

Do we Need Faith in the Resurrection Today? Exploring the Meaning of Belief through Aquinas

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Early in the 60s, the Rev T. Robinson wrote the highly controversial book, *Honest to God* which shook the faith of many people in those heady and giddy days. It was obviously a work that represented the high point of an abbreviated historico-critical reading of the New Testament. I do not wish to go into the details of that book which I read with so much confusion as a sophomore in the school of theology but I still remember one of his submissions that the bones of Jesus must be in one dusty area in some Palestinian town, but that this fact however does not change his faith in the Resurrection. The point however, is that the Christian faith in the Resurrection is rooted in the understanding of the events of the Resurrection as both history and above history. Salvation history and linear history are two related but distinct realities. Salvation history is God's time, while linear time is the human and existential chronological time with its particularities, complexities and factualities. As history, the Resurrection is an event that happened in the past, but is not limited to the past but rather defines the future. As an event that is above history, the Resurrection defines history outside the ordinary categories that are available to history. In a real sense, the truth of the Resurrection is rooted in a real experience of real people, who lived within history, but whose experience of Jesus changed in the light of the event that happened after his death beyond the limited compass of linear history. The Resurrection redefines linear history and can no longer be understood outside the radical nature of the experience of the early disciples in history. Thus, while Robinson may make claims that the bones of Jesus may be found and not change his faith in the Resurrection, my argument is

that the bones of Jesus does not need to be found in order to verify the faith of the Christians because the Resurrection is an event that has made the fact of finding the bones of Jesus nugatory.

As Christians celebrate Easter, there is one question that keeps on coming up in the minds of many Christians and non-Christians: Do you really believe all that stuff about the Resurrection? What is the meaning of the Resurrection? I will employ two frames of reference: (1) look at an expression of one of the witnesses to the Resurrection, how it can help me come to faith in the Resurrection, (2) use Aquinas's discourse on the meaning of faith to justify why a faith in the Resurrection makes sense.

Three paths are opened to me in doing this analysis. In the first place, I will do a brief spiritual reading of the Resurrection appearance of Jesus and the report of Mary to the disciples. Secondly, I will follow an *ordo inventionis* by inductively drawing out the intelligibilities in Aquinas's analysis of faith in the second volume of his great *Summa Theologiae*. I will proceed via an *ordo expositionis* to show the metaphysical structure in Aquinas's analysis with regard to the encounter of faith with human reason and creation in order to draw out the consequences of this view of faith for living a Resurrection faith for Christians of today.

I have seen the Lord. In these words of Mary are summarized the meaning of Easter. By his glorious resurrection, Jesus has given us a new vision of faith that God is not absent in our world, rather that he is dynamically present in every circumstance and at all times. 'Seeing' does not refer specifically to a merely physical sight, but to a vision of faith, which goes beyond mere physical experience. The person Mary saw on the first day of the week was not a phantom or ghost, the person she saw was not a resuscitated Jesus but a risen

Jesus in his bodily glory. She had a new experience that changed her relationship with Jesus because of who Jesus became after his death.

The Gospel of John tells us that Mary initially thought that Jesus was the gardener taking care of the grave yard, because Jesus was now different. Why was she unable to recognize Jesus immediately, someone she had been with for three years and some few days back? The reason was that this Jesus was new. It was only when Jesus called her by name that she immediately recognized Jesus as the risen Lord. Mary's broken world of grief at the loss of Jesus, was opened once our Lord called her by name. The voice of Jesus calling her by name shatters her world and opens a brand new future. In that instance, Jesus gave her a new insight, a new vision of faith and she recognized him as Lord. Mary did not understand why the tomb of Jesus was empty. She thought perhaps that someone had taken the body away; she did not understand the meaning of the words of Jesus during his earthly ministry: destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it; unless a seed dies it will not give birth to new life; I lay down my life so that I can take it up again. Mary came to the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus, but she experiences a new reality, the risen and glorified Lord. In the joy and ecstasy of this new experience, Mary runs to the other disciples to announce to them: *I have seen the Lord*.

