

“Father, If It Be Possible, Let This Chalice Pass from Me”: Christ’s Prayer in Gethsemane According to St. Thomas

KEVIN E. O’REILLY, O.P.

Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum)
Rome

THE FOCUS OF THIS ARTICLE is St. Thomas’s account of Christ’s prayer at question 21 of the *tertia pars* the *Summa Theologiae* (*ST*), where his prayer in Gethsemane enjoys a particular prominence. At the outset of this question Thomas reiterates what he has already said about prayer at question 83 of the *secunda secundae* in the course of a series of questions on the virtue of religion. In this regard, various texts indicate that prayer and subjection to God are intimately related. It should therefore be no surprise that Thomas places a question on Christ’s subjection to the Father before his treatment of Christ’s prayer. Christ’s obedience unto death on the Cross at once expresses both an attitude of perfect subjection to God and the ultimate realization of the virtue of religion. Since this attitude receives particular expression in his prayer in Gethsemane, Christ’s prayer can be said to possess a sacrificial character. The interpretation is further corroborated at question 22 of the *tertia pars*, which deals with Christ’s priesthood. Once again, Thomas’s treatment of the virtue of religion stands in the background, this time the question on sacrifice (*ST* II-II, q. 85). Of particular import is the idea that outward sacrifice points towards the “inward sacrifice” of “devotion, prayer, and other like interior acts.”¹

¹ *Summa Theologiae* (*ST*) II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from *ST* are from *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981)

The significance of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane can be properly understood, however, only in the light of the doctrine of the hypostatic union, of which Christ's prayer in general is a consequence. Of particular import in this regard is Thomas's dyotheletism, his espousal of the doctrine that Christ possessed two wills—a divine will and a human will. For, if Christ possessed only a divine will, then it would not have been necessary for him to pray. We therefore turn in the first instance to this doctrine. According to Thomas's analysis, Christ's human will was moved by the divine will but in accord with the exigencies of his humanity as animated with a rational soul and thus as moved by its own will. Viewed in this light, his human will can attain what it wishes only by the divine power. Thomas's rigorous adherence to the fact that Christ truly took on human flesh combines with his dyotheletism in helping to explain how Christ can recoil from the Father's will in his humanity while at the same time and without logical contradiction positing the perfect attunement of Christ's human will to the divine will. This perfect attunement of Christ's human will to the divine will, which his prayer in Gethsemane expresses, in effect constitutes the perfect spiritual sacrifice.

Christ's Possession of Two Wills and His Prayer

Thomas's Chalcedonian Christology leads him to endorse classical dyotheletism, the doctrine that there are two wills in Christ, in the course of the series of questions devoted to the consequences of the union, questions 16–26 of the *tertia pars* of *ST*. In article 1 of question 18, after outlining various historical heresies in this regard, Thomas quotes from Constantinople III, which decreed as follows: "In accordance with what the Prophets of old taught us concerning Christ, and as He taught us Himself, and the Symbol of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us, we confess two natural wills in Him and two natural operations."² Thomas has already shown that the Son of God assumed a perfect human nature.³ It follows, therefore, that he must have assumed a human will, since "the will pertains to the perfection

² See also *ST* III, q. 19, a. 1, where Thomas quotes from Act 18 of Constantinople III (the Sixth Council): "*We confess two natural, indivisible, unconvertible, unconfused, and inseparable operations in the same Lord Jesus Christ our true God; i.e. the Divine operation and the human operation.*" For a treatment of Constantinople III in St. Thomas's thought, see Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "Dyotheletism and the Instrumental Consciousness of Jesus," *Pro Ecclesia* 17 (2008): 396–422.

³ See *ST* III, q. 5; and q. 9, a. 1.

of human nature, being one of its natural powers.”⁴ At the same time, the assumption of human nature by the Son of God entailed no diminution on the part of the divine nature, “to which it belongs to have a will.”⁵ Hence, concludes Thomas, “it must be said that there are two wills in Christ, i.e. one human, the other Divine.”⁶

That Christ's prayer is to be understood in the light of his possession of two wills—and, by extension, in the light of the hypostatic union—is clearly in evidence from the outset in article 1 of question 21, where Thomas discusses whether it is becoming for Christ to pray. As he begins to lay out his own position, Thomas asserts that “prayer is the unfolding of our will to God, that He may fulfil it.”⁷ If Christ had possessed a divine will alone, it would not have been necessary for him to pray, since the divine will would have brought about whatever he wished. Christ, however, has two distinct wills, divine and human.⁸ In so far as the human will is concerned, Thomas clearly has in mind the will as reason (*ut ratio*),⁹ what Paul Gondreau refers to as “the higher internal appetitive ordering of the will to the universal good, to the *summum bonum*.”¹⁰ The human will in this sense achieves what it desires only by the power of the divine will. As Thomas explains in his express treatment of the two wills of Christ, his human will possessed a determinate mode on account of the fact that it was in the divine hypostasis: “it was always moved in accordance with the bidding of the Divine will.”¹¹ One must nevertheless avoid misunderstanding this assertion as meaning that there was no movement of the will proper to Christ's human nature. Thomas appeals in this regard to the example of the saints: their good wills are moved by God's will, “*Who worketh in them both to will and to accom-*

⁴ ST III, q. 18, a. 1 (see also ST I, qq. 79–80).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ST III, q. 21, a. 1.

⁸ See ST III, q. 18, a. 1.

⁹ It will be seen below that Thomas distinguishes between will as nature (*voluntas ut natura* [θελησις]) and will as reason (*voluntas ut ratio* [βουλησις]). Furthermore, as shall be seen, he maintains that sensuality or the sensual appetite can be regarded as “a will by participation” (ST III, q. 18, a. 2).

¹⁰ Paul Gondreau, “St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane,” in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 227.

¹¹ ST III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 4.

plish, as it is written Phil 2:13.”¹² Thomas’s invocation of the notion of instrumental causality is apt in this context: Christ’s human nature was the instrument of the Godhead according to its own exigencies, as an instrument animated with a rational soul and thus moved by its own will.¹³ The groundwork that Thomas lays in article 1 of question 18 thus establishes what he reiterates in article 1 of question 21: “The Divine and the human wills are distinct in Christ, and the human will of itself is not efficacious enough to do what it wishes, except by Divine power.” Thus, it belongs to Christ incarnate as possessing a human will to pray.¹⁴

¹² ST III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1.

