

PASSION AND BEATIFIC CONNATURALITY
ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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To Mary,
Mother of Jesus and Mother of John

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ABBREVIATIONS

a.	article
Cant.	Song of Solomon
Cor.	Corinthians
corp.	body (Respondeo)
CG	Summa Contra Gentiles
De Ver.	De Veritate
Deut.	Book of Deuteronomy
Eph.	Letter to the Ephesians
Gal.	Letter to the Galatians
Gen.	The Book of Genesis
In Joan. Evang.	Commentary on the Gospel of John (Augustine)
In Jn.	Commentary of the Gospel of John (Aquinas)
Jn.	The Gospel of St. John
Lk.	The Gospel of St. Luke
Mk.	The Gospel of St. Mark
Mt.	The Gospel of St. Matthew
ST	Summa Theologica
Suppl.	Supplementum Tertiæ Partis
Rev.	The Book of Revelation
Rom.	Letter to the Romans
Super Sent.	Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard
q.	question
qc.	quaestiuncula (Sub-question)

SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE PROJECT

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Love always entails a going out of self and into another that a dwelling may be had on the other's terms – for the sake of the other. That the other is seen as good, should be preserved in its own right, and is worthy of one's assent, is fundamental to love. It is in love that we find life; it is in the "other" that we have our own life – in dying that we live. When our Lord tells us that losing one's life is the pre-requisite for saving it¹, He is not giving us a new commandment nor an evangelical counsel: He is simply telling us the way things are; this is an insight into the nature of reality. Love is a fundamental aspect of being itself. It's a funny thing then when Jesus offers Himself to death on a cross for our sakes; funny, because in the strictest sense of the term, a comedy is when something good happens to somebody who doesn't deserve it. The Catholic claim is that through our Lord's dolorous passion, something very good happens to us – not just to us but to all flesh: the entire created order. Good Friday is good because something very good

¹ Lk. 17:33.

happens and, like the best comedy, it happens in a way that we could not have seen coming.

The mode by which these good things are done for us is in fact so unimaginable that it is a scandal to us; it is a scandal because the very author of the story finds Himself murdered at the readers' hands; and for this reason, the comedy is also a tragedy. Nevertheless, this is the mystery of our Catholic faith: that God has set us free from death by Himself dying. No greater love is there than our Lord's total self-gift to us, His friends, that we might know Him as He is and know Him even as we are known.² But why? And *how*? The beloved disciple tells us in his Revelation that the name of this God is unknown to any but God Himself. Then, in the next breath, His unknown name is revealed! It is revealed to the Blessed as the *Logos* insofar as His garments have been dipped in blood: "His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name inscribed that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God."³

What precisely is accomplished by His crucifixion, by the transpiercing of His Heart? What is accomplished even by His Incarnation and His circumcision? Scripture suggests that to the extent that He is affected by His creatures, He is known by them.⁴ That we can *know* the very being (οὐσία) of God, and so all of reality, principally through Christ's blood, is at the heart not only of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Passion but

² Cf. 1 Cor. 13:12, 1 Jn. 3:2.

³ Rev. 19:12-13.

⁴ Cf. Jn. 19:37.

the supernatural end of all human epistemological activity. Thus, it is our aim with this thesis to show that, in this light, passion (particularly that of the Eternal Logos in His human nature) is a constitutive element of knowledge in this life and the next.

We do not intend with this investigation to offer any new or groundbreaking Christological developments. All that the Catholic Church has proposed on these matters is ample to sustain our inquiry. Should we, however, succeed in contributing anything new to the reader's understanding, we hope it would be by way of further developing the theological epistemology of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, whom we have followed as our guide and master. We will make occasional references to the Sacred Scriptures (particularly to the Johannine and Pauline texts) to show how the themes presented in our thesis are reflected there. However, it is not as a work of Scriptural exegesis, but as a modest development of the thought of St. Thomas, that we plan to make our argument. We also hope, with this thesis, to buttress the traditional doctrine of Beatitude, which the Occidental school has generally held to be a fundamentally epistemological act, against any currently emerging counterclaims. Because the secondary literature on the specifically epistemological significance of *passio* in the context of Beatific knowledge is strikingly absent in the best contemporary Scholastic commentators (with the exception of Fr. Arthur Vella's work which we shall cite later), we hope to provide some instigation to further the conversation. While there have been some very comprehensive studies of note recently offered within the Thomistic school on

the subjects of moral action and epistemology⁵, Christological *passio*,⁶ and the Beatific Vision,⁷ not one of them approaches the question of Beatific knowledge through the lens of *passio* as an epistemological impetus. Even one of the greatest recent commentators on the work of St. Thomas, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance,⁸ surprisingly spends but a few pages considering the nature of Heavenly knowledge in his great, but maybe misleadingly titled work, “*Beatitude*.”⁹

Our work here is intended to be synthetic. It is not meant to be an exhaustive historical survey of secondary literature; nor is it meant to be a comprehensive examination of the Angelic Doctor’s work on epistemology or even on the Beatific Vision. The issues at hand are indeed vast – they themselves, and St. Thomas’ treatment of them, are worthy of many more pages than we can offer here. We have, though, tried to present the questions in an incisive way that includes the Catholic tradition, as holistically as possible, in the conversation, avoiding wherever we can the entry into

⁵ Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth: The Truth of All Things and Reality and the Good* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989); Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., *By Knowledge and by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005); Steven Long, *The Teleological Grammar of the Moral Act (Introductions to Catholic Doctrine)* (Naples, FL: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

⁶ Mark-Robin Hoogland, C.P., *God, Passion and Power Thomas Aquinas On Christ Crucified and the Almightyness of God (Thomas Instituut Utrecht)* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2003)

⁷ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, *Life Everlasting and the Immensity of the Soul: a Theological Treatise On the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell* (Rockford: TAN Books, 1952); William J. Hoye, *Actualitas Omnium Actuum: Man’s Beatific Vision of God As Apprehended by Thomas Aquinas. (Meisenheim)* (am Glan: Hain, 1975); Matthew Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death: Resurrection, Afterlife, and the Fate of the Christian* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

⁸ Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance was known to levitate in ecstasy when contemplating these things. The account of his frequent ecstasy was relayed to me personally by one of his former confreres at the Angelicum, Fr. Sylvan Rouse, C.P., whose work we cite later.

⁹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, *Beatitude: A Commentary on St. Thomas’ Theological Summa, Ia Iae, Qq. 1-54* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co, 1956).

current Thomistic debates on the many peripheral questions surrounding this work, not because these debates themselves are fruitless, but because giving them just treatment would require more than the scope of our work will allow. If we seem to be dealing with our principal question in a new way, it is only because the question itself is new. For this reason, the reader may pardon the style which at times may seem overly rhetorical for such a thesis; because this work is indeed an introduction to the minimally explored, if not previously unasked question, regarding *passio* and its role in Beatific epistemology, we have tried to present our findings in as succinct and inviting a way as possible, with a sincere hope of arousing future conversation.

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of Scholastic epistemology rests Aristotle's assertion: "all men by nature desire to know."¹⁰ Latent in this sentence is not only the truth of man's teleology but of his intellectual and volitional faculties – for his end is an act of intellection and he is inclined to this end appetitively. As Etienne Gilson put it, "man knows through his intellect, he desires to know through his will."¹¹ Now these two faculties which find their synthesis and produce their effect in the human soul are utterly impotent unless they are mutually harmonized and interconnected: the intellect alone has knowledge and the will

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Pr, 1979), A, 1.

¹¹ Etienne Gilson, *Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1951 (The Aristotelian Society of Marquette University, 1951), 12.

alone can desire it; the will alone is incapable of measuring the good, and the intellect alone is incapable of enjoying it. And what does man want to know? Quite simply, everything. And herein lies his problem, which we will take up in greater detail later: his reach extends his grasp. In fact, that which man ultimately wants to know is unknowable to him apart from a gift he cannot confect. “The human intellect, to which is connatural to derive its knowledge from sensible things, is not able through itself to reach the vision of the divine substance in itself, which is above all sensible things.”¹² The mode by which the human intellect is elevated to connaturality with the divine substance will be of chief importance to this work.

In chapter 1, we will first examine, in a cursory fashion, the intellectual and volitional movements of the human soul which is itself, by nature, oriented toward knowledge of the whole.¹³ Using the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, we shall attempt to identify an overarching principle of harmonization of the intellect and the will, taking note of the spontaneity (active element) and receptivity (passive element) at work throughout the human action, and ultimately considering this action insofar as it applies to the Beatific Vision enjoyed by the Saints. Once this principle is identified, we shall, in chapter 2, consider it from the perspective of the Incarnate Word, Who is the actuating agent of Beatitude, investigating the mode by which the Beatific Vision is granted to the Blessed. Understanding the Beatific Vision not only as the ultimate moral action, but as the epistemological operation of connaturality between God and the Blessed in the

¹² *CG IV*, cap. 1, n. 2.

¹³ *ST I*, q.79, a. 3, sed contra.

Incarnate Word, we shall investigate the constitutive elements of Beatific Knowledge, paying particular attention to St. Thomas' understanding of *passio*: the principle of affectivity that makes cognition possible in humans – but also the Christological act to which the Incarnation was ordered and by which ultimate knowledge of God is at all possible for the Blessed. It is our hope that through showing the implicit correlation between these two analogous forms of “*passio*” the reader may gain a more deeply developed theory of knowledge which, as such, is ordered toward a beatific share in the Divine Life.

The reader will see that, throughout this thesis, we speak of “Christ’s Passion” and “Christ’s *passio*.” Our distinct usage is not entirely arbitrary. Though there is generally a sense of interchangeability between these two terms, we usually mean by “Christ’s Passion” the historical event and culmination of our Lord’s earthly life, i.e., His suffering and death on Calvary. “Christ’s *passio*,” on the other hand, is generally meant to signify the passibility of Jesus beginning with His conception, present in the humanity of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is important to understand that as *passio* is an inclination to an end, every aspect of our Lord’s incarnate passibility was indeed ordered toward His ultimate Passion and execution. In that respect, the *passio* (passibility) of our Lord is entirely subsumed into His Passion (event). Of central importance to this work is how the *passio* of Jesus causes the actuation of the created intellect. How does Christ’s affectivity create Beatitude? How does Christ’s Passion save?

We have tried, in this, to mirror the doctrine of St. Thomas who teaches that Christ's Passion causes the salvation of the Blessed in five distinct ways,¹⁴ which we will synthesize here and then take up more deeply later. First, as the head of humanity and the Church, at once a Divine Person, His Passion causes the reward of salvation overflowing upon each of His members simply insofar as He has been exalted by God following His persecution for justice's sake. In this way, His Passion merits the salvation of the Church. Secondly, His Passion causes salvation as a fully adequate satisfaction for man's injustice. The value of Christ's life offered to the Father as a Theandric act of love infinitely surpassed any merely human offering. Because his Passion was accepted with perfect love, it was more pleasing to the Father than the sins of men were displeasing. Thirdly, Christ's Passion causes the redemption of the Blessed because it is an acceptable oblation offered by Him, the high priest of the New Covenant – His Passion is meritorious as Sacrifice. Fourthly, His Passion is a just ransom paid against the penalty of our sin; thus, His Passion causes salvation as redemption.

But the fifth way, St. Thomas says, that Christ's Passion causes salvation is perhaps most germane to this essay. It is distinct from the realm of merit: Christ's Passion is not only the *moral* cause of salvation, through merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, and redemption, but the *instrumental efficient* cause of salvation insofar as the suffering humanity of Christ is the means by which His Divinity causes in the Blessed the *Lumen Gloriae* and graces of salvation.¹⁵

¹⁴ *ST* III, q. 46.

¹⁵ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6 corp. "Christ's Passion accomplishes man's salvation efficiently." It is known that there was development in St. Thomas's conception of instrumental efficient causality as applied to

It is our intention with this work to examine how Christ's *passio* as the instrumental cause of Beatitude directly corresponds, in operation and purpose, to human *passio* that provokes every act of knowledge in pursuit of Beatitude.

Christ's saving work. Our thesis will make use of the Angelic Doctor's fully mature thought on this issue, as found in the *Summa Theologiae*. See the discussion and the references listed in Bernhard Blankenhorn, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4.2 (2006): 255–94, esp. pp. 261-267.

CHAPTER 1

PASSIO, HUMAN ACT, AND MODE OF BEATITUDE

PASSION AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN ACTION

The partial movements that constitute a single moral action are multifarious and, for the most part, elude the grasp of self-reflective understanding; but human action (as with the movement of any thing) always involves a motion toward a good. The faculty that has the good as its object is the will. The will is the appetite of the rational soul. Whereas stones tend toward a good in free fall and their principle of movement comes from without, humans' proximate principle of movement, the will, is within.¹⁶ We are, in a certain respect, self-movers; and in this, we can be called free. But though our proximate principle of movement is internal, St. Thomas is careful to point out that the first principle of the will cannot be from within (or we should be God); rather, the first movement of our will is produced by an exterior principle.¹⁷ That exterior principle – the first principle – of human action is being as such, God Himself, our final cause; and the movement of the will which is at the foundation of all further movements, the first

¹⁶ *ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 3.

¹⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 4.

movement of the will, Thomas calls *amor*. This ‘simple willing’ is the “natural appetite for knowledge”¹⁸ within every human being. It is also the fundamental concupiscible passion of the soul and root of all other passions. Thus we see the will is, in its nature, the *tendency* of the intellect; but though its aim is knowledge, or truth, it remains a wholly appetitive faculty because it cannot pursue truth as such, but only insofar as the truth is a good.

The object of the will is the good, and the first movement toward this good is *amor*, but the appetite cannot be moved unless an object is first known;¹⁹ thus, prior even to the first movement of the will must come some sight of the good: “First, there is the apprehension of the end, then the desire of the end.”²⁰ A man must see what he wants before he can want it. Important to note here is that whereas the will, from the start, appears entirely spontaneous – that is, it is set in pursuit of a good – the intellect in its first movement can barely be called a movement at all as it is primarily *passive* in a twofold sense: first, with respect to the object of cognition which it receives formally and purely, secondly with respect to the will which has immediately given its full consent to the intellect to exercise its power.²¹

As St. Thomas explains, the goodness of a thing is found in the thing; whereas the truth of a thing is found in the mind.²² For this reason, the movement of the will is a

¹⁸ *CG I*, 4, par. 3.

