



# FAITH & REASON

THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

Spring 1991 | Vol. XVII, No. 1

---

---

## CHRIST AND RECONCILIATION

*Romanus Cessario, O.P.*

---

---

*Fr. Cessario, in his first essay in Faith & Reason, offers a profound reflection upon the role of Christ in fulfilling the Father's salvific plan.*

### INTRODUCTION



THE THEOLOGICAL ACT REMAINS AN ACT OF HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING IN two respects.<sup>1</sup> First of all, it bears upon a content that the Christian tradition has historically transmitted, beginning with the scriptural witness and proceeding thence through its transmission in tradition. Its objective, therefore, concerns a set of claims about history that have themselves been historically mediated. At the same time, we can consider the theological exercise historical in another sense. For it investigates the testimonial materials received from the past tradition in light of the present historical situation. Of course, its retrieval of the past is not an historically neutral one, consisting in an immediate attainment of past meanings and older explanations. Rather, the encounter embraces the perspective of concerns that remain contemporary with the theological act itself.<sup>2</sup> We call such encounter critical and even scientific to the extent that the perspectives of the past and that of present theological inquiry mutually illumine one another. Appropriately enough, then, German thinkers especially remind us that theology forms a kind of retrieval and, consequently, call it a *Wiederholung*.

During the course of the Christian millennia, Christian claims about salvation and about the role of Jesus of Nazareth in God's final and definitive deed of saving humanity have included a variety of understandings, explanations, and analogies. Moreover, those claims and their various renderings have a doctrinal and theological history, within which St. Thomas Aquinas occupies a canonical position.<sup>3</sup> We characterize the received tradition as fundamentally objectivist in kind, evident, for example, in his discussion of the incarnation. There Aquinas employs the notion of "common nature assumed" as a central concept. Even in his treatment of the sacraments, he introduces the Aristotelian categories of efficient and instrumental cause to account for what a sacrament accomplishes, in particular, the abiding sacrament. Other examples occur in his works which confirm the realist temper of his thought. On the other hand, from a slightly different outlook, we might wonder whether Aquinas, in fact, does not enjoy an unique historical position. Writing as he does during the middle of the thirteenth-century, Aquinas both follows the period of monastic theology, with its reliance on literary forms and allegorical imagery, and at the same time antedates the modern period, with its much vaunted turn towards the subject and human consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Because it also precedes the balkanization of the *sacra doctrina*, Aquinas' realist outlook necessarily includes exactly the sort of perspectives that do not immediately fit in with the contemporary understanding of the theological act. Whatever critical reservations one might posit concerning its attempt to penetrate and appropriate the received historical tradition, the simple fact remains that the post-modern situation locates the theological act within entirely

different perspectives from those of Aquinas. And although a return to theological realism both in systematics and in morals already has commenced among certain theologians, in the meantime we are still caught in an ambiguity characteristic of a *Zwischenzeit*.<sup>5</sup> Thus, many theologians still grapple with a contemporary theological perspective, dominant since Descartes, which assumes the dynamism of the subject as in some measure creative of the meaning and value of human interactions with the world. Besides, closely allied to this subjectivist interest and the exaggerated personalist concerns which it generates, there also remains the emergence of historical understanding. In short, its proponents recognize that one cannot simply equate human being tout court with historical being.<sup>6</sup> Rather we can best recognize what constitutes the distinctively human only in those dimensions in which human being stands out from common nature and purely temporal succession. All in all, the proponent of Thomist realism in christology and sacraments faces stiff odds when he tries to compete in the theological marketplace. Such a one must show that both Aquinas and the tradition which developed his thought through the sixteenth century did in fact advance a particular view of Christian personalism.<sup>7</sup>



Yet the difference in perspective necessarily establishes the starting point of any theological exercise directed toward recovering the Christian soteriological tradition and its extension in the sacraments of the Christian faith. For the practitioner of theological inquiry, even the one disposed to value the tradition, will enter upon the theological enterprise undoubtedly shaped to some extent by the contemporary perspective. Consequently, owing to this initial difference in perspectives, a certain experience of the “foreignness” of the received tradition will undoubtedly mark the initial encounter with the Thomist synthesis. But this heterogeneity need not constitute an insurmountable obstacle. Why? Because the genius of any theological exercise always seeks to discover certain latent intelligibilities in the tradition without too facily eliding the difference of perspectives. Thus, in his introduction to the 1984 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, Pope John Paul II adapts this principle to the requirements of ecclesiology:

“the Church - without identifying herself with the world or being of the world - is in the world and is engaged in dialogue with the world.”<sup>8</sup> By the same token, theology enters into history without being fully identified with it.

In this essay, Aquinas’ soteriological model of satisfaction allows us to question whether a received theological tradition can measure up to the canons of contemporary theological inquiry. To be sure, its basic perspective appears alien at first, and any number of authors have taken up the challenge to explain why.

Besides, Aquinas’ theology of satisfaction also suffers from the baggage of the metaphorical residue which St. Anselm’s satisfaction theory in *Cur Deus Homo?* brings as well as from its later conflation with substitutional theories of Christ’s saving work.<sup>9</sup> Even in the nineteenth century, for example, the American preacher Phillip Brooks (1835-1893) summarized the ambiguity: “You say that the death of Christ appeased God’s wrath. I am not sure there may not be some meaning of those words which does not include the truth which they try to express, but in their natural sense which men gather from them out of their ordinary human uses, I do not believe

that they are true.”<sup>10</sup> As a theological exercise, then, this essay seeks to accomplish two goals. First of all, it intends to set forth the distinctive perspective which St. Thomas gives to his account of the satisfactory character of Christ’s work and at the same time to establish the theological warrant of Aquinas’ insight for a contemporary theology of Christian penance and satisfaction.

The retrieval of Aquinas’ insights on these important truths will surely invite the men and women of our time “to rediscover, translated into their own way of speaking, the very words with which our Saviour and Teacher Jesus Christ began his preaching: ‘Repent, and believe in the gospel.’”<sup>11</sup>

## I. THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST

First of all, I would like to present a theology of Christian satisfaction. Since it takes full account of the

continuity between creation and redemption, the doctrine portrays salvation as a work of image-perfection and image-restoration. These analogues, which actually derive from common Augustinian theology, represent the dyad of Christian merit and satisfaction which essentially constitute the work of salvation.<sup>12</sup> In the first instance, image-perfection refers to that reward of a distinctively supernatural life which Christ makes available to the members of his Body. "Through grace, Christ's soul was moved by God," writes Aquinas, "in such a way that not only he himself should arrive at the glory of eternal life but should bring others to it as well."<sup>13</sup> Again, Aquinas consciously places his treatment of the grace of Christ in a context which illumines two important features of his christology. First, he affirms that Christ's merit derives from the ontologically prior *gratia unionis*, the hypostatic union, and, secondly, that it remains foremost associated with his passion and death. Thus, as the letter to the Hebrews, with all its implications for later doctrines on priesthood and sacrifice, makes clear, Christ in his role as head of the Church and author of human salvation alone makes it possible for us to reach God.<sup>14</sup> Image-perfection, then, points directly to the intellectual creature's call to a supernatural perfection.

