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**Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility in the
Philosophical Theology of Thomas Aquinas**

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Introduction

The mysterious relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility has engendered a lively debate among Christian theologians. To cite but the major enervating encounters, when the British monk Pelagius exhorted the irresponsible Romans to live a God-glorifying life (410),³ Augustine pushed hard for divine sovereignty (412-427).⁴ When the Saxon monk Gottschalk repeated Augustine's predestination emphasis (849), vis-à-vis the freedom view of Archbishop Hincmar, Erigena's efforts at reconciliation proved to be unsuccessful (853).⁵ When centuries later Desiderius Erasmus re-opened this debate by declaring the human will to be free

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² See www.Aquinas.edu.

³ For Pelagius' own view, see J. Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge: Heffner, 1956); R. F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (Seabury: 1968); and B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Welolfeboro, NH: Boydell, 1988).

⁴ Among the major anti-Pelagian writings are Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter* (412), *On Grace and Free Will* (427), and *On the Predestination of the Saints* (428).

⁵ Cf. P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reperi. 1976), 4:525-43.

(1524),⁶ Martin Luther parried with the bondage of the will (1525).⁷ When the followers of Jacob Arminius,⁸ the so-called Remonstrants, defended human freedom, the Contra-Remonstrants at the Synod of Dordt replied with the five articles to the contrary (1618-19). When John Wesley proclaimed human freedom of choice (1769-70), even the ability to be perfect, George Whitefield (died 1770) pointed out the other side.⁹ And Samuel Johnson (died 1784) and Jonathan Edwards (1754) could not bridge their differences on this issue either.¹⁰

Often this historic issue has been understood as a dilemma: If humans have freedom to act, then divine providence is ineffectual. Conversely, if God is the cause of all human acting, then there is no room for human freedom of choice.

Near the middle of this protracted debate there appeared the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274). Into two of his major works he incorporated this tough issue. In his earlier *Summa contra gentiles* (1259-64), in which he sought to demonstrate the relative compatibility of three monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,¹¹ he used human reason to articulate the topics of God's nature, divine creation, and human happiness (books 1-3), to conclude with faith's path of the tri-une God, the Incarnation, and human supra-natural end (book 4).¹² In his later and fuller *Summa Theologiae* (1266-73), in which he aimed to write a suitable textbook

⁶ Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will* (1524). Erasmus' views are summarized in *Erasmus-Luther Discourse on Free Will*, E. F. Winter, ed. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966, abbreviated), part one, pp. 33, 38, 50, 59 (for the complete text, see *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, P. S. Watson, ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], in *The Library of Christian Classics*, volume 17).

⁷ Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525). Luther's views are abbreviated in *Erasmus-Luther Discourse on Free Will*, part two, pp. 109, 125, 132, 135-36.

⁸ Arminius, who studied under Beza in Geneva (1582-83), resented the oppressive nature of divine power as set forth by his teacher; as a professor of theology at the newly established university in Leiden (1603-09), he presented a milder case of Calvinism over against the stricter view of his opponent Gomarus.

⁹ For a summary of this debate, see P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:566-67.

¹⁰ For Samuel Johnson, see James Boswell, *Journal* (1769); for Jonathan Edwards see his *Treatise of the Will* (1754).

¹¹ See J. A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1974), pp. 130-31; cf. T. F. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997), p. 3, for Aquinas exposure to Jewish and Muslim scholars as a student at the University of Naples.

¹² The word "contra" in the title *Summa contra gentiles* refers to the truths of the Christian faith enunciated in book four, less so to the truths of reason explained in the first three books.

for beginning and advanced students of theology and to eliminate “multiplication of useless questions” found in current texts, he depended upon divine revelation as apprehended in faith--throughout. In our exposition of Aquinas’ perspective we shall limit ourselves to these two works.

A. Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles*

In book one of his *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas starts out by giving five proofs of the existence of God (ch. 13). Having proved that God is, the friar next describes God among other things as One who knows and wills himself (chs. 48, 76), and also knows and wills other creatures (chs. 49, 77),¹³ though not as necessarily (ch. 81, cf. ch. 85, no “absolute necessity”) as he wills himself (ch. 80).

In book two, Aquinas continues his discussion of God’s nature. As Creator of the universe, that is, of all things (ch. 15), God caused his creatures to be, that is, so-called intellectual creatures with a freedom of choice: humans possess the power of deliberation (ch. 48).¹⁴ In other words, God did not create automata, lifeless robots repeating the same movements over and over again, but human beings who can make choices.