Seeing the Lord is a vision of faith that comes from God himself. Just as the Lord explained the meaning of the Resurrection to Mary so in the Easter celebration, the Church's faith in the Resurrection, in her liturgy, is teaching us that we do not worship a dead God but a living God, who is so powerful and so great that even death cannot destroy his only Son. The world today needs to hear that Jesus is alive so that they can see the meaning of our human destiny. But our world is more fascinated by novelties than by truth. There are many Christians who think that the Resurrection is only a myth; there are

some Christian scholars today who deny the reality of the Bodily Resurrection of Christ. In 2007 there appeared the Gnostic document, *the Gospel of Judas*, which denied the truth of the passion and Resurrection of Christ. We have such fabrications as the *Da Vinci Code*, which should have been consigned to flames, if people of our times have the patience of checking things out for themselves. The message of *Da Vinci Code* is the same as the falsehoods published in 1996 in the book *The Tomb of Jesus*, which claimed that the bones of Jesus were found in Southern France. All these distortions are attempts to lead people away from the truth that we serve a living God; a God who is personal and alive in the glorified Christ. However, we can put the claims of Jesus to test; one can check things out for one's self.

The liberation from the nets of sin, suffering, death, hatred, and the fear of the future is the meaning of Easter and we see that all around our lives. *Easter means that it is safe for us to believe in Jesus because with him, we are safe and secure. Easter means that it is safe to love even when love hurts knowing that at the end love will triumph. Easter means that it is safe to hope for better days ahead knowing that Jesus the risen Lord goes ahead of us. Easter means that it is safe to die knowing that death has been conquered by Jesus on this day. Easter means that the tomb of Jesus is empty because Jesus has become available for all.*

When Jesus emerged, transformed from the tomb on Easter morning, something fundamentally new happened to the whole of creation. The normal course of history was changed and a new history began. The cycle of decay of death and sin was broken. It was the new morning of God's new creation. Easter celebrates the birth of the new creation of God. It was the first day of God's new week, the moment of sunrise after the long night of sin and death; the time of new meetings and a sign of new hope for the future. Because of the hope in the Resurrection of Jesus, we are guaranteed that evil shall never triumph over

good; that goodness does triumph, that no matter how massive the weight we carry in life that we are assured of victory through Christ.

Acts of mercy and justice, the creation of beauty in this earth and the celebration of truth, deeds of love and the creation of communities of kindness and forgiveness-all these matter and they matter forever. This is what Jesus spent his life doing. His vindication with the Resurrection is a statement that the way of Christ is the best way; with him, through him and for him we shall do good and our good shall triumph over the evil we see around us. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christianity will be the greatest fraud, and all our deeds will have little or no significance. The Resurrection of Jesus means that the present time is shot with significance. What is done for the glory of God in the present is genuinely building God's future. Mary experienced on this Easter day the victory of God in Christ, and shared her new experience with the other disciples. These disciples in turn went about proclaiming the same message: Jesus is alive! Some of them have to give their lives for this truth. It is was no myth at all! 'Seeing' means having a vision of faith which cannot be understood using the terms and relations of ordinary history and experience.

Aquinas defines faith as the habit of the intellect, by which eternal life is begun in us, which makes the intellect assent to things which are unseen. (11a-11ae 4, 1, c). By faith, one comes to hold the truths that are necessary for salvation about the God head and about Christ as the way to God. Aquinas explicates the nature of faith this way: "The object of every cognitive habit includes two things: first that which is known materially, and is the material object, so to speak, and secondly, that whereby it is known, which is the formal aspect of the object." (IIa-IIae, 1,1). In the first article, of the *secunda secundae*, Aquinas deals with 'Whether the object of faith is the first truth?' He argues that the formal object of faith is the first truth, or the divine truth which is revealed by God. The material object of faith

includes every other thing to which the intellect assents which includes not only God but all things in relation to God. God is the formal object of faith, and other things in relation to God are the material object. This is shown to be a cognitive act that demands the perfection of the intellect or the satisfaction of the intellect.

