The Atoning Death of Christ

St. Thomas's Doctrine of Vicarious Satisfaction

John P. Joy

The Atoning Death of Christ

St. Thomas's Doctrine of Vicarious Satisfaction

John P. Joy

Cruachan
Hill Press

ISBN: 978-1-957206-12-7
Cover Design by Jessica Fellmeth
Cover Art Carl Bloch, *Descent from the Cross*

Published by

Cruachan Hill Press
12552 E Michigan Ave.
Grass Lake, MI 49240
www.cruachanhill.com

Printed and Bound in the United States of America

Vexilla Regis prodeunt
Fulget Crucis mysterium
Qua vita mortem pertulit
Et morte vitam protulit

The Apotheosis of Saint Thomas Aquinas

This 1631 altarpiece painting by Francisco de Zurbarán, was painted for the Dominican College of Seville.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

St. Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109) is justly famous for his influential "satisfaction" theory of the atonement, according to which the necessity of satisfaction for the salvation of mankind provides the solution to the perennial theological question of the Incarnation: why did God become man (*Cur Deus homo*)? Anselm was not the first to introduce the idea of satisfaction into Christian theology – that distinction belongs to Tertullian (c. 160-220)[1] – but he made such powerful use of the idea that it has dominated much of Western soteriology ever since. Among the most influential thinkers to follow Anselm in applying the term to Christ's work of redemption are St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) as well as the leading Protestant Reformers Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564). Given the prominent place of these figures within their respective ecclesial and theological traditions, it can be no surprise that the idea of satisfaction continues to exercise great influence both in Catholic and in Protestant soteriology.

Both Aquinas and the Reformers adopt Anselm's term, namely "satisfaction", but the respective meanings which they give to the term vary. This divergence of meaning is located in the relation that satisfaction bears to punishment. For Luther and Calvin only punishment can make satisfaction. Justice is satisfied when sin is punished; therefore, "to satisfy" for sin means nothing other than "to be punished" for sin. Aquinas, on the other hand, takes a slightly different position: although satisfaction always contains something of a penal nature, it is never simply the same as punishment. In his scholastic terminology, *satisfactio est pœna secundum quid*. To compound the problem, neither usage seems to agree entirely with Anselm, who tends

---

[1] Tertullian, *De pœnitentia*, 6.4; 7.14; 8.9; 9.2; 10.2; 11.3. Cf. *Treatises on Penance: On Penitence and On Purity*, Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 28, translated and annotated by William P. Le Saint (New York: Newman Press, 1959), 155-156, n. 77; Donald K. McKim, *Theological Turning Points: Major Issues in Christian Thought* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1988), 81-82; Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 81-84.

to define satisfaction precisely in opposition to punishment: justice demands one or the other, but not both.

This distinction between the oft-similar atonement doctrines of these influential thinkers should not be overlooked in contemporary debates over the nature of the atonement. There are, to be sure, fundamental points upon which they all agree, such as the objective nature of Christ's saving work, and in particular the fact that Christ's death somehow satisfies the requirements of divine justice; but regarding the relationship between punishment and satisfaction, Thomas walks something of a *via media* between Anselm's opposition of the two concepts and the Reformation identification of them. When faced with the overwhelming enormity of Christ's suffering, of the pain which he endured for the sake of man's salvation, Thomas's careful distinction between *pœna simpliciter* (punishment) and *pœna secundum quid* (satisfaction) allows him to offer an adequate account of the meaning and purpose of Christ's sufferings – which Anselm was unable to do – while simultaneously avoiding the problematical elements of the later Reformation doctrine of penal substitution.

Since any authentic Christian interpretation of Christ's saving work is bound first of all to the sources of divine revelation, Chapter One outlines the main features of the New Testament's description of the salvific efficacy of Christ's death upon the cross. The task of locating Thomas's theology of the cross within the broad spectrum of theological accounts of the atonement commences at the most general level in Chapter Two, which provides an overview of the main lines of approach historically taken by Christian theologians in their attempts to interpret the data of revelation on this point. The so-called "objective" and "subjective" soteriological models are contrasted in dialogue with the influential work of the Lutheran bishop Gustaf Aulén (1879-1977), who proposes a third model as the "classical" view of the atonement. Moving from the generic level to the specific, the remaining chapters compare and contrast three prominent examples of "objective" theories of the atonement, focusing in particular on the account that each one gives of the death of Christ as a work of satisfaction. Chapter Three focuses on Anselm's seminal satisfaction-theory, discussing especially the place given therein to punishment in dialogue with J. Denny Weaver's pacifistic critique. Chapter Four turns to the Reformation theory of penal substitution, noting especially the altered meaning of

"satisfaction" and then examining some of the difficulties which arise within this perspective.

The second half of this work then focuses on Thomas Aquinas's theology of the cross. Chapter Five inquires into Thomas's understanding of satisfaction in general, proposing that the proper light in which to read what Thomas writes on the satisfactory nature of Christ's passion and death is to be found within his treatment of the threefold effect of sin. The most important distinctions between Thomas's atonement doctrine and that of the Reformers already come to light here. Chapter Six turns to the passion itself, interpreting Thomas's texts in the light of his general understanding of satisfaction. His doctrine of vicarious satisfaction is also continually placed in relation to Anselmian satisfaction and penal substitution. Chapter Seven proceeds along the same lines with regard to the efficacy and fruits of the passion. Finally, Chapter Eight carries through to its end Thomas's treatise on the humiliation of Christ, which after his passion treats also of his death, burial, and descent into hell. Christ's descent into hell is especially interesting here, for the ultimate divergence between Thomas's doctrine of vicarious satisfaction and the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution is fully revealed in their opposing interpretations of this event.

CHAPTER ONE: THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Redemption and Sacrifice

One of the most frequent sets of words appearing in the New Testament to describe the death of Christ is that based upon the related verbs λυω (active: I loose, untie, set free, destroy, abolish, allow) and λυτροω (middle: I set free, redeem, rescue; passive: I am ransomed).[2] The idea of a λυτρωσις (redemption, ransoming, releasing) through Christ is already introduced while he is yet in the womb (Lk. 1:68), and Christ himself refers to his own life as a λυτρον (price of release, ransom): "the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (λυτρον) for many" (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45; cf. 1 Tim. 2:6).[3] Forms of the verb λυτροω appear in Luke's Gospel (24:21), and in the letters of Peter (1 Pet. 1:18) and Paul (Tit. 2:14). Another related word used frequently in the Pauline Letters is απολυτρωσις (release, redemption): "In him we have redemption (απολυτρωσιν) through his blood" (Eph. 1:7; cf. Rom. 3:24, 1 Cor. 1:30, and Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15).

The same monetary metaphor comes to the fore most strongly in Paul's words to the Corinthians: "you were bought (ηγορασθητε) with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). The verb here is αγοραζω (I buy, purchase), similar uses of which occur in the Letter to the Galatians (3:13; 4:5), and in the Revelation to John, notably in the song of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders: "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom (ηγορασας) men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9; cf. 14:3, 4).

---

[2] This survey of New Testament texts is indebted principally to William J. Kiefer, ed., *Biblical Subject Index* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1958), 149-150. English translations of Greek words are taken from Warren C. Trenchard, *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

[3] New Testament biblical texts are taken from *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed., ed. Barbara Aland et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). English translations are taken from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994).

A second major theme of the New Testament's presentation of Christ's death on the cross is that of sacrifice. The Baptist points to this immediately when he proclaims Christ as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). Peter immediately joins the concepts of redemption and sacrifice: "You know that you were ransomed (ελυτρωθητε)... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The idea of sacrifice is often explicit in the word groups based on θυω (I sacrifice, slaughter, kill, celebrate) and προσφερω (I bring to, offer, present): "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering (προσφοραν) and sacrifice (θυσιαν) to God" (Eph. 5:2; cf. 1 Cor. 5:7, and especially Heb. 9:7-28).

Paul's reference to Christ as the ιλαστηριον (Rom. 3:25; cf. Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10) is strongly redolent of sacrifice.[4] At the very center of the Day of Atonement ritual (*Yom Kippur*), the high priest takes the blood of a goat inside the holy of holies and sprinkles it seven times before and upon the "mercy seat" (LXX: ιλαστηριον in order to make atonement for all Israel (Lev. 16:15). As the Letter to the Hebrews (9:5) recalls, the ιλαστηριον was that part of the Ark of the Covenant between and overshadowed by the cherubim – the holiest of all holy places.

Fruition

Turning from the mode of efficacy of Christ's death to the effects themselves, the constant emphasis both in the theme of redemption and in that of sacrifice is upon the blood of Christ. A search of the New Testament turns up no fewer than thirty-four references to the salvific

[4] The meaning of ιλαστηριον and related words was the subject of much debate in the twentieth-century. It was especially the Protestant exegete C. H. Dodd (1884-1973) who argued that in the New Testament these words should always be understood in terms of "expiation" rather than "propitiation", i.e. the object of the verb ιλασκομαι should always be understood as sin (which is expiated, cleansed) rather than God (who is propitiated, appeased). See C. H. Dodd, "*Hilaskesthai*: Its Cognates, Derivatives and Synonyms, in the Septuagint," *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1931): 352-360. For replies to Dodd's arguments, see especially Leon Morris, "The Use of *Hilaskesthai* etc. in Biblical Greek," *Expository Times* 62 (1951): 227-233; and Roger Nicole, "C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation," *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1955): 117-157.

efficacy of Christ's outpoured blood. Considered as redemptive, the effect of Christ's blood is liberation. As the price paid in ransom for sinful mankind, the blood of Christ liberates sinners from slavery to sin (Tit. 2:14; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12), to the law (Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Rom. 7:1-6), to the devil (Col. 1:13; 2:15; Heb. 2:14), and to death itself (2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:15).

Considered as sacrificial the effect of Christ's blood is, negatively, to forgive and remove sin, to cleanse, to purify: "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 9:22; cf. 1 Jn. 1:7). Positively, the blood of Christ makes peace (Col. 1:20) between man and God, reconciles man to God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:19-22; Eph. 2:13). This twofold fruition of his sacrificial blood can also be seen in the words which Christ spoke over the bread and wine at the Last Supper: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). Similarly after the supper: "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (Mt. 26:27-28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). The outpouring of Christ's blood both forgives sins and inaugurates a new covenant, a new and more intimate relationship between God and man.

Representation

Another decisive aspect of the New Testament's depiction of Christ's death is its vicarious or representative nature: he died on the cross "for us." That he died "for" sinful man, in the sense of "for his benefit," is clear: "The good shepherd lays down his life for (υπερ) the sheep" (Jn. 10:11). That he died "for" sinful man, in the sense of "in his place," is also implied, for example, in the unwitting prophecy of the high-priest Caiaphas: "it is expedient for you that one man should die for (υπερ) the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (Jn. 11:50).

The reifying words of Paul point vividly in the same direction, stressing the representative aspect of Christ's death: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13); "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The image of the sin-bearer is especially indicative of vicarious suffering: "Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time" (Heb. 9:28). Occurring in the context of the discussion in Hebrews of the Old Testament Day of Atonement ritual, such words clearly allude to the "scapegoat" for Aza'zel:

> Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness (Lev. 16:21-22).

The image of sin-bearing recurs in First Peter as well: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:24). Here, however, the allusion is clearly to the fourth servant song of Isaiah (Is. 52:13-53:12), the whole theme of which is the vicarious suffering of the sinless one in place of sinners, of "the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Pet. 3:18): "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:5-6). This magnificent text of Isaiah, in which the vicarious bearing of a penalty for sin is clearly present, rightly occupies an important place in the interpretation of Christ's suffering and death.

Conclusion

In summary, the New Testament presents Christ's death on the cross as a vicarious penal redemptive sacrifice, the effect of which is to please God, purify man of his sin, free him from his former slavery, and reconcile him to God. "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, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of

reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-19). This is the raw data of the New Testament; it is the task of the theologian to gather what is granted by faith in divine revelation into a unified understanding (Anselm's *fides quærens intellectum*).

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL TYPES OF THE IDEA OF ATONEMENT

While it is clear that the New Testament presents the salvific work of Christ as accomplished above all through the vicarious penal redemptive sacrifice of his own life upon the cross, it is also true that various ways of understanding and interpreting this article of faith have arisen throughout the Christian centuries. Two broad paths have traditionally been delineated, with the line of demarcation running between so-called "objective" and "subjective" theories of the atonement. This account of the historical record, however, was challenged by the Swedish Lutheran bishop Gustaf Aulén, who proposes a third main type of the idea of atonement, which he names the "classic" or "dramatic" view, in his enormously influential work *Christus Victor*, published in Sweden in 1930 and appearing already in English translation in 1931.

History of Interpretation

Aulén begins his work with an overview of the traditional account of the history of Christian soteriology. The generally accepted view was that the early Church contributed very little to the development of an atonement doctrine, with the first real breakthrough occurring only with Anselm at the beginning of the second Christian millennium.[5] Anselm firmly rejected the idea (widespread in the patristic era) that the devil had acquired any rights over mankind by Adam's sin, and formulated a fully developed objective theory of the atonement, according to which

[5] For example, Ludwig Ott refers only briefly to "Inadequate Patristic Theories of the Redemption," citing two examples: "St. Irenaeus of Lyon († about 202) initiated the so-called recapitulation theory or mystic theory of Redemption, which... teaches that Christ as the second Adam, saved and united with God the whole human race." Thus salvation "had already taken place in principle through the Incarnation," while only "a subordinate significance" is accorded to Christ's passion. Origen developed a problematical "ransom theory" which became widespread in the patristic era: "He held that the devil by Adam's sin, had acquired a formal dominion over mankind. In order to liberate mankind from this tyranny Christ gave his life to the devil as ransom price. But the devil was deceived, as he was not able to maintain for long his dominion of death over Christ" (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch [Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1974], 186).

the death of Christ balanced the scales of divine justice. Such a theory is objective in the sense that Christ's death is referred first of all to something outside of ourselves, namely to God and his justice. Counterposed to this is the subjective theory of the atonement typically credited to Peter Abelard (1079-1142), only a generation removed from Anselm. According to this view, the effect of Christ's death is first of all in individual men and women. The atonement functions along the lines of moral exemplarism: Christ's death is primarily a demonstration of God's love for mankind, which prompts men to love him in return and thus also to cease from sin and turn to virtue. The final step in the traditional account is to trace one line connecting later medieval scholasticism, the Reformation, and the Protestant "Orthodoxy" of the seventeenth century to Anselm, while another line connects Socinianism and especially Enlightenment thought and on the atonement to Abelard.[6]

Such an account of the historical record, however, entirely overlooks, according to Aulén, the existence of a real third idea of the atonement: the classic view of the early Church. Contrary to the common opinion of historians of theology, Aulén sees in the patristic writings a fully developed idea of the atonement:

> Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ – Christus Victor – fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself.[7]

Two points stand out here: the theme of Christ's victory over evil, and the divine initiative and action emphasized in God's reconciliation of the world to himself. This view is thus aptly summarized by the title, *Christus Victor*, together with the Pauline phrase, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Writing as a historian with the intent to correct what he perceives to be an error in the historical record, Aulén proceeds to a survey of the patristic era, finding this classic view expressed in the

---

[6] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 1-4. For a recent essay contrasting the views of Anselm and Abelard see Gwenfair M. Walters, "The Atonement in Medieval Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III, 239-262 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academics, 2004).

[7] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 4.

entire Greek tradition from Irenaeus of Lyons to John Damascene, while in the Latin West he finds it in Ambrose, Augustine, and the great popes Leo I and Gregory I, among others, although in the writings of the Western Fathers it often co-exists with elements of the typically "Latin" view of the atonement, which is Aulén's label for Anselmian satisfaction theories. It is also true, he admits, that the foundations of this Latin view are laid quite early on in the West, especially by the North Africans Tertullian and Cyprian.[8] After moving backwards to find support for the classic view in the New Testament,[9] Aulén then moves forwards to the medieval period, where he uncovers the Latin view in Anselm and the later scholastics, and the subjective view in Abelard, while the classic view survives only in hymns and sequences such as the *Victimæ paschali* of Easter and in the dramatic mystery plays of the Middle Ages, in which Christ triumphantly conquers the comic figure of the devil.[10] Then Luther arrives on the scene, whose teaching, Aulén maintains, "can only be rightly understood as a revival of the old classic theme of the Atonement as taught by the Fathers."[11] His successors, however, beginning already with Melanchthon, reverted immediately to the Latin view, which thus became the dominant view of later Protestant "Orthodoxy".[12]

Comparison of the Types

A systematic comparison of Aulén's three main types of the idea of atonement forms the conclusion of his work. Aulén compares all three types, but he is especially at pains to distinguish the classic view from the similarly objective Latin view. He compares (1) their respective structures; (2) the idea of sin; (3) the connections between the atonement, justification, and sanctification; (4) the connection between the Incarnation and the atonement; (5) and the conception of God operative in each case. A final comparison is then appended concerning the very possibility of a rational theory of the atonement.[13]

---

[8] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 16-60.
[9] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 61-80.
[10] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 81-100.
[11] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 102.
[12] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 101-142.
[13] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 143-158.

The most important comparison, and the one on which Aulén hangs the most weight throughout his entire work, is the first one. He summarizes the contrasting structures of the two types chiefly under consideration as follows: "The classic type shows a continuity of Divine operation, and a discontinuity in the order of merit and of justice, while the Latin type is opposite to it in both respects."[14] The classic view is characterized by continuity in the divine operation: God is the actor in the drama of salvation. He reconciles the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). This necessitates a breach in the legal order: man does nothing to make up for his sin; he cannot merit salvation; God's justice is not satisfied; everything is grace. In the Latin view the situation is reversed. The order of justice is strictly maintained by satisfaction, and the continuity of the divine action is broken by Christ's offering of this satisfaction as man. Near the beginning of his work, Aulén had already anticipated this conclusion:

> The most marked difference between the 'dramatic' type and the so-called 'objective' type lies in the fact that it represents the work of Atonement or reconciliation as from first to last a work of God Himself, a *continuous* Divine work; while according to the other view, the act of Atonement has indeed its origin in God's will, but is, in its carrying-out, an offering made to God by Christ as man and on man's behalf, and may therefore be called a *discontinuous* Divine work.[15]

The structures of all three views can also be seen in their movements and orientations: in the classic view God moves toward man; in the subjective view man moves toward God; and in the Latin view God makes the first movement toward man who responds with a movement back toward God.[16] In the classic view Christ's death is oriented toward the devil as victorious; in the Latin view it is directed toward God as satisfactory; and in the subjective view it is directed toward man as exemplary.

Aulén writes primarily as a historian, but his work inevitably appears as a kind of *apologia* for the classic view of the atonement; and although the exact measure of his influence is difficult to judge, it is indisputable that he has at least succeeded in bringing a third view of the

---

[14] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 145.
[15] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 5.
[16] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 154.

atonement into the conversation along side of the traditional objective *versus* subjective dichotomy.[17] On the other hand, his efforts have not gone uncriticized. Lutheran theologian Ted Peters has expressed second thoughts about Aulén's presentation of Luther's soteriology in relation to Anselm,[18] and the Dominican scholar Romanus Cessario has referred to Aulén's work as a "caricature of soteriological models" which "has influenced, regrettably, twentieth-century Catholic scholarship."[19] John Stott, an Anglican clergyman and a leading figure within Protestant evangelicalism at large, refers to Aulén's characterization of Anselm's doctrine as "contemptuous" and "unjust", although he notes at the same time the importance of recovering the theme of victory in the field of soteriology.[20]

The point at issue is Anselm's fidelity to the interpretive tradition of the Church Fathers, and by extension, to the data of the New Testament itself.[21] Almost incredibly, however, the decisive point upon which Aulén wants to posit a sharp break between Anselm and the Fathers lies in the question as to who accomplishes the redemption. Since the continuity of the divine action is the defining characteristic of the classic idea of the atonement, Aulén's key question for Anselm is this: "Does Anselm treat the atoning work of Christ as the work of God Himself from start to finish?"[22] Now in order to arrive at the necessity of the Incarnation Anselm had emphasized two things: that only man should offer satisfaction, and that only God could. What Aulén finds objectionable is that God should reconcile the world to himself precisely as man. On the basis of this he even asserts that for Anselm, "The Incarnation and the Atonement are not organically connected together,

---

[17] For a recent work on the atonement that follows this new threefold division (with the addition of a fourth view that attempts to combine the others), see James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academic, 2006).

[18] Ted Peters, "The Atonement in Anselm and Luther: Second Thoughts about Gustav Aulén's Christus Victor," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (1972): 301-314.

[19] Romanus Cessario, "Aquinas on Christian Salvation," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas G. Wienandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum, 117-137 (London: T&T Clark International, Continuum, 2004), 136, n. 23.

[20] John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 224-226.

[21] For a study of the continuity between Anselm and his predecessors, including on the question of the atonement, see Giles Edward Murray Gaspar, *Anselm of Canterbury and His Theological Inheritance* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004).

[22] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 86.

as they were in the classic view."[23] Indeed, this alleged disconnection between the Incarnation and the atonement returns as the fourth point of comparison in Aulén's conclusion.

