



**AQUINAS ON GOD’S REST AFTER CREATION  
IN BIBLICAL THOMISM LENS**

***AQUINO: SOBRE EL DESCANSO DE DIOS DESPUÉS DE LA  
CREACIÓN EN EL LENTE DEL TOMISMO BÍBLICO***

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ABSTRACT

In his commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews (cap. IV), St. Thomas considers the rest of God after the work of creation (see Gen 2:2), treating it not as a deistic withdrawal of the Creator, but a productive quiescence. According to the Biblical Thomism, God’s action is not something abstract for us, but constitutes the principle – *exemplar* – of Christian action. Therefore this paper will firstly present multiple senses of the rest (*triplex requies*) of created beings, then the correct understanding of God’s action during *creatio continua*, in order to reflect on what the Christian’s “restful” life consists in. St. Paul urged the disciples of Christ “to be restful” (*ut quieti sitis*, cf. 1 Thess 4:11).

*Keywords:* Biblical Thomism, Letter to the Hebrews, creation, ethics, eschatology

## RESUMEN

En su comentario a la Carta a los Hebreos (cap. IV), Santo Tomás considera el reposo de Dios tras la obra de la creación (véase Gn 2,2), tratándolo no como un repliegue deísta del Creador, sino como una quiescencia productiva. Según el tomismo bíblico, la acción de Dios no es algo abstracto para nosotros, sino que constituye el principio -ejemplar- de la acción cristiana. Por ello, en este trabajo se presentarán, en primer lugar, los múltiples sentidos del reposo (*triplex req-uiēs*) de los seres creados, y luego la correcta comprensión de la acción de Dios durante la *creatio continua*, para reflexionar sobre en qué consiste la vida “reposada” del cristiano. San Pablo exhortó a los discípulos de Cristo a “estar tranquilos” (*ut qui-eti sitis*, cf. 1 Tes 4,11).

*Palabras clave:* Tomismo bíblico, Carta a los Hebreos, creación, ética, escatología.

## INTRODUCTION

The correct understanding of religious language is a fundamental theological challenge, but is not limited to religious epistemology.<sup>1</sup> Theology does not focus only on the correctness of procedures in analogical predication on God, but seeks the truth that will be an *exemplar* for human action. In this light, it is possible to understand why a correct reading of the meaning of “God’s rest” after the six days of creation is important for St. Thomas Aquinas, who lived at a time when dogmatics and morality were united. Precisely such approach is adopted in Biblical Thomism<sup>2</sup>, which aims not only to restore the use of Aquinas’ biblical commentaries, but also to practice his method of *sacra doctrina* which tries to relate the truth about God’s rest (cf. Gen 2:2) to Christian’s peaceful life, consisting in imitation of the rest of God (cf. 1 Th 4:11). Thus a Thomistic, teleological approach makes it possible to read the biblical texts in a way that unites reflections on God, the world and the man: the notions of quiescence of natural things, quiescence of human beings and quiescence of God are connected by more than purely terminological affinity. Proposed perspective makes it also possible to grasp many theological truths – such as the eternal rest of the faithful,

1 See Carlos Miguel Gómez Rincón, *Racionalidad y trascendencia. Investigaciones en epistemología de la religión* (Salamanca: Sal Terrae, 2020).

2 Jörgen Vijgen, “Biblical Thomism: Past, Present and Future”, *Angelicum* 95/3 (2018): 263-287; see also: Matthew Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); Piotr Roszak y Jörgen Vijgen, eds., *Towards a Biblical Thomism: Thomas Aquinas and the Renewal of Biblical Theology* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2018).

entered by the men already on earth (through *inchoatio*) – and their true meaning that goes far beyond simple inaction<sup>3</sup>.

The point of reference for these reflections will be Aquinas' interpretation of the Letter to the Hebrews, where the issue of entering God's rest is undertaken (Hbr 4:1), recalling many events and figures from the Old Testament. First of all, it is about a proper exegesis of the Book of Genesis, where it is mentioned that God rested on the seventh day – in biblical language this seventh day is a day on which the history of salvation is currently taking place, obviously involving God's providential works. It seems therefore that the following reflections might shed an interesting light on the present debate about the divine action in the world. The analysis will be conducted in three points: starting from the explanation of the meaning of the term "rest" (*quies*) in the natural world, through the discussion of the issue of God's rest after creation, to the restful Christian life.

