

# HOW IS THIS COMMENTARY ARRANGED?

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This book is an amplified classical commentary -- a commentary in the classical style, lacking none of its parts, but with extra parts added. Just as in classical commentary, the core of the book is line-by-line analysis of St. Thomas's text. Line-by-line analysis holds a venerable place in Western scholarship. In St. Thomas's own day, a line-by-line commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard was required of every candidate for the degree of Master of Theology. By itself, however, line-by-line analysis leaves something to be desired, so I have added sections of preparation, paraphrase, and online supplemental discussion, allowing these sections to vary in length according to need. The sequence of these sections will be explained a bit later. Although some who use this commentary will read it from front to back, I realize that many will dip only into particular sections. In such an interconnected work, this fact poses some difficulties. For this reason, I occasionally make the same point, in different ways, in more than one place (something St. Thomas does as well, despite his concern about repetition), and I also cross-reference his discussions of various topics (though selectively).

People write about St. Thomas for a variety of reasons. Some, like Yves Simon and Jacques Maritain, have adopted St. Thomas's insights as the seminal principle of their own investigations. Others, like John Haldane, have attempted to recast his thought into the idiom and question-set of contemporary analytical philosophy. Still others, like Alasdair MacIntyre, and in another way Russell Hittinger, have used St. Thomas to illuminate great moments in other traditions of inquiry. Then come writers of a more practical orientation, such as the "manualists" of a previous generation, who mined St. Thomas's work for rubrics that might be helpful to confessors. The purpose of this commentary is not quite like that of any of those works, because its chief goal is simply to explain what St. Thomas means. Even so, two different approaches to the task might have been adopted, other than the one I have chosen. For there are those who attempt analytical reconstruction, like Anthony Lisska, John Finnis, and on a grander scale Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and there are those who offer freer treatments of Thomistic themes and insights, like Ralph McInerny or Joseph Pieper. To each approach to the task there corresponds a particular literary form.

One of my earliest readers suggested that I "pick a fight" with the latter two forms, analytical reconstruction and freewheeling thematic discussion, in order to demonstrate the superiority of classical commentary. I certainly don't want to pick a fight, for I am indebted to those who use these other forms. Besides, it would be hypocritical to do so, for I have employed them myself. But it is no insult to the other two forms to point out that amplified classical commentary has certain sharp advantages. One is flexibility, for in principle, it can do most of what the other two forms do, and it can also do things that they can't. Another is objectivity, for it forces the author to sacrifice his own opinions in order to explicate St. Thomas's own text. If the author's opinions do intrude, they do so mainly in my supplementary *Companion to the Commentary*, and these are the icing, not the cake; the reader may ignore them if he wishes. Classical commentary enforces another kind of discipline too. How tempting it is to curry favor with readers, by reassuring them that today we know better than St. Thomas about this or that! Classical commentary makes it difficult to patronize an author in that way, because it forces us to make sure that we understand precisely what he is saying -- just as if, and just because, it might be true. Of course it might not be true, at least not at every point, and it would be just as wrong to patronize readers as to patronize St. Thomas. But classical commentary allows him to speak, and the reader to listen, without static and background noise. It respects the reader by allowing him to decide for himself, freely and without manipulation, whether he agrees.

The version of the *Treatise on Law* employed in this commentary is the one incorporated in the well-known, very literal translation of the *Summa* by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, which has been the gold standard for many years. HTML versions are available in several locations online, which makes the text not only readily accessible but also electronically searchable. Of course I in no way wish to disparage more recent translations, such as the translation of Alfred J. Freddoso, which I often recommend to my students.

The *Treatise* contains nineteen main topics, called "questions," numbered 90 through 108. Each question is divided into "articles," or articulations, each of which poses a single *ultrum* or "whether." If it were possible to treat all eighteen questions in a single volume, that would be ideal. That cannot be done. The next best is to present Questions 90-97, which provide an overview, in their entirety, along with selections from Questions 98-108, which focus on Divine law. Many scholarly treatments of the *Treatise* simply ignore Questions 98-108. In the aggressively secular milieu of contemporary scholarship, that is not surprising. However, anything that obscures the theological context of St. Thomas's great work will obscure the work itself, because St. Thomas views not only Divine law but natural

law in the context of the history of salvation. It was otherwise with the natural rights theories of the Enlightenment. They tried to bracket theology, on the assumption that the only way to talk about things like natural law, which we have in common, is to ignore everything that we don't have in common. Though initially this assumption seemed plausible, it turned out to be based on a fallacy, and one of the mysteries of modernity is why the fallacy was not obvious sooner. To ignore the history of salvation is not to be neutral about the history of salvation; rather it is to assume a priori that the history of salvation makes no difference to the understanding of anything else. A discussion among Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and atheists, each of whom is invited to discuss his theological premises, may be difficult to conduct. But how is it easier to conduct than a discussion among all the same parties, each of whom is expected to impersonate the atheist?

