivering the lectures that became the *super Mattheaeum* (1269-70) and the *super Ioannem* (1270-1272). These two Gospel commentaries and the ST are the three works of Aquinas that feature the most explicit references to the text of Isa. 53. The work with the fourth most references, the *Postilla super Psalmos*, was also written in 1273, shortly before Aquinas’ death. These four works contain a combined total of 78 explicit references to Isa. 53, or about 71% of the 110 total references to this Scriptural text that he makes throughout his biblical and systematic works. Hence, the text of Isa. 53 is most prominent in the four works that Aquinas composed between the period of 1269-1273 in Paris and Naples. Of these works, the ST features the most explicit references to Isa. 53, and the overwhelming majority of those references occur in the *Tertia Pars*. This third part of the ST alone has more cases of Isa. 53 than any of Aquinas’s other major biblical or systematic works. These cases are found primarily in the *Tertia Pars*’ 59 question treatise on the Incarnation, life and Paschal Mystery of Christ. Aquinas frequently turns to Isaiah’s text in order to ground and support his speculative theological attempts to explore the divine mystery that is Christ’s incarnate suffering and death.

The structure of this chapter will unfold as follows. First, I will provide a quantitative analysis of Aquinas’s references to Isa. 53 in the ST. I will identify the number of times that Aquinas explicitly quotes Isa. 53 as well as the places in which these references occur and the specific verses which are being quoted. Second, I will provide a qualitative analysis that explicates the various ways in which Aquinas interprets and uses the Suffering Servant text throughout the ST. For reasons discussed below, this analysis will be organized in accord with the chronological order of the various sections of the ST in which the cases of Isa. 53 are found.

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Just as was the case in our examination of the *Scriptum*, here in the ST we will often have to examine the primary points that Aquinas makes in a particular article before we can examine his reference to Isa. 53. For, references to this biblical text in the ST are always in the service of specific, systematic theological points that are being argued in the article. Finally, this chapter will end with a synthetic exposition of the various Christological and soteriological truths that Aquinas draws out from the text of Isa. 53 throughout the course of the ST.

I. Quantitative Analysis

In the ST Aquinas explicitly quotes the text of Isa. 53 a total of 27 times. The only verse from Isa. 53 that he does not quote is v.11. The remaining 11 verses of Isa. 53 are each quoted the following number of times: 53:1 (1 case, or x1), 53:2-3 (x1), 53:3 (x2), 53:4 (x7), 53:5 (x1), 53:6 (x2), 53:7 (x6), 53:8 (x2), 53:9 (x1), 53:10 (x1), 53:12 (x2). Aquinas also makes a reference to Isa. 53 without quoting or discussing a specific verse. This is actually the 1st of the 27 cases. As in previous works, here v.7 plays a large role. But, surprisingly, it is v. 4 that possesses the highest number of cases in the ST. Of the remaining cases, only verses 3, 6, 8, and 12 are quoted multiple times.

Aquinas uses Isa. 53 in the *Tertia Pars* far more than he does in any other portion of the ST. He quotes Isa. 53 2 times in the *Secunda Secundae*. His remaining 25 references to Isa. 53 are all found in the *Tertia Pars*. 24 of those quotations come between questions 14 and 52. The remaining, final quotation is in question 68, which concerns the salvific effects of baptism. Hence, as is fitting, Aquinas turns to Isa. 53 above all when he is addressing questions

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5 But, in the Index Thomisticus only 25 of these references come up when one searches for ‘Isaias LIII’ and its variants. This is because in ST III, q. 47, a. 3, c. Aquinas quotes three different verses from Isa. 53 (see cases 21-23 in the chart below) but he only mentions the word “*Isaiae LIII*” prior to the first verse that he quotes. Hence, a word search for ‘Isaias LIII’ will not show these latter two references.
concerning the incarnate being and work of Christ. In the chart below, I identify the location of
the articles in the ST where cases of Isa. 53 are found, the question posed by the article, and the
specific verse(s) of Isa. 53 that are quoted in those articles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case # and Location:</th>
<th>The question posed by the article:⁶</th>
<th>Isa. text cited:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1: ST II-II, q. 2, a. 7, ad 2</td>
<td>Does salvation always require explicit faith in Christ?</td>
<td>Isa. 53; no verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2: II-II, q. 10, a. 1, c.</td>
<td>Is unbelief a sin?</td>
<td>Isa. 53:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: III, q. 14, a. 1, obj. 4</td>
<td>Should the Son of God have assumed bodily defects?</td>
<td>53:2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4: III, q. 14, a. 1, c.</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td>53:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5: III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 3</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td>53:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6: III, q. 14, a. 2, obj. 1</td>
<td>Did he assume the obligation of subjection to these defects?</td>
<td>53:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7: III, q. 15, a. 1, ad 4</td>
<td>Was there sin in Christ?</td>
<td>53:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8: III, q. 15, a. 5, sc.</td>
<td>Was there sensible pain in Christ?</td>
<td>53:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9: III, q. 15, a. 6, obj. 4</td>
<td>Was there sorrow in Christ?</td>
<td>53:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10: III, q. 18, a. 6, obj. 2</td>
<td>Was there any contrariety of wills in Christ?</td>
<td>53:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11: III, q. 22, a. 2, ad 1</td>
<td>As a priest, what victim did Christ offer?</td>
<td>53:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12: III, q. 22, a. 6, ad 3</td>
<td>Should Christ be called “a priest according to the order of Melchisedech?”</td>
<td>53:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13: III, q. 31, a. 3, obj. 1</td>
<td>Is Christ’s genealogy suitably traced by the evangelists?</td>
<td>53:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14: III, q. 35, a. 6, obj. 2</td>
<td>Did Christ’s mother suffer in childbirth?</td>
<td>53:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15: III, q. 36, a. 1, sc.</td>
<td>Should Christ’s birth have been made known to all?</td>
<td>53:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16: III, q. 43, a. 1, obj. 2</td>
<td>Should Christ have worked miracles?</td>
<td>53:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17: III, q. 46, a. 1, obj. 2</td>
<td>Was it necessary for Christ to suffer for men’s deliverance?</td>
<td>53:7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶ I have slightly reworded some of these questions for the sake of brevity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#18: III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 4</th>
<th>Was the pain which Christ endured the greatest?</th>
<th>53:4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#19: III, q. 46, a. 11, sc.</td>
<td>Was it fitting for Christ to be crucified with robbers?</td>
<td>53:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20: III, q. 47, a. 3, obj. 2</td>
<td>Did the Father deliver Christ up to suffer?</td>
<td>53:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21: III, q. 47, a. 3, c.</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td>53:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22: Ibid.</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td>53:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23: Ibid.</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
<td>53:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#24: III, q. 49, a. 3, sc.</td>
<td>Did Christ’s Passion free us from our debt of punishment?</td>
<td>53:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#25: III, q. 51, a. 1, ad 2</td>
<td>Was it fitting for Christ to be buried?</td>
<td>53:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#26: III, q. 52, a. 1, c.</td>
<td>Was it fitting for Christ to descend into hell?</td>
<td>53:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#27: III, q. 68, a. 5, ad 1</td>
<td>Do the baptized need to do works of satisfaction?</td>
<td>53:4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above chart shows that in the entire ST, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53 in 16 different questions and 22 different articles. 14 of those questions and 20 of those articles are contained in the *Tertia Pars*. Aquinas uses Isa. 53 in the *Tertia Pars* primarily in order to reflect upon the causes, essence and saving value of Christ’s Passion. 19 of the 25 cases in the *Tertia Pars* are in articles that are explicitly concerned with the nature, origin, end and/or soteriological consequences of Christ’s suffering and death. Only the articles in which cases 7, 10, 13, and 14-16 are contained are not specifically about Christ’s suffering.

II. Qualitative Analysis

I now conduct a qualitative analysis of the 27 cases of Isa. 53 in the ST. Unlike in the last two chapters, here I will not examine Aquinas’s references to Isa. 53 in the chronological order of verses within that biblical text. The reason for this is that in the ST as a whole, and particularly within specific questions, understanding a particular article often requires one to be
familiar with the basic content of the articles that have come before it. So, for example, it would be unfitting to examine the reference to Isa. 53:4 in ST III, q. 68 prior to the reference to 53:7 in q. 46, a. 1, even though v. 4 precedes v. 7 in the actual text of Isa. 53. Consequently, in this chapter, I will simply organize my qualitative analysis in accord with the chronological order of questions in which those cases occur in the ST. I will label each subsection within this qualitative analysis after the topic(s) which Aquinas addresses in the questions under consideration.

A. Cases 1-2: ST II-II, Questions 2 and 10 - On Faith and Unbelief

Aquinas’s 1st and 2nd references to Isa. 53 in the ST are found in two questions from the secunda secundae on the act of faith and the nature of unbelief, respectively. The 1st case is found in II-II q. 2, a. 7, ad 2. In this article, Aquinas considers whether or not “it is necessary for the salvation of all” that they “believe explicitly” in Christ.\(^7\) The second objection argues that explicit faith in Christ cannot be necessary for salvation, for even John the Baptist did not “appear to have known the mystery of Christ explicitly” given the question that he asks the Lord in Mt. 11:3.\(^8\) Aquinas responds by arguing that the Baptist’s own words, as recorded in Jn. 1:34 and 39, testify to the fact that he was explicitly aware of the Son’s Incarnation and “future Passion.”\(^9\) Further, the Baptist would have known about Christ’s Passion from the fact that “other prophets had foretold it, as may be seen especially in Isaiah 53.”\(^10\) Aquinas does not mention a specific verse from Isa. 53. Rather, he simply refers to the chapter as a whole and uses

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\(^7\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 2, a. 7. Henceforth, all citations from the ST will be abbreviated as ST II-II, etc. All quotations from the ST are taken from the Leonine edition of the Latin text and, unless otherwise noted, the English translation by Laurence Shapcote. These Latin and English texts are available online at https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.II-II.

\(^8\) ST II-II, q. 2, a. 7, obj. 2.

\(^9\) Ibid., ad 2.

\(^10\) Ibid.
it as the principal example of an Old Testament prophecy concerning Christ’s Passion. The words of Isaiah’s prophecy can generate explicit faith in Christ’s Passion, and that is exactly what they did for John the Baptist.\(^\text{11}\) So while Aquinas does not use the phrase ‘literal sense’ here, his analysis in this context suggests once more that the Passion of Christ is the first and principal reality to which the words of Isa. 53 refer.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53 in the \textit{secunda secundae} occurs in q. 10, a. 1, where Aquinas considers the question of whether or not unbelief is sinful. His answer hinges upon a distinction between two kinds of unbelief. The first kind, which consists of “pure negation,” is not sinful.\(^\text{12}\) This type of unbelief is present in those “who have heard nothing about the faith.”\(^\text{13}\) The second, sinful type of unbelief consists in “opposition to the faith,” such as when “a man refuses to hear the faith, or despises it.”\(^\text{14}\) At this point, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:1 in order to provide a biblical illustration of the nature of sinful unbelief: “‘who has believed our report?’”\(^\text{15}\) Isaiah’s text shows that the sin of unbelief consists in denying the divine message, or, the divine report. This is the case even when the divine report is difficult and challenging to believe, such as Isaiah’s report about the suffering of the Christ.

As is evident from the above analysis, Aquinas uses Isa. 53 in the \textit{secunda secundae} in relatively simple and inconsequential ways. The remainder of his references to Isa. 53 are found in the \textit{Tertia Pars}. There, Aquinas frequently employs Isa. 53 in the service of theologically rich Christological and soteriological arguments.

\(^{11}\) On Aquinas’ distinction between implicit and explicit faith, and on the degree to which the latter is necessary, see ST II-II, q. 2, a. 5-7.
\(^{12}\) ST II-II, q. 10, a. 1, c.
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:1.
B. Cases 3-10: ST III, Questions 14, 15 and 18 — On Christ’s Human Defects and Pain

Aquinas’s first 8 references to Isa. 53 in the Tertia Pars are found in his questions on the bodily defects (q. 14) and defects of soul (q. 15) that Christ experienced in his human nature as well as on the unity of Christ’s will (q. 18). The first 4 cases are in question 14, the next 3 are in question 15, and the final case is in question 18.

The first 3 cases of Isa. 53 in the Tertia Pars are found in III, q. 14, a. 1. The 1st of these cases is in the fourth objection to the question of whether God the Son should have assumed bodily defects in his human nature. This objection argues that one of the ends of the Incarnation, namely, to bring people to the knowledge of God, was frustrated by the fact that Christ assumed bodily defects. For “by these infirmities men were kept back from knowing him.”16 This claim is followed by a lengthy quote from Isa. 53:2-3, which reads in part “‘there was no sightliness in him that we should be desirous of him,’” and he appeared “‘hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not.’”17 In his response to this objection, Aquinas grants that Christ’s bodily infirmities “concealed his Godhead,” but he claims that they also “made known his manhood.”18 Thus, bodily defects do not ultimately frustrate the revelatory end of the Incarnation, for it is precisely through Christ’s humanity that we come to know and believe in his divinity. His humanity is “the way” to “the Godhead.”19 In support of this claim, Aquinas quotes Rom. 5:1-2, where Paul identifies Christ as the one through whom we gain access to God. In the body of the article, Aquinas identifies another proof of this principle in the appearance of the risen Christ to Thomas the Apostle. Thomas was “recalled to the faith” through “the sight of his [Christ’s]...

16 ST III, q. 14, a. 1, obj. 4.
17 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:2-3. The full quotation states: “‘[There was no sightliness] that we should be desirous of him. Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, and his look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not.’”
18 ST III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 4.
19 Ibid.
wounds.” Hence, with the help of the text of Isa. 53:2-3, Aquinas provides a phenomenological order in regards to the way that we come to know Christ: through our encounter with Christ’s bodily infirmities, we come to know his humanity, and through our encounter with his humanity, we come to know his divinity.

The 2nd case of Isa. 53 in the Tertia Pars (and the 4th in the ST as a whole) occurs in the body of q. 14, a. 1. In the sed contra, Aquinas claims that God the Son did indeed assume a human nature which was vulnerable to bodily defects. Christ did so in order “to suffer and be tempted” just as other humans are.21 By sharing in their pain and temptation, yet without sin, Christ is able to help all those who suffer and who are tempted to bear their trials as he did. In the body of the article, Aquinas further specifies how it is that Christ’s bodily defects enable him to help sinners. He says that Christ came “to satisfy for the sin of the human race,” and that “one satisfies for another’s sin by taking on himself the punishment [poenam] due to the sin of the other.”22 He then specifies that the “punishment [poena] for sin” that all sinners must pay are “bodily defects, namely, death, hunger, thirst, and the like.”23 All of these defects were “brought into the world by Adam.”24 That is, as a result of Adam’s sin all of his descendants are conceived with a human nature that is subject to bodily defects.

As a fellow descendant of Adam, Christ also experiences the poena that is natural bodily infirmity. Aquinas explains this concept with the help of a quotation from Isa. 53:4: “it was
useful for the end of the Incarnation that he [Christ] should assume these penalties \(\text{[poenalitates]}\) in our flesh and in our stead, according to Isa. 53:4: ‘surely he has borne our infirmities.’”\(^{25}\) The text of Isa. 53:4 here witnesses to the fact that Christ endured the same basic types of bodily defects that all sinners must endure. Christ possessed a passible human nature in solidarity with postlapsarian humanity. This is what Aquinas means in this context when he speaks of the “punishment” that Christ endured on our behalf. The immediate source of Christ’s bodily pain was simply the passible nature that he freely assumed; he was not actively inflicted with pain by the Father. The Father was not actively afflicting additional suffering upon Christ as a punishment for his own sins or for the sins of others. Aquinas’s next use of Isa. 53 further clarifies this point.

The 5th case in the ST occurs in the third objection of III, q. 14, a. 1. This objection claims that “penalty \(\text{[poena]}\) is the consequence of fault,” and that Christ never had any faults.\(^{26}\) Hence, Christ should not have experienced any bodily defects, for such defects are penalties \(\text{[poenales]}\). In his response to this objection, Aquinas affirms that \(\text{poena}\) is always a consequence of sin, though it can be a consequence of actual sins or original sin. Then, he specifies that such \(\text{poena}\) can be endured by the sinner himself or by someone else who offers satisfaction on behalf of the sinner. In terms of the human nature that Christ assumed, the vulnerability of this nature to bodily defects is ultimately due to the sin of Adam, the father of the human race. Further, Christ chose to assume such a passible human nature and thus be subject to bodily \(\text{poena}\) in response to both Adam’s sins and all of the actual sins committed throughout human history. In order to emphasize this point, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:5: “‘He was

\(^{25}\) Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:4.
\(^{26}\) ST III, q. 14, a. 1, obj. 3.
wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins.” Christ was not a sinner; he did not owe a debt of punishment and satisfaction in response to his own sins. The text of Isa. 53:5 makes the origin of Christ’s suffering clear: he experienced pain in order to enact satisfaction for our sins. Christ himself never did anything that was displeasing to God, and God never had any reason to vent his wrath upon Christ’s body. Rather, Christ freely chose to endure bodily poenas for our sakes, as a fitting means of satisfying for our sins.

