

Aquinas on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit as the Delight of the Christian Life

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IN THE WAKE OF THE RESURGENCE IN ATTENTION to virtue in Catholic moral theology, there is a renewed attention to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the beatitudes. However, this has not yet included significant attention to the fruits of the Holy Spirit. This is surprising since many virtue ethicists draw from the work of Thomas Aquinas and his treatise on virtue culminates in questions on the gifts, beatitudes, and finally the fruits. Scholars such as Eleonore Stump and Andrew Pinsent acknowledge the importance of the fruits but offer no comprehensive treatment. Servais Pinckaers noted that the fruits are the culmination of the treatise on happiness but is relatively silent on their nature. Yet, Thomas Aquinas agrees with Aristotle on the position that delight is the proper accompaniment of perfect human operations (*Sent. Eth.* X l. 6, lines 101-116). He also speaks of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as “delightful.” How are we then to appreciate Aquinas’s theology of the fruits?

In this essay, I begin to formulate an answer to this question by addressing a number of issues. First, I establish that the fruits are not discussed in isolation but in relation to other theological notions. This raises questions such as: What relations exist between the different elements of Aquinas theology? How are the virtues perfected by the gifts? What actions are designated by the beatitudes? How are the *actus* of the beatitudes and the fruits distinct from each other? After establishing a basic understanding of how Aquinas sees these relations, it will be somewhat easier to understand his further definition of the fruits, as this takes place in the larger framework of the *prima secundae*. Then, I discuss the fruits in greater detail by moving to the second point, which is to address some of the inadequacies of previous treatments of the fruits. Some scholars mistakenly conflate them with the passions whereas others, such as Servais Pinckaers, avoid this mistake but do not incorporate material from the Biblical commentaries of Aquinas. My third point is to present and reflect on Aquinas’s discussion of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in his commentary on Galatians and how this commentary relates to those on Isaiah and Matthew as well as to question 70 of the *prima secundae*. I then broaden this study

by turning to Aquinas's discussion of *fruitio*, which provides the proper framework to speak of the fruits. Fourth and finally, I offer a preliminary conclusion and suggest avenues for further research, since the present article is intended as a conversation starter on a topic that is rarely taken up.

At stake is the very coherence of the discussion of human perfection through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Each of the virtues is a gift of grace, and it is perfected by the gifts and actualized in the beatitudes and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Among these four elements of the structure of moral perfection, the fruits are the most seriously misunderstood. The gifts are usually acknowledged as the higher *habitus* they are, and the beatitudes are properly identified as *actus* by all scholars. It is only in the discussion of the fruits that we see ambiguous descriptions which suggest things about them that contradict what Aquinas affirms. There are four related problems: the fruits are often glossed over in discussions of the structure of the *Summa*; their relation to the beatitudes is unclear; they are not always properly acknowledged as *actus*; and they are confused with passions.¹ Thus, in the course of this essay, I argue why it is incorrect to relate the fruits to the passions, since Aquinas's description of them excludes the notion of passivity. He explicitly claims that the fruits are *actus*, and, in this article, I understand the fruits as delightful *actus*, springing forth from the infusion of grace in the soul of the human person.

INADEQUACIES IN TREATMENTS OF THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Aquinas's works, the fruits are almost always discussed in relation to the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the beatitudes. Although I address these connections, the primary object of this article is to provide conceptual clarity with regard to the fruits. To do this, I begin first of all, although this is perhaps stating the obvious, by establishing that the *secunda secundae* cannot be read without the *prima secundae*. The first book speaks of ends, passions, virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit as the principles of moral action, and the second book builds on this by speaking of concrete actions as they are formed by virtue and impeded by vice. Second, some argue that the *secunda secundae* is about the theological virtues and the cardinal virtues. But not everyone acknowledges that the latter are in fact infused cardinal virtues, and not their acquired counterparts. Each of the virtues in the *secunda secundae* is related to a gift of the Holy Spirit. Since the gifts only perfect the infused virtues, we can assume therefore that each of the virtues discussed in the *secunda secundae* is infused. What we are

¹ For example, see Eleonore Stump, "The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions," *Faith and Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2011): 42.

