

The *Propassiones* of Christ, His Fullness of Grace, and His Moral Exemplarity according to St. Thomas Aquinas¹

BARRETT H. TURNER
Mount St. Mary's University
Emmitsburg, MD

Introduction

WHILE READING St. Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the passions of Christ's soul in the *tertia pars*, one may be surprised to encounter a term not previously mentioned in the *Summa theologiae* [*ST*]. The term is *propassio*. Derived from St. Jerome's exegesis of Christ's sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane, the term originally signified a sort of half-passion or first movement of a stifled passion. Perhaps baffled by this Stoic infiltration into Thomas's discussion of the passions, few scholars link Thomas's treatment of Christ's experience of *propassio* to the moral exemplarity of Christ and thus to moral theology. Even Craig Steven Titus's article discerning "the quality of Christ's passions and their relevance for Christian ethics" does not relate the *propassiones* of Christ to moral theology, despite giving a brief (and slightly mistaken) exposition of this aspect of Christ's affectivity.² Perhaps the general reason for this lack of connection

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented at the 36th Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference at Villanova University, October 22, 2011.

² Craig Steven Titus, "Passions in Christ: Spontaneity, Development, and Virtue," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 53–87, at 53 and 81–82. Titus is interested to show that the *propassiones* of Christ are spontaneous but in accordance with the predisposition of reason. This confuses the principle of a passion with its effect, as *Summa*

between Christ's *propassiones* and his moral exemplarity is that Christ's virtuous experience of *propassio* seems a function of his unique status as the God-Man, and is therefore not a model or ideal for other humans. For this reason, other scholars have raised doubts about the coherence of Thomas's affirmation both of the exemplarity of Christ's virtuous passions and also of the unique features of Christ's humanity. That Christ possessed the Beatific Vision and that he moved all the parts of his soul only insofar as he willed by divine dispensation "introduces significant discontinuities between Christ's affectivity and ours," as Nicholas Lombardo posits.³ In other words, the exemplarity of Christ for man is lost when Christ's humanity is elevated in the hypostatic union to a state beyond all reach.

This article aims to strengthen the link between Thomas's doctrine of Christ's moral exemplarity for the baptized and his treatment of Christ's unique humanity by looking at the term *propassio* as it is applied to Christ and to other men. Thomas' reliance on Jerome's terminology gives the concept of *propassio* an alien air, liable to dismissal as Thomas's convoluted attempt to retain a Stoic term out of respect for Jerome. Yet Thomas elevates the term *propassio* from its Stoic provenance to become a term for describing an essential facet of Christ's fully virtuous human affectivity: that Christ's passions, even when intense, never deflected his soul from its ordination to God the Father. As we will see, *propassio* is an integral part of every virtuous passion, and this is why all of Christ's passions are *propassiones*. My contention is that the fullness of grace, along with the fullness of virtue and gifts, in the human soul of Christ is a sufficient cause of his experience of the passions as *propassiones*. Furthermore, *propassiones* serve as a normative ideal for the justified, thereby linking Christ's perfected humanity to his moral exemplarity for his members. His soul is both instrumental and exemplary cause of our salvation, insofar as he both

theologiae [ST] III, q. 15, a. 4, clarifies. By "spontaneous," Titus means sudden but consequent passion. In referring to both spontaneity and effect as *propassio*, Titus follows the mistake of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (see below). Of course, a passion must be both consequent and preservative of reason's *imperium* to be virtuous.

- ³ Nicholas E. Lombardo, O.P., *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 217; cf. 216–18. Lombardo cites in agreement Boyd Taylor Coolman, "The Salvific Affectivity of Christ according to Alexander of Hales," *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 1–38, esp. 29–31. This article addresses Coolman's understandable question whether Thomas's Christ suffered in his reason or experienced compassion, but uses Thomas' *Compendium theologiae* to resolve the question in a way different from Coolman, thereby reconciling Alexander's and Thomas's treatments (see second section below).

confers grace and shows how to live by it. At the same time, the experience of even the just in this life will entail discontinuities with Christ's experience of the passions, on account of the continued presence of the *fomes peccati*. Even here, however, Thomas assumes that the emotions of the justified will become more conformed to Christ over time, even if never fully attaining the ideal of Christ's exclusive experience of what I will call fully virtuous *propassiones*. This discontinuity between Christ and his members arises on account of the unruly first motions of passions attributable to the *fomes*, even if such first motions do not deflect reason and thereby remain *propassiones* in a less virtuous sense. In this way, the life of virtue by grace enables the just to experience only *propassiones*, either in the partially virtuous sense of an incomplete passion from an illicit object or passions that anticipate reason (antecedent passion) or even in the fully virtuous sense of Christ's own passions, that is, deep passions entirely in accord with reason but never deflecting reason from God's rule.

The first section of this paper examines how Thomas expands the original Stoic meaning of the term *propassio* from a mere half-passion to a potentially intense yet fitting affective response that does not overwhelm reason. He thereby opens a space for intense passions in Christ that extend the reign of reason into affectivity, including passions of anger and sadness that the Stoics did not allow in the wise man. The second section clarifies that according to Thomas's doctrine, the sufficient cause of these *propassiones* of Christ is his fullness of grace and virtue, and that the unique humanity of Christ is not an impediment to his moral exemplarity in this regard. Christ is the exemplar of virtuous living before God for the human race. This section accordingly responds to those who would say that Thomas's treatment of Christ's humanity is detrimental to his doctrine of Christ's moral exemplarity, namely, that Christ's unique affectivity is more a function of a divine dispensation than the fullness of grace in Christ's human soul. To the contrary, this section argues that the divine power is necessary more to restrain the Beatific Vision from glorifying Christ's body before the Passion.

Finally, the third section will demonstrate that Thomas thought that not only Christ but other humans, "the just" and "the wise," were characterized over against "sinners" by their experience of *propassiones*. Indeed, Thomas holds that *propassio* is a necessary element of every virtuous passion. At the same time, this final section will highlight the way in which even those in Christ will not attain Christ's moral perfection in this life on account of the *fomes peccati*. Throughout the paper, the term "asymptotic" will be used to indicate that, at best, the grace of Christ enables the justified to have increasingly virtuous passions without the

total elimination of concupiscence in this life. That is, by Christ's grace and the infused virtues, unruly passions from the *fomes* may be reduced in this life but never removed, just as a curve will forever approach an asymptote without meeting it. In this regard, the justified's experience of only partially virtuous antecedent *propassiones* is a sign of Christ's grace working in them, preventing the materially disordered desires of the flesh from becoming formally rebellious against Christ's reign in his members.

***Propassio* in Christ according to St. Thomas**

Thomas's use of the term *propassio* importantly develops the Stoic suspicion of the passions to suit his own goal of portraying Christ as the God-Man, in whom our nature is brought into such union with the divine nature that his human affectivity is perfected. He employs the term *propassio* sparsely throughout his career, only twenty-eight times.⁴ The sprinkle of uses is at its thinnest in his early years, with only twelve occurrences before 1268, most of which are direct quotations of other authors, for example, six from Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and the sources therein, and four from Jerome in the *Catena aurea*.⁵ Thomas's treatment of Christ's affectivity in the *tertia pars* cites Jerome's commentary on Matthew 26:37, where the term *propassio* occurs. The term, however, is of Stoic provenance and was used in anthropological contexts. The Stoics held that a virtuous man would not experience passion resulting from an evil object, especially sadness,

⁴ According to a search for *propassio* using www.corpusthomicum.org/it/index on August 28, 2014, excluding spurious works.

⁵ *In III sent.*, d. 15, q. 2, a. 3, qa. 3, *expos.* (five occurrences); *In IV sent.*, d. 12, q. 3, a. 2, qa. 3, *expos.* (one occurrence); *Catena aurea* on Matthew 5, lec. 16 (four occurrences). Thomas's two other uses of the term before 1268 occur at *Super Isaiam* 42 and *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8. "Though Thomas exploits the term to his great advantage in the treatise on Christ's passions in the *Summa*, his analysis of Christ's human affectivity in the commentary on the *Sentences* fails to mention propassion, despite the fact that his reproduction of Lombard's text includes the term" (Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009; originally 2002], 369). To supplement Gondreau's comment, however, Thomas does have Christ in view when he comments on the Servant of Isaiah 42:4 (*non erit tristis*). Thomas has to reconcile this with Christ's sadness in the Gospels. Thomas says that the Servant will not be sad *in corde*, but he will have *propassio tristitiae*. Thomas then cites Matt 26, *tristis anima mea etc.* (Leonine ed., 28:177). Thomas uses this same distinction years later in his commentary on the Gospel of John, though without using the term *propassio* itself (see below). The division of Thomas's commentary places the comment about Christ's "propassion of sadness" right after a discussion of the fullness of grace in Christ's human soul, which is further evidence for the plausibility of this article's argument in the second section.

since no real loss could ever befall the virtuous man. At most, the wise man might experience an initial, involuntary movement of the sense appetite. For instance, a wise man might experience the *propassio* of anger when he perceives an injury, yet he does not experience the full passion of anger, since he does not consent to the desire for vengeance.⁶ The difficulty for patristic Christian exegetes was that the Gospels portray Christ as angry and sorrowful, even “greatly distressed” (Mark 14:33) and “troubled in spirit” (John 13:21).

Jerome’s appeal to Stoic *propassio* in order to explain Christ’s sorrow as virtuous tended to deny the Son of God’s passivity, just as Stoics denied such passivity in the virtuous man.⁷ Christ’s *propassiones* were exceptional for Jerome, as they were not sinful, but they still smacked of the weakness of the flesh. We may say that Christ’s *propassiones* were enough to show that Christ had assumed our nature entirely, but not enough to entail sin. Christ experienced only the sudden beginnings of passion from the intense anguish he experienced in Gethsemane. The supreme rationality and virtue of Christ kept such movements from becoming full-blown passions, which would have been sinful. Thus, when Christ “began to be sorrowful and troubled” (Matt 26:37), Jerome emphasizes that Christ only *began* to be sorrowful and troubled. Hence the words Thomas takes from Jerome’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew for use in the *Catena aurea* and again later in the *tertia pars*: “Our Lord indeed was truly saddened, in order to prove the reality of the man [*homo*] which he assumed; but in order that passion should not be master over his mind, ‘he began to be saddened’ by a propassion; for it is one thing to be saddened, and another to start to be saddened.”⁸ Beyond this, Jerome does not clarify why Christ experienced

⁶ Richard A. Layton discusses this example in Seneca in “*Propatheia*: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 (2000): 262–82, at 264–65.

