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Aquinas on Christ's Passion: Redemption as Human Achievement and More than Satisfactory

Męka Chrystusa w pismach Tomasza z Akwinu – odkupienie jako ludzkie osiągnięcie przekraczające zadośćuczynienie

ABSTRACT: The subject is Aquinas's treatment of Christ's Passion as redemptive in the *Summa Theologiae*. Many theologians judge that the key notion of Aquinas's soteriology is atonement whose underlying structure is justice and also that the concepts of "redemption" and "sacrifice" are simply metaphors. Aquinas suggests that Christ's Passion as redemptive is more than a metaphor. While writing two articles, each on the moral modes of merit, satisfaction and sacrifice, Aquinas writes four on redemption. While affirming the Passion's two causalities, principal and instrumental, Aquinas writes that the effects are achieved in three ways: by way of exciting charity, by way of redemption and by way of efficiency. The purpose of the article therefore is to find why Christ's Passion is so important by examining these four articles. An analysis of *ST* 3.48.4 shows that Christ's Passion as redemptive is ordered toward a positive goal, the union with Christ, while atonement towards a negative one. An analysis of *ST* 3.48.5, shows that the divine and human causalities, principal and instrumental, so work together in affecting the will acts of Christ, elicited and commanded, that even Christ's soul is perfected. An analysis of *ST* 3.49.2 shows that by way of faith in Christ's Passion and by way of its power Christ can aid us in our struggle against sin and the devil. Finally, an analysis of *ST* 3.49.3 shows how Christ through Baptism, Penance and suffering aids us in attaining a perfection of soul and its powers, not immediately but through the choices we make in our life and dying. On the Last Day, when souls are joined to bodies, those, who had cooperated with Christ in their suffering and dying and thereby attained their soul's perfection, will have achieved a glorified immortality as well as beatific vision.

KEYWORDS: Atonement, Commanded Act, Causality, Elicited Act, Human Act, Justice, Punishment, Redeemer and Redemption, Christ's Passion, Thomas Aquinas

ABSTRAKT: Tematem artykułu jest mąka Chrystusa ujmowana przez św. Tomasza w *Sumie teologicznej* jako odkupienie. Wielu teologów uważa, że kluczowym pojęciem

soteriologii Akwinaty jest pokuta wynikająca ze sprawiedliwości, zaś pojęcia odkupienia i ofiary są jedynie metaforami. Tomasz z Akwinu jednak sugeruje, że mąka Chrystusa jako odkupienie jest czymś więcej niż metaforą. Na dwa artykuły o moralnych aspektach zasług – zadośćuczynienia i ofiary – Tomasz z Akwinu pisze cztery na temat odkupienia. Wskazując na dwie przyczyny mąki – główną i instrumentalną – twierdzi, że skutki osiąga się na trzy sposoby: poprzez pobudzanie miłości, poprzez odkupienie i poprzez skuteczność. Celem artykułu jest zatem ustalenie na podstawie analizy tych czterech artykułów, dlaczego mąka Chrystusa jest tak ważna. Artykuł 3.48.4 pokazuje, że mąka Chrystusa jako odkupienie jest ukierunkowana na pozytywny cel, czyli zjednoczenie z Chrystusem, podczas gdy pokuta ma cel negatywny. Analiza *ST* 3.48.5 wskazuje, że boskie i ludzkie przyczyny sprawcze, główne i instrumentalne, współdziałają w taki sposób, że wpływają na akty woli Chrystusa, wywołane i nakazane, że nawet dusza Chrystusa zostaje udoskonalona. Analiza *ST* 3.49.2 pokazuje, że poprzez wiarę w mąkę Chrystusa i poprzez jej moc Chrystus może pomóc nam w walce z grzechem i diabłem. Wreszcie z *ST* 3.49.3 wynika, że Chrystus poprzez chrzest, pokutę i cierpienie pomaga nam osiągnąć doskonałość duszy i jej mocy, nie bezpośrednio, ale poprzez wybory, których dokonujemy w naszym życiu i umieraniu. W dniu ostatecznym, kiedy dusze połączą się z ciałami, ci, którzy współpracowali z Chrystusem w swoim cierpieniu i umieraniu, a tym samym osiągnęli doskonałość duszy, osiągną chwalebną nieśmiertelność, a także wizję uszczęśliwiającą.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: odkupienie, akt nakazany, przyczynowość, akt wywołany, akt ludzki, sprawiedliwość, kara, Odkupiciel, mąka Chrystusa, Tomasz z Akwinu

Introduction

Rachel Cresswell's article and Joel R. Gallagher's have offered important insights regarding Aquinas's soteriology as found in his treatment of Christ's Passion, in the *Summa Theologiae*.¹

After demonstrating how much more alike Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* is to Aquinas's so called improvement of Anselm's Satisfaction Theory, R. Cresswell presented how Anselm's and Aquinas interpretation of the Philippian hymn differed.² More than interesting, it was theologically significant that Aquinas emphasizes the extent and magnitude of Christ's suffering and death rather than His humility as constituting His abasement. Did Aquinas do this only

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3.6–49, trans. Laurence Shapkote, <https://aquinasc.org> (hereafter *ST*).

² Rachel Cresswell, "Reframing Anselm and Aquinas on Atonement," *New Blackfriars* 104, no. 1109 (2023): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12802>.

that it might excite a person's love for the crucified Christ?³ Or did Aquinas also want to connect that suffering with Christ's exaltation?⁴

Joel R. Gallagher, for his part, in comparing Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor*⁵ to Aquinas's Theology of the Passion, made the important point that whereas Aulén emphasized the conquering of the devil and evil in view of God's overcoming evil in the world without any human aid, Aquinas argued that Christ's being the agent of victory includes the entire human activity of Christ, including all of His salvific work that He accomplished as a human being.⁶ What Gallagher also observed in his article was that many scholars characterize Aquinas's soteriology in the way Cessario Romanus had done in his work *The Godly Image*, namely that "Satisfaction: [is the] Key-Notion for Interpreting Christ's Death."⁷ Thus Brian Davies divided his commentary on Aquinas's treatment of the Passion under the heading "The Big Picture" which is about Christ's satisfaction and under the heading "Some Details" which is about Christ's incarnation, hypostatic union, preaching, miracles, Passion, Redemption and Ascension.⁸ Thus Rik Van Nieuwenhove examines Christ's Passion and death, first under the title, "Satisfaction," pages 281–92, then under the title "Sacrifice and Sacrament," pages 292–95.⁹ Paul M. O'Callaghan did spend 32 pages on satisfaction and 44 pages regarding the devil, including 3 pages on the Ransom Theory.¹⁰

Robin Ryan, on the other hand, in his excellent overview of Aquinas's Soteriology begins with examining Aquinas's subtle changes of Anselm's Satisfaction Theory and ends with Ryan noting Aquinas's consideration of Christ's Death

³ ST 3.49.1.

⁴ ST 3.49.6.

⁵ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A.G. Hebert (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003).

⁶ Joel R. Gallagher, "Christus Victor Motifs and Christ's Temptations in the Soteriology of Thomas Aquinas," *New Blackfriars* 101, no. 1094 (2020): 368, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12415>.