¹⁹ *De Ver.* q. 1, a. 2.

²⁰ *ST I-II*, q. 15, a. 3, corp.

²¹ See Gilson, *Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 45.

²² *Ibid*, 13. Cf. also cf. *De Ver.*, q. 1, a. 2.

tendency of the soul towards and even into the form of a being; whereas the movement of the intellect is caused by an impression of the being into the knowing soul. This interpenetration of reality and knower is of course called knowledge; but does this interpenetration of beings easily resonate with our modern ears? Do we believe that knowledge is possible? Surely, many contemporary thinkers would deny this; and while we will not be parsing their opinions in this essay, we would do well to point out the crux by which St. Thomas seems to think real knowledge is possible.

Passio (passion) is fundamentally a being's receptivity or capacity to be affected by a like being – in a word, it is the tendency to *accept*. Passion and action are properties of all created beings which are, by that very fact, in motion. For St. Thomas, *passio* can carry one of three technical meanings which we shall describe later, but for now it is important to understand the broadest sense in which the Angelic Doctor uses this term throughout his corpus: the tending of patient into the agent. It is the principle of attraction toward a good.²³ The “root passion” and cause of all other passions is “*amor*.”²⁴ In the realm of moral movement, *passio*, or tendency, is preceded only by connaturality (*connaturalitas*), which is the capacity or aptitude to tend. And after the patient is actuated by the agent, there is rest which is given by the agent. Thus, for St. Thomas, there is a very clear over-arching structure of moral action: there is a connaturality which gives rise to passion, that, when actuated, terminates in rest.²⁵ Following this account

²³ It is true that passion is the tendency to accept or to reject but rejection is only done in light of a desirable good. For this reason, the concupiscible appetite is greater than the irascible.

²⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 27, a. 4, corp., and q. 46, a. 1, corp.

²⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 23, a. 4, corp; q. 26, a. 1, corp., a. 2, corp.

given in the Summa, St. Thomas delves into the specific eleven passions which the reader will perhaps most readily associate *passio*. An understanding of “the passions,” in their carnal manifestations, though, must be predicated by an understanding of *passio* itself, which is at work in every creaturely action – most germane to this essay, the ultimate knowing action (the Beatific Vision) which is a fruit of the connaturality rendered in the patient by the agent and is followed by rest in that very agent.

Quoting Aristotle’s treatise on the soul,²⁶ Aquinas notes that understanding (*intelligere*) is precisely a kind of passion insofar as it is a change – or an affect (*affectio*) – in the soul.²⁷ Being does something to a knower and, as Fr. Arthur Vella articulates, this capacity to receive being is at the heart of man’s nature:

This idea of ‘receptivity’ connotes the grandeur of man insofar as it represents man open to the world around him, to others and to God. It is in this receiving, assimilating and possessing that man fulfills himself and, fulfilling himself, reaches the full development of mature personality.²⁸

Only through *passio* (principally, *amor*) is knowledge possible because only through it are we affected by other beings. And in fact Thomas is explicit on this: *passio* is not limited to the corporeal senses but is indeed also in the soul.²⁹ The soul is fundamentally receptive to reality. “Passions belong *per accidens* to the human soul which is spiritual;

²⁶ *De Anima*, I, 5 (410, 25): “perceiving, and also both thinking and knowing, are, on their own assumption, ways of being affected or moved.”

²⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 22, a. 1, corp.

²⁸ Arthur Vella, S.J., *Love is Acceptance: A Psychological and Theological Investigation of the Mind of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Doctoral Dissertation presented to the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome, 1964), 76.

²⁹ *ST I-II*, q. 22, a. 1, ad 1: “But passivity, as implying mere reception, need not be in matter, but can be in anything that is in potentiality. Now, though the soul is not composed of matter and form, yet it has something of potentiality, in respect of which it is competent to receive or to be passive, according as the act of understanding is a kind of passion, as stated in *De Anima* iii, 4.” See also I, q. 79, a. 2, corp.

however, as far as passions claim the whole compositum for their subject and as far as they take place in the sensitive appetite, they are said to belong *per se* to the human soul.”³⁰

That man is perfected by corporeal objects received through his senses is hardly disputable. It does not come as a surprise that man possesses an intrinsic capacity to be receptive to and perfected by beings outside of himself on a corporeal level. But, as the replies to all three of St. Thomas’ objections in this article point to, that the soul – an immaterial creation – should be subject to passion, is something altogether more noteworthy, for it would entail that man is capable of receiving spiritual reality as patient.³¹ This is of course possible because, though immaterial, the soul “has something of potentiality.”³² Etienne Gilson is even ready to affirm that the soul in itself “is only potency.”³³ It is in motion; thus, it must be acted upon passively in order to reach its end. To what extent are the intellectual and volitional faculties acted upon as patient? The most readily available English translation³⁴ is highly misleading on this point: “Therefore the passions are in the appetitive rather than in the apprehensive part.” But through a single word, the Latin makes for a different reading: “*Ergo et passiones magis sunt in*

³⁰ Vella, 99.

³¹ *ST I-II*, q. 22, a. 1, ad 1.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1956), 352.

³⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 22, a. 2, corp. *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, second and revised edition (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1920), online edition ed. by Kevin Knight, 2008, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/2022.htm> (accessed May 1, 2011).

appetitiva quam in apprehensiva.”³⁵ That is, Thomas intends no extreme exclusivity or opposition of the faculties with his response; while it is true that *passio* is more at work in the will, precisely because the will is the faculty pursuing the form of the object outside of the soul, it is also at work in the intellect which, in like manner, suffers change with the encounter of its object. Though the passions, *per se*, are considered more affective than proper to the intellect, the intellect itself indeed has a passive as well as an active dimension. Let us recall that, according to St. Thomas, any change, without exception, is change of potency to act.³⁶ Therefore it would be foolish to suppose that the will alone undergoes passion in the soul – not only because the will never does anything alone, but more importantly because in the simple apprehension of being, the passive intellect is undergoing some change and as such is being actualized. It is being seized, being possessed, being assimilating to, and, according to its own mode, *becoming* the object. The intellect knows passively insofar as it is actuated by the things it knows. As potency, all knowledge, all virtue, and each action of the human soul is reducible to act; moreover, this reduction always occurs as a tendency toward the total actuation of the soul which is the very Act of God Himself Who is the Good for which the knowing soul was created. This ultimate actuation of the soul that is the intellectual apprehension of the Divine Essence is called Beatitude.

³⁵ *ST I-II*, q. 22, a. 2, corp. (emboldening added).

³⁶ This is not to say that there is no such thing as ‘bad’ *passio*. Though passions, like any movement, bring about an actualization in the patient in some respect, Thomas considers them in the same category as any external act (*ST I-II* q. 23, a. 4); thus, their moral value in themselves is indifferent. They are voluntary only according to their relation to reason. Unregulated by prudence, they can degenerate into vice; but commanded by right judgment, they can become aids to virtue. Insofar as passion is engaged by deliberation, it increases the goodness or wickedness of a particular action.

Passio, or affect, is present throughout the moral action, in *amor* and especially in the passive intellect which is apt to receive, not only the final, but the first apprehension of being. Though it is the first act of the will, *amor* is not the beginning of the action; rather, as all movements of the will do, it follows immediately after an act of the intellect. Both of these initial acts, though, are fundamentally passive. The intellect must first receive sight of its end before the will can incline the soul toward it in a motion of affectivity. Whereas the will moves toward the truth insofar as it is good, the intellect beholds the good as true. “The good, under the aspect of the true, has a relation to reason that is prior to that which, under the aspect of something to be striven for, it has to the will; for the will could not turn toward the good if this had not been grasped by the reason.”³⁷ Truth and goodness, as transcendentals, are convertible with each other, but neither the intellect nor the will is able to do what is proper to the other. The faculties remain distinct even in their closest affinity which is found in the beginning of any moral action (and again in the end which we shall see later). Even before any sort of synderesis, or decision – before the being becomes at all practical (even possibly) – it is simply, through *passio*, beheld in the intellect and accepted as good by the will (*complacentia*). The same is true for man’s natural knowledge of God which is thoroughly obscure but rooted in sight and complacency none the less.

Let us briefly retrace our steps and examine how an actual being finds its way into the simple apprehension of the intellect, thus beginning the moral action toward it. It would benefit us to consider a hypothetical object. We shall consider a peanut. How do

³⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 3 ad 1.

we come to know a peanut? First, we see it; the material thing is present to our material senses. Then, the formal simple intellectual apprehension of the peanut begets the response of our will. In a movement that seems to immediately follow the sight of the peanut, the appetite for the peanut as a good is activated by the sight of the peanut's form. But here we see that a step is unaccounted for. Precisely by what mode did the peanut go from being an actual, sensual object to being a form in our intellect? To put the problem another way, how is it that when I have the peanut in mind, my mind, though it knows the salty peanut, does not itself become a salty peanut in its corporeal nature? The passivity of the intellect has already been addressed; and, in fact, the passive intellect is the locus of understanding in the soul,³⁸ but in order for material objects to be reduced into formal objects of knowledge, a certain spontaneity is required; St. Thomas calls this ever-acting dynamism of the rational soul the agent intellect. The agent (or active) intellect operates to raise sensible knowledge to the universal level of understanding. It is perpetually acting to de-materialize the knowledge of the senses thereby making manifest their universal aspects.³⁹ And whatever degree of de-materialization is occurring through the agency of the intellect, there is the presence of form; and with each form – wherever there is form – comes the inclination toward that form which is the rational appetite, the will.

Thus we see that the spontaneous activity of the intellect is the necessary precondition to any moral action whatsoever. Why? Because moral action requires a

³⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unicity of the Intellect*, trans. Sr. Rose Emmanuella Brennan, S.H.N. (St. Louis: Herder, 1957.) ch. 3.

³⁹ *ST I*, q.79, 3, corp.

movement of the will, a movement of the will is only toward the form of a being, and the form of a being, while becoming known through the senses, is not known directly *by* the senses. For any intellectual knowledge or moral action at all, the intellect must carry out some act of universalization that formal apprehension may occur.⁴⁰

If we consider the peanut analogy, it is easy to see that any appetite (sensual or otherwise) comes into play only after the form of a being is known. Having this appetite elicited in me, I might eat one peanut. Then I might eat another, and another. Presuming my action is not out of sheer hunger, why would I continue to eat the peanuts? Why isn't one enough for me? Because, even on the sense level of taste, I want to get to the whole of the thing – I want the form – even if this is done in futile pursuit of the individual parts. In fact, man is designed so that all formal knowledge begins in a corporeal pursuit. I want to know the form of peanut as a good, and because every form has within it its own inclination to be itself as fully as it can be, the real peanut has actuated knowledge of peanut-being in my faculty of taste; but as matter it can go no further – it must be universalized by the intellect in order to be immaterially apprehended. In a way here, too, the concrete being is doing something to the intellect but resides there as form, not as individual, determined object. This sort of formal knowledge is proper only to God and His rational creatures and is the obvious necessary predicate to any moral action. We should also keep in mind the two-fold agency at work in this or any act of knowing: that of the object and that of the active intellect. Truth is realized through the actuating work of a being known as well as the intellect. It is only after the object is grasped and

⁴⁰ Ibid.

dematerialized by the agent intellect that the intellect is *passively* actualized formally *as* the thing known.⁴¹

Whereas knowledge as truth is achieved in the passive intellect and can only be apprehended spiritually and universally, the being, as good, is not in the mind but ‘out’ in the corporeal world. The appetite for good then is essentially ecstatic, going out into the world to obtain the known good; to desire is to be drawn out of oneself.⁴² This ecstasy requires a change or alteration in the patient – a *passio*. In the movement of knowledge, the acting agent, be it the thing itself acting on the will of the knower or the agent intellect acting on the thing, impresses itself into the form of the other by its very act of being. Thus, with every rational movement, there is a mutual reciprocity of spontaneity and receptivity that is the fundamental principle of harmonization throughout the action towards a good – towards knowledge, and towards the fullness of being. This principle is the overarching cause of the human action and brings the affects or *passions* of attraction,

⁴¹ Things actuate the intellect. Thus, knowledge ultimately occurs in the passive intellect which, as patient, conforms to reality. The intellectual soul is initially receptive; its actuating principle is reality itself. To assert otherwise, that the intellect is ‘the first mover,’ so to speak, is of course the philosophical hallmark of Emmanuel Kant, but this error is all too often stumbled into very subtly by some within the Thomistic school. An example of this critical misstep in an otherwise sound article which we shall later quote more favorably is found in David Schindler, “Towards a Non-Possessive Concept of Knowledge: On the Relation Between Reason and Love in Aquinas and Balthasar,” *Modern Theology* 22, 4 (October 2006: 577-607), 588: “We would say that the soul relates to being first by taking it into itself intentionally as true and then moving beyond itself to being’s real existence as good: ‘a thing outside the soul moves the intellect, and the thing known moves the appetite, which tends to reach the thing from which the motion started.” Schindler is right to say that “a thing outside the soul moves the intellect,” but this is contradictory to his initial proposition: “We would say that the soul relates to being first by taking it into itself intentionally as true.” We precisely cannot say this. It is entirely erroneous and contrary to St. Thomas’ epistemology to ascribe the initiation of knowledge to the soul’s agency. If the thing outside the soul is truly the first mover and actuating principle in the knowing action, then the intellect must first be receptive as patient.

⁴² *ST I-II*, q. 28, a. 3, corp.

union, mutual indwelling, ecstasy, and zeal⁴³ all the while changing the patient, toward its good, into the form of the other. This principle of dynamic receptivity at work between mover and moved, St. Thomas calls love.

Love is at work in the moral action, not merely as the first movement of the will toward a good – that first simple acceptance of a being’s goodness – but throughout the entire action and, indeed, throughout the action’s fruition: love is not only the cause of movement toward a good, but the cause of joy that overflows from the movement’s terminus.