dealing with then is a discussion of the moral life of the Christian believer who is aided by grace. For this reason, in what follows in this article, when I will speak of “virtues,” I will therefore, by default, refer to infused virtues. Third, the neo-Thomist interpretation seems to be that the perfection brought about by the virtues, gifts, beatitudes and fruits is an exceptional form of Christian life.² This makes moral perfection a feature of exceptional Christians rather than the vocation of all, and it is this notion that Pinckaers passionately lamented in many of his writings. The structure of the *Summa theologiae* offers no support for the exceptionalist interpretation. The exceptional charisms, forms of religious life and ecclesiastical offices are discussed in questions 171-189 of the *secunda secundae*, but discussions the virtues, gifts, beatitudes and fruits all occur in questions 1-170, the section which discusses the moral life of all Christians (ST II-II prol.).³ Scholars generally acknowledge that there is an intimate connection of the fruits with the beatitudes in the *prima secundae* but find it difficult to understand the gifts, beatitudes, and fruits in relation to the virtues in the *secunda secundae*. Although these connections are made consistently, they seem to appear out of nowhere. This leads to a number of problematic interpretations, which I now address.

As noted, the fruits are often confused with the passions even though Aquinas explicitly calls them *actus*. Their names do suggest a certain likeness to other theological groups. Joy (*delectatio*) is a passion, but there is also a fruit with a similar name (*gaudium*). Sometimes a discussion of the gift of fear is taken as a discussion of the homonymous passion.⁴ The similarities can indeed be confusing. On the other hand, the fact that there are fruits named “charity” and “faith” has led no one to hold that they are virtues, in spite of them having the same names. This is because everyone knows the definition of a virtue and instantaneously decides that this does not apply to the fruits of the Holy Spirit. This is the way forward. Rather than beginning to imagine what fruits are by looking at their names, we should consider the basic definitions. What is a passion? Reworking a phrase of John Damascene, Aquinas defines a passion as “a movement of the sense appetite

² For a discussion of the origins of this development, see Charles Bouchard, “Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 539-558.

³ For an extended discussion and corroboration of these three arguments, see: Anton ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes: Reading Matthew, Disputing Grace and Virtue, Preaching Happiness* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 142-154, 181-182, 192-194.

⁴ Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, “Power Made Perfect in Weakness: Aquinas’s Transformation of the Virtue of Courage,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11 (2003): 155. Konyndyk DeYoung speaks of the “passion” of fear, although the article she discusses is introduced as a discussion on the *gift* of fear, cf. ST II-II q. 123.

caused by imagining good or evil” (ST I-II q. 22, a. 3).⁵ The very term “passion” denotes passivity: the person experiencing passions is being acted upon by an exterior object, which triggers a response (cf. ST I-II q. 22, a. 1 resp.). It is in the response, by moving away or toward the object, that the person acts, but this action does not belong to the passion itself. It is also important to note that passions are either positive or negative: desire or aversion, pleasure or pain. Fruits on the other hand are only phrased in positive terms, as Aquinas notes that in nature a fruit is delightful and applies this to the fruits of the Holy Spirit (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1 resp.). Furthermore, the fruits are *actus* and can therefore not be defined in terms of passivity. So, in order to give a proper definition of the fruits we need to abandon the notion that they are passions and delve deeper into Aquinas’s works.

Now, if the fruits of the Holy Spirit are *actus*, what sort of acts are they? Because the question on the fruits immediately follows that on the beatitudes, Andrew Pinsent claimed that the fruits “are also consequent upon the Beatitudes ... implying some intermediate step between Gift-based *actus* in general and the special *actus* that are Fruits.”⁶ Later, he suggests the metaphor of resonance. The fruits are delightful in the same way the harmony of musicians is pleasant to the human ear. In a similar way, the human person’s resonance with God is delightful.⁷ Pinsent’s intuition of harmony is very helpful. Indeed, in the succession of the beatitudes a “tranquility of order” is established thus restoring the harmony of the human person with God, in himself and with creation (*Sup. Mt. cap. 5 l. 2*).⁸ His description of the beatitudes as an “intermediate step” implies a temporal sequence, but sequences in the discussion of the virtues, gifts, beatitudes, and fruits tend to be logical. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the higher *habitus* that perfect the virtues. In that sense the gifts follow on the virtues. However, Aquinas claims that they are all infused at the same time. Similarly, the fruits do not follow on the beatitudes in the sense of “coming after” them. Instead they “come along” with the beatitudes. Here, the commentary on Matthew may be helpful, because it explores the relation between delight and happiness (*Sup. Mt. cap. 5 l. 2*). The reason Aquinas speaks of the fruits following the beatitudes is “because the idea of beatitude includes delight, as Aristotle says” (ST II-II q. 139, a. 2, arg. 3). Rather than coming after the beatitudes, the fruits are their supervenient delight.

⁵ For a discussion, see Nicholas Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 20ff.

⁶ Andrew Pinsent, “The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 481; cf. ST II-II q. 139 a. 2 arg. 3.