¹³ See ST III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 2, where Thomas employs the analogy of a servant being moved to act by the command of his master to illustrate this point: “An instrument animated by a sensitive soul is moved by the sensitive appetite, as a horse by its rider; and an instrument animated with a rational soul is moved by its will, as by the command of his lord the servant is moved to act, the servant being like an animate instrument, as the Philosopher says (*Polit.* i, 2,4; *Ethic.* viii, 11). And hence it was in this manner that the human nature of Christ was the instrument of the Godhead, and was moved by its own will.” See also ST III, q. 19, a. 1, ad 2. On the movement of the human will in general by God, see ST I-II, q. 10, a. 4: “As Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* iv) *it belongs to Divine providence, not to destroy but to preserve the nature of things*. Wherefore it moves all things in accordance with their conditions; so that from necessary causes through the Divine motion, effects follow of necessity; but from contingent causes, effects follow contingently. Since, therefore, the will is an active principle, not determinate to one thing, but having an indifferent relation to many things, God so moves it, that He does not determine it of necessity to one thing, but its movement remains contingent and not necessary, except in those things to which it is moved naturally.” See also ST III, q. 19, a. 1: “In Christ the human nature has its proper form and power whereby it acts; and so has the Divine. Hence the human nature has its proper operation distinct from the Divine, and conversely. Nevertheless, the Divine Nature makes use of the operation of the human nature, as of the operation of its instrument; and in the same way the human nature shares in the operation of the Divine Nature, as an instrument shares in the operation of the principal agent. And this is what Pope Leo says (*Ep. ad Flavian.* xxviii): *Both forms* (i.e. both the Divine and the human nature in Christ) *do what is proper to each in union with the other, i.e. the Word operates what belongs to the Word, and the flesh carries out what belongs to flesh.*”

¹⁴ Thomas guards against the error of Nestorianism by emphasizing that operation pertains to a subsisting hypostasis in accordance with the form and nature from which it receives its species. Thus, writes Thomas, “from the diversity of forms or natures spring the divers[e] species of operations, but from the unity of hypostasis springs the numerical unity as regards the operation of the species: thus fire has two operations specifically different, namely, to illuminate and to heat, from the difference of light and heat, and yet the illumination

In this regard, it ought to be recalled that “prayer implies a certain ordering inasmuch as we desire something to be fulfilled by God; and this is the work of reason alone.”¹⁵ There is therefore an obvious sense in which prayer cannot be ascribed to sensuality, for the movement of sensuality is incapable of transcending material reality in order to rise up to God. The fact that the nature of Christ’s sensuality was identical with ours means that he did not pray with his sensuality either. There is, nevertheless, another sense in which we can pray according to our sensuality—when our prayer expresses to God the desire of our appetite or sensuality. Christ can be said to have prayed with his sensuality in this sense “inasmuch as his prayer expressed the desire of His sensuality, as if it were the advocate of the sensuality.”¹⁶ His intent in praying is thus once again to teach us. Antoine Guggenheim’s observation in this regard is worth noting: this instruction is a truly human act; if it were not so, it would not be salvific.¹⁷ Christ is not a spectator to his own prayer or to his own life—that would constitute a kind of Docetism; he acts, rather, in keeping with the demands of the economy of revelation according to the flesh.¹⁸ To pray with his sensuality shows that he had assumed human nature in its fullness with its natural affections. Obviously referring to Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane, moreover, Thomas argues that, in praying with his sensuality, Christ shows that it is possible for us to wish according to our natural desire what God does not wish. It shows finally “that man should subject his own will to the Divine will.”¹⁹ Thomas again quotes from Augustine to illustrate this point with the example of Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane: “Christ acting as a man, shows the proper will of a man when He says ‘Let this chalice pass from Me’; for this was the human will desiring something proper to itself and, so to say, private. But because He wishes man to be righteous and to

of the fire that illuminates at one and the same time is numerically one. So, likewise, in Christ there are necessarily two specifically different operations by reason of His two natures; nevertheless, each of the operations at one and the same time is numerically one, as one walking and one healing” (*ST III*, q. 19, a. 1, ad 3).

¹⁵ *ST III*, q. 21, a. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Antoine Guggenheim, *Jésus Christ, Grand Prêtre de l'ancienne et de la nouvelle Alliance: Étude théologique et herméneutique du Commentaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin sur l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2004), 206.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 206–7.

¹⁹ *ST III*, q. 21, a. 2.

be directed to God, He adds: 'Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt,' as if to say, 'See thyself in Me, for thou canst desire something proper to thee, even though God wishes something else.'"²⁰ Christ's reason did not in fact desire the fulfilment of the petition that He might not drink of the chalice that was his Passion and death on the Cross. His example of prayer was rather for our instruction by making known to us "His natural will, and the movement of His sensuality, which was His as man."²¹

Christ's prayer in Gethsemane witnesses to the fact that, in him, there was a will of sensuality in addition to a will of reason, since "the Son of God assumed human nature together with everything

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *ST* III, q. 21, a. 4, ad 1. See also, for example, *Super Ioan.* 17, lect. 1: "There is a difference between the prayer of Christ and our own prayer: our prayer arises solely from our needs, while the prayer of Christ is more for our instruction, for there was no need for him to pray for himself, since together with his Father he answers prayers. He instructs us here by his words and actions. He teaches us by his actions in lifting up his eyes, so that we also will lift our eyes to heaven when we pray: 'To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!' (Ps 123:1). And not just our eyes, but also our actions, by referring them to God: 'Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven' (Lam 3:41). He teaches us by his words, for he said his prayer publicly, and said, so that those whom he taught by teaching he might also teach by praying. We are taught not just by the words of Christ, but also by his actions"; see *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P., and James A. Weisheipl, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), no. 2179. While John 17 recounts Christ's priestly prayer at the Last Supper, its focus is decidedly different from that of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. For one thing, it is removed from the context of Christ's anguish in Gethsemane immediately prior to his Passion, the context that calls for a discussion of his two wills. In the commentary on John 17, this anguish therefore does not enter into Thomas's considerations. Thus, in commenting on Christ's sacrifice he writes, "And so it was appropriate that some sacrifice be offered for the sanctification of the disciples. This is what he is saying: I sanctify myself in order that they might be sanctified, that is, I am offering myself as a sacrifice: 'who offered himself without blemish to God' (Heb 9:14)" (*Super Ioan.* 17, lect. 4, no. 2231). Indeed, in keeping with the text on which he is commenting, Thomas's emphasis is on Christ's glory. Apart from five occurrences of the word "glory" in the block quotations of the Gospel text, there are seventy-nine other occurrences of it in Thomas's commentary—an indication of the importance of this notion. Finally, the genre of Thomas's commentary on John 17 is very different from *ST*. The former is a verse by verse commentary on the Gospel text, while the latter is a systematic treatise structured according to Thomas's theological design. That Thomas's structural choices in *ST* have a theological significance is the point of this present article with regard to Christ's prayer.

pertaining to the perfection of human nature.”²² Since animal nature is included in human nature as a genus in its species, the Son of God necessarily assumed all that pertains to our animal nature, including the sensitive appetite or sensuality, described by Gondreau as movements of a “lower animal-like inclination to sense goods or evils.”²³ In other words, Christ's experience of the passions is implicit in his assumption of human nature.²⁴ Christ in his human nature was, as Gondreau puts it, “subject to an affective type of willing, a type of willing connected to the desire for bodily goods.”²⁵ In this respect, it must be borne in mind that it is the human *compositum* that is subject

²² *ST* III, q. 18, a. 2.

²³ Gondreau, “St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ,” 226.