After the point of formal apprehension of a being and simple acceptance of its goodness, the will inclines to move toward that being. The first act of the will was a disposition to its proper act; ultimately the will moves to love a thing as such. This movement of the will is actually a multiplicity of movements, each stemming from a distinct affect. This multiplicity is all too often overlooked by modernity, which holds the will to merely be an instrument of blind dynamism or sheer power.⁴⁴ The will is not reducible solely to freedom; far from it – freedom is a characteristic of the will, not the nature of the will. The very term “free will,” though it surely has a place in the context of *liberum arbitrium*, colloquially suggests that the will is *essentially* freedom. St. Thomas

⁴³ *ST I-II*, q. 28, aa. 1-6.

⁴⁴ For St. Thomas, as with Aristotle, the will’s character is essentially ancillary to the intellect, “*voluntas est in ratione*,” and cannot but be inclined toward the good and happiness. The tendency to separate and oppose these faculties begins with John Duns Scotus who takes objection with the naturally eudaimonistic conception of the will in favor of a libertarian power (*Ordinatio 2*). The seeds sown by Duns Scotus bear their fruit in the history of philosophy with Nietzsche who finally asserts the sheer independence of the will; see especially Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans., with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966). Worthy of note for our purposes, Nietzsche here demands the abolition of *passio* altogether (*ibid.*, sec. II, p. 44).

would certainly beg to differ. To understand the will as nothing more than an instrument of freedom is to fail to consider that the will has better things to do.⁴⁵ Even in its first act of complacency, ‘freedom’ is not to be found, but only the simple acceptance of a thing’s goodness.

Immediately after the initiation of the moral action comes synderesis (sometimes called the voice of the primordial conscience). At synderesis, the intellect, for the first time, “begins to be practical; here the extension of the will begins.”⁴⁶ Here, the first semblance of a judgment is made: “I must love the good.”⁴⁷ At this point, judgment is wholly general and not directed to any particular good. The point of synderesis is merely the beginning of the trajectory toward knowledge, the pulling back of the bow as it were. Following the synderesis of the intellect comes the will’s first movement toward a being in itself – the tendency toward a good.

The intellect then considers the good as a cause of action and the means to the end desired; this is immediately followed by the consent of the will to those means. Then comes judgment by which the intellect deems a particular set of means to be the appropriate course of action to obtaining the end. After the judgment is formed by the intellect, the will responds with a decision – *electio* – but perhaps its meaning is more suitably conveyed in English as in “to decide” (from *de* + *caedere*) which means to cut

⁴⁵ Cf. I-II, q. 11, a. 3. Let the reader be clear; here we are not proposing that the will is at anytime not free; the will is properly free insofar as it is rational.

⁴⁶ Josef Pieper, *Reality and the Good* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), ch. 6, p. 147.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; cf. also *De Ver.* 16, I, 12.

off all other possible options. Finally, the intellect commands the use of the will which results in the execution of the action – the movement toward a good and into the truth.

We hope that this brief sketch of the human epistemological action according to the Scholastic tradition will serve, for the rest of our investigation, as a backdrop by which we consider the ultimate human action, the Beatific Vision. We have shown that the tendency in man toward his end is accomplished through mutually harmonious sub-acts of his soul's two faculties. Right understanding of the microcosmic interrelation present in these faculties at work is essential to developing a synthetic understanding of Beatitude and, as we shall see, the interrelation of intellect and will is ultimately analogous to that of God and the Blessed in Christ.

THE OPERATION OF THE WILL IN BEATITUDE

It is important to see that with the will's execution of acts toward a good, the movement toward that good is terminated. But is the good apprehended by the will? No. The will, as such, is a movement in love, toward a being as being. It is wholly incapable of measuring that being as good or (more importantly) of beholding the good in the soul. After all, love is an affective union which seeks out the beloved on the latter's own terms. Whereas reason apprehends what is general and universal, the will strives toward

particular objects.⁴⁸ As we said before, it is an *attractio* that draws one out of one's self; it is ecstatic. With the movement of the will, the good (the beloved) is the mover:

Now in drawing it to itself, it does three things in the patient. Because, in the first place, it gives the patient an inclination or aptitude to tend to the mover: thus a light body, which is above, bestows lightness on the body generated, so that it has an inclination or an aptitude to be above. Secondly, if the generated body be outside its proper place, the mover gives it movement towards that place. Thirdly, it makes it to rest, when it shall have come to its proper place: since to the same cause are due, both rest in a place, and the movement to that place.⁴⁹

But if the finality of rest is ultimately proper to the will,⁵⁰ why, then, is the intellect called by St. Thomas the superior faculty? More importantly, how is it that the ultimate act, Beatitude, is essentially an act of the intellect?⁵¹ The answer to the first question is synthesized by David Schindler with clarity:

As true, material being is elevated, as it were, to an immaterial mode of existence, while, as good, it exists concretely through the various compositions that constitute material being (substance, accidents, form and matter, essence and existence). But simplicity and abstraction is nobler than complexity; therefore, truth is nobler than goodness...the universal is higher than the individual, and insofar as abstraction frees a thing from the limitations that make it individual, truth is for that reason higher than goodness. Thus, Aquinas adds, the idea of goodness is in fact nobler than its individual reality, presumably because this idea in its formality includes more than any particular instance of the good.⁵²

The will, in its movement toward a thing, is never capable of possessing it in the soul; thus, the object of its encounter is always outside of itself. For that reason, there

⁴⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 66, 3, corp.

⁴⁹ *ST I-II*, q. 23, a. 4, corp.

⁵⁰ *ST I-II*, q. 11, a. 3, corp.

⁵¹ *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 4.

⁵² Schindler, "Towards a Non-Possessive Concept of Knowledge," 585.

cannot be true union with a thing as good. The will, as movement by affect, tends toward a being in love and finds rest when the soul possesses its beloved entirely, but this possession occurs in the apprehensive faculty. Finally, human action consummates much like it started – with a simple apprehension of a form in the passive intellect. For this reason, Thomas affirms that Beatitude is an operation of the intellect: “man's happiness consists in the knowledge of God, which is an act of the intellect.”⁵³

But in the Beatific Vision, the form is the fullness of all form and being, God Himself. Though the Beatitude is an operation of the intellect, the will is far from excluded from this act. True, as St. Thomas says, the will does rest in Beatitude – but being-at-rest is a peculiar thing for a faculty that only operates through passion. If the will can only be moved ecstatically, how can it rest? Is it not but a power of inclination and motion towards a good? Just what is the will doing after the end is reached?

Interestingly, St. Thomas assigns a great amount of precedence to a particular affect of the will, which he says is properly present only after the Beatific Vision.⁵⁴ The affect of the will present through happiness is joy wherein the lover duly responds to the encounter of the beloved and loves for the sake of the beloved, not as practical, but as an end in Himself. So though Beatitude must occur in the intellect, its outpouring, its celebration is eternally an act of the will: “Hence fruition seems to have relation to love, or to the delight which one has in realizing the longed-for term, which is the end. Now

⁵³ *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 4 sed contra.

⁵⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 11, a. 3. “Augustine says (*De Trin.* x, 11): “A man does not enjoy that which he desires for the sake of something else.” But the last end alone is that which man does not desire for the sake of something else. Therefore enjoyment is of the last end alone.”

the end and the good is the object of the appetitive power. Wherefore it is evident that fruition is the act of the appetitive power.”⁵⁵ The will is meant to rejoice.

At this final level of the will, ‘freedom’ is scarcely a concern. For St. Thomas, free acts lead to Beatitude and in Beatitude consists the fullness of freedom – for truth is both the cause of Beatitude and of freedom.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the freedom of an act, properly speaking, is not what constitutes felicity. The will never takes joy in itself – precisely because the object of delight is the content of the intellect; the will rejoices in the mutual indwelling and the intellectual vision of the beloved. And though it could not be called a state of enjoyment, there is a place where the will is eternally engaged in self-assertion: hell. The eternal fruit of Beatitude, however, consists not in self-assertion or autonomous conquest, but in harmonization with the intellect, an enjoyment of the whole of reality and the embrace of the fullness of being through consonance, in a word: love. Damnation is but a result of a perversion of passionate love, “for the bodies of the damned will be tormented not only from without, but also from within, according as the body is affected at the instance of the soul's passion towards good or evil.”⁵⁷

The subversion of the will over the intellect resulting in damnation is a disorder that is echoed in every sort of moral disorder, e.g. the flesh dominating the spirit, the

⁵⁵ *ST I-II*, q. 11, a. 1, corp.

⁵⁶ Cf. Jn. 8:32.

⁵⁷ *Super Sent.*, IV, d. 50, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 3 corp.: “Aliud quod invenitur in corporali fletu, est quaedam commotio et perturbatio capitis et oculorum; et quantum ad hoc fletus in damnatis esse poterit post resurrectionem. Corpora enim damnatorum non solum ex exteriori affligentur, sed etiam ab interiori, secundum quod corpus immutatur ad passionem animae in bonum vel malum; et quantum ad hoc fletus carnis resurrectionem indicat, et respondet delectationi culpae quae fuit in anima et in corpore.”

consensus of the public overruling the truth itself, man seeking to be “as God.”⁵⁸ These, like all moral disorders, have their roots in an epistemological disorder which is the failure of the will to be harmonized as subordinate to the intellect. Because the act of Beatitude is intellectual, the will must enjoy its end, along with every preceding end, in a way, as *ancilla* rejoices in her *Domina*. To quote Jacques Maritain:

Our Beatitude will essentially consist in seeing, possessing God in a deifying vision, in which the very being of God will be one with our intelligence in the order of knowledge, and the love and delight in the will will only be the consequence of this. So that in us, at the last, Intelligence will perfectly enjoy its metaphysical primacy over the Will.⁵⁹

In the absolute sense, the intellect is a superior faculty, but Thomas points out that the superiority of a thing must be measured in two ways, in itself and relative to other things. Taken in itself, the intellect is superior because it is more nobly aimed at the internal possession of simple truths. But taken “relatively and by comparison with something else, we find that the will is sometimes higher than the intellect, from the fact that the object of the will occurs in something higher than that in which occurs the object of the intellect.”⁶⁰ This is to say that whereas to know corporeal things is always better than to love them, from our earthly perspective, in relation to God, it is better to love Him than to know Him, because it is more noble to elevate one’s soul than to demand God condescend to one’s intellect. Understanding the rightly ordered epistemological relation of intellect and will in the soul’s beatific act of Divine knowledge carries a certain sacramentality and

⁵⁸ Gen. 3:5.

⁵⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (Apollo Editions, 1970), 39.

⁶⁰ *ST I*, q. 82, a. 3, corp.

can serve as a helpful image of the relationship between Christ and His Church, God and His creation, etc. We shall take this up in greater detail below.

But these observations prompt the question: how, then, is final knowledge ultimately possible? If God is infinitely beyond our senses, He cannot be seen in Himself but only through His effects.⁶¹ Thus, the will's striving for Him who is the cause of her joy, would seem to be for naught. Prior to the Beatific Vision, our natural knowledge of God is philosophical; we know Him as a being in the distance, as it were. Our knowledge of Him as the principle of created beings is certain but unfamiliar; we know Him from, say, the five ways of Aquinas, but this knowledge is limited and obscure. The will, however, desires to know God more fully, and, in a way, reaches out to Him. Prior to the Beatific Vision, the will goes further than the intellect because it aims at union with Him as He is, in Himself – whereas the intellect only receives Him in its own limited mode. The passion affecting the appetitive faculty of the soul is what draws us nearer to God in this life, but this does not satisfy. Happiness is ultimately only available to us through death; and not just any kind of death, but through our share in the death of Him in Whom our happiness consists. For where our own passibility cannot lead us, the Beatitude for which we strive is indeed accomplished by another sort of affect: for our sakes, God offers Himself to undergo *passio*. By a similar movement of His intellectual will, albeit a condescending one, God allows Himself to come under our roof and make His dwelling

⁶¹ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 12, corp. "...our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen.

with us thus causing our Beatitude.⁶² The Beatific Vision is indeed an act of our intellects, but it is only wrought through a Divine act of Will.

LUMEN GLORIAE, UNDERSTANDING, AND PASSIONATE CONNATURALITY

St. Thomas affirms, with Sacred Scripture, that happiness consists in knowledge of God.⁶³ Beatitude is fundamentally the intellectual possession of the Divine Essence; this, like any knowing action, requires some likeness or connaturality between the knower and the known as knowledge must be received in the mode of the knower.⁶⁴ St. Thomas relates this connaturality to two gifts: the Light of Glory and the Gift of Understanding. Though he never compares these gifts in the same context or explicitly distinguishes their Heavenly function, we shall do so in this section as their compatibility is of central importance to our thesis.

As we have shown above, the Thomistic proofs against the position held by Scotus and others, that would have Beatitude found in the will, rest on the two-fold logical supposition that the will is operating in one of two ways: as desire, in which case intellectual possession is striven for, or in joy, in which case possession is had. So though it is effected by charity, objective union is always found in the knowing faculty. The will

⁶² Cf. Jn. 1:14.

⁶³ *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 3, corp.; cf. Jn. 17:3; 14:8; Mt. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:2.

⁶⁴ *ST I*, q. 84, a. 1 corp.; cf. q. 13, a. 1, ad 3.

enables knowledge but does not realize it. “Love effects the union; yes, but an effective union, not an objective union.”⁶⁵ The Holy Spirit, then, Who is the Love of God, is the guide to truth operating in the Blessed: “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.”⁶⁶

The will, as the tendency of the intellect, is the “spiritual heart,” the faculty by which the intellect is drawn toward and into a thing known – and this is accomplished through a disposition to receptivity. In this sense, the will is analogous, in an epistemological manner, to the Holy Spirit Who tends only according to what He has received passively.⁶⁷ As the Dominican master Marie-Dominique Philippe put it, “the will is first of all a power for receptivity with respect to a spiritual good; but in order for the good to attract, it must be known by the intellect as a spiritual good.”⁶⁸ Now to see anything, says St. Thomas, requires the power of sight and union with the thing seen.⁶⁹ As we have shown above, intellectual sight or apprehension of a thing is the possession of a thing – objects of sight must be, in a certain respect, *in* the seer. Whereas, with human knowledge of corporeal things, this must happen through abstraction, with human knowledge of God, abstraction is impossible precisely because His essence is inseparable from His act of

⁶⁵ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Beatitude: A Commentary On St. Thomas' Theological Summa, Ia IIae, Qq. 1-54* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co, 1956), 89.