⁷ Gallagher, 361 Romanus Cessario, *The Godly Image: Christian Satisfaction in Aquinas*, *Sacra Doctrina* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020) [E-Book].

⁸ Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 311–15, 315–22.

⁹ Rik Van Nieuwenhove, "Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion: Aquinas' Soteriology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Peter Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 277–302.

¹⁰ Paul M. O'Callaghan, "The Effects of the Passion and Death of Christ in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas" (PhD diss., Universidad de Navarra, 1981).

and Resurrection and our participation in these by the sacraments as saving.¹¹ Moreover, Ryan also writes “In treating the efficacy of Christ’s Passion in his *Summa Theologiae*, [Aquinas] employs the metaphors of merit, satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption/ransom.”¹²

But, going back to the very text of Aquinas in which he addresses the modes of Christ’s instrumental causalities, one finds that while Aquinas’ treatment of Christ’s Passion is quite simple: considering the Passion itself, a human act, even in giving its circumstances of time, place, situation and person,¹³ its causes, Christ, the Father, His slayers and the devil¹⁴ and its effects.¹⁵ This is done in a very balanced way, arranging the intentional modes of acting: merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, redemption and efficiency according to what is first in the order of intention,¹⁶ and arranging their complimentary effects according to what is last in execution.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Aquinas makes two exceptions regarding a balanced treatment. First, in dealing with the mode of redemption, Aquinas devotes not one, but two articles regarding its order of intention,¹⁸ and not one, but two articles regarding its order of execution.¹⁹ The second exception occurs in Aquinas’s treatment of the Passion’s causalities and effects. In *ST* 3.48.6, Aquinas writes that the Passion has two efficient causes, principal, according to Christ’s divinity, and instrumental, according to Christ’s humanity. However, when considering how their effects are brought about, Aquinas refers to three, not two ways. One is psychological “by way of exciting our charity.” The second way is personal, i.e. “by way of redemption” in which Christ’s person, as it were, uses hands to make up for the fault of feet. The third way effects are brought about is ontological,

¹¹ Robin Ryan, *Jesus and Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2015), 83–91.

¹² Ryan, 88.

¹³ *ST* 3.46.9, 10, 11 and 12; 3.46–49. Treating 30 articles on the Soteriology of Christ’s Passion in terms of three parts of the human act is different from being what Cresswell calls as multipartite account and one which Gallagher describes as combining “satisfaction with some of the elements: merit, sacrifice, charity, obedience, justice or the fulfilment of the Old Law.” (Cresswell, “Reframing Anselm and Aquinas on Atonement,” 36; Gallagher, “Christus Victor Motifs,” 361).

¹⁴ *ST* 3.47.

¹⁵ *ST* 3.48, 49.

¹⁶ *ST* 3.48.1, 2, 3, 6.

¹⁷ *ST* 3.49.6, 5, 4, 1.

¹⁸ *ST* 3.48.4, 5.

¹⁹ *ST* 3.49.3, 2.

“by way of efficiency.”²⁰ In writing this, it is as if Aquinas were seeking to match his Soteriology with the Christology of the Third Council of Constantinople, which considers the person of Christ having a divine and a human will which are not mixed but work together.

Consequently, it seems appropriate to examine these four articles on Christ’s Passion as redemptive, namely its intended end, *ST* 3.48.4, the nature of its act, *ST* 3.48.5, its effect, *ST* 3.49.3 and the way it enables one to deal with sin and the devil, *ST* 3.49.2. Thus one can ask: is the Passion as redemptive simply one way among others to understand Christ’s Passion, or is it an analogy comparing Christ’s physical actions of suffering and death to our spiritual actions regarding sin and death, or is it a reality in which our human actions are to be like Christ’s human actions and are to attain with His aid a perfection of human nature like His?

What Aquinas wishes to do is to reflect on the scriptural notion of redemption, as arising from God’s revelation. The idea itself is an ancient one, going back to ancient Jewish history and Moses himself. It calls to mind how those who had sold themselves into slavery or were taken captive were set free.²¹ Redemption has the drama of someone giving all his possessions to buy back his kinsman²² or of someone struggling to liberate his people from captivity.²³ Because the notion of redemption has such dramatic power, therefore, the ancient Fathers of the Church, such as Irenaeus and Gregory of Nyssa, used it to speak about the mystery of Christ’s Passion.²⁴ Christ is presented as either the defeated warrior who ultimately triumphs in setting the captives free, or as the one who pays the price of His life to save mankind, His kinsmen.

²⁰ *ST* 3.49.1.

²¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer writes: “In the OT, Yahweh is often depicted in the role of Israel’s *gô’el*, ‘redeemer,’ i.e., the kinsman to whom fell the duty of buying back the lost freedom of a relative.” Also: “Another notion, however, was often linked with the redemptive liberation, viz., that of ‘acquisition, possession.’” “It was a deliverance, then, that terminated in ‘acquisition,’ and even in ‘adoption.’” (Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968], 816, 79:91–92).

²² Consequently, Thomas quotes from 1 Pet 1:18. “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . but with the precious blood of Christ. . . .” (*ST* 3.48.4).

²³ Thus Thomas writes: “On the contrary, Our Lord said (John 12:31), when His Passion was drawing nigh: Now shall the prince of this world be cast out; . . .” (*ST* 3.49.2).

²⁴ Jean Rivière says that Irenaeus was the first to develop this idea from the Scriptures about Christ’s Passion. Jean Rivière, *The Doctrine of the Atonement: A Historical Essay*, trans. Luigi Cappadelta, vol. 2 (Saint Louis, MO: Herder, 1909), 113–16.

Unfortunately, these dramatic representations of Christ's work were marred by the other things they implied. If Christ must ransom persons from the devil, that would imply there that God did not always have power over man.²⁵ If Christ must be the ransom-payment, this would imply that the devil is the one to whom God gives the ransom.²⁶

At issue is whether one can keep the dramatic power in the notion of redemption and at the same time attain a correct and further understanding of Christ's Passion as redemptive. Anselm had succeeded in clarifying certain things by abstracting the notion of justice from the idea of ransom. But in leaving the images of redemption behind, what he gained in clarity of thought he lost in the dramatic force of his ideas.²⁷ It is one thing to understand that Christ saves us by fulfilling the requirements of justice. It is another thing to link this understanding with the disheartening experience of struggling with temptation constantly until one at last succumbs to Satan's weapons of suffering and death. As will be shown, Aquinas seeks to show how Christ's Passion can aid one in one's struggle against sin and the devil and even deliver one should one have fallen into sin at the devil's tempting.²⁸

Redemption: *ST* 3.48.4

When one speculatively examines what the scriptural metaphors for redemption imply about the natures and relationships between God and the devil, the very

²⁵ *ST* 3.48.4.1.

²⁶ *ST* 3.48.4.3.

²⁷ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange sees no loss in this regard. Rather, because Christ's Passion is seen as a just repairing of the offense against God, Garrigou-Lagrange writes that this was "a most excellent correction of certain exaggerations of Origen and St Gregory of Nyssa." (Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christ the Savior: A Commentary on the Third Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Bede Rose [Saint Louis, MO: B. Herder Book, 1950], 595). Hans Kessler, however, does not think this is an achievement at all. Citing Otto Hermann Pesch, he writes: "Redemption hat also bei Thomas einem anderen Bildsinn, aber keinen anderen Sachsinn als Satisfaction" (Hans Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Themen und Thesen der Theologie [Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1970], 184; Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin: Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs*, Walberberger Studien 4 [Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1967], 558). The following analysis should show that Thomas does not just [simply] use the notion of satisfaction to explain what redemption means, but that he does add new understanding about Christ's Passion by using the notion of redemption.

