



The Goodness of Creatures in Aquinas' Reading of the Wisdom Books

Kenny Ang (*Pontifical University of the Holy Cross*)

This article explores Aquinas' conception of the goodness of creatures in the light of his commentaries on wisdom literature. Leveraging the *Index Thomisticus*, relevant passages from Aquinas' commentaries on wisdom books and their corresponding scriptural verses related to creation are identified. His non-exegetical works are also scrutinized for references to these verses. Through this examination, Aquinas emerges as affirming that God's love encompasses all creatures, including the devil. Aquinas associates God with all that is good but also emphasizes the original goodness of demons and attributes the source of evil to the will of rational beings.

EJSTA 42 (2024)

DOI:
10.2478/ejsta-2024-0002

Article history:
Received: 23.4.2024
Accepted: 31.5.2024
Available online:
01.12.2024

Keywords

Biblical Thomism • Wisdom literature • theology of creation



In recent years, there has been a growing acknowledgment of Aquinas' role as an interpreter of biblical texts.¹ Many scholars have emphasized his position as a *magister in sacra pagina*,² focusing on both the biblical and systematic dimensions of his theological writings.³ Biblical Thomism, a subject of significant contemporary interest as noted by Bonino,⁴ seeks to reconcile biblical exegesis and speculative theology by

¹ See Carl Clifton Black II, 'St. Thomas's Commentary on the Johannine Prologue: Some Reflections on Its Character and Implications', in: *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (1986), 681; Peter M. Candler Jr., 'St. Thomas Aquinas', in: Justin S. Holcomb (ed.), *Christian Theologies of Scripture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 64.

² See, among others, Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montréal: Institut d'études médiévales, 1950), 207–212; Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin: sa personne et son oeuvre* (Paris: Cerf, 2015), 87–93.

³ See Robert J. Woźniak, 'An Emerging Theology Between Scripture and Metaphysics: Bonaventure, Aquinas and the Scriptural Foundation of Medieval Theology', in: Piotr Roszak, Jörgen Vijgen (eds.), *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 422.

⁴ See Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin lecteur du Cantique des cantiques* (Paris: Cerf, 2019), 135. The English translation is Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Reading the Song of Songs with St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Andrew Levering (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2023).

emphasizing the foundational role of Scripture throughout Aquinas' entire body of work.⁵

To explore further the biblical foundations of Aquinas' theology, it is informative to scrutinize a crucial element of his doctrine: the concept of creation. Pieper describes creation as "the hidden key" in Aquinas' philosophy,⁶ while Ghisalberti sees it as a "penetrating thought" in his work.⁷ Ratzinger, in 1979, affirms that the relationship between Creator and creation lies at the heart of Aquinas' theological reflections.⁸ Additionally, Torrell elucidates that during Aquinas' second teaching period in Paris, his positions on creation theory and anthropology stirred debates and accusations of heresy.⁹

Aquinas' particular appreciation for the wisdom literature of the Old Testament is evident, as pointed out by Boadt. The index of *Summa Theologiae* reveals 52 columns of quotations from the wisdom literature, compared to 44 from the prophets.¹⁰ Boadt further notes Aquinas' dedication to understanding revelation thoroughly, which enabled him to grasp the intended messages of the biblical authors.¹¹

Given Aquinas' significant engagement with the wisdom literature, this article seeks to investigate his understanding of the goodness of creatures as reflected in his commentaries on these texts.¹² Following Bonino's framework of Biblical Thomism,¹³

⁵ See Serge-Thomas Bonino, 'Préface. Consacre-toi à la lecture (1 Tm 4, 13)', in: Jean-Éric Stroobant de Saint-Éloy, Jean-Baptiste Échivard (eds.), *Commentaires des épîtres à Timothée I et II, à Tite et à Philémon* (Paris: Cerf, 2020), 13; see also Piotr Roszak, Jörgen Vijgen (eds.), *Towards a Biblical Thomism: Thomas Aquinas and the Renewal of Biblical Theology* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2018), 11–16.

⁶ Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1957), 47.

⁷ Alessandro Ghisalberti, 'La creazione nella filosofia di S. Tommaso d'Aquino', in: *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 51 (1969), 202.

⁸ See Joseph Ratzinger, *'In the Beginning...': A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 79.

⁹ See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 2: Spiritual Master* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 228–229.

¹⁰ See Lawrence Boadt, 'St. Thomas Aquinas and the Biblical Wisdom Tradition', in: *The Thomist* 49, no. 4 (1985), 576.

¹¹ See Boadt, 'St. Thomas Aquinas and the Biblical Wisdom Tradition', 580.

¹² In God, wisdom is identical with the very divine essence. See *Sent.*, pr.: "Non autem hoc ita dictum est, quod solus filius sit sapientia, cum pater et filius et spiritus sanctus sint una sapientia, sicut una essentia; sed quia sapientia quodam speciali modo filio appropriatur, eo quod sapientiae opera cum proprietatibus filii plurimum convenire videntur. Per sapientiam enim Dei manifestantur divinorum abscondita, producuntur creaturarum opera, nec tantum producuntur, sed etiam restaurantur et perficiuntur (...)"'. More broadly speaking, wisdom entails understanding the ultimate causes. See *ScG* I, c. 94 n. 2; *ScG* II, c. 4 n. 4; *ScG* III, c. 154 n. 5; *STh* I, q. 14 a. 1 ad 2.

¹³ Bonino identifies three paths of Biblical Thomism. The first path centers on Aquinas' biblical commentaries, analyzing their hermeneutical method, patristic sources, and doctrinal contents. The second path examines how Aquinas cites the books of Scripture he has commented on in his systematic works, such as *Summa Theologiae*. The third path, which is "still rarely practiced", studies how Aquinas quotes verses from biblical books that he has not commented on. This method reconstructs his thoughts on a book and highlights how he connects biblical citations to certain theological topics. See Bonino, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin lecteur du Cantique des cantiques*, 138–139. See also Bonino, 135, where he calls this last path the "troisième voie méthodologique".

the article explores Aquinas' interpretations of Job and Psalms (the first path), his non-exegetical works where he alludes to these books (the second path), and his references to Proverbs, Sirach, and Wisdom concerning creation throughout his writings (the third path).

To identify relevant passages from Aquinas' non-exegetical works regarding creation theology,¹⁴ this article utilized the *Index Thomisticus*¹⁵ and Petrus de Bergomo's *Tabula Aurea*.¹⁶ It also scrutinized Aquinas' commentaries on Scripture for keywords pertaining to creation theology.¹⁷

The goodness of creatures figures as one of the *leitmotifs* in Aquinas' creation theology in his commentary on the wisdom books. Having been created by God, "every thing [*ens*], insofar as it has being, is similar to him",¹⁸ the *summum bonum simpliciter*.¹⁹ Through this research, the article uncovered 106 verses from the wisdom literature on which Aquinas provided commentary regarding creation. Job emerged as the most frequently cited book, with 50 verses, followed by Psalms (27 verses),²⁰ Wisdom (15 verses),²¹ Sirach (8 verses),²² and Proverbs (6 verses).²³ Among these verses, 20, constituting nearly 19 percent, discuss the goodness of creatures.²⁴ This

¹⁴ The primary sources for this article are Aquinas' exegetical works and non-exegetical works in which he references Scripture regarding creatures' goodness. For clarity, I refer to Aquinas' Scripture commentaries, including his *Catena aurea*, as his exegetical works. Some taking *exegesis* to designate any critical interpretation of a text might remind me that Aquinas penned exegetical works that do not *in recto* concern Scripture (e. g., his commentaries on *Super de Causis* and *Super De div.*). They are on the mark. Therefore, since I take *exegesis* to signify *stricto sensu* the interpretation of Scripture, I clarify that the term *exegetical works* in this article specifically refers to Aquinas' Scriptural exegetical works. I refer to his other works, both systematic (e. g., *ScG*, *ST*) and non-systematic (e. g., sermons, philosophical commentaries), as *non-exegetical works*.