The question one raises here is that of causality, does the material object of faith which is revealed through the data of sense and experience originate from God as their first cause or do one admit the orientation of the human being naturally towards the Truth as the termination of the operations of the intellect? In addition, Aquinas will be expected to show the relationship between the material object and the formal object of faith in terms of how the process of knowing originates in the sense (matter) and how the directional movement of the will relates the objects which are perceived with the final object, which is the First Truth. It is interesting that Aquinas calls the formal object of faith the First Truth, because his Aristotelian realism which holds that every epistemic act begins first from the senses, will suggest that God will be the final truth in a chain of truths that are derived from material objects. His understanding of revelation, however, shows that grasping the truth is the first intention of the subject even in grasping the intelligibilities of the material object. Truth is one.

Faith is, however, not solely the act of the intellect; it is also a habit of the will, "to believe is an act of the intellect assenting to the truth at the command of the will." (IIa-IIae, 4,5,3). Aquinas, following Augustine, shows in question two, article two that faith is not only an act of the intellect but also that of the will hence; "the object of faith can be considered either on the part of the intellect, or on the part of the will that moves the intellect." (IIa-IIae, 2,2, 1). He makes three distinctions in this regard: *credere in Deo*, *credere Deum*, *credere in Deum*. The first refers to the authority on the basis of which one believes;

one believes this truth as revealed by God the first truth. The second refers to the material content of faith. One believes certain things about God – for example, that God is one and triune and that God is the source of all being and the end of the rational creature. One also believes that God has become human in order to render possible human salvation, and that Christ is the way to eternal life. By *credere Deum*, one believes these truths, as referred to the God who establishes God as our end and orients the movement of the will through Christ to this end. By *credere in Deum*, Aquinas acknowledges the role of charity in the act of faith and the role of the will in believing. For our own justification and having a right relationship with God, it is not enough to have an intellectual assent to that which God has revealed, but it is also important for one to love the one who reveals the Truth, hence the distinction between unformed and formed faith (IIa-IIae. 4.3-4: 5.2-3). The former is faith that lacks love; the latter is faith that is shaped by love of God. God is to be loved above all else and this demands the adhesion of the will through the attractiveness of both the truth and the one who reveals.

Through the act of faith, the intellect tends to and adheres to the Truth, while the will is directed to the last end on account of which, it assents to the First Truth. The three theological virtues are infused together in the act of justification. The act of faith is made possible through the perfection of charity that is the love and attraction of the mind and will to the First Truth (this idea is well developed by Balthasar in the first of his Trilogy, *The Glory of God*). Charity is called the form of faith in so far as the act of faith is perfected and formed by charity. (IIa-IIae, 4,4,1). Charity, however, can be lost by original sin, which pertains to the will, but faith remains even though it may be unformed, thus Aquinas argues that living and lifeless faith (formed and unformed faith) are not distinct habits. Hope, on the other hand, cannot lead to faith absolutely. One cannot hope to obtain eternal

happiness unless one believes that this is possible. Thus, one can be led by hope to persevere in faith; hence Aquinas argues that hope leads to faith. (4,7,obj.2)

In relation to the other theological virtues then, Aquinas argues further that faith is the first virtue, it has an intrinsic relation to the other theological virtues: "Hence, as the last end is present in the will by hope and charity, and in the intellect by faith, the first all the virtue must, of necessity, be faith because natural knowledge cannot reach God as the object of heavenly bliss, which is the aspect under which hope and charity tends towards him." (IIa-IIae, 4,7,1). It is necessary to underlie the fact that Aquinas does not see faith as the achievement of the human intellect. Faith's formal object has two aspects; the things that cannot be seen with the human eyes revealed by God for example the Resurrection of the Lord and the things we can see which relate to the divine providence or governance of the world. It is because of this that we have articles of faith, which do not reduce the revealed truths to different divisions but make them intelligible, and show how they are related to one another. However, faith is not a human accomplishment; God is the one who teaches what is to be believed and he teaches according to the capacity of each person. Hence, the humblest believer in Christ knows more about God and how to lead a good life than the most profound philosopher was able to know without faith in Christ (cf. Bruce D. Marshall in *The Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*).