²⁸ *ST* 3.49.2.

idea of redemption seems impossible. To say that God redeems us is to imply that God has lost His hold on us.²⁹ To say that Christ is the price of our redemption is to imply that the deceiver who holds us captive unjustly benefited by being paid to let us go.³⁰ Thirdly, in no way could Christ give His blood to the devil to ransom us from the devil who holds us captive because of our sin.³¹

Despite the force of these objections and contrary to what some of his interpreters have said, Thomas very strongly affirms that redemption is a fact.³² God's own word in the Scriptures says that Christ became a curse in order to redeem us. Consequently, Aquinas sees his task as not to prove Christ's Passion saves us by way of redemption, but to explain how this takes place.

In as much as redemption is to be delivered from captivity and restored to God, Aquinas first considers how we become captive. First, in succumbing to the devil's deception and disobeying God's command we make ourselves not only a sinner but a captive of the devil. Secondly, in sinning, one goes against God's order of justice so that one's captivity is in having to pay the penalty for doing so.³³ In other words, those who sin make themselves a captive both to the devil and to God.

To this, Aquinas writes, "Christ in His Passion was a sufficient and a superabundant atonement for the sin and the debt of the human race, it was as a price at the cost of which we are freed from both obligations." That is, Christ's Passion as a sufficient and superabundant atonement delivers us not only from our own sin and debt of punishment, but also "the sin and debt of the human race,"³⁴ namely, original sin whose debt of punishment was damnation, separation from God, and death, beginning with the separation of our powers from reason and ending in the separation of our soul from our body.³⁵

²⁹ *ST* 3.48.4.1.

³⁰ *ST* 3.48.4.3.

³¹ *ST* 3.48.4.3m.

³² Namely "redemption" is not a metaphorical term, i.e. about an image or narrative to help one understand Christ's Passion; Ryan, *Jesus and Salvation*, 88. Nor is it an analogical term, i.e. about one reality being partly like another reality, e.g. our spiritual dying to sin is like Christ's physical dying; Jean-Pierre Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*, vol. 2 of *Le Christ en ses mystères*, Jésus et Jésus-Christ 79 (Paris: Desclée, 1999), 397. Rather, "redemption" is a term for a distinct reality, i.e. it is about an act whose intention is to be united to Christ, *ST* 3.48.4.2m and is different from the act of satisfaction whose intention is the paying the debts of sin; *ST* 3.48.2.

³³ *ST* 1-2.17.1.

³⁴ *ST* 3.48.4.

³⁵ *ST* 1.64.4.1.

What becomes problematic is what Aquinas writes next. “For the atonement by which one satisfies for self or another is called [*dicitur*] the price, by which he ransoms himself or someone else from sin and its penalty.” In giving the word “price” for atonement, and the word “ransoms” for the action of satisfaction, is Aquinas identifying atonement with redemption? Is redemption nothing other than the action of delivering us from sin and the debt of punishment? Jean-Pierre Torrell writes that redemption is a consequence of atonement.³⁶ Davies writes, “It can also be thought of as redemptive since it releases us from the imprisonment of sin.”³⁷

However, in the last two sentences of the body of the article, it seems Aquinas intends to distinguish Christ’s Passion as an atonement from Christ’s Passion as a redemption. For atonement, Aquinas uses the verb, *satisfacit*. For redemption Aquinas uses the word *dando* (‘to bestow or hand over’) and the pronoun *nobis* (‘for us’). Thus Aquinas writes, “Now Christ made satisfaction not by giving money or anything of the sort but by bestowing what was of the greatest price—Himself—for us. And therefore Christ’s Passion is called our redemption.”³⁸

To further clarify the difference between (*satisfactio*) and redemption, Aquinas, in reply one, states that there are two ways we belong to God, one by being “under God’s power” and the other “by being united to Him in charity.”³⁹ As these are distinct ways one is bound to God, then one must read Aquinas’s last sentence in the body of the article as distinguishing satisfaction from redemption rather than as identifying them as practically the same thing. Thus when Aquinas writes, “And therefore in so far as he was delivered from sin by the satisfaction of Christ’s Passion, he is said to be redeemed by the Passion of Christ,”⁴⁰ Aquinas means that in addition to our being liberated from sin

³⁶ Torrell, *La vie et l’oeuvre de Jésus*, 417. Previously, Torrell said that atonement is not the par excellence concept for the theology of redemption. Rather Torrell refers to what Albert Patfoort said, namely that satisfaction is an important piece, but not the only one for understanding Christ’s Passion. It has the value of a true theological analogy to which the notions of sacrifice and redemption, which are merely metaphors, must be reduced. Thus Torrell writes that this is his position as well. Then Torrel writes, “For a complete and satisfactory exposition,” see Romanus Cessario, *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from St. Anselm to Aquinas*, Studies in Historical Theology 6 (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1990), 397 and n. 31.

³⁷ Davies, *Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae*, 320.

³⁸ *ST* 3.48.4.

³⁹ *ST* 3.48.4.1m.

⁴⁰ *ST* 3.48.4.1m.

and its punishment by atonement, we are being united to God in charity by redemption.⁴¹

Aquinas uses the next two replies to the objections to tell the story of redemption in terms of the cause and effect relationships that one can have with the devil, God, and Christ.

By consenting to sin, one puts one's self under the devil. "But as to the penalty, man was chiefly bound to God as his sovereign judge, and to the devil as his torturer, according to Matt 5:25: Lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer."⁴² That is, it is by God's permission that the devil can exercise his power to tempt one to sin and it is by God's ordination that one suffers the penalty from the devil.⁴³ God is in charge.

Consequently, the redemption that is required for the liberation of human beings is with respect to God, not with respect to the Devil. The price was not to be paid to the Devil but to God. Thus the blood of Christ, which is the price of our redemption, is not said to be offered to the Devil but to God. Atonement (*satisfactio*) releases us from sin and debt of punishment; redemption unites us to God in charity. Atonement is different from redemption because they fulfill different purposes.⁴⁴

⁴¹ While Cessario, *The Godly Image*, 195; Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 313–15. Gallagher, "Christus Victor Motifs," 361, Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus*, 397, 417, and Van Nieuwenhove, "Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion," 287–92, see satisfaction as an analogy for understanding Christ's Passion, and Torrell considers "sacrifice" and "redemption" as metaphors that have to be related to the concept of "merit" and "satisfaction," Aquinas writes that redemption is a human act whose intended end is different from satisfaction. Satisfaction's end is the paying of the debts of sin. The end of redemption is to unite us to Christ in charity. Redemption is more than a metaphor, which is but another way of understanding the value of Christ's Passion and more than a good analogy in which Christ's physical death is the cause of our spiritual dying unto sin. Redemption as a term refers to a distinct reality of Christ Passion. Christ's Passion unites us to Christ in charity and is different from satisfaction whose intention or end is the paying the debt of sin. In *ST* 1–2.12.3, Aquinas writes that "one thing can be chosen in preference to another, because of the greater number of purposes for which it is available: so that evidently a man can intend several things at the same time."

⁴² *ST* 3.48.4.2m.

⁴³ *ST* 3.48.4.2m.

⁴⁴ In *ST* 1–2.12.3: "...one thing can be chosen in preference to another, because of the greater number of purposes for which it is available: so that evidently a man can intend several things at the same time."

The Redeemer: *ST* 3.48.5

Christ's role in this power struggle for our redemption is unique. In fact, particular effects of redemption must be attributed immediately to Christ and to no one else. In other words, Christ's immediate role in redemption is different from the roles that the trinitarian God and others play.

In answer to his question whether it is proper for Christ to be the redeemer, Aquinas's first answer is taken from the revealed Word of God, Gal 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" to which Aquinas adds: "But only Christ was made a curse for us."⁴⁵

Helpful for understanding Galatians is the distinction Aquinas made between the slayers' choice to kill Jesus and Jesus' choice to die. Christ's death was His slayers' choice and intent; Christ's death was His choice to not stop it from happening, but death was not His intent.⁴⁶ Christ's intent was to hand Himself over to God.⁴⁷

In the body of the article, Aquinas indicates the two conditions according to which one can be called the redeemer. The act of paying and the price paid must be by and belong to the same person. Both "of these belong immediately to Christ as man." But in regard to the remote and first cause, it was the Trinity, "to whom Christ's life belonged as to its first author, and from whom Christ received the inspiration of suffering for us."⁴⁸

It is in his replies to the objections that Aquinas explains in what sense the Trinity is the cause of our redemption and in what senses the Son of God incarnate is, and then indicates in what sense our sufferings are not the cause of, but contribute to, our redemption.

To explain how the Trinity's causality of our redemption is different from Christ's, Aquinas uses the metaphysical concepts of principal and instrumental efficient causality. It is the Trinity that supplies what Christ's humanity does not have of itself, namely, divine power and divine grace. Christ's humanity is the instrument of this power and grace,⁴⁹ which He exercises and brings about by his own free will. Therefore, Aquinas writes, "and so redemption belongs immediately to the Man-Christ, but principally to God." It is in *ST* 3.49.3 that Aquinas considers the effects these different powers bring about, which will be considered below.

⁴⁵ *ST* 3.48.5.s.c.

⁴⁶ *ST* 3.47.1.3m.

⁴⁷ *ST* 3.48.4.1m

⁴⁸ *ST* 3.47.1.

⁴⁹ *ST* 1-2.112.1.1m.

In answer to the second objection that “not only Christ, but the Father also redeemed us,” Aquinas considers redemption not in the metaphysical terms of principal and instrumental efficient causality, but in human act and interpersonal terms. He writes that the Son of God as the Man-Christ “paid the price of our redemption immediately, but at the command of the Father as the original author.”⁵⁰ This is important because it is in His human act that the Son of God incarnate makes its own contribution to our redemption.⁵¹ In so far as Christ’s act made His own humanity the price, directed to God as end and on our behalf, then His act should affect His own humanity in these ways.

In order to understand how this is possible, one first needs to understand that Aquinas works with two kinds of willing, elicited and commanded.⁵² Command is “an act of the reason presupposing, however, an act of the will.”⁵³ Namely the will lends its power to reason and reason uses that power to command one’s will, reason, sensitive appetite and or bodily members.⁵⁴ When the command is repeated enough or powerful enough, it causes what is commanded to be inclined to the object of the command.⁵⁵ So if the object is good and the command is repeated enough or powerful enough, what is commanded receives a good habit. This is what happened for Christ when He cried out “Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”⁵⁶ By the miraculous power which He had,⁵⁷

⁵⁰ *ST* 3.48.5.2m.

⁵¹ Christ’s commanded act of dying is metaphysically unique in that it is done by the incarnate Son of God whose act of existence is not proper to His humanity but to His divinity, and thus distinct from our graced acts of dying described by Karl Rahner. Also, it is unique in its singularity, in that it is different from all Christ’s other acts in that its object is Christ’s soul, done by the Son Incarnate and directed not to God in general but specifically to the Father, as stated by the Gospel of Luke: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). All other human acts of Christ no matter what the object affect His operational powers not His soul. As a singular event it is a matter of Theology, which according to Hans Urs von Balthasar is a knowledge and science of singular events. For references, see Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (New York: Herder / Herder, 1961), 79 and see Fergus Kerr on Von Balthasar’s critique of Aquinas: Fergus Kerr, “The Varieties of Interpreting Aquinas,” in *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation*, ed. Fergus Kerr (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 32.

⁵² *ST* 1–2.8, prologue.

⁵³ *ST* 1–2.17.1.

⁵⁴ *ST* 1–2.17.5, 6, 7, 9. “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

⁵⁵ *ST* 1–2.51.2.

⁵⁶ *ST* 3.48.5.1m.

⁵⁷ *ST* 3.47.1.2m: “at the last moment He was able to cry out with a loud voice: and hence His death should be computed among His other miracles.”

the Son of God incarnate inclined His soul to the Father, giving it the habit of glory.⁵⁸

In contrast, in the third reply, Aquinas writes that “the sufferings of the saints are beneficial to the church as by way, not of redemption, but of example and exhortation.” They have but a psychological effect, not an ontological one.

Even though Thomas in the above articles has solved the speculative problem of treating Christ’s Passion as a redemptive activity, without impugning His power and without a ransom being paid to the devil, two fundamental questions remain. If the devil, other human beings, and Christ are instruments of God’s providence, then what is so unique and special about Christ’s role in our redemption? Second, even if one postulates that Christ is our redeemer, how does one contend with the obvious evidence that the devil still has the upper hand? Even after the coming of Christ, damnation is still possible; having sinned, people must still pay their debts of punishment; and all people die.⁵⁹

In order to answer these questions, Thomas writes two more articles, in which he considers how Christ’s Passion delivers us from our bondage to the devil,⁶⁰ and from God’s punishment.⁶¹

Christ Redeems Us from the Devil: *ST* 3.49.2

Having established that Christ is our redeemer by paying the price of His own life, Aquinas writes of its effect by contrasting the three things about the power of the devil with the three things Christ’s Passion effected.

Aquinas begins by admitting to a three-fold power in the devil.⁶² He can seduce us. He can act as God’s instrument of punishment. He can, by his own wickedness, hinder us from securing salvation, as he did with the Patriarchs by keeping them in Hell, even though they had died in faith and grace.⁶³

Nevertheless, the devil’s power is not as great as Christ’s. First, whereas the devil can tempt us by influencing our cognitive powers and corresponding appetites, Christ alone can directly influence our will. That is, when a person

⁵⁸ *ST* 1.97.1: “a thing is incorruptible in its form, inasmuch as being by nature corruptible, yet it has an inherent disposition [habit] which preserves it wholly from corruption; and this is called incorruptibility of glory.”

⁵⁹ *ST* 3.49.3.1, 2, and 3.

⁶⁰ *ST* 3.49.2.

⁶¹ *ST* 3.49.3.