⁷ Jerome himself “appropriated the concept from Origen and Didymus,” the former using it only in anthropological contexts, and the latter being the first to use it in regard to Christ (Layton, “*Propatheia*,” 262n2; see also Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 367).

⁸ *Catena aurea* on Matt 26, lec. 10, citing Jerome’s *In Matth.* 26:37 (author’s translation; *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris angelici ordinis praedicatorum Opera omnia ad fidem optimarum editionum accurate recognita, Parmae typis Petri Fiacadori*, 25 vols. [New York: Musurgia, 1948–1950; originally 1852–1873], 11:306b). Checking a Latin database, Jerome does indeed use *propassionem* instead of *passionem* in *In Matth.*, indicating that the Latin text used for the *Catena aurea* is corrupt here. The Parme edition notes that P. Nicolai reads *per propassionem*. Thomas also records *propassionem* when citing Jerome at *ST III* q. 15, a. 4, corp. Therefore, I read the text as *per propassionem*.

such a “half-passion.” Was it prior to the judgment of his human reason, leaving Christ liable to the tendency of human affectivity to run ahead of reason, which is itself a result of the fall?⁹ Ostensibly Jerome was only wanting to affirm of Christ the highest level of human virtue as conceived by the Stoics by denying that he was sad in his spirit. So characterizing Christ in Stoic terms obviously leads to a clash with other Gospel passages.

Despite this negative connotation for Christ’s affectivity, the medieval tradition adopted Jerome’s term *propassio* as a way to hold simultaneously that Christ experienced the Beatific Vision in his human soul and that he had a complete human nature, including affectivity.¹⁰ Peter Lombard used the term *propassio* to describe Christ as one “who voluntarily endures fear and sorrow in such a way that the mind is moved neither from virtue nor from the contemplation of God.”¹¹ After Lombard, Scholastics thus had to describe Christ’s affectivity in a way that preserved his virtue and the possession of the Beatific Vision.

In Thomas’s writings, *propassio* becomes not only a way of harmonizing Christ’s possession of the Beatific Vision with his humanity, but also a way of describing how Christ had strong human passions without losing the direction of reason. In this way, Thomas develops the Stoic inheritance via Jerome. Christ not only *began* to be sad, *pace* Jerome, but was sad to a great degree because such sadness was an appropriately deep response to death and sin, the offense of which he knew most accurately as the God-Man. This modification or clarification of Jerome emerges especially in Thomas’s later writings, wherein Chalcedonian Christology meets Aristotelian notions of passion. There he employs the term *propassio* more frequently than in his early writings, nearly always in connection with Christ’s affectivity, and in conversation with the Stoic objection that the

⁹ The same question might be asked of St. Maximus the Confessor, who, according to William Cavanaugh, also seemed to discuss Christ’s passions in such a way as to leave room for initial affective movements of Christ’s soul apart from reason and as a feature of our fallen humanity assumed in the Incarnation (*Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011], 141–69). Cavanaugh uses Maximus’s Christology to discuss the “sinfulness of the Church.”

¹⁰ Kevin Madigan, “Ancient and High-Medieval Interpretations of Jesus in Gethsemane: Some Reflections on Tradition and Continuity in Christian Thought,” *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995): 157–73, at 165. See also Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 67–68, 367–68. Jerome’s appropriation of the concept of *propassio* “endured throughout the early medieval period to become a fixture in discussions of sin in the school of Laon” (Layton, “*Propatheia*,” 262n2).

¹¹ Madigan, “Ancient and High-Medieval Interpretations,” 165, commenting on Peter Lombard, *Sent.* III, d. 15, q. 2.

“wise man” is not sad.¹² *Propassio*, having started as a purely anthropological term, thereby becomes an almost exclusively Christological one in Thomas. Thomas’s mature concept of *propassio* portrays Christ’s affectivity as intense or deep, yet so moderated by reason’s control that his passions did not overwhelm reason. As Paul Gondreau has made the point:

One should not interpret the term propassion as the Thomist equivalent for the Stoic ideal of the virtuous man who is unswayed in any manner by his affective disposition. . . . To understand properly the notion of propassion, then, one must view it in a negative sense, i.e., as that which affirms that Jesus’ *imperium* of reason was in no sense perturbed or manipulated by the passions.¹³

Despite the nominal link to Jerome’s Stoic anthropology and “half-passions,” Thomas modifies the term in accordance with his Aristotelean categories.

The common element for Jerome, Peter, and Thomas is that *propassiones* do not disturb or deflect reason and are therefore not sinful, though by this they do not mean the same thing. Thomas’s own treatment of *propassio* begins with *De veritate*:

A man is completely changed by such emotions when they remain not only in the lower appetite but also drag the higher to itself. In truth, when they are only in the lower appetite, then the man is altered by them only partially, as it were [*quasi secundum partem*], from which they are called in this way “propassions,” but in the first way, “passions.”¹⁴

Whether *propassiones* are virtuous or venially sinful depends on whether

¹² From 1268 until 1273: *Super Matth* 26, lec. 5 (six times [*propassio/propassionem*]); *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4 (once [*propassio*]); *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4, corp. (thrice [*propassio, propassionem, propassionis*]); a. 6, ad 1 and 2 (twice [*propassionem*]); a. 7, ad 1 (twice [*propassionem*]); q. 46, a. 7, obj. 3 (once [*propassio*]); *Super Psalmos* 2, no. 3 (once [*propassio*]); *Super Psalmos* 54, no. 3 (once [*propassio*]). Dating taken from Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Initiation à saint Thomas d’Aquin. Sa personne et son oeuvre*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 483–525. Gondreau is right that Thomas “makes significant use of [the term *propassio*] only near the end of his career” (*Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 368).

¹³ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 371–72.

¹⁴ *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8 (Leonine ed., 22/3:776a). All translations from this work are by the author.

the other integral parts of virtuous passion are present: lawful object and arousal consequent to reason's judgment. Here one can see that Thomas does speak occasionally of *propassio* in purely anthropological or moral ways, even if only to answer a question about Christ's passions.¹⁵ Other texts applying the term *propassio* to virtuous humans other than Christ, presented in the third section, will provide a link between Christ's perfectly virtuous affectivity and his role as exemplar of virtue for the faithful.

For now, let us note that Thomas agrees with the Stoics that whatever Christ's passions, they cannot deflect or trouble his reason's ordination to God. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, for example, Thomas denies that Christ's passions "troubled" his reason.

Sometimes [a] perturbation remains within the bounds of reason, and sometimes it exceeds the bounds of reason, namely, when the reason itself is troubled. And although this latter condition quite often occurs in us, it is not found in Christ, since he is the Wisdom of the Father. *Indeed, it is not found in any wise person*; thus the Stoic tenet that one who is wise is not troubled, that is, in his reason.¹⁶

The type of passion mentioned here, which does not exceed the bounds of reason so as to trouble reason, is a *propassio*, though the word does not appear. To be troubled in one's reason is to have a passion that has welled up outside of reason's *imperium*. Here Thomas even assents to the Stoic principle that passions ought not trouble reason, though he understands the principle somewhat differently than they. At the same time, Thomas

¹⁵ Therefore, Gondreau and William C. Mattison III are nearly correct in writing, respectively, that "Thomas nowhere speaks of propassion in relation to general human affectivity only" (*Passions of Christ's Soul*, 368–69), and, "though Thomas refers to passion vs. propassion in Christ, he never applies this distinction to the human moral life" ("Jesus' Prohibition of Anger [Mt 5:22]: The Person/Sin Distinction from Augustine to Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 68 [2007]: 839–64, at 846n18). The error is minor, considering that Thomas does indeed primarily use the term in his Christological work and nowhere utilizes the term in his systematic expositions of human passion such as in the *prima secundae*. Thomas's exposition of Ps 2 is even more an exception, in that Thomas speaks there of human *propassio* apart from any reference to Christ's affectivity (see third section below).

¹⁶ *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5 (emphasis added). Unless otherwise stated, English translations of this work taken from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 3 vol., trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P., and James A. Weisheipl, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010). When necessary, the Latin of the 1952 Marietti edition hosted on corpusthomisticum.org was consulted.

asserts against the Stoics that Christ truly experienced sadness, which involves a greater troubling of the soul than even fear, on account of a present evil. Thomas notes that “fear, since it is concerned with an evil to come in the future, has less disturbance than sadness, which involves an evil which is present.” Since Christ was truly sad, therefore the Stoic opinion about the wise man “is false because Jesus, who is the highest Wisdom, was troubled.”¹⁷ Christ’s passions did not trouble his reason but were true affections, even involving sadness.

In order to understand further the nature of *propassio* in particular, however, one must know what it means for a passion not to transform Christ’s soul completely or for it to drag down reason and yet be a true human emotion. Initially it would appear that the intensity of a passion results in the loss of rational control in the case of a full-blown passion.¹⁸ The danger is that the language of “propassion,” “imperfect passion,” and “passion remaining in the sensitive appetite” sounds to our ears as if Christ experiences a “half-passion” in the Stoic sense.¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Torrell warns against this line of thinking in reading Thomas. Assigning *propassio* to Christ “is not to say [Christ’s passions were] like false-passions or selective passions, nor even like the beginnings of passions, but like what they would have been able to be in the state of innocence, so as to remain contained in sensibility without ever carrying along reason in an overflowing tied, for our part, to the very idea of passion.”²⁰ The strength of the “half-passion” objection feeds on the assumption that a genuine passion must overwhelm the soul, carry the person along in an abandonment to the depths of feeling, independent of or even against reason. Aquinas does not share this view, but rather allows for the deep experience of a passion as appropriate for a virtuous individual, without the passion dominating the soul and deflecting one from reason’s direction. “Complete” or “perfect” passion (*passio perfecta*) does not equal “genuine” or “deeply felt” passion for Thomas. Nor should *propassio* be conceived as “a ‘spatial’ containment,” but instead we should understand, with Gondreau, that Thomas’s “propas-

¹⁷ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4. A similar point is made in *ST* III, q. 15.

