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## St. Thomas on Devotion and Contemplation

O relacji między pobożnością a kontemplacją  
w pismach św. Tomasza z Akwinu

**ABSTRACT:** The article aims to explore the interconnectedness of contemplation and devotion according to the theological insights of St. Thomas Aquinas. Central to this exploration is the dynamic relationship between the intellect and the affections (*affectus*). The first section of the article notes that while Thomas's understanding of contemplation is fundamentally intellectual, he emphasizes the role of the affections as its motive cause. The second section presents the reciprocal interaction between devotion – one such motive cause – on the one hand, and meditation and contemplation, on the other hand, which interaction instantiates the dynamics of reciprocal interaction between intellect and will. The third section first deals with the disruptive effect of sin on devotion which, as an act of the virtue or religion pertaining to the will, orients towards final beatitude. It then demonstrates that the power of Christ's Passion, communicated through faith and the sacraments, is the remedy for this disorder. The conclusion summarises the main findings, relating them to Thomas's celebrated experience during Mass at the Chapel of St. Nicholas, Naples, on 6 December 1273, and pointing to the significant role that the Eucharist plays in cultivating both devotion and contemplation.

**KEY WORDS:** devotion, contemplation, meditation, intellect, will, affections, Thomas Aquinas, Eucharist

**ABSTRAKT:** Celem artykułu jest analiza wzajemnych powiązań między kontemplacją a pobożnością w teologicznej myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu. Centralnym punktem tej analizy jest dynamiczna relacja między intelektem a uczuciami (*affectus*). W pierwszej części artykułu zauważono, że chociaż kontemplacja w pismach św. Tomasza ma charakter zasadniczo intelektualny, to podkreśla on rolę uczuć jako przyczyny motywującej. W drugiej części przedstawiono zagadnienie pobożności i szczegółowo omówiono relację między pobożnością (jedną z przyczyn motywujących) a medytacją i kontemplacją jako przykład dynamiki wzajemnego oddziaływanego między intelektem a wolą. W trzeciej części najpierw omówiono destrukcyjny wpływ grzechu na pobożność, która jako akt cnoty lub religijności związany z wolą, ukierunkowuje

na ostateczne szczęście, a następnie wskazano, że według św. Tomasza lekarstwem na ten destrukcyjny wpływ jest przekazana poprzez wiarę i sakramenty moc Męki Chrystusa. W podsumowaniu główne wnioski z przeprowadzonej analizy zostały przedstawione na tle słynnego doświadczenia św. Tomasza podczas Mszy Świętej w kaplicy św. Mikołaja w Neapolu 6 grudnia 1273 r.; wskazano także na znaczącą rolę Eucharystii w kultywowaniu zarówno pobożności, jak i kontemplacji.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** pobożność, kontemplacja, medytacja, intelekt, wola, uczucia, Tomasz z Akwinu, Eucharystia

William of Tocca in his biography of St. Thomas reports that every day Thomas read a passage of John Cassian's *Conferences*.<sup>1</sup> In order to do so Thomas set aside his contemplation (*speculatio*), that is to say, his consideration of universal and necessary things.<sup>2</sup> When asked why he sometimes forsook this contemplation (*speculatio*) in order to read Cassian's *Conferences* Thomas replied: "In this reading I nourish my devotion. On the basis of this devotion I rise up more easily into contemplation. Affection (*affectio*) thus pours forth into devotion

<sup>1</sup> Angelicus Ferrua, ed., *S. Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae* (Alba: Edizioni Domenicane, 1968), 64.

<sup>2</sup> See Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 49, a. 6, ad 2, accessed July 27, 2024, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.I-II> (hereafter: *STh*). *Speculatio*, Thomas notes, "would seem to be reducible to meditation (*meditatio*)" (*STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 3, ad 2). In equating *speculatio* and *meditatio* Thomas draws upon a gloss of Augustine who writes that the word *speculatio* is derived from *speculum* (mirror). *Speculatio* is thus likened to seeing in a mirror. Thomas adds that to see something in a mirror is "to see a cause in its effect wherein its likeness is reflected" (*STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 3). The effect wherein the likeness of something is reflected is predicated upon the fact of man's hylomorphic constitution, that is to say, the fact that he is constituted as a psychosomatic unity. As a result, he perceives a simple truth at the term of a process which has its point of departure in various premises. As Jan Aertsen states the point, "The way of reason, which is grounded in man's mode of being, is a *discursion from something towards something*, is a movement and therefore has a succession, also in a temporal sense" (Jan Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988], 191). *Speculatio*, which according to Thomas can be reduced to meditation, is concerned with deducing from principles the truth that is sought, which deduction is a necessary prelude to "the contemplation itself of the truth" (*ipsa contemplatio veritatis* [Ferrua, *S. Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae*, 64]). The reception of principles furnishes the starting-point from which a man sets forth on the path towards the contemplation of truth. Since the reception of these principles and the deduction that unfolds based on them receive their completion in the contemplation of the truth, the contemplative life as it is pertains to man – which includes these two acts – derives its unity from contemplation of the truth. The vocabulary that we encounter in William of Tocca's biography of Thomas thus places us firmly within the context of what Thomas understands by contemplation as it applies to man as a psychosomatic being.

and by the merit of this devotion intelligence ascends to greater heights.”<sup>3</sup> In this regard Thomas followed the example of Saint Dominic who, by frequently reading the *Conferences*, attained the heights of perfection. Devotion – which according to Thomas “is a special act of the will”<sup>4</sup> – by moving the intellect thus cultivates the contemplative life since “the contemplative life, as regards the essence of the action, pertains to the intellect.”<sup>5</sup> As Thomas writes in the *sed contra* of the first article devoted to the contemplative life, this life has “something to do with the affective or appetitive power.”<sup>6</sup> By the same token, the intrinsic cause of devotion on the part of man is meditation or contemplation (*meditatio seu contemplatio*).<sup>7</sup> Thomas’s exegesis of Ps 38:4 at *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, makes the same point as follows: “It is written (Ps. xxxviii. 4): *In my meditation a fire shall flame out*. But spiritual fire causes devotion. Therefore meditation is the cause of devotion.”