¹⁵ Roberto Busa, ed., *Index Thomisticus: Sancti Thomae Aquinatis operum omnium indices et concordantiae* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974).

¹⁶ Petrus de Bergomo, *In opera Sancti Thomae Aquinatis index, seu, tabula aurea eximii doctoris* (Alba-Roma: Editiones Paulinae, 1960).

¹⁷ I searched for keywords such as *creatio*, *creatura*, *creo*, *creator*, etc.

¹⁸ *ScG* II, c. 22 n. 6: "omne ens, inquantum habet esse, sit ei simile". See *STh* I, q. 5 a. 3 co.: "omne ens, inquantum est ens, est bonum". See also Santiago Sanz Sánchez, 'Tommaso del Creatore (Chesterton). Le ragioni e l'attualità di un appellativo', in: *Annales Theologici* 32 (2018), 89–90.

¹⁹ *STh* I, q. 6 a. 2 co.

²⁰ The verses from the Psalms are 2, 5; 8, 2; 8, 4; 15[16], 2; 17[18], 11; 17[18], 32; 17[18], 42; 18[19], 2; 18[19], 6; 18[19], 8; 23[24], 1; 24[25], 5; 24[25], 7; 26[27], 6; 26[27], 9; 32[33], 6; 32[33], 9; 32[33], 15; 40[41], 14; 41[42], 5; 44[45], 2; 45[46], 8; 49[50], 14; 50[51], 12; 103[104], 24; 103[104], 30; 148, 5. The primary numbering system used corresponds to the numbering found in *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem* (cited above). In square brackets are the numbering used in the *NRSVCE* and most modern Bible translations.

²¹ The verses from Wisdom are 1, 7; 1, 14; 6, 8; 8, 1; 11, 21; 11, 25; 12, 13; 12, 18; 13, 1; 13, 3–5; 14, 3; 14, 11; 14, 21.

²² The verses from Sirach are 1, 1; 1, 10; 18, 1; 24, 40–41; 33, 15; 42, 17; 42, 21.

²³ The verses from Proverbs are 3, 19–20; 8, 22; 8, 24; 8, 30; 16, 4.

²⁴ These 20 verses are Job 1, 6; 2, 10; 3, 1; 4, 18; 12, 6; 15, 19; 27, 12; 35, 3; 38, 13; 40, 10; 40, 14; 41, 1–3; Psalms 24, 7; 40, 14; Wisdom 11, 21; 11, 25; 14, 11; Sirach 33, 15.

highlights the significance of the topic, as Aquinas addresses it more frequently than the theme of God's creative wisdom, which he covers based on 19 verses.²⁵

Aquinas affirms several points regarding the goodness of creatures based on his reading of the wisdom books. He asserts that God's love, goodness, presence, and arrangement are the reasons behind the goodness of all creatures (Section 1). Aquinas not only associates God with all that is good (Section 2) but also emphasizes the original goodness of demons (Section 3) and attributes the source of evil to the will of rational beings (Section 4).

1. The Cause of Creatures' Goodness

1.1 God's Love

Aquinas supports his claim that creatures' goodness stems from God's love by citing Job 41, 1–3 and Wisdom 11, 25.²⁶

I will not stir him up, like one that is cruel, for who can resist my countenance?
Who hath given me before that I should repay him? All things that are under
heaven are mine. I will not spare him, nor his mighty words, and framed to
make supplication (Job 41, 1–3).

In Job 41, 1–3, God responds to those who accuse him of being cruel for giving immense power to the devil.²⁷ Aquinas outlines God's three answers. First, Aquinas argues that God's concession of great power to the devil is not an act of cruelty, based on Job 41, 1. He emphasizes that the exercise of the devil's power is subject to God's providence—symbolized by his face (*vultus*)—directed towards human salvation.²⁸ Second, Aquinas asserts that God loves all creatures, including the devil, and

²⁵ These 19 verses are Job 9, 8; 12, 7; 22, 12; 28, 24–25; 28, 27–28; Psalms 8, 4; 32, 6; 32, 15; Proverbs 3, 19–20; Wisdom 1, 14; 8, 1; 11, 21; Sirach 1, 10; 24, 40–41; 42, 21.

²⁶ “[1] non quasi crudelis suscitabo eum / quis enim resistere potest vultui meo [2] quis ante dedit mihi ut reddam ei / omnia quae sub caelo sunt mea sunt [3] non parcam ei et verbis potentibus et ad deprecandum compositis” (Job 41). In the absence of any specific indication, I used the English translation of Scripture from *Douay-Rheims: The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate*. I chose this translation as it aligns better with the translation of Scripture Aquinas employs.

²⁷ Aquinas identifies Behemoth and Leviathan as the devil. See *In IV Sent.*, d. 47 q. 1 a. 3 qc. 4 obj. 2: “Praeterea, Job 40, 28, dicitur de Behemoth, per quem Diabolus intelligitur: *cunctis videntibus praecipitabitur*”. See also *De Malo*, q. 16 a. 6 obj. 1; *STh III*, Suppl., q. 89 a. 8 obj. 2; Scott Hahn, Curtis Mitch, *Job: With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes*, Second Catholic Edition, The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 15; 52.

²⁸ See *In Iob*, c. 41 (ln. 13–21): “Quod autem hoc sibi ad crudelitatem ascribi non debeat ostendit triplici ratione: primo propter potestatem ipsius Dei, cum dicit *Quis enim resistere potest vultui meo*, idest providentiae meae? Quasi dicat: quantumcumque Leviathan iste sit potens non potest providentiae meae resistere, ut potentia sua utatur nisi quantum mihi placuerit, et mea voluntas non ad perniciem sed ad salutem hominum tendit”.

gratuitously bestows good things upon them. Job 41, 2 suggests that all creatures are “created, conserved, and governed” by God and, hence, he cannot be cruel to them.²⁹ Aquinas also cites Job 41, 2 in *ScG II* to reason that God creates not out of necessity or debt of justice. Creation, which presupposes nothing, is the moment when creatures begin to have something of their own.³⁰ Nothing preexists the divine goodness which is “the end and the first motive to create”.³¹ Last, based on Job 41, 3, Aquinas asserts that God’s concession of power to the devil is not cruel because he does not defer to Satan in any way.³²

For thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made: for thou didst not appoint, or make any thing hating it (Wis. 11, 25).

