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Every generation has its own characteristic affliction. In the current generation there appears to be a general lack of concern for purposeful lives. In America countless college-degree holding twenty-somethings live paycheck to paycheck with no end in sight and no plan in place. The most common reason I hear for this lack of purpose is “I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up,” which astounds me time after time. While I do not subscribe to the careerism which modern America pushes on it citizens, nor to the idea that obtaining “American Dream” produces the most happiness, I do believe every person should be working towards some goal; unfortunately, this has not been the case as of late. Although idleness is not unique to this generation, it has gripped far greater numbers that ever before. The lack of effort exercised by the current generation not only betrays their sense that time will have no effect on them, but also their general apathy toward everything in their lives. Although everything the modern world has invented, or improved is at their fingertips, there is still a refusal to take action towards any good in their lives. By good I am not referring to ideas as dramatic as making the world better, but rather those things which would cause pleasure in their lives. While it is clear that this is the type of pleasure which every person seeks, the pleasures found in drugs, alcohol, and other sources of physical gratification are being sought after. In effect, people today are failing to choose long-term pleasures such as having a sense of purpose in life. Why is this generation of America, it seems, so apathetic?

This phenomenon is certainly not specific to our age. In ancient Greece they referred to this apathy endemic to our age as *acedia*. The word is a transliteration from
the Greek word αχήδεια, literally, “lack of care.” Siegfried Wenzel, author of *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia*, states the word’s historical Greek meaning is both positive and negative, when he says the word is used to mean “carelessness or freedom from sorrow . . . [and] weariness, exhaustion, or apathy, which in at least one passage is connected with the moral endeavors of Stoic philosophy.”¹ Wenzel traces the use of the word into the Septuagint, where it appears nine times with a general meaning of weariness or anguish. “One of these passages should be singled out because of its later importance as a bridge between the still very vague meaning of αχήδεια in the Septuagint and its eventual application to a specific temptation. It is verse 28 of Psalm 118: ‘My soul has slumbered because of αχήδεια.”² The word then became a title for a temptation for ascetics and monks to abandon their duties and rigorous practices in the writing of the ascetic and mystic Evagrius Ponticus (AD 345-399). Gregory the Great (AD 540-604) and others then applied the word to all people, not just those in the coenobitic life, and it was St. Thomas Aquinas (AD 1225-1274) who finally wrote a serious treatment of the experience and phenomenon that came to be known as *acedia*.

Supplement to the historical meaning of *acedia*, apathy is a loose term for lack of interest or concern and the word characterizes well the actions (or lack there of) of the current generation described above. Apathy is commonly used when translating the word *acedia*, though it is also at times translated as sloth. The differing translations, along with the deep history of the word and experience of *acedia* imply that apathy is not simply an innocuous feeling, or something that can be easily gotten rid of, but an emotion that strikes a person to his core and can come with or cause serious
consequences if the emotion takes hold and becomes perfected within the person. If this perfection occurs, this experience is no longer an emotion, but as a vice; indeed sloth is counted as one of the seven capital vices. Thus the purpose of this paper will be to understand first what acedia is, what the experience of acedia entails, and how to overcome it. Second, through this exploration of acedia, apathy and sloth will be addressed, including how they are related, and how both have come to fruition in modernity.

Question 35 of the Secunda Secundae of Aquinas' Summa Theologiae states that "acedia is a kind of oppressive sorrow which so depresses a man that he wants to do nothing." Consequently, knowing that acedia is a species of sorrow, we must first understand what sorrow is and how it affects man in order to come to a full appreciation of the acedic experience. Aquinas addresses sorrow and its different species beginning in question 35 of the Prima Secundae, where he first makes the distinction between pain (dolore) and sorrow (tristitia). Pain, he states, can result from either exterior or sense experiences—like the prick of a needle or the hurt from a bad bruise—or interior experiences, such as the loss of a loved one. The word pain applies to both experiences, but what is felt is certainly not the same. The first kind is on a bodily level, the second is on an intellectual level. Pain is a general term; bodily pain is the correct term for the former experience, sorrow for the latter, but both are intrinsically related, as both are species of pain.

The basic causes of sorrow then, are of interest to our purposes. Aquinas, agreeing with St. John Damascene (AD 676-749), states that the cause of sorrow is the
occurrence of evil,⁵ but he is also careful to include that a desire over something that cannot be had also causes sorrow.⁶ “Just as desire . . . for the good is a cause of pain, so also is the desire or love of unity. For the good of a thing consists in a certain unity: it needs to unite in itself all those elements which constitute its perfection.”⁷ This is obviously a Platonic notion, and in the same passage Aquinas mentions that the desire for unity is the reason “the Platonists held oneness, as well as goodness, to be an originating principle.” But exactly what Aquinas intends by unity in this article is unclear. Is he referring to a unity of body and soul, as it seems the quote from St. Augustine is in the sed contra?⁸ Surely this must be some source of human pain, for in the post-lapserian state man’s material and spiritual parts are profoundly disconnected, much different than the pre-lapserian state of man, in which man was a soul perfectly realized in materiality.⁹ However, there may be more to this conception of unity.

The desire for unity is not purely Platonic; it is a general philosophic and theological notion “that they all may be one.” In this vein, Aquinas asserts that “contemplation of [God] alone makes man perfectly happy.”¹⁰ Man desires a union with God that cannot be perfect in this life—in the fallen state—but this desire will not be fulfilled until later, and sorrow results. This sorrow is the primary cause of all the other sorrows man experiences, just as happiness in God is the primary cause of all other goods in man’s life. Only union with God can bring the happiness man desires, and as long as it is not enjoyed, every man in this world will experience at least some sorrow.
The unity man desires is impossible in this life, and he must withstand the effects of sorrow, both in his body and his soul. It is not difficult to understand that pain in the body can distract the mind; any man can recall a time when he was in such pain that nothing could distract him, and he could think of nothing but the pain. Aquinas explains, never wavering from his assertion in the *Prima Pars* that body and soul are truly one, stating, “all the powers of the soul are rooted in its one, single essence . . .” and therefore when physical pain is intense, even the most well-trained reason can be distracted.