Such a criticism, however, applies much more readily to Aulén himself than to Anselm, who explains the Incarnation precisely in terms of the atonement. In his view, wherein man should satisfy for sin since man had sinned, yet only God could sufficiently satisfy for the infinite offense of sin, the close connection of Incarnation and atonement could not be more apparent: the satisfaction which achieves atonement must be offered by one person existing in two natures, divine and human. The atonement is the completion of the Incarnation as much as the Incarnation is the presupposition of the atonement. Aulén's criticism would justly fall upon Anselm only if the latter posited a Nestorian duality of persons. As it is, the continuity of the divine agency is assured by the single agent (the person of the Son) at work in two natures. In Aulén's view of the atonement, on the other hand, it is actually hard to see what the place or role of Christ's human nature is if he accomplishes our redemption not as man, but as God. Moreover, his critique of Anselm on this point would actually exclude the suffering and death of Christ as the cause of man's redemption, for Christ could hardly have suffered and died as God, that is, in his divine nature.

Conclusion

If there is no real distinction between the Latin Anselmian view and the classic view of the Fathers on the basis of contrasting structural continuities and discontinuities, then all that remains is a difference of emphasis, namely on victory over the devil or on the satisfaction of divine justice, but no real incompatibility. Indeed, this may be the reason why Aulén often found elements of the classic view and the Latin view existing side by side in the Western Fathers without any apparent awareness of contradiction. A sacrifice that satisfies the divine justice leading to the forgiveness of sins, justification, and salvation, is by that very fact a victory over the evil which formerly held man enslaved. Without a real opposition between these two themes, Aulén's thesis collapses and the traditional historical account is so far

[23] Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 87.

vindicated. The idea of satisfaction as applied to the cross of Christ contradicts neither the emphasis of the Fathers on victory over evil, nor the New Testament's insistence on God's initiative and agency in the work of redemption. In fact, it maintains all of this, but emphasizes the justice of God manifested on the cross: "This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous..." (Rom. 3:25-26). The cross is the redemptive sacrifice of the God-man, which satisfies the divine justice and thereby also conquers evil and injustice.

CHAPTER THREE: ST. ANSELM'S DOCTRINE OF SATISFACTION

Anselm and His Critics

While St. Anselm, the so-called "Father of Scholasticism,"[24] did not radically break with the soteriological tradition of the Church Fathers (*contra* Aulén), it is nevertheless true that he made a decisive step forward by setting forth a complete systematic treatment of the atonement. The treatise *Cur Deus homo*, written by the newly consecrated archbishop of Canterbury in the years 1095-1098,[25] is a theological classic, due at once to the force and to the simplicity of its argumentation.

The task that Anselm sets for himself in *Cur Deus homo* is to discover "by what reason or necessity God has been made man, and by his death, as we believe and confess, has restored life to the world, when he could have done this either through another person, whether angelic or human, or by his will alone."[26] The main lines of his argument are as simple as they are well known. Southern draws them out in three stages:

1 The problem

i. Man was created by God for eternal blessedness.
ii. This blessedness requires the perfect and voluntary submission of Man's will to God. (Freedom is to love the limitations appropriate to one's being.)
iii. But the whole human race has refused to make this submission (and has thus lost its freedom).
iv. No member of the human race can restore the lost blessedness, because even perfect obedience cannot now make up for lack of obedience in the past.

---

[24] Eugene R. Fairweather, ed., *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 10 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1956), 47.
[25] For a historical timeline of Anselm's life and work see Richard W. Southern, *St. Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xxvii-xxix.
[26] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* I, 1: "Qua scilicet ratione vel necessitate deus homo factus sit, et morte sua, sicut credimus et confitemur, mundo vitam reddiderit, cum hoc aut per aliam personam, sive angelicam sive humanam, aut sola voluntate facere potuerit" (all translations of Anselm's Latin are my own).

v. Therefore the created universe is deprived of its due harmony, and in the absence of external aid, the whole human race has irretrievably forfeited the blessedness for which it was created.

2 The necessity of a solution

i. God's purpose in the creation of Man and the universe has been frustrated.
ii. But it is impossible that the purpose of an omnipotent Being should be frustrated.
iii. Therefore a means of redemption must exist.

3 The solution

i. To restore the lost harmony and blessedness, an offering of obedience must be made, equal to or greater than all that has been lacking in the past.
ii. Only Man, as the offender, *ought* to make this offering; but no man can do this, because he already owes to God all and more than all he has to offer.
iii. Only God *can* make an offering which transcends the whole unpaid debt of past offenses; but God ought not to make it, since the debt is Man's.
iv. Since only Man ought to, and only God can, make this offering, it must be made by one who is both God and Man.
v. Therefore a God-Man is necessary for the Redemption of the whole Creation.[27]

The key element in all of this, as can readily be seen, is the balancing of the scales, so to speak, between the measure of the offense and the measure of the compensatory offering; this balancing of the scales is termed "satisfaction", that is, making or doing enough (Latin: *satis-facere*).

This account of salvation, however, has been the subject of much criticism. Gustaf Aulén was one prominent twentieth-century critic, as was seen in the preceding chapter, but a second and much broader stream of criticism flows from the idea that Anselm's theory portrays a cruel God whose blood-lust can only be "satisfied" by the death of his own Son. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger, for example, writes that, "Even in its classical form it is not devoid of one-sidedness, but when considered in the vulgarized form that has to a great extent shaped the general consciousness, it looks cruelly mechanical and less and less

[27] Southern, *St. Anselm*, 206.

feasible."[28] According to Nieuwenhove, a defender of Anselm on this point, "It has been alleged that it [Anselm's satisfaction theory] entails a transactional, legalistic view of God; that it evokes the specter of a vindictive Father who demands the sacrifice of his Son; that Anselm's God would be guilty of subjecting his mercy to his justice; and so forth."[29] In short, the point at issue here is precisely the penal aspect of satisfaction. An interesting example of modern criticism along these lines comes from the pen of J. Denny Weaver, who writes from a pacifistic perspective in *The Nonviolent Atonement*.[30] Entrance into Weaver's "conversation with Anselm and his defenders"[31] may serve to clarify the place of punishment in Anselm's thought by responding to some of Weaver's critiques of Anselm on that point.

Weaver begins his "conversation" by identifying three basic approaches taken by defenders of Anselmian satisfaction. Some simply attempt to "rehabilitate the ideas of punishment and vicarious suffering."[32] Others try to "shift emphasis away from punishment,"[33] while still others accept "the validity of the critique of punishment by

---

[28] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, Communio Books, 2004), 231; cf. 281-282. The original German text reads: "Schon in ihrer klassischen Gestalt enträt sie nicht der Einseitigkeit. Wenn man sie aber gar in der Vergröberung betrachtet, die sich das allgemeine Bewußtsein weithin geschaffen hat, erscheint sie als grausamer Mechanismus, der uns immer unvollziehbarer wird" (Idem, *Einführung in das Christentum* [Munich: Kösel, 1968], 187).

[29] Rik van Nieuwenhove, "'Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion': Aquinas' Soteriology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, 277-302 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 287.

[30] J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001). Interestingly enough, Weaver harkens back to the work of Aulén by naming his own alternative theory of the atonement "Narrative Christus Victor".

[31] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 179-224.

[32] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 179. Weaver's example of this approach is William C. Placher, "Christ Takes Our Place: Rethinking Atonement," *Interpretation* 53.1 (1999): 5-20.

[33] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 179. Here Weaver cites David Wheeler, "The Cross and the Blood: Dead or Living Images?," *Dialog* 35.1 (1996): 7-13; Thelma Megill-Cobbler, "A Feminist Rethinking of Punishment Imagery in Atonement," *Dialog* 35.1 (1996): 14-20; Leanne Van Dyk, "Do Theories of Atonement Foster Abuse?," *Dialog* 35.1 (1996): 21-25; Nancy J. Duff, "Atonement and the Christian Life: Reformed Doctrine from a Feminist Perspective," *Interpretation* 53.1 (1999): 21-33; Margo G. Houts, "Atonement and Abuse: An Alternative View," *Daughters of Sarah* 18.3 (1992): 29-32.

blaming the excesses on Protestant reformers such as John Calvin and appealing to an earlier, different emphasis in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*."[34]

He then identifies three questions relevant to the debate. The first "concerns the attitude of Jesus toward his role in atonement,"[35] while the second is the related question of "God's agency in Jesus' death."[36] Finally, "a third important point concerns the place of punishment in Anselm's theory."[37] Leaving aside the first two approaches of Anselm's defenders, which are ultimately inadequate, as Weaver correctly points out, as well as the first two questions (in order to come directly to the point), it is only through an egregious misreading of Anselm's text that Weaver is able to dismiss the point made by Pickstock and others in regards to his third question, namely the place of punishment in Anselmian satisfaction.

Considering the length of Weaver's work (246 pages), the radical nature of his proposal (to "abandon satisfaction and Anselmian atonement forthwith"[38]), and the extent to which his conclusion depends upon establishing that all satisfaction theories assume the truth of the formula "justice equals punishment,"[39] it is incredible that he devotes only one short paragraph to proving that Anselm makes this assumption:

> It is following this definition of sin and the need for repayment of the debt to God's honor that Anselm mentions the necessity of punishment. The lead in to his comment about punishment is a statement that it is "not fitting" for God to remit sin "by mercy alone, without any payment for the honor taken away from him." It then follows that "to remit sin in this way is the same thing as not to punish it." This means that satisfying sin is equated with punishing it. "And since to deal rightly with sin without satisfaction is the same thing as to punish it, if it is not punished it is remitted irregularly."[40]

---

[34] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 179. Weaver's example here is Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing on the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 156-157.
[35] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 191.
[36] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 191.
[37] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 191.
[38] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 225.
[39] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 204.
[40] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 192.

On the basis of this reading of Anselm, Weaver concludes that "Anselm considered the punishment of sin necessary," although he admits both that "it is far from his primary focus," and that "he does not say that Christ's death is a punishment."[41]

> Above all there is no indication at all that in the death of Jesus, God is exercising on Jesus the punishment that sinners deserve, or that God is punishing Jesus in place of punishing sinners. The defenders of satisfaction atonement such as Catherine Pickstock, whose strategy is to blame the worst excesses of penal substitution on the Protestant Reformers, particularly John Calvin, and to discover a different emphasis in Anselm are thus quite correct. Anselm did not have a penal substitutionary understanding of vicarious suffering.[42]

Admitting all of this, Weaver still holds that "the understanding that doing justice means inflicting punishment is an assumption that Anselm never doubted."[43] If this is true, no defender of Anselm can do more than "blunt or camouflage the element most offensive to the radical critics of traditional satisfaction atonement, namely its modeling of divinely sanctioned violence."[44]

Critiquing the Critics

For all the weight that Weaver lays upon this assumption, and indeed he returns to it again and again in establishing his conclusion,[45] he has far from adequately demonstrated that such an assumption does in fact exist in Anselm's argument. The lines cited by Weaver are from *Cur Deus homo* I, 12, wherein Anselm begins: "Let us return and see, whether it is becoming for God to dismiss sin by mercy alone without a payment of the entire honor taken away from him," to which Boso's reply, "I do not see why it should not be becoming," elicits this explanation: "To dismiss sin in this way is nothing other than not to punish. And since

---

[41] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 192.
[42] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 192.
[43] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 195.
[44] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 195. The "radical critics" he has in mind are especially, but not limited to, the representatives of Black Theology, Feminist Theology, and Womanist Theology whom he discusses in chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively.
[45] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 195, 201-203, 225.

without satisfaction there is no right ordering of sin except by punishment, if it is not punished, it is inordinately dismissed."[46] This last line, which Weaver himself cites, already indicates that Anselm has in mind two fundamentally different ways in which sin can be dealt with rightly, even though the first half of the line seems to lend itself to Weaver's interpretation, which runs as follows: to dismiss sin without satisfaction is nothing other than not to punish; if no satisfaction is the same as no punishment, then satisfaction is the same as punishment.

The question, however, is how to understand Anselm's "*non est aliud.*" Is he really asserting an identity or equation between satisfaction and punishment here, or is he merely saying that given the absence of satisfaction, a simple amnesty would amount to a failure to punish? In other words, might two distinct ways of restoring justice still be envisaged here, in such a way that given the lack of one (satisfaction), the lack of the other (punishment) would constitute a failure of justice? The second half of Anselm's reply implicitly supports this latter reading: if there is no satisfaction (*sine satisfactione*), then dealing rightly with sin means punishing it. The implication is that if there is satisfaction, then sin is dealt with rightly without punishment. That this is indeed Anselm's meaning can be explicitly verified many times over throughout the rest of his text. For example, Anselm later concludes: "If it is not becoming for God to do something unjust or inordinate, then it does not pertain either to his liberty or to his benignity or to his will, to dismiss unpunished the sinner who does not repay to God that which he took away."[47] If the sinner who has not satisfied may not be dismissed unpunished, the sinner who has satisfied may be.

That satisfaction and punishment are, for Anselm, distinct paths of justice can be seen most clearly in his *nec... nec* and *aut... aut* formulations.[48] For example: "If, however, sin is *neither* paid for *nor*

---

[46] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* I, 12: "**Ans.** Redeamus et videamus, utrum sola misericordia sine omni solutione ablati sibi honoris deceat deum peccatum dimittere. **Boso.** Non video, cur non deceat. **Ans.** Sic dimittere peccatum non est aliud quam non punire. Et quoniam recte ordinare peccatum sine satisfactione non est nisi punire: si non punitur, inordinatum dimittitur."

[47] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* I, 12: "Quapropter, si non decet deum aliquid iniuste aut inordinate facere, non pertinet ad eius libertatem aut benignitatem aut voluntatem, peccantem, qui non solvit deo, quod abstulit, impunitum dimittere."

[48] Nieuwenhove rightly grasps the import of these formulations: "Whereas 'satisfaction' is popularly misunderstood in terms of meeting the demands of vindictive justice (Christ is being punished on our behalf), for Anselm satisfaction

punished, then it is subject to no law."[49] Again, he asks: "Does it seem to you, that he [God] wholly preserves it [his honor], if he thus permits himself to be robbed, such that *neither* is he repaid *nor* does he punish the thief?" After Boso's reply in the negative, Anselm concludes: "It is necessary therefore, that *either* the stolen honor be repaid *or* punishment follow."[50] The disorder caused by sin may be corrected in either of two ways: the sinner may offer satisfaction by rendering to God some honor proportioned to that which he took away by his sin, or, should he fail to do this, God will punish him for his sin. He who satisfies is precisely not punished.[51]

The balancing of the scales of justice is an image which Weaver uses frequently, claiming that for Anselm, as for all satisfaction based atonement theories, the only thing that can be placed in the other side of the scale to balance the weight of sin is punishment: "Restoring justice means balancing the evil of sin on one side with violent punishment on the other side."[52] In fact, however, Anselm clearly holds that there are two distinct possible counterweights to sin: "*satisfactio aut poena.*"[53] Over and against punishment, satisfaction is a distinct means of re-establishing justice. That this also corresponds with reality can be verified through common experience. The man who offends his wife may make up for it by bringing her flowers (satisfaction), or she may make him sleep on the couch (punishment); such an example, moreover, makes it eminently clear that, although a certain equity is re-established in either case, only satisfaction contributes positively toward healing a broken relationship (that is, toward atonement).

Justice may be served by punishment (a strict pacifist may still disagree here with Anselm), but it is not simply equated with

---

rules out punishment: *aut poena aut satisfactio*" (Nieuwenhove, "Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion," 288.

[49] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* I, 12: "Si autem peccatum *nec* solvitur *nec* punitur, nulli legi subiacet" (italics added for emphasis).

[50] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* I, 13: "**Ans.** Videtur tibi, quod eum integre servet, si sic auferri sibi permittet, ut *nec* solvatur *nec* ipse auferentem puniat? **Boso.** Non audeo dicere. **Ans.** Necesse est ergo, ut *aut* ablatus honor solvatur *aut* poena sequatur" (italics added for emphasis).

[51] Cf. Dániel Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 87-90.

[52] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 201; cf. also 195, 225.

[53] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* I, 15.

punishment, and thus Weaver's "inescapable"[54] conclusion turns out to be quite escapable after all. For if "the assumption that doing justice means to punish"[55] is precisely transcended by Anselmian satisfaction, which envisions another and indeed a preferable means of doing justice, then the conclusion which follows from this assumption, namely that "satisfaction atonement *in any form* depends on divinely sanctioned violence,"[56] is simply false, true though it may be in some forms.

Critiquing Anselm

There is, however, a problem still remaining for Anselm. It was not revelation, but his own reasoning that led him to divide punishment from satisfaction. Having set himself the task of arriving at the truths of faith through logical reasoning, he needs to "prove" not only that satisfaction had to be made by a God-man (hence the Incarnation), but also that this satisfaction had to take the form of a most painful death (hence Christ's passion). At this point Anselm's logic becomes less convincing. Since he had already divided punishment off from satisfaction, he has a difficult time re-integrating the painful reality of the cross.

Anselm's first attempt at answering the question as to why Christ's act of satisfaction was such a painful one relies on the typological correspondence between Adam and Christ expounded in the Letter to the Romans (Rom. 5:12-19). The honor rendered to God in satisfaction should correspond to the dishonor done him by Adam's sin. Since Adam brought death upon the world through sin, it is fitting that Christ should free man from sin through death. While such a line of thought is theologically sound, with clear roots in Scripture and a long history amongst the Fathers, it does not quite measure up to Anselm's logical requirements. When he returns to the same question later, he makes a more sustained effort to work out the problem logically: in order to satisfy, Christ must honor God by offering him something that

[54] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 225.
[55] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 203.
[56] Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 203. For a critique of Weaver's work from a different perspective, see Stephan Finlan, *Problems with Atonement: The Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2005), 98-100.

he does not already owe to him; since he is sinless, Christ need not die of debt; but since he is omnipotent, he can die voluntarily; therefore his life is something that can be offered in satisfaction. Furthermore, the unowed gift ought to be something supremely valuable in order to outweigh the grievousness of all human sin; hence it cannot be anything merely human or created, but must be something pertaining to himself; again the his own life presents itself as a fitting gift to be offered in satisfaction.[57]

Anselm's account here focuses above all on two intertwined aspects of the cross. First, as a sinless man, Christ's death is not owed to God, and therefore it can be offered in satisfaction. Secondly, the life given up in this death is the infinitely valuable life of the God-man, and therefore more than sufficiently worthy to counter-balance the infinite weight of sin. That death is penal, that it is necessarily painful, is almost incidental here; and this leaves the extreme pain of death by crucifixion still unexplained. To remedy this, Anselm argues that it would be most fitting, since Adam gave in so easily to the devil, for Christ to conquer the devil only with great difficulty.[58] By introducing the concept of difficulty into satisfaction, Anselm comes close to Thomas's understanding of satisfaction as *pœna secundum quid*, but still falls short of it. Still dividing satisfaction from punishment, Anselm does allow that it would be fitting for satisfaction to be painful, but he does not make the connection that pain is fitting because it is penal.

Conclusion

It can thus be said (*contra* Weaver) that Anselm does not hold the "violent" assumption that justice can only be satisfied by punishment. Anselm insists upon justice, but he clearly envisions satisfaction and punishment as alternative paths of justice, and sharply distinguishes them from one another. This distinction is manifest especially in his repeated "either... or" formulations, and verifiable through common experience. When Anselm does introduce the aspect of "difficulty" into

---

[57] See especially Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* II, 10-18.

[58] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* II, 11: "Si homo per suavitatem peccavit, an non convenit, ut per asperitatem satisfaciat? Et si tam facile victus est a diabolo, ut deum peccando exhonoraret, ut facilius non posset, nonne iustum est, ut homo satisfaciens pro peccato tanta difficultate vincat diabolum ad honorem dei, ut maiori non possit?"

Christ's work of satisfaction, it is revelation that moves him to do so, not a philosophical presupposition about the nature of justice, as Weaver charges him with holding. Anselm wants to work on the basis of logic alone, but his conclusions are predetermined. He already knows by faith what he wants to "prove" by reason, and the New Testament clearly reveals the harsh "difficulty" of Christ's death. This prominent aspect of Christ's work of atonement must be included in Anselm's conclusion, but he is unable to integrate this convincingly into his reasoning on account of his working out of the concepts of satisfaction and punishment only in contra-distinction. Moreover, the penal aspect of Christ's death, according to which the "difficulty" of satisfaction is fitting precisely as a penalty (Is. 53:5), is entirely missing in Anselm's account. Weaver's criticism is misplaced. It is Isaiah the prophet far more than Anselm the scholastic who introduces the penal dimension of Christ's suffering and death. The steps taken later by Aquinas (to include an aspect of punishment in the definition of satisfaction) and the Reformers (to define satisfaction as punishment) address this deficiency in Anselm's work, but with an important difference: Aquinas preserves Anselm's fundamental distinction between satisfaction and punishment even while bringing out the penal aspect of satisfaction, whereas Luther and Calvin wholly eliminate the distinction.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE REFORMATION DOCTRINE OF PENAL SUBSTITUTION

As is clear from the term itself, "penal-substitution" theories of the atonement focus on Christ's endurance of the penalty of sin (penal) in the place of sinners (substitution). One recent definition phrases it this way: "The doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin."[59] Thomas Schreiner's definition is more expansive:

> The Father, because of his love for human beings, sent his Son (who offered himself willingly and gladly) to satisfy God's justice, so that Christ took the place of sinners. The punishment and penalty we deserved was laid on Jesus Christ instead of us, so that in the cross both God's holiness and love are manifested.[60]

Such an account has clear roots in the Scriptures: the cross is presented as a voluntary act of sacrifice; it was offered for man and in man's place; God's "wrath" is appeased (or his justice satisfied); man is freed from sin and reconciled to God. The entire text of Isaiah 53, which clearly implies that Christ bore the punishment of sin for man, also stands behind this presentation.[61] Its emphasis on the aspect of justice in the paying of a debt due on account of sin places it firmly in the "objective" line of interpretation stretching from the Fathers, through

---

[59] Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 21.

[60] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 67-98 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academic, 2006), 67. Further on, Schreiner offers another useful summary: "The penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Sinners deserve eternal punishment in hell from God himself because of their sin and guilt. God's holy anger is directed (Rom. 1:18) against all those who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). And yet because of God's great love, he sent Christ to bear the punishment of our sins. Christ died in our place, took to himself our sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and guilt (Gal. 3:10), and bore our penalty so that we might receive forgiveness of sins" (Ibid., 72-73).

[61] See Chapter 1 above.

Anselm and the medieval scholastics, equally to Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and beyond.[62]

Martin Luther

The origins of the theory of penal substitution, as a distinct model of the atonement, lie in Martin Luther's rallying cry of *justificatio sola fide*.[63] Penal substitution is, so to speak, the other side of the same coin. The "joyous exchange" (Luther's famous *fröhliche Wechsel*) by which the merits of Christ become the merits of the sinner, such that he is regarded as righteous despite his own unrighteousness, and therefore receives salvation as the due reward of righteousness, by the same token implies the transfer of the demerits of sinners to Christ, such that he becomes the worst of sinners despite his own sinlessness, and therefore receives death as the just reward of sin.

Some of Luther's most vivid language regarding Christ as a penal substitute occurs in his commentary on the text of St. Paul which reads: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). After some initial remarks against the standard interpretation of the "popish sophisters,"[64] Luther begins his commentary by highlighting the words "for us": "For he saith not that Christ was made a curse for Himself, but for us. Therefore all the weight of the matter standeth in this word 'for us'."[65] These are the key interpretive words for Luther because he sees in them an expression of that "joyous exchange" of place between Christ and sinners: "Making a happy change with us, He took upon Him our sinful person, and gave unto us His innocent and victorious person."[66] For Luther, the key to

---

[62] See Chapter 2 above.

[63] Timothy George recently remarked that, "One cannot so easily separate Luther's understanding of Christ's work on the cross from his doctrine of justification by faith" (Timothy George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III, 261-278 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academic, 2004), 264.

[64] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, ed. John Prince Fallowes, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics, 1978), 3:13, p. 163.

[65] Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* 3:13, 164.

[66] Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* 3:13, 172.

understanding the death of Christ is to see in it a literal substitution, that is, a literal exchange of places effected between Christ and sinners:

> Our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law, and so to be holden under the same, that we could never be delivered from it of our own power, sent His Only Son into the world, and laid upon Him all the sins of all men, saying, be Thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner who did eat the fruit in Eden; that thief who hanged upon the cross, and briefly, be Thou that person who has committed the sins of all men: see therefore, that thou pay and satisfy for them.[67]

For Luther here, it no longer seems true even to say that Christ died for our sins. The substitution he posits is so radical that our sins appear to become truly Christ's, such that in the end, he really dies for his own sins.

The term "satisfaction" does appear at the end of the text cited above, but the idea is really only peripheral to his thought. When he does use the term, his central idea of substitution inevitably shapes its meaning. Unlike Anselm, therefore, who views satisfaction as an alternative to punishment, it becomes clear in the continuation of Luther's text that he understands it precisely as the bearing of punishment:

> Here cometh the law and saith: I find Him a sinner, and such a one as hath taken upon Him the sins of all men, and I see no sins else but in Him: therefore let Him die upon the cross: and so it setteth upon Him and killeth Him. By this means the whole world is purged and cleansed from sin, and so delivered from death and all evils.[68]

Thus the Baptist theologian Timothy George is correct to pinpoint as a "major divergence" between Anselmian and Lutheran soteriology, "Luther's rejection of Anselm's formulation of *either* punishment *or* satisfaction as a remedy for sin."[69] He proceeds to explain: "The satisfaction Christ offered to the Father on the cross was not in lieu of the penalty owed because of sin. No, it was precisely the penalty (*poena*) itself due to us from God the Judge because of our transgression

---

[67] Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* 3:13, 167-168.
[68] Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* 3:13, 168.
[69] George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," 274.

of his holiness, justice and goodness."[70] On the basis of the complete and literal substitution found at the core of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, Anselm's distinction between satisfaction and punishment is changed into a simple identification.

John Calvin

The next step, both historically and theologically, is taken by John Calvin, in whose writings the theory of penal substitution finds its first systematic expression, although most of the elements are already present in Luther.[71] Calvin's contribution is to incorporate the legal assumption that justice demands the full punishment of sin (Weaver was right to identify this assumption; his mistake lay in attributing it to all satisfaction theories of the atonement). The logic of this assumption, worked out in a straightforward Anselmian manner, ironically leads (*contra* Anselm) to the complete equation of satisfaction and punishment.[72]

In treating of the salvific death of Christ, Calvin emphasizes the trial and condemnation of Jesus before the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate. This is, for Calvin, a "principle point in the narrative," which is meant "to teach us, that the punishment to which we were liable was inflicted on that Just One."[73] Appealing twice to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, Calvin finds expressed in the public and formal condemnation of Christ as a guilty sinner (who is nevertheless innocent) the legal transfer of guilt and punishment onto him: "Our acquittal is in this – that the guilt which made us liable to punishment was transferred to the head of the Son of God (Is. liii. 12)."[74] Thus Pilate seems in a certain sense to

---

[70] George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," 274.

[71] This is not to say that the respective soteriologies of Luther and Calvin are alike in every respect. For Luther, for example, our sins really seem to become Christ's own sins, whereas for Calvin they are merely legally imputed to him.

[72] See Chapter 3, above.

[73] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.5: "Porro quia nos maledictio ex reatu manebat ad coeleste Dei tribunal, primo loco refertur damnatio coram praeside Iudaeae Pontio Pilato: ut sciamus, poenam, cui eramus obstricti, fuisse iusto inflictam." All translations of Calvin's Latin are taken from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1863).

[74] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.5: "Haec nostra absolutio est, quod in caput Filii Dei translatus est reatus, qui nos tenebat poenae obnoxios (Ies. 53, 11.)."

represent God the Father: he knows that Christ is innocent, but nevertheless judges and condemns him to a death among sinners.

Picking up the theme of substitution, Calvin explains the death of Christ in light of the Old Testament sin offerings. He sees these as so many examples of penal substitution, wherein the guilt of the sinner was first laid upon the animal and then the penalty for sin inflicted upon it. Christ the archetype thus made himself "a propitiatory victim for sin... on which the guilt and penalty being in a manner laid, ceases to be imputed to us."[75] For Scriptural support Calvin appeals most frequently to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, but also to 2 Cor. 5:21, Rom. 8:3, Gal. 3:13, and 1 Pet. 2:24 – a set of verses now standard in positive expositions of penal substitution.

A legal perspective, meanwhile, is clear throughout: God is "a just judge" who "cannot permit his law to be violated with impunity, but is armed for vengeance."[76] Christ is placed before Pilate "as a criminal at the bar"[77] and likewise "felt himself standing at the bar of God as a criminal in our stead."[78] Trained as a lawyer, Calvin gives Luther's concept of substitution a decidedly legal aspect: the guilt of mankind is legally imputed to Christ, whom God the judge therefore punishes in our stead, imputing Christ's justice, meanwhile, to sinners. Here again lies the connection between penal substitution and forensic justification.

Finally, it should be asked how Calvin understands the idea of satisfaction, a word which occurs frequently in his treatment of Christ's death. One example can be found in the following exhortation to preachers, which is also a fine summary of his doctrine of penal substitution:

> But again, let him [an ordinary sinner] be told, as Scripture teaches, that he was estranged from God by sin, an heir of wrath, exposed to the curse of eternal death, excluded from all hope of salvation, a

---

[75] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.6: "Quare, ut iusta expiatione defungeretur, animam suam *Ascham* impendit, hoc est satisfactoriam peccati hostiam (ut inquit Propheta Ies. 53, 5. 10.), in quam reiecta quodammodo macula et poena, nobis desinat imputari."

[76] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.1: "Qui ut est iustus iudex, non sinit impune Legem suam violari, quin ad vindictam armatus sit."

[77] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.5: "Verum ubi reus ad tribunal sistitur, testimoniis arguitur et premitur, ipsius iudicis ore morti addicitur: his documentis intelligimus ipsum personam sontis et malefici sustinere."

[78] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.12: "Respondeo hoc fuisse exordium, unde colligi potest quam diros et horribiles cruciatus perpessus fuerit, quum se ad tribunal Dei reum stare cognosceret nostra causa."

> complete alien from the blessing of God, the slave of Satan, captive under the yoke of sin; in fine, doomed to horrible destruction, and already involved in it: that then Christ interposed, took the punishment upon himself, and bore what by the just judgment of God was impending over sinners; with his own blood expiated the sins which rendered them hateful to God, by this expiation satisfied and duly propitiated God the Father, by this intercession appeased his anger, on this basis founded peace between God and men, and by this tie secured the Divine benevolence toward them.[79]

In contrast to Anselm, punishment and satisfaction are here set in apposition rather than opposition. It is precisely by bearing the punishment hanging over sinners that Christ satisfies and propitiates the Father. There is no longer a question of choosing between satisfaction and punishment (*aut satisfactio aut pœna*) as alternative paths of justice. Satisfaction is punishment (*satisfactio est pœna*), and justice has no choice but to exact it. Calvin, like Luther before him, has fully replaced the Anselmian *aut...aut* with a simple *est*.

Difficulties

A recent work entitled *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (2007) collects no fewer than twenty-eight objections leveled against penal substitution in a rising tide of criticism, the rhetorical peak of which was surely reached in the accusation that it depicts the crucifixion as "a form of cosmic child abuse."[80] Many if not most of the objections fall away under the scrutiny of the authors, but a few bear closer examination. One such

---

[79] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.2: "Verum audiat rursum quod Scriptura docet, se alienatum fuisse a Deo per peccatum, haeredem irae, mortis aeternae maledictioni obnoxium, exclusum ab omni spe salutis, extraneum ab omni benedictione Dei, Satanae mancipium, sub peccati iugo captivum, horribili denique exitio destinatum et iam implicitum: hic Christum deprecatorem intercessisse, poenam in se recepisse ac luisse, quae ex iusto Dei iudicio peccatoribus omnibus imminebat: mala, quae Deo exosos illos reddebant sanguine suo expiasse: hoc piaculo satisfactum ac rite litatum Deo Patri esse: hoc intercessore iram eius fuisse placatam: hoc fundamento pacem Dei cum hominibus esse subnixam: hoc vinculo benevolentiam illius erga ipsos contineri."

[80] Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 182. For a reply to this charge see D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 185-187; *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 228-233.

objection states: "It is unjust to punish an innocent person, even if he is willing to be punished."[81] Analytic philosopher Eleonore Stump argues this objection as follows:

> [Penal substitution] seems not to emphasize God's justice but to rest on a denial of it. For all the talk of debt is really a metaphor. What (P) is in fact telling us is that any human being's sins are so great that it is a violation of justice not to punish that person with damnation. What God does in response, however, is to punish not the sinner but a perfectly innocent person instead (a person who, even on the doctrine of the Trinity, is not the same person as God the Father, who does the punishing). But how is this just?[82]

Christ's innocence is clearly attested in Scripture (Jn. 8:46; 1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26), as is God's justice (1 Pet. 2:23; Rom. 3:25). If the objection stands, then penal substitution falls; and the objection, moreover, seems to be supported not only by natural moral reason, but also by divine revelation: "The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ez. 18:20).[83] The authors reply by appealing to the concept of Christ's representation in order to explain how our sins really become Christ's on account of our union with him in faith; but the balance that they attempt to strike between representation (we in Christ) and substitution (Christ instead of us) is at best unconvincing. Unable to integrate the two concepts, they are forced to alternate between them: at the moment of judgment and condemnation Christ is our representative (but not our substitute); while at the moment of execution he is our substitute (but not our representative).[84]

Another difficulty that often arises within penal substitution theories comes to light in the objection which states: "Penal substitution

---

[81] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 240. The authors treat this objection as advanced by Tom Smail, "Can One Man Die for the People?," in *Atonement Today*, ed. John Goldingay, 73-92 (London: SPCK, 1995), 85.

[82] Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 428. This objection will have to be readdressed in the context of Thomas's doctrine of vicarious satisfaction in order to show the extent and limitations of its validity.

[83] Cf. Deut. 24:16; 2 Kg. 14:6; Jer. 31:29-20. See also, however, the seemingly contradictory thought expressed in Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9.

[84] See Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 240-249.

does not work, for the penalty Christ suffered was not equivalent to that due to us."[85] In the words of Stump:

> [Penal substitution] claims that in his suffering and death on the cross Christ paid the full penalty for all human sin so that humans would not have to pay it; and yet it also claims that the penalty for sin is everlasting damnation. But no matter what sort of agony Christ experienced in his crucifixion, it certainly was not (and was not equivalent to) everlasting punishment, if for no other reason than that Christ's suffering came to an end.[86]

Faced with this objection, the proponent of penal substitution has two options: either to argue that the penalty really was equivalent, or to grant that it was not and explain why penal substitution works nevertheless. The authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions* take the latter route, explaining that although the infinite gravity of sin demands an infinite punishment, the finitude of Christ's punishment is compensated by the infinite dignity of his person. Interestingly enough, by placing the positive value of Christ's personal dignity in the scales of justice to counter-balance the negative value of sin this comes very close to the position of Anselm (and Thomas).

Calvin, on the other hand, immediately takes the other option. The logical outworking of the assumption condemned by Weaver and asserted by the authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, namely that "the severity of punishment must be in proportion to the seriousness of the crime,"[87] leads easily to the conclusion that "Christ must not only suffer for many people; he must suffer an infinite punishment, for this is what our sins deserve."[88] Carried through in a simple linear fashion, the logic at work here demands the eternal damnation of Christ. Calvin sees this immediately, which explains the central place that he gives to the credal statement that Christ descended into hell. Its place literally is central: the chapter of Calvin's *Institutes* (II, 16) which contains his account of the redemption is divided into nineteen sections, of which only two deal directly with the death of Christ, while fully five are given to his descent into hell; moreover, these five sections are located precisely in the middle of the chapter, and it is the third of these that

---

[85] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 265.
[86] Stump, *Aquinas*, 429.
[87] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 266.
[88] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 266.

contains Calvin's positive interpretation of the descent. His own words confirm the centrality of this article: "Here we must not omit the descent to hell, which was of no little importance to the accomplishment of redemption."[89] This article contains "a matter of great importance which ought not by any means to be disregarded,"[90] and "the place which it holds in a summary of our redemption is so important, that the omission of it greatly detracts from the benefit of Christ's death."[91]

Why is Christ's descent into hell so important? "Nothing had been done," writes Calvin, "if Christ had only endured corporeal death. In order to interpose between us and God's anger, and satisfy his righteous judgment, it was necessary that he should feel the weight of divine vengeance."[92] Appealing again to Isaiah 53, he holds that Christ "undertook and paid all the penalties which must have been exacted from them [sinners], the only exception being, that the pains of death could not hold him."[93] He concludes: "Hence there is nothing strange in its being said that he descended to hell, seeing he endured the death which is inflicted on the wicked by an angry God."[94] In short, if the punishment inflicted by God on sinners is not only physical death but also damnation, then Christ satisfies the demands of justice only if he both dies and descends into hell. The *descensus* article of the Creed, which Calvin sees as occurring virtually in Christ's agony in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:38-44) and in his abandonment on the cross (Mt. 27:46), is meant "to teach us that not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of redemption, but that there was a greater and more

---

[89] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.8: "Nec vero descensum ad inferos omittere convenit, in quo ad redemptionis effectum non parum est momenti."

[90] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.8: "In tractanda tamen doctrinae summa locum ei dari necesse est, utpote quae rei maximae utile ac minime spernendum mysterium continet."

[91] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.8: Si quos porro impedit morositas, ne in Symbolum admittant, mox tamen planum fiet, tanti interesse ad redemptionis nostrae summam, ut ea praeterita multum ex mortis Christi fructu depereat.

[92] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.10: "Nihil actum erat, si corporea tantum morte defunctus fuisset Christus: sed operae simul pretium erat, ut divinae ultionis severitatem sentiret, quo et irae ipsius intercederet, et satisfaceret iusto iudicio."

[93] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.10: "Quibus significat, in locum sceleratorum sponsorem, vadem, adeoque instar rei submissum, qui dependeret ac persolveret omnes, quae ab illis expetendae erant, poenas: uno hoc duntaxat excepto, quod doloribus mortis non poterat detineri."

[94] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.10: "Ergo si ad inferos descendisse dicitur, nihil mirum est, quum eam mortem pertulerit, quae sceleratis ab irato Deo infligitur."

excellent price – that he bore in his soul the tortures of condemned [*damnati*] and ruined [*perditi*] man."[95] Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), one of the most prominent Catholic theologians of the twentieth-century, takes this line of thought to its utmost point. For him, the redemptive suffering of Christ continues and is even increased on Holy Saturday. While his body lay in the darkness and silence of the tomb, Christ suffered in his soul all the pains of the damned, and indeed his pain even surpassed theirs in a horrific, unmediated *visio mortis*, a direct vision of death itself somehow analogous to the beatific vision of God enjoyed by the blessed in heaven.[96]

At this point, another objection becomes a real problem, namely that "Penal substitution implies a division between the persons of the Trinity."[97] The authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions* are able to deal with this easily on account of their prior decision to grant the inequality of Christ's sufferings with those due to sinners. Such a decision is commendable not only because it does not allow the logical progression of ideas from an assumed principle to dominate over

---

[95] Calvin, *Institutiones* II, 16.10: "ut sciamus non modo corpus Christi in pretium redemptionis fuisse traditum, sed alius maius et excellentius pretium fuisse, quod diros in anima cruciatus damnati et perditi hominis pertulerit." Cf. Luther's *Commentary on Romans* 2:18, wherein he writes that Christ "really and truly offered Himself to the Father for eternal punishment on our behalf. His human nature behaved as if He were a man to be eternally condemned to Hell" (cited in Anthony W. Bartlett, *Cross Purposes: The Violent Grammar of Christian Atonement* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2001], 90).

[96] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), 168-176. For a thorough-going critique of Balthasar's *descensus* theology in light of traditional Catholic teaching, see Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); for the lively debate that ensued in the Journal *First Things*, see Alyssa Lyra Pitstick and Edward T. Oakes, "Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy: An Exchange," *First Things* (December 2006): 25-32; Pitstick and Oakes, "More on Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy," *First Things* (January 2007): 16-19; Avery Dulles et al., "Responses to Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy," *First Things* (March 2007).

[97] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 279. For the effect of Balthasar's soteriology upon his understanding of the Trinity see Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 120-132; Idem, "Balthasar on Christ's Consciousness on the Cross," *The Thomist* 65 (2001): 567-581; David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune* God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131-150.

revelation and reality, but also because the alternative ends up in the worst tangle of contradictions. The essential punishment of hell, deeper than its fiery flames, is the state of separation from God (Mt. 25:41; Lk. 13:27; 14:24; Rev. 22:15). If Christ suffered this, one can only choose between a Nestorian schism between the divine and human natures of Christ, such that his humanity alone experienced damnation, and an Arian schism between Father and Son, such that the Son was really abandoned by the Father.

A further challenge to penal substitution is posed by a dilemma which manifests itself through the objection that states: "Penal substitution implies universal salvation, which is unbiblical."[98] It is again Stump who advances this argument:

> [Penal substitution] maintains that Christ pays the penalty for all sin in full so that humans do not have to do so. But it is a fundamental Christian doctrine that God justly condemns some people to everlasting punishment in hell. If Christ has paid the penalty for sin completely, how is God just in demanding that some people pay the penalty again?[99]

The authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions* grant Stump's reasoning, but dispute her premise that Christ died for all men rather than only for the elect. They escape the charge of universalism by turning to the doctrine of particular redemption or limited atonement, one of the five canons of Calvinism defined by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) against the Arminians.[100] Those who maintain the belief that Christ died for all men (1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:14-15) are driven back again toward universal salvation.[101]

---

[98] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 268.

[99] Stump, *Aquinas*, 429.

[100] It is the "L" of the English language acrostic TULIP: Total Depravity; Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement; Irresistible Grace; and the Perseverance of the Saints.

[101] The existence of such a dilemma may also shed further light on Balthasar's apparent tendency toward universalism.

Conclusion

Most concisely formulated, the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution states that Christ was punished with the punishment with which sinners deserved to be punished so that they could escape that punishment. Such an interpretation of Christ's saving death begins with clear roots in the Scriptures, and is right to include penalty for sin in its understanding of the cross of Christ. Shaped by Luther's idea of radical substitution, however, and by Calvin's legal assumption that justice demands strict and full punishment for sin, the penal aspect of the cross comes to dominate over everything else. Moreover, this replacement of Anselm's distinction between punishment and satisfaction with a simple equation raises serious difficulties: first, at the level of natural moral reasoning, it seems manifestly unjust for a judge to inflict punishment on an innocent person in place of the guilty; secondly, at the properly theological level, it can be objected that Christ did not really suffer the full punishment that sinners deserved because he did not (and could not) suffer the pains of damnation; to those who simply reply that he did, it can be further objected that this can only imply an Arian view of the Trinity or a Nestorian Christology; finally, the dilemma which forces one to choose between either universalism or a limited atonement (together with the double predestination that this entails) seems inescapable on the penal substitutionary account of the atonement.

CHAPTER FIVE: ST. THOMAS ON SATISFACTION

Turning at last to the writings of Thomas Aquinas, it is interesting to note that the authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions* do not hesitate to align Thomas and Calvin on facing pages in their survey of the "historical pedigree"[102] of penal substitution, whereas on the contrary Romanus Cessario claims that, "Aquinas offers no support for those who would advance a theory of penal substitution as the mechanism by which the benefits of Christ reach the human race."[103] In order to locate Thomas's doctrine of Christ's work of satisfaction correctly in relation to the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution (and to Anselm's doctrine of satisfaction), it is necessary first of all to examine his texts on satisfaction with a view toward its relation to punishment. Although satisfaction is only one of ten reasons that Thomas offers for the supreme suitability of the Incarnation as the means of human salvation, it occupies an especially important place in the economy of salvation as the divinely willed solution to the problem of sin.[104] As such, Thomas's doctrine of salvation *per modum satisfactionis* presupposes and depends upon his understanding of sin and its effects; and indeed, it is in Thomas's discussion of the threefold effect of sin – the corruption of the good of nature, the stain of sin, and the debt of punishment – that he most fully sets forth his understanding of satisfaction in relationship to punishment.

---

[102] Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 184-185. For proof of Thomas's penal substitutionary view of the atonement the authors cite Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 3; q. 48, a. 4. Cf. also Aaron Milavec, *Salvation Is from the Jews: Saving Grace in Judaism and Messianic Hope in Christianity* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2007), 63: "[W]hen it came to considering the Passion he [Thomas] slipped entirely into the path of penal substitution that Anselm had trod before him."

[103] Cessario, "Aquinas on Christian Salvation," 124. Cf. Idem, *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from Anselm to Aquinas*, Studies in Historical Theology, Vol. 6 (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1989), xvii, 157.

[104] For this reason, Romanus Cessario identifies satisfaction as the "principle or key-notion in Christian salvation.... [T]he actual economy of salvation, marked as it is by human sin and frustration, requires that the theologian locate the satisfaction of Christ as the Archimedean point of the new dispensation" (Cessario, "Aquinas on Christian Salvation," 126).

The Effects of Sin

The first effect of sin which Thomas takes up is the corruption of the good of nature (*corruptio boni naturæ*), which is caused by every sin (whether original or actual). The good of nature is threefold. It consists firstly in the principles of human nature and its powers, such as the intellect and will, which are neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. The natural inclinations of the human powers toward virtue, however, were permanently damaged by the original sin and are further diminished by every actual sin, but they are never entirely destroyed. In the intellect, this wound of sin is called ignorance; in the will, malice; in the irascible appetite, weakness; and in the concupiscible, concupiscence. Finally, the original justice that was bestowed on man at his creation as a good of nature was entirely destroyed by the original sin.[105] The loss of original justice and the consequent bodily corruption ending in death therefore belong more properly to the consideration of the penal effect of sin than to the corruption of the good of nature. When Thomas refers to the corruption of the good of nature, he speaks above all of the wounded will, a wound able to be healed only by grace, and only fully in the state of glory.[106]

A second effect of sin is its stain (*macula peccati*), which refers metaphorically to the loss of grace caused by mortal sin, and so is to be understood privatively rather than as something positive existing in the soul. This stain remains even when the act of sin has passed away. Since the soul is "darkened" when it turns away from the "light" of divine grace (and also from the natural light of reason), the sinner's soul remains darkened or stained until he returns to the divine light, which is not accomplished by the mere the cessation of sin, but requires the infusion of grace together with a movement of the will away from sin and back toward God.[107]

Finally, the debt of punishment (*reatus pœnæ*) refers to the fact that every sin makes the sinner deserving of punishment. In response to

---

[105] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 85, aa. 1-3, 5.

[106] See, for example, Thomas's summary of the effects of sin in *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 109, a. 7.

[107] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 86, aa. 1-2. For a consideration of the free motion of the will against sin and toward God (by formed faith) as man's necessary co-operation with prevenient sanctifying grace in the process of justification see Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 113, aa. 1-5.

sin, which is a disordered act that introduces a certain inequality, punishment maintains order by restoring the equality of justice. According to Thomas:

> The act of sin makes a man deserving of punishment insofar as he transgresses the order of divine justice, to which he does not return except through some recompense of punishment, which restores the equality of justice, namely so that he who indulged his will more than he ought to, acting against the command of God, should, according to the order of divine justice, suffer, willingly or unwillingly, something contrary to that which he would want.[108]

It befits the divine justice that every sin should be punished in some way, but the kind of punishment which is due to him on account of his sin varies according to the will of the sinner, that is, depending on whether he suffers willingly or unwillingly. As long as he resists his punishment it is simply penal, but if he accepts and embraces it, it becomes the means of his liberation from sin. The unrepentant sinner, who is still stained by his sin, suffers unwillingly. As long as his disordered will clings to sin it remains disordered and hence he continues to remain liable to punishment, even eternally: "The duration of the punishment answers to the duration of the fault, not indeed on the part of the act, but on the part of the stain; with this enduring, the debt of punishment remains."[109] As long as the *macula peccati* remains, that is, the disordered condition of being turned away from God and outside of the light of his grace, the *reatus pœnæ* also remains. These two effects of sin are closely connected.

Things stand quite differently, however, for those who have been cleansed of sin by grace. The will infused with charity loves God for his own sake, and therefore also hates sin and loves justice. Hence the

---

[108] Aquinas *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 6: "Actus enim peccati facit hominem reum pœnæ inquantum transgreditur ordinem divinæ justitiæ; ad quem non redit nisi per quamdam recompensationem pœnæ, quæ ad æqualitatem justitiæ reducit, ut scilicet qui plus voluntati suæ indulsit quam debuit, contra mandatum Dei agens, secundum ordinem divinæ justitiæ aliquid contra illud quod vellet, spontaneus vel invitus patiatur" (all translations of Thomas's Latin are my own). For his treatment of the justice of punishment, see Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 140-146.

[109] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 4, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod duratio pœnæ respondet durationi culpæ, non quidem ex parte actus, sed ex parte maculæ, qua durante manet reatus pœnæ."

cleansing of the stain of sin does not occur without the sinner in some sense willing his own punishment:

> Whence the stain of sin cannot be removed, unless the will of man accept the order of divine justice, namely that either he himself should spontaneously take upon himself a punishment in recompense for his previous fault, or likewise endure patiently one inflicted by God. For in both ways punishment has the account of satisfaction.[110]

It is at this point that Thomas introduces the key distinction between *pœna simpliciter* (punishment) and *pœna secundum quid* (satisfaction), the distinction in light of which Thomas's texts on Christ's work of satisfaction must be read if they are to be interpreted correctly. He continues:

> Satisfactory punishment [*pœna satisfactoria*], however, diminishes something of the account of punishment. For it belongs to the account of punishment that it should be against the will. Satisfactory punishment, however, although it is against the will according to an absolute consideration, it is nevertheless voluntary then and there. Whence it is voluntary *simpliciter*, but involuntary *secundum quid*, as is clear from the things which were said above about the voluntary and the involuntary. Therefore it is to be said that, with the stain of sin having been removed, a debt can indeed remain, not of punishment simply speaking [*pœna simpliciter*], but of satisfactory punishment [*pœna satisfactoria*].[111]

This distinction is the key to understanding Thomas's doctrine of vicarious satisfaction and therefore also the key to distinguishing it from the similar accounts offered by Anselm and the later Reformers. Understanding this text, however, requires familiarity with the

---

[110] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 6: "Unde macula peccati ab homine tolli non potest, nisi voluntas hominis ordinem divinæ justitiæ acceptet, ut scilicet vel ipse sibi pœnam spontaneus assumat in recompensationem culpæ præteritæ, vel etiam a Deo illatam patienter sustineat. Utroque enim modo pœna rationem satisfactionis habet."

[111] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 6: Pœna autem satisfactoria diminuit aliquid de ratione pœnæ. Est enim de ratione pœnæ quod sit contra voluntatem. Pœna autem satisfactoria, etsi secundum absolutam considerationem sit contra voluntatem, tamen tunc et pro hoc est voluntaria. Unde simpliciter est voluntaria, secundem quid autem involuntaria, sicut patet ex his quæ supra de voluntario et involuntario dicta sunt. Dicendum est ergo quod, remota macula culpæ, potest quidem remanere reatus, non pœnæ simpliciter, sed satisfactoriæ."

difference between something which is said *simpliciter* and something which is said *secundum quid*, for which Thomas refers the reader to his prior discussion of volition and involition in actions.

In considering actions done out of fear, such as when sailors jettison their cargo for fear that the ship may otherwise sink, Thomas concludes that such actions are voluntary *simpliciter*. That is, in the actual situation of a dangerous storm the sailors really do want to throw their cargo overboard; although *secundum quid*, that is, in a certain respect or according to a certain abstract consideration, the sailors certainly do not want to lose their cargo. In the concrete case their action is voluntary; it is only in abstracting the action from the real situation that the (nonetheless real) involuntary aspect of their action appears.[112] Similarly, it is only in abstracting the work of satisfaction from the concrete circumstances that the (also very real) aspect of punishment appears, for punishment is by definition against the will, whereas satisfaction is voluntary.[113] Hence, as long as the stain of sin remains, punishments are inflicted on the sinner against his will; yet when he turns and embraces his punishment out of love for divine justice, with the stain of sin wiped away by grace, his punishment is transformed into satisfaction. In the former case, the effect of sin is a *reatus pœnæ simpliciter*; in the latter only a *reatus pœnæ satisfactoriæ* remains.

The precise relationship between satisfaction and punishment can be further refined in reference to Thomas's statement that the account of satisfaction is found both in punishments spontaneously taken upon oneself, and in punishments inflicted by God but patiently endured. In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Thomas distinguishes between these, calling the former properly "satisfaction" and the latter more precisely "purgation".[114] The complete picture, therefore, divides *pœna*,

---

[112] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 6, a. 6: "Sed si quis recte consideret, magis sunt hujusmodi voluntaria quam involuntaria; sunt enim voluntaria simpliciter, involuntaria autem secundum quid. Unumquodque enim simpliciter esse dicitur secundum quod est in actu, secundum autem quod est in sola apprehensione non est simpliciter, sed secundum quid."

[113] For Thomas's definition of punishment and his division of evil into *malum pœnæ* and *malum culpæ*, see Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I, q. 48, a. 5.

[114] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 158, n. 5. What Thomas has in mind here as works of satisfaction are especially the traditional Christian penitential practices of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 15, q. 1, a. 4c; cf. also *Summa theologiæ* II-II, qq. 32, 83, 147). Purgative punishments are the "scourges by which we are punished by God in this life" (Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 15, q. 1, a.

taken in its generic meaning as "pain", which is something that is against the will according to an abstract consideration, first into *pœna simpliciter* (punishment) and *pœna secundum quid* (satisfaction in the wider sense), on the basis of whether or not it is against the will in the concrete circumstances; *pœna secundum quid* is then subdivided into *pœna satisfactoria* (satisfaction properly speaking), and *pœna purgatoria* (purgation) on this basis: in the former case the pain is self-assumed; in the latter it is accepted from God.

The Nature of Satisfaction

It is already clear from the foregoing that the act of satisfaction is formally an act of justice, and that it is both penal, although in a diminished sense, and voluntary. First of all, at the formal level, satisfaction aims to give to the other what is due to him in compensation for the prior offense. It belongs at the most general level to commutative justice, which is concerned with equality between individual persons.[115] More specifically, satisfaction belongs to vindictive justice (taken in its general sense), which moderates the restoration of equality presupposing the inequality of a prior offense.[116] This equalization, however, can happen in different ways. When a judge simply punishes an offender, his act of punishing belongs properly to the virtue of vindictive justice, for he renders to the offender what is due to him, namely punishment. If, on the other hand, the offender wills to make amends by voluntarily compensating the offended one for his injury, his act of satisfying belongs to the virtue of penance, which is a species of justice, for he renders to the offended what is due to him, namely compensation.[117] Justice is done in either case, but the agent and patient of the act differ: in simple punishment, the judge renders what is due to the offender, whereas in satisfaction, the offender renders what is due to the offended. Formally speaking, "satisfaction is compensation for an

---

4b), as well as, of course, the pains of Purgatory after this life (Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 21, q. 1, a. 3b).

[115] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* II-II, q. 61, a. 1.

[116] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 15, q. 1, a. 1b.

[117] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 85, a. 3, ad 3: "aliquid pro offensa in alterum commissa vel invitus punitur, quod pertinet ad vindicativam justitiam, vel voluntarie recompensat emendam; quod pertinet ad pœnitentiam quæ respicit personam peccatoris, sicut justitia vindicativa personam judicis."

inflicted injury according to the equality of justice."[118] Thomas explicitly agrees with Anselm here, who defines satisfaction as rendering due honor to God, with respect to past sin. The definition which Thomas gives within his treatise on the passion of Christ is essentially the same, but highlights the highly personal nature of the justice involved in satisfaction: "He properly satisfies for an offense who offers to the one offended something which he loves as much or more than he hated the offense."[119] The equality established here is not between two externally measurable quantities, but between the internal measure of the offended party's displeasure in the offense and the measure of his pleasure in the compensatory gift.

At the formal level, then, Thomas understands the act of satisfaction in a way similar to Anselm. Thomas, however, insists that the act must also be materially painful. Satisfaction is still a kind of *pœna*, even if only *secundum quid*, and this is necessary in order for a man to be fully liberated from sin. The conversion from sin to God takes place primarily in the will, which must renounce sin in order to be free of it. This, however, is something that fallen man cannot do without the aid of divine grace wiping away the stain of sin and justifying him; but he must also cooperate with this grace through free acts of the will whereby he moves toward God by an act of formed faith and away from sin by an act of penance, which hates sin out of love for God and includes both sorrow over past sin with the purpose of amendment. Satisfaction is precisely the exterior act of the virtue of penance which accomplishes this interior intention, and it does so in two ways corresponding to the twofold purpose of amendment: to make up for past sin and to avoid sin in the future.[120] In order to accomplish each of these ends, works of satisfaction must be penal.

---

[118] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 15, q. 1, a. 1c: "et sic dicitur, quod satisfactio est injuriae illatae recompensatio secundum justitiae aequalitatem; et in idem dicitur redire definitio anselmi, qui dicit, quod satisfacere est deo debitum honorem impendere, ut consideretur debitum ratione culpae commissae. "

[119] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 2: "Dicendum quod ille proprie satisfacit pro offensa qui exhibet offenso id quod æque vel magis diligit quam oderit offensam."

[120] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 85, a. 3: "pœnitentia non habet quod sit virtus specialis ex hoc solo quod dolet de malo perpetrato, ad hoc enim sufficeret charitas, sed ex eo quod pœnitens dolet de peccato commisso inquantum est offensa Dei cum emendationis proposito. Emendatio autem offensæ contra aliquem commissæ non fit per solam cessationem offensæ, sed exigitur ulterius quædam recompensatio..."

First of all, as regards compensation for past sin, it is necessary for works of satisfaction to be penal because, "although nothing can be taken away from God, so far as it is on his part; nevertheless, the sinner, so far as it is in him, deprives him of something by sinning," namely of the honor due to him, "and therefore for a work to be satisfactory, it must be good in order to honor God, and it must be penal in order to withdraw something from the sinner."[121] An act of satisfaction must render something good to God. This is the formal aspect of satisfaction, of giving to God what is due to him with respect to previous sin. That this must also deprive the sinner of something good pertains to the material aspect of satisfaction, without which the act is incomplete. The sinner must render some good to God in such a way as to deprive himself of some good, so that by taking a penalty upon himself in this way the sinner also renders to himself what is due on account of his sin; and indeed, "in this way he will be established totally apart from disorder."[122] Secondly, acts of satisfaction should be penal in order to prevent future sins: "a man does not easily return to sins, from which he has experienced punishment."[123] Justice seeks not only to restore equality, but to preserve it. Satisfaction brings to completion the conversion of the will whereby it renounces sin and clings to God, and so it is fitting that, as the turning of the will away from God and toward lower goods was characterized by a certain pleasure, so this contrary motion should embrace something painful.[124]

---

[121] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 15, q. 1, a. 4a: "deo autem quamvis quantum ex parte sui est, nihil subtrahi possit; tamen peccator, quantum in ipso est, aliquid ei subtraxit peccando... et ideo ad hoc quod aliquod opus sit satisfactorium, oportet quod sit bonum, ut in honorem Dei sit; et poenale, ut aliquid peccatori subtrahatur."

[122] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 158, n. 4: "sed peccator peccando contra ordinem divinitus institutum facit, leges dei praetergrediendo. est igitur conveniens ut hoc recompenset in seipso puniendo quod prius peccaverat: sic enim totaliter extra inordinationem constituetur."

[123] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, dist. 15, q. 1, a. 4a: "quia non facile homo ad peccata redit, ex quo poenam expertus est." Thomas thus combines the definitions of satisfaction given by Augustine, who regards it as preventative of future sin, and Anselm, who regards it as curative of past sin. See Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, dist. 15, q. 1, a. 1c.

[124] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 158, n. 1: "unde oportet quod per contraria voluntas recedat a peccato his per quae in peccatum inclinata fuit. fuit autem inclinata in peccatum per appetitum et delectationem circa res inferiores. oportet igitur quod a peccato recedat per aliqua poenalia, quibus affligatur propter hoc quod

This necessarily penal element of satisfaction is precisely what Anselm left out of account in his theoretical outworking of the concepts of satisfaction and punishment only in contra-distinction (*aut satisfactio aut pœna*). Thomas's account more clearly corresponds to reality on this point – to say nothing of revelation – for although the basic distinction between bringing flowers to an offended wife and being made to sleep on the couch is a valid one, and hence satisfaction and punishment are not to be equated, it is also true that the flowers would not easily be accepted if they cost nothing, whether in time spent gathering them or in money spent buying them.

Pain is a necessary element of the act satisfaction, but it is from charity that the act derives its power. Thomas explicitly refers to the pain endured in satisfaction as the *quasi* matter of the act, whose principle is charity:

> Satisfaction... indeed has as its *quasi* matter the pains which one endures... But it has for a principle the habit of soul from which it is inclined toward willing to satisfy..., and from which satisfaction has efficacy; for satisfaction would not be efficacious unless it proceeds from charity.[125]

As has been seen already, Thomas's distinction between satisfaction and punishment hinges on the volition of the pain suffered in each case, and this means that satisfaction must flow from love, for "it is manifest that what we do out of love we do most willingly."[126] The virtue of charity must inform the virtue of justice, such that charity directs the act of satisfaction to the higher end of friendship. The act is elicited by the virtue of justice and hence aims immediately at the restoration of equality, but it is commanded by the virtue of charity and receives thereby a further ordination to the reconciliation of friendship.[127] In

---

peccavit: sicut enim per delectationem tracta fuit voluntas ad consensum peccati, sic per poenas confirmatur in abominatione peccati."

[125] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 1: "Ad primum dicendum quod satisfactio pro peccato alterius habet quidem quasi materiam pœnas quas aliquis pro peccato alterius sustinet. Sed pro principio habet habitum animæ ex quo inclinatur ad volendum satisfacere pro alio, et ex quo satisfactio efficaciam habet; non enim esset satisfactio efficax nisi ex caritate procederet."

[126] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 114, a. 4: "Similiter etiam manifestum est quod id quod ex amore facimus, maxime voluntarie facimus."

[127] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, d. 15, q. 1, a. 1b, ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod satisfactio, ut ex dictis patet, est quaedam injuriae illatae recompensatio. unde

satisfaction, writes Thomas, "it is not only the reintegration of the equality of justice that is sought, as in vindictive justice; but more the reconciliation of friendship."[128] As such, the act of satisfaction cannot achieve its ultimate goal of friendship with God unless it proceeds from charity, for charity is the love of friendship.

In the case of congruous satisfaction, such as a mere man offers to God, in which strict equality cannot be achieved, but only a proportional equality according to God's acceptance, it is only charity, as the principle of the act, that allows the act itself to attain its end. Merely human acts of satisfaction, both as good and as penal, cannot achieve equivalence with respect to an offense against God. As proceeding from charity, however, they are acceptable to God and thus suffice for satisfaction:

> In satisfaction it is necessary that, with friendship having been restored, the equality of justice should be restored, "the contrary of which undoes friendship," as the philosopher says in *Ethics* 8. But the equality in satisfaction made to God is not according to equivalence, but rather according to his acceptance, as was said; and therefore it is also necessary that, if an offense should be already dismissed through previous contrition, satisfactory works are accepted by God, and this is given by charity; and therefore works done without charity are not satisfactory.[129]

---

sicut injuria illata immediate ad inaequalitatem justitiae pertingebat, et per consequens ad inaequalitatem amicitiae oppositam; ita et satisfactio directe ad aequalitatem justitiae perducit, et ad aequalitatem amicitiae ex consequenti. et quia actus aliquis elicitive ab illo habitu procedit ad cujus finem immediate ordinatur, imperative autem ab illo ad cujus finem ulterius tendit; ideo satisfactio elicitive est a justitia, sed imperative a caritate."