The 6th instance of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 14, a. 2. Having established that Christ assumed a human nature that was vulnerable to bodily defects, Aquinas now asks whether or not Christ assumed an obligation to endure these defects. The first objection answers this question in the negative, and it does so with the help of Isa. 53:7, which states “he was offered because he himself willed it.” The objection argues that this text refers to Christ’s voluntary willing of the Passion, and that “will is opposed to necessity.” Since Christ freely chose to suffer bodily pain, as Isa. 53:7 seems to indicate, then he could not have been bound by any necessity or obligation to suffer those pains. Aquinas provides a thorough response to this objection in the body of the article.

He begins by establishing that the Son of God freely chose, with his divine will, to assume a human nature that would be naturally “subject to the necessity of death and other like defects” in virtue of its substantial matter. Consequently, this passible human nature was also “subject to necessity in regard to the nail that pierced and the scourge that struck.” Further, the human, sensitive will of Christ would have been subject to the natural, necessary experience of

27 Ibid., ad 3, quoting Isa. 53:5.
28 Unless otherwise noted, all further references in this chapter to question and article numbers which feature cases of Isa. 53 come from the Tertia Pars.
29 ST III, q. 14, a. 2, obj. 1, quoting Isa. 53:7.
30 Ibid., obj. 1.
31 Ibid., c.
32 Ibid.
“repugnance” at the prospect of “death and bodily hurt.” But, again, Christ necessarily experiences these bodily defects and interior revulsion at them as a consequence of his prior, free, eternal and divine decision to assume a human nature subject to these defects. Additionally, even as a human Christ willed, “following the deliberation of reason,” to experience these defects. That is, his rational will was completely conformed to the eternal decision of his divine will, even as his sensitive will experienced natural repugnance at the prospect of pain and death. Aquinas summarizes this argument and returns to the text of Isa. 53:7 in his response to the first objection. He states, “Christ is said to be ‘offered because he himself willed it,’ namely, with his divine will and deliberate human will.” In conclusion, the text of Isa. 53:7 does not mean that Christ’s human body and sensitive will were completely free from the necessity of undergoing defects. Rather, this biblical text simply indicates that Christ freely chose, as both God and man, to subject himself to this natural necessity.

Aquinas’ 7th reference to Isa. 53 is in III, q. 15, a. 1. In the body of this article Aquinas argues that Christ was not guilty of actual or original sin. But, as the fourth objection points out, this conclusion seems to contradict the testimony of 2 Cor. 5:21, which states that “‘he that knew no sin,’ namely, Christ, ‘for us was made sin.'” In his response to this objection, Aquinas

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., ad 1. This could be considered Aquinas’s 28th explicit reference to the words of a verse from Isa. 53 in the ST. But, here Aquinas does not explicitly mention that these words come from ‘Isaiah,’ and so they will not turn up on a search for ‘Isaiah’ using the Index Thomisticus. Further, Aquinas is quoting these scriptural words because they were quoted in the objection that he is responding to. And so, it raises the question of whether or not one should count a quotation once or twice if it occurs in an objection and then is repeated verbatim in the response to the objection. I have chosen to count such occurrences as simply one quotation.
36 ST III, q. 15, a. 1, c.
37 Ibid., obj. 4.
turns to Isa. 53 and several other biblical texts in order to explain the proper meaning of 2 Cor. 5:21. He states,

God “made Christ sin,” not, indeed, in such sort that he had sin, but that he made him a sacrifice for sin, just as it is written in Hos. 4:8: “They shall eat the sins of my people,” that is, the priests, who by the law ate the sacrifices offered for sin. And in that way it is written in Isa. 53 that “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,” namely, because he gave him up to be a victim for the sins of all men. Or, “he made him sin,” meaning that he had “the likeness of sinful flesh,” as it is said in Rom. 8. And this is because of the passible and mortal body he assumed.

In this passage, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:6. He does not think that this verse is saying that Christ sinned. Nor does Isaiah’s text mean that God placed upon Christ the cumulative interior effects of every human sin, such as the endurance of a disordered will, guilt, and shame. Isa. 53:6 also does not mean that in his own being Christ experienced all of the bodily pain that every human sin in history has ever caused. Rather, that which God has laid on Christ’s shoulders is the task of offering himself as a sacrifice in atonement for the sins of all of humanity. Christ has received from the Father the heavy responsibility of making an offering which suitably atones for every sin that has been and ever will ever be committed by human beings.

The 8th case of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 15, a. 5, which inquires whether Christ experienced “sensible pain.” In the body of the article, Aquinas clarifies the meaning of the question. For, while it is one thing to say that Christ’s body was harmed, it is another thing to say that he felt the pain that comes from that harm, or, that he had “the sense of hurt.” In the sed contra, he establishes the biblical foundation for his answer by simply quoting Isa. 53:4: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our pains.” Building off of this quotation, in the body of the

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38 Aquinas also uses Isa. 53 in order to explain the meaning of 1 Cor. 5:21 in his Commentary on 2 Corinthians. See Chp. 4, pgs. 17-18 in this work and Super 2 ad Corinthios, c. 5, l. 5, 201.
39 ST III, q. 15, a. 1, ad 4, quoting Hos. 4:8, Isa. 53:6, and Rom. 8:3.
40 ST III, q. 15, a. 5.
41 Ibid., c.
42 Ibid., s.c. quoting Isa. 53:4. I have translated dolores into “pains,” rather than the given “sorrows.”
article Aquinas claims that Christ really did experience sensible pain. He really endured “the 
sense of hurt” and felt “true pain.”  The reason for this is that Christ actually possessed a real 
soul with all of its “natural powers,” including the power to feel pain.  The Son of God did not 
assume merely a body in the manner of a pilot who controls a drone that is disconnected from his 
own being. Rather, Christ assumed a human body and soul that were intimately united. He 
possessed a complete human nature. Hence, when damage and harm was inflicted upon Christ’s 
body, he felt the experience of pain in his soul. In short, he really did experience the sensory 
pain of which Isa. 53:4 speaks.

The 9th occurrence of Isa. 53 is the third and final reference to this text in III, q. 15. In a. 
6, Aquinas asks if Christ experienced “sorrow” [tristitia].  In order to understand how he uses 
Isa. 53 in this article, we first need to examine the basic answer to the question that Aquinas 
explicates in the body of the article. He explains that sorrow, like sensible pain, exists in the 
“sensitive appetite” of the human soul. But sorrow and sensible pain are distinct in terms of 
their causes. The soul feels sensible pain in response to harm that is “perceived by the sense of 
touch, such as when anyone is wounded.” The soul feels sorrow in response to “anything 
hurtful or evil interiorly apprehended by the reason or imagination, as when anyone grieves over 
the loss of grace or money.” To put it simply, the soul experiences sensible pain in response to 
bodily harm, and it experiences sorrow in response to the intellectual recognition of any type of 
harm and evil. So, all sensible pain is accompanied by sorrow, but not all sorrow results from 
sensible pain. Given this definition, Aquinas reasons that Christ certainly experienced sorrow.

43 Ibid., c.
44 Ibid.
45 ST III, q. 15, a. 6.
46 Ibid., c.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
For, “Christ’s soul could apprehend things as hurtful either to himself, as his passion and death, or to others, as the sin of his disciples, or of the Jews that killed him.” Christ felt the interior pain of sorrow precisely because he intellectually recognized the evil and harmful things that were done to him or to others and by others. Christ grieved in the face of these evils, just as he grieved outside of the tomb of his friend Lazarus.

We can now appreciate the use of Isa. 53 in the fourth objection to this article. This objection is grounded in a quotation from St. Augustine which states that sorrow is a response to “things we suffer unwillingly.” If we presuppose Augustine’s definition then we cannot say that Christ experienced sorrow for, as Isa. 53:7 states, “he was offered because he himself willed it.” Aquinas’s response to this objection hinges on the distinction between willing something as an end in itself and willing something merely as a means to an end. We can freely choose certain things as means which we would not choose as ends, such as “bitter medicine.” The bitterness of such medicine is “contrary to the will” considered in itself. But nonetheless a sick person may freely choose to take such bitter medicine “by reason of the end to which it is ordained,” namely, “health.” For instance, a person will experience sorrow when their leg is amputated even though they freely willed to undergo this operation as a means to the end of saving their life. Similarly, Aquinas explains, “Christ’s death and passion were of themselves involuntary, and caused sorrow, although they were voluntary as ordained to the end, which is the redemption of the human race.” Christ did not choose to experience the Passion as an end in itself. Rather, the various forms of pain which constituted his Passion were in and of

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., obj. 4, quoting Augustine, City of God book 14, chapter 6.
51 Ibid., obj. 4, quoting Isa. 53:7.
52 Ibid., ad 4.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
themselves repugnant to his will and therefore sources of sorrow. Nonetheless, Christ freely willed to endure these pains and the sorrow which they caused for the sake of the end to which they were ordered: the salvation of the human race. So, the fact that Isa. 53:7 testifies to the voluntary nature of Christ’s Passion does not mean that Christ was preserved from the experience of sorrow amidst his Passion.

The 10th case of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 18, a. 6, which asks “was there contrariety of wills in Christ?” Drawing upon the terminology of Gal. 5:17, the second objection argues that the desires of Christ’s “spirit” and “flesh” were in opposition to one another. For, “in his flesh he shrank from the passion,” yet “by the will of charity” which he possessed from the Holy Spirit Christ “willed the Passion.” Here the objection quotes Isa. 53:7 as a biblical proof of the fact that Christ freely chose from charity to endure the Passion: “he was offered because he himself willed it.” In the body of the article, Aquinas establishes the basic points that inform his response to this objection. He first notes that it is normal for a person to desire “one thing with his rational appetite” even as he “wishes [for] another thing with his sensitive appetite.” This tension only becomes an opposition of contrariety if the sensitive appetite overpowers the rational, such that the person pursues their sensitive wish even though they know doing so is contrary to reason. Aquinas says that Christ could have experienced tension between his sensitive and rational will, but never contrariety. As a man Christ rationally chose to endure the Passion for the end of our salvation even though his sensitive appetite was naturally repulsed by the means needed for the acquisition of this end. Christ’s natural and properly ordered appetite

55 Ibid., q. 18, a. 6.
56 ST III, q. 18, a. 6, obj. 2.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
59 Ibid., c.
for sensory goods and the avoidance of sensory pain never frustrated his ability to choose, with his rational will, to do that which he knew to be the divine will.\textsuperscript{60} Hence, Christ’s rational choice to endure the Passion, as spoken of by Isa. 53:7, was not “impeded or retarded by the desires of [his] flesh.”\textsuperscript{61}

C. Cases 11-12: ST III, Question 22—On the Priesthood of Christ

Aquinas’ 11th reference to Isa. 53 is in q. 22, a. 2. Granting that Christ is a priest, this article asks if “Christ himself was both priest and victim?”\textsuperscript{62} The first objection sets up Aquinas’s later reference to Isa. 53. It argues in the form of a syllogism: a priest’s job is to kill the sacrificial victim; Christ did not destroy himself; hence, “he was not both priest and victim.”\textsuperscript{63} In his response to this objection, Aquinas first grants the middle term of the above syllogism by acknowledging that “Christ did not slay himself.”\textsuperscript{64} The Son did not choose, through commission or omission, to actively cause his own death. He did not commit suicide. Yet, there is a sense in which Christ “offered himself” just as a priest offers up a sacrificial victim to God.\textsuperscript{65} For, as Aquinas explains, “of his own free will he exposed himself to death, according to Isa. 53:7: ‘he was offered because he himself willed it.’”\textsuperscript{66} Aquinas uses Isa. 53:7 here in order to supply a new, nuanced middle term to the syllogism regarding priests that he provided in the objection. He can now reason: priests slay sacrificial victims; Christ freely exposed himself to death; hence, in this way Christ is both priest and sacrificial victim. As

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., ad 2.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., q. 22, a. 2.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., obj. 1.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., ad 1.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
Aquinas explains in the response to the second objection, Christ “freely offered himself to suffering,” and so “in this respect he is a victim.”

Thus, in this article Aquinas helpfully clarifies what Isa. 53:7 is (and is not) saying in regards to Christ’s voluntary endurance of the Passion. Christ freely chose to expose himself to suffering and death, but he did not actively attempt to bring about this suffering and death in a formal or material way. The nature of Christ’s free offering of himself in the Passion, of which Isa. 53:7 speaks, can be further appreciated in light of the following comparison. Christ’s free decision to expose himself to the Passion is comparable to the free choice of a policeman who enters the house of a human trafficker in order to liberate the people who are held in slavery within. The police officer freely exposes himself to the danger of being in the criminal’s house, but he does so for the sake of saving the captives; he does not actively will to encounter the violent criminal. Similarly, Christ freely chooses to expose himself to the danger of living and preaching and working miracles in the presence of his enemies, even though he knows that doing so will get him killed. Despite this knowledge, Christ risks himself in this way for the sake of saving humanity. He actively wills to live and preach and work miracles; he does not actively will to be arrested and killed. Yet, unlike the police officer, Christ has actively chosen with both his divine and rational human will to be capable of experiencing and feeling any harm and pain that does end up getting inflicted upon him. Whereas, if the police officer is caught by the trafficker, then he has no choice but to experience and feel the harm and pain that may be inflicted upon him.

The 12th use of Isa. 53 occurs in III, q. 22, a. 6. This article deals with the question of whether, as Psalm 110 indicates, Christ should be called “‘a priest forever according to the order

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67 Ibid., ad 2.
of Melchisedech.”68 The third objection argues that Christ should not be referred to as a priest of Melchisedech’s order, but rather simply of his own order. For, Christ alone, and not Melchisedech, is without genealogy, father, or mother, and Christ alone lasts forever (per Heb. 7:2).69 In his response, Aquinas does not concede the conclusion of the objection, but he does grant the truth of the propositions used in support of that conclusion. He admits that Christ alone “had no earthly father, no heavenly mother, and no genealogy, according to Isa. 53:8: ‘who shall declare his generation?’ and who in his divinity had neither beginning nor end of days.”70 Aquinas thus interprets Isa. 53:8 here as referring to the virginal conception of Christ, the divine generation of the Son exclusively from the Father, and the eternity of the Son’s divine being. While the Letter to the Hebrews does say that Melchisedech lacked father, mother, and genealogy, and that he existed eternally, this is not to be taken literally; Hebrews says this only in the sense that “these details in his [Melchisedech’s] regard are not supplied by Holy Scripture.”71 Conversely, Christ is actually, in fact, the eternal and divine Son of the Father who became human apart from the mediation of a human father.

D. Cases 13-16: ST III, Questions 31, 35-6, and 43—On Christ’s Genealogy, Birth, and Public Ministry

Aquinas’ 13th reference to Isa. 53 once again concerns the issue of Christ’s genealogy. In III, q. 31, a. 3, Aquinas considers whether the Gospels provide fitting records of Christ’s genealogy. The first objection claims that “Christ’s genealogy should not have been set down,”

68 ST III, q. 22, a. 6, s.c.
69 Ibid., obj. 3.
70 Ibid., ad 3, quoting Isa. 53:8.
71 Ibid., ad 3.
since “it is written by Isa. 53:8: ‘who shall declare his generation?’"72 In response Aquinas, drawing upon Jerome, claims “Isaias speaks of the generation of Christ’s divinity.”73 Conversely, the genealogy of Matthew is about “Christ’s forefathers from whom he was descended according to the flesh.” Hence, Matthew and Isaiah are speaking of different types of genealogies. Christ’s divine generation from the Father cannot be spoken of adequately, nor, Aquinas says here, can “the manner of the Incarnation.”74 But, it is possible to speak about Christ’s human ancestors.

The 14th case of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 35, a. 6, which asks if Mary suffered in giving birth to Christ. In the body of this article, Aquinas claims that Christ was born in a miraculous manner: he “came forth from the closed womb of his mother” without “opening the passage from the womb.”75 Hence, Mary was a perpetual virgin in the sense that even birth did not open her womb.76 But the second objection argues that Christ’s birth should have involved pain, for “the end is proportionate to the beginning.”77 Since “Christ ended his life in pain,” per “Isa. 53:4: ‘Surely he has carried our pains,’ ” then his birth should have also featured pain.78 In response, Aquinas affirms the meaning of Isa. 53:4, saying that Christ really did suffer “pains.”79 Yet, he argues that this is beside the point: the question is whether Mary suffered in giving birth, not whether Christ suffered in being born. So the objection does properly interpret Isa. 53:4 as a witness to the reality of Christ’s pain, but this reality is not relevant to the question Aquinas seeks to answer in this context.

72 Ibid., q. 31, a. 3, obj. 1, quoting Isa. 53:8. Aquinas also turns to Isa. 53:8 in order to deal with this objection in the super Matthaeum, c. 1, l. 1, no. 15. See Chp. 5, pgs. 17-18.
73 Ibid., ad 1.
74 Ibid.
75 ST III, q. 35, a. 6, c.
76 Ibid., q. 28, a. 2.
77 Ibid., q. 35, a. 6, obj. 2.
78 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:4. I translate dolores here as “pains” rather than the given “sorrows.”
79 Ibid., ad 2. The word for “pains” here is dolores.
The 15th occurrence of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 36, a. 1. This article asks if “Christ’s birth should have been made known to all.” Aquinas begins to answer this question in the sed contra by quoting two biblical texts which speak of the “hidden” [absconditus] mystery of God, Isa. 45:15 and Isa. 53:3. The latter states: “his look was, as it were, hidden [absconditus] and despised.” Aquinas thus takes it as a given of revelation that not everyone recognized the Messianic and divine identity of Jesus; the glory of his birth was not made known to all. Hence, Aquinas proceeds to give reasons why this was the case. The first reason that he gives in support of the revealed truth which Isa. 53:3 and 45:15 testify to is a problematic one that is worth highlighting:

First, because this would have been a hindrance to the redemption of man, which was accomplished by means of the cross. For, as it is written in 1 Cor. 2:8: “If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Aquinas’s argument here can be put into the form of a syllogism: (A) the redemption of the world was accomplished by the cross; (B) the cross happened because people did not recognize that Christ was the Lord of glory; (C) therefore, our redemption depended upon the concealment of Christ’s glory from some individuals. On a purely literary level, Aquinas’s words in this immediate context do appear to support this syllogism.