⁷ Andrew Pinsent, “The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit,” 482.

⁸ Cf. Ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 192-194.

Of the post-Vatican II interpreters of Aquinas, Servais Pinckaers offers the most convincing argument for the place of the fruits in the moral theology of Aquinas. In his article “Beatitude and the Beatitudes,” he claims that questions 1 to 70 of the *prima secundae* should be read as one large treatise on the nature of happiness and its attainment.⁹ He states that “in order to recount all the riches of life lived according to the Spirit, St. Thomas thought it appropriate to add to the Beatitudes the fruits of the Holy Spirit as enumerated by St. Paul in his Letter to Galatians Is not “fruit” the best image of beatitude — a fruit that has acquired its full perfection and beauty? It is the image of a life’s work which has reached its maturity.”¹⁰ The statement is brief and does not provide a further elaboration of this idea. What it does contribute is the insight that “beatitude” and “fruit” are intimately related notions.

A second intuition he shared was that a Christian view of moral action that can be considered properly human must include a form of pleasure or delight. In an article from 1990, later translated as “Reappropriating Aquinas’s Account of the Passions,” Pinckaers discussed the relation between virtues and passions.¹¹ As he did so often, he pitted his argument against the so-called morality of obligation. He argued that only in a morality based upon beatitude there can be a place for the emotions and that, therefore, only such a morality is truly human. Pinckaers agreed with Aristotle that “beatitude consists in the highest human activity that achieves the best kind of pleasure.”¹² He goes on to speak of this pleasure in terms of *delectatio* and joy (*gaudium*), basing himself on Aquinas’s commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and the *Summa theologiae*. He observes that *delectatio* can pertain to the tangible, whereas joy “only relates to reason and spirit.” The latter can therefore not be attributed to animals but only to humans, angels, and God.¹³ Spiritual joy is a participation in God’s happiness, and it is the experience proper to the exercise of virtue under the New Law.

Although the objective of this article is not to question Pinckaers’s premise that there is a place for emotions such as joy in a proper discussion of the moral life, it seems that he missed a distinction and as a consequence presented a less refined discussion of Aquinas. He speaks of delight and joy but does not bring up *fruitio* as the enjoyment

⁹ Servais Pinckaers, “Beatitude and the Beatitudes in Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*,” in *The Pinckaers Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 115-129. For a more thorough discussion of this theory see ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 142-154.

¹⁰ Pinckaers, “Beatitude and the Beatitudes,” 129.

¹¹ Servais Pinckaers, “Reappropriating Aquinas’s Account of the Passions,” in *The Pinckaers Reader*, 273-287.

¹² Pinckaers, “Reappropriating Aquinas’s Account of the Passions,” 275.

¹³ Pinckaers, “Reappropriating Aquinas’s Account of the Passions,” 285.

proper to the life of grace. In a noteworthy article, Daniel DeHaan identified three kinds of pleasure in Aquinas's writings. Aside from *delectatio* and *gaudium*, he does include *fruitio* as a form of pleasure.¹⁴ *Delectatio* and *gaudium*, DeHaan claims, pertain to respectively the external and internal senses and the terms describe the concupiscible power resting in good. These two forms of pleasure belong to the domain of the passions. The term *fruitio* pertains to what is intellectually apprehended and describes the will resting in the good.¹⁵ This is not a passion but *actus*. This new distinction is important because *fruitio* provides us with a description of enjoyment that is closely related to the *fructus* of the Holy Spirit and that takes this discussion out of the domain of the passions and into that of human action. Perhaps it is because Pinckaers seems to have missed this particular distinction that he always struggled to account for the place of the fruits in moral theology and, at times, even glossed over them. For example, in his otherwise fine contribution to *The Ethics of Aquinas*, he notes in the commentary on the *Sentences* the beatitudes are discussed with an eye to "the relationship among the virtues, gifts, and beatitudes" but does not mention that Aquinas also relates these to the fruits.¹⁶

THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE FRUITS IN SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARY AND THE *SUMMA*

These misinterpretations of the fruits and their conflation with the passions raise questions that need to be explored further. In what follows, I track the development of Aquinas's thought on the fruits in his commentaries and then reconsider the *Summa* in light of this. Before writing the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas discussed the fruits on a number of occasions. The commentary on the fruits proper is that on the letter to the Galatians. This letter is the *locus* where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are found. Earlier, Aquinas also discussed the fruits in his commentary on the *Sentences* and on the book of Isaiah. Remarkably, in all of these works, he relates the fruits to the virtues, gifts, and beatitudes.

The commentaries on the *Sentences* and Isaiah are among the earliest works of Aquinas, written during his first stay in Paris, between 1251 and 1255.¹⁷ In these works, Aquinas followed his master Albert the Great who made the unusual choice of connecting the virtues, gifts,

¹⁴ Daniel DeHaan, "Delectatio, gaudium, fruitio. Three Kinds of Pleasure for Three Kinds of Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas," *Quaestio* 15 (2015): 543-552.

¹⁵ DeHaan, "Delectatio, gaudium, fruitio," 544.

¹⁶ Servais Pinckaers, "The Sources of the Ethics of Saint Thomas," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen Pope (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 24.

¹⁷ Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Sa Personne et son Oeuvre* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2015), 51-54, 65-66, 432-434.

beatitudes, and fruits.¹⁸ Albert spoke in his commentary on the *Sentences* of virtues, gifts, beatitudes and fruits as perfecting the soul in regard to four types of acts.¹⁹ As I noted on another occasion,

When Albert seeks to answer how the gifts perfect the human soul, his solution is to present them in a hierarchical order. The virtue of faith allows one to know the first truth. The gifts are given as an aid to virtue, in this case they allow the subject to taste the truth that is known. Even higher is the beatitude of the clean of heart, which gives a maximum certitude of the truth. The fruits are the highest point in Albert's categorization, presented here as the subject's being refreshed in the taste of this certitude. This fourfold distinction is presented as respectively first, second, third, and fourth act.²⁰

Although Aquinas follows Albert's innovative inclusion of the fruits in this discussion, in the commentary on Isaiah he begins to go his own way by abandoning Albert's hierarchical ordering of the four connected theological elements. Instead, he begins to develop his own theory of human action, considering the virtues and gifts as *habitus* and the beatitudes and fruits as *actus*. He describes the beatitudes as actions of virtue perfected by the gifts (*Sup. Is.* 11, lines 142-143). "Such operation," Aquinas continues, "is necessarily accompanied by delight (*delectatio*), because delight is the operation proper to unimpeded habit, as the Philosopher says" (*Sup. Is.* 11, lines 142-143). In the context of the commentary, it is clear that Aquinas refers to the fruits when speaking of delight.

The commentary on Galatians provides us with further noteworthy insights into how Aquinas understands the fruits. It has proven difficult to determine when Aquinas lectured on this Pauline letter, but it seems that the text of his lectures was taken down between 1261 and 1265.²¹ The commentary would then predate the second Parisian stay, during which the *prima secundae* was composed. Many of the insights from the commentary will later find their way into the discussion of the fruits in the *Summa*. Rather than offering a line-by-line reading of the commentary, I note five key features of the characterization of the fruits in the commentary. First, fruits of the Holy Spirit are "fruits"

¹⁸ In this article I do not consider the commentary on the *Sentences* because this teaching is significantly different from Aquinas's mature theology, which builds on the Biblical commentaries. See ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 125-128.

¹⁹ Bernhard Blankenhorn, *The Mystery of Union With God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 91-92.

²⁰ Ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 129-130.

²¹ Thomas d' Aquin, *Commentaire de l'Épître aux Galates*, trans. Jean-Eric Stroobant de Saint-Éloy (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2008), 9; Torrell, *Initiation à Saint Thomas d' Aquin*, 327, 450.

because they are to be understood “not as something earned or acquired, but as produced.” They are produced in us by the Spirit, who is the source of the moral life of the Christian. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that “we acquire the habit of the virtues; these in turn make us capable of working according to virtue” (*Sup. Ad Gal.* 5 l. 6).²² The fruits as acts springing forth from these virtues have the same root: “[Paul] says therefore, *the fruit of the Spirit*, which arises in the soul from the sowing of spiritual grace” (*Sup. Ad Gal.* 5 l. 6). It is in this light that we can understand the later discussion in the *Summa* where the fruits are described “as if arising from a kind of divine seed” (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1 resp.). The second notable feature of the fruits in the commentary is that they are characterized by the fact that they are “a source of delight.” Here it is noted in passing but we will see it is essential to understanding the distinctive character of the fruits. Third, the delight of the fruits is not pursued for its own sake. They are *actus*, and one could argue that we should therefore not delight in them since we should delight in God alone. Aquinas responds to this objection by comparing the fruits to a medicine. A bitter-tasting medicine is desired only for the sake of its end, namely good health, but one can find a sweet medicine pleasing and formally seek it out for this reason, even though it is still taken with an eye to the end of health (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1, ad 2; cf. q. 11, a. 3 resp.). We will see that this description of the origin and delightfulness of the fruits will find its way into the *Summa*, along with the analogy of medicine. Fourth, the commentary notes that the fruits “perfect one either inwardly or outwardly.” Charity, joy, peace, patience, and longanimity are the fruits that perfect a person inwardly with regard to both good and evil things. The other fruits direct one with regard to exterior things, but the inward perfection of the fruits comes first. Fifth, as he did in the commentary on Isaiah and as he would do in the *Summa*, Aquinas establishes the relation of the fruits to the virtues, gifts, and beatitudes. When he rounds up the discussion on the fruits, he notes that all works of virtue “are called fruits of the Spirit, both because they have a sweetness and delight in themselves and because they are last and congruous products of the gifts.” Aquinas takes care also to note the distinct features of the fruits: “A virtue can be considered the habit and the act. Now the habit of a virtue qualifies a person to act well. If it enables him to act well in a human mode, it is called a virtue. But if it qualifies one for acting well above the human mode, it is called a gift....But as to the act of a virtue, it is either perfective, and in this way is a beatitude; or it is a source of delight, and in this way it is a fruit” (*Sup. Ad Gal.* 5 l. 6). Note that Aquinas relates the fruits to the virtues and explicitly calls them acts.