Aquinas derives from Wisdom 11, 25 in *ScG I* that God, “the last end of things”, wills all other things inasmuch as he wills himself to be.³³ He emphasizes that God hates nothing³⁴ and specifies in *In Psalmos* that he “hates not what he made but what he did not make, namely, sin”.³⁵ In *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, Aquinas explains that God “causes all things by loving his goodness”.³⁶

²⁹ *In Iob*, c. 41 (ln. 21–30): “Secundo ostendit idem ex largitate bonitatis ipsius qua gratis omnibus bona sua distribuit, unde subdit *Et quis ante dedit mihi ut reddam ei?* Quasi dicat ‘nullus’, (...) unde non habeo contra ipsa quae feci crudelitatis animum; et ad idem pertinet quod subdit *Omnia quae sub caelo sunt mea sunt*, quia scilicet sunt a me creata, conservata et gubernata: nullus autem rebus suis adversatur”.

³⁰ See *ScG II*, c. 28 n. 2: “Universali autem rerum productioni nihil praesupponitur cui aliquid debeatur. Ipsa igitur universalis rerum productio ex debito iustitiae provenire non potuit”. *ScG II*, c. 28 n. 3: “Cum iustitiae actus sit reddere unicuique quod suum est, actum iustitiae praecedit actus quo aliquid alicuius suum efficitur. Ille igitur actus quo primo aliquid suum alicuius efficitur, non potest esse actus iustitiae. Sed per creationem res creata primo incipit aliquid suum habere. Non igitur creatio ex debito iustitiae procedit”. See also *ScG II*, c. 28 n. 4.

³¹ *ScG II*, c. 28 n. 5: “Ipsa enim divina bonitas praecedit ut finis et primum motivum ad creandum: secundum Augustinum, qui dicit: *quia Deus bonus est, sumus*”. See Job 41, 2 cited in *ScG II*, c. 28 n. 6.

³² *In Iob*, c. 41 (ln. 30–35): “Tertio ostendit se non esse crudelem permittendo Satanam in sua potentia exaltari, per hoc quod in nullo ei defert (...)”.

³³ *ScG I*, c. 75 n. 2: “Est autem ipse Deus ultimus rerum finis (...). Ex hoc igitur quod vult se esse, etiam alia vult, quae in ipsum sicut in finem ordinantur”. See *ScG I*, c. 75 n. 8, which cites Wisdom 11, 25.

³⁴ See *ScG I*, c. 96 n. 2: “Si igitur voluntas Dei ad malum inclinari non potest, ut ostensum est, impossibile est quod ipse rem aliquam odio habeat”. See *ScG I*, c. 96 n. 6, which cites Wisdom 11, 25.

³⁵ *In Psalmos* 5, n. 3 (#28): “Triplex enim gradus est, quo modo aliquis odit aliquem. Primo habet eum odio, volendo ei malum in corde. Secundo hoc exequitur inferendo poenam. Tertio si quando punivit, tamen reconciliat eum sibi. Sed Deus primo odit; unde dicit, *odisti omnes* et cetera. Sap. 14: *similiter est odio Deo impius et impietas ejus*. Sed contra, Sap. 2: *diligis omnia quae sunt* et cetera. Respondeo: quod Deus fecit, non odit; sed quod non fecit, scilicet peccatum. Sed si nos pertinaciter insistamus, peccatorem odit in quantum non revocat, et per poenas ordinat”. See also *In Psalmos* 50, n. 1 (#501).

³⁶ *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 8 (#966): “Deus enim diligendo suam bonitatem causat omnia. Sap. XI, 25: «*Diligis omnia* (...)»”.

He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now (1 Jn. 2, 9).

If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Lk. 14, 26).

Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5, 7).

However, Aquinas notes an apparent contradiction regarding hatred in *In decem praeceptis*. While 1 John 2, 9 commands Christians not to hate, Luke 14, 26 states that one should hate certain people to become a disciple of Christ³⁷ and Psalm 5, 7 declares that God hates the workers of iniquity. To resolve this tension, Aquinas distinguishes between God's love for nature and his hatred for vice, guilt, or sin.³⁸ He explains in *STh* I that God hates a human being only to the extent that he does not will the good of eternal life for him.³⁹

1.2 God's Goodness

The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember. According to thy mercy remember thou me: for thy goodness' sake, O Lord (Ps. 24, 7).

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel from eternity to eternity. So be it. So be it (Ps. 40, 14).

Praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created (Ps. 148, 5).

Psalms 24, 7 and 40, 14 reveal that God is the source of goodness in all creatures. In Psalm 24, 7, the psalmist appeals to God's mercy not on the basis of his merits but because God communicates good things to all creatures. The psalmist asks God to

³⁷ See *In decem praeceptis* I, c. 6: "Sciendum autem, quod quicumque odit fratrem suum, non est instatu salutis. I Ioan. II, 9 (...). Est autem attendendum, quod etiam in hoc invenitur quaedam contrarietas. Nam sancti aliquos oderunt: Psal. CXXXVIII, 22: *perfecto odio oderam illos*; et in Evangelio Luc. XIV, 26 (...)"

³⁸ See *In decem praeceptis* I, c. 6: "Deus enim diligit et odit. Quia in quolibet homine duo sunt considerata: scilicet natura et vitium. Natura quidem in hominibus diligi debet, vitium vero odiri. (...) Sap. XI, 25: *diligis domine omnia* (...). Ecce ergo quod Deus diligit et odit: diligit naturam et odit vitium". See also *De Malo*, q. 3 a. 1 s.c. 3; *STh* I-II, q. 79 a. 1 s.c.; *STh* III, q. 49 a. 4 ad 1.

³⁹ See *STh* I, q. 23 a. 3 ad 1: "Deus omnes homines diligit, et etiam omnes creaturas, inquantum omnibus vult aliquod bonum, non tamen quodcumque bonum vult omnibus. Inquantum igitur quibusdam non vult hoc bonum quod est vita aeterna, dicitur eos habere odio, vel reprobare". This is a response to *STh* I, q. 23 a. 3 obj. 1, which cites Wisdom 11, 25.

remember him for the sake of God's goodness, which is God himself, "the being of goodness" that "[makes] all things good".⁴⁰ Aquinas also upholds God's goodness as the cause of creatures' goodness, as seen in his interpretation of Psalm 40, 14. He describes *benedictus* as "saying the good", noting that humans bless God "by recognizing his goodness" whereas God blesses them "by causing goodness [in them]" since, for God, saying something equals making it.⁴¹ Psalm 148, 5 also suggests that God's blessing causes goodness in humans.⁴²

1.3 God's Presence and Arrangement

(...) thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight (Wis. 11, 21).

Wisdom 11, 21 upholds the goodness of creatures by pointing to God's arrangement of them and the presence of Trinitarian vestiges within them. Aquinas reasons in *In I Sent.* that since Trinitarian vestiges are present in creatures, every creature is "a certain good".⁴³ In *De Ver.*, he asserts that creatures are good inasmuch as God arranges them.⁴⁴ In *STh* I, he suggests that the concept of goodness (*ratio boni*) consists in number, weight, and measure.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *In Psalmos* 24 n. 6 (#216): "Non petit sibi peccata dimitti propter sua merita, quia misericordia non habet meritum. Et ideo allegat duo ex parte Dei, scilicet *misericordiam* et *bonitatem*, quae in Deo sunt ut in subjecto, sed differunt ratione. In Deo autem consideratur bonitas, scilicet communicatio bonorum in creaturis, quia bonum est diffusivum sui. (...) Non solum propter misericordiam qua parcis miseris sis memor tantum, sed *propter bonitatem tuam*, qua bona facis omnia; et haec bonitas est ipse Deus, quia ipse est esse bonitatis".