The theological problem with this syllogism is that it indicates that God actively willed to conceal the identity of Christ from some people precisely so that those people would be moved to crucify Christ. Concealing Christ’s identity is the means to the end of getting people to misunderstand and kill Christ. God does something (hide Christ’s identity) in order to move people to error (lack of faith in and understanding of Christ) so that they will sin (arrest, assault

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80 Ibid., q. 36, a. 1.
81 Ibid., s.c.
82 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:3.
83 Ibid., c.
and kill Christ). We thus have God actively willing error and sin as a means and end, respectively. I do not think that Aquinas is committed to such a position.

As we have already seen in both the *super Ioannem* and *the super Matthaeum*, Aquinas argues two related points: first, those who killed Christ were guilty of the sin of murder; second, God could not have actively willed this sin. 84 Further, as we have seen, in ST III, q. 22, a. 2 (on whether Christ was both priest and victim), Aquinas makes it very clear that Christ did not kill himself but rather merely exposed himself to danger for our salvation. 85 The second objection of that article argues that Christ could not have been a sacrificial victim because human sacrifices were conducted by the gentiles, and God “reprehended” those sacrifices. 86 The objection supports this judgment with a quotation from Psalm 106:38: “‘They shed innocent blood; the blood of their sons and of their daughters, which they sacrificed to the idols of Chanaan.’” 87 In his response to this objection, Aquinas distinguishes between the will of Christ and the will of the people who killed him. Christ freely willed to endure suffering for us, and this was a pleasing sacrifice to God. But, those who freely willed to slay Christ “are not accounted as offering a sacrifice to God, but as guilty of a great crime. And a similitude of this sin was borne by the wicked sacrifices of the Gentiles, in which they offered up men to idols.” 88 So, here in III, q. 22, a. 2 Aquinas is clear: the slaying of Christ was an abominable crime that was foreshadowed by the horrific human sacrifices of the gentiles, and God was repulsed by all of these crimes. God did not actively will these crimes either as ends or as means. So while the problematic nature of Aquinas’s argument in III, q. 36, a. 1 remains, it would be a mistake to...

84 See Thomas Aquinas, *Lectura super Ioannem*, c. 13, l. 5, 1815 and c. 18, l. 1, 2283; *Lectura super Matthaueum*, c. 27, l. 1, 2336.
85 ST III, q. 22, a. 2.
86 Ibid., obj. 2.
87 Ibid., obj. 2, quoting Psalm 106:38.
88 Ibid., ad 2.
think that this argument encapsulates and adequately represents Aquinas’ full understanding of the reasons for Christ’s Passion.

The 16th case of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 43, a. 1, which considers “whether Christ should have worked miracles.” The second objection claims that Christ will come with works of “power and majesty” in his eschatological, second coming, and so it is fitting that in “his first coming he came in infirmity, according to Isa. 53:3: ‘a man of pains and acquainted with infirmity.’” In response, Aquinas argues that the “infirmity” of which Isa. 53:3 speaks was an “‘infirmity’ of the flesh, which is manifested in the passions.” The pain and infirmity which Christ suffered in his bodily passions does not render him incapable of working miracles or render such miraculous works unfitting. For, as Aquinas explains, in addition to coming in passible flesh Christ also “came ‘in the power of God,’ and this had to be made manifest by miracles.” Hence, Isa. 53:3, while true, gives only half of the truth about Christ: he is both a man of pain and infirmity and a man of glory. His infirmity manifests his solidarity with sinners, and his miraculous works manifests his solidarity with God.

E. Cases 17-24: ST III, Questions 46-7 and 49—On the Passion of Christ

Questions 46-49 of the Tertia Pars contain Aquinas’s mature systematic exposition of the theological mystery of Christ’s Passion. He turns to Isa. 53 in 3 out of these 4 questions: on the nature of the Passion itself (q. 46), on the efficient cause of the Passion (q. 47), and on the effects of the Passion (q. 49). He does not refer to Isa. 53 in q. 48, which deals with the efficiency of the

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89 Ibid., q. 43, a. 1.
90 Ibid., obj. 2, quoting Isa. 53:3. I translate dolores here as “pains” rather than the given “sorrows.”
91 Ibid., ad 2, quoting Isa. 53:3.
92 Ibid., quoting 2 Cor. 13:4.
93 Ibid., c. Aquinas says that Christ’s miracles (1) confirm the truth of his divine teaching, (2) confirm the reality of the divine presence within him.
Passion, or, the “the manner in which” the salvific effects of the Passion were “brought about.”

3 cases of Isa. 53 are in q. 46, 4 cases are in q. 47, and 1 case is in q. 49.

The 1st case of Isa. 53 in this portion of the Tertia Pars, and the 17th total case in the ST, is found in III, q. 46, a. 1. In this article, Aquinas considers whether or not it was “necessary” for Christ to endure the Passion for the salvation of the human race. The second objection contains a syllogism: “what is necessary is opposed to what is voluntary;” “Christ suffered of his own free will;” therefore, “it was not necessary for him to suffer.” A quotation of Isa. 53:7 supports the middle term by saying “‘He was offered because he himself willed it.’” Hence, the text of Isa. 53:7 is used to support the argument that it was not necessary for Christ to suffer and die.

Aquinas’s response to this objection builds upon a distinction between various kinds of ‘necessity’ that he makes in the body of the article. There is natural necessity, such as when a person suffers fatigue from hard manual labor. The reality of fatigue follows necessarily from the intrinsic, natural principles of the human body. There is also a necessity that is imposed from without, by some external efficient cause. For example, a man is necessarily bound in one spot when someone violently ties him up and prevents him from moving. Finally, a thing may be necessary in light of an end to be pursued. Such a necessity refers to a means that is strictly necessary, or at least fitting, in order to acquire the desired end. So, for instance, an athlete who desires the end of victory is necessarily bound to practice and condition in preparation for competition. Aquinas says that the nature of man and of God did not render Christ’s suffering necessary. Further, there was no external necessity imposed upon Christ by God or even by

94 ST III, q. 48.
95 ST III, q. 46, a. 1.
96 Ibid., obj. 2.
97 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
himself to suffer, for Christ “suffered voluntarily.” 98 Hence, Christ’s Passion was only necessary “from necessity of the end proposed,” meaning that it was the most fitting means which Christ could employ to attain the end of our liberation from sin. 99

Hence, in response to the second objection, Aquinas says that Christ’s free decision to undergo the Passion does rule out one form of necessity, namely, the kind that is imposed upon a person from an external efficient cause. 100 Since he is both God and man, no external power can force Christ to experience suffering against his will. In that sense, it is never ‘necessary’ for Christ to suffer. As Isa. 53:7 testifies, Christ was not bound under necessity to suffer at the hands of his enemies in the same way that a helpless lamb is powerlessly led to the slaughter against its own will. Rather, Christ experienced suffering only because he freely chose to assume a passible human nature and to experience the various defects and pains that would be inflicted upon him in that nature. Christ’s free decision to undergo suffering was ‘necessary’ only in terms of the end that he was pursuing, namely, our salvation from sin. When ‘necessity’ is understood in this sense then it does not contradict Isa. 53:7’s teaching that Christ freely chose to suffer.

The 18th case of Isa. 53 in the ST is in III, q. 46, a. 6. This article asks a highly speculative question about a disturbing reality, namely, “whether the pain of Christ’s Passion was greater than all other pains?” 101 Aquinas answers this question in the affirmative. He says that Christ experienced “sensible pain” in response to bodily harm and “internal pain” as a result of being conscious of harmful realities, and “in Christ each of these was the greatest in this

98 ST III, q. 46, a. 1, c.
99 Ibid. On the distinction between a means that is strictly necessary and a means that is necessary in the sense of being most fitting, see ST III, q. 1, a. 2.
100 ST III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 2.
101 ST III, q. 46, a. 6.
present life.” But the fourth objection provides an interesting argument in defense of the conclusion that Christ could not have experienced as much of the internal pain of sorrow as sinners do. It first establishes the principle that “the greater the good lost, the greater the pain” of sorrow in response to that lost good. Then, it states that Christ only lost his bodily life, whereas sinners lose the life of grace. Therefore, it concludes, sinners have far more to be sorrowful about than Christ ever had. In his response, Aquinas presumes the principle set forth in the objection, namely, that the pain of sorrow is proportionate to the value of the good that is lost. He also accepts the statement that the life of grace is superior to bodily life. Nonetheless, he still attempts to refute the objection’s conclusion.

Aquinas’s response to the fourth objection hinges upon three primary points, and he grounds the last point explicitly in the text of Isa. 53. He explains,

Christ grieved not only over the loss of his own bodily life, but also over the sins of all others. And this grief in Christ surpassed all grief of every contrite heart, both because it flowed from a greater wisdom and charity, by which the pang of contrition is intensified, and because he grieved at the one time for all sins, according to Isa. 53:4: “Surely he hath carried our sorrows.”

So, first, it is true that Christ never lost the life of grace for himself, and thus never had that reason to grieve. But the objection falsely assumes that Christ never grieved over the sins of others. Aquinas rejects this presumption and states that Christ did in fact experience sorrow over the sins of others. Second, the virtuous causes of Christ’s sorrow made it more painful than the sorrow which any other person can experience. Sorrow is caused by the intellectual recognition of evil and the revulsion of the will in response to that evil. Christ’s infinite wisdom enabled

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102 Ibid., c.
103 Ibid., obj. 4.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., ad 4.
106 Ibid., ad 4, quoting Isa. 53:4.
him to recognize intellectually the true nature of evil more so than any other person, and his infinite charity caused his will to respond to the face of evil with an incomparable sadness and disgust.

Third, in his response to the objection Aquinas makes the intriguing claim that Christ experienced sorrow in response to each and every human sin ever committed. He explicitly quotes Isa. 53:4 in support of this claim. Isaiah’s text not only indicates that Christ bore our physical pains; it also shows that Christ entered into solidarity with us in our sorrows. For Aquinas, the Suffering Servant text supports the notion that Christ bore every sorrow in response to sin that every sinner has ever experienced, and therefore he experienced a far greater sorrow than any individual sinner ever could. Finite sinners are aware principally of those sins which they themselves commit and which are committed against them. They may also grieve in response to news of the sins committed by strangers. But they can never be aware in a precise way of every specific sin committed by every human being throughout the course of history. They could not acquire such awareness even over an entire lifetime. Yet Christ, as true God and true man, can have such an awareness, and Aquinas claims that Isa. 53:4 is proof that he did in fact have such knowledge. Further, he experienced this comprehensive knowledge of sin “at one time [simul],” rather than little by little over a progressive period of time. All at once, Christ endured “the pain of contrition” in response to every sin ever committed. Simultaneously, he was contrite for “all the sins of the human race.” By enduring this unparalleled degree of the

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107 Ibid., ad 4.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., c.
pain of contrition, Christ made satisfaction for the sins of humanity.\textsuperscript{110} Hence, he is the exemplar cause for all contrite hearts and, as C.S. Lewis would say, the “perfect penitent.”\textsuperscript{111}

Aquinas’s exegetical use of Isa. 53:4 in this context is rather simple, but it has further logical implications. He claims that the reference in 53:4 to the Servant carrying our sorrows supports the notion that Christ knew what it was like to experience sorrow in response to sin, and specifically that Christ grieved for all human sin at one time. On this basis, one could also read the text of Isa. 53:4 in support of the notion that Christ experienced every other virtuous form of human sorrow as well, and not merely those forms of sorrow that are in direct response to sin. In this light, the text of Isa. 53:4 can also speak of Christ’s internal pain in response to the recognition of the ugliness of natural evils such as physical suffering and death. In the body of III, q. 46, a. 6, Aquinas makes it clear that Christ experienced the pain of sorrow in reaction to his bodily pain, and he further adds that Christ “apprehended most vehemently all the causes of sadness.”\textsuperscript{112} That is, Christ was conscious of every evil and source of harm that there is, and so he endured the pain of sadness that accompanies the recognition of all of those tragedies. While Aquinas does not explicitly draw out the logical implications of this notion, it seems to require the affirmation that Christ carried the sorrows not only of the penitent and the victim of sin, but also of the poor and widowed, of the laborer and the sick, of the person approaching death, and of all those who must righteously bear the pain of great harm and tragedy. Christ experienced radical solidarity with all those who virtuously recognize and endure the burden of suffering and who grieve for the sake of righteousness. Admittedly, Aquinas does not explicitly use Isa. 53:4 in support of such a view, but the way he does exegete Isaiah’s text lends itself to such an

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., c. and ad 2.
\textsuperscript{112} ST III, q. 46, a. 6, c. Emphasis added.
interpretation. So it seems fitting to say that for Aquinas, Isa. 53:4 testifies to the truth that Christ carried the sorrow of all penitents and of all those whose sadness is born of wisdom and charity.

The 19th occurrence of Isa. 53 is in III, q. 46, a. 11. Here Aquinas asks a simple question: was it “fitting for Christ to be crucified with thieves?” Aquinas’s answer to this question begins in the *sed contra*, where he quotes Isa. 53:12: “he was reputed with the wicked.” Isaiah’s text “foretold” that Christ would be counted among evildoers, and so it provides a biblical testimony to the reality of the object which Aquinas will reflect upon in the remainder of the article. As the Gospels and Isa. 53:12 indicate, Christ really was crucified alongside criminals, and in this article, Aquinas analyzes the various ways in which that historical event was fitting in accordance with the saving mission of the Son.

Aquinas’s next 4 uses of Isa. 53 are in q. 47, which concerns the efficient cause of Christ’s Passion. Cases 20-23 are all found in q. 47, a. 3, which deals with the complex question of “whether God the Father delivered up Christ to the Passion?” 3 of these cases are found in the body of the article. There, Aquinas begins by stating that Christ endured the Passion freely “out of obedience to the Father.” Then, he affirms that the Father “did deliver up Christ to the Passion . . . in three distinct respects.” He explains,

In the first way, because by his eternal will he preordained Christ’s Passion for the deliverance of the human race, according to the words of Isaia 53:6: “the Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all;” and again [Isa. 53:10]: “the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity.” Secondly, inasmuch as, by the infusion of charity, he inspired him with the will to suffer for us; hence we read in the

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113 ST III, q. 46, a. 11.
114 Ibid., s.c. quoting Isa. 53:12.
115 Ibid., q. 47, a. 3.
116 Ibid., c.
117 Ibid.
same passage [Isa. 53:7]: “He was offered because he himself willed it.” Third, by not shielding him from the Passion, but abandoning him to his persecutors.\textsuperscript{118}

Aquinas uses Isa. 53 twice in support of the first explanation and once in support of the second. On their surface, Isa. 53:6 and 10 appear to say that God actively willed and was even pleased by the suffering of Christ. But Aquinas interprets these verses as simply referring to the Father’s eternal plan for Christ to undergo suffering. For Aquinas, God the Father bruised Christ and laid our iniquities on him simply in the sense that Christ’s Passion was in accord with the eternal providence of God. To say that God providentially willed the Passion is not to say that he actively willed the contingent causes of Christ’s suffering, namely, the unbelief, violence, and cowardice of Christ’s enemies. In fact, the third explanation that Aquinas provides in the body of the article helps to support this reading of his uses of Isa. 53:6 and 10. God the Father abandoned Christ into the hands of his enemies, which simply means that he did not actively intervene to save Christ. For from all eternity he had preordained to allow Christ to be handed over to his enemies, and it is to this that Isa. 53:6 and 10 testify.

We can now turn to the second explanation that Aquinas provides in the body of III, q. 47, a. 3 regarding how the Father delivered up Christ to suffer. Aquinas uses Isa. 53:7 in this context in order to provide a biblical witness to the freedom of Christ. Christ’s free choice to undergo the Passion, a choice about which Isa. 53:7 speaks, was made possible because he possessed the moral virtue of charity. He received this supernatural virtue from the Father. Hence, the charity of Christ is the reason why he could freely choose to endure the Passion, and it is also the reason why Aquinas can say that the Father delivered up Christ to suffer.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:6, 10, and 7.
\textsuperscript{119} On Aquinas’s treatment of the relationship between the will of the Father and Christ’s charitable acceptance of the Passion see Joel Matthew Wallace, “Inspiravit et voluntatem patiendi pro nobis, inundendo ei caritatem”: Charity, the Source of Christ’s Action According to Thomas Aquinas (Siena: Cantagalli, 2013).
Aquinas makes a similar point in his response to the second objection of III, q. 47, a. 3. This objection contains the 4th and final use of Isa. 53 in this article. The objection argues that one should not say that the Father delivered Christ up to death in light of the fact that Christ freely “gave himself up for us, as it is written in Isa. 53:12: “‘he has delivered his soul unto death.” The presupposition here is that it is unlikely “that a man be given over to death by himself and by another also.” Aquinas responds simply by distinguishing between the divine will of God the Father and Son and the human will of the incarnate Son. As God, the Son and the Father both delivered Christ to death; and, as man, Christ also freely chose, from charity, to endure that which he and the Father divinely willed for him to endure from all eternity. Thus, here Aquinas is saying that the text of Isa. 53:12 should be interpreted as referring to the human will of Christ. As a man, Christ freely handed himself over to death in accord with the divine will of God.