The opposite phenomenon is also true. Indeed, it is doubtful that Aquinas would be surprised with the recent medical findings that depression not only affects one’s mood but also can cause a great amount of physical pain. “The body is harmed by sorrow more than by any other emotion,” Aquinas states, “. . . for in sorrow the soul is weighed down by some evil occurring here and now.” The previous articles explain that sorrow usually burdens a man both physically and spiritually. “By being weighed down,” Aquinas states in a reply to one of his objections, “the soul is not free to take an interest in things outside itself; it shrinks into itself; it ‘contracts.’” It can generally be agreed that a man who burdens himself with an abundance of worries and sorrows is usually not a very productive man, he is “in his own head,” as the saying goes. Additionally, when sorrow completely overtakes a man, “if the evil is so strong as to shut out all hope of escaping it, the interior movement of the soul in anguish is brought to a complete halt . . . Sometimes even external bodily movement is so affected that a person is struck senseless.” Sorrow, if unchecked, can be such a weight on both
body and soul that a man’s progress, both physically and spiritually can be importantly, and sometimes even completely arrested.

Here we come to a problem. If the happiness man desires—union with God—cannot be found in this life and thus results in sorrow, and this sorrow produces detrimental symptoms in man, both physical and spiritual, how is man to live his life? What cause is there to keep on living? Aquinas offers the following clarification of what he previously stated, namely that in addition to burdening a man, “sorrow may be the source or cause of an activity. In that case, the activity is improved by sorrow, for the more that a thing causes one sorrow, the harder one tries to rid oneself of the sorrow, as long as the hope of doing so remains.” Consequently, all is not despair, man’s salvation lies in hope, but there will be a struggle throughout life to maintain it.

In his treatise entitled On Hope, Josef Pieper states, “man finds himself, even until the moment of his death, in the status viatoris,” that is, in the state of being on the way. The state of man in this life is that of “not yet;” the true fulfillment of his nature is in God, but it is not attainable at this time. Yet he must continue on through life in the hope that the gift will be given in the next life. Pieper then explains that the status viatoris has both positive and negative elements. The negative element of this state is the possibility of sin, that possibility of returning to the nothingness from which man came. The positive is the opposite. And since being on the way means being on the way to somewhere—though not in a literal, physical sense—the negative and positive elements both lead to respective possibilities for man’s being, or what Pieper calls the status comprehensoris, that is, one who has arrived. The option of not sinning will lead to
the union with God which man desires, and thus it seems the answer is obvious: we wish to arrive to God and God only.

Perhaps at first the positive possibility seems the only logical option for man, for how could any man “possibly be disinterested in the fulfillment of his own nature in God?” as Pieper asks. Of course man wishes to arrive to God. Yet practically we see many men in fact not choosing the positive path. Surely it is difficult to continue on in faith without fulfillment of our desires, and Pieper describes these difficulties beautifully:

It is not certain, however, that man, of himself, will be able to “persevere in hope.” As long as he is in the status viatoris, man, even the “perfect Christian,” can, by turning aside to nothingness, use his free will to destroy the supernatural life that is in him and with it the hope of eternal life that is rooted therein. It is not the certainty of hope that is thus denied, but only the possibility of a subjective certainty of salvation.17

Thus there is a restlessness and anxiety in the status viatoris of which man can not be rid of in this life.

Restlessness is a peculiar phenomenon, but is related closely to both sorrow and acedia. Restlessness lies in the experience of being unable to find or control a sought-after end. In the case of God, it is a good which is not completely present, but man also feels this restlessness because he recognizes that his own state is not as it should be. Restlessness indicates a disorder of human nature and of the universe “Man, a being who is limited but whose reason is open to the unlimited totality of being, possesses an intimate knowledge of his finitude and his contingency,”18 Jacques Servais diagnoses. However, a participation in the common restlessness, a restlessness that all Christians
properly feel in their longing for Christ, instead of a lone undertaking of such a feeling, as well as a continual struggle for hope will help mediate the restlessness found in man.

Unfortunately, this is not the only manifestation of sorrow. There are four species of sorrow with which Aquinas is concerned. The first division he makes concerns the objects of sorrow. The object of sorrow is one’s own misfortune, but can be experienced in two different ways. In this regard, pity, the first of the species, results if the sorrow felt is over another’s misfortune, which one sees as one’s own. Envy, the second species, results if the pain felt is over another person’s good fortune. The former sorrows over something which has not happened to him, but he feels anyway, the latter is pained by a good he does not have, which is now an apparent evil to him.

The second part of the division concerns the effects of sorrow and involves the sensitive appetite. If the appetite discovers something it desires and its path is blocked by some obstacle, the choice of whether to struggle for what is desired or to flee from the obstacle is presented. When man sorrows, he decides that instead of staying to fight for what he wishes, he will free himself from the difficulty in question. If for some reason, something prevents this flight from the evil, the third species of sorrow, anxiety, results. This sorrow weighs upon his mind and he cannot accomplish much else. If, however, the sorrow and pain felt over an evil affects him even to his materiality, and he is weighed down spiritually to the point of physical immobilization, the final species, acedia is now beginning to take root in his being.

As stated above, the term acedia and the condition it represents have developed through the centuries. One of the first writers to use the word in an explanation of
religious obstacles after Christ was Evagrius Ponticus. Born in Turkey in 346, Evagrius was an acclaimed preacher in Constantinople but withdrew to the desert of Egypt to live as an ascetic in 382. It is from his writings that the first Christian descriptions of acedia come. He writes in his Praktikos, in a section entitled “The Eight Kinds of Evil Thoughts,”

The demon of acedia, also called the “noonday demon,” is the most oppressive of all demons. He attacks the monk about the fourth hour and besieges his soul until the eighth hour. First he makes the sun appear sluggish and immobile, as if the day had fifty hours. Then he causes the monk continually to look at the sun to see how far it still is from the ninth hour, and to look around, here and there, whether any of his brethren is near. Moreover, the demon sends him hatred against the place, against life itself and against the work of his hands, and makes him think he has lost the love of his brethren and that there is none to comfort him. If during those days anybody annoyed the monk, the demon would add this to increase the hatred. He stirs the monk also to long for different places in which he can find easily what is necessary for his life and can carry on a much less toilsome and more expedient profession. It is not on account of the locality, the demon suggests, that one pleases God. He can be worshipped everywhere . . . Thus the demon employs all his wiles so that the monk may leave his cell and flee . . .

Though Evagrius was not the first to experience this spiritual sloth or apathy—indeed as Siegfried Wenzel states, “the temptation of boredom and dejection that he described is presented as common to those who had withdrawn to the desert for a more intensive religious life,”—he is the first to give such a full analysis of the ever-present temptation.