If book one discusses the divine being and book two divine creation, book three elaborates on both human conduct (chs. 2-63) and divine providence (chs. 64-163). Humans are said to act for the sake of ends (ch. 2), good ends (chs. 3, 16),¹⁵ namely, God (ch. 17), specifically human imitation of divine goodness (ch. 20), that is, a knowledge and contemplation of God (chs. 25, 37). This is their final end, beyond which there is no further goal (ch. 2).

This sought-after human happiness is not possible in this life (ch. 48), however, because clothed as they are within a corporeal body, humans cannot know God’s spiritual nature (chs. 45, 47) and cannot reach up to God’s majestic and sublime level so to speak in their own strength (ch. 52). But they desire this sublime happiness (ch. 50), and

¹³ The one deity is said to have created many creatures (ch. 77).

¹⁴ God’s creation of the universe is not accomplished through natural necessity, but is achieved according to God’s wisdom (ibid., 2:23-24).

¹⁵ If Aquinas maximizes human ability and willingness to do good, he minimizes human inclination toward evil (chs. 4-13). Humans cause unintentional evil (chs. 4-6), evil being an accidental cause (ch. 14). Further, evil is not an essence (ch. 7), and does not entirely destroy the good (ch. 12). In fact, the end of everything is a good (ch. 16).

this natural desire is not in vain (ch. 51). Rather, they can find God on the basis of a divine assistance, by means of a divine light granting the human intellect “*the light of glory*” (ch. 53), the fulfillment of every human desire (ch. 63). This divine elevation is extended to all humans and is not restricted to some. There is “no created intellect of so low a degree in its nature that cannot be raised” to this supernatural light and the “diversity of degrees in the intellectual nature does not prevent the lowest in that nature from being raised” by the vision of the divine substance (ch. 57 [1-2]).

From human conduct, the freely chosen act of knowing God (cf. ch. 148), Aquinas turns to divine providence, to God as the governor and ruler of the attainment of that felicitous human end (ch. 64) and as the preserver of his creatures (ch. 65), whom he loves.¹⁶

As he introduces the two poles of human free will and divine assistance, Aquinas next tries to bring the two poles of the polarity together. On the one hand, God is the cause of all things, the “first and principal agent” of every (human) operation (ch. 67). For should God’s influence on the world be denied or cease to be, every finite operation, in turn, would cease to be (ch. 67).¹⁷

On the other hand, God’s providence is executed through “secondary causes” (ch. 77), primarily through the angels (ch. 91 [2]). Further, God’s will does not “prejudice” against human free will (chs. 73, 89 [1]),¹⁸ as God’s power is working through, not apart from, human volition (ch. 69). Divine help does not coerce humans (148 [1-2]) and does not cancel human prayer (ch. 95 [1]). It can even be affirmed that both God and humans together can cause humanity’s final end to be reached (ch. 70).

In the end, however, the scales tip to one side: “God is more the

¹⁶ “The government of providence proceeds from God’s love for the things created by Him; for love consists chiefly in this, that *the lover desires the good of the beloved* [citing Aristotle]. Consequently, the more God love a thing, the more it comes under His providence. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture . . . and the Philosopher [Aristotle] From this we may again conclude that He loves intellectual substances most of all. Therefore their acts of will and choice are the object of His providence” (book 1, ch. 90 [6]). Should God love his creatures, God does not hate them. “For as love is to the good, so hatred is to evil. . . . If, then, the will of God cannot be inclined to evil . . . it is impossible that He should hate anything” (book 1, ch. 96 [1-2]).

¹⁷ In *Summa contra gentiles* 3:94, Thomas reasons that the fact of divine providence is certain, though its execution through secondary causes is not always necessary.

¹⁸ Aquinas does not extrapolate divine “persuasion” from human “persuasion” which he accepts (3:88 [2]).

cause of every action than even secondary active causes” (ch. 67; cf. ch. 88), and can do so without these (ch. 99). In fact, God renders human actions subject to his own providence (chs. 90-91).¹⁹

At the close of his lengthy discussion about divine providence or divine help (chs. 92 [9], 147 [3])--in order that humans may persevere (ch. 155)--Aquinas, links providence and election (ch. 163 [1]), making the transition from reason to faith thus:

So . . . some men are directed by divine working to their ultimate end as aided by grace, while others who are deprived of the same help of grace fall short of their ultimate end, and since all things that are done by God are foreseen and ordered from eternity by His wisdom . . . the aforementioned differentiation of men must be ordered by God from eternity. According, then, as He has preordained some men from eternity, so that they are directed to their ultimate end, He is said to have predestined them . . . those to whom He has decided from eternity not to give His grace He is said to have reprobated or to have hated. . . .