In brief devotion causes contemplation while contemplation – and meditation, which is included within contemplation as one of its acts – causes devotion. A dynamic reciprocity thus characterizes the relationship between devotion and contemplation. This relationship in effect furnishes a particular instance of the relationship of dynamic mutual interaction that obtains, according to Thomas, between the intellect and the will. This article therefore turns in the first instance to this more general relationship between the intellect and the will in order to elaborate further the interinvolvement of intellect and will before turning to the specific instance of the mutual causal influence that contemplation and devotion exercise on each other.

## The Affective Aspect of the Contemplative Life

The principle object of contemplation is the divine truth since “this contemplation is the end of the whole human life,”<sup>8</sup> a point that Thomas establishes in the treatise on beatitude that prefaces his treatment of the moral life in the *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. The final article of the third question, which is concerned with the nature of happiness or beatitude (*beatitudo*), argues

<sup>3</sup> Ferrua, *S. Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae*, 64: “Ego in hac lectione devotionem colligo, ex qua facilius in speculationem consurgo, ut sic affectus habeat, unde se in devotionem diffundat, et intellectus ex huius merito ad altiora condescendat.” My translation.

<sup>4</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1, *sed contra*.

<sup>7</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

<sup>8</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

that “Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence.”<sup>9</sup> Two considerations support this contention: firstly, man cannot be perfectly happy so long as there remains something for him to seek and desire; secondly, the perfection of any particular power depends on the nature of its object. In order to explicate the point that only vision of the Divine Essence can afford us final and perfect happiness, Thomas begins with the second consideration, namely that the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object which, in the case of the intellect, is “*what a thing is (quod quid est)*, i.e. the essence of a thing.”<sup>10</sup> It follows therefore that the intellect is perfected inasmuch as it knows that essence of a thing. In this life however the human intellect, on the basis of its knowledge of created effects, can know no more about God than the simple fact of His existence. It still does not know the Essence of the First Cause, namely God, and so is not yet perfectly happy. Perfect happiness or beatitude requires that the intellect attain to the very Essence of the First Cause. Thus, concludes Thomas, “it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man’s happiness consists.”<sup>11</sup>

In his discussion of the contemplative life Thomas expresses this conclusion in these words: “[C]ontemplation will be perfect in the life to come, when we shall see God face to face, wherefore it will make us perfectly happy.”<sup>12</sup> In our present condition as *viatores* however our contemplation of the divine truth is necessarily imperfect for we see in a mirror (*per speculum*) and obscurely (*in aenigmate*), as Thomas explains referring 1 Cor 13:12.<sup>13</sup> In other words we are constrained in this life to contemplate God, the First Cause, by means of His created effects. As Thomas writes in his commentary on First Corinthians,

every creature is for us like a certain mirror (*tota creatura est nobis sicut speculum quoddam*); because from the order and goodness and magnitude which are caused in things by God, we come to a knowledge of His divine wisdom, goodness and eminence. And this knowledge is called seeing in a mirror (*visio in speculo*).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>10</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Super I ad Corinthios* c. 13, l. 4 [800], accessed July 27, 2024, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~1Cor.C13.L4.n800.4> (hereafter: *Ad I Cor.*). Translation slightly amended. Thomas’s commentary is based on the *reportatio* of Reginald of Piperno.

Inasmuch as we know the invisible things of God we are said to see in a mirror, while insofar these invisible things remain hidden or are secrets to us “we see in an enigma” (*videmus in aenigmate*),<sup>15</sup> that is to say, we see darkly. This obscure *speculatio* affords us “a certain inchoate beatitude,”<sup>16</sup> which begins in this world and will receive its completion in the next. Thus, as Thomas writes in the *De Malo*, “as a created good is a certain likeness and participation of the uncreated good, so the attainment of a created good is a certain likeness of true beatitude.”<sup>17</sup> By contemplating created goods, the finite effects of the First Cause, we are led by the hand (*manuducimur*) as it were to the contemplation of God.<sup>18</sup> Rom 1:20 provides Scriptural warrant for this notion: “The invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”<sup>19</sup> The contemplation of the effects of God’s creative causality thus pertains in a secondary way to the contemplative life inasmuch as it leads man to the knowledge of God. Contemplation of truths apart from the divine truth perfect the intellect in relation to the divine truth, which constitutes the ultimate perfection of the intellect.<sup>20</sup>

Having established that the object of contemplation is truth – ultimately divine truth – we now turn to the subject of contemplation. The contemplative, Thomas not surprisingly tells us, is chiefly concerned with “the contemplation of truth.”<sup>21</sup> To be more precise he ‘intends’ the truth. As such he can be said to move towards the truth since the word ‘intention’ (*intentio*) means “to tend to something” (*in aliquid tendere*).<sup>22</sup> Thomas argues however that intention is

<sup>15</sup> *Ad I Cor.*, c. 13, l. 4 [801].

<sup>16</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo* q. 5, a. 1, ad 5, accessed July 27, 2024, <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html>. My translation. Giacomo Samek Lodovici writes that “every finite good is a symbolic anticipation of the infinite good” (Giacomo Samek Lodovici, *La felicità del bene: una rilettura di Tommaso d’Aquino* [Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2007], 107). My translation.