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. Fabian Larcher and Matthew Lamb (Lander: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

This fifth notion will also be developed further in the *Summa*. To the remarks on delight, Aquinas adds there that they are the blossoms of future happiness (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1, ad 1). The most striking difference between the *Summa* and the commentary will be the absence of the distinction between “human mode” and “above the human mode.”²³ This shift in language is most likely the result of Aquinas’s desire to give an even more explicit grounding of human perfection in divine grace. As we saw, the commentary already reflects this effort by speaking of the fruits as arising “from the sowing of spiritual grace.”

The commentary on Galatians already contains the key notions of Aquinas’s theology of the fruits. This theology is in fact developed throughout the Biblical commentaries. Both the commentaries on Isaiah and Galatians contain miniature treatises on the distinction between virtues, gifts, beatitudes, and fruits. The latest of Aquinas’s commentaries that is relevant to our inquiry is on the gospel of Matthew. In this work Aquinas also precedes his commentary on the letter of the text with a miniature treatise. Here, he does not address the fruits explicitly, which makes it the exception in those works of Aquinas that discuss the Scriptural passages relevant to the gifts, beatitudes, or fruits. One aspect of it will prove important though. Commenting on the beatitude of the clean of heart, Aquinas speaks of the contemplative act and the happiness it brings. He notes two things, with reference to Aristotle. First, in order for contemplation to make a person happy, it has to have God as its object. Second, he notes that “delight perfects happiness just as beauty perfects youth” (*Sup. Mt.* c. 5 l. 2; *Sent. Eth.* X c. VI, lines 107-108, 111-112).²⁴ When we explore the analogy with beauty’s perfection of youth, we learn that delight itself does not constitute the essence of youth but is a supervenient end.²⁵ In the commentary on Galatians and the *Summa*, Aquinas addresses similar concerns with regard to the fruits, making sure that delight is not sought for the sake of itself but is the effect of the attainment of something that can properly be called an end of human action. These remarks also indicate that he presupposes a relation between happiness and delight. In what follows, I argue that, in the *prima secundae*, the delight that originates in actions of the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit is properly called *fruitio* and described by the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

²³ The terminology of virtue “in a human mode” or “above the human mode” features in Aquinas’s earlier works but disappears in the *Summa*. For a discussion see Ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 136-140.

²⁴ Note that Aquinas follows Aristotle in speaking of *felicitas*, but the context is a discussion of *beatitudo*. For the edition of the text, see Anton ten Klooster, “Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes: Edition of the Basel Manuscript,” *Jaarboek Thomas Instituut* 36 (2017): 41-87.

²⁵ Kevin White, “Pleasure, a Supervenient End,” in *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Tobias Hoffman, Jörn Müller and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 220-238.

However, if Aquinas believed *fruitio* was the proper form of pleasure or delight proper to the Christian life, why does he speak of *delectatio* in the commentaries on Isaiah, Galatians, and Matthew? In part, it is because theological precision is not a feature of this type of texts. Aquinas wrote down his remarks on Isaiah, but the text of the commentaries on Galatians and Matthew are *reportationes*, reports of a class done by a secretary. In class, Aquinas did provide conceptual frameworks before further engaging his subject. In the commentary on Matthew, he speaks of delight not in order to give a full-blown account of pleasure and virtue but to help his audience understand the words “blessed are the clean of heart.” Still, Aquinas continues to use the term “delight” in the *Summa*. In question 70 of the *prima secundae*, he states that the fruits are delightful and that one delights in them, but we can observe similar discussions in question 11 on *fruitio* because *fruitio* is further specified in the article as its own type of delight.

In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas presents his mature theology of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The *Summa* presents us with the *disputatio*, the discussion of questions that arise from the *lectio* of Scripture. The *disputatio* is built on the foundation of *lectio*, and it is therefore helpful to read the two together. This provides us with the most comprehensive understanding of a given author’s views on a subject, including Aquinas’s theology of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Reading question 70 of the *prima secundae* together with the commentary will direct us to a question on *fruitio* in the *Summa*. At stake is not whether or not Aquinas believes a successful Christian moral life involves some kind of enjoyment. It does. The question is whether or not he believes this enjoyment should be described in terms of the passions. If the answer is no, how should we then speak of the fruits?

Recent studies have convincingly argued that the structure of virtues, gifts, beatitudes, and fruits is key to understanding the moral section of the *Summa theologiae*. The infused virtues and the gifts are the governing *habitus* of the Christian life.²⁶ The actions springing forth from this are properly described in the beatitudes. After discussing all of these, Aquinas moves on to the fruits in question 70 of the *prima secundae*. Here, he poses four questions. For our investigation, the first two are particularly relevant: are the fruits of the Holy Spirit *actus*, and do they differ from the beatitudes? The first article affirms some of the things we already saw in the commentary on Galatians: the term fruit designates something ultimate and delightful. Aquinas again takes up the example of medicine to clarify that we should delight in God only as the ultimate end, and in virtuous deeds “not as if

²⁶ A recent study discusses this in great detail and compares competing interpretations of the gifts, see John Meinert, *The Love of God Poured Out: Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2018).

they were the end, but by reason of their intrinsic nobility, which delights the virtuous man” (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1, ad 2). He takes up the notion from the commentary on Galatians that the gifts are *actus*. Aquinas does not dwell on this point but rather goes on to explain how they are in fact fruits of the Holy Spirit rather than of reason. It is in the second article that Aquinas further refines his position by clarifying how he distinguishes the fruits from the beatitudes.

The beatitudes and the fruits both are “fruit” of the action of the Holy Spirit since both spring forth from the virtues and the gifts of the Spirit, the *habitus* infused in the soul by God. Furthermore, “It belongs to the very concept of fruit that the thing be ultimate and delightful,” and this can also be said of the beatitudes as Aquinas had argued in the previous article (ST I-II q. 70, a. 2, arg. 3). Yet, the difference in their enumeration, Aquinas argues in the *sed contra*, indicates the difference in species. In the response, he addresses the objection that the beatitudes are also called “fruits.” This is true, but the opposite is not true: one cannot call the fruits “beatitudes” because “the concept of beatitude entails more than the concept of fruit. For the concept of fruit it is sufficient that there be something ultimate and delightful; but for the concept of beatitude it is required in addition that the thing be perfect and outstanding.” He reaffirms that any virtuous action is in a sense a fruit but that “only perfect works are called beatitudes” (ST I-II q. 70, a. 2 resp.). In brief and in Aquinas’s own words, “the beatitudes are fruits but not... all fruits are beatitudes” (ST I-II q. 70, a. 2, ad 1). Delving deeper into the question as to what the fruits are, he considers them “in the light of the various ways in which the Holy Spirit proceeds within us. In this process, man’s spirit (*mens hominis*) is put in order first of all within itself; secondly, in regard to that which is near to it; thirdly, in regard to that which is beneath it” (ST I-II q. 70, a. 3 resp.).

From the discussion in question 70 of the *prima secundae*, we can take away a number of things with regard to the fruits. First and foremost, they are *actus* rather than passions. Second, just as the beatitudes, they are a fruit produced by the action of the Holy Spirit. Third, it is proper to them that they are delightful, and we can understand this as a supervenient delight. Fourth, they order the *mens* of the human person, first of all within itself. It is this latter observation that gives us another important insight into the fruits. The infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the infused *habitus* that allow the believer to act toward the final end of eternal happiness. Beatitudes and fruits are the *actus* that spring forth from them. But whereas Aquinas’s discussions of the beatitudes speak of concrete ways of acting such as selling one’s possessions, performing works of mercy and establishing peace, the fruits are characterized by a far greater interiority. As I noted elsewhere,

The fruits order the human mind, and pertain largely to interior actions such as peace in the light of turmoil, patience in suffering, a kind attitude toward neighbors, and a healthy restraint with regard to concupiscence. The beatitudes on the other hand call not only for inner peace but also to the establishment of peace in one's life This difference in orientation, inward rather than outward, is a proper way of distinguishing the fruits from the beatitudes.²⁷

It is true that the fruits also perfect one outwardly, but both in the commentary on Galatians and in the *Summa* the ordering of the human person "inwardly" or "within itself" comes in the first place. Even of those things that concern outward stimuli, the fruits can be interpreted in terms of the inner ordering of the person. The fruits of continence and chastity, for example, order a person with regard to outward things but concern the interior appetite (*Sup. Ad Gal.* c. 5 l. 6; ST I-II q. 70, a. 3 resp.).