¹⁸ See Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 370.

¹⁹ Madigan often translates *propassio* this way when treating Jerome and his Stoic influences, though he rightly notices the inadequacy of that translation with regard to Bonaventure’s and Aquinas’s treatments of Christ’s affectivity (“Ancient and High-Medieval Interpretations,” 169–70).

²⁰ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Le Christ en ses mystères*, vol. 1, *La vie et l’œuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Desclée, 1999), 107 (all translations from this work are the author’s own).

sion is a fully elicited movement of the sensitive appetite.”²¹

To see this, let us consider how Aquinas describes Christ’s affectivity as rational and yet deeply felt in two concrete instances, the Passion and the death of Lazarus. The first example is Christ’s suffering in the Passion. Thomas holds two positions which seemingly contradict one another. On the one hand, Christ “accepted sadness, the greatest in absolute quantity”; on the other hand, he accepted a sorrow “not exceeding the rule of reason.”²² Christ’s grief surpassed that of every contrite heart, combining sorrow over the loss of his perfect life with grief for the sins of mankind.²³ Yet this sorrow was moderate in that it observed the mean. We see the solution to the contradiction once we reject the popular understanding of moderation and remember that Thomas follows Aristotle in setting not a mathematical but a proportional mean for assessing how the passions are moderate.²⁴ Christ experienced great sorrow over the sins of the world, a sorrow following upon his perfect knowledge of their evil, their offensiveness to God, and the loss mankind incurs by them. This uniquely profound sorrow was perfectly reasonable given the facts.

Thus, Titus is right as far as it goes to say that “Aquinas distinguishes Jesus’ suffering as a ‘passion’ since in experiencing His own passion and death, and in sorrowing for the plight of others, He was not deflected from His mission, which involved knowledge, freedom, and surety, that is, a moral act.”²⁵ Yet the suffering of Christ was also at its highest when he sorrowed over the sins of the whole world, and thus his experiencing *propassio* means that while his sorrow did not deflect reason and struck the proportional mean, he still experienced the greatest sorrow any man had ever had in this life.²⁶ His absolute sorrow was entirely appropriate and fitting while seeing all the sins of mankind, a true response to the ugliness of sin. One must also agree with Steven Jensen, that Christ’s sadness was not final: while it recoiled from his impending death according to *voluntas ut natura*, this did not prevent his human will from accepting the Passion

²¹ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 371.

²² *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 2. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of *ST* are taken from the Benziger edition of the translation by Dominican Fathers.

²³ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 4.

²⁴ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 2; see also I-II, q. 64, a. 2, for the concept of the proportional mean.

²⁵ Craig Steven Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychological Sciences* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 335.

²⁶ In *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 3, Thomas excludes comparison between Christ’s sorrow and the sorrow of any soul in hell.

in obedience to the Father's plan (*voluntas ut ratio*).²⁷

Gondreau also speaks of the intensity of Christ's fear in Gethsemane, made acute not only by his imminent torture and execution but also by the spiritual suffering he would endure for the sins of the world. In this way the "Son of God suffers unspeakable fear and anguish at the thought of his violent death," yet this suffering remains in the "conjoined instrument of his sensitive appetite."²⁸ In other words, Christ's fear was the greatest ever felt and yet it was a *propassio*. Torrell speculates that Christ's passions "were able to be more intense in him owing to his exceptional knowledge of good and evil and because they remained submissive to reason."²⁹ Torrell means that Christ's passions always reflected reality accurately through his perfect human knowledge as the God-Man, and because of the strength of his reason and virtue. Thus Christ's fear is the bodily sign that he understands clearly the coming pain of the Passion, the tragic wickedness of sin, and the loss of his perfect life.³⁰

The second example comes from Thomas's commentary on the Gospel of John, when Jesus, visiting the grave of Lazarus, "groaned in spirit and troubled himself" (John 11:33; "infremuit spiritu et turbavit se"). Thomas identifies the "trouble" with sadness at the infliction of death on the human race on account of sin and the "groan" with anger at "the cruelty of death and of the devil."³¹ In either case, Christ's passions were proportionate to reality and thus "preserved the moderation of reason." Christ was saddened at the death of his friend precisely because his reason commanded a proportionate and fitting sadness. Excessive sadness is not excessive because of its depth of feeling but because such sadness "precedes

²⁷ Steven J. Jensen, "Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions," *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 216–17. For additional discussion of the "will as nature" versus "will as reason" distinction, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, "Father, If It Be Possible, Let This Chalice Pass From Me': Christ's Prayer in Gethsemane According to St. Thomas," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15 (2017): 511–13.

²⁸ 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: Eerdmans, 2009), 242.

²⁹ Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mystères*, 1:107.

³⁰ See *ST* III, q. 15, a. 7: Christ had fear "inasmuch as the sensitive appetite naturally shrinks from bodily hurt, by sorrow if it is present, and by fear if it is future." He did not have the kind of fear which results from uncertainty of the future given his perfect knowledge. On Christ's sadness on account of the sins of the world, see the text from the *Compendium theologiae* in the second section below.

³¹ *Super Ioan* 11, lec. 5.

the judgment of reason and is immoderate [i.e., does not hold the mean].”³² Thomas lists three ways in which Christ’s passion of sorrow ought not be conceptualized as arising in his soul: “for an inappropriate reason” (object), “not moderated by reason” (intensity or effect), and “spring[ing] up before the judgment of reason” (antecedent passion).³³ The list parallels the three ways in which Christ’s affections differ from ours in *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4: object, principle, and effect. The concept “not moderated by reason” correlates with the difference in effect found in the *Summa*, which uses the term *propassio*.³⁴ That is, Christ’s sadness was neither an antecedent passion nor a “complete” passion dragging down his reason, but was what he calls elsewhere a *propassio*. Immoderate sadness runs apart from reason’s guidance and thus begins to run blindly, perhaps leading someone to forget Providence. In the case of a friend’s death, moderate passion requires a deeply felt passion. Christ experienced perfectly what human emotions are meant to be: soul–body engagements with the world in light of reason’s apprehension of good or evil. So, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

Therefore, to say that a *propassio* does not drag down reason is to say that the passion goes no further than is reasonable, indeed, no further than the mean set for it by reason’s command. Hence depth of feeling is not necessarily precluded by the notion of *propassio*, for reason may command the sensitive powers to be moved intensely in light of the situation. Certain events indeed call for depth of feeling as the appropriate human response. In this, Christ is the exemplar not in intensity of passion—for who could suffer as intensely as Christ—but in proportionality.

There is an obvious objection to this analysis in that Thomas speaks elsewhere of intense passion impeding reason: “The stronger a passion is, the greater hinderance is it to the man who is swayed by it.”³⁵ As Gondreau notes, this objection stems from the hylomorphic unity of body and soul, as well as the containment of the soul’s powers in its essence. As a result, the intensity of a change in the sensitive appetite and the bodily agitation accompanying it impedes the use of reason.³⁶ Thomas even cites this principle in the context of Christ’s affectivity: “In us the natural order is that the soul’s powers mutually impede each other, i.e., if the operation of one

³² *Super Ioan* 11, lec. 5.

³³ *Super Ioan* 11, lec. 5.

³⁴ Gondreau also mentions this passage as related to the effects of Christ’s passions (*Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 363).

³⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 44, a. 2, ad 2.

³⁶ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 364–65.

power is intense, the operation of the other is weakened.”³⁷ In other words, Christ’s experience of deep emotion under reason’s control may be a point of discontinuity between his passions and ours, perhaps making *propassio* something proper to Christ only. Yet we should recall that, for Thomas, the “natural order” in us is one in which we are wounded by original sin. In the Garden, the emotions would have been completely obedient to reason and reason ordered to God, on account of the gift of grace (*ST* I, q. 95, a. 1). In order to better grasp this, let us now consider whether Christ’s *propassiones* were more a function of his fullness of grace and virtue or a special divine dispensation not found in any other instance of human nature in whatever state.

Christ’s Moral Exemplarity and *Propassio*

To prove that Christ experienced *propassiones* according to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas is not the same as showing that Christ’s *propassiones* are exemplary. This section will contend that Christ’s fullness of grace and virtue is a sufficient cause of his *propassiones* and thus his affectivity is exemplary for us. This prepares for the argument of the third section, that Thomas teaches that *propassiones* should characterize the affective life of “the just” after the model and in the grace of Christ. Thomas teaches that Christ, in addition to being the mediator of grace, is the exemplar of the life of grace for his members. Christ is the *summum exemplar perfectionis*, “the supreme model of perfection,” and is *exemplum virtutis*, “the model of virtue” for mankind.³⁸ The consummate act of this exemplarity was Christ’s atonement. Thomas teaches that one way the Passion saved man was “because thereby [Christ] set us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the Passion, which are requisite for man’s salvation. Hence it is written (1 Pet 2:21): *Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.*”³⁹ Christ bravely faced his suffering and death for our sake in obedience to the Father’s will. The Passion is an example of virtue, as Titus observes, for “Jesus’ patience offers us a model of well-ordered suffering and sorrow.”⁴⁰

Christ’s moral exemplarity flows from the fullness of grace, virtue, and

³⁷ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 9, ad 3.

³⁸ Respectively, *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 1 (cited in Gondreau, “Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ,” 234), and *ST* III, q. 15, a. 1.

³⁹ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 3.

⁴⁰ Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude*, 334. For more on Christ’s moral exemplarity, see: Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 326–33; Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas d’Aquin, maître spirituel*, 2nd edition (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 147–59, 489–93.

gifts in his human soul. Christ had the fullness of grace “inasmuch as grace is possessed in its highest possible excellence and in its greatest possible extension to all its effects.”⁴¹ This fullness includes habitual grace because of the human soul’s union with the Word, which would need habitual grace to perfect its operations, and furthermore to mediate habitual grace to the human race.⁴² Thomas argues that the effects of this grace in Christ’s soul include “the virtues, the gifts [of the Holy Spirit], and the like.”⁴³ In fact, Christ had the virtues so intensely in his human soul that “he had them most perfectly beyond the common mode.”⁴⁴ Hence Christ had the infused virtues, including the moral virtues, to the greatest degree. The ultimate basis of Christ’s plenitude of virtue is the grace of personal union, whereby the fullness of grace flows from the humanity’s absolute proximity to the divine nature. All other graces existing in Christ’s soul result from the grace of union.⁴⁵ Thus Christ’s role as the model of virtue comes from his soul’s plenitude of grace, which is a property of the hypostatic union.