Now the flow of thought becomes a bit unsteady. To Aquinas, predestination--God’s grace to some (election), but not to others (reprobation)—constitutes a “certain section of divine providence” (ch. 163 [2]), but it becomes a new element in his argument concerning God’s provision. For now the general path of reason toward a divine knowledge made more easily travelable by divine assistance is forked by faith: either toward bliss for some or toward rejection for others. While divine providence “imposes no necessity” as “it does not take away contingency from things” (ibid.), it is God who ultimately predestines (ch. 161).

Divine assistance to those wishing to know God is a welcome answer to their incapacity to know God’s inner nature, for now this desire on their part can and will be met. God and part of humanity are united in intention: humans seek their Maker and the Creator assists them along the way.

But can those who embark upon a different course, for instance,

¹⁹ “No thing can act by its own power unless it acts through His power. . . (3:89 [5]; cf. ch. 90 [2]). On this basis, Antony Flew (*An Introduction to Western Philosophy* [Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1971, pb], pp. 233, 235) concludes that Aquinas espouses a deterministic position. The English philosopher has more appreciation for Aristotle’s argument about human freedom (ibid. pp. 225-32).

on a career of wealth, honor, or pleasure,²⁰ even against their will, be deprived of eternal felicity because they chose what they chose? To this question Aquinas writes (ch. 159 [1]):

Now, if this is granted [namely, that “man should not be held responsible for the lack of such (divine) aids”], many inappropriate conclusions appear.

Aquinas cites two consequences: (1) if a person lacks divine grace, then such an individual does not deserve punishment. And (2) such a person attains neither eternal happiness nor eternal punishment. Instead of presenting rational arguments for his two claims, he appeals to biblical affirmations. To the former consequence, the apostle John states that such a person does deserve punishment (John 3:36), to the latter, the apostle Matthew replies that it will be either the one or the other (Matthew 25:34, 41).

Aquinas softens his harsh indictment regarding some humans by saying that God wills all humans to be saved (cf. the apostle Paul at 1 Timothy 2:4).²¹ But the theologian has his own way of interpreting this biblical affirmation: all--except those who impede God’s offer of grace (ch. 159 [2]). He explains this claim as follows:

But those alone are deprived of grace who offer an obstacle within themselves to grace; just as, while the sun is shining on the world, the man who keeps his eyes closed is held responsible for his fault, if as a result some evil follows, even though he could not see unless he were provided in advance with light from the sun.

That is, humans need the sun in order to see and can be held responsible for certain consequences should they keep their eyes shut in broad daylight. That is true; walking with closed eyes can make one stumble or bump into a brick wall. But on what basis does Aquinas distinguish between those who open their spiritual eyes to see God and those who keep their eyes shut when confronted by the same divine light? Or, as he argued earlier, if rational creatures seek after God, which of these do not follow that course? Why do some, not others?

²⁰ Human happiness is not identified with carnal pleasure (book 3, ch. 27), honors (ch. 28), glory (ch. 29), and wealth (ch. 30). But these choices are not considered sinful or evil—neither by Aquinas nor by Aristotle.

²¹ Further into his letter (4:10), Paul writes: “the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” Similarly, Peter writes (2 Peter 3:9): the Lord “is forbearing ... not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Following a similar mitigating way, Aquinas affirms that God heals at times some who impede his grace, but not all recalcitrant humans, for God does not give sight to all those who are blind and does not heal all who are sick (ch. 161 [1]), referring to Paul’s words at Romans 9:22-23. And that is due to a divine decision ([2]).²² Those—either few or many—who resist divine assistance cannot change their sinful stance, however (ch. 160).

The notion of humanity’s twofold destiny—either to eternal life or eternal death—is further taken up in book four, in the last section about human life after physical death, following the section on the sacraments. Aquinas holds—on the basis of faith—that after physical death the souls of the “saints” are to see the beatific vision of God (ch. 91 [6]) and that those of the wicked will be punished (chs. 91 [1], 92 [3]). Then their will remains immutable: their evil will is to remain evil forever (chs. 92-93).