On the other hand, image-restoration points to the fact that this eschatological achievement occurs principally and determinatively during the course of our ordinary human existence, which even after baptism retains the scars and creases of original sin. As a result, the believer moves towards image-restoration by accomplishing certain penitential actions which have as their chief purpose the rehabilitation of our human capacities, however disordered as a result of both personal and original sin. For the Christian, every freely-accepted or self-imposed suffering, especially consecrated by the power of Christ in the sacrament of penance, conforms him or her more closely to the person of Christ. Moreover, at the same time, it restores a complete life of virtue to the individual. Christian satisfaction, then, marks an important step in the realization of the economy of salvation. This explains why the early Fathers of the Church coined the axiom, "what was not assumed was not saved."<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, Christ had to assume every part of human nature because no part of that nature escaped the effects of sin. As a result, image-restoration, which constitutes our personal share in the sufferings of Christ, embraces every feature and aspect of our created nature. It comes as no surprise, then, that during the great pe-

riod of christological debate (before the Council of Chalcedon, 451) the axiom mentioned above served as a principal criterion for orthodoxy.

Central to the image-perfection and image-restoration of every human person remain the mysteries of Christ's life and death. For example, in the final section of his *Summa theologiae*, where Aquinas treats the incarnation and the whole economy of salvation, he stresses both these aspects of our salvation. In fact, he uses the perfection and restoration of the human person as basic principles of organization for the *tertia pars*.<sup>16</sup> First of all, then, under the heading of image-perfection (*promotio in bono*), he begins the whole treatise with an enumeration of benefits which, as a result of the incarnation, promote the believing member of Christ's Body towards the goods that a life marked by both the infused moral and theological virtues embodies. Secondly, under the heading of image-restoration (*remotio mali*), St. Thomas lists those detrimental realities from which the passion of Christ delivers the human race. This distinction between promotion towards the good and removal of evil surmounts the traditional controversy between Thomists and Scotists about the true purpose of the Incarnation. In fact, both schools agree that the incarnation seeks but one goal or end, namely the perfection of the *imago Dei* in every man and woman. Nonetheless, Aquinas will always insist that this goal cannot be reached unless the work of image-restoration, accomplished through satisfaction and penance, first takes place in the life of the believer. Animated by this conviction, he finds support in the scriptures, since the forgiveness of sins remains the only motive which the inspired texts point to as a sufficient reason or motive for the incarnation.<sup>17</sup>



The history of the theory demonstrates that Aquinas' use of satisfaction as a central category for Christian soteriology marks a decided advance in the development of western theology. Admittedly, the notion that Christ died in order to satisfy the heavenly Father for the sins of the human race intrigued the thirteenth century medieval theologians. Although the image behind satisfaction, if not the actual term itself, can make a reputable claim to represent some of the earliest Christian soteriology, it is St. Anselm of Canterbury and his eleventh century work

*Cur Deus Homo?* who actually give the notion a recognizable form and currency in subsequent theological debate. Moreover, much like the Ontological Argument of his *Proslogion*, St. Anselm's formulation of the satisfaction argument continues to attract the interest of contemporary theologians. Still, certain difficulties haunt Anselm's explanation of satisfaction, especially anent his well-informed attempt to enlarge on the trinitarian aspects of the mystery. Thus, even during the early scholastic period, for example, theologians sought to work out the trinitarian implications of this theory despite the fact that it risked misleading the theologically unsophisticated reader. It suggests that our salvation actually results from some form of commercial exchange which takes place only after the Father successfully strikes a bargain with his Son. To put it differently, Anselm's theology amounts to a *theologie de comptoir*.<sup>18</sup> In short, the categories of early medieval theology simply did not serve well the requirements of later periods. Even today *Cur Deus Homo?* requires an elaborate hermeneutic in order to distinguish it from the literary genre known as pious.

On the positive side, however, the impulse to identify the atonement as an integral and connected part of the trinitarian movement in the world did contribute towards the solution of one problem intrinsic to the theology of satisfaction. How can a past historical event, such as the death of Christ, remain effective for salvation in every subsequent historical moment? Theologians still wrestle with accounts given to support the universal character of Christian redemption.<sup>19</sup> Even so, it is interesting to note the theological intuition of the medieval theologians. Because they generally held to the authentic transcendence of God, these theologians, by representing the sacrifice of Christ as really involved with the Trinity, provided a way out of a problem which later theologians, either less convinced of the divine transcendence or, more likely, more intent on remaining strictly within the limits of historical and textual analysis, still find difficult to resolve. Indeed, fundamental to an adequate sacramental theology remains an account that explains how the actions of the divine and human agents converge in the achievement of the sacramental effects. In Christ, of course, the hypostatic union provides both the explanatory concept for the incarnation and the model for all other mediations in the Church. But the sacraments, since they involve individual human agency in both the minister and the recipient - "separated instruments," in the phrase of Aquinas - require further explanation. One of the chief purposes of this essay, then, remains to ad-

vance a proposal about how one can coherently affirm this "double agency" in sacramental theory.

First of all, we should look at the satisfaction of Christ. Scholars agree that St. Thomas Aquinas, especially during the latter part of his career, gave St. Anselm's formulation of christological satisfaction an entirely new focus.<sup>20</sup> Of course, cultural changes which occurred during the thirteenth century, especially the gradual disappearance of feudalism and the transferal of monastery schools to the newly-founded universities, helped Aquinas recognize that Anselm's feudal metaphor of an insulted lord assuaged by the superabundant good deed of his son, although perfectly intelligible within the perspectives of monastic theology, would simply no longer satisfy the theological sophistication of the university masters. So, he looked for a different approach to the question, one which reflected, moreover, his more mature grasp of the reality of grace and divinization. At the same time, Aquinas also developed a deeper intuition about the whole nature of theological language. For he recognized that neither the juridical categories of crime and punishment, nor the mercantile categories of exchange and purchase (and still less the mythological category which spoke about a ransom to the devil) could adequately serve as ways of talking about Christian redemption. Since all images limp, so these images only partially reflected the full teaching of the *sacra doctrina* about Christ's sacrifice. As a result, Aquinas, mainly inspired by his reading of the Greek fathers, set about to develop an interpretation of satisfaction which would accentuate the personal character of God-man relations as pre-eminently realized in the person of the incarnate Word.<sup>21</sup>