That Christ was full of grace and virtue means that he would not have experienced the inordinate movements of the passions associated with the material element of original sin, a defect which remains in men who have been elevated to the state of grace.⁴⁶ Perfect virtue destroys the tendency of sensuality to run against or apart from the mastery of reason. Given that “in Christ the virtues were in their highest degree,” and that the “moral virtues, which are in the irrational part of the soul, make it subject to reason, and so much the more as the virtue is more perfect,” then “the *fomes* of sin was nowise in [Christ].”⁴⁷ While the *fomes* is never eradicated for men born in

⁴¹ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10.

⁴² *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1.

⁴³ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 9.

⁴⁴ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 2, ad 2. By “beyond the common mode,” it is not clear whether Thomas means the infused moral virtues as possessed by those in a state of grace or the blessed (“perfecting” and “perfect virtues,” respectively; see I-II, q. 61, a. 5), or whether Thomas means a mode unique to the assumed humanity of the Word incarnate. It is not clear how any of these differ in species, because they have the same term, differing from the “social or human virtues” (*ST* I-II, q. 61, a. 5).

⁴⁵ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13.

⁴⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 82, a. 3. “Aquinas excludes any sinful inclinations from Christ’s person, explaining that since Christ’s passions were virtuous and ordered by reason, his passions were never immoderate or inclined toward sin” (Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 211).

⁴⁷ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 2. See Titus, “Passions in Christ,” 69: “Because of this highest perfection of virtue in Christ the *fomes* of sin never existed in him.” For more on Christ’s lack of original sin in relation to his passions, see: Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 157–66; Gondreau, “Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and

sin,⁴⁸ the greater such men grow in virtue and holiness, the more the *fomes* is diminished and a man approaches the asymptote of Christ's perfection. The lack of original sin in Christ does not make him less human but more human, for sin is not essential to human nature but is against it.⁴⁹ As Lombardo explains, "Christ's affectivity, then, through sanctifying grace, the virtues and the gifts, and his utter lack of sin, is . . . more truly human than ours, which is marked by the wounds of original sin."⁵⁰

This general picture of Christ's moral exemplarity extends to his modeling of virtuous passions, the operations of his perfect virtue. As Lombardo says, Christ "shows us what virtuous affectivity looks like, and therefore what it looks like to be truly human, so that we can imitate him."⁵¹ Commenting on John 12:27, where Jesus looks to his impending suffering and death ("Now is my soul troubled"), Thomas explains why Jesus was willing to be "troubled" in his soul: first, to demonstrate his true humanity; and second, "he wanted to be an example to us."⁵² If Christ did not experience trouble in his soul, "he would not have been a satisfactory example of how we should face death."⁵³ He allowed himself to experience "trouble" in order that "when we are troubled at the prospect of death, we will not refuse to endure it," but will face it as our Lord did.⁵⁴ Thomas then cites Hebrews 4:15 to give scriptural warrant for the connection between Jesus's role as Mediator and his exemplary experience of human passion: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (RSV).⁵⁵ Since "the reason of Christ allowed his soul and its inferior powers to act in their own proper way," he therefore allowed himself to experience the "natural" passion of recoiling from the impending separation of soul from body.⁵⁶

the Suffering of Christ," 234–38; Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 211–12.

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 74, a. 3, ad 2.

⁴⁹ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 1.

⁵⁰ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 206.

⁵¹ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 222.

⁵² *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5. Notice that Thomas has added the aspect of moral exemplarity, whereas Jerome spoke only of an anti-Appollinarian proof in Christ's affectivity. As a friendly addition to O'Reilly ("Christ's Prayer in Gethsemane," 508n21), this text is perhaps a complementary Johannine analogue to the Agony in the Garden, in addition to the high priestly prayer of ch. 17, for here Thomas highlights Christ's example in facing his death.

⁵³ *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5.

⁵⁴ *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5.

⁵⁵ *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5.

⁵⁶ *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5.

The difficulty that Christ's exemplarity poses for moral theology is that, according to Thomas, Christ's experience of the passions differs from our own. After affirming that Christ experienced true passions in his soul, Thomas adds three qualifications:

Nevertheless, we must know that 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. . . . 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.⁵⁷

The three ways in which Christ's passions differ from ours are that his passions never tended toward an unlawful object, never arose apart from reason's disposition (i.e., were always consequent), and never overflowed from the sensitive appetite into the rational part, thereby dominating the soul. This last difference is the aspect of Christ's virtuous affectivity that Thomas means by the term *propassio*.⁵⁸ Similarly, Thomas had earlier

⁵⁷ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4.

⁵⁸ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., mistakenly identifies all three differences as *propassio* when he says: "Hence, in Christ the passions never preceded the judgment of reason and the consent of the will, but followed them. Therefore they are preferably called propassion" (*Christ the Savior: A Commentary on the Third Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. [St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1950], 417). As shown above, *propassio* only regards the movements which remain in the lower appetite and do not "also drag the higher appetite [i.e., rational appetite] to it" (*De ver.*, q. 26, a. 8). For more on this point, see Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul*, 366–72. At the same time, one can say that since *propassio* is an integral part of virtuous passions, we may speak with Garrigou-Lagrange of

affirmed in *De veritate* that human affectivity in Christ while denying in him the affectivity found in sinners, the passions of the latter being “frequently complete” because they drag away reason. Christ’s passions were never complete in that sense; thus they are *propassiones*.⁵⁹

My contention is that these three differences in Christ’s experience of the passions obtain because of the fullness of virtue in Christ’s soul in contrast to our human nature wounded by sin, and not immediately from his being a divine Person or because of Thomas’s affirmation that Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision in his soul during his earthly ministry. Christ had virtuous human passions because his humanity was full of grace and thus perfect in virtue, however much one might explain the mode of that virtue in relation to the grace of union or his possession of the Vision. It is not simply that Christ is a divine Person but that the divine Person assumed our nature. Therefore the perfection of virtue in his human soul follows. As will be seen in the explanation of *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8, below, even Adam had a fully virtuous affectivity before sin. Due to sin men cannot experience passion in the entirely virtuous way in which Christ experienced passion, but in grace they will tend toward his model.

An objection to this position stems from Thomas’s treatment of Christ’s unique humanity as the God-Man. How can we imitate someone whose humanity is unique? In particular, Thomas holds that a divine dispensation allowed Christ to experience the joy of the Beatific Vision in his higher reason while he experienced pain and sorrow in his sensitive appetite. This dispensation allowed each part of his humanity to have its proper operation without the joy from the Vision preventing sorrow from arising in his sense appetite, and vice versa. This divine dispensation is an “aspect of [Christ’s] affectivity that even a graced and sinless human person would not have in common with him,” says Lombardo, and “implies that Christ’s affections do not operate according to their nature, insofar as the affections of the will do not fully engage the passions of the sense appetite.”⁶⁰ Boyd Taylor Coolman expresses a similar doubt in comparing Thomas’s Christology to that of Alexander of Hales.⁶¹ This is a legitimate question to raise, especially when concentrated on texts of the *Summa theologiae*.

propassiones in the sense of fully virtuous passions.

⁵⁹ *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 8.

⁶⁰ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 206, 216.

⁶¹ Coolman, “Salvific Affectivity,” 31: “Perhaps also Christ’s constant experience of the Beatific Vision in his intellectual appetite or will ‘crowds out’ for Thomas the possibility of some form of compassion there as well. Like Alexander in his early position in the Glossa, Thomas seems to hold to a ‘cleaner’ distinction between joy in the rational part of [the] soul and sorrow in the sensible part.”

By way of response, Thomas's earlier treatment of the matter in the *Compendium theologiae* does not portray Christ's reason as cordoned off from his sensitive appetite. Since this passage from the *Compendium* serves as the basis for *ST* III, q. 46, a. 7 ("Whether Christ suffered according to his whole soul?"), the former should inform one's reading of the latter.⁶² In the *Compendium* Thomas writes: "If, therefore, the suffering [*passio*] of Christ's soul is considered on the part of his body, thus his whole soul suffered when his body suffered. For the soul is the form of the body according to its essence, indeed all the powers of the soul are rooted in its essence. Whence it remains that while his body suffered any given power of his soul suffered in a certain way."⁶³ On the side of "the suffering of his soul from an object" of a given power of the soul, the passions of Christ's soul did not disturb the joy of the Vision in his higher reason. Now the higher reason "gazes upon eternal things that should be contemplated and considered." Here Christ had the Beatific Vision. On account of this object his higher reason therefore "had nothing adverse or contrary from which any suffering of nuisance would have a place in it."⁶⁴ The lower reason, however, "ponders about temporal things" and could be a locus of suffering in Christ's soul, since lower reason "apprehended death and any other injury of the body as harmful and contrary to natural desire." Now a man suffers in his lower reason "from those things he apprehends as harmful to others whom he loves," because "love makes two men as though one." Therefore Thomas says that "Christ suffered from this sadness because he recognized that danger from sin or punishment was threatening others whom he loved out of charity; whence not only for himself, but also for others he was afflicted."⁶⁵ Thomas therefore does affirm compassion in the human soul of Christ, *pace* Coolman.

Now the higher reason and the lower reason are the same faculty.⁶⁶ While the divine dispensation did allow Christ a unique joy flowing from the Beatific Vision in his higher reason without rendering his body and soul impassible, his lower reason (and thus the faculty of reason itself)

⁶² The part of *Compendium* on the virtue of faith, into which the following chapter falls, was composed during Thomas's Roman period (1266–1267); see Torrell, *Initiation*, 509.

⁶³ *Compendium theologiae*, ch. 232 (Leonine ed., 42:181a). Translations from this work are the author's own.

⁶⁴ Leonine ed., 42:181a.

⁶⁵ Leonine ed., 42:181a–b. Thomas has already expounded upon the idea that fallen men needed a friend to suffer for them in order to explain the fittingness of the Incarnation in *Compendium theologiae*, ch. 226.

⁶⁶ *ST* I, q. 79, a. 9.

was involved in his suffering: "Therefore, regarding the same things about which Christ suffered in his external senses, imagination, and lower reason, he rejoiced in his higher reason, inasmuch as he related those things to the order of divine wisdom."⁶⁷ Lombardo has not fully taken stock of this text from the *Compendium* in positing an incoherence between Christ's possession of the Beatific Vision and his having a true and perfect human affectivity. Likewise, the text meets Coolman's concern about Thomas's Christology precluding a discussion of Christ's compassion, at least in principle.⁶⁸

The reasoning of Lombardo's objection assumes that only the divine dispensation allows all Christ's powers to act in their own proper way. It is true that Thomas did hold that "the natural order is that the soul's powers mutually impede each other," while in Christ, "by control of the Divine power, *every faculty was allowed to do what was proper to it*, and one power was not impeded by another. Hence, as the joy of his mind in contemplation did not impede the sorrow or pain of the inferior part, so, conversely, the passions of the inferior part nowise impeded the act of reason."⁶⁹ But Thomas also describes the proper action of Christ's faculties in terms of his reason's governance. For example, Aquinas says that it was "the reason of Christ [that] allowed his soul and its inferior powers to act in their own proper way."⁷⁰ Further, could the divine power be the fullness of grace in Christ's soul? One should also question whether Adam, having supernatural and preternatural gifts in the Garden, did not suffer the powers of his soul impeding one another; yet he was human. Thus, an effect that seems an avoidance of human nature due to the divine dispensation is due more to Christ's fullness of virtue, which allows for the action of the lower appetites to participate perfectly in reason's political rule.

A text from *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8, confirms that a sufficient cause of

⁶⁷ Leonine ed., 42:181b.

⁶⁸ Coolman, "Salvific Affectivity," 29–31. Regarding Coolman's question about sorrow remaining in Christ's sensitive appetite (*ST* III, q. 46, a. 7, obj. 3, actually uses the term *propassio*), Thomas regards this as necessary because a complete passion "causes reason to deflect from the rectitude of its act, so that it then follows the passion" (ad 3). The *Compendium* passage and the later article in the *Summa* should then confirm Coolman's conjectural solution regarding Thomas and Alexander on reason and sorrow in Christ ("Salvific Affectivity," 29). Further, Coolman could appreciate that later in the *Compendium* passage Thomas utilizes the same distinction between *ratio ut natura* and *ratio ut ratio* that Coolman admires in Alexander (31).

⁶⁹ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 9, ad 3 (emphasis added).

⁷⁰ *Super Ioan* 12, lec. 5.

Christ's virtuous emotions is his fullness of grace and virtue. Even Adam before sin and the blessed, likewise complete in virtue and not lacking in grace, had virtuous passions of the same type. Thomas accordingly attributes the same rational control over the parts of the soul to Christ, Adam in the original state, and the resurrected just:

To be sure, in the blessed, in man in the first state, and in Christ according to the state of infirmity, such passions are never sudden, for the reason that, owing to the perfect obedience of the lower powers to the higher ones present in them, no movement arises in the lower appetite except according to reason's command. Hence Damascene says, "No natural tendencies preceded the will in the Lord, for he was hungry willingly, he feared willingly" etc. *And this should be understood similarly concerning the blessed after the resurrection and human beings in the first state.*⁷¹

This reinforces the line of those who see in Christ a revelation of humanity as it once was and as it will become. This is all the more reason to regard the rational control of the powers of Christ as sufficiently explained by his fullness of grace and virtue, which he recovers for fallen Adam and secures for the blessed in the resurrection.

Gondreau offers a similar solution. He understands Thomas to be speaking of an effect of the fall from grace when he speaks of the "natural order" whereby the movements of man's soul impede one another, that is, in the state of wounded nature. The higher powers of Christ, "given the tenet of his sinlessness and perfection in grace and virtue, could in no case be impaired."⁷² In other words, the intensity of a passion impeding the other powers of the soul, of which Thomas speaks in his treatise on the passions in the *prima secundae*, is not the same kind of intensity felt by Christ in his Passion. The former "presupposes the disorder among the soul's powers (cf. *Prima Secundae*, q. 77, a. 3), a disorder that Christ's integrity of soul precludes."⁷³ If Gondreau is correct in this analysis, it suggests that when Thomas excludes intense passions from Christ, Adam before sin, and the blessed in texts such as *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8, Thomas does not mean they could not experience profound or deeply felt passions. Rather Thomas means that they would not experience passions that drag away reason. In that sense, "intensity" is equivalent to a passion overrunning

⁷¹ Leonine ed., 22/3:776b (emphasis added).

⁷² Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul*, 366.

⁷³ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul*, 366.

reason, which a *propassio* does not do. If that is correct, then the divine dispensation perfects Christ's human affectivity *qua* human affectivity, namely, the virtuous spontaneity of Christ's passions.

This brings us back to the issue of *propassio* and to the relationship of reason's command to the elicitation of a passion. In various texts we find Christ's passions obedient to the command of reason. With Lombardo we should ask, "Does Aquinas mean that passions occurred in Christ only after reason's explicit command? Or does Aquinas mean to affirm something less dictatorial about reason's guidance of passion?"⁷⁴ Without getting into another subject—that of the political rule of reason over the passions—we can briefly review Aquinas' position.⁷⁵ "Aquinas says that the operations of the sensitive powers are 'rational by participation' inasmuch as they 'naturally obey reason,'" says Titus. "Moral virtue makes the sensitive appetites 'execute the commands of reason, by exercising their proper acts.'" ⁷⁶ The "command" or "order" of reason is reason's shaping of the sensitive appetite and its acts, the passions, by the moral virtues.⁷⁷ Thus the "command of reason" is compatible with spontaneous, elicited passions. Take Christ's desire for natural goods, which spontaneously arose within reason's ordering: "Christ's flesh naturally desired [*naturaliter appetebat*] food, drink, sleep, and other such things with his sensitive appetite, after the manner and order of right reason."⁷⁸ Christ experienced spontaneous movements of his powers because he willed his soul's faculties to all have their own proper movement *but always in accord with the judgment of reason*. We agree, therefore, with Jensen that, when we speak of spontaneity in Christ's passions, we should mean that their "automatic response is precisely the ability to follow the judgment of reason with ease, not the ability to act independently of reason."⁷⁹

Rather, the sort of "spontaneous passion" Thomas wants to exclude from Christ's experience is antecedent passion. "Aquinas has no difficulty affirming that Christ's passions may chronologically precede the conscious judgment of Christ's reason," says Lombardo. "He does, however, exclude

⁷⁴ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 201.

⁷⁵ See Jensen, "Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions," 203–08, for assessment of Thomas's use of Aristotle's "political rule" metaphor. Jensen ultimately regards the fact of political rule as a function of humanity wounded by sin, such that reason has to exercise a persuasive rather than tyrannical rule over the passions.

⁷⁶ Titus, "Passions in Christ," 73.

⁷⁷ Thomas holds that the sensitive powers are seats of virtue (*ST* I-II, q. 50, a. 3).

⁷⁸ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 2, ad 2. Cf. the fourth ground of proper passion, "intensity," in *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 8.

⁷⁹ Jensen, "Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions," 205; see also 203.

from Christ those spontaneous movements of disordered passion that Aquinas calls antecedent passion.”⁸⁰ Titus characterizes these consequent, spontaneous passions of Christ as *propassiones* which “begin in the sensitive appetite but [do] so in a way that is in accordance with the ‘disposition of reason’ (*ST* III, q. 15, a. 4).”⁸¹ They are both consequent to reason and also spontaneous, because they arise immediately but the response comes from the virtuous disposition of the sensitive part informed by reason’s judgment. Further insight is shed by Thomas’s reminder that Christ’s sense appetite, because it was a fully virtuous human appetite, was rational by participation and therefore one could call “the sensuality. . . *a will by participation*.”⁸²

Returning to the objection, the divine dispensation in Thomas’s Christology seems more to do with preventing the joy of the Beatific Vision from overflowing into the lower powers, and with preventing the intensity of Christ’s human passions with regard to evils from hindering his higher reason having its proper act in the Beatific Vision.⁸³ This containment allowed Christ to suffer and to die, for otherwise the Vision would glorify his humanity so that it could not suffer.⁸⁴ Here one should emphasize the reason of containing joy so as to prevent Christ’s humanity from being immediately glorified as the proximate reason for a special divine dispensation. Lombardo himself admits that reason forming the sense appetite so virtuously that the passions do not overflow so as to disturb reason is explainable by the fullness of virtue in Christ’s soul. Thus he says: “The relationship between reason and passion in Christ, then, is not something unique to a God-man, but rather the full flourishing of human nature. The virtuous experience the same thing—albeit imperfectly and without complete constancy, since the *fomes peccati* can never be completely eradicated from wounded human nature.”⁸⁵ In this he agrees with Torrell, who responds to doubts concerning Thomas’s doctrine of Christ’s perfect self-mastery over his passions as follows:

⁸⁰ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 211.

⁸¹ Titus, “Passions in Christ,” 82. Note again, though, that the antecedent–consequent distinction regards the principle of a passion, not its effect on reason, which is what truly characterizes a passion as *propassio* or *passio*.

⁸² *ST* III, q. 18, a. 2, corp. Jensen rightly points out that the will’s rectitude comes back to right reason’s judgments (“Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions,” 200–201).

⁸³ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 6; q. 46, a. 8, obj. 2, corp. and ad 2.

⁸⁴ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 5, ad 3.

⁸⁵ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 211–12.

This grip of reason over the passions in Christ is the first sign of what we were calling above the exceptional status of his humanity. At first sight, it awakens a certain incredulity, but if one will recall that this humanity is exempt from original sin and from the moral disorder which follows (the “tinderbox of sin”), and that it is at the same time graced to a supreme degree, the explication is perfectly convincing.⁸⁶

This supports the thesis that Christ’s experience of perfectly virtuous passion (and thus of *propassiones*) is sufficiently explained by the fullness of grace and virtue in his human soul. The divine dispensation is required more by other unique features of Christ’s humanity that are a function of his humanity being assumed by the divine Person of the Son. The main example would be that he enjoyed the Beatific Vision even in the unimaginable depths of sorrow and pain in the Passion. The sufficient cause of the fullness of grace can be considered in abstraction from Christ’s possession of the Beatific Vision during his earthly ministry. Furthermore, to identify his fullness of grace and virtue as a sufficient cause of *propassio* in Christ strengthens the link between Christ’s experience of the passions and his role as exemplar in the virtuous life, which Thomas also affirms.