Instead of having God employ his predestination powers as he stated near the end of book three, at the final pages of book four Aquinas has God judge human life on the basis of human “merit” (ch. 91 [1]), on what they did “in the body” (ch. 91 [2]), on their own life style: those who love God and those who reject God. Thus divine predestination makes room for human free choice to re-appear at the very end of the *Summa contra gentiles*.

B. The *Summa Theologiae*

In his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas adopts a different strategy. He places the doctrines of divine providence (I, Q. 22) and divine predestination, including election and reprobation or rejection of humans (I, Q. 23) at the start of the theological enterprise, namely, in eternity, before discussing the eternal nature of the tri-une God (QQ. 27-43), and over one hundred and fifty pages before elucidating divine creation of the universe (QQ. 44-49)—of the angels (QQ. 50-61) and humanity (QQ. 75-102). Whereas divine providence pertains to directing all things toward their end (Q. 22, Art. 1) without in some cases imposing “necessity” upon them (Q. 22, Art. 4), divine predestination embraces humanity’s supra-natural, unattainable end (Q. 23, Art. 1), which is brought about by God’s sole act of

²² In his *Summa contra gentiles* (3:161 [3]) Aquinas rejects Origen’s defense of human free will.

predestining—that some fall away while others are elected.²³ In other words, God predestines some humans to eternal bliss and others to eternal misery “before” there existed any created universe. This, I submit, smacks of a measure of divine determinism²⁴--for all this has been decided before humans were created and were able to use their free will--even though in his doctrine of creation to follow Aquinas will strongly assert that God creates humans with a free will.²⁵

After having explained that God created the universe including human beings, Aquinas resumes his discussion of the notion of divine government of the created universe (Q. 105, Art. 5), which may be executed through primary and secondary causation, God working through human free will (Q. 105, Art. 4 on divine moving of the human will).

In his treatment of human ethics (*Summa Theologiae*, II/1), Aquinas employs again the by now familiar themes: humans act voluntarily (Q. 6, Art. 1) and freely (Q. 13, Art. 6), and can reach their

²³ For the contrast Aquinas cites Malachi 1:2-3 (*ST* I, Q. 23, Art. 3): “Jacob have I love, Esau have I hated.” In his answer to objections Aquinas writes: “God does reprobate some persons . . . as men are ordained to eternal life through the providence of God, it likewise is part of that providence to permit some to fall away from that end . . . Therefore, as predestination includes the will to confer grace and glory, so also reprobation includes the will to permit a person to fall into sin, and to impose the punishment of damnation because of that sin.” In his reply to objection one, Aquinas writes that God does not wish eternal life for some. In his next reply he writes dialectically, that by way of “both . . . end:” “Reprobation . . . is the cause of abandonment by God . . . eternal punishment. But quilt proceeds from the free choice of the person who is reprobated and deserted by grace. In his reply to the third objection, Aquinas writes that God’s reprobation does not “take anything away from the power of the person reprobated. He goes on to explain this: “although anyone reprobated by God cannot acquire grace, nevertheless, that he falls into this or that particular sin comes from the use of his free desire. Hence it is rightly imputed to him as guilt.” Heroically, Aquinas wishes to maintain both that God predestines some to eternal abandonment and that these humans are personally guilty of their choices. This is a sticky stance.

²⁴ Aquinas changed the place of predestination from reason’s transition to faith (*Summa contra gentiles*, 3: 163) to the beginning of theology, to the inner divine life in eternity (*Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 23). John Calvin, in contrast, reversed this procedure: from the beginning of theology, in earlier editions, to the section on faith and ethics in the 1559 edition (cf. *Institutes*, 3.21.1, fn. 1, J. T. McNeill, ed.). By way of a historical note, Calvin’s successor Beza placed the doctrine of predestination at the outset of theology; Arminius one of his students, in turn, changed its location within the theological discipline again. The Synod of Dordt stressed divine sovereignty almost to the exclusion of human responsibility.

²⁵ “Man has free choice, or otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions and punishments would be in vain” (*ST*, I, Q. 83, Art. 1). For by the power of judgment, humans judge things to be avoided or approached. In his reply to objection 2, Aquinas rejects absolute freedom: “free choice is not sufficient . . . unless it be moved and helped by God.” That is, God is the first cause of our ability to be free (rep. to obj. 3).

natural end through habits, namely, virtues.²⁶ As they are seeking their final end, they are accompanied by God's law (QQ. 90-108), and assisted by divine grace (QQ. 109-114).