Drawing upon the richness of the various Fathers available to him, St. Thomas fashioned a satisfaction model which derives both its structure and meaning from an animated vision of the saving work of Jesus Christ. We see a good example of this borrowing in his treatment of the sacraments. Within this context, Aquinas preferred to speak about salvation as actualized in the individual believer in order to move him or her forward on the journey towards beatific fellowship. For Aquinas, then, the human person always remains set between God and God. As I have already said, central to this explanation, which coheres with the exitus-reditus pattern, remains the notion of the reformation and perfection of the image of God in each human person. The *imago Dei*, with all of its dynamic resonances in St. Thomas' account, accomplishes its purpose through the free exer-

cise of satisfactory acts in the personal sin-marked histories of believers. But this happens only when such acts remain suffused with and justified by the pre-eminent satisfaction of Christ, who always remains by reason of the grace of union (*gratia unionis*) personally united to God. This scheme, of course, serves to highlight the unconditional priority of the divine action at the heart of the discussion, for it always remains God who is acting in Jesus to complete the divine plan for salvation. Thus, Aquinas continues the teaching, for example, of St. Ambrose: “For it is not of human power to confer divine things, but it is your function, Lord, and that of the Father.”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, any discussion of a given part of the theological synthesis which Aquinas and those who follow him adopt requires that we grasp how these theologians understand the nature of the divine essence and how that shapes their conception of the divine activity *ad extra*. First, God does not act in order to acquire some new perfection as an end or goal. Rather, as *ipsum esse subsistens*, his ontological transcendence remains the root of the sheer liberality and graciousness of all his activities with respect to the non-divine. Thus the sole reason why God operates *ad extra* remains the divine reality itself, that is, the sheer communicative good that constitutes his being.<sup>23</sup> Such operation remains above all ordered to the bestowal of triune communication in that good upon all rational creatures. Since they aptitudinally bear the image of this communion in their constitution and their destiny, everyone remains a potential participant in the beatific fellowship. Moreover, St. Thomas develops his satisfaction-model to explain the achievement of such personal communion as a surpassing gift in the face of human historical sin. It also embodies the meaning he fathoms in the words of St. Paul, “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (II Cor 5:19).<sup>24</sup>

In order to gain an accurate understanding of how this reconciling love actually works, we need to inquire about a personalist perspective on Christian satisfaction and sacramental practice, one which transcends the somewhat inert and highly impersonal categories of saving subject and saved objects. Even so, after nearly a millennium of formalized “satisfaction-theory,” neither Roman Catholics nor Protestants have entirely succeeded in escaping from such conceptual frameworks. To tell

the truth, theologians still strive to stretch out the saving efficacy of Christ towards its potential beneficiaries in much the same way that modern philosophy endeavors to match an object up with its appropriate knowing subject. Furthermore, this occurs across the spectrum of theological opinions. We can see it both in Marxist inspired theologies of liberation, where the stretching reaches straightaway and, it seems exclusively, to the economically disadvantaged and politically dispossessed. We find it also in so-called conservative soteriologies, where the stretching takes the form of additions and subtractions in an account-ledger, as if Christ asked us to earn so many quarters of social security in order to insure safely a comfortable (heavenly) retirement. Unfortunately both positions ultimately establish a theoretical distance between

God’s work and the creature, when, in fact, by reason of the incarnation, none exists; such subject-object perspectives can only interfere with the divine initiative for salvation. Aquinas, for example, makes a point of insisting upon the immediacy of the union between the creature and God which the incarnation itself makes possible. So not even the sacred humanity of Christ stands between the individual believer and his relationship with God.

St. Thomas’ developed theological view of Christian salvation, one of the great achievements of his *Summa theologiae*, avoids the falsifying subject-object dualism. For example, although the notion of “common nature assumed” with all of its connotations alien to contemporary philosophical *Denkformen* does function in St. Thomas’ account of Christ’s satisfactory work, nevertheless this notion remains in some respects only a preliminary element of explanation. The human nature assumed by the Word is that whereby Christ remains, in the phrase of Chalcedon, “homoousious h min,” that is, “one in being with us.”<sup>25</sup> Consequently, it serves to explain ontic accessibility and communion between Christ and other human beings insofar as all possess this same nature. At the same time, the divine person of the Word, who is one in being with the Father, indicates the point to which this communion ineluctably leads. For Aquinas, then, “common nature assumed” serves, in the case of Christ, as the unique instrument which manifests the mystery of Christ’s divinity and establishes the ground for all authentic personalism within the created order. Christ, the eternal Word of creation, completes the hidden plan of

  
“In Christ God was reconciling  
the world to himself.”  
(II Cor 5:19)  


God through the Spirit-filled work which he, the incarnate Son, offers once and for all to the Father. Even if St. Thomas refuses to grant the premise that human being remains exclusively historical being, henceforth only divine providence can trace for the Christian the design of human history. Of course, the remote origin for this form of Christian personalism lies in the testimonials of faith. In this case, the Chalcedonian definition itself, according to a later formulation, calls the union between the human nature of Christ and God in *una persona*, thereby confirming the ground of created personhood as the most exquisite of human realities.<sup>26</sup>

From another and more proximate point of view, however, the explanation for St. Thomas' understanding of personalism lies in a theological awareness, developed during the latter part of his career, of the unqualified uniqueness of the divine presence to human creatures. Largely as a result of reading the Greek Fathers (probably during his Italian sojourn, 1259-1268), St. Thomas came to realize that the notion of divinization, a complex theory whereby the Eastern Church sought to describe the effects of God's special presence to the world in Christ, grace, and the Eucharist, radically changed the way one should describe the theology of Christian life and practice. Accordingly, this changed perspective fundamentally affects the way that subsequent theologians, in principle, explain sacramental efficacy. Penitential satisfaction, for example, is not something that God requires of man, nor even, for that matter, of Jesus, as a condition for accomplishing the divine plan of salvation. Rather it remains the means whereby God accomplishes his eternal design, "the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9-10).<sup>27</sup>

To sum up: It is man and not God whom satisfaction changes. For, on the one hand, the increment and restoration of perfection designated by the term "satisfaction" pertains entirely to the human creature. By contrast, the communication of that increment pertains with absolute priority to the divine goodness and mercy penetrating the human creature with God's own love. It remains the individual, then, in the historical and social dimensions of his or her personhood, who in the progressive reformation of the God-like image (in the present order of things marred by the sin of Adam as well as by personal sin) is gradually changed into being what God intends his creature to be. Thus, St. Paul reminds

the Colossians: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col 1:19-20). As a sure mark of theological integrity, well-founded soteriology always centers on the revealed truth about Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

## II. *SIN AND HUMAN DISORDER: IMAGO DEI*

A personalist perspective on salvation, however, requires that the theologian likewise understand the reverse side of the picture, namely sin and its own dyadic structure, which the scholastics called *macula* and *poena*.<sup>29</sup> Following the standard theological tradition which derives principally from St. Augustine, the medieval schoolmen asserted that a disordered action affects the beauty of the soul (hence, the stain or *macula*) even as it necessarily produces within the powers of the soul a sort of penalty (hence, the guilt of punishment or *reatus poenae*). Until some form of purification occurs, either directly, through satisfactory works, or indirectly, for example through an indulgence, this liability for punishment permanently marks the psychological condition of the sinner. Historically speaking, it is interesting to note that neither the juridical categories of casuistry nor the contemporary forms of revisionist moral theology emphasize sufficiently the intrinsic character of a sinful action. But a complete theology of salvation must include reference to the several aspects of self-destructiveness which sin by its defective nature inevitably discloses.

