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Florian Wöller • Ueli Zahnd (eds.)

Dominican Culture, Dominican Theology

The Order of Preachers and Its Spheres of Action (1215 – ca. 1600)

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Jan C. Klok
Volker Leppin
Ulli Roth

curator
Jan C. Klok

Annemarie Pilarski
Ulrike Treusch
directorium Societatis

Krijn Pansters
praeses Societatis

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Thomas Aquinas on Petitionary Prayer and Divine Providence

Jonathan Reinert

1. Introduction

Praying is one of the basic processes of spiritual life in many religions and in Christianity as well. This is especially true for life in monasteries and religious orders because the times of prayer structure the day. In a certain sense, the whole of life there is centered on prayer. Against this background, we can ask how such a self-evident, daily religious practice was reflected upon by medieval Dominican theologians. Prayer is ideally qualified as an exemplary subject for exploring the relationship between religious practice and theological theory, since theory and practice, theology and spiritual life do not stand disconnected from one another but are mutually dependent. One is reminded of the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer corresponds to the law of faith), which can be traced back to Prosper of Aquitaine (5th century).[1] One important theological problem has always been, and still is, petitionary prayer or supplication.[2] The question of the meaning and effect of petitionary prayer concerns several fields of theology, such as for example: the relationship between God, human beings, and the world; divine providence; the possibilities and limitations of human beings; and the relationship between the human and the divine will. Therefore, petitionary prayer is at the center of three articles in this book, which deal respectively with the theology of prayer as found in Thomas Aquinas (by Jonathan Reinert), Meister Eckhart (by Anja Bork), and Johannes Tauler (by Andreas Zecherle). These contributions were planned together and are related to each other, even though they can each be read separately. By presenting these three popular theologians we want to demonstrate a plurality of understandings of the meaning and essence of (petitionary) prayer within the Dominican order.

[1] Cf. Gerhards, Albert, "Lex orandi, Lex credendi", in Religion in Past and Present VII (2010), p. 443.

[2] For ancient philosophy, cf. for example Hirsch-Luipold, Rainer/Trapp, Michael, eds.: *Ist Beten sinnvoll? Die 5. Rede des Maximos von Tyros* (SAPERE 31), Tübingen 2019; for the current discussion cf. for example Biersack, Robert: *Bittgebet und Gottes Vorsehung. Eine systematisch-theologische Studie zur Sinnhaftigkeit und Wirksamkeit der Bitte an Gott* (Pallottinische Studien zu Kirche und Welt 13), Sankt Ottilien 2015; Böttigheimer, Christoph: *Sinn(losigkeit) des Bittgebets. Auf der Suche nach einer rationalen Verantwortung*, Freiburg 2018; Eisele, Wilfried, ed.: *Gott bitten? Theologische Zugänge zum Bittgebet* (Quaestiones disputatae 256), Freiburg 2013; Thomas, Günter: "Die Affizierbarkeit Gottes im Gebet. Eine Problemskizze", in *id.*: *Gottes Lebendigkeit. Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie*, Leipzig 2019, pp. 149–170.

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2. Thomas Aquinas and Prayer

We know little about the personal spiritual life of Thomas Aquinas and whether he had specific individual manners of prayer,[3] because his 'inner life' is not a topic of his writings. It seems, then, that the *praxis pietatis* of the great Dominican theologian fits quite naturally into that of his order. However, a specifically or even singularly 'Dominican spirituality' is just as difficult to identify,[4] at least if one expects something particularly 'original'.[5] In contrast to the Friars Minor, for whom Francis of Assisi remained the model, object and constant point of reference for their spirituality as the founder of the Order, Dominic de Guzmán played a subordinate role in the spirituality of the Order of Preachers.[6] As a mendicant order, following Christ in poverty was of great importance for the Dominicans. It is possible that for Thomas himself, this idea of discipleship was a reason for his turning away from the classical monastic way and joining the Dominicans,[7] but this is also anything but certain. The very *proprium* of the Order of Preachers was—as the name suggests—the focus on preaching and the emphasis on theological study, which, to a certain extent, took on a spiritual character itself.[8]

Even if we can only say very little about Aquinas's spiritual life, this does not mean that 'spirituality' played a marginal role for him. On the contrary, from the numerous passages in his work in which he reflects on the life of faith and on prayer, it is possible to measure the great importance that he attached to the practice of piety. Lydia Maidl, who has written a comprehensive work on Thomas Aquinas's theology of prayer, formulates the relationship as follows:

> Through his teaching and preaching, though entirely concerned about objectification—the truth of the matter should shine forth—, he [viz. Aquinas] wanted to bring to others what was central to him in his personal spirituality. Prayer and theological teaching, which in the Order of Preachers was understood as part of worship, were for him the pillars of his life.[9]

[3] Cf. Maidl, Lydia: *Desiderii interpres. Genese und Grundstruktur der Gebetstheologie des Thomas von Aquin* (Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes 38), Paderborn 1994, p. 5.

[4] Cf. the contributions in: Engel, Ulrich, ed.: *Dominikanische Spiritualität* (Dominikanische Quellen und Zeugnisse 1), Leipzig 2000; Tugwell, Simon: "Introduction", in ed. Simon Tugwell: *Early Dominicans. Selected Writings* (The Classics of Western Spirituality), Ramsey, NY 1982, pp. 1–47.

[5] Cf. Füllenbach, Elias H.: "Dominikanische Spiritualität", in ed. Volker Leppin: *Thomas Handbuch*, Tübingen 2016, pp. 122–126: 122: "Der Dominikanerorden [...] folgte in seiner Observanzfrömmigkeit weitgehend dem althergebrachten 'monastisch-kanonikalen Lebensstil' der *vita religiosa* [...]. Die Spiritualität der von Dominicus gegründeten und 1216 erstmals päpstlich bestätigten Ordensgemeinschaft war daher nie besonders originell."

[6] Cf. only the small tract *The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic*, in *Early Dominicans* 1982, pp. 94–119.

[7] Vgl. Horst, Ulrich: "Was hat Thomas von Aquin veranlaßt, in den Predigerorden einzutreten?", in *Archa Verbi* 6 (2009), pp. 102–120.

[8] Simon Tugwell has related spirituality entirely to preaching activity and discovered in this the Dominican *proprium*: Tugwell, Simon: "Die Spiritualität der Dominikaner", in ed. Jill Raitt: *Geschichte der christlichen Spiritualität. Vol. 2: Hochmittelalter und Reformation*, Würzburg 2005, pp. 35–50.

[9] Maidl 1994, p. 4: "Was ihm in seiner persönlichen Spiritualität zentral war, das wollte er über sein Unterrichten und Predigen auch anderen nahe bringen, allerdings ganz um Objektivierung bemüht: die Wahrheit der Sache sollte aufleuchten. Gebet und theolo-

Because of the many reflections on spirituality, Thomas was not unreasonably regarded as a "spiritual master"[10].