Faith is then a virtue as well as a habit, it requires human effort but is not the result of human effort: "For many are unable to make progress in the study of science, either through dullness of mind, or through having a number of occupations and temporal needs, or even through laziness in learning, all of whom would be altogether deprived of the knowledge of God, unless Divine things are brought to their knowledge under the guise of faith." (IIa-IIae, 2,4,1). Aquinas in question four seeks to explore deeper why faith is a

virtue. He concerns himself with the relationship of the act of faith with the object of faith, that is, the relationship between believing and the object of belief, God who is the First Truth. Here, it is important to note that the will must be reduced to act by God's prompting grace (*auxilium*). The one who stands in correct relationship with God is more receptive to the divine promptings by additional habits of will that are themselves given by God, namely the gifts of the Holy Spirit (understanding and knowledge, IIa-IIae, 4, 8, obj. 4; St II-II, 8-9.) In the act of faith, the human subject is dependent on God for the granting of the habitual grace, and the theological virtues themselves. Faith as virtue refers to the perfecting of the intellect and the infallible nature of the divine truth which the intellect possesses as First Truth in the act of faith. (4,5,1).

Aquinas goes on in article three (IIa-IIae) to state that nothing false can come under the aegis of faith. He writes: "The formal aspect of the object of faith is the First Truth; so that nothing can come under faith, save in so far as it stands under the First Truth, under which nothing false can stand, as neither can non-being stand under being, nor evil under goodness. It follows therefore that nothing false can come under faith." (3, 1) Looked closely, this might appear to be contradictory. Aquinas, however, argues further that it is quite impossible for a false opinion to be the outcome of faith. (3,obj.3) However, faith is seen in Aquinas to be the perfection of the intellect, that is, the intellect seeks the good and the truth, and on finding it clings to it as the term of its advance. Hence, it is impossible for the perfection of the intellect through the first truth to diverge to falsehood. Indeed, falsehood in any intellect is an indication that it has not arrived at the true faith.

As Serge Thomas Bonino argues very eloquently, divine revelation brings about three realities to the human search for truth: the perfection of the intellect, it ripens, heals, purifies and fulfills the intellect; it also brings a union between the intellect and the object of

faith, God. Faith unites the knowing subject with the object of faith, God. "The order of grace comes from a more profound gift of God: it consist on the one hand in the objective revelation of the mystery, received in faith, and on the other hand in the dynamism of charity as participation in the love with which God loves himself and loves his spiritual creatures. In relation to nature, grace is irruption and newness: It opens 'new horizons' to human existence." ("Nature and Grace in Deus Caritas Est" *Novo et Vetera*, 5 (no. 2), Spring 2007, 233-234).

Faith's object as the First Truth is the full completion of the dynamism for perfection rooted in human knowing, beyond which none can go and outside whose structure one can have the possibility of falsehood. What is clear in Aquinas's explication of faith is that both the formal and material objects of faith cohere in such a way that the human subject is led through the material objects to the formal object, the First Truth.

Aquinas uses the definition given in Hebrew 11: 1 as starting point in developing another understanding of faith as a substance. Here, we must make a distinction that substance is being used by Aquinas in a unique sense not as that which can stand on its own but as the first beginning of things to be hoped for in so far as whole subsequent things are contained in the first beginning virtually: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." There is a correspondence between the first truth which is 'unseen', and the 'substance of things hoped for' which are also unseen.