⁴¹ *In Psalmos* 40 n. 9 (#431): "Benedicere nihil aliud est quam dicere bonum. Aliter nos benedicimus Deum, et aliter benedicit nos Deus. Nos benedicimus Deum, recognoscendo bonitatem ejus. Deus autem benedicit nos, causando in nobis bonitatem: quia suum dicere est facere. (Ps. 148) *dixit enim, et facta sunt*". For more on God's *dicere* as his *facere*, see *In Matt.*, c. 19 l. 1 (#1544); c. 25 l. 3 (#2094).

⁴² See *In Psalmos* 27 n. 6 (#252): "Dicit ergo: ego petivi, et sum exauditus in petitione mea; unde, *benedictus dominus*. Benedicere Dei nos, est causare bonitatem in nobis, *quia dixit, et facta sunt*. Ps. 148. Benedicere nos Deo, est agnoscere ejus bonitatem, qua nobis bene facit: et nihil ei accrescit ex hoc".

⁴³ *In I Sent.*, d. 3 q. 2 a. 3 s.c. 1: "Contra, Sap. 11, 2: *omnia in numero, pondere et mensura disposuisti* [Wis. 11, 21]. Item Augustinus loquens de modo, specie, et ordine, dicit: *ubi haec tria magna sunt, magnum bonum est; ubi parva, parvum; ubi nulla, nullum*. Sed omnis creatura est aliquod bonum. Ergo omnis creatura habet haec tria". On the presence of number, weight, and measure in light, see *In I Sent.*, d. 3 q. 2 a. 3 ad 4; *De Ver.*, q. 21 a. 6 ad 11.

⁴⁴ *De Ver.*, q. 21 a. 6 s.c. 5: "Praeterea, sapientiae XI, 21, dicitur: *omnia in numero, pondere et mensura constituisti*. Sed secundum Augustinum libro IV super Genesim ad litteram, *mensura cuilibet rei modum praefigit, numerus speciem praebet, pondus vero dat ordinem*. Ergo in his tribus, modo, specie et ordine, bonitas creaturae consistit, cum creatura secundum hoc sit bona quod a Deo sit disposita".

⁴⁵ See *STh* I, q. 5 a. 5 co.: "Unde ratio boni, secundum quod consistit in perfectione, consistit etiam in modo, specie et ordine". See *De Ver.*, q. 21 a. 6 s.c. 5. See also the use of Wisdom 11, 21 within the moral context in *STh* I-II, q. 1 a. 4 ad 1; q. 63 a. 2 co.; q. 100 a. 7 s.c.

2. God and Good Things

Aquinas puts forth three affirmations linking God to goodness in this section: God is the sole source of good things (Job 27, 12; 35, 3; Sir. 33, 15), all good things come from him (Job 12, 6), and good can come out of evil (Job 2, 10; 38, 13).

2.1 The Source of Only Good Things

Behold you all know it, and why do you speak vain things without cause? (Job 27, 12).

At the heart of the affirmation of the goodness of creatures lies the belief that only good things can originate from God. Aquinas cites Job's reply to his interlocutors in Job 27, 12 where he notes that, as the Creator and Ruler of all things, God bestows gifts upon humans as a father would bequeath an inheritance. Regardless of their moral standing, all individuals receive good things from God, though of varying kinds: the wicked receive temporal blessings while the good obtain spiritual rewards (Job 27, 13–23).⁴⁶

For thou saidst: That which is right doth not please thee: or what will it profit thee if I sin? (Job 35, 3).

And God saw that it was good (Gen. 1, 25).

Aquinas reinforces the notion of God as the source of only good things in his analysis of Job 35, 3. In this passage, Elihu criticizes Job's claim to innocence before God,⁴⁷ asserting that Job's declaration—*"non tibi placet quod rectum est"*—contradicts the divine wisdom that is evident in the creation of all things. In support of this, Aquinas cites Genesis 1, 25 which confirms that God made everything for a good purpose. Thus, it is evident that God is pleased by all that is good.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *In Iob*, c. 27 (ln. 142–155): *"et quid sine causa vana loquimini, idest ea quae rationis fulcimentum non habent? Solent enim homines hebetes cum cognoscant praemissa non advertere quid ex eis sequatur. Est autem considerandum quod cum Deus sit creator omnium et gubernator, omnes ab eo suscipiunt aliquid quasi hereditatem suam a patre: mali autem homines quasi suam partem et suam hereditatem a Deo accipiunt bona temporalia huius mundi (...) e contrario autem boni percipiunt quasi suam partem et hereditatem spiritualia bona (...)"*.

⁴⁷ See Facultad de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra (ed.), *Sagrada Biblia: Traducción y notas*, Edición digital (Pamplona: EUNSA, 1997), v. Job 35, 1–16.

⁴⁸ *In Iob*, c. 35 (ln. 95–103): *"Deinde convertit se ad improbandum aliud verbum quod praemiseraat «Non tibi placet quod rectum est», quod divinae sapientiae repugnaret, quae primo quidem apparet in rerum creatione, unde dicit Et non dixit, scilicet Iob sentiens quod Deo bona non placerent: Ubi est Deus qui fecit me? [Job 35, 10] Non enim Deus fecit res nisi propter bonum, unde dicitur Gen. 1²⁵ «Vidit Deus quod esset bonum» etc., unde manifestum est quod Deo placet bonum"*.

Good is set against evil, and life against death: so also is the sinner against a just man. And so look upon all the works of the most High. Two and two, and one against another (Sir. 33, 15).

Aquinas argues in *ScG II* that the existence of good and evil in creatures does not indicate that they originate from two opposing principles.⁴⁹ Instead, he maintains that “there is not one principle of evil *per se*, but the first principle of all things is one first Good from whose effects evil ensues *per accidens*”.⁵⁰ However, Gregory the Great seems to contradict this thesis by asserting that God creates “even evils, which have no natural subsistence of their own”.⁵¹ To clarify Gregory’s statement, Aquinas cites Sirach 33, 15 and explains that God is said to create evils “insofar as he creates things that are good in themselves but harmful to others”.⁵² Thus, Gregory’s words do not conflict with Augustine’s position in *STh I*, q. 49 a. 2, where he states that “God is not the Author of evil because he is not the cause of tending to nonbeing”.⁵³ Aquinas argues that God does not cause evil rooted in the agent’s defect but only the corruption of some things for the sake of “the good of the universe’s order”.⁵⁴ In *STh I*, q. 49 a. 3, Aquinas reiterates his conclusion in *ScG II* that there is no supreme evil that causes all evils.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ See *ScG II*, c. 41 n. 9: “Contrariorum agentium sunt contrariae actiones. Eorum igitur quae per unam actionem producuntur, non sunt ponenda principia contraria. Bonum autem et malum eadem actione producuntur: eadem enim actione aqua corrumpitur et aer generatur. Non sunt igitur, propter differentiam boni et mali in rebus inventam, ponenda principia contraria”. See Sirach 33, 15 cited in *ScG II*, c. 41 n. 12.