Thomas did not write any specific treatise on prayer. However, he reflects on prayer in numerous places in other works. In contrast to the 'monastic-spiritual' tradition, in which prayer was primarily located and thematized in connection with meditation and contemplation,[11] Thomas understands prayer primarily as petitionary prayer. Here, I shall discuss important writings containing Thomas's thoughts regarding petitionary prayer in their approximate chronological order of composition.[12] On the one hand, a high degree of consistency in Aquinas's thinking is evident, but on the other hand, new aspects also become visible over time, because prayer is always treated in different literary and theological contexts. Thus, in the sequence chosen here, a movement of thought can be discerned.

The first source is the *Summa contra gentiles*, written between 1259–64.[13] In it, supplication is addressed in the horizon of the doctrine of providence. In the *Summa theologiae*, the doctrine of prayer is placed in the anthropological context of the *Secunda secundae*, written ca. 1271–72. As the essence of hope and thus as a necessary element of the Christian life under divine providence, prayer is re-located in the unfinished *Compendium theologiae*.[14] In the last years of his life in Naples, Thomas interpreted the Lord's Prayer in sermons in the *Collationes in Orationem Dominicam*, in which the contents of petitionary prayer are reflected upon.

gisches Lehren, das im Predigerorden als ein Stück Gottesdienst aufgefaßt wurde, sind ihm die beiden Grundpfeiler seines Lebens." Unless otherwise specified, translations are all mine.

10 Torrell, Jean-Pierre: *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Vol. 2: Spiritual Master*, Washington DC 2003; *id.*: *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Thomistic Ressourcement Series 2), Washington, D.C. 2011; Tugwell, Simon: "Thomas Aquinas: Introduction", in ed. Simon Tugwell: *Albert & Thomas. Selected Writings* (The Classics of Western Spirituality), Mahwah, NJ 1988, pp. 199–351.

11 Maidl names William of St. Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux, Guigo the Carthusian, and Bonaventure as important inspirers of the 'monastic-spiritual' tradition in the 12th and 13th centuries (cf. Maidl 1994, pp. 109–116).

12 For dating cf. Weisheipl, James A.: *Friar Thomas D'Aquino. His Life, Thought, and Works*, Washington, D.C. 1974, pp. 355–405; Emery, Gilles: "Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas", in Jean-Pierre Torrell: *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, Washington, D.C. 1996, pp. 330–361.

13 For references in the footnotes, the following abbreviations are used for the works of Thomas Aquinas: *ScG* = Thomas de Aquino: *Summa contra gentiles libri quattuor*, ed. Karl Albert et al., 4 vols., Darmstadt ^{4}2013 (if available, the English translation from Tugwell 1988 is added); *STh* = *id.*: *Summa theologiae*, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII edita cura et studio Fratrum Praedicatorum*, vols. 4–12, Rome 1886–1906 (if available, the English translation from Tugwell 1988 is added); *CTh* = *id.*: *Compendium theologiae*, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII edita*, vol. 42, Rome 1979; *In Orat. Dom* = *id.*: *Collationes in Orationem Dominicam*, ed. Raymondo M. Spiazzi: *Opuscula theologica, vol. 2: De re spirituali*, Turin 1954.

14 The dating of the *Compendium* is extremely difficult. The fact that the writing is unfinished, with a note at the end of the manuscript, speaks for a late dating, at least of the second discontinued part about prayer. The first part about faith is very close in its content to the *Summa contra gentiles*, so it could have been written earlier. Whether the closeness of the content must refer to a temporal closeness of the origin is, of course, not certain.

3. Petitionary Prayer in the Horizon of the Doctrine of Divine Providence: the *Summa contra gentiles*

3.1 The Approach of the Summa contra gentiles

The *Summa contra gentiles*, which Thomas completed in 1265, aims to present and justify the contents of the Christian faith in confrontation with the 'pagans', that is, in the language of reason.[15] The fundamental approach is as follows: even if there is just a single, simple truth (*una et simplex veritas*)[16] in God, it is accessible to human knowledge in two ways, so that we must speak of two kinds of truth (*duplex veritatis modus*).[17] One kind of truth is accessible to natural reason, while the other kind surpasses it. While the first kind of truth *qua* reason is also open to philosophy, the second depends on revelation. But since both come together in God to form one truth, both kind of truths—that is, the insights of natural reason and the revealed contents of faith—cannot contradict each other.

So, with everything that concerns the first kind of truth, the argumentative debate about the right view of God and the world can be sought out with the pagans and they can be persuaded in a rational way. And that actually concerns quite a lot. The first three of four books in the *Summa contra gentiles* deal with such content. Book One is about God Himself, Book Two includes the creatures that come from Him and in Book Three, the order of the creatures towards the Creator as their goal is explicated.[18]

The third book also includes the question of the meaning of petitionary prayer in light of divine providence. So, for Thomas, this question is not part of revealed truth, but still in the domain of natural reason. The larger context in which the problem of petitionary prayer is treated is determined by questions about the order and structure of reality, the relationship between spiritual and non-spiritual entities, dependencies in the created world, divine providence and human free will, and the causes within the general order.[19] In the latter, we already see the Aristotelian imprint that characterizes Thomistic theology as a whole.[20]

[15] Cf. Imbach, Ruedi: "Schriften gegen die pagane Philosophie und die konsequenten Aristoteliker", in Leppin 2016, pp. 182–192: 187; *id.*: "Die 'Heiden' als Herausforderung", in Leppin 2016, pp. 142–149.

[16] *ScG* I, 9, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, p. 28.

[17] *ScG* I, 3, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, p. 8.

[18] Cf. *ScG* I, 9, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, p. 30: "Intendentibus igitur nobis per viam rationis prosequi ea quae de Deo ratio humana investigare potest, primo occurit consideratio de his quae Deo secundum seipsum conveniunt; secundo vero, de processu creaturarum ab ipso; tertio autem, de ordine creaturarum in ipsum sicut in finem."

[19] For an introduction to book III, cf. Schönberger, Rolf: *Thomas von Aquins 'Summa contra gentiles'*, Darmstadt 2001, pp. 116–173.

[20] Cf. Drews, Hans-Anton: "Thomas von Aquin", in ed. Ulrich Köpf: *Theologen des Mittelalters. Eine Einführung*, Darmstadt 2002, pp. 129–148: 138–140; Pesch, Otto Hermann: *Thomas von Aquin. Grenze und Größe mittelalterlicher Theologie. Eine Einführung*, Mainz ^{3}1995, pp. 132–139; Putallaz, François-Xavier: "Lateinischer Aristotelismus", in Leppin 2016, pp. 89–96.

