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Salvation Through Christ's Merits in Saint Thomas Aquinas

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Abbreviations

<i>Comp. theol.</i>	<i>Compendium theologiae seu Brevis compilatio theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum</i>
<i>De car.</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de caritate</i>
<i>De malo</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i>
<i>De pot.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia</i>
<i>De spe</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de spe</i>
<i>De ver.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i>
<i>De virt. in com.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus</i>
<i>Ethic.</i>	<i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i>
<i>In de caelo</i>	<i>In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio</i>
<i>In Psalm.</i>	<i>In psalmos Davidis expositio</i>
<i>In Symb.</i>	<i>In Symbolum Apostolorum, scilicet ‘Credo in Deum’ expositio</i>
<i>Lect. rom.</i>	<i>Lectura romana in primum Sententiarum Petri Lombardi</i>
<i>Quodl.</i>	<i>Quaestiones de quolibet</i>
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei contra errores Infidelium seu Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>
<i>Super I Cor.</i>	<i>Super primam Epistolam ad Corinthios lectura</i>
<i>Super Col.</i>	<i>Super Epistolam ad Colossenses lectura</i>
<i>Super Eph.</i>	<i>Super Epistolam ad Ephesios lectura</i>
<i>Super Heb.</i>	<i>Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos lectura</i>
<i>Super Ioan.</i>	<i>Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura</i>
<i>Super Matt.</i>	<i>Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura</i>
<i>Super Philip.</i>	<i>Super Epistolam ad Philipenses lectura</i>
<i>Super Rom.</i>	<i>Super Epistolam ad Romanos lectura</i>

With respect to Aquinas’s scriptural commentaries, the biblical reference is given in square brackets after the chapter, lecture and paragraph number of the Marietti edition, as e.g. ‘*Super Rom.* 6.4.517 [6:23]’. As to *Super I Cor.*, there is the occasional reference to the *reportatio* of Reginald of Piperno, found in the bibliography under the title *Super Epistolam I ad Cor.: XI, 1–XIII, 11*. In some cases, the line numbers of the Leonine edition are provided after the standard reference separated by a colon, as e.g. ‘*Ethic.* 8.1:21–24’. For *Sent.* IV.23–50, the Parma edition with the title *Commentum in quartum librum Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi* has been used. As regards the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, references to the Marietti edition are given in square brackets after the part, chapter and paragraph number of the English edition translated by Anton C. Pegis et. al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), as e.g. ‘*SCG* III.158.7 [3311]’. Translations of Saint Thomas and other Latin authors are mine throughout, although standard translations have been consulted. Quotations from the Bible refer to the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition (RSV-2CE). With regard to patristic authors, there is the occasional reference to the *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, abbreviated CCSL.

Introduction

In his *ex professo* discussion on merit in the *Prima Secundae*, Saint Thomas begins by pointing out that merit is an effect of cooperating grace.¹ In turn, the reward and hence effect of merit is the beatitude of eternal life as reached through grace.² Accordingly, the language of merit is employed to describe the way in which we by works of charity participate in God's saving activity of bestowing beatitude on us,³ i.e. how God through cooperating grace leads us to eternal life without eliminating our freedom.⁴ At the same time however, Aquinas holds that our merits are brought about by the merit of Christ, which is similar to a universal cause (*quodammodo sicut causa universalis*) or to a root (*radix*) from which all merits draw their efficacy.⁵ Moreover, all meritorious activity takes place in Christ Jesus (*hoc fit in Christo Iesu Domino nostro*).⁶ Further, merit is if not the principal than at least one of the ways in which Christ's passion causes our salvation.⁷ Therefore, the question naturally poses itself, what the relation is between our meritorious works and the merit of Christ, since both cause our salvation.

The present study considers this issue in Saint Thomas Aquinas with a particular focus on the passion. It has four chapters. In the first chapter, I give a short account of the basic rationale for merit as the way in which we cooperate with God's communication of his own goodness, i.e. how we participate in God's creating and saving activity. A first section deals with God's mercy and justice as a general framework for merit. The reason for this perspective is that merit pertains to justice in that it makes one worthy of a reward, yet ultimately, it is a gift of God's goodness and mercy. The second section on condign and congruous merit discusses Saint Thomas's answer to the question how it is possible for us to merit in terms of strict justice before God while still preserving his transcendence. A third section treats grace and charity as principles of merit, in particular the relation of charity to justice and meritorious causality. In

¹ *ST* I-II.114 pr.: 'Deinde considerandum est de merito, quod est effectus gratiae cooperantis.'

² *Sent* II.26.1.5 co.: 'Gratia habet in nobis diversos effectus ordinatos. Primum enim quod facit est hoc quod dat esse quoddam divinum. Secundus autem effectus est opus meritorium quod sine gratia esse non potest. Tertius effectus est praemium meriti, scilicet ipsa vita beata, ad quam per gratiam pervenitur.'

³ *ST* I-II.109.3 ad 3: 'Amor dicitur summus non solum quantum ad gradum dilectionis, sed etiam quantum ad rationem diligendi, et dilectionis modum. Et secundum hoc, supremus gradus dilectionis est quo caritas diligit Deum ut *beatificantem*'. Cf. *ST* II-II.85.2 co.: 'Anima autem se offert Deo in sacrificium sicut principio suae creationis et sicut *fini suae beatificationis*.' Both italics mine.

⁴ Cf. *ST* I-II.111.2 ad 2: 'Deus non sine nobis nos iustificat, quia per motum liberi arbitrii, dum iustificamur, Dei iustitiae consentimus. Ille tamen motus non est causa gratiae, sed effectus. Unde tota operatio pertinet ad gratiam.'

⁵ *Sent*. II.27.1.6 ad 2: 'Meritum Christi est sicut radix omnium meritorum, a quo omnium merita efficaciam trahunt; unde est quodammodo sicut causa universalis'.

⁶ *Super Rom.* 6.4.517 [6:23]: 'Opera nostra si considerentur in sui natura et secundum quod procedunt ex libero arbitrio hominis, non merentur ex condigno vitam aeternam, sed solum secundum quod procedunt ex gratia Spiritus Sancti. [...] Et hoc fit in Christo Iesu domino nostro, id est, per Christum, vel in quantum in ipso sumus per fidem et charitatem.'

⁷ *ST* III.48.1 co.: 'Christus non solum per suam passionem sibi, sed etiam omnibus suis membris meruit salutem.'

the second chapter, I discuss the merits of Christ, first if it is possible for Christ to merit at all, and second the fittingness of the passion in light of the fact that Saint Thomas holds that Christ merited from the first moment of his existence, whence the brutality of the passion might seem redundant. Chapter three treats merit as the most basic mode in which Christ's passion effects our salvation as compared to satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption, which turn out to be concrete realisations of Christ's charity, whereas merit concerns charity in an unqualified sense. Finally, the fourth chapter treats the communication of Christ's merits. Section one deals with the special union between Christ and humanity that explains how Christ's merits pertain to others although he is a different person from us. Section two discusses the doctrine of incorporation into the mystical body of Christ, which in Aquinas's mature work, i.e. in the *Summa Theologiae*, has become the primary account of the communication of Christ's merits. A final section treats the hierarchical relationship between Christ's merits and ours, as well as how Christ's merits cause our merits both effectively and by way of exemplarity.

Many of the individual sections of this study could have been greatly expanded, and quite a few of the topics discussed are deserving of further attention in themselves. It is true that in recent years, several book length studies on merit and closely related topics in Aquinas have appeared, especially in connection with grace and moral theology,⁸ but comparatively little attention has been paid to merit in connection with subjects proper to dogmatic theology,⁹ such as the role of Christ in our meritorious activity, how the Holy Spirit causes our merits or the relation between merit and the Trinity or the sacraments. These subjects remain topics for future research.

⁸ Some of the book length titles ordered by publication date include Aloisa M. LEWERMANN, *Wachsen in der Gottesfreundschaft: Theologie des Verdienstes bei Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 2009); Shawn M. COLBERG, 'Be Glad and Rejoice for your Reward is very great in Heaven': 'Reward' in the Theology of Thomas and Bonaventure' (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2008); Joseph P. WAWRYKOW, *God's Grace and Human Action: 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Michael ARGES, *Divine Self-Expression through Human Merit According to Thomas Aquinas* (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1991); William D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit: The Nature of its Causality according to St. Thomas* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1962); Prudentio DE LETTER, *De ratione meriti secundum Sanctum Thomam* (Rome: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1939). Wawrykow offers an extended survey of the literature in *ibid.*, pp. 1–59. Similarly, Lynn discusses the early 20th century literature with respect to the question of meritorious causality in *ibid.*, pp. 74–90.

⁹ See however the important studies by Jean-Pierre TORRELL, *Encyclopédie: Jésus le Christ chez saint Thomas d'Aquin: Texte de la Tertia Pars (ST III^a) traduit et commenté accompagné de Données historiques et doctrinales et de cinquante Textes choisis* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2008), pp. 1170–1185; and John EMERY, *A Christology of Communication: Christ's Charity According to Thomas Aquinas* (S.T.D. diss., University of Fribourg, 2017), published by the author, pp. 235–259, 407–426. For a survey of the theology of merit in a number of 20th century French thomists, see Philippe-Marie MARGELIDON, *Études thomistes sur la théologie de la rédemption: De la grâce à la résurrection du Christ* (Perpignan: Artège, 2010), pp. 103–138. Other studies include, W. Jerome BRACKEN, 'Of What Benefit to Himself Was Christ's Suffering? Merit in Aquinas's Theology of the Passion', *The Thomist* 65 (2001), 385–407; A.M. LEWERMANN, *Wachsen in der Gottesfreundschaft*, pp. 173–212; and J.P. WAWRYKOW, *God's Grace and Human Action*, pp. 233–247.

1. Merit in General

The doctrine of merit gives rise to a number of theological conundrums. On the one hand, it appears to put God under an obligation to reward us for good works, thereby questioning not only the doctrine of grace and salvation as an absolutely free gift of God but also his very transcendence. On the other hand, merit seems necessary in order to allow for a real interpersonal exchange between God and human beings. Nevertheless, it may seem an inapt notion to describe the intimate friendship between God and man based on grace and charity. These questions are treated in the course of this chapter. The first section presents Saint Thomas's answer to the first question, namely that the order of justice is inherent in human nature and based on divine ordination, whence the sovereignty of God remains completely intact. In turn, since human nature is a gift from God, justice and thus merit are founded on God's goodness and mercy. This is also the ultimate rationale for merit, as it allows us to participate in God's creating and saving activity. The second section deals with the distinction between congruous and condign merit, i.e. merit in the proper and improper sense. Aquinas's mature answer to the question how we can merit condignly before God is that it is the Holy Spirit that formally disposes us by grace and moves us towards glory by effectively causing our acts of charity. In the third section, we approach the third issue, namely that although merit is a species of justice, it is at the same time based on grace and charity, which is a kind of friendship with God, whence justice takes on a slightly different meaning. Still, the notion of merit cannot be dispensed with, since we cannot efficiently cause beatitude or growth in the friendship with God, although we can merit it on the basis of grace.

1.1. Justice, Mercy and Merit

God gives to creatures whatever is fitting to their natures, so that they can act as they should and attain their due ends. Since justice consists in a fitting order (*conveniens ordo*) and proportion (*proportio*),¹ God's communication of perfections pertains to his justice insofar as he grants to each creature what is proper to it according to his divine wisdom. This order of justice is twofold. On the one hand, all created reality is ordered to God in the sense that it is to fulfil his will and sapiential plan and thus manifest his goodness. In this way, God's justice regards what befits him (*respicit decentiam ipsius*), insofar as he renders to himself his due. On

¹ *ST* I.21.4 co.: 'Non enim potest facere aliquid Deus, quod non sit conveniens sapientiae et bonitati ipsius; secundum quem modum diximus aliquid esse debitum Deo. Similiter etiam quidquid in rebus creatis facit, secundum convenientem ordinem et proportionem facit; in quo consistit ratio iustitiae.' *ST* I.21.2 co.: 'Sicut autem se habent artificata ad artem, ita se habent opera iusta ad legem cui concordant. Iustitia igitur Dei, quae constituit ordinem in rebus conformem rationi sapientiae suae, quae est lex eius, convenienter veritas nominatur. Et sic etiam dicitur in nobis veritas iustitiae.'

the other hand, justice might seem to introduce a reverse order of God towards creatures, for it is for instance due to man to have hands, as this is in accord with his nature, and so it might appear that God is under a kind of obligation when he fulfils the order of justice and gives to all creatures their due. But this second order is based on the first, since what is due to each thing is ordered to it according to divine wisdom, and hence God is not made a debtor;² rather, the debt to creatures (*debitum creaturae*) is reduced to a debt to God himself (*debitum Deo*).³

The communication of perfections can also be attributed to God's goodness if considered absolutely, or to his liberality insofar as he grants his gifts because of his goodness, or again to his mercy on account of the removal of some defect.⁴ Now, God's work of justice always presupposes and is based on these other attributes, especially mercy, for although the order of creation exemplifies justice, the very existence and being of this order is primarily established by an act of divine goodness and mercy. Thus Saint Thomas writes that in all of God's works, mercy shines forth as their first root, and the power (*virtus*) of mercy is preserved in all things that follow, where it operates even more vehemently, just as the primary cause flows into the effect more vehemently than the secondary cause.⁵ In this way, every act of God is an act of both justice and mercy, but since the order of justice is founded on mercy, it is more an act of mercy. This holds true also for creation, which is an act of justice insofar it corresponds to God's wisdom and goodness, and an act of mercy forasmuch as things are moved into being from non-being,⁶ something that God is under no obligation whatsoever to do.

² *ST I.21.1 ad 3*: 'Omnia creata ordinantur in Deum. Sic igitur et debitum attendi potest dupliciter in operatione divina, aut secundum quod aliquid debetur Deo; aut secundum quod aliquid debetur rei creatae. Et utroque modo Deus debitum reddit. Debitum enim est Deo, ut impleatur in rebus id quod eius sapientia et voluntas habet, et quod suam bonitatem manifestat, et secundum hoc iustitia Dei respicit decentiam ipsius, secundum quam reddit sibi quod sibi debetur. Debitum etiam est alicui rei creatae, quod habeat id quod ad ipsam ordinatur, sicut homini, quod habeat manus, et quod ei alia animalia serviant. Et sic etiam Deus operatur iustitiam, quando dat unicuique quod ei debetur secundum rationem suae naturae et conditionis. Sed hoc debitum dependet ex primo, quia hoc unicuique debetur, quod est ordinatum ad ipsum secundum ordinem divinae sapientiae. Et licet Deus hoc modo debitum alicui det, non tamen ipse est debitor, quia ipse ad alia non ordinatur, sed potius alia in ipsum.'

³ W.D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit*, p. 42.

⁴ *ST I.21.3 co.*: 'Communicatio enim perfectionum, absolute considerata, pertinet ad bonitatem, ut supra ostensum est. Sed in quantum perfectiones rebus a Deo dantur secundum earum proportionem, pertinet ad iustitiam, ut dictum est supra. In quantum vero non attribuit rebus perfectiones propter utilitatem suam, sed solum propter suam bonitatem, pertinet ad liberalitatem. In quantum vero perfectiones datae rebus a Deo, omnem defectum expellunt, pertinet ad misericordiam.' Cf. *Sent. IV.46.1.2.1 co.*

⁵ *ST I.21.4 co.*: 'Opus autem divinae iustitiae semper praesupponit opus misericordiae, et in eo fundatur. Creaturae enim non debetur aliquid, nisi propter aliquid in eo praeexistens, vel praeconsideratum, et rursus, si illud creaturae debetur, hoc erit propter aliquid prius. Et cum non sit procedere in infinitum, oportet devenire ad aliquid quod ex sola bonitate divinae voluntatis dependeat, quae est ultimus finis. Utpote si dicamus quod habere manus debitum est homini propter animam rationalem; animam vero rationalem habere, ad hoc quod sit homo; hominem vero esse, propter divinam bonitatem. Et sic in quolibet opere Dei apparet misericordia, quantum ad primam radicem eius. Cuius virtus salvatur in omnibus consequentibus; et etiam vehementius in eis operatur, sicut causa primaria vehementius influit quam causa secunda. Et propter hoc etiam ea quae alicui creaturae debentur, Deus, ex abundantia suae bonitatis, largius dispensat quam exigit proportio rei. Minus enim est quod sufficeret ad conservandum ordinem iustitiae, quam quod divina bonitas confert, quae omnem proportionem creaturae excedit.' Cf. *Sent. IV.46.1.1.2 co.* See also A.M. LEWERMANN, *Wachsen in der Gottesfreundschaft*, pp. 62–66.

⁶ *ST I.21.4 ad 4*: 'Licet creationi non praesupponatur aliquid in rerum natura, praesupponitur tamen aliquid in Dei cognitione. Et secundum hoc etiam salvatur ibi ratio iustitiae, in quantum res in esse producit, secundum quod

The establishment of the order of justice is not produced by creatures: it is a free gift according to God's wisdom; but the fulfilment of this order requires the cooperation of creatures as secondary causes. This corresponds to a twofold act of mercy on the part of God: first, the communication of being and nature; and second, the gift of the ability to act according to and thus to fulfil that nature.⁷ The latter follows intrinsically from the former, as the divine ordering is not something externally added to nature, but rather an inherent finality of nature itself.

Merit is a special instance of the order of justice with respect to rational creatures insofar as what is owed to them does not arise directly from nature but is mediated by free choice.⁸ Aquinas defines merit as an act that makes something due to the agent,⁹ which may pertain either to reward or punishment. In a theological context however, merit is usually employed with respect to supernatural beatitude.¹⁰ Parallel to the way non-rational creatures participate in God's communication of being as secondary causes, human beings in grace can cooperate with God's bestowal of gifts by way of merit. In fact, the ability to merit is a special instance of God's mercy as it constitutes the gift of approaching beatitude by ourselves and not exclusively as moved only by God.¹¹ As Saint Augustine famously said: 'He who made you without you, will not save you without you.'¹² Thus, just as the participation of non-rational creatures in the order of creation as secondary causes flows from their nature, so also the participation in the

convenit divinae sapientiae et bonitati. Et salvatur quodammodo ratio misericordiae, in quantum res de non esse in esse mutatur.'

⁷ J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, p. 236.

⁸ *ST I-II.114.1 co.*: 'Etiam res naturales hoc consequuntur per proprios motus et operationes, ad quod a Deo sunt ordinatae. Differenter tamen, quia creatura rationalis seipsam movet ad agendum per liberum arbitrium, unde sua actio habet rationem meriti; quod non est in aliis creaturis.'

⁹ *Sent. III.18.2 co.*: 'Patientis autem justitiam actio propria est facere sibi debitum quod est ei per justitiam reddendum: et hoc proprie mereri est. Unde et id quod secundum justitiam redditur, merces dicitur.' *ST I-II.114.1 co.*: 'Meritum et merces ad idem referuntur: id enim merces dicitur quod aliqui recompensatur pro retributione operis vel laboris, quasi quoddam pretium ipsius. Unde sicut reddere iustum pretium pro re accepta ab aliquo, est actus iustitiae; ita etiam recompensare mercedem operis vel laboris, est actus iustitiae'. Cf. *ST I-II.21.3 co.*, *De virt. in com.* 1.1 ad 2.

¹⁰ *ST III.2.11 co.*: 'Opera meritoria hominis proprie ordinantur ad beatitudinem, quae est virtutis praemium, et consistit in plena Dei fruitione.' Cf. *ST II-II.83.15 ad 2*, *Sent. III.18.1.2 co.*

¹¹ *ST III.19.3 co.*: 'Habere aliquod bonum per se est nobilius quam habere illud per aliud, semper enim causa quae est per se, potior est ea quae est per aliud, ut dicitur in VIII Physic. Hoc autem dicitur aliquis habere per seipsum, cuius est sibi aliquo modo causa. Prima autem causa omnium bonorum nostrorum per auctoritatem est Deus, et per hunc modum nulla creatura habet aliquid boni per seipsam, secundum illud I Cor. IV, quid habes quod non accepisti? Potest tamen secundario aliquis esse causa sibi alicuius boni habendi, in quantum scilicet in hoc ipso Deo cooperatur. Et sic ille qui habet aliquid per meritum proprium, habet quodammodo illud per seipsum. Unde nobilius habetur id quod habetur per meritum quam id quod habetur sine merito.' The same line of thought can be found in BONAVENTURE, *In tertium librum sententiarum*, d. 37, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4, p. 160: 'Quod majoris libertatis est dare aliquid sine merito, quam cum meritis, dicendum quod etsi majoris liberalitatis sit ex parte dantis, non tamen est tantae gloriae et excellentiae ex parte susipientis. Et quoniam Dominus in conferendo praemium non tantum attendit suae liberalitatis manifestationem, imo etiam gloriae nostrae promotionem; hinc est quod maluit nobis dare aeternam beatitudinem per impletionem mandatorum et meritum obedientiae, quam nullo merito praecedente. Praeterea, merita nostra in nullo derogant divinae liberalitati, imo potius eam manifestant: tum quia ipse bonorum nostrorum non eget; tum quia omnia merita nostra procedunt ex munere gratiae suae. Et propterea dicit Apostolus [Rom. 6:23]: *Gratia Dei vita aeterna*'

¹² 'Qui ergo fecit te sine te, non te iustificat sine te' (AUGUSTINE, *Sermo 169.XI.13*, CCSL 41Bb, p. 418). Cf. *ST I-II.111.2 ad 2*, cited in n. 4 of the introduction.

order of grace through merit is based on divine ordination (*divina ordinatio*), which is not something exteriorly added to nature transformed by grace but is a finality inherent in grace itself.¹³

1.2. Condign and Congruous Merit

Saint Thomas distinguishes between condign and congruous merit. The first is merit proper in the sense that the value of the meritorious act is equal to the reward. In the second case, there is no such equality; rather, the recompense is based on the liberality of the giver according to some kind of fittingness.¹⁴ The distinction between condign and congruous merit is important to show that human beings really do cooperate in God's bestowal of beatitude. If only congruous merit were possible, our participation in God's self-communication, which is the gift of beatitude, would be greatly reduced. Thus, although it may seem that it would be more gratuitous of God to communicate eternal life on the basis of congruous merit only, or perhaps even completely without regard to any of our actions, it is condign merit which constitutes the greater gift, for we are thereby not only granted the bestowal of beatitude itself, but we are also allowed to share in the very giving of the gift of glory.¹⁵

The distinction between condign and congruous merit is also important as it points to the principle of merit, which is charity founded in sanctifying habitual grace.¹⁶ For the essential difference between condignly and congruously meritorious action is that the former refers to the same genus (*ad idem genus*) as the reward, whereas the latter is of an inferior kind,¹⁷ whence

¹³ *ST* I-II.114.1 co.: 'Modus autem et mensura humanae virtutis homini est a Deo. Et ideo meritum hominis apud Deum esse non potest nisi secundum praesuppositionem divinae ordinationis, ita scilicet ut id homo consequatur a Deo per suam operationem quasi mercedem, ad quod Deus ei virtutem operandi deputavit.' *ST* I-II.110.2 co.: 'Aduvatur homo ex gratuita Dei voluntate, secundum quod aliquod habituale donum a Deo animae infunditur. Et hoc ideo, quia non est conveniens quod Deus minus provideat his quos diligit ad supernaturale bonum habendum, quam creaturis quas diligit ad bonum naturale habendum. Creaturis autem naturalibus sic providet ut non solum moveat eas ad actus naturales, sed etiam largiatur eis formas et virtutes quasdam, quae sunt principia actuum, ut secundum seipsas inclinentur ad huiusmodi motus. Et sic motus quibus a Deo moventur, fiunt creaturis connaturales et faciles; secundum illud Sap. VIII, et disponit omnia suaviter. Multo igitur magis illis quos movet ad consequendum bonum supernaturale aeternum, infundit aliquas formas seu qualitates supernaturales, secundum quas suaviter et prompte ab ipso moveantur ad bonum aeternum consequendum. Et sic donum gratiae qualitas quaedam est.' For more on divine ordering, see J.P. WAWRYKOW, *God's Grace and Human Action*, pp. 9–12, 80–83, 147–164, 180–181, 241; Michał PALUCH, *La profondeur de l'amour divin: Évolution de la doctrine de la prédestination dans l'œuvre de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Bibliothèque thomiste 55 (Paris: Vrin, 2004), pp. 273–317 (esp. pp. 307–317).

¹⁴ *Sent.* II.27.1.4 co.: 'Dicitur autem aliquis mereri ex condigno, quando invenitur aequalitas inter praemium et meritum, secundum rectam aestimationem: ex congruo autem tantum, quando talis aequalitas non invenitur, sed solum secundum liberalitatem dantis munus tribuitur quod dantem decet.'

¹⁵ Cf. Matthew LEVERING, 'Eternal Life: A Merited Free Gift?', *Nova et Vetera* 9.1 (2011), Eng. ed., 149–162, and J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, pp. 239–240.

¹⁶ *Sent.* III.30.1.5 ad 1: 'Gratia facit meritum sicut principium remotum constituens nos in esse spirituali, sine quo non possumus mereri aliquid spirituale; sed caritas est sicut principium proximum.' For grace, see e.g. *Sent.* III.18.1.4.1 co., or *ST* III.2.11 co. For charity, see e.g. *De spe* 3 ad 2, *De malo* 7.2 co., or *ST* II-II.2.9 ad 1.

¹⁷ *Sent.* II.27.1.3 co.: 'Secundum autem aequalitatem proportionis ex condigno meremur vitam aeternam. Attenditur enim aequalitas proportionis, quando aequaliter se habet hoc ad illud, sicut aliud, ad alterum. Non autem

it follows that it cannot be given on the basis of strict justice but is granted on account of the liberality of the giver in virtue of some fittingness. In other words, since condignly meritorious action proceeds from grace, which is the beginning of glory (*inchoatio gloriae*), also the reward will be in that same category: it will be a consummation of grace, which is the same as glory.¹⁸ This is an application of the more general principle that each virtue merits a proportionate reward, so that for instance exaltation is merited by humility and abundance by poverty.¹⁹ With respect to merit specifically, the reward should be proportionate to the virtue of charity, and thus it will consist in seeing, loving and delighting in God.²⁰

But as Saint Thomas points out, the reward for condign merit should not only belong to the same genus, it must also be equal to the meritorious act, which seems impossible, as there is the greatest inequality (*maxima inaequalitas*) between God and man.²¹ The solution to this difficulty is that although condign merit in the proper sense requires an equality of quantity, there can also be condignity in an imperfect sense as based on an equality of proportion.²² As condign merit in the full or perfect sense corresponds to commutative justice in a perfect sense, so condignity in the imperfect sense corresponds to commutative justice in an imperfect sense.²³ Within the created order, this kind of relative justice obtains when two persons are not equal in an unqualified sense (*simpliciter*) so that one of them in a certain way ‘belongs’ to the other (*quasi aliquid eius existens*), as is the case in parental relations, where the son is somehow a part of the father (*quodammodo est pars eius*). This should not be taken to refer to the father as somehow owning or possessing the son, but rather to the fact that the son *as son* is essentially

majus est Deo vitam aeternam tribuere, quam nobis actum virtutis exhibere: sed sicut hoc congruit huic, ita illud illi, et ideo quaedam proportionis aequalitas invenitur inter Deum praemiantem et hominem merentem; dum tamen praemium referatur ad idem genus in quo est meritum, ut si praemium est quod omnem facultatem humanae naturae excedit, sicut vita aeterna, meritum etiam sit per talem actum in quo refulgeat bonum illius habitus qui divinitus infunditur’. *Ibid.* art. 6 co.: ‘Cum meritum quodammodo sit causa praemii, dupliciter contingit ut actus meritorius non sufficiat ad praemii consecutionem [...] aut ita quod actus sit extra genus talis perfectionis quae meritum causat, sicut sunt actus gratiam praecedentes; et hoc modo dicitur quod actibus talibus non meretur quis gratiam sibi ex condigno, sed solum ex congruo.’