In this *Summa* Aquinas assigns a much greater role to human vices or bad habits (II/1, QQ. 49-89) than in his earlier work. Regarding the Christian notion of human sin, Aquinas treats this subject only in two places of his *Summa contra gentiles*: in this discussion of human end or purpose (3:4-15) and of grace (4:50-52) (not in his exposition of divine creation). In the former passage, which we already noted, sin is said not to be a substance; in the latter section, original sin is introduced in relation to the incarnation of our Lord.²⁷ This paucity of emphasis would indicate that the notion of sin does not really fit the *Summa's* overall structure comprising as it does the distinction between nature or reason and grace or faith, not the triad creation, sin, and grace.²⁸

Aquinas treated the subject of sin more thoroughly in his larger *Summa Theologiae*. Steering cautiously between the Scylla of perfection (mankind is not sinful; cf. Aristotle) and the Charybdis of "total depravity" (there is no moral good in the human heart, as the later Augustine proclaimed), he reasoned the human soul has lost its vertical capacity to love God and is "wounded" in its horizontal social relations.²⁹ Should humanity be "totally depraved" (as the Protestant Reformers Luther and Calvin would affirm, for instance), humans

²⁶ We must be brief concerning Aquinas' impressive treatment of ethics. Concurring with Aristotle, Aquinas selects the Greek virtues of justice, courage, temperance and prudence. Going beyond him, Aquinas explains the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

²⁷ In these three chapters, Thomas explains that all humans are born in sin and thus are mortal, as they experience that in daily living. Adam's "original" sin in the Garden of Eden was passed on to his descendants.

²⁸ The Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd has called my attention to the fact that in Aquinas' way of thinking the foundational motif of nature and grace "clashes" with the Christian triad of creation, fall into sin, and divine redemption (see especially the forthcoming English translation of his *Reformation and Scholasticism*, Volume 2).

²⁹ Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 85, Art. 1, where it is said that there are three goods: the natural powers of the soul; the human inclination towards virtue; and the gift of original justice bestowed on the first "man." Of these, the first good is not destroyed nor diminished. The third good has been destroyed by the first man's sin, while the second good has been diminished by sin (cf. *ibid.*, Art. 2). How far apart was Thomas Aquinas from John Calvin on the point of the nature of sin? Calvin defined human sinfulness as the obliteration of humanity's "heavenly image" (*Institutes*, II.1.5, 8).

should cease to be the creatures God intended them to be.³⁰ Thus spoke Aquinas.³¹

C. Evaluation

In his *Summa contra gentiles* Aquinas sides with Aristotle to the extent that humans can use their freedom to aim at their final goal, which is happiness,³² which, in turn, comprises knowledge of God's nature.³³ In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle links happiness with practicing the three moral virtues of justice, courage, and temperance (rather than with pursuing the more popular notions of wealth, honor, and pleasure)³⁴; after much delay (via the subjects of friendship and excess) the Stagirite takes up the subject of contemplation, arguing that true and lasting human happiness consists in meditating uninterruptedly about and thinking like the deities.³⁵

Aquinas parts ways with Aristotle by declaring that humans cannot achieve their final end in this life, in their own strength without divine assistance. Here the theologian and the philosopher go in different directions, as the Greek believes that the fragile commodity of happiness can be acquired and maintained in this uncertain life through education rendered primarily by the city-state,³⁶ not through divine providence as for Aquinas.

Divine providence and human striving toward their final end mesh for Aquinas, as God's encouragement enables an unspecified number of humans to reach their final end—to know God.

The rather sudden introduction of the notion of divine election of some and passing by of others is a veering away from this just-noted attractive divine-human harmony. It is also a turning from Aristotle to Scripture and a cause of tension between God and part of humanity. For Aristotle, human freedom of choice, certainly responsibility is to

³⁰ ¶II-1, Q. 85, Art. 2. Reinhold Niebuhr, who wrestled with the same complex nature of sin, severely critiqued Aquinas (*The Nature and Destiny of Man* [New York: Scribner's, repr, pb, 1964], 1:153-54).

³¹ Aquinas' view of the fall into sin and the divine response cannot be treated in this brief article.

³² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103 a 16-18; 1139b 18-35.

³³ Aquinas (*Summa contra gentiles* 3:25) cites Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 983a 6).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1116a 3-1136a 14.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178b 8-10, 22-24. Aquinas cites Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* at *Summa contra gentiles* 4:91 (2). For Aquinas humanity's final goal is a beholding of the divine vision, for Aristotle it is to be like God meditating uninterrupted though not everlasting.

³⁶ The *Nicomachean Ethics* is followed by Aristotle's book on *Politics*.

be maintained,³⁷ at the expense of divine sovereignty. God, for Aristotle, is not a moral deity rendering just transactions with humans; rather, he is a thinking thing, thinking about his own thought.³⁸ God may be the final goal of human striving,³⁹ but God is not the efficient cause of human acting. Aquinas followed Aristotle regarding human final end as an intellectual knowledge of God rather than as mastering moral virtues (cf. *Summa contra gentiles* 3:34), but he differentiates between a general awareness of God humans have in this life and a specific grasping of God's essence in a future life. This differentiation into a two-fold knowledge of God permits Aquinas to agree with (on the natural level) and go beyond (on the supra-natural level) Aristotle.

Aquinas is influenced not only by Aristotle, but also by the later Augustine, for whom God is the only efficient cause for human happiness. In the protracted debate on human freedom with his opponent Pelagius, Augustine nearly snuffs out human freedom with his notion of divine predestination, as we noted above.

Given a partial ambivalence in his view concerning divine sovereignty and human freedom, some interpreters—understandably—claim Aquinas stresses divine predestination, or primary causation, while others claim he emphasizes human freedom, or secondary causation.⁴⁰ Aquinas himself maintains both sides of the equation—divine sovereignty and human freedom. But without a balance between divine predestination and human choices! He moves from an early affirmation of human freedom to divine predestination in the *Summa contra gentiles* and places an even greater stress on divine determinism in his *Summa Theologiae*.

It was not Aquinas' intention to write hundreds of pages about human existence in order one day to terminate his efforts and to set his seven-year project merely aside. As it turns out, however, he so did. As he was elucidating Scripture's view of the sacraments, he

³⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1109b 30-1110 b 2.

³⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1074b 33-34; cf. 1072b 21-39.

³⁹ Aristotle, *De anima* 415a 27-415b 2: “. . . for any living thing . . . the most natural act is the production of another like itself . . . in order that, as far as nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal toward which all things strive . . .”

⁴⁰ A. Kenney, “Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom,” in *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, A. Kenney, ed. (Garden City, NY: Anchor pb, 1969), pp. 255-270.

stopped his discussion in the midst of the sacrament of penance. A divine vision showed him that he had written “straw,” a substitute, rather than religious truth itself. So we shall never know how he would have resolved his dilemma: God predestines humans to their respective end or rewards them according to their life style. Someone else completed this massive work, and outlined Aquinas’ view of eternal life. But these additions may not be Aquinas’ last words on the subject.

Conclusion

Aquinas’ heroic endeavor to do justice to two antagonistic⁴¹ motifs resembles a similar strategy on the part of René Descartes to link two dissimilar elements. As Aquinas seeks to answer a religious question, similarly the modern philosopher tries to solve a scientific problem. Distinguishing between the spiritual and un-extended human soul and the extended and material human body,⁴² the Frenchman must face the problem of their connection. The interaction between the two—the body sends messages to the mind that is it thirsty and the mind permits quenching—appears to suggest a plausible interaction.⁴³ A tension occurs, however, when Descartes tries to bring the freedom of the soul into a contact with the mechanical nature of the body.⁴⁴ Instead of showing clearly how freedom and determinism interface, Descartes seeks to reconcile human free will with divine “pre-ordination.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ The polar relationship between human freedom and divine sovereignty remains dialectical: human experience a relationship of harmony created as they are by a good God. But this relationship is broken due to human alienation (cf. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951, 1957], 1:182-86; 2:62-64).

⁴² R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Meditation six), in *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, eds. (Dover pb, reperi. 1955), 1:190.

⁴³ R. Descartes, *Meditations*, in *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, 1:192. Cf. *The Principles of First Philosophy*, Principle 2 (ibid., 1:255).

⁴⁴ *The Principles of First Philosophy*, 1:221, 234-35, 240-41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:235. Cf. 2:75.

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