3.2 "The Immutability of Divine Providence Does not Exclude the Benefit of (Petitionary) Prayer"[21]

3.2.1 The Structure of the Double Chapter and the Nature of the Argumentation

The heading of 3.2 appears in the *Summa contra Gentiles* above two chapters that are obviously meant to be read together. According to the usual practice of Thomas Aquinas and the way of his thinking, the two chapters are very clearly structured. Viewed thus, the double chapter can be divided into five parts:

In the first part, several arguments are presented in support of the leading thesis, which is already contained in the title: namely, that the immutability of divine providence does not exclude petitionary prayer. These arguments are introduced with small signal words such as *adhuc* (moreover), *item* (likewise) and *amplius* (further).[22]

In the second part, Thomas justifies with another series of arguments why at the same time it is not inconsistent that "sometimes the petitions of people who pray are not accepted by God" (*quandoque etiam petitiones orantium non admittantur a Deo*).[23]

As far as the justifications in parts one and two are concerned, there is a characteristic difference: the arguments of the first part often fall back on premises that have already been presented and justified in the previous parts of the *Summa contra gentiles*. Thus, the reasoning for the answer to the question raised about the purpose of petitionary prayer is evidently deduced from the previous explanations. Consequently, it is shown—in accordance with the approach of the *Summa contra gentiles*—that the thesis concerning the immutability of divine providence not excluding petitionary prayer can be coherently inserted into the picture of God and the world as drawn in the preceding books. Stated concisely, then, the thesis appears as a necessary consequence of the premises. Only at the very end of this section, as a kind of subsequent confirmation (*Hinc est quod dicitur ... /* "Therefore it is said ..."), are two Bible verses mentioned, namely Ps 144 (145):19 "He will do the will of those who fear him and he will hear their prayers and save them" (*Voluntatem timentium se faciet, et orations eorum exaudiet, et salvos faciet eos*) and Matt 7:8: "Everyone who asks, receives and everyone who seeks, finds and to one who knocks the door will be opened" (*omnis qui petit accipit, et qui quaerit invenit, et pulsanti aperietur*).[24]

The arguments of the second part, on the other hand, are presented differently, with each argument here supported by Bible verses. While in the first part the rule was established, as expressed in Matt 7:8, in the second part the exceptions to this rule have to be justified. What function do the biblical passages have? Due to the approach of the *Summa contra gentiles* they cannot function as authoritative justifications, because the argumentation must be rational. That

[21] *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, pp. 70–82; trad. Tugwell, pp. 425–432: "Quod immobilitas divinae providentiae utilitatem orationis non excludit".

[22] Cf. *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, pp. 70–72; trad. Tugwell, pp. 425–427.

[23] *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, pp. 72–76: 72; trad. Tugwell, pp. 427–428: 427.

[24] *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, p. 72; trad. Tugwell, p. 426f.

means, the arguments have to speak for themselves and, according to Thomas, they are valid in themselves because they can be coherently integrated into the whole. Therefore, the Bible verses would be more of a reassurance to his (Christian) readers, since they provide biblical confirmation of the rational argument. They indicate that the exceptions to the general rule found in Matt 7:8 are also biblically justified.

Thirdly, the first two parts are followed by a kind of interim conclusion.[25] In this, a new concept is introduced into the argumentation, through which it becomes apparent where the actual problem lies in the horizon of Aristotelian thought: the concept of *causa* (cause).[26] So the problem of petitionary prayer in the horizon of Aristotelian thought is to what extent petitionary prayer can be seen as a cause for changes in the world. And the interim conclusion immediately provides the answer by pointing to the distinction between superordinate and subordinate orders, and thus between first cause and second causes.

In the fourth part, which follows the interim conclusion, a twofold error (*duplex error*)[27] is presented, which is eliminated by the preceding explanations. The two errors are directed against the two constitutive components of the core thesis of the chapter mentioned at the beginning. According to the first error, the petitionary prayer becomes senseless; according to the second error, divine providence is abolished. Thomas also provides Bible verses that seem to correspond to the respective errors.[28]

Of course, Aquinas is primarily interested in the *connection* between the two elements. And so, in the fifth part, he explains why the two errors each lead to subsequent problems, which means that they themselves are not consistently pursued and cannot be drawn into a coherent view of God and the world.[29] The end of the fifth part makes exemplary reference to a theological element that seems to speak against Thomas's fundamental thesis of unchanging providence, namely the biblical talk of the 'repentance of God'.[30] This biblical motif also appeared in the proofs of the second error, which opposes divine providence. Thomas explains how this speech is to be understood appropriately, referring to a topic that is still controversial today, both exegetically and theologically.[31]

So, what is the content of Aquinas's argument on the immutability of providence and the relevance of petitionary prayer?

25 Cf. *ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., p. 76; trad. Tugwell, p. 428.
26 Cf. Höffe, Otfried: *Aristoteles*, Munich ³2006, pp. 116–119.
27 *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, p. 76; trad. Tugwell, p. 428.
28 Cf. *ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., pp. 76–78; trad. Tugwell, pp. 428–430.
29 Cf. *ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., pp. 78–82; trad. Tugwell, pp. 430–432.
30 Cf. *ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., pp. 80–82; trad. Tugwell, p. 432.
31 Cf. Jeremias, Jörg: *Die Reue Gottes. Aspekte alttestamentlicher Gottesvorstellung* (Biblisch-theologische Studien 31), Neukirchen-Vluyn ³2002.

3.2.2 On the Content of the Argument

I begin with the objections called errors, which stand in the middle of the double chapter. This is because by denying one of the two elements—the immutability of providence or the meaning of petitionary prayer—the errors constitute the negative foil against which Aquinas's solution stands out.

The first objection to the meaning of petitionary prayer is that it does not bear fruit, that is, it achieves nothing (*nullum esse orationis fructum*).[32] According to Thomas, this can occur in three variants which amount to the same thing based on different background assumptions: firstly, the denial of the efficacy of petitionary prayer can come from the denial of divine providence, as seen with the Epicureans; secondly, it can derive from the notion that human affairs have nothing to do with divine providence, as seen with the Peripatetics; or thirdly, it can come from the notion that everything happens necessarily under providence, as seen with the Stoics.

Conversely, the second error that Thomas opposes assumes that the divine plan is changed by human influence such as petitionary prayer. Consequently, this view denies the immutability of providence. Thomas mentions the Egyptian religion as an example, according to which people believe that fate can be averted through petitionary prayers, magic spells, offerings of incense, and similar magical practices.

Thomas basically ascribes the same problem to both errors, namely that they localize divine providence and the effect of petitionary prayer on a single level. But—and this is Thomas's core argument—a distinction must be made between general order and special order (*differentia inter universalem ordinem et particularem*).[33] The distinction between general and special order corresponds to the distinction between general cause (*causa universalis*)[34] and secondary causes (*causae secundae*).[35]

The highest, general order is the eternal, unchanging plan of God; thus, according to the highest, general cause, everything necessarily comes from God. But this general order does not exclude, but rather includes special orders on a lower level of reality. Similarly, a supreme cause does not exclude secondary causes on a lower level that operate within special orders. Therefore, petitionary prayer and "pious desires" (*orationes et pia desideria*)[36] can indeed be causes of change in the world and can be designated as such, but they are such *qua* secondary causes.