⁵⁰ *ScG II*, c. 41 n. 11: “Non est igitur unum primum et per se malorum principium: sed primum omnium principium est unum primum bonum, in cuius effectibus consequitur malum per accidens”. See a similar argument in *De Pot.*, q. 3 a. 6 ad 13; *STh I*, q. 49 a. 3 ad 1.

⁵¹ *ScG II*, c. 41 n. 12: “Gregorius dicit: *etiam mala, quae nulla sua natura subsistunt, creantur domino: sed creare mala dicitur cum res in se bonas creatas nobis male agentibus in flagellum format*”.

⁵² See *ScG II*, c. 41 n. 12: “Et eodem [Eccli.] 33-15: *contra malum bonum (...)*. Dicitur autem Deus *facere mala*, vel *creare*, inquantum creat ea quae secundum se bona sunt, et tamen aliis sunt nociva: sicut lupus, quamvis in sua specie quoddam bonum naturae sit, tamen ovi est malus; et similiter ignis aquae, inquantum est eius corruptivus. Et per similem modum [Deus] est causa malorum in hominibus quae poenae dicuntur”.

⁵³ *STh I*, q. 49 a. 2 s.c.: “Sed contra est quod dicit Augustinus, in libro octoginta trium quaest., quod Deus non est auctor mali, quia non est causa tendendi ad non esse”.

⁵⁴ *STh I*, q. 49 a. 2 co.: “malum quod in corruptione rerum aliquarum consistit, reducitur in Deum sicut in causam. (...) Manifestum est autem quod forma quam principaliter Deus intendit in rebus creatis, est bonum ordinis universi”.

⁵⁵ See *STh I*, q. 49 a. 3 obj. 1: “Videtur quod sit unum summum malum, quod sit causa omnis mali. Contrariorum enim effectuum contrariae sunt causae. Sed in rebus invenitur contrarietas, secundum illud Eccli. XXXIII, *contra malum bonum est, et contra vitam mors; sic et contra virum iustum peccator* [Sir. 33, 15]. Ergo sunt contraria principia, unum boni, et aliud mali”. *STh I*, q. 49 a. 3 ad 1: “contraria conveniunt in genere uno, et etiam conveniunt in ratione essendi. Et ideo, licet habeant causas particulares contrarias, tamen oportet devenire ad unam primam causam communem”.

2.2 Good Things Come from God

The tabernacles of robbers abound, and they provoke God boldly; whereas it is he that hath given all into their hands (Job 12, 6).

Furthermore, Aquinas argues that all good things, even those stolen by robbers, come from God. In Job 12, 6, Job describes the robbers' fate which seems to contrast with his own. However, God distributes good things to humans not based on their merits, as Aquinas explains.⁵⁶

2.3. Out of Evil Comes Good

If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil? (Job 2, 10).

Aquinas clarifies in *In Symbolum Apostolorum* that, according to Job 2, 10, although God is the source of all good things, humans may still experience hardships from him. He explains that "if something harms [us] in a way and brings us hardship [*poena*], we should believe that that hardship is from God; not so with guilt [*culpa*] since no evil is from God except that which is ordered to the good". Aquinas argues that hardships can purify sins, humble the guilty, and inspire the good to love God. Therefore, one should endure them patiently.⁵⁷

And didst thou hold the extremities of the earth shaking them, and hast thou shaken the ungodly out of it? (Job 38, 13).

Job 38, 13, which is situated in God's exposition of the marvels in the universe's arrangement, affirms that good can come from evil. God describes the earth where, at first glance, earthquakes appear as a great source of evil. However, Aquinas argues that "all things which occur in the corporeal creature redound to the usefulness of humans: earthquakes and other terrible things of this sort are useful for making terrified humans desist from sins". Aquinas explains that God shakes the earth

⁵⁶ *In Iob*, c. 12 (ln. 131–132; 155–162): "et terram et animalia de quibus supra dixerat, in quibus humanae divitiae consistunt, nullus homo habere potest nisi Deus in manu eius dederit: et sic si praedones abundant, Deus dedit in manibus eorum; per hoc ergo confutatur illorum opinio qui ponebant divitias a Deo dari pro merito iustitiae, cum etiam praedonibus a Deo dentur".

⁵⁷ *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 1 (#884): "Tertio inducitur ad patientiam in adversis. Nam licet omnis creatura sit a Deo, et ex hoc sit bona secundum suam naturam; tamen si in aliquo noceat, et inferat nobis poenam, debemus credere quod illa poena sit a Deo; non tamen culpa: quia nullum malum est a Deo, nisi quod ordinatur ad bonum. Et ideo si omnis poena quam homo suffert est a Deo, debet patienter sustinere. Nam poenae purgant peccata, humiliant reos, provocant bonos ad amorem Dei. Iob II, 10: «Si bona suscepimus (...)»".

(*concutiens*) to cast out sinners from it, sometimes through death or a change of life.⁵⁸ Hence, the goodness of creatures becomes more evident as even what seems evil may occur for good.

3. The Fallen Angels

Aquinas draws on the numerous allusions to angels and demons in the Book of Job to affirm the goodness of creatures. He argues that demons, although they became evil by their own fault (Job 1, 6; 4, 18), are created by God (Job 40, 10) and no creature is inherently evil (Job 2, 10; 3, 1). Additionally, the devil's wickedness was the beginning of God's using punishment in his dealings with creatures (Job 40, 14).

3.1 Demons as God's Creatures

Behold behemoth whom I made with thee, he eateth grass like an ox (Job 40, 10).

In *In Iob*, Aquinas examines the statement in Job 40, 10 that "God created the devil with humans" (*feci tecum*). While some may interpret this as evidence of simultaneous creation of angels and humans,⁵⁹ Aquinas suggests an alternative reading in *In Iob*. He proposes that if one holds that the creation of angels temporally precedes that of humans, this statement may mean that the devil, like humans, is "a creature of the good God" despite its wickedness. Alternatively, the statement may imply that the devil and humans share intellectual nature.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *In Iob*, c. 38 (ln. 257–279): "Numquid tenuisti concutiens etc. (...) hic incipit prosequi mirabilia divinatorum operum quae in dispositione praedictarum trium partium mundi apparent. Et incipit a terra in qua praecipue admirandum apparet quod accidit circa terraemotum (...). Omnia vero quae accidunt in corporali creatura in utilitatem hominum redundant: terraemotus autem et alia huiusmodi terribilia utilia sunt ad hoc quod homines terri a peccatis desistant, unde subdit < et > excussisti impios ex ea?, et loquitur ad similitudinem hominis qui concutit vestimentum ut ex eo excutiat pulverem seu tineam: ita etiam Deus videtur concutere terram ut excutiat peccatores ex ea, quandoque quidem per mortem, quandoque autem per emendationem vitae".

⁵⁹ See *De Pot.*, q. 4 a. 2 s.c. 2: "Praeterea, Iob, 40, 10, dicitur: ecce Behemoth, quem feci tecum. Per Behemoth autem, secundum Gregorium, Diabolus intelligitur qui factus est prima die, vel ante omnem diem; homo autem, ad quem dominus loquitur, factus est sexta die. Ergo ea quae sunt facta sexto die, sunt simul facta cum illis quae facta sunt primodie; et sic idem quod prius".