¹⁸ *ST* II-II.24.3 ad 2: ‘Gratia nihil est aliud, quam quaedam inchoatio gloriae in nobis’; *ST* I.95.1 arg 6: ‘Natura plus distat a gratia quam gratia a gloria, quae nihil est aliud quam gratia consummata’.

¹⁹ *De pot.* 6.9 co.: ‘Singulae tamen virtutes merentur singularia quaedam praemia eis proportionaliter respondentia; sicut humilitas meretur exaltationem, et paupertas regnum.’ Cf. *ST* III.19.3 ad 3.

²⁰ Cf. *Sent.* I.1.1.1 co.

²¹ *ST* I-II.114.1 co.: ‘Manifestum est autem quod inter Deum et hominem est maxima inaequalitas, in infinitum enim distant, et totum quod est hominis bonum, est a Deo.’

²² *Sent.* II.27.1.3 co.: ‘Secundum quantitatis aequalitatem ex actibus virtutum vitam aeternam ex condigno non meremur; non enim tantum bonum est in quantitate actus virtutis, quantum praemium gloriae, quod est finis ejus. Secundum autem aequalitatem proportionis ex condigno meremur vitam aeternam.’

²³ *Sent.* IV.46.1.1.1 co.: ‘In prima ergo, scilicet commutativa justitia, requiritur aequalitas quantitatis, ut scilicet tantum quisquis accipiat, quantum dedit secundum valorem; et ideo inter illos in quibus non potest esse quantitatis aequalitas, non potest proprie esse commutativa justitia, sicut est in illis quorum unus non potest recompensare aliquid aequalens beneficiis acceptis ab alio; sicut filius non potest recompensare aliquid aequalens beneficiis patris, a quo esse et nutrimentum accepit et disciplinam; et ideo quantumcumque retribuat patri in obsequiis, non fit perfecta aequalitas; unde nec proprie salvatur ibi ratio commutativae justitiae; sed tamen aliquis modus justitiae salvari potest, in quantum filius retribuit patri secundum modum suum sicut pater dedit secundum modum suum, ut loco aequalis quantitatis sumatur aequalitas proportionis.’

and formally linked to the father: he cannot cease being related to the father without also ceasing to be a son.²⁴ Thus, the son is not compared to the father as a completely different person (*simpliciter alterum*) and will therefore merit in an imperfect sense, although still condignly.

Now, since there is nothing that is equal to God and all things exist by participation in him,²⁵ it follows that if there should be any justice and thus merit between God and creatures, it will be of a very special kind:²⁶ it will be according to a certain proportion, inasmuch each operates according to his own mode (*secundum modum suum*), i.e. it will be based on the unique relationship that obtains between human beings and God. Now, since the mode and measure (*modus et mensura*) of human power (*virtus*) is from God, this takes us back to divine ordination, for the end of human power (*virtus*) is precisely that we should merit eternal life.²⁷ It should also be noted that not only man but also God operates according to his own mode, which hints at the fact that the divine ordination inherent in nature is in turn based on the order found in God's goodness, justice, mercy, and we might also add: being.

There are however some notable differences regarding the basis of condign merit between the teaching of the *Commentary on the Sentences* and that of the *Summa theologiae*. The *Sentences* do not have much to add to the explanation given above: condignity obtains as long as the meritorious action and the reward are on the same supernatural level of perfection; acts of charity as inchoate beatitude are rewarded by increase in charity and consummate beatitude.²⁸

²⁴ *ST* II-II.57.4 co.: 'Ius, sive iustum dicitur per commensurationem ad alterum. Alterum autem potest dici dupliciter. Uno modo, quod simpliciter est alterum, sicut quod est omnino distinctum, sicut apparet in duobus hominibus quorum unus non est sub altero, sed ambo sunt sub uno principe civitatis. Et inter tales, secundum philosophum, in V Ethic., est simpliciter iustum. Alio modo dicitur aliquid alterum non simpliciter, sed quasi aliquid eius existens. Et hoc modo in rebus humanis filius est aliquid patris, quia quodammodo est pars eius, ut dicitur in VIII Ethic.; et servus est aliquid domini, quia est instrumentum eius, ut dicitur in I Polit. Et ideo patris ad filium non est comparatio sicut ad simpliciter alterum, et propter hoc non est ibi simpliciter iustum, sed quoddam iustum, scilicet paternum. Et eadem ratione nec inter dominum et servum, sed est inter eos dominativum iustum.'

²⁵ *ST* I.44.1 co.: 'Necesse est dicere omne quod quocumque modo est, a Deo esse. Si enim aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit [...]. Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse.'

²⁶ Aquinas applies the doctrine of qualified justice (cf. *ST* II-II.57.4 co., cited in n. 24) to merit in the first part of *ST* I-II.114.1 co.: 'Iustitia autem aequalitas quaedam est; ut patet per philosophum, in V Ethic. Et ideo simpliciter est iustitia inter eos quorum est simpliciter aequalitas, eorum vero quorum non est simpliciter aequalitas, non est simpliciter iustitia, sed quidam iustitiae modus potest esse, sicut dicitur quoddam ius paternum vel dominativum, ut in eodem libro philosophus dicit. Et propter hoc, in his in quibus est simpliciter iustum, est etiam simpliciter ratio meriti et mercedis. In quibus autem est secundum quid iustum, et non simpliciter, in his etiam non simpliciter est ratio meriti, sed secundum quid, in quantum salvatur ibi iustitiae ratio, sic enim et filius meretur aliquid a patre, et servus a domino.'

²⁷ *ST* I-II.114.1 co.: 'Non potest hominis ad Deum esse iustitia secundum absolutam aequalitatem, sed secundum proportionem quandam, in quantum scilicet uterque operatur secundum modum suum. Modus autem et mensura humanae virtutis homini est a Deo. Et ideo meritum hominis apud Deum esse non potest nisi secundum praesuppositionem divinae ordinationis, ita scilicet ut id homo consequatur a Deo per suam operationem quasi mercedem, ad quod Deus ei virtutem operandi deputavit. Sicut etiam res naturales hoc consequuntur per proprios motus et operationes, ad quod a Deo sunt ordinatae. Differenter tamen, quia creatura rationalis seipsam movet ad agendum per liberum arbitrium, unde sua actio habet rationem meriti; quod non est in aliis creaturis.'

²⁸ Cf. W.D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit*, pp. 17–18. For a commentary on how Aquinas uses the notions of condign and congruous merit in the *Summa* as compared to the *Sentences*, see Jean RIVIÈRE, 'Saint Thomas et le mérite « de congruo »', *Revue des sciences religieuses* 7.4 (1927) 641–649.

In the *Summa*, on the other hand, Saint Thomas attributes condignity to the grace of the Holy Spirit formally disposing²⁹ and moving us towards glory by effectively causing our acts of charity. The meritorious act considered in itself (*secundum substantiam operis*) as proceeding from free choice is no longer sufficient for condignity but merely for congruity.³⁰ Instead, condignity is due to the value (*valor*) of the power (*virtus*) of the Holy Spirit acting in us.³¹ This not only introduces a more explicit Trinitarian and hence Christological aspect, but it also establishes a more fitting proportion between merit and reward. Just as the end of human life is uncreated, so it is fitting that the principle by which we attain beatitude should also be uncreated, and in a similar way as Christ merited infinitely because his theandric acts were the actions of the one who is both God and man in one person,³² so we merit condignly because we are moved by a divine person, namely the Holy Spirit, who nevertheless influences us in such a way as not to abolish free choice and human cooperation.³³

Another important development in the *Summa* is that grace is to a much higher extent characterized as an active principle in the sense that I am not only moving myself towards God by making use of the grace received, but it is rather grace that is moving me. Saint Thomas here compares grace to a fount of water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14), and to a seed of a

²⁹ Charity is an supernatural accident in the soul, which is a participation in the Holy Spirit, cf. *ST II-II.23.3 ad 3*: ‘Accidens autem quod causatur ex participatione alicuius superioris naturae est dignius subiecto, in quantum est similitudo superioris naturae, sicut lux diaphano. Et hoc modo caritas est dignior anima, in quantum est participatio quaedam Spiritus Sancti.’ Cf. *ibid.*, art. 2 co. *ST III.7.13 co.*: ‘Principium autem gratiae habitualis, quae cum caritate datur, est Spiritus Sanctus, qui secundum hoc dicitur mitti quod per caritatem mentem inhabitat.’ See also *Lect. rom.* 17.1.2 co. and *De car.* 2.1 co., cited in n. 31.

³⁰ *ST I-II.114.3 co.*: ‘Si [opus meritorium] consideretur secundum substantiam operis, et secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio, sic non potest ibi esse condignitas, propter maximam inaequalitatem. Sed est ibi congruitas, propter quandam aequalitatem proportionis, videtur enim congruum ut homini operanti secundum suam virtutem, Deus recompenset secundum excellentiam suae virtutis.’

³¹ *ST I-II.114.3 co.*: ‘Si autem loquamur de opere meritorio secundum quod procedit ex gratia Spiritus Sancti, sic est meritorium vitae aeternae ex condigno. Sic enim valor meriti attenditur secundum virtutem Spiritus Sancti moventis nos in vitam aeternam’; *ST I-II.114.6 co.*: ‘Opus nostrum habet rationem meriti ex duobus. Primo quidem, ex vi motionis divinae, et sic meretur aliquis ex condigno.’ Cf. *Lect. rom.* 17.1.2 co.: ‘Spiritus Sanctus facit duos effectus: in quantum movet ad actum, et in quantum supra hoc dat agenti quod bene et faciliter operetur. Et propter hoc aliter dicendum est et melius, quod caritas est ipse Spiritus Sanctus quo diligimus Deum effective, et secundum hoc est quid increatum quia est ipse Spiritus Sanctus; est autem quid creatum in quantum secundum ipsam caritatem Deum formaliter diligimus’; *De car.* 2.1 co.: ‘Oportet esse quemdam habitum caritatis in nobis creatum, qui sit formale principium actus dilectionis. Nec tamen per hoc excluditur quin Spiritus Sanctus, qui est caritas increata, sit in homine caritatem creatam habente, movens animam ad actum dilectionis, sicut Deus movet omnia ad suas actiones, ad quas tamen inclinantur ex propriis formis’. Cf. J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, pp. 188–192.

³² *Sent.* III.13.1.2.2 ad 4: ‘Infinitas efficaciae quae est in merito, contingit ex hoc quod ad actionem illam concurrat divina persona, quia non est tantum hominis actio, sed Dei et hominis; secundum quod Dionysius actionem Christi nominat deivirilem.’ Cf. *De ver.* 29.3 ad 4 and 8, *Quodl.* III.2.1 ad 3. See also W.D. LYNN, *Christ’s Redemptive Merit*, p. 117.

³³ *ST II-II.23.2 co.*: ‘Non potest dici quod sic moveat Spiritus Sanctus voluntatem ad actum diligendi sicut movetur instrumentum quod, etsi sit principium actus, non tamen est in ipso agere vel non agere. Sic enim etiam tolleretur ratio voluntarii, et excluderetur ratio meriti, cum tamen supra habitum sit quod dilectio caritatis est radix merendi. Sed oportet quod sic voluntas moveatur a spiritu sancto ad diligendum quod etiam ipsa sit efficiens hunc actum.’ This aspect is discussed in detail in e.g. *Lect. rom.* 17.1.2 co. and *De car.* 2.1 co.

tree, which virtually contains the whole tree (*in quo est virtus ad totam arborem*).³⁴ Hence, there is a focus on finality, organic growth, ordering towards glory and inchoate beatitude, but above all on grace as an inherently active principle propelling us towards eternal life. The mode in which glory or the value of glory is contained in grace is not specified more precisely, but on the basis of passages not explicitly dealing with merit, we can give a couple of comparisons: eternal life is contained in grace as the effect is contained in the cause, perfection in the not yet perfected and the manifest in the hidden.³⁵

A significant aspect only alluded to in the question on merit at the end of the *Prima Secundae*, which will be discussed at length in the section on the communication of Christ's merits, is the fact that the movement of merit takes place in Christ Jesus (*hoc fit in Christo Iesu Domino nostro*),³⁶ for the Holy Spirit is not given but through incorporation into Christ.³⁷ In fact, the whole motion of return to God described in the *Secunda Pars* should be read in the light of the Christology developed in the *Tertia Pars*.³⁸ Aquinas hints at this when he says that only Christ can merit first grace condignly for others because his soul is moved by God not only so that he should attain eternal life for himself but also in order to lead others to it, insofar as he is the head of the Church.³⁹ As will be shown, the merits of Christ the head are communicated to us insofar as we are united to him as members of his mystical body.

1.3. Grace, Charity and Merit

The gift of grace is nothing but a participation in the divine nature (*participatio divinae naturae*), by which God deifies us (*deificat*) and communicates to us the fellowship of divinity

³⁴ *ST I-II.114.3 co.*: 'Valor meriti attenditur secundum virtutem Spiritus Sancti moventis nos in vitam aeternam; secundum illud Ioan.IV, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam'; *ibid.*, ad 3: 'gratia Spiritus Sancti quam in praesenti habemus, etsi non sit aequalis gloriae in actu, est tamen aequalis in virtute, sicut et semen arborum, in quo est virtus ad totam arborem.'

³⁵ *ST I-II.107.3 co.*: 'Aliquid continetur in alio dupliciter. Uno modo, in actu, sicut locatum in loco. Alio modo, virtute, sicut effectus in causa, vel complementum in incompleto [Piana ed.: 'in completo'], sicut genus continet species potestate, et sicut tota arbor continetur in semine. Et per hunc modum nova lex continetur in veteri, dictum est enim quod nova lex comparatur ad veterem sicut perfectum ad imperfectum.' *Ibid.*, ad 2: 'Praecepta novae legis dicuntur esse maiora quam praecepta veteris legis, quantum ad explicitam manifestationem. Sed quantum ad ipsam substantiam praeceptorum novi testamenti, omnia continentur in veteri testamento.' Cf. *In de caelo* I.9.4.

³⁶ *Super Rom.* 6.4.517 [6:23]: 'Opera nostra si considerentur in sui natura et secundum quod procedunt ex libero arbitrio hominis, non merentur ex condigno vitam aeternam, sed solum secundum quod procedunt ex gratia Spiritus Sancti. Unde dicitur Io. IV, 14: quod *fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam*. Et hoc fit in Christo Iesu Domino nostro, id est, per Christum, vel in quantum in ipso sumus per fidem et charitatem.'

³⁷ *Super Rom.* 8.1.605 [8:2]: 'Spiritus non datur nisi his qui sunt in Christo Iesu. Sicut enim spiritus naturalis non pervenit ad membrum quod non habet connexionem ad caput, ita Spiritus Sanctus non pervenit ad hominem qui non est capiti Christo coniunctus.'

³⁸ J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1180.

³⁹ *ST I-II.114.6 co.*: 'Merito condigni nullus potest mereri alteri primam gratiam nisi solus Christus. Quia unusquisque nostrum movetur a Deo per donum gratiae ut ipse ad vitam aeternam perveniat, et ideo meritum condigni ultra hanc motionem non se extendit. Sed anima Christi mota est a Deo per gratiam non solum ut ipse perveniret ad gloriam vitae aeternae, sed etiam ut alios in eam adduceret, in quantum est caput Ecclesiae et auctor salutis humanae.'

(*consortium divinae naturae*), so that we are made children of God (*filius Dei*) and heirs to his promises.⁴⁰ The reason for this transformation of humanity is that eternal life exceeds the proportion of the human essence both with regard to knowledge and desire, and hence a supernatural gift must be added to nature, which is called sanctifying grace, and this is the principle of merit.⁴¹ However, meritorious acts do not flow directly from graced nature; they are mediated by charity, which makes grace the remote and charity the proximate principle of merit.⁴² Charity in turn is called the form of the other virtues (*forma virtutum*) in that it informs and orders them to communion with God.⁴³

Now, charity is a kind of friendship between God and man, which consists in benevolence and mutual love founded on a certain communion or communication (*communicatio*), more specifically in the fact that God communicates a share in his beatitude to us. Love, in turn, is a kind of bond or a union of the lover with the beloved: it is when one's appetite or affection is completely imbued in the beloved and as a consequence delights and firmly abides in him.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *ST* I-II.112.1 co.: 'Donum autem gratiae excedit omnem facultatem naturae creatae, cum nihil aliud sit quam quaedam participatio divinae naturae, quae excedit omnem aliam naturam. Et ideo impossibile est quod aliqua creatura gratiam causet. Sic enim necesse est quod solus Deus deificet, communicando consortium divinae naturae per quandam similitudinis participationem'; cf. *ST* III.7.1 arg 1. *ST* I-II.110.3 co.: 'Virtutes autem infusae disponunt hominem altiori modo, et ad altiorem finem, unde etiam oportet quod in ordine ad aliquam altiorem naturam. Hoc autem est in ordine ad naturam divinam participatam; secundum quod dicitur II Petr. 1, *maxima et pretiosa nobis promissa donavit, ut per haec efficiamini divinae consortes naturae*. Et secundum acceptionem huius naturae, dicimur regenerari in filios Dei.' *ST* I-II.114.3 co.: 'Attenditur etiam pretium operis secundum dignitatem gratiae, per quam homo, consors factus divinae naturae, adoptatur in filium Dei, cui debetur hereditas ex ipso iure adoptionis, secundum illud Rom. VIII, *si filii, et heredes*.' For divine filiation and grace, see also the whole of *ST* I-II.110.3 co. and *ibid.*, art 4 co.

⁴¹ *ST* I-II.114.2 co.: 'Vita autem aeterna est quoddam bonum excedens proportionem naturae creatae, quia etiam excedit cognitionem et desiderium eius, secundum illud I ad Cor. II, nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit. Et inde est quod nulla natura creata est sufficiens principium actus meritorii vitae aeternae, nisi superaddatur aliquod supernaturale donum, quod gratia dicitur.' Cf. *Sent.* II.27.15 ad 3.

⁴² *Sent.* II.26.1.4 co.: 'Sicut ab essentia animae fluunt potentiae ab ipsa essentialiter differentes, sicut accidens a subjecto, et tamen omnes uniuntur in essentia animae ut in radice; ita etiam a gratia est perfectio essentiae, ut dictum est, et ab ea fluunt virtutes quae sunt perfectiones potentiarum, ab ipsa gratia essentialiter differentes, in gratia tamen conjunctae sicut in sua origine, per modum quo diversi radii ab eodem corpore lucente procedunt'; cf. *Sent.* II.26.1.3 ad 2 and *ST* III.7.2 co. *Sent.* III.30.1.5 ad 1: 'Gratia facit meritum sicut principium remotum constituens nos in esse spirituali, sine quo non possumus mereri aliquod spirituale; sed caritas est sicut principium proximum.' Cf. W.D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit*, pp. 18–22.

⁴³ *Sent.* II.26.1.4 ad 5: 'Caritas alio modo dicitur forma virtutum quam gratia. Caritas enim est forma virtutum ex parte actus, in quantum scilicet omnes actus virtutum in suum finem convocat, eo quod ejus objectum est finis ultimus. [...] Unde caritas informat alias virtutes, sicut virtus virtutem: sed gratia informat per modum originis, quia scilicet ex ipsa gratia quodammodo formaliter oriuntur habitus virtutum, per diversas potentias diffusi. Illud autem quod ab alio oritur, formam et speciem ab eo trahit, et in suo vigore consistit, quamdiu origini continuatur: et ideo non oportet quod gratia sit idem quod caritas, quamvis caritas nunquam possit esse sine gratia.' Cf. *ST* I-II.114.4 co. and *ST* III.7.2 co.

⁴⁴ *ST* II-II.23.1 co.: 'Non quilibet amor habet rationem amicitiae, sed amor qui est cum benevolentia, quando scilicet sic amamus aliquem ut ei bonum velimus [...] Sed nec benevolentia sufficit ad rationem amicitiae, sed requiritur quaedam mutua amatio, quia amicus est amico amicus. Talis autem mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliqua communicatione. Cum igitur sit aliqua communicatio hominis ad Deum secundum quod nobis suam beatitudinem communicat, super hac communicatione oportet aliquam amicitiam fundari [...] Amor autem super hac communicatione fundatus est caritas. Unde manifestum est quod caritas amicitia quaedam est hominis ad Deum.' *Sent.* III.27.2.1 co.: 'Caritas, quae est quaedam amicitia hominis ad Deum, per quam homo diligit Deum, et Deus hominem.' *Sent.* III.27.1.1 co.: 'Quando affectus vel appetitus omnino imbuitur forma boni quod est sibi obiectum, complacet sibi in illo et adhaeret quasi fixum in ipso; et tunc dicitur amare.' In *ibid.*, ad 2, Aquinas

With regard to merit, since charity is a love of God for his own sake,⁴⁵ the act of charity is incompatible with any anticipation of a reward distinct from God himself, as it would make something else the ultimate end of the act. But as it belongs to friendship to delight in each other's company, the very gift of communion with the beloved can be anticipated as a reward and thus merited, for it is exactly in this that beatitude consists: to delight in seeing and loving God.⁴⁶ It is also compatible with friendship to see the very act of charity as a reward, since charity itself is an inchoate beatitude and the love of God is not ordered to anything else than God himself.⁴⁷ These two types of recompense correspond to the two kinds of merit commonly discussed by Saint Thomas: meriting eternal life and meriting an increase in grace or charity.⁴⁸

Another characteristic of charity is that although it is the principle of merit, it has the quality of disregarding the reward to which it tends, for the charitable action by which someone merits is not primarily performed on account of the reward but because of the good of charity itself, so that someone in charity would continue to love even if no reward ensued; and this is the reason why Christ continues to willingly merit throughout his life, although he had already merited eternal life from the first moment of his human existence.⁴⁹ In this sense, charity never ceases, as it is its own reward. Another corollary is that because charity seeks the good of the beloved, our love of God strives to fulfil his divine will and sapiential plan to communicate

speaks of love as transformation: 'Amor dicitur virtus unitiva formaliter: quia est ipsa unio vel nexus vel transformatio qua amans in amatum transformatur, et quodammodo convertitur in ipsum.' This view is representative of the *Sentences* but not Aquinas's later works, cf. Emmanuel DURAND, 'Au principe de l'amour: *formatio* ou *proportio*? Un déplacement revisité dans l'analyse thomastique de la *voluntas*', *Revue Thomiste* 104 (2004) 551–578; or Henri-Dominique SIMONIN, 'Autour de la solution thomiste du problème de l'amour', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 6 (1931), 174–274.

⁴⁵ *ST* II-II.23.5 ad 2: 'Caritate diligitur Deus propter seipsum.'

⁴⁶ *ST* I-II.114.4. co.: 'Vita aeterna in Dei fruitione consistit.' *Sent.* III.29.1.4 s.c. 3: 'Amicorum est quod quaerant invicem perfrui. Sed nihil aliud est merces nostra quam perfrui Deo, videndo ipsum. Ergo caritas non solum non excludit, sed etiam facit habere oculum ad mercedem'.

⁴⁷ *Sent.* III.29.1.4 co.: 'Mercedem enim aliquis propter seipsum amat. [...] de ratione amicitiae est quod amicus sui gratia diligatur [...]. Patet ergo quod ponere mercedem aliquam finem amoris ex parte amati, est contra rationem amicitiae. Unde caritas per hunc modum oculum ad mercedem habere non potest: hoc enim esset Deum non ponere ultimum finem, sed bona quae ex ipso consequitur. Sed ponere mercedem esse finem amoris ex parte amantis, non tamen ultimum, prout scilicet ipse amor est quaedam operatio amantis, non est contra rationem amicitiae: quia ipsa amoris operatio cum sit quoddam accidens, non dicitur amari nisi propter suum subjectum, ut ex dictis patet: et inter ea quae propter se aliquis diligit, potest esse ordo, salva amicitia; unde et ipsam operationem amoris possum amare, non obstante amicitia, propter aliquid aliud. [...] Patet ergo quod habens caritatem non potest habere oculum ad mercedem, ut ponat aliquid quodcumque finem amati, scilicet Dei (hoc enim esset contra rationem caritatis, ut est amicitia quaedam), nec iterum ut ponat aliquod bonum temporale finem ipsius amoris; quia hoc est contra rationem caritatis, ut est virtus: potest tamen habere oculum ad mercedem, ut ponat beatitudinem creatam finem amoris, non autem finem amati: hoc enim neque est contra rationem amicitiae, neque contra rationem virtutis, cum beatitudo virtutum sit finis.'

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II.114, art. 3 and 8.

⁴⁹ *Sent.* III.18.1.5 ad 1: 'Actio qua quis meretur non est principaliter propter praemium consequendum, sed propter bonum caritatis. Unde homo habens caritatem etiam operaretur, si nulla retributio sequeretur; unde etiam postquam meruit aliquid operatur; et id quod sibi primo uno modo debebatur, postea alio modo sibi debetur.' For the reference to Christ, see the objection, *ibid.*, arg 1: 'Christus per passionem non meruerit sibi. Mereri enim est aliquid sibi debitum facere. Sed qui sibi semel aliquid debitum fecit, puta emendo, non ulterius emit illud. Ergo et qui meruit aliquid semel, ulterius non potest mereri illud. Sed Christus ab instanti conceptionis meruit sibi ea quae dicta sunt. Ergo per passionem nihil sibi meruit'. This question is treated at length in section 2.2.

himself.⁵⁰ Hence, charity is nothing else than a supernatural participation in God's self-communication, by which he also reveals and manifests himself.

Because of the special nature of amical relations, justice takes on a slightly different form in the context of friendship. This is not at all unexpected, since Aquinas maintains that the notions of justice are taken in particular from economical transactions, from which they are then transferred to cover all areas of justice.⁵¹ More specifically, justice concerns that which is due in a legal sense, whereas friendship pertains to the due of amicability and custom as well as to gratuitous favours,⁵² which means that the debt of friendship (*debitum amicitiae*) is more concerned with the affection of the giver than the quantitative value of the particular favour granted, which rather pertains justice.⁵³ Hence, charity can be characterized as a response to the affection with which God communicates his gifts.