In order to be able to reconcile divine providence and the efficacy of petitionary prayer at the same time, a distinction of orders and causes is necessary. But how can the connection between the effectiveness of petitionary prayer and divine providence be identified? What is the connection between the orders

[32] *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, p. 76; trad. Tugwell, p. 429.

[33] *Ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., p. 78; trad. Tugwell, p. 431; he speaks of a "universal pattern" and a "particular pattern".

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., p. 76; trad. Tugwell, p. 428.

[36] *Ibid.*

and between the causes?

The answer is clear from the first part of the double chapter. Thomas Aquinas gives various reasons in this regard. However, they are all related to one thing: God's goodness (*bonitas*). Already in the first book of the *Summa contra gentiles*, Thomas elaborates on this important element of his doctrine of God in several chapters: God is good (*Deus est bonus*),[37] God is goodness itself (*Deus est ipsa bonitas*),[38] God is the goodness of all that is good (*Deus est omnis boni bonum*),[39] and God is the highest good (*Deus sit summum bonum*).[40]

On the part of human beings, this determination of God as the good par excellence corresponds to "pious desires" (*pia desideria*), since the fulfillment by God of the content of petitionary prayers only makes sense for Thomas on condition that what is desired is the good (*inquantum desiderat bonum*):[41]

> It is appropriate that God should assent to the pious desires of rational creatures; not as if our desires moved the immovable God, but it is a consequence of his own goodness that he brings about what they desire in a suitable way.[42]

It is therefore in accordance with the eternal plan of the unchanging God as the good that he fulfills good desires. In this way, petitionary prayer is placed in a movement towards the good. It aims *at* God as the good, just as it also proceeds *from* God as the source of all good:

> Now every desire is a kind of movement toward the good, and there could be nothing like this in things unless it came from God, who is good by virtue of his own essence, and who is the very source of goodness; every mover moves things toward something like itself. So it belongs to God, in his goodness, to bring to a fitting outcome the fitting desires which are expressed in prayers.[43]

As we have seen, the effort of Thomas Aquinas is to maintain the traditionally believed efficacy of petitionary prayer while at the same time mediating this with his theological-philosophical doctrines of God and of providence.

The elements of the immutability of God, the eternal plan, divine providence and the general order, which belong to the essence of Thomas's doctrine of God, certainly have consequences for the understanding of the biblical discourse on God, inasmuch as the latter describes a transformation or change in

37 *ScG* I, 37, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, pp. 142–146.

38 *ScG* I, 38, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, p. 146.

39 *ScG* I, 40, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, pp. 150–152.

40 *ScG* I, 41, ed. Albert et al., vol. 1, p. 152.

41 *ScG* III, 95/96, ed. Albert et al., vol. 3/2, p. 74; trad. Tugwell, p. 427.

42 *Ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., p. 70; trad. Tugwell, p. 425: "Piis enim desideriis rationalis creaturae conveniens est quod Deus assentiat, non tanquam desideria nostra moveant immobilem Deum: sed ex sua bonitate procedit ut convenienter desiderata perficiat."

43 *Ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., pp. 70–72; trad. Tugwell, p. 425: "Omne autem desiderium est quidam motus ad bonum. Qui quidem non potest rebus inesse nisi a Deo, qui est per essentiam suam bonus, et fons bonitatis: movens enim omne movet ad aliquid simile sibi. Ad Deum igitur pertinet, secundum suam bonitatem, quod desideria convenientia, quae per orationes explicantur, ad effectum convenientem perducat."

God. Thomas is aware of this and explicitly addresses it at the end of the double chapter. In this regard, two classical topoi are the words 'repentance of God' and 'wrath of God'. For Thomas, such biblical statements cannot be meant literally but must be understood in a "transferred" (*transumptiva*)[44] or "metaphorical" (*metaphorice*)[45] sence. In this we see how the practice of prayer, theological reflection, and the understanding of the Bible go hand in hand.

4. Petitionary Prayer and Divine Providence in the Horizon of the Doctrine of Prayer: the *Summa Theologiae*

4.1 Literary Context

The context of the statements about petitionary prayer in the *Summa theologiae* is quite different from that of the *Summa contra gentiles*. Consequently, the framing and the goal differ as well. While the *Summa contra gentiles*, as we have seen, starts from a general doctrine of God and seeks to justify petitionary prayer in the context of the doctrine of providence, the statements about prayer in the *Summa theologiae* stand in an anthropological context, which is about the action of human beings (*Pars secunda*).[46] The fundamental question in this context is therefore not the question of the execution and the non-contradictory maintenance of divine providence, but rather the question of the direction and the goal of human life and of the movement of humankind towards this goal: namely, beatitude (*beatitudo*), the perfect good, and ultimately towards God Himself, because the fulfillment of the ultimate goal (*ultimus finis*) consists in the vision of God (*visio Dei*).[47]

The narrower context of *STh* I-II, *quaestio* 83 on prayer (*De oratione*), is the doctrine of virtue and more specifically the virtues belonging to justice, among which Thomas also includes religion (*religio*). If virtue (*virtus*) is understood as that which makes the bearer of virtues and his works good,[48] religion is defined as that virtue which is related towards God[49] and through which God is given the honor due to Him.[50] The virtue of religion includes both external and internal acts, with the internal acts (since they are more important) being placed before

[44] *Ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., p. 80; Tugwell, p. 432 translates both latin words with "metaphorically".

[45] *Ibid.*, ed. Albert et al., p. 82; trad. Tugwell, p. 432.

[46] Cf. Köpf, Ulrich: "Der Aufbau der Summa Theologiae", in Leppin 2016, pp. 250–266; for the *Secunda secundae* cf. Torrell, Jean-Pierre: *Aquinas's Summa. Background, Structure, & Reception*, Washington, D.C. 2005, pp. 37–48; Weisheipl 1983, pp. 256–263. For the older discussion on the theological significance of the structure of the *Summa theologiae* cf. Pesch 1995, pp. 387–400.

[47] Cf. *STh* I-II, qq. 1–5. That the "last and perfect beatitude" consists in the vision of God, Thomas treats concretely in *STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8, ed. Leonina 6, p. 35: "Respondeo dicendum quod ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae."

[48] *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 2, ed. Leonina 9, p. 179: "virtus est quae bonum facit habentem et opus eius bonum reddit."