Aquinas’ next, 24th reference to Isa. 53 is found in III, q. 49, a. 3. The entire question concerns the salvific effects of Christ’s Passion, and this specific article deals with the issue of whether Christ’s Passion released humanity from an obligation to endure punishment as a result of their sins. The sed contra consists exclusively of a quotation from Isa. 53:4: “‘Surely he has borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows.” Interestingly, in the remainder of the article Aquinas never explicitly explains how this verse from Isaiah relates to the question at hand or to the arguments that he offers in exposition of the answer to that question. So, I will simply offer a brief explication of the primary points that are made in this article and then make some suggestions regarding how the text of Isa. 53:4 relates to these points. In the body of the article,

120 ST III, q. 47, a. 3, obj. 2, quoting Isa. 53:12.
121 Ibid., obj. 2.
122 Ibid., ad 2.
123 ST III, q. 49, a. 3, s.c. quoting Isa. 53:4.
Aquinas makes two major points regarding what may be called the objective cause of humanity’s liberation from punishment. First, Christ’s Passion “directly” freed humanity from “the debt of punishment” by providing a “sufficient and superabundant satisfaction” for the sins of humanity.\(^\text{124}\) This means that in terms of strict justice, sinners no longer need to suffer punishment since Christ’s Passion was a more than suitable satisfaction in recompense for their sins. Second, the Passion “indirectly” frees humans from the debt of punishment by liberating humanity from the sins which generate debts of punishment.\(^\text{125}\)

In his replies to the three objections, Aquinas provides a rich and nuanced exposition of how Christians subjectively appropriate the objective deliverance from punishment that Christ won for them through his work of satisfaction. He makes three primary points. First, Christ’s Passion frees humans from the punishment of eternal damnation insofar as “it is applied, through faith and charity and the sacraments of faith.”\(^\text{126}\) These realities cause people to be “united to Christ” and thus to escape the spiritual death that is hell.\(^\text{127}\) Second, Baptism “configures” penitents to Christ and so frees them from any need to offer the “punishment of satisfaction” for their prebaptismal sins.\(^\text{128}\) But those who sin after baptism are obligated to offer satisfaction for their sins, and these penitential works are forms of punishment. Through these free endurances of penitential suffering, they are “configured” to the suffering of Christ, and the satisfaction wrought by Christ’s Passion functions to lessen the degree of suffering that they need to endure in satisfaction for their sins.\(^\text{129}\) Third, Christ’s Passion frees us from the punishment of spiritual death during this life, and it frees us from the punishment of bodily death at the eschaton. For,

\(^{124}\) Ibid., c.
\(^{125}\) Ibid.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., ad 1.
\(^{127}\) Ibid.
\(^{128}\) Ibid., ad 2.
\(^{129}\) Ibid.
“Christ’s satisfaction works its effect in us inasmuch as we are incorporated with him, as the members with their head.”

Hence, “as Christ first had grace in his soul with bodily passibility, and through the Passion attained to the glory of immortality,” so too the members of Christ’s mystical body share in his charity, suffering and death in this life, and then share in his resurrection in the next life.

With this framework in mind, we can now discern how Aquinas may be interpreting and using the text of Isa. 53:4 in III, q. 49, a. 3. One possibility is that the ‘iniquity’ that Christ carries on our behalf is the task of freeing us from the debt of punishment. So Christ places upon his own shoulders the burden of offering a satisfaction that can free humanity from the iniquity of punishment. A similar interpretation would hold that, through his Passion, Christ bears away the iniquities of our sins, temporal punishments, and eternal punishment. A third interpretation could unfold as follows: in the Passion, Christ bore the iniquities of sensible and internal pain; we are freed from the debt of punishment insofar as we are configured to Christ’s Passion; therefore, we are freed from the debt of punishment by bearing the iniquities of sensible and internal pain in union with the crucified Christ. Christ bore our iniquities and pains out of charity, and in doing so, he objectively satisfied for the sins of the human race. When we are united to Christ through charity and bear pain and sorrow out of love for God, then we subjectively appropriate the superabundant satisfaction that Christ offered to the Father. By doing so, we are freed from the punishments of damnation and permanent bodily death. These interpretations of Isaiah’s text are consistent with the theological claims that Aquinas makes in this article as well as with the ways in which we have seen Aquinas interpret Isa. 53:4 on earlier occasions.

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130 Ibid., ad 3.
131 Ibid.
F. Cases 25-26: ST III, Questions 51-2—On Christ’s Burial and Descent to the Dead

The 25th case of Isa. 53 occurs in Aquinas’s treatment of the burial of Christ in III, q. 51, a. 1. The second objection argues that Christ’s burial was not ordered towards our salvation, and therefore it was not fitting for him to be buried. In response, Aquinas claims that Christ’s burial did bring about our salvation. Aquinas takes two steps to support this claim. First, he quotes Isa. 53:9, “‘he shall give the ungodly for his burial.’” 132 Second, he explains the meaning of this biblical verse by citing “a gloss” which states “‘he shall give to God and the Father the Gentiles who were without godliness, because he purchased them by his death and burial.’” 133 So, in order to support the salvific significance of Christ’s burial, Aquinas turns to Isa. 53:9 and interprets that verse with the aid of an authority. According to the gloss cited, Isa. 53:9 testifies to the exchange that occurs as a result of Christ’s burial: Christ goes down into the earth and the ungodly are raised up to the life of God.

The 26th instance of Isa. 53 is found in III, q. 52, a. 1, which considers the question of “whether it was fitting for Christ to descend into hell.” 134 In the body of the article Aquinas offers three reasons why it was fitting that Christ descended into hell, and he quotes Isa. 53 in support of the first reason. Before we consider that explanation, though, it is necessary to clarify what Aquinas means by the terms ‘hell’ and ‘descent.’ He offers this clarification in q. 52, a. 2. There are three distinct levels of “hell” [inferno], namely, the hell of the lost, the hell of the just, and Purgatory. 135 The inferno of the lost is a state of eternal damnation and is equivalent to the contemporary Catholic doctrine of hell. The inferno of the just refers to the state that was

132 ST III, q. 51, a. 1, ad 2, quoting Isa. 53:9.
133 Ibid., ad 2.
134 ST III, q. 52, a. 1.
135 Ibid., q. 52, a. 2, s.c. and c.
experienced by the righteous souls who died prior to the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Second, Aquinas distinguishes between two ways in which Christ was “in” these various “places.” In terms of “effect,” Christ was in each level of hell: he shamed those in the hell of the lost, he gave hope to those in Purgatory, and he gave the Beatific Vision to those in the inferno of the just. Additionally, “a thing is said to be in place through its essence, and in this way” Christ’s human soul “descended only into that part of hell wherein the just were detained.” In this realm of the righteous dead, the soul of Christ proclaimed the good news to the righteous souls detained there and lifted them up to the vision of God in his essence, a vision which they had been deprived of as a result of original sin.

With these clarifications in mind, we can now examine how Aquinas interprets Isa. 53 in support of the claim that it was fitting for Christ to descend into hell. He explains,

It was fitting for Christ to descend into hell. First of all, because he came to bear our penalty [poenam] in order to free us from penalty [poena], according to Isa. 53:4: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” But through sin man had incurred not only the death of the body, but also descent into hell. Consequently since it was fitting for Christ to die in order to deliver us from death, so it was fitting for him to descend into hell in order to deliver us also from going down into hell.

While the logic of this passage is fairly straightforward, the way in which Aquinas uses Isa. 53:4 here raises complex theological questions. He draws two principal points from Isaiah’s text: (1) Christ really experienced the same types of poenas that sinners experience, such as death, (2) he did so precisely as a means of liberating sinners from permanent captivity to those poenas.

Presupposing these two points, Aquinas then argues that it was fitting for Christ to endure the

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136 Ibid., c.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 ST III, q. 52, a. 5, c.
140 Ibid., q. 52, a. 1, c. quoting Isa. 53:4.
poenam of hell since he came to liberate sinners from hell. The context suggests that Aquinas is referring specifically and exclusively to the hell of the just, and so the logic is: Christ shared in the poenae that the souls of the just endure in the underworld, and he did so precisely in order to save souls from that poenae. Now, the poenas that the deceased souls of the just endured were the privation of the Beatific Vision and the consequent pain of longing that that privation elicits. Could Christ really have shared in that type of poenae? In light of Aquinas’s Christology, the answer is in a certain sense ‘yes’ and in another sense ‘no.’

Christ could not have shared in the poenae of the righteous dead in a complete sense given that as a man he always possessed the Beatific Vision in his intellect. From the first moment of his conception in the womb of Mary, Christ knew the essence and will of God through a direct and immediate intellectual vision. Nonetheless, during his temporal life he still experienced defects and pains of soul and body. His perfect intellectual knowledge of God did not prevent him from experiencing the internal pain of sorrow, fear, and anger, nor the sensory pain that comes from bodily harm. Aquinas makes it clear that by his Passion, Christ merited the full glorification of his soul and body, such that they would no longer be subject to such defects and pains. Further, he claims that Christ received the fruits of this merit at the moment of his resurrection - at this point his soul and body became completely impassible. But, Aquinas does not clearly state whether Christ’s soul experienced internal pain during the three days that he spent with the righteous dead in the inferno of the just. Hence, when Aquinas appeals to Isa. 53:4 in order to support the idea that “Christ, in order to take our penalties

141 ST III, q. 9, a. 2.
142 Ibid., q. 15, a. 5, 6, and 10.
143 Ibid., q. 46, a. 6.
144 Ibid., q. 54, a. 2.
[poenas] upon himself . . . willed his soul to descend into hell,” the exact nature of the poenam that Christ’s soul endured in hell is vague.\footnote{Ibid., q. 52, a. 4, c.}

At most, Aquinas could mean the following: as Christ descended into the presence of the righteous dead and proclaimed the good news to them, his soul could still have been capable of experiencing the internal pain of sorrow. During his stay of “a day and two nights”\footnote{Ibid.} in the inferno of the just Christ could have grieved for (1) the absence of his body, (2) the pain of longing for his risen body, (3) the pain of longing for the full, unqualified enjoyment of his will at the intellectual vision of God, (4) the pain of longing for these gifts to be given to his fellow souls in the inferno of the just and for all souls, (5) the pain of knowing all of the sins of humanity and the destinies of the damned. Especially in regards to ways 1-4, Christ could have experienced solidarity with the righteous dead in their suffering even as he prepared to take away their pains on the morning of the third day. In conclusion, this may be the sense in which Aquinas is interpreting Isa. 53:4 in III, q. 52, a. 1: even in the netherworld, Christ shared in the pain and suffering of sinners; he knew what it was like to virtuously experience privation and to long for the fullness of glory. Yet, he was able to liberate the righteous dead from their suffering precisely because he first shared in it - he came down to the souls of the just in the darkness of death and brought them up into the light of life.

G. Case 27: ST III, Question 68—On the Relationship Between Baptism and Satisfaction

The 27th and final reference to Isa. 53 in the ST is found in III, q. 68, a. 5, in which Aquinas inquires as to whether those who are baptized need to perform works of satisfaction. In the body of the article, he is emphatic that the newly baptized do not need to perform any works
of satisfaction in reparation for their pre-baptismal sins. The reason for this is that “by baptism man is incorporated into the very death of Christ,” and “Christ’s death satisfied sufficiently” for the sins of the entire world.\footnote{147} But the first objection proposes an argument against this conclusion. It begins with the presupposition that “a man should be punished for every sin” that he commits, and then observes that “works of satisfaction are enjoined on sinners in punishment [\textit{poenam}] of past sins.”\footnote{148} Hence, the objection concludes, the newly baptized should also be “enjoined” to do works of satisfaction for their pre-baptismal sins.\footnote{149}

Aquinas’s response to this objection begins by reaffirming the two foundational principles articulated in the body of the article. First, baptism unites the recipient to Christ by making them a member of Christ’s mystical body.\footnote{150} Second, Christ’s Passion objectively satisfied for the sins of the whole world, and so the members of his body can share in that satisfaction. Aquinas explains this second point by saying, “the very pains [\textit{poena}] of Christ were satisfactory for the sins of those who were to be baptized, just as the pain [\textit{poena}] of one member can be satisfactory for the sin of another member.”\footnote{151} He then quotes Isa. 53:4, saying “Hence it is written in Isa. 53:4: ‘Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our pains.’”\footnote{152} With the help of Isa. 53:4, Aquinas is saying that the baptized do not need to endure the \textit{poenas} that are works of satisfaction precisely because Christ has already endured that \textit{poenam} on their behalf. Since satisfaction was offered for sin, justice was not violated. That is, Christ has taken upon himself and completed the required task of performing a good work that satisfies for the sins of the entire human race. This objectively fulfills the demands of justice. Then, through the

\footnote{147} ST III, q. 68, a. 5, c.  
\footnote{148} Ibid., obj. 1.  
\footnote{149} Ibid.  
\footnote{150} Ibid., ad 1.  
\footnote{151} Ibid.  
\footnote{152} Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:4. I have translated \textit{dolores} here as “pains” in place of the given “sorrows.”
grace of baptism, the objective satisfaction which Christ wrought in his Passion is shared with and subjectively experienced by sinners. Hence, just as the head of the mystical body shared in the pains of the members, so now the members share in the satisfaction which was given by their head.153

III. Conclusion and Synthesis

We can now synthesize the various theological points that Aquinas draws from the text of Isa. 53 in the ST. Just as he does in his earlier works, so too here in the ST Aquinas affirms the fundamental point that the text of Isa. 53 is an explicit prophecy of the Passion of Christ. The suffering and death of the Messiah are the realities that are immediately signified by the words of the prophecy. This prophecy reports the truth that was divinely revealed to the prophet by God, and hence those who deny or oppose this divine report are guilty of the sin of unbelief. In addition to making this fundamental point regarding the meaning of Isa. 53, throughout the ST, Aquinas consistently turns to this biblical text in order to support his exposition of one or more of five theological themes. I will identify these themes below and then offer a synthetic explanation of the theological points that Aquinas makes with the help of Isa. 53 in regards to those themes.

The first theme regards the divine generation of the Son and the extent to which his identity was revealed to humanity. “Who shall declare his generation?” asks Isa. 53:8. According to Aquinas, this text refers primarily to the divine, eternal, incomprehensible generation of the Son from the Father. In a secondary sense, these biblical words also point to the fact that Christ had no divine mother, and that as man, he was conceived of a virgin and so

153 On why works of satisfaction are needed for post-baptismal sins see ST III, q. 49, a. 3, and the above analysis on pgs. 30-32.
lacked an earthly father. While the Gospel of Matthew can rightly trace Christ’s human genealogy, no person can adequately describe Christ’s generation in the womb of Mary or his eternal generation from the Father. Further, as Isa. 53:3 indicates, the truth about Christ’s divinity and Messianic identity was “hidden” from the knowledge of many of his contemporaries, and consequently they “despised” and rejected the Lord of glory. Christ’s Godhead was hidden from some by the bodily defects which he experienced as a man, defects about which Isa. 53:2-3 speak. Nonetheless, by clearly testifying to the reality of Christ’s humanity, these defects ultimately contributed to the revelation of Christ’s divinity, and thus to the didactic end of the Incarnation. This is seen most clearly in the case of Thomas the apostle, who came to profess the divinity of Christ precisely because he saw the risen, wounded body of the Lord.