For each question and article, the order of the commentary is the same: It is the order followed in classical commentaries, but, as I have suggested, with several parts added. At the front of each question, I place matters the reader should consider first: "Before Reading Question 90," "Before Reading Question 91," and so forth. At the opening of each article, I place the Dominican Fathers translation, called "Text," with my paraphrase, called "Paraphrase," in parallel columns. The Dominican Fathers translation is always italicized. Everything else is in ordinary font. Because the Dominican Fathers translation is usually very literal, and because parallel columns allow readers to decide for themselves just how freely or literally I am paraphrasing, I have the fortunate liberty to rephrase sometimes more freely, sometimes more literally, just as I think clarity requires. Sometimes the reader may compare my paraphrase with the Dominican Fathers translation and think, "How did he get that paraphrase from the words of the translation?" The answer is that I am not paraphrasing the translation, but paraphrasing the Latin itself. Every now and then I even disagree with the translators about the meaning of some point in the original language; sometimes I am even more literal. Even so, the Paraphrase is not an alternative translation and should by no means be mistaken for one. It is not even close to a translation. At the freest moments of the Paraphrase, I change St. Thomas's verb tenses, add clarifications, insert transitions, remove phrases that seem redundant in English, and even reorder the sentences. In a translation, such liberties would be inexcusable. But to make the meaning of the prose transparent, they are indispensable. This may be a suitable place to insert my standard disclaimer. Where pronouns are concerned, I generally follow the traditional English convention - the one everyone followed, before politically motivated linguistic bullying became fashionable -- according to which such terms as "he" and "him" are already "inclusive." Unless the context clearly indicates the masculine, they have always been used to refer to a person of either sex. Readers who choose differently

may write differently; I ask only that they extend the same courtesy to me. In the meantime, since my language includes masculine, feminine, neuter, and inclusive pronouns, any rational being who feels excluded has only him-, her-, or itself to blame.

Interpolated between chunks of Text and Paraphrase are sections of line-by-line analysis. This analysis goes well beyond the paraphrase, but in doing so makes clear why the paraphrase is framed as it is. As I have mentioned, although the *Commentary* is self-contained, an online *Companion the Commentary* is also provided with this *Commentary*. In the *Companion*, readers will find supplemental discussions, flexible in length and style, keyed to the individual articles of the *Treatise on Law*, so that the themes each article discusses can be seen in even greater clarity and depth. One might say that the "Before Reading" sections prepare us to enter the forest; the paraphrase helps us walk among the trees; the line-by-line analysis helps study each tree closely; and the *Companion* help step back and consider the grove in its setting.

Because I also supply some cross-references, it may be helpful to explain how the sections of the great work to which the *Treatise on Law* belongs are cited. If the source is not already clear, the letters "S.T." are used to indicate the *Summa Theologiae* (or *Summa Theologica*, a form of the title that is also widely used). In this commentary, of course, the abbreviation is normally unnecessary. Next the part is indicated: "I" for the First Part, "I-II" for the First Part of the Second Part, "II-II" for the Second Part of the Second Part, or "III" for the Third Part, and "Supp." for the Supplement. "Q.," followed by a numeral, identifies the question; the numbering of questions begins anew in each part. "Art.," followed by a numeral, identifies the article. Citations are further specified by the abbreviation "Obj.," with a numeral, for an objection, or the Latin preposition "ad," with a numeral, for a reply to an objection. If a citation specifies neither an objection, a reply to an objection, nor the *sed contra*, then it refers either to the whole article, or, if one is quoting from it, to the *respondeo*. For example, "S.T., I-II, Q. 94, Art. 4, ad 3," means "Summa Theologiae, First Part of the Second Part, Question 94, Article 4, Reply to Objection 3," but "S.T., I-II, Q. 94, Art 4," refers either to Article 4 in its entirety, or to the "I answer that" part of Article 4.

Several other systems of citation are also widely used. The First Part, or *Prima Pars*, is sometimes designated 1, 1a, or Ia; the First Part of the Second Part, or *Prima Secundae Partis*, is sometimes designated 1-2, 1a-2ae, or Ia-IIae; the Second Part of the Second Part, or *Secunda Secundae Partis*, is sometimes designated 2-2, 2a-2ae, or IIa-IIae; and the Third Part, or *Tertia Pars*, is sometimes designated 3, 3a,

or IIIa. In an abbreviation like “1a-2ae,” the “a” and “ae” are endings of the words *Prima* and *Secundae*. I should also mention that the body of an article is also sometimes called the corpus, abbreviated cor.

For the convenience of beginners, in quoting from works other than the *Summa*, such as the writings of Aristotle, I use reliable editions that are in the public domain and are available on the internet whenever possible. Scholars, of course, will have their own favorite translations. When I provide quotations from the Bible, I most often use either the Douay-Rheims version (DRA), which is an English translation of the Latin Vulgate that St. Thomas used, and which is also employed by the Dominican Fathers; or the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSV-CE), which is sometimes more clear and often more beautiful. Which translation I am using is always indicated in footnotes. When the chapter and verse divisions of the Douay-Rheims differ from those of more recent translations, I indicate this fact in footnotes too.