[128] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 90, a. 2: "Dictum est autem supra, quod alio modo fit recompensatio offensæ in pœnitentia, et in vindicativa justitia. Nam in vindicativa justitia fit recompensatio secundum arbitrium judicis, non secundum voluntatem offendentis vel offensi; sed in Pœnitentia fit recompensatio offensæ secundum voluntatem peccantis, et secundum arbitrium Dei in quem peccatur, quia hic non quæritur sola redintegratio æqualitatis justitiæ, sicut in justitia vindicativa; sed magis reconciliatio amicitiæ, quod fit dum offendens recompensat secundum voluntatem ejus quem offendit."

[129] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, dist. 15, q. 1, a. 3b: "'in satisfactione oportet quod, amicitia restituta, justitiae aequalitas restituatur, "cujus contrarium amicitiam solvit, ut philosophus in 8 ethic. dicit. 'aequalitas autem in satisfactione ad deum non est secundum aequivalentiam, sed magis secundum acceptionem ipsius, ut est dictum; 'et ideo oportet quod et si jam offensa sit dimissa per praecedentem contritionem, opera satisfactoria sint deo accepta, quod dat eis caritas; et ideo sine caritate opera facta non

In the case of condign satisfaction, perfect equivalence is achieved between offense and compensatory offering. Here also, however, charity remains indispensible. Only as proceeding from charity is the act of perfect satisfaction able to attain its further end of reconciliation; and the act itself is ever more pleasing, and hence still more fully makes compensation, the more it proceeds from charity. This is why Thomas writes repeatedly that the act of satisfaction derives its power and efficacy from its principle, from charity. Because the equality which satisfaction seeks to restore according to justice is between persons, and ordered toward reconciliation, it must be measured in personal terms much more than in merely numerical terms. The worth of the compensatory offering itself is not measured simply in itself but in the pleasure which the offended party takes in it, and this increases in proportion to the love with which it is offered. The wife in our mundane domestic example will always look first at the measure of love expressed by her husband through the flowers before looking at their cost, and will accept them even if they fall short of strict equivalence if his love is great; whereas, if he buys the flowers merely out of obligation (without love) they will not suffice to restore their broken friendship no matter how costly.

With respect to satisfaction, therefore, Thomas considers not only the worth of the compensatory gift – the formal element of satisfaction – as Anselm had done, nor only the pain endured as punishment for sin – the material element of satisfaction – as the Reformers would do, but also and even above all at the charity from which the act of satisfaction flows as from its principle, and from which it chiefly derives its power.

---

sunt satisfactoria." In light of Thomas's later discussion of congruous and condign merit, one could also say that such congruous satisfaction is also condign to the extent that it proceeds from supernatural grace and charity. See Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 114, a. 3: "Si autem loquamur de opere meritorio secundum quod procedit ex gratia Spiritus sancti, sic est meritorium vitæ æternæ ex condigno. Sic enim valor meriti attenditur secundum virtutem Spiritus sancti moventis nos in vitam æternam, secundum illud *Joan., Fiet in eo fons aquæ salientis in vitam æternam.* Attenditur etiam pretium operis secundum dignitatem gratiæ, per quam homo consors factus divinæ naturæ adoptatur in filium Dei, cui debetur hæreditas ex ipso jure adoptionis, secundum illud *Rom., Si filii, et hæredes.*"

Implications for Penal Substitution

Two important implications of Thomas's distinction between *pœna simpliciter* (punishment) and *pœna secundum quid* (satisfaction) present immediate contrasts between his doctrine of vicarious satisfaction and the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution. These implications, which appear together in the text below, concern the transferability and the required degree of pain in punishment and satisfaction respectively:

> But as regards satisfaction of a debt, one is able to satisfy for another, provided that he is in charity, so that his works can be satisfactory. Nor is it necessary that a greater punishment should be imposed on him who satisfies for another, than would have been imposed on the principal, as some say, moved by this reasoning: that one's own punishment satisfies more than another's; because punishment has its power of satisfying maximally by reason of the charity by which a man endures it. And since greater charity appears in one man satisfying for another than if he himself were to satisfy, therefore less punishment is required of him who satisfies for another than would be required of the principal.[130]

As regards the transferability of satisfaction, then, since the penalty in this case is by definition voluntarily assumed, there is nothing to prevent someone who did not sin from taking a penalty upon himself for another out of love.[131] This is possible, according to Thomas, "because friendship makes two [persons] one through affection, and especially through the love of charity."[132] On account of the union of charity between two friends, the satisfaction made by one on the other's behalf really becomes in a way also the act of the other, for charity regards a

---

[130] Aquinas, *In IV sententiarum*, dist. 20, q. 1, a. 2c: "sed quantum ad satisfactionem debiti unus potest pro alio satisfacere, dummodo sit in caritate, ut opera ejus satisfactoria esse possint. nec oportet quod major poena imponatur ei qui pro altero satisfacit, quam principali imponeretur, ut quidam dicunt, hac ratione moti, quia poena propria magis satisfacit quam aliena; quia habet vim satisfaciendi, maxime ratione caritatis qua homo ipsam sustinet. et quia major caritas apparet in hoc quod aliquis pro altero satisfacit quam si ipse satisfaceret; ideo minor poena requiritur in eo qui pro altero satisfacit, quam in principali requireretur."

[131] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 7: "Et quia contingit eos qui differunt in reatu pœnæ esse unum secundum voluntatem unione amoris, inde est quod interdum aliquis qui non peccavit, pœnam voluntarius pro alio portat."

[132] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 158, n.7: "quia amicitia ex duobus facit unum per affectum, et praecipue dilectio caritatis."

friend as another self and suffers with the suffering friend: "and thus punishment is not lacking to him, as long as he suffers with his suffering friend; and so much the more fully as he himself is the cause of his suffering."[133] Punishment properly speaking, however, is simply not transferable: "If, in truth, we speak about *pœna simpliciter* inasmuch as it has the account of punishment, then it is always ordered toward one's own sins."[134] Again, Thomas writes: "But if we speak about punishment inflicted for sin, insofar as it has the account of punishment, then each one is punished only for his own sin, for the act of sin is something personal."[135] One may satisfy for another's sins, but one may not be punished for another's sins.

At this point it is to possible to return to one of the objections against penal substitution discussed earlier in order to see how Thomas's doctrine of vicarious satisfaction avoids some of the difficulties into which the Reformation doctrine falls. In summary form, the objection states: "It is unjust to punish an innocent person, even if he is willing to be punished."[136] Beginning from the revealed fact that Christ endured the penalty for our sins (Is. 53:5), penal substitution theorists often fall into serious difficulties by working out the implications of that truth along the lines of *pœna simpliciter*. While there is nothing at all contrary to justice in one man voluntarily taking upon himself a certain penalty in order to satisfy for another's sin, it would be manifestly unjust for a judge to inflict a punishment upon an innocent man no matter how willing he is to accept it. The point at issue is the agent of the act. As an act of vindictive justice, punishment belongs to the judge, while satisfaction belongs to the penitent as an act of the virtue of penance. Hence, whereas it is an act of virtue to take a penalty upon oneself in order to satisfy for a friend, it would be nonetheless vicious for a judge to inflict a penalty upon the innocent in place of the guilty, even if the innocent party were willing to accept it. Since satisfaction is made by the voluntary assumption of penal works, there can be no question of injustice on the part of the judge, who

---

[133] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 158, n. 7: "et sic poena ei non deest, dum patienti amico compatitur; et tanto amplius, quanto ipse est ei causa patiendi."

[134] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 7: "Si vero loquamur de pœna simpliciter secundum quod habet rationem pœnæ, sic semper habet ordinem ad culpam propriam."

[135] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 8: "Si autem loquamur de pœna pro peccato inflicta inquantum habet rationem pœnæ, sic solum unusquisque pro peccato suo punitur, quia actus peccati aliquid personale est."

[136] See page 34, above, n. 81.

merely accepts the voluntary offering of the innocent friend as sufficient and therefore inflicts no punishment on the guilty (nor indeed on anyone). Penal substitution theories go astray precisely when they regard Christ's death as a punishment actively inflicted on him by God the Father, rather than as a voluntary act of satisfaction on the part of Christ, which is permitted and accepted by the Father.

In this connection, a question also arises concerning the use, prevalent among proponents of penal substitution, of the image of divine wrath poured out upon Christ as he hung upon the cross. The "wrath" of God is a common biblical metaphor which refers to his punitive or vindictive justice. Because one who inflicts pain on another appears to be wrathful, God is metaphorically said to be wrathful when he punishes. As applied to God, "wrath" signifies only the act of vengeance and not the movement of an inner passion, for he is impassible. According to the primary signification of God's wrath, however, which is his active infliction of punishment according to vindictive justice, it is entirely inappropriate and even impossible to speak about God's wrath being poured out upon Christ, for this would make the Father the active punisher of Christ and the agent of his death. When Balthasar, for example, asserts that, "The cup mentioned on the Mount of Olives is God's cup of wrath, often referred to in the Old Covenant, filled with the wine of his anger,"[137] and that Christ "has diverted onto himself all the anger of God at the world's faithlessness,"[138] and again that "God unloaded his wrath upon the Man who wrestled with his destiny on the Mount of Olives and was subsequently crucified,"[139] he seems to make the Father active in the infliction of vindictive punishment upon Christ.[140] This is unthinkable

---

[137] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodrama IV: The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994), 338. The original German text reads: "Der Kelch, von dem am Ölberg die Rede ist, ist der im Alten Bund oft erwähnte Zorneskelch Gottes, gefüllt mit seinem Zornwein..." (Idem, *Theodramatik III: Die Handlung* [Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1980], 315).

[138] Balthasar, *Theodrama IV*, 343. In the original: "Es hat diesen ganzen Zorn über die Untreue der Welt auf sich abgelenkt..." (Idem, *Theodramatik III*, 319).

[139] Balthasar, *Theodrama IV*, 345. In the original: "Kann man ernstlich von einer Entladung des Zornes Gottes über den am Ölberg Ringenden, dann Gekreuzigten sprechen? Man muß es..." (Idem, *Theodramatik III*, 322).

[140] See also the entire section entitled: "The Cup of Wrath" (Balthasar, *Theodrama IV*, 338-351); "Der Taumelkelch" (Idem, *Theodramatik III*, 315-327). Thomas, on the other hand, interprets the "chalice" of Christ (Mt. 20:22-23; 26:39; Mk. 10:38-39; 14:36; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 18:11) not as the cup of divine wrath mentioned so often in the

from Thomas's point of view, according to which the wrath of God is appeased by Christ's sacrifice. Wrath that is "appeased" or "propitiated" is precisely not poured out, but rather assuaged. A wrathful person is appeased when his anger is calmed, not when it is unleashed in all its fury, whether upon the guilty or the innocent.

The second implication of Thomas's key distinction between punishment and satisfaction regards the degree of pain demanded by justice in each case, which diminishes in reverse proportion to its volition. In the case of involuntary punishment the degree of pain is simply measured against the gravity of the sin. Ultimately this means that the punishment inflicted by vindictive justice on the unrepentant sinner is the infinite pain of the loss of the beatific vision corresponding to the infinite gravity of sin in its aspect of aversion from God, together with the intense, yet ultimately finite, pain of sense corresponding to the gravity of sin in its aspect of conversion to lower goods.[141] Although the will remains disordered, God preserves the order of justice by inflicting involuntary pain on the will which voluntarily seeks only its own pleasure. In voluntary satisfaction, however, the equality of justice is restored in a different manner, that is, in a manner ordered toward the further end of friendship. As has already been seen, the act of satisfaction derives its efficacy from charity, which orders the act toward the higher goal of friendship, and makes the act itself more pleasing and acceptable to the one offended, such that less pain suffices for satisfaction when it is offered out of a greater love. Since the order of justice is restored above all through the interior re-ordering of the will toward God by acts of charity and penance, the need for exterior acts of satisfaction may even be removed, should charity be strong enough:

Old Testament (Is. 51:17, 22; Jer. 13:13; 25:15-17, 27ff.; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7; Ez. 23:32-34; Hab. 2:15-16; Obad. 16; Zech. 12:2; Ps. 79:9; Lam. 4:21) but as the "chalice of salvation" (Ps. 116:13), that is, the passion itself, which is called a chalice "because it has sweetness from the charity of the one suffering, but bitterness from its own nature; just as healing medicine is sweet on account of the hope of health, but bitter on account of its taste" (Aquinas, *Super Evangelium Ioannis*, cap. 18, lec. 2: "dicitur autem passio calix, quia ex caritate patientis dulcedinem habet, sed ex natura sua amaritudinem; sicut et medicina sanativa, propter spem sanitatis dulcis est, sed amara propter saporem").

[141] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 87, a. 4. *In IV sententiarum*, dist. 50, q. 2.

> Whence through the vehemence of love of God, and hatred of former sin, the necessity for satisfactory or purgatorial punishment is excluded: and, if the vehemence be not such as to totally exclude punishment, nevertheless, however vehement it is, by so much does less punishment suffice.[142]

According to the respective degrees of charity manifested therein, works of satisfaction voluntarily assumed require less pain than is inflicted by purgatorial scourges patiently accepted, both of which pale in comparison to the pains of real punishment inflicted on unrepentant sinners.

Another objection against penal substitution was summarized in this way: "Penal substitution does not work, for the penalty Christ suffered was not equivalent to that due to us."[143] Here again, the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution falls into difficulties by working out the implications of Christ's penal suffering along the lines of *pœna simpliciter*. Despite a clear recognition of the voluntary nature of Christ's assumption of the penalty for sin, Calvin, for example, fails to note the implications of this volition for the degree of pain required of Christ for the act of satisfaction. He treats the debt of punishment paid by Christ as if it were a *reatus pœnæ simpliciter*, rather than a *reatus pœnæ satisfactoriæ*, and so assumes that the weight of Christ's pain must correspond to the weight of mankind's sin. Thomas and Calvin agree that Christ suffered the punishment due to mankind on account of human sin. The crucial difference is that Thomas understands this as the punishment which a repentant mankind would still have been obliged to undergo in satisfaction, whereas Calvin understands it as the punishment due to unrepentant sinners. This is the point of departure for the idea that Christ must have suffered even damnation in order to satisfy fully for the sins of the world. On this account, the formal cause of salvation *per modum satisfactionis* is simply Christ's pain, whereas for Thomas it is the gift of Christ's life offered out of charity.

---

[142] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 158, n. 6: "unde per vehementiam dilectionis dei, et odii peccati praeteriti, excluditur necessitas satisfactoriae vel purgatoriae poenae: et, si non sit tanta vehementia quod totaliter poenam excludat, tamen, quanto vehementius fuerit, tanto minus de poena sufficiet."

[143] See page 35, above, n. 85.

Conclusion

Thomas's distinction between *pœna simpliciter* and *pœna satisfactoria* (as a kind of *pœna secundum quid*), according to which punishment is the infliction of pain against the will of the sinner whereas satisfaction is the penitent's voluntary undertaking of a good work which is penal in itself, leads to two important conclusions about the respective natures of satisfaction and punishment. First, although satisfaction must be accomplished by means of penal works, the element of pain is merely the *quasi* matter of the act, whereas its formal part is the gift offered in compensation, while the charity which informs the act is the principle from which it receives its power of satisfying. The magnitude of pain required for satisfaction thus decreases in proportion to the increase of charity, for the compensatory gift offered out of a greater love makes the offering itself more pleasing and acceptable to the one offended and thus serves to restore broken friendship and reconcile friends. Secondly, insofar as two persons are united in charity, one can satisfy for the sins of the other, whereas one cannot be punished (simply speaking) for the sins of another. Eleonore Stump's arguments are therefore directed against the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution precisely to the extent that Christ appears therein to endure mankind's punishment in the full and proper sense (that is, *pœna simpliciter*), whereas they present no difficulty for Thomas's doctrine of *pœna satisfactoria*.

It is precisely the understanding of satisfaction as a kind of *pœna secundum quid*, as outlined in the preceding chapter, that Thomas consistently applies in his interpretation of the saving passion of Christ. The fundamental distinction between satisfaction and simple punishment lies in the volition of the act, that is, the extent to which the act is freely willed. If Christ's death on the cross is a work of satisfaction (as opposed to punishment, or even purgation), then before all else it must be perfectly voluntary, freely willed and chosen.

Causes and Necessity of the Incarnation

The third part of the *Summa theologiæ* is wholly taken up with the question of human salvation, treating first of the Incarnation of Christ in itself (qq. 1-26), and then of his life and death (qq. 27-59).[144] An incomplete treatise on the sacraments (qq. 60-90) follows, which would have been followed in turn by a consideration of the last things.

The idea of satisfaction comes to the fore almost immediately in the very first question, which treats of the *convenientia* (fitness or suitability) of the Incarnation, wherein Thomas defends from the outset the eminently voluntary character of the Incarnation itself, refusing to indulge in speculation as to whether the Son of God would have become man even had man not sinned. As something springing solely from the freedom of the divine will, without any intrinsic necessity, God's choice to become incarnate is known to us only by divine revelation. Thomas therefore concludes: "Whence, since in sacred Scripture the reason for the Incarnation is everywhere assigned to the sin of the first man, it is more fitting to say that the work of the Incarnation was ordained by God

---

[144] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, procemium. An example of Thomas's remarkable attention to numerical symbolism can be seen in the choice of thirty-three questions dedicated to the life of Christ, at the end of which Thomas dedicates seven questions (qq. 46-52) to Christ's ultimate humiliation, and then again seven questions (qq. 53-59) to his glorious exaltation, according to the pattern of the great Pauline text: "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" (Phil. 2:8-9).

as a remedy for sin, such that, without sin, the Incarnation would not have happened."[145]

Again defending the freedom and power of God, Thomas explains that the Incarnation, taken as a remedy for sin, may not be understood as necessary for the restoration of fallen mankind in the sense that this end could not have been achieved without it: "For God by his omnipotent strength could have repaired human nature in many other ways."[146] A means to an end may, however, be relatively necessary when it allows one to reach the desired end more suitably and easily, "as a horse is necessary for a journey."[147] In this relative sense, Thomas concludes that, "it was necessary for God to become incarnate in order to repair human nature."[148] Thomas then proceeds to list ten distinct ways in which the Incarnation appears as a most suitable means to the end of human salvation,[149] the last of which introduces the necessity (relative, not absolute) of satisfaction for the liberation of mankind from servitude:

> Which indeed, as Augustine says in *de Trinitate* XIII, "ought to have been done thus that the devil should be overcome by the justice of the man Jesus Christ," which was done by Christ satisfying for us. A pure man, however, could not satisfy for the whole human race; but

---

[145] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 3: "Unde, cum in sacra Scriptura ubique incarnationis ratio ex peccato primi hominis assignetur, convenientius dicitur incarnationis opus ordinatum esse a Deo in remedium peccati, ita quod, peccato non existente, incarnatio non fuisset."

[146] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 2: "Deus enim per suam omnipotentem virtutem poterat humanam naturam multis aliis modis reparare."

[147] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 2: "alio modo, per quod melius et convenientius pervenitur ad finem, sicut equus necessarius est ad iter." Thomas's example could perhaps be updated to say that an airplane is necessary for a trans-oceanic journey. Such a necessity is only relative inasmuch as, strictly speaking, one could take a boat, or even swim.

[148] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 2: "Secundo autem modo necessarium fuit Deum incarnari ad humanæ naturæ reparationem."

[149] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 2. The Incarnation established faith, raised up hope, excited charity, offered an example of right action, and conferred a participation in the divine nature; it taught man not to prefer the demons to himself, and how unworthy of him is his sin; it did away with human presumption, humbled man's pride, and freed man from the servitude of sin. Nor does such a list exhaust the advantages that accrue to man through the Incarnation, many of which are even above human comprehension.

> God did not owe satisfaction; whence it was necessary for Jesus Christ to be God and man.[150]

In this brief paragraph Thomas seems to repeat the basic argument of Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*: satisfaction is necessary for salvation; only a God-man can satisfy; hence the necessity of the Incarnation.[151] Thomas explains further that perfect (or condign) satisfaction, which makes a fully adequate compensation for the fault, could not have been made by a mere man for two reasons:

> [B]ecause the entire human nature was corrupted through sin; nor could the good of some one person, or even of many, by comparison compensate for the detriment of the whole nature. Then also because a sin committed against God has a certain infinity from the infinity of the divine majesty, for an offense is as much graver, as the one offended is greater. Whence it was necessary, for condign satisfaction, that the action of the one satisfying should have an infinite efficacy, namely as being of God and man.[152]

The similarity to Anselm's thought which is clearly evident here remains somewhat superficial inasmuch as the framework of necessity within which the argument occurs is quite different. In Anselm's texts, God appears bound by an order of justice higher than himself. He must save mankind; but he may not do so without satisfaction; therefore he must become incarnate in order to offer satisfaction. For Thomas, on the other hand, God freely chose to save man; he chose not to do this without satisfaction; and so he chose to become incarnate. The

---

[150] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 2: "Quinto, ad liberandum hominem a servitute. Quod quidem, ut Augustinus dicit, *fieri debuit sic ut diabolus justitia hominis Jesu Christi superaretur*. Quod factum est Christo satisfaciente pro nobis. Homo autem purus satisfacere non poterat pro toto humano genere; Deus autem satisfacere non debebat. Unde oportebat Deum et hominem esse Jesum Christum."