⁶² *ST* 3.49.2.

⁶³ *ST* 3.49.2.2m; 5.1m.

commits a sin, he or she alone is responsible for consenting to it. The devil has no power over the human will. When we receive forgiveness from Christ, however, our conversion of heart is due both to our own will and to Christ's influence. In forgiving us, Christ gives our own will the power to make this conversion. That is, one can turn from sin to God by God's grace enabling one to do so.⁶⁴

Second, the devil has less power than Christ's concerns mankind's offense against God which in justice incurred God's punishment. When "Christ offered Himself up for us in the Passion . . . [His] voluntary enduring of the Passion was most acceptable to God as coming from charity. Therefore . . . Christ's Passion was a true sacrifice" overcoming our offense and reconciling us to God.⁶⁵

As for the devil's power of hindering persons from securing salvation by keeping them in hell,⁶⁶ Aquinas writes that Christ vanquishes the devil not by His force but by His justice. Because the devil went beyond his limit of power by giving the debt punishment for sin, death, to an innocent person, who was Christ, so God removes the debt punishment for sin, death, from guilty persons, who believe in Christ "whom the devil slew, though he was no debtor."⁶⁷ One could say that the innocent Christ offered his weakness in dying as an act of satisfaction for peoples' sins, so they can receive God's grace to be cleansed from sin and merit eternal life. The injustice of Christ's death was corrected by His Resurrection.

An illustration that can be generalized is in the Gospel of Luke. "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom'. And Jesus said to him, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:42–43). That is, nailed to their crosses, two human beings both in their weakness of dying, interact. The one acknowledges his sinfulness and having faith in Jesus asks for forgiveness. Then, Christ, as it were, in his weakness offers His own suffering in satisfaction for the man's sins so he can receive God's grace and enter with Christ into Paradise. Sometimes our greatest acts occur in our weakest moments.

⁶⁴ ST 3.49.2. When Thomas in this passage says that the devil has power over man by leading him into sin and then says that Christ delivers man from the devil's power by obtaining forgiveness, one should study what Thomas says elsewhere about the devil having sufficient power to lead man into sin (ST 1–2.80.1), and about what is effected in man's will when he is forgiven (ST 1–2.113.2, 3). In these passages Thomas indicates that the devil can influence one's choice only by proposing to one's senses and mind certain objects of choice. The devil cannot move one's will; only God and one's self can do that (ST 1–2.80.1).

⁶⁵ ST 3.48.3.

⁶⁶ ST 3.49.2.1m.

⁶⁷ ST 3.49.2.

It his second reply regarding the devil's power to tempt and molest persons' bodies, Aquina states that "there is a remedy provided for man though Christ's Passion whereby he can safeguard himself against the enemy's assaults, so as not be dragged down into the destruction of everlasting death,"⁶⁸ i.e. by mortal sin. However, in explaining how this happens Aquinas makes distinctions in the *Summa Theologiae* that he did not make when explaining this in his earlier work, the *Sentences*. In the *Sentences* as in the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas holds that Christ's Passion and death are sufficient as an atonement for all sin and punishment, both personal sin and original sin. In fact in the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas writes that the atonement is superabundant.⁶⁹ As for the effectiveness of Christ's Passion and death delivering us from sin and its punishment, in the *Sentences* Aquinas simply says that it depends on faith, charity and the sacraments,⁷⁰ but in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas makes important distinctions in explaining how this occurs.

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas writes that it is faith and its accompanying charity that is sufficient for delivering us from mortal sin and its punishment, but not from original sin.⁷¹ This is because mortal sins reside in one's powers of action and faith and charity are strong enough to draw these powers away from what is not of God and to what is of God. However such faith and its accompanying charity, while strong enough to cleanse one of mortal sin are not strong enough to rid one of original sin and its effect of blocking one's way to heaven. It is only after Christ's Passion that this can happen. This is for two reasons. One is on the part of Christ, the other on the part of ourselves. It is only by His Passion that Christ's humanity actually gains the power to deliver us from original sin and its punishment,⁷² which happens when Christ merits His exaltation.⁷³ It is then that He can act as both the efficient and exemplar cause of our own dying and rising, so that we can imitate Him in His dying and He, by His Godhead, can liken us to Himself in His resurrection on the Last Day.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *ST* 3.49.2.2m.

⁶⁹ *ST* 3.49.3.

⁷⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis: Liber III a distinctione XVII ad distinctionem XX*, III, d. 19, q. 1, a. 2co, <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/snp3017.html#9816>.

⁷¹ *ST* 3.49.2.2m.

⁷² *ST* 3.49.2.2m: "But after Christ's Passion, men can defend themselves from this by its power."

⁷³ *ST* 3.49.6.

⁷⁴ *ST* 3.56.1.3m: "But just as the Resurrection of Christ's body, through its personal union with the Word, is first in point of time, so also is it first in dignity and perfection; as the gloss says on 1 Cor. 15:20, 23. But whatever is most perfect is always the exemplar, which

On our part, besides faith and charity likening us to Christ we need the sacraments. Not only do we need grace to make elicited acts to merit eternal life, we also need sacramental character to receive the aid of Christ⁷⁵ to do the commanded acts⁷⁶ of making the signs of faith⁷⁷ in the sacraments but also to do commanded acts like Christ in the face of opposition and death, things that are not desired. Thus one needs the sacramental character in addition to the grace that is given to give witness to one's faith the way Christ gave witness to Himself in the face of opposition and death.⁷⁸ In worship as ritual there is the "Liturgy of the Word" and the "Liturgy of the Eucharist," while in living there is the witness of one's faith and martyrdom.

Christ Redeems Us from the Debt of Punishment: *ST* 3.49.3

If Christ's influence in delivering us from the bondage of the devil is so great, then why does He seem to be less effective in delivering us from our other bondage, our debt of punishment due to God's justice? These debts seem to perdure till this day. In fact, those who deny that Christ redeems humankind from due punishments marshal three reasons why.

First, it is a testimony of faith that there is still the punishment of damnation. As this is a fact of faith, then how can one say that Christ has redeemed us by removing our debt of punishment? Second, it is a penitential practice in the Church that those who have confessed their sins must do a particular penance. Why then is this penance imposed? Third, it is a matter of common sense that all are subject to the punishment of original sin which is death.⁷⁹ If Christ has removed all God's punishments for sin, then why do people die?⁸⁰

the less perfect copies according to its mode; consequently Christ's Resurrection is the exemplar of ours."

⁷⁵ *ST* 3.62.3: "sacramental character is specially the character of Christ, to Whose priesthood the faithful are likened by reason of the sacramental characters, which are nothing else than certain participations of Christ's priesthood flowing from Christ Himself."

⁷⁶ *ST* 3.63.4.3m. Character resides in one's cognitive power. *ST* 1-2.17.1: "Command is an act of the reason presupposing, however, an act of the will."

⁷⁷ *ST* 3.63.4.3m. Sacramental character is ordained to things pertaining to Divine worship which is a "protestation of faith expressed by exterior signs."

⁷⁸ *ST* 3.72.5. "in Confirmation he receives power to do those things which pertain to the spiritual combat with the enemies of the Faith."

⁷⁹ *ST* 1-2.81.3.1m.