The act of faith has an analogical relationship with *sacra doctrina* for both as their formal object divine revelation and faith in that which God has revealed, but the acts proper to them differ: *sacra doctrina* has to be learned through revelation; faith on the other hand is a gift, that demands the movement of the will towards the ultimate good of the human person, the First Truth. *Sacra doctrina* presupposes faith; "Although those things

which are beyond man's knowledge may not be sought for by man through his reason, nevertheless, once they are revealed by God they must be accepted by faith." (1,1,1) This connection is well brought out in the prima pars (q.1,7, 1) when Aquinas observes that in *sacra doctrina* all things are treated under the aspect of God either because they refer to God himself or because they refer to God as their beginning and end. The principles of *sacra doctrina*, he argues, are the articles of faith, and the whole science of *sacra doctrina* is contained virtually in its principles, God. However, faith is different from *sacra doctrina* in many ways, faith deals with things that are unseen and so is not science, but *sacra doctrina* proceeds from self-evident principles established by the light of a higher science (1,1,2; IIa-IIae, 1,5, 1 and obj. 2). Here one sees an important distinction between faith and *sacra doctrina*: faith is demonstrated not through appeals to what is seen, but through persuasion and appeal to the sacred scripture (ibid), *sacra doctrina* is demonstrated through appeal to principles shown through divine science and can also use the philosophical sciences to make explicit divine revelation. Aquinas is not proposing fideism or blind faith, for he speaks of formed and unformed faith. He also admits that faith is not the acceptance of only the things that are beyond reason but also of things within the grasp of reason. The point of distinction is that for faith, what is to be believed is beyond human reason, but for *sacra doctrina* what is beyond reason (the formal object of faith) is the data for reflection using human reason. Faith, Aquinas argues is more certain than science and if *sacra doctrina* is a science it follows that faith is more certain than it, hence faith can ground the certainty of *sacra doctrina* to the extent it makes explicit the meaning of faith.

This is similar to what Aquinas writes in the secunda secundae (IIa-IIae, 4,1,1) about the substance of faith as being the first beginning of the things to be hoped for and all things in relation to this first beginning. *Sacra doctrina* is also necessary for human salvation

because it relates to the truth of faith which is necessary for human salvation: the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. One could therefore, make an important conclusion that the law of faith is analogically the law of *sacra doctrina*, since they both have a similar structure, and follows the reditus-exitus pattern of the Summa. In the explication of 'the substance of things hoped for' as pertaining to faith, Aquinas shows how faith is both a virtue, an act of the intellect, as well as a habit of the will as we have explained above. Faith is also the beginning of eternal life, but not eternal life. What one hopes for is what one does not yet possess, so there is in faith some elements of unfulfillment or the 'not yet' quality. But one has some certainty in faith because of the authority of God who reveals the First Truth and the evidence that is found in Sacred Scripture.

We shall consider some articles in the *secunda-secundae* questions 1,2 and 4 where Aquinas speaks of faith in relation to *sacra doctrina*. This will help us to establish that the hermeneutic that faith offers to *sacra doctrina* is revolves around faith. That is theology begins from faith and should lead to faith. Some of these points are not explicit but we intend to show that the structure of faith so proposed is similar to the structure of *sacra doctrina* and hence faith can offer the hermeneutics for *sacra doctrina*, just as *sacra doctrina* makes intelligible the articles and precepts of faith. In the second article of the first question, Aquinas asks whether faith is a proposition. The important point made here is that "the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower." (IIa-IIae, 1,2,1). Aquinas adopts a classical Aristotelian epistemic standpoint about the process of knowledge. There is objectivity in the object to be known, and the object's sense data actuates the epistemic process, and each knower knows the object according to its nature. Thus, since the human person knows things from their particularities before forming a concept through the agent intellect, the human person knows propositionally. However,

because the First Truth to be believed is simple, the knowledge we have of it is not a proposition, but the perfection or end of the multiple propositional aspects of our knowledge. Here, we must underlie that the formal object of faith already organizes the data of theology because it has its own mode of being which is independent of us, and organizes the whole process of coming to receive divine revelation because of the teleological bent of our assent to the First Truth. The next article addresses the manner in which the object of faith comes to be grasped by the human intellect. Already, one sees an organic structure that Aquinas establishes which has the human subject searching for truth through the things that God has created; the things that God has created show forth the presence of God. Here we see the *exitus-reditus* structure at play.