⁶⁰ *In Iob*, c. 40 (ln. 293–305): "Sed si illa dierum enumeratio non designat temporis successionem sed diversa genera rerum productarum, secundum sententiam Augustini, nulla repugnantia invenitur; si autem, secundum aliorum expositionem, angelorum creatio duratione praecessit hominis productionem, potest dupliciter hoc verbum intelligi: uno modo ut sit sensus quem feci tecum [Job 40, 10] idest quem feci sicut et te, et hoc dicit ad excludendum errorem eorum qui considerantes malitiam diaboli aestimaverunt eum non esse Dei boni creaturam; alio modo ut sit sensus quem feci tecum [Job 40, 10] idest similitudinem tecum habentem quantum ad naturam intellectualem".

3.2 Not Evil by Nature

If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil? (Job 2, 10).

After this, Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day (Job 3, 1).

Aquinas affirms in *In Symbolum Apostolorum* that all creatures are naturally good, referencing Job 2, 10.⁶¹ This is further supported in his commentary on Job 3, 1 in *In Iob*, where Job curses his own birthday, believing it to be a day of misery rather than a day of celebration sanctified by God. Job's perspective contrasts with the Sabbath which God established to commemorate the benefits of creation bestowed upon humanity.⁶²

Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not (Rom. 12, 14).

Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day in which my mother bore me, be blessed (Jer. 20, 14).

However, Job's denunciation of his birthday in Job 3, 1 seems to contradict Paul's condemnation of cursing in Romans 12, 14. To reconcile this, Aquinas clarifies that Paul specifically criticizes cursing that invokes evil or falsely slanders someone. The Apostle does permit cursing when it is used by a judge to condemn the guilty or by a truthful person to demonstrate the evil of something.⁶³ In Job's case, he denounced his day as evil not based on its nature but according to Scripture's usage of time, where it can be good or evil based on the events that happen during it. Therefore, Job cursed his day as he remembered "the evil things befalling him on that day".⁶⁴ Aquinas

See *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 1 (#884): "omnis creatura sit a Deo, et ex hoc sit bona secundum suam naturam (...). Iob II, 10: «Si bona suscepimus (...).»".

⁶² See *In Iob*, c. 3 (ln. 162–178): "Est autem aliquis dies clarus multipliciter: primo quidem ex Dei sanctificatione qui eum celebrem esse instituit, sicut habetur Exodi XX⁸ «Memento ut diem sabbati sanctifices»; hanc igitur claritatem a praedicto die removet dicens *non requirat eum Deus desuper*, quasi dicat: non exigat Deus ab hominibus ut hunc diem celebrem agant. Dies enim aliqui exiguntur a Deo ad celebritatem propter aliquod insigne beneficium in illa die hominibus collatum, sicut sabbatum in Veteri Lege propter beneficium creationis, et dies Paschae propter beneficium liberationis ex Aegypto; quod etiam manifestum est in diebus festis qui in Novo Testamento celebrantur. Vult ergo per hoc significare quod sua nativitas non debet computari inter insignia Dei beneficia, cum magis ad miseriam natus esse videatur quam ad laetitiam".

⁶³ *In Iob*, c. 3 (ln. 61–69): "Tertio contingit aliquem dicere malum simpliciter enuntiando vel in praesenti vel in praeterito vel in futuro, sive vere sive false. Prohibet igitur Apostolus maledicere tali maledictione qua quis imprecatur malum alicui vel eum falso diffamat, non autem eo modo quo iudex reum condemnat vel aliquis verax malum alicuius rei ordinate demonstrat, vel demonstrando praesens vel recitando praeteritum vel praenuntiando futurum".

⁶⁴ *In Iob*, c. 3 (ln. 69–78): "Sic igitur intelligendum est Iob suo diei maledixisse quia eum malum esse denuntiavit, non secundum suam naturam qua a Deo creatus est, sed secundum illam Scripturae

confirms that all creatures, including Job's birthday, are naturally good in his comment on Jeremiah 20, 14.⁶⁵

In *STh* II-II, he evaluates Job's curse and asks if it is permissible to curse irrational creatures.⁶⁶ He argues that Job did not curse his birthday as a creature but as a result of "the original guilt he contracted at birth and its consequent penalties". However, cursing irrational creatures qua God's creatures is considered "a sin of blasphemy", while cursing them considered in themselves is idle, vain, and therefore illicit.⁶⁷

3.3 Evil by Their Fault

Now on a certain day, when the sons of God came to stand before the Lord, Satan also was present among them (Job 1, 6).

Aquinas asserts that the fallen angels are not inherently evil. In his commentary on Job 1, 6, he emphasizes the goodness of creatures by comparing angels with demons. According to Aquinas, *fili Dei* in Job 1, 6 refer to angels because "they resemble God through participation in glory". These good incorporeal spirits "enjoy divine glory by conserving the purity in which they were created". In contrast to these good spirits are the demons who are not evil by nature or creation but "by their fault", as "God is

consuetudinem qua tempus dicitur bonum vel malum secundum ea quae in tempore aguntur, secundum illud Apostoli Eph. V¹⁶ «Redimentes tempus quoniam dies mali sunt»; maledixit igitur Iob diei suo inquantum mala sibi in ipso die accidisse commemorat". Of a piece with Aquinas' elucidation, Clifford associates Job's birth with creation: "Job explodes with anger in chapter 3, cursing the day of his creation (...) To Job, the creation of the universe is so closely linked to his own creation that God's randomness and injustice toward him is simply one more instance of God's randomness and injustice toward the world". In Richard J. Clifford, 'Creatio ex nihilo in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible', in: Gary A. Anderson, Markus Bockmuehl (eds.), *Creation ex nihilo: Origins, Development, Contemporary Challenges* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 73.

⁶⁵ See *In Ier.*, c. 20 l. 3 (#112): "diei in sua natura consideratae non maledicit, quia hoc esset stultum et peccatum, sed inquantum mala est, prout scilicet aliquid mali in ipsa accidit; sicut e contra dies festus agitur propter aliquod bonum quod die illo accidit: et hoc significat, illa maledictio, Gregorius tamen respiciens ad naturam ipsius diei dicit, quod ad litteram non potest intelligi".

⁶⁶ See *STh* II-II, q. 76 a. 2 s.c.: "Sed contra est quod dominus maledixit ficulneae, ut habetur Matth. XXI; et Iob maledixit diei suo, ut habetur Iob III". *STh* II-II, q. 76 pr.: "Deinde considerandum est de maledictione. (...) Secundo, utrum licite possit aliquis maledicere irrationali creaturae".

⁶⁷ *STh* II-II, q. 76 a. 2 co.: "Tertio modo ordinatur creatura irrationalis ad rationalem per modum continentis, scilicet temporis vel loci. Et sic maledixit Iob diei nativitatis suae, propter culpam originalem, quam nascendo contraxit, et propter sequentes poenalitates. Et propter hoc etiam potest intelligi David maledixisse montibus Gelboe, ut legitur II Reg. I, scilicet propter caedem populi quae in eis contigerat. Maledicere autem rebus irrationalibus inquantum sunt creaturae Dei, est peccatum blasphemiae. Maledicere autem eis secundum se consideratis, est otiosum et vanum, et per consequens illicitum".

the Author of their nature and the supreme Good can be the cause only of good things".⁶⁸

Behold, they that serve him are not steadfast, and in his angels he found wickedness (Job 4, 18).

