8 To adore (*Adorare*)

Only God is to be adored with adoration or service (*latria*), which is worship (*theosebia*) according to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*,[[1]](#endnote-1) that is, with an honor (*cultu*) due only to God. Other saints are to be honored with an adoration of reverence (*dulia*). In truth the cross of Christ or the Blessed Virgin are to be adored with the profoundest respect of special veneration (*hyperdulia*) because of the contact which they had to Christ’s own body.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Wherefore, they who proceed devoutly before Christ, are said to adore him alone, according to that of Matt. 4[:10]: “The Lord your God shall you adore.” In truth,[[3]](#endnote-3) since only God is to be adored with service to which pertain altars, temples, sacrifices, which only are to be consecrated to God both in dedicating and offering; certainly not to the angels, nor apostles, nor martyrs, but to God alone for the honor of those. Just as it is evident in Apoc. [22:9], where the angel said to John wishing to adore him, “See thou do it not,” he said, “Adore God.” And in the Acts of the Apostles [14:11-14], Paul and Barnabas in Iconium prohibited themselves to be adored. And Mardochai feared to adore the proud Aman lest he transfer the honor of God to a man [Esth. 3:1-3].

Why is it, therefore, that the three Magi are said to have adored the child, when this child in nature was human according to that said, the child is not a maker but was made, [Matt. 2:1-12]. Also when Moses mandated in the law “lest you be deceived by error, you adore and serve them, which the Lord your God created, [Deut. 4:19]. To this therefore Aristotle spoke syllogistically,[[4]](#endnote-4) that God is to be adored, but this child is God, therefore he is to be adored. For there is such a great personal union in this substance (*hypostasi*), so that in this Deity they adore the humanity, and the contrary, according to that of Psal. [98:5]: “Adore his footstool, for it is holy.”

¶ Therefore, who adore the Lord, they ought to attend to three things: motive, mode, and condition. Motive is double: the work of creation and the work of redemption.

¶ Concerning the first, if someone restores to me a limb that has been lost, justly I would adore him. But God gave the soul with powers, the body with limbs, and the world with its contents. Therefore we say with the Psal. [94:6]: “Come let us adore and fall down: and weep before the Lord that made us.” Apoc. 14[:7]: “Adore him, that made heaven and earth.”

¶ Concerning the second, the son is held to adore the father, moreover the thief his bondsman, the infirm his healer, Exod. 4[:31]: “They heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, and falling down they adored.” Luke 24[:52]: “They adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy.”

Again, the mode of adoring is double: one does it reverently with an exterior action: not laughing,[[5]](#endnote-5) not telling stories, not thinking distractedly, 2 Esdr. 8[:6], lifting up their hands, they adored him with their faces to the ground. Without doubt, reverence is owed for a benefice, but most to God himself. Therefore, John 9[:38], the blind man enlightened “said, I believe, Lord. And falling down, he adored him.”

¶ The second mode of adoring relates to an interior effect, so that God is adored fervently, not feigned, not lukewarm, John 4[:24]: “They that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth.” Eccli. 35[:20]: “He that adores God with joy, shall be accepted, and his prayer shall approach even to the clouds.” If a hand approaches the fire, it gets hot. Much more the heart approaching to God, who is called fire, Ps. [95:9]: “Adore the Lord in his holy court,” that is, in the human heart.

Again, the condition of adoration is double. The first is in the present, namely, the request of petitions. Thus the needy adore the power so that they may be heard. The example in the lepers as Matt. 8[:2]: “Behold a leper came and adored him.” The second, Hebr. [10:11], in the future, namely, in the reign of the blessed. Matt. 2[:11]: “Falling down they adored him.” And it follows, through another way they returned into their region. Concerning which in Psal. [114:9]: “I will please the Lord in the land of the living.”

¶ Again, Christ is to be adored on account of three things which are clear in his incarnation. On account of his power, because the greatest distances are joined, as deity and humanity. On account of wisdom because the greatest marvels are revealed, as, namely, he becomes the creator, as the Virgin brings forth on account of the goodness, because the highest becomes soft, the strong becomes weak, God becomes man. Therefore, on account of the first he is adored with reverence, Ps. [71:11]: “The kings of the earth shall adore him.” On account of the second he is adored with prudence, Isaiah [66:23]: “All flesh shall come to adore before my face.” On account of the third he is adored with devotion, [2] Chron. [23:30]: “Bowing the knee they adored.”

1. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10.4 (PL 41:281): Nam, ut alia nunc taceam, quae pertinent ad religionis obsequium, quo colitur Deus; sacrificium certe nullus hominum est qui audeat dicere deberi, nisi Deo. Multa denique de cultu divino usurpata sunt, quae honoribus deferrentur humanis, sive humilitate nimia, sive adulatione pestifera; ita tamen ut quibus ea deferrentur, homines haberentur, qui dicuntur colendi et venerandi; si autem eis multum additur, et adorandi: quis vero sacrificandum censuit, nisi ei quem Deum aut scivit, aut putavit, aut finxit? Quam porro antiquus sit in sacrificando Dei cultus, duo illi fratres Cain et Abel satis indicant, quorum majoris Deus reprobavit sacrificium, minoris aspexit.