## I. MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF THE WORD QUIES

Using the categories from Aristotle's physics, Aquinas often refers to the notions of motion and rest, with the help of which he describes the activity of nature (for the concept of motion includes all changes, not just a local motion, or simply spatial change from the point A to the point B).<sup>4</sup> The rest refers to completed and therefore perfect movement, if we follow the etymology of Latin *perfectus*.<sup>5</sup> Therefore Aquinas defines *quies* as a lack – but not a simple opposition – of movement (*privatio motus*).<sup>6</sup> At the same time he distinguishes between the rest resulting from natural motion, where reaching a goal is intended, and *quies violenta*, where the previously lost goal is being restored.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. BASIC MEANING: LACK OF MOTION VS REST OF DESIRE

St. Thomas distinguishes between the two kinds of rest: the first one is broadly understood simply as the cessation of motion, activity, and the attainment

3 See Matthew Lamb, *Wisdom Eschatology In Augustine and Aquinas*. In M. Dauphinais, B. David, & M. Levering eds., *Aquinas the Augustinian* (Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 258-279.

4 In *Physic.*, lib. 2 l. 1 n. 5.

5 *Summa Theologiae* (=ST) I, q. 73, a. 1c.

6 In *Physic.*, lib. 6 l. 5 n. 9.

7 In *Physic.*, lib. 5 l. 10 n. 11.

of certain immutability by a given being.<sup>8</sup> Such rest is therefore negatively defined by time, as is motion itself, since according to the classical view time is the quantity of motion. Therefore if Thomas maintains that “rest is opposed to motion”, this claim does not have an absolute sense, since it depends on the distinction between *terminus ad quem* and *terminus a quo* and the movement towards rest can hardly be regarded simply as the opposite of rest already achieved by a being. As an example we could recall the organism’s transition from illness to health, because the movement towards health is not a contradiction or negation of health.<sup>9</sup> If the infinity rests in itself, for it lasts in itself, so does the relation of the part and its rest within the structure of the whole (*pars naturaliter quiescit in toto*).<sup>10</sup> This means to rest in something is to be in it at every moment of this time.<sup>11</sup> Therefore Aquinas maintains that the body naturally rests in its place (*corpus naturaliter quiescit in suo loco*).<sup>12</sup>

This in turn leads Thomas to identify a second kind of rest, defined not by relation to movement, but by a rest of desire (*quies desiderii*). It consists in the fact that the desire rests in the good loved, in which it is somehow fastened, or even embedded (as suggested by the Latin *figitur*) – hence the conviction that the feeling (affect) of the lover rests in the loved person.<sup>13</sup> Such state of the will’s rest in the desired good is called *delectatio*,<sup>14</sup> which in turn leads to the final enjoyment of the good, namely *fruitio*.<sup>15</sup> Therefore if the body rests after movement, so – according to Aquinas – does the happiness, which calls for its final rest in the supreme good, which is the ultimate goal, after which nothing more is desired.<sup>16</sup>

This, however, can be met with a twofold resistance, due to the object of desire as well as the imperfect way in which the will desires it.<sup>17</sup> But when the

8 In *Physic.*, lib. 3 l. 4 n. 4: “cessatio a movendo, dicitur quies; dicuntur enim quaedam quiescere, quando cessant agere: omne igitur tale movens, scilicet cuius immobilitas est quies”.

9 In *Physic.*, lib. 5 l. 9 n. 5.

10 In *Physic.*, lib. 4 l. 8 n. 7.

11 ST I, q. 53, a. 3c.

12 In *Physic.*, lib. 4 l. 8 n. 6.

13 In *Physic.*, lib. 4 l. 4 n. 3.

14 ST I-II, q. 34 a. 4c. “Utrum autem voluntas sit bona vel mala, praecipue ex fine cognoscitur. Id autem habetur pro fine, in quo voluntas quiescit. Quies autem voluntatis, et cuiuslibet appetitus, in bono, est delectatio. Et ideo secundum delectationem voluntatis humanae, praecipue iudicatur homo bonus vel malus; est enim bonus et virtuosus qui gaudet in operibus virtutum; malus autem qui in operibus malis”. See also ST I, q. 5 a. 6 co.

15 *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 1 q. 4 a. 1 ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1 cap. 90 n. 3.

16 ST I-II, q. 2 a. 8c. “Ex quo patet quod nihil potest quietare voluntatem hominis, nisi bonum universale. Quod non invenitur in aliquo creato, sed solum in Deo, quia omnis creatura habet bonitatem participatam”.

17 ST I-II, q. 11 a. 4 ad 2. See also María Teresa Enrique, Jorge Martín Montoya, “Imperium and causality in Thomas Aquinas”, *Scientia et Fides* 1 (2021): 329–355.

human succeeds in attaining the ultimate goal, it rests in it and no longer directs itself towards any other desire. The opposite of such state is the effort to move from one good to another, since man seems to be dissatisfied with the good he has acquired and is moving towards the ultimate goal. Such difficulty of resting in the final good finds its expression in the afflictions mentioned in the Book of Job, which will cease when man rests in the good. This situation, at the level of biblical interpretation, is expressed for St Thomas by the dove, sent by Noah to see whether the flood has stopped (cf. Gen 8:9), and having nowhere to sit<sup>18</sup>. In his conclusion Aquinas notes: "For nothing in the present life is so firm that the soul could be secure and at rest"<sup>19</sup>. He observes, therefore, that this kind of rest of desire occurs with the attainment of that for which man makes an effort and desires nothing more – this is possible also in the earthly life when the will of the righteous man attains rest in God.<sup>20</sup> This experience of rest during earthly life has the value of a foretaste (*inchoatio*) – according to Aquinas the same concerns contemplation, where rest foreshadows eternal happiness.<sup>21</sup> Thus to "rest in God" while still on earth means to want nothing else besides God or to want everything for God's sake.

## 2. REST "IN" OR "FROM" WORKS

With the fundamental double meaning of *quies* outlined, it is now worth turning to the *Lecture on the Letter to the Hebrews*, where Aquinas takes up the theme of the rest in God in the context of the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:2). In one interpretation he follows the sense suggested by the physics (the cessation of the creation of new species and the beginning of a state of *propagatio*), but in the other he makes a distinction between the absolute rest, in the sense of the cessation of movement when the body rests in what it has accomplished, and the rest from works done, in order to rest not in the thing intended but in own goodness. According to Thomas this *in opere / ab opera* distinction shows the incomparability of God's way of acting, which we try to describe in language accessible to us:

18 More on Aquinas's biblical exegesis, see Piotr Roszak, Jörgen Vijgen, eds., *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2015).

19 Super Heb., cap. 6 l. 4: "Nihil enim in praesenti vita est firmum, ubi posset anima firmari et quiescere".

20 Super Sent., lib. 1 d. 1 q. 4 a. 1 ad 5.

21 In Ioan., cap. XI, lect.3 nr 1495.

“For he rested in himself from all eternity, but when he rested, it was not in his works, but from his works. For God works in a different manner from other artisans; for an artisan acts because of a need, as a house builder makes a house to rest in it, and a cutlerer a knife for gain; hence, the desire of every artisan comes to rest in his work. But not so with God, because he does not act out of need but to communicate his goodness; hence, he does not rest in his work, but from producing a work; and he rests only in his goodness”.<sup>22</sup>

In a sense, the doer “rests” in what he has created and completes his activity: in God’s case, however, rest is accomplished in his goodness, which is extremely dynamic as it communicates itself to the creature. It consists therefore not in passivity, but in active sharing of goodness with creation.

### 3. THREE KINDS OF REST: TEMPORAL, OF CONSCIENCE AND OF GLORY

St Thomas mentions yet other types of “rest” in the context of Ps. 94, which makes reference to the Israel’s wandering in the wilderness after the exodus from Egyptian slavery. It recalls the tempting of Israel and God’s oath that this people would not enter His rest (cf. Heb 3:11). Aquinas draws attention to the stylistic form of this psalm, which speaks of God’s oath, thus emphasizing immutability – however this immutability in a sense has a conditional nature: if the people do not repent, a certain punishment will befall them. At the same time, as a kind of *notae*, Thomas introduces three kinds of rest: temporal (*temporalis*), of conscience (*conscientiae*) and of eternal glory (*gloriae aeternae*):

“Now there is threefold rest: one is temporal: you have much goods laid up for many years: take your rest (Luke 12:19). The second is the rest of conscience: I have labored a little and have found much rest to myself (Sir 51:35). The third is the rest of eternal glory: in peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest (Ps 4:9). Therefore, what is stated here can be explained in each of these ways, namely, they have not entered the rest of the promised land or the rest of conscience or the rest of eternal happiness”.<sup>23</sup>

22 Super Heb., cap. 4 l. 1: “Secundum Augustinum non dicit simpliciter requievit, sed requievit ab operibus suis. Ab aeterno enim requievit in seipso, sed tunc etiam requievit non in operibus, sed ab operibus. Aliter enim operatur Deus, et quilibet alius artifex. Artifex enim agit propter indigentiam suam, sicut domificator facit domum, ut in ipsa quiescat. Similiter faber facit cultellum propter lucrum. Unde desiderium cuiuslibet artificis quietatur in opere suo. Sed non sic est de Deo, quia non agit propter indigentiam suam, sed propter bonitatem communicandam. Unde non quiescit in opere, sed ab opere producendo, et quiescit tantum in sua bonitate.”