Acedia eventually became a technical term for the experiences of Christian ascetics in the east. It was first introduced into western thought through the writings of St. John Cassian (AD 360-435). A contemporary of Evagrius, Cassian founded several monasteries in Marseilles and wrote much on the coenobitic life. Book X of his Instituta, entitled, “On the Spirit of Acedia” gives a description similar to that of Evagrius, again
calling this temptation the “midday demon,” and explaining that when such a 
temptation overcomes the monk, the only thing he wishes is to leave his cell. He will do 
anything to escape the confines such as visit the sick or engage in philosophical 
conversation with his brothers, only so that he does not have to stay there. Evagrius 
and Cassian agree if this flight becomes habitual, the monk will soon give up his ascetic 
lifestyle all together. The difference between Cassian and Evagrius is Cassian’s “desire 
to classify and systematize,”24 which led to his formation of a scheme of eight-vides by 
which Christians are tempted most severely. This eight-vice scheme was learned and 
followed, most especially by monks, for hundreds of years.

Cassian’s eight-vice scheme did not go untouched, for in his Moralia in Job, 
written while he was still a monk, Gregory the Great names seven vices, none being 
acedia. This may have been done because tristitia and acedia were very much alike in 
Cassian’s descriptions, or as Wenzel states, because of “Gregory’s refusal to consider 
not merely the name, but the notion itself as worthy of the exalted position of ‘leader’ of 
many other vices.”25 In any case, Gregory’s scheme did not immediately or completely 
replace that of Cassian’s—the two schemes existed for a great while side by side—and 
in the twelfth century Gregory’s principle vices became the seven deadly sins, but his 
tristitia was replaced by Cassian’s acedia. The question remains then, as Wenzel puts it, 
“why should the term—despite its foreign appearance, its connection with a strange, 
restricted form of monasticism, its rare occurrence outside the Cassianic sin list—have 
ousted the more homely tristitia, while it bore the authority of a Church Father?”26 The 
reason is most likely that acedia was a primarily monastic vice; Cassian’s descriptions of
acedia were more relevant to the monastic tradition, and much of the theological
discourse of the day occurred in the monasteries.

The meaning of the word acedia changed slowly outside of the monastic
tradition, and was transformed to refer to negligence in spiritual duties. Wenzel traces
the roots of this change to four writers of the eighth and ninth centuries. St. Pirimimus
in his De singulis libris canonicis scarapsus, written between AD 710 and 724, equates
acedia with idleness, as do Alcuin (AD 735-804) and Jonas of Orléans (AD 760 – 844).
The most important description is by Hrabanus Maurus (AD 776-856), who writes in his
De ecclesiastica disciplina,

> For acedia is a plague which proves to be of much harm to those who
serve God. The idle man grows dull in carnal desires, is cheerless in
spiritual works, has no joy in the salvation of his soul . . . Acedia corrupts
the miserable mind which it inhabits with many misfortunes, which teach
it many evil things. From it are born somnolence, laziness in good deeds,
instability, roaming from place to place, lukewarmness in work, boredom,
murmuring, and vain talks . . . May the servant of God never be found
idle!27

Maurus effectively reduces acedia from a monastic vice which attacks a monk’s
perseverance in his solitary study and prayer in his cell, to idleness or laziness in the
layman. Only with Thomas Aquinas is the full meaning of acedia regained.

Aquinas does not address acedia immediately after he first mentions it in the
questions on sorrow, but places his treatment of it in the Secunda Secundae where he
takes the ten vices against charity;28 in it he sorts out the bits and pieces left by those
before him to come to a formal statement of the nature of the vice, and also to
demonstrate that these authorities were essentially in agreement. He begins with a
discussion of whether acedia is a sin or not, because it would seem that if acedia is a
species of sorrow, as we have shown above, then it is an emotion, and emotion cannot be a vice or sin: can we be blamed for something we feel? Additionally, it appears as if acedia is at least in part a physical ailment—the descriptions of the monks who experience it, for example, are fraught with instances of physical affliction.

To be sure, the emotions in themselves are not sins. It depends on whether what they are directed towards has rightfully earned the emotion. As stated above, Aquinas defines acedia as “a kind of oppressive sorrow which so depresses a man that he wants to do nothing.” He then goes on to assert that “such sorrow is always bad.”  

However, he makes the distinction of sorrow being bad in itself or bad in its effects. Sorrow is bad in itself when it arises from an apparent evil which is really good. Think of envy here—to be sorrowful over another’s good. Sorrow is bad in its effects when its object is actually evil, but the sorrow so oppresses a man that it drags him away from his good work. Uncontrolled and undirected sorrow will always cause some sort of evil.

Acedia’s object is the divine good—God—but it causes a man to see that good as evil. It has as its object the divine good as it is in oneself, that is, “as one’s graced orientation towards the supernatural ultimate end. In the depths of acedia a man does not care about his own spiritual state.”  

And so acedia also causes a man to be weighed down to the point of sloth in his sorrow about God. So it seems acedia is doubly evil—in itself and in its effects.

Here Aquinas also warns of ignoring the effects the physical can have on the spiritual, which will be important throughout the question. “Now since sense appetite
has a bodily organ,” he states, “it follows that through certain corporeal changes a man becomes susceptible to certain sins.”

Once again it is important to remember in this world so influenced by Cartesian dualism that body and soul have great effect on one another, and Aquinas points to this throughout the *Summa*.

A sin is mortal, according to Aquinas, “when it kills the spiritual life, that effect of charity whereby God dwells in us.” A venial sin, on the other hand, “allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.” Though *acedia* is just one of a group of vices opposed to charity, it is also, as we have seen, especially dangerous. It is considered to be a special vice, because to be sorrowful about the divine good is far worse than to be sorrowful over any other good. Consequently *acedia* manifests according to the nature of the good which one is sorrowful over. In light of this, *acedia* can be either a mortal or a venial sin. When *acedia* concerns man’s “sensuality as part of the flesh’s quarrel with spirit, [it] is venial.” However, *acedia* in its perfected form—that sorrow which reaches so far into a person that “it gets into reason, [and] reason consents to running away, to the horror, to the loathing of the divine good due to the flesh’s utter victory over the spirit, it is clear then that *acedia* is a mortal sin.”

In a last effort to organize these aspects of the history of *acedia*, Aquinas classifies *acedia* as a capital sin because it is the fertile “soil,” so to speak, from which all manner of sins grow. These other sins are called the offspring of *acedia*, and they all involve flight from the apparent evil which is *acedia*'s object. We do many things for *acedia*'s sake, either to avoid it, or exasperated by its pressure upon us, distract ourselves with something else. The Catholic mystic Thomas Merton explains:
Incapable of the divine activity which alone can satisfy his soul, fallen man flings himself upon exterior things, not so much for their own sake as for the sake of agitation which keeps his spirit pleasantly numb. He has but to remain busy with trifles; his pre-occupation will serve as a dope. It will not deaden all the pain of thinking; but it will at least do something to blur his sense of who he is and of his utter insufficiency.\(^{37}\)

The offspring of \textit{acedia} consist first of spite, an “irritable rebellion against all who are charged with the responsibility of preventing man’s true and divinized self from falling prey to forgetfulness, to ‘self-forgetfulness.’”\(^{38}\) Here students’ general attitudes towards theology and philosophy professors come to mind, not to mention a common distaste Americans have for and religious or clergy. The second offspring is malice which resists the spiritual goods themselves. Malice manifests itself in a hatred of a man based only on the good that lies in him; think of the ridicule an especially holy person endures in the present culture.

Conversely, in place of rebellion one may try and distract oneself from this pain with unfit pleasures, which results in idle curiosity, a state in which a person is constantly “rushing after this or that, without rhyme or reason.”\(^{39}\) Think of a person who finds excitement in a new project—it could be a new goal in his life, or even a book he has just began—but can never seem to finish what he has begun; he simply moves on to the next whimsical fad which excites him. Another easily identifiable symptom is the loquaciousness of someone who talks much, but seems never to have anything to say.

Despair, however, is the worst effect of \textit{acedia}, which is why it is the first listed by Aquinas. Thomas R. Heath calls despair “the monster in wait behind”\(^{40}\) \textit{acedia}. It is also in despair that the other offspring of \textit{acedia} flourish perfectly. Here, one simply gives up the ultimate end of life to pursue trivial things. The divine good which was once
known to be there, now becomes more and more remote, and a laziness results.

“What’s the point?” one in the throes of despair would proclaim. Soon, the resentment out of which spite and malice are borne, comes, and followed by the “wandering after illicit things,” or purely physical pleasures. All of these resulting from the sin of acedia.

And so ends Aquinas’ treatment in the *Summa* of the full blown vice of acedia. It is chilling to think about how many consequences this once technically monastic vice can have on the human person. It is not only monks, but all human beings who are susceptible to it. But the biggest question that remains is how anyone, recognizing that their good is found in and with God, could ever be sorrowful because of him. How has this greatest of all goods turned, for a person experiencing acedia, into an apparent evil?

To answer this question, we must look at the virtue to which acedia is opposed: charity. Jean Charles Nault states that acedia “is a sin against charity insofar as it stands in opposition to spiritual joy (gaudium) born of charity, the utterly exceptional love that God wishes to establish with His creature.” Charity, as defined by Augustine, “is a virtue and as our most completely ordered affection, joins us to God and makes us love him.” Since charity’s object is God, the divine good, it is a special virtue, and Aquinas states that, “charity comes into the definition of all the virtues, not because it is essentially identical with them, but because somehow they all depend on charity.” Charity directs the acts of all other virtues, always with a view to man’s final end.

Man desires goods to make him happy, which can either be proximate or final in nature. The sensitive appetite desires sensual goods, those things which result in
pleasures of like kind. The intellectual appetite—the will—on the other hand, seeks a universal good, that good which will make man finally happy, which we know is God. Since charity’s object is loving God, it sits in the will.  

45 We must desire to love God; love of God, though gifted from him as a supernatural virtue, will not occur spontaneously in us.

Aquinas states when inquiring into the nature of charity that “no virtue is so much inclined to its act as charity, nor operates with such delight.”  

46 This seems counter-intuitive, because as stated above, and in almost every person’s day-to-day experience, the virtue of loving God above all else is not, in fact, the easiest to practice.

R. J. Batten explains:

This does not mean that charity necessarily makes itself felt in vehement inclination and delight. The life of the ordinary Christian, as well as the testimony of saints and mystics, and above all the traditional teaching of the Church, attests to genuine charity allied to great aridity and repugnance . . . In fact the supernatural virtues do not impart to the subject the congeniality which is found with the natural virtues. This is why St. Aquinas does not say that no one possessing virtue is so inclined to its act and delighted in it as he who has charity, but that no virtue so inclines and delights.  

47 The virtues in their most perfect form are certain internal dispositions and principles of action infused by God that enable us to reach our end, but the virtue may not be perfected in its control of our habits, and there are still times when earthly obstacles get in the way of the perfection of the virtue.

Charity can be looked at as a divine friendship. Indeed, the first question Aquinas addresses is whether or not charity falls under the category of friendship. Not only is charity love by man for God, but it is a “sharing of man with God by his sharing his happiness with us.”  

48 Friendship involves a willingness to love and share oneself
from both sides. As a result, friendship between two men requires a great deal of work—effort must exist on both sides, sacrifices by both, and a willingness to change and grow. As such, charity is both the easiest and most difficult friendship man will ever experience. It is the easiest because in no other friendship is the friend always present, always making himself known, and in no other friendship does a friend wish for the relationship to work as much as God does. However, this divine friendship is the most difficult man has experiences because of how much man must conform his nature to the good, how much a man must change, and how differently a man must live his life, in order for the friendship to be a good one.

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung affirms this, stating, “for Aquinas, charity is a deep bond of friendship that makes us all we are meant to be.” To become this something we are meant to be involves change in the person and usually involves a great deal of work. Here is where acedia may pervert man’s view of God as the thing to be loved above all else to, instead, an apparent evil, something which demands a great deal of work. It is also here where we see the associations with sloth that acedia has acquired. We have already noted that acedia was transformed from a monastic spiritual vice to something more like shirking one’s religious duties. The link here lies in man’s refusal to dedicate the effort required for a friendship with God, which is of a spiritual nature.

It is important to note that acedia will only occur if man has already some contact and knowledge of God. Acedia in its perfect form can only result from charity, it will not occur on its own. This is exemplified by the fact that acedia properly considered was first recognized by the ascetic monks in the Egyptian deserts—they were forging a deep
connection with God and *acedia* interrupts the experience, tries to distract from it. This, as DeYoung states, “we do not have an aversion to God himself in *acedia*, but rather to ourselves-as-sharing-in-God’s-nature, united to him in the bond of friendship.”\(^{50}\) We must first know the requirements of change in order to experience aversion to them.