A further difference between justice and friendship is that whereas equality is the culmination of justice (*ultimum in iustitia*), it is the beginning of friendship (*primum in amicitia*). This means that acts of justice aim at reducing inequality by mutual commutation so that the work of justice ceases when equality is attained. Friendship, on the other hand, starts where justice leaves off in the sense that it aims at expressing and actualizing the mutual equality and communion already had.⁵⁴ Hence, acts of charity are a realisation of the inchoate divine life given to us by grace,⁵⁵ and it is by this expression of mutual love that we merit and advance towards God.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ST* I-II.114.1 ad 2: 'Deus ex bonis nostris non quaerit utilitatem, sed gloriam, idest manifestationem suae bonitatis, quod etiam ex suis operibus quaerit. Ex hoc autem quod eum colimus, nihil ei accrescit, sed nobis. Et ideo meremur aliquid a Deo, non quasi ex nostris operibus aliquid ei accrescat, sed in quantum propter eius gloriam operamur.' Cf. J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, pp. 245–246.

⁵¹ *ST* II-II.58.11 ad 3: 'Omne superfluum in his quae ad iustitiam pertinent lucrum, extenso nomine, vocatur, sicut et omne quod minus est vocatur damnum. Et hoc ideo, quia iustitia prius est exercita, et communius exercetur in voluntariis commutationibus rerum, puta emptione et venditione, in quibus proprie haec nomina dicuntur; et exinde derivantur haec nomina ad omnia circa quae potest esse iustitia. Et eadem ratio est de hoc quod est reddere unicuique quod suum est.'

⁵² *ST* II-II.23.3 ad 1: 'Posset enim dici quod [amicitia] est virtus moralis circa operationes quae sunt ad alium, sub alia tamen ratione quam iustitia. Nam iustitia est circa operationes quae sunt ad alium sub ratione debiti legalis, amicitia autem sub ratione cuiusdam debiti amicabilis et moralis, vel magis sub ratione beneficii gratuiti.' Cf. *Ethic.* 8.1:21–24.

⁵³ *ST* II-II.78.2 ad 2: 'Recompensatio alicuius beneficii dupliciter fieri potest. Uno quidem modo, ex debito iustitiae, ad quod aliquis ex certo pacto obligari potest. Et hoc debitum attenditur secundum quantitatem beneficii quod quis accepit. [...] Alio modo tenetur aliquis ad recompensandum beneficium ex debito amicitiae, in quo magis consideratur affectus ex quo aliquis beneficium contulit quam etiam quantitas eius quod fecit.' Cf. *ST* II-II.106.5 co. and *ST* III.90.2 co.

⁵⁴ *Ethic.* 8.7:98–116: 'Aequalitas et proportio, quae secundum dignitatem attenditur, non similiter se habet in iustitia et amicitia. Nam [...] circa iustitiam, oportet quod primo attendatur vel aestimetur dignitas secundum proportionem; et tunc fiet commutatio secundum aequalitatem. Sed in amicitia oportet e converso, quod primo attendatur aliqua aequalitas inter personas mutuo se amantes, et secundo exhibeatur utrique quod est secundum dignitatem. Et huius diversitatis ratio est, quia amicitia est quaedam unio sive societas amicorum, quae non potest esse inter multum distantes, sed oportet quod ad aequalitatem accedant. Unde ad amicitiam pertinet aequalitate iam constituta ea aequaliter uti; sed ad iustitiam pertinet inaequalia ad aequalitatem reducere. Aequalitate autem existente cessat iustitiae opus. Et ideo aequalitas est ultimum in iustitia, sed primum in amicitia.'

⁵⁵ Cf. *ST* II-II.25.2 ad 2: 'Caritas est ipsa communicatio spiritualis vitae, per quam ad beatitudinem pervenitur'.

Now, the wayfarer's progress towards God and growth in charity are associated with both meritorious and efficient causality, albeit in various ways.⁵⁶ As to the first, when the end of an act exceeds the power of the agent, the desired good has to be granted exteriorly as a gift, and thus meritorious causality *formally* consists in the agent performing an act that makes him worthy of the sought-for good as a reward.⁵⁷ As to the second, efficient causality can be attributed to meritorious action *materially*, i.e. insofar as it is an act of charity, in two ways: first, efficiently, as flowing from the form of charity in the sense that every act of charity is an actualization of the communion with God and hence concomitantly causes a certain delight, which is characterized as a reward.⁵⁸ It is however impossible to increase charity through efficient causality by our own efforts,⁵⁹ nor can we by ourselves efficiently cause consummate beatitude;⁶⁰ rather, these have to be communicated by God. The second way meritorious action causes a reward by way of efficient causation *materially*, i.e. insofar as it is an act of charity, is by means of disposition.⁶¹ Aquinas is very reticent about the way we are disposed by charitable acts, but we may at least say that as sin leads to a certain deformation of the soul, so meritorious action leads to the soul's adornment and dignity, which makes it worthy and fit for glory.⁶²

⁵⁶ I am here following W.D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit*, pp. 60–68, with the addition that he does not make a clear the distinction between formal and material meritorious causality.

⁵⁷ *ST I.62.4 co.*: 'Quaelibet autem res ad ultimum finem per suam operationem pertingit. Quae quidem operatio in finem ducens, vel est factiva finis, quando finis non excedit virtutem eius quod operatur propter finem, sicut medicatio est factiva sanitatis, vel est meritoria finis, quando finis excedit virtutem operantis propter finem, unde expectatur finis ex dono alterius. Beatitudo autem ultima excedit et naturam angelicam et humanam, ut ex dictis patet. Unde relinquitur quod tam homo quam Angelus suam beatitudinem meruerit.'

⁵⁸ *Sent. II.27.1.5 co.*: 'Sicut culpae redditur duplex poena: una quae comitatur ipsam culpam, ut conscientiae remorsus, et hujusmodi, secundum quod Augustinus dicit in Lib. I Confess., quod inordinatus animus sibi ipsi est poena; alia quae infligitur exterius a iudice Deo vel homine: ita etiam duplex est praemium respondens merito: unum quod comitatur ipsum actum meritorium, ut ipsa delectatio boni operis, et similia; aliud quod pro bono opere redditur a Deo vel homine, ut vita aeterna et quidquid hoc modo redditur. Ad hoc autem duplex praemium diversimode actus meritorius ordinatur: quia ad primum praemium est proportionatus secundum formam suam: verbi gratia, ex hoc ipso quod est actus ab habitu perfecto procedens, delectabilis est; unde in principium actus reducitur sicut in causam: sed ad praemium quod exterius redditur, ordinatur secundum proportionem dignitatis tantum; ut qui tantum meruit, tantum remuneretur in quocumque bono, et qui tantum peccavit tantum puniatur.'

⁵⁹ *Lect. rom. 17.2.3 ad 4*: 'Licet caritas non augeatur per additionem, non tamen sequitur quod augeatur per actus sicut per causam effectivam augmenti, sed solum sicut per causam meritoriam.' *Sent I.17.2.3 co.*: 'Actus enim qui est ex caritate, ordinatur ad augmentum caritatis et per modum dispositionis et per modum meriti; sed actus praecedens caritatem ordinatur ad consequendum caritatem solum per modum dispositionis, ut supra dictum est, art. antec., non per modum meriti: quia ante caritatem nullum potest esse meritum. Neuter autem actus ordinatur ad habendam vel augmentandam caritatem per modum alicujus efficientiae, sicut actus nostri ad habendum habitus acquisitos.'

⁶⁰ *Sent. II.27.1.5 co.*: 'Duplex est praemium respondens merito: unum quod comitatur ipsum actum meritorium, ut ipsa delectatio boni operis, et similia; aliud quod pro bono opere redditur a Deo vel homine, ut vita aeterna et quidquid hoc modo redditur.'

⁶¹ *Sent. II.27.1.5 ad 4*: 'Homo habens gratiam non dicitur posse proficere in melius, quasi ipse gratiam sibi augmentet, cum augmentum gratiae a Deo sit; sed quia homo potest per gratiam acceptam augmentum gratiae mereri, disponendo se, ut majoris gratiae capacios fiat.'

⁶² *De ver. 29.7 co.*: 'Opus humanum valet ad vitam aeternam consequendam, in quantum per ipsum quaedam dignitas et idoneitas in homine consequitur ad consecutionem gloriae. Sicut enim actus peccati redit in quamdam animae deformitatem, ita et actus meritorius in quemdam animae decorem et dignitatem; et ex hoc dicitur meritum condignum.' Saint Thomas sometimes seems to reduce meritorious to dispositive causality, e.g. in *ST I.23.5 co.*: 'Secundum rationem causae meritoriae, quae reducitur ad dispositionem materiae'. In such passages disposition

Both the formal and the material aspects of meritorious causality are important. The formal aspect accentuates the personal dimension of merit as it emphasizes the fact that progress in the life of charity always involves a reciprocal and interpersonal exchange:⁶³ just as in the created order, friendship depends on mutual communication – it cannot be forced. The material aspect, on the other hand, highlights the organic feature of merit in the sense that grace is like a seed that contains the whole tree, and so charity as inchoate beatitude is intrinsically ordered to consummate beatitude. Under this material aspect, every act of charity engenders its reward in virtue of producing concomitant delight and strives for its own increase and consummation by way of dispositive causality.

Conclusion

Since merit refers to an action which makes us worthy of a reward, it is based on justice in the sense of the order of God's wisdom inherent in human nature. Justice on the other hand is based on God's goodness and mercy, for God establishes the order of nature as a free gift to creatures and then lets them cooperate in the fulfilment of that order. Accordingly, merit describes the participation of rational creatures in God's sapiential plan for creation by way of free choice without violating his transcendence.

With respect to the question how we can merit in strict justice before God, condign merit before God is possible in virtue of the unique relationship between God and creatures: human beings merit before God in a way similar to how a son can merit with respect to his father although they are not equal in an unqualified sense. But this is not enough: for condignity, the meritorious act must also be in the same genus as the reward, which means that it has to be an act of charity, and the agent must live in and be moved by the grace of Holy Spirit.

As to the question how the notion of merit taken from the context of legal justice can be reconciled with charity as a kind of friendship between God and man, it will take on a slightly different meaning insofar as friendship is more concerned with the communication of beatitude, i.e. with God giving himself to the blessed. Still, the concept of reward in the sense that something is granted to another *because of* an act performed by that person must be maintained in order to ensure an interpersonal exchange between God and human beings.

may be understood in accordance with the *De ver.* 29.7 co., or in a broad sense so as to refer the very meritorious act itself, cf. *Sent.* III.19.1.1.1 co.: 'Sufficienter quidem disposita est materia, quando fit necessitas ad formam: et similiter aliquis sufficienter per meritum disponitur ad aliquid, quando illud efficitur sibi debitum'.

⁶³ Cf. Bernard CATÃO, *Salut et rédemption chez saint Thomas d'Aquin: L'acte sauveur du Christ* (Paris: Aubier, 1965), pp. 52–61; and François BOURASSA, 'La Rédemption par le mérite du Christ', *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 17 (1965), 201–229 (206).

2. The Merits of Christ

As merit is a gift of God in the sense that we are granted to participate in his self-communication, it comprises a good for human beings. It would therefore seem that Christ should also be able to merit with respect to his humanity as a way of participating in the communication of beatitude. On the other hand, Aquinas holds that Christ with respect to his human nature always had the beatific vision. This raises the issue in what sense it is possible for Christ to merit at all. Further, since Saint Thomas maintains that Christ merited from the first moment of his existence, the passion appears unnecessary, and so it must be asked in what sense it was fitting that Christ should suffer.

2.1. The Possibility of Christ's Merit

The biblical passage that Saint Thomas cites in support for the possibility of Christ merit is Phil. 2:8–9: ‘And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.’¹ Christ merited because he was elevated on account of having humbled himself. With regard to the issue in which sense it was possible for Christ to merit, we must consider that there are two general conditions for merit: in order to perform a meritorious action, a person must have the capacity to merit (*facultas merendi*) and be in the state of meriting (*status merentis*).² The latter implies that one does not yet have that which is to be merited. It is associated with the state of the wayfarer (*status viatoris*) as opposed to that of the comprehensor (*status comprehensoris*) and thus refers to the fact that in this life, we are still on the way, journeying as it were, towards our ultimate end.³ As to the *facultas merendi*, there are two requirements. On the part of nature, a person must be in control of his own acts and thus

¹ *De ver.* 29.6 s.c. 2; *ST* III.19.3 s.c.; cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1171.

² *De ver.* 29.6 co.: ‘Ad meritum enim duo requiruntur: scilicet status merentis, et facultas merendi.’ Aquinas speaks of different conditions for merit at various stages of his writings. Thus, in *Sent* III.18.1.2 co., three conditions are required (*ad meritum tria requiruntur*), namely that one is in the state of acquiring the reward (*in statu acquirendi mercedem*), master of one’s own actions (*dominus suae actionis*), and the meritorious act must be equal to the reward (*aequiparetur mercedem*). In *ST* III.2.11 ad 2, on the other hand, Saint Thomas distinguishes between those things which are required for reward (*requiruntur ad praemium*) and those that are pre-required for merit (*praeexiguntur ad meritum*), such as divine goodness, the grace of God, human nature and the incarnation. Some commentators also speak of divine ordination as a separate condition, e.g. J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, pp. 258 and 411. I am here following J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1171, in using the terms *facultas merendi* and *status merentis* as a heuristic device for the discussion, which will include also the other characteristics.

³ *De ver.* 29.6 co.: ‘Ad statum quidem merendi requiritur quod desit sibi id quod mereri dicitur.’ *De ver.* 29.7 ad 5: ‘Sicut mereri est viatoris, ita non nisi pro viatore aliquis mereri potest: quia oportet ut ei pro quo quis meretur, aliquid desit eorum quae sub merito cadunt.’ *ST* III.19.3 arg 1: ‘Comprehensoris non est mereri, caritas enim comprehensoris pertinet ad praemium beatitudinis.’ *De ver.* 26.10 ad 15: ‘Status viatoris et comprehensoris sint quasi contrarii.’

have free choice. On the part of grace, since the reward of beatitude transcends the ability of human nature, we cannot merit by purely natural endowments, and so grace must be added.⁴ In addition, one must call attention to the importance of divine ordination as a presupposed basis for merit, but it should be kept in mind that divine ordination is not separate from the conditions just mentioned, as God's divine ordination is inherent in human nature and also in grace, both of which are so to speak 'rigged' for merit.

Regarding the capacity to merit and free choice in particular, Aquinas writes that since there is will as reason (*voluntas ut ratio*) in Christ's human soul, there will also be election and hence free choice, because *voluntas ut ratio* is the same as election which is the proper act of free choice.⁵ Now, *voluntas ut ratio* is contrasted to *voluntas ut natura*. The latter refers to the will as inclined towards an end without qualification, whereas in the former, the will tends to an end as a means to something else. Hence, insofar as there are several possible means to an end, the will can be determined by for instance counsel, judgment and election.⁶ With respect to Christ's impeccability specifically, Saint Thomas states that although Christ's human will was determined solely to the good, it was not fixed to any particular good, and this is sufficient for free choice and merit.⁷

With respect to the second requirement for the capacity to merit, namely grace, Saint Thomas holds that Christ did not only have the grace of union but also habitual grace, which flows forth from his union with the Godhead.⁸ Now grace concerns the essence of the soul, and since the

⁴ *De ver.* 29.6 co.: 'Facultas vero merendi requiritur ex parte naturae, et ex parte gratiae. Ex parte naturae quidem, quia per actum proprium quis mereri non potest nisi sit dominus sui actus; sic enim suum actum quasi pretium pro praemio dare potest. Est autem quis dominus sui actus per liberum arbitrium; unde naturalis facultas liberi arbitrii requiritur ad merendum. Ex parte vero gratiae, quia cum praemium beatitudinis facultatem humanae naturae excedat, per naturalia pura ad illud merendum homo non potest sufficere; et ideo requiritur gratia, per quam mereri possit.' Cf. also *ST I-II.109.2 co.*, and *ibid.*, art. 5.

⁵ *ST III.18.4 co.*: 'Electio autem est idem quod voluntas ut ratio, et est proprius actus liberi arbitrii, ut in prima parte dictum est. Et ideo, cum in Christo ponatur voluntas ut ratio, necesse est ibi ponere electionem, et per consequens liberum arbitrium, cuius actus est electio.'

⁶ *ST III.18.3 co.*: 'Alterius rationis est actus voluntatis secundum quod fertur in aliquid secundum se volitum, ut sanitas, quod a Damasceno vocatur thesis, idest simplex voluntas, et a magistris vocatur voluntas ut natura, et alterius rationis est actus voluntatis secundum quod fertur in aliquid quod est volitum solum ex ordine ad alterum, sicut est sumptio medicinae, quem quidem voluntatis actum Damascenus vocat bulesim, idest consiliativam voluntatem, a magistris autem vocatur voluntas ut ratio.' *ST III.18.4 ad 2*: 'Electio praesupponit consilium, non tamen sequitur ex consilio nisi iam determinato per iudicium; illud enim quod iudicamus agendum post inquisitionem consilii, eligimus.'

⁷ *ST III.18.4 ad 3*: 'Voluntas Christi, licet sit determinata ad bonum, non tamen est determinata ad hoc vel illud bonum. Et ideo pertinebat ad Christum eligere per liberum arbitrium.' *De ver.* 29.6 ad 1: 'Licet anima Christi esset determinata ad unum secundum genus moris, scilicet ad bonum, non tamen erat determinata ad unum simpliciter: poterat enim hoc vel illud facere et non facere: et ideo libertas in eo remanebat, quae requiritur ad merendum.'

⁸ *ST III.7.1 co.*: 'Necesse est ponere in Christo gratiam habituaalem, propter tria. Primo quidem, propter unionem animae illius ad verbum Dei. Quanto enim aliquod receptivum propinquius est causae influenti, tanto magis participat de influentia ipsius. Influxus autem gratiae est a Deo, secundum illud Psalmi, gratiam et gloriam dabit dominus. Et ideo maxime fuit conveniens ut anima illa reciperet influxum divinae gratiae.'

powers of the soul flow from its essence, Christ also had the virtues,⁹ especially charity.¹⁰ He did however not have faith and hope, as these pertain to the divine essence as not yet seen and possessed respectively, and since Christ saw the divine essence fully from the first moment of his conception, he could not have faith.¹¹ Nor could he have hope as a theological virtue, the object of which is God, but he did have hope with respect to immortality and the glory of his body, which he did not yet possess.¹²

The sense in which Christ is in the *status merentis* is a more complex issue. Since Saint Thomas holds that Jesus was a comprehensor from the first instant of his human existence, it would seem that he could not merit, as he already possessed the vision of God through his essence, which others obtain through merit. Aquinas's reply to this objection is based on the principle that the greatest excellence is to be attributed to Christ. Now, to have something by one's own power is more excellent than to have it from someone else. Creatures have something by their own power insofar as they are secondary causes of their proper good by cooperating with God, and in rational creatures, this cooperation is articulated in the terminology of merit. Thus, to have something through merit is more excellent than to have it solely from another. However, some endowments are more excellent than merit. Hence, Christ did not merit grace, beatitude or his divinity, since this would imply that he at some point lacked them, which would diminish Christ's dignity more than merit would increase it. On the other hand, as merit pertains to charity, it constitutes a greater excellence for Christ to merit the communication of beatitude from the higher parts of his soul (*mens*) to the lower aspects of his humanity than to have it from the start.¹³ This communication of beatitude, which was held back by a special

⁹ *ST III.7.2* co.: 'Sicut gratia respicit essentiam animae, ita virtus respicit eius potentiam. Unde oportet quod, sicut potentiae animae derivantur ab eius essentia, ita virtutes sunt quaedam derivationes gratiae. Quanto autem aliquod principium est perfectius, tanto magis imprimit suos effectus. Unde, cum gratia Christi fuerit perfectissima, consequens est quod ex ipsa processerint virtutes ad perficiendum singulas potentias animae, quantum ad omnes animae actus. Et ita Christus habuit omnes virtutes.'

¹⁰ *De ver.* 29.6 ad 6: 'Caritas, quantum de se est, semper nata est esse merendi principium; sed quandoque non est merendi principium propter habentem, qui est extra merendi statum, sicut patet de sanctis in patria. Christus autem non erat extra statum merendi, quia viator erat: et ideo caritate eadem fruebatur et merebatur, sicut et eadem voluntate. Nec tamen erat idem principium meriti et praemii: quia non merebatur gloriam animae, ad quam pertinet caritas; sed gloriam corporis, ut dictum est.'

¹¹ *ST III.7.3* co.: 'Obiectum fidei est res divina non visa. Habitus autem virtutis, sicut et quilibet alius, recipit speciem ab obiecto. Et ideo, excluso quod res divina non sit visa, excluditur ratio fidei. Christus autem in primo instanti suae conceptionis plene vidit Deum per essentiam, ut infra patebit. Unde fides in eo esse non potuit.'

¹² *ST III.7.4* co.: 'De ratione spei est quod aliquis expectet id quod nondum habet. Et sicut fides, in quantum est virtus theologica, non est de quocumque non viso, sed solum de Deo, ita etiam spes, in quantum est virtus theologica, habet pro obiecto ipsam Dei fruitionem, quam principaliter homo expectat per spei virtutem. Sed ex consequenti ille qui habet virtutem spei, potest etiam in aliis divinum auxilium expectare, sicut et ille qui habet virtutem fidei, non solum credit Deo de rebus divinis, sed de quibuscumque aliis sibi divinitus revelatis. Christus autem a principio suae conceptionis plene habuit fruitionem divinam, ut infra dicitur. Et ideo virtutem spei non habuit. Habuit tamen spem respectu aliquorum quae nondum erat adeptus, licet non habuit fidem respectu quorumcumque. Quia, licet plene cognosceret omnia, per quod totaliter fides excluderetur ab eo, non tamen adhuc plene habebat omnia quae ad eius perfectionem pertinebant, puta immortalitatem et gloriam corporis, quam poterat sperare.' For Christ's hope in a different sense than a theological virtue, see *ibid.* ad 1–3.

¹³ *ST III.19.3* co.: 'Habere aliquod bonum per se est nobilius quam habere illud per aliud, semper enim causa quae est per se, potior est ea quae est per aliud, ut dicitur in VIII Physic. Hoc autem dicitur aliquis habere per seipsum,

dispensation,¹⁴ includes the participation of his body in beatitude,¹⁵ the external manifestation of his glory to others,¹⁶ and his exaltation, i.e. the resurrection, the ascension, the seat at the right hand of the Father, and his judiciary power. With respect to these last four elements, there is a special meritorious proportion, as Christ obtained them by giving himself up to a fourfold humiliation: first, he merited the resurrection by his passion and death; second, as regards place, he merited the ascension in that his body was laid in the tomb and his soul descended into hell; third, by the confusion and dishonour of the cross, he merited the exaltation at the right hand of the Father; and fourth, by giving himself up to the power and judgment of men, he merited to be the judge of men.¹⁷

cuius est sibi aliquo modo causa. Prima autem causa omnium bonorum nostrorum per auctoritatem est Deus, et per hunc modum nulla creatura habet aliquid boni per seipsam, secundum illud I Cor. IV, *quid habes quod non accepisti?* Potest tamen secundario aliquid esse causa sibi alicuius boni habendi, in quantum scilicet in hoc ipso Deo cooperatur. Et sic ille qui habet aliquid per meritum proprium, habet quodammodo illud per seipsum. Unde nobilius habetur id quod habetur per meritum quam id quod habetur sine merito. Quia autem omnis perfectio et nobilitas Christo est attribuenda, consequens est quod ipse per meritum habuit illud quod alii per meritum habent, nisi sit tale quid cuius carentia magis dignitati Christi et perfectioni praeiudicet quam per meritum accrescat. Unde nec gratiam, nec scientiam, nec beatitudinem animae, nec divinitatem meruit, quia, cum meritum non sit nisi eius quod nondum habetur, oportet quod Christus aliquando istis caruisset; quibus carere magis diminuit dignitatem Christi quam augeat meritum. Sed gloria corporis, vel si quid aliud huiusmodi est, minus est quam dignitas merendi, quae pertinet ad virtutem caritatis. Et ideo dicendum est quod Christus gloriam corporis, et ea quae pertinent ad exteriorum eius excellentiam, sicut est ascensio, veneratio, et alia huiusmodi, habuit per meritum. Et sic patet quod aliquid sibi mereri potuit.⁷

¹⁴ *ST* III.19.3 arg. 3: ‘In Christo tamen dispensative factum est quod gloria animae non derivaretur ad corpus.’ *ST* III.15.6 co.: ‘Delectatio divinae contemplationis ita per dispensationem divinae virtutis retinebatur in mente Christi quod non derivabatur ad vires sensitivas, ut per hoc dolor sensibilis excluderetur.’ A detailed explanation is given in *Sent* III.18.1.4.2 co.

¹⁵ *ST* III.19.3 ad 3: ‘Redundantia gloriae ex anima ad corpus est ex divina ordinatione secundum congruentiam humanorum meritorum, ut scilicet, sicut homo meretur per actum animae quem exercet in corpore, ita etiam remuneretur per gloriam animae redundantem ad corpus. Et propter hoc non solum gloria animae, sed etiam gloria corporis cadit sub merito, secundum illud Rom. VIII, *vivificabit mortalia corpora nostra, propter inhabitantem spiritum eius in nobis*. Et ita potuit cadere sub merito Christi.’ Cf. also *Sent*. III.18.1.4.1 co.

¹⁶ *Sent*. III.18.1.4.3 co.: ‘Aliqua sunt quae sunt de substantia beatitudinis, sicut dotes animae et corporis; aliquid autem quod est de bene esse ipsius, sicut manifestatio beatitudinis ad alios, in quo etiam gloria consistit, quia gloria est clara cum laude notitia [...]. Quia ergo in Christo debuit esse completissima beatitudo, ideo non solum in seipso beatificatus est, sed ad perfectionem suae beatitudinis etiam sua beatitudo aliis ostensa fuit: et secundum hoc dicitur exaltationem meruisse: quae quidem exaltatio in tribus consistit; scilicet in notitia cordis, secundum quod dicitur accepisse nomen super omne nomen, quia nomen de re notitiam facit: item in reverentia corporis, quantum ad genuflexionem: item in confessione oris.’ *ST* III.19.3 co.: ‘Christus gloriam corporis, et ea quae pertinent ad exteriorum eius excellentiam, sicut est ascensio, veneratio, et alia huiusmodi, habuit per meritum.’ *ST* III.54.2 co.: ‘Per humilitatem passionis meruit gloriam resurrectionis.’

