

**The Search for Wisdom and the Light of Christ**  
Aquinas Philosophy Workshop 2021 - Fr. Dominic Legge

- A. The name of ‘wise,’ absolutely speaking, is solely reserved to one whose reflection is focused on the end of the universe, which is also the origin of the universe. Thus, according to the Philosopher [Aristotle], it belongs to the wise to consider the highest causes.<sup>1</sup>
- B. [T]he first author and mover of the universe is an intellect, as will be shown below. Therefore, the ultimate end of the universe must be the good of an intellect. But this is truth. **Therefore the truth must be the ultimate end of the whole universe**, and wisdom principally strives after the consideration of it. And hence divine wisdom testifies that he assumed flesh and came into the world to manifest the truth, saying (at Jn 18:37): “For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37).<sup>2</sup>
- C. The pursuit of wisdom is more perfect, more sublime, more useful, and more joyful, than all other human pursuits. It is more perfect because, to the extent that man devotes himself to the pursuit of wisdom, he already has a certain share of true happiness. . . . It is more sublime, because through wisdom, man especially approaches to a divine likeness . . . . Therefore, since likeness is the cause of love, the pursuit of wisdom especially joins one to God in friendship. . . .<sup>3</sup>
- D. The rational creature sees in the light of God . . . . We do not mean a light created by God, which is what Genesis 1 speaks of, “let there be light.” Rather, [we see] *in your light*, namely, that by which you shine, which is a likeness of your substance. Brute animals do not participate in this light, but the rational creature does. First, in natural knowledge, for man’s natural reason is nothing other than the brilliance of divine splendor in the soul, on account of which splendor man is in the image of God: “the light of your countenance is signed upon us, O Lord (Ps. 4:7).” The second is the light of grace: “Rise up, O sleeper, [arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light] (Eph. 5:14).” The third is the light of glory: “Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, [and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee] (Is. 60:1).”<sup>4</sup>
- E. [T]hrough sin, the reason is dimmed, especially in practical matters; the will is hardened, less sensitive to the good; a greater difficulty in doing good arises; and concupiscence is more and more inflamed.<sup>5</sup>
- F. [T]o prepare oneself for grace is, as it were, to be turned to God; just as, whoever has his eyes turned away from the light of the sun, prepares himself to receive the sun's light, by turning his eyes towards the sun. Hence it is clear that man cannot prepare himself to receive the light of grace except by the gratuitous help of God moving him inwardly.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SCG I.1. All translations of Aquinas are my own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> SCG I.1.

<sup>3</sup> SCG I.2.

<sup>4</sup> In Psalm. 35 (no. 5).

<sup>5</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 85, a. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 6. [English Dominican Fathers translation]

- G. The light of faith makes seen the things that are believed. For as through the other *habitus* of virtues a man sees that which is fitting to him according to that *habitus*, thus also through the *habitus* of faith the mind of man is inclined to assent to those things that befit a right faith, and not to [assent to] others.<sup>7</sup>
- H. Just as man assents to first principles by the natural light of his intellect, so also a virtuous man, by the habit of virtue, judges rightly of what pertains to that virtue. Likewise, in this way, by the light of faith divinely infused in man, he assents to the things that pertain to faith and not to their contraries. Consequently “there is no” danger or “condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” illuminated by Christ through faith.<sup>8</sup>
- I. The simple light which is faith causes its perfection, namely, its assent, but insofar as that light is not perfectly participated, it does not totally remove the imperfection of the intellect, and so the movement of thought remains restless in it.<sup>9</sup>
- J. This splendor of [the Father’s] glory, the image of the fontal light, took on our flesh and did many glorious and divine works in this world. The Gospel is therefore the declaration of this light, hence the Gospel is also called the knowledge of the brightness of Christ, which knowledge has the power to enlighten.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 4 ad 3.

<sup>8</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 3 ad 2.

<sup>9</sup> *De Verit.* q. 14, a. 1 ad 5.

<sup>10</sup> *In II Cor.* no. 125.