The second theme is about the origin, nature, and saving significance of Christ’s human defects and pain. Aquinas features Isa. 53:3, 4, and 7 prominently in the service of this theme. Christ came in the power of God, which means that he worked miracles which testified to the reality of his divine nature. Yet, at the same time, Christ came in the frailty of human nature. He was one with God and one with sinners. He “bore our infirmities and carried our pains” (Isa. 53:4) in the sense that he assumed a passible human nature that was subject to real bodily defects and pain. Christ’s body could be physically harmed, and his soul felt sensible pain in response to such harm. For the Son assumed not merely a material body but also a human soul. His experience of bodily defects and pain included the universal human burdens of hunger, thirst, and death. In addition, Christ could experience the internal pain of sorrow whenever he was intellectually conscious of the presence of evil and harm. In this sense, he truly “carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4).
As God, Christ freely chose to assume a passible, fully human nature, and thus to be necessarily subject to the various defects and pains that would accompany the possession of such a nature. Additionally, as a man, he “was offered because he himself willed it” (Isa. 53:7), which means that with his rational human will he freely chose to endure these defects and pains. He made this free human choice despite the fact that his sensitive appetite naturally and properly reacted with repugnance, sorrow and fear to the prospects of harm and pain. With his rational will, Christ chose to endure the Passion as a means to the end of our salvation, but with his sensitive appetite, he experienced revulsion at the pain which was innate to the Passion. The significance of Christ’s divine and human choice to undergo harm and pain is further revealed by the fact that the sensible and internal pain that he endured was greater in intensity than all other human experiences of pain. Despite being completely sinless, Christ experienced the pain of contrition for human sin in a way that surpassed the pain felt by every sincerely repentant human heart. He truly “carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4) in the sense that he grieved for every human sin ever committed, and he did so all at once. This pain of contrition that Christ experienced was also unsurpassed due to the fact that it proceeded from Christ’s unsurpassed wisdom and charity. Further, Aquinas says that Christ grieved for “all the causes of sadness,” implying that Christ shared in every virtuous form of sorrow that righteous souls can experience.\textsuperscript{154}

Aquinas refers to Christ’s defects and pain on multiple occasions as forms of \textit{poena}, or, punishment. The immediate source of these \textit{poenae} was the passible human nature that Christ possessed and which he inherited in union with all of the descendants of Adam. Since he was completely sinless, Christ did not deserve to endure these \textit{poenae}, and the fact that he did endure them is exclusively due to the sins of humanity. That is, as both God and man, Christ freely

\textsuperscript{154} ST III, q. 46, a. 6, c.
chose to assume and experience a human nature that was subject to poenae exclusively for the sake of our salvation from sin. This is what Isa. 53:5 means by saying that Christ “was wounded for our iniquities” and “bruised for our sins.” Christ bore the poena of defects and pain so that he could help sinners to endure their defects and pain with charity. He “bore our infirmities” (Isa. 53:4), meaning that he bore the poena that we must bear, and by doing so he offered a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the human race. Christ was truly “made sin” for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and the Father “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6) in the sense that Christ freely offered himself as a sacrifice in reparation for our sins.

The third theme is about the relationship between the will of God and the human will of Christ in regards to the Passion. As a man, Christ did not actively slay himself through commission or omission. But, “he was offered because he himself willed it” (Isa. 53:7), which means that he did freely choose to expose himself to death. Hence, in that sense Christ is both the victim who was offered on the cross and the priest who offered up the victim. Christ’s free choice to undergo the Passion was necessary only in relation to the end to which it was ordered. Christ freely chose to endure the Passion as a fitting means to the end of our salvation. From all eternity God foreknew and preordained that Christ should endure the Passion for our salvation, and this is what Isaiah meant when he said that God “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:6) and that he “was pleased to bruise him in infirmity” (53:10). The Father delivered up Christ to suffer in three ways: first, insofar as he eternally preordained the Passion; second, because he did not rescue Christ from his enemies; third, by inspiring Christ’s human will with the charity that he needed to make the free sacrificial offering of which Isa 53:7 speaks. Out of charity, Christ the man freely “delivered his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12), but this does not mean that the Father did not also hand over Christ to his enemies in the senses specified above.
The fourth theme consists of the relation between Christ’s Passion and the deliverance of sinners from the debt of punishment. Every sin incurs punishments, and among those punishments includes the debt of satisfaction. When the debt of satisfaction is paid, then the sinner is freed from all of the punishments that they endure as a consequence for their sins. In this light, Isa 53:4 has at least two meanings: Christ “has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows” in the sense that he (1) really experienced the various forms of poena that we suffer as descendants of Adam, such as defects of body and soul, and (2) by bearing these poenas of infirmity and sorrow with charity, he takes upon himself and completes the painful task of offering an objectively sufficient work of satisfaction for the sins of humanity. Through baptism, the new members of Christ’s mystical body receive a full share in the objective satisfaction that Christ enacted in his Passion. As Christ shared in the infirmities and sorrows of sinners, so now newly baptized sinners share in the effects of his work. Baptism immediately delivers the soul from the punishment of spiritual death by infusing the life of grace, but full liberation from the poena of bodily passibility and death does not come until the eschaton. Christians who sin after baptism must subjectively appropriate the effects of Christ’s objective work of satisfaction by performing their own penitential acts of satisfaction. These penitential acts are a form of poena, and when they are performed with charity they conform the penitent to the cross of Christ. As Christ bore poena with charity, and then entered into glory, so too penitents must bear their poena with charity in order to participate in the satisfaction wrought by Christ.

The fifth and final theme regards Christ’s death among the wicked, his burial, and his descent to the dead. Christ was “reputed with the wicked” (Isa. 53:12), which means that he was condemned as and alongside dangerous criminals. “He shall give the ungodly for his burial” (Isa. 53:9) means that, as a result of his burial in the tomb, Christ was able to generate faith
among the Gentiles and thus give them to the Father. Christ’s burial had saving significance. As his body laid in the tomb, Christ’s soul descended to the inferno of the just. By doing so he “has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows,” meaning that he shared in the poena that the souls of the just experience in the underworld. Christ descended into the depths of righteous suffering in order to free the righteous dead from their suffering. Having shared in their pain for one day and two nights, Christ proceeded on Easter morning to give the righteous dead a share in his own heavenly glory.

In conclusion, the text of Isa. 53 features prominently in the ST from both a quantitative and qualitative standpoint. Aquinas quotes Isa. 53 more in the Tertia Pars alone than he does in any of his other major theological works. These quotations appear in each of the various structural parts which make up a ST article: the sed contra, the objections, the replies, and the body of the article. Regardless of where they are placed within an article, Aquinas almost always provides an explicit exposition of the meaning or meanings of these verses from Isa. 53. He consistently interprets this biblical text in a way that serves to help clarify the mystery of Christ’s human nature, will, and suffering. Two features of Aquinas’s theological interpretations of Isa. 53 in the Tertia Pars are particularly distinctive when compared to his earlier works. The first is the fact that he repeatedly draws upon this biblical text in order to explicate the causes, nature, extent, and salvific significance of the poena that Christ endured in solidarity with the descendants of Adam. The second is that he turns to Isa. 53 over and over again in order to specify the relationship between the Passion, the will of God, and the sensitive and rational human appetites of Christ. In sum, in the Tertia Pars Aquinas offers his most in-depth and nuanced exposition of Isaiah 53’s teaching regarding the Servant’s free embrace of suffering for the salvation of the world.
Chapter 8: The Commentaries on Romans and the Psalms

In the last chapter, we explored how Aquinas referenced Isa. 53 in the *Summa Theologiae* 27 times in the service of his deeply analytical systematic theology. In this chapter, we will examine the 14 references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes across his two final works, namely, the *super Romanos* and the *super Psalmos*. Aquinas composed these works between 1272-3, which, as we have seen, is only about a year after he began work on the *Tertia Pars* of the ST. Further, he continued to write the *Tertia Pars* during the same period in which he composed these two biblical commentaries.¹ Hence, while the *Tertia Pars* contains the highest quantity of references to Isa. 53 of any of Aquinas’s works, the *super Romanos* and *super Psalmos* bear at least equal witness to the mature thought of Aquinas in regards to the text of Isa. 53.

This chapter will unfold in three parts. First, I will historically situate the *super Romanos* and then provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of its few references to Isa. 53. Second, I will do the same in regards to the *super Psalmos*, and this analysis will make up the majority of this chapter. Third and finally, I will conclude with a theological synthesis of the various Christological truths that Aquinas gleans from the fourteen cases of Isa. 53 that are spread across the *super Romanos* and the *super Psalmos*.

I. Cases of Isaiah 53 in the *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*

Aquinas’s *super ad Romanos* is based on a course of lectures that he gave upon the text of Romans. While the year in which Aquinas composed and delivered these lectures remains subject to debate, Jean-Pierre Torrell claims that “everything seems to indicate that Thomas indeed gave a course at Naples on Romans, of which he rapidly corrected the first eight chapters,

but the rest has come down to us in the condition of notes from the course - a *reportatio.*"² That is, Aquinas taught a course on Romans between 1272-1273 in Naples, and the notes from that course have come down to us in two distinct parts. The first eight chapters of the notes that we have were written by Thomas himself, and the remainder of the notes were written by Reginald of Piperno as he listened to Aquinas’s teaching.³ Aquinas only references Isa. 53 a total of 2 times in the *super Romanos.* I will now proceed to a qualitative analysis of those 2 cases.

The 1st case of Isa. 53 in the *super Romanos* occurs in lecture 5 on Rom. 9. In Rom. 9:32 Paul says that some of the Israelites have “*stumbled at the stumbling stone*” because they sought righteousness through the works of the law rather than through faith in Christ.⁴ Aquinas identifies this stumbling stone as Christ, and he explains why Paul uses this metaphor: “just as a stone against which a man stumbles is not guarded against because it is small, so the Jews, seeing Christ clothed with our weakness, did not guard against stumbling over him.”⁵ Aquinas then immediately quotes Isa. 53:3, stating “*his look was as it were hidden and despised. Whereupon we esteemed him not.*”⁶ Aquinas turns to Isaiah’s text in order to provide a biblical explanation for why some of the Israelites stumbled over Christ. The human defects which Christ experienced, especially during his Passion, veiled his divinity and thus led some to reject him. As a result of his weakness and misery, some of the Israelites did not take Christ seriously, and so they did not sufficiently guard themselves against the spiritually destructive effects of

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⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *super ad Romanos,* c. 9, l. 5, 811, quoting Romans 9:32. All references to the *super ad Romanos* are based on the 1953 Marietti edition of the Latin text and the English translation done by Fabian Larcher and edited by the Aquinas Institute. These Latin and English texts are available online at [https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Rom](https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Rom). All citations from these texts will include reference to the chapter, lecture, and paragraph number cited.
⁵ *Super ad Romanos,* c. 9, l. 5, 811.
⁶ Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:3.
rejecting him. It is easy for people to disregard the weak and despised Christ, and yet the very act of disregarding Christ leads them to stumble against him. The Passion of Christ is thus a stumbling block.

The 2nd and final case of Isa. 53 in the *super Romanos* occurs in lecture 3 on Rom. 12. In Rom. 12:19 Paul exhorts Christians to abstain from seeking revenge against those who hurt them, saying “‘revenge not yourselves.’” Aquinas says that in this verse Paul is simply reiterating Jesus’ command to turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39) and he is instructing Christians to imitate the example of Jesus himself. In order to illustrate how Christ treated his enemies, Aquinas quotes Isa. 50:6 and then Isa. 53:7, which states “‘like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.’” Aquinas explains that Christ’s teaching and example do not necessarily mean that Christians must literally say to their enemies “here is the other cheek,” for during the Passion Christ himself said “‘if I have spoken ill, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why do you strike me?’” More fundamental than turning the other cheek, Christians are always called to practice “patience” and “benevolence” toward their enemies for the sake of the latter’s “correction and concord.” Hence, Isaiah’s description of Christ as a silent and helpless lamb who was led to death should be interpreted as a description of Christ’s patience and benevolence towards his enemies. Rather than seeking revenge through violent words and deeds, Christ exercised silence and non-violence towards his enemies for the sake of their conversion and salvation.

II. Cases of Isaiah 53 in the *Commentary on the Psalms*

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7 Ibid., c. 12, l. 3, 1011, quoting Rm. 12:19.
8 Ibid., 1011, quoting Isa. 53:7.
9 Ibid., 1011, quoting John 18:23.
10 Ibid., 1011.
If Aquinas taught Romans in Naples during the academic year of 1272-1273, then, as Torrell suggests, at the beginning of the academic year of 1273, he began a course on the Psalms. That is, he began to lecture on the Psalms in September or October of 1273, but these lectures were never completed. The reason for this is that Aquinas became ill in December of 1273, and at that point he ceased writing and teaching. He then died in March of 1274. As a result of his illness and death, Aquinas was only able to complete lectures on the first fifty-four Psalms. The *reportatio* of these lectures that has come down to us was made by Reginald of Piperno.\(^\text{11}\)

Despite being unfinished and containing commentary upon only about the first third of the book of Psalms, Aquinas’s *super Psalms* nevertheless contains an impressive 12 explicit references to the text of Isaiah 53.\(^\text{12}\) We can only speculate regarding the number of times Aquinas would have referenced Isa. 53 had he been able to complete his commentary on the Psalms. Regardless, the *super Psalms* that has come down to us today contains a significant quantitative engagement with Isa. 53. Among Aquinas’s biblical commentaries, only the *super Matthaueum* and the *super Ioannem* contain more cases of Isa. 53 than the *super Psalms* does.

Of the 12 references to Isa. 53 that Aquinas makes in his commentary on the Psalms, he quotes Isa. 53:7 the most with a total of 4 cases. The remaining cases are as follows: 53 [without a specific verse] (x1), 53:1 (x1), 53:2 (x1), 53:2-3 (x2), 53:4 (x1), 53:6 (x1), 53:9 (x1). In the qualitative analysis that follows, I will explicate these cases according to the numerical order of verses in Isa. 53, meaning, I will examine the case of Isa. 53:1, and then that of Isa. 53:2, and so on.

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\(^{12}\) The Index Thomisticus actually identifies thirteen cases, but the first case is incorrect. The Index mistakenly identifies Aquinas’s quotation of Isa. 52:1 in paragraph 78 of the sermon on Psalm 9 as a quotation of Isa. 53. The Latin and English texts provided by the Aquinas Institute correct this error.
A. Cases of Isa. 53, v. 1-4 and v. 6.

The 1st case that we will examine occurs in Aquinas’ lecture on Ps. 27. In this lecture, Aquinas makes a general reference to Isa. 53 but he does not quote a specific verse. Given that Scripture identifies this Psalm as “‘a Psalm for David himself,’” Aquinas says that this either means that the “literal sense” of the Psalm is about David or that “he made this [Psalm] himself and he sang this and others.” Either way, Aquinas says that the “mystical sense” of this Psalm is about the “the prayer of Christ to the Father that he be freed from suffering evils.” This context establishes the foundation for Aquinas’s Christological reading of Ps. 27:2, in which the Psalmist makes the following petition to God: “‘Hand me not over together with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity destroy me not.’” Aquinas says that the content of this verse “can all be referred to Christ, who was considered to be among the criminals on the cross, as Isa. 53 says.”

Hence, on the surface of Ps. 27:2, Christ appears to be asking the Father to deliver him from the fate that is described in Isa. 53: the unjust condemnation and execution of the Servant as a criminal alongside of other criminals. Aquinas does not read the Psalm in this way, though. He does not say that in this Psalm Christ is praying for deliverance from the Passion itself. Rather, Aquinas merely says that here Christ is praying that he will not be handed over to death for the same reason that the wicked are killed nor for the same “intention” of those who handed

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13 Thomas Aquinas, *super Psalmo*, Ps. 27, no. 247, quoting Psalm 27:1. All references to the *super Psalmo* will be to the Latin texts and the English translations available at [https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Psalm](https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Psalm). The Latin text of Aquinas’s commentary on Psalms 1-51 is based on the Parma edition of 1863, while the Latin text of his commentary on Psalms 52-4 is based on the 1980 edition by Fr. Busa. Both editions have been transcribed and edited by the Aquinas Institute. The English translation of both these Latin texts was done by Sr. Albert Marie Surmansi and Sr. Maria Veritas Marks. All citations from these texts will include reference to the number of the Psalm that Aquinas is commenting upon as well as the paragraph number of his commentary.
14 Ibid., Ps. 27, no. 247.
15 Ibid., Ps. 27, no. 249, quoting Psalm 27:2.
16 Ibid., no. 249.
him over to death.\textsuperscript{17} The wicked die as a result of their own sins, and the people who crucified Christ did so because they “intended the name of Christ to perish.”\textsuperscript{18} Conversely, Christ willed to endure death “because of our iniquity.”\textsuperscript{19} So, here Aquinas offers a somewhat counterintuitive interpretation of Ps. 27:2, but this interpretation serves to clarify the meaning of Isa. 53. Isa. 53’s description of the Servant’s death among the wicked does not mean that the Servant was actually a sinner who deserved that fate. Rather, unlike the criminals with whom he was crucified, Christ died for our sins and not for his own.

In our 2nd case, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:1 in the course of his commentary upon Ps. 44. In Ps. 44:11 the Psalmist says “‘hear [audi], O daughter,’” and Aquinas identifies this daughter as the Church.\textsuperscript{20} The Church, Aquinas says, must be “‘swift to hear [audiendum]’ . . . the Gospel or the word of Christ” and “the writings of the prophets, so that they might believe in Christ.”\textsuperscript{21} He then immediately quotes Isa. 53:1, which states “‘who has believed our report?’”\textsuperscript{22} Aquinas presents the text of Isa. 53:1 as an example of a prophetic writing that bears witness to Christ and which thus can generate faith in Christ. Hence, Ps. 44:11 exhorts the Church to hear and believe in those Christological reports that are contained in the Gospels as well as in prophetic writings such as Isa. 53:1. While he does not use the phrase ‘literal sense’ in this context, Aquinas’ analysis here once again indicates that he does identify Christ as the principal reality to which the words of Isa. 53 refer.

