

# Atonement

## *Introduction*

The doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine that God has resolved the problem of human evil by means of the suffering and death of Christ, is the central doctrine of Christianity; and yet not much attention has been paid to it by contemporary philosophers of religion. Perhaps one of the reasons for this comparative neglect is that many philosophers know this doctrine only in the version which tends to be promulgated by unreflective believers who are more to be admired for devotion than for philosophical expertise. This popular account of the atonement is often assumed to be just the theory of the atonement held by such Christian thinkers as Aquinas (or some other notable philosophical theologian), but careful consideration shows that Aquinas's theory (and no doubt also that of other thoughtful and sophisticated theologians in the history of the Christian tradition) differs significantly from the popular account with which many philosophers are familiar.

The popular account in question tends to consist in the following set of claims (or something approximately like it):

*A popular version of the doctrine (P)* Human beings by their evil actions have offended God. This sin or offense against God generates a kind of debt, a debt so enormous that human beings by themselves can never repay it. God has the power, of course, to cancel this debt, but God is perfectly just, and it would be a violation of perfect justice to cancel a debt without extracting the payment owed. Therefore, God cannot simply forgive a person's sin; as a just judge he must sentence all people to everlasting torment as the just punishment for their sin. God is also infinitely merciful, however; and so he brings it about that he himself pays their debt in full, by assuming human nature as the incarnate Christ and in that nature enduring the penalty which would otherwise have been imposed on human beings. In consequence, the sins of ordinary human beings are forgiven; and, by God's mercy exercised through Christ's passion, human beings are saved from sin and hell and brought to heaven.

There are many problems with this version of the doctrine of the atonement.

To begin with, contrary to what it intends, this version of the doctrine does not, in fact, present God as forgiving human sin. To forgive a debtor is to fail to exact all that is in justice due. But, according to (P), God does exact every bit of the debt owed him by human beings; he allows none of it to go unpaid. As (P) tells the story, God himself fully pays the debt owed him. This part of the story is perplexing; but what it shows is only that God himself has arranged for the debt to be paid in full, not that he has agreed to overlook any part of the debt.

The proponent of (P) might claim that God's forgiveness consists precisely in his not requiring that *we* pay the debt for sin but rather his paying it himself for us in the person of Christ. But it is hard to see what constitutes forgiveness on this claim. Suppose that Daniel owes Sarah \$1000 and cannot pay it, but Sarah's daughter Marion, who is Daniel's good friend, does pay Sarah the whole \$1000 on Daniel's behalf. Is there any sense in which Sarah can be said to forgive the debt? On the contrary, Sarah has been repaid in full and has foregone none of what was owed her.

The proponent of (P) will say that God's justice precludes his overlooking the debt and that therefore, in himself paying the debt owed him, he has shown mercy and forgiveness in the only way he can. And, the proponent of (P) will say, surely our intuitions about Sarah's forgiveness would be different if it turned out that although her justice did not allow her to cancel Daniel's debt, Sarah had instructed her daughter to pay the debt. The case for (P) is also strengthened by remembering that, on the doctrine of the Trinity, Christ is one in being with God the Father, so that the one paying the debt is the same as the one to whom the debt is paid.

Apart from the other perplexities raised by this rejoinder, however, it 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? Suppose that a mother with two sons, one innocent and one disobedient, inflicted all her disobedient son's justly deserved punishment on her innocent son, on the grounds that the disobedient one was too little to bear his punishment and her justice required her to punish someone. We would not praise her justice, but rather condemn her as barbaric, even if the innocent son had assented to this procedure. If the mother could after all forego punishing the disobedient son, why did she not just do so without inflicting suffering on the other child? And how is justice served by punishing a completely innocent person?

Furthermore, the account given in (P) is inconsistent both with itself and with another fundamental Christian doctrine. In the first place, (P) claims that in his suffering and death on the cross Christ paid the full penalty for all human sin so that human beings 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. Second, (P) maintains that Christ pays the penalty for all sin in full so that human beings 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?

The proponent of (P) may try to answer both these objections by altering his account to say that the penalty Christ pays for human beings is his death and suffering. But this answer is no real help. On Christian doctrine, the punishment for sin is not just death but hell, so that this alteration of (P) has the infelicitous result that what Christ undergoes in his substitutionary suffering is not the traditionally assigned penalty for sin. But even if it were, Christ's suffering would not remove the penalty from human beings since they all suffer death anyway.

Finally, it is not clear what the atonement accomplishes, on the account given in (P). According to Christian doctrine, the main problem with human evil is that it leaves human beings alienated from God. Human beings tend to will what they ought not to will, and so their wills are not in conformity with God's will. Consequently, they do not live in peace with God now, and in that state they cannot be united to God in heaven. Now, according to (P), the atonement consists in Christ's paying the penalty for sin. But nothing in (P) suggests in any way that the atonement alters human nature and proclivities which are responsible for sin. In (P)'s version of the doctrine, the atonement is efficacious to remove not sinful nature or proclivities for moral evil, but only the penalty for sin. In that case, however, the atonement is not really an at-one-ment; for, as (P) tells it, the atonement leaves human beings with just the same tendencies to will what is contrary to God's will, so that their wills are no more conformable to God's will, they are no more tending toward unity with God, than they were before the atonement.

It seems to me, then, that the version of the doctrine of the atonement in (P) is subject to serious philosophical and theological objections. But often enough when we find a piece of Christian doctrine which looks highly problematic in popular theology, it turns out to be a somewhat distorted version of an idea which was once presented with philosophical and theological sophistication in the work of philosophical theologians in the history of Christian thought. In this chapter I want to look carefully at Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, which is one of the best treatments of the doctrine I know. Although it is indebted to other interpretations of the doctrine in the preceding history of medieval thought, some of which (such as that of Anselm) it resembles in one way or another, it is nonetheless one of the most philosophically sophisticated and theologically insightful of the medieval accounts.