⁸⁰ *ST* 3.49.3.1, 2 and 3.

Aquinas's overall answer is to state the two ways we have been delivered from the debt of punishment. The first way is direct. We are delivered from the sins of the human race by Christ's sufficient and superabundant atonement.⁸¹ A sufficient atonement, should we take Aquinas's definition, is offering something which God loves equal to the offense which God detests.⁸² That is, there is a self-denying offering of obedience and love by the incarnate and infinite Son of God which is equal to the self-indulging offense of disobedience and self-love against the infinite God and its effect, when this is accompanied by the restoration of human nature to its original condition at creation. Then it makes up for original sin. Thus a superabundant atonement would be one in which the act of love and obedience would be the same,⁸³ but one in which human nature is "restored into something better."⁸⁴

The second way we have been delivered from the debt of punishment is indirect, "that is to say—in so far as Christ's Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sin, upon which the debt of punishment rests."⁸⁵ This would be caused by God's restoration of grace.⁸⁶

In his objections and replies, Aquinas makes key distinctions that in fact explain how Christ's Passion does more than what is done by Christ's atonement.

The difference between atonement and redemption is due to three things. First, the different ways we can come in contact with Christ's Passion, one way being by faith and charity, the other way by the sacraments of faith. Second, the different ways Baptism and Penance, though working instrumentally, bring about different effects. Third, the fact that the Christian's act done in cooperation with Christ is both similar to and distinct from Christ's act, both in time and in effect.⁸⁷

The first objection argues that since "the chief punishment of sin is eternal damnation" still exists, then "it seems, therefore, that Christ's Passion did not deliver men from the punishment of sin," of any kind. In reply, Aquinas's writes that this is the case, since the work of Christ's Passion was not applied

⁸¹ *ST* 3.49.3.

⁸² *ST* 3.48.2.

⁸³ *ST* 3.48.1.3m: "Christ's Passion has a special effect, which His preceding merits did not possess, not on account of greater charity, but because of the nature of the work."

⁸⁴ *ST* 1.97.1.1m: "yet he did not recover immortality, the loss of which was an effect of sin; for this was reserved for Christ to accomplish, by Whom the defect of nature was to be restored into something better."

⁸⁵ *ST* 3.49.3.

⁸⁶ *ST* 1-2.113.2: "Now the effect of the Divine love in us, which is taken away by sin, is grace, whereby a man is made worthy of eternal life, from which sin shuts him out."

⁸⁷ *ST* 3.49.3.1m, 2m and 3m.

to them. They made no contact with Christ's Passion either through faith and charity or through the sacraments of faith.⁸⁸

The second objection argues that since there is a satisfactory punishment given in the sacrament of penance, then Christ's Passion does not deliver us from the punishment of sin. In reply Aquinas gives the principle that "to secure the effects of Christ's Passion, we must be likened [*configurari*] unto Him." This is done "sacramentally in Baptism according to Rom 6:4: 'For we are buried together with Him into death.'"⁸⁹

This can be interpreted analogically. Namely we are likened to Christ in that as he dies a physical death we die spiritually by putting sin to death.⁹⁰ However Aquinas makes two further statements about what happens at Baptism. First, "no punishment of satisfaction is imposed upon men at their Baptism, since they are fully delivered by Christ's satisfaction."⁹¹ Second, while the baptized are "likened unto Christ's death," those who sin afterward, can only be likened to "Christ suffering."⁹² This would mean that Baptism delivers one from all sin committed before Baptism, both original sin and personal sin and their punishments.

But if persons would sin afterward, which would tarnish their likeness to Christ because of their personal sins, they can be "likened unto Christ suffering by some form of punishment or suffering they endure in their own person."⁹³ That is, by doing the penance or undergoing some suffering, persons can counter their sinful inclinations, seeking to replace vice with virtue. Moreover, "by the cooperation of Christ's satisfaction, much lighter penalty suffices than one that is proportionate to the sin."⁹⁴

⁸⁸ ST 3.49.3.1m.

⁸⁹ ST 3.49.3.2m.

⁹⁰ Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus*, 434.

⁹¹ ST 3.49.3.2m.

⁹² ST 3.49.3.2m.

⁹³ ST 3.49.3.2m.

⁹⁴ ST 3.49.3.2m. This means that Christ helps us to make satisfaction for these sins, for the practice of penance is an external act, i.e. arising outside of the will, i.e. from reason, but uses the power of the will to command an act of satisfaction, see ST 3.48.2.1m. On the other hand, instead of seeing Christ helping the penitent make an adequate satisfaction, Torrell sees it the other way around. He writes, "It is only because the person's satisfaction is 'caught in' 'incorporated into' the satisfaction of Christ already present and giving it strength that that of the penitent has any value." Then, instead of explaining how this happens Torrell writes that "the precise point of this solution is less interesting than the appeal to the Pauline teaching of sacramental conformity to Christ which occupies such an important place in Aquinas." (Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus*, 433).

It is Aquinas's reply to the third objection that is needed to clarify what is going on. When Christ died, His atonement as spoken of before was not simply sufficient but superabundant, one in which human nature is restored into something better. Consequently, Aquinas describes what takes place in Christ the head and then in us who are incorporated with him as members. Of Christ, Aquinas writes “[1] Christ first had grace in His soul with bodily possibility, and [2] through the Passion attained to [3] the glory of immortality.” Then Aquinas writes “[1] so we likewise who are His members, are freed by His Passion from all debt of punishment”⁹⁵ having “a passible and mortal body: [2] but afterwards, ‘being made conformable’ to the sufferings and death of Christ, [3] we are brought into immortal glory.”⁹⁶

What is important to recognize is that for Christ the progression from having grace and a passible body to attaining immortal glory is all done by Christ alone but it is not done by our selves alone. This is shown even grammatically. Whereas Christ first had grace in His soul with bodily possibility and through the Passion attained [active voice] to the glory of immortality,” “we first receive in our souls *the spirit of adoption of sons*, whereby our names are written down for the inheritance of immortal glory, while we yet have a passible and mortal body: but afterwards, *being made conformable* [passive voice] to the sufferings and death of Christ, we are brought [passive voice] into immortal glory.”⁹⁷ Of such assistance Aquinas had previously explained: “atonement consists in an outward action for which helps may be used, among which friends are to be

⁹⁵ Either by Baptism without sinning or also by penance having sinned.

⁹⁶ *ST* 3.49.3.m. In interpreting this passage about how Christ attains immortal glory and how we do, Torrell centers on Aquinas's words about our receiving “in our souls the spirit of adoption of sons,” and attributes this to the grace of the Holy Spirit and writes, that “it is the Holy Spirit who acts in the sacraments and that he is guarantee of our inheritance.” Thus, Torrell writes that the Aquinas's text has an eschatological perspective. There is a progressivity in the process of conformity to Christ beginning with Baptism. Then Torrell writes what is the key difference of his position from mine above. This conformity to Christ is accomplished only through the same trials that Christ has already undergone; not in our place, but rather like us, so that we may learn to live these things and surmount them “like him.” (Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus*, 434). That is, Torrell holds that all that Christ did and endured shaped the grace that is now communicated to us, so that we can act as Christ did in His life, Passion and death and then at God's disposal and power have our resurrection brought about. Torrell, 640–41.