²⁴ See *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4: “The affections of the sensitive appetite are most properly called passions of the soul. Now these were in Christ, even as all else pertaining to man's nature.” Earlier in this question (*ST* III, q. 15, a. 2, ad 2), Thomas writes: “The flesh naturally seeks what is pleasing to it by the concupiscence of the sensitive appetite; but the flesh of man, who is a rational animal, seeks this after the manner and order of reason. And thus with the concupiscence of the sensitive appetite Christ's flesh naturally sought food, drink, and sleep, and all else that is sought in right reason, as is plain from Damascene (*De Fide Orth.* iii, 14).”

At the same time, it ought to be noted that, according to Thomas, Christ's experience of the passions differed from ours in certain ways. On this point, see *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4: “The passions were in Christ otherwise than in us, in three ways. First, as regards the object, since in us these passions very often tend towards what is unlawful, but not so in Christ. Secondly, as regards the principle, since these passions in us frequently forestall the judgment of reason; but in Christ all movements of the sensitive appetite sprang from the disposition of the reason. Hence Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* xiv, 9), that *Christ assumed these movements, in His human soul, by an unfailing dispensation, when He willed; even as He became man when He willed.* Thirdly, as regards the effect, because in us these movements, at times, do not remain in the sensitive appetite, but deflect the reason; but not so in Christ, since by His disposition the movements that are naturally becoming to human flesh so remained in the sensitive appetite that the reason was nowise hindered in doing what was right. Hence Jerome says (on Matt 26:37) that *Our Lord, in order to prove the reality of the assumed manhood, ‘was sorrowful’ in very deed; yet lest a passion should hold sway over His soul, it is by a propassion that He is said to have ‘begun to grow sorrowful and to be sad’; so that it is a perfect passion when it dominates the soul, i.e. the reason; and a propassion when it has its beginning in the sensitive appetite, but goes no further.*”

²⁵ Gondreau, “St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ,” 227.

to passion: *compositum patitur*.²⁶ Robert Miner explains Thomas's position well: "The passions are in the sensitive appetite, but the sensitive appetite itself belongs to the form/matter composite, since it requires a bodily organ for its operation."²⁷ According to the hylomorphic structure of the passions, "the formal element is the movement of the appetitive power, while the bodily transmutation is the material element."²⁸

Thomas's hylomorphism also entails certain consequences for how he construes the relationship between the passions and reason. It is not possible to discuss this relationship at length within the confines of this article, but one aspect demands our attention, the relationship of dynamic reciprocal influence between reason and the passions. The analogy of political power, taken from Aristotle, suggests itself for the passions, since they are free and, thus, possess "a certain right of opposition."²⁹ The passions are therefore capable of undermining the judgment of reason. On the other hand, when they do follow the lead of reason, being thereby "rationalized,"³⁰ they facilitate its command, since they are disposed toward the good that is in accord with reason. As Mark D. Jordan puts it, "so far as the passions are brought under right reason, they increase the exercise of reason and so nearness to the good."³¹ It is precisely this idea that Thomas brings to bear on his discussion in article 2 of question 18, concerning whether there was a will of sensuality in Christ, when he writes: "It must be

²⁶ ST I-II, q. 22, a. 1.

²⁷ Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32.

²⁸ ST I-II, q. 44, a. 1.

²⁹ Ibid. Freedom is not ascribed in the same univocal sense to the lower appetite as it is to the rational appetite (the will). As Gondreau points out, however, its ascription to the lower appetite is not merely metaphorical either. He explains: "Aquinas truly believes that the dynamic interplay between our higher faculties and our lower ones is such that, through the work of moral virtue, reason and will penetrate into the very sensitive appetite and endow it with a real, albeit derived and partial, sharing in rationality and freedom. For Thomas, the lower appetite, our animal-like inclination to bodily goods, has the capability of becoming rational (and thus free) by participation" ("St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ," 230).

³⁰ This expression is borrowed from the title of Elisabeth Uffenheimer-Lippens's article "Rationalized Passion and Passionate Rationality: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation Between Reason and the Passions," *The Review of Metaphysics* 56 (2003): 525–58.

³¹ Mark D. Jordan, "Aquinas's Construction of a Moral Account of the Passions," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 33 (1986): 92.

borne in mind that sensuality or the sensual appetite, inasmuch as it naturally obeys reason, is said to be *rational by participation*,” a point gleaned from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.³² Since “the will is in the reason,”³³ it can be said by logical extension that the sensuality is “a will by participation.”³⁴

In discussing the act of Christ’s will, Thomas distinguishes between “simple will,” or “will as nature” (*voluntas ut natura*; *θέλησις*), and “counselling will,” or “will as reason” (*voluntas ut ratio*; *βούλησις*), a distinction drawn from Damascene.³⁵ In the case of *voluntas ut natura*, the will is borne toward the end simply and absolutely “as towards what is good in itself,”³⁶ while in the case of *voluntas ut ratio*, it is borne toward the means under a certain relation, since “the goodness of the means depends on something else.”³⁷ Thus, for example, we desire health by an act of simple willing, whereas we desire medicine, a means to health, by an act of the counselling will.

The significance of Christ’s twofold will according to his human nature—“the will of sensuality, which is called will by participation, and the rational will, whether considered after the manner of nature, or after the manner of reason”³⁸—for Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane begins to emerge in Thomas’s discussion in article 5 of question 18, about whether the human will of Christ was altogether conformed to the divine will in the thing willed. Indeed, the quotation from Augustine in the *sed contra* indicates as much: “Augustine says (*Contra Maxim.* ii, 20): *When Christ says ‘Not what I will, but what*

³² See *Nicomachean ethics* 1.13.

³³ On this point, see *ST* I, q. 87, a. 4, and q. 87, a. 4, ad 3. See also *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, a. 13, ad 12: “The will exists in the reason inasmuch as it follows the apprehension of the reason” (“*voluntas est in ratione in quantum sequitur apprehensionem rationis*”; my own translation from the Marietti/Turin edition available at <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/qda01.html>, last accessed Jan 30, 2017). Expressed otherwise, Thomas states, “the intellect moves the will, because the good understood is the object of the will, and moves it as an end” (*ST* I, q. 82, a. 4). For a treatment of the participation of the will in the reason, see Tibor Horvath, S.J., *Caritas est in Ratione: Die Lehre des hl. Thomas über die Einheit der intellektiven und affectiven Begnadung des Menschen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1966), 48–58.

³⁴ *ST* III, q. 18, a. 2.

³⁵ *ST* III, q. 18, a. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.* These acts do not of course diversify the power, since “both acts regard the one common ratio of the object, which is goodness” (*ibid.*). In other words, there is in Christ but one human will.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *ST* III, q. 18, a. 5. The will so construed is, in effect, threefold.