Aquinas’ 3rd reference to Isa. 53:2 is in the course of his analysis of Ps. 44. For Aquinas, this Psalm is about “the nuptials of Christ and the Church,” and in v. 3 the Psalmist sings “the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[17]{Ibid., Ps. 27, no. 249.}
\footnotetext[18]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[19]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[20]{Ibid., Ps. 44, no. 458, quoting Psalm 44:11.}
\footnotetext[21]{Ibid., no. 458, quoting James 1:19.}
\footnotetext[22]{Ibid., no. 458, quoting Isa. 53:1.}
\end{footnotes}
praise of the groom,” namely, Christ.\textsuperscript{23} The Psalmist says that Christ is “‘beautiful above the sons of men,’” and Aquinas interprets this as referring to “a fourfold beauty in Christ.”\textsuperscript{24} Christ possessed unsurpassable beauty in terms of his divinity, his “justice and truth,” his “honorable and virtuous” life, and finally in his “beauty of body.”\textsuperscript{25} In regards to Christ’s physical beauty, Aquinas fields an objection that is based on a paraphrase of the text of Isa. 53:2b: it seems that Christ was not physically beautiful, the objection claims, since “‘we have seen that there is in him no beauty or comeliness.’”\textsuperscript{26} In response to this objection, Aquinas insists that Isaiah is not speaking about the general appearance of Christ’s body but rather about the way that he appeared “in his Passion, in which his body’s form was deformed by the multitude of his afflictions.”\textsuperscript{27} Isa. 53:2 depicts the “contempt” that Christ’s enemies had towards him during the course of his physical suffering. Thus, for Aquinas there is no contradiction between the beauty of which Ps. 44:3 speaks and the lack of beauty to which Isa. 53:2 testifies. Both biblical texts speak the truth about Christ’s physical appearance. As a man Christ possessed the physical beauty that “was appropriate to his state” and his “nature,” but that beauty was marred during the course of his Passion.\textsuperscript{28}

The 4th case that we will examine occurs in Aquinas’s commentary on Ps. 33. While analyzing Ps. 33:1, Aquinas makes a reference to the fact that there were members of the kingdom of David who “did not know” Christ.\textsuperscript{29} He then offers a quotation from Isa. 53:2-3 in order to provide a biblical description of their ignorance: “‘we have seen him, and there was no

\begin{footnotes}
\item[23] Ibid., Ps. 44, no. 451.
\item[24] Ibid., Ps. 44, no. 452, quoting Psalm 44:3.
\item[25] Ibid., Ps. 44, no. 452.
\item[26] Ibid., paraphrasing Isa. 53:2. The paraphrase states: “‘vidimus et non erat in eo species neque decor.’”
\item[27] Ibid., Ps. 44, no. 452.
\item[28] Ibid.
\item[29] Ibid., Ps. 33, no. 324.
\end{footnotes}
sightlessness [in him];’ and they despised him: ‘whereupon we esteemed him not.”” 30 For Aquinas, Isa. 53:2-3 describes the view of unbelievers towards Christ and it clarifies why they did not believe. The agony and misery that Christ endured in his Passion clouded the vision of some of his contemporaries and led them to see Christ as a mere man who was unworthy of their faith and esteem.

The 5th case is a reference to Isa. 53:2-3 that Aquinas makes while commenting on Ps. 49. This Psalm opens with a declaration that God will reveal himself and “‘come manifestly’” to his people “‘out of Zion, the loveliness of his beauty.’” 31 Aquinas interprets these lines as a reference to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in Jerusalem at Pentecost. From that historical moment in Jerusalem, God’s “beauty began to be diffused” to the whole world. 32 Aquinas interprets God’s ‘beauty’ here specifically as God’s “calling” of the world to faith in Christ. 33 He then acknowledges that even prior to Pentecost “Christ himself certainly began this diffusion” of God’s beauty or calling to humanity. 34 Nonetheless, Aquinas claims that Christ’s beauty “was not seen, since he was encompassed by weakness.” 35 He then offers a quotation from Isa. 53 which combines verses 2-3: “‘we have seen him [v.2b] the most abject of men, a man of sorrows [v.3a].’” 36 For Aquinas, Isa. 53:2-3 testifies to the fact that the Passion of Christ hid his beauty from many of his peers. God’s call to sinners, a calling which he began through Christ and continues through the apostles, was initially rejected by some on account of the humiliation and misery of God’s messenger. The sorrow and degradation of Christ masked his

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30 Ibid., Ps. 33, no. 324, quoting Isa. 53:2 and 3, respectively. My translation, from “‘vidimus eum, et non erat aspectus’: et contempserunt eum: ‘unde nec reputavimus eum.’”
31 Ps. 49, no. 490-1, quoting Ps. 49:3 and 2, respectively.
32 Ibid., Ps. 49, no. 490.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:2-3. My translation, from “‘vidimus eum novissimum virorum, virum dolorum.’”
divinity and garbled his divine message. Yet, Aquinas concludes, “after his Passion, his strength and power appeared.”

Hence, during the historical event of the Passion, the beauty of God was hidden to the eyes of many, but the resurrection which followed that Passion provided the ultimate diffusion of God’s loveliness to the world.

The 6th case is a quotation from Isa. 53:4 which occurs amidst Aquinas’ comments upon Ps. 18. The Psalmist says that God “‘has set his tabernacle in the sun,” and Aquinas interprets this verse as a figurative reference to “the reality” that is Christ. He presents several different Christological readings of this verse, but the one which is relevant for our purposes is as follows: the tabernacle of God is the “body” of Christ, and this body is in the sun in the sense that it is “passible,” for it suffers “in the heat” of the sun. Aquinas supports this interpretation with the words of Isa. 53:4: “‘Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” Christ’s human flesh is the tabernacle of God, the locus of divinity and sanctity in the cosmos. Nonetheless, Christ has shared in the pain and sorrow of all of Adam’s descendants. Christ suffered with us in toil and labor and under the heat of the sun. Christ, the creator of all things, is nonetheless subject to the environmental afflictions that all humans experience.

The 7th case is found in Aquinas’s analysis of Ps. 52. This Psalm decries the widespread sin and unbelief of humanity, saying “‘All have gone aside, they have become unprofitable together; there is none who does good.” Commenting upon this verse, Aquinas says “All have fallen away from the understanding of and search for God.” He then quotes Isa. 53:6, which

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37 Ibid., Ps. 49, no. 490.
38 Ibid., Ps. 18, no. 152, quoting Ps. 18:6.
39 Ibid., Ps. 18, no. 152.
40 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:4.
41 Ibid., Ps. 52, no. 519, quoting Ps. 52:4.
42 Ibid., Ps. 52, no. 519.
states “‘Every one has turned aside into his own way.’”\textsuperscript{43} Hence, both Ps. 52:4 and Isa. 53:6 speak of the same reality: humanity’s mass turning away from God. This abandonment of God involves a loss of “true faith” and “love of God,” and this absence of faith and charity renders a person’s works “unprofitable for him in relation to the prize of eternal life.”\textsuperscript{44} Isa. 53:6, then, describes the malady and problem for which the Suffering Servant is the cure. Christ came to offer himself as a sacrifice in order to draw humanity out of the darkness of sin and error into which they had thrown themselves and into the light of faith and charity.

\textbf{B. Cases of Isa. 53, v. 7 and v. 9}

The 8th case of Isa. 53 in the \textit{super Psalmos} that we will examine takes place in Aquinas’s exegesis of Ps. 34. “This psalm,” Aquinas explains, “is either written in the person of David, or of Christ, or of both.”\textsuperscript{45} If the Christological character of this Psalm is granted, then Aquinas specifies that the text can be interpreted as speaking “mystically” and “at length” upon “the Passion of Christ.”\textsuperscript{46} One such example of this Psalm’s mystical references to Christ’s Passion is found in v. 15, in which the Psalmist laments “‘they rejoiced against me, and came together. Scourges were gathered together upon me, and I knew not.’”\textsuperscript{47} For Aquinas, this text refers to the fact that Christ’s pagan and Jewish enemies, among both the leaders and the people, worked together to bring about his death. And yet, amidst his affliction at their hands, Christ “‘knew not,’” meaning that he “acted as though ignorant” by “remaining silent and not

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:6.
\item[44] Ibid., Ps. 52, no. 519.
\item[45] Ibid., Ps. 34, no. 345.
\item[46] Ibid.
\item[47] Ibid., Ps. 34, no. 355, quoting Ps. 34:15.
\end{footnotes}
speaking.”48 To provide further biblical support for this interpretation, Aquinas quotes three scriptural texts, among which is Isa. 53:7: “he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter.”49 Aquinas turned to the direct and clear Christological meaning of Isa. 53:7 in order to help him exegete the ambiguous final words of Ps. 34:15. In sum, both Ps. 34:15 and Isa. 53:7 testify to the “patience of Christ” amidst his Passion.50 Christ endured hatred, insults and persecution from his enemies with silence; he refused to even offer a verbal, intellectual defense of his innocence and teaching, and in this his supreme patience is revealed.

The 9th case of Isa. 53 occurs in the context of Aquinas’s comments upon Ps. 37. In Ps. 37:14 the Psalmists states “‘But I, as a deaf man, heard not and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.”51 Aquinas interprets this verse as a depiction of the “patience” of a just man, and especially of the patience of Christ. He says that those who lack patience will be “disturbed in soul” when they are “afflicted,” and this interior pain will result in a verbal expression of disturbance.52 In order to avoid being disturbed in soul and consequently in words, the afflicted person should strive “to be like a deaf man who does not hear the evil words” that are spoken about them and to them.53 When the just person refuses to hear the evil that is uttered against them, then they are able to “be like one mute,” for they will “not utter disturbed words.”54 Aquinas says that “Christ particularly did this, as is said” in Mtt. 27:14, Ps. 38:2, and Isa. 53:7: “‘He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter.”55 Aquinas argues that the just behavior of the afflicted man, as depicted in Ps. 37:14, is fulfilled to a supereminent degree by Christ in his

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., Ps. 34, no. 355, quoting Isa. 53:7. The other texts that Aquinas quotes here are Ps. 37:14 and Jer. 11:19.
50 Ibid., Ps. 34, no. 355.
51 Ibid., Ps. 37, no. 402, quoting Ps. 37:14.
52 Ibid., Ps. 37, no. 402.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
Passion, as testified to by Isa. 53:7. As his enemies afflicted him and led him to death, Christ acted like one who was deaf and mute. In his soul, he did not dwell upon the evils that were enacted against him, and with his words, he did not lash out against the perpetrators of those evils.

Our 10th case of Isa. 53 is in Aquinas’s lecture on Ps. 38. In Ps. 38:9-10 the Psalmist laments that he has become “‘a reproach to the fool,’” for he was “‘dumb, and I opened not my mouth.’”56 Just as he did with Ps. 37:14, so too here Aquinas interprets this verse as a reference to the patience of the Psalmist. He explains, “It is a sign of patience that a man does not render evil for evil when words of rebuke are brought against him.”57 In particular, this passage from the Psalm speaks of “continuing patience,” as opposed to the patience of someone who may “remain silent for an hour, [but] afterwards he sometimes becomes impatient and begins to speak a lot.”58 In order to illustrate such continuing patience, Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:7, saying “‘He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb as a lamb before its shearer, and he shall open not his mouth.’”59 Both Ps. 38:14 and Isa. 53:7 speak of one who was “dumb” [obmutui (Ps. 38), obmutescet (Isa. 53)] and who did not open his mouth [et non aperui os meum (Ps. 38), et non aperiét os suum (Isa. 53)]. For Aquinas, the thematic connection between these two biblical passages is supported by their nearly identical Latin renderings. Both biblical texts can be applied to Christ, who in his patience never uttered “reproaches” against God or his neighbor even as the latter afflicted him.60 Christ thus persevered in perfect patience throughout the trial of his Passion.

56 Ibid., Ps. 38, no. 413, quoting Ps. 38:9-10.
57 Ibid., Ps. 38, no. 413.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., quoting Isa. 53:7.
60 Ibid., Ps. 38, no. 413.
The 4th and final case of Isa. 53:7 and the 11th total case of Isa. 53 in the *super Psalmos* is found in the context of Aquinas’s exegesis of Ps. 49:3, which states “‘God shall come manifestly.’” Aquinas takes this passage as an opportunity to reflect upon the differences between Christ’s first and second comings. During his incarnate life on earth “God came hidden in human weakness,” but “at the second coming he will be manifest.” Aquinas then offers a paraphrase of Isa. 53:7 in order to illustrate how “in his first coming” Christ “showed meekness,” for “‘as a lamb before the shearer he was led.’” During his incarnate life Christ exercised silence and patience as he was “judged” by his enemies and when he “bore with evil men.” Conversely, when he comes in glory Christ “shall speak” and “will cry out like one in labor.”

Thus, just as he did with his three earlier references to Isa. 53:7 in the *super Psalmos*, here Aquinas interprets this biblical text as a reference to the virtuous and patient silence of Christ in the face of his enemies. Like a lamb who does not object as he is led before his shearer, so too Christ does not defend himself or lash out when his enemies lash out against him.

The 12th and last case of Isa. 53 in the *super Psalmos* is in Aquinas’ lecture on Ps. 16. Aquinas interprets this Psalm as “a prayer in which he [David] asks to be heard for the sake of justice.” The Psalmist begins his prayer by begging God to hear and answer him, and he does so by assuring God that he prays “‘not from deceitful [dolosis] lips’ but from straightforward ones.” Following this interpretation Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:9, which states “‘There was no
Aquinas then proceeds to identify two ways of being “deceitful,” namely, with one’s words and with one’s actions. The latter form of deceit occurs when one’s actions are inconsistent with one’s words. Aquinas concludes his engagement with Ps. 16:1 by quoting a “gloss” which states, “‘deceitful lips are those that say, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the will of my Father.’” By citing Isa. 53:9 in the context of this analysis of the nature of deceit, Aquinas sheds light upon the integrity of Christ. Christ never speaks falsehoods, only truths. Further, his actions are always consistent with his words and prayers. Christ not only prays to and praises the Father, but he also actively does the will of the Father. For these reasons, Christ’s prayers surpass all other human prayers in terms of their worthiness to be heard by the Father.

III. Conclusion and Synthesis

In the super Psalmos, Aquinas turns to Isa. 53:1 (“who has believed our report?”) in order to indicate that the entirety of Isaiah chapter 53 is an example of a prophecy that testifies to the Christian faith that has been proclaimed by the Apostles. Hence, the divine report that is contained in Isa. 53 can and should generate Christian faith in those who read it and hear it. Yet, in both the super Psalmos and the super Romanos Aquinas interprets Isa. 53:2-3 as evidence of the fact that Christ’s Passion was a stumbling block to his contemporaries. Despite the clear Christological teaching of Isa. 53, many rejected and despised Christ during his agony. The pain that Christ’s enemies inflicted upon him veiled his divine glory from the eyes of many of his contemporaries. Through Christ, God was calling sinners to himself, and yet the suffering of the

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68 Ibid., Ps. 16, no. 115, paraphrasing Isa. 53:7. My translation, from “‘dolus non fuit in ore ejus.’”
69 Ibid., Ps. 16, no. 115.
70 Ibid., emphasis in the original.
incarnate Son prevented some people from accurately hearing and faithfully embracing the beauty of Christ’s divine call to them. Hence, due to the misery of his Passion, some of Christ’s contemporaries refused to pay him heed, and in doing so they spiritually stumbled into unbelief and sin. Nonetheless, Christ revealed his supreme glory and beauty in a dramatic and unsurpassed way through his resurrection from the dead and pouring forth of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. By his conquest of death and giving of the Spirit, Christ diffused the beauty of his truth and love throughout the world for all to see.

Aquinas reads Isa. 53:6 (“Every one has turned aside into his own way”) as a description of the universal fall of humanity away from faith and charity and into unbelief and sin. Sinners suffer death as a punishment for their sins, but Christ did not experience death due to any sin of his own, for he was completely without sin. Rather, Christ was violently killed by sinners who sought to rid his name from the earth, and so for this reason he was crucified and “reputed with the wicked” (Isa. 53:12). Yet Christ himself freely chose to endure this suffering in order to save humanity from their wickedness. Christ, whose flesh was the very tabernacle of God upon earth, bore “our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4) in order to bring humanity back to the way of faith and charity. He assumed a passible human nature and was crucified with the wicked under the burning sun in order to lead the wicked into the light of glory.

In both the super Romanos and the super Psalmos, Aquinas consistently interprets Isa. 53:7 (“He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, etc.”) as a revelation of the virtuous patience and benevolence of Christ towards his enemies. Throughout his Passion, Christ acted like a deaf and mute person. He refused to pay attention to the insults and slanders that were uttered against him. He refused to verbally lash out at his enemies or even simply argue in his own defense. At no point did he utter a reproach towards God or his neighbors. Christ remained verbally and
physically passive in the hands of his enemies, and he did so as a means of bringing about their correction and conversion. Similarly, Aquinas reads Isa. 53:9 ("There was no deceit in his mouth") as a testimony to the moral integrity of Christ. Christ spoke only the truth and never falsehoods. Further, he acted in accord with the truth that he spoke, and he not only prayed to the Father but also actively carried out the will of the Father for him. Thus, even amidst his Passion, Christ’s words and actions towards his neighbors and towards God were completely free of all deceit. Consequently, the prayers of Christ are of greater merit than all other human prayers.
Conclusion: Synthesizing Aquinas’ Christological Exegesis of Isaiah 53

I have now provided a quantitative and qualitative analysis of every reference to the text of Isa. 53 that Aquinas made throughout the course of his career in his major theological works. This analysis included Aquinas’ lecture upon Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam as well as the 115 additional references to Isa. 53 that he made in his biblical commentaries, Scriptum, and Summa Theologiae. Having completed this direct investigation of the number, place and function of Isa. 53 in Aquinas’s works, we are now in a position to synthesize our findings.