23 Super Heb., cap. 3, l. 2, nr 184. See Carlos Augusto Casanova, “Saint Thomas Aquinas’ Theology and His Commentary on the Book of Psalms”, *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia* 3 (2021): 217–230.

As can be seen, the range of meaning of “rests” is varied, on the one hand, because of the existence of earthly and eternal time – on the other hand, the “peace of conscience” can also refer to another rest mentioned in the commentary. Speaking of desires (*affectus*), Thomas stresses that Christ brings about rest in spiritual and permanent goods, being the “High Priest of future goods”, not like the priests of the Old Testament, who could only bring about rest in temporal goods<sup>24</sup>. Priests as mediators between God and human beings should lead the faithful to rest, which is synonymous with peace and concord between God and the people. This rest, however, differs from the one introduced by Christ as a surety of better testament. In the case of the Son of God, it is about spiritual and permanent goods for which the Old Testament man longed, as it is expressed in Ps. 73:25: “besides you what do I desire upon earth?”. The man seeks the true good in order to rest in it and attain *silentium quietis cordis*.<sup>25</sup> In this sense the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul is the source of spiritual rest for the person.<sup>26</sup>

Another threefold division of rests can be proposed from the perspective of salvation history, according to which we can distinguish between the rest of God after creation, the rest of the Israel after reaching the Promised Land and crossing the Jordan under Joshua (who for Aquinas foreshadows Jesus<sup>27</sup>) and the rest in glory.<sup>28</sup> The latter was foreshadowed by the words of David, who announces in one of the psalms that he is looking forward to another rest, although the nation had already settled in Palestine – which Thomas reads as a promise of spiritual rest. In Letter to Hebrews this eternal rest is called *sabbatissimus populo Dei* (Heb 4:9), to which the Church directs her expectations, emphasizing this rest in the image of eternity as our “home”.<sup>29</sup>

24 See Antoine Guggenheim, *Jésus Christ, Grand Prêtre de l'Ancienne et de la Nouvelle Alliance. Étude théologique et herméneutique du commentaire de Saint Thomas d'Aquin sur l'Épître aux Hébreux*, (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2007). See also: Jose Maria Cabrera, “El sacerdocio de Jesucristo en el Comentario de santo Tomás a la Carta a los Hebreos”, *Studium. Filosofía y Teología* 24 (2021): 21-45.

25 ST I-II, q.11, a.1.

26 Gabriel Mary Fiore, “Silence before God in the Life and Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas”, *Nova et Vetera. English Edition* 19, n. 1 (2021): 14-15.

27 See Super Heb., cap. 4, l.1, nr 207: “Deinde cum dicit Nam si eis Iesus, etc., probat quod supersit alios intrare, quia si Iesus Nave, id est Iosue, filiis Israel, finalem requiem praestitisset, numquam de alia, etc., id est, non immineret nobis alia requies, nec de alia aliqua propheta David loqueretur post illam diem. Unde manifestum est, quod illa requies fuit signum requiei spiritualis”. See also Matthew Levering, “Christ the New Joshua. Retrieving Origen and Aquinas for Today”, *Studium. Filosofía y Teología* 48 (2021), 117-136.

28 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 2, nr 209.

29 Super Psalmo 29, n. 1.

## II. GOD'S REST AFTER CREATION - UNDERSTANDING GOD'S ACTION

While human action on many levels tends towards rest, for Aquinas the mystery of the seventh day of creation involves such rest of God, which is not stillness but productive quiescence. St. Thomas discusses the meaning of God's rest in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, in the first part of the *Summa Theologiae* (q. 73) and in the *Lecture on the Letter to the Hebrews*. It is worth analyzing these three approaches.