[151] Cf. also Aquinas, *Compendium theologiæ* I, cap. 200; *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7.

[152] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2: "Ad secundum dicendum quod aliqua satisfactio potest dici sufficiens dupliciter. Uno modo, perfecte, quia est condigna per quandam adæquationem ad recompensationem commissæ culpæ. Et sic hominis puri satisfactio sufficiens esse non potuit, quia tota natura humana erat per peccatum corrupta; nec bonum alicujus personæ vel etiam plurium poterat per æquiparantiam totius naturæ detrimentum recompensare. Tum etiam quia peccatum contra Deum commissum quandam infinitatem habet ex infinitate divinæ majestatis; tanto enim offensa est gravior quanto major est ille in quem delinquitur. Unde oportuit, ad condignam satisfactionem, ut actio satisfacientis haberet efficaciam infinitam, utputa Dei et hominis existens."

Incarnation appears as springing voluntarily from divine freedom and love rather than as compelled by divine justice. From all eternity, the Triune God voluntarily willed the course of satisfaction.

The Son of God also voluntarily took upon himself the means of making satisfaction by assuming a human nature (since man had sinned, it was fitting that man should satisfy), together with certain perfections of grace, knowledge, and power, as well as certain defects of body and soul. Regarding these defects, Thomas's guiding principle is their ordination to the end of salvation. He argues that it was fitting for Christ to assume a human nature subject to bodily defects such as infirmity, passibility, and mortality for three reasons, the first of which is that these things are ordered toward the end of salvation as providing for the *quasi* matter of satisfaction: "But one satisfies for the sin of another when he takes upon himself the punishment (*pœna*) due to the sin of the other. But corporal defects of this kind, namely death, hunger and thirst, and such things, are the punishment (*pœna*) of sin..."[153] Here it is important to recall that in the context of satisfaction the *pœna* due to sin must be understood as a *pœna satisfactoria* rather than a *pœna simpliciter*. Hence the punishment of sin in this case includes pains of sense (and ultimately bodily death), but not pains of loss (ultimately, spiritual death).[154] It is in keeping with the nature of satisfaction that Christ should be perfect in knowledge and virtue, especially charity, from which principle satisfaction has its efficacy, but it was also necessary, "that his body should have been subject to infirmities, in order that the matter of satisfaction should not be lacking to him."[155]

---

[153] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 14, a. 1: "Unus autem pro peccato alterius satisfacit dum pœnam peccato alterius debitam in seipsum suscipit. Hujusmodi autem defectus corporales, scilicet mors, fames et sitis, et hujusmodi, sunt pœna peccati..."

[154] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 1, a. 4, obj. 2: "Sed Christus venit pro satisfactione peccatorum pœnam sensus pati in cruce, non autem pœnam damni, quia nullum defectum habuit divinæ visionis aut fruitionis." Cf. *Compendium theologiæ* I, cap. 226: "non igitur christus illos defectus assumere debuit quibus homo separatur a deo, licet sint poena peccati, sicut privatio gratiae, ignorantia et huiusmodi. per hoc enim minus idoneus ad satisfaciendum redderetur; quinimmo ad hoc quod esset auctor humanae salutis, requirebatur ut plenitudinem gratiae et sapientiae possideret, sicut iam dictum est. sed quia homo per peccatum in hoc positus erat ut necessitatem moriendi haberet, et ut secundum corpus et animam esset passibilis, huiusmodi defectus christus suscipere voluit, ut mortem pro hominibus patiendo genus humanum redimeret."

[155] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 1: "Et ideo oportuit animam Christi perfectam esse quantum ad habitus scientiarum et virtutum, ut haberet facultatem

Turning to consider what defects of soul Christ assumed together with human nature, Thomas first considers and rejects sin: "it is manifest that he [Christ] ought not to have assumed the defect of sin," and first of all because "sin does nothing for satisfaction; indeed, it impedes the power of satisfaction: because, as it is said (Ecclus. 34:23), 'the Most High does not approve of the gifts of the iniquitous.'"[156] Even the *fomes* of sin, that is, the habitual inclination toward sin, is excluded from Christ as being, *inter alia*, non-ordainable to the end of salvation *per modum satisfactionis*; whereas such defects of soul as passibility, sensible pain (*dolor sensibilis*), and spiritual sorrow (*tristitia*) are found in Christ.[157] Christ's spiritual perfections of grace and charity provide the principle of satisfaction, while for the sake of its matter he is voluntarily subject to every defect (of body and soul) that allows him to suffer without compromising the perfection of his grace and virtue. By freely co-assuming these defects of human nature, that is, by voluntarily taking them upon himself, the suffering and death that come upon him on their account already appear as voluntary.

Causes and Necessity of the Passion

When he comes at last to consider the passion of Christ in itself, Thomas first returns to the question of necessity, emphasizing again that the only necessity at work in the passion of Christ, as in the Incarnation, is that which arises from the desired end, and even this is only a relative necessity, not an absolute necessity. That Christ had to suffer for man's salvation indicates only that salvation could not otherwise be obtained so well or fittingly. It does not indicate that there was any kind of

---

satisfaciendi; et quod corpus ejus subjectum esset infirmitatibus, ut ei satisfactionis materia non deesset."

[156] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 15, a. 1: "Secundum quæ tria manifestum est quod defectum peccati assumere non debuit. Primo enim, peccatum nihil operatur ad satisfactionem; quinimmo virtutem satisfactionis impedit: quia, ut dicitur *Eccl. dona iniquorum non probat Altissimus.*" Cf. *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 15, a. 1, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod Christus sua tentatione et passione nobis auxilium tulit, pro nobis satisfaciendo. Sed peccatum non cooperatur ad satisfactionem, sed magis ipsam impedit, ut dictum est. Et ideo non oportuit ut peccatum in se haberet, sed quod omnino esset purus a peccato; alioquin pœna quam sustinuit fuisset sibi debita pro peccato proprio."

[157] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 15, aa. 2, 4-6.

compulsion at work, neither on the part of God who could have saved man otherwise, nor on the part of Christ as man, who suffered voluntarily.[158] In this connection, Thomas offers a most interesting reply to the objection which argues that neither God's mercy nor his justice seem to require that Christ should suffer for the salvation of mankind. According to his justice God could have simply abandoned mankind to the eternal damnation that his sins merited; and according to his mercy he could have forgiven man's sins without demanding payment. Here again is an important correction of Anselm, who truly seems to restrict God's mercy by obliging him to demand payment, whether by punishment or satisfaction, of the debt incurred by man through sin. On the contrary, Thomas holds that:

> [E]ven this justice depends upon the divine will requiring satisfaction for sin from the human race. For if God had willed to free man from sin without any satisfaction, he would not have acted against justice... For God has not another superior, but is himself the supreme and common good of the entire universe. And therefore if he dismisses sin, which has the account of a fault from the fact that it is committed against himself, he injures no one: just as any man who remits an offense committed against himself without satisfaction acts mercifully and not unjustly.[159]

Thomas then explains that God's choice to require satisfaction for man's salvation is fitting (*conveniens*) both in terms of his justice and his mercy. The justice manifested by God in requiring satisfaction for sins is clearly greater than if he had merely granted a complete amnesty, but this, according to Thomas, "was of a more abundant mercy than if he had dismissed sins without satisfaction."[160] Counter-intuitive though

---

[158] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 1.

[159] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 2, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod hæc etiam justitia dependet ex voluntate divina, ab humano genere satisfactionem exigente pro peccato. Nam si voluisset absque omni satisfactione hominem a peccato liberare, contra justitiam non fecisset... Sed Deus non habet aliquem superiorem, sed ipse est supremum et commune bonum totius universi. Et ideo si dimittat peccatum, quod habet rationem culpæ, ex eo quod contra ipsum committitur, nulli facit injuriam: sicut quicumque homo remittit offensam in se commissam absque satisfactione, misericorditer et non injuste agit."

[160] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod hominem liberari per passionem Christi conveniens fuit et misericordiæ et justitiæ ejus. Justitiæ quidem, quia per passionem suam Christus satisfecit pro peccato humani

such an assertion is, Thomas explains how the demand for satisfaction manifests an even more abundant mercy when he considers "whether there was any way more fitting for the liberation of the human race than through the passion of Christ."[161] Thomas first recalls that there is more to salvation than just liberation from sin, and that the passion of Christ is a most fitting means of salvation for many reasons beyond this alone.[162] Also in regard to liberation from sin, however, Thomas writes that God's choice to require satisfaction redounds to the "greater dignity of man, so that as man had been conquered and deceived by the devil, so it should be a man who conquered the devil; and as man had merited death, so a man should conquer death by dying."[163] The passion of Christ is thus a most fitting means of salvation, and of liberation from sin in particular; and thus it is that God shows a more abundant mercy in liberating man from sin by means of satisfaction rather than amnesty, for Christ's satisfaction bestows on man the dignity of being able to participate in righting his wrongs.

Thomas next considers the very sufferings (*passiones*) of Christ themselves, and especially their extremity. Here again, although the generality and magnitude of Christ's suffering (evident in Scripture) is everywhere viewed as befitting such a great work of satisfaction, Thomas is careful to point out that the very least suffering of Christ, as the act of one who is both God and man, would have been enough in strict justice to satisfy for all man's sins.[164] That he went so far beyond

---

generis; et ita homo per justitiam Christi liberatus est... et hoc fuit abundantioris misericordiæ quam si peccata absque satisfactione dimisisset."

[161] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 3: "utrum fuerit aliquis modo convenientior ad liberationem humani generis quam per passionem Christi."

[162] The passion of Christ, *inter alia*, demonstrates such a great love that it provokes men to love God in return; it sets an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and many other virtues necessary for salvation; it merits grace and glory for man; it impresses upon man the gravity of sin and the need to avoid it.

[163] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 3: "Quinto, quia hoc ad majorem dignitatem hominis cessit, ut sicut homo victus fuerat et deceptus a diabolo, ita etiam homo esset qui diabolum vinceret; et sicut homo mortem meruit, ita homo moriendo mortem superaret."

[164] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 5, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod secundum sufficientiam una minima passio Christi suffecisset ad redimendum genus humanum ab omnibus peccatis..." Cf. *Compendium theologiæ* I, cap. 231: "erat siquidem quaelibet passio eius, quantumcumquae minima, sufficiens ad redimendum humanum genus, si consideretur dignitas patientis. quanto enim aliqua passio in personam digniorem infertur, tanto videtur maior iniuria: puta si quis percutiat

this, suffering every kind of sin (taken generically[165]) with maximum intensity, highlights again the eminently voluntary character of his suffering, and hence the superabundance of divine love. God could have saved man without demanding any satisfaction, yet out of a greater mercy chose to manifest a more severe justice; even then the demands of this stricter justice would have been met by the least suffering of Christ, yet again out of an even greater love he chose to manifest a justice still more severe, proportioning not only the infinite dignity of the one suffering to the infinite offense of sin, but also the magnitude of his suffering to the magnitude of its fruit, which is the redemption of the whole human race.[166] The magnitude of Christ's pain is not firstly demanded by justice, but rather chosen voluntarily by a love which manifests itself in a severe justice undergirded by an ever greater mercy.[167]

In speaking of the magnitude of Christ's pain, both sensible (*dolor*) and interior (*tristitia*), both of which were indeed maximal, Thomas includes an important qualification, adding: "among the sorrows of this present life." In other words:

> [T]he pain of suffering separated souls pertains to the state of future damnation, which exceeds every evil of this life, just as the glory of the saints exceeds every good of the present life. Whence, when we

---

principem quam quam si percutiat quendam de populo. cum igitur christus sit dignitatis infinitae, quaelibet passio euis habet infinitam existimationem, ut sic sufficeret ad infinitorum peccatorum abolitionem."

[165] That is, he suffered at the hands of Jews and gentiles (Romans); men and women; princes, servants, and friends; he suffered in the loss of every kind of good, and was afflicted in every part of his body, etc.; see Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 5.

[166] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 6: "et ideo tantam quantitatem doloris assumpsit, quæ esset proportionata magnitudini fructus qui inde sequebatur."

[167] Cf. Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 3, ad 1: "In quo ostenditur et *Dei severitas*, qui peccatum sine pœna dimittere noluit: quod significat Apostolus dicens, *Proprio Filio suo non pepercit*; et bonitas ejus in eo quod cum homo sufficienter satisfacere non posset per aliquam pœnam, quam pateretur, ei satisfactorem dedit: quod signavit Apostolus dicens, *Pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum*; et dicit, *Quem*, scilicet Christum, *proposuit Deus propitiatorem per fidem in sanguine ipsius*." Thomas holds firmly that both justice and mercy appear in every act of God toward his creatures, for "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ps. 25:10); "But the work of divine justice always presupposes the work of mercy, and is founded upon it" (Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I, q. 21, a. 4: "Opus autem divinæ justitiæ semper præsupponit opus misericordiæ, et in eo fundatur").

> say that Christ's pain is maximal, we do not compare it to the pain of separated souls.[168]

Here again Thomas insists on restricting the sufferings of Christ to pains of sense and explicitly excludes pains of loss. Satisfaction offered to God must be acceptable to him. The suffering caused by the loss of spiritual goods such as grace and virtue is in no way pleasing to God, and thus would actually impede the work of satisfaction.[169]

When Thomas comes to consider the causes of the passion of Christ, he is careful to strike a delicate balance: on the one hand, according to the very nature of satisfaction, he must maintain that Christ voluntarily took his sufferings upon himself, which is, moreover, clearly attested in Scripture: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn. 10:17-18); on the other hand, he must neither make Christ guilty of suicide, nor excuse the sin of those who participated in putting him to death (Jn. 19:11). He must similarly safeguard the voluntary nature of Christ's act while still holding that it was also an act of obedience to the Father, which is also clear from the continuation of the above passage of John's Gospel: "This charge I have received from my Father" (Jn. 10:18; cf. Phil. 2:8).

First and foremost, Christ's death was directly caused by his executioners, and by willing to kill him they sinned grievously.[170] Christ was also the cause of his own death, but only indirectly: "Namely, because he did not prevent it, although he could have prevented it."[171] Christ as God had the power to prevent men from attempting to hurt him, and even his human soul had such complete power over his body that it could have prevented it from suffering injury from the blows

---

[168] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod dolor animæ separatæ patientis pertinet ad statum futuræ damnationis, quæ excedit omne malum hujus vitæ, sicut sanctorum gloria excedit omne bonum præsentis vitæ. Unde cum dicimus Christi dolorem esse maximum, non comparamus ipsum dolori animæ separatæ."

[169] Thomas holds firmly that Christ in his higher reason enjoyed the uninterrupted bliss of the beatific vision throughout his whole life including even his passion and death; he did not, however, allow this bliss to overflow into his lower powers because he willed to suffer the pains proper to the work of satisfaction. See Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, aa. 7-8.

[170] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, aa. 1, 4-6.

[171] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 1: "Alio modo dicitur aliquis causa alicuius indirecte, scilicet quia non impedit, cum impedire possit..."

inflicted on it: "Because therefore the soul of Christ did not repel from his own body the hurt inflicted upon it, but willed that his corporal nature should succumb to that hurt, he is said to have laid down his life, or to have died voluntarily."[172] Christ's laying down of his own life voluntarily is also fully compatible with his obedience to his Father, for obedience implies not only doing what one is commanded to do, but also willing to do so.[173] Obedience out of fear certainly diminishes volition, but not obedience out of love, and Christ obeyed his Father voluntarily on account of his great love for him.[174]

For his part, God the Father was the cause of Christ's passion in three ways, according to Thomas: first, by pre-ordaining from all eternity that Christ should suffer thus for the salvation of mankind; secondly, by infusing the charity into the human soul of Christ whereby he freely willed to obey the Father's pre-ordained command; and thirdly, by not preventing his death although he could have done so (Mt. 26:53).[175] In none of these ways is the voluntary nature of Christ's own self-offering compromised, nor is there any way in which the Father directly causes Christ's death any more than Christ himself directly causes his own death, so that again, divine "wrath" in the sense of active vindictive justice are just as much excluded as suicide.

Conclusion

In considering the causes and necessity which lead to Christ's death, Thomas stresses before all else the eminently voluntary character of God's work of salvation, from its eternal origins in the divine will, to

---

[172] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 1: "Quia ergo anima Christi non repulit a proprio corpore nocumentum illatum, sed voluit quod natura corporalis illi nocumento succumberet, dicitur suam animam posuisse, vel voluntarie mortuus esse."

[173] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 2, ad 2.

[174] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 2, ad 3.

[175] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 47, a. 3. This last point is how Thomas consistently interprets the dereliction of Christ: the Father's abandonment of the Son (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34) is simply his non-intervention, and nothing more. The truth of this understanding can already be seen clearly in the text of the Psalm which Christ is praying, for the Psalm parallels precisely these two questions: "Why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me?" (Ps. 22:1). Cf. Aquinas, *Super Evangelium Matthaei*, cap. 27, lec. 2; *In Psalmos*, ps. 21, n. 1; *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 50, a. 2, ad 1.

the Incarnation of the Son of God in time, to his passion and death on the cross. As such, he does not seek so much to understand why God had to become Incarnate and suffer and die on the cross in order to save man, but rather how God's wisdom is manifested in his free choice to save man in this eminently suitable way. In obedience to his Father, and moved by charity, Christ voluntarily suffered and died in order to offer for the greater benefit of man a satisfaction greater far than was required in strict justice for the sins of mankind. In this respect Thomas differs both from Anselm and from the Reformers. Whereas Anselm views satisfaction as strictly necessary for salvation, Thomas understands it as perfectly voluntary; and whereas the Reformation doctrine understands the magnitude of Christ's pain as strictly necessary for satisfaction, Thomas sees it rather as a manifestation of the voluntary superfluity of the divine love.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
ST. THOMAS ON THE EFFICACY AND FRUITS OF THE PASSION

The core of any Christian doctrine of salvation lies in the answer to two questions: what has Christ the Savior obtained for mankind? and how has he obtained it? In order to answer these two questions, Thomas asks about the mode of efficacy of the passion of Christ (q. 48) and then about the effect itself (q. 49).

Modes of Efficacy

As regards the question of efficacy, Thomas considers the passion as the cause of human salvation through the modes of merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, and redemption, and then also considers the primary causality of God himself and the instrumental causality of Christ's humanity.

Any action proceeding from grace and charity is meritorious, and hence Christ merited salvation both for himself and for his members by his every action.[176] He merited especially by his passion, not because the love manifested therein was greater (it is always perfect), but because the act itself was more suited to the end of salvation. Despite the fact that Christ merited our salvation even from the moment of his conception, however, there remained on man's part the obstacle of sin, for the removal of which other modes of efficacy were still (relatively) necessary.[177]

For the liberation of man from the obstacle of sin Thomas turns to satisfaction, which he here describes as the recompense which the offender makes to the offended in order to counter-balance the offense: "He properly satisfies for an offense who offers to the one offended something which he loves as much or more than he hated the

[176] Merit is thus a wider category than satisfaction. Any good work flowing from grace and charity is meritorious, whereas only good works flowing from grace and charity which are also penal are satisfactory. Hence every work of satisfaction is also meritorious, but the converse is not true.

[177] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 1, co., ad 2, ad 3.

offense."[178] Thomas then summarizes his entire doctrine of satisfaction when he explains the superabundance of Christ's satisfactory death: "But Christ, by suffering out of charity and obedience, offered to God something greater than the recompense of the entire offense of the human race would have required."[179] He then briefly lists the three reasons why Christ's passion more than compensated for all the sins of men:

> 1) first indeed on account of the magnitude of his charity, from which he suffered;
>
> 2) secondly, on account of the dignity of his life, which he laid down for satisfaction; which was the life of God and man;
>
> 3) thirdly, on account of the generality of his suffering and the magnitude of pain that he assumed, as was said above.[180]

This list is remarkable in synthesizing the true insights of the main types of atonements theories. Abelard and the so-called "subjective" tradition of interpretation emphasize Christ's charity manifested upon the cross; within the so-called "objective" tradition, Anselm looks chiefly at the positive worth of the gift (the life of the God-man) offered by Christ in our place to God; and Calvin and the Reformation tradition focus on the magnitude of Christ's penal sufferings.

An ever-present danger in theology is to emphasize one aspect of a truth too much to the detriment of another, and avoiding this is one of Thomas's great strengths. The charity of Christ manifested on the cross does indeed inspire man to love God in return, for Abelard as for Thomas, who even places this at the head of his list of reasons why the passion of Christ was a most suitable means of salvation: "For, first, by this man learns how much God loves man, and by this is provoked to

---

[178] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 2: "Dicendum quod ille proprie satisfacit pro offensa qui exhibet offenso id quod æque vel magis diligit quam oderit offensam."

[179] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 2: "Christus autem ex charitate et obedientia patiendo majus aliquid Deo exhibuit quam exigeret recompensatio totius offensæ humani generis."