DeYoung offers the potent example of marriage for this transformation required in friendship:

> Marriage is more than a civil contract; it is a transformation of identity, the kind that comes only through the gift of oneself to another person. Thus, it involves the dying away of an old individual self and the birth of a new unity. In a mysterious way, this new bond of unity enables both members in the relationship to grow and be transformed in ways that perfect their character.\(^ {51}\)

Marriage is a more intense friendship than most others, and thus a more intense change or transformation is required. The most important and intense friendship and thus largest transformation of self would then be in friendship with God.

In such a large transformation lie efforts, burdens, and possibly pain. The whole point of the moral life is to properly orient oneself so that one may receive and know God, and in this lies happiness, but it is never promised that the process will be painless or easy. A physical analogy would be the process of getting in shape. There will be pain after a weight lifting session or a long run, but it is so that the body might become physically fit. We must become “spiritually fit” in order to be happy but no one said it would be easy or without burden. DeYoung utilizes two Pauline terms which are in opposition—the old self, that which is sinful, and the new self, which is redeemed, reoriented, human nature. We are attached to the old self, and as a result are averse to
becoming a new self, and this is why DeYoung explains *acedia* as not an aversion to God, but an aversion to “*ourselves-as-sharing-in-God’s-nature*.”

*Acedia* then, as Nault puts it, “is a profound withdrawal into self.” Within action lies the ability and hope of revealing and changing our being, and *acedia* completely resists this action and this hope. Charity is that virtue in which our actions are ordered according to and are born out of love. *Acedia* is averse to all of this. It paralyzes “the dynamism of action, impedes communion with the other and the gift of self that enables it.” There is a misconception that commitment to self means freedom, but in fact is, once again deferring to Nault, a “deeper enslavement to the self.” Nault is referring to enslavement to that old self, that which is trapped in the sinfulness of this world.

So, *acedia* resists God only insofar as the demands to a relationship with God are difficult. There are costs to a relationship with God, most blatantly great sacrifices, which *acedia* is unwilling to pay. *Acedia* would rather be alienated than pay the costs involved. Again, let us return to DeYoung’s powerful example of marriage to explain a bit more fully—usually a husband and a wife get along well,

but when they argue at dinnertime and head off to opposite corners of the house for the rest of evening, it is much easier to maintain that miserable distance and alienation from each other than it is to do the work of apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Learning to live together and love each other well after a rift requires giving up their anger, their insistence on seeing the world only from each of their own perspectives. Saying “I’m sorry” takes effort . . . Love takes effort. Those with *acedia* want the easy life, for they find detachment from the old selfish nature too painful and burdensome, and so they neglect the acts of love that will maintain and deepen the relationship.

In these acts of love lie the answer to and the way to overcome *acedia*. 
Once again, we must remember that the notion of *acedia* which we have at this point has its roots in the experiences of ascetic monks. *Acedia* is most assuredly a spiritual vice, but it is not unaffected by the materiality of human nature. By this I mean the original description of *acedia* as “the noonday demon.” Why would this occur in monks most frequently, most consistently at this time? First, the acedic experience occurs at the hottest hours of the day, and that time when it seems that one has already been awake for a long period of time, and yet there is no end in sight. Secondly, the monk would become averse to his cell, thinking that he must get out of it, go somewhere else. Nault states that “external instability is thus the sign of an interior instability: there exists a clear and direct link between the act of keeping one’s body within his cell and the act of keeping one’s thoughts on the remembrance of God.”

Thus the way to overcome an acedic experience that is just beginning to take root in one’s soul is perseverance, to never concede to the wish or temptation of escaping God or shirking the duties necessary in a relationship to him. Nault explains further, for this reason, the opposite of *acedia* is *hypomonē*, literally meaning the act of remaining under the yoke. Within the setting of monastic life, this word relates to the two dimensions indicated—the spatial and the temporal—for it signifies not only patience, passing through the test (duration), but also perseverance within one’s cell and in the solitary life (space). By virtue of this perseverance, *acedia* is destroyed down to its very root, called *philautiā*, self-love. This perseverance is not a blind resignation, but a waiting truly conscious of God, oriented toward a direct and person encounter with him.

Most men though, do not live in situations similar to the cenobites in the desert. However, just as *acedia* does not apply only to monks, neither does its cure, perseverance.
Perseverance will be an appropriate salve to all who are beginning to experience acedia. As said above, one with acedia will begin to shirk those duties which are appropriate to his relationship with God. The marriage analogy can continue here: the husband and wife in the beginning of a disagreement must take the steps to resolve it, or the space between them, both physically and spiritually, becomes greater and greater. The argument will only grow worse if left unresolved and thus small discussions must be held, even if they are somewhat painful, acknowledging the sacrifice on one or both spouses’ part. Likewise, the simple act of praying, even if we do not feel like it, even if we feel like it is doing nothing, and we are feeling or gaining nothing from it, should be part of the perseverance of every Christian. Remember that acedia prefers alienation—praying prevents the space from growing. It is through perseverance in one’s religious duties, even when they are unrewarding, painful, or difficult, that the alienation and the experience of acedia is overcome.

But what about someone in whom acedia has taken root, and is in danger of becoming a vice, the stage at which acedia will begin to affect every part of one’s person, both physically and spiritually, and that acedia’s offspring will begin to be seen? How is such a one to be reclaimed? The answer to this, Mary Margaret Funk offers, is compunction. This word, usually associated with distress or guilt, becomes much more in this usage. Funk quotes from the Philokalia; “compunction is the state of one who is pricked to the heart, who has become conscious of his distance from God; who has a mingled feeling of sorrow, tenderness and joy springing from a sincere repentance.”
If *acedia* has taken root only the profound experience of compunction can extract it from one’s soul. It is

> a felt experience of being struck down, pierced to the heart. One is moved to deep sorrow and repentance. Compunction isn’t something that happens to a seeker once or twice, after some sinful incident. Compunction is a burning state, like being in love. It is a resolve, a heightened relationship with God . . . When we feel compunction we feel like a sinner in constant need of God’s mercy.⁶⁰

Remorse then, will bring such a one back to God and allow this one to be rid of *acedia*.

What causes this remorse, this beginning of reunion with God is different for each person. But it causes a wish to be closer to God—alienation from him is no longer an option.