### *The problems solved by the atonement*

Aquinas assigns a number of roles to Christ's passion and death;<sup>i</sup> but, roughly speaking, they can all be subsumed under two general functions, namely, (as he puts it) making satisfaction and meriting grace. These functions correspond to two different problems posed by moral evil.

To see these problems and the difference between them, consider two friends, Susan and David. Suppose that these two have been best friends for years, but that very recently (unbeknownst to Susan) David has become an alcoholic, and that he is given to driving while drunk, although he is generally successful in concealing his condition when he drives. Suppose that on one occasion, when he has Susan's small daughter in his car and is nonetheless driving drunk, he has a bad car accident; the child is killed, and David's alcoholism becomes a matter of public knowledge. If Susan and David are not to be permanently alienated despite this dreadful event, there will be two obstacles to their continued friendship: first, the problem of dealing with the moral wrong David has done (I will call this 'the problem of past sin') and, second, the problem of dealing with the moral wrong David is likely to do, given that he is still an alcoholic (I will call this 'the problem of future sin').

Aquinas believes that the atonement is God's solution to both these problems.<sup>ii</sup> Christ's passion and death, insofar as they serve to make satisfaction, are the solution to the problem of past sin; and, insofar as Christ merits grace by his passion and death, they are the solution to the problem of future sin. So, Aquinas says, Christ's suffering and dying have two principal effects: satisfaction for our past sins and salvation from our sinful nature.<sup>iii</sup>

I will begin with Aquinas's understanding of the atonement as making satisfaction for sin.

#### *The popular account and Aquinas's account*

At first glance, the Thomistic account of the atonement as making satisfaction sounds perilously like (P). Here is an example of the sort of thing Aquinas tends to say about making satisfaction:

*The Thomistic account (T):* "[Christ] willed to suffer that he might make satisfaction for our sins. And he suffered for us those things which we deserved to suffer because of the sin of our first parent. The chief of these is death, to which all other human sufferings are ordered as to their end. . . . Accordingly, Christ also willed to suffer death for our sins so that, without any fault of His own by himself bearing the penalty we owed, he might free us from the sentence of death, in the way that anyone would be freed from a penalty he owed if another person undertook the penalty for him."<sup>iv</sup>

To understand Aquinas's account of this function of the atonement, however, and to see why it is in fact different from the views in (P), we need to see what Aquinas means by satisfaction and the importance he attaches to it.

Satisfaction, Aquinas says, removes the debt of punishment for sin.<sup>v</sup> But, according to Aquinas, if God had willed to free human beings from sin without any satisfaction, he would not have acted against justice; for if God forgives sin without satisfaction -- without removal, that is, of the debt of punishment -- he wrongs no one, just as anyone who overlooks a trespass against himself acts mercifully and not unjustly.<sup>vi</sup> In fact, Aquinas says,

"a judge who has to punish a fault committed against another . . . cannot remit the fault or penalty without injustice. But God has no one superior to him; rather he himself is the highest and universal good of the whole world. And for this reason, if [God] remits sin, which is defined as a fault from its being committed against [God] himself, he does no one an injury, just as any human being who, without [requiring] satisfaction, remits an offense committed against himself does not act unjustly but is merciful."<sup>vii</sup>

And so, on Aquinas's view, it is not necessary that satisfaction be made for human sins.

Nonetheless, Aquinas holds, there was no more suitable way of healing our nature than by making satisfaction.<sup>viii</sup> According to Aquinas,

“Something is said to be necessary for an end in two ways. In one way, [as] that without which something cannot be...; in another way, [as] that by means of which one arrives at the end in a better and more suitable manner, as, for example, a horse is necessary for a journey. In the first way, it was not necessary for God to become incarnate in order to restore human nature, for by his omnipotent power God was able to restore human nature in many other ways. But in the second way it was necessary for God to become incarnate in order to restore human nature.”<sup>ix</sup>

And so Aquinas concludes,

”by his passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race, and in this way a human being is made free [from sin] by the justice of Christ.”<sup>x</sup>

These remarks strongly suggest that for Aquinas the problem of past sin is understood differently from the way it is understood in (P). On (P), the problem with the sins a person such as David has committed is that they have resulted in God’s alienation from David and in God’s consequent inability to refrain from punishing him, without satisfaction’s having been made. But, on Aquinas’s account, David is alienated from God, who is free to require satisfaction or to forego it; and the problem is a problem in human nature. This is a large and important difference. How one interprets the doctrine of the atonement depends most fundamentally on how one understands the nature of the problem the atonement was meant to solve. For (P), the main obstacle to human salvation lies, in effect, in God himself, whose justice constrains him to damn human beings unless atonement is made. For Aquinas, the main obstacle lies in sinful human nature, which damns human beings unless it is repaired or restored by the atonement.

#### *Aquinas’s notion of satisfaction: support and illustration*

Support for this reading of Aquinas’s account can be found in Aquinas’s general theory of satisfaction as one of the three integral parts of penance (the other two being contrition and confession).<sup>xi</sup> Aquinas’s emphasis in his discussion of all the parts of penance is on the sinner, not on the person sinned against. So, for example, Aquinas sees penance in general as a kind of medicine for sin.<sup>xii</sup> It consists in detesting one’s sin and purposing to change one’s life for the better,<sup>xiii</sup> and it aims primarily at the restoration of friendship between the wrongdoer and the one wronged.<sup>xiv</sup> In discussing the remission of sins, which is on his view the goal of penance, