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14 (2021) 3: 259–271

ISSN (print) 1689-5150

ISSN (online) 2450-7059

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/BPTh.2021.014>

**“Why did I not die in the womb?”
Job’s cursing the day of his birth in the interpretations
of Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas
(a comparative approach)**

Abstract. The Book of Job presents a just, blameless man, who after being afflicted with great pain and suffering begins to curse the day of his birth. The aim of the article is to elucidate the reasons for and the meaning of Job’s harsh words by comparing two different interpretations of the passage offered by Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Both expositions seem to be incompatible regarding: the reasons for and the aims of Job’s cursing, the moral evaluation of his cursing, the reasons for and the objects of Job’s sorrow, the virtuous way of expressing sorrow. On the other hand, they seem compatible concerning the admission of the fact of experiencing sorrow by Job and the moral imperative to tame sorrow. The incompatibilities appear to be rooted in two different approaches to passions (the Stoic versus the Peripatetic one) and in different evaluations of earthly life and goods. It is shown that Aquinas’ interpretation is more faithful to the text and relies on a more adequate anthropology and psychology.

Abstrakt. Księga Hioba opowiada o człowieku sprawiedliwym, niewinnym, unikającym zła, który doznał wielkich udręk i cierpienie zaczyna przeklinać dzień swojego urodzenia. Celem tego artykułu jest wyjaśnienie przyczyn i ukazanie znaczenia Hiobowych przekleństw poprzez porównanie dwóch różnych interpretacji autorstwa Grzegorza Wielkiego oraz Tomasza z Akwinu. Wydaje się, że obie interpretacje nie dają się pogodzić w następujących fundamentalnych kwestiach: przyczyny sprawczej i celowej złożeń Hioba, moralnej oceny tych złożeń, przyczyn smutku Hioba, cnotliwego sposobu wyrażania smutku. Natomiast w dwóch kwestiach obie wykładnie wykazują zgodność: obie uznają, że Hiob doświadczał smutku i obie przywołują moralny nakaz kontrolowania tego uczucia przez rozum. Argumentuję, że różnice pomiędzy obiema interpretacjami wynikają przede wszystkim z odmiennych poglądów wspomnianych komentatorów na kwestię uczuć (filozofia stoicka kontra perypatetycka) oraz z odmiennego wartościowania życia ziemskiego i ziemskich dóbr. Wykładnia Tomasza

z Akwinu wykazuje większą wierność wobec tekstu biblijnego i opiera się na bardziej adekwatnej antropologii i psychologii.

Keywords: Job's curse; cursing the day of birth; sorrow; passions; suffering; Job; *Moralia*; Gregory the Great; Thomas Aquinas; literal exposition on the book of Job.

Słowa kluczowe: przekleństwa Hioba; przeklinanie dnia urodzenia; smutek; uczucia; cierpienie; Hiob; Grzegorz Wielki; Tomasz z Akwinu; literalna interpretacja księgi Hioba.

The Book of Job presents a just, pious, blameless man, who suddenly becomes afflicted with great adversities: he loses all his possessions, children, health. Job does not understand the reason for his innocent suffering. After seven days of remaining silent, feeling great pain, he starts cursing the day of his birth (Job 3). His words are harsh and full of bitterness: "Let the day perish on which I was born; the night in which it was said «a man child is conceived»" (Job 3:3). He complains: "Why did I not die in the womb? Why did I not come forth from the womb and expire?" (Job 3:11). He laments: "Before I eat, I sigh, and my wailing is like flood waters" (Job 3:24). How should these words be understood? Does Job express himself here in a virtuous way?

The broad interpretations of this passage were given by two great theologians living in two different eras: Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Thomas Aquinas. In his *Moralia*, Gregory the Great presents Job, even on the literal level, as being a perfectly stalwart man unmoved by all of the various tragedies that befall him. His responses and complaints are made primarily not out of passion but with the intent to teach his wife or his friends about God and a godly life¹. Thomas Aquinas seems to take a different interpretation in his literal exposition on the Book of Job. According to Aquinas, Job is speaking out of passion of sorrow and this is not only permissible but also virtuous². Are the two views of Job's cursing the day of his birth, his experience of and expression from sorrow compatible?

The two interpretations may be seen as incompatible in some respects and compatible in other respects. They seem to be incompatible regarding: the reasons for and the aims of Job's cursing; the moral evaluation of his cursing (on

¹ Gregory the Great, *Moral Reflections on the Book of Job, Vol. 1, Preface and Books 1–5*, transl. B. Kerns, Athens, Ohio 2014, p. 244.

² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, transl. B.T.B. Mullady OP, ed. The Aquinas Institute, Lander, Wyoming 2016, chapter 3, lecture 1, p. 38.

the literal level); the reasons for and the objects of Job's sorrow; the moral/virtuous way of expressing sorrow. On the other hand, they seem to be compatible concerning: the fact of experiencing sorrow by Job (he is not immune from it) and the moral imperative to tame sorrow.

The two interpretations seem incompatible regarding the reason for (efficient cause) and the aim of (final cause) Job's cursing the day of his birth as well as the moral evaluation of this cursing on the literal level. It is because both expositions are based on different anthropologies and different approaches to passions. While Gregory the Great indicates that Job's curse is the result 'not of the emotion of anger but of the calm attitude of a teacher', who gives instructions to the sinners out of charity³, Thomas Aquinas suggests that the curse comes out of Job's sorrow, which is induced by the loss of his external and bodily goods⁴. These qualities of the soul differ in kind. Calmness and charity belong to the moral virtues which reside in the will, whereas sorrow is a passion that belongs to the sensitive part of the soul (which, however, if moderated in line with reason, becomes good, virtuous and is a sign of man's goodness). In Gregory's interpretation, Job, while cursing, does not have in mind his own grief but the grief of the whole human race⁵. He does not seem to be preoccupied with his own pain and suffering: 'he counts his own sufferings as nothing', he wants to cure the wounds of others – 'his care is lest his followers should suffer anything in their hearts because of some evil persuasion', he disdains the wounds in his own body but ministers to wounds of the heart in others⁶. Saint Gregory presents Job as an altruist, who is not internally moved by the adversities he has experienced, who does not care about his own pain but does everything for the sake of others. Gregory describes him as: 'internally intact', 'inwardly erect, protected by the armor of his mind', 'wounded yet unhurt, sitting yet erect', which recalls the ideal of the Stoic sage, skeptical about the passions. The Stoics maintained that it does not pertain to the wise man to conceive sadness for any reason whatsoever⁷. In Gregory's literal interpretation, the aim of Job's curse is not to express his sorrow but to teach others about the superiority of eternal life and the dangers lurking in the worldly life. However, in his analysis Gregory goes far beyond the literal

³ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 244.

⁴ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 38.

⁵ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 246.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 214

⁷ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 79. See also Augustine, *The City of God*, book XIX, chapter IV.

level. It is clearly visible in the passages where he explains the meaning of the word 'day' as designating an apostate spirit (the devil)⁸ or where he relates the lamentation 'I sigh before I eat' to the internal sphere of the wise man – to the soul being fed at the meal of contemplation after having suffered misfortune⁹. It is because Gregory cannot accept the conclusion that the just man (Job) could literally curse the day of his birth. That would contradict the virtues of humility, quietness, calmness and self-possession which characterize the holy man¹⁰. That would be contrary to the Stoic ideal of the sage. Therefore Gregory concludes that on the literal level 'Job's words are irrational' and 'going by the words alone, it is clear that according to the literal sense the holy man says nothing with them'¹¹.

Thomas Aquinas takes a different approach, which is more faithful to the text. It is also grounded in a more adequate psychology that refers to the Peripatetic view on passions. Aquinas disagrees with Gregory's statement that on the literal level Job's cursing is irrational. On the contrary, it is natural and rational for Job to feel sorrow and curse the day of his birth out of this passion, because he is a rational animal. As an animal, Job possesses sensitive nature which requires certain passions to be present in him. When the evil (something saddening or painful like the loss of possessions, children, health) comes, it is a sign of goodness if a man reacts to this with sorrow, because that means he appreciates the lost goods and shuns evil – the lack of these goods.

⁸ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 245.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 317.