Again remember that just as *acedia* is not purely a spiritual state, neither is its cure. Compunction brings physical effects:

> Compunction of heart is an abiding gift of consciousness that is not only an inward disposition, but is a real emotional state, often accompanied by tears. *Acedia* creates a dried-up soul. Tears soften us and prepare us to begin again, as if in our first fervor.⁶¹

And this also reminds us once more that *acedia* is only experienced by one who already has a relationship with God. In compunction, man does not begin anew, but returns to the first zeal and commitment to God which inspired him to seek God out in the first place, whether it is in a monastery in the Egyptian desert, or a church in his own neighborhood.

The cure of *acedia* and all of its offspring seems simple, namely perseverance and remorse deep enough to cause compunction. And yet its presence grips both the religious and the non-religious over time; the offspring of *acedia* named above, despair, loquaciousness, interior restlessness, instability of place or purpose, indifference, spite,
and malice, can all be identified most easily in our society. Why then do we not swallow this bitter but manageable pill? The problem in our misrecognition of *acedia*, or in our reduced understanding of all that the vice includes. This seems to be why *acedia* is translated as both sloth and apathy and yet neither one by itself nor both together completely encompass the full meaning and weight of the effects of the vice. Why is this?

The first step in the reduction of *acedia* that has been passed down to us occurred during the Reformation which, DeYoung explains,

> Turned away from the tradition-based lists of virtues and vices in favor of what it saw as the more strictly Scriptural commandments . . . Thus, the seven great vices gradually lost their status as central heuristic devices in theology and spiritual formation. In addition the Reformers expanded the notion of one’s spiritual vocation to include all forms of work and labor. So shirking one’s spiritual duties—the monastic sense of *acedia*—now came to mean neglect of one’s work in general, while its opposite, diligence came to be regarded as virtue.\(^\text{62}\)

The second step lies in the importance of God to the modern world, which is preciously small. It is apparent that God no longer plays an important part in the day to day lives of most people and assuredly does not affect or serve as the background against which people choose their actions. This increased secularization of all things in the world has evacuated many notions of their deeper spiritual meaning and as a result, their deeper psychological effects. Sloth is no exception. We have already seen that *acedia* resists action, mostly in the spiritual sense, but at its fullest can affect the physical as well. However, without the concept of God and our duties to him, the spiritual side of *acedia* is no longer apparent and we are left with only sloth, that complete aversion to action of
any kind, to any duties in one’s life. The dangers of this reduced version of sloth are not nearly as clear as the dangers which are apparent in the explanation of *acedia*.

Interestingly enough, in our industrious culture, sloth is the worst kind of secular sin. We must always be doing something. The constant worker is held up as an ideal member of society, a person who is contributing to the common good. But we must be careful. Remember that restlessness and listlessness are also symptoms of *acedia*. The busy-body who has a to-do list a mile long and never stops a moment to think can be in the throes of *acedia* as much as one who refuses any action, both spiritual and physical. Occupying oneself with unimportant tasks in order to avoid the work of the spiritual life is just as bad as refusing to do the work.

Apathy, on the other hand, is not the offense that sloth is, and is in fact becoming something of a norm. Sloth points to that part of *acedia* which affects the physical, apathy to that which affects the mental. Remember again that indifference (in Latin *torpor*), is one of the offspring of *acedia*, and it is this offspring which I think has become “at home,” and to a certain extent welcomed, in the modern consciousness. In the deepest and most spiritual meaning, *torpor* is a sluggish indifference “toward those things that are in truth necessary for man’s salvation,” and “it is linked by an inner necessity to the denial of man’s higher self that springs from sadness and sloth.”

Again, with no notion of God to surround ourselves with, apathy no longer becomes indifference to those things that are necessary for our salvation, but just plain indifference to everything.
Here I would like to return to the original question of this paper: why does it seem that the current young adult generation of America is so apathetic? How has acedia affected them, if a sense of God and the religious is no longer with them? It strikes me that time and again the ascetic monks who wrote of acedia called it the “noonday demon,” something which strikes in the middle of the day. The fact that such a great number of monks had this experience that more than one person wrote about it is quite telling. Funk properly takes this concept out of the ascetic lifestyle when she states simply and almost out of place in her book that “acedia comes at midlife.” It is an interesting observation that fits better with the original descriptions of Evagrius and Cassian than with later transforms of the word into simply a resistance to effort.

What I think Funk is getting in touch with here too, is that the experience of acedia cannot occur in someone who has no connection with God. Obviously, we all have a connection with God because we are all created by him, but someone who has no knowledge of God and what a relationship with him entails cannot experience acedia, and he cannot resist the demands of a relationship if he does not understand there are any in the first place. So, if this is the case, it is not the young adult, twenty-somethings in America who are experiencing acedia. Do not misunderstand, they most assuredly are in the throes of apathy, but as I stated before, apathy is only a small part of the aedic experience. It is my opinion that it is the older generation of Americans, this apathetic generation’s parents, who are experiencing acedia, full-blown.

This older generation is at a crossroads, for I believe that is the best analogy for what acedia is. There are two paths leading away from acedia. The first is that of
perseverance, one which eventually leads to a fuller, happier existence in God. The second is giving in to acedia, to its “temptation to view the moral life as nonsense.”

Man will give in to the demands of the old self, to bring up the Pauline terms again, and giving up on the burdens of a relationship with God. The choice this generation is making, whether de jure or de facto, is having a profound effect on its children.

This is not that far of a stretch, if we think about all that was stated above about acedia. DeYoung’s marriage analogy is all the more appropriate here; the divorce rate alone points to the fact that more and more people are unwilling to, in effect, do the work, required in marriage. All the more so for the work required for God. Polling evidence concludes time and time again that almost all adults in the United States believe in God, but the majority does not attend masses more than once a month.

While these two criteria are somewhat superficial, they are still an indication as to the lack of effort, by our society as a whole, put into a relationship with, for, and in God.

Again, however, the question arises, how could man look into the face of that which will make him happiest and see it as an evil? Why would he be unwilling to do the work in this relationship? Pieper comments parenthetically and almost scoffs at this question in On Hope when he states “as though man could possibly ‘disinterested’ in the fulfillment of his own nature in God,” and yet, it seems this is exactly the case.