Cf. 10.16.1 (PL 41.294): Cum ergo ad hunc unum quidam Angeli, quidam vero ad se ipsos latria colendos signis mirabilibus excitent; et hoc ita ut illi istos coli prohibeant, isti autem illum prohibere non audeant; quibus potius sit credendum, respondeant Platonici, respondeant quicumque philosophi, respondeant theurgi, vel potius periurgi: hoc enim sunt illae omnes artes vocabulo digniores. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *Sermo* 7 (PL 40.1249): Haec enim dulia consistit in reverentiae exhibitione et dilectione. Hoc autem facere debemus non solum pastoribus, sed et sanctis Dei; et tunc reddimus per obedientiam quae sunt Caesaris Caesari. Sed tunc reddimus quae sunt Dei Deo, quando in latria perseveramus: hoc enim soli Deo congruit. Haec enim consistit in oratione, et gratiarum actione, et cultus exterioris exhibitione, et interioris mentis devotione.

Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2-2, q. 103, a. 3.

Cf. Perhaps Higden added this paragraph to the earlier version of the Distinctiones under the influence of Alan of Lille, *Liber in Distinctionibus* (PL 210.693): Adorare proprie debitum cultum Deo exhibere, vel theosebia, vel theosis, vel latriosis: haec consistit in contemplatione, oratione, oblatione et hujusmodi, unde in Psalmo: Venite, adoremus et procidamus ante Deum. Signat etiam homini vel alicui rationali creaturae cultum exhibere, et dicitur dulia: haec autem consistit in obedientia, in genuflexione, in capitis inclinatione et hujusmodi; unde in Gen.: Abraham tres angelos vidit et unum adoravit, id est eis cultum debitum exhibuit. Dicitur venerari, unde in Antiphon.: Crucem tuam, Domine, adoramus, id est veneramur. Dicitur ad Deum orare, unde: Introibo in domum tuam, adorabo. Ad Deum orare, id est fide, spe et charitate ad Deum tendere. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Innocent III, *Sermo* 8 (PL 217:488-489): Verum cum solus Deus sit adorandus, illa videlicet adoratione quae latria Graece vocatur vel nuncupatur, ad quam pertinent altaria, templa et sacrificia, quae soli Deo sunt dedicanda, consecranda et offerenda, non quidem angelis, non apostolis, non martyribus, sed Deo tantum ad honorem ipsorum; quia videlicet servitus ista non creaturae, sed Creatori debetur. (Unde angelus [Col.0488C] in Apocalypsi se prohibuit adorari, dicens Joanni: «Deum adora; ego enim frater tuus sum, et conservus fratrum tuorum (Apoc. XIX).» Et Paulus et Barnabas cum Lystris in Lycaonia claudum sanassent, et voluissent eis turbae victimas immolare, conscissis tunicis exierunt in turbas, prohibentes se adorari (Act. XIV). Et Mardochaeus testatur se timuisse Aman superbissimum adorare, ne honorem Dei sui transferret ad hominem, et ne quemquam adoraret, excepto Deo suo (Esth. XIII).

Quid est hoc quod magi non Deum, sed puerum adorasse dicuntur? Qui licet in veritate sit Deus, non tamen secundum naturam divinam, sed secundum carnem assumptam est puer, secundum quam etiam non est [Col.0488D] Factor, sed factus, Paulo attestante: «Qui factus est ex semine David secundum carnem (Rom. I),» contestante Psalmista, quod «Homo factus est in ea, et ipse fundavit eam Altissimus (Psal. LXXXVI),» cum et Moyses mandet in lege, ne quis errore deceptus adoret ea, quae fecit Dominus Deus suus (Deut. IV).

Porro si solus Deus sit adorandus, cum puer iste sit Deus, Isaia propheta testante: «Puer natus est nobis, et Filius datus est nobis, et vocabitur nomen ejus Admirabilis, Consiliarius, Deus, Fortis;» ergo puer iste, qui natus est nobis, quasi Deus adorandus existit. Una quidem adoratione cum Patre qui genuit, et Spiritu qui procedit, sicut ipsa Veritas ait in Evangelio: «Veri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in Spiritu et veritate [Col.0489A] (Joan. IV).» Nam et tanta est illa unio personalis inter divinam et humanam naturam, ut in hypostasi Verbi, propter assumentem divinitatem, humanitas etiam adoretur assumpta, secundum illud propheticum: «Adorate scabellum pedum ejus, quoniam sanctum est (Psal. XCVIII).» Caetera vero sacra vel sancta non adoranda sunt latria, sed dulia veneranda, ne forte sub specie pietatis θεοσέβεια convertatur in idololatriam, et ita subintret vitium pro virtute. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.3, 1014a35-1014b3 (Barnes 2:1601): The so-called elements of geometrical proofs, and in general the elements of demonstrations, have a similar character; for the primary demonstrations, each of which is implied in many demonstrations, are called elements of demonstrations; and the primary syllogisms, which have three terms and proceed by means of one middle, are of this nature. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Bernard, *Tractatus de Interiori Domo seu de Conscientia Aedificanda* 8.15 (PL 184:51): Denique ratio per mentis excessum in contemplationem sublimium sublevata, et in divinae contemplationis arcanum rapta, atque ibi illuminata [Col.0515C] ad cognitionem veritatis et veri luminis, inflammata ad desiderium bonitatis, omnes illicitas voluptates, affectiones, et vagas memoriae cogitationes, cordis dispersiones, animi fluctuationes, spiritus evagationes, et mentis distractiones in unum colligit, atque in illo felicitatis fonte totum suum desiderium figit.

31.66 (PL 184:540): Proh dolor! religio relinquitur, et silentium rumpitur: hinc indi volant verba vana et inutilia, forsitan et detractoria. Sic confabulando saepe consumitur dies integra.

34.73 (PL 184:543): Tu vero comedendo, bibendo, jocando, et ridendo, tempus otiose vivendo perdis, quod tibi indulserat Deus ad acquirendam gratiam, et ad promerendam gloriam. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)