Given that the fruits are delightful and *actus*, we need to find a way of speaking about them that acknowledges both these things. It is clear that the passions do not qualify for the task. At the same time, we are looking for terminology that does justice to the interiority of the fruits. When we search the *Summa* for questions that bring together the notions of fruit or fruition, delight and an interior form of action, two come up: question 70 on the fruits and question 11 on enjoyment (*fruitio*). In both these articles, Augustine's discussion of *frui* serves as the point of reference to discuss the notion of delight. Both articles address the objection that the will should not rest in something that is not the ultimate end, which is what is denoted by the notion of fruition or delight (ST I-II q. 11, a. 3; q. 70, a. 1).²⁸ Both articles flesh out what it means to reap a fruit: "Fruition seems to be nothing else than to receive a fruit," Aquinas states in question 11 (ST I-II q. 11, a. 1, arg. 1). This is the same terminology we saw in question 70 (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1 resp.). Most importantly, both *fruitio* and the fruits of the Holy Spirit are considered *actus*. Because the two articles are so similar in the language they use, it seems that Aquinas considers *fruitio* and the *fructus* of the Holy Spirit as similar concepts. The major difference between the two articles is that question 11 deals with fruition as an act of the will whereas in question 70 Aquinas explains that the type of action he is speaking of is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Enjoying God "as being a good and ultimate . . . is the object of will. Such also is it as an enjoying. The mind indeed is the power laying hold of this end; yet the will it is which sets us in motion towards it and enjoys it when attained," Aquinas says of *fruitio* in general (ST I-II q. 11, a. 1, ad. 1).

²⁷ Ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 174.

²⁸ See Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 77, 86-92.

In his discussion of the fruits, his interest is to distinguish its origin: “If activity proceeds from a man in virtue of his rational faculty, it is said to be the fruit of reason. But if it proceeds in virtue of a higher power, namely that of the Holy Spirit, it is called a fruit of the Holy Spirit, as if arising from a kind of divine seed” (ST I-II q. 70, a. 1 resp.).

The third article of question 11 discusses another notion that is important to *fruitio* and the fruits: its relation to the ultimate end. Strictly speaking, *fruitio* is said only of the ultimate end. Yet, Aquinas does allow for forms of enjoyment in this life. “That which in itself holds a certain delightfulness,” he writes in the response, “and to which other things lead up, can indeed be called a fruit in a sense, but not as though it peculiarly and quite completely fulfilled the notion of a fruit to be enjoyed” (ST I-II q. 11, a. 3 resp.). The will rests completely only in the ultimate end, and any enjoyment in this life is had in anticipation of ultimate *fruitio*. If there is any doubt that all of this can be said of the fruits, Aquinas takes it away in his response to the second objection. Since fruits as joy, charity and peace do not have the character of being the ultimate end, one cannot say that *fruitio* pertains exclusively to that end, the objector argues. In the response Aquinas makes a distinction he also makes in question 70, namely between what produces the fruit and the person enjoying the fruit (ST I-II q. 11, a. 3, ad 2; q. 70, a. 1 resp.). The fruits of the Holy Spirit, Aquinas answers, “are the effects in us of the Holy Spirit, not as though they are to be enjoyed as our ultimate end” (ST I-II q. 11, a. 3, ad 2; q. 70, a. 3 resp.). The key distinction here is that between the end itself and our gaining of it, Aquinas explains in what follows. God is the ultimate end as “the objective reality ultimately sought for,” *fruitio* belongs to the process of attaining this end.²⁹ Applied to the fruits of the Holy Spirit, we can say that charity, joy, peace, and the other fruits are those things we enjoy as we tend toward our ultimate end. This theory can be corroborated with Aquinas’s discussion of the beatitudes in both his commentary on Matthew and in the *Summa*. In these works, he suggests happiness is gradually attained in this life: a person can have an inchoate participation in the happiness that is to be had fully *in patria*. For example, the mercy of God is had fully in heaven, but it is had in an inchoate form in the forgiveness of sins, by the removal of temporal defects (cf. *Sup. Mt.* c. 5 l. 2; ST I-II q. 69, a. 2 resp.; a. 3 resp.; II-II q. 9, a. 2, ad 1). If we understand the beatitudes as the *actus* by which the human person tends toward happiness and begins to participate in it, then we can consider the fruits as the interior *actus* by which this happiness is enjoyed. Defined as such we are able to speak of the fruits as actions, and in a way that takes them out of the discourse on the passions but