<sup>18</sup> Peter M. Candler Jr. rightly underscores the notion of participation in this regard. See Peter M. Candler Jr., *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 111: “Thomas explicitly links beatitude with the activity of contemplation as the *ductus* which leads us unto beatitude. Though the beatitude of God in which we participate through contemplation in the present life is an imperfect one, ‘Nevertheless it *is* a participation of happiness [*beatitudo*]: and so much the greater, as the operation can be more continuous and more one’ (*STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4). Emphasis added by Candler.

<sup>19</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

<sup>20</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4, ad 4.

<sup>21</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 12, a. 1. See Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 350: “What strives after an end must be in some way determined to it. Otherwise there would be no reason why the agent

properly speaking an act of the will. He explains that when one thing acts on another, “both the action of the mover and the movement of thing moved, tend to something.”<sup>23</sup> The fact that the movement of the thing moved tends to something is grounded in the causal action of the mover. Intention therefore belongs, Thomas argues, “first and principally to that which moves to the end: hence we say that an architect or anyone who is in authority, by his command moves others to that which he intends.”<sup>24</sup> The will however moves all the other powers of the soul to their respective ends and so intention properly speaking “is an act of the will.”<sup>25</sup> The acts of these other powers of the soul, including the act of the intellect, constitute particular ends which are included in the universal end, which pertains to the will.<sup>26</sup> Thus, writes Thomas, “The will

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would tend towards just this rather than some other terminus. That determination must proceed from the intention of the end. The end can only motivate the agent if it already pre-exists in the agent. This presence cannot be, however, according to the natural mode of being of the end; for then the agent would already possess the intended [sic], and the movement would come to rest. The end must be present in what strives as *intentio*, that is, as “intelligible species.” This representation is the essence of knowledge. The determination of the agent must be through an intellect that determines the end for the action. An end can only be intended when the end as end is known, together with the means to it.” See also Michael S. Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 199. Sherwin writes that Thomas is clear in his mature work that “the will does not order anything directly” (Sherwin, 199). Quoting *STh* I-II, q. 12, 1, ad 3 (“The will does not ordain, but tends to something according to the order of reason. Consequently this word *intention* indicates an act of the will, presupposing the act whereby the reason orders something to the end”), Sherwin continues: “The will acts as the efficient cause of the act, but as ordered to its end by reason. Hence, although the goodness of the will’s exterior act is the form of the exterior act, properly speaking this form, as a principle of right order and proper measure, exists in the intellect” (Sherwin, 199).

<sup>23</sup> Sherwin, 199.

<sup>24</sup> Sherwin, 199.

<sup>25</sup> Sherwin, 199.

<sup>26</sup> See *STh* I-II, q. 9, a. 1: “Now good in general, which has the nature of an end, is the object of the will. Consequently, in this respect, the will moves the other powers of the soul to their acts, for we make use of the other powers when we will. For the end and perfection of every other power, is included under the object of the will as some particular good: and always the art or power to which the universal end belongs, moves to their acts the arts or powers to which belong the particular ends included in the universal end.” See also *STh* I, q. 82, a. 4: “Now the object of the will is good and the end in general, and each power is directed to some suitable good proper to it, as sight is directed to the perception of color, and the intellect to the knowledge of truth. Therefore the will as agent moves all the powers of the soul to their respective acts, except the natural powers of the vegetative part, which are not subject to our will.”

moves the intellect as to the exercise of its act; since even the true itself which is the perfection of the intellect, is included in the universal good, as a particular good.<sup>27</sup> Viewed in the light of these considerations it becomes clear that the contemplative life pertains to the intellect insofar as the essence of its action is concerned. It belongs to the will however to move the intellect to the exercise of this action.<sup>28</sup>

It is precisely this motive force of the will that is crucial to a correct understanding of contemplation as Thomas understands it. As he progresses his argument concerning the role of affectivity in the contemplative life, he notes that the appetitive power moves one to observe either sensibly or intellectually. Sometimes it is love (*amor*) of the thing seen that moves one, a fact that Matt 6:21 communicates: “[W]here thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.”<sup>29</sup> Sometimes the motive force is “love (*amor*) of the very knowledge that one acquires by observation.”<sup>30</sup> It is “love of God” (*caritas Dei*) as seen – obviously *per speculum* and *in aenigmate* – and as affording us “a certain inchoate beatitude,”<sup>31</sup> that constitutes the contemplative life, a point that Thomas makes by way of appeal to the authority of Gregory the Great. Elsewhere, in his treatment of the beatitudes, Thomas writes that “contemplative happiness (*beatitudo*), if perfect, is the very essence of future beatitude, and, if imperfect, is a certain beginning thereof.”<sup>32</sup>

Yet while *caritas Dei* constitutes the contemplative life, it remains that “The beatitude of an intellectual nature consists in an act of the intellect.”<sup>33</sup> In this regard we must remind ourselves that charity perfects the will, which moves the other powers of the soul, including the intellect, to their particular ends. When the will delights in the intellect’s grasp of its object, there arises the experience of beauty – for the beautiful, Thomas tells us, is that the apprehension of which gives pleasure (*pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet*).<sup>34</sup> Thomas argues that the beautiful and the good are in fact identical,

<sup>27</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 9, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>28</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1.

<sup>29</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 4.

<sup>32</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 69, a. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *STh* I, q. 26, a. 3.