Thou wilt' He shows Himself to have willed something else than did His Father." Thomas takes this recoiling from the Father's will seriously; it is not something to be explained away, especially in view of what Gondreau describes as Thomas's "view of the human being (which he ascribes here to Christ) as an integrated, participated whole, by which the various powers of the soul retain an intimate synergistic union with each other."³⁹ As truly human, the will of sensuality in Christ "naturally shrinks from sensible pains and bodily hurt."⁴⁰ In like manner, Christ's *voluntas ut natura* "turns from what is against nature and what is evil in itself, as death and the like."⁴¹ In contrast, it was by his *voluntas ut ratio* that Christ willed to fulfil the divine will—namely that He should undergo pain, suffering, and death for our salvation. In brief, it is clear that "in His will of sensuality and in His rational will considered as nature, Christ could will what God did not; but in His will as reason He always willed the same as God, which appears from what He says (Matt 26:39): *Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*"⁴²

While Thomas preserves the perfect conformity between Christ's divine and human wills by invoking the distinction between *voluntas ut natura* and *voluntas ut ratio*, there nevertheless remains an issue concerning a seeming discord between Jesus's lower sensitive powers/emotions and his reason and will. In this regard, Gondreau points out that Jesus's aversion to death corresponds to "the natural, instinctive, affective, aversion to death that all animals (as with all creatures) possess; his aversion to death does not pertain to a fully elicited appetitive movement as such."⁴³ As such, it does not constitute a movement of passion that opposes the command of reason and will. Instinctive affective reactions still remain part of the human lot even in the case of a human being who is perfectly virtuous, since the sensitive appetite enjoys a quasi-autonomy. Crucially, in the case of Christ, however, as Gondreau writes, these reactions "are finalized by reason, that is, they are fully integrated into Christ's perfection in moral virtue before they reach the stage of a fully elicited movement of the lower appetite."⁴⁴ Prayer as the ordering force of reason

³⁹ Gondreau, "St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ," 233.

⁴⁰ *ST* III, q. 18, a. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* On this point see also *Compendium theologiae*, ch. 233.

⁴³ Gondreau, "St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ," 235.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 236.

brought to bear upon our desire so that this desire is conformed to the divine will finds its perfect exemplar in Christ's prayer.

In the final article of Thomas's discussion of Christ's two wills we encounter a reference to what constitutes a fully elicited movement of the sensitive appetite: "There was an agony in Christ with regard to the sensitive part, inasmuch as it implies a fear of imminent trial, as Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.* ii, 15; iii, 18, 23)."⁴⁵ Christ's experience of fear, however, did not entail a disruption of the *imperium* of reason and will over the sensitive appetite. Thomas categorizes it elsewhere as a "propassion" in order to distinguish it from the passion of fear that "implies a perfect passion drawing man from what reason dictates."⁴⁶ In other words, Jesus's experience of fear was rightly ordered. As Craig Steven Titus writes with respect to Jesus's experience of sorrow, he was "rightly affected by the object, without unreasonable resultant action"⁴⁷ so that "He was not deflected from His mission, which involved knowledge, freedom, and surety, that is, a moral act."⁴⁸ Jesus, "the man of consummate moral virtue,"⁴⁹ experienced fear in a way that did not come into direct conflict with the Father's will.⁵⁰ In other words, fear did not undermine the perfection of his prayer.

This section has highlighted the significance of the hypostatic union for a proper understanding of Christ's prayer. This doctrine

⁴⁵ ST III, q. 18, a. 6, ad 3 (my translation from the Leonine edition, available at <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth4016.html#47733>, last accessed Jan 30, 2017). Thomas treats the passion of fear at length earlier in ST I-II, qq. 41–44.

⁴⁶ ST III, q. 15, a. 7, ad 1. As already noted, Thomas discusses the difference between Christ's passions and our passions in ST III, q. 15, a. 4 (see note 24 above). For a discussion of the notion that "the passions were in Christ otherwise than in us," see Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Scranton, PA / London: University of Scranton Press, 2009), 333–74. Gondreau comments that "Jesus enjoyed a moral integrity characterized by a radically extensive penetration of reason into his sensibility, whereby every movement of his affectivity was instinctively and innately oriented to the exercise of virtue" (373).

⁴⁷ Craig Steven Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychosocial Sciences* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 334.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 335.

⁴⁹ Gondreau, "St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ," 238.

⁵⁰ In the case of fear as a propassion, therefore, Thomas does not need to invoke the distinction between *voluntas ut natura* and *voluntas ut ratio*.

requires that we ascribe two wills to Christ—a human will and a divine will. It is inasmuch as Christ possesses a human will that he prays, since “the human will of itself is not efficacious enough to do what it wishes, except by Divine power.”⁵¹ While prayer is essentially an act of reason, there is a sense in which it can express the desire of sensuality, as if it were its advocate. Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane, which, like all his prayer, serves as an example for our instruction is a case in point,⁵² shows us that, while it is possible for natural desire to be inclined to what God does not wish, man should nevertheless “subject his own will to the Divine will.”⁵³ Thomas’s hylomorphic anthropology allied with his dyotheletism allows him to take Christ’s recoiling from the Father’s will in his humanity seriously while, at the same time and without logical contradiction, positing the perfect conformity of Christ’s human will to the divine will.

My next section turns to a consideration of the virtue of religion, which “excels among the moral virtues,”⁵⁴ and of Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane. While it presupposes the doctrines of the hypostatic union and of Christ’s possession of two wills, Thomas’s account of Christ’s prayer also presupposes what he has written in the *secunda pars* about the virtue of religion. Prayer, along with devotion, is one of the internal acts of this virtue. Since he possessed all the virtues perfectly, Christ necessarily had the virtue of religion and, thus, also exemplified a constant attitude of prayer. In this regard, careful attention to the relevant texts shows that prayer and subjection to God are intimately related: prayer expresses our subjection to God and our confession of our need of him as the author of what promotes our well-being.⁵⁵ Thomas’s placement of a question on Christ’s subjection to the Father before his treatment of Christ’s prayer should be seen in this light. Christ’s obedience unto death on the Cross at once furnishes both the all-surpassing attitude of subjection to God and the ultimate realization of the virtue of religion. The outward sacrifice of the Cross is, however, ordered toward “devotion, prayer, and other like interior acts.”⁵⁶ It follows, therefore, that Christ’s prayer is intimately associated with his priesthood, treated by Thomas in question 22 of the *tertia pars*, immediately following his discussion of

⁵¹ ST III, q. 21, a. 1.

⁵² See, for example, *Super Ioan.* 17, lec. 1 (quoted above in note 21).

⁵³ ST III, q. 21 a. 2.

⁵⁴ ST II-II, q. 81, a. 6.

⁵⁵ See ST II-II, q. 83, a. 3.

⁵⁶ ST II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2.

Christ's prayer, since the notion of sacrifice, one of the external acts of religion, is essential to this office. The position of the question on Christ's prayer—between considerations of his subjection to the Father and of his priesthood—indicates that his prayer is sacrificial in character. The primary example adduced by Thomas in this regard is Christ's prayer in Gethsemane.