However, I think Pieper holds the answer in his diagnosis of man as the status viatoris, stuck in the “now and not yet” time. As I stated above, we become restless during this period of not yet, and as Merton astutely observes, we turn to other things to serve as a “dope.” Servais quotes Paul Claudel when he states, “the Christian idea of perfection
gnaws at societies and souls like an erosive principle that will not leave them in peace.” Perseverance may have been the answer to this erosion before, but man in the modern era, in his anthropocentric world, quickly grew tired of this perseverance.

I do not claim to know or fully understand when or what caused man to no longer persevere in his relationship with God, although I can with some confidence say that the ushering in of modern science has something to do with it. Perhaps the instant gratification of science looked like a good alternative to the “not yet” with which man must continually deal. There was something appealing about the fact that diseases could be cured and more crops could be grown relatively quickly, but best of all, man could control these processes—he was not made to wait for anything. The impulse to control, produce, and not be made to wait for anything has come to fruition at present in modern American society. Industriousness, next to freedom, is the supreme virtue; there is no time for leisure of any kind any more. We are no long burdened with efforts for God if we no longer have time to think of them.

In any case, by being unwilling to make such efforts, God is slowly but surely moving out of the picture and we are entering into an increasingly secularized society. David L. Schindler’s first sentence in a speech given at the Vatican recently was “Nietzsche is right that the core problem of modernity is the death of God,” and he goes on to analysis of Nietzsche’s madman in *The Gay Science*, stating that he is scarcely unaware that churches still abound, and that the name of God is still invoked regularly in the life of his culture. On the contrary, he makes his announcement precisely in the face of his recognition that this is so. What the madman’s announcement implies, therefore, is that he and the culture have different ideas of what is meant by God and religion. What the madman means to say is that God is not truly *alive in*
the inner workings of the culture, or again that the God whose name remains on the lips of so many is inadequate to the depth and breadth of what a God who is truly God must be. The God whose infinity formerly shaped men’s lives has become, in Nietzsche’s view, an empty infinite through which modern man stray – without profundity of purpose or passion. 69

God of course, never leaves us. It is always our choice as to which *status comprehensoris* we pick. But truly man is at the crossroads of *acedia*, but we are being led further and further down that path leading away from God, so that we know less and less about him and of that which a true relationship with him consists.

What I am asserting here is that we all, but perhaps most pointedly in the current generation of young adults, are quite literally the offspring of *acedia*. Again, the signs exist. To reiterate, the offspring of *acedia* are despair, loquaciousness, distraction, instability of place or purpose, indifference, spite and malice. Could there be a more familiar list? Indeed as Pieper laments, “is not the mere listing of the ‘offspring of sloth,’ of the siblings and peers of despair, a most striking conformation of this diagnosis? Do we not read it with something approaching the shamefaced chagrin of a person who has been surprised in dishonest dealings? Does not the present era witness the ripening of all these fruits of despairing sadness?” 70

Think once again of the symptoms in the current generation. Spite and malice have always been with man, but the others seem uniquely suited to the present. The instability of purpose of a twenty-five year old who states “I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up.” It is a procrastination of life made possibly by constant distractions—whatever personal “dope” which pleases and has been encouraged by their parents’ sin. The instability of place is evident—and never even thought to be a
problem—in that every generation moves further from home, and more often, than the next. The indifference is that symptom which I think we are experiencing most greatly now. The emphasis on diligence produced by our culture of industriousness, combined with the indifference towards most things in life produced by apathy has resulted in an entire generation of know-nothing, feel-nothing, non-goal oriented busy bodies who have no desire to look beyond how they wish to spend next week’s paycheck. And finally, despair, the “monster” that waits for us, patiently until we move further along this path that was chosen well before any of us was even born.

This is not to say that nothing more is at fault in the indifference which plagues our culture, but I think *acedia* plays a great role because of its in-between nature. An entire generation is at the noon-time of its age, and although they seem to have already made their choice by losing perseverance, there is always the chance to turn around and make their way back through compunction. Nor is this to say that *acedia* is more of a societal than individual problem. I certainly think the dangers of *acedia* are present for each and every person who acknowledges even the least of relationships with God. However, as more people are schooled in *acedia*, the effects can be seen not just in them, but in their children. So, because we are no longer persevering, and perhaps that state of great remorse, compunction, has not yet arrived, I would like to present two more aids to help us rid ourselves of this societal *acedia* and its offspring.

The first is leisure. As stated before, the industriousness of our society is a remedy in no way to the acedic experience. Nietzsche again has his finger on the pulse of this phenomenon
When [the philosopher] thinks of the haste and hurry now universal, or the increasing velocity of life, of the cessation of all contemplativeness and simplicity, he almost thinks that what he is seeing are the symptoms of a total extermination and uprooting of culture. The waters of religion are ebbing away and leaving behind swamps or stagnant pools; the nations are again drawing away from one another in the most hostile fashion and long to tear one another to pieces. The sciences, pursued without any restraint and in a spirit of the blindest laissez faire, are shattering and dissolving all firmly held belief; the educated classes and states are being swept along by a hugely contemptible money economy. The world has never been more worldly, never poorer in love and goodness. The educated classes are no longer lighthouses or refuges in the midst of this turmoil of secularization; they themselves grow daily more restless, thoughtless and loveless. Everything, contemporary art and science included, serves the coming barbarism. 

This is why Aquinas rightly states that acedia is not the opposite of work but rather a sin against the third commandment—keeping the Sabbath holy—in which man is told he needs to “rest his spirit in God.” As Pieper states, “genuine rest and leisure are possibly only under the precondition that man accepts his own meaning.” The link, as Aquinas has already made clear, made between leisure and God lies in the Sabbath.

In the speech mentioned above, Schindler goes on to give an example of Emeritus, a fourth century Christian martyred for continuing to celebrate Sunday Mass is his home, which was in violation of the Emperor Diocletian’s prohibition of Christian worship.

Emeritus was asked by the proconsul who interrogated him “Why have you received Christians in your home, transgressing the imperial dispositions? Emeritus replied, “Sine domenico non possimus,” which means literally . . . “without Sunday we are not able.” What is that we are unable to do? We are unable to live. The point, in other words, is that we are unable as such: we cannot at all, we can do nothing, without Sunday—without worship.

So we must begin again to honor the tradition of the Sabbath. In this small step, we can begin to bring God back into our lives, and the apathy concerning all things may soon transform into remorse over the fact that God is not present in our lives as he should be.
Leisure will at least give us time to think, where as life lived in constant haste gives us none.