[49] *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 1, ed. Leonina 9, p. 178: "*ordinem ad Deum.*"

[50] *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 4, ed. Leonina 9, p. 181: "*exhibere Deo debitum honorem.*"

the external ones in the arrangement of the *Summa theologiae*.[51] The internal acts of religion are devotion (*devotio*)[52] and prayer (*oratio*).[53]

4.2 Prayer

In accordance with the anthropological context of the *quaestio*, Thomas first undertakes an anthropological localization of prayer. Basically, he differentiates four powers (*potentiae*) of human beings. From the lower to the higher powers, these are *potentia vegetativa*, *potentia sensitiva*, *potentia appetitiva* and *potentia intellectiva*.[54] In article 1 of the *quaestio* on prayer, Thomas argues that prayer, like desire (*desiderium*), does not belong to the appetitive power, but to the intellectual power, that is, to the highest power. To the intellectual power belong the two powers of the soul (*potentiae animae*): volition (*voluntas*) and reason (*intellectus/ratio*). In the volition, which Thomas also ascribes to the *appetitiva*, devotion is anchored.[55] Prayer, on the other hand, is an act of the highest power of the soul, the reason, and more specifically the practical reason (*ratio practica*) in distinction to the speculative reason (*ratio speculativa*).[56]

Thomas understands prayer first and foremost as petitionary prayer. This becomes clear when he asks in the second article whether it is appropriate to pray at all.[57] Among the possible objections is one that is explicitly biblically based. If, according to Matt 6:32, the heavenly Father knows what we need, then it seems inappropriate to ask God for it. The succinct counter-argument is also a biblical instruction (Luke 18:1): "One should pray always and not give up."[58] The pro and contra, however, appears only as a hook to point out in the answer three wrong views of ancient philosophical schools—and these wrong views are all connected with divine providence: first, that praying is futile because divine providence does not concern human affairs; second, that praying is senseless because everything happens out of unalterable necessity; and third, that divine providence can be influenced—for example, through prayer. All three errors were already encountered in the *Summa contra gentiles*, and the concern dealt with there in more detail is also the same:

> So what we have to do now is find some way of indicating the usefulness of prayer which neither makes out that human affairs, in being governed by divine providence, are all subject to necessity nor supposes that God's plans can be changed.[59]

[51] Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 82 [prologus], ed. Leonina 9, p. 187.
[52] Cf. *ibid.*, ed. Leonina 9, pp. 187–191: "De devotione".
[53] Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 83, ed. Leonina 9, pp. 192–211; trad. Tugwell, pp. 476–519: "De oratione".
[54] Cf. Slenczka, Notger: "Anthropologie", in Leppin 2016, pp. 347–362: 352.
[55] *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 1, ed. Leonina 9, p. 187.
[56] *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 1, ed. Leonina 9, pp. 192–193.
[57] *STh* II-II, q, 83, a. 2, ed. Leonina 9, p. 193: "Utrum sit conveniens orare."
[58] *Ibid.*, ed. Leonina 9, p. 194: "Oportet orare, et non deficere."
[59] *Ibid.*; trad. Tugwell, pp. 480–481: "Et ideo oportet sic inducere orationis utilitatem ut neque rebus humanis, divinae providentiae subiectis, necessitatem imponamus; neque etiam divinam dispositionem mutabilem aestimemus."

In this regard, a distinction must be made between different causes and orders in the world. In principle, human acts can also be causes for change in the world, and even must be, "in order to bring about certain effects by their acts, according to the pattern planned by God."[60] Applied to prayer, this means that "we do not pray to change God's plan, but in order to obtain those things which God planned to bring about by means of the prayers of the saints."[61]

The answer of Thomas in article 2, which has just been referred to, is a brief summary of what he has argued and unfolded in greater detail in the *Summa contra gentiles*. In the *Summa theologiae* a recapitulation of this is sufficient, because the goal is different. If in the *Summa contra gentiles* divine providence was the overriding theme, in the *Summa theologiae* it is prayer. Thus, the *quaestio* deals with numerous other questions concerning prayer, including the questions of what can and should be asked for. The fact that petitions addressed to God may and should have certain content is already evident from the Lord's Prayer.[62] While prayer is embedded in human beings' movement towards eternal beatitude, it can also be used to ask for temporal things when these do not become the goal of life, "but [rather] as supports which help us on our way towards beatitude, inasmuch as they serve to sustain our bodily life and play an instrumental role in our virtuous deeds."[63] Moreover, Christian love (*caritas*) commands us to pray for others.[64]

In the *Summa contra gentiles*, it ultimately remains open why the meaning of petitionary prayer needs to be justified at all. An obvious answer is that this justification was probably simply a common ecclesiastical practice. In this regard, the *Summa theologiae* provides further insight, since in addition to the differentiation of what should be prayed for and the more frequent authoritative reference to biblical instructions (the counterarguments consist quite often simply of biblical verses), in several places explicit reference is made to religious and liturgical practice (as in the quotation above, where the "prayers of the saints" are mentioned). An entire article also serves to demonstrate that the saints in heaven pray for the believers on earth and that they should therefore be invoked.[65] Moreover, in view of the four kinds of prayer derived from 1 Tim 2:1, liturgical practice is brought into play argumentatively:

> In many of the church's collects the same pattern can be observed, as for example in the collect for Trinity Sunday: 'Almighty eternal God' has to do with the ascent to God which is 'prayer'. 'Who gave your servants, etc.' has to do with thanksgiving. 'Grant, we beseech you' has to do with 'pleading'. And 'Through our Lord, etc.' at the end has to do with 'entreaty'.[66]

60 *Ibid.*; trad. Tugwell, p. 481: "ut per actus suos impleant quosdam effectus secundum ordinem a Deo dispositum."

61 *Ibid.* (Tugwell provides an alternative translation): "Non enim propter hoc oramus ut divinam dispositionem immutemus: sed ut id impetremus quod Deus disposuit per orationes sanctorum esse implendum."

62 Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 5, ed. Leonina 9, p. 197; trad. Tugwell, p. 486.

63 *STh* II-II, q. 83. a. 6, ed. Leonina 9, p. 198; trad. Tugwell, p. 488: "[...] sed sicut quaedam adminicula quibus adiuvamur ad tendendum in beatitudinem, in quantum scilicet per ea vita corporalis sustentatur, et in quantum nobis organice deserviunt ad actus virtutum."

64 Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 7, ed. Leonina 9, p. 198; trad. Tugwell, p. 490.

65 Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 11, ed. Leonina 9, pp. 203–204; trad. Tugwell, pp. 500–503.