The Sacrificial Character of Christ's Prayer

As we have already intimated, Thomas begins his treatment of Christ's prayer by recalling what he has already written about prayer in question 83 of the *secunda secundae*, in the course of a series of questions on the virtue of religion. In the first two articles of that question, it becomes clear that "prayer is the unfolding of our will to God, that He may fulfil it."⁵⁷ If Christ possessed but a divine will, it would clearly not have been fitting for him to pray, since "the Divine will of itself is effective of whatever He wishes by it, according to Psalms. 134:6: *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, He hath done*."⁵⁸ The distinction between the divine and human wills in Christ means, however, that it belonged to Christ as a man possessing a human will to pray, since "the human will of itself is not efficacious enough to do what it wishes."⁵⁹ The grace of Christ, however, was most perfect, and so there flowed from it "the virtues which perfect the several powers of the soul for all the soul's acts."⁶⁰ He therefore possessed all the virtues—including the virtue of religion, which excels all the others inasmuch as "its actions are directly and immediately ordered to the honor of God."⁶¹ By this virtue, his mind was perfectly subjected to God⁶² and revered him "as the first principle of the creation and government of things."⁶³ One might say that Christ in his human nature possessed an unfailing attitude of prayer, since, as Thomas writes concerning prayer, "man shows reverence to

⁵⁷ *ST* III, q. 21 a. 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* See also *ST* II-II, q. 83, a. 10, ad, 1: "The Son is said to ask or pray in respect of His assumed, i.e. His human, nature and not in respect of His Godhead."

⁶⁰ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 2.

⁶¹ *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 6. Thomas does not state explicitly that Christ had the virtue of religion. As R. Jared Staudt explains, however, that Christ did in fact possess this virtue "is clearly inferred through his religious acts"; see "Did Christ Worship the Trinity?" *The Thomist* 76 (2012): 245. Staudt then proceeds to offer abundant evidence from the *Summa* to support this point (*ibid.*, 243–53).

⁶² See *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 7.

⁶³ *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 3.

God by means of prayer, in so far as he subjects himself to Him, and by praying confesses that he needs Him as the Author of his goods.”⁶⁴ Expressed otherwise, “the mind of Christ was always raised up to God, since He was always contemplating him as existing above himself.”⁶⁵

One might wonder, however, how Thomas’s portrayal of Christ’s prayer tallies with his anti-Nestorian attitude, since he is clear that there is only one Person in Christ. In other words, does Christ as God pray to himself? The response to this question is provided by the doctrine of the hypostatic union: Christ in his humanity prays to God, to whom, in the Person of the Word, his human soul is hypostatically united. Adapting R. Jared Staudt’s words, we can say that Christ prays to God through his human and creaturely soul “in respect of God’s pre-eminence both as creator and as end.”⁶⁶ One could employ Thomas’s own words in relation to the virtue of religion to Christ in his humanity: Christ in his humanity prays to God “as the first principle of the creation and government of things.”⁶⁷ God’s Trinitarian being demands moreover that Christ’s prayer, which is directed to the Person of the Father, is, by logical extension, communicated to the other divine Persons.⁶⁸ Indeed, as created,

⁶⁴ ST II-II, q. 83, a. 3.

⁶⁵ ST III, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3. In another sense “the human mind of Christ did not need to rise to God, since it was ever united to God both by personal being and by the blessed vision” (ibid.). Thomas is here quoting from John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3.24. Underlying both these formulations is the notion that a nature always implies a hypostatic subject that always acts in and through a nature. Thus, as White explains, “the unity of activity of the Incarnate Word requires the beatific vision in the intellect of Christ, so that his human will and his divine will *may cooperate* within one subject”; see White, “The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision,” *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 507. Elsewhere White writes that “the *natural operations* of Christ’s mind and will are treated as principles of activity, even as these transpire within the unity of his unique person, the Son of God. Because they can be identified as distinct principles of natural operations, they can also be treated as grammatical subjects of activity” (White, “Dyothelitism,” 398–99).

⁶⁶ Staudt, “Did Christ Worship the Trinity?” 257.

⁶⁷ ST II-II, q. 81, a. 3. See also ST II-II, q. 81, a. 3, ad 3: “By praying man surrenders his mind to God, since he subjects it to Him with reverence and, so to speak, presents it to Him. . . . Wherefore just as the human mind excels exterior things, whether bodily members, or those external things that are employed for God’s service, so too, prayer surpasses other acts of religion.”

⁶⁸ See Staudt, “Did Christ Worship the Trinity?” 257: “To say that Christ as a man does not worship (offer acts of adoration and *latria*) himself as divine as a separate subject is crucial in upholding anti-Nestorian doctrine. There is only

Christ's humanity is dependent on God and is therefore subject to God in three ways, a subjection that "Christ professes of Himself."⁶⁹ As Staudt writes, "Christ's humanity is subject to the Holy Trinity and thus owes it the honor due from all human beings (though Christ is not a human person)."⁷⁰ Indeed, Christ's prayer does not pertain to his divine nature and, hence, does not imply, as Thomas Joseph White, O.P., explains, "an eternal subordination or obedience within the uncreated Trinity."⁷¹ Nevertheless, White elaborates, "this prayer is expressive of an inner-Trinitarian relation. It reveals to us the relation that the person of the Son has with respect to the Father: Jesus receives all that he is and has both as God and man from the Father as his origin."⁷² Christ's prayer is "a human mode of expression of his intra-Trinitarian filial identity."⁷³

According to Thomas, prayer and subjection to God are intimately connected: by means of prayer, we subject ourselves to him and confess that we need him as the author of what conduces to our well-being.⁷⁴ Human nature, he tells us as he begins his discussion of Christ's subjection to the Father, is characterized by a threefold subjection to God.⁷⁵ The first kind of subjection pertains to our participation in the divine goodness as created effects of his creative causality. Interestingly, Thomas construes this subjection in a positive light: participation in the divine goodness means that human nature, like any created nature, is subject to the rays of God's goodness.

one person in Christ. Yet this does not mean that we must *de facto* rule out Christ's worship of the Holy Trinity, for two reasons. First, there is reverence in the human soul of Christ toward God, to whom, in the second person, this human soul is hypostatically united. Second, the worship which is directed to the person of the Father is communicated to the other persons." These comments are equally applicable to Christ's prayer, and this idea is supported by *ST* III, q. 26, a. 2: as God, Christ "does not differ from the Father and the Holy Ghost in nature and power of dominion: nor have the Father and the Holy Ghost anything that the Son has not, so that He be able to communicate to others something belonging to the Father or the Holy Ghost, as though it were belonging to others than Himself."

⁶⁹ *ST* III, q. 20, a. 1.

⁷⁰ Staudt, "Did Christ Worship the Trinity?" 262.

⁷¹ Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 527.

⁷² *Ibid.* Imitation of Christ's example draws the believer into this relation.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 528.

⁷⁴ See *ST* II-II, q. 83, a. 3

⁷⁵ See *ST* III, q. 20, a. 1.