⁶⁶ Jn. 16:13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: “for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.”

⁶⁸ Marie-Dominique Philippe, *Retracing Reality* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Publishers, Ltd., 2000), 84.

⁶⁹ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 2, corp.

existence.⁷⁰ Further, because His nature is infinitely superior to ours, we are incapable of the natural similitude required for His formal possession (as His formal possession *is* His actual possession). Thus it is impossible for any created intellect by its natural powers to see the Divine Essence.⁷¹ The Church has affirmed St. Thomas explicitly on this matter and shares the resolution he has presented:⁷² The gift by which the Blessed are assimilated to the essential vision of God is the *Lumen Gloriae*: a light, bestowed through grace, by which the Blessed are enabled to see *as* God and so see God. The *Lumen Gloriae* is the connaturality given to the Blessed that enables their intellectual sight of God. “In his own similitude let us seek God: in his own image recognize the Creator.”⁷³ It is a created light which, as a grace, bestows upon the Blessed the very form of God. The weight of this claim cannot be understated; St. Thomas is explicit: “by this light the Blessed are made deiform.”⁷⁴ In the Beatific Vision, the Blessed have not only been given a glimpse of God’s form – they have been assumed by it!

Thomas is clear that the *Lumen Gloriae* is necessary, but he is less clear as to the mode by which it operates and is bestowed. It is a grace, and it is “some similitude,” but we are left with an apparent difficulty which is unaddressed by the Angelic Doctor in the cursory treatment of the subject he gives in Question 12 of the Prima Pars: his account of

⁷⁰ *ST I*, q. 3, a. 3, corp.

⁷¹ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 4.

⁷² The Council of Vienne (1311-1312) affirms that the Divine essence was invisible to created intellects unaided by the *Lumen Gloriae* (Denz., 43rd ed., n. 895).

⁷³ Augustine, *In Joan. Evang.*, xxiii, 10; cf. *ST I*, 12, 4, corp.

⁷⁴ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 5, corp.

the *Lumen Glorae* affirms that it is indeed a similitude: “Therefore it must be said that to see the essence of God, there is required some similitude in the visual faculty, namely, the light of glory.”⁷⁵ However, earlier in the same article, he is clear that the vision of the Divine Essence is precisely *not* accomplished through a similitude: “But to see the essence of God is not an enigmatic nor a speculative vision, but is, on the contrary, of an opposite kind. Therefore the divine essence is not seen through a similitude.”⁷⁶ If a created light is required for a created intellect to behold God, how can this vision be truly essential and whole? How may we understand the Beatific Vision to be in one respect according to the mode of similitude and in another not? In a subsequent objection, St. Thomas points out the dilemma very sharply: “If God is seen in a medium, He is not seen in His Essence.”⁷⁷ His way of dealing with this difficulty is somewhat surprising:

This light is required to see the Divine Essence, not as a likeness in which God is seen, but as a perfection of the intellect, strengthening (*confortans*) it to see God. Therefore it may be said that this light is to be described not as a medium in which God is seen, but as one under which He is seen; and such a medium does not take away the immediate vision of God.⁷⁸

The Light of Glory is a grace by which the intellect is perfected, not according to its own natural potential for excellence (which of course is intellectually receptive to the whole of reality but only through sensual mediation) but according to God’s own Essence. To receive the *Lumen Glorae* is to receive an essentially Divine elevation –

⁷⁵ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 2, corp. “Dicendum ergo quod ad videndum Dei essentiam requiritur aliqua similitudo ex parte visivae potentiae, scilicet lumen gloriae...” See also, q. 1, a. 2, corp.

⁷⁶ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 2, sed contra. “Sed videre Deum per essentiam non est visio aenigmatica vel specularis, sed contra eam dividitur. Ergo divina essentia non videtur per similitudines.”

⁷⁷ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 5, obj. 2.

⁷⁸ *ST I*, q. 12, a. 5, ad 2.

made like unto God. This epistemological promotion credited by St. Thomas to the *Lumen Gloriam* reflects what is recorded in Scripture, in passages by St. Paul and by St. John.⁷⁹ It is interesting that these two most sublime apostles both describe their pending deification in terms of *nunc et tunc*; as if their beatific knowledge shall be at once wholly new but is also wholly present in germ through faith. The doctrine of St. Thomas echoes this; in the *Lumen Gloriam*, the knowing soul is perfected and consummated, as it were, by the Divine Essence – ended in God Himself. Our Lord’s command to “be perfect (τέλειοι)”⁸⁰ as our Heavenly Father is perfect (τέλειός) is wholly more understandable in this light.

The Holy Spirit’s Gift of Understanding, “which attains the Divine Essence through intuition,” is the gift by which the Blessed apprehend spiritual things.⁸¹ St. Thomas also says in the *Summa* that the Gift of Understanding, as correlating to purity and the sight of God, pertains specifically to the Vision of the Divine Essence.⁸² At first glance, it seems that St. Thomas’ account of the Gift of Understanding’s Beatific function closely resembles his account of the *Lumen Gloriam*: both pertain to the intellectual assimilation to the Divine Essence. How then can we distinguish between these two gifts?

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 13:12: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.” 1 Jn. 3:2: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is.”

⁸⁰ Mt. 5:48.

⁸¹ *Super Sent.* III, d. 34, q. 1. a. 4; *Ibid.*, a. 3, ad 6.

⁸² *ST* II-II, q. 8, a. 7, corp.

St. Thomas never explicates the distinction between the *Lumen Gloriae* and the Gift of Understanding, but following the work of John of St. Thomas, Fr. Sylvan Rouse, a Passionist priest, has taken up this question and explored it comprehensively.

The immediate Object of the light of glory is God himself immediately seen. The immediate object of the Gift [of Understanding] is rather *something coming from God – illuminative motion* of the Spirit to penetrate Divine things. Moreover, we cannot say that the Gift of Understanding exercises the same role as the light of glory in Heaven. The Gift of Understanding does not elicit the Beatific Vision, but is regulated by it.⁸³

So we see that the Gift of Understanding, though perfected in the Vision of the Divine Essence, is not what directly elicits Beatific connaturality.⁸⁴ It is, rather, ancillary and propulsory. It is the gift through which “the adopted sons of God will continue to penetrate and perceive spiritual objects outside the Divine Essence.”⁸⁵ It is this Spirit that will animate in the Blessed a tendency to the depth and richness of the whole and draw them eternally deeper into the infinite mystery of Beatitude. But the specific gift which enables the Beatific Vision itself, is the *Lumen Gloriae* – which renders in the soul a connaturality to intuit the Divine Form, God Himself. Because God Himself is the direct object of the Beatific Vision, Who is Himself imparting this connaturality, it follows that He activate this connaturality by indeed imparting His own nature into the Blessed. This

⁸³ Sylvan Rouse, C.P. *The Gift of Understanding According to St. Thomas Aquinas and his Predecessors*. Doctoral Dissertation presented to the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome, 1964) 238.

⁸⁴ Cf. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theologici*, I-II, d. 18, a. 3.

⁸⁵ Rouse, 239.

is to say the Blessed must actually be made Deiform and elevated to a state of connaturality with the Divine.⁸⁶ How are human and Divine natures rendered compatible?

To explore this mystery of deification, we would do well to examine our natural thirst for Beatitude as we experience it. Man by his very nature *seeks* happiness – yet his thirst is quenched only by his possession of the whole and since he is not the whole, and cannot be by his very nature, his reach always extends his natural grasp. Even as *capax universi*, he is, by nature, a seeker: he is, in this life, *in statu viatoris*, not yet arrived.⁸⁷ Happiness is found in the *other*. Is it not true that our quest for happiness implies our lacking it? Inasmuch as we are naturally inclined toward happiness, we are naturally deficient in it. Moreover, it is unimaginable and beyond the sensitive appetites, the sensitive forms, or any created thing.⁸⁸ But as created things, we are faced with this paradox of our nature. How are we to receive Beatitude which *is* God in our own mode as creature? While the final answer to this question is perhaps best put forth in the Gospel of John which we shall take up later, there is an obvious relationship to our final end as *comprehensor* and our sensible appetites which propel us toward this end through love.

⁸⁶ Here we should note that “connaturality with the Divine” is not a typical way St. Thomas speaks of man’s deification. St. Thomas will often use “*connaturalis*” to describe what is connatural to humans by their created nature, and not, generally, by their conformation to Christ. Nevertheless, St. Thomas does, at times, speak of God’s self-revelation, Incarnation, and mission of the Holy Spirit as operating “connaturally” with his creatures. Cf. *ST I*, q. 43, a. 7, corp. “The care of God over all things matches the mode of their being. Now it is connatural (*connaturalis*) to a human being, as is already clear, to be guided by the seen towards the unseen; this is why the invisible things of God had to be made known to him through the visible. With his creatures as evidence God has in some way pointed to himself and the eternal processions of the persons; similarly it was right for the invisible, temporal processions of the divine persons to be made known through certain visible creatures.” Thus we see that St. Thomas’s understanding of Divine Revelation is explicitly connected to the notion of connaturality.

⁸⁷ Cf. Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustines Press, 1998), ch. 2.

⁸⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 1, corp.

This relationship is well demonstrated through our appetites as man and woman, loving most exemplarily through our sharing of bodies and personalities in the communion of conjugal union.⁸⁹ Like most sensual pleasure, sexual love is all-promising and yet never-satisfying. But unlike other kinds of pleasure, conjugal pleasure between man and woman and the beauty carried therein serves as a vehicle of awakening to the transcendent dimension of human personality.⁹⁰ Conjugal love necessarily points the lovers beyond itself and toward the divine promise of eternity through death.⁹¹ Plato is keen to this notion and poetically gives us an account through Aristophanes' speech at the *Symposium*. Two who are truly in love, he says:

are people who finish out their lives together and still cannot say what it is they want from each other. No one would think that it is the intimacy of sex – that mere sex is the reason each lover takes so great and deep a joy in being with the other. It's obvious that the soul of every lover longs for something else; his soul cannot say what it is, but like an oracle, it hides behind what it wants, and like an oracle it hides behind a riddle.⁹²

Christ's self imagery, then, as a Bridegroom, is far more intelligible in this light. Is it not love – total love through perfect self gift – by which one accomplishes life? This

⁸⁹ Though we shall not deal with John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* in this essay, his treatment of this observation is perhaps the most extensive - the weight of which has yet to be nearly realized in the history of thought. A thorough study examining the complementarity of Angelic Doctor's own teaching to *Theology of the Body* would be worthwhile. Compare also Benedict XVI, "Deus Caritas Est": Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 1: "Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness."

⁹⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 108:6, p. 555.

⁹¹ Death and the sexual union have always had a unique cultural connection. By way of one example, *La petite mort*, literally, "the little death," is the French expression for the completion of the conjugal act.

⁹² Plato, *Symposium* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 1989), 192 c.

requirement for life through gift, as we noted before, is no commandment or new counsel; it is inherent in being itself. As the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies in order to find fulfillment and fruition, so does the human person. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, rests on the imagery of conjugal love to convey the nature of Christ's relationship to the Blessed: "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her...this is a great mystery and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church."⁹³ This is to say, just as Plato suggests, that by its very nature, Beatitude is accomplished through the mystery in which it is veiled! St. Jerome's translation is even more compelling than the RSV to this point: "*Sacramentum (μυστήριον) hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia.*" The love that causes Beatitude and the connaturality required for it *is* the total and personal gift of God Himself to His beloved; quite literally, it is "the Great Sacrament!"

In his own commentary on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, St. Thomas affirms the threefold truth of Christ's purpose with the Church as Bridegroom: firstly to cleanse and sanctify her; secondly, that the mode by which this is accomplished is to be His own Passion; and finally, the intended conclusion of connatural glory: "that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church."⁹⁴ Whereas Thomas knows that similitude in the visual faculty is required for the Beatific Vision and not present in man by nature, he

⁹³ Eph. 5: 25, 32.

⁹⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Matthew L. Lamb, O.C.S.O. (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1966), ch. 5, lec. 8: "He hath delivered his soul unto death' (Is. 53:12). And for what? That He might sanctify it: Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). 'Sanctify them in truth' (Jn. 17:17); that is the effect of Christ's death...The goal of this sanctifying action is the Church's purity. Thus he states that He might present it to himself, a glorious Church."

understands that the connaturality required for Beatitude is accomplished through the very nature of God being imparted to His beloved by the gift of His Divine Son as groom and as victim.⁹⁵ It is as Sacrificial Husband that Christ actuates the intellects of the Blessed to behold Him as He is: "...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure."⁹⁶

"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world."⁹⁷ The light of glory, which enables the Blessed to intuit the Divine Essence, is a similitude gratuitously bestowed which elevates the beloved to a connaturality with the Divine Nature. In this way, it is distinctly matrimonial insofar as it is the gift of the Son – and everything He has been given by His Father – to His Bride. But more properly speaking it is Eucharistic, for it is made possible only by a fleshly union of persons who share in the Father's essence through the Passion of the Son: "The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one."⁹⁸

That this Glory is given to the Blessed through the assumed carnal affectivity of the Eternal Word is central to our thesis. For through the passion of Him who was once

⁹⁵ Ibid.: "This washing has a power from the passion of Christ."

⁹⁶ Rev. 19: 7-8. Biblical imagery of the Blessed elevated to glory is consistently done through the analogy of an adorned bride. See also Is. 61:10, Ezek. 16:8-14; Rev. 21:9.

⁹⁷ Jn. 17:24.

⁹⁸ Jn. 17:22; see *In Jn*, chap. 17, lect. 5 (on vv. 20-23), no. 2240.

impassible, all who were once subject to passion may suffer no more. As we have shown, all anthropological epistemology occurs through the body. When considering whether or not the Beatific Vision can be accomplished in a disembodied soul, St. Thomas answers in the affirmative but that the soul would prefer to be united to its body. Humans are happiest with a body. To be human in the image and likeness of God is to be “male and female.”⁹⁹ Moreover, in Heaven, the Blessed will resemble the resurrected Christ and share in His glory that flows from His wounds.

St. Thomas assigns four gifts the Blessed shall possess following the bodily resurrection which is to occur at the general judgment: impassibility, subtlety, clarity, and agility.¹⁰⁰ We shall focus on the first of these. Though the body “is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption.”¹⁰¹ The Blessed, St. Thomas says, shall not be subject to corruption in the sense that they will not undergo any movement contrary to nature. This, however, is but one of three ways¹⁰² the Angelic Doctor understands the word “*passio*” to be used. Briefly, let us review them. First, in the most general sense, anything that

⁹⁹ Gen. 1:27; 5:2; ST I, q. 93, a. 4, ad 1, a. 6, ad 2.

¹⁰⁰ ST Suppl., qq. 82-85.

¹⁰¹ 1 Cor. 15:42.

¹⁰² See *Super Sent.* IV, d. 44, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, corp., in which St. Thomas says there are two ways in which one can understand something to be passible: “Respondeo dicendum ad primam quaestionem, quod passio dupliciter dicitur. Uno modo communiter: et sic omnis receptio passio dicitur; sive illud quod recipitur, sit conveniens recipienti et perfectivum ipsius, sive contrarium et corruptivum; et ab huiusmodi passionis remotione corpora gloriosa impassibilia non dicuntur, cum nihil quod est perfectionis, eis sit auferendum. Alio modo dicitur proprie, quam sic definit Damascenus in 2 Lib. passio est motus praeter naturam; unde immoderatus motus cordis passio ejus dicitur; sed moderatus dicitur ejus operatio; cujus ratio est, quia omne quod patitur, trahitur ad terminos agentis, quia agens assimilatur sibi patiens; et ideo patiens, in quantum huiusmodi, trahitur extra terminos proprios in quibus erat.” However, in ST I-II, q. 22, a. 1, he says there are three ways. In the case of the latter, he has divided the proper sense of the word into the two aspects of passibility through generation and passibility through corruption.

receives something is passive. In this respect, beings are passive even if they undergo no deterioration of their own form but only *receive* a perfection. According to this sense, as St. Thomas' example goes, air is passive when it is lit up. The Blessed in Heaven remain passible in this sense insofar as they are fittingly receiving their glory from another and insofar as they are operating as bodily persons.¹⁰³

In the second and third senses, something is passive insofar as a new form is received while another taken away. This is the most proper sense of *passio* – an alteration or change in the patient brought about by an affective union with a new form. Passion renders one susceptible to being overcome by the form of an agent and actualized by it. “A thing is said to be passive from its being drawn into the agent.”¹⁰⁴ But precisely because creatures are *ex nihilo*, prior to their confirmation in Glory, they possess some tendency back toward nothingness. Even in the case of corruption, when a thing recedes from the fullness of its own form, a less excellent form is wrought by the agent in the patient. In this sense (i.e. corruptibility), the Blessed in Heaven are impassible. They are incorruptible because their souls, sharing in Christ's reign over creation, enjoy perfect dominion over their flesh. They will undergo no movement contrary to their nature; they will not die or age.

The Blessed, in as much as the Divine Essence has fully become the intelligible species actuating their intellects, cannot “change” contrary to their nature nor can their Beatitude be lost once assumed into their share of the *Lumen Gloriam*. In this, their

¹⁰³ Cf. *Super Sent.* IV, d. 44, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, corp.

¹⁰⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 22, 1 corp.

wayfaring state will have ended; they will have obtained comprehension: knowledge of the Divine Essence and perfect dominion over their flesh – but we must remember that upon the resurrection, they shall again have flesh. Yet even without their body, the Blessed are said to have other intellectual operations besides the Vision of God: they will be able to think and choose, according to their natural ability; then, with the body, they will be able to converse, move, etc.¹⁰⁵ The Blessed shall spend an eternity receiving and accepting in wonder, through the Vision of God, all things. In this sense, passion is proper wherever there is flesh, is compatible with felicity, and will remain: “all reception is called passion insofar as that which is received is suitable to the recipient.”¹⁰⁶ And as passion will remain in resurrected Blessed, so it shall remain in the resurrected Christ, for He too remains embodied, and His Body is the Church.

As we have shown, *passio* is inherent in the human acts of knowing – all of which are ordered toward ultimate knowledge which is the Beatific Vision. The desire for Beatitude is present in humans by nature but is only realized through grace. This grace of similitude is bestowed through Christ Himself receiving forevermore a carnal nature, His Body, the Church. This reception of flesh, as any reception, is fundamentally passive. It is ordered toward and expressed most fully through His Passion and death on a cross.

¹⁰⁵ Bryan Kromholtz, *On the Last Day: the Time of the Resurrection of the Dead According to Thomas Aquinas*, *Studia Friburgensia* vol. 110 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2010), 443-52, 460-65.

¹⁰⁶ *Super Sent.* IV, d. 44, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, corp.

KNOWLEDGE, LIFE, AND PASSION

Commenting on the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, the Angelic Doctor teaches with the Beloved Disciple that eternal life is indeed the fruit of Christ's Passion. Moreover, he fittingly notes that the measure of this fruit's efficacy in the Blessed recipient of this new life is intellectual apprehension (viz. sight and belief) of the Theandric suffering itself: "But he who looks upon the lifted up Son of Man, and believes in the crucified Christ, he is freed from poison and sin: 'Whoever believes in me will never die,' and is preserved for eternal life."¹⁰⁷ The eternal life of the Blessed, then, is only possible insofar as God, in the person of Christ, is affected as patient.¹⁰⁸ And though Christ's passion is culminated on Calvary, we must remember that it begins with the Incarnation itself; for the Incarnation is the unchanging and eternal Word assuming changing and passible flesh thereby uniting, forevermore in one Person, two natures: one passible and the other impassible. As the Church has perennially affirmed, not only the sacrifice on the cross, but the entire condescending work of God is ordered toward bestowing His own eternal life upon His beloved.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, vol. III, trans. James A. Weisheipl, O.P. (Magi, 1998), lect. 2, 475: "Ille autem respicit filium hominis exaltatum qui credit Christo crucifixo; et sic liberatur a veneno et a peccato, infra XI, 26: qui credit in me, non morietur in aeternum: et praeservatur ad vitam aeternam."

¹⁰⁸ To be clear, we affirm with St. Thomas that God could have chosen to bestow eternal life on His creatures through other means than his own suffering. He, however, did not.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54: "For He was made man that we might be made God; and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and He endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality. For while He Himself was in no way injured, being

God *is suffering* in His human nature, not simply as a victim of torture and murder but precisely as man – for to suffer is to be affected by another, to be mutable. It is true that as Glorified, our Savior suffers no longer; however insofar as His body on earth is affected, He is as well.¹¹⁰ This is precisely why the holy Mass is so efficacious in the salvific order.

As a creature, man is, by nature, a sufferer; that is, one who receives.¹¹¹ The ultimate fruit of Christ's passibility in His human nature is man's elevation to impassibility in Christ's Divine nature: He came "that they might have life."¹¹² This is to say that His Incarnation was ordered toward the salvation of His beloved. Here we have established the major premise of the first of two syllogisms we shall take up that are implicit in John's Gospel. We hope that these syllogisms which are confirmed by St. Thomas shall support our thesis that eternal life of man is only possible through God being affected as patient in His incarnate nature.

Now the minor premise: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent."¹¹³ Eternal life is knowledge of God. St. Thomas is clear in his respective commentary that the Evangelist is not offering an

impossible and incorruptible and very Word and God, men who were suffering, and for whose sakes He endured all this, He maintained and preserved in His own impassibility." See also ST III, q. 1, a. 2, corp.: where St. Thomas cites St. Augustine: "God was made man, that man might be made God."

¹¹⁰ Cf. Acts 9:4.

¹¹¹ This is not to say that death and pain are to be considered entirely natural; they are the result of the Fall, and thus are punishment for sin. Death and pain are unnatural to the human soul, but natural to the body; see *ST I II*, q. 85, a. 6.

¹¹² Jn. 10:10.

¹¹³ Jn. 17:3.

analogy here but, in a certain sense, a statement *per se nota*, that is, the subject is fully contained within the predicate and vice-versa. “Since then intellectual understanding is living activity, and to understand is to live, it follows that to understand an eternal reality is to live with an eternal life. But God is an eternal reality, and so to understand and see God is eternal life.”¹¹⁴ Thus, to know God is to live and to live is to know God. The conclusion of these two premises is manifest: our knowledge of God is dependent on God Himself being affected as patient. Christ’s passion is a constitutive element of our sharing in His own self-knowledge.

Worthy of note, St. Thomas reaffirms that knowledge is sight – that eternal life is in the intellectual operation of vision and that the impetus for this knowing action is indeed love (*amor*).¹¹⁵ While Thomas is clear that love (*amor*) is a passion, it is not so in the Divine Being.¹¹⁶ Though we can certainly speak of God loving, and though the effects of His love may be likened to the passion of love, properly speaking, God is of course not passionate except by analogy. In God (notwithstanding the humanity of Christ), love is a simple act of the will and not an effect of agency on a patient.¹¹⁷ Let the reader be clear, our essay is in no way proposing a Patripassianism or suggesting that the Divine Being is

¹¹⁴ *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, XVII, lect. 1, 2186.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*: “Accordingly our Lord says that eternal life lies in vision, in seeing, that is, it consists in this basically and in its whole substance. But it is love which moves one to this vision, and is in a certain way its fulfillment: for the completion and crown of beatitude (happiness) is the delight experienced in the enjoyment of God, and this is caused by charity. Still, the substance of beatitude consists in vision, seeing. (Et ideo Dominus dicit, quod in visione consistit vita aeterna, scilicet principaliter secundum totam suam substantiam. Amor autem est movens ad hanc, et quoddam eius complementum: nam ex delectatione quae est in fruitione divina, quam facit caritas, est complementum et decor beatitudinis: sed eius substantia in visione consistit.)”

¹¹⁶ *ST I II*, q. 26, a. 2.

¹¹⁷ *ST I II*, q. 22, a. 3, ad 3.

subject to alteration; with the Catholic Church we affirm that the second Person of the Blessed Trinity did indeed suffer in His human nature and that the other Persons, in their Divine Nature, did not; nevertheless, it is Christ's passion that Sacred Scripture and the Angelic Doctor consistently identify as the principal cause of our Divine knowledge.

This doctrine is not only the consummation of John's Gospel: "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced,"¹¹⁸ but of Mark's: "Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw how he had thus cried out and expired, he said, 'truly this man was the Son of God,'"¹¹⁹ and Matthew's: "Truly He was the son of God."¹²⁰ It is noteworthy that the most reliable commentaries remark firstly that John intends his readers to understand the Divine Being, Yahweh (the great I AM) as the one being pierced.¹²¹ This is evidenced by the account of Jesus' arrest in 18:6; and in John's reference of Zechariah 12:10, he alludes to the Messianic piercing as a means by which men would look to Yahweh and behold God. Secondly, by John's framing of the crucifixion in the typology of Moses and the bronze serpent (Numbers 21:10), his intention is amply soteriological as well as eschatological. In using the future tense, "they *shall* look," John points to the parousia and echoes not only to the Baptist's testimony of Jesus as saving Lamb but also the visions of Revelation (as Revelation was likely written earlier).¹²² These observations

¹¹⁸ Jn. 19:37.

¹¹⁹ Mk. 15:39.

¹²⁰ Mt. 27:54.

¹²¹ See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible Volume 29 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), 938.

¹²² Jn. 1:29, 36; Rev. 14:1.

should not be taken as an inference that one must somehow “look” upon the Crucified one in this life as a prerequisite for attaining the vision of God in the next. Rather, as the Church has always affirmed regarding the holy Mass, to look upon the Crucified in this life *is* to be looking upon Him in the next.¹²³

¹²³ To be more precise, the One whom we see imperfectly at the Mass is the same One whom the blessed see perfectly. Cf. 1 Cor 13:12: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.”

CHAPTER 2

INCARNATIONAL CONNATURALITY

THE INCARNATIONAL MOTIVE

As we have shown above, man by nature desires happiness. This intellectual desire is gradually actuated through the knowledge of reality and finally realized in Heaven with the total sight of the Divine Essence, the whole of reality. Because man by nature is not able to accomplish his last end through his natural faculties, this Vision must be imparted to him through grace – specifically, the Light of Glory. Together with the Holy Spirit’s Gift of Understanding, man enjoys the Beatific Vision and penetrates the mystery of God. This mystery is sacramentally expressed and dispensed to the world solely through the Incarnate Word, as the instrumental cause of salvation whose Passion actuates His beloveds’ true sight of Him, in His Glory, through His being affected by them. In this sense, the epistemological connaturality between God and man is wrought through Christ, who is at once the epistemological agent *as* patient. “It is precisely through the instrumental causality of the sacraments that we are inserted into history, into the power that proceeds through each of Christ’s actions and sufferings in the flesh.”¹²⁴ In this final

¹²⁴ Blankenhorn, 291.

chapter, we shall more comprehensively investigate this willingness of God to receive and accept His creatures as patient in order to actuate their Beatific knowledge of Him; we shall also address the more readily-apparent difficulties. We shall show the distinctively Eucharistic mode of this Beatific union which is taught by St. Thomas as an extension of the doctrine of St. John the Evangelist, a witness to our Lord's Passion.

Goodness is by nature self-diffusive and communicative¹²⁵; moreover, it is always realized in truth in which, as we have already noted, is found the fullness of being. Goodness, then, ontologically congruent with being itself, is reality conceived as desirable. For our purposes, we would do well to consider the end of all of creation, namely, God being united to His creation hypostatically in the Person of Jesus Who is the Truth, from two points of view. Firstly, it is good for man that the immutable Word has become incarnate. It is good that man, through the assent of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has served God and thereby been assumed into the higher order of the Truth itself which supersedes his own natural ends. Secondly, because God is goodness itself and because it pertains to goodness to communicate itself fully, it is very good¹²⁶ for God to have joined Himself, in the most full way, to His creation:

Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature, and this is brought about chiefly by "His so joining created nature to Himself that one Person is made up of these three – the Word, a soul and flesh," as Augustine says (*De Trin.* xiii). Hence it is manifest that it was fitting that God should become incarnate.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

¹²⁶ "*Convenientissimus*:" literally, most harmonious, convenient, most 'coming-together.'