However, it seems that Aquinas minimizes the freedom of the human subject especially as he speaks of ‘a commanding will’ which is similar in relation to the compelling grace of Augustine (4,2,obj 2). It appears that the human subject has no option since he or she is already constituted or ordered to move towards the First Truth. In addition, the question of making faith the fulfillment of the cognitive quest poses a whole range of problematics with regard to the contemplation of God.

This is where one sees the relationship between the believing subject and the object of belief, analogous to the theologian who contemplates the meaning and the object of Truth. How free is the theologian in engaging faith’s formal object (the first Truth) and the object of *sacra doctrina* (the revelation of God) in order to know and formulate propositions that addresses challenges that faith faces in the world? One sees in Aquinas a metaphysical motif: The nature and structure of the faith and the process of faith (that is believing) in itself offers a hermeneutics for *sacra doctrina*. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas shows that the love and will of God extends first to the Infinite Good, God himself, and also to God’s

creatures. There is a fundamental metaphysical law which one draws from Aquinas which grounds my contention that faith offers a hermeneutics for *sacra doctrina*.

Contemplating God is the ultimate good and happiness of the human subject “The perfection of the rational creature consists not only in what belongs to it in respect of its nature, but also in that which it acquires through a supernatural participation of Divine goodness.” (I-II, 3, 8). Using physical creatures as the starting point, because they are closer to us in our perception of reality, Aquinas argues thus: Each being has a natural inclination towards its own good, his own perfection, whether it is to acquire its own perfection (if it doesn’t already to exist) or to rejoice in it (if it already exists). This is clearly evident to us from looking at the appetitives like food, drinks etc. If one is hungry, one gains satisfaction from eating food for eg. Aquinas discerns in each being another inclination: the tendency to communicate his own good, to have others participate in his own perfection. Thus, if this kind of inclination exists in natural things, how much more will it exist in a supreme manner in God to communicate his likeness or good to human creatures as much as human being are open to receive it (ST, I, 19, a. 2).

There is thus a correspondence between that which God reveals and the perfection of the human person in the direction of acquiring that ultimate good which is the First Truth which the intellect desires. “Wherever one nature is subordinate to another, we find that two things concur towards the perfection of the lower nature, one of which is in respect of that nature’s proper movement, while the other is in respect of the movement of the higher nature.” (ST, IIa-IIae, 1, 3, 1). This places the whole goal of *sacra doctrina* within a certain hermeneutics in Aquinas hence his assertion: “In order that a man arrive at the perfect vision of heavenly happiness, he must first of all believe God, as a disciple believes the master who is teaching him.” (IIa-IIae, 1,3,1). How does the content of *sacra doctrina*

show that what is revealed is an act of generosity and beneficence from God, and how it shows that this good, the First Truth fulfills the ultimate desire and movement of the intellect.

Sacra doctrina is knowledge of God revealed by God to human creatures (cf. 1,1,1).

What is the content of this divine revelation about God that is revealed in *sacra doctrina*? As has been shown by my many commentators the *Summa* in possible distinction with other writings of Aquinas has a higher view of *sacra doctrina* than was usually supposed, one that is deeply Christoform. While we do not wish to demonstrate this assertion in greater detail as this does not fall within the scope of our inquiry here, faith in God following Aquinas demands that the theologian follows a certain divine pedagogy so that he or she can arrive at the First truth. Since salvation is accomplished by the Incarnate Son and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, truth beyond reason which we need to know concerns the distinction of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity-the knowledge of the Divine Persons is a saving truth for Aquinas. We need to know this truth because it concerns our salvation (ST,1.3.1), and the knowledge of the Trinity is not one which we can acquire *per creaturas* and in this consists the saving truth of our salvation. Left to our cognitive devices, as Bruce D. Marshall argues in his interpretation of *sacra doctrina*, we would never be able to know what the aim of life is, let alone be able to attain it. "The human being is ordered by God to an end which exceeds the comprehension of reason, as Isaiah 64: 4 says: 'Without you, O God, the eye has not seen what you have prepared for those who love you.'" (p.4) That pedagogy is what Aquinas shows in his description of *sacra doctrina* and the pedagogy is Christoform because the knowledge of Jesus Christ is indeed the consummation of theology as Aquinas argues in the prologue to the *Tertio pars*: "Inasmuch as our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to save his people from their sins