It is therefore appropriate to begin with Aquinas' early writings, where he explains the meaning of God's rest on the seventh day of creation. In the *Commentary on the Sentences* this rest expresses *consummatio operum et quies opificis*<sup>30</sup> and does not quarrel with the fact that God, desiring himself, rests in Himself in the fullest way (*maxime quietatur*).<sup>31</sup> For God's will rests in an end which can be understood in two ways: either absolutely, which is accomplished in eternity, where God is sufficient for himself, but also for the sake of the creature, when the creature pleases God. Not in the sense that God needs the creature, but that he directs it towards himself.<sup>32</sup>

In the context of the seventh day, however, this cessation of action cannot be interpreted as an abandonment of creation, for then it would turn into nothing, but more as the cessation of the creation of new entities and the attainment of the double perfection which is synonymous with blessing (explained after Gregory as the accumulation and multiplication of God's gifts) and sanctification. Thus the first of the ways in which the world is completed consists in its having all its essential parts (*ex omnibus suis partibus essentialibus*), and the second in the world being ordered to its end (*ex ordine ad finem*).<sup>33</sup> Both these forms of crowning or perfecting the world are referred to God, by the virtue of the fact that the perfection of creatures is a reflection of the perfection of the Creator in the essential manifestations of the world, and that something is considered crowned when it can continue to reproduce itself, thus participating in God's power.

30 Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 15 q. 3 a. 3 co

31 Contra Gentiles, lib. 1 cap. 90 n. 3.

32 Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 15 q. 3 a. 2c: "Quies voluntatis divinae in fine, potest accipi dupliciter. Vel absolute, secundum quod in seipso sufficientiam invenit; et sic quies aeterna est. Alio modo potest intelligi per relationem ad creaturam, secundum quod creatura Deo placet: non tamen ita ut ea indigeat, quasi in ea sufficientiam suae beatitudinis inveniens; sed eam ad seipsum ordinans, in seipso sufficientiam invenit: et sic quiescere dicitur Deus proprie a rebus conditis: quod non potest intelligi nisi rebus jam conditis, quod est post senarium diem: et ita quies Dei, secundum duas ultimas acceptiones, convenienter septimo diei ascribitur".

33 Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 15 q. 3 a. 3 co.

While the sixth day is synonymous with God's action of producing things, bringing them into existence, the seventh day is "the rest of divine contemplation, which God delights in Himself".<sup>34</sup> God's rest consists in knowing himself and through this act of contemplation God comes to know the world. God does not come to know things as external to Himself, but comes to know them through/in His being. God is happy in this way, delighting in Himself.

An explanation of the meaning of God's rest after creation appears also in the treatise on creation in the *Summa of Theology*. Starting from a broad understanding of movement as all action and desire, Thomas accepts a double sense of God's rest. On the one hand he describes it as the cessation of action (*pro cessatione ab operibus*), understood as the cessation of the creation of new entities that would not have existed in the earlier "days" of creation; on the other hand he understands it as the fulfilment of desire (*pro impletione desiderii*), which however does not involve God in any way needing created things:

"Hence, when all things were made He is not said to have rested in His works, as though needing them for His own happiness, but to have rested from them, as in fact resting in Himself, as He suffices for Himself and fulfils His own desire. And even though from all eternity He rested in Himself, yet the rest in Himself, which He took after He had finished His works, is that rest which belongs to the seventh day. And this, says Augustine, is the meaning of God's resting from His works on that day".<sup>35</sup>

However, Aquinas is interested in showing that this does not mean God's withdrawal from the world or his passivity in history. This is evidenced by the well-known passage from Jn 5:17: "My Father acts until now and I act", quoted by Aquinas as a reminder that God sustains the world in existence and manages it (*conservando et administrando*) and exercises providential care over it. It is the action of God who, contrary to occasionalism, moves creatures to their proper action (*ad propriam operationem eam movendo*)<sup>36</sup>.

An explanation referring to the interpretations contained in the first part of the *Summa of Theology* can be found in the *Lecture on the Letter to the Hebrews*, where solutions from the *Summa* are directly quoted.<sup>37</sup> Thomas relies on two texts cited by St. Paul, namely Gen 2:2 and Ps 95(94):8. He basis his considerations on the distinction between rest "in" and rest "from" the works performed, but also on the sense in which creation can be considered complete and thus perfect, since

34 Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 15 q. 3 a. 3 s.c. 2.

35 ST I, q. 73, a.2c.

36 ST I, q.73, a.1, ad 2.

37 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 1, nr 203.

*quies enim demonstrat motum consummatum*.<sup>38</sup> Recalling the categories already known from the *Commentary on the Sentences*, he states that, in essence, the crowning took place through the work of creation (strictly speaking, the work of the first day) and the work of separation, while the second kind of crowning, as regards the individual parts, in the work of adornment. Therefore it seems that there are two kinds of resting, one *secundum integritatem* and the other *secundum operationem*. Having clarified the sense of the crowning of creation, which took place in seven days, Aquinas discusses the meaning of the day of God's rest, which is a foreshadowing of the "seventh epoch of rest", an idea developed in other biblical commentaries.<sup>39</sup>