¹⁷ *ST* III.49.6 co.: ‘Christus autem in sua passione seipsum humiliavit infra suam dignitatem, quantum ad quatuor. Primo quidem, quantum ad passionem et mortem, cuius debitor non erat. Secundo, quantum ad locum, quia corpus eius positum est in sepulcro, anima in Inferno. Tertio, quantum ad confusionem et opprobria quae sustinuit. Quarto, quantum ad hoc quod est traditus humanae potestati [...]. Et ideo per suam passionem meruit exaltationem quantum ad quatuor. Primo quidem, quantum ad resurrectionem gloriosam. [...] Secundo, quantum ad ascensionem in caelum. [...] Tertio, quantum ad consessum paternae dexterarum, et manifestationem divinitatis ipsius, [...] Quarto, quantum ad iudiciariam potestatem.’ Cf. *Super Philip.* 2.2.53–2.3.73 [2:6–11], esp. 2.3.67–71 [2:9], and the commentary by Édouard HUGON, *Le mystère de la rédemption* (Paris: Téqui, 1910), p. 221, summarized in P.-M. MARGELIDON, *Études thomistes sur la théologie de la rédemption*, pp. 111–112.

2.2. The Specificity of the Passion

Saint Thomas not only holds that Christ could merit but also that he merited from the first moment of his human existence. As in the case of the possibility of his merit in general, this follows from the principle of Christ's maximal excellence. Now, as the grace of Christ's humanity flows from the union with the godhead, and as the humanity was assumed by the second person of the Trinity in the first instant of Christ's conception, he was also sanctified with the plenitude of grace from the outset, a sanctification which he did not merit. But insofar as sanctification takes place through one's acceptance of and cooperation with God's grace, someone can be sanctified by grace either according to his own proper act, or according to the act of another, as in the case of infant baptism. Now, the former mode of sanctification is more excellent than the latter, and since the sanctification of Christ was most excellent and since he was destined to be the sanctifier of others rather than the other way around, it follows that he was to be sanctified according to his own act of free choice toward God, by which he merited.¹⁸

The doctrine that Christ merited from the first instant of his existence raises a difficulty with respect to the *status merentis*, since it would seem impossible or at least superfluous to merit again what has already been acquired, and thus, as beatitude has already been merited from the outset, subsequent meritorious action and in particular the excesses and radical brutality of the passion appear if not redundant, then at least unnecessary.¹⁹ The common 13th century response to this objection, taken over from Gregory the Great and passed on by Peter Lombard,²⁰ was that one and the same reward could be merited in various ways, not in the sense that it became more due but rather in that it was made due for various reasons, so that one, as it were, obtained several titles to the same good. This solution is taken over by the early Aquinas and retained in

¹⁸ *ST* III.34.3 co.: 'Christus in primo instanti conceptionis suae sanctificatus fuit per gratiam. Est autem duplex sanctificatio, una quidem adultorum, qui secundum proprium actum sanctificantur; alia autem puerorum, qui non sanctificantur secundum proprium actum fidei, sed secundum fidem parentum vel Ecclesiae. Prima autem sanctificatio est perfectior quam secunda, sicut actus est perfectior quam habitus; et quod est per se, eo quod est per aliud. Cum ergo sanctificatio Christi fuerit perfectissima, quia sic sanctificatus est ut esset aliorum sanctificator; consequens est quod ipse secundum proprium motum liberi arbitrii in Deum fuerit sanctificatus. Qui quidem motus liberi arbitrii est meritorius. Unde consequens est quod in primo instanti suae conceptionis Christus meruerit.' Cf. *ST* III.34.1 co.

¹⁹ *ST* III.48.1 arg. 2: 'Christus ab initio suae conceptionis meruit et sibi et nobis, ut supra dictum est. Sed superfluum est iterum mereri id quod alias meruerat. Ergo Christus per suam passionem non meruit nostram salutem.'

²⁰ PETER LOMBARD, *Sentences* III.18.2, in ID., *Magistri Petri Lombardi parisiensis episcopi Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, 2 vols. (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1971 and 1981), vol. 2, p. 113; cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1172.

his later work,²¹ but it also substantially expanded throughout his career, both by means of a number of more general considerations,²² as well as regards merit more specifically.

With respect to the latter, there is first the introduction of a proportion of fittingness between the nature of the meritorious act and the reward, for instance in the sense that the resurrection and the following glory is a suitable recompense for the passion because exaltation is the proper reward for humility;²³ or in the sense that the price of mankind's redemption is in the same genus as the punishment for sin, for it is fitting that we should be saved from death by death;²⁴ or again in that various prophecies and figures of the Old Testament are fulfilled, for instance, the ark of wood that saved humanity from the deluge can be interpreted as a prefiguration of the cross.²⁵ Similarly, the proportion between the various elements of Christ's exaltation mentioned above fit elegantly into this explanation of the specificity of the merits of Christ's passion.

Second, Saint Thomas points out that the passion had a certain efficiency that Christ's previous merits lacked, not on account of a greater charity, but because of the nature of the act itself (*genus operis*).²⁶ This may be read in a general way, for instance in terms of moral inspiration, or in reference to some proportion as above; but one can also interpret Aquinas as making a distinction between the intention of the agent and the act itself. As to the intention, all the acts of Christ had the same meritorious value because of the charity animating them, but with regard to their kind or specific characteristics, it is clear that some of Christ's acts manifested and realised his charity more than others. Hence, supposing that it is the same charity operating in all of Christ's actions, there is a certain meritorious value derived from the very nature of the passion itself. It is for example not difficult to realise that there is a great difference between the meritorious acts of the child Jesus at home with Mary and Joseph or the merits of Christ's deeds during his public ministry on the one hand, and his dramatic and brutal

²¹ *Sent.* III.18.1.5 ad 2: 'Non oportet quod faciat sibi magis debitum, quia hoc est secundum intensionem caritatis, quae est radix merendi; sed facit sibi pluribus modis debitum.' *ST* III.34.3 ad 3: 'Nihil prohibet idem esse alicuius ex diversis causis. Et secundum hoc, Christus gloriam immortalitatis, quam meruit in primo instanti suae conceptionis, potuit etiam posterioribus actibus et passionibus mereri, non quidem ut esset sibi magis debita; sed ut sibi ex pluribus causis deberetur.'

²² Cf. e.g. *ST* III.46, art. 1, 3, and 4 co. Some of these reasons for the specificity of the passion are taken over from earlier sources as Augustine, John Chrysostome, Gregory of Nyssa, Theophylact and Athanasius, all of which are cited in art. 4.

²³ *De ver.* 26.6 ad 4: 'Christus per passionem suam meruit sibi et nobis. Sibi quidem gloriam corporis, quam quamvis per alia praecedentia merita meruerit, tamen per quamdam decentiam proprie claritas resurrectionis est praemium passionis, quia exaltatio est proprium humilitatis praemium.' Cf. *Comp. theol.* I.240.

²⁴ *Quodl.* II.1.2 co.: 'Ut pretium redemptionis humani generis non solum esset infinitum valore, sed etiam esset eiusdem generis, ut scilicet nos de morte per mortem redimeret.' *ST* III.46.3 co.: 'Sicut homo mortem meruit, ita homo moriendo mortem superaret.'

²⁵ *ST* III.46.4 co.: 'Convenientissimum fuit Christum pati mortem crucis [...] Septima ratio est quia hoc genus mortis plurimis figuris respondet. Ut enim Augustinus dicit, in sermone de passione, de diluvio aquarum humanum genus arca lignea liberavit.' For further similar proportions, see the whole article as well as art. 1. and 3.

²⁶ *ST* III.48.1 ad 3: 'Passio Christi habuit aliquem effectum quem non habuerunt praecedentia merita, non propter maiorem caritatem, sed propter genus operis, quod erat conveniens tali effectui, ut patet ex rationibus supra inductis de convenientia passionis Christi.'

death on the cross on the other, although all his actions were performed with the same degree of charity.²⁷

Third, Saint Thomas points out that although Christ had already merited our salvation from the first moment of his conception, there were still some obstacles on our part that had to be removed through his passion,²⁸ i.e. we had to be cleansed of personal and original sin by means of the cross.²⁹ For instance, although the saints of the Old Testament merited to enter the heavenly kingdom by their works of justice due to their faith in Christ's passion thus purging themselves from personal sin, their justice did not suffice to remove the guilt of all of humanity,³⁰ which emphasizes the collective and ecclesial aspect of salvation. Likewise, the blessed virgin, should she have died before Christ's passion, would not have been admitted into the beatitude of the vision of God on account of the debt of nature (*reatus naturae*).³¹ Hence, there is nothing lacking in the merits of Christ prior to the passion; rather, there is an impediment in us which is removed by the suffering of Christ. It should however be pointed out that salvation in the sense of removal of the debt of punishment (*reatus poenae*) is not brought about by a quantitative accumulation of afflictions, for as Saint Thomas says, even a single drop of Christ's blood would have sufficed to satisfy for all the sins of humanity; rather, the redemptive efficiency of the cross is due to the very nature of the salvific act.³²

A fourth reason why the passion was fitting with regard to merit is sacramental. Since the communication of Christ's merits does not take place without our participation, each believer

²⁷ Jean-Pierre TORRELL, *Le Christ en ses mystères: La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1999), vol. II, pp. 392–393.

²⁸ *ST* III.48.1 ad 2: 'Christus a principio suae conceptionis meruit nobis salutem aeternam, sed ex parte nostra erant impedimenta quaedam, quibus impediabamur consequi effectum praecedentium meritorum. Unde, ad removendum illa impedimenta, oportuit Christum pati.'

²⁹ *Sent.* IV.4.2.2.6 co.: 'Aperiri januam regni caelestis nihil aliud est quam amovere impedimentum quo aditus in regnum caeleste toti naturae humanae prohibebatur. Hoc ergo impedimenta absolute quantum ad omnes remotum fuit sufficienter per passionem Christi; sed illa remotio efficienter fit quo ad istum, secundum quod particeps fit passionis Christi jam factae per Baptismum; et sic Baptismus quasi causa instrumentalis aperit januam regni caelestis quo ad istum, sed passio ut causa satisfactoria quo ad omnes.' *ST* III.22.3 co.: 'Ad perfectam peccatorum emundationem duo requiruntur, secundum quod duo sunt in peccato, scilicet macula culpae, et reatus poenae. Macula quidem culpae deletur per gratiam, qua cor peccatoris in Deum convertitur, reatus autem poenae totaliter tollitur per hoc quod homo Deo satisfacit.' *ST* III.57.6 ad 2: 'Passio Christi est causa nostrae ascensionis in caelum, proprie loquendo, per remotionem peccati prohibentis, et per modum meriti.'

³⁰ *ST* III.49.5 ad 1: 'Sancti patres, operando opera iustitiae, meruerunt introitum regni caelestis per fidem passionis Christi, secundum illud Heb. XI, *sancti per fidem vicerunt regna, operati sunt iustitiam*, per quam etiam unusquisque a peccato purgabatur quantum pertinet ad emundationem propriae personae. Non tamen alicuius fides vel iustitia sufficiebat ad removendum impedimentum quod erat per reatum totius humanae creaturae. Quod quidem remotum est pretio sanguinis Christi. Et ideo ante passionem Christi nullus intrare poterat regnum caeleste, adipiscendo scilicet beatitudinem aeternam, quae consistit in plena Dei fruitione.'

³¹ *Sent.* III.3.1.2.1 ad 1: 'Si beata virgo ante passionem Christi defuncta fuisset, ad Dei visionem non admitteretur, sicut nec alii antiqui patres: quamvis enim in eis remotus esset reatus ad personam pertinens, remanebat tamen reatus naturae, qui per passionem Christi sublatus est.'

³² *Sent.* III.20.1.3 ad 4: 'Quod quamvis gutta sanguinis quam in circumcisione fudit, esset sufficiens ad omnem satisfactionem, considerata conditione personae, non tamen quantum ad genus poenae: quia pro morte ad quam humanum genus obligatum erat, oportebat quod mortem exsolveret.' *Adoro te devote*: 'Cuius una stilla saluum facere, totum mundum posset omni scelere.' Cf. *Quodl.* II.1.2 s.c. 2.

must unite himself with the sufferings and the death of Christ in order to share in his merits. In the present economy of salvation, this takes place through faith, charity and the sacraments, in particular by means of baptism and the Eucharist, which renders the passion of Christ present and communicates its effects to us.³³ We do not have any sacrament that renders present for instance the merits of the hidden life of Jesus, but we do have the Eucharist, which permits us to share in the merits flowing from Christ's passion; indeed, the Eucharist not only communicates the fruits of the passion but it contains *Christus passus* himself, offered up to God for our salvation.³⁴ In fact, Saint Thomas holds that all the sacraments have their salvific power (*virtus*) from the passion of Christ, a power which is united to us (*copulatur*) by the reception of the sacraments. One might here call to mind the well-known patristic interpretation of the blood and water flowing forth from the crucified Christ as a sign of the sacraments, a theme well known to Aquinas.³⁵

A final reason for the specificity of the passion as regards merit is that Christ thereby *intended* to suffer specifically *for the sake of* the salvation of humanity. Saint Thomas writes that Christ wanted to suffer death (*pati voluit*) in order to redeem humanity from sin, for in any purchase, one does not only need a requisite amount of funds (*quantitas valoris*) but it is also necessary to have the intention (*deputatio*) of using those resources for the purchase in question.³⁶ Aquinas teaches that the other afflictions in Christ's life were not intended

³³ ST III.79.1 co.: 'Effectus huius sacramenti [i.e. Eucharistiae] debet considerari [...] ex eo quod per hoc sacramentum repraesentatur, quod est passio Christi, sicut supra dictum est. Et ideo effectum quem passio Christi fecit in mundo, hoc sacramentum facit in homine.' *Quodl.* II.1.2 co.: 'Non sunt deputatae ad redemptionem humani generis a Deo patre et Christo aliae passiones Christi absque morte. Et hoc triplici ratione [...] Tertio ut mors Christi esset etiam sacramentum salutis, dum nos virtute mortis Christi morimur peccato et carnalibus concupiscentiis et proprio affectui; et causa assignatur I Petri III, 18: *Christus semel pro peccatis nostris mortuus est, iustus pro iniustis, ut nos offerret Deo mortificatos quidem carne, vivificatos autem spiritu.*' Cf. also *Super Ioan.* 6.7.973 [7:55].

³⁴ ST III.73.5 ad 2: 'Eucharistia est sacramentum perfectum dominicae passionis, tanquam continens ipsum Christum passum.' ST III.73.4 ad 3: 'Hoc sacramentum dicitur sacrificium, in quantum repraesentat ipsam passionem Christi. Dicitur autem hostia, in quantum continet ipsum Christum, qui est hostia suavitatis, ut dicitur Ephes. v.' ST I.65.3 co.: 'In eo continetur ipse Christus substantialiter, in aliis autem sacramentis continetur quaedam virtus instrumentalis participata a Christo'. Cf. also ST III.79.7 ad 3.

³⁵ ST III.62.5 co.: 'Manifestum est quod sacramenta Ecclesiae specialiter habent virtutem ex passione Christi, cuius virtus quodammodo nobis copulatur per susceptionem sacramentorum. In cuius signum, de latere Christi pendentis in cruce fluxerunt aqua et sanguis, quorum unum pertinet ad Baptismum, aliud ad Eucharistiam, quae sunt potissima sacramenta.' J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 1173–1174. See also the studies by Martin MORARD, 'L'Eucharistie, clé de voûte de l'organisme sacramentel chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin' *Revue Thomiste* 95.2 (1995), 217–250 (219), and Gilles EMERY, 'The Ecclesial Fruit of the Eucharist in St. Thomas Aquinas', *Nova et Vetera*, Eng. ed., 2.1 (2004), 43–60.

³⁶ *Comp. theol.* I.231: 'Christus viator et comprehensor fuit [...] inde est quod Christus quamvis comprehensor esset, meruit tamen per ea quae fecit et passus est [...] Nobis etiam suae singulae passiones et operationes fuerunt proficuae ad salutem, non solum per modum exempli, sed etiam per modum meriti, in quantum propter abundantiam caritatis et gratiae nobis potuit gratiam promereri [...] Erat siquidem quaelibet passio eius, quantumcumque minima, sufficiens ad redimendum humanum genus [...] Non tamen fuit per quamlibet consummata humani generis redemptio, sed per mortem, quam propter rationes supra positas ad hoc pati voluit, ut genus humanum redimeret a peccatis. In emptione enim qualibet non solum requiritur quantitas valoris, sed deputatio pretii ad emendum.'

(*deputatae*) for the redemption of the human race *apart from* (*absque*) the death of Christ.³⁷ This means that the acts of Christ are not to be considered as isolated from the passion; rather, they can be interpreted as making up an integral whole so that the entire life of Christ is viewed, in a sense, as one single meritorious act that derives its ultimate meaning from the passion. As it is often said: all that happened to Christ and all that he did, all the *acta et passa*, was for our salvation. In the context of merit, this can be understood in the sense that all his acts were offered as a part of the sacrifice of the cross,³⁸ by which he merited our salvation, an interpretation proposed by Domingo de Soto and John of St. Thomas.³⁹

Having thus established that Christ was indeed capable of meriting, it must be noted that whatever Christ merited was already due to him on account of grace.⁴⁰ And so it may be said that although Christ merited for instance his judiciary power by letting himself be handed over to the power and judgment of men, this was already due to him because of grace. In fact, Saint Thomas in this connection explicitly enumerates the three modalities of Christ's grace – the grace of union, his capital grace, and his plenitude of habitual grace – so that, wholly apart from any merits, the grace of Christ by itself constituted a threefold reason for the bestowal of for instance judiciary power or the glory of resurrection.⁴¹ Nevertheless, merit is still supremely fitting because it is not merely a means to an end but also a perfection in its own right.⁴²

Conclusion

As merit is a perfection, the fact that Christ merited follows from the principle of his maximal excellence. Christ fulfils the two conditions for merit, and so it is possible for him to merit.

³⁷ *Quodl.* II.1.2 co.: 'Non sunt deputatae ad redemptionem humani generis a Deo patre et Christo aliae passiones Christi absque morte.' See also *ibid.*, ad 1–3.

³⁸ The often quoted expression 'acta et passa' is only found in the prologue to the *Tertia Pars*. For a connection to salvation, see *ST* III.48.6 co.: 'Omnes actiones et passiones Christi instrumentaliter operantur, in virtute divinitatis, ad salutem humanam'; or *Comp. theol.* I.212: 'Omnes eius actiones et passiones humanae virtute divinitatis salutare fuerunt'. For an explanation of the efficient causality of the mysteries of Christ's life, see the important text in *ST* III.56.1 ad 3, cited in ch. 4, n. 47, and the commentary in J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 1220–1231 (esp. p. 1227)

³⁹ DOMINGO DE SOTO, *In quartum sententiarum commentarii* (Douai: Ex Typographia Petri Borremans, 1613), IV.1.3.5, p. 38b; JOHN OF ST. THOMAS, *Cursus theologicus*, tome 9 (Paris: Vivès, 1886), *De Sacramentis* 24.5.22, pp. 306–307; Charles JOURNET, *La Messe: Présence du sacrifice de la Croix* (Paris: Desclée, 1957), p. 29; J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 1175.

⁴⁰ *De ver.* 29.6 ad 3: 'Quod Christus non meruit aliquid quasi sibi non debitum, ut fieret ei debitum, sicut homines in primo actu meritorio merentur; nec iterum ut id quod erat debitum, fiat magis debitum, sicut in his quorum gratia augetur; sed ut id quod erat uno modo debitum ratione gratiae, fieret ei alio modo debitum ratione meriti.'

⁴¹ *ST* III.59.3 co.: 'Nihil prohibet unum et idem deberi alicui ex causis diversis, sicut gloria corporis resurgentis debita fuit Christo non solum propter congruentiam divinitatis et propter gloriam animae, sed etiam ex merito humilitatis passionis. Et similiter dicendum est quod iudiciaria potestas homini Christo competit et propter divinam personam, et propter capitis dignitatem, et propter plenitudinem gratiae habitualis, et tamen etiam ex merito eam obtinuit, ut scilicet, secundum Dei iustitiam, iudex esset qui pro Dei iustitia pugnavit et vicit, et iniuste iudicatus est.'

⁴² *ST* III.19.3 co.: 'Gloria corporis, vel si quid aliud huiusmodi est, minus est quam dignitas merendi, quae pertinet ad virtutem caritatis.'

With regard to the *facultas merendi*, although Christ could not sin, he had the freedom to choose between different goods. He also had charity as a consequence of the habitual grace that flowed from the grace of union. As to the *status merentis*, although Christ could not merit the beatific vision, which he had from the first instance of his human existence, he could merit the overflowing of grace from the higher to the lower parts of his humanity. In particular, he merited the participation of his body in beatitude, his exaltation and the external manifestation of his glory.

With regard to the fittingness of the passion in spite of the fact that Christ had merited already from the first instant of his human existence, Aquinas gives several considerations. First, there is a certain proportion of fittingness between the passion and the reward, for instance in that exaltation is merited by humility. Second, the passion had a certain efficiency because of the very nature of the act itself. Third, there were certain impediments on our parts, which had to be removed by the passion. Fourth, in the current economy of salvation the passion of Christ was to be represented in the sacraments and give them their efficiency. Fifth, the merits of Christ's life were not intended apart from the passion; rather, all the acts of Christ's life merited our salvation as related to the sacrifice of the cross.

3. Merit and the Passion of Christ

In question forty-eight on the efficiency of Christ's passion in the *Tertia Pars*, Saint Thomas speaks of five ways in which Christ's suffering brought about our salvation: merit, satisfaction or atonement, sacrifice, redemption, and the way of instrumental efficiency.¹ The last of these will be discussed in the section on Christ's grace and the communication of his merits. The first four describe the moral causality of the passion, i.e. how the passion saves us with respect to the order of justice. They should however not be treated as separate modes of salvation; rather, they make up distinct features of a causal whole in which merit takes precedence. In what follows, we will see that the charity of Christ is the fundamental principle of our salvation. Merit refers to charity in an unqualified way with respect to the will, whereas satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption pick out charity insofar as it is realised materially in the concrete events of the passion. Hence, the latter three turn out to be particular ways in which Christ merited our salvation.

3.1. Merit as the Fundamental Mode of Salvation

Of the first four modes of salvation, merit is the fundamental: it is most *general* and most *basic*.² It is most *general* because sacrificial, redemptive and atoning acts all fall under the notion of merit, whereas the converse does not hold. That the other salvific modalities fall under merit follows from Saint Thomas's more general doctrine that all human acts are either positively or negatively meritorious. With regard to other people, all acts fall under merit insofar as they are to the advantage or disadvantage of someone else.³ As regards acts that seemingly conduce only to the agent's own individual benefit, they fall under merit insofar as they affect the community to which he belongs.⁴ Further, all acts are either meritorious or demeritorious also with respect

¹ *ST* III.48.6 ad 3: 'Passio Christi, secundum quod comparatur ad divinitatem eius, agit per modum efficientiae; in quantum vero comparatur ad voluntatem animae Christi, agit per modum meriti; secundum vero quod consideratur in ipsa carne Christi, agit per modum satisfactionis, in quantum per eam liberamur a reatu poenae; per modum vero redemptionis, in quantum per eam liberamur a servitute culpae; per modum autem sacrificii, in quantum per eam reconciliamur Deo'. For instrumentality, cf. *ibid.* co.: 'Duplex est efficiens, principale, et instrumentale. Efficiens quidem principale humanae salutis Deus est. Quia vero humanitas Christi est divinitatis instrumentum, ut supra dictum est, ex consequenti omnes actiones et passiones Christi instrumentaliter operantur, in virtute divinitatis, ad salutem humanam. Et secundum hoc, passio Christi efficienter causat salutem humanam.'

² Cf. J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, pp. 407–411.

³ *ST* I-II.21.3 co.: 'Cum ergo aliquis agit in bonum vel malum alterius singularis personae, cadit ibi dupliciter ratio meriti vel demeriti. Uno modo, secundum quod debetur ei retributio a singulari persona quam iuvat vel offendit. Alio modo, secundum quod debetur ei retributio a toto collegio. Quando vero aliquis ordinat actum suum directe in bonum vel malum totius collegii, debetur ei retributio primo quidem et principaliter a toto collegio: secundario vero, ab omnibus collegii partibus.'

⁴ *ST* I-II.21.3 co.: 'Cum vero aliquis agit quod in bonum proprium vel malum vergit, etiam debetur ei retributio, in quantum etiam hoc vergit in commune, secundum quod ipse est pars collegii [...] Sic igitur patet quod actus bonus vel malus habet rationem [...] meriti et demeriti, secundum retributionem iustitiae ad alterum'.

to God, for since it is due that all our acts are referred to God as the ultimate end of human life, whoever performs an evil act that is not referable to God does not give him due honour, from which demerit follows. In addition, it befalls God to give retribution for all human acts, either good or bad, insofar as he is the ruler of the community of creation and the caretaker of the common good.⁵ Finally, there are no indifferent acts, whence one cannot argue that some acts do not fall under merit because they are neither good nor bad.⁶ All of this shows that merit is not merely a limited part of Aquinas's conception of *justice* but a basic notion that pervades his whole understanding of human conduct. It should therefore come as no surprise that merit plays a vital role in his teaching on salvation and *justification* before God.

That merit does not conversely necessarily fall under satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption follows from the fact that the latter presuppose an offence having been committed, whereas merit does not. Even if sacrifice and redemption are taken in a broad sense so that sacrifice is understood as oblation or offering,⁷ and redemption not as buying back but simply as an act of payment in a general sense so as to gain some favour, still not all human acts will qualify as acts of offering or buying because both of these require the intention to give something to another person or to buy something from someone,⁸ whereas merit does not, since all acts, even those not intentionally performed for the sake of obtaining a reward, are either meritorious or demeritorious.

An indication that merit is the most *basic* mode of salvation is the fact that it is treated first in the discussion on the efficiency of the passion both in the *Sentences* and in the *Summa*.⁹ It is also the only mode of salvation dealt with in the expositions on the human operation of the incarnate Word as well as in the discussion on Christ's grace in the *De veritate*, where the others

⁵ *ST I-II.21.4 co.*: 'Actus alicuius hominis habet rationem meriti vel demeriti, secundum quod ordinatur ad alterum, vel ratione eius, vel ratione communitatis. Utrouque autem modo actus nostri boni vel mali habent rationem meriti vel demeriti apud Deum. Ratione quidem ipsius, in quantum est ultimus hominis finis: est autem debitum ut ad finem ultimum omnes actus referantur, ut supra habitum est. Unde qui facit actum malum non referibilem in Deum, non servat honorem Dei, qui ultimo fini debetur. Ex parte vero totius communitatis universi, quia in qualibet communitate ille qui regit qui regit communitatem, praecipue habet curam boni communis: unde ad eum pertinet retribuere pro his quae bene vel male fiunt in communitate. Est autem Deus gubernator et rector totius universi, sicut in Primo habitum est: et specialiter rationalium creaturarum. Unde manifestum est quod actus humani habent rationem meriti vel demeriti per comparationem ad ipsum: alioquin sequeretur quod Deus non haberet curam de actibus humanis.'

⁶ *ST I-II.18.9 co.*: 'Necesse est omnem actum hominis a deliberativa ratione procedentem, in individuo consideratum, bonum esse vel malum.'