In this concluding chapter, I will do two things. First I will provide a qualitative synthesis that identifies how often and where Aquinas quoted each particular part of the 12 verses in Isa. 53. This will enable us to see which verses and subsections of Isa. 53 featured most prominently in Aquinas’ works. Second, I will present a synthetic exposition of the major Christological points that Aquinas drew out from the text of Isa. 53 throughout the course of his life.

I. Quantitative Synthesis

In order to more precisely identify how many times and when Aquinas quoted particular passages from Isa. 53, I have divided each verse of his version of Isa. 53 into ‘a’ and ‘b’ sections, as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>53:1: [a]</th>
<th>Who has believed our report? [b] and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?</th>
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<tr>
<td>53:2: [a]</td>
<td>And he shall rise up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: [b] there is no form in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him:</td>
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<tr>
<td>53:3: [a]</td>
<td>Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: [b] and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not.</td>
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53:4: [a] Truly he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: [b] and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.

53:5: [a] But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins: [b] the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed.

53:6: [a] All we like sheep have gone astray, every one has turned aside into his own way: [b] and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

53:7: [a] He was offered because he himself willed it, [b] and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.

53:8: [a] He was taken away from distress, and from judgment: who shall declare his generation? [b] because he is cut off out of the land of the living: for the wickedness of my people have I struck him.

53:9: [a] And he shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his death: [b] because he has done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth.

53:10: [a] And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity: [b] if he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a long-lived seed, and the will of the Lord shall be directed in his hand.

53:11: [a] Because his soul has labored, he shall see and be filled: [b] by his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities.

53:12: [a] Therefore will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he has delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: [b] and he has borne the sins of many, and has prayed for the transgressors. 

Presupposing the above subdivisions of each verse of Isa. 53, the chart on the following pages details how many times and in what works Aquinas quoted each of those subdivisions.

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1 This version of Isa. 53:1-12, along with all references to this text throughout the remainder of this chapter, is the Aquinas Institute's English translation of Thomas’s Latin version of Isa. 53. The one exception is Isa. 53:7a, which is my own translation from the Latin “oblatus est quia ipse voluit.”
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<th>Ser</th>
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<th>Gal</th>
<th>Eph</th>
<th>2 Thes</th>
<th>2 Tim</th>
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\(^{860}\) Generic references to the entire chapter of Isa. 53.

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The chart above enables us to make several significant observations regarding the number and place of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 throughout the course of his life. The bottom row of the chart specifies the total number of cases of Isa. 53 in each of Aquinas’ works. This row shows that his engagement with Isa. 53 increased substantially towards the end of his life.

During the 16 year period beginning with the super Isaiam (c. 1252) and concluding with the ad Hebraeos (c. 1268), Aquinas made only 35 explicit references to Isa. 53. These 35 cases were spread out across 11 different works, and no individual work had more than 7 cases (the Scriptum). Then, during the far briefer 4 year period beginning with the super Matthaeum (c. 1269) and concluding with the super Psalmos (1273), Aquinas made 80 explicit references to Isa. 53. Of those, 66 references were contained in three works, namely, the super Matthaeeum, the super Ioannem, and the ST.

Hence, Aquinas turned to the text of Isa. 53 most frequently when he was commenting upon the Gospels and when he was setting forth his mature, systematic account of Christ’s suffering in the Tertia Pars of the ST. This makes sense when one thinks, as Aquinas did, that the content of Isa. 53 is inherently Christological. A Christological reading of Isa. 53 renders that text conducive to the interpretation of the Gospels as well as to a systematic exposition of the origins, nature and purpose of Christ’s suffering. Yet it is also worth noting that the super Psalmos contains 12 cases of Isa. 53. This is despite the fact that Aquinas only completed about one third of that work prior to his illness and death. Hence, it may also have simply been the case that in his later years Aquinas was more conscious and appreciative of the text of Isa. 53 than he had been throughout the majority of his scholarly life. Or, perhaps he also viewed the Psalms as full of Christological content. In any event, from a purely numerical standpoint, the
The overwhelming majority of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 occurred in the four final works of his twilight years.

In terms of specific verses of Isa. 53, Aquinas quoted v.7 far more than any other verse. He referenced v.7 a total of 40 times. 20 of those references were to v.7a, which depicts the Servant’s free decision to undergo suffering and death. The other 20 were to v. 7b, which depicts the Servant as a peaceful and silent lamb. Aquinas quoted each subsection of v.7 more than he quoted any other part (subsection or complete verse) of Isa. 53. The closest competitor was v. 4a, which Aquinas quoted 15 times. These three texts (7a, 7b, and 4a) thus makeup nearly half of Aquinas’ total number of references to Isa. 53. Aquinas used these three texts in order to emphasize the reality of Christ’s pain and suffering (v.4a), the divine and human freedom with which he endured that suffering (v.7a), and the patient, passive and gentle manner with which he suffered (v.7b).

Aquinas’ fourth most quoted portion of Isa. 53 is v. 12a. He quoted this text 10 times, and most of those cases refer to Christ’s death among the wicked. Aquinas uses this text, like Isa. 53:7a, in order to describe how Christ freely hands himself over to death. He also interprets 53:7a as a witness to the errant and unjust condemnation of Christ and Christ’s consequent solidarity with those who are persecuted. Isa. 53:8a is Aquinas’ fifth most cited portion of Isa. 53. All 7 of his quotations from this text concern the “generation” of the Suffering Servant. The remaining number of Aquinas’ references to complete verses or subsections of verses in Isa. 53 are spread out fairly evenly. The only verse that does not receive any mention at all is v. 11.

Similarly, there are no individual cases of v. 2a, v. 5b, and v.10b. Consequently, in our sample of Aquinas’ works, his only engagement with verses 11, 2a, 5b, and 10b are in his lecture upon Isa. 53 in the *super Isaiam*. 

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Aquinas rarely quoted those portions of Isa. 53 that seem to depict God as actively inflicting pain upon the Servant. Apart from his lecture on Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam, he only referenced Isa. 53:6b (“the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all”) 3 times. While he quotes v.8b 4 times, only 3 of those references are to that portion of 8b that states “for the wickedness of my people have I struck him.” Aquinas quotes v.10a (“And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity”) only 1 time. Hence, while many contemporary readers may find these passages of Isa. 53 to be dramatic, challenging, and consequently worthy of sustained attention, Aquinas himself only very rarely turned to them. Further, as I will detail in the qualitative section below, his readings of these challenging verses are not straightforward. Rather, he interprets these passages as testifying to a highly nuanced account of the relationship between God’s will and Christ’s suffering.

Having established these quantitative and historical observations regarding the number and place of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53, we can now proceed to a qualitative synthesis of his engagement with this biblical text.

II. Qualitative Synthesis: Aquinas’ Christological Reading of Isaiah 53

In this section I provide a synthetic exposition of Aquinas’ theological exegesis of Isa. 53. I detail how Aquinas interprets Isa. 53 as a prophecy of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of Christ. I explicate the various Christological and soteriological points that Aquinas draws out from the text of Isa. 53 in his 115 references to that text as well as in his lecture on Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam.

In his first scholarly work of theology, the super Isaiam, Aquinas identified Christ as the primary referent of Isa. 53. He states this in the preface, following Jerome, and he is faithful to
this initial interpretation throughout the remainder of his scholarly career. In his lecture on and references to Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam, as well as in all of his ensuing biblical commentaries and systematic works, Aquinas consistently and exclusively identifies the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53 as Christ. This is the fundamental characteristic of Aquinas’ reading of Isa. 53. The verba of Isa. 53 focus upon only one res, Christ. No other historical figure is the referent of this Suffering Servant text. Despite being generally open to the possibility of a pluriform literal sense of Scripture, Aquinas identifies no such pluriform meaning regarding the identity of the Suffering Servant in Isa. 53. While numerous passages of Scripture, such as the Psalms, possess a Christological spiritual sense, Isa. 53 does not refer to Christ in this secondary way. Rather, the literal sense of Isa. 53 is about Christ, and Christ only. Christ is the first and exclusive res that God willed the verba to signify.

The super Ioannem is the only place where Aquinas appeals to external evidence outside of the text of Isa. 53 in order to support his claim that Christ is the literal sense of that passage. Commenting upon Jn. 12:37-41, Aquinas observes that the Evangelist quotes Isa. 53:1 (“Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”) as a prophecy of the fact that many would not believe in Christ. Aquinas then focuses upon the Evangelist’s claim in Jn. 12:41: “These things said Isaias, when he saw his glory, and spoke of him” (Jn. 12:41).\textsuperscript{862} For Aquinas, these words show that no less an authority than John the Evangelist himself is claiming that Isaiah had seen Christ. That is, Isaiah could predict that many would not believe in Christ precisely because he had received a divine revelation about the future Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of Christ. In Isa. 53:1-12, Isaiah wrote down the content of that Christological revelation that he had received. So, both God and Isaiah intended the

\textsuperscript{862} Jn. 12:41, as given at the beginning of the super Ioannem c. 12, l. 7.
verba of Isa 53 to refer to the res that is Christ. In sum, Aquinas is confident that the literal sense of Isa. 53 is about Christ not only because of the nature of that text itself and the authority of Jerome, but also because the Fourth Gospel claims that Isaiah saw and wrote about Christ. Hence, Aquinas’ reading of Isa. 53 is informed in a fundamental way by his reading of Jn. 12.

Given that the literal sense of Isa. 53 is about Christ, Aquinas thinks that this biblical text can lead readers to the Christian faith. In the super Ioannem, Aquinas says that even the contemporaries of Jesus who refused to believe in him still knew that Isa. 53 was an explicit prophecy about the death of the Messiah. Given that this is clearly about the Messiah, and given that its descriptions of the Messiah’s humiliation and exaltation correspond precisely to Christ’s Passion and Resurrection, those who read Isa. 53 should be led by it to explicit faith in Jesus as the Christ. Aquinas states this firmly in the ST, and in the super Psalmos he equates the evangelical force of Isa. 53 to that of the Gospels. That is, those who read the verba of Isa. 53, like those who read the Gospels, should come to believe in and contemplate the historical and divine res that is the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

In the super Isaiam, Aquinas provided a detailed divisio textus of Isa. 53:1-12. He claimed that the primary theme of this biblical passage is the Passion of Christ. But the text also speaks of the exaltation that Christ will experience as a result of his Passion. The text can be divided into four major parts. The first part (v.1) establishes that the Christological content which will unfold throughout the remainder of the chapter is a great mystery that will be difficult for many to believe. The second part (v.2a) is a similitude of the exaltation that Christ will receive. The third part (v.2b-7) focuses upon what Aquinas calls Christ’s “humiliation,” that is, his Passion. The fourth part (v.8-12) centers upon the exaltation of Christ and the saving fruits of his Passion. Within these four major parts, Aquinas identifies various subdivisions which
detail the Passion and exaltation of Christ in their own ways. For our purposes, perhaps the most significant aspect of Aquinas *divisio* of Isa. 53 is that it shows once again how committed he is to a Christological exegesis of this passage. Every major and minor part of Isa. 53 is about the Passion and exaltation of Christ.

Having established these fundamental aspects of Aquinas’ interpretation of Isa. 53, I can now explicate the speculative theological insights that Aquinas draws out from the various verses of this biblical passage. Isaiah’s text contains numerous Christological themes.

The first theme involves the origin and identity of Christ. Aquinas consistently interprets Isa. 53:8a (“who shall declare his generation?”) as a reference to the eternal, incomprehensible generation of the Son from the Father. Isaiah’s words indicate that many will not believe in the divine filiation of Christ. The Suffering Servant is the son of David in time and yet, from all eternity, he is the only begotten and consubstantial Son of the Father. Even those who do believe in this sublime mystery will never be able to fully understand it or perfectly express it. At times Aquinas also claims that Isaiah’s words regarding the mysterious generation of the Son can also apply to Christ’s miraculous conception within the womb of the virgin Mary. Christ’s generation from Mary is a miraculous mystery in its own right. Many do not believe in it, and even those who do cannot fully comprehend it. Just as he was born from a Father alone in eternity, so now in time Christ is born of a mother alone. He has no human father, just as he had no divine mother. Yet as Son of God and Son of Mary Christ is fully God and fully human. The dual natures of Christ enable him to act as the “arm of the Lord” (Isa. 53:1b). Christ is the instrument through which the Father accomplishes his saving work on behalf of the world.

The second theme is the reality, nature and origin of Christ’s suffering. Christ was “a man of sorrows [dolores], and acquainted with infirmity” (Isa. 53:3a). “Truly,” Isaiah says, “he
has borne our illnesses and carried our sorrows [dolores]” (Isa. 53:4a). Aquinas interprets these words of Isaiah in an anti-Docetic fashion. They are biblical proof that Christ “truly” [vere] experienced suffering, and Christ’s suffering was proof of his real humanity. Christ’s body could be harmed and his soul could feel sensible and interior pain. In the super Isaiam, the Scriptum, and the ST Aquinas repeatedly calls the harm and pain that Christ experienced a “punishment” [poena]. Christ bore these poena in union with all of the descendants of Adam. That is, Christ experienced poena of body and soul because he possessed a real, passible human nature in solidarity with all of the children of Adam. Christ endured the poena of infirmity that all those who live in a postlapsarian world must bear: hunger, thirst, weariness, bodily pain, sorrow, fear, and death. In his Passion, especially, Christ’s body was “wounded” [vulneratus] and “bruised” [attritus] (Isa. 53:5a). For Aquinas, the scarlet cloak which the soldiers draped upon Jesus (Mt. 27:28) reflects the scarlet, wounded and bruised body of the suffering Lord.

Depending upon the context, Aquinas interprets the Servant’s dolores (Isa. 53:3a, 4a) as either ‘pain’ or ‘sorrow.’ Yet the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. For sorrow or sadness [tristitia] is simply a species within the genus of pain. Pain refers to any felt experience of harm and loss, in body or soul. Sorrow refers specifically to the pain that the mind and heart feels when the person intellectually recognizes the reality of evil and harm. The pain of physical suffering is one thing, and the intellectual pain of sorrow in response to that physical suffering is another. Yet the two types of pain are often simultaneous and intertwined. Christ experienced the pain of sorrow and fear in the face of suffering and death, for his sensitive appetite was naturally and properly repulsed at the prospect of the Passion. This is the case even though, as Isa. 53:7a and 53:12a indicate, Christ freely chose with his rational will to endure the Passion.
Aquinas reads Isa. 53:4a ("truly he has . . . carried our sorrows") as indicating that Christ grieved with sorrow not only over his own pains, but also in response to the sins of humanity. The pain of Christ’s sorrow was unsurpassed because, as Isa. 53:4a states, Christ bore the pain of our sorrows. That is, all at once he recognized and grieved over every sin that ever had been and ever would be committed by humanity. In this sense, Christ was the ultimate penitent; his unsurpassed contrition, born of infinite wisdom and charity, was a pleasing sacrifice of repentance that he offered to the Father in satisfaction for all of the sins of humanity. Further, while he does not explicitly link this claim to the text of Isa. 53:4a, in the ST Aquinas claims that Christ experienced sorrow in response to “all the causes of sadness.”[863] Hence, Christ not only bore our sorrow over sin itself, but he also bore the sorrows that we experience due to all of the consequences of sin: hunger, thirst, bodily pain, loss of loved ones, ignorance, social rejection and loneliness, poverty, illness, fear, and death, to name but a few. Christ truly carried our sorrows with us, for he walked alongside all those who experience the pain of sorrow in response to the reality of sin and its consequences.

The third Christological theme that Aquinas draws from Isa. 53 concerns the unjust rejection and persecution of Christ. Christ was “despised, and the most abject of men” (Isa. 53:3a). He was “reputed with the wicked” (Isa. 53:12a). Aquinas interprets these passages as prophecies of the fact that Christ’s enemies would errantly condemn him as a grave criminal. Members of the Roman and Jewish powers in Jerusalem unjustly identified Christ as an evildoer who needed to be removed from society. They handed over Christ to abuse and death. Christ’s violent punishment alongside violent criminals shrouded his divine and Messianic identity from the eyes of many. In his Passion, Christ’s glory “was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon

[863] ST III, q. 46, a. 6, c. See chp. 7, pg. 27.
we esteemed him not” (53:3b). As he hung upon the cross, there was “no form in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him” (Isa. 53:2b). Consequently, many of Christ’s peers “thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted” (Isa. 53:4b). Aquinas does not interpret Isa. 53:2b-3 and 4b as statements regarding any natural spiritual or physical deformity or imperfection of Christ. Rather, all of these verses concern the fact of Christ’s unjust punishment upon the cross and the consequent scandal that this punishment caused. Christ, the God-man, the exemplar of all virtue, was treated as a criminal and as one who has been rejected by God. In this way, Isa. 53 testifies to Christ’s solidarity with all those who suffer injustice at the hands of men, and in particular to Christ’s solidarity with those who are persecuted for their obedience and witness to God. Further, Isa. 53 testifies to a great mystery: Christ’s Passion, despite its salvific value, was a stumbling block to many of his peers. The Passion caused many to turn away in revulsion from the face of God incarnate.