To tell the truth, the *felix culpa*, traditional in both the Church's liturgy and spirituality, has yet fully to influence the way theologians talk about sin. As a result, much contemporary theology ignores the significant implications of sin's providential character, a point associated especially with Thomists when they emphasize the divine permission to sin. At first, such a position may appear strange for Christian faith and practice which, as the II Vatican Council reminds us, chiefly stress the universal call to holiness. Indeed some theologians, influenced by recent enthusiasm for optimistic anthropologies, may even think that such a starting-point betrays the fundamental goodness which they, confusedly, imagine present both in creation and the new order of grace.<sup>30</sup> On the contrary, such a vantage-point actually takes full account of the Christian teaching on the true meaning of sin. When it comes to describing the malice of sin, the real theological parvenu remains the one who supposes that sin principally consists in either an infraction of certain

rules and regulations or a transgression of personal conscience's dictates. As I have said, the classical tradition interprets sin as a harmful disordering of the person's human powers or capacities and insists that the results of sin in fact remain identified with the very disorder itself.

The authentic tradition, of course, also refuses to accept a vision of human nature which insists on postlapsarian humanity as an essentially corrupt instance of what had been something very good. Such a view, however, does approximate, among other positions, the reformed misconception on original sin. At the same time, the Christian tradition also refuses to endorse the thesis which grants fallen human nature the capacity for permanent integral operation without divine grace. That contention amounts to the Pelagian extreme. Rather, the orthodox benchmark for the doctrine of grace points to a view of original sin and its effect on human nature. This avoids having to choose between two heterodox alternatives which continue to polarize the lengthy discussions generated by these questions.

Aquinas, for example, who inherits the language, if not the concepts, of the era of metaphorical theology, serves as a representative exponent of the realist tradition. Although he continues the metaphor of stain, the *macula peccati*, Aquinas makes it plain that the privative effects of sinful actions stem from a disordered action judged with reference to the authentic goals of human fulfillment. In this context, stain remains a metaphor which chiefly suggests the graceful beauty and integrity of life missing from the sinner who sets his or her energies on goals short of those which comprise divine beatitude. In brief, what is missing in sin remains the totality exacted by the meaning of charity. As an action which lacks its appropriate finality - *actus debito ordine privatus*, Aquinas calls it - sin remains inconsistent with God's plan for our hap-

piness.<sup>31</sup> At all costs, Christian theology should avoid the fundamentally juridical view of sin, advanced today by certain proponents of revisionist moral theology. They apparently remain comfortable with nominalist categories and, therefore, liable to an uncontrolled re-defining of disordered actions. But Aristotle's warning still holds good: *Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei.*<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the doctrine of creation simply will not allow for this kind of hermeneutic, because the *imago Dei* will not permit frustrating the soul's desire for authentic holiness.

Sin, as I have said, also entails a liability to punishment, a *reatus poenae*. But this indebtedness in which sin puts the creature does not necessarily argue for the Anselmian notion of vicarious satisfaction. This conclusion has also haunted Christian reflection on the atonement for nearly a millennium. Rather, the punishment of sin, insofar as it falls within the providential designs of God's saving plan, principally occurs in the process of righting the imbalance within the creature. So the personalist perspective of Aquinas himself does not allow God to turn farther away from the sinner than the sinner has turned away from him. Conversion, then, always entails a deeper appreciation of the gratuity of God's love. In his earlier works, Aquinas still spoke as if evangelical justification observed much the same norms as the Aristotelian moral virtue of justice. This stance, however, lent credence to the false notion that salvation chiefly consists in retributive justice. He later learned that in the new dispensation the spirit really does give life and that the letter kills. In this, Aquinas penetrates the deeply religious intuition which St. Augustine bequeathed to the western theological tradition: "What are the laws of God written by God himself in our hearts, if not the very presence of the Holy Spirit?"<sup>33</sup>



Sin, then, includes the notion of a human order deprived of its ultimate and proper end. Admittedly, philosophers argue about the suitability of enumerating basic purposes and goals for human existence, but the Christian faith maintains no such uncertainty. For it makes beatific fellowship with the triune God the main measure of an authentic Christian life. Even if sin distances us from God, the justified life compensates for that imbalance. This explains why in the final analysis the fundamental measure of the estrangement also remains the measure of our own discontent. We can speculate further as to whether only the theologian really is able to grasp the full implications of sin. Even if philosophers can adequately articulate the dimensions of the human malaise and its predicament, the full meaning of sin still requires a context of faith in order for one to comprehend fully what it means to lose God. Although it may sound strange, philosophers can only stumble onto sin's meaning; thus they rightly speak about the *mysterium iniquitatis*.

This principle especially holds true when it comes to speaking about original sin. St. Thomas' notion of original sin and original justice represents a high point of theological achievement in his career.<sup>34</sup> Contending with multiple viewpoints concerning the authentic meaning of the biblical doctrine of the Fall and the original state of our first parents, Aquinas developed a comprehensive theory. It has two advantages: one recognizes the parameters of God's creative goodness and the other takes account as well of what role original sin plays in describing the human condition. Despite the questionably earnest efforts of creation-centered spiritualities, authentic Catholic teaching simply will not allow for a facile reinterpretation of original sin. In particular, an attempt to reformulate the doctrine in continuity with magisterial teaching must maintain the following elements: (a) original sin comprises a privation located at the level of nature and (b) it forms a part of human history.<sup>35</sup> These elements make it an originating sin which affects subsequent development in the race. As Cardinal Ratzinger recently remarked, the notion is quite widespread these days that a whole series of dogmas of the Catholic faith, especially creation, original sin, Christology, and sacramental doctrine, are no longer defensible. But such biases cannot stand the test of serious theological reflection.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, a more controversial debate centers around the personal status of the first parents before sin. In addressing this question, controverted even

in the Middle Ages, Aquinas enunciates a set of principles which help us to interpret the difference between creation freely willed and grace gratuitously bestowed - what we call justification. He recognizes, of course, that original justice does constitute a grace precisely because both the praeternatural gifts and the actual enjoyment of divine fellowship itself remain freely-bestowed; and in the latter case, supernatural endowments for the human creature. On the other hand, original justice does not comprise a grace in the sense that it forms an integral part of human nature in its original constitution. Rather the human person remains *capax Dei* precisely as created in the divine image. This does not impede, however, original justice from perfecting man on a natural level. Theologians traditionally refer to these perfections as the praeternatural gifts and include among them: impassability, immortality, rectification of the sense appetites, and a direction of the will to God as the author of the natural law.<sup>37</sup> As qualities of nature, then, these gifts steadied both human physical powers and moral energies. To be sure, such perfections, while they truly formed part of our first parent's nature, nevertheless remained linked to grace without, thereby making grace a constitutive part of our common nature.



The above distinction between grace and creation would help settle some of the confusion which surrounds the now common assertion that we were created in grace. Of course, we can hold this position but not the conclusions drawn by some theologians. They miss the distinction between a grace freely given in creation and what would amount to the essentially oxymoronic reality of a "natural grace." Moreover, to speak about the state of integral nature, as original justice is sometimes called, does not imply what certain periods in theology described as a state of "pure nature." Like a photographic negative, a so-called "pure nature" could only provide a frozen image of mankind, but it could never put on the stage an acting person. Likewise, sexual congress alone can never account for the propagation of original justice. On the contrary, Aquinas held the view that grace remained the root cause of the praeternatural gifts. If Adam had not sinned, for example, each new member of his progeny would have had to receive original justice much after the fashion of the immediate infusion of the spiritual soul.<sup>38</sup>

Altogether original sin constitutes a lack of original justice, “a corrupt habit of sorts,” but still not a positive inclination to evil; it includes only the loss of these supernatural endowments that would have restrained the development of moral and even physical defect.

If it be adequate to interpret the authentic tradition, theological anthropology must embrace a fully Christian view of man. This, moreover, requires a broad view of creation, providence and sin. Creation remains a coming forth from God’s sustaining power and providence. And whatever the full meaning of fallen nature entails, it surely includes certain privative effects in the powers of the soul, the intellect, the will and the sense appetites; these amount, in effect, to a disordering of the powers of the soul among themselves. As something concrete and consonant with the biblical teaching, the alienation accomplished by original sin exists on three distinct levels: the individual, societal and the divine. Thus, in our post-lapsarian state, deprived of the special endowments which our first parents enjoyed, the work of Christian grace on fallen nature must always remain elevating and restorative, or as the scholastics put it, *gratia sanans et elevans*. And this brings us back to the original dyads of redemption: satisfaction and merit, image-restoration and image-perfection. In fact, we could summarize the discussion in this way. A good Christian anthropology achieves a balance between the Scylla embodied in rationalist accounts of original sin with their correlative reductionist view of Christ’s work and the Charybdis instantiated in pessimistic descriptions of human nature with their implied deficient trust in Christ’s efficacy. As the Fathers remind us, Christ has become our integrity.

### III. THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Finally, I would like to remark briefly on the sacrament of penance. The Holy Father points to this sacrament as a principal locus where through the working of the Holy Spirit the human person encounters the reconciliation effected by Christ’s salvific death. As happens in every sacrament, penance also manifests God’s saving providence for the baptized member of Christ’s Body or, as St. Leo the Great remarks, “Our Redeemer’s presence has passed into the sacraments.”<sup>39</sup> In the case of penance, however, this providential care exists in order to provide for a certain contingency in human affairs. In short, we require penance as a remedy for sins committed after baptism. This explains why the Council of Trent accepted the metaphorical reference, a second plank af-

ter shipwreck, as an apt image for this sacrament.<sup>40</sup> Expressing one of his fundamental convictions about this sacrament, the Holy Father writes: “[F]or a Christian, the sacrament of penance is the ordinary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sins committed after baptism.”<sup>41</sup> The sacrament of penance, then, provides the sinner with an opportunity to encounter personally the cause of divine reconciliation.

Following a principle basic to and constitutive of every sacramental reality, theologians advance the view that the efficacy of penance derives from the passion of Christ itself. Only the satisfaction of Christ can merit our spiritual well-being. But penance holds a secondary place relative to the integrity which the other sacraments, especially baptism and the eucharist, confer and preserve on the member of Christ’s Body. Hence the Church correctly, if only metaphorically, refers to the sacrament as “the second plank after shipwreck.” Indeed, the first protection for those crossing a sea remains the safety provided by an intact ship; but after shipwreck, one can only cling to a plank as a second remedy. Thus Aquinas concludes: “So also, the first protection in the sea of this life remains that a person preserve spiritual integrity; but if one, by committing sin, should lose it, the second remedy is that regained through penance.”<sup>42</sup> However obliquely, this emphasis on the conditional character of penance points to the mystery of human freedom and divine providence. The sacrament of penance, then, establishes the condition necessary to transform sin into a *felix culpa*.

The history of this sacrament within the Church evidences several misconceptions concerning its nature and efficacy. To begin with one example of misguided instruction on how the Christian should react to sin and temptation, historical Quietism subverted the Church’s teaching in order to accommodate a spirituality negligent with respect to moral discipline. And although current interest in the works of Madame Guyon suggests a limited renaissance of this view, the ecclesiastical condemnation and subsequent punishment of Miguel Molinos still remains an effective witness to the truth that the simplicity of God’s love never provides an excuse for vicious behavior.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the sacrament of Christ’s reconciliation can never become an excuse for moral indifference or spiritual laxity. Mortal sin remains the greatest evil which can befall the human person. Indeed, spiritual authors continually warn against the especially vicious sin of ingratitude for the forgiveness of past sins. To be sure, mortal sin always embodies the prime analogue for any

sinful activity because only this kind of aversion from God destroys the bond of charity and friendship with God which baptismal grace establishes in the soul. So theories about penance err both by excess and by defect.

We need to understand, then, how penance works. When the medieval theologians sought to explain the constitutive reality of a given sacrament, they identified three principal elements present in each of the *sacra septenaria*: (1) the liturgical rite itself; (2) the interior effect or personal grace which the sacrament accomplishes; and (3) the permanent feature or abiding aspect of the sacrament. In the technical language of the schools, we refer to these respectively as: the *sacramentum tantum*, the *res tantum*, and the *res et sacramentum*.<sup>44</sup> Since the grace of penance remains especially allied with the satisfaction of Christ, we can freely assign the work of image-restoration and image-perfection as the principal interior effect of penance. Again, leaving the matter of the liturgical rite aside for the moment, we can inquire about the permanent feature which penance sacramentally establishes within the Church. In other terms, how does this sacrament mediate the passion of Christ to those whom the Holy Spirit draws towards the tribunal of God's mercy?

This question, in fact, exacerbated certain medieval theologians who found it difficult to pin down in a theological formulation something so contingent as personal sorrow. Even Aquinas' position on the sacramentality of penance remains a difficult feature of his entire sacramental theology. After considering the relative merits of other views, he mentions the *res et sacramentum*, the abiding sacrament of penance, as the penitent's sorrow for sin based on faith in the saving power of Christ's mysteries. Already inspired by the gift of the Spirit, the repentant sinner's renewed love for God combines with the action of the priest's absolution to bring the penitent towards a renewed sense of belonging to God. Thus, the phrase of St. Augustine serves to remind us of the cooperative character of this sacrament: "He who has created you without yourself will not justify you without yourself."<sup>45</sup> Some modern theologians, on the other hand, prefer to speak simply of solemn admission to the Eucharist, thereby setting aside the difficult questions involved in stabilizing personal contrition within the ambit of sacramental efficacy and ecclesial communion.

The tradition enumerates three principal elements which compose the sacrament of penance: con-

trition of the heart, confession of the lips, and the satisfaction of works. The Holy Father includes reference to these "realities or parts" in *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*. "Satisfaction," he writes, "is the final act which crowns the sacramental sign of Penance."<sup>46</sup> He goes on to explain that acts of satisfaction, in addition to joining the sinner's own physical and spiritual mortification to the passion of Jesus Christ, remain valuable signs of the personal commitment which the Christian has made to God in the sacrament to begin a new life.. The imposition of an individual satisfaction, then, remains integral to the celebration of reconciliation as a sacrament. It acts in the same way that true sorrow and (under normal circumstances) particular confession of sins also do. The penance, as custom refers to it, both completes the necessary elements of sacramental reconciliation and segues the forgiven sinner towards a renewed life of virtue and charity within the Church. Furthermore, everything that Christ accomplished by his satisfaction now stands at the disposal of the newly reconciled member of his Body.