⁷ *ST II-II.85.3 ad 3*: 'Sacrificia proprie dicuntur quando circa res Deo oblatas aliquid fit, sicut quod animalia occidebantur, quod panis frangitur et comeditur et benedicitur. Et hoc ipsum nomen sonat, nam sacrificium dicitur ex hoc quod homo facit aliquid sacrum. Oblatio autem directe dicitur cum Deo aliquid offertur, etiam si nihil circa ipsum fiat, sicut dicuntur offerri denarii vel panes in altari, circa quos nihil fit. Unde omne sacrificium est oblatio, sed non convertitur.'

⁸ For redemption, cf. *Comp. theol.* I.231: 'Non tamen fuit per quamlibet consummata humani generis redemptio, sed per mortem, quam propter rationes supra positas ad hoc pati voluit, ut genus humanum redimeret a peccatis. In emptione enim qualibet non solum requiritur quantitas valoris, sed deputatio pretii ad emendum', see also *Quodl.* II.1.2 co. For sacrifice, cf. *ST II-II.85.3 ad 3*: 'Decimae autem, proprie loquendo, non sunt neque sacrificia neque oblationes, quia non immediate Deo, sed ministris divini cultus exhibentur.'

⁹ *Sent.* III.18–20, and *ST III.48*.

are mentioned only in passing.¹⁰ Further, although question forty-eight of the *Tertia Pars* begins with an article on merit as a mode of salvation, Aquinas mainly discusses the possibility of Christ to merit for others in terms of his mystical body, which will be treated in the following section. With respect to the question in what way Christ's merit is efficient for our salvation in particular, Saint Thomas is very brief: he merely states that whoever suffers for the sake of justice merits salvation,¹¹ but he does not say in what way justice is achieved, as if to indicate that this will be explained in the treatment of the other salvific modalities. In addition, merit has a unique role in the work of salvation as it not only removes the impediments for the reception of beatitude but also positively effects the communication of friendship with God.¹²

Nevertheless, the fundamental reason for the fact that merit is the most basic mode of salvation is, as Saint Thomas writes elsewhere, that 'whatever there is in the mystery of human redemption and the incarnation of Christ, all is a work of charity.'¹³ Now, all the four modes of salvation are ultimately based on charity,¹⁴ but merit concerns the love of God in an unqualified sense, namely as it resides in the will as such, whereas satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption account for charity in a qualified way, inasmuch as it is realised materially in the concrete events of the passion, or in the very flesh of Christ (*in ipsa carne Christi*), as Saint Thomas puts it.¹⁵ It is therefore apt to consider the four salvific modes as a causal whole based on charity in which merit takes precedence.¹⁶ In fact, Aquinas explicitly teaches something like this in the

¹⁰ For Christ's operation, see *Sent.* III.18.1.2–6, *ST* III.19.3–4, and *ST* III.34.3; for his grace, see *De ver.* 29.6–8.

¹¹ *ST* III.48.1 co.: 'Manifestum est autem quod quicumque in gratia constitutus propter iustitiam patitur, ex hoc ipso meretur sibi salutem'. The entire text is cited in ch. 4, n. 25.

¹² *ST* III.57.6 ad 2: 'Passio Christi est causa nostrae ascensionis in caelum, proprie loquendo, per remotionem peccati prohibentis, et per modum meriti.' This passage implies a distinction between the positive effect of merit on the one hand ('per modum meriti'), and the cleansing efficiency of the other moral causalities of salvation on the other ('per remotionem peccati prohibentis'). Cf. *De ver.* 29.7 co., *ST* III.22.3 co., *ST* III.49.5 ad 4.

¹³ *Super Eph.* 3.5.178 [5:19]: 'Quidquid est in mysterio redemptionis humanae et incarnationis Christi, totum est opus charitatis. Nam quod incarnatum est, ex charitate processit. Supra II, 4: *propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos, et cetera*. Quia vero mortuus fuit, ex charitate processit Io. XV, 13: *maiores hac dilectionem nemo habet, etc.*; infra V, 2: *Christus dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis oblationem et hostiam Deo*. Propter hoc dicit Gregorius: *o inaestimabilis dilectio charitatis. Ut servum redimeres, filium tradidisti*. Et ideo scire charitatem Christi, est scire omnia mysteria incarnationis Christi et redemptionis nostrae, quae ex immensa charitate Dei processerunt, quae quidem charitas excedit omnem intellectum creatum et omnium scientiam, cum sit incomprehensibilis cogitatu.' Cf. *ST* III.46.4 ad 1, *ST* III.46.6 ad 4, *ST* III.46.9 ad 4, *ST* III.47.2 ad 3.

¹⁴ For merit, see *ST* III.48.1 arg. 3: 'Radix meriti est caritas.' For satisfaction, see *Sent.* III.20.1.3 ad 1: 'Christi non fuit satisfactoria ex parte occidentium Christum, sed ex parte ipsius patientis, qui ex maxima caritate pati voluit', *Sent.* IV.15.1.1.3 ad 2: 'Satisfactio sine Dei auxilio fit, quia sine caritate esse non potest'. For sacrifice, see *ST* III.48.3 ad 3: 'Passio Christi ex parte occidentium ipsum fuit maleficium, sed ex parte ipsius ex caritate patientis fuit sacrificium.' For redemption, see *ST* III.49.1 co.: 'Passio Christi causat remissionem peccatorum per modum redemptionis. Quia enim ipse est caput nostrum, per passionem suam, quam ex caritate et obedientia sustinuit, liberavit nos'. See also section 1.3 on the relation between grace, charity and merit.

¹⁵ *ST* III.48.6 ad 3 (cited in n. 1).

¹⁶ Cf. J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, p. 409. Aquinas in fact teaches that satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption imply merit. For merit and satisfaction, see *De ver.* 29.7 s.c. 1: 'Christus pro nobis satisfecit, 1 Ioh. II, 2: *Ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris*; sed satisfactio sine merito esse non potest; ergo Christus pro nobis meruit.' For merit and sacrifice, see *Super Heb.* 13.2.754 [13:16]: 'Quare autem istud duplex beneficium offerre debeamus, ostendit dicens quia talibus hostiis promeretur, passive, Deus, id est, possumus Deum mereri talibus sacrificiis: ipse enim est merces nostra, quam istis operibus possumus acquirere.' A connection between

Sentences. Having treated the merits of Christ as ordered to obtain some good, he writes that he means to go on to address his merits as ordered to the removal of evil in us, but in actual fact, the following passages discuss satisfaction, redemption and reconciliation, essentially constituting a parallel text to the question on the efficiency of the passion in the *Summa*.¹⁷ Accordingly, one may profitably examine satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption as particular realisations of Christ's charity so as to better understand in what way they are meritorious. In the words of Saint Thomas, 'to know the charity of Christ is to know all the mysteries of the incarnation of Christ and of our redemption'¹⁸.

3.2. Merit and Satisfaction

After the article on merit, Aquinas treats satisfaction. Satisfaction usually involves a penal element which the offender takes on himself willingly in order to recompense the offended and remove the debt of punishment (*reatus poenae*) so that the order of justice is restored.¹⁹ Hence, we can speak of meriting the removal of punishment by way of atonement. Yet in the treatment of the atonement of Christ in the *Summa*, the penal element is notably absent in the rationale for satisfaction. Instead, Saint Thomas writes that atonement involves giving to the offender that which he loves more than he hates the offence.²⁰ This characterisation effectively identifies

merit and redemption can be established through satisfaction, cf. *ST* III.48.4 co.: 'Christus autem satisfacit, non quidem pecuniam dando aut aliquid huiusmodi, sed dando id quod fuit maximum, seipsum, pro nobis. Et ideo passio Christi dicitur esse nostra redemptio.'

¹⁷ *Sent.* III.19.1 pr.: 'Postquam determinavit Magister de merito Christi secundum quod ordinatur ad bonum consequendum sibi et nobis [dist. 18], hic determinat de merito ipsius secundum quod ordinatur ad remotionem mali in nobis: ipse enim in se nec subjectus est culpae neque debitor est poenae. Dividitur autem in duas partes: in prima ostendit quomodo per passionem Christi liberamur a malis; in secunda de causa passionis Christi'.

¹⁸ *Super Eph.* 3.5.178 [5:19] (the last sentence as cited in n. 13).

¹⁹ *Sent.* IV.15.1.4.1 co.: 'Satisfactio [...] respectum habet ad praeteritam offensam pro qua recompensatio fit per satisfactionem, et etiam ad futuram culpam, a qua per eam praeservamur; et quantum ad utrumque exigitur quod satisfactio per opera poenalia fiat.' *SCG* III.158.5 [3309]: 'Postquam homo per gratiam remissionem peccati consecutus est, et ad statum gratiae reductus, remanet obligatus, ex Dei iustitia, ad aliquam poenam pro peccato commisso. Quam quidem poenam si propria voluntate a se exegerit, per hoc Deo satisfacere dicitur: in quantum cum labore et poena ordinem divinitus institutum consequitur, pro peccato se puniendo, quem peccando transgressus fuerat propriam voluntatem sequendo.' Cf. *Sent.* IV.15.2.2.2 ad 2, *ST* I-II.87.6 co. For the removal of the debt of punishment by Christ, cf. *ST* III.48.6 ad 3: 'Passio Christi [...] agit per modum satisfactionis, in quantum per eam liberamur a reatu poenae'.

²⁰ *ST* III.48.2 co.: 'Ille proprie satisfacit pro offensa qui exhibet offenso id quod aequè vel magis diligit quam oderit offensam.' Cf. *ST* III.79.5 co.: 'In satisfactione magis attenditur affectus offerentis quam quantitas oblationis'. This definition corresponds to the characterisation given in the influential article by Paul GALTIER, 'Satisfaction', in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 14.1, ed by Alfred VACANT, Eugène MANGENOT and Émile AMANN (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1939), cols. 1129–1210 (1135): 'Dans leur sens le plus général, les mots « satisfaire », « satisfaction », disent « faire assez » pour atteindre un but moral, pour répondre à une attente, pour observer une loi ou être déclaré quitte d'une obligation, pour se libérer d'une charge. Le droit romain en parlait à propos de créances ou d'offenses. « Satisfaire », en cette matière, c'était « faire assez » pour que le créancier consentît à accorder remise de tout ou partie de la dette, pour qu'un offensé renonçât à tirer vengeance ou à poursuivre le châtement de l'injure reçue. Offrir satisfaction n'était pas s'acquitter totalement de la dette ou accepter de subir le châtement mérité ; c'était cependant reconnaître le droit, confesser son tort, accepter le principe d'une réparation,

satisfaction with an act of charity, the implication being that a meritorious act on the part of Christ would have been sufficient to atone for human sin.²¹ Also in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas points out that the retributive element is not an absolute necessity in the remission of sin, for the offender can be so forcefully turned away from sin and so vigorously enkindled with the love of God that the need for punishment is reduced or even removed.²² Now, it can surely be said that Christ's will was turned away from sin and towards God in an extraordinary way, as he had the fullness of grace and the greatest of charity.²³ Hence, it follows that suffering was not at all necessary. In fact, in the *Summa*, Saint Thomas explicitly teaches that God could have dispensed with satisfaction altogether without acting against justice, since he is under no obligation to require atonement, as he has no higher authority above himself.²⁴ This makes it all the more remarkable that the passion of Christ in actual fact is characterized by the greatest afflictions.

Aquinas writes that Christ gave to God not only more than required but that he satisfied superabundantly on account of the charity and obedience with which he bore his passion, first because of the magnitude of his charity; second, because of the dignity of the life which he offered up, namely the life of someone who is both God and man; and third, because of the magnitude of the grief or of the afflictions (*magnitudo doloris*) which he endured.²⁵ The first of these reasons gives us the key to understanding the atonement: the gift that God loves more

par là, se conformer à la justice, tout en faisant appel à la bienveillance et en s'appliquant à obtenir, par l'aveu de sa dette ou de sa culpabilité, de n'être point traité selon toute la rigueur des lois.'

²¹ Earlier in the *Summa*, Aquinas says that satisfaction has punishment as its material part, whereas the formal principle is charity, but this element is absent in *ST* III.48.2 co., cf. *ST* III.14.1 ad 1: 'Satisfactio pro peccato alterius habet quidem quasi materiam poenas quas aliquis pro peccato alterius sustinet, sed pro principio habet habitum animae ex quo inclinatur ad volendum satisfacere pro alio, et ex quo satisfactio efficaciam habet; non enim esset satisfactio efficax nisi ex caritate procederet'.

²² *SCG* III.158.6 [3310]: 'Cum mens a peccato avertitur, tam vehemens potest esse peccati displicentia, et inhaesio mentis ad Deum, quod non remanebit obligatio ad aliquam poenam.' Cf. *SCG* III.157.3 [3301]: 'Offensa non nisi per dilectionem tollitur.'

²³ *ST* III.7.9 co.: 'Christus habuit gratiae plenitudinem.' *Sent.* III.19.1.1.1 co.: 'Solutus autem Christus aliis potest sufficienter mereri: quia potest in naturam, in quantum Deus est, et caritas sua quodammodo est infinita, sicut et gratia'.

²⁴ *ST* III.46.2 ad 3: 'Iustitia dependet ex voluntate divina ab humano genere satisfactionem pro peccato exigente. Alioquin, si voluisset absque omni satisfactione hominem a peccato liberare, contra iustitiam non fecisset. [...] Deus non habet aliquem superiorem, sed ipse est supremum et commune bonum totius universi. Et ideo, si dimittat peccatum, quod habet rationem culpae ex eo quod contra ipsum committitur, nulli facit iniuriam, sicut quicumque homo remittit offensam in se commissam absque satisfactione, misericorditer, et non iniuste agit.' Cf. *SCG* III.158.6 [3310] (cited in n. 22). The possibility of dispensing with satisfaction is also present in the *Sentences*, but the motivation is different, cf. *Sent.* III.20.1.4.1 ad 3: 'Quamvis sit inconveniens ex parte nostra secundum ordinem quem Deus rebus posuit, ut peccatum sine satisfactione dimittatur; tamen si ipse faceret, convenientissimum esset, quia ipse simul cum hoc faceret, aliquam convenientiam in re poneret.' Cf. *Comp. theol.* I.200: 'Sed si Deus hominem sola sua voluntate et virtute reparasset, non servaretur divinae iustitiae ordo, secundum quam exigitur satisfactio pro peccato.'

²⁵ *ST* III.48.2 co.: 'Christus autem, ex caritate et obedientia patiendo, maius aliquid Deo exhibuit quam exigeret recompensatio totius offensae humani generis. Primo quidem, propter magnitudinem caritatis ex qua patiebatur. Secundo, propter dignitatem vitae suae, quam pro satisfactione ponebat, quae erat vita Dei et hominis. Tertio, propter generalitatem passionis et magnitudinem doloris assumpti, ut supra dictum est. Et ideo passio Christi non solum sufficiens, sed etiam superabundans satisfactio fuit pro peccatis humani generis.'

than he hates our sins is the concrete realisation of his Son's charity.²⁶ This consummation or fulfilment of charity is expressed in the most consistent but also most abundant way, namely in that he who is God takes on himself the greatest of suffering wholly without any necessity or obligation to do so, as if to show to what lengths God is willing to go for the sake of charity. In this way, Christ's passion is formally and primarily a meritorious work of charity and only secondarily atoning in the sense of involving suffering, for suffering is the way in which Christ's charity is realised, certainly a most fitting way, but by no means a necessary one.

The fittingness of Christ's suffering has to do with the proportion between the meritorious act and the reward. The penal element of the atonement is appropriate for several reasons. First, although God is not bound to require punishment, it is surely fitting that he should follow the order justice that he himself instituted and thus manifests his wisdom, goodness, mercy and glory.²⁷ With respect to merit in particular, it is fitting that the liberation from *punishment* is merited by an action involving a *penal* element. Second, although Christ's will was turned to God and away from sin with an extraordinary fervour, this is not always the case in us, and so, as Christ's salvific work is done for our sake, it is not entirely fitting for God to dispense with retribution altogether. Third, for us punishment has a medicinal and penitential dimension,²⁸ which was lacking in Christ, since he could not have the virtue of penance as he had committed no sin and thus had no need of any medicine.²⁹ Hence, the debt of punishment (*reatus poenae*) was removed by means of suffering in order to make it possible for us to avail ourselves of and participate in his meritorious activity as we do penance and atone for our own sins and those of others.³⁰ Just as it is a great good to be able to cooperate in the communication of eternal life

²⁶ Cf. B. CATÃO, *Salut et rédemption*, p. 90; Albert PATFOORT, 'Le vrai visage de la satisfaction du christ selon saint Thomas: Une étude de la Somme théologique', in *Ordo sapientiae et amoris: image et message de saint Thomas d'Aquin à travers les récentes études historiques herméneutiques et doctrinales: Hommage au professeur Jean-Pierre Torrell OP à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire*, ed. by Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1993), pp. 247–266 (p. 264).

²⁷ *SCG* III.158.4 [3308]: 'Ordo iustitiae hoc requirit ut peccato poena reddatur. Ex hoc autem quod ordo servatur in rebus, sapientia Dei gubernantis apparet. Pertinet igitur ad manifestationem divinae bonitatis et Dei gloriam quod pro peccato poena reddatur.' Cf. *Sent.* III.20.1.1.1 co.: 'Congruentissimum fuit humanam naturam, ex quo lapsa fuit, reparari. Fuit enim conveniens quantum ad ipsum Deum: quia in hoc manifestatur misericordia Dei, potentia, et sapientia. Misericordia quidem sive bonitas, quia proprii plasmatis non despexit infirmitatem: potentia vero inquantum ipse omnium nostrorum defectum sua virtute vicit: sapientia autem inquantum nihil frustra fecisse invenitur.'

²⁸ *Sent.* IV.15.1.1.2 co.: 'Satisfactio, quae aequalitatem respectu offensae praecedentis in faciente importat, opus justitiae est quantum ad illam partem quae poenitentia dicitur.' *SCG* III.158.1 [3305]: 'Ad hoc quod homo auxilio gratiae ad statum rectitudinis redeat, necessarium est quod a peccato, per quod a rectitudine declinaverat, recedat. [...] Voluntate autem homo a peccato recedit dum et de praeterito poenitet, et futurum vitare proponit.' *Ibid.* no. 6 [3310]: 'Poena quam quis patitur post peccati remissionem, ad hoc necessaria est ut mens firmiter bono inhaereat, homine per poenas castigato, poenae enim medicinae quaedam sunt'.

²⁹ *Sent.* IV.14.1.3: 'Christus non potuit peccare, ut in 3 Lib., dist. 12, qu. 2, art. 1, dictum est, et ideo materia hujus virtutis [id est poenitentiae] non competit sibi nec actu nec potentia'. Cf. Édouard HUGON, *Le mystère de l'Incarnation*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Tequi, 1921), pp. 232–234, P.-M. MARGELIDON, *Études thomistes sur la théologie de la rédemption*, pp. 225–228.

³⁰ *Sent.* III.19.1.3.2 co.: 'Aliquis fit particeps Christi per realem conformitatem ad ipsum, scilicet inquantum Christo patiente patimur, quod fit per poenitentiam.' *Sent.* III.20.1.3 ad 3: 'Remissio poenae quae fit aliis hominibus, praecipue poenae satisfactoriae, fundatur supra virtutem satisfactoriam Christi, quae superabundavit

through merit, so it is a gift from God to be able to participate in the plan of salvation and in a certain way bring about our own restoration through satisfaction.³¹ In this way, Christ's satisfaction is a work not only of justice but above all of mercy, as it is a greater gift to participate in the process of reconciliation than to be forgiven without involvement:³² it is a way of God to communicate his own goodness.³³ Thus, it is apt to say that the purpose of Christ's atonement is not to change God's will in the sense of appeasing him, since his love for us is eternal and immutable; rather, it is to communicate his love to us by changing our wills,³⁴ a process in which we are granted to participate through merit.

3.3. Merit and Sacrifice

With regard to the passion of Christ as a sacrifice, it has rightly been pointed out that satisfaction is obtained through sacrifice.³⁵ But a sacrifice is not always a means of satisfaction, nor is an act of satisfaction always a sacrifice.³⁶ The main difference between satisfaction and sacrifice

ad amovendas omnes poenas quantum in se fuit; unde oportet quod particulata satisfactio fundetur supra satisfactionem Christi condignam, sicut imperfectum in quolibet genere oritur ex perfecto.' *ST* III.1.2 ad 2: 'Quia omne imperfectum praesupponit aliquid perfectum, a quo sustentetur, inde est quod omnis puri hominis satisfactio efficaciam habet a satisfactione Christi.' *ST* III.48.2 ad 1: 'Caput et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica. Et ideo satisfactio Christi ad omnes fideles pertinet sicut ad sua membra. In quantum etiam duo homines sunt unum in caritate, unus pro alio satisfacere potest, ut infra patebit. Non autem est similis ratio de confessione et contritione, quia satisfactio consistit in actu exteriori, ad quem assumi possunt instrumenta; inter quae computantur etiam amici.' Cf. *SCG* III.158.7 [3311], *De ver.* 29.7 co., *ibid.* ad 6–7.

³¹ *Sent* III.20.1.1.2 co.: 'Congruum etiam fuit quod natura humana per satisfactionem repararetur. [...] Secundo ex parte hominis, qui satisfaciens, perfectus integratur: non enim tantae gloriae esset post peccatum, quanta erat in statu innocentiae, si non plenarie satisfecisset: quia magis est homini gloriosum ut peccatum commissum satisfaciendo plenarie expurget, quam si sine satisfactione dimitteretur; sicut etiam magis homini gloriosum est quod vitam aeternam ex meritis habeat, quam si sine meritis ad eam perveniret: quia quod quis meretur, quodammodo ex se habet, in quantum illud meruit. Similiter satisfactio facit ut satisfaciens sit quodammodo causa suae purgationis.' Cf. A. PATFOORT, 'Le vrai visage de la satisfaction', p. 260. For satisfaction and merit, cf. *Sent* IV.17.2.4.3 ad 3: 'Satisfactio opus meritorium requirit'.

³² *ST* III.46.1 ad 3: 'Hoc [i.e. hominem liberari per passionem Christi] fuit abundantioris misericordiae quam si peccata absque satisfactione dimisisset.' Cf. P.-M. MARGELIDON, *Études thomistes sur la théologie de la rédemption*, p. 236.

³³ Cf. Jean-Pierre TORRELL, *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Volume 2. Spiritual Master* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 62.

³⁴ Cf. *ST* I-II.113.2 co.: 'Homo peccando Deum offendit, sicut ex supradictis patet. Offensa autem non remittitur alicui nisi per hoc quod animus offensi pacatur offendentis. Et ideo secundum hoc peccatum nobis remitti dicitur, quod Deus nobis pacatur. Quae quidem pax consistit in dilectione qua Deus nos diligit. Dilectio autem Dei, quantum est ex parte actus divini, est aeterna et immutabilis, sed quantum ad effectum quem nobis imprimit, quandoque interruptur, prout scilicet ab ipso quandoque deficiamus et quandoque iterum recuperamus. Effectus autem divinae dilectionis in nobis qui per peccatum tollitur, est gratia, qua homo fit dignus vita aeterna, a qua peccatum mortale excludit.' Cf. *ST* III.49.4 ad 2.

³⁵ J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1199. Cf. *Sent.* IV.12.2.2.3 arg. 3: 'Sacrificia veteris testamenti in satisfactionem pro peccatis mortalibus offerebantur'.

³⁶ *ST* III.22.2 co.: 'Omne illud quod Deo exhibetur ad hoc quod spiritus hominis feratur in Deum, potest dici sacrificium. Indiget igitur homo sacrificio propter tria. Uno quidem modo, ad remissionem peccati, per quod a Deo avertitur. Et ideo dicit apostolus, Heb. v, quod ad sacerdotem pertinet ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis. Secundo, ut homo in statu gratiae conservetur, semper Deo inhaerens, in quo eius pax et salus consistit. Unde et in veteri lege immolabatur hostia pacifica pro offerentium salute, ut habetur Levit. III. Tertio, ad hoc quod spiritus hominis perfecte Deo uniatur, quod maxime erit in gloria. Unde et in veteri lege offerebatur holocaustum, quasi

is that whereas satisfaction is an act of offering the offender something which he loves equally or more than he hates the offence,³⁷ a sacrifice is an external expression or a sign of an inner act of giving oneself to God as our creator and ultimate beatitude.³⁸ Hence, it can be said that sacrifice refers to the passion as an act of self-giving, whereas satisfaction picks out that act of self-giving insofar as it is atoning. A further characterization of sacrifice is that it is an ordering of the soul towards God as our origin and final end.³⁹ Yet another description given is an act done to show due reverence and honour to God (insofar as sacrifice belongs to the virtue of religion).⁴⁰ These three definitions are related in that they all involve an outward expression of the acknowledgement of God as our ultimate end, and so they point to the movement towards union with God,⁴¹ which is commonly described by merit. This is typical of the virtue of religion, to which sacrificial acts belong and which concerns the ordering (*ordo*) of man towards God as our unfailing principle and last end.⁴² Saint Thomas makes the link between religion and union with God explicit in connection with sanctity, which differs from religion merely notionally. He explains sanctity as a kind of purity by which we liberate ourselves from inferior

totum incensum, ut dicitur Levit. I.' That not every act of satisfaction is a sacrifice follows from the fact that there are oblations which are not sacrifices, although they are surely satisfactory (cf. *ST* II-II.85.3 ad 3, n. 7).

³⁷ *ST* III.48.2 co. (cited in n. 20).

³⁸ *ST* II-II.85.2 co.: 'Oblatio sacrificii fit ad aliquid significandum. Significat autem sacrificium quod offertur exterius, interius spirituale sacrificium, quo anima seipsam offert Deo, secundum illud Psalm., sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus, quia, sicut supra dictum est, exteriores actus religionis ad interiores ordinantur. Anima autem se offert Deo in sacrificium sicut principio suae creationis et sicut fini suae beatificationis.' Cf. *ST* III.22.2 co.

³⁹ *ST* I-II.102.3 co.: 'Secundum enim quod sacrificia ordinabantur ad cultum Dei, causa sacrificiorum dupliciter accipi potest. Uno modo, secundum quod per sacrificia representabatur ordinatio mentis in Deum, ad quam excitabatur sacrificium offerens. Ad rectam autem ordinationem mentis in Deum pertinet quod omnia quae homo habet, recognoscat a Deo tanquam a primo principio, et ordinet in Deum tanquam in ultimum finem. Et hoc representabatur in oblationibus et sacrificiis, secundum quod homo ex rebus suis, quasi in recognitionem quod haberet ea a Deo, in honorem Dei ea offerebat; [...] Et ideo in oblatione sacrificiorum protestabatur homo quod Deus esset primum principium creationis rerum et ultimus finis, ad quem essent omnia referenda. Et quia pertinet ad rectam ordinationem mentis in Deum ut mens humana non recognoscat alium primum auctorem rerum nisi solum Deum, neque in aliquo alio finem suum constituat; propter hoc prohibebatur in lege offerre sacrificium alicui alteri nisi Deo'.