Aquinas also upholds the fallen angels' goodness in his analysis of Job 4, 18, where he debunks the Manichean belief that invisible creatures proceed from the good God whereas visible creatures originate from an evil principle. Aquinas explains that even spiritual creatures can freely turn away from the Creator, which is confirmed by Job 4, 18's declaration that even invisible creatures are "not steadfast".⁶⁹ He also recalls in his comment on Job 4, 18 in *In Iob* that, according to the Catholic faith, "all angels were created good", but "some fell from the state of rectitude by their fault while others attained greater glory".⁷⁰ Aquinas concludes that the claim that God does not create demons because they are evil is a non sequitur.

3.4 The Beginning of God's Ways

He is the beginning of the ways of God, who made him, he will apply his sword (Job 40, 14).

In Job 40, 14, after likening the devil's cruelty to the toughness of an elephant's gristle,⁷¹ God identifies Satan as the beginning of his "ways". Aquinas believes that

⁶⁸ *In Iob*, c. 1 (ln. 242–253): "(...) inter incorporeos spiritus quidam sunt boni qui, puritatem in qua creati sunt conservantes, divina gloria perfruuntur a Dei voluntate numquam recedentes: et hi quidem spiritus in Scripturis interdum dicuntur angeli, idest nuntii, quia divina hominibus annuntiant, interdum autem filii Dei dicuntur inquantum Deo per participationem gloriae assimilantur. Mali autem spiritus quidamsunt, non per naturam aut per creationem cum cuiusque naturae auctor sit Deus nec summum bonum potest esse causa nisi bonorum, sed sunt mali per propriam culpam (...)".

⁶⁹ See *Super Decretalem*, c. 1 (ln. 454–481): "Secundum autem praedictam Manichaeorum errorem ponentium duo principia, unum bonum et unum malum, non solum attendebatur distinctio quantum ad creationem visibilium et invisibilium creaturarum, ut scilicet invisibilia sint a bono Deo, visibilia vero a malo, sed etiam quantum ad ipsa invisibilia. Ponebant enim primum principium esse invisibile et ab eo quasdam invisibiles creaturas esse productas, quas dicebant esse naturaliter malas; et sic in ipsis angelis erant quidam naturaliter boni ad bonam creationem boni Dei pertinentes, qui peccare non poterant, et quidam naturaliter mali — quos daemones vocamus — qui non poterant non peccare: contra id quod dicitur Iob IV¹⁸ «Ecce qui serviunt ei non sunt stabiles et in angelis suis reperit pravitatem». (...) Et ideo ad haec excludenda dicit *Diabolus autem*, scilicet principalis, et alii *Daemones quidem a Deo natura creati sunt boni, sed ipsi per se facti sunt mali*, scilicet per liberum voluntatis arbitrium, homo vero diaboli suggestionem peccavit, id est non naturaliter sed propria voluntate". See Denzinger-Hünermann 800.

⁷⁰ *In Iob*, c. 4 (ln. 412–416): "tenet enim fides catholica omnes angelos bonos fuisse creatos, quorum quidam per propriam culpam ceciderunt a rectitudinis statu, quidam vero ad maiorem gloriam pervenerunt".

⁷¹ See *In Iob*, c. 40 (ln. 371–381): "Tertio describit motum elephantum (...) et quantum ad hoc subdit *cartilago ipsius quasi laminae ferreae* [Job 40, 13] (...)". *In Iob*, c. 40 (ln. 509–513): "Postquam Dominus

viae in this context can refer to either God's works of creation or his works of providence.

The first interpretation suggests that Satan was one of the first creatures made by God or one of the most excellent ones. The second interpretation, which Aquinas considers more fitting, suggests that Satan is the beginning of God's works of providence. Since doing good is the only work befitting God's goodness, punishing rational creatures due to their wickedness—first found in the devil and passed on to humans—is part of God's providence. Thus, Satan's role as the beginning of God's works of providence signifies that it is the beginning of God's using diverse ways: doing good and punishing.⁷²

By choosing to interpret *viae Dei* as God's works of providence rather than his works of creation, Aquinas emphasizes the inherent goodness of creatures. As everything in God's creation is good, punishment comes into play as part of God's providence, not his creation.

4. Out of Will Comes Evil

Aquinas asserts that evil does not originate from God's creative act but from the will of rational creatures. He emphasizes that earthly things can be used for both good and bad (Job 15, 19; Wis. 14, 11) and identifies the devil's will as the source of evil deeds (Job 12, 6; 40, 14).

4.1 The Evil Use of Good Creatures

To whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger hath passed among them (Job 15, 19).

Therefore there shall be no respect had even to the idols of the Gentiles: because the creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise (Wis. 14, 11).

descripsit proprietates diaboli sub similitudine elephantis qui est maximum animalium terrestrium, describit ipsum sub similitudine Leviathan (...)"

⁷² In Job, c. 40 (ln. 386–403): "Haec autem quae figuraliter dicta sunt exponit Dominus subdens *Ipse*, scilicet Satan de quo praedicta metaphorice dicta sunt, *est principium viarum Dei*, idest operum eius. Et si quidem hoc referatur ad opera creationis, hoc ea ratione dicitur quia Satan inter primas creaturas est conditus, vel etiam quia secundum quosdam fuit excellentior inter ceteras creaturas; sed convenientius proposito videtur ut per vias Dei intelligamus opera providentiae eius. Considerandum est autem quod Deo unum solum opus est proprium suae bonitati conveniens, scilicet benefacere et miserere; quod autem puniat et adversitates inducat, hoc contingit propter malitiam creaturae rationalis, quae primo est in diabolo inventa et per eius suggestionem est ad homines derivata, et ideo signanter dicit quod *ipse est principium viarum Dei* [Job 40, 14], idest quod Deus diversis viis utatur, scilicet benefaciendo et puniendo".

Aquinas interprets Job 15, 19 to mean that the earth was given to the wise to use for good purposes, while the foolish use it to their detriment. He cites Wisdom 14, 11 to illustrate how humans can misuse good creatures and turn them into occasions of sin.⁷³

In other works, he elaborates based on Wisdom 14, 11 that abuse of creatures occurs when they are treated as ends rather than as means⁷⁴ and when people seek the perfect good in them.⁷⁵ Aquinas argues that creatures “are not *per se* the cause of fault but only occasion and cause [thereof] *per accidens*”.⁷⁶ Against the heresy that attributes the creation of visible things to an evil principle, Aquinas suggests that visible things come from God and can lead people to him, but they can also lead them away if they are foolishly used.⁷⁷

4.2 The Devil's Sword

The tabernacles of robbers abound, and they provoke God boldly; whereas it is he that hath given all into their hands (Job 12, 6).

He is the beginning of the ways of God, who made him, he will apply his sword (Job 40, 14).