This explains Aquinas' contention that in penance not only is the restoration of the balance of justice sought, as in retributive justice, but above all the reconciliation of friendship.<sup>47</sup> The very notion of commutative justice prevails even here, resembling that which can exist even between members of a family. When, for example, a father distributes benefits to his children, he does so according to a wisdom and love which he alone possesses. This allusion remains the controlling image in Aquinas' explanation of reconciliation. In fact, the actual living out of image-restorative works, now ratified by the sacrament of Christ's love, itself constitutes the achievement of divine grace. The liturgy still reflects this theology of satisfaction when it counsels priests to join the following prayer after the sacramental absolution: "May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, and also whatever good you do and evil you endure, be cause for the remission of your sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of life everlasting."<sup>48</sup> Through it, the Church, making explicit reference to the *thesaurus ecclesiae*, as the merits of Christ and of the saints over which she holds definitive authority are called, sacramentalizes the whole life of the believer. It also signifies the reviviscence of grace.

To be sure, the institute of frequent confession does not occupy a central place in contemporary pastoral theology and we find very little written today which urges the celebration of the sacrament precisely as a means to-

wards spiritual growth. But the Holy Father still maintains that “[T]he frequent use of the sacrament [of penance] ... strengthens the awareness that even minor sins offend God and harm the Church, the Body of Christ.”<sup>49</sup> Christian satisfaction and the sacrament of penance which establishes it as an effective means for image-perfection both accomplishes this goal and at the same time brings Christ’s mission to completion. St. John tells us that “[I]n this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world” (1 Jn 4:12). Indeed, Christ wants to fulfill this mission which he has received from the Father: “The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved me” (Jn 17:24). The reconciliation of a fallen race remains Christ’s glory, the very task given him by the Father to accomplish. We read in St. Luke’s Gospel, “Father I have sinned against heaven and before you.”<sup>50</sup> The power of Christ’s passion mediated in the sacrament turns the penitent person back to God, with a purpose of amendment, as a son and daughter turn towards their father. It is precisely in this aspect of divine forgiveness, that the Church especially discerns the healing or medicinal character of reconciliation. “And this is linked to the fact,” writes the Holy Father, “that the Gospel frequently presents Christ as healer, while his redemptive work is often called *medicina salutis*.”<sup>51</sup> Further, if we look at this from the perspective of the divine action operative in the sacrament, we can recognize unequivocally the divine intention which Christ manifests, what St. John refers to as his glory. For he comes to fulfill a task, to reveal God’s true purposes concerning our salvation, unfolding the heart of the Father’s desire for unity. Above all and like a human father, God desires more to draw his prodigal children back to loving union with himself than to punish them according to the canons of vindicative justice. And our awareness of this desire should consequently move us towards seeking the sacrament with greater and greater frequency and fervor.

Foremost in any theological discussion remain two mysteries, the incarnation and the Trinity, a fact which all Catholic theologians accept. When practiced

in accord with their original purposes, Christian soteriology and sacramental theory lead us to a personal communion with the three-personed God. That remains the only goal indicating where the work of Christ leads. Theologians speak about the missions of the divine persons as a way of indicating the active role which God takes in our personal histories. The missions, in turn, reflect the trinitarian processions which, with all of their inner necessity in knowledge and love, constitute the very Godhead itself. These trinitarian missions, moreover, form special relationships in those to whom God freely extends justification in the Church of faith and sacraments. Indeed, the visible sending of the Son and invisible coming of the Holy Spirit comprise the principal trinitarian missions which characterize the economy of salvation.<sup>52</sup>

The patristic doctrine of *perichoresis*, *circuminsessio* in Latin, reminds us of the fundamental unity and consubstantiality of the divine persons. But what the Latin theologians further distinguish as *circuminsessio* points to another aspect of God’s inner life, namely, the attraction which the divine persons exercise upon one another,

drawing together all those parts of the divine plan known only to God. Accordingly, on a personal level, the blessed Trinity remains present to the souls of the justified believer as “object known and loved.” Although this formulation reflects the realist preference for the primacy of knowledge in the human person, the formulation nonetheless makes a clear reference to the unity of human subjectivity. Indeed, the spiritual tradition prefers to call this knowledge quasi-experiential in order to emphasize the importance of

the non-cognitive elements which mark it as unique. Like the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which constitute the special and privileged endowments of the Christian believer, the three-personed God remains the principal and unique source of spiritual benefit and growth for the members of Christ’s Body. So the sacraments point to God. And in the sacrament of penance, especially, we discover how the Trinity effects a sacrament of salvation for those who remain united with the incarnate Son.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

By divine condescension, human reality has been

  
*“[T]he frequent use of the sacrament [of penance]... strengthens the awareness that even minor sins offend God and harm the Church, the Body of Christ.”*  


created in order to enter into communion with the fellowship of the divine persons. This destiny, moreover, remains strictly supernatural. The openness of the human intellect and of human love remains as it were the negative condition for the achievement of this supernatural destiny. This basically human structure aptitudinally images the personal communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in knowledge and love. The gracious conferral of resources proportionate to a supernatural destiny of communion complement and fulfill what remains only a trajectory impressed upon human nature. First of all, habitual grace transforms the human person so as to share in the divine nature and, then, the theological virtues confer a share in the very divine loving and knowing. Thus, the merely aptitudinal imaging of the three divine persons coincident with human nature itself is achieved as an actual imaging of the three divine persons as regards both their communion in the divine nature and their personal communion in knowledge and love. It should be noted, then, that the image of the three divine persons, the created analogue of *perichoresis*, remains actualized in precisely those dimensions of consciousness as free self-determination through love that also constitutes the *ratio* of human historicity. In this saving action, the immanent and visible mysteries of the incarnate Son both reveal and point to the invisible transcendence of the Trinity, fulfilling Christ's intention to turn everything over to the Father. "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor 15:25).

In St. Thomas' view, a particular expression of divine love and justice is showing mercy. Indeed, it is this condescension that accounts for the incarnation and actively shapes all that transpires in the human intellect and will of Christ. To the human will of Christ, God communicates the fullness of supernatural love as a capital endowment, such that his love for the Father should be both abounding love for us and the love of the Father on behalf of the members of his Body. Thus rectified by charity, the human will of Christ fulfills the divine justice - that is, performs the substance of Adam's original establishment in justice: a complete submission and subjection of all human energies and interest to the Father. It is this "evangelical" justice, suffused by excelling charity, that forms the inner core of Christ's salvific work under its satisfactory aspects. For, in this attitude of subjection and obedience, Christ ratifies the Father's salvific plan within the ambit of his human history and destiny.

What remains salvifically determinative and there-

fore satisfactory about Christ's human destiny therefore is not simply the physical event of his passion, the exaction of a penalty of death, but the interior attitudes of love, obedience, and self-disposal in the Father's favor that animate Christ's sufferings. The perfect interplay of the Father's loving initiative to save mankind and of Christ's human response remains a crucial feature of Christ's satisfactory work according to St. Thomas, for that communion of loves restores our own imaging communion with the Trinity.

Of course, Saint Thomas' account of Christ's salvific work in its satisfactory character addresses not merely the achievement of this sort of personal communion between head and members and of the whole Body through its Head with triune fellowship. It equally confronts the historical situation of such communion and that which has rendered such communion historically impossible: the reality of human sin, historical sin as a concrete determinant of universal human history. The "economy" of sin is by no means an ultimate nor even equiparant with the economy of salvation in the Christian view. Indeed, inasmuch as human moral failure instantiates whatever lacks due order, characterized by deficient causality and unintelligibility, its historical shape remains parasitic upon God's governance of his creation.