¹²⁷ *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

Thus, from two distinct aspects (that of God and that of man), there is a goodness found in the Incarnation – two distinct motives toward Truth: one of mercy, the other of need. That we may even speak of the immovable God having a motive (after all, the words are cognates: *immovable* vs. *motive*) is nothing less than a mystery and a testament to His great love for us expressed in John’s Gospel; it is because of God’s love for us that He sent His Son (3:16). Moreover, that love God has for the Blessed is identified by John repeatedly as bearing its fruit in their knowledge: “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”¹²⁸

We diverge in no way from the Scholastic position in affirming this. St. Thomas himself, while paying heed to differing opinions, is clear that the ultimate motive for the Incarnation was one of mercy.¹²⁹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance notes, while commenting on this teaching of St. Thomas, that the very name “Jesus” given to the incarnate Word through the Angel, “does not mean King or Doctor, but Savior, and the names God gives always express the primordial trait of the spiritual physiognomy of those who receive those names.”¹³⁰ Thus, he continues, “the motive of the Incarnation is that reason for which it was necessary: to save us through perfect reparation for offense against God by means of an act of reparative love which could be more pleasing to God than He is

¹²⁸ 1 Jn. 3:1.

¹²⁹ *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3.

¹³⁰ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance, *Our Saviour and His Love for Us* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 2009), 113.

displeased by all the sins of the world, and which would be an infinite source of grace for us.”¹³¹ Moreover, Garrigou-Lagrange makes clear that the traditional Thomistic caveat to this doctrine is that the salvific nature of the Word’s Incarnation was not an unforeseen accident or plan-modification of God in response to man’s fall, but an efficacious divine decree rooted in the beginning of all things, in the wisdom of God Himself.

TWO DIFFICULTIES ADDRESSED

As we have developed an overview of Beatific Connaturality, we must briefly divert to better address two of the most prominent objections to the above synthesized doctrine of St. Thomas. Firstly, we shall consider the Scotian position regarding the “primacy of Christ” question. Secondly, we shall deal with the more recent revival of the Scotian position on the doctrine of Beatitude as a properly epistemological activity.

God’s motive for the Incarnation is indeed latent in His motive for creation. This position is surely rooted in Thomas’ understanding of goodness’ intrinsically self-communicative nature and is a helpful alleviation to the problems stumbled upon by the neoplatonists regarding God’s liberty in this self-diffusion of Divinity. For as we have already noted, goodness is always predicated by truth toward which it tends. Any act of God, be it processional or creative, is deeply rooted in and directed toward His Wisdom and self-knowledge. Understanding the incarnational motive in this light is perhaps the

¹³¹ Ibid.

most concise alleviation to the long-standing primacy of Christ feud between the Scotian and Thomistic schools. It is true that Duns Scotus proclaimed that Christ would have become incarnate even if man had not fallen:

To think that God would have given up such a task had Adam not sinned would be quite unreasonable! I say, therefore, that the fall was not the cause of Christ's predestination and that if no one had fallen, neither the angel nor man in this hypothesis Christ would still have been predestined in the same way.¹³²

It is also true that Aquinas holds a seemingly different perspective: “Since everywhere in the Sacred Scripture the sin of the first man is assigned as the reason of Incarnation, it is more in accordance with this to say that the work of Incarnation was ordained by God as a remedy for sin; so that, had sin not existed, Incarnation would not have been.”¹³³ But what can be too easily overlooked is that St. Thomas nowhere denies that God may have become incarnate without man’s fall. In fact, he is explicit in this regard: “even had sin not existed, God could have become incarnate.”¹³⁴ Thus, the two perspectives are in no way mutually exclusive. As all things of God are pre-ordained from all eternity according to His own self-knowledge, so is the Incarnation which is (and Duns Scotus would nowhere deny this) a remedy for sin. This compatibility was recalled by Pope Benedict XVI in a catechetical general audience dedicated to the Subtle Doctor:

[I]n the opinion of Duns Scotus the Incarnation of the Son of God, planned from all eternity by God the Father at the level of love is the fulfillment of creation and enables every creature, in Christ and through Christ, to be filled with grace and to praise and glorify God in eternity. Although Duns

¹³² Bl. John Duns Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis*, in III Sent., d. 7, 4.

¹³³ *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3, corp.

¹³⁴ *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3, corp. Cf. also *Super Sent.* III, d. 1, q. 1, a. 3, corp.: Concerning the unconditional incarnation, “this opinion can also be called probable.”

Scotus was aware that in fact, because of original sin, Christ redeemed us with his Passion, Death and Resurrection, he reaffirmed that the Incarnation is the greatest and most beautiful work of the entire history of salvation, that it is not conditioned by any contingent fact but is God's original idea of ultimately uniting with himself the whole of creation, in the Person and Flesh of the Son.¹³⁵

Insofar as the motive of the Incarnation was one of Divine Mercy, rooted in God's love for man from the beginning, our conclusion must be that every dimension of our Lord's conception, birth and life was ordered toward His passion and death on a cross for the sake of His creatures' fulfillment in Him. This truth is expressed by the Church universally in her Creeds, scriptures, and liturgies: it is the passion of the Incarnate Word by which Christ God is configured to us; and conversely, it is our participation in that passion by which alone we are configured to Him.¹³⁶ The ultimate convergence of God and man occurs at the cross of Jesus.

As we have shown above, this convergence renders knowledge of God which is Life. The epistemological character of Heaven cannot be understated. As is clear in Sacred Scripture and perennially reaffirmed by the tradition, most synthetically by St. Thomas Aquinas, Beatitude is an authentically intellectual act. Posited by Aristotle of a God Whose Name was then unknown to the philosopher, the final end of man must be "speculative in accord with the contemplation of the best object of speculation."¹³⁷ There have been some modern attempts to move away from this conception which are unhelpful

¹³⁵ Benedict XVI, "John Duns Scotus," a General Audience, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, July 7, 2010.

¹³⁶ Lk. 9:23: "And He said to all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

¹³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *CG*, III, 25. See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Focus Philosophical Library Series) (Newbury, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Co., 2002), X, 7: 1177a 18, 191.

and, at best, rooted in a misreading of St. Thomas and a failure to possess a harmonious and teleological view of nature and grace. It is true that the Blessed shall not know in Heaven as they knew on earth. It is also true that the difference in quality between beatific and natural knowledge is ineffable.¹³⁸ It is patently false, however, to suggest that the difference thereof is so radical and ineffable that it is one of kind and not degree.¹³⁹

One very explicit recent (Catholic) critic of the Scholastic doctrine on Beatitude, as an epistemological act, is Germain Grisez. Grisez proposes a communitarian view of human fulfillment against the contemplative view held by St. Thomas. Because Grisez's opinion represents a rather noticeable trend in thought that has reverberated with some consequence not only in Catholic academia but even in the liturgy,¹⁴⁰ and elsewhere, we shall briefly examine his work specifically and address the most obvious errors therein. We shall then see that had Grisez followed his own premises to their deepest conclusions, particularly those regarding the bodily resurrection, he might not have been so inclined to dispute the Angelic Doctor. It is our hope that the developments rendered in this thesis,

¹³⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9.

¹³⁹ Cf. Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010), 52.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, General Audience, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Oct. 3, 2012. The Holy Father saw fit to address this trend specifically as it pertains to the liturgy: "I would like to recall another important aspect. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we read: 'In the liturgy of the New Covenant every liturgical action, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, is an encounter between Christ and the Church' (n. 1097). Therefore it is the 'total Christ,' the whole Community, the Body of Christ united with her Head, that is celebrating. Thus the liturgy is not a sort of 'self-manifestation' of a community; it means instead coming out of merely 'being ourselves,' being closed in on ourselves, and having access to the great banquet, entering into the great living community in which God himself nourishes us. The liturgy implies universality and this universal character must enter ever anew into the awareness of all. The Christian liturgy is the worship of the universal temple which is the Risen Christ, whose arms are outstretched on the Cross to draw everyone into the embrace of God's eternal love. It is the worship of a wide open heaven. It is never solely the event of a single community with its place in time and space."

surrounding these points, may serve to shed light on the difficulties encountered by Grisez and his sympathizers.

It is difficult to identify any systematic rebuttal of St. Thomas in his work but some consistent themes stand out. First, Grisez's starting point on the question of Beatitude is to posit an anthropology that is fundamentally different in teleology from the traditional view. While he concedes that every human agent must always act for some ultimate end, he holds that this end is necessarily multifarious: "unlike any subpersonal creature that tends toward some fulfillment fixed by its nature and environment, we develop new ways in which we can be fulfilled."¹⁴¹ Thus, for Grisez, "human nature is indeterminate."¹⁴² Following in this, Grisez' notion of Beatitude is strikingly un-ended. "What about the Beatific Vision? It is neither an act a human person can choose to do, nor a good that human persons can bring about. It is entirely a gift of the Father, Son, and Spirit—a sharing, somehow, in their own joy."¹⁴³ While we would certainly refute, with Grisez and St. Thomas, any Pelagian notion that Beatitude can be achieved through merely natural means, Grisez fails to realize an important distinction which we have described in detail above: as *capax universi*, man is, by nature, capable of receiving a vision of the whole; but as creature, that vision is beyond his natural reach and can only be achieved by him passively through grace. Moreover, the Beatific possessed by the Blessed *is* brought about by a Divine Person Who assumed a human nature – namely Jesus Christ. Grisez's

¹⁴¹ Germain Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone," *Theological Studies* 69, (2008): 53.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

lack of account for this co-sharing in carnal affectivity which produces Divine Life in the Blessed¹⁴⁴ is a well-reflected consequence of his non-epistemological understanding of Beatitude. Finally then, for Grisez, Heaven is not an act of knowing the Divine Essence, but a partaking in communal intimacy, albeit principally with the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, in the Kingdom of God. “I hold it to be a truth of faith that human beings’ true ultimate end is the kingdom of God, not God alone.”¹⁴⁵ It is here that Grisez diverges explicitly from the Angelic Doctor and the Catholic Faith itself. St. Thomas sums up the explanation with precision:

It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls (*totaliter quietat*) the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull (*quietare*) man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Psalm 102:5: “Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.” Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness.¹⁴⁶

Where Grisez diverges from the tradition concerns both teleology and epistemology. In positing that the Blessed shall “continue to desire, act, and be increasingly fulfilled, so that the heavenly wedding feast will never end and will always grow still more joyful,”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Gal. 2:19-21: For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.

¹⁴⁵ Grisez, “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings,” 61.

¹⁴⁶ *ST* 1-II, q.2. a 8, corp.

¹⁴⁷ Grisez, “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings,” 61.

he has neglected to account for what the will is. As we have described, the will tends receptively toward the intellectual end of truth and rejoices as ancillary when that truth is finally accomplished. There is nothing in Heaven that shall be desired by the Blessed; the intellectual will shall only rejoice. And though it is a mystery infinitely surpassing our ability of description, the Blessed will spend an eternity ‘getting to know’ and growing in joy with God and one another – not out of desire, but wonder. This is not at all to say that Heaven will not be a communion. St. Thomas is clear that the Blessed will enjoy increased delight in common Beatitude – not principally because they will be with each other but because they will be *seeing the same thing*. For St. Thomas, it is necessary only for the “well-being” of the saints’ beatitude (and not for the “essence” of beatitude) that they be raised and that they enjoy the company of the rest of the just.¹⁴⁸ Grisez’ notion that Heaven will be a perpetual non-intellectual intimacy with God and with created goods rather than an intellectual enjoyment of the whole deserves some further investigation. “Sometimes this doctrine of the Beatific Vision is understood in a way which would make our sharing in divine life a limited sort of activity, appealing perhaps to intellectuals but not to many others.”¹⁴⁹ One might ask Dr. Grisez, “Is community good in itself? Is not communion, or intimacy with anything, directed toward knowledge of that thing?” We must remember that, as rational animals, every aspect of human personality is oriented toward our knowing purposes. Our bodies, our senses, and our appetites – all of these things are intended for knowledge. Thus, when final knowledge is

¹⁴⁸ See *ST* I-II, q. 4, aa. 5 and 8; see also Kromholtz, 431.

¹⁴⁹ Germain Grisez, “Christian Moral Principles,” Ch. 19, q. d, 4. twotlj.org, February 1, 2014, <http://www.twotlj.org/G-1-19-D.html>.

realized in the Vision of the Divine Essence, every dimension the human person shall be elevated and fulfilled. This truth is so profoundly real that we shall get our bodies back! If Dr. Grisez finds the notion of intellectual Heaven perhaps too sterile or lacking, it is perhaps due to his failure to realize the richness, depth, and meaning of human intellectual capacity. He has drawn a false and unhelpful dichotomy between “Vision of the Divine Essence” and “Joyful intimacy with Divine Persons.” According to the traditional view, this intimate joy can only be had through knowledge of the Divine Essence. It is only through knowledge of the Father, in the Son, that joy can be complete.¹⁵⁰

EUCCHARISTIC CONNATURALITY

Prior to Adam’s fall, the human body was gifted with impassibility and immortality.¹⁵¹ In sin, God, the vivifying principle of things, was withdrawn from the soul – or rather the soul from God. In turn, the body became disintegrated from the soul. As St. Paul said, “the wages of sin is death.”¹⁵² Passibility in the human body is but the result of moral failure, which we know is also epistemological failure; the occasion for

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Jn. 15:11.

¹⁵¹ *ST I*, q. 97, a. 1.

¹⁵² Rom. 5:12; *ST I-II*, q. 85, a. 5.

the fall was, after all, a disproportionate yearning for knowledge.¹⁵³ In Adam's aspiration for the knowledge of God (which is the very being of God Himself), he was cast down back into the dirt from which he came. A comparison need not be drawn out between Adam's fall, Lucifer's fall, or the fall of any mighty ones "cast down from their thrones."¹⁵⁴ in every case, the fall is a result of an overreach. The consequence of Adam's sin reverberated to his flesh and all of creation over which he would no longer possess dominion.