⁹⁷ *ST* 3.49.3.m.

computed.”⁹⁸ So in our very act of dying Christ assists us to commend our soul to the Father, and thereby acquire the habit of glory.⁹⁹

To understand how the above takes place, we can use Aquinas's principle about how habits are caused. For everything that is passive and moved by another is disposed by the action of the agent; wherefore if the acts be multiplied a certain quality is formed in the power which is passive and moved, which quality is called a habit.¹⁰⁰ In the case of the Passion, Christ is the agent who as the Redeemer brings about His own salvation and ours.¹⁰¹ As Redeemer, the act that is done is His and the object of the act is His soul, as expressed by His words, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit (Luke 23:46).” That is, Christ commands His soul to the Father by way of command. A command, in general is an “act of reason, presupposing an act of the will, in virtue of which the reason, by its command, moves (the power) to the execution of the act.”¹⁰² One can command one's will, reason, sensitive appetite and bodily members.¹⁰³ Christ is able to command His soul and not just His powers for two reasons. First, while the soul is inclined by its nature to its body, because His slayers are causing it to separate from His body, it is open to being influenced by an outside power. Second, that outside power is due to Christ's hypostatic union because He can not only call on His will and grace to make that command, but upon the miraculous power of His divinity¹⁰⁴ and incline His soul to the Father. In this way Christ acquires the habit of glory for His soul.¹⁰⁵ Then by the power of His Godhead and thus in union with Father and Holy Spirit, after three days, Christ is able to join His soul perfected by this new habit to His body so that it acts as the formal cause of His human nature's immortality and glory.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, Christ can use His powers to help us not only in turning our commanded powers from sin back to God but also help us as we are dying to

⁹⁸ *ST* 3.48.2.1m.

⁹⁹ For a description of how Christ causes the habit of glory in Himself see W. Jerome Bracken, “Of What Benefit to Himself Was Christ's Suffering?: Merit in Aquinas's Theology of the Passion,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 65, no. 3 (2001): 385–407, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.2001.0002>.

¹⁰⁰ *ST* 1–2.51.2.

¹⁰¹ *ST* 3.48.1.

¹⁰² *ST* 1–2.17.1.

¹⁰³ *ST* 1–2.17.5, 6, 7, 9.

¹⁰⁴ *ST* 3.47.1.2m.

¹⁰⁵ *ST* 1.97.1: “Second, a thing is incorruptible in its form, inasmuch as being by nature corruptible, yet it has an inherent disposition which preserves it wholly from corruption; and this is called incorruptibility of glory.”

¹⁰⁶ *ST* 2–2.58.2. This paragraph can describe metaphorical justice.

command and commend our souls to the Father and thereby acquire the habit of glory. Then, on the Last Day, our having already attained the more excellent goal of the vision of God, Christ, by His Godhead and with the Father and Holy Spirit, will join our souls to our bodies whereby we will be made glorious and immortal like the risen Christ Himself.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, what Christ underwent in His Passion and death was not simply a satisfaction for sin to remove all debts of punishment. It was also a redemptive act in which mankind's very weakness in dying became the moment for Christ the man and the moment for us as well to achieve through an outward act of command¹⁰⁸ the highest human but invisible good,¹⁰⁹ the habit of glory in one's

¹⁰⁷ *ST* 3.49.3.2m. To be redeemed is to be likened to the Redeemer.

¹⁰⁸ *ST* 3.48.2.1m. While Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 313; Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus*, 407, and Van Nieuwenhove, "Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion," 290, comment on *ST* 3.48.2.2m about satisfaction being an "outward act" for which another can satisfy, *ST* 3.48.2.1m, only Torrell recognizes it as *l'acte extérieur*. None write that the exterior act is a command, in which our reason, exterior to our will, commands and another of our powers obeys and is perfected thereby; *ST* 1–2.17.1. As such, command is the bases for explaining how Christ's act in dying can attain for his human nature the glory of immortality, *ST* 3.49.3.3m. Also command is basis for explaining how Christ can help us to do the same, *ST* 3.49.3.3m. This is because Christ by commanding His own soul and inclining it to His Father in his dying, *ST* 3.49.5.2m, so perfected His soul with the habit of glory, *ST* 1.97.1, that it became, when rejoined to His body, the formal cause of His bodily resurrection and exaltation. *ST* 3.48.1.3m; 3.49.6.2m. Thereby, through the sacraments, Christ can communicate to us not only the grace of the Holy Trinity to merit eternal life, *ST* 3.62, but also sacramental character, *ST* 3.63, which flows from Christ himself, *ST* 3.63.3.2m, and which enables us to receive the help of Christ Himself to command our sinful powers and direct them back to God, *ST* 3.49.3.2m. Moreover, at our dying, we can receive the help of Christ to command our soul and incline it to the Father, as Christ did, and thus attain the habit of glory, as Christ did. Then on the Last Day, when the Incarnate Son with the Father and Holy Spirit joins our souls to our bodies, we will be like Christ, not only in terms of grace but also in terms of our bodily likeness to the resurrected and glorious incarnate Son of God.

¹⁰⁹ Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*. To account for the scriptural testimony that we are saved by Christ's death, Rahner developed his "Theology of Death," considering what takes place in every human death and applying it to Christ. In death, one, in his very weakness, surrenders his bodily life and at the same time one morally consummates his spiritual reality as to be either in harmony or disharmony with the world of God (Rahner, 33), and body-spirit beings (Rahner, 31), either contributing or not contributing to the establishment of the right order of this world (Rahner, 33). Applying this to Christ, the following can be said. In His surrender of bodily life, experiencing God's abandonment and the darkness of its outcome (Rahner, 49–50) Christ by grace made a "free offering of His entire created existence to God" (Rahner, 70). In doing so the human reality of Christ is consummated through His death and His death grafted into the oneness of this world" becomes "a destiny

soul. Only on the Last Day, will we see that our soul with the habit of glory gives us a likeness to the risen Christ, the incarnate Son of God.

Conclusion

From the analysis of these articles on redemption, therefore, one can see that Thomas has given a much more comprehensive understanding of Christ's redemption than has either the devil's ransom theory of the early Fathers or the satisfaction theory of Anselm. Neither the metaphor of the devil's battle against God nor the moralistic description of our duty to God adequately explains what Christ accomplished by redeeming us. Only by seeing redemption in the metaphysical and moral act terms of our participation in God's providence, can one appreciate the value of suffering in our struggle with evil. Furthermore, this point of view enables one to see how the Incarnate Son of God and the sacraments supply us with the power to prevail.