⁷³ *In Iob*, c. 15 (ln. 167–178): “(…) sapientibus enim solis terra data esse dicitur quia bonorum terrenorum ipsi sunt domini, utentes eis ad suum bonum, insipientes autem utuntur eis ad suum damnum, secundum illud Sap. XIV¹¹ «Creaturae factae sunt in muscipulam pedibus insipientium». Et iterum ad eorundem dignitatem ostendendam subdit *et non transibit alienus per eos*, quia videlicet hi qui sunt a sapientia alieni consortio sapientum annumerari non possunt; vel quia sapientes ab extraneis non suppeditantur: per illos enim alienus transire dicitur qui ab aliquo alieno vincuntur et subiciuntur”. See also *In Psalmos* 19 n. 6 (#164): “*obligati*, quia bona temporalia ligant, et maxime peccatores: Sap. 14: *creaturae Dei factae sunt in odium et in muscipulam pedibus insipientium* [Wis. 14, 11], id est peccatorum”.

⁷⁴ See *In I Sent.*, d. 1 q. 3 a. 1 ad 2: “creaturae, quantum est in se, non impediunt nos a consequenda beatitudine; sed ex parte nostra, in quantum eis abutimur, in eissistendo, sicut in fine”. This is a response to *In I Sent.*, d. 1 q. 3 a. 1 obj. 2: “Praeterea, illo utimur quo tendentes ad beatitudinem iuvamur. Sed creaturis impedimur frequenter, sicut dicitur Sap. 14, 2: *creaturae factae sunt in odium* (...) [Wis. 14, 11]. Ergo non omnibus possumus uti”.

⁷⁵ See *STh* II-II, q. 9 a. 4 co.: “ad scientiam proprie pertinet rectum iudicium creaturarum. Creaturae autem sunt ex quibus homo occasionaliter a Deo avertitur, secundum illud Sap. XIV, *creaturae factae sunt in odium* (...) [Wis. 14, 11], qui scilicet rectum iudicium de his non habent, dum aestimant in eis esse perfectum bonum; unde in eis finem constituendo, peccant et verum bonum perdunt”.

⁷⁶ *De Ver.*, q. 5 a. 3 ad 1: “creaturae corruptibiles non sunt per se causa culpa, sed occasio tantum, et per accidens causa: causa autem per accidens et effectus non oportet esse unius coordinationis”. This is a response to *De Ver.*, q. 5 a. 3 obj. 1, which cites Wisdom 14, 11. See also *ScG* III, c. 141 n. 6.

⁷⁷ See *STh* I, q. 65 a. 1 ad 3: “creaturae, quantum est de se, non retrahunt a Deo, sed in ipsum ducunt, quia *invisibilia Dei* (...) [Rom. 1, 20]. Sed quod avertant a Deo, hoc est ex culpa eorum qui insipienter eis utuntur. Unde dicitur [Wis. 14, 11] (...). Et hoc ipsum quod sic a Deo abducunt, attestatur quod sunt a Deo”. *STh* I, q. 65 a. 1 co.: “quorundam haeticorum positio est, quod visibilia ista non sunt creata a bono Deo, sed a malo principio”. See also *STh* I-II, q. 79 a. 1 ad 2.

Regarding Job 12, 6, Aquinas distinguishes the power to harm which proceeds from God and the will to harm which comes from the evildoer.⁷⁸ He clarifies based on Job 40, 14 that Satan's being the beginning of God's ways does not imply that it is "capable by itself to harm", as it is God who "will apply [Satan's] sword", to wit, its "harmful operation". But even though Satan can cause harm only with God's permission, the sword is said to belong to Satan since its will to harm stems "from itself".⁷⁹

5. Conclusion

Let us revisit how Aquinas delves into various biblical passages to illuminate the goodness present in creatures. Drawing upon Job 41, he posits that God's love extends to all creatures, including the devil, as he gratuitously bestows goodness upon them. Furthermore, Wisdom 11, 25 illustrates how God "causes all things by loving his goodness". Aquinas emphasizes Psalm 40, 14 to affirm God's goodness as the source of creatures' goodness, while Wisdom 11, 21 highlights the goodness of creatures bearing Trinitarian vestiges.

Aquinas asserts, based on Job 27, 12 and Job 35, 3, that only good can originate from God, rejecting the consideration of good and evil as two opposing principles. Even in the face of evil, Aquinas argues, citing Job 12, 6 and Job 38, 13, that God orders events for the good. While demons are culpable for their evil deeds, Aquinas maintains, referencing Job 1, 6 and Job 4, 18, that their existence stems from God's creation. Ultimately, Aquinas underscores that evil does not originate from God's creative act but from the will of rational creatures. He emphasizes that earthly things can be utilized for both good and evil, as depicted in Job 15, 19 and Wisdom 14, 11.

From a methodological standpoint, the examination of Aquinas' consideration on the goodness of creatures, illuminated by his references to the wisdom books, reaffirms the significance of his exegetical works. Only in his exegetical works does he cite Job 1, 6 in the creation context and comment on 11 out of 16 verses from Job and Psalms, which is over 68 percent.⁸⁰

According to Pieper, emphasizing the goodness of creatures stands out as a hallmark of Aquinas' thought.⁸¹ Statistically, within Aquinas' creation theology in the light of his consideration of the wisdom literature, this subject ranks second only to the topic of God as the sole Creator in terms of the number of verses Aquinas employs

⁷⁸ *In Iob*, c. 12 (ln. 125–131): "Sed quia dixerat abundare praedonum tabernacula qui provocant Deum, ne forte responderetur quod talis abundantia non est a Deo, subiungit *cum ipse dederit omnia in manibus eorum*, idest in potestate eorum, quia potestas nocendi alicui non est nisi a Deo, voluntas autem malefaciendi non est nisi ase ipso (...)" .

⁷⁹ *In Iob*, c. 40 (ln. 403–410): "Et ne credatur sic esse principium viarum Dei quod per se ipsum sit potens ad nocendum, hoc excludit subdens *Qui fecit eum*, scilicet Deus, *applicabit gladium eius* [Job 40, 14], idest noxiam operationem ipsius; voluntas autem nocendi est diabolo a se ipso, propter quod dicitur gladius eius, sed effectum nocendi non habet nisi ex voluntate vel permissione divina".

⁸⁰ These 11 verses are Job 1, 16; 12, 6; 15, 19; 27, 12; 35, 3; 38, 13; 40, 14; 41, 1; 41, 3; Psalms 24, 7; 40, 14.

⁸¹ See Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, 30.

to support it.⁸² Methuen suggests that Aquinas' focus on the goodness of creatures aligns with the Dominican Order's endeavors to counter Catharism in the thirteenth century.⁸³ It is not surprising, therefore, that the theme of the goodness of creatures holds a prominent position in Aquinas' creation theology.

⁸² Aquinas invokes 20 verses to substantiate the affirmation of the goodness of creatures, while he invokes 22 verses to support the affirmation of God as the sole Creator.

⁸³ See Charlotte Methuen, "Interpreting the Books of Nature and Scripture in Medieval and Early Modern Thought: An Introductory Essay," in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, Brill's Series in Church History (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 187: "This project [of countering the Cathars] was particularly important to members of the Dominican order (founded 1216). It resulted in a theology which sought to emphasize that matter had been created by God and was consequently inherently good."