

Reasoning in Biblical Exegesis: from Stephen Langton to Thomas Aquinas

The scientific activity of 13th-century scholastic theologians in general consciousness is associated rather with writing *summae*, comprehensively discussing theological problems, as well as with detailed discussion of subtle theological issues. Meanwhile, studies of the last decade show more clearly that this vision is stripped of an extremely important aspect of both the creativity and the spiritual life of these authors, which was reading and explaining the Bible.

Particularly noteworthy are the works created as part of the relatively new trend of research, which is “Biblical Thomism”. They highlight the central role of the Bible in theology of St. Thomas Aquinas and show the richness of the content of his biblical commentaries, which until recently remained in the shadow of his flagship theological and philosophical works. This new opening in research on the work of Aquinas coincides with the wide international research initiative launched in 2014 around the “Logic and Religion” congresses, which among many topics include an indication of the logical aspects of medieval theology and metaphysics, as well as with numerous conferences and publications on logic in medieval philosophy and theology.

Despite this, no advanced studies have yet been published that would combine these two trends and examine the logical aspects of medieval biblical exegesis. In the environment of philosophers and theologians, the foundations of “semiotics” of biblical exegesis are widely known, which can be reduced to distinguishing (maximum) four senses of Scripture. Whereas, especially in medieval scholastic authors with an analytical disposition, interpretations of some passages in the Bible reveal many other aspects of the application of logic; we can find it especially in their reasonings presented in such texts. The proposed project aims to start filling this gap, in the first step, focusing on reasoning.

An example of a text which presents a reasoning which is very interesting from a logical point of view, is the question 103 on the blessing given by Isaac to Jacob, written by Stephen Langton, a theologian of the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. This author – still little known by today’s philosophers and theologians, and extremely insightful and respected among his contemporaries – in order to explain the “mechanism” of this blessing, presented reasonings referring to a subtle semiotic theory, formulating the rules and conditions for the effectiveness of the blessing. Moreover, on the basis of this issue, it is possible to reconstruct the reasoning and logical rules governing them at two levels, namely: reasoning governing Langton’s exegesis itself, and also – in the light of its interpretation – the reasoning that Isaac conducted before he decided to give his blessing. Still other interesting reasonings can be found in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. For example, in the passages of *Summa theologiae*, in which he interprets quotes taken from the Bible, one can find non-classical (e.g. non-monotonic) reasoning. However, there are also other analytically oriented 13th-century theologians who presented interesting reasonings within biblical exegesis, like Robert Grosseteste, Albert the Great and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio.

The aim of the project is to examine the nature of reasoning in biblical exegesis in the period from the end of the 12th century to mid-13th century, focusing on various aspects of reasonings present in exegetical texts of selected thinkers presented above, representing successive generations of theologians. There will be tested the following general hypotheses: 1) biblical exegesis of the analytically oriented theologians of above-mentioned period contain various reasonings which reveal their mastery of logic and methodological awareness; 2) using logically perfect reasonings in biblical exegesis significantly changes its status, making it to some extent “scientific”.

The project therefore assumes pointing out the basic logical aspects of biblical exegesis. Despite the limited scope, it will enable the identification of the main research directions that can be used in analyses of works by other authors. Finally, conclusions regarding reasoning in biblical exegesis will be useful in contemporary discussions on the rationality of faith and the relationship between logic and religion.