The second kind of subjection relates to God's power "inasmuch as human nature, even as every creature, is subject to the operation of the Divine ordinance."⁷⁶ This second aspect of our subjection to God clearly places Thomas's discussion in the context of divine providence.⁷⁷ It is in this context that prayer finds its place, for, as Thomas tells us, "we pray not that we may change the Divine disposition [*divinam dispositionem*], but that we may impetrate that which God has disposed [*disposuit*] to be fulfilled by our prayers, in other words *that by asking, men may deserve to receive what Almighty God from eternity has disposed [disposuit] to give*, as Gregory says (*Dial.* i, 8)."⁷⁸ Christ's prayer in particular ought to be understood in this way, inasmuch as all that befell him is believed to have happened to him according to what God had disposed ("omnia quae circa humanitatem Christi acta sunt, divina dispositione gesta creduntur").⁷⁹

The third aspect of our subjection to God pertains to the proper act of human nature, "inasmuch as by its own will it obeys His command."⁸⁰ Thomas has previously established that God is the cause of the human soul's movement for two reasons: firstly, because the will is the power of the rational soul that "is caused by God alone, by creation";⁸¹ secondly, because the will is intrinsically ordered towards the universal Good, God himself.⁸² These two reasons form the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See *ST* I, q. 22, a. 1: "It is necessary to attribute providence to God. For all the good that is in created things has been created by God. . . . In created things good is found not only as regards their substance, but also as regards their order towards an end and especially their last end, which . . . is the divine goodness. . . . This good of order existing in things created, is itself created by God. Since, however, God is the cause of things by His intellect, and thus it behooves that the type of every effect should pre-exist in Him, as is clear from what has gone before (q. 19, a. 4), it is necessary that the type of the order of things towards their end should pre-exist in the divine mind: and the type of things ordered towards an end is, properly speaking, providence."

⁷⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 83, a. 2.

⁷⁹ *ST* III, q. 20, a. 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6. See also *ST* I, q. 90, a. 2.

⁸² Ibid. Thomas continues: "Every other good is good by participation, and is some particular good, and a particular cause does not give a universal inclination" (ibid.). See also *ST* I-II, q. 2, a. 8: "It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls 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

basis for the virtue of religion—of which prayer is one of the chief acts, since “by it religion directs man’s intellect to God.”⁸³ Religion, Thomas explains, properly denotes “a relation to God,”⁸⁴ since “it is He to Whom we ought to be bound as to our unfailing principle; to Whom also our choice should be resolutely directed as to our last end.”⁸⁵ Religion is a virtue annexed to the virtue of justice, the essential character of which “consists in rendering to another his due according to equality.”⁸⁶ Religion thus shares in common with justice the fact of rendering someone—namely, God—what is due to him. At the same time, the virtue of religion falls short of the perfection of justice inasmuch as man can never render God as much as he owes him. It is in this sense that Thomas argues that, “just as all natural things are subject to the divine motion by a natural necessity, so too all wills, by a kind of necessity of justice, are bound to obey the divine command.”⁸⁷ According to Thomas, Christ ascribes this kind of subjection to himself. John 8:29 supports this contention: “I do always the things that please Him.”⁸⁸ Christ is here referring to his subjection to the Father in his obedience unto death. Scripture is once again invoked in this regard: “Hence it is written (Phil 2:8) that he became *obedient* to the Father *unto death*.”⁸⁹ The Cross thus proves to be defining with regard to Christ’s exercise of the virtue of religion in his subjection and obedience to the Father. Since prayer and subjection to God are intimately associated and prayer is an internal act of the virtue of religion—to which external acts such as sacrifice are ordered—it follows that Christ’s Cross is also defining with regard to his prayer. In other words, Christ’s prayer is sacrificial in character.

While Thomas does indeed refer to various texts that record Christ’s prayer, it remains that the greatest emphasis in this regard

that naught can lull 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 Ps 102:5: *Who satisfieth thy desire with good things*. Therefore God alone constitutes man’s happiness.”

⁸³ ST II-II, q. 83, a. 3.

⁸⁴ ST II-II, q. 81, a. 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ ST II-II, q. 80, a. 1.

⁸⁷ ST II-II, q. 104, a. 4. God communicates His commands to us either by the natural law or by the written law (see ST II-II, q. 104, a. 5, ad 2).

⁸⁸ ST III, q. 20, a. 1.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

concerns his prayer in Gethsemane.⁹⁰ It furnishes the primary illustration employed by Thomas at the second article of question 21 of the *tertia pars* in answering the question of whether it pertains to Christ to pray according to his sensuality. In his response, as we have seen, Thomas points out that Christ could be said to have prayed with his sensuality “inasmuch as His prayer expressed the desire of His sensuality, as if it were the advocate of the sensuality.”⁹¹ Among the things that Christ’s example in this regard teaches us is that “man should subject his own will to the Divine will.”⁹² Implicated here, as we have seen, is Thomas’s espousal of Constantinople III’s teaching concerning Christ’s two wills. He quotes a passage from Augustine in this regard, a passage that focuses on Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane.⁹³

The third article of question 21, informed by Thomas’s dyotheletism, also makes reference to this particular prayer of Christ in the course of an explanation of the two ways in which Christ prayed for himself. Connecting with the previous article, Thomas states that Christ prayed “by expressing the desire of His sensuality, as stated above (a. 2); or also of His simple will, considered as a nature; as when He prayed that the chalice of His Passion might pass from Him (Matt 26:39).”⁹⁴ The response of the final article of this question (a. 4) does not mention the prayer in Gethsemane directly, but exegesis of the *sed contra* by way of reference to Thomas’s commentary on

⁹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, in elaborating the basis for a spiritual Christology, points out that “the entire gospel testimony is unanimous that Jesus’ words and deeds flowed from his most intimate communion with the Father; that he continually went ‘into the hills’ to pray in solitude after the burden of the day (e.g., Mk 1:35; 6:46; 14:35, 39)”; see Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to Spiritual Christology*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), 17. Luke’s Gospel in particular emphasizes this reality. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *sed contra* of Thomas’s first article on Christ’s prayer draws upon this Gospel: “It is written (Luke 4:12): *And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God*” (ST III, q. 20, a. 1, sc).

⁹¹ ST III, q. 21, a. 2.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.: “Christ acting as a man, shows the proper will of a man when He says ‘Let this chalice pass from Me’; for this was the human will desiring something proper to itself and, so to say, private. But because He wishes man to be righteous and to be directed to God, He adds: ‘Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt,’ as if to say, ‘See thyself in Me, for thou canst desire something proper to thee, even though God wishes something else.’”

⁹⁴ ST III, q. 21, a. 3.