[180] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 2: "primo quidem propter magnitudinem charitatis, ex qua patiebatur; secundo, propter dignitatem vitæ suæ, quam pro satisfactione ponebat; quæ erat vita Dei et hominis; tertio, propter generalitatem passionis et magnitudinem doloris assumpti, ut supra dictum est."

love him, in which consists the perfection of salvation."[181] The "subjective" aspect is present here, but this is not all that Christ's charity accomplishes. Christ also makes "objective" compensation for sin by his act of satisfaction, which is acceptable to God as satisfaction precisely because of the charity informing it.[182] The infinite dignity of the life of the God-man offered in satisfaction does indeed, for Thomas as for Anselm, allow Christ's act of satisfaction to sufficiently and even superabundantly counter-balance the infinitely grievous sin of the whole human race, but Thomas is careful to note that satisfaction requires not only that a pleasing gift be offered to God, but also that it should cost the one satisfying something, that is, it should be painful. Hence the magnitude of Christ's sufferings, for Thomas as for Calvin, belongs integrally to his act of satisfaction, but Thomas views them in the light of God's mercy which goes beyond the strict requirements of justice even while manifesting a more severe justice.

Moving forward, Thomas proceeds to explain the biblical themes of sacrifice and redemption in relation to satisfaction. "A sacrifice," he writes, "is properly speaking something done unto the honor due to God alone, for the sake of pleasing him."[183] No gift offered on the altar could please God more than the self-offering of his perfect Son, nor could anything make such a gift more acceptable than the charity of Christ: "because [Christ] endured his passion voluntarily, it was most acceptable to God, as coming forth from the greatest charity."[184] Christ's offering of himself out of pure charity is a true and

---

[181] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 46, a. 3: Primo enim per hoc homo cognoscit quantum Deus hominem diligat, et per hoc provocatur ad eum diligendum, in quo perfectio humanæ salutis consistit."

[182] Thomas also remarks that charity, which is in the higher reason, compensates in satisfaction for sin insofar as this is also in the higher reason (Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 26, a. 9, ad s.c. 2: "passio christi non esset satisfactoria, nisi in quantum est voluntarie ex caritate suscepta: et sic non oportet quod dolor sit in superiori parte rationis christi respectu propriae operationis, sicut in adam fuit culpa per operationem superioris rationis: quia ipse motus caritatis patientis, qui est in superiori parte rationis, respondet in satisfactione ad id quod fuit in culpa secundum superiorem rationem").

[183] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 3: "Dicendum quod sacrificium proprie dicitur aliquid factum in honorem proprie Deo debitum, ad eum placandum."

[184] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 3: "et hoc ipsum quod voluntarie passionem sustinuit, Deo maxime acceptum fuit, utpote ex charitate maxima proveniens."

proper sacrifice which does honor to God, and pleases him even more than he detests all the sins of the world, that is, it makes satisfaction.

Taking up the biblical metaphor of redemption, Thomas views man as doubly bound on account of sin: he is held in bondage by the devil in slavery to sin and is also bound by the justice of God to a debt of punishment. Christ's passion and death, however, precisely by making satisfaction, frees man from both obligations and is thus likened to the price whereby someone is redeemed: the "price" of Christ's passion "pays" the debt of punishment demanded by God, which allows man to be restored to grace, thus also liberating him from his slavery to sin and the devil.

What Thomas has done in these few articles, then, is to explain that Christ's passion works man's salvation in the mode of a penal (understood in terms of *pœna satisfactoria*), redemptive, sacrifice, precisely the main content of the biblical data reviewed in the first chapter.

Fruition and Application

The effects or fruits of Christ's passion are firstly liberation and reconciliation, leading ultimately to salvation; here again, Thomas is explaining and synthesizing the data of revelation. By his saving passion, Christ merited grace and salvation for mankind (and exaltation for himself); by satisfying for the sins of the whole race, he liberated man from the debt of punishment; by paying this ransom price he liberated man also from sin itself and its resultant stain, as well as from the devil to whom he was made subject by sin; and by offering himself on our behalf as a most pleasing sacrifice Christ reconciled mankind to God.[185] Since God's love for man is eternal and immutable, Thomas is quick to point out that:

---

[185] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, aa. 1-6; cf. q. 48, a. 6, ad 3: "passio Christi, secundum quod comparatur ad divinitatem ejus, agit per modum efficientiæ; in quantum vero comparatur ad voluntatem animæ Christi, agit per modum meriti; secundum vero quod consideratur in ipsa carne Christi, agit per modum satisfactionis, inquantum per eam liberamur a reatu pœnæ; per modum vero redemptionis, in quantum per eam liberamur a servitute culpæ; per modum autem sacrificii, inquantum per eam reconciliamur Deo, ut infra dicetur."

> The passion of Christ is not said to have reconciled us to God in the sense that he began to love us anew, since it is written, "In perpetual charity have I loved you" (Jer. 31:3); but because through the passion of Christ the cause of hatred has been taken away, not only through the removal of sin, but also through the compensation of a more acceptable good.[186]

Liberation from the stain of sin (*macula peccati*) occurs through the grace merited by Christ in his passion, while liberation from the debt of punishment (*reatus pœnæ*) occurs through Christ's act of satisfaction. Such a liberation is indeed already a reconciliation. This restored union (*re-conciliatio*) between God and man is crowned with perfection in the state of glory, in the direct vision of God, in which the corruption of the good of nature (*corruptio boni naturæ*) is definitively overcome by the confirmation of the will in grace. Here also man will finally be freed from bodily corruption and death, "For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).

A constant underlying theme throughout Thomas's consideration of the efficacy and effects of Christ's passion is the important question of the application of the fruits of the passion to individual men and women. The first step is to distinguish between modes of efficiency or efficient causality. God himself, the Blessed Trinity, is the principal efficient cause of salvation; the humanity of Christ is the instrumental cause of salvation, and therefore all of the actions and passions of Christ work as instrumental causes of man's salvation, but especially his passion and death upon the cross.[187] Christ's passion, however, is somewhat like a medicine prepared by the physician of souls ready to cure any who are sick and dying.[188] In other words, "because the passion of Christ precedes as a kind of universal cause of the remission of sins, as was said above, it is necessary that it be applied to individuals

---

[186] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, a. 4, ad 2: "passio Christi non dicitur quantum ad hoc nos Deo reconciliasse quod de novo nos amare inciperet cum scriptum sit *Jer., In charitate perpetua dilexi te*; sed quia per passionem Christi sublata est odii causa, tum per ablationem peccati, tum per recompensationem acceptabilioris boni."

[187] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, aa. 5-6.

[188] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3: "Christus sua passione nos a peccatis liberavit causaliter, idest instituens causam nostræ liberationis, ex qua possent quæcumque peccata quandoque remitti, vel præterita vel præsentia vel futura; sicut si medicus faciat medicinam ex qua possint quicumque morbi sanari etiam in futurum."

for the destruction of their own sins."[189] Individual persons must be brought into contact in some way with Christ's passion in order for it to work its effect in them, namely through the spiritual contact made through faith and the sacraments of faith.[190] This faith, moreover, cannot be a dead faith, but must be vivified by charity: "But the faith through which we are cleansed from sin is not unformed faith which is able to exist even with sin, but it is a faith formed by charity, so that the passion of Christ may be applied to us not only as regards the intellect, but also as regards the affections."[191] The means of spiritual contact with the passion of Christ are thus summarized under the headings of faith, charity, and sacraments.[192]

The sacraments, like the passion itself, are also instrumental causes of grace, but with this difference: they are separate from the principal cause whereas the humanity of Christ, through which he suffered and died, is united to the divinity. Thomas illustrates the difference by comparing it to a hand (an instrument united to the person who is the principal cause of the motion) moving something with a stick (a separate instrument). The causal power of the sacraments is therefore derived from the passion of Christ, "the power of which is in a way joined to us through the reception of the sacraments."[193] Baptism brings a man into spiritual contact with the passion of Christ by conforming him sacramentally to Christ in his passion (cf. Rom. 6), and by inwardly

---

[189] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, a. 1, ad 4: "quia passio Christi præcessit ut causa quædam universalis remissionis peccatorum, sicut dictum est, necesse est quod singulis adhibeatur ad deletionem propriorum peccatorum. Hoc autem fit per baptismum, et pœnitentiam, et alia sacramenta, quæ habent virtutem ex passione Christi, ut infra patebit."

[190] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 6, ad 2: "passio Christi, licet sit corporalis, habet tamen spiritualem virtutem ex divinitate unita: et ideo per spiritualem contactum efficaciam sortitur, scilicet per fidem et fidei sacramenta, secundum illud Apostoli, *Quem proposuit propitiatorem per fidem in sanguine ejus*."

[191] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, a. 1, ad 5: "etiam per fidem applicatur nobis passio Christi ad percipiendum fructum ipsius, secundum illud *Rom., Quem proposuit Deus propitiatorem per fidem in sanguine ejus*. Fides autem per quam a peccato mundamur non est fides informis quæ potest esse etiam cum peccato, sed est fides formata per charitatem, ut sic passio Christi nobis applicetur non solum quantum ad intellectum, sed etiam quantum ad affectum. Et per hunc etiam modum peccata dimittuntur ex virtute passionis Christi."

[192] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 1; q. 49, a. 5.

[193] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 62, a. 5: "Unde manifestum est quod sacramenta Ecclesiæ specialiter habent virtutem ex passione Christi, cujus virtus quodammodo nobis copulatur per susceptionem sacramentorum."

justifying him. According to Thomas, this justification involves four things which concur simultaneously in time, but according to a certain natural order: the infusion of grace by God is followed by man's free co-operation in the movement of his will toward God (by faith) and against sin (hatred of sin belongs to charity), which culminates in the remission of sins.[194] At the level of his being, man is thus granted a participation in the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), which also elevates the powers of the soul, so that by faith he participates in divine knowledge, and through charity in divine love. Divinized by grace, man reaches out through faith, hope, and charity to touch upon God himself.[195]

By being thus regenerated unto a new spiritual life of grace, the baptized are made members of Christ, the source and fountain of this life, and as such are said to be incorporated into the body of Christ through baptism, made one with him through grace and charity. From this point of view the vicarious aspect of Christ's work comes into sharper focus:

> For because he himself is our head, he has by his passion, which he endured out of charity and obedience, liberated us as his members from our sins, as it were by the price of his passion, just as if a man by some meritorious work that he does by his hand should redeem himself from a sin which he committed with his feet. For just as the natural body is one, consisting of a diversity of members, so also the whole Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, is regarded as if it were one person with its head, which is Christ.[196]

The ecclesiological vision expressed here applies equally to satisfaction. The union of two persons in charity, which is a necessary condition for vicarious satisfaction, reaches perfection in man's incorporation into Christ: "The head and members are, as it were, one mystical person; and therefore the satisfaction of Christ pertains to all the faithful as to his

---

[194] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 113, aa. 1-8.

[195] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* I-II, q. 110, a. 4.

[196] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 49, a. 1: "Quia enim ipse est caput nostrum, per passionem suam, quam ex charitate et obedientia sustinuit, liberavit nos tanquam membra sua a peccatis, quasi per pretium suæ passionis; sicut si homo per aliquod opus meritorium quod manu exerceret redimeret se a peccato quod pedibus commisisset. Sicut enim naturale corpus est unum ex membrorum diversitate consistens, ita tota Ecclesia quæ est mysticum corpus Christi computatur quasi una persona cum suo capite, quod est Christus."

members."[197] The full weight which Thomas gives to the union of Christ and his faithful *quasi una persona mystica* appears in the question as to whether baptism liberates man from the entire debt of punishment. In answer, Thomas repeats that baptism incorporates one into Christ, and specifically into the passion of Christ, and concludes from this that every baptized person is healed by the passion "just as if he himself had suffered and died... [H]e who is baptized is liberated from the debt of every punishment due to him for his sins, just as if he himself had sufficiently satisfied for all his sins."[198] The penalties flowing from the loss of original justice, such as death, hunger, thirst, and the like, clearly remain in this life, despite the fact that baptism could remove them, but Thomas finds this reasonable on three accounts. First, it is fitting that those incorporated into Christ should be conformed to him in his entire life, but especially in his suffering and death. As Christ was full of grace and virtue, so should his members be; yet as he accepted a passible body and merited glory through suffering, so should his members, who are children of God and co-heirs of Christ, "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17).[199]

Thomas's complete vision of salvation through incorporation into Christ and conformation to Christ, especially in his suffering and death, places his understanding of the vicarious nature of Christ's passion in stark contrast to the Lutheran idea of substitution. The persons of Christ and the sinner are not exchanged, but united.[200] Christ on the cross did not do something (namely, suffer *pœna simpliciter*) so

---

[197] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 1: "caput et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica; et ideo satisfactio Christi ad omnes fideles pertinet sicut ad sua membra."

[198] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 69, a. 2: "per baptismum aliquis incorporatur passioni et morti Christi, secundum illud *Rom., Si mortui sumus cum Christo, credimus quia etiam simul vivemus cum Christo.* Ex quo patet quod omni baptizato communicatur passio Christi ad remedium ac si ipse passus et mortuus esset. Passio autem Christi, sicut supra dictum est, est sufficiens satisfactio pro omnibus peccatis omnium hominum. Et ideo ille qui baptizatur liberatur a reatu omnis pœnæ sibi debitæ pro peccatis, ac si ipse sufficienter satisfecisset pro omnibus peccatis suis." Cf. STh. III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 2.

[199] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 69, a. 3; q. 49, a. 3, ad 3.

[200] Hence the remark of Nieuwenhove: "This idea of incorporation in Christ – becoming part of the Body of Christ – is crucial to preclude a misunderstanding of Aquinas' soteriology in transactional or even substitutional terms" (Nieuwenhove, "Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion," 290).

that sinners would not have to; he did something that sinners could not do (namely, offer *pœna satisfactoria*) so that in him they would be able to do it. Thomas's doctrine also corrects the deficiency in Anselm's account on this point. When Anselm came to consider how human salvation follows upon the great balancing of the scales accomplished by Christ, he gives an almost completely extrinsic account, imagining that God offered a reward to Christ for his meritorious work, who lacking nothing himself benevolently requested that salvation be given instead to sinners.[201] Thomas's doctrine, in contrast both to Anselm and to the Reformers, brings to light the great dignity bestowed on mankind through the passion of Christ, in that he should be given a way to participate, through, with, and in Christ, in his own redemption.

Conclusion

Thomas's treatment of the efficacy and effects of the passion of Christ represent a remarkable synthesis of the main themes of biblical thought and expression regarding the salvation wrought by Christ upon the cross. The passion achieves its effects as an instrumental efficient cause of salvation through the modes of merit, satisfaction, sacrifice, and redemption; and these effects are, for man, liberation from sin and reconciliation to God, culminating in salvation. As a universal cause, however, the saving power of the passion needs to be applied to individuals, who are brought into spiritual contact with it through faith, charity, and the sacraments. Incorporated into Christ and conformed to him in his passion, the faithful receive in baptism all the effects of the passion as if each one had suffered and died himself, as if each one had sufficiently satisfied for his own sins and merited his own salvation. The baptized are sacramentally configured to Christ through the baptismal character, which is a sign and cause of an ontological configuration to Christ by grace (understood as a participation in the divine nature), which gives rise to operational configuration to Christ by faith and charity, such that those who are united to the passion of Christ in baptism may truly die to sin and live again to righteousness (Rom. 6:3-11).

[201] Anselm, *Cur Deus homo*, 2.19.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ST. THOMAS ON CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL

A final question remains regarding Thomas's interpretation of the article of the Creed which states that Christ descended *ad inferos*, into the nether regions, into hell. It is an important question because in Thomas's *Commentary On the Symbol of the Apostles* he appears to interpret this article in essentially the same way that Calvin later does. Removed from its own context, and from the wider context of Thomas's doctrine, this text could easily be misinterpreted in such a way as to support the conclusion that Thomas's doctrine of vicarious satisfaction is not essentially different from the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution.

Interpretation

In his commentary on the Apostles's Creed, Thomas gives four reasons as to "why Christ descended with his soul into hell," the first of which is this:

> First, in order to endure the entire punishment of sin, in order thus to expiate the entire fault. But the punishment of man's sin was not only the death of the body, but there was also a punishment in the soul: since the sin also had reference to the soul, the soul itself was also punished by the lack of the divine vision: for the removal of which, satisfaction had not yet been made. And therefore, before the coming of Christ, all men descended to hell after death, even the holy fathers. Christ, therefore, in order to endure the entire punishment due to sinners, willed not only to die, but also to descend according to his soul into hell. Whence Psalm 87:4, "I have been counted with those who have descended into the pit: I have been made as a man without help, free among the dead." For the others were there as slaves, but Christ as free.[202]

[202] Aquinas, *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, 5: "sunt autem quatuor rationes quare Christus cum anima ad infernum descendit. prima ut sustineret totam poenam peccati, ut sic totam culpam expiaret. poena autem peccati hominis non solum erat mors corporis, sed etiam erat poena in anima: quia etiam peccatum erat quantum ad animam, quia etiam ipsa anima puniebatur quantum ad carentiam visionis divinae: pro qua abolenda nondum satisfactum erat. et ideo post mortem descendebat omnes, etiam sancti patres, ante christum adventum, ad infernum. ut ergo christus sustineret totam poenam

This text immediately appears to imply that Christ descended into hell in order to suffer there the proper punishment of the damned, namely the loss of the vision of God, as if it were somehow necessary for him to endure this in order to make a full satisfaction for sin.

Such a position would imply that the *pœna* endured by Christ was a *pœna simpliciter*, according to which the pain itself is regarded as formal in the act of "satisfaction" (understood here simply as punishment) rather than the good offered in compensation out of charity. In this case divine justice appears unwilling to accept anything less than the full punishment due to unredeemed sinners, namely the damnation to which they would have been subject apart from Christ's sacrifice. This also implies an act of substitution in the Lutheran sense of a literal exchange of places between Christ and sinners, rather than the kind of vicarious representation in which Christ steps into the place of sinners without displacing them, but rather incorporating them into himself. In short, such a position implies a penal substitution in the full sense of the words given to them by the Reformation.

The most important thing to notice in this text, however, is Thomas's concluding statement that Christ was among the dead, *ut liber* (as free). In the *Compendium of Theology*, Thomas explains this unique freedom of Christ in a text which is crucial for a proper understanding of his interpretation of Christ's descent into hell and therefore also of his doctrine of satisfaction as a whole:

> In truth, on the part of the soul it follows among men from sin after death that they descend into hell not only as regards place, but also as regards punishment. But just as the body of Christ was indeed under the earth according to place, but not according to the common defect of dissolution, so also the soul of Christ descended indeed into hell according to place, not however in order to undergo punishment there, but rather to release from punishment those who were detained there on account of the sin of the first parent, for which he had already fully satisfied by suffering death: whence after his death nothing remained to be suffered, but he descended into hell locally without suffering any punishment, that he might show himself as the liberator of the living and the dead. From this also it is said that he

---

peccatoribus debitam, voluit non solum mori, sed etiam secundum animam ad infernum descendere. unde psal. lxxxvii, 4: aestimatus sum cum descendentibus in lacum: factus sum sicut homo sine adiutorio inter mortuos liber. alii enim erant ibi ut servi, sed christus ut liber."

> alone was free among the dead, because his soul was not subject to punishment in hell, nor his body to corruption in the tomb.[203]

This text makes it very clear that for Thomas there can be no question of Christ suffering any kind of punishment in hell.

The parallelism presented here between tomb and hell is also instructive. In his treatise on the humiliation of Christ in the *Summa theologiæ* (III, qq. 46-52), Thomas considers his passion (qq. 46-49), and then his death as the state of separation of soul and body (q. 50). This is followed by parallel questions on the burial of his body (q. 51) and the descent of his soul into hell (q. 52). That Christ descended into hell in order to endure the entire punishment of sin means for Thomas that he willed to endure physical death fully, from the suffering which precedes death, through the separation of soul from body in which it is consummated, to its completion in the resting places of soul and body apart from each other.[204] The descent of Christ into hell according to his soul bears the same relation to punishment as the burial of his body: "just as Christ, in order to take upon himself our punishments, willed his body to be placed in the tomb, so also he willed his soul to descend into hell."[205] The descent itself, like the burial, is penal only inasmuch as it is the completion of death, but Christ's soul does not suffer in hell any more than his body suffers in the tomb.

---

[203] Aquinas, *Compendium theologiæ* I, cap. 235: "Ex parte vero animae sequitur in hominibus ex peccato post mortem, ut ad infernum descendant non solum quantum ad locum, sed etiam quantum ad poenam. sicut autem corpus christi fuit quidem sub terra secundum locum, non autem secundum communem resolutionis defectum, ita et anima christi descendit quidem ad inferos secundum locum, non autem ut ibi poenam subiret, sed magis ut alios a poena absolveret, qui propter peccatum primi parentis illic detinebantur, pro quo plene iam satisfecerat mortem patiendo: unde post mortem nihil patiendum restabat, sed absque omni poenae passione localiter ad infernum descendit, ut se vivorum et mortuorum liberatorem ostenderet. ex hoc etiam dicitur quod solus inter mortuos fuit liber, quia anima eius in inferno non subiacuit poenae, nec corpus eius corruptioni in sepulcro."

[204] The same parallelism also provides the context in Thomas's commentary on the *descensus* article of the Creed: "Sicut dictum est, mors christi fuit in separatione animae a corpore, sicut et aliorum hominum; sed divinitas ita insolubiliter iuncta fuit homini christo, quod licet anima et corpus separarentur ab invicem, ipsa tamen deitas perfectissime semper et animae et corpori affuit; et ideo in sepulcro cum corpore fuit filius dei, et ad inferos cum anima descendit" (Aquinas, *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, 5).