66 *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 17, ed. Leonina 9, p. 211; trad. Tugwell, p. 518: "In pluribus etiam

This exemplifies that Thomas Aquinas is a thinker who starts from the ecclesiastical *praxis pietatis*, which shaped him and which he seeks to justify theologically.[67]

5. Petitionary Prayer as a Necessary Element within Divine Providence: the *Compendium theologiae*

The *Compendium theologiae* is an unfinished introduction to the content of the Christian life. It was planned to be structured according to the famous Pauline triad of faith, hope, and love (cf. 1 Cor 13:13). For Thomas, this structure has an inner logic:

> This order [viz. first faith, then hope, and thirdly love] is, in fact, observed by the Apostle and required by right reasoning; for there can be no right love unless hope is given its due aim, nor can there be such unless the knowledge of the truth is lacking. Therefore, first, faith is necessary, by which you know the truth; second, hope, by which your intention is directed to the due goal; third, love is necessary, by which your desire is completely ordered.[68]

The second part on hope is guided by the Lord's Prayer. Although the text breaks off in the middle of the interpretation of the second petition for the coming of the kingdom of God, the intention of the overall arrangement, and specifically the relationship of petitionary prayer to divine providence from the first chapters of the second part, become clear in their interweaving with the first part.

In the *Compendium theologiae*, as in the two *Summae*, prayer is understood primarily as petitionary prayer. In the case of the *Compendium*'s approach, this is obvious because the Lord's Prayer is the basis of the explanations. In terms of content, however, the *Compendium* goes beyond the *Summae* in one important point: by making prayer, specifically the Lord's Prayer, as the example of petitionary prayer, the essence of the consummation of hope in the context of Christian life, the petitionary prayer becomes a necessary component of Christian life. Already in the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas relates prayer to the theological virtue of hope.[69] In this respect, it can be said that the link with hope touches on "a

> Ecclesiae collectis haec quatuor possunt attendi. Sicut in collecta Trinitatis, quod dicitur, *Omnipotens, sempiterne Deus*, pertinet ad orationis ascensum in Deum; quod dicitur, *qui dedisti famulis tuis* etc., pertinet ad gratiarum actionem; quod dicitur, *praesta, quaesumus* etc., pertinet ad postulationem; quod in fine ponitur, *per Dominum nostrum* etc., pertinet ad obsecrationem."

67 This may sound self-evident. In comparison with other important thinkers and preachers of the Dominican Order, namely Meister Eckhart (see the contribution by Anja Bork in this volume) and Johannes Tauler (see the contribution by Andreas Zecherle in this volume), it should nevertheless be noted.

68 *CTh* I, cap. 1, ed. Leonina 42, p. 83: "Hoc enim et apostolicus ordo habet, et ratio recta requirit. Non enim amor rectus esse potest nisi debitus finis spei statuatur, nec hoc esse potest si veritatis cognitio desit. Primo igitur necessaria est fides, per quam veritatem cognoscas; secundo spes, per quam in debito fine tua intentio collocetur; tertio necessaria est caritas, per quam tuus affectus totaliter ordinetur."

69 Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 17 a. 2 and 4, ed. Leonina 8, p. 125–126. Cf. Torrell 2003, pp. 330–331.

core idea of the doctrine of prayer in St. Thomas".[70] But this happens in the *Summa theologiae* rather incidentally and without effect on the systematic order.[71] This is different in the *Compendium theologiae*.

Thomas makes it explicitly clear, right in the title of the first article of the second part of the *Compendium*, that "for the perfection of the Christian life, the virtue of hope is necessary."[72] It is necessary not in the sense of natural causality in the world, but because of faith in divine providence.[73] Accordingly, prayer is the appropriate means of divine providence on the part of human beings, and the way by which the things that are hoped for can be attained:

> But because, according to the order of Divine Providence, the way to reach the goal is assigned to each one in accordance with its nature, a proper way has also been given to human beings, according to the peculiarity of the human condition, to obtain what they hope to obtain from God. Indeed, the human condition entails that one makes a petition in order to obtain from someone, especially from a superior, what he hopes to obtain through him; and therefore a prayer has been shown to human beings [viz. the Lord's Prayer] by which human beings are to obtain from God what they hope to obtain from Him.[74]

Through the direct connection of the Christian life—and concretely of hope, which finds its expression in prayer—to the execution of divine providence, the following becomes obvious: according to Thomas, prayer is neither necessary (because God would have to be informed of something that he has not yet known) nor can it be a matter of God's will being changed by human petitions. In this, Thomas maintains continuity in all his writings. Rather, prayer is necessary for the sake of the one who prays, because through the performance of prayer he becomes capable of receiving.[75] Thus, the theological views about

70 Maidl 1994, p. 26.

71 Basically, the *Secunda secundae* of the *Summa theologiae* is structured along the main virtues: first the theological virtues of faith (*fides*, qq. 1–16), hope (*spes*, qq. 17–22), and love (*caritas*, qq. 23–46), followed by the four classical cardinal virtues prudence (*prudentia*, qq. 47–56), justice (*iustitia*, qq. 57–122), strength (*fortitudo*, qq. 123–140), and temperance (*temperantia*, qq. 141–170). Thomas deals with prayer in the context of justice (q. 83), as explained above.

72 *CTh* II, cap. 1, ed. Leonina 42, p. 193: "In quo ostenditur quod ad perfectionem Christiane uite necessaria est uirtus spei."

73 Cf. *ibid.*: "Sed quia inter cetera fidei documenta unum esse diximus ut credatur Deus providentiam de rebus humanis habere, insurgit ex hoc in animo credentis motus spei ut scilicet bona, que naturaliter desiderat ut edoctus ex fide, per eius auxilium consequatur. Unde post fidem, ad perfectionem christiane vite spes necessaria est."

74 *CTh* II, cap. 2, ed. Leonina 42, p. 193: "Quia vero secundum divine providentie ordinem unicuique attribuitur modus perveniendi ad finem secundum convenientiam sue nature, est etiam hominibus concessus congruus modus optinendi que sperat a Deo secundum humane condicionis tenorem. Habet autem hoc humana condicio ut aliquis deprecationem interponat ad optinendum ab aliquo, presertim superiori, quod per eum se sperat adipisci. Et ideo indicta est hominibus oratio per quam homines a Deo optineant quod ab ipso consequi sperant."

75 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 194: "Sed oratio ad optinendum a Deo est homini necessaria propter se ipsum qui orat, ut scilicet ipsemet suos defectus consideret et animum suum flectat ad ferventer et pie desiderandum quod orando sperat optinere: per hoc enim ad recipiendum idoneus redditur."

God and God's will converge with the anthropological views about the human condition, as well as the spiritual views about the Christian life.[76]

In contrast to the *Summa contra gentiles*, the *Compendium theologiae* was written entirely with an already Christian audience in mind. Accordingly, the method of exposition differs in that instead of *sola ratione*, it argues on the basis of authorities—primarily the Bible, but also the Church Fathers. Not only is the further elaboration decidedly designed as an interpretation of a biblical text (the Lord's Prayer), but the development of the argumentation also occurs as a rule based on biblical proofs. Thus, even the sections that are materially identical with the two *Summae* take on a different character. Chapter 6 deals with the argumentation that God, who is called Father, also has the power to grant what is hoped for.[77] In terms of content, Thomas addresses the arguments against the meaning of petitionary prayer or against divine providence in the context of petitionary prayer, which have already been dealt with in the *Summae*. In the *Compendium*, however, these argumentations are related to the extension of the address 'Father' by the addition of 'who art in the heavens' (*qui es in caelis*). If the address to God as 'Father' expresses God's attention to human beings and the believer's self-understanding of being accepted as a child of God, and if the closer definition of 'our' Father calls the community of believers to mind, the second part of the address expresses that the one from whom the good is petitioned is also the one who can grant it: "The disposition of the divine will to help, however, is sufficiently expressed by confessing Him as Father; but in order not to doubt the excellency of His power, it is added, 'Who art in the heavens.'"[78] Therefore, only by the address to God testified in the Lord's Prayer is the confidence of hope to be strengthened (*ad spei fiduciam confirmandam*).[79] The issue of why and how God directs everything according to his providence is already presented in the context of faith, i.e. the first part of the *Compendium*,[80] and therefore is not expounded again in this section. This issue also includes the topic of the possibility of miracles in the sense of a divine causation of changes in the world, which is important for the question of the meaning of petitionary prayer.[81]

Since the *Compendium theologiae* breaks off at the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, it is necessary to look at Thomas Aquinas's later sermons on the Lord's Prayer for the concretization of the petition.

76 Cf. further *CTh* II, cap. 4, ed. Leonina 42, pp. 194–195.

77 *CTh* II, cap. 6, ed. Leonina 42, p. 196: "Ubi ostenditur Dei patris nostri quem oramus potestas ad sperata concedendum [...]."

78 *Ibid.*: "Satis autem uoluntatis diuine promptitudinem ad adiuuandum exprimimus Patrem eum profitendo, sed ne de excellentia potestatis eius dubitetur subditur: 'Qui es in celis.'"

79 *Ibid.*

80 Cf. *CTh* I, cap. 123, ed. Leonina 42, p. 126.

81 Thomas affirms the possibility of miracles, just as he affirms the meaning of petitionary prayer, through the distinction of higher and lower orders and the parallel differentiation of the *causa prima* and the *causae secundae*, cf. *CTh* I, cap. 136, ed. Leonina 42, p. 126.

6. Actual Petitionary Prayer: the *Collationes in Orationem Dominicam*

In petitionary prayer, generally speaking, one asks to obtain good things and to be delivered from all evil.[82] However, as an expression of hope that is ultimately related to God, prayer, like the Christian life as a whole, acquires a certain direction: "It [viz. the Word of God, i.e., Jesus Christ] set the human intention right by a short prayer, wherein, teaching us to pray, it shows what our intention and hope should aim at."[83] In the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas counters the view that it would be inappropriate to ask God for something specific by pointing out that Christ instructed his disciples to make specific petitions in the Lord's Prayer.[84] When asked whether the composition of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer is correct, he refers to the authority of Christ, who instituted this prayer in this specific order.[85] Thus, for Thomas Aquinas, the Lord's Prayer is the unquestionable norm of supplication par excellence.[86] But Thomas would not be Thomas if he simply accepted this as an authoritative positing—for if it represents the perfect norm, it must also be possible to identify good reasons why this is the case.

In the preface to the *Collationes in Orationem Dominicam*, Thomas lists five qualities or excellencies (*excellentiae*) that a prayer must have. It must be sure (*secura*), right (*recta*), ordered (*ordinata*), devotional (*devota*), and humble (*humilis*).[87] The Lord's Prayer corresponds to these qualities in an outstanding way, as Thomas further explains in the preface. For the present context, the closely related qualities of 'right' and 'ordered' are of interest. According to the highly

[82] Cf. *CTh* II, cap. 6, ed. Leonina 42, p. 196: "orando peteremus uel aliqua bona consequi uel liberari a malis."

[83] *CTh* I, cap. 1, ed. Leonina 42, p. 83: "Intentionem humanam brevi oratione rectificavit, in quo dum orare nos docuit, quo nostra intentio et spes tendere debet ostendit."

[84] Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 5, ed. Leonina 9, p. 197; trad. Tugwell, p. 486: "Sed contra est quod Dominus, Matth. VI et Luc. XI, docuit discipulos determinate petere ea quae continentur in petitionibus Orationis Dominicae."

[85] Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 9, ed. Leonina 9, p. 201; trad. Tugwell, p. 494.

[86] On Thomas's understanding and interpretation of the Lord's Prayer cf. Barnes, Corey: "Thomas Aquinas on Christ's Prayer", in ed. Roy Hammerling, *A History of Prayer. The First to the Fifteenth Century* (Brill's Companion to the Christian Tradition 13), Leiden/Boston 2008, pp. 319–335; Maidl 1994, pp. 214–219; Nissing, Hanns-Gregor: "Die Summe unserer Hoffnung. Thomas von Aquin und seine *Auslegungen zum Vaterunser* (*Collationes in Orationem Dominicam*)", in Thomas von Aquin: *Das Vater unser. Auslegungen zum Herrengebet*, eds. Hanns-Gregor Nissing/Berthold Wald, trad. Josef Pieper (Thomas von Aquin. Einführende Schriften 4), Munich 2020, pp. vii–lxxxii.

[87] *In Orat. Dom.*, n. 1019, ed. Spiazzi, p. 221. From these norms, which characterize the Lord's Prayer as the principal one (*principalior*), we must distinguish the criteria that Thomas gives in the *Summa theologiae* for the granting of petitions (*STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 15, ed. Leonina 9, p. 209; trad. Tugwell, p. 513): "This is why four conditions are laid down which, if they are all present at once, will ensure that one always obtains what one is asking for: one must be praying for oneself, for things that are necessary for salvation, piously and with perseverance" ("et ideo ponuntur quatuor conditiones, quibus concurrentibus, semper aliquis impetrat quod petit: ut scilicet *pro se* petat, *necessaria ad salutem*, *pie* et *perseveranter*"; original emphasis).

quoted dictum[88] of John Damascene from *De fide orthodoxa*,[89] that to pray is to make "a petition to God for things which are fitting" (*petitio decentium a Deo*): God should not be asked for all sorts of things, especially not for things which are unseemly (*indecentia*).[90] Knowledge of what is to be asked for (*petendum*) is just as little to be presupposed with the human being as is knowledge of what is to be desired (*desiderandum*). Therefore Jesus is needed as a teacher of prayer, because what he has taught to ask for can also be rightly longed for.[91] Whereas in his anthropological positioning of prayer in the *Summa theologiae,* Thomas insists that prayer must be assigned to the *potentia intellectiva* and not to the *potentia appetitiva* (see 3.2), in contrast with desire (*desiderium*), he here emphasizes the affinity between desire and prayer, and thus—anthropologically speaking—between volition and reason. This becomes clear in the determination of prayer as *ordinata*: prayer and desire must be 'ordered' in the same way, because prayer mediates and translates desire (*oratio sit desiderii interpres*).[92] Both prayer and desire are ordered when the spiritual is preferred to the physical and the heavenly to the earthly, as this is given in the Lord's Prayer.