Our Lord, in His mercy, saw it fitting to restore order to the disintegrated man and cosmos by really and personally entering His own created order, typologically present in a converse manner to every dimension of the primal fall. He Himself would become the new fruit hung on a new tree taken up by the new man and discerned in a new garden – albeit a garden of agony and not paradise, a tree of repulsion and not allure, and a fruit of scandal and not delectation. Eating of this tree, once hidden in the original garden¹⁵⁵, would become the cause, not only of restored life, but of the very knowledge Adam in his folly once sought.¹⁵⁶ This, the salvific moment, was foretold for the first time in the

¹⁵³ Gen. 2:17; *ST II-II Q.* 163, aa. 1 and 2.

¹⁵⁴ Lk. 1:52.

¹⁵⁵ Gen. 2:9.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 13*, trans. by Edwin Hamilton Gifford, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.): "And if because of the tree of food they were then cast out of paradise, shall not believers now more easily enter into paradise because of the Tree of Jesus? If the first man formed out of the earth brought in universal death, shall not He who formed him out of the earth bring internal life, being Himself the Life?"

protoevangelium in which God promises to defeat death itself through the humblest creature, the flesh of Adam, the woman.¹⁵⁷

In the moment of our parents' original fall, scripture almost jocularly reminds us that "their eyes were opened."¹⁵⁸ It is true that they were made instantly aware of their wretched condition as severed from the good grace of their Maker; their shame was visible; however, the reality of their condition was darkness – a loss of sight. As the fruit of sin is death insofar as one is removed from life itself, so it is blindness insofar as one is removed from light itself.¹⁵⁹ With this in mind, it is possible to consider that second, saving tree under a different aspect – the aspect of God.

To the flesh which Christ was incarnated to save, the cross was a horror. Even his own body, in foreseeing the impending agony, dripped with sweat of blood and shuddered at what would be the greatest suffering any man would ever endure either before or since.¹⁶⁰ Even his friends, including those that had previewed His Glory on Tabor, abandoned him in His hour. Truly, from the perspective of flesh – from our perspective, the cross is a dreadfully repulsive sign. Nevertheless, impelled by the love for His Father, His brethren and bride,¹⁶¹ He undergoes agony and passion until the sacrifice of His life is complete and commended to the Father. But as seen only by a few,

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Gen. 3:15.

¹⁵⁸ Gen. 3:7.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. 3 Jn. 1:11, 1 Jn. 2:11, Mt. 15:14; on ignorance as a consequence of sin, see *ST I-II*, q. 85, a. 3.

¹⁶⁰ *ST III*, q. 46, a.6, corp. and ad 4.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Cant. 4:9.

including His mother, his beloved disciple, the centurion, and some women, this was indeed a son of God suffering. For that reason, the Church has affirmed, with St. Thomas, that even at the height of His agony, Christ maintained not only a profound peace born of tender and infinite love, but the Beatific Vision of the Divine Essence itself.¹⁶²

Returning to the commentary of Garrigou-Lagrance, it is said that as viewed from below, Christ's passion is "the hour of darkness and shame," but "when viewed from above, is also the glorious hour of salvation, the most fruitful for all souls."¹⁶³ The scholastic tradition maintains that even in His crucifixion, though He freely willed to abandon to suffering the lower regions of His faculties and sensibility, our Lord experienced fruition and Beatitude in the summit of His intellect and will.¹⁶⁴ That which is seen as dreadful to those in darkness is a font of delight for those in light. While appearing to those below as gruesome and cursed, our Lord's sacrifice is, in reality, the deepest act of felicitous love. The sacrifice of the Son is satisfactory to the Father. Rightly, the Church has called that day "good." For as St. Paul knows the wages of sin to be death, the wages of Christ-God dying are life, and a triumphant victory over death

¹⁶² Cf. *ST* III, q. 64., a. 4.

¹⁶³ Garrigou-Lagrance, *Our Savior and His Love for Us*, 291.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 276. See also *ST* III q. 15 a. 10 and *ST* III q. 34 a. 4.

itself. This is expressed beautifully in the Byzantine liturgy and elsewhere by the Paschal *troparion*:

Christ is risen from the dead,
Trampling down death by death,
And upon those in the tombs
Bestowing life!¹⁶⁵

As intense was the suffering of Christ in His hour, so intense was His love for goodness. He did truly desire to suffer for His beloved and this desire is particularly decisive after His prayer in the garden: “Rise, let us be on our way.”¹⁶⁶ His activity is not only intensely decisive from this moment in the garden but intensely passionate. He is at once completely dedicated to accomplish the perfect will of the Father and yet completely receptive to all that is given to Him. This period of decisive receptivity, most properly called the Passion of Christ, is the perfect image of benevolent love and at the same time the source of eternal life and knowledge to those affecting the victim. Thus, Christ actualizes our saving knowledge of Himself through His own suffering: *Christ is agent as patient*.

As we have said, the idea of “connatural knowledge” has taken on many forms in various currents of Thomistic thought. As a technical term, it can refer to that sort of knowledge which is not obtained conceptually by ratiocination and abstraction but by habitual inclination toward the good which is “co-natured with our very being.”¹⁶⁷ The

¹⁶⁵ Melkite Catholic Church, *The Lenten Triodion*, vol. iv. (Bedford, NH: Sophia Press, 2000). Cf. also 1 Cor. 15:55.

¹⁶⁶ Jn. 14:31. “*Surgite, eamus hinc.*” See also *ST* III, q. 47, a. 1, corp.

¹⁶⁷ Jacques Maritain, “On Knowledge Through Connaturality,” *Review of Metaphysics* 4 (1951): 473-481.

classical example of this distinction is a “learned” man who knows all the virtues versus a less educated man who, though he cannot identify them, does indeed possess them. The latter case is an example of connatural knowledge insofar as the object of knowledge is ingratiated into the very being of the knower; in this case we could rightly say that the man who knows virtues connaturally really *is* virtuous.¹⁶⁸ St. Thomas himself draws the distinction between connatural knowledge and other sorts of knowledge when elucidating the nature of the Holy Spirit’s supreme gift. Wisdom, he says, is caused by charity and a result of a certain “sympathy (*compassio*) or connaturality for Divine things.”¹⁶⁹ We wish to draw the reader’s attention here to two things: Firstly, while distinctions such as these are certainly helpful, taken much more broadly, there is a sense in which all knowledge is connatural. There is an axiom of St. Thomas that ought to be remembered in this discussion: “that which is received must be received in the mode of the receiver.”¹⁷⁰ The cognition of forms, in every respect, requires a certain likeness or connaturality.

Secondly, “*compassio*” is a notion built into St. Thomas’ understanding of connaturality; and while his explication of connatural knowledge in the aforementioned article serves well as an archetype for any analogous discussion of connaturality (viz. inclination or habit throughout the moral realm), the truest place that we can use this term is in the context of right judgment of Divine ideas and our “sympathetic” encounter with God, quite literally, in suffering with Christ.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 2.

¹⁷⁰ *ST* I, q. 84, a. 1 corp.

As we have noted, there is a twofold impulsion that draws *all things* to the cross. From the point of view of fallen man, under the patrimony of Satan¹⁷¹, the impetus toward Calvary is the murder of God – a subversion of Divine life. God, however, is impelled toward the cross by a great love for His enemies with whom He does desire to share His own life – the very life they are attempting to take. Thus, He is, in one respect, Victim, in another, Priest. But from either perspective, the final end is the same and it is nothing less than what Adam had first attempted to grasp: man’s knowledge of the Divine. Returning to the maxim of St. Thomas, that which is received must be received in the mode of the receiver, we are reminded that the mode of the receiver is passible flesh; God’s self-knowledge must be communicated to the Blessed in that mode. This is the scandal of the Eucharist. In the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel, Jesus exhorts His disciples that He is the bread of life, the bread that came down from heaven, His “flesh for the life of the world.”¹⁷² It is significant that St. John uses the same Greek work for “eat” in the first part of his exhortation; his account of this discourse is thoroughly magisterial in purpose¹⁷³ and seems designed to bring out the full implications of this meal:

Your ancestors ate (ἔφαγον) the manna in the wilderness, yet they died.
But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may

¹⁷¹ Jn. 8:44, “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” See also *ST I*, q. 65, a. 1 and *ibid.*, q. 114, a. 3, ad 2.

¹⁷² Jn. 6:52.

¹⁷³ Cf. *In Jn.* S. Thomae in Prologus S. Hieronymi. “Evangelium istud conscriptum fuit postquam Ioannes revocatus est a Pathmos insula Asiae, ubi ad preces episcoporum Asiae hoc scripsit Evangelium.” Regarding St. John’s intentions in the promulgation of the fourth Gospel, see also Marie-Dominique Philippe, O.P., *Wherever He Goes: A Retreat on the Gospel of John* (Laredo, Tex.: Congregation of St. John, 2001), 69-70.

eat (φάγη) and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats (φάγη) this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat (φαγεῖν)?” Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat (φάγητε) the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.¹⁷⁴

We remember here the context of this discourse. Human sacrifice and cannibalism were not uncommon in the ancient world, especially in religious ritual.¹⁷⁵ However, there were a few cultures in which cannibalism was *not* practiced – most notably Hellenistic, Roman, and Semitic. We could only imagine, then, the reaction of the Jewish and Greco-Roman crowd who had assembled to hear this man speak. But though they grumble and question, they are still listening. It is only until our Lord changes His tone to be more explicit that they lose patience. “He who eats (τρώγων) my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats (τρώγων) my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”¹⁷⁶ By concluding His exhortation with a different word for “eat,” “trōgōn,”

¹⁷⁴ Jn. 6:49-53.

¹⁷⁵ The existence of ritualistic sacrifice and cannibalism among Barbarian and Celtic cultures in the ancient world is well recorded by modern archeological and ancient accounts alike including those of Julius Caesar, Pliny the Elder, and Herodotus who documented ritualistic cannibalism in Scythia as early as the 5th century BC (*Histories*, Book 4): “The manners of the Anthropophagi are more savage than those of any other race. They neither observe justice, nor are governed, by any laws. They are nomads, and their dress is Scythian; but the language which they speak is peculiar to themselves. Unlike any other nation in these parts, they are cannibals.” Pliny the Elder, a contemporary of Jesus, recorded similarly (*Naturalis Historia* Book 7, Chapter 2): “The Anthropophagi, whom we have previously mentioned as dwelling ten days' journey beyond the Borysthenes, according to the account of Isigonus of Nicæa, were in the habit of drinking out of human skulls, and placing the scalps, with the hair attached, upon their breasts, like so many napkins.”

¹⁷⁶ Jn. 6:54-56.

literally, “eat as beasts eat” (τρόγος: to gnaw, munch, crunch), our Lord is being perfectly clear: our salvation must come through a real partaking in His passible flesh.

“As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats (τρώγων) me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate (ἔφαγον) and died; he who eats (τρώγων) this bread will live for ever.”¹⁷⁷ Through the difference in verbiage, the mode of consumption that Jesus intends for His people is contradistinguished from that of their fathers. There can be no mistake about the literal meaning behind our Lord’s words concerning His flesh as life-giving bread.

This teaching is especially hard for the Jews who were previously commanded to “not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.”¹⁷⁸ To the Jews, the blood in a creature was a sign of its life. Blood was used only for atonement on the altar and its consumption was prohibited because to share in a creature’s blood, would be to share in its bestial life.¹⁷⁹ The weight behind our Savior’s words becomes all the more impressive in this light when it is His blood that would be poured out on the altar of atonement as well as serve as the

¹⁷⁷ Jn. 6:57-58; see *In Jn.* VI, lect. 7, 980-81.

¹⁷⁸ Gen. 9:4.

¹⁷⁹ See Lev. 17:10-14: “If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust. For the life of every creature is the blood of it; therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.” Cf. also Deut. 28:53-57.

conduit for our share in His Divine life precisely insofar as it is received by us in our own ‘bestial’ mode.

Jesus’ words are the height of scandal to those who had been following Him. John tells us that many at that moment returned to their former ways of life and that Judas, as a consequence of this teaching, would betray his Master. This is no easier a teaching for us today; certainly every modern current of apostasy and betrayal is rooted in opposition to the doctrine of the Eucharist, but to explore this would be the subject of another essay. What we can note here is the correlation between tradition and betrayal at the heart of the apostolic commission of Maundy Thursday to promulgate the Bread of Life. Both tradition and betrayal come from the same word (*tradere*) and accomplish the same thing. Tradition is the handing on of the truth; betrayal is the handing over of the truth. Every apostle is charged with the duty and authority by which the truth shall be passed on; only Judas accomplishes this in the more sinister manner. But as St. John alone is aware at the last supper, it is this act of subversive *traditio* by which the saving hour of Jesus must be brought forth; again, the wicked human intentions and Divine salvific providence, in the cross, converge in purpose.

St. John concludes the Bread of Life discourse with our Lord putting forth a syllogism that is central to our thesis: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats (τρώγων) me will live because of me.”¹⁸⁰ Commenting on this passage, St. Thomas expounds, very interestingly, that this syllogism (more precisely, an enthymeme as the Evangelist leaves the reader to deduce the conclusion) can teach us

¹⁸⁰ Jn. 6:57.

about Christ from two perspectives: “either in reference to his human nature, or in reference to his divine nature.”¹⁸¹ St. Thomas renders the syllogism as follows:

Minor premise: Who ever eats me will live because of me.

Major premise: But I live because of the Father.

Conclusion: Therefore he who eats me lives (also) because of the Father.