[205] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 52, a. 4: "Dicendum quod, sicut Christus, ut nostras pœnas in se susciperet, voluit corpus suum in sepulcro poni, ita etiam voluit animam suam ad infernum descendere."

Contrary to Balthasar, who holds that Christ had to endure both a natural death (the separation of the soul from the body), and the "second death" spoken of in the Revelation to John (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8), the spiritual death of the soul (that is, the separation of the soul from God), in order to fully free man from this twofold death,[206] Thomas clearly holds that Christ's one (natural) death is itself more than sufficient for this purpose, as can be seen in the mystical interpretation which he gives to the two nights and one whole day that Christ spent in the tomb (and in hell):

> [B]y the death of Christ we have been liberated from a double death, namely from the death of the soul and from the death of the body: and this is signified by the two nights through which Christ remained in the tomb. His death, however, not coming forth from sin, but undertaken from charity, had not the account of night, but of day: and therefore it is signified by the whole day in which Christ was in the tomb.[207]

Another important text for an accurate understanding of Thomas's doctrine of the descent of Christ's soul into hell can be found in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, his first major work. There he reiterates the principles on the basis of which he excludes any pain or suffering from the soul of Christ in hell. The Incarnation was ordered toward salvation, for the accomplishment of which God had chosen to require satisfaction. In assuming a human nature therefore Christ willed to take upon himself certain defects, according to a twofold criterion: they should be those which were common to all men on account of sin, yet did not imply or even incline toward any defect of grace or virtue. That a soul should descend into hell after death was, before Christ's coming, common to all men on account of original sin, and so Christ also endured this, descending locally into hell. Thomas then considers each possible kind of punishment (*pœna*), and concludes that Christ cannot have suffered any of them in hell. The pain of loss (*pœna damni*), which is the lack of the vision of God, would clearly

---

[206] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 168-176.

[207] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 51, a. 4: "Dictum est autem supra, quod per mortem Christi liberati sumus a duplici morte, scilicet a morte animæ et a morte corporis: et hoc significatur per duas noctes, quibus Christus in sepulcro permansit. Mors autem ejus quia non fuit ex peccato proveniens sed ex charitate suscepta, non habuit rationem noctis, sed diei: et ideo significatur per diem integrum, quo Christus fuit in sepulcro." Cf. also *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 50, a. 6.

imply a defect of the consummate grace of glory, and hence is excluded. The pain of sense (*pœna sensus*) could be either satisfactory (*pœna satisfactoria*), purgative (*pœna purgativa*), or damnative (*pœna damnativa*). Now pain cannot be satisfactory after death inasmuch as satisfaction, like merit, belongs to the state of the *viator*, to this earthly life alone; but purgative pains (after death) are only due on account of impurity and damnative pains on account of mortal sin, either of which would imply a defect of grace. Hence: "It was befitting to Christ to descend into hell insofar as it implies a place, but not insofar as it implies punishment."[208]

Conclusion

Although a single text taken out of context can easily give the impression that Thomas holds essentially the same doctrine of penal substitution as Calvin, namely that in order to pay the debt due to sin Christ had to suffer the pain proper to damnation (which consists essentially in the loss of the vision of God), Thomas's parallel texts on the same topic make it abundantly manifest that this is not the case. According to Thomas, Christ descended locally into hell in order to endure death all the way through to the end, but his soul did not suffer there. On the contrary, he came to release from their punishment and from the captivity of the conquered devil the souls of the holy fathers who were detained there on account of original sin, which he accomplished with such a manifestation of power that, although he entered only into the limbo of the fathers according to his essence and freed only them, even the damned felt the power of his presence.[209]

[208] Aquinas, *In III sententiarum*, d. 22, q. 2, a. 1a.
[209] Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* III, q. 52, aa. 1-2, 5-8; *In III sententiarum*, d. 22, q. 2, a. 1b.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Any attempt to locate (theologically more than historically) St. Thomas Aquinas's soteriological doctrine of vicarious satisfaction must place his doctrine not only into relation with other prominent theologians, but more fundamentally with the principles of theology themselves, the articles of faith granted by divine revelation. In order to do precisely this, the first chapter sought to gather the main elements of the New Testament's presentation of Christ's salvific death on the cross, which itself also highlights some important Old Testament texts such as, among others, the fourth servant song of the prophet Isaiah (52:13-53:12). A few dominant features of the cross emerged: it was redemptive, sacrificial, penal, and vicarious; and it accomplished man's salvation by liberating him from slavery to sin and by reconciling him to God.

The first step was then to establish that, contrary to the claims of Gustaf Aulén, there is nothing inherently unbiblical in the idea of satisfaction, nor is it a theological novelty of the medieval period which breaks with the tradition of the Fathers. In fact, satisfaction simply expresses a foundational truth of revelation, namely that Christ's death was a manifestation of the justice of God (Rom. 3:25-26). The next step was to disclose the contrast between various ways in which satisfaction has been understood. By walking a careful *via media* between Anselmian satisfaction (according to which: *satisfactio non est pœna*) and the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution (according to which: *satisfactio est pœna*), Thomas's doctrine of vicarious satisfaction (according to which: *satisfactio est pœna secundum quid*) succeeds in avoiding the errors and difficulties into which the others fall.

In Anselm's attempt to find necessary reasons for the truths of the faith, he worked out the concepts of satisfaction and punishment as distinct paths of justice, such that justice demands always one or the other (*aut satisfactio aut pœna*). Although this is fundamentally true, and verifiable through common experience, he fails to account adequately for the real connection that nevertheless exists between satisfaction and punishment, namely that satisfaction is necessarily penal, which renders him unable to offer a convincing account of the magnitude of Christ's suffering on the cross. Ironically, Anselm's

greatest crime, according to J. Denny Weaver, is to insist too strongly on punishment, when in fact, it is one of the deficiencies of his account that he leaves it out almost entirely. In other words, it is Isaiah far more than Anselm who is responsible for introducing the idea of punishment into Christian soteriology.

The Protestant Reformers, on the other hand, make exactly the identification of satisfaction and punishment that Weaver accuses Anselm of making. Beginning from Scripture, instead of from reason alone as Anselm had done, they arrive at a doctrine of penal substitution according to which Christ was punished with the very punishment with which unredeemed sinners deserved to be punished so that they could escape that same punishment. A literal substitution or exchange of places between Christ and sinners is envisioned here such that Christ receives the penalty due to sinners whereas they similarly receive the reward due to Christ. Penal substitution and justification by faith alone are thus two side of the same coin. Although penal substitution has clear roots in Scripture, it goes astray by interpreting the need for punishment strictly. In Thomistic language, it views Christ as enduring the punishment due to sinners simply speaking (*pœna simpliciter*), which raises several serious difficulties, among which the most problematic are the implied or explicitly asserted activity of the Father in inflicting punishment on Christ, and the implied or asserted damnation of Christ.

Thomas's doctrine of *pœna satisfactoria* as a kind of *pœna secundum quid* allows him both to correct Anselm's failure to include the penal aspect of satisfaction, which arose largely from his separation of satisfaction from punishment (*aut satisfactio aut pœna*), and to exclude the most serious errors of penal substitution, which arise largely from its equation of satisfaction and punishment (*satisfactio est pœna simpliciter*). Whereas Anselm looked only at the formal element of satisfaction – the worth of the compensatory offering, Thomas includes its material element – the pain necessarily involved in making the offering; and whereas the Reformers look only at the material element of satisfaction, at its penalty, Thomas subordinates this to its principle which is charity.

Furthermore, in accord with his general understanding of the nature of satisfaction, Thomas also brings out the perfect volition of Christ's act of satisfaction: from its origins in the eternal will of God, through the Incarnation of the Son of God in time, all the way to his death on the cross, the actions of God in bringing salvation to mankind

are eminently free. In this respect, Thomas's doctrine stands above both Anselmian satisfaction and penal substitution rather than in between them, for Anselm emphasizes the strict necessity of satisfaction for salvation, while penal substitution also holds that the magnitude of Christ's pain was strictly necessary for satisfaction.

Another contrast between the accounts of Anselm, Thomas, and the Reformers appears in the question of the application of the fruits of the redemption wrought by Christ on the cross. For Anselm, this is a marginal consideration, and it seems to be effected only extrinsically by the handing over to sinners of the reward offered to Christ for his meritorious work. From the point of view of the Reformation doctrine of penal substitution, it is by means of a real or imputed exchange of persons effected (on the basis of faith alone) between Christ and the sinner. For Thomas, however, the fruits of the passion are applied to individuals only through their incorporation into Christ's body by faith, charity, and the sacraments.

The whole field of soteriology, of theological reflection upon the gift of salvation won for man by Christ upon the cross, may be reduced to three questions: What moved Christ to die for man's salvation? How did his death cause man's salvation? How are individual men and women saved by this? In each case, the answers given by Anselm, Thomas, and the Reformers differ decisively. Each one can answer the second question, which is really the central question, by reference to satisfaction, yet Thomas's understanding of satisfaction places him firmly in between the others. Anselm views Christ's self-offering in death as formally an act of satisfaction, but leaves his pain out of account; the Reformers see Christ's pain in dying as formally satisfactory; whereas Thomas includes pain as the material element in the act of satisfaction which formally consists in Christ's act of offering himself to the Father out of charity. In this respect, Thomas's account stands in between the others and precisely as such transcends them. Together with this, and largely because of it, his account of vicarious satisfaction also stands above Anselmian satisfaction and penal substitution with respect to the other two questions. The efficient cause of Christ's passion and death is the divine will freely moved by love, and unmoved by any necessity other than that of fittingness; and the mode of application of the fruits of the redemption to individual men and women is intrinsic rather than extrinsic: the final cause of Christ's passion and death, the actual salvation of individual men and women for

the glory of God, is attained in no other way than through their incorporation into his mystical body the Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Greek New Testament. 4th Revised Edition. Edited by Barbara Aland et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.

The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994.

Anselm of Canterbury. *Cur Deus homo.* Florilegium Patristicum 18. Edited by Bernhardus Geyer and Johannes Zellinger. Bonn: Petri Hanstein, 1929. English: *Why God Became Man and The Virgin Conception and Original Sin.* Translated by Joseph M. Colleran. New York: Magi Books, 1969.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Compendium theologiae.* S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 3. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *De rationibus fidei.* S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 3. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *In Psalmos.* S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 6. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *In quattuor libros sententiarum.* S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 1. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *In Symbolum Apostolorum.* S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 6. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate.* S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 3. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *Summa contra gentiles*. S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 2. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 5 (1a. 19-26). "God's Will and Providence." Edited and translated by Thomas Gilby. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1967.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 8 (1a. 44-49). "Creation, Variety, and Evil." Edited and translated by Thomas Gilby. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1967.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 17 (1a2æ. 6-17). "Psychology of Human Acts." Edited and translated by Thomas Gilby. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1970.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 25 (1a2æ. 71-80). "Sin." Edited and translated by John Fearon. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1969.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 26 (1a2æ. 81-85). "Original Sin." Edited and translated by T. C. O'Brien. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1965.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 27 (1a2æ. 86-89). "Effects of Sin, Stain and Guilt." Edited and translated by T. C. O'Brien. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1974.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 30 (1a2æ. 106-114). "The Gospel of Grace." Edited and translated by Cornelius Ernst. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1972.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 48 (3a. 1-6). "The Incarnate Word." Edited and translated by R. J. Hennessey. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1967.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 49 (3a. 7-15). "The Grace of Christ." Edited and translated by Liam Walsh. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1974.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 54 (3a. 46-52). "The Passion of Christ." Edited and translated by Richard T. A. Murphy. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1965.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 56 (3a. 60-65). "The Sacraments." Edited and translated by David Bourke. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1975.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 57 (3a. 66-72). "Baptism and Confirmation." Edited and translated by James Justin Cunningham. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1975.

_____. *Summa theologiæ*. Volume 60 (3a. 84-90). "The Sacrament of Penance." Edited and translated by Reginald Masterson and T. C. O'Brien. New York; London: Blackfriars, 1966.

_____. *Super Evangelium Ioannis*. S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 6. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

_____. *Super Evangelium Matthaei*. S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. Volume 6. Edited by Robert Busa. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

Aulén, Gustaf. *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*. Translated by A. G. Hebert. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Theodramatik III: Die Handlung*. Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1980. English: *Theodrama IV: The Action*. Translated by Graham Harrison. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994.

_____. *Theologie der Drei Tage*. Freiburg: Johannes, 1990. English: *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*. Translated by Aidan Nichols. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005.

Bartlett, Anthony W. *Cross Purposes: The Violent Grammar of Christian Atonement*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2001.

Bracken, Jerry. "Thomas Aquinas and Anselm's Satisfaction Theory." *Angelicum* 62.4 (1985): 501-530.

Calvin, John. *Institutio christianæ religionis*. Edited by A. Tholuck. Berolini: Apud Gustavum Eichler, 1834-1835. English: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1863.

Carson, D. A. *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

Cessario, Romanus. "Aquinas on Christian Salvation." In *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*. Edited by Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum. Pages 117-137. London: T&T Clark International, Continuum, 2004.

_____. "Sonship, Sacrifice, and Satisfaction: The Divine Friendship in Aquinas and the Renewal of Christian Anthropology." *Letter and Spirit* 3 (2007): 71-93.

_____. *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from Anselm to Aquinas*. Studies in Historical Theology. Volume 6. Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1989.

Chalke, Steve, and Alan Mann. *The Lost Message of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Chung, Sung Wook, Editor. *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Coffey, David. *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Davies, Brian. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Davis, Stephen T., Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, Editors. *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Deme, Dániel. *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury.* Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.

Dodd, C. H. "Hilaskesthai: Its Cognates, Derivatives and Synonyms, in the Septuagint," *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1931): 352-360.

Duff, Nancy J. "Atonement and the Christian Life: Reformed Doctrine from a Feminist Perspective." *Interpretation* 53.1 (1999): 21-33.

Dulles, Avery, et al. "Responses to Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy." *First Things* (March 2007).

Dyk, Leanne van. "Do Theories of Atonement Foster Abuse?" *Dialog* 35.1 (1996): 21-25.

Edmondson, Stephen. *Calvin's Christology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Emery, Gilles. "Reconciliation with the Church and Interior Penance: The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas on the Question of the *Res et Sacramentum* of Penance." *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 1.2 (2003): 283-302.

Evans, G. R. *Anselm and Talking about God.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

_____, Editor. *A Concordance to the Works of St. Anselm.* New York: Kraus International Publications, 1984.

Fairweather, Eugene R., Editor. *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham.* The Library of Christian Classics. Volume 10. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1956.

Fiddes, Paul S. *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

Finlan, Stephen. *Options on Atonement in Christian Thought.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2007.

_____. *Problems with Atonement: The Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2005.

Gaspar, Giles Edward Murray. *Anselm of Canterbury and His Theological Inheritance.* Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004.

George, Timothy. "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology." In *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological and Practical Perspectives.* Edited by Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III. Pages 261-278. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academic, 2004.

Gunton, Colin E. *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988.

Hagen, Kenneth. "Luther on Atonement – Reconfigured." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61 (1997): 251-276.

Hart, D. Bentley. "A Gift Exceeding Every Debt: An Eastern Orthodox Appreciation of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo.*" *Pro Ecclesia* 7 (1998): 333-349.

Hill, Charles E., and Frank A. James III, Editors. *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academic, 2004.

Hogg, David S. *Anselm of Canterbury: The Beauty of Theology.* Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004.

Holmes, Steve. "Can Punishment Bring Peace? Penal Substitution Revisited." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58.1 (2005): 104-123.

Houts, Margo G. "Atonement and Abuse: An Alternative View." *Daughters of Sarah* 18.3 (1992): 29-32.

Jamros, Daniel P. "Satisfaction for Sin: Aquinas on the Passion of Christ." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 56 (1990): 307-328.

Jeffery, Steve, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach. *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007.

Kelly, Brian. "Aquinas on Redemption and Change in God." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992): 249-263.

_____. "Towards a Theology of Redemption." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 57 (1991): 173-184.

Kiefer, William J., Editor. *Biblical Subject Index.* Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1958.

Letter, P. de. "Theology of Satisfaction." *The Thomist* 21.1 (1958): 1-28.

Levering, Matthew. "Balthasar on Christ's Consciousness on the Cross." *The Thomist* 65.4 (2001): 567-581.

_____. "Christ the Priest: An Exploration of *Summa Theologiae* III, Question 22." *The Thomist* 71.3 (2007): 379-417.

_____. "Israel and the Shape of Thomas Aquinas's Soteriology." *The Thomist* 63.1 (1999): 65-82.

_____. "Juridical Language in Soteriology: Aquinas's Approach." *Angelicum* 80.2 (2003): 309-326.

_____. *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

_____. *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*. Challenges in Contemporary Theology. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Galatians*. Edited by John Prince Fallowes. Translated by Erasmus Middleton. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics, 1978.

Marthaler, Bernard L. *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology*. Third Edition. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007.

Marx, C. William. *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995.

McGrath, Alister E. *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

McKim, Donald K. *Theological Turning Points: Major Issues in Christian Thought*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1988.

Megill-Cobbler, Thelma. "A Feminist Rethinking of Punishment Imagery in Atonement." *Dialog* 35.1 (1996): 14-20.

Milavec, Aaron. *Salvation Is from the Jews: Saving Grace in Judaism and Messianic Hope in Christianity*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2007.

Morris, Leon. "The Use of Hilaskesthai etc. in Biblical Greek," *Expository Times* 62 (1951): 227-233.

Nichols, Aidan. "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Passion of Christ." In *Scribe of the Kingdom: Essays on Theology and Culture*. Volume 1. Pages 192-204. London: Sheed & Ward, 1994.

_____. *No Bloodless Myth: A Guide through Balthasar's Dramatics*. Introduction to Hans Urs von Balthasar. Volume 2. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000.

Nicole, Roger. "C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation." *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1955): 117-157.

Nieuwenhove, Rik van. "'Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion': Aquinas' Soteriology." In *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas.* Edited by Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow. Pages 277-302. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.

_____. "St Anselm and St Thomas Aquinas on Satisfaction: Or How Catholic and Protestant Understandings of the Cross Differ." *Angelicum* 80.1 (2003): 159-176.

O'Collins, Gerald. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus.* Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

_____. *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

O'Collins, Gerald, and Michael Keenan Jones. *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Ott, Ludwig. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma.* Translated by Patrick Lynch. Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1974.

Park, Andrew Sung. *Triune Atonement: Christ's Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole Creation.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300).* The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Volume 3. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Peters, Ted. "The Atonement in Anselm and Luther: Second Thoughts about Gustav Aulén's Christus Victor." *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (1972): 301-314.

Pfürtner, Stephen. *Luther and Aquinas on Salvation.* Translated by Edward Quinn. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964.

Pickstock, Catherine. *After Writing on the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

Pitstick, Alyssa Lyra. *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.

Pitstick, Alyssa Lyra, and Edward T. Oakes. "Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy: An Exchange." *First Things* (December 2006): 25-32.

_____. "More on Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy." *First Things* (January 2007): 16-19.

Placher, William C. "Christ Takes Our Place: Rethinking Atonement." *Interpretation* 53.1 (1999): 5-20.

Ratzinger, Joseph. *Einführung in das Christentum.* Munich: Kösel, 1968. English: *Introduction to Christianity.* Translated by J. R. Foster. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, Communio Books, 1990.

Rausch, Thomas P. *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 2003.

Saward, John. *The Mysteries of March: Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Incarnation and Easter.* London: Collins, 1990.

Schmiechen, Peter. *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

Schreiner, Thomas R. "Penal Substitution View." In *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views.* Edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy. Pages 67-98. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academic, 2006.

Schwartz, Daniel. *Aquinas on Friendship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Shannon, William H. *Anselm: The Joy of Faith*. New York: Crossroad, 1999.

Siekawitch, Larry. "The Evolution of the Doctrine of the Atonement in the Medieval Church: Anselm, Abelard, and Aquinas." *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 9 (2007-2008): 3-30.

Smail, Tom. "Can One Man Die for the People?" In *Atonement Today*. Edited by John Goldingay. Pages 73-92. London: SPCK, 1995.

Southern, Richard William. *St. Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Stelten, Leo F. *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

Stott, John R. W. *The Cross of Christ*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986, 2006.

Strehle, Stephen. *The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel: Encounter between the Middle Ages and the Reformation*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

Stump, Eleonore. *Aquinas*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Sungenis, Robert A. *Not by Bread Alone: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for the Eucharistic Sacrifice*. Goleta, CA: Queenship, 2000.

Tertullian. *Treatises on Penance: On Penance and On Purity*. Ancient Christian Writers. Volume 28. Translated and annotated by William P. le Saint. New York: Newman Press, 1959.

Trenchard, Warren C. *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament.* Revised Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.

Visser, Sandra, and Thomas Williams. *Anselm.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Vonier, Anscar. *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist.* Bethesda, MA: Zaccheus Press, 2003.

Walters, Gwenfair M. "The Atonement in Medieval Theology." In *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives.* Edited by Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III. Pages 239-262. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, IVP Academics, 2004.

Weaver, J. Denny. *The Nonviolent Atonement.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

Wheeler, David. "The Cross and the Blood: Dead or Living Images?" *Dialog* 35.1 (1996): 7-13.