(Matt 1:21) as the angel announced showed unto us the way of truth whereby we might attain to the bliss of eternal life by rising again, it is necessary in order to complete the work of theology...that there should be a consideration of the Savior of all and of the benefits he brings to the whole human race.”

By way of conclusion, one can then argue that; (1) faith offers *theology and philosophy* a hermeneutics of meaning because they begins from faith or faintly they begin from a search for the first truth, which is the beginning of the search for God. (2) Faith shows that every reality is open to interpretation in theology because they can be interpreted in relation to God. This applies to all human realities including culture, civilizations, and new realities. Thus, theology can see clearly the inner enrichment of history by interpreting historical realities in the light of faith, that is, how they relate to the perfection of the human person in the light of the First Truth and the ultimate human fulfillment. (3) Theology does not, therefore, stand in judgement over the faith and divine revelation. It is not a master of the science of God but rather a servant of this science. (4) Faith and *sacra doctrina* can therefore, not be in conflict of any kind because both have the same formal object even though they approach this from different material objects.

In the light of this theological analysis, the final question is whether the faith of Mary Magdalene (I have seen the Lord) is a rational stance within this theological structure that we have elaborated. The answer is yes because from Aquinas we draw that faith is the fulfillment of the inner search of the intellect for the First Truth. Faith offers the explanation to the search of the intellect for the truth. Faith is also the gift of God that draws the movement of the human intellect and will to the ultimate Good, which fulfills the human search for happiness. Seeing the Lord, as the summary of the Resurrection faith is rooted in an assent to the truth which cannot be available to the ordinary human mind if not because

it was revealed to him or her by God. Within the normal human way of 'seeing' we can only relate to the data of sense which is available to our consciousness or realize within us the innate ideas that furnish our conscious experience. These two ways of seeing relate to each other depending on what philosophical position one takes, but they are only the condition of possibilities for the 'seeing' of faith, which builds on them and does not obliterate them. The Resurrection is, therefore, an event that begins from God, we find this often repeated in scripture, that Christ was raised from the dead by God. The Resurrection is not a human initiative, because it is not a normal human experience discoverable within linear history. The Resurrection is an event that can be accepted only in faith, and that is why the people who saw Jesus were those who had faith in him. Those who today will experience the power of the Risen Lord or celebrate his presence in the human world are those who are open to the divine shattering of our vision to give us a new vision. This is why understanding the Resurrection faith demands a new way of seeing. But the Resurrection is not simply an event to be accepted in faith, it is also an event that can be understood because it is not outside the range of human comprehension. This is why one can argue that the Resurrection makes sense. It is an event that was witnessed in faith by the followers of Jesus Christ. It is an event that sustained the faith of the earliest followers of Christ around which they wove the story of salvation in both the text of the scriptures and more importantly in the lived experience of faith that validated the reality of the Resurrection. It is reasonable to affirm the Resurrection as the beginning and the ultimate basis of our faith and human destiny. If Christ is the first principle, and the first truth, he gives the reason for being, and he fulfills the being of the human person who constantly seeks the foundations for the present and the future. Seeing the Lord becomes in this light

the possibility for being, as well as the prospect for ultimate human fulfillment. Lord Jesus, reveal yourself to your people who are searching for the truth, for life and for hope.

Easter, 2008