<sup>34</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3. See also *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1: “Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally (*in subiecto quidem sunt idem*); for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty. But they differ logically (*ratione differunt*), for goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire); and therefore it has the aspect of an end (the appetite being

the difference between them being a logical one: while the essence of the good consists in the fact that it calms the appetite, the essence of a beautiful thing consists in the appetite's being calmed by the vision or knowledge of it. Beauty in effect "adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty: so that *good* means that which simply pleases the appetite,"<sup>35</sup> while the pleasure that attends apprehension is what gives rise to the experience of the beautiful.<sup>36</sup> The will, strengthened by charity, in effect moves the intellect to contemplate the divine truth, in which it then delights. The contemplative life begins on the basis of the motive force of charity and it "terminates in delight, which is seated in the affective power (*in affectu*)."<sup>37</sup>

In summary, therefore, the essence of contemplation pertains to the intellect, while the affections (*affectus*) furnish the motive cause – whence "the love of God and our neighbor (*dilectio Dei et proximi*) is requisite to the contemplative life."<sup>38</sup> Motive causes, it ought to be emphasized, do not however enter into the essence of any reality but rather dispose and perfect it. The next section turns to one such motive cause that disposes and perfects the contemplative life, namely devotion, the first of the interior acts of the virtue of religion. As readiness to give oneself to the things of God, it constitutes a special act of the will. Its intrinsic cause on our part however is meditation or contemplation. As has been shown, the essence of the meditative or contemplative act pertains to the intellect. There thus obtains a dynamic interinvolvement between the contemplative act and devotion, an interinvolvement that constitutes a particular instantiation of the general dynamic reciprocal interaction that characterizes

a kind of movement towards a thing). On the other hand, beauty relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen (*[p]ulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam, pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent*).

<sup>35</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>36</sup> For a brief treatment of goodness and beauty, see Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *Thomas Aquinas and Contemplation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 64–66. The author concludes that "given the fact that beauty is a perichoresis of truth and goodness (as the quotation from *STh* I-II, q. 27, a. 1 makes clear) and contemplation comes to fruition in both knowing and loving truth, it stands to reason to suggest that things of beauty are themselves an excellent medium for contemplation. Given the brevity of the remarks Aquinas dedicates to the topic of beauty, this must remain a somewhat tentative suggestion" (Van Nieuwenhove, *Thomas Aquinas*, 65). For book-length treatments of Thomas's aesthetics, see Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Christopher Scott Sevier, *Aquinas on Beauty* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); and, Miriam Savarese, *La nozione trascendentale di bello in Tommaso d'Aquino* (Rome: EDUSC, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 180, a. 2, ad 1.

the relationship between the intellect and the will. Devotion, as an interior act of religion, cannot however be considered apart from the reality of sin, which disrupts man's ordering to God as his unfailing principle and ultimate end; neither can it be considered apart from the restorative power of the grace of Christ.

## The Intellectual/Rational Cause of Devotion

Devotion, as already intimated, constitutes an interior act of the virtue of religion, to which it belongs "to show reverence to one God under one aspect, namely, as the first principle of the creation and government of things."<sup>39</sup> Religion is in turn what Thomas refers to as a virtue annexed to justice, which is defined as "a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will"<sup>40</sup> and which has the will as its subject.<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting that in his discussion of whether justice is in the will as its subject, the intimate relationship of reason to justice is highlighted in response to an objection that since justice is sometimes called truth and since truth does not reside in the will but rather in the intellect, neither does justice have the will as its subject. In his reply Thomas points out that the will is a rational appetite. Consequently, "when the rectitude of the reason which is called truth is imprinted on the will on account of its nighness to the reason, this imprint retains the name of truth; and hence it is that justice sometimes goes by the name of truth."<sup>42</sup>

As a virtue annexed to justice, religion has something in common with it while at the same time it falls short of the perfection of justice. The essential character of justice, as already noted, "consists in rendering to another his due according to equality."<sup>43</sup> While what man renders to God is due, however, it is not and cannot be equal, "as though man rendered to God as much as he owes Him."<sup>44</sup> Religion, which "consists in offering service and ceremonial rites or

<sup>39</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 3. At *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 3, ad 1, Thomas states this point in Trinitarian terms: "The three Divine Persons are the one principle of the creation and government of things, wherefore they are served by one religion."

<sup>40</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 1. See also *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 11: "[T]he proper act of justice is nothing else than to render to each one his own."

<sup>41</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 4.

<sup>42</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 58, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>43</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 80.

<sup>44</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 80. Josef Pieper writes that "The fact that some debts are not or cannot be repaid is essential to the world's actual condition" (Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966], 104).

worship to *some superior nature that men call divine*<sup>45</sup> thus falls into the category of virtues that render his due to another but are nevertheless “unable to render the equal due.”<sup>46</sup> While it falls short of the perfection of justice, however, religion nevertheless “excels among the moral virtues.”<sup>47</sup> Its excellence is owed to the fact that “its actions are directly and immediately ordered to the honor of God.”<sup>48</sup> Matthew Levering captures the significance of Thomas’s position in these words: “The key to human excellence is right worship.”<sup>49</sup> The seeming inconsistency in maintaining at one and the same time that religion on the one hand falls short of the perfection of justice while on the other hand it is the most excellent of the moral virtues evaporates in the face of the idea that “Virtue is praised because of the will, not because of ability.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, Thomas continues, “if a man fall short of equality which is the mean of justice, through lack of ability, his virtue deserves no less praise, provided there be no failing on the part of his will.”<sup>51</sup>

It is in this context that devotion takes its place as characterizing those persons who subject themselves completely to God.<sup>52</sup> It is, it seems, nothing else than a certain will “to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God.”<sup>53</sup> Since this self-donation constitutes a special kind of act, devotion is to be considered as a special act of the will. One might nevertheless wonder how this can be so given that devotion “is common to various genera of acts, namely, corporal and spiritual acts: for a person is said to meditate devoutly and to genuflect devoutly.”<sup>54</sup> It cannot be denied that devotion is to be found in various genera of acts, as the two examples cited illustrate. It is found in these genera however not as species thereof but rather “as the motion of the mover is found virtually in the movements of the things moved.”<sup>55</sup> Thomas also points out that the mover communicates the mode of movement to whatever it moves. As an act of the will whereby a man offers himself readily to the service of God, the ultimate end, devotion accordingly imparts a particular mode to human acts – both to those acts that pertain to the will itself as concerned with the

<sup>45</sup> Pieper, 104.

<sup>46</sup> Pieper, 104.

<sup>47</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 6.

<sup>48</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 114.

<sup>50</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 6, ad 1.

<sup>51</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 6, ad 1.

<sup>52</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1, obj. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 2.

means to the end (*ea quae sunt ad finem*) and to those acts that pertain to the other powers of the soul as moved by the will.<sup>56</sup>

Notwithstanding the causality of the will both with respect to its own acts and with respect to the acts of the other powers of the soul, the intrinsic cause of devotion on our part is meditation or contemplation (*meditatio seu contemplatio*),<sup>57</sup> the essence of whose act, as has been stated, pertains to the intellect.<sup>58</sup> There obtains a dynamic reciprocity between the acts of contemplation and devotion, a reciprocity that constitutes a particular instantiation of the general interaction between intellect and will.<sup>59</sup> Thus on the one hand, in order to understand, the intellect must be moved by the will, and on the other hand the act of the will must be preceded by an act of the intellect since the idea of the appetible good is in the intellect, and so on. The mutual causal influence of these faculties does not however admit of an infinite regress. Thomas argues that “we must stop at the intellect as preceding the rest.”<sup>60</sup> He adds, pertinently, that “every movement of the will must be preceded by apprehension, whereas every apprehension is not preceded by an act of the will.”<sup>61</sup> The causality exercised by the intellect on the will must however not be construed as extrinsic to the will for according to the order of generation of the powers of the soul the will issues from the intellect and therefore shares in its nature.<sup>62</sup> The will, on account of its participation in the life of the intellect, is intrinsically characterized by intellectuality. As Michael S. Sherwin puts it: “The will is a rational appetite, and as such always acts from knowledge.”<sup>63</sup>

Devotion consists in an act of the will whereby a man readily surrenders himself to the service of God. As an act of the virtue of religion, the consideration

<sup>56</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1. See Odon Lottin, *L'âme du culte: la vertu de la religion d'après s. Thomas d'Aquin* (Abbaye du Mont-César, Louvain: Bureau des Œuvres Liturgiques, 1920), 25–26: “The will is in effect the mover of all moral activity. Oriented to God by the act of devotion, the will in turn makes all the acts of the other faculties which are subject to its motion converge to the same end.” My translation.

<sup>57</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Before dealing with the intrinsic cause of devotion on the part of human beings, Thomas notes that “The extrinsic and chief cause of devotion is God, of Whom Ambrose, commenting on Lk. ix. 55, says that *God calls whom He deigns to call, and whom He wills He makes religious: the profane Samaritans, had He so willed, He would have made devout.*”

<sup>59</sup> For an extended treatment of the interaction between the intellect and the will, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, *The Hermeneutics of Knowing and Willing in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Utrecht: Thomas Instituut; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 80–108, esp. 96–105.

<sup>60</sup> *STh* I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>61</sup> *STh* I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3. See also *STh* I-II, q. 9, a. 4.

<sup>62</sup> See *STh* I, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>63</sup> Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 20.

from which this act of will issues concerns the ultimate ground of reality, namely God as Creator of all that exists and as our ultimate beatitude; it also regards the reality of sin as destroying our ordering to God, and the recovery of this ordering on the basis of faith. As Thomas writes, religion properly denotes “a relation to God” since “it is He to Whom we ought to be bound as to our unfailing principle; to Whom also our choice should be resolutely directed as to our last end; and Whom we lose when we neglect Him by sin, and should recover by believing in Him and confessing our faith.”<sup>64</sup> The speculative reason is capable of discerning that God is our first unfailing principle and our final end, a fact evidenced by Thomas at *STh* I, q. 2, a. 3,<sup>65</sup> and at *STh* I-II, q. 2,<sup>66</sup> respectively. Man is ontologically absolutely dependent on God as His creature that He has brought into being out of nothing. The practical reason as the extension of the speculative reason translates the debt owed to God as our Creator and as our Ultimate Beatitude into those acts that manifest the virtue of religion.<sup>67</sup> These acts proportion a man to God on account of their being suitably ordered to Him in a becoming (*convenienter*) manner.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *STh* I, q. 81, a. 1. R. Jared Staudt writes: “The virtue of religion recognizes God’s absolute primacy over every created good and seeks to rightly order all things in subordination to him. The right ordering of religion arises as a matter of justice toward God, while also forming an aspirational goal of the Christian life to give him honor in all things, looking forward to the moment when Christ will be fully ‘all in all’ (Col 3:11)” (R. Jared Staudt, *The Primacy of God: The Virtue of Religion in Catholic Theology* [Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2021], 1).

<sup>65</sup> For a critical engagement with the Five Ways see, for example, C. J. F. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); and Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways* (London: Routledge / Kegan Paul, 1969). For an account of the general background to the *Five Ways* within the context of Thomas’s doctrine of being, see John R. Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: Collected Papers of Joseph Owens C.Ss.R.* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1980), 52–131.

<sup>66</sup> For a brief discussion of this point, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, “Transcending Gadamer: Towards a Participatory Hermeneutics,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 65, no. 4 (2012), 851–55.

<sup>67</sup> See *STh* I, q. 79, *sed contra*: “The speculative intellect by extension becomes practical.” On this point, see Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth: The Truth of All Things and Reality and the Good*, trans. Lothar Krauth and Stella Lange (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 141–44. “The concept of the practical reason,” writes Pieper, “necessarily includes and asserts the theoretical as well. The ‘basic faculty’ is the theoretical reason, which ‘extends’ to become the practical. The theoretical includes the practical, somewhat at the genus includes the distinct species. Only insofar as it is theoretical is the reason also practical. Prior to all action is the ‘theoretic’ perception of reality. *Intellectus speculativus fit practicus*, the theoretic reason ‘becomes’ practical. All that is practical is rooted in the theoretical and presupposes it” (Pieper, 143).