⁴⁰ *ST* II-II.85.1 co.: 'Ex naturali ratione procedit quod homo quibusdam sensibilibus rebus utatur offerens eas Deo, in signum debitae subiectionis et honoris, secundum similitudinem eorum qui dominis suis aliqua offerunt in recognitionem dominii. Hoc autem pertinet ad rationem sacrificii.' *ST* II-II.85.3 co.: 'Sacrificium est quidam specialis actus laudem habens ex hoc quod in divinam reverentiam fit. Propter quod ad determinatam virtutem pertinet, scilicet ad religionem.' Cf. *ST* II-II.81.2 and *ibid.* art. 4.

⁴¹ *ST* II-II.81.7 co.: 'Deo reverentiam et honorem exhibemus non propter ipsum, qui in seipso est gloria plenus, cui nihil a creatura adiici potest, sed propter nos, quia videlicet per hoc quod Deum reveremur et honoramus, mens nostra ei subiicitur, et in hoc eius perfectio consistit; quaelibet enim res perficitur per hoc quod subditur suo superiori, sicut corpus per hoc quod vivificatur ab anima, et aer per hoc quod illuminatur a sole. Mens autem humana indiget ad hoc quod coniungatur Deo, sensibilium manuactione, quia invisibilia per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur, ut apostolus dicit, ad Rom. Et ideo in divino cultu necesse est aliquibus corporalibus uti, ut eis, quasi signis quibusdam, mens hominis excitetur ad spirituales actus, quibus Deo coniungitur.'

⁴² *ST* II-II.81.1 ad 1: 'Religio habet duplices actus. Quosdam quidem proprios et immediatos, quos elicit, per quos homo ordinatur ad solum Deum, sicut sacrificare, adorare et alia huiusmodi.' *Ibid.* co.: 'Religio importat ordinem ad Deum. Ipse enim est, cui principaliter alligari debemus tanquam indeficienti principio, ad quem etiam nostra electio assidue dirigi debet sicut in ultimum finem, quem etiam neglegenter peccando amittimus et credendo et fidem protestando recuperare debemus, debemus, tanquam indeficienti principio; ad quem etiam nostra electio assidue dirigi debet, sicut in ultimum finem'.

things so as to be united with God,⁴³ although God is not the object but rather the end of religion; its proper object is divine worship (*cultus*).⁴⁴

Now, this theme of unity and ordering towards God is strikingly present in Saint Thomas's discussion on the sacrifice of the cross. First, there is the focus on reconciliation as distinct from recompense. Aquinas explicitly writes that reconciliation is the end of Christ's passion considered as sacrifice, whereas insofar as it is a satisfactory act, the purpose of the cross is the liberation from the debt of punishment.⁴⁵ It is true that we are also reconciled to God via satisfaction,⁴⁶ but if the passion is referred to as a sacrifice, the way in which we are reconciled is not that of recompense as in satisfaction but rather by being united with God by ordering our soul towards him. Further, Saint Thomas explicitly speaks of the removal of sin and the offering of a pleasing sacrifice to God as two different ways in which the passion causes reconciliation with God.⁴⁷ Also, the notion of reconciliation does not in itself signify an act of compensation for a prior offence but rather an act reuniting the will of one person to that of another.⁴⁸

Second, the theme of union with God is also implied in the fact that a sacrifice is an act related to (*relatum*) to God as our ultimate end, performed in order to unite us with God in holy fellowship (*ut sancta societate Deo inhaeremus*), so as to be reconciled with him (*ad eum placandum*) and express our complaisance (*obsequium*).⁴⁹ Most apparently however, Saint Thomas accentuates the theme of union in his third explanation of why Christ's passion was an

⁴³ *ST II-II.81.8 co.*: 'Nomen sanctitatis duo videtur importare. Uno quidem modo, munditiam [...]. Munditia enim necessaria est ad hoc quod mens Deo applicetur. Quia mens humana inquinatur ex hoc quod inferioribus rebus immergitur, sicut quaelibet res ex immixtione peioris sordescit, ut argentum ex immixtione plumbi. Oportet autem quod mens ab inferioribus rebus abstrahatur, ad hoc quod supremae rei possit coniungi. Et ideo mens sine munditia Deo applicari non potest. [...] Unde non differt [sanctitas] a religione secundum essentiam, sed solum ratione. Nam religio dicitur secundum quod exhibet Deo debitum famulatum in his quae pertinent specialiter ad cultum divinum, sicut in sacrificiis, oblationibus et aliis huiusmodi, sanctitas autem dicitur secundum quod homo non solum haec, sed aliarum virtutum opera refert in Deum, vel secundum quod homo se disponit per bona opera ad cultum divinum.'

⁴⁴ *ST II-II.81.5 co.*: 'Duo igitur in religione considerantur. Unum quidem quod religio Deo affert, cultus scilicet, et hoc se habet per modum materiae et obiecti ad religionem. Aliud autem est id cui affertur, scilicet Deus. [...] Unde manifestum est quod Deus non comparatur ad virtutem religionis sicut materia vel obiectum, sed sicut finis. Et ideo religio non est virtus theologica, cuius obiectum est ultimus finis, sed est virtus moralis, cuius est esse circa ea quae sunt ad finem.'

⁴⁵ *ST III.48.6 ad 3* (cited in n. 1).

⁴⁶ *Sent. III.19.1.5.1 s.c.*: 'Per satisfactionem Deo reconciliamur.' Cf. *ST I-II.114.2 ad 3*.

⁴⁷ *ST III.49.4 co.*: 'Passio Christi est causa reconciliationis nostrae ad Deum dupliciter. Uno modo, in quantum removet peccatum [...] Alio modo, in quantum est Deo sacrificium acceptissimum. Est enim hoc proprie sacrificii effectus, ut per ipsum placetur Deus, sicut cum homo offensam in se commissam remittit propter aliquod obsequium acceptum quod ei exhibetur.'

⁴⁸ Cf. *Super Col. 1.5.53 [1:20]*: 'In reconciliatione autem sunt duo consideranda: primo in quo conveniunt qui reconciliantur. Discordes enim diversas habent voluntates. Reconciliati autem consentiunt in aliquo uno. Et sic voluntates prius discordes concordant in Christo. Et huiusmodi voluntates sunt et hominum, et Dei, et Angelorum.'

⁴⁹ *ST III.48.3 co.*: 'Sacrificium proprie dicitur aliquid factum in honorem proprie Deo debitum, ad eum placandum. Et inde est quod Augustinus dicit, in X de Civ. Dei, *verum sacrificium est omne opus quod agitur ut sancta societate* [other editions have 'caritate' instead of 'sancta societate'] *Deo inhaereamus, relatum scilicet ad illum finem boni quo veraciter beati esse possumus.*' *ST III.49.4 co.*: 'Est enim hoc proprie sacrificii effectus, ut per ipsum placetur Deus, sicut cum homo offensam in se commissam remittit propter aliquod obsequium acceptum quod ei exhibetur.' The verb 'inhaereo' is translated with 'unite' after J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 739.

efficacious sacrifice, namely because Christ was *one* with him to whom the sacrifice was offered, made those for whom he offered it *one* in himself, and was himself the *one* who offered the sacrifice as well as the sacrifice itself.⁵⁰ This is the reason why the passion was a true sacrifice, for Christ unites and reconciles us with God by taking us up into the act of his own self-giving to the Father, with whom he is already one.

This same focus on turning towards God in order to be united with him is present in Saint Thomas's discussion on Christ's priesthood. The language of legal justice, satisfaction and recompense is present also here, but the emphasis is rather on Christ as a mediator who conjoins and reconciles.⁵¹ Notably, in the rationale for why sacrifices are made, the language of satisfaction is absent. Saint Thomas quotes Augustine saying that a sacrifice is offered to raise man's spirit to God (*ad hoc quod spiritus hominis feratur in Deum*). Indeed, this seems to be the reason why a sacrifice causes the remission of sins, namely because it is the very opposite of sin, by which man is turned away from God (*per quod Deo avertitur*). Further, sacrifices are also offered so that man remains in the state of grace, always inhering in God (*semper Deo inhaerens*), and so that the spirit of man may be perfectly united to God (*perfecte Deo uniat*).⁵² Hence, just as satisfaction removes the debt of punishment, it would appear that sacrifice is more related to the stain of sin (*macula peccati*), which is caused by the soul cleaving (*inhaereo*) to things against the light of reason and divine law.⁵³ The orientation of the soul against divine law causes a distance between man and God that is removed when man returns to God by a contrary motion.⁵⁴ But a movement towards God is precisely that which is expressed in the exterior sign of a sacrifice, and hence, it may be said that Christ's passion

⁵⁰ *ST* III.48.3 co.: 'Unde manifestum est quod passio Christi fuit verum sacrificium. [...] et, *cum quatuor considerentur in omni sacrificio*, ut Augustinus dicit in IV de Trin., scilicet *cui offeratur, a quo offeratur, quid offeratur, pro quibus offeratur, idem ipse qui unus versusque mediator per sacrificium pacis reconciliat nos Deo, unum cum illo maneret cui offerebat, unum in se faceret pro quibus offerebat, unus ipse esset qui offerebat, et quod offerebat.*' The same passage from Saint Augustine is cited in *ST* III.22.3 ad 1 to explain the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice: 'In quantum eius humanitas operabatur in virtute divinitatis, illud sacrificium erat efficacissimum ad delenda peccata. Propter quod Augustinus dicit, in IV de Trin.: *ut, quoniam quatuor considerantur [...]*'.

⁵¹ *ST* III.22.1 co.: 'Proprium officium sacerdotis est esse mediatorem inter Deum et populum, in quantum scilicet divina populo tradit, unde sacerdos dicitur quasi sacra dans'. *ST* III.26.1 co.: 'Mediatoris officium proprie est coniungere eos inter quos est mediator, nam extrema ununtur in medio. Unire autem homines Deo perfecte quidem convenit Christo, per quem homines reconciliantur Deo'. Cf. *Super Matt.* 1.2.26 [1:2]: '[Lucas evangelista] commendat sacerdotalem dignitatem, per quam Deo reconciliamur, et ipsi Christo unimur'.

⁵² *ST* III.22.2 co., cited in n. 36.

⁵³ *ST* I-II.86.1 co.: 'Est autem quasi quidam animae tactus, quando inhaeret aliquibus rebus per amorem. Cum autem peccat, adhaeret rebus aliquibus contra lumen rationis et divinae legis, ut ex supradictis patet. Unde ipsum detrimentum nitoris ex tali contactu proveniens, macula animae metaphorice vocatur.' *Ibid.* ad 1: 'Anima sua actione se inquinat, inordinate eis inhaerendo, contra lumen rationis et divinae legis.'

⁵⁴ *ST* I-II.86.2 ad 3: 'Actus peccati facit distantiam a Deo, quam quidem distantiam sequitur defectus nitoris, hoc modo sicut motus localis facit localem distantiam.' *Ibid.* co.: 'Licet autem cesset actus peccati, quo homo discessit a lumine rationis vel legis divinae, non tamen statim homo ad illud redit in quo fuerat, sed requiritur aliquis motus voluntatis contrarius primo motui. Sicut si aliquis sit distans alicui per aliquem motum, non statim cessante motu fit ei propinquus, sed oportet quod appropinquet rediens per motum contrarium.'

considered as a sacrifice primarily cleanses from the stain of sin and secondarily removes the debt of punishment insofar as the turning towards God is atoning.⁵⁵

With respect to merit in particular, the sacrifice of the cross is meritorious by way of realising charity in a special way,⁵⁶ namely insofar as it is an external sign of how Christ is entirely directed towards God in the act of his self-giving to the Father. The reward for his sacrificial act is that *we* are united and reconciled to God, since Christ himself was already completely at one with God and thus had no need of any sacrifice, rather the purpose of his priesthood was to communicate union with God to us,⁵⁷ as well as to make it possible for us to participate in this communication in a way typical of merit. We find the proportion characteristic of merit in that the sacrifice of the cross is primarily a remedy for the stain of sin (*macula peccati*) and not for the debt of punishment (*reatus poenae*), for Christ does exactly the opposite of sin, which is a turning away from God towards an inferior good,⁵⁸ namely to turn towards God and away from lesser goods. This ordering of Christ towards God in his self-giving is most fittingly exemplified in the immolation of his body, where he in a sense gives up everything inferior to God for the sake of God.

3.4. Merit and Redemption

With regard to the passion of Christ operating by way of redemption, Saint Thomas distinguishes two senses in which man was bound (*obligatus*) by sin, the liberation from the servitude of sin (*servitus culpa*) being the proper effect of redemption:⁵⁹ first on account of the debt of punishment and divine justice. This obligation is removed by way of satisfaction, and hence the passion can be considered as a kind of price which Christ pays so that we once again belong to God through grace and charity.⁶⁰ In this sense, redemption retains its literal but

⁵⁵ *ST* III.22.3 co.: ‘Macula quidem culpa deletur per gratiam, qua cor peccatoris in Deum convertitur, reatus autem poenae totaliter tollitur per hoc quod homo Deo satisfacit. Utrumque autem horum efficit sacerdotium Christi. Nam virtute ipsius gratia nobis datur, qua corda nostra convertuntur ad Deum’.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ST* III.48.3 co.: ‘Hoc ipsum opus, quod voluntarie passionem sustinuit, fuit Deo maxime acceptum, utpote ex caritate proveniens. Unde manifestum est quod passio Christi fuit verum sacrificium.’

⁵⁷ *ST* III.22.4 s.c.: ‘In Ephesina synodo legitur, si quis dicit Christum pro se obtulisse oblationem, et non magis pro nobis solum (nec enim indiguit sacrificio qui peccatum nescit), anathema sit. Sed in sacrificio offerendo potissime sacerdotis consistit officium. Ergo sacerdotium Christi non habuit effectum in ipso Christo.’ *Ibid.* co.: ‘Christo non competit effectum sacerdotii in se suscipere, sed potius ipsum aliis communicare.’

⁵⁸ *ST* II-II.162.6 co.: ‘In peccato duo attenduntur, scilicet conversio ad commutabile bonum, quae materialiter se habet in peccato; et aversio a bono incommutabili, quae est formalis et completiva peccati.’ *De malo* 3.1 co.: ‘Peccatum vero, secundum quod proprie in moralibus dicitur, habet rationem culpae et provenit ex eo, quod voluntas deficit a debito fine per hoc, quod in finem indebitum tendit.’

⁵⁹ For the effects proper to the different modes of salvation, see *ST* III.48.6 ad 3, cited in n. 1.

⁶⁰ *ST* III.48.4 co.: ‘Per peccatum dupliciter homo obligatus erat. [...] Secundo, quantum ad reatum poenae, quo homo erat obligatus secundum Dei iustitiam. [...] Igitur, quia passio Christi fuit sufficiens et superabundans satisfactio pro peccato et reatu generis humani, eius passio fuit quasi quoddam pretium, per quod liberati sumus ab utraque obligatione. Nam ipsa satisfactio qua quis satisfacit sive pro se sive pro alio, pretium quoddam dicitur quo se redimit a peccato et poena’. *Sent.* III.19.1.4.1 co.: ‘In quantum vero Deum nobis placavit, dicitur nos redemisse, sicut pretium solvens suae satisfactionis pro nobis, ut a poena et a peccato liberemur.’ With reference

analogous meaning of ‘buying back’,⁶¹ which accentuates the atonement as a work of commutative justice, whereas satisfaction rather puts the emphasis on mercy in the sense that the passion is a gesture of compensation in the hope of God’s forgiveness.

Second, man was also bound by the servitude of sin because he had fallen into sin and thus made himself a slave to sin. Further, since he had been overcome by the devil, who seduced him to sin, he was handed over to the devil’s bondage.⁶² Whereas the first sense of redemption effectively reduces it to an aspect of satisfaction, this second characterisation introduces a new element connected to patristic theories of salvation such as the ransom theory and the *Christus Victor* theory.⁶³ In this sense, *redemptio* should be translated as ‘ransom’ or better as ‘rescue’.⁶⁴ Especially the motif of conquering the devil is present, which gives us an elegant proportion between merit and reward. For the devil overcame the whole of mankind by seducing the first human beings to sin, and he also overcomes each individual person by tempting him to sin.⁶⁵ Now, Christ conquers the devil and liberates us from the servitude of sin by resisting his temptations and exercising the virtues contrary to the vices which led to sin, especially humility, obedience and the austerity of punishment, which are opposed to the indulgence of the forbidden fruit.⁶⁶ In particular the virtue of obedience is linked with merit, as it consists in contempt of one’s own will and other inferior goods in favour of the union with God and the fulfilment of his will, in which merit consists. This is the reason why charity cannot exist without obedience, for friendship leads to the union of wills.⁶⁷

to belonging to God, we never ceased to belong to God in the sense of being subject to his power, but we did cease to be united with him in grace and charity, and in this sense, Christ buys us back so that we once again belong to God, cf. *ST* III.48.4 ad 1, *ST* III.48.5 co.

⁶¹ B. CATÃO, *Salut et rédemption*, pp. 34–37, A. PATFOORT, ‘Le vrai visage de la satisfaction’, pp. 262–263, J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1185, and ID., *Le Christ en ses mystères*, pp. 414–415, insist on referring to redemption as a metaphor, but I cannot see how this thesis can be sustained without making the whole vocabulary of commutative justice metaphorical, since all notions of justice are taken from economical transactions, see *ST* II-II.58.11 ad 3, cited in ch. 1, n. 51.

⁶² *ST* III.48.4 co.: ‘Per peccatum dupliciter homo obligatus erat. Primo quidem, servitute peccati, quia qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati, ut dicitur Ioan. VIII; et II Pet. II, *a quo quis superatus est, huic et servus addictus est*. Quia igitur Diabolus hominem superaverat inducendo eum ad peccatum, homo servituti Diaboli addictus erat.’ Cf. *ST* III.48.6 ad 3, cited in n. 1.

⁶³ Cf. Ben PUGH, *Atonement Theories: A Way through the Maze* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2014), pp. 3–13; John N.D. KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 4th edn. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), pp. 173–174, 185–186, 375, 382–383, 391–392, 395–396; Gustaf AULÉN, *Christus Victor: A Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), pp. 4ff.

⁶⁴ *Sent.* III.19.1.4.1 co.: ‘In quantum enim a potestate Diaboli [Christus] eripuit, dicitur nos redemisse, sicut rex regnum occupatum ab adversario, per laborem certaminis redimit’.

⁶⁵ *Sent.* III.19.1.2 co.: ‘Devicerat autem Diabolus totum humanum genus in primis parentibus, et eis dominabatur, dum eos ad hoc secundum suum votum deduxerat ut nullus Paradisi januam introiret: devincit etiam unumquemque singulariter, dum eum ad peccatum inclinavit, quia qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati’.

⁶⁶ *Sent.* III.19.1.4.1 co.: ‘Per suam passionem Christus duo fecit: liberavit enim nos a potestate hostis, vincendo ipsum per contraria eorum quibus hominem vicerat, scilicet humilitatem, obedientiam, et austeritatem poenae, quae delectationi cibi vetiti opponitur’. Cf. *Sent.* III.19.1.4.2 co. Christ also conquers the devil insofar as the devil assails an innocent man over whom he has no right, and so it is just that he should lose his power, cf. *ST* III.49.2 co. and *Super Rom.* 8.1.609 [8:3].

⁶⁷ *ST* II-II.104.3 co.: ‘Sicut peccatum consistit in hoc quod homo, contempto Deo, commutabilibus bonis inhaeret; ita meritum virtuosi actus consistit e contrario in hoc quod homo, contemptis bonis creatis, Deo inhaeret. [...] Inter

Accordingly, redemption refers to the same general movement in the passion of Christ as sacrifice, namely the turning towards God and away from sin; but whereas sacrifice highlights the movement towards God, redemption puts the emphasis on the movement away from sin: hence the focus on conquering and resisting the devil as well as on the contempt of inferior goods for the sake of God. Consequently, the merit proper to redemption is that of turning away from created goods in favour of God as opposed to the movement of sin, whereby one clings to created goods in a way not referable to God.⁶⁸ It is therefore apt to say that just as satisfaction is linked with the removal of the debt of punishment (*reatus poenae*) and sacrifice with the cleansing of the stain of sin (*macula peccati*), so redemption is connected with the third effect of sin, namely the corruption of nature (*corruptio boni naturae*),⁶⁹ i.e. a weakening of the tendency towards virtue. One of the reasons why sin corrupts nature is because human acts produce an inclination to similar acts, and so sin creates a tendency to vice rather than virtue,⁷⁰ and this is what Aquinas means by the servitude of sin.⁷¹ Now, the passion of Christ in terms of redemption is a remedy for the inclination to sin insofar as it exemplifies a contrary motion, namely the resistance and conquering of sin. As in satisfaction and sacrifice however, we are not turned away from sin without our own cooperation; rather, we can participate in Christ's victory over the devil by uniting ourselves with him and performing meritorious works of obedience, humility, abstinence and other virtues.⁷² Naturally, since Christ's human nature was not corrupted as he did not have original sin, he did not have to resist any inclinations to sin

virtutes autem morales, tanto aliqua potior est quanto maius aliquid contemnit ut Deo inhaereat. [...] Et ideo, per se loquendo, laudabilior est obedientiae virtus, quae propter Deum contemnit propriam voluntatem, quam aliae virtutes morales, quae propter Deum aliqua alia bona contemnunt. [...] Nam si quis etiam martyrium sustineret, vel omnia sua pauperibus erogaret, nisi haec ordinaret ad impletionem divinae voluntatis, quod recte ad obedientiam pertinet, meritoria esse non possent, sicut nec si fierent sine caritate, quae sine obedientia esse non potest. Dicitur enim I Ioan. II, quod *qui dicit se nosse Deum, et mandata eius non custodit, mendax est, qui autem servat verba eius, vere in hoc caritas Dei perfecta est*. Et hoc ideo est quia amicitia facit idem velle et nolle.'

⁶⁸ Cf. *Sent.* II.28.1.2 ad 6: 'Ille proprie vincit peccatum qui potest pertingere ad hoc contra quod est pugna peccati. Hoc autem non potest esse nisi in eo qui opus meritorium operatur; unde talis victoria vitam aeternam meretur, et sine gratia non fit.'

⁶⁹ *ST* I-II.85 pr.: 'Deinde considerandum est de effectibus peccati. Et primo quidem, de corruptione boni naturae; secundo, de macula animae; tertio, de reatu poenae.'

⁷⁰ *ST* I-II.85.1 co.: 'Bonum naturae, scilicet ipsa naturalis inclinatio ad virtutem, diminuitur per peccatum. Per actus enim humanos fit quaedam inclinatio ad similes actus, ut supra habitum est. Oportet autem quod ex hoc quod aliquid inclinatur ad unum contrariorum, diminuatur inclinatio eius ad aliud. Unde cum peccatum sit contrarium virtuti, ex hoc ipso quod homo peccat, diminuitur bonum naturae quod est inclinatio ad virtutem.'

⁷¹ Cf. *ST* III.48.4 co. (cited in n. 62).

⁷² *ST* I-II.85.5 ad 2: 'Culpa originalis et actualis removetur ab eodem a quo etiam removenitur et huiusmodi defectus, secundum illud apostoli, Rom. VIII, vivificabit mortalia corpora vestra per inhabitantem spiritum eius in vobis, sed utrumque fit secundum ordinem divinae sapientiae, congruo tempore. Oportet enim quod ad immortalitatem et impassibilitatem gloriae, quae in Christo inchoata est, et per Christum nobis acquisita, perveniamus conformati prius passionibus eius. Unde oportet quod ad tempus passibilitas in nostris corporibus remaneat, ad impassibilitatem gloriae promerendam conformiter Christo.' *ST* III.49.2 ad 2: 'Diabolus etiam nunc quidem potest, Deo permittente, homines tentare quantum ad animam, et vexare quantum ad corpus, sed tamen praeparatum est homini remedium ex passione Christi, quo se potest tueri contra hostis impugnationes, ne deducatur in interitum mortis aeternae. Et quicumque ante passionem Christi Diabolo resistebant, per fidem passionis Christi hoc facere poterant, licet, passione Christi nondum peracta.'

arising from nature,⁷³ but he could resist the temptations of the devil as well as reject lesser goods for the sake of God by way of the virtue of obedience, which is effectively what we are doing when we resist the temptations of concupiscence. It is therefore apt to say that in his passion considered as a work of redemption, Christ conquers the devil and turns *us* away from sin.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, it may be said that the four modalities in which Christ's passion effects our salvation as a moral cause should be considered as a causal whole where merit takes precedence. The reason for this is that charity is the fundamental principle for Christ's salvific work. Now, merit refers to charity in an unqualified way, namely as it resides in the will, whereas satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption account for charity insofar as it is realised materially in the concrete events of the passion. The latter three may therefore be viewed as particular ways in which Christ merited. The most basic of these salvific modes is that of sacrifice, for a sacrifice is essentially an external sign of Christ's charity in the sense of an act of turning towards God and of spiritual self-giving to the Father. Yet turning towards God also implies a turning away from sin and in particular a rejection and conquering of the devil, which is the central theme of redemption as a specific mode of salvation. Redemption is realised in the passion in that Christ shows forth the virtues contrary to those involved in the first sin in the Garden of Eden, especially obedience and humility. Sacrifice and redemption taken together realise a movement of charity towards God and away from sin that constitutes a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of mankind, especially as it both fulfils the order of justice that God has instituted and allows us to participate in the reconciliation with God by way of penance. Christ's offering himself to God out of love (sacrifice), thus turning *us* away from sin (redemption) is the gift which God loves more than he hates sin (satisfaction). And so, the passion of Christ is essentially an actualisation and concrete realisation of the Son's love of the Father (merit), a love which is communicated to us insofar as we are united with Christ. There is also a special proportion between satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption on the one hand and the three consequences of sin on the other. Whereas satisfaction takes away the debt of punishment, sacrifice and redemption constitute the contraries to the stain of sin and the corruption of nature respectively. In this sense, Christ's passion is meritorious in that it constitutes the very opposite of sin.

⁷³ *ST* III.41.1 co.: 'Christus in omnibus tentari voluit, absque peccato. Tentatio autem quae est ab hoste, potest esse sine peccato, quia fit per solam exteriorem suggestionem. Tentatio autem quae est a carne, non potest esse sine peccato, quia haec tentatio fit per delectationem et concupiscentiam; et, sicut Augustinus dicit, nonnullum peccatum est cum caro concupiscit adversus spiritum. Et ideo Christus tentari voluit ab hoste, sed non a carne.' Cf. *ST* III.15.1–2.