In sum, Thomas’s three ways in which Christ’s passions differ from those of human beings occur in a comparison between his passions and human nature as fallen from grace and wounded by sin, rather than human nature in its original state under the influence of grace. Thomas sees the three differences between Christ’s passions and ours as indicators of our sin, not the inability of human nature healed and elevated by grace to tend toward an ideal of virtuous passion. While the justified must still contend with the *fomes peccati*, as is further explained below, the gap between their experience of the passions and Christ’s closes when one considers the possibility of growth in virtue according to the power and example of Christ himself. This growth *in via* will at best be “asymptotic” due to the *fomes peccati*, but by the grace of the God-Man their affections can become more virtuous according to their exemplar. To complete the link between Christ’s *propassiones* as a feature of his perfectly virtuous affectivity as caused by his fullness of grace and virtue, and our own life in grace, we now turn to texts in which Thomas discusses Christ’s passions as exemplary for the just, who should in turn experience *propassiones*.

⁸⁶ Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mystères*, 1:107.

Propassio in the Just and in the Wise

Further demonstrating that Christ's *propassiones* fall under his moral exemplarity and are not merely a function of the divine dispensation are texts where Thomas labels the passions of just or virtuous men as *propassiones*. These texts indicate that men besides Christ should experience passions that are necessarily *propassiones*, since *propassio* is an integral part of every virtuous emotion. This section argues that Thomas did not use the term or concept of *propassio* for Christ only, but as a necessary element of all virtuous passions experienced by the just and the wise. This section therefore completes the connection of Christ's experience of *propassiones* (first section) and his moral exemplarity being sufficiently caused by the fullness of grace in his human soul (second section), to the moral exemplarity of Christ's *propassiones* for other human beings. As Thomas says in his *Super Ioannem* 12, lectio 5, a passion that troubles reason "is not found in any wise person." Now every *propassio* is not a passion which troubles reason. If every wise man has *propassiones* and if some wise man does not have the Beatific Vision, then some who have *propassiones* do not (yet) have the Beatific Vision (by Bocardo).

This section will proceed first to a synthetic presentation of Thomas's doctrine on the experience of *propassiones* by the "just" and the "wise." As far as I know, the texts which follow from the *Postilla super Psalmos* have not been used in recent treatments of *propassio* in Thomas. Secondly this section will give a caveat about the asymptotic nature of the passions of the just according to the ideal of Christ, for in this life the just remain beset by the *fomes peccati*. This second part flows naturally from the first, for Thomas holds that the just or the wise might experience two types of *propassio*: in the sense of the first movement of an antecedent passion or of a passion arising from a morally illicit object but constrained by reason before becoming voluntary (*propassio* only partially virtuous and never in Christ himself), and in the sense of fully elicited, appropriate consequent passions that do not deflect reason but arise from its judgment (fully virtuous *propassiones* as were only in Christ). That the just or wise man experiences the former owes to original sin's remaining effect, the *fomes*.

That Thomas expects *propassiones* to characterize the affectivity of "the just man" or "the wise man" even in this postlapsarian life is evident enough. In *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8, Thomas discusses the characteristics of passion, one of which is whether the passion draws the rational appetite to the level of the sensitive appetite. If so, it is a "complete passion" or simply a "passion." If not, it is "incomplete" or a "propassion," transforming the person in part (*quasi secundum partem*). Thomas says "sinners"

(*peccatores*) experience immoral passions, including that such passions are often complete passions. In contrast, “in the just [*in iustis*] they are never complete, because their reason is never drawn down by their passions.” Furthermore, Thomas expects there to be growth in experiencing *propassio*, for “in the imperfect they are vehement, but in the perfect they are incapable [of moving reason], the inferior powers being pulled in by the habit of the moral virtues.”⁸⁷ Notice that Thomas expects *propassiones* to differentiate the experience of “the just ones” from “sinners,” and that Thomas further differentiates the just into the imperfect and the perfect. The perfect are characterized by their greater degree of moral virtue, which subordinates the movements of the sense appetite to reason. That these passions remain in the lower appetites is the *ratio* of a *propassio*, as Thomas explains earlier in the response. Thus *propassio* is an integral part of every virtuous passion, a necessary but not sufficient cause of virtuous affectivity.

Further buttressing the similarities between Christ’s perfect *propassiones* and those Thomas expects to see in Christ’s members are certain texts where Christ is held out as the exemplar of the types of passions the faithful should experience. Two passages from Thomas’s *Super Ioannem* explain that while Christ experienced *propassio* on account of his perfection, that experience is normative for any wise man (*sapiens*).⁸⁸ While visiting Mary and Martha shortly after the death of Lazarus, Christ “troubled himself” (John 11:33). Thomas next gives three reasons why Christ willed to be sorrowful, namely, to show forth his human nature, “so that by controlling his own sadness, he might teach us to moderate our own sadness,” and “to tell us that we should be sad and weep for those who die.”⁸⁹ This second and third reason touch directly upon Christ’s role as moral exemplar in that Christ moderates his passion here according to reason, including not allowing the passion to become immoderate. Thomas writes, “our Lord willed to be sad in order to teach us that there are times when we should be sad, which is contrary to the opinion of the Stoics; and he preserved a certain moderation in his sadness, which is contrary to the excessively sad type.” Thomas attributes to the “excessively sad type” an immoderate sorrow which would dominate the soul, as discussed in the second section of the paper. Such a person allows his sadness to run apart from his reason in response to a certain evil, thereby losing the guidance of reason and the human character of his emotion. Given Thomas’s comments elsewhere about the appropriateness of Christ’s intense sorrow on the Cross, it is

⁸⁷ Leonine ed., 22/3:776b.

⁸⁸ On the dating of 1270–1272, see Torrell, *Initiation*, 288, 496.

⁸⁹ *Super Ioan* 11, lec. 5.

difficult to imagine Thomas meaning by “moderate” here that one ought ever to have only weakly felt sorrow.⁹⁰ The proportion depends on what reason judges appropriate for the situation, and so one ought to sorrow at a friend’s death (*contra* Stoic opinion, Thomas says, which “seems very inhuman”).⁹¹

The second example from Aquinas’s commentary actually uses the term *propassio*, relating it to another instance of Jesus’s being troubled (John 13:21: “When Jesus had thus spoken [about his betrayal], he was troubled in spirit”). Thomas briefly reviews that “trouble” correlates to a movement of the soul in the sensitive appetite, that these passions are unlike movements of the intellectual powers in that they entail a bodily change, and that such troubling is indeed a passion, namely, the passion of sadness.⁹² He adds that “among all the affections or passions of the sensory appetite, sadness involves the most disturbance . . . [and] this is why one who is afflicted with sadness is especially said to be troubled.”⁹³ Responding to the Stoic position that categorically denied sadness to the “wise man,” since, according to them, the wise man could not experience evil, Thomas notes that sadness can arise in someone in two ways.⁹⁴ The first way is “from the flesh.” A passion might arise because of some apprehension of the senses, but “independently of the judgment of reason,” which signifies antecedent passion. Even if this happens, however, it is possible that the passion will “remain within the limits of reason and not cloud one’s reason; in this case, Jerome would call it a *propassio*.” Thomas uses the term *propassio*, citing Jerome as his source. Such an experience of human affectivity, limited to the sensitive appetite and not “clouding” reason, “can happen in one who is wise.” On the other hand, a passion which goes “beyond the limits of reason and trouble[s] reason . . . is not found in the wise.” Admittedly, this seems to be more about a wise man checking a sudden, unformed movement of his sensitive appetite, that is, an antecedent passion, before it troubles his reason and thus dominates his soul. This merely shows that *propassio* is an integral part of virtuous passions, but not sufficient for fully virtuous passion. All the faithful should have at least these lower-level *propassiones*. Robert Miner implies that *propassio* in Thomas is always this kind of antecedent passion that the virtuous person is able to check before

⁹⁰ Indeed, in *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 8, the *passio*–*propassio* distinction differs from whether a passion is “slight” or “intense.”

⁹¹ *Super Ioan* 11, lec. 5.

⁹² *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4.

⁹³ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4.

⁹⁴ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4.

it drags away reason. Thus Miner says that such *propassiones* are not “significant” movements of the sensitive appetite and that “Aquinas does not think that we are responsible for experiencing propassions.”⁹⁵ This is only partially true, for all of Christ’s passions were *propassiones*, were intense, and were morally perfect. Miner’s position is true in regard to the involuntary, antecedent movements of affectivity found in “the just” on account of the *fomes*. But this is only the lower level of *propassio*.

The second way describes how Christ’s passion of sorrow is virtuous, though Thomas does not limit this to Christ only. This way begins from the reason, “that is, when someone is troubled in the sensory appetite because of a judgment of reason and from deliberation [*ex rationis iudicio et deliberatione*].”⁹⁶ A remaining question is whether this is always a discursive judgment or whether one’s emotions can be shaped by reason beforehand through the formation of virtues, allowing for spontaneous but rational emotional responses. Yet Thomas does say that “in Christ all things arose from the deliberation of reason, even in his sensory appetite; and so there were in him no sudden disturbances of his sensuality.”⁹⁷ An unresolved question at this point is how Thomas conceives of all things arising from Christ’s deliberation. Does that mean all passion arose after a judgment of reason made immediately and temporally prior to the experience of the passion? One answer, which would introduce greater disparity between Christ’s affectivity and ours, is that Christ never experienced spontaneous movements apart from the discursive judgment of reason and the command of his will. Given that Aquinas seems to allow for spontaneous (though consequent) passion in Christ, it is better to reject this and instead understand Thomas to mean “inordinate movement antecedent to reason” for “from the flesh” in the first way and “in accordance with the sensitive appetite’s own movement as shaped by reason in virtue (consequent to reason)” for “in accordance with deliberation of reason” in the second way.