<sup>68</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 2.

This ordering is possible however only in one who is not affected by mortal sin, which “destroys the principle of the order whereby man’s will is subject to God.”<sup>69</sup> The disorder entailed by mortal sin, while in itself irreparable, can nevertheless be restored by the power of God because “disorders in things referred to the end, are repaired through the end, even as an error about conclusions can be repaired through the truth of the principles.”<sup>70</sup> One can express this point in terms of grace, as indeed Thomas does: “Now everlasting life is an end exceeding the proportion of human nature . . . Hence man, by his natural endowments, cannot produce meritorious works proportionate to everlasting life; and for this a higher force is needed, viz. the force of grace. And thus without grace man cannot merit everlasting life.”<sup>71</sup> With the help of grace, which resides in the essence of the soul,<sup>72</sup> a man can however avoid all mortal sin.<sup>73</sup> Faith as an infused virtue is derived from and ordained to the light of grace.<sup>74</sup>

Consideration of God as the First Efficient Cause of all that exists and as the Final End of all things is in effect “the consideration of God’s goodness and loving kindness,”<sup>75</sup> as Thomas puts it in his discussion of whether meditation or contemplation is the cause of devotion. In a question devoted to the

<sup>69</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 3. In contrast, sometimes “the sinner’s will is directed to a thing containing a certain inordinate, but which is not contrary to the love of God and one’s neighbor, e.g., an idle word, excessive laughter, and so forth: and such sins are venial by reason of their genus.” Steven J. Jensen explains that although venial sins are not directed virtually to the divine good, they are nevertheless directed habitually to the divine good in the case of one who is in a state of grace. See Steven J. Jensen, *Sin: A Thomistic Psychology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 26.

<sup>70</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 88, a. 1. For an argument in favour of the notion that there can be one ultimate end only, the position espoused by Thomas, see Jensen, *Sin: A Thomistic Psychology*, 15–40.

<sup>71</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 5.

<sup>72</sup> See *STh* I-II, q. 111, aa. 3 and 4.

<sup>73</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 8. Notwithstanding this point, for Thomas, as Rude te Velde notes, “the primary motive of grace does not lie in the restoration of the defect in human nature as a consequence of sin. Even if the Fall had not happened, grace would still be necessary for man to attain his ultimate end, which consists in the union of man with God (*coniunctio ad Deum*)” (Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The ‘Divine Science’ of the Summa Theologiae* [Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2006], 151).

<sup>74</sup> See *STh* I-II, q. 111, a. 3: “[E]ven as the natural light of reason is something besides the acquired virtues, which are ordained to this natural light, so also the light of grace which is a participation of the Divine Nature is something besides the infused virtues which are derived from and are ordained to this light, hence the Apostle says (Eph. V. 8): *For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light.* For as the acquired virtues enable a man to walk, in accordance with the natural light of reason, so do the infused virtues enable a man to walk as befits the light of grace.”

<sup>75</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

goodness of God, Thomas argues that “since God is the first effective cause of all things, it is manifest that the aspect of good and of desirableness belong to Him.”<sup>76</sup> Thomas approvingly quotes *De Divinis Nominibus* of the Pseudo-Dionysius in this regard: “Dionysius (*Div. Nom.* iv) attributes good to God as to the first efficient cause, saying that, God is called good *as by Whom all things subsist*.”<sup>77</sup> Goodness is, however, also that which “all things desire”<sup>78</sup> and this belongs preeminently to God.<sup>79</sup> Here we witness the Neoplatonic principle according to which, in the words of Fran O'Rourke, “every effect is converted to the cause from which it proceeds”<sup>80</sup> since the good of an effect derives from its cause. An effect thus seeks its cause as its own good. In this regard Thomas writes that “the agent itself is desirable and has the nature of good. For the very thing which is desirable in it is the participation of its likeness.”<sup>81</sup> All created things thus receive their goodness from “the divine goodness, as from the first exemplary effective and final principle of all goodness.”<sup>82</sup> In other words, “God’s will is the cause of all things”<sup>83</sup> and, as such, wills some good to them all. Since to will good to something is to love it, it follows that “God loves everything that exists.”<sup>84</sup>

According to Thomas, consideration of God’s goodness and loving kindness wakens *dilectio*, the interior act of charity, “which is the proximate cause of devotion.”<sup>85</sup> While things concerning the Godhead are “in themselves, the strongest incentive to love (*dilectio*) and consequently to devotion, because God is supremely lovable,”<sup>86</sup> the weakness of the human mind means that it requires to be guided (*manuduci*) by means of certain sensible things both with regard to knowledge and to the love (*dilectio*) of Divine things.<sup>87</sup> Christ’s humanity is

<sup>76</sup> *STh* I, q. 6, a. 1.

<sup>77</sup> *STh* I, q. 6, a. 1.

<sup>78</sup> *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4.

<sup>79</sup> See *STh* I, q. 6, a. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 32 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 235.

<sup>81</sup> *STh* I, q. 6, a. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *STh* I, q. 6, a. 4.

<sup>83</sup> *STh* I, q. 20, a. 2.