Aquinas’ fourth theme is that Christ endured the agony and injustice of his Passion like a perfectly innocent and peaceful lamb. Christ was put to death despite the fact that he had “done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in his mouth” (Isa. 53:9b). The super Psalmos is the only place where Aquinas quotes Isa. 53:9b. There, he interprets this text as indicating the perfect moral integrity of Christ. Christ exclusively spoke the truth, and he always acted in accord with the truth. He obeyed and carried out the will of the Father in every circumstance. The perfect moral virtue with which Christ endured the cross is an example to all Christians to remain steadfast in faith and righteousness even during the agony of life in the world. Aquinas interprets Isa. 53 as testifying in a particularly clear way to the virtuous manner in which Christ

864 Putting aside the lecture on Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam.
treated his enemies amidst his Passion. Christ “prayed for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12b), saying “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Christ’s prayer for those who crucified him manifests the breadth of his love, for he wills the good for both his friends and his enemies.

Christ’s love for sinners is the reason why he “opened not his mouth” and was “led as a sheep to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7b). As he was arrested, tried, forced to carry his cross, and crucified, Christ was “dumb as a lamb before his shearer” (Isa. 53:7b). Aquinas quotes these words of Isa. 53:7b as much as any other text from Isa. 53.865 He consistently interprets this verse as referring to Christ’s patience, benevolence and gentleness amidst his Passion. Christ never uttered or did evil towards his enemies even as they persecuted him. He did not seek revenge but rather turned the other cheek. He remained verbally and physically passive throughout his suffering. While at times he answered the questions of those who interrogated him, for the most part he acted like a silent and deaf man amidst his persecution. He did not offer lengthy, passionate and detailed defenses of his innocence. Rather, Christ focused upon simply enduring his suffering with righteousness. Aquinas says that Christ exercised this passive, patient and gentle silence out of love for his enemies, in order to bring about their conversion and correction. Aquinas thus points to Isa. 53:7b, 9b and 12b as examples for those who are undergoing persecution and assault. Like Christ, Christians must love even their enemies. They must strive to counter verbal and physical violence with consistent patience, prayer, and gentleness.

The fifth Christological theme involves the relationship between the will of God, the will of Christ, and the Passion. Isa. 53:8b states, “for the wickedness of my people have I struck

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865 A total of 20 cases, matched only by the 20 cases of Isa. 53:7a.
him.” As early as the super Isaiam, Aquinas interprets this text as indicating that God merely allowed [permisi] Christ’s enemies to harm him. God did not actively will that Christ would be rejected and put to death. Likewise, in the super Matthaenum Aquinas adds that both the Father and the Son, as God, chose to permit Christ’s enemies to harm him. In the super Ioannem, Aquinas specifies that Christ, as God, had the ontological power to actively prevent his enemies from harming him. Yet he freely chose as God and man to endure the harm that would be inflicted upon him. This is the meaning of Isa. 53:7a: “He was offered because he himself willed it.” Christ did not actively seek to be betrayed, arrested and put to death. He did not command or counsel these actions. But he did freely permit them and endure them.

Isa. 53:10a states, “and the Lord was pleased [voluit] to bruise him in infirmity.” This text could be interpreted as implying that God actively wills and delights in the pain of Christ in and of itself. Yet Aquinas does not read it in this way. Rather, in the super Isaiam, Aquinas interprets this text as signifying the Father’s command to Christ to endure the Passion and Christ’s consequent, free obedience to that command. Aquinas supports this interpretation by linking Isa. 53:10a to the text of Phil. 2:8, which states that Christ was “obedient unto death.” For Aquinas, both Isa. 53:10a and Phil. 2:8 show that Christ’s Passion was meritorious before God precisely because of the obedience with which Christ bore it. The Father did not actively will for Christ to be harmed by his enemies. He merely permitted Christ’s enemies to afflict him with pain. Hence, it is not the pain of the Passion, considered in itself, that the Father willed.

Yet consequent to the attacks of Christ’s enemies upon him, the Father did actively will for Christ as man to endure the harm and pain of those attacks.866 That is, the Father commanded Christ to abstain from using his divine power to escape the hands of his enemies, and Christ

866 For a Thomistic account of why the Father would have given Christ the command to endure the Passion see Daniel Waldow, “Aquinas on the Nature of Christ’s Punishment and its Role in His Work of Satisfaction,” New Blackfriars vol. 103, no. 1103 (January 2022): 7-28, especially 20-24.
freely chose as a man to obey that command. The Father was “pleased” [voluit] by Christ’s free choice to obey his command to endure the Passion, as well as by Christ’s free choices to obey God in all things even throughout the pain of his Passion. That is why the Passion was meritorious.

Aquinas used Isa. 53:10a and 53:7a in a similar way in ST III, q. 47, a. 3. There he said that God “was pleased [voluit] to bruise” (Isa. 53:10a) Christ simply in the sense that he eternally preordained for Christ to endure the Passion for the salvation of sinners. God eternally willed to command Christ to endure the pain that would be inflicted upon him by his enemies. God also eternally planned to abstain from actively intervening to save Christ from his enemies. In addition, by the charity that Christ had from the Father and for the Father, he freely chose as a man to obey the Father’s command to endure the violence of the Passion. This is what it means to say that Christ “was offered because he himself willed it” (Isa. 53:7a).

Further, Aquinas frequently turned to the text of Isa. 53:7a in order to emphasize the intentional manner with which Christ approached his Passion. Christ knew that he had enemies who sought to kill him, and yet he did not try to avoid their attacks. He freely exposed himself to the threat of death by engaging in preaching and works which he knew would elicit the ire of some of his contemporaries. Further, unlike the paschal lambs who were led in ignorance to the Jerusalem Temple to be slaughtered, Christ was the paschal lamb who knew what awaited him in Jerusalem and yet who chose to go there anyway. On the night he was betrayed, he knew that Judas and members of the Sanhedrin plotted against him. Yet he did not seek to flee from Jerusalem. Rather, he “took” the bread and “broke it” (1 Cor. 11:23; Mt. 26:26) as a sign of his intention to hand his body over to be broken upon the cross. In Gethsemane, Christ had the power to repel the soldiers with merely his words, and yet he permitted them to seize him (Jn.
In all of these ways, says Aquinas, Christ “was offered because he himself willed it” (Isa. 53:7a).

Aquinas even insists that Christ, as he hung upon the cross, had the power to freely determine the exact moment in which he would die. This does not mean that he actively brought about his death through commission or omission. But it does mean that he had the ontological power to deter the violent effects of the attacks that were levelled against him. Just as in Gethsemane Christ had the divine power to repel the soldiers, so too upon the cross he had the power to prolong his bodily life indefinitely. Mere humans, obviously, do not have this power. Consequently, when Christ did die, he did so only because he freely allowed himself to die. He freely permitted his soul to depart from his body. This is what it means to say that he “has delivered his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12a). No one took Christ’s life from him apart from his permission. He laid down his life of his own accord (Jn. 10:18).

The sixth Christological theme that Aquinas derives from Isa. 53 is that human sin was the reason for Christ’s Passion. This means two things. First, Christ’s suffering and death were not a punishment for his own sins. He was sinless. Hence, he “was wounded for our iniquities” and “was bruised for our sins” (Isa. 53:5). This means that the sins of humanity were the fundamental cause of Christ’s Passion. He suffered and died as a result of “the wickedness of my people” (Isa. 53:8b). Second, Christ’s Passion was a means of saving sinners. “By his bruises we are healed” (Isa. 53:5b). Christ suffered and died in order to save humanity from their sins. This is the sense in which Christ “has borne the sins of many” (Isa. 53:12b). He “has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4a) in the sense that he took away our sins and maladies precisely by sharing in our pain and sorrow.
How did Christ’s Passion take away human sin? Aquinas thinks that Isa. 53 supports a soteriological understanding of the Passion as an act of satisfaction, merit, and sacrifice. Aquinas says that fallen humanity needed a penance that would heal them from their sins. Christ’s Passion is that penance. Specifically, Christ’s Passion is an act of satisfaction. “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6b). This passage signifies that Christ has taken upon himself the burdensome and painful task of offering satisfaction for sin. Christ has borne the burden of offering a penance that takes away the sins of the world. In the *Scriptum* and the *Tertia Pars* of the ST, Aquinas frequently draws upon Isa. 53 in his attempts to explain how Christ’s Passion satisfies for human sin. For Aquinas, the Passion of Christ was objectively sufficient to satisfy for the sins of the entire world. This is because of the charity and obedience with which Christ endured the Passion. In his Passion Christ “has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4a) precisely out of love for God and neighbor. Christ’s heroic act of charity and obedience amidst pain and death was infinitely pleasing to God and so it overshadows the injustice of all human sin. Yet Christ’s Passion, understood merely as an historical event of the distant past, does not in and of itself liberate people from their sins. Sinners in every age, before and after Christ, must personally and actively participate in the objective satisfaction that Christ enacted upon the cross. Sinners do this through the grace of faith, repentance, baptism, and the life of charity. By suffering with Christ and for Christ out of charity and obedience, sinners are conformed to Christ and so share in the satisfaction that he wrought upon the cross. According to Aquinas, Christ carries our sorrows in order to empower us to help him carry his cross.

The merit of Christ’s Passion is another way in which it takes away human sin. Aquinas says that the humiliation and exaltation of Christ are the two major themes of Isa. 53. And there
is an order between the two: Christ is exalted by God precisely because of his humiliation. Specifically, the way in which Christ bore his humiliation is the source of his merit. Christ freely chose to suffer out of love for sinners and loving obedience to God. He laid down his life in order to save his bride, the Church: “he has delivered his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12a).

Further, Christ’s death is uniquely meritorious on account of the fact that he is God incarnate: “who shall declare his generation?” (Isa. 53:8a). Consequently, Christ’s divine dignity and self-giving love are the reasons why his Passion merited a reward of life-giving grace for humanity: “if he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a long-lived seed” (Isa. 53:10a). Sinners are justified in grace and thus reborn as sons of God in the Son as a result of the Passion. The Passion merits the sanctification of sinners, which enables them to do God’s will through, with, and in Christ: “the will of the Lord shall be directed in his hand” (Isa. 53:10b). Aquinas also links the salvific and meritorious nature of the Passion to Christ’s teaching ministry. Through his teaching Christ “has labored” for the conversion of sinners, and consequently “he shall see” the gentiles brought to faith and thus “be filled” (Isa. 53:11a). Christ’s teaching merits the grace of conversion for sinners: “By his knowledge,” that is, the teaching that he gives, Christ merited grace which will “justify many” (Isa. 53:11b). In sum, both his teaching and Passion are means by which Christ converts sinners and merits for them the gift of justification and sanctification.

Aquinas also describes Christ’s meritorious Passion in terms of a victory over the powers of evil. He says that precisely “because he has delivered his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12a) Christ conquered the reign of sin, death and hell in the world. By his death he subjected those evil powers to himself. For the grace that Christ merited for humanity by the Passion leads to their liberation from captivity to the powers of evil. God “distribute[s] to him very many” (Isa. 53:12a), meaning that he gives sinners to Christ in grace as a fruit of the Passion. Converted
sinners are the “spoils” (Isa. 53:12a) that Christ won by his death. Christ then shares these spoils with his disciples. He “divide[s] the spoils of the strong” (Isa. 53:12a) in the sense that he shares his pastoral responsibility for this newly acquired flock with his disciples.

Christ’s Passion was also a priestly sacrifice. Christ was not merely a sacrificial victim. He is also the priest who offered up the sacrificial victim. This is what it means to say that “he was offered because he himself willed it” (Isa. 53:7a). Christ “has delivered his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12a), and thus he is simultaneously both priest and victim. As already indicated, this does not mean that Christ actively killed himself through commission or omission. Rather, it simply means that as God he freely assumed a passible human nature, and as man he freely chose out of love to obey the Father’s command to experience all of the harm and pain that came as a consequence of possessing that passible nature. Further, it means that Christ knowingly exposed himself to danger by accomplishing the works that he was sent to do: teaching, performing miracles, establishing a Church, and ultimately making his final journey to Jerusalem. In all of these ways, Christ freely offered himself to the Father as a perfect sacrifice of thanksgiving, supplication, and atonement on behalf of sinful humanity. And unlike all other priests, who have to offer sacrifices in atonement for their own sins as well as the people’s, Christ the innocent lamb offered himself in sacrifice purely for the sins of others: “he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins” (Isa. 53:5a).

On the basis of Isa. 53, Aquinas also includes Christ’s burial among his saving works. Isa. 53:9a states, “he shall give the ungodly for his burial, and the rich for his death.” Aquinas only comments upon this passage three times. In the *super Isaiam*, he interprets this text as referring to Christ’s burial by ungodly people, namely, the Judean and Roman authorities who crucified him. In his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, Aquinas simply quotes Is. 53:9a in support
of Paul’s statement that Christ “was buried” (1 Cor. 15:4). Only in the ST does Aquinas comment on the saving significance of Christ’s burial. There he appeals to a gloss and interprets Isa. 53:9a in a different way than he had done in his two earlier references to this text. In the ST Aquinas says that Christ is the one who gives the ungodly, namely, the gentiles, to the Father as a result of his death and burial. That is, Christ’s death and burial are the reason why he is able to justify the gentiles and present them in holiness to the Father.

Aquinas also turns to Isa. 53 in order to explain the saving value of Christ’s descent to the dead. Christ “has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4a) even in the realm of the dead. Christ descended to the inferno of the just in order to proclaim the good news to them, yet in doing so he shared in their poena. Aquinas does not specify the exact nature of the poena that Christ endured in the underworld. Nonetheless, he states that Christ bore the poena of the righteous dead precisely in order to free them from that poena. Having shared in their poena, Christ then rose from the dead and gave the souls of the just a share in his own eternal life.

I now conclude this qualitative synthesis by explicating the seventh and final Christological theme that Aquinas draws out from the text of Isa. 53. This theme is about the personal exaltation of Christ following his Passion. In his divisio of Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam, Aquinas identifies Isa. 53:8a as the text that is specifically about Christ’s personal exaltation following his humiliation: “he was taken away from distress and from judgment.” Aquinas only quotes these words in his lecture on Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam. Hence, these words did not occupy a particularly prominent place in the quantity or quality of Aquinas’ engagement with Isa. 53. Nonetheless, reviewing his interpretation of this biblical text is a fitting way to conclude this qualitative synthesis of his reading of Isa. 53. For Aquinas interprets these words of Isa.

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867 See chp. 7, pgs. 33-36.
53:8a as a reference to Christ’s resurrection from the dead. It is precisely by his resurrection that Christ escaped the “distress” of death and the unjust, errant “judgment” (Isa. 53:8a) of those who put him to death. Aquinas interprets these words of Isaiah in light of Phil. 2:9, which states “for which cause, God also has exalted him.” That is, Phil. 2:9 is saying that Christ rose from the dead as a result of his obedience unto death. For Aquinas, Isa. 53:8a and Phil. 2:9 refer to the same reality: Christ’s glorious resurrection from the dead was a reward for his Passion. The overwhelming quantitative majority of Aquinas’ references to Isa. 53 throughout his life concern those texts which pertain to Christ’s suffering and death. Yet for Aquinas, Isaiah’s prophecy of the Suffering Servant is not merely about suffering. For as Paul indicated in Phil. 2:9 so also Isaiah indicated in Isa. 53:8a: the Servant’s humiliation ultimately leads to his exaltation; his endurance of death results in his conquest of death.

III. Conclusion

This work has shown that Aquinas’ engagement with the text of Isa. 53 increased significantly in the final four years of his life. The vast majority of his references to this text are contained in four theological works from those years, namely, the super Matthaeum, super Ioannem, Summa Theologiae, and super Psalmos. For whatever reason, Aquinas thought it fitting to turn to the text of Isa. 53 far more in these works than he had done in earlier, comparable works such as his commentaries on the letters of Paul and his commentary on Peter Lombard’s Sentences.

Yet Aquinas’ interpretations of Isa. 53 remained substantially consistent throughout the course of his life. Aquinas’ cursory super Isaiam was his first scholarly work of theology. His lecture on Isa. 53 and 5 additional references to Isa. 53 in that commentary proved to be
foundational for the ensuing 110 explicit references to that biblical text that he would make throughout the remainder of his life. It is true that at times in his later works the depth of Aquinas’ theological engagement with Isa. 53 increased dramatically in relation to the level of engagement that was present in the super Isaiam. Most notably, in the Scriptum and ST, Aquinas’ theological exegesis of Isa. 53 is far more sophisticated than it is in his earlier, cursory commentary. A similar thing can be said regarding his reading of Isa. 53 in the commentaries on Matthew and John. There he uses Isa. 53 in the service of his thorough theological expositions of the mysteries of Christ’s life and death. Yet despite the increased theological sophistication of Aquinas’ engagement with Isa. 53 in his later years, at no point does he offer a reading of Isa. 53 that departs in any serious way from the initial interpretation that he provided in the super Isaiam. Rather, Aquinas’ numerous theological interpretations of Isa. 53 in the super Isaiam and in all of his ensuing works build upon and complement one another.

Aquinas consistently and exclusively interpreted Isa. 53 as a prophecy of Christ. When he turned to this text in his biblical commentaries and systematic works, he typically did so in order to emphasize one of three Christological themes. Those themes are the voluntary nature of Christ’s Passion, the gentleness and patience with which Christ endured the Passion, and the source and nature of Christ’s various sufferings. These and all of the numerous Christological insights that Aquinas drew out from Isa. 53 combine to produce a robust and compelling portrait of the nature and saving value of Christ’s cross. While Aquinas’ exegetical and systematic account of the cross is not reducible to his interpretations of Isa. 53, nonetheless his engagement with Isa. 53 in and of itself provides a speculatively rich and moving theology of Christ’s Passion.
Bibliography

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