Thomas continues, giving two intended effects of Christ allowing himself to be troubled in spirit: firstly, to deny “the error of Apollinarius” by showing himself to have a true human nature; secondly, “to aid our own progress.”⁹⁸ The sorrow of Christ, which is here a *propassio* with a lawful object and consequent to the judgment of reason, was willed by him in

⁹⁵ Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 106.

⁹⁶ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4 (author’s own translation).

⁹⁷ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4 (author’s own translation).

⁹⁸ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4.

response to Judas's betrayal so as to give "an example to superiors that if now and then they have to pass a harsh judgment on their subjects, they should do it with a sad heart."⁹⁹ Christ's emotional response to Judas is a proportionate sadness and accordingly a model for all those who must rebuke their subordinates.

In several other texts, Thomas even argues from the affectivity of "the just man" or "the wise man" to the affectivity of Christ to clarify that Christ experienced *propassiones*, not *passiones*. The passage above from *Super Ioannem* correlates with what Aquinas implies about the possibility of human affectivity in *ST* III, q. 15, while teaching on the passions of Christ's soul. We have already seen Thomas defend the position that Christ only experienced passions with lawful objects and with the judgment of reason. He never had "perfect" (complete) passions which "dominate the soul," but *propassiones* which arise in the sensitive appetite at reason's command "but [go] no further."¹⁰⁰ Later in the question, Thomas teaches that Christ experienced only the *propassio* of sorrow and that of fear.¹⁰¹ In the course of doing so, Thomas attributes these *propassiones* to "the wise man" (*sapiens*), correlating with the first passage from *Super Ioannem* above. With regard to fear, Thomas is answering an objection raised from Proverbs 28:1: "The just man, bold as a lion, shall be without dread." Since Christ was "most just," how could he fear? Thomas answers: "The just man is said to be without dread, in so far as dread implies a perfect passion drawing man from what reason dictates. And thus fear was not in Christ, but only as a *propassio*."¹⁰² One can infer that Thomas would also say that all the just in Christ likewise ought to experience the *propassio* of fear. If the just characteristically experience *propassiones*, how much more the Just One? In other words, if *propassio* is an integral part of virtuous passions, Christ's affectivity could not be lacking in this regard.

Regarding sorrow, Thomas is more explicit in linking Christ's experience of the *propassio* to the emotional life of mere men:

In the soul of the wise man there may be sorrow in the sensitive appetite by his apprehending these [secondary] evils; without this sorrow disturbing the reason. And in this way are we to understand that *whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad*

⁹⁹ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4.

¹⁰¹ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 6, ad 1 and ad 2 (sorrow); a. 7, ad 1 (fear).

¹⁰² *ST* III, q. 15, a. 7, ad 1.

[Prov 12:21], because his reason is troubled by no misfortune. And thus Christ's sorrow was a propassion, and not a passion.¹⁰³

Thomas is replying to the Stoic position that the just man does not experience sorrow because the only evil that can befall him is the loss of his virtue, which cannot happen but voluntarily. By definition, the just man is virtuous. Therefore, the just man can experience no evil. In order to overcome the objection, Thomas distinguishes between virtue and sin as man's chief good and chief evil, respectively, and the "secondary goods of man, which pertain to the body."¹⁰⁴ The loss of these goods results in the *propassio* of sorrow in the just man, as the harm of Christ's Passion and the harm done by the sins of his disciples or the Jews who killed him produced the *propassio* of his sorrow in Christ's soul (combining the reply with the article's *corpus*).¹⁰⁵ This does not conflict with Christ's deeply felt sorrow for the sins of the world, since even his sorrow for our sins did not remove his virtue from him. In fact, his virtue made his deep sorrow possible. Notice that Thomas argues from the just man's experience of *propassio* to Christ's experience of *propassio*. This also justifies Lombardo's observation that Aquinas's conception of "the instructive role of Christ's affectivity" is not "unidirectional" but is informed by sound psychology.¹⁰⁶ If that is true, then this is even stronger evidence for Christ's experience of *propassio* as an ideal for all other human emotional life.

At the end of his teaching career, Thomas taught an incomplete course on the Psalms,¹⁰⁷ wherein he twice mentions *propassio*. Teaching on Psalm 2, Thomas encounters words attributing anger to God: "Then he will speak to them in his anger [*tunc loquetur ad eos in ira sua*]." Thomas comments that anger indicates God's "pronouncement of vengeance" and that "anger does not befall God, but what pertains to the creature is sometimes attributed to the Creator by *antropopatos*, namely, a human propassion."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ ST III, q. 15, a. 6, ad 2.

¹⁰⁴ ST III, q. 15, a. 6, ad 2.

¹⁰⁵ See *Compendium theologiae*, ch. 232: "Hence Christ suffered from this sadness because he recognized that danger from sin or punishment was threatening others whom he loved out of charity; whence not only for himself, but also for others he was afflicted" (Leonine ed., 42:181b).

¹⁰⁶ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 223.

¹⁰⁷ *Postilla super Psalmos*, given in 1273. On the dating, see Torrell, *Initiation*, 376–77, 497, but especially 606–07, where Torrell relates recent scholarship that destroys the doubts of Bataillon and Tugwell about the late date of the work.

¹⁰⁸ *Postilla super Psalmos* 2, no. 3 (*Index Thomisticus: S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia ut sunt in Indice Thomistico*, ed. R. Busa, 7 vols. [Stuttgart: Bad Cannstatt,

The kind of anger which is applied to God analogically is the kind of anger a righteous man experiences, that is, the *propassio* of anger. This is a text where Thomas refers to a *propassio* apart from any consideration of Christ. He makes a virtuous human *propassio* the creaturely analogue of God's anger. This would be a righteous anger aiding in the infliction of vengeance and moderated by reason's deliberation. To understand *propassio* here as a sudden, antecedent passion makes the analogous relation to God's justice unintelligible. Of course, what is not attributed is change in God, let alone a bodily transmutation, nor the danger of God's anger deranging his reason, even slightly. That this is one of the last works we have from Thomas hints at an anthropological appropriation of a term he had been using nearly exclusively for Christ's virtuous passions. Perhaps at the end of his career Thomas was beginning to associate more freely in his own mind the term *propassio* with virtue in human beings generally.¹⁰⁹

Thomas's comments later on Psalm 54[55] are interesting for two reasons. First, they provide more evidence for linking *propassio* with "wise men." Second, Thomas makes a rare explicit statement that Christ's passions could arise suddenly. First, Thomas denies that the passion of sadness ever befalls a wise man ("non cadit in virum sapientem"). Thomas then distinguishes the passion of sadness from the *propassio* of sadness: "The other sadness is called *propassio*, which is a sudden movement or change; and this sadness was in Christ."¹¹⁰ The sadness in Christ was *propassio*, "a sudden movement or change." It is very unusual for Thomas to describe Christ's affectivity as "sudden" (*subitus*). In fact, he denies this elsewhere.¹¹¹ What Thomas writes could be taken in two ways. He could be attributing to Christ the kind of *propassio* envisioned by Jerome and discussed in the first section. Given Thomas's doctrine of Christ's fullness of virtue and correlative lack of the *fomes*, it is unfitting to interpret him in this way. The other way in which Thomas's words can be understood would be to take them as referring to a spontaneous *propassio* arising in accordance with reason, yet not dragging down reason. This text therefore gives explicit support to an interpretation of what the antecedent-consequent distinction means, namely, that these categories do not refer to a temporal

1980], 6:50b).

¹⁰⁹ Without endorsing his view that *propassiones* are bodily changes occurring within and assisting deliberation, that Thomas would associate *propassiones* with humans generally supports Jensen's appropriation of the term for speaking about virtuous passions outside of Christological contexts ("Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions," 224–27).

¹¹⁰ *Postilla super Psalmos* 54, no. 3 (Busa ed., 6:129a–b).

¹¹¹ E.g.: *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 8; *Super Ioan* 11, lec. 5, and 13, lec. 4.

moment before the command of reason but to the movement as in accordance with reason's disposition.¹¹² This latter interpretation harmonizes with section two's discussion of Christ's spontaneous *propassiones*. More interestingly, here Thomas speaks of the principle of the passion while calling it a *propassio*, which elsewhere is used to speak of the effect of a passion. Thus, Thomas regarded *propassio* as integral to all virtuous passion, such that Christ's sudden but consequent passions could be named *propassiones*.

As is now clear, Thomas believes that the just man or the wise man experiences *propassiones*. In them Christ's grace heals the image marred in Adam's fall. Christ is the New Adam, head of the Church, perfecting his members through the grace mediated by his assumed humanity and its virtue. Before moving to a necessary qualification of this picture by reference to the *fomes peccati*, let us return to something provocative said above, that Christ's *propassiones* are of the same kind as the first man's were before sin. Recall Torrell's identification of Christ's *propassiones* with Adam's, to which he adds: "One is able informally to summarize the intuition of Thomas [on Christ's *propassiones*] in saying that if we want to know what the passions in Christ are like, one must not reason from what they are in us, but from what they were in the first Adam before sin."¹¹³ This overlap between Adam's *propassiones* and Christ's reinforces the argument above that Christ's affectivity is exemplary for our moral life. First, it reinforces that Christ's *propassiones* are sufficiently caused by his fullness of virtue. The gifts of habitual grace and original justice in Eden allowed the first Adam to have self-mastery over his passions, experiencing no disorder and having rational command. His reason was subordinate to God, his soul to reason, and his body to his soul; this was a gift of grace.¹¹⁴ Thomas says that Adam had the moral virtues perfectly and thus had regulated passions.¹¹⁵ In that state, Adam's "sensual appetite was wholly subject to reason: so that in that

¹¹² Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 109–11, 211; Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul*, 337–42; Jensen, "Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions," 253.

¹¹³ Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mystères*, 1:107. This comment by Torrell seems to contradict Lombardo when he says that "in order to understand Christ, it is necessary to reflect on human experience, not just sacred Scripture" (*Logic of Desire*, 223). The reconciliation is that Torrell speaks of when our passions are disordered, rebelling against our reason, and sinful, as Thomas means in *ST* III, q. 15, a. 4, while Lombardo speaks of what is best in our passions when our passions are virtuous. Even so, one should not look to human experience without sacred Scripture, as Aristotle did, for then one will regard our lack of control over our emotions as merely natural, rather than a wound of original sin. In that case, one will be somewhat baffled by Christ's affectivity, as Lombardo is.