¹⁰ As B.T.B. Mullady OP notes, the place of the passions in morals has long been a problem for Christians. Many were influenced by the Stoic philosophy, which holds that passions are sicknesses of the soul and the virtuous man must become as dispassionate as possible. Apathy was celebrated as a Christian virtue and recommended by Fathers of the Church like Evagrius Ponticus. The view of passions as sicknesses of the soul was especially true of the passion of sorrow. If a person were virtuous, he should never experience sorrow. A just man could not be sad about the loss of material goods, for, since he is a spiritual person, and spiritual goods are more important than material goods, material suffering should not affect him. For this reason, the lament of Job which expresses such great sorrow, such an outpouring of passion, seemed unreasonable to those Christians influenced by Stoic ideas. See B.T.B. Mullady OP, *Moral Principles in Thomas Aquinas's Commentary on Job*, in: *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. M. Levering, P. Roszak, J. Vijgen, Washington D.C. 2020, p. 318.

¹¹ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 238. For a longer examination of Gregory's interpretation of Job's speeches see C. Straw, *Job's Sin in the Moralia of Gregory the Great*, in: *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages*, ed. F.T. Harkins, A. Canty, Leiden – Boston, Brill 2016, pp. 71–100.

Aquinas notes that what is natural cannot be totally suppressed. He explains the functioning of exterior and interior senses: 'For sense cannot but repulsed by the unsuitable and the harmful. [...] Such foods without flavor are not fit to delight the sense of taste. Similarly, the heart of man cannot freely tolerate things which are not pleasant, much less things which are bitter and harmful. [...] It is impossible that what is apprehended by the interior sense as harmful should be received without sadness'¹². Thomas notices that the Stoic ideal of the sage devoid of sadness is against the sensitive nature of man. Only hard and insensitive hearts do not grieve over dead friends. Wise men do grieve over the loss of the exterior goods but with moderation, in accord with reason¹³.

Aquinas affirms that Job's cursing – being the expression of his sorrow – was ruled by reason¹⁴. This could be inferred from the fact that Job passed seven days in silence after he had been afflicted and before he began to speak. The passage of time mitigated his sorrow and enabled him to assess his situation in a reasonable way¹⁵. Also, the greatness of loss and pain suffered by Job justified his radical, harsh words. By cursing the day of his birth Job did not detest living *per*

¹² Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 79.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

¹⁴ See also P. Roszak, *Życ w cieniu pytań. Antropologiczne przesłanie Expositio super Iob św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia* 6 (2013), p. 126.

¹⁵ As F.T. Harkins points out, Thomas Aquinas emphasizes the fact that Job cursed the day of his birth *post haec*, that is, after seven days of sitting in silence with his friends, clearly showing that the words that follow were uttered 'according to reason untroubled by sadness'. These two small words, *post haec*, reveal that Job did not speak out of a mind overcome by sadness (indeed, if he had done so, he would have spoken earlier, when the force of his sadness was more severe), and he seems to have remained silent for a week precisely so that his friends would not judge him as speaking from a troubled mind. Furthermore, that Job did, after this significant period of silence, open his own mouth to speak also shows that his reason controlled his sadness. For if his sadness had overcome his reason, Thomas notes, passion would have compelled him to speak, thus completely eliminating his agency. But, as is customary for wise men, Job here actively and rationally speaks of the suffering that he is experiencing, just as Christ also did when he said: My soul is sad, even to death (Mt, 26:38). See F.T. Harkins, *Christ and the Eternal Extent of Divine Providence in the Expositio super Iob ad litteram of Thomas Aquinas*, in: *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages*, ed. F.T. Harkins, A. Canty, Leiden – Boston, Brill 2016, p. 178. See also D. Spezzano, *The Hope and Fear of Blessed Job*, in: *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. M. Levering, P. Roszak, J. Vijgen, Washington D.C. 2020, p. 278.

se but the evil which he has suffered, the wretched life in misery¹⁶. For although life itself is desirable, yet a life subject to misery is not¹⁷. In his powerful lament Job avoided the pitfall which would question his virtue: cursing God and His gift of life *per se*. Taking it all together, Job's curse could not be seen as irrational on the literal level.

Unlike Gregory, Aquinas treats the curse as an expression of Job's sorrow. In Aquinas' view, the aim of the curse is to show three things: that Job's life is wearisome, the greatness of the unhappiness which he was suffering ('Before I eat, I sigh') and his innocence ("Have I not dissembled?")¹⁸. The attention is focused on Job's own grief and lamentation, in contrast to Gregory's interpretation which concentrates on grief and wounds of the whole human race and Job's role as a teacher, prophet and doctor who cures people's wounds and spurns his own grief. However, both commentators recognize Job's patience in cursing and both deny that the curse is the result of his sinfulness¹⁹.

Furthermore, the two interpretations seem to be incompatible with regard to the object of Job's sorrow and the moral way of expressing sorrow. This incompatibility appears to be rooted in different evaluations of earthly life and goods. Although Gregory the Great denies that Job's cursing is the result of sorrow caused by the loss of his temporal goods, he still acknowledges that Job feels some kind of sorrow (but for different reasons). Unlike Aquinas, Gregory denies that the adversities like the loss of possessions, children, health made Job sad or bitter. The following passage shows that more or less clearly: '(...) blessed Job surrounded by the loss of so many possessions and struck helpless by so many sores, yet he stood unhurt, as though in an ark made up of virtues. Indeed, his mind was unmoved and remained above all this. That was why no traps of the enemy could upset him'²⁰. In Gregory's view, Job remains calm and unmoved

¹⁶ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 39.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

¹⁹ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, pp. 213, 243–244; Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 38.

²⁰ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 191. Another passage pointing out Job's calmness reads as follows: '[...] As far as blessed Job was concerned, the earthen vessel was all broken up with sores externally, but internally his treasure remained intact. His wounded body was in pain, but his interior treasure of wisdom was continually reborn and poured out in words of holy teaching: "If we accept good things from God's hand, why should we not receive evil?". See *Ibidem*, p. 193–194.

because he represses sadness – he distracts his mind from the pain inflicted by his sores by thinking of the comfort derived by God's gifts²¹. However, in later passages of *Moralia* Gregory admits that the saint (Job) experiences sorrow. While analyzing Job's lamentation: 'And why are those whose soul is bitter given life?', Gregory gives two reasons for the sorrow of the saints. The saints are sad because: first, they fear for displeasing God by some hidden sin and 'ceaselessly pay for their failings with their tears' and secondly, because they miss the eternal life – they have been 'exiled here, far from the presence of the Creator and do not yet enjoy the eternal fatherland'²².

In Gregory's view, Job feels sorrow for these two reasons. The author of *Moralia* explains that the lamentation 'My roaring sounds like overflowing water' refers to Job's penitential tears, tears of sorrow induced by his penitential thoughts. The holy man is sad because he has fear for God and is afraid of displeasing Him by some hidden sin and thus of being lost: '[...] in the very act of good works the just are sometimes afraid, and they spend their time in unbroken weeping, lest they should displease God in these works by some hidden sin. When God's blows strike them suddenly, they think they have offended the Creator, because they do not get up to perform loving service for their neighbors, whether on account of being prevented by sickness or by suffering from heartache'²³. So the holy people are full of sorrow not because of the losses of their possessions, health, bodily pain and suffering but because of their inability to help others: 'Their hearts turn into tears because their bodies keep them from performing the services their devotion inclines them to. When they reflect that they are not increasing their reward, they are even afraid that the work they have done have displeased God'²⁴.

According to Gregory, the second reason for the holy man's sorrow is being exiled on this world, 'far from the presence of the Creator'²⁵. Gregory states that the holy men know 'how peaceful the lost country' (the Paradise) is and 'how chaotic is that country to which they have fallen.' The worldly pleasures and temporal goods are dangerous because they distract and lead away from the

²¹ Ibidem, p. 195.

²² Ibidem, p. 309.

²³ Ibidem, p. 318.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 318.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 309.

love of God²⁶. Therefore the saints escape from disturbing emotions, desires for joys²⁷ – ‘they desire none of the goods of this world’, they ‘evict all the inordinate desires from the chamber of the heart’ by means of contemplation. Since they ‘regard all passing things with contempt, they are not troubled by the wild thoughts inspired by them’ (this is because their only desire is for the eternal homeland)²⁸. Therefore, because the holy men despise temporal goods, they cannot fall into sorrow or despair when they lose them. They also fear prosperity more than adversity because they know that the comforts of the present life ‘impede their internal attention’, hinder the interior desire for eternal goods²⁹.

Aquinas takes a different, more positive view on the value of earthly goods and life. He admits that temporal goods should be loved (however, in an appropriate way – because of the higher spiritual and eternal goods, which are principal)³⁰ and their loss should result in man’s sorrow (moderated by reason). Unlike Gregory, Saint Thomas appreciates the goodness of the earthly life. He explains that Job does not detest living in this world *per se* but only the evil which he suffers³¹. Aquinas points to the natural desire of everything to exist³², the natural inclination of a human being to live. Gregory, on the other hand, emphasizes the holy man’s desire to detach from the earthly life and his desire to die³³. It seems that in this respect the two interpretations cannot be reconciled. However, it is noteworthy that both commentators agree on the hierarchy of goods and acknowledge the superiority of eternal goods over the temporal ones.

Furthermore, the two interpretations are incompatible regarding the description and evaluation of Job’s expression from sorrow. While Gregory depicts Job as internally sad but externally unmoved³⁴, humble³⁵, quiet³⁶ and self-restrained, Aquinas pays attention to Job’s external expression of sadness. Moreover, Saint

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 314.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 314.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 288–289.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 307.

³⁰ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 33.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 43.

³² Ibidem, p. 177.

³³ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 309–310.

³⁴ Ibidem, pp. 193, 196, 213.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 320.

³⁶ Ibidem, pp. 323, 355.

Thomas recognizes vehemence in Job's sorrow (when analyzing his lamentation: 'my wailing is like flood water')³⁷ and finds it appropriate, justified by the greatness of the inflicted losses and pain. Whereas Thomas explains Job's lamentation in its literal sense, Gregory's interpretation is allegorical even on the literal level. Unlike Aquinas, he considers the words: 'Why did I not die in the womb?' etc. as pertaining to the internal mechanism of committing sin in the heart and its completion in action³⁸. In Gregory's view, such strong words of Job's curse understood literally are simply unbecoming for blessed Job – a man 'endowed with superior spiritual wisdom'³⁹. When the wise men suffer, 'they avoid not only speaking evil against God but also insulting words against their adversaries'⁴⁰. The wise men 'bear the burden of sorrow in such a way as not to transgress the bounds of humility' by their words⁴¹. Job's cursing seems to transgress these bounds, therefore Gregory abandons the literal interpretation of this passage and immediately proceeds to the allegorical exposition.

On the other hand, the two interpretations seem compatible regarding: the acknowledgement of Job's experience of some kind of sorrow, the existence of good and bad sorrow and the need to tame sorrow by reason. Although Gregory is inspired by the Stoic view on emotions, he speaks about good and bad passions⁴². For example, he states that the anger aroused by impatience is the offspring of vice but the anger formed by zeal is the offspring of virtue⁴³. Bad anger makes us lose wisdom and destroys the social bonds, whereas good anger is the sign of love of our neighbors (when we are angry with their going astray).

³⁷ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 48.

³⁸ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 276.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

⁴² As Aquinas notes in *Summa Theologiae* I–II, q. 24, a. 2, the difference between the Stoic view on passions (all passions are evil) and the Peripatetic one (moderate passions are good) is, in reality, almost only verbal, if we consider the intent of either school. It is because the Stoics used a different terminology than the Peripatetics- they called passion every movement of the appetitive part that exceeds the limits of reason, whereas the rational movement of the appetitive part they called will. For a more detailed discussion and comparison of the Stoic and the Peripatetic view on passions see T.H. Irwin, *Augustine's Criticisms of the Stoic Theory of Passions*, *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Oct 2003, p. 430–447.

⁴³ Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 382.

Similarly, there is good and bad sorrow. For Gregory, bad sadness has as its object the loss of temporal goods and prosperity, whereas good sadness expresses the fear of displeasing God with sin and of being lost, the feeling of being exiled on this world, repentance for sins⁴⁴ and the awareness of the fall of the whole human race⁴⁵. Thomas Aquinas shares the view on bad and good emotions. He notes that the passions of the soul, in so far as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin and are bad, but in so far as they are controlled by reason, they pertain to virtue⁴⁶. Sorrow is good if moderated by reason – as in the case of Job who waited seven days in silence before he expressed his grief. Sorrow is a natural reaction of the human soul to the present loss of goods. It denotes the perception and rejection of evil⁴⁷. Moderate sorrow can both: motivate someone to learn more about the things that may free him from his pain and take away an excess of pleasure, often an impediment to learning⁴⁸. But sorrow can also be bad if it is felt in an unreasonable way – for example if it is too vehement in the given circumstances⁴⁹ (if it is not proportional to the loss suffered). It can also be destructive when it is so strong that it totally eradicates hope and leads to total despair – a man is then completely unable to seek any good and becomes paralyzed⁵⁰.