Likewise, medicinal punishment as an effect of human moral fault shows that God's loving intentions retain the upper hand in guiding human history to its true destiny. It is radically the incarnation of the Word and Christ's consequent disposal of his historical freedom in loving response to the Father which show that what remains uppermost and triumphant remains the Father's love. In that perfect response to the Father's saving will, Christ has freely and lovingly chosen solidarity with human history and a history of suffering (imposed as a punishment). In virtue of Christ's solidarity with suffering humanity, penal suffering becomes "once and for all" truly restorative and rectifies human willing. For, in truth, Christ "learned obedience through suffering," inasmuch as the full range of Christ's subjection of himself to the Father's saving will includes the acceptance of suffering experienced as the historical locus for obedient and loving acceptance of that will. The supernatural gifts which the Body derive from their Head accordingly effect a personal solidarity with him in other situations of human suffering. The grace and charity which Christ's members receive from him and in him always remain the grace and love of his passion. These conform Christ's Body to

Christ's own obedience and love. This conformity urges the members of the Church to "make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ" - that is, to supply their own free ratification of the experience of the cross as the definitive historical shape of communion with the Father

and the Holy Spirit in and through their Head. Union in and with the mind of Christ enables Christians to transform and shape human history by extending Christ's salvific work through culture and society. This openness, in short, helps us "to redeem the time."



## NOTES

1We find the doctrinal grounds for this assertion in the dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* (1870). In this document, the Fathers of Vatican I elaborated the following vision of speculative theology: "When reason illuminated by faith searches with diligence, piety, and prudence, it attains - through the gift of God - a certain understanding of the mysteries [of faith], and an abundantly fruitful understanding at that: both from analogy with what it knows naturally as well as from the interconnection of these very mysteries with each other and with the final purpose of man" (DS 3016). For a commentary on this passage, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., C. 1, "De intelligentia Theologiae" in his *Divinarum personarum conceptionem analogicam*, 2nd edition (Romae: Universitatis Gregorianae Aedes, 1959), 7-48.

2Thus, Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J. explains the heuristic structure of a universal viewpoint, which, he tells us, remains "concerned with the principal acts of meaning that lie in insights and judgments, and it reaches these principal acts by directing attention to the experience, the understanding and the critical reflection of the interpreter." See his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Third edition (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970), 565ff.

3The present *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983) continues to recognize the special place which Aquinas holds in the teaching of theology, for example c. 252.3: "S. Thoma praesertim magistro." Earlier, the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana*, which establishes norms for ecclesiastical faculties, also stresses the importance of Aquinas' doctrine both in theology (art. 71) and in philosophy (art. 80), cf. AAS, 1979, pp. 469-521.

4Addressing the medieval context, M. - D. Chenu, O.P. contrasts the twelfth century theologians with those later thinkers, including Aquinas, whom he refers to as the masters of theological science: "The statues of Rheims would have been out of place in the tympanum at Vezelay, no less than the masters would have been in monastic cloisters. But the two Christendoms of feudal Vezelay and of urban Rheims, each with its own understanding of faith and mode of expression, formed part of a single church." See his *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 309. On the other hand, Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1982), 152-97, concludes that more than any other figure in the seventeenth century Descartes marks the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern world. Afterwards, Gilson argues, Cartesian spiritualism and idealism characterize large portions of modern philosophy.

5Edward Farley documents the balkanization of theology in his *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), especially, 49-124. And J. A. DiNoia, O.P., "Religious Theology in the Perspective of Religious Diversity," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988), 401-416 suggests some advantages of realist theology, especially in the context of theological pluralism.

6More than any other Roman Catholic theologian in recent times, Karl Rahner, S.J. has insisted on the significance of human transcendence in theological investigation. As a result, many theologians (sometimes, as ill luck would have it, without the proper nuance) regard the human person as simply an unfinished and dynamic being, thrusting toward a fulfillment, both individual and social, that lies indefinitely ahead. For example, see the account given by John Macquarrie, "The Anthropological Approach to Theology," *The Heythrop Journal* 25 (1984), 272-287.

7The late Dominican theologian Colman E. O'Neill steadily developed and defended this thesis, especially in his last work, *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), especially 31-49.

8John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation On Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today*, Dec. 2, 1984 (hereafter RP), 2. Cf. *Origins* 14:433-58.

9For a general study of this especially vexed question, see P. Galtier, "Satisfaction," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* XIV: 1129-1210 and Louis Richard, *The Mystery of the Redemption* (Baltimore-Dublin: Helicon Press, 1965).

10See Philips Brooks, *Sermons in 10 Volumes* (New York: B. F. Dutton, 1881-1911), Seventh series.

11RP, 1. For a detailed study of Aquinas' personalist understanding developed in the context of Christ's satisfaction, see Romanus Cessario, O.P., *Christian Satisfaction in Aquinas* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982).

12For an analysis of Augustine's original doctrine concerning the *imago Dei*, see Walter H. Principe, C.S.B., "The Dynamism of Augustine's Terms for Describing the Highest Trinitarian Image in the Human Person," *Studia Patristica* 18, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), Vol. 3, 1291-99. The author also includes an extensive bibliography.

13*Summa theologiae* Ia-IIae q. 114, a. 6. Aquinas develops this inchoative ecclesiology in the *tertia pars* when he speaks about the capital grace of Christ.

14In a key text for the biblical doctrine of satisfaction, Hebrews 2:9-10 actually mentions Christ's suffering which forms an integral part of his mission to establish the Church of glory. "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering." For further information on this point; see Ceslas Spicq, O.P., *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie., 1952), especially 3, n. 1. Moreover, scholars agree that Aquinas produced the first medieval commentary, as distinguished from a gloss, on this New Testament writing. In fact, not only does Aquinas' biographer, Bernard Gui, mention the commentary on Hebrews separately but it also circulated independently from any other *Expositio et lectura super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli*, as 7 extant manuscripts give witness.

15The axiom represents the principal line of argument given by St. Athanasius in his famous treatise, *On the Incarnation of the Logos of God*. Again, in the *Letter to Epictetus*, 7 (PG XXVI:1061) Athanasius writes: "[B]ut the Savior having in very truth become man, the salvation of the whole man was brought about. For if the Word were in the body putatively, as they say, and by putative is meant imaginary, it follows that both the salvation and the resurrection of man is apparent only, as the most impious Manichaeus held."

16See *Summa theologiae* IIIa q. 1, a. 2 where Aquinas, having distinguished between strict necessity and a necessity "per quod melius et convenientius pervenitur ad finem," lists five ways in which the incarnation, according to the second kind of necessity, serves "ad promotionem hominis in bono" and five ways in which it remains useful "ad remotionem mali."

17See J. H. Nicolas, O.P., *Synthese Dogmatique: De la Trinité a la Trinité* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1985), especially, 454-60. The author provides clarity about an issue which previously suffered from distorting rhetoric generated by long-standing historical controversies.

18See Rene Roques, ed., *Pourquoi Dieu s'est fait homme*, French translation of *Cur Deus Homo?* with notes and introduction (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1963), especially 161-72.