In accordance with *Summa of Theology* Aquinas sees the God's rest as the opposite of movement rather than the opposite of any work. The language describing this rest encounters fundamental difficulties, since it is hard to imagine action without movement, and God, while creating, does not move. Therefore the term "rest" is not so much an indication of God's inactivity as of the Creator's cessation of the creation of new species. It does not imply the absence of novelty in the world living during God's rest,

"because that which was made afterwards was in those things produced at that time, either according to an active power, as in the perfect animals, or according to seminal notions, or according to matter, such as minerals. Therefore there was not then a dead man awakened, but a body was made, which was able to be awakened. Certain things, however, were made according to a likeness, such as rational souls, which are made only by God".<sup>40</sup>

For Thomas this is the "productive rest" of God that can be understood from the broader perspective of the relation of the First Cause to secondary causes. The First Cause (understood not in the chronological but in the essential sense) acts in beings at their more intimate level, namely at the level of their *esse*, just as the nature acts more deeply than art.<sup>41</sup> Thus the First Cause, as *causa prior*, enables the action of later causes. As can be seen, these linguistic nuances of reflections on God's rest can prove to be an inspiration for the ongoing debates on divine action.

Kind of summary of the idea of "God's rest" as an activity (different from the work of creation) may be found in Thomas' reflections from his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, where he refers to four actions that God performed in

38 ST I, q. 73 a. 1 ad 2.

39 In Ps., 6, n. 1.

40 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 1, nr 204.

41 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 2, nr 220.

relation to the Sabbath: he sanctified, blessed, crowned his work and rested.<sup>42</sup> In the context of the wrong way in which the Jews regarded this day as one of absolute abstinence from all work, Thomas emphasizes the uninterrupted and constant action of God who sustains creation in its existence. Aquinas thus explains the correct choice of the term “rest” by Moses as the author of the Torah, who had in mind spiritual rest, the example of which God leaves to men after they have done good works.<sup>43</sup> As Thomas reminds in his *Lecture on the Letter to Hebrews*, this in turn follows from the fact that God created man in his own image and for the attainment of eternal happiness, and this happiness is synonymous with eternal rest.<sup>44</sup>

### III. RESTFULNESS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE: *UT QUIETI SITIS* (1 THESS. 4:11)

This rest from works, proper to God because of the communication of His goodness (and resting in it), is also a “model” for that which awaits the saved: “And he says, a sabbath day of rest, because just as in the old law the sabbath represented God’s rest from his works (Gen 2:2), so too that rest will be that of the saints from their labors. From henceforth now, says the spirit, that they may rest from their labors (Rev 14:13)”<sup>45</sup> This was also the purpose of God’s rest after creation.<sup>46</sup> It is not an idleness, for it does not consist in refraining from all works, for some of them will continue in eternity, and these are seeing, loving and praising, as suggested by the cited quotations from Rev 4:8 and Is 40:31.<sup>47</sup> Such is the meaning of the “sanctification” of the seventh day,<sup>48</sup> because God did not become happy by creating the world, but by resting in His goodness (*ab operibus*),

42 Super Io., cap. 5 l. 2. “Et hoc patet in quatuor, quae Deus erga diem sabbati ordinavit. Nam diem sabbati sanctificavit, diem sabbati benedixit, in eo opera sua consummavit, et in eo requievit”.

43 Super Io., cap. 5 l. 2. “In quo excludit falsum intellectum Iudaeorum, qui volentes conformari Deo, nihil in die sabbati operantur, ac si Deus ipso die omnino destiterit operari. Et quidem licet in sabbato requieverit a novis creaturis condendis, nihilominus tamen semper et continue usque modo operatur, creaturas in esse conservando. Unde et signanter verbo requietionis Moyses est usus post opera Dei, a quibus condendis requievit, ut signaret spiritualem requiem, quam Deus exemplo quietis suae fidelibus postea qui bona fecerint opera, arcana significatione pollicebatur”. See Jörgen Vijgen, Scripture as a Guidepost for How Not to Read Scripture. Aquinas on the Apologetic Function of Scripture, In Roger Nutt and Michael Dauphinais (Eds.) *Thomas Aquinas, Biblical Theologian* (pp. 133-160). Ohio: Emmaus Academic.

44 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 1: “si Deus creavit hominem ad aeternam beatitudinem, quia ad imaginem et similitudinem suam creavit illum, ideo praeparavit ei requiem”.

45 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 2, nr 209.