Hebrews 5:7 will reveal its implicit presence.⁹⁵ This implicit presence is significant for how we understand Thomas's response: Christ's prayer has a sacrificial tenor, a cruciform character. A final reference to Christ's prayer in Gethsemane occurs in response to an objection in which Thomas points out its pedagogical function: "For our instruction, it was His will to make known to us His natural will, and the movement of His sensuality, which was His as man."⁹⁶

Christ's prayer in Gethsemane looms large throughout the first three articles of question 21 of the *tertia pars*, but in the final article (a. 4), Thomas heightens his emphasis on the sacrificial character of Christ's prayer, and the *sed contra* once again plays a significant role in guiding our interpretation. Here Thomas quotes from a passage in the letter to the Hebrews (5:7) that deals with Christ's priesthood: "With a strong cry and tears offering up prayers . . . He was heard for his reverence."⁹⁷ In his commentary on the letter to the Hebrews, Thomas describes Christ's "prayers and supplications" as the "spiritual sacrifice"⁹⁸ that he offered. Again it is Christ's prayer in Gethsemane that Thomas has in mind, a fact that is inferred from his reference to Matthew 26:39, where we are told that "He fell upon his face, praying."⁹⁹ Christ prays to the Father, who has the power to

⁹⁵ See the next two paragraphs.

⁹⁶ *ST* III, q. 21, a. 4, ad 1.

⁹⁷ *ST* III, q. 21, a. 4, sc. For an extensive commentary on Thomas's treatment of Christ's priesthood in the letter to the Hebrews, see Guggenheim, *Jésus Christ*.

⁹⁸ *Super Heb* 5, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 255); all English translation from *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Hebraeos lectura (Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews)*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher, O.P. (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012). See *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 2: "The sacrifice that is offered outwardly represents the inward spiritual sacrifice, whereby the soul offers itself to God according to Ps 50:19, *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit*, since . . . the outward acts of religion are directed to the inward acts." See also *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2: "Man's good is threefold. There is first his soul's good which is offered to God in a certain inward sacrifice by devotion, prayer and other like interior acts: and this is the principal sacrifice." Outward sacrifice necessarily employs sensible things on account of the hylomorphic constitution of human nature. Thus, as Charles Journet explains: "Sacrifice . . . is 'an essentially latreutic symbol,' it is 'in its essence a rite significative of that homage which is due to God alone'"; see Charles Journet, *The Church of the Word Incarnate*, vol. 1 (London/New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 53n4. Clearly, therefore, as Staudt concludes, Christ possesses "to the highest degree the virtue of religion, manifest in the great priestly offering of himself on the cross" (Staudt, "Did Christ Worship the Trinity?" 252).

⁹⁹ *Super Heb* 5, lect. 1 (Marietti no. 255).

save him in two ways. Firstly, the Father has the power to save him from death on the Cross: “‘Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will’ (Matt 26:39).”¹⁰⁰ Secondly, the Father has the power to raise Christ up from the dead: “‘Because you will not leave my soul in hell’ (Ps 15:10); and again: ‘But you, O Lord, have mercy on me and raise me up again’ (Ps 40:11).”¹⁰¹ Thomas goes on to state that Christ’s priesthood is “ordained to that spiritual sacrifice”¹⁰²—namely, “to offer prayers and supplications”¹⁰³—concerning which Scripture attests: “‘The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me’ (Ps 49:23); ‘We will render the calves of our lips’ (Hos 14:3).”¹⁰⁴ This contention is in accord with the principle that Thomas established in his treatment of sacrifice in question 85 of the *secunda secundae*, that “the outward acts of religion are directed to the inward acts.”¹⁰⁵

Significantly, Thomas again quotes from Hebrew 5 in the next article, article 1 of question 22 of the *tertia pars*, where he discusses whether it is fitting that Christ should be a priest. As priest, Christ not only “bestows Divine things on the people” but also “offers up the people’s prayers to God, and, in a manner, makes satisfaction to God for their sins.”¹⁰⁶ Thomas cites Hebrews 5:1 in support of this claim: “Every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.”¹⁰⁷ The point is that Thomas’s question on Christ’s prayer cannot and ought not to be taken in isolation from the following question concerning Christ’s priesthood, in which the notion of sacrifice, one of the external acts of religion, is essential. Familiarity with Thomas’s treatment of sacrifice at question 85 of the *secunda secundae* corroborates this interpretation. Thus, he writes

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *ST* III, q. 22, a. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. See also Thomas’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (244): “The act of the high priest is to offer gifts, i.e., voluntary oblations, not extorted: ‘Of every man that offers of his own accord, you shall take them’ (Exod 25:2) and sacrifices for sins, i.e., which are offered to him to satisfy for sins: ‘The priest shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him’ (Lev 4:26). This indicates that everything offered, whether voluntary or under vow or for satisfaction, shall be offered according to the disposition of the prelate.”

that "the sacrifice that is offered outwardly represents the inward spiritual sacrifice, whereby the soul offers itself to God according to Ps 50:19, *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit*, since . . . the outward acts of religion are directed to the inward acts."¹⁰⁸ Further on, he refers to the "inward sacrifice" of "devotion, prayer, and other like interior acts,"¹⁰⁹ and this inward sacrifice constitutes "the principal sacrifice."¹¹⁰ In the final article devoted to sacrifice, Thomas writes, "Sacrifice is twofold. . . . The first and principal is the inward sacrifice, which all are bound to offer, since all are obliged to offer to God a devout mind. The other is the outward sacrifice."¹¹¹

The prayer of Christ in Gethsemane fulfils Thomas's definition of prayer in a preeminent way when Christ says to the Father, "Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt." The very words them-

¹⁰⁸ ST II-II, q. 85, a. 2.

¹⁰⁹ ST II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2. For a short treatment of the act of devotion, see Dom Odon Lottin, O.S.B., *L'âme du culte: la vertu de la religion d'après s. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain, BE: Bureau des Oeuvres Liturgiques, Abbaye du Mont-César, 1920), 24–25. For a longer exegesis, see Erich Hech, *Der Begriff Religio bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munich/Paderborn/Vienna: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1971). Lottin observes that, in modern ascetical language, the term "devotion" tends to mean the fervor of charity. It is therefore not an act but a quality belonging to charity rather than to religion (*L'âme du culte*, 24). In contrast, Thomas deems devotion to be "a special act of the will" whereby one gives oneself readily "to things concerning the service of God" (ST II-II, q. 82, a. 1). Indeed, it is the first act of religion and "a necessary condition of all its secondary acts" (ST II-II, q. 83, a. 15).

Staudt points to ST III, q. 22, a. 4, ad 2, in order to show that Christ's self-offering was guided by devotion, "the interior religious disposition required for proper worship" ("Did Christ Worship the Trinity?," 246). In ST III, q. 22, a. 4, ad 2, we read: "Two things may be considered in the offering of a sacrifice by any priest—namely, the sacrifice itself which is offered, and the devotion of the offerer. Now the proper effect of priesthood is that which results from the sacrifice itself. But Christ obtained a result from His passion, not as by virtue of the sacrifice, which is offered by way of satisfaction, but by the very devotion with which out of charity He humbly endured the passion."

¹¹⁰ Ibid. The full text reads: "Man's good is threefold. There is first his soul's good which is offered to God in a certain inward sacrifice by devotion, prayer and other like interior acts: and this is the principal sacrifice. The second is his body's good, which is, so to speak, offered to God in martyrdom, and abstinence or continency [*sic*]. The third is the good which consists of external things: and of these we offer a sacrifice to God, directly when we offer our possession to God immediately, and indirectly when we share them with our neighbor for God's sake."