²⁹ See Pinckaers, “Beatitude and the Beatitudes,” 129; Ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes*, 148-149.

instead links them closely to the *actus* of the beatitudes. This approach takes the fruits out of their relative isolation and considers them as an integral part of Aquinas's discussion of human flourishing.

Does the connection of *fruitio* and the fruits mean that there are twelve distinctive pleasures in the Christian life since there are twelve fruits?³⁰ This concern perhaps stretches the concept of alignments further than Aquinas does. Traditionally, there are not twelve works of the flesh, but to him this doesn't mean that the fruits cannot be considered in opposition to them (*Sup. Ad Gal.* c. 5 l. 6). Another way to address this issue is by pointing out Aquinas's use of tradition and faithfulness to Scripture. Drawing from Augustine, he adopts the term *fruitio* to describe the purest form of pleasure. He cannot simply reduce all forms of pleasure in the Christian life to this single term because of the twelve *fructus* of the Holy Spirit he encounters in Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians. The purpose of relating them to the notion of *fruitio* is to provide a conceptual framework in which we can understand the fruits. We should realize that Aquinas's starting point is not an effort to clearly define the fruits. In his Biblical commentaries, he proposed an alignment between the virtues, gifts, beatitudes and fruits, clarifying some aspects of it with reference to Aristotle.

CONCLUSION: THE FRUITS, EMOTIONS, AND FURTHER WAYS TO EXPLORE THEM

The objective of this article has been to provide some conceptual clarification with regard to the fruits. Any form of virtuous action is delightful, and, in the Christian life, the fruits describe the delight that comes from actions springing forth from the *habitus* of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One could say that in the life of grace "the fruits are to Aquinas as pleasure is to Aristotle."³¹ The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the delights that come with actions that have as their goal union with God, whereas pleasure in the Aristotelian sense comes with actions that are directed toward natural happiness.

I have engaged the work of Andrew Pinsent and Servais Pinckaers, in the hope of building on their insights. I also touched upon the conflation of the fruits with the passions, as it is implicated, for example, in the work of Stump. In response to Pinsent, I provided arguments against the suggested temporal sequence from beatitudes to fruits, while agreeing on the usefulness of the metaphor of resonance as a description for a successful moral life. Pinckaers offered some reflections on the fruits and spoke of the importance of enjoyment in Chris-

³⁰ A question raised by William C. Mattison in response to a paper presentation on the fruits.

³¹ This is the summary of Matthew Levering, given in response to the aforementioned paper; the subsequent development of this notion is my own.

tian morality. I returned to the sources by studying Aquinas's expositions on the fruits in the Biblical commentaries and in the *Summa theologiae*. This led to further precisions and a first exploration of how Aquinas understands enjoyment in terms of *fruitio*. Key to my interpretation is the notion that the fruits are characterized by their interiority, something that can be recognized both in their general definition and in the description of individual fruits.

At the outset, I noted that the fruits are rarely taken up in discussions of Aquinas's moral theology. The present contribution is an effort to begin to fill the lacuna but is in no way a comprehensive study. Many questions remain and need to be explored further. Future research on the fruits could ask what precisions we can add to our understanding of *fruitio* as the will resting in the good. One thing I have not done in this article is to study the description of each of the fruits in detail. Both the commentary on Galatians and the *Summa* contain enough material for such a follow-up investigation. This would help us to better understand how the fruits are *actus* and what the relation is between the inward and outward perfection of the subject. In further exploring the relation between passions, human action, grace, and happiness, the leading intuition should be this: Aquinas's approach is a positive one. He seeks to understand how the Spirit guides the believer on the path toward eternal happiness. If we pursue the question in this way, we follow in the footsteps of Servais Pinckaers, whose insights provide us with a solid basis for further reflection on the morality of happiness.³² **M**

³² I wish to thank the organizers of the First Pinckaers Symposium held in May 2018 at Notre Dame University for providing me with an opportunity to present my first reflections on the fruits in an environment that was both academically challenging and encouraging. I am also grateful to William C. Mattison for his constructive feedback on earlier drafts of this article.