Insofar as redemption is part of God's providence, it is a process by which we are converted from sin and transformed into glory. As part of this process, suffering has a number of functions. It maintains God's justice by punishing us with damnation, because we choose to remain in sin. It helps us to correct the faults still remaining after we are forgiven and are converted to God. Finally,

and intrinsic principle" of the world of "personal human actions" (Rahner, 73). Rahner says "He performed all this in virtue of a grace necessarily his due as a divine person, while the grace which helps us to face our death, is his grace." (Rahner, 70). Rahner later makes the statement that while "Christ was poured out over all the world; he became actually, in his humanity, what he had always been according to his dignity, the heart of the world, the innermost center of creation" (Rahner, 74). It seems Rahner is attributing too much to Christ's humanity, making it more than being an instrument of grace (Rahner, 74), making one think Rahner is attributing to Christ's humanity what His divinity is for the world. In what I have written I have considered the risen Christ being the conjoined instrument of His Godhead and the sacraments to be His separated instruments, whereby Christ communicates grace and sacramental character. By grace we can merit eternal life. By grace and sacramental character which flows directly from Christ, *ST* 3.63.3, we can receive Christ's personal aid during our lifetime and when we are dying. We will receive Christ's personal aid to command our powers and direct them to the Father; *ST* 3.49.2.2m. Then at our dying, through both these gifts we will be able to command and commend our souls to the Father, *ST* 3.49.2.3m, as Christ did in his dying, and acquire the habit of glory, *ST* 3.49.2.3m, as Christ did in His dying, *ST* 3.48.5.1m, making us become like Christ, in His humanity, in sanctifying grace and in having the habit of glory. Then, on the Last Day, when our souls are joined to our bodies we will become like the resurrected Christ Himself.

suffering contributes to our transformation into glory. Thus, submission to suffering, under the influence of the Incarnate Son of God enables the power of God to have its greatest effect.¹¹⁰

It is through the sacraments that the Incarnate Son of God can affect us. First, these sacraments help us to overcome the effects of sin. Baptism wipes sin away.¹¹¹ Penance assists us in performing satisfactory acts so that less suffering is needed to remove the residual effects of personal sin.¹¹² Second, the sacraments, particularly Baptism and Confirmation, enable us to be subject to the influence of Christ whereby suffering and particularly death are moments to do acts that can perfect us and attain the glory of immortality itself.¹¹³

Christ by way of His hypostatic union has the power to command His own human nature and direct it to His Father and assist us in commanding our own powers and ultimately our soul to the Father. This is the ultimate reason why suffering can be changed from a destructive to a constructive force. Whereas grace elicits acts of love for God and neighbor and thereby merits eternal life, it is Christ, in His hypostatic union, who enables us to command our human powers and ultimately our soul that changes the function of suffering. It evolves from being a punishment for sin and a correction of its effect into being an opportunity for our human nature to be transformed.¹¹⁴ Now, whereas a virtue is a specific kind of habit, a habit in general “is a disposition whereby that which is disposed, is well or ill-disposed either in regard to itself, that is, to its nature, or in regard to something else, that is to the end.”¹¹⁵ By assisting us to command and commend our souls to the Father and thereby acquire the habit of glory for them, Christ, the Son of God incarnate, brings us to share in the glory and immortality of His own risen human nature.

Through the prism of redemption, therefore, suffering and death are seen as occasions when Christ not only exercises His personal influence on us by way

¹¹⁰ *ST* 3.48.6.1m; *ST* 3.48.1.3m: “Christ’s Passion has a special effect, which His preceding merits did not possess, not on account of greater charity, but because of the nature of the work, which was suitable for such an effect,” *ST* 3.48.2.1m: “But the same reason does not hold good of confession and contrition, because atonement consists in an outward action, for which helps may be used, among which friends are to be computed.”

¹¹¹ *ST* 3.49.3.1m.

¹¹² *ST* 3.49.3.2m.

¹¹³ *ST* 3.49.3.3m.

¹¹⁴ Human virtue is an operative habit (*ST* 1–2.55.2). Now, whereas a virtue is a specific kind of habit, a habit in general “is a disposition whereby that which is disposed, is well or ill disposed either in regard to itself, that is, to its nature, or in regard to something else, that is to the end” (*ST* 1–2.49.3).

¹¹⁵ *ST* 1–2.49.3.

of command but also comes to possess us in a most radical way by the habit of glory. The way a virtue in a person comes to possess the power in which it inheres is the way Christ comes to possess us. As a virtue gives a new mode of being and a greater facility in operating to a power of a person's soul,¹¹⁶ Christ gives a new mode of being and facility of operating to our very essence.¹¹⁷ The unique relationship that Christ attains with us through His redemptive act, therefore, is as pervasive as the relationship that a virtue has with any of a person's powers of acting. Moreover, like virtue itself, the power that comes from Christ is at the disposal of our freedom to use or reject. We can call upon Christ to help us overcome the devil's temptations. We can also call upon Christ to help us deal with the devil's power to separate soul from body and make that the occasion whereby He enables us to cooperate with Him in commanding and commanding our souls to the Father, thereby acquiring the habit of glory as He did.

As redemptive, therefore, Christ's Passion not only delivers us from the punishment of the sin of the human race, but initiates a process by which His own human act of dying by way of His command is the immediate and in that sense the unique cause of His bodily transformation and exaltation and also a process by which we, His members, according to grace and by cooperation with Christ can undergo to become bodily like Him. While the triune gift of grace enables us to merit eternal life, it is Christ Himself who personally influences us so that we can command acts that so affect our powers of acting that vices can be replaced by virtue and the debilitating habit of original sin¹¹⁸ can be replaced by the habit of glory. That is, Christ is the immediate cause of the process by which He and then we are bodily transformed, becoming not only immortal but glorious.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ One can choose to go contrary to his virtue and thus corrupt it (*ST* 1–2,53,2). One is free, therefore, to follow the inclination of virtue or not to follow it.

¹¹⁷ *ST* 3,49,2,3m.

¹¹⁸ *ST* 1–2,82,1: "In this sense original sin is a habit. For it is an inordinate disposition, arising from the destruction of the harmony which was essential to original justice," *ST* 2–2,164,1: "But inasmuch as through sin man's mind withdrew from subjection to God, the result was that neither were his lower powers wholly subject to his reason, whence there followed so great a rebellion of the carnal appetite against the reason: nor was the body wholly subject to the soul; whence arose death and other bodily defects."

¹¹⁹ It should be pointed out that the above is an interpretation of Aquinas that is different from Torrell's. For Torrell what is valuable and effective is due to grace regarding merit (Torrell, *La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus*, 392–93), satisfaction (Torrell, 406–7) and redemption (Torrell, 419). Thus, Torrell describes grace as Christo-forming and writes that only at the resurrection is grace able to deploy all its virtualities (Torrell, 633).

What remains to be seen is how the interaction between Christ and His fellow human beings causes this change to come about. Later in *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas shows how Christ's death and Resurrection act not only as an efficient cause, but also as exemplary causes likening us to Himself¹²⁰ and how the sacraments, by the gifts of sacramental grace¹²¹ and sacramental character,¹²² enable one to share in Christ's priesthood,¹²³ with sacramental character enabling one to receive Christ's aid and give witness to Christ "even in the face of the enemies of the Christian faith."¹²⁴

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¹²⁰ *ST* 3.56.1.3m.

¹²¹ *ST* 3.62.

¹²² *ST* 3.63.

¹²³ *ST* 3.62.5.1m.

¹²⁴ *ST* 3.72.5. For an explanation of these causalities see Chapter 10 of W. Jerome Bracken, "Why Suffering in Redemption? A New Interpretation of the Theology of the Passion in the Summa Theologica, 3. 46–49, by Thomas Aquinas" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1978), 349–70.

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