¹¹¹ ST II-II, q. 85, a. 4.

selves signify the perfect surrender of his mind to God the Father. In other words, his subjection in his human nature to the Father is perfect. Joseph Ratzinger's/Pope Benedict XVI's comments on Christ's prayer reflect Thomas's understanding of the same: "The prayer 'not my will but yours' (Luke 22:42) is truly the Son's prayer to the Father, through which the natural human will is completely subsumed into the 'I' of the Son. Indeed, the Son's whole being is expressed in the 'not I, but you'—in the total self-abandonment of the 'I' to the 'you' of God the Father."¹¹² As such, Christ's prayer is the perfect expression of human freedom *in actu*. It is the fruit of a perfectly devout mind ready to do what concerns the service of God. In other words, Christ's devotion informs the tenor of his prayer.¹¹³ As we have seen Thomas write, moreover, "the sacrifice that is offered outwardly represents the inward spiritual sacrifice, whereby the soul offers itself to God according to Ps 50:19, *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit*, since . . . the outward acts of religion are directed to the inward acts."¹¹⁴ Thus, to Thomas's construal of Christ's prayer can be applied the words of Ratzinger/Benedict: "He fashioned his death into an act of prayer, an act of worship."¹¹⁵ This sacrificial tenor arguably pervades Thomas's understanding of Christ's prayer, partic-

¹¹² Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Part II, *From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), 161.

¹¹³ *ST* II-II, q. 82, a. 1. See *ST* II-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1: "The mover prescribes the mode of the movement of the thing moved. Now the will moves the other powers of the soul to their acts, and the will, in so far as it regards the end, moves both itself and whatever is directed to the end. . . . Wherefore, since devotion is an act of the will whereby a man offers himself for the service of God Who is the last end, it follows that devotion prescribes the mode to human acts, whether they be acts of the will itself about things directed to the end, or acts of the other powers that are moved by the will."

¹¹⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 2. Thomas's account of the interior and exterior acts of religion is predicated upon a hylomorphic construal of human nature. In other words, as Hech puts it, they concern man "in his personal unity of reason and will as also of body and soul" (Hech, *Der Begriff Religio*, 169; my translation).

¹¹⁵ Benedict XVI, *Behold the Pierced One*, 22. For Thomas, worship and prayer are to be distinguished in that prayer is one of the acts whereby God is worshipped. Other acts whereby God is worshipped or which are ordered to such worship include devotion (*ST* II-II, q. 82), adoration (*ST* II-II, q. 84), sacrifice (*ST* II-II, q. 85), oblations and first fruits (*ST* II-II, q. 86), tithes (*ST* II-II, q. 87), vows (*ST* II-II, q. 88), and oaths (*ST* II-II, q. 89). Particularly noteworthy among these acts is sacrifice, since it can be offered to no one but God alone (*ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 2). For a consideration of the terminology connected with worship in Thomas, see Staudt, "Did Christ Worship the Trinity?" 236–43.

ularly in the fourth article of question 21 of the *tertia pars*, where the prayer of Gethsemane is implicit in the *sed contra*. Fulfilling the will of God means accepting death on the Cross, a point that is implicit in the conformity of Christ's will with God: "According to the will of reason, Christ willed nothing but what He knew God to will. Wherefore every absolute will of Christ, even human, was fulfilled, because it was in conformity with God; and consequently His every prayer was fulfilled."¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The position of the question on Christ's prayer in the overall structure of the treatise on the mystery of the Incarnation is significant. After the first question on the fittingness of the Incarnation, this treatise is divided into two major sections: (1) qq. 2–26, which deal with the mystery of the Incarnation itself; and (2) qq. 27–59, in which Thomas reflects on all that Our Savior did and suffered during his earthly life. The first major section is itself subdivided into two parts, the second of which engages with "the consequences of the [hypostatic] union."¹¹⁷ The question on Christ's prayer finds its place in this section. The fact that Thomas regards Christ's prayer as a consequence of the hypostatic union and does not leave its treatment to the section on all that Our Savior did and suffered during his earthly life is significant. It suggests that Christ's prayer, rather than being simply one of the mysteries of his life, instead informs them all, even from his very conception.¹¹⁸

Christ's prayer is thus not a contingent adjunct, but rather flows from the hypostatic union. Thomas quotes Damascene on this point, understanding prayer to be "the raising up of the mind to God":¹¹⁹ "As Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.* iii, 24), *the human mind of Christ did not need to rise to God, since it was ever united to God both by personal being and by the blessed vision.*"¹²⁰ The movement involved here "signifies the act of something perfect, i.e. something existing in act."¹²¹ In

¹¹⁶ *ST* III, q. 21, a. 4.

¹¹⁷ *ST* III, q. 16, prol.

¹¹⁸ See *ST* III, q. 34. Thomas argues that, at his conception, Christ was sanctified "by reason of His own movement of the free-will towards God" (*ST* III, q. 34, a. 3).

¹¹⁹ *ST* III, q. 21, a. 1, obj. 3. This description of prayer is a quotation from Damascene's *De fide orth.* 3.24.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* Thomas would agree with Benedict's contention that "the entire person of Jesus is contained in his prayer" (*Behold the Pierced One*, 20). See note 65 above.

¹²¹ *ST* III, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.

this sense, Thomas argues, “the mind of Christ was always raised up to God, since He was always contemplating Him as existing above Himself.”¹²² In other words, it was perfectly devout. Christ’s prayer, as flowing from the hypostatic union, is therefore not a conglomeration of isolated events, however characteristic of his life they might be, but rather expresses a habitual attitude. His life can thus be described as a constant prayer and, as such, a perpetual sacrifice.¹²³ His death on the Cross is the ultimate external expression of this perfect inward sacrifice. The position of the question on Christ’s prayer along with the questions on his subjection to the Father and on his priesthood is a structural expression of this same point. The placement of the question on Christ’s prayer and the prevalence of references to his prayer in Gethsemane indicate that, for Thomas, the Cross is understood to pervade the whole of Christ’s earthly life.

Christ’s example clearly establishes prayer as a *sine qua non* in the life of the disciple. Imitating his example of prayer means that the disciple conforms himself to the eternal concept of Wisdom.¹²⁴ This conformation is a consequence of the hypostatic union. In other words, the fact that the Person of the Son was personally united to human nature entails that his moral example, since it is ontologically grounded in his eternal procession from the Father, furnishes the most exalted manifestation of the ordering force of divine Wisdom in the unfolding of human knowing and loving. The logic of both question 21 and article 8 of question 3 in the *tertia pars* is ineluctable: imitation of Christ’s example of prayer entails a participation in his Cross. An adequate elaboration of this point must however await another article.

N V

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2.

¹²⁴ For an elaboration of this point, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, O.P., *The Hermeneutics of Knowing and Willing in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven, BE: Peeters, 2013), 111–21.