46 ST I, q.73, a.2, ad 3: “... Deus requievisse, quia nos requiescere facit”.

47 Super Heb., cap. 4, l. 2, nr 210.

48 Super Psalmo 23, n. 1.

and therefore man, likewise, is not to rest in his work as in his ultimate goal, but to rest in God himself from the works he performs, which is eternal happiness (*beatitudo*). In order to introduce such rhythm of life, in which man does not rest in himself (and own works) but in God, the Lord's Day was instituted, which is dedicated to the worship of God, and whose purpose is to relate everything to God, because this means resting in Him.<sup>49</sup>

This approach to God's rest as *exemplar* is confirmed in biblical exegesis based on the senses of the Scripture, since for Thomas – besides the literal explanation of God's "rest" – it is possible to point to its allegorical sense, which is the rest of Christ in the tomb, and to the anagogical one, referring to the rest of the soul in God.<sup>50</sup> This translates into the spiritual path of the disciple of Jesus: through baptism, the believer passes from Christ's rest in the tomb to being co-buried with him and thus to obtaining his rest.<sup>51</sup> It is not surprising that even the seventh hour in Jn 4:52 (the healing of the son of the royal official from Capernaum) is read by Thomas as a reference to God's rest from His works, which in his view means that man's spiritual life consists in spiritual rest, which is confirmed by the words of Is 30:15, according to which salvation consists in attaining the tranquility (*si quieveritis, salvi eritis*), and – by way of contrast – by Is 57:2, according to which the ungodly heart, resembling the rough sea, can rest in nothing.<sup>52</sup>

Thus reflections on the restfulness of God become a point of reference for reflections on the Christian lifestyle, in accordance with the approach proposed by the Biblical Thomism, which reads Scripture in a way that integrates all its senses. In this spirit, the simplicity of God is not merely a dogmatic truth, but a truth which translates into the simple life of Christians.<sup>53</sup> In the case of restful life, to which we are encouraged by the contemplation of the mystery of God's rest, a number of concrete questions arise: can such life be active or does it belong only to the contemplative life? How do we maintain quiescence in the midst of so many responsibilities? How can we obtain such a life?

The call for Christians to lead a life that would be restful (*ut quieti sitis*), though not idle, but focused on fulfilling one's duties, appears in the Letter to the

49 Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 15 q. 3 a. 3c.

50 Super Col., cap. 2 l. 4.

51 Super Sent., lib. 3 d. 37 q. 1 a. 5 qc. 3 ad l. "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod observatio sabbati, in quantum caeremonialis est, signat principaliter requiem Christi in sepulcro, et per consequens quietem quam habemus per ipsum, consepulti cum eo per Baptismum in mortem; Rom. 6. Unde veniente veritate, figura cessavit."

52 Super Io., cap. 4 l. 7.

53 Tyler R. Wittman, "'Not a God of Confusion but of Peace': Aquinas and the Meaning of Divine Simplicity", *Modern Theology* 2 (2016): 151-169.

Thessalonians (4:11). Because of the quotation from Proverbs 7:11, Thomas directs the reflection towards the situation when such calmness is lacking, which happens with the spreading of sin.<sup>54</sup> It is, therefore, a question of refraining from curiosity, which leads us to being preoccupied with unnecessary things, and freedom from these burdens allows one to lead a contemplative life, through which one can achieve rest.

Thus the recommendation to avoid restlessness (*inquietudo*) stems from the awareness of the fact how much harm to Christian life can be caused by being distracted by secondary external affairs, which oppose the rest of contemplation (*quies contemplationis*).<sup>55</sup> It is different in case of spiritual actions, which belong to the very serenity of contemplation. Liberation from external concerns is a prerequisite for establishing oneself in virtue, hence Thomas stresses the value of the virtue of *continentia*. It brings the necessary restraint also in this sphere, because, realistically speaking, the radical resistance to all sensual desire in this temporal life can bring even more anxiety to the soul, preoccupied with the struggle against temptations, and not translate into the realization of the good.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, reasoned Aquinas, the restlessness of the soul, because of the damage it causes to a person's life, had no place in Paradise, where primordial justice prevailed. But this restlessness can also affect the body, for example through greed, which leads man to chase after superficial things. Such anxiety, as a result of greed, affects the human *affectus*.<sup>57</sup> This is why St. Paul so often puts an emphasis on the recommendation to lead a restful life, because anxiety with regard to trivial matters is contrary to peace, and the Church is meant to be a community nurturing and transmitting peace.<sup>58</sup> It is not a matter of not being preoccupied with anything – on the contrary, Thomas realistically states that “the human soul should always be occupied with something”,<sup>59</sup> but it is important that it should concern itself with a true good.