<sup>84</sup> *STh* I, q. 20, a. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

<sup>86</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>87</sup> This fact is predicated on man’s hylomorphic constitution. As Jan Aertsen puts it, “As incarnated mind, he is dependent upon sense experience” (Aertsen, *Nature and Creature*, 194). Thomas, however, is not at all straightforwardly Aristotelian in his account of human cognition. See *STh* I, q. 84, a. 4, ad 1: “The intelligible species which are participated by our intellect are reduced, as to their first cause, to a first principle which is by its essence

chief among these things as the Preface for Christmastide makes clear when it prays “that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible.”<sup>88</sup> The reference here is to the hypostatic union, that is to say, the doctrine that “the Person of Christ subsists in two natures.”<sup>89</sup> This doctrine entails that in beholding the man Jesus, we at the same time behold God since by virtue of the hypostatic union “human nature is assumed so as to be in the Person of the Son of God.”<sup>90</sup> It is precisely on account of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, that is to say, “through knowing God visibly”<sup>91</sup> that we been able to come to know God as a Trinity of Persons and it is thanks to meditation on the Word’s assumption of human nature that we have been “be caught up to the love of things invisible.”<sup>92</sup> The fact of the incarnation brings us to the second consideration concerning meditation as the cause of devotion, namely that of “man’s own shortcomings (*defectus*) on account of which he needs to lean on God.”<sup>93</sup>

Examination of the relevant texts shows that the *defectus* that characterize the human condition in its fallen state are twofold, namely bodily and spiritual. Bodily *defectus* include death<sup>94</sup> as well as hunger and thirst.<sup>95</sup> With regard to the *defectus* of the soul, these include such things as sin;<sup>96</sup> the *fomes* of sin, that is to say, “an inclination of the sensual appetite to what is contrary to reason”;<sup>97</sup>

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intelligible – namely, God. But they proceed from that principle by means of the sensible forms and material things, from which we gather knowledge, as Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* vii).” Here we witness an original synthesis of Platonism and Aristotelianism. For a discussion of this point, see Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo San Tommaso d’Aquino* (Segni: Editrice del Verbo Incarnato, 2005), 325–47. In brief, they are brought together into a living unity on the basis of their mutual complementarity (“vengono fatti convivere insieme secondo una mutua complementarietà,” Fabro, 342).

<sup>88</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>89</sup> *STh* III, q. 2, a. 4.

<sup>90</sup> *STh* III, q. 2, a. 10. For a discussion of Thomas’s treatment of the hypostatic union, see Joseph P. Wawrykow, “Hypostatic Union,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 222–51.

<sup>91</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>92</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>93</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

<sup>94</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 164, a. 1; II-II, q. 164, a. 1, ad 1; II-II, q. 164, a. 1, ad 4; II-II, q. 164, a. 1, ad 5; III, q. 14, a. 1; III, q. 14, a. 2; III, q. 14, a. 3, ad 2; III, q. 14, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>95</sup> *STh* III, q. 14, a. 1.

<sup>96</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 1.

<sup>97</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 2.

ignorance,<sup>98</sup> passibility,<sup>99</sup> sensible pain,<sup>100</sup> sorrow,<sup>101</sup> fear,<sup>102</sup> wonder,<sup>103</sup> and anger.<sup>104</sup> Natural reason tells us that we are subject to a higher being, namely God, on account of these *defectus* and that we need help and direction from Him.<sup>105</sup> The *defectus* of sin is of particular relevance in the context of the virtue of religion since, as we have seen, we lose God “when we neglect Him by sin.”<sup>106</sup> In other words, the principle of order whereby our will is subject to God is destroyed by mortal sin, as already intimated.<sup>107</sup> This disorder occasioned by mortal sin can and indeed has been restored by the power of God by virtue of Christ’s Passion, which is “the proper cause of the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>108</sup> By extension the debt of punishment incurred on account of sin has been abolished and Christ has opened the gate of heaven by His Passion.<sup>109</sup>

According to Thomas, devotion is caused in a secondary way by the consideration of one’s own *defectus*, for “this consideration regards the term from which man withdraws by the movement of his devout will, in that he trusts

<sup>98</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 3.

<sup>99</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 4.

<sup>100</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 5.

<sup>101</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 6.

<sup>102</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 7.

<sup>103</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 8.

<sup>104</sup> *STh* III, q. 15, a. 9.

<sup>105</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

<sup>106</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 1.

<sup>107</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 3.

<sup>108</sup> *STh* III, q. 49, a. 1. For a treatment of Christ’s Passion and death on the Cross as an act of religion, see R. Jared Staudt, “Did Christ Worship the Trinity?” *The Thomist* 76, no. 2 (2012), 233–72, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.2012.0026>. On the relationship between sin and the virtue of religion, see R. Jared Staudt, “Sin as an Offence against God: Aquinas on the Relation of Sin and Religion,” *Nova et Vetera: English Edition* 9, no. 1 (2011), 195–207. Staudt explains that Thomas “lays out the foundations for sin as a personal offence by recognizing the fundamental need to honor God through particular religious actions and through a general obedience to his moral law. Failure to do so is an irreligious act, even of idolatry. In fact, Aquinas recognizes idolatry as the origin of all sin, which characterizes in sin in its contempt for God. In sin one turns away from God and toward a created good. This is the essence of idolatry and also the essence of sin” (Staudt, “Sin as an Offence against God,” 196).

<sup>109</sup> See *STh* III, q. 49, aa. 3 and 5. As Rik Van Nieuwenhove writes, Thomas “describes sin in terms of a sickness of the soul whereby the sinner loses her proper focus in life,” while “our incorporation in Christ through faith and charity radically transforms us, heals the soul, and allows us to begin to share the trinitarian life” (Rik Van Nieuwenhove, “Bearing the Marks of Christ’s Passion: Aquinas’ Soteriology,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005], 296).

not in himself, but subjects himself to God.”<sup>110</sup> Consideration of one’s own sin, which gives rise to sorrow (*tristitia*), is a particular case in point. This sorrow is good inasmuch as “it denotes perception and rejection of evil.”<sup>111</sup> Inasmuch as sorrow is due to a right judgment of reason and a well-disposed will that detests the evil, sorrow is a virtuous good.<sup>112</sup> This sorrow, which is “according to God”<sup>113</sup> is the secondary and accidental effect of devotion. It leads moreover to salvation, “i.e., eternal salvation, which is a steadfast salvation belonging to the blessed,” Thomas tells us in his commentary on 2 Cor 7:10.<sup>114</sup> It is precisely this virtuous good that is in question with respect to consideration of Christ’s Passion. As Thomas tells us, “In the consideration of Christ’s Passion there is something that causes sorrow, namely, the human defect, the removal of which made it necessary for Christ to suffer [Luke 24:25].”<sup>115</sup> This sorrow, occasioned in effect by contemplation, is a participation in Christ’s Passion and in effect imparts a cruciform dynamic to devotion.