4. The Communication of Christ's Merits

Through his redemptive work in its various aspects, Christ merited salvation *for us*. But it is not immediately clear how the idea of meriting for another should be understood, for merit is always a personal act whose principle lies within the meriting subject.¹ Granted that a person can merit congruously for someone else if they are united in friendship, still he cannot merit condignly, for merit resides in the will of the one performing the meritorious act, and hence one person is not praised for the work of another.² Now since Christ is a different person from us, it must be explained how he can merit condignly for us.³ Unfortunately, it is still sometimes suggested that Aquinas solves this problem in terms of a transferral of merits or by way of vicarious satisfaction in the sense of imputation or substitution.⁴ His view is rather that there is a communication of merits by means of a kind of inclusion or better impartation and participation in Christ, a teaching that is articulated by the idea of incorporation into the mystical body of Christ. This doctrine is of fundamental importance, because it implies that Aquinas conceives of salvation primarily as a mystical union between Christ and the faithful similar to early Greek physical or mystical theories of salvation as recapitulation. Hence, Saint Thomas's understanding of the mediation of Christ can aptly be described as involving both a descending and an ascending movement. In the incarnation, God descended to man so that we might be

¹ *ST* III.48.1 arg. 1: 'Videtur quod passio Christi non causaverit nostram salutem per modum meriti. Passionum enim principia non sunt in nobis. Nullus autem meretur vel laudatur nisi per id cuius principium est in ipso. Ergo passio Christi nihil est operata per modum meriti.'

² Friendship in terms of an accidental union of affection is not sufficient to merit condignly for someone else, cf. *Sent.* III.19.1.1.1 co. cited in n. 14. See also *ST* I-II.114.6 co.: 'Merito congrui potest aliquis alteri mereri primam gratiam. Quia enim homo in gratia constitutus implet Dei voluntatem, congruum est, secundum amicitiae proportionem, ut Deus impleat hominis voluntatem in salvatione alterius'.

³ *Sent.* III.18.1.6.1 arg. 1: 'Videtur quod Christus nobis mereri non potuit. Sicut enim laus requirit voluntarium, ita et meritum. Sed propter hoc quod laus requirit voluntarium in laudato, ideo unus non laudatur propter actum alterius. Ergo similiter nec unus alteri mereri potest: et sic Christus nihil nobis meruit.' Cf. *De ver.* 29.7 arg. 2.

⁴ The basis for this misunderstanding most probably lies in the development of the doctrine of satisfaction in the later middle ages and early modern times, cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1194. As to contemporary expositions of Aquinas, Philip L. QUINN, 'Aquinas on Atonement, in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, ed. by Roland J. FEENSTRA and Cornelius PLANTINGA, Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 153–177 (pp. 171–174), treats Aquinas's doctrine of incorporation into Christ with scepticism and presents the thomistic view on the atonement as an instance of vicarious satisfaction, a term which Saint Thomas never uses and which didn't arise until the 17th century in Protestant theology and around a century later found its way into the work of the Catholic theologian Mariano Dobmayer (1753–1803), cf. Jean RIVIÈRE, 'Satisfactio vicaria', *Revue des sciences religieuses* 26.3 (1952), 221–257 (234, 244). Eleonore STUMP, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 427–454, esp. pp. 448 and 451, is equally sceptical of the doctrine of Christ's mystical body and essentially reduces it to 'a union of minds and wills' (p. 451), which is insufficient for condign merit. Similarly, the virtual absence of this aspect in the rendition of Aquinas's doctrine of salvation and satisfaction in standard Catholic textbooks practically misleads the reader to interpret it in terms of substitution, especially since Aquinas is presented as a historical step towards Protestant theories of penal substitution, cf. Gerald O'COLLINS, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical Study of Jesus*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 208–211; or Bernard SESBOÛÉ, *Jésus-Christ l'unique médiateur: Essai sur la rédemption et le salut*, 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1988–91), I, pp. 345–350.

mystically united to the humanity of Christ;⁵ having been thus taken up into Christ, mankind is then led back to God by participation in the Saviour's redeeming work.⁶

The following chapter discusses the union between Christ and humanity that makes a communication of merits possible. Before treating Aquinas's mature explanation of this union in terms of incorporation into the body of Christ, we will survey two other related accounts. Finally, there is a discussion on the hierarchical relationship between Christ's merit and ours, which also deals with the efficient and exemplary causality of Christ's meritorious actions.

4.1. The Union of Christ and Humanity

Aquinas explains the mystical union between Christ and humanity in several ways. First, there is the biblical comparison between Adam and Christ.⁷ When responding to the objection that only the one who merits is to be rewarded, Saint Thomas writes that just as the sin of Adam flows (*derivatur*) to others by way of carnal generation because Adam was constituted by God as the principle of the whole of human nature, so the merit of Christ extends to all his members, because Christ has been constituted as head of all men with respect to grace.⁸ This is explained more fully in the treatment of original sin, where we are faced with a similar problem, namely the transmission of original sin. For as sin includes the notion of personal guilt (*culpa*), it must be explained in what way the descendants of Adam can be considered guilty of original sin although they have not willed it themselves. Aquinas explains that since guilt is voluntary, it is not enough to say that original sin is a disorder of the will passed on in a manner similar to the transmission of defects of the body or the soul, for no one reproaches a man for being born blind. Rather, all men must be considered as one man insofar as they have a common nature received from their first parents, just as all who are members of one community are regarded as one body and the whole community as one man. Now the act of a member of the body such as a hand is not voluntary on account of the hand itself but rather in virtue of the will of the soul moving the hand. Similarly, the disorder of the will transmitted from Adam is not voluntary by the will of the descendants but rather in virtue of the will of the first parents to which we are united insofar as we have received our human nature from them.⁹ The point here is that an

⁵ Cf. *ST* III.1.2 co. Saint Thomas explains how the incarnation promotes man's advancement in the good: 'Quinto, quantum ad plenam participationem divinitatis, quae vere est hominis beatitudo, et finis humanae vitae. Et hoc collatum est nobis per Christi humanitatem, dicit enim Augustinus, in quodam sermone de Nativ. domini, factus est Deus homo, ut homo fieret Deus.'

⁶ J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 374 and 1178; J.N.D. KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 170–174 and 375.

⁷ Cf. Rom. 5:12–21. *ST* III.19.4 s.c. cites Rom. 5:18.

⁸ *ST* III.19.4 ad 1: 'Peccatum singularis personae non nocet nisi sibi ipsi. Sed peccatum Adae, qui constitutus est a Deo principium totius naturae, ad alios per carnis propagationem derivatur. Et similiter meritum Christi, qui est a Deo constitutus caput omnium hominum quantum ad gratiam, se extendit ad omnia eius membra.'

⁹ *ST* I-II.81.1 co.: 'Dato quod aliqui defectus corporales a parente transeant in prolem per originem; et etiam aliqui defectus animae ex consequenti, propter corporis indispositionem, sicut interdum ex fatuis fatui generantur, tamen

individual man considered in himself is not guilty of original sin; he can only be blamed for it insofar as he is referred to Adam as a principle, just as someone can suffer the disgrace of his family due to an offence committed by an ancestor,¹⁰ or as an act of the whole of a society, or a part of it, or merely by its leader, may be said to pertain to a person insofar as he is a part of that society.¹¹ With respect to merit in particular, this analogy does not merely amount to Christ representing humanity before God and thus meriting on behalf of the whole of the human community; rather, Christ's merits flow to us (*derivatur*) by way of the spiritual *regeneration* of baptism, by which we are incorporated into him, similar to how original sin is transmitted by carnal *generation*.¹²

A second explanation of how Christ's merits pertain to us can be summarized by the passage from Porphyry saying that 'all men are one man in common nature'.¹³ Saint Thomas writes that the reason a person cannot merit condignly for someone else is that his actions cannot sufficiently 'go over' (*transire*) into another person due to an insufficient unity (*communitas*)

hoc ipsum quod est ex origine aliquem defectum habere, videtur excludere rationem culpae, de cuius ratione est quod sit voluntaria. Unde etiam posito quod anima rationalis traduceretur, ex hoc ipso quod infectio animae prolis non esset in eius voluntate, amitteret rationem culpae obligantis ad poenam, quia, ut philosophus dicit in III Ethic., *nullus improperebit caeco nato, sed magis miserebitur*. Et ideo alia via procedendum est, dicendo quod omnes homines qui nascuntur ex Adam, possunt considerari ut unus homo, in quantum conveniunt in natura, quam a primo parente accipiunt; secundum quod in civilibus omnes qui sunt unius communitatis, reputantur quasi unum corpus, et tota communitas quasi unus homo. Porphyrius etiam dicit quod *participatione speciei plures homines sunt unus homo*. Sic igitur multi homines ex Adam derivati, sunt tanquam multa membra unius corporis. Actus autem unius membri corporalis, puta manus, non est voluntarius voluntate ipsius manus, sed voluntate animae, quae primo movet membra. Unde homicidium quod manus committit, non imputaretur manui ad peccatum, si consideraretur manus secundum se ut divisa a corpore, sed imputatur ei in quantum est aliquid hominis quod movetur a primo principio motivo hominis. Sic igitur inordinatio quae est in isto homine, ex Adam generato, non est voluntaria voluntate ipsius sed voluntate primi parentis, qui movet motionem generationis omnes qui ex eius origine derivantur, sicut voluntas animae movet omnia membra ad actum. Unde peccatum quod sic a primo parente in posteris derivatur, dicitur originale, sicut peccatum quod ab anima derivatur ad membra corporis, dicitur actuale. Et sicut peccatum actuale quod per membrum aliquod committitur, non est peccatum illius membri nisi in quantum illud membrum est aliquid ipsius hominis, propter quod vocatur peccatum humanum; ita peccatum originale non est peccatum huius personae, nisi in quantum haec persona recipit naturam a primo parente. Unde et vocatur peccatum naturae; secundum illud Ephes. II, *eramus natura filii irae*. A more detailed explanation is provided in *De malo* 4.1 co. See also *Comp. theol.* I.196.

¹⁰ *ST I-II.81.1 ad 5*: 'Illud quod est per originem, non est increpabile, si consideretur iste qui nascitur secundum se. Sed si consideretur prout refertur ad aliquod principium, sic potest esse ei increpabile, sicut aliquis qui nascitur patitur ignominiam generis ex culpa alicuius progenitorum causatam.'

¹¹ *De malo* 4.1 co.: 'Considerandum est, quod aliquis homo singularis dupliciter potest considerari: uno modo secundum quod est quaedam persona singularis; alio modo secundum quod est pars alicuius collegii, et utroque modo ad eum potest aliquis actus pertinere. Pertinet enim ad eum in quantum est singularis persona, ille actus quem proprio arbitrio et per se ipsum facit; sed in quantum est pars collegii, potest ad eum pertinere actus aliquis quem per se ipsum non facit nec proprio arbitrio, sed qui fit a toto collegio vel a pluribus de collegio vel a principe collegii; sicut illud quod princeps civitatis facit, dicitur civitas facere, ut philosophus dicit. Huiusmodi enim collegium hominum reputatur quasi unus homo, ita quod diversi homines in diversis officiis constituti sunt quasi diversa membra unius corporis naturalis, ut apostolus inducit de membris Ecclesiae, I Cor. XII, 12.'

¹² *ST III.19.4 ad 3*: 'Sicut peccatum Adae non derivatur ad alios nisi per carnalem generationem, ita meritum Christi non derivatur ad alios nisi per regenerationem spiritualem, quae fit in Baptismo, per quam Christo incorporamur, secundum illud Galat. III, omnes quotquot in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis. Et hoc ipsum est gratiae, quod homini conceditur regenerari in Christo. Et sic salus hominis est ex gratia.'

¹³ *Sent.* III.18.1.6.1 co.: 'Omnes homines sunt unus homo in natura communi'. Cf. *Super Rom.* 5.3.410 [5:12], *ST I-II.81.1 co.*

between the two. For mere men can unite themselves to each other only via an accidental conjunction of affection (*coniunctio affectus*), which suffices merely for congruous merit. Christ on the other hand is united to others by an essential conjunction (*coniunctio essentialis*) or a communion in nature (*communio in natura*), and so he can merit for others *because and insofar as he can influence human nature (potest in natura)* in the sense that his actions can ‘go over’ (*transire*) to others.¹⁴ In another passage, Saint Thomas writes that Christ had power over the whole of human nature in virtue of the instrumental causality of his humanity as united to the divinity, and so his merits could extend (*extendo*) both to the whole human nature (*tota natura*) and to individuals.¹⁵ Similarly, later in his career, Aquinas writes that Christ, insofar as his humanity was an instrument of the divinity, could merit for others by spiritually *flowing* into them (*spiritualiter influere*) so as to cause an aptness (*idoneitatas*) for glory in them.¹⁶ Hence, Saint Thomas holds that there is a special union between Christ and human nature which allows for a communication of merits. It is true that the doctrine of Christ’s humanity as an instrument of the divinity is not fully developed with respect to efficient and dispositive causality at this stage in Aquinas’s career,¹⁷ but what matters here is not the precise mode of influence but rather the fact that there is such an influence by which Christ’s merits can

¹⁴ *Sent.* III.19.1.1.1 co.: ‘Delere peccatum dicitur dupliciter [...] Alio modo dicitur efficiens disponens materiam ad recipiendum formam: et sic dicitur peccatum delere ille, qui meretur peccati deletionem: quia ex merito efficitur aliquis dignus quasi materia disposita ad recipiendum gratiam, per quam peccata deleantur. Hoc autem contingit dupliciter: vel sufficienter, vel insufficienter. Sufficienter quidem disposita est materia, quando fit necessitas ad formam: et similiter aliquis sufficienter per meritum disponitur ad aliquid, quando illud efficitur sibi debitum; et hoc est meritum condigni; et sic nullus homo neque sibi neque alteri potest mereri gratiam vel peccati deletionem. Non sibi, quia antequam gratiam habeat, non est in statu merendi, ut patet ex dictis: aliis non, quia actio unius non potest sufficienter transire in alterum, nisi in quantum habet aliquam communitatem cum illo, quae potest esse vel per communionem in natura, vel per conjunctionem affectus. Sed prima conjunctio est essentialis, secunda autem accidentalis. Purus autem homo non potest in naturam, quia, ut supra dictum est, dist., 18, qu. 2, art. 6, quaestiu. 1, est inferior quam natura; et ideo non potest actio ejus in alium hominem transire secundum quod jungitur ei in natura, sed solum quantum ad conjunctionem affectus, quae est conjunctio accidentalis; et propter hoc non potest alteri sufficienter mereri, sed ex congruo. Solus autem Christus aliis potest sufficienter mereri: quia potest in naturam, in quantum Deus est, et caritas sua quodammodo est infinita, sicut et gratia’

¹⁵ *Sent.* III.18.1.6.1 co.: ‘Sicut dicit Damascenus, caro Christi et anima erat quasi instrumentum deitatis, unde quamvis esset alia operatio Dei et hominis, tamen operatio humana habebat in se vim divinitatis sicut instrumentum agit vi principalis agentis: et propter hoc dicit Damascenus quod ea quae hominis sunt, supra hominem agebat; unde et actio Christi meritoria, quamvis esset actio humana, tamen agebat in virtute divina: et ideo erat potestas ei supra totam naturam, quod non poterat esse de aliqua operatione puri hominis, quia homo singularis est minus dignus quam natura communis: quia divinius est bonum gentis quam bonum unius hominis. Et quia *omnes homines sunt unus homo in natura communi*, ut dicit Porphyrius, inde est quod meritum Christi, quod ad naturam se extendebat, etiam ad singulos se extendere poterat; et ita aliis mereri potuit’.

¹⁶ *De ver.* 29.7 co.: ‘Opus Christi efficacius fuit operibus aliorum hominum. Nam per opus alterius hominis non redditur idoneus ad gloriae perceptionem nisi ille qui operatur, eo quod unus homo in alium spiritualiter influere non potest: et ideo unus alii ex condigno mereri non potuit gratiam vel vitam aeternam. Sed Christus secundum suam humanitatem spiritualiter influere potuit in alios homines: unde et eius opus in aliis causare potuit idoneitatem ad consecutionem gloriae. Et ideo potuit aliis ex condigno mereri, secundum quod influere in alios poterat, in quantum erat humanitas eius divinitatis instrumentum, secundum Damascenum.’

¹⁷ W.D. LYNN, *Christ’s Redemptive Merit*, pp. 91–144, offers a detailed discussion of the various interpretations that have been put forward of these passages.

overflow, *go over* or *extend* to us so that the reward is properly due to us, although strictly speaking, we are not the subject of Christ's meritorious actions.

The third and *most important* explanation of the union between Christ and human beings is the doctrine of incorporation into Christ's mystical body, which is most prominently found in the *Summa*. In his earlier works, the teaching of the mystical person is certainly present, but Aquinas does not use it as an explanation of how Christ could merit for us other than in passing as a response to objections;¹⁸ rather, he mainly relies on the explanation from the union of nature. In the *Summa*, on the other hand, the doctrine of the mystical body has become the main account of how Christ's merits are communicated to us.¹⁹ Here, Christ is said to be the head of the mystical body of the Church spiritually by way of order, perfection and power (*virtus*). In regard to order, his grace is higher (*altior*) and prior (*prior*) according to his proximity to God, for all others have received grace with respect to his grace. As to perfection, Christ is the head of men on account of his plenitude of all graces. Finally, he had the power (*virtus*) to pour grace into (*influo*) all members of the Church.²⁰ As to the union of the members to the head, Saint Thomas says that all people of all times and places belong to the body of Christ, although in different degrees. Some are united to him through glory, others through charity, yet others merely through faith. Further, there are those united to him merely through a potency that will later be reduced to act. Finally, some are not predestined for glory, and these people are united to Christ in potency but will cease to be members of the mystical body on their departure from this world.²¹ The continuity between the members and the head is accounted for by Christ's

¹⁸ *Sent.* III.18.1.6.1 ad 2, *De ver.* 29.7 ad 11.

¹⁹ For a detailed survey of the relevant passages, see W.D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit*, pp. 91–165, although his general scepticism to Aquinas's teaching on the unity of nature as well as the lack of emphasis on his doctrine of incorporation hardly does them justice. On this latter aspect, Ghislain LAFONT, *Structures et méthode dans la « Somme théologique » de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1996), pp. 421–425, is better. Closer to the actual texts of Aquinas is however J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 1176–1185. Also, in spite of its age, the influential study by Palémon GLORIEUX, 'Le mérite du Christ selon saint Thomas', *Revue des sciences religieuses* 10.4 (1930), 622–649, is still well worth reading, especially because of the extensive citation of nearly all of the relevant passages. See however the valid critique of W.D. LYNN, *ibid.*, pp. 81–84, 110–116 and G. LAFONT, *ibid.* p. 425, n. 1.

²⁰ *ST* III.8.1 co.: 'Christus dicitur caput Ecclesiae secundum similitudinem humani capitis. In quo tria possumus considerare, scilicet ordinem, perfectionem et virtutem. [...] Haec autem tria competunt Christo spiritualiter. Primo enim, secundum propinquitatem ad Deum gratia eius altior et prior est, etsi non tempore, quia omnes alii acceperunt gratiam per respectum ad gratiam ipsius [...] Secundo vero, perfectionem habet quantum ad plenitudinem omnium gratiarum [...] Tertio, virtutem habuit influendi gratiam in omnia membra Ecclesiae'. A somewhat different (but similar) characterisation is given in *Sent.* III.13.2.1 co. and again in *De ver.* 29.4 co. See also *Super I Cor.* 11.1.587 [11:3], *Super Eph.* 1.8.69 [1:22], *Super Col.* 1.5.45–53 [1:18–20].

²¹ *ST* III.8.3 co.: 'Sic ergo dicendum est quod, accipiendo generaliter secundum totum tempus mundi, Christus est caput omnium hominum, sed secundum diversos gradus. Primo enim et principaliter est caput eorum qui actu uniuntur sibi per gloriam. Secundo, eorum qui actu uniuntur sibi per caritatem. Tertio, eorum qui actu uniuntur sibi per fidem. Quarto vero, eorum qui sibi uniuntur solum potentia nondum ad actum reducta, quae tamen est ad actum reducenda, secundum divinam praedestinationem. Quinto vero, eorum qui in potentia sibi sunt uniti quae nunquam reducetur ad actum, sicut homines in hoc mundo viventes qui non sunt praedestinati. Qui tamen, ex hoc mundo recedentes, totaliter desinunt esse membra Christi, quia iam nec sunt in potentia ut Christo uniantur.'

grace itself, i.e. by the Holy Spirit, who is numerically the same in the whole Church and fills and unites it.²²

4.2. The Mystical Body of Christ

With respect to merit in particular, Saint Thomas writes that Christ had grace not only as an individual person but as the head of the Church, to which all are united as members so as to constitute one mystical person. It is important to stress here that, for Aquinas, Christ's personal and capital grace are essentially one same grace (*eadem est secundum essentiam*), distinguished only by a distinction of reason.²³ In other words: the grace that Christ received for himself is essentially the same as the grace he received for us. Hence, our grace is a share in Christ's own grace, and thus Christ's merits extend to us insofar as we are incorporated into him so as to mystically constitute one person.²⁴ The grace of the head overflows (*redundat*) to the members, and so Christ's actions are related both to him and to his members as the actions of a person in grace to himself.²⁵ In another passage, Aquinas writes that we have received grace in order to obtain eternal life for ourselves, whereas the soul of Christ is moved by God through grace not only that he himself should reach glory but also in order to lead others to glory insofar as he is the head of the Church, and therefore he can merit condignly for others.²⁶ Hence, Christ can merit for others because of the nature and orientation of his capital grace.

²² *De ver.* 29.4 co.: 'Invenitur etiam triplex conformitas capitis ad membra. [...] Tertia est ratione continuitatis; nam caput ceteris membris in corpore naturali continuatur. [...] Est etiam in Ecclesia continuitas quaedam ratione Spiritus Sancti, qui unus et idem numero totam Ecclesiam replet et unit; unde etiam et Christus secundum humanam naturam dicitur caput ratione influentiae.'

²³ *ST* III.8,5 co.: 'Eadem est secundum essentiam gratia personalis qua anima Christi est iustificata, et gratia eius secundum quam est caput Ecclesiae iustificans alios, differt tamen secundum rationem.'

²⁴ *ST* III.19.4 co.: 'In Christo non solum fuit gratia sicut in quodam homine singulari, sed sicut in capite totius Ecclesiae, cui omnes uniuntur sicut capiti membra, ex quibus constituitur mystice una persona. Et exinde est quod meritum Christi se extendit ad alios, in quantum sunt membra eius, sicut etiam in uno homine actio capitis aequaliter pertinet ad omnia membra eius, quia non solum sibi sentit, sed omnibus membris.' *ST* III.48.2 ad 1: 'Caput et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica.' On this, see Martin MORARD, 'Les expressions « corpus mysticum » et « persona mystica » dans l'œuvre de saint Thomas d'Aquin: références et analyse', *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995), 653–664.

²⁵ *ST* III.48.1 co.: 'Christo data est gratia non solum sicut singulari personae, sed in quantum est caput Ecclesiae, ut scilicet ab ipso redundaret ad membra. Et ideo opera Christi hoc modo se habent tam ad se quam ad sua membra, sicut se habent opera alterius hominis in gratia constituti ad ipsum. Manifestum est autem quod quicumque in gratia constitutus propter iustitiam patitur, ex hoc ipso meretur sibi salutem, secundum illud Matth. v, *beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iustitiam*. Unde Christus non solum per suam passionem sibi, sed etiam omnibus suis membris meruit salutem.'

²⁶ *ST* I-II.114.6 co.: 'Merito condigni nullus potest mereri alteri primam gratiam nisi solus Christus. Quia unusquisque nostrum movetur a Deo per donum gratiae ut ipse ad vitam aeternam perveniat, et ideo meritum condigni ultra hanc motionem non se extendit. Sed anima Christi mota est a Deo per gratiam non solum ut ipse perveniret ad gloriam vitae aeternae, sed etiam ut alios in eam adduceret, in quantum est caput Ecclesiae et auctor salutis humanae'. The orientation of Christ's grace is not as explicit in the *Sentences*, where Aquinas bases the communication of Christ's merits on the infinity and perfection of his grace overflowing to others, cf. *Sent.* III.19.1.1.1 co., cited in n. 14, and *Sent.* II.27.1.6 co.: 'Quod alteri mereatur, ad hoc non sufficit, nisi sit perfectissima gratia, quae quodammodo in alios redundet.' Cf. W.D. LYNN, *Christ's Redemptive Merit*, p. 147.

Now, with regard to grace, we may notice that in these explanations, Aquinas writes that Christ did not have grace only as an individual person. Elsewhere, he affirms that grace had been conferred upon Christ as on a universal principle in the sense that the power (*virtus*) of his grace extends to all the effects in the genus of grace.²⁷ In fact, this is one reason why Saint Thomas holds that Christ had habitual grace, namely so that it could overflow from him to others.²⁸ In a parallel passage, he explains that a form is limited by being received in something, as heat is limited when received in a subject. But it is possible for a form not to be limited in this way if there is no defect on the part of the recipient. In this case, the subject will have the form in its fullness (*secundum omnem modum completionis*) so that nothing is wanting with respect to the perfection of the form. And it is in this way that grace is in Christ, so that whatever pertains to the perfection of grace is found in him. Similarly, the grace of Christ is also unlimited with respects to its effects.²⁹ Aquinas therefore holds that Christ's grace exists in him in a way similar to a non-limited universal rather than as a particular,³⁰ wherefore it can be participated and shared with others as an exemplary and in a certain sense also as a formal cause. If we apply

²⁷ *ST* III.7.9 co.: 'Conferebatur ei [i.e. Christo] gratia tanquam cuidam universali principio in genere habentium gratias. Virtus autem primi principii alicuius generis universaliter se extendit ad omnes effectus illius generis, sicut sol, qui est universalis causa generationis, ut dicit Dionysius, IV cap. de Div. Nom., eius virtus se extendit ad omnia quae sub generatione cadunt. Et sic secunda plenitudo gratiae attenditur in Christo, in quantum se extendit eius gratia ad omnes gratiae effectus, qui sunt virtutes et dona et alia huiusmodi.' Cf. *ST* III.7.11 co. and ad 3.

²⁸ *ST* III.7.1 co.: 'Necesse est ponere in Christo gratiam habitualement, propter tria. [...] Tertio, propter habitudinem ipsius Christi ad genus humanum. Christus enim, in quantum homo, est mediator Dei et hominum, ut dicitur I Tim. II. Et ideo oportebat quod haberet gratiam etiam in alios redundantem, secundum illud Ioan. I, de plenitudine eius omnes accepimus, gratiam pro gratia.' *ST* III.7.9 co.: 'Recipiebat anima Christi gratiam ut ex ea quodammodo transfunderetur in alios. Et ideo oportuit quod haberet maximam gratiam, sicut ignis, qui est causa caloris in omnibus calidis, est maxime calidus.'