54 Super I Thes., cap. 4 l. 1.

55 ST II-II, q. 180 a. 6 ad 1. “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod motus corporales exteriores opponuntur quieti contemplationis, quae intelligitur esse ab exterioribus occupationibus. Sed motus intelligibilium operationum ad ipsam quietem contemplationis pertinent”.

56 Contra Gentiles, lib. 3 cap. 136 n. 6. “Resistere autem omnino concupiscentiis, et quasi continuam pugnam habere, maiorem inquietudinem animo tribuit quam si aliquis moderate concupiscentiis uteretur. Cum igitur inquietudo animi maxime perfectioni virtutis repugnet, videtur perfectioni virtutis adversari quod aliquis perpetuum continentiam serve”.

57 ST II-II, q. 118 a. 8 c.

58 Super Tit., cap. 3 l. 1.

59 In 2 Tes., cap. 3, lect. 2. “Anima enim hominis semper oportet quod circa aliquid occupetur”.

Therefore a kind of “good” restlessness can arise, for example, in those people who are idle in the face of wicked things. Thus the statement about the need to be calm expresses the call to live in peace and tranquility of mind, as pursuing without hindrance what man rightly wants, e.g. by following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>60</sup> In this way the man also submits himself to God, at present with regard to the affairs of temporal life, and later completely, when God will be all in all, that is when the soul rests completely in God.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, according to Thomas, the rest in God, nurtured by the believer and taking place especially in the act of contemplation, is of great significance for the Christian life, since it gives us the strength to love others both *propter Deum, sub ratione Dei* and by relating everything to God.<sup>62</sup> The latter can be realized by directing all our actions towards him in a real and habitual way, thus by not accepting anything that might be contrary to him.

This restful life is not contradicted by haste with which one must strive to enter into God’s rest.<sup>63</sup> For this reason St. Thomas distinguishes between the two hurries: the first is the wrong one, when one acts suddenly, and the second is the one accompanied by reflection and therefore leading to implementing undertaken decisions. The haste should not destroy deliberation, hence Aquinas’ encouragement to hurry in entering God’s rest refers to the prompt manner of execution of what had been deliberated and decided. The order of words is significant for Aquinas here: the term *ingredi* denotes an entrance into something internal, while the exit (*egredi*) concerns something external, a departure from that which disturbs and draws one away from decent things.<sup>64</sup>

Restful life is therefore a dynamic life, consistent in its purpose, avoiding all that is disturbing and led with the proper haste that comes from the awareness that the attainment of rest in God is a long journey because of the difference of states (*in via* and *in patria*). God’s rest, then, is the goal of and condition for the fruitful performance of the acts proper to the new life.

60 Super II Cor., cap. 2 I. 3. “Cum, inquam, ita esset apertum mihi ostium in domino, non habui requiem spiritui meo, id est non potui facere quod spiritus meus volebat, id est dictabat. Tunc enim dicitur habere spiritus requiem, quando efficit quod vult, sicut tunc dicitur caro requiescere, quando habet quod concupiscit. Lc. c. XII, 19: anima mea, habes multa bona”.

61 Super I Cor., cap. 15 I. 3.

62 Emily Dubie, “Caregiving, Self-Care, and Contemplation: Resources from Thomas Aquinas”, *New Blackfriars* 102 (2021): 384-400.

63 Super Heb., cap. 4, I. 2, nr 215.

64 Super Heb., cap. 4, lect. 1. “Est autem duplex requies. Una in bonis exterioribus, et ad istam egreditur homo a requie mentis; alia est in bonis spiritualibus, quae est intima, et ad istam ingreditur. Matth. XXV, 21: intra in gaudium domini tui. Cant. I, 3: introduxit me rex in cellaria sua.”

## CONCLUSIONS

Following the Aquinas' reflection on the God's rest interestingly demonstrates the renewed methodology proposed by Biblical Thomism, which can be seen as the art of integrating tradition and contemporary exegesis, but also professed and practiced truth. The understanding of God's rest, of the nature of beings that are trying to rest in their natural, final goal, and of the restful life of the Christian – this particular “chain” in theological methodology – reminds us about the need to include metaphysics in exegesis. At the same time it reveals a kind of liturgical experiencing of the truths of faith, which seems to be a part and the assumption of Thomas' theological project. The connection between God's rest and regarding Sunday as time of God's worship reminds us of the integrity of the approach proposed by Aquinas.

Present life, belonging to the time of the “rest of God”, is not about catching up strength or energy after exhausting work, but about creativity, being free to create. It is about relating everything to God – this is the meaning of the postulated “rest”, which begins on earth and will be fully realized in heaven<sup>65</sup>.

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