Finally, the two commentators agree on the moral imperative to tame sorrow by reason. Gregory the Great suggests practicing self-restraint, self-possession and mental discipline⁵¹. Thomas Aquinas speaks of sorrow moderated by reason, of sadness felt in a reasonable way. Gregory recommends to distract the mind

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 267.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 246.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, q. 24, a. 2 and Idem, *Commentary*, p. 37, where the author speaks of moderating sorrow by reason.

⁴⁷ Idem, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, q. 37, a. 2.

⁴⁸ Idem, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, q. 37, a. 1.

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 48.

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, q. 39, a. 2. For a detailed analysis see M.R. Miller, *Aquinas on the Passion of Despair*, New Blackfriars 2012, vol. 93 (1046), p. 395.

⁵¹ And he gives a lot of instructions in this respect. Gregory may be referring here to the ascetic tradition shaped by Ambrose. See C.J. Mews, C. Renkin, *The Legacy of Gregory the Great in the Latin West*, in: *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. B. Neil, M.J. Dal Santo, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition Vol. 47, 2013, pp. 313–342.

when it is upset by thinking of the comfort derived by God's gifts⁵². However, what Gregory seems to suggest is an absolute supplantation of sorrow caused by the loss of earthly goods. When he writes about repressing bitter thoughts or feelings of pain by mental practices and when he stresses the importance of humility, quietness, calmness in experiencing sorrow, he appears to misunderstand the role of reason and passions in the human soul. He recommends repressing passions by reason, thus ignoring the sensitive nature of man. Aquinas, on the contrary, speaks against censoring sadness both internally and externally. Following Job's words, Thomas explains that the strength of the wise man 'is not the strength of a stone'. However strong the reason of a mortal man may be, he still must experience the feeling of pain on the part of the flesh⁵³.

Referring to Aristotle, Aquinas emphasizes that reason does not destroy the sensitive nature of man, nature which rejoices in things which befit it and feels pain and sorrow about things which misfit it. This is because reason governs the passions by political rule, as a wise governor to a free citizen, and not by despotic rule, as master to slave⁵⁴. Given the political rule of the passions, it is not natural for reason to supplant the sensitive power but rather to direct it to its proper objects. This also explains the aim and role of the virtues and why they are necessary for the well-being of the soul. Virtues must be introduced to allow the passions to support the actions of reason and will, not so that the passions

⁵² Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, p. 195.

⁵³ Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 80.

⁵⁴ Passions do not obey reason and will like the body – e.g. the hand. According to Aristotle, the manner in which reason uses the passions as instruments of freedom is opposite to that in which it uses the body. See Aristotle, *Politics*, I 1254^b, transl. C.D.C Reeve, Indianapolis/Cambridge 1998, p. 8. The physical body has no knowing life of its own. As a result, there is no way in which it can resist such a command. Such is not the case with the passions. When temptation arises in a person, many normally assume that if they make an act of will which does not consent to the temptation and the temptation does not go away then they must be consenting in some way. This is not the case. One can fail to consent but the passions do not obey such a lack of consent in the will like the hand. The reason is they have a knowing life of their own in the senses and so they do not have to obey the directives of reason and will. They should do so but common human experience shows they do not. This is because reason governs the passions by political rule, as a wise governor to a free citizen. This is also the reason virtues must be introduced to allow the passions to allow a person to act spontaneously, in accord with reason. See B.T.B. Mullady OP, *Moral Principles*, p. 321.

may be replaced by reason and will⁵⁵. Therefore, the virtue of patience⁵⁶ does not consist in feeling no sorrow or replacing the feeling of sorrow by reason, but rather in preserving reason despite feeling intense sorrow in perseverance, in feeling sorrow in an ordinate way, in proportion to the loss suffered.

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⁵⁵ B.T.B. Mullady OP, *Moral Principles*, p. 322.

⁵⁶ Aquinas notes that both Job and Christ showed patience in their expressions (Job when he cursed the day of his birth and Christ when He said: 'My soul is sorrowful unto death' – Mt 26:38; Mk 14:34). Thomas states that wise men usually express the motion of the passions which they feel in a reasonable way. See Aquinas, *Commentary*, p. 38.

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