²⁹ *Sent.* III.13.1.2.2 co.: '[Gratia Christi] tribus modis infinita dici potest. Uno modo ex conjunctione ad divinitatem in quantum concurrat ad eundem actum cum ipsa, ut actus gratia illa informatus non tantum sit actus hominis, sed etiam Dei. Secundo quantum ad rationem gratiae. In his enim quae mole magna non sunt, non est accipere finitum et infinitum secundum numeralem vel dimensionalem quantitatem, sed secundum aliquid quod est limitatum et non limitatum. Limitatur autem aliquid ex capacitate recipientis; unde illud quod non habet esse receptum in aliquo, sed subsistens, non habet esse limitatum, sed infinitum, sicut Deus. Si autem esset aliqua forma simplex subsistens quae non esset suum esse, haberet quidem finitatem quantum ad esse, quod esset particulatum ad formam illam; sed illa forma non esset limitata, quia non esset in aliquo recepta; sicut si intelligatur calor per se existens. Sed secundum hoc etiam formae universales intellectae habent infinitatem. Sed si forma talis sit recepta in aliquo, de necessitate limitata est quantum ad esse debitum illi formae, non solum quantum ad esse simpliciter: quia non solum non habet plenitudinem essendi simpliciter, sed totum esse, quod naturae illius est possibile fore. Sed possibile est ut non sit limitata quantum ad rationem illius formae, ut scilicet habeat illam formam secundum omnem modum completionis ipsius, ut nihil sibi desit de pertinentibus ad perfectionem illius formae; et hoc erit, si ex parte recipientis non sit defectus, vel ex parte agentis. Et hoc modo dicitur gratia Christi infinita: quia quidquid ad gratiae perfectionem pertinere potest, totum in Christo fuit. Tertio quantum ad effectus: quia non limitatur ad aliquos determinatos effectus, sed potest per gratiam infinitis operari redemptionem; sicut dicitur in Lib. de causis, quod virtus intelligentiae est infinita inferius. Et hic modus respicit gratiam capitis; secundus autem gratiam singularis hominis; sed primus gratiam unionis.'

³⁰ *ST* III.7.11 ad 3: 'Minus per augmentum potest pervenire ad quantitatem maioris in his quae habent quantitatem unius rationis. Sed gratia alterius hominis comparatur ad gratiam Christi sicut quaedam virtus particularis ad universalem. Unde sicut virtus ignis, quantumcumque crescat, non potest adaequari virtuti solis; ita gratia alterius hominis, quantumcumque crescat, non potest adaequari gratiae Christi.' Cf. *ST* III.7.7 ad 1. For an overview of Aquinas's doctrine on universals from an analytical perspective, see Jeffrey E. BROWER, 'Aquinas on the Problem of Universals', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92.2 (2016), 715–735.

this to merit, it follows that since we are united to Christ as our universal principle of grace, and since his merits are ultimately graced acts of charity, they pertain also to us.

Still, there appears to be a problem with the doctrine of Christ's mystical body, for Aquinas teaches that Christ merited first grace for us.³¹ But if the communication of merits presupposes that we are already incorporated into Christ through grace, then it would seem that the first grace merited by Christ must be preceded by the grace of incorporation, whence it would not really be *first* grace at all.³² To my knowledge, Saint Thomas never addresses this issue specifically. In his discussion on meriting first grace in the *Summa*, he simply states that the soul of Christ is moved by God through grace not only so that he himself should reach glory but also in order to lead others to beatitude as the head of the Church.³³ In the parallel passage in the *Sentences*, it says that Christ can merit first grace for others because he has the most perfect grace which overflows to others.³⁴ If we take these passages as a response to our query, it follows that the ultimate reason why Christ can condignly merit first grace for others is to be found in the orientation and plenitude of his grace. This combined with the fact that Aquinas holds that *all*³⁵ are united to Christ the head may be taken to indicate that the grace which is *in Christ* somehow unites us to him, although that grace is not yet *in us*. Another interpretation would be that the first sanctifying grace that Christ merited for us *both* incorporates us into him *and* communicates Christ's merits to us. It should however be noted that above all in Aquinas's early works, the account of Christ as our head includes the notion of 'conformity of nature',³⁶ which could suggest an explanation for the meriting of first grace for others based on the unity of nature in line with the above treated second explanation of the union between Christ and human beings. But this explanation is quite problematic, since the contact between Christ and others by virtue of human nature cannot be properly salvific in the sense of an actual gift of

³¹ *ST* I-II.114.6 co. cited in n. 26.

³² G. LAFONT, *Structures et méthode dans la « Somme théologique »*, p. 423, speaks of the two following questions as 'irritantes': 'Si le mérite du Christ s'étend à ses membres, qu'est-ce qui constitue les hommes membres *avant* le mérite du Christ? Si le mérite du Christ ne s'étend qu'à ses membres, la Rédemption est-elle universelle?' He sketches an interesting solution based on the image of God in human nature, although almost entirely without textual evidence (pp. 422–425). For a relevant passage, see *ST* I-II.113.10 s.c. and co.

³³ *ST* I-II.114.6 co. cited in n. 26.

³⁴ *Sent* II.27.1.6 co.: 'Sufficit enim gratia ad hoc ut homo per eam sibi ipsi mereatur, sed quod alteri mereatur, ad hoc non sufficit, nisi sit perfectissima gratia, quae quodammodo in alios redundet: et propter hoc dicitur, quod Christus, de cujus plenitudine omnes accipimus, Joan. 1, omnibus ex condigno meruit'.

³⁵ *ST* III.19.4 co. cited in n. 24; *ST* III.8.3 co., cited in n. 21.

³⁶ *Comp. theol.* I.214: 'Ex hoc autem quod a Christo ad alios gratia et veritas derivantur, convenit ei ut sit caput Ecclesiae. Nam a capite ad alia membra, quae sunt ei conformia in natura, quodammodo sensus et motus derivatur. Sic a Christo et gratia et veritas ad alios homines derivantur: unde ad Ephes. I, 22: et ipsum dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam, quae est corpus eius. Dicitur etiam potest caput non solum hominum, sed etiam Angelorum, quantum ad excellentiam et influentiam, licet non quantum ad conformitatem naturae secundum eandem speciem'. Cf. *Sent* III.13.2.1 co.; *ibid.* III.13.2.2.3 co.; *De ver.* 29.4 co.; *ST* III.8.3 co.; *ibid.* 8.4 arg 1 and ad 1; *Super I Cor.* 11.1.587 [11:3]; *ibid.* [reportatio Reginaldi de Piperno] 11:3; *Super Eph.* 1.8.69 [1:22]. See also *Sent.* IV.43.1.1.2 ad 3. It should however be noted that the theme of 'conformity of nature' diminished over time and is left out of the central explanations of the mystical body of Christ in the *Summa*, cf. J. EMERY, *A Christology of Communication*, pp. 289–290.

grace. An alternative would be to follow Charles Journet, who holds that the *immediate* and hypostatic union between the second person of the Trinity and Christ's concrete human nature gives rise to a *mediate* union between Christ and human nature as it exists in each one of us, a union which could be taken to serve as basis for the communication of first grace as a reward for Christ's merits.³⁷ Finally, a further solution to our question, and probably the best one, would be to develop an answer based on Aquinas's teaching on prevenient grace that prepares and disposes us for the reception of the first gift of sanctifying grace as a reward for Christ's merits. Although prevenient graces are not salvific per se, they bring about an actual ordination to Christ's mystical body, and so they prepare for the reception of the first gift of sanctifying grace that formally incorporates into Christ.³⁸

4.3. The Causality of Christ's Merits

The communication of Christ's merits does however not only pertain to the rewards for merit such as first grace, but there is also a special relationship between our merits and the meritorious acts of Christ's life. In this context, the pertinent question is whether our merits add anything to the merits of Christ. The relevant biblical passage for this query is Col. 1:24: 'In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church'.³⁹ In his commentary, Saint Thomas explains that these words are not to be understood in the obviously heretical sense, according to which the blood of Christ is not sufficient for the salvation of the world. Rather, Christ and the Church are one mystical person, in which Christ is the head and we are the members, so that what is lacking in Christ's afflictions does not pertain to the head but rather to the members, i.e. what is lacking is the communication of Christ's merits to his members. In this way, it may be said that Christ continues to suffer throughout the ages in the members of his body according to God's providence, so that the

³⁷ Charles JOURNET, *L'Église du Verbe incarné : Essai de théologie spéculative. Volume II. Sa structure interne et son unité Catholique* (Saint-Maurice: Éditions Saint-Augustin, 1999), p. 224: 'En se joignant *immédiatement*, d'une façon hypostatique ou personnelle, une nature humaine individuelle qui figurait les prémices de l'humanité réconciliée, il se joignait *médiatement* – d'une façon non pas certes hypostatique, mais toutefois réelle, intime, mystérieuse [...] la nature humaine qui se trouve en chacun de nous'. Relevant passages for this solution include: *Sent.* IV.43.1.1.2 ad 5, *ST* III.30.1 co., *ST* III.2.11 co. and ad 2, *Super Ioan.* 2.1.338 [2:1] and *In Psalm.* 44.1.

³⁸ Cf. *ST* I-II.111.3, *ST* I-II.112.2, *Sent.* II.18.1.3 ad 2, *Sent.* II.26.5. See also the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent, chs. 5–6, which was influenced by Aquinas theology of grace, cf. Heinrich DENZINGER and Peter HÜNERMANN (ed.), *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 43rd edn. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012), nos. 1525–1526. For a discussion on the questions treated in this paragraph, see Benoît-Dominique de LA SOUJEOLE, 'Universalité et singularité chrétiennes', *Anthropotes* 27.1 (2011), 23–33. As a final remark, it seems to me that this discussion is intimately linked with the question of the nature of the potency through which we are united to Christ the head before it is reduced to act (*ST* III.8.3 co., cited in n. 21), whether it is natural, obediential or of some other kind. In this regard, note the adjective 'mystérieuse' used by Journet in the text quoted above in n. 37.

³⁹ Cf. *ST* III.48.5 arg 3 and ad 3.

Church may be presented to him without spot nor wrinkle at the end of time.⁴⁰ The main point of this explanation is of course that Christ's merits are superabundantly sufficient for the salvation of mankind, but also that, on Aquinas's view, the question whether there is something lacking in the afflictions of Christ is nonsensical as it assumes an opposition between Christ's merits and ours, whereas for him, Christ and the faithful are one mystical person so that it is not possible to speak of Christ's merits as opposed to our merits; rather, we have to speak of the merits of the head, on the one hand, and those of the members, on the other, although even on this distinction, the merits of the head are shared by the members. Elsewhere, this communication of merits within the mystical body of Christ is extended to cover the doctrine of the communion of saints, so that whatever good a member of the Church does is communicated to all who live in charity.⁴¹ Cajetan aptly summarizes Aquinas's position when he writes that it is not because of the *insufficiency* of Christ's merit that our works are added; on the contrary, it is the *superabundance* of Christ's merit which is communicated to us as his members; for it is greater that the grace of Christ is conferred to us in such a way that he as our head merits in and through us as his members, than that we merely participate in his merits insofar as they exist in him.⁴²

This passage from Cajetan highlights an important aspect of the communication of Christ's merits, namely that there is a hierarchical and causal order between Christ's merits and ours.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Super Col.* 1.6.61 [1:24]: 'Haec verba, secundum superficiem, malum possent habere intellectum, scilicet quod Christi passio non esset sufficiens ad redemptionem, sed additae sunt ad complendum passiones sanctorum. Sed hoc est haeticum, quia sanguis Christi est sufficiens ad redemptionem, etiam multorum mundorum. I Io. c. II, 2: *ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris*, et cetera. Sed intelligendum est, quod Christus et Ecclesia est una persona mystica, cuius caput est Christus, corpus omnes iusti: quilibet autem iustus est quasi membrum huius capitis, I Cor. XII, 27: *et membra de membro*. Deus autem ordinavit in sua praedestinatione quantum meritorum debet esse per totam Ecclesiam, tam in capite quam in membris, sicut et praedestinavit numerum electorum. Et inter haec merita praecipue sunt passiones sanctorum. Sed Christi, scilicet capitis, merita sunt infinita, quilibet vero sanctus exhibet aliqua merita secundum mensuram suam. Et ideo dicit *adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum Christi*, id est totius Ecclesiae, cuius caput est Christus. *Adimpleo*, id est, addo mensuram meam. Et hoc *in carne*, id est ego ipse patiens. Vel quae passiones desunt in carne mea. Hoc enim deerat, quod sicut Christus passus erat in corpore suo, ita pateretur in Paulo membro suo, et similiter in aliis. Et *pro corpore, quod est Ecclesia*, quae erat redimenda per Christum. Eph. v, 27: *ut exhiberet ipse sibi Ecclesiam gloriosam, non habentem maculam neque rugam*. Sic etiam omnes sancti patiuntur propter Ecclesiam, quae ex eorum exemplo roboratur. Glossa: *passiones adhuc desunt, eo quod paritoria meritorum Ecclesiae non est plena, nec adimplebitur, nisi cum saeculum fuerit finitum*. Paritoria autem est vas, vel domus, ubi pariter multa inferuntur.'

⁴¹ *In Symb.* 10.997: 'Quidquid boni fecerunt omnes sancti, communicatur in caritate existentibus, quia omnes unum sunt: Psal. CXVIII, 63: *particeps ego sum omnium timentium te*. Et inde est quod qui in caritate vivit, particeps est omnis boni quod fit in toto mundo', cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Spiritual Master*, pp. 194–199.

⁴² Thomas de Vio CAJETAN, *De fide et operibus*, in *Opuscula omnia Thomae de Vio Caietani*, (Lyon: Apud Gulielmum Rovillum, 1588), cap. XII, pp. 291–292: 'Respondemus meritum Christi fuisse sufficientissimum, et satisfactionem eius sufficientissimam pro peccatis non solum nostris sed totius mundi, originalibus, mortalibus et venialibus, iuxta doctrinam I Io. 2 et propterea non ex insufficientia meriti, aut satisfactionis Christi opera vivorum Christi membrorum meritoria ac satisfactoria apponuntur, sed ex affluentia meriti Christi communicatur membris eius vivis, ut illorum quoque opera sint meritoria et satisfactoria. Maior enim gratia Christi nobis confertur communicando nobis, quod ipse caput nostrum in nobis, et per nos tamquam membra sua mereatur et satisfaciat, quam si meritum duntaxat Christi in propria persona participaremus.' Cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 1183–1184 and Yves CONGAR, 'Mérite en théologie catholique', in ID., *Vocabulaire œcuménique* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), pp. 233–251 (pp. 248–251).

Saint Thomas writes that not only grace but the very merit of Christ is somehow similar to a universal cause (*quodammodo sicut causa universalis*); it is like a root (*radix*) from which all merits draw their efficacy.⁴³ This does not necessarily mean that the historical acts of Christ have a kind of perennial existence as universal formal causes;⁴⁴ rather, we may say that the grace of Christ, which we share and by which we merit, cannot be separated from his concrete humanity and the particular acts of his life, so that our grace will be a grace of the mysteries of Christ's life, infused as it were by his suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and all the merits of his life,⁴⁵ all of which influence us in our meritorious activity. In this connection, we may call to mind that grace is not a static but an active principle in the sense that we are not only moving ourselves towards God by making use of the grace received; rather, we are being moved by the grace of Christ as that grace is active in his life.⁴⁶

Yet it is not only the grace of Christ but also his very meritorious actions that *cause* our merits. This follows from the fact that all the *acta et passa* of Christ's life accomplish our salvation, and since merit is the way in which our salvation is realised, also our merits must be caused by the mysteries of Christ's life. Now, the mysteries of Christ's life operate both by way of efficient and exemplar causality. They are efficient causes insofar as the humanity of Christ is the instrument of his divinity, which operates by divine power and thus extends to all times and places.⁴⁷ The exemplar causality is a consequence of the efficient since every agent produces something similar to himself (*omne agens agit sibi simile*).⁴⁸ Hence, we may speak of a configuration of the members of the mystical body to Christ, for it is fitting that if we share in his glory, we should also *share in the process by which that glory is attained*, i.e. in his

⁴³ *Sent.* II.27.1.6 ad 2: 'Meritum Christi est sicut radix omnium meritorum, a quo omnium merita efficaciam trahunt; unde est quodammodo sicut causa universalis, quam oportet ad effectus determinatos applicari per causas particulares, sicut sunt sacramenta et orationes Ecclesiae'. Cf. *In Symb.* 10.997, where Aquinas says that it is the very merit, i.e. the act itself, is communicated to us: 'Sciendum est etiam, quod non solum virtus passionis Christi communicatur nobis, sed etiam meritum vitae Christi.'

⁴⁴ This is the position of Odo CASEL, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, ed. by Burkhard Neunheuser, 2nd edn. (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999).

⁴⁵ Cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Spiritual Master*, p. 141.

⁴⁶ Cf. section 1.2, *ST* I-II.114.3 co. and ad 3 (cited in ch. 1, n. 34), *ibid.* art. 6 co. (cited in ch. 1, n. 39), and J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 211, n. 14.

⁴⁷ *ST* III.56.1 ad 3: 'Resurrectio Christi non est, proprie loquendo, causa meritoria nostrae resurrectionis, sed est causa efficiens et exemplaris. Efficiens quidem, in quantum humanitas Christi, secundum quam resurrexit, est quodammodo instrumentum divinitatis ipsius, et operatur in virtute eius, ut supra dictum est. Et ideo, sicut alia quae Christus in sua humanitate fecit vel passus est, ex virtute divinitatis eius sunt nobis salutaria, ut supra dictum est; ita et resurrectio Christi est causa efficiens nostrae resurrectionis virtute divina, cuius proprium est mortuos vivificare. Quae quidem virtus praesentialiter attingit omnia loca et tempora. Et talis contactus virtualis sufficit ad rationem huius efficientiae. [...] Semper autem id quod est perfectissimum, est exemplar eius quod est minus perfectum [Piana ed.; Leon. ed.: 'est exemplar quod imitantur minus perfecta']; for a commentary on this variation, see J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, p. 924, n. 58] secundum suum modum. Et ideo resurrectio Christi est exemplar nostrae resurrectionis. Quod quidem necessarium est, non ex parte resuscitantis, qui non indiget exemplari, sed ex parte resuscitatorum, quos oportet illi resurrectioni conformari'. Cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 1220–1231 (esp. p. 1227), *id.* *Spiritual Master*, pp. 125–152.

⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. *ST* I.19.4 co.: 'Effectus procedunt a causa agente, secundum quod praexistunt i ea, quia omne agens agit sibi simile.'

merits.⁴⁹ Thus, for instance we may be said to be conformed to the death of Christ by dying to sin,⁵⁰ or to become participants in his passion when we suffer with the suffering Christ.⁵¹

Conclusion

The standard account of how the merits of one person can pertain to someone else often involves concepts such as transferral, substitution, imputation or vicarious satisfaction. In Aquinas, such notions can at the very most account for congruous merit for someone else based on an union of affection or friendship, but they are insufficient to explain how Christ could merit condignly for others. Saint Thomas's position is therefore that there is a special union between Christ and humanity, which allows for a communication of merits. He articulates this by a theology of Christ as the new Adam, but above all in his mature work of the *Summa* as a union based on our incorporation into the mystical body of Christ, i.e. our membership in his mystical body. With respect to merit in particular, Saint Thomas says that grace was not in Christ only as in an individual but rather in an unrestricted sense so that it could overflow to his members. In fact, there is a special orientation of the grace of Christ, for the soul of Christ is moved by God not only so that he himself should attain eternal life but also in order to lead others to it, and thus he can merit for others. With respect to the relationship between Christ's meritorious actions and ours, we cannot add anything to the merits of Christ; rather, our merits are a communication of the merits of Christ the head to his members. Moreover, the individual meritorious actions of Christ's life cause our merits both efficiently and by way of exemplarity.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ST* III.49.3 ad 3: 'Membra autem oportet capiti esse conformia. Et ideo, sicut Christus primo quidem habuit gratiam in anima cum passibilitate corporis, et per passionem ad gloriam immortalitatis pervenit; ita et nos, qui sumus membra eius, per passionem ipsius liberamur quidem a reatu cuiuslibet poenae, ita tamen quod primo recipimus in anima spiritum adoptionis filiorum, quo adscribimur ad hereditatem gloriae immortalitatis, adhuc corpus passibile et mortale habentes; postmodum vero, configurati passionibus et morti Christi, in gloriam immortalem perducimur; secundum illud apostoli, Rom. VIII, *si filii Dei, et heredes, heredes quidem Dei, coheredes autem Christi, si tamen compatimur, ut simul glorificemur.*' See also J.-P. TORRELL, *Encyclopédie*, pp. 817–818, n. 74, ID. *Spiritual Master*, pp. 140–145.

⁵⁰ *Super Rom.* 6.1.473 [6:3]: 'Sicut igitur eius morti configuramur, in similitudinem mortis eius, quasi ipsam mortem Christi in nobis repraesentantes. II Cor. c. IV, 10: *semper mortificationem Iesu Christi in corpore nostro circumferentes.* Gal. ult.: *stigmata Iesu in corpore meo porto. Vel in morte ipsius, id est, per virtutem mortis eius.* Apoc. I, 5: *lavit nos a peccatis nostris.* Unde de latere Christi pendentis in cruce post mortem fluxit sanguis et aqua, ut dicitur Io. XIX, 34. Sicut igitur eius morti configuramur, in quantum peccato morimur, sic ipse mortuus est vitae mortali, in qua erat similitudo peccati, licet non esset ibi peccatum.'

⁵¹ *Sent* III.19.1.3.2 co.: 'Aliquis fit particeps Christi per realem conformitatem ad ipsum, scilicet in quantum Christo patiente patimur, quod quidem fit per poenitentiam. Et quia haec conformatio fit per nostram operationem, ideo contingit quod est imperfecta, et perfecta. Et quando quidem est perfecta conformatio secundum proportionem ad reatum culpae, tunc poena totaliter tollitur, sive hoc sit in contritione tantum, sive etiam sit in aliis partibus poenitentiae. Quando autem non est perfecta conformatio, tunc adhuc manet obligatio ad aliquam poenam vel hic vel in Purgatorio. Non tamen oportet quod sit conformatio ad passionem Christi secundum experientiam tantae poenae ad quantam aliquis obligatur ex culpa: quia passio capitis in membra redundat; et tanto plus, quanto est ei aliquis per caritatem magis conjunctus; unde ex vi passionis Christi diminuitur quantitas debitae poenae; et secundum hoc dicitur has poenas auferre, in quantum eas diminuit.'

General Conclusion

What is the relation between our meritorious work and the merit of Christ, in particular with respect to his passion? As to merit in itself, we saw in the first chapter that merit is primarily a gift of God's goodness and mercy and secondarily a work of justice which makes us worthy of a reward. For merit lets us participate and cooperate in the *gift* of God's self-communication, which is a perfection in itself. Further, merit before God is not merely congruous but condign, which enables an interpersonal exchange between rational creatures and their creator and giver of beatitude (*beatificans*). This is made possible by a transformation of human nature through grace, so that we can perform good works of charity that make us fit for eternal life. Yet it is not enough that the meritorious act and the reward are in the same genus; rather, the mature teaching of Saint Thomas is that it is in virtue of us being moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit that we merit eternal life, a movement that takes place in Christ Jesus.

As merit is a perfection in itself, it must belong also to the humanity of Christ on account of the principle of his maximal excellence. And indeed, it was possible for Christ to merit insofar as he had the *facultas merendi* and was in the *status merentis*. As to the first, he had free choice with respect to different goods as well as grace and charity, but with regard to the second, he could not merit the beatific vision for himself, since he had seen the divine essence from the first moment of his human existence. He could only merit the overflowing of beatitude to his body as well as his exaltation and the external manifestation of his glory. With respect to the merit of the passion specifically, the issue is the way in which Christ's suffering was necessary and fitting, as he had already merited eternal life both for himself and for us. Saint Thomas gives several considerations. First, there is a certain proportion of fittingness between the passion and the reward, for instance in that exaltation is merited by humility. Second, the passion had a special effect in virtue of the nature of the act itself. Third, there were certain impediments on our parts, which had to be removed by the passion. Fourth, in the current economy of salvation, the passion of Christ was to be represented in the sacraments and give them their efficiency. Fifth, the merits of Christ's life were not intended apart from the passion; rather, all the acts of Christ's life merited our salvation as related to the sacrifice of the cross.

Merit is however not the only way in which the passion effects our salvation. In the *Tertia Pars*, Saint Thomas speaks of four ways in which the passion brings about our salvation by way of moral causality, i.e. with respect to the order of justice: merit, satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption. These should not be treated as four separate modes of salvation; rather, they constitute distinct features of a causal whole in which merit takes precedence. The reason for this is that charity is the fundamental principle for Christ's salvific work. Now, merit refers to charity in an unqualified sense insofar as it resides in the will, whereas satisfaction, sacrifice

and redemption account for the way in which charity and hence merit is realised materially in the concrete events of the passion. The most basic of the latter three modes of salvation is that of sacrifice, for a sacrifice is essentially an external sign of charity in the sense of a turning towards God and of a spiritual self-giving to the Father. But turning towards God also implies turning away from sin for the sake of God, something Christ could not do since he had no original or personal sin, but he could turn *us* away from sin, and in particular, he could reject and conquer the devil, which is the central theme of redemption as a specific mode of salvation. Sacrifice and redemption taken together realise a movement of charity towards God and away from the devil that constitutes a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of mankind, especially as it both fulfils the order of justice instituted by God and allows us to participate in the reconciliation with God by way of penance. Christ's offering of his own life on the cross out of love and obedience is the gift which God loves more than he hates sin. And so, the passion of Christ is essentially a realisation of the Son's love of the Father, a love which is communicated to us insofar as we are united with Christ. There is also a special proportion between satisfaction, sacrifice and redemption on the one hand and the three consequences of sin on the other. Whereas satisfaction takes away the debt of punishment, sacrifice and redemption are the contraries of the stain of sin and the corruption of nature respectively. In this sense, Christ's passion is meritorious in that it represents the very opposite of our sin.

How is Christ's salvific merit communicated to us? In his mature work, Aquinas answers this question with the doctrine of incorporation into the mystical body of Christ. The merits of Christ are communicated to us insofar as Christ as the head and we as his members are 'mystically one person' or 'like one mystical person'. Saint Thomas holds that grace was in Christ not only as in an individual but rather in an unrestricted sense so that it could overflow to his members. Insofar as we are united to him through the grace of headship, we are given to participate in his merits. With respect to the relationship between Christ's meritorious actions and ours, we do not add anything to the merits of Christ; rather, our merits flow forth from the merits of Christ. Moreover, the individual meritorious actions of Christ's life cause our merits both efficiently and by way of exemplarity.

This short passage from Saint Thomas can serve as a final conclusion of the present study:

Each one of us is moved by God through the gift of grace so that he may attain eternal life for himself, and thus condign merit does not extend beyond this movement. But the soul of Christ was moved by God through grace not only so that he should attain eternal life for himself but also in order to lead others to it, insofar as he is the head of the Church and the author of human salvation.¹

¹ *ST I-II.114.6 co.*: 'Unusquisque nostrum movetur a Deo per donum gratiae ut ipse ad vitam aeternam perveniat, et ideo meritum condigni ultra hanc motionem non se extendit. Sed anima Christi mota est a Deo per gratiam non solum ut ipse perveniret ad gloriam vitae aeternae, sed etiam ut alios in eam adduceret, in quantum est caput Ecclesiae et auctor salutis humanae'

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