In its content, the Lord's Prayer is the petitionary prayer par excellence, because this prayer basically contains everything that is to be desired and everything that is to be avoided—this is how Thomas summarizes it at the end of his interpretation.[93] According to Thomas, the structure of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer corresponds exactly to this summary. What is to be desired, because it is good, is found in the first four petitions. What is to be avoided, because it is contrary to the good, is found in the last three petitions. The greatest desire must be directed to God alone, for which reason the glory of God is in first place, which is the subject of the first petition "hallowed be thy name" (*sanctifice-*

88 Thomas Aquinas repeatedly refers back to the two dicta with which John Damascene opens the chapter on prayer: that prayer is 'an ascent of the mind to God' (*ascensus intellectus in Deum*) and that prayer is 'a petition made to God for things that are fitting' (*petitio decentium a Deo*). Thomas refers to the latter, for example, two times in Thomas de Aquino: *Scriptum super Sententiis* IV, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, ed. Fabianus M. Moos, Paris 1947, p. 726; trad. Tugwell, p. 364; *id.*: *Lectura super Matthaeum*, ad Matt 6:9–15; trad. Tugwell, p. 455 (Tugwell took this part from the Basel Manuscript B.V.12, it cannot be found in the edition of Raphael Cai, Marietti 1951, which is based on another manuscript); *CTh* II, cap. 7, ed. Leonina 42, p. 198; and three times in the chapter on prayer in the *Summa theologia* (*STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 1, a. 5, and a. 17, ed. Leonina 9, pp. 193, 197, and 210; trad. Tugwell, pp. 478, 485, and 517). But it is not only Thomas who cites John Damascene; rather, these two dicta were contemporarily regarded as common definitions of prayer; cf. for example Bonaventura: *Breviloquium* X, cap. 4, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, Quarrachi 1891, p. 263.

89 Johannes Damascenus: *De fide orthodoxa* 68.1, in Saint John Damascene: *De Fide Orthodoxa. Versions of Burgundio and Cerbandus*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (Franciscan Institute Publications. Text Series 8), St. Bonaventure, NY 1955, p. 267.

90 Cf. *In Orat. Dom.*, n. 1021, ed. Spiazzi, p. 221.

91 Cf. *ibid.*: "Ipse autem Christus doctor est: nam ipsius est docere quid nos orare oporteat. Nam discipuli dixerunt ei, Luc. XI, I: 'Domine, doce nos orare'. Ea ergo quae ipse orare docuit, rectissime postulantur."

92 *In Orat. Dom.*, n. 1022, ed. Spiazzi, p. 221.

93 Cf. *In Orat. Dom.*, n. 1108, ed. Spiazzi, p. 235: "Ut in summa exponatur, sciendum est, quod in oratione dominica continentur omnia quae desiderantur, et omnia quae fugiuntur."

tur nomen tuum).[94] The following six petitions then refer to the human being, whereby the second to fourth and the fifth to seventh petitions correspond to each other: eternal life is to be sought, therefore "Thy kingdom come" is asked (*adveniat regnum tuum*). Sin is opposed to the attainment of eternal life, which is why we ask "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (*dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris*). The realization of God's will and his righteousness is to be longed for, which is why we ask "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (*fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra*). Temptations want to hinder the doing of the will of God, of justice and of all good works, therefore we ask "and lead us not into temptation" (*et ne nos inducas in tentationem*). If the preceding spiritual things were prayed for, which will only be completely fulfilled in eternity,[95] the necessities of life should also be prayed for with the request "give us this day our daily bread" (*panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie*).[96] Opposed to the necessities of life are misfortunes and tribulations, so that it is necessary to pray "but deliver us from evil" (*sed libera nos a malo*).

Thomas has thus sought to demonstrate that the Lord's Prayer is the perfect prayer in terms of content and form. In the context of his interpretation of the Lord's Prayer, the question of the relationship to divine providence no longer arises—it has already been dealt with and positively answered in the more systematic writings discussed in the previous passages. In the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, it is concretized how petitionary prayer can be drawn into divine providence, since it contains everything that is to be asked for—on the way to God, to the good, to eternal life, and to beatitude.

7. Conclusion

In four different texts, Thomas Aquinas remarks on petitionary prayer, focusing on the relationship between petitionary prayer and divine providence. For the most famous Dominican theologian of the Middle Ages, the belief in an unchanging divine providence is a central aspect of the Christian faith. This aspect, as Thomas explains in the *Summa contra gentiles*, belongs to the content of faith that can also be justified on the basis of reason without having to refer to divine revelation. In this framework, Thomas justifies the meaning of petitionary prayer in the face of possible philosophical objections. Crucial here is the distinction between the *causa prima* (God) and *causae secundae* within the world, and respectively between a highest order (providence) and subordinate orders of relative independence. Therefore, in the sphere of subordinate orders in the world, petitionary prayer could have the character of a secondary cause and thus

[94] Cf. *ibid.*

[95] Cf. *In Orat. Dom.*, n. 1071, ed. Spiazzi, p. 229.

[96] It is interesting that due to this conceptual order of the Lord's Prayer in the understanding of Thomas Aquinas, a spiritual interpretation of the bread recedes into the background. Thomas only mentions at the end of his interpretation of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer that the bread can also be understood (with the addition of John 6:51) as sacramental bread or (with Matt 4:4) as the word of God; cf. *In Orat. Dom.*, n. 1079, ed. Spiazzi, p. 230.

relate to the belief in divine providence without contradiction. The necessity of petitionary prayer in terms of these subordinate worldly orders remains open.

This becomes recognizable in the *Summa theologiae*, namely when the ecclesiastical practice of petitionary prayer is taken up argumentatively. Overall, the perspective of the *Summa theologiae* is different: prayer is anthropologically situated, and within this framework, divine providence is also thematized. Materially identical with the *Summa contra gentiles*, there is no contradiction between prayer and providence. The *Compendium theologiae* goes a significant step further, having as its starting point neither theology nor anthropology per se, but rather the Christian life in the form of faith, hope and love. In the *Compendium*, petitionary prayer in the form of the Lord's Prayer is given a constitutive place in Christian life, because it is seen as the essence of hope. Thus, it appears necessary for divine providence to reach its goal. Finally, Thomas deals with the content of prayer in the *Collationes in Orationem Dominicam* since the Lord's Prayer is the petitionary prayer par excellence. We can thus state in summary that for Thomas Aquinas, petitionary prayer—as it is biblically testified, liturgically formed, and practiced in individual piety—is philosophically justified, theologically grounded, and constitutively relevant to the life of Christians.