“The Son,” says St. Thomas, “because of the unity He has with the Father, receives life from the Father; therefore one who is united to Christ receives life from Christ.”¹⁸²

Christ’s unity with the Father now shared carnally through the Eucharist is the connaturality that enables life-giving knowledge. St. Thomas expounds on the commonality of natures accomplished herein:

If they are explained as referring to Christ the Son of God, then the “as” implies a similarity of Christ to creatures in some respect, though not in all respects, which is, that he exists from another. For to be from another is common to Christ the Son of God and to creatures. But they are unlike in another way: the Son has something proper to Himself, because He is from the Father in such a way that he receives the entire fullness of the divine nature, so that whatever is natural to the Father is also natural to the Son... If we explain this statement as applying to Christ as man, then in some respect the “as” implies a similarity between Christ as man and us: that is, in the fact that as Christ the man receives spiritual life through union with God, so we too receive spiritual life in the communion or sharing in this Sacrament.¹⁸³

Christ “sent,” that is, incarnate, is given the life of the Father and the flesh of Mary. In the Word Incarnate is the fullness of both natures, human and Divine. He who eats Him, in His human nature, shall share in His Life – which is the fullness of every nature. This is why St. Thomas, following explicitly in the school of St. John, affirms that the

¹⁸¹ *In Jn.* VI, lect. 7, 977.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

sacraments derive their power and efficacy directly from Christ's passion as well as serve instrumentally to convey the merits of that passion to those who partake therein.¹⁸⁴ This sacramental action by which the connaturality of God and man is accomplished in the creature "involves an instrumental action fully subordinated and dependent on the divine principal cause"¹⁸⁵ which is, at the same time, done according to the finite mode of the receiver. The *passio* of the Incarnate Word operates sacramentally, not only as the cause of merit in the Blessed but as the instrumental agent of their sanctification. "The sacraments especially have their power from Christ's passion."¹⁸⁶ Sacraments convey and effect spiritual reality and salvific grace. As passible creatures, we need spiritual reality to be conveyed, not only under a sensible aspect, but in a way that overcomes our natural intellectual preference for the phantasm, the 'work of our hands.'¹⁸⁷ As instrumental cause, then, Christ's *passio* serves as the actuating principle of our Divine Knowledge in a similar way that the agent intellect serves as the actuating principle of sense knowledge. In the case of the former, the instrument (Christ's passion) conveys the particular created intellect to the spiritual Essence of God; whereas in the latter, the instrument (agent intellect) conveys the spiritual form of the particular creature to the intellect.

In His passionate mission, Jesus is sent to impart on us nothing less than the very

¹⁸⁴ *Super Sent.*, IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, corp.

¹⁸⁵ Blankenhorn, 263.

¹⁸⁶ *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5, corp.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *CG*, III, cap. 47, n. 1.: "Now, if we are not able to understand other separate substances in this life, because of the natural affinity of our intellect for phantasms, still less are we able in this life to see the divine essence which transcends all separate substances." The reader will also notice our allusion to the offertory prayer of the holy Mass.

Life of the Father. “And this is the will of the Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”¹⁸⁸ Truly, the Father has lavished upon us great love.¹⁸⁹

Mary’s complete and unreserved acceptance of the Eternal Word was, and is, a “yes” on the part of creation to be actualized. Christ’s acceptance of Mary’s flesh accomplished the perpetual union of humanity and Divinity. The fruit of this union, namely life eternal, is dispensed to the world from the tree of life: the Cross, at which Mary and Jesus are united in Heart and decisively passive, at once, to the will of the world and the will of the Father. Through this two-fold simultaneous acceptance of opposite wills (God and man), Beatitude is dispensed at Calvary and through the Holy Mass and man’s nature is fulfilled. God is offered to man and man to God. This sacrifice is perpetually being offered, through the Holy Mass, to allow those united in Christ to merit life in Him until Christ receives His Bride Glorious at the end of time. St. Thomas summarizes:

We do not say that Christ is daily crucified and killed [in the Mass]... Yet those things which carry with them Christ’s relation to God the Father are said to be done daily [in the Mass]: these are, to offer, to sacrifice, and the like. On that account the victim is perpetual, and was offered once by Christ in this manner that it might be daily offered by His members.¹⁹⁰

As St. Thomas has taught, Sacred Doctrine is God’s own self-knowledge revealed to the Blessed. Where man knows through the *passio* inherent in his own intellect, Sacred Doctrine – the Truth Who is Christ – can only be fully known through His own *Passio*

¹⁸⁸ Jn. 6:40.

¹⁸⁹ 1 Jn. 3:1.

¹⁹⁰ *Super Sent.* IV, d. 12, expos. text.

which is, at once, a Divine act of love (both dynamic and receptive) in which He gives Himself and receives the Church. With this understanding, we must conclude that the Passion of Christ is not merely an historical event, but a sacramental and epistemological receptive-act.

CONCLUSION

Christ's Passion, as we have discussed, is the consequence of love inherent in Being itself. It is the mode, freely chosen by God from the beginning, through which all salvific grace is bestowed upon man. It begins at the moment of the Incarnation; for in this moment, God chose to assume a passible nature for the sake of elevating the latter. This Passion ends at the moment of Christ's death, "*consummatum est.*"¹⁹¹ This is the appointed hour in which the Father is glorified by His Son and Glory is given to His Son in His humanity. All sanctifying grace is merited through Christ's Passion and heroic death. In Heaven, Christ, in His glorified Flesh, as such, does not obtain merit - nor does He suffer; for the time of merit is His hour of Passion. Grace is continually made available, however, through the Church, Christ's body, especially in baptism and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which is at every time a manifestation of the same meritorious Theandric sacrifice. Further, now that His hour of Passion has been made complete, Christ's humanity ascended to Heaven, gloriously impassible and having achieved merit through His Passion, communicates grace to His Church perpetually. The cause of this grace is God. And the living instrument by which this grace is bestowed is the pierced humanity of Jesus.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Jn. 19:30.

¹⁹² *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5 corp.

As we noted at the beginning of this work, Thomas teaches that Christ's Passion causes the salvation of the Blessed in five distinct ways,¹⁹³ one of which is as an efficient instrumental cause.¹⁹⁴ As we have shown, understanding Christ's Passion as the instrumental cause of Beatitude helps us to accept the correlation between Christ's receptive-act of suffering whereby He draws all men to Himself¹⁹⁵ and man's receptive-act of knowing in Beatitude. Our human act upon Christ in His passible humanity, namely that which caused his suffering by our depraved pursuit of Divine knowledge, willed freely by Him in love, is not only the cause of His wholly meritorious Theandric act, but at the same time the sole instrumental cause of our Beatific knowledge. This dynamically receptive act of mutual acceptance, which St. Thomas calls love, has its historical culmination at Calvary but is intrinsic to being itself and the impetus toward every act of knowledge – every act of truth, most finally, that of Beatitude. “Divine knowledge is the ultimate end of every act of human knowledge and every operation.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, Christ's historic *Passio* must be considered also as the final act of *passio (amor)* necessary for the fulfillment of the human knowing act. Though this love is supplied by God, it is received in a human mode.

As we have noted, man is *capax universi* - capable of the universe. As such, he possesses, by nature, an intrinsic openness to, and desire for, the whole of reality. Also,

¹⁹³ *ST* III, q. 46.

¹⁹⁴ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6 corp.: “Christ's Passion accomplishes man's salvation efficiently.”

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Jn. 12:32.

¹⁹⁶ *CG* III, 48, par. 9.: “*Est ergo cognitio divina finis ultimus omnis humanae cognitionis et operationis.*”

man's knowledge occurs, as the fruit of active intellectual dematerialization, in the passive (*patitur*) intellect. Thus, man is fundamentally passionate insofar as he is disposed to be affected by and drawn into being and insofar as he must accept reality as patient. God, however, is not fundamentally passionate insofar as He is at once the fullness of Being which He knows perfectly. But for St. Thomas, and indeed the whole of Western thought, the notion of "universal" carries a double meaning – it at once implies the totality of all that is (the Essence of God) as well as the essence of each and every intelligible thing that is known by God, and so knowable by man. In point of fact, the mind is *only* capable of knowing universals; strictly speaking it cannot perceive individual properties.¹⁹⁷ It is God, the Creator, Who has disposed man to know universals and disposed universals to be known by man. But the light of universal intelligibility is in no way limited to the created order: God Himself, as the most simple Being – Being as such – is supremely intelligible; thus, "the universality" intelligible by man indeed transcends merely passible reality, extends to, and is only fulfilled by knowledge of the ultimate universal, the mind of God. As the Apostle teaches, human fulfillment cannot occur until we "know as we are known;"¹⁹⁸ that is to say, "knowing universals through the Universal." Nevertheless, because 'the coin' of all knowledge, both transient, and Beatific, is precisely the universal form receptive to the passive intellect, every single act of human cognition, no matter how small, actuates the mind's innate potential for the whole. With this, it is easy to see why the Church has always taught that the Blessed

¹⁹⁷ *ST I*, q. 86, a. 1.

¹⁹⁸ 1 Cor. 13:12.

enjoy felicity of varying degrees in Heaven: the more one knows in this life, the more one knows of God; therefore, the more one knows in this life (insofar as the one knowing is animated by charity), the happier one shall be in the next.¹⁹⁹ The intensity of Beatitude possessed by our Blessed Mother surpasses that of all other saints combined – for she was chosen to *know* God the most. It is the light of intelligibility, transfigured in fullness for the Blessed after death, that permeates every aspect of passible creation, and to discover the eternal through the fleeting is something specifically human. Well did the poet, William Blake, write:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.
...And when this we rightly know
Thro' the World we safely go...²⁰⁰

The universal is, in every instance of knowledge, given to the human mind, by God, *through the passible* and apprehended by man through his passions – man *wants* to know.

Though the object of human knowledge is always universal, the mode of human knowledge *as acceptor* of reality is *passio*. In this way, *passio*, most especially, *amor*, as

¹⁹⁹ It is, of course, also the degree of charity, not merely of knowledge, that determines one's degree of beatitude. Mary is also loved by God and loves God herself more than any other creature. But, as we have shown above, the harmonization of the intellectual and volitional faculties is required for beatitude. Perhaps the best treatment on varying degrees of beatitude among the Blessed has been given to the Church by her youngest doctor: "I once told you how astonished I was that God does not give equal glory in heaven to all His chosen. I was afraid they were not at all equally happy. You made me bring Daddy's tumbler and put it by the side of my thimble. You filled them both with water and asked me which was fuller. I told you they were both full to the brim and that it was impossible to put more water in them than they could hold. And so, Mother darling, you made me understand that in heaven God will give His chosen their fitting glory and that the last will have no reason to envy the first. By such means, you made me understand the most sublime mysteries and gave my soul its essential food." St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*. (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 20.

²⁰⁰ William Blake, "To See a World," from *Auguries of Innocence: English Poetry II: From Collins to Fitzgerald*, vol. XLI, The Harvard Classics (New York: P.F. Collier & Son), 1909–14, 2001.

an epistemological impetus, is what elevates the human mind into the spiritual heart of a thing and into the universal or form. *Passio* is the conduit through which man is impelled into knowledge of the Divine. Mustn't we then acknowledge that for the sake of man's final knowledge, Christ, the absolute Universal entered into a human *Passio*? That Christ entered into *passio* and that man intellectually conforms to particular creatures through *passio* is no mere linguistic coincidence – both analogies of *passio* share the same epistemological end: Beatific knowledge, the light of glory bestowed upon passible man. Christ suffered in order to be intelligible to the suffering. “God Himself suffered ecstasy through love.”²⁰¹ It is only through this ecstasy, manifest in the incarnation and death of Jesus, that God, in His Essence, is known by the Blessed. In this light, we see how Christ's “apprehension” in the Garden takes on notably epistemological weight. Whereas men achieve intellectual knowledge of sensible reality passively only after the “reaching out,” dematerialization, and reductive act of the agent intellect, God is infinitely beyond the grasp of man's dynamic intellective power and so sent His Son to convey the Universal to the sensible, thereby rendering a connaturality and elevating the sensible to the Universal. For it is only through the *passio* of *Act Itself* that our passive intellects are finally actuated. In this way, the passion of Christ, in its broadest sense, that is, the entire passibility of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, deserves more consideration in the field of epistemology. We hope especially, given the findings of this thesis, to have encouraged more questions surrounding the nature of the active and passive dimensions of the human intellect in the light of Christ's passibility. That Christ has given all of

²⁰¹ *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 3, sed contra.

creation to the Father by giving all of Himself to creation is a mystery worthy of inexhaustible contemplation in this life and the next, but we have tried to cultivate some greater appreciation for the mystery of beatification in its context as a fundamentally intellectual operation that is inherently related to all human knowledge.

As the Father gives the Son glory, so the Son bestows it upon the Blessed along with all else that the Father has conferred upon the Son. This glory, veiled from earthly eyes during Christ's Passion, shall be demonstrated at the last judgment when, according to the Angelic Doctor, "time will stop"²⁰² and our Lord will show forth His communion with the Father, revealing at once that same communion shared with the Blessed saints Eucharistically, and executing the Father's justice upon all.²⁰³ "They shall look upon him who they have pierced" as their flesh is resurrected.²⁰⁴ Their judgment will be according to the disposition of their passion, principally that of their love. Those who have not voluntarily tended toward the truth shall be confirmed in that disposition; those who have shared in our Lord's Passion, shall be confirmed in Glory and share His joy eternally by intellecting the Divine Essence.

Just as every element of human flesh is ordered toward our knowing purposes, so too is every element of Christ's assumed flesh ordered toward *our* knowing purposes – for it is ordered ultimately toward His Cross, through which we come to know as we are

²⁰² *In Jn.* XI, lect. 5, 939.

²⁰³ *Suppl.* q. 90, a. 2 corp.

²⁰⁴ *Jn.* 19:37.

known.²⁰⁵ But as we reach out passionately in desire for Beatitude, Christ reaches out benevolently in His passion that we might share in His Beatitude. The bodily Passion of our Lord directly corresponds in purpose with the natural epistemological passions of His creatures. God's desire for man, and man's desire for God, embrace and interpenetrate in a mutual fiat, a unified act of intellectual acceptance, or love. Love is the acceptance of Being. In this way, the passionate fiat of Mary, as crowning point of creation, meets the passionate fiat of Jesus, the Lord of creation, in the Cross; and the consequence is the perfect actualization of created intellect in the Beatific Vision: that for which all things are made – the Truth.

²⁰⁵ 1 Cor. 13:12.

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