The second solution is hope. This again reaches back to Pieper’s description of man as the *status viatoris*. There is always a restlessness in man because he can never be fulfilled in this life. Naturally, hope is a virtue of youth, a looking forward to the things to come in their lives. But natural hope dissipates when youth withers. But what of the man who has reached the noontime of his life, realizing that there is less to come than there already was? He has not reached his fulfillment, and it is not as if it is just around the corner— he now realizes that he can do nothing to reach his fulfillment. Pieper states, “it is above all when life grows short that hope grows weary; the ‘not-yet’ is turned into the has-been, and old age turns, not to the ‘not-yet,’ but to memories of what is ‘no-more.”75 Natural hope knows death as the end, and once past midday will give up on everything.

Supernatural hope—a hope in things to come after this life—addresses this unfulfillment, because it gives man a longer future than he could ever imagine. Thus when youth begins to ebb, hope does not. The profound apathy towards the future will not arise for “nothing more eminently preserves and founds ‘eternal youth’ than the theological virtue of hope.”76 This hope does not fear death, for it is only then when the restlessness will be fulfilled and the *status viatoris* will finally complete his journey.

*Acedia* has been perfected in our current American society. Not only are we at the crossroads, but we are beginning to choose the path away from God and thus we are producing the literal offspring of *acedia*. The spiritual notion of *acedia* has been
evacuated and we are left with vacant notions of sloth and apathy. Sloth is still demonized, but only to the end that *acedia* is propagated even more in the never stop work ethic of our culture. Apathy has become completely at home in our modern consciousness, completely at home with those young adults who will next gain control of the world. If apathy is now our affliction, what will be our future? Michael Hanby in a piece on boredom in American culture gives a prediction asserting,

> it is difficult to imagine that a culture which does not know how to feast or how to pray, which makes no distinction between hours of the day or days of the week, and has forgotten how to mark the passage of time with seasons of celebration and solemnity, will be capably of great art, music, or of craftsmanship or that it will be able to sustain marriage, rear children or fulfill the natural obligation between generations in caring for the sick and dying. For such a culture will be unable to attend to the compulsions of form, and it will lack the patience to produce artifacts that are compelling. It will fail to discriminate between internal and external goods because it will know no internal goods, and indeed no internality.

It is a frightening prospect, but the wave of indifference is upon us. And if this apathetic generation is the offspring of one experiencing full blown *acedia*, then what will the sons and daughter of apathy be? The answer is the “monster in wait,” that worst offspring of *acedia*, the most serious and that which will come after all the rest—despair. So let us persevere, allow ourselves remorse and leisure, and most of all, keep hope. There is chance of turning back, we are still able to choose a different path, and prove Nietzsche’s madman wrong. *Acedia* and its affects have not yet completely overtaken us.
The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature

2. Ibid., 6-7
3. The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the vice as “sloth or acedia,” and is joined by pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, and gluttony.
4. ST II-II, q. 35, a.1
5. ST I.-II, q. 36, a. 1
6. ST I-II, q. 36, a. 2
7. ST I-II, q. 36, a. 3
8. Augustine says, “The pain felt by dumb animals shows how their souls long for unity in directing and caring for their bodies. For what else is pain but a feeling of reluctance to suffer division or decay?”
9. Augustine in Book XIII of *De Civitate Dei*, states, “the first man . . . was made a living soul.”
10. ST I-II, q. 36, a. 7
11. ST I, q. 75 and 76
13. ST I.-II, q. 37, a. 4
14. ST I-II, q. 37, a. 2
15. ST I-II, q. 37, a. 3
17. Ibid., p.108
19. These four species come from the authority of Damascene and Gregory of Nyssa.
20. Before beginning a full exploration of acedia it should be noted that because pity, envy, anxiety and acedia are all species of sorrow, their effects and symptoms may sound alike to one another. Again, I have neither the time nor space in this paper to address all four species of sorrow, and my focus lies in how acedia has gained special status as a capital vice unlike any of its siblings, and how it has transformed into what modernity calls apathy—a vice, as I stated before, I think is becoming quite identifiable with modern America.
21. cf. *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* trans. by Father Luke Dysinger, OSB (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2005). This book is a study of his life, works, and theology. It gives particular attention to his little-studied exegetical treatises, especially the Scholia on Psalms, as well as his better-known works, in order to present a more balanced picture of Evagrius the monk.
22. Qtd. in *The Sin of Sloth* (5)
23. *The Sin of Sloth* (11)
24. Ibid., 20
25. Ibid., 28
26. Ibid., 29
27. qtd. in *The Sin of Sloth* (37)
28. ST II-II, q. 34-43. The other nine vices are hatred (odio), envy (invidia), discord (discordia), contention (contentione), schism (schismate), war (bello), brawling (rixa), sedition (seditione) and scandal (scandalo). Notice in how grave of a group acedia is placed.
29. ST II-II, q.35, a.1

ST II-II, q.35, a.1

ST II-II, q. 35, a.2

(1855) Catechism of the Catholic Church, (English translation, Doubleday Press)

ST II-II, q. 35, a.3

ST II-II, q. 35, a.3

ST II-II, q. 35, a.3


On Hope (121)

ST II-II, q. 35, a.4

(191) “Appendix I: Spiritual Apathy,” in Consequences of Charity

ST II-II, q. 35, a.3


De Coelo, I, II, 28IaII; a18

ST II-II, q. 23, a. 4

ST II-II, q. 24, a. 1

ST II-II, q. 23, a. 2

(121) On Hope

ST II-II, q. 35, a.2


Acedia: Enemy of Spiritual Joy” (245)

Ibid., 245

Ibid., 246

“Acedia’s Resistance” (23)

“Acedia: Enemy of Spiritual Joy” (239)

Ibid., 239


Ibid., 107

Ibid., 106

“Acedia’s Resistance” (4)

On Hope (121)

Thoughts Matter (109)

“Acedia: Enemy of Spiritual Joy” (249)

Cf. “While Most U.S. Adult Believe in God, Only 58 Percent are ‘Absolutely Certain,’” Harris Poll #80, October 31, 2006. The poll concludes 73% of US adults believe in God, but only 35% attend Church at least once a month. <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=707>

On Hope (104)

qtd. in “Restlessness and Anxiety” (229)


On Hope (122)

72 ST II-II, q. 35, a. 1
73 On Hope (119)
74 “Liberalism and the Memory of God” (484)
75 On Hope (110)
76 Ibid., (111)