¹¹⁴ *ST* I, q. 95, a. 1.

¹¹⁵ *ST* I, q. 95, a. 2, ad 3; see also a. 3.

state the passions of the soul existed only as consequent upon the judgment of reason."¹¹⁶ We have seen how Christ's passions were likewise consequent to the deliberation of reason. The difference is that Adam did not have the Beatific Vision,¹¹⁷ and he did not experience fear or sorrow before sin. Even so, the common denominator in both him and Christ is the perfection of moral virtue as the sufficient cause of virtuous passions. Torrell himself uses the word "propassion" in describing such a state, though Thomas does not use the term in the *prima pars*: "The mastery over the passions by reason such that they remain propassions is one of the characteristics of the state of innocence according to Thomas (cf. *ST* I, q. 95, a. 2)."¹¹⁸ Adam would have experienced only *propassio* prior to the fall into sin, and this by the grace of God perfecting human nature and reason's mastery over the whole person.

Additionally, Christ's *propassiones*, being not only a restoration of the graced life found in the state of innocence but also a reasonable and perfect human encounter with evil and the world's brokenness, are more a model for our perfection than Adam's. As the New Adam, Christ does more than Adam as head. Among everything else, he comes to us in our broken and sinful state to raise us back up to fellowship with the Father. To do so, Christ experiences *propassiones* that result from an evil object, passions which Adam did not have to taste before the fall. As the New Adam, Christ has added to his experience of Adam's innocent affectivity the pain, fear, and sorrow of a world corrupted by sin. As Torrell notes:

Christ shared in this state, nevertheless with one difference: situated in paradise, the first man did not have any evil to fear; he did not have in him therefore any passions which have an evil for their object: fear, sadness, pain, etc. Christ, to the contrary, having assumed voluntarily the life of man driven from paradise, suffered as all other men the passions provoked by evil like those provoked by good.¹¹⁹

In facing evil with a true manhood, Christ fully entered into the human condition to raise us up out of sin and death. The Incarnation redeems the dark side of human affectivity in that the New Adam experiences passion in regard to evil, thereby facing down the evil of sin inserted into creation by the Old Adam.

¹¹⁶ *ST* I, q. 95, a. 2.

¹¹⁷ *ST* I, q. 94, a. 1.

¹¹⁸ Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mystères*, 1:107n34.

¹¹⁹ Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mystères*, 1:107n34.

At the same time, the passions of Christ's members can only asymptotically tend toward the ideal of the God-Man's perfected humanity, on account of the *fomes peccati*. In this age the faithful still bear something of the image of the "man of dust" even as they will then completely bear the image of the "man of heaven" (1 Cor 15:47–50). Thomas teaches explicitly that Christ's passions are exemplary for us who receive his grace. He also teaches that our humanity is wounded by original sin even in the life of grace, for justification does not include a restoration of the integrity Adam had in the Garden before sin. So "the continual corruption of the sensuality . . . understood as referring to the *fomes* . . . is never completely destroyed in this life, since, though the stain of original sin passes, its effect remains."¹²⁰ Even in the text from *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 8, mentioned above, which speaks of growth in the *propassiones*, Thomas still cautions that even the perfect "have passions not only foreseen but sudden, not only in respect to good but even in respect to evil."¹²¹ Elsewhere Thomas describes the wounding of human nature by the fall in terms of the loss of the original justice, which includes the gift of integrity, by which reason was subject to God and the sense appetite to reason. Accordingly, "all the powers of the soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order."¹²² This gives rise to disordered desires, including disordered passions, in humankind in our present state. This wounding is not removed by the grace of Christ in this age:

In the state of corrupt nature man needs grace to heal his nature in order that he may entirely abstain from sin. And in the present life this healing is wrought in the mind—the carnal appetite being not yet restored. Hence the Apostle (Rom 7:25) says in the person of one who is restored: "I myself, with the mind, serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." And in this state man can abstain from all mortal sin, which takes its stand in his reason, as stated above (q. 75, a. 5); but man cannot abstain from all venial sin on account of the corruption of his lower appetite of sensuality.¹²³

¹²⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 74, a. 3, ad 2.

¹²¹ Leonine ed., 22/3: 776b.

¹²² *ST* I-II, q. 85, a. 3.

¹²³ *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 8. See also a. 9, where Thomas notes that man needs the further help of actual grace generally and "for this special reason—the condition of the state of human nature. For although healed by grace as to the mind, yet it remains corrupted and poisoned in the flesh, whereby it serves the 'law of sin' (Rom 7:25)," as well as in the other faculties according to the same fourfold wounding mentioned in q. 85, a. 3.

This distinction between the healing of the reason's wound by ordering it to God while leaving the sensuality subject to the *fomes peccati* is the basis for distinguishing below between the two kinds of imitation of Christ found in the faithful in regard to *propassio*.

These features of Thomas's teaching, Christ's exemplarity and the presence of the *fomes peccati*, characterize what I mean by the asymptotic imitation the faithful can give to Christ's grace. Their affective life will more and more obey, as they go from grace to grace, the Master's model. Yet they will never in this life be completely free from disordered movements of affectivity. For this reason, I distinguish two levels of affective imitation that Thomas expects to see in the life of the faithful. Both levels may rightly be called *propassio*. The first level is that the faithful, in experiencing disordered, involuntary first movements of sensuality, will resist them and not approve of them. These are *propassiones* because they arise in regard to an illicit object or even to a good object but antecedent to the deliberation of reason, yet they do not drag down the reason to sensuality because the "just man" resists the movement, at least to the point of being able to avoid mortal sin. As Thomas notes, "corruption of the *fomes* does not hinder man from using his rational will to check individual inordinate movements, if he be presentient to them, for instance by turning his thoughts to other things."¹²⁴ Such resistance is only successful, however, by the grace of Christ and does not always entail avoidance of venial sin in regard to such movements of the sense appetite.¹²⁵ Obviously, such *propassiones* do not characterize Christ's affectivity except by participation in his reason's "containment" of his emotions. That is to say, these *propassiones* have a necessary but insufficient quality in regard to virtue, that they do not deflect the soul's ordination to God. The second level or type of *propassio* is that passion which does not deflect reason's ordination to God but which is also consequent in regard to a licit object. This type is the fully virtuous *propassio*. It is this level that would include what Jensen has proposed regarding the "propassions," namely, that they are virtuous, non-final movements of the sensitive appetite,¹²⁶ though I hold that *propassiones* will also be consequent to final deliberation, since in no case may a passion drag reason down to the sense appetite. Thomas also uses the word in regard to antecedent passions that are nonetheless restrained by reason, which I am calling here the lower-level version of *propassio*. These were in Christ and are the ideal for his members, who can experience them but not

¹²⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 74, a. 3, ad 2.

¹²⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 8.

¹²⁶ Jensen, "Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions," 224–27.

exclusively as Christ did in his earthly ministry. The texts adduced above are enough to show this. Again, the faithful, still in the “body of death” (Rom 7:24), are not yet as Christ is in regard to his reason’s *imperium*, but they will be in the general resurrection.

In sum, that Thomas expects *propassiones* to characterize the affectivity of “the just man” or “the wise man” even in this postlapsarian life is evident enough. Nor can these texts be attributed to Christ alone, for in these texts, Thomas sometimes uses *propassio* to designate an antecedent passion or a passion arising from a morally illicit object, but which reason constrains before the passion becomes voluntary. At the same time, Thomas expects that *propassiones* of the sort experienced by Christ may also characterize the experience of the faithful. They have received the Holy Spirit and grace; they are conformed to Christ more and more. Yet the reason why the faithful can only attain an asymptotic conformity to Christ is the presence of the material element of original sin in human souls, the lack of dictatorial control of reason over the passions leading to involuntary movements of affectivity (*fomes peccati*). Hence their participation in Christ’s perfect affective life will never fully attain his virtue and glory in this life. Nonetheless, by at least avoiding mortal sin in regard to the passions and at most by experiencing fully virtuous *propassiones* more and more, they will be more and more conformed to the image of the “man of heaven.”

Conclusion

St. Thomas modifies his terminological inheritance from Jerome such that *propassio* becomes a term expressing Christ’s perfectly virtuous emotional life. In Thomas’s theology, it signifies a fully elicited movement of the sensitive appetite in accord with moral virtue sufficiently caused by the fullness of grace and the power of Christ’s reason. The Lord’s *propassiones* are as deeply felt as the moments of his life call for, and yet they never shake the *imperium* of reason over his human soul. That is to say, Christ is never led or overwhelmed by his passions but leads them by what is highest in his human nature, his reason elevated by his fullness of grace. At the same time, because *propassio* is an integral part of virtuous passions, it can refer simply to the effect of a passion not shaking reason’s *imperium*. While Christ never experienced such antecedent yet reason-controlled passions, his faithful do on account of the *fomes peccati*. In imitation of their Master’s perfect passions, however, they are at least able to control such antecedent passions by his grace. Furthermore, there is evidence from Thomas’s work that he expected “the just” to experience passions more and more akin to Christ’s own fully virtuous *propassiones*.

Indeed, comments throughout Thomas's later works, as well as an early reference in *De veritate*, allow us to apply the concept of *propassio* to the type of moral life the faithful, having been vivified and constantly assisted by his grace to resist the corruption of the flesh, may experience in imitation of Christ. While pilgrims can never attain to the perfection of Christ given the absoluteness of the grace in his human soul on account of its radical proximity to the fount of grace, the Divine nature, they will tend asymptotically toward the ideal of human sensibility obedient to reason and therefore freely respond to the events of human life. Christ did not have disorder in his soul on account of his grace and virtue, not even the *fomes*. We will never be rid of such concupiscence *in via*, but the more deeply grace, virtue, and the gifts take root in a man's soul, the more he will be conformed to Christ (Rom 8:29), the New Adam, and the more his passions will be *propassiones* like his head. Again, this will be either in terms of containing antecedent or even evil passions (what I have called lower-level or not fully virtuous *propassiones*), or the more frequent experience of fully virtuous *propassiones* asymptotically akin to Christ's own perfectly virtuous passions. Either way, one must be changed into Christ, the likeness of God, from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18; cf. 4:4), for he is the man of heaven whose image all must bear (1 Cor 15:49).

N.V