19For a standard contemporary solution which draws, moreover, upon the German idealist notion of solidarity, see Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, translated by V. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 215-225.

20In short, the discovery of the personalist dimensions evident in the patristic doctrine of divinization moved Aquinas to recognize the fundamental inadequacy latent in a juridical or mercantile construal of salvation. See James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974), especially the "Influence of Greek Theology," 163-76.

21For a good treatment which explains Aquinas' use of and reliance upon the Fathers of the Church, see G. Geenen, "Thomas d'Aquin. VII. Saint Thomas et les Peres," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* XV:738-61 and the classical study by I. Baches, *Die Christologie des hl. Thomas v. Aquin und die griechischen Kirchenväter* (Paderborn, 1931).

22 *On the Holy Spirit*, Prologue, 18 (PL XVI:708).

23With almost poetic elegance, Aquinas elaborates this fundamental truth of the Christian faith in a disputed question: "The ultimate end is not the communication of goodness, but rather divine goodness itself. It is from his

love of this goodness that God wills it to be communicated. In fact, when he acts because of his goodness, it is not as if he were pursuing something that he does not have, but, as it were, willing to communicate what he does have. For he does not act from desire for the end, but from love of the end.” See *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15, ad 14.

24St. Paul makes this remark in the context of the creature’s transformation in Christ: “Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself...” See II Corinthians 5:17-19.

25The Council of Chalcedon (451) in fact complements the work of Nicaea (325) which used the same expression, “consubstantial,” to identify the divine in Christ with the Trinity. For a theological discussion of the Chalcedonian definition, see Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, translated by John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), especially 543-50.

26Aquinas puts it simply: “Person signifies what is noblest in the whole of creation” in *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 24, a. 2. Etienne Gilson discusses both the historical background and philosophical implications of this Christian view of created personhood. See his chapter on “Christian Personalism,” *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, translated by A.H.C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940), 189-208.

27For Aquinas, the Eternal Law, which he principally identifies with the trinitarian Logos, remains the source of divine providence for the rational creature. See *Summa theologiae* Ia-IIae q. 93, especially aa. 5-6. See Oscar J. Brown, *Natural Rectitude and Divine Law in Aquinas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), especially 1-12.

28Colin Gunton points out the interest this topic holds for contemporary theologians in “When the Gates of Hell Fall Down: towards a modern theology of the justice of God,” *New Blackfriars* 69 (1988): 488-96.

29For a detailed analysis of Aquinas’ notion of sin, see T. C. O’Brien, *Effects of Sin, Stain and Guilt*, Vol. 27 (Ia 2ae 86-89) of the Blackfriars *Summa theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), especially 99-109.

30Unfortunately, we often find this view expressed by those who propose to interpret the thought of Karl Rahner. His well-known rejection of “supernaturalism” still leads some thinkers to make ambiguous statements about the relationship of nature and grace, thereby making it difficult to discern what in fact pertains only to God’s gratuity. For example, Lucien Richard writes: “Creation is the establishment, by God, of what is other precisely as other... Because of the unity of nature and grace from the very beginning of creation, the history of the world and salvation history are materially identical and coextensive...” *Is There a Christian Ethics?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 15.

31See *Summa theologiae* Ia-IIae q. 72, a. 1, ad 2: “Sin is not a pure privation, but an action lacking its due order.”

32Aristotle wrote: “the [moral] end appears to each man in a form answering to his character,” *Ethics* III, 5. 1114a32-1114b2. But see Aquinas’ use of this axiom in *Summa theologiae* Ia-IIae q. 58, a. 5, where he develops it as a principle for the exercise of prudence.

33*De spiritu et littera*, 26 (PL XLIV:229).

34See *Summa theologiae* Ia-IIae q. 81-85 for his discussion of original sin. T. C. O’Brien provides one of the best commentaries on this subject in *Original Sin*, Vol. 26 (Ia2ae 81-85) of the Blackfriars *Summa theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), especially 105-143.

35These propositions include the principal elements of the Council of Trent’s declaration that original sin remains “origine unum et propagatione, non imitatione transfusum omnibus inest unicuique proprium” (DS 1513). For a commentary on the Council’s statement, see Henri Rondet, *Original Sin*, translated by C. Finegan, O.P. (Staten Island: Alba House, 1972), especially 169-75.

36Remarks made upon the announcement of the publication in English translation of *The New German Catechism: The Church’s Confession of Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).

37See *Summa theologiae* Ia qq. 93-98, especially q. 95, a. 1 where Aquinas discusses a problem much debated among the scholastics, “Whether or not man was created in grace.” For further information, see I. H. Dalmais, O.P., “Original Sin” in *God and His Creation*, Vol. 2, *Theological Library*, edited by A. M. Henry, O.P., translated by C. Miltner, CSC (Cork: Mercier Press, nd), 355-71.

38”[I]t has to be said that if children had been born in original justice they would also have been born with grace... Yet this would not have made grace natural, because it would not have been transmitted by any virtue in the seed, but seed, but would have been conferred on man the moment he had a rational soul. Just as the moment a body

is ready for it God infuses a rational soul, which is not, for all that, propagated.” See *Summa theologiae* Ia q. 100, a. 2, ad 2.

39Sermon 2, *On the Ascension*, c. 11 (PL LIV:398).

40 “Si quis ... paenitentiam non recte ‘secundum post naufragium tabulam’ appellari: an s.” (DS 1702).

41RP 31.1. See the recent study on the history of penance by Joseph A. Favazza, *The Order of Penitents: Historical Roots and Pastoral Future* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1988).

42*Summa theologiae* IIIa q. 84, a. 6.

43See Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1983), 319-339; 295-318 for an introduction to Madame Guyon and Molinos respectively. Between 1975-1985 Christian Books, Gardiner, Maine published several revised English translations of Madame Guyon’s treatises as works of popular piety.

44See O’Neill, *Sacramental Realism*, especially 98, 106, 171ff, 181ff. Contemporary sacramental theology, with its emphasis on the symbolic and anthropological aspects of the sacraments, does not emphasize these distinctions.

45Ibid , 175-77 for a brief discussion of Aquinas’ position on the sacramentality of penance.

46RP 31.III.

47Aquinas actually makes this point in the context of the virtue of penitence: “And it is thus that the penitent turns to God, with the purpose of amendment as a servant to his master.... and as the son to his father.... and as a wife to her husband. ...” *Summa theologiae* IIIa q. 85. a. 3.

48*Ordo Paenitentiae*, n. 93.

49RP 32. In our day, Adrienne von Speyr stresses this important practice in the spiritual life. See her *Confession*, translated by Douglas W. Stott (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985).

50Cf. Luke 15:11-32. Biblical commentators remark on this passage: “.. through his sin, or better, through his fatherly pardon, patterned on the sin, the prodigal, discovering paternal love, retrieves - or even perhaps experiences for the first time - the sentiments of a son.” See Stanislaus Lyonnet, S.J. and Leopold Sabourin, S.J., *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 36, 37.

51RP 31.II.

52For an expert discussion of the trinitarian implications latent in sacramental reconciliation, see William J. Hill, O.P., *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), especially 273-314.