While consideration of one’s *defectus* gives rise to devotion that has sorrow as its secondary and accidental effect, its first and direct effect is joy (*delectatio*). This accidental joy (*per accidens laetitia*)<sup>116</sup> arises on account of the “hope of Divine assistance,”<sup>117</sup> Whose Passion has brought about our salvation efficiently. The salvific effect of Christ’s Passion is communicated to us by faith and the sacraments of faith: “Christ’s Passion, although corporeal, has yet a spiritual effect from the Godhead united: and therefore it secures its efficacy by spiritual contact – namely, by faith and the sacraments of faith, as the Apostle says (Rom 3:25): *Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.*”<sup>118</sup> Going beyond what Thomas writes, one could say that the Sacraments, acts of religion whereby God is worshiped, both call forth the devotion of believers

<sup>110</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 82, aa. 3 and 4. On the threefold subjection of human nature to God, see *STh* III, q. 20, a. 1.

<sup>111</sup> *STh* I-II, q. 39, a. 2. See also I-II, q. 39, a. 1.

<sup>112</sup> See *STh* I-II, q. 39, a. 2. Sorrow ought of course be proportionate to the evil which gives rise to it in order to be virtuous. In this regard, Thomas writes: “All the passions of the soul should be regulated according to the rule of reason, which is the root of the virtuous good; but excessive sorrow, of which Augustine is speaking, oversteps this rule, and therefore it fails to be a virtuous good.”

<sup>113</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 4. The reference is to 2 Cor 7:10.

<sup>114</sup> See Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. Fabian Larcher, accessed July 27, 2024, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~2Cor.C7.L3.n268>.

<sup>115</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>116</sup> The words *delectatio* and *laetitia* are used synonymously in this article.

<sup>117</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 4.

<sup>118</sup> *STh* III, q. 49, a. 6, ad 2.

as they contemplate the realities that are celebrated, while this contemplation of the realities celebrated serves to enkindle further devotion. Preeminent in this regard is the Eucharist, to which greater devotion is owed than to the other Sacraments since “the entire Christ is contained therein.”<sup>119</sup> Moreover, Thomas adds, “this sacrament requires a more general devotion, i.e., on the part of the whole people, since for them it is offered; and not merely on the part of the recipients, as in the other sacraments.”<sup>120</sup>

## Conclusion

Our considerations in this article have focused on Thomas’s account of contemplation and of devotion as instantiations of acts of the intellect and of the will respectively; the essence of contemplation pertaining to the intellect and its motive force to the will. While Thomas does not refer explicitly to devotion in this regard, it ought to be pointed out that neither does he refer to any other specific affection. What he does say however is completely consonant with allowing for devotion as a motive force. Devotion, after all, concerns the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service or worship (*obsequium*) of God,<sup>121</sup> and contemplation of God is arguably an act of worship – or, more precisely, can be rendered an act of worship when commanded by the virtue of religion.<sup>122</sup>

The reverse dynamic, namely contemplation as a cause of devotion is dealt with explicitly by Thomas: consideration of God’s goodness and loving kindness awakens *dilectio*, which is “the proximate cause of devotion.”<sup>123</sup> Thus the good apprehended by the intellect by virtue of meditation or contemplation moves the will to devotion, while acts of devotion in turn move the intellect to deeper contemplation. The report in William of Tocca’s biography of St. Thomas, regardless of whether or not it is historically accurate, in effect communicates the essence of Thomas’s considerations concerning the influence of affectivity on the life of the intellect: *affectio* “pours forth into devotion and by the merit of this devotion intelligence ascends to greater heights.”<sup>124</sup> Thomas himself writes explicitly about meditation or contemplation as the cause of devotion. Thomas’s

<sup>119</sup> *STh* III, q. 83, a. 4, ad 5.

<sup>120</sup> *STh* III, q. 83, a. 4, ad 5.

<sup>121</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1.

<sup>122</sup> See *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>123</sup> *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Ferrua, *S. Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipuae*, 64. My translation.

own testimony, both direct and indirect, thus points to the interaction between devotion and contemplation that redounds to the intensification of each. His experience during Mass at the Chapel of St. Nicholas, Naples, on 6 December 1273, is arguably a case in point.<sup>125</sup> The rite of the Eucharist in effect furnishes the most exalted context in which the believer, stirred up by devotion, can contemplate divine things and, on the basis of this contemplation, be moved to yet greater devotion. Devotion and contemplation, while independent realities, are nevertheless bound up in the dynamics of reciprocal influence that obtain between intellect and will.

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<sup>125</sup> For a treatment of this experience, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, "Patiens Divina in the *Summa Theologiae*: A Key to Understanding Thomas's Experience during Mass at the Chapel of St. Nicholas, Naples, on 6 December 1273," in *Initiation and Mystagogy in Thomas Aquinas: Scriptural, Systematic, Sacramental and Moral, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. Henk J. M. Schoot, Jacco Verburgt, and Vijgen Jörgen (Utrecht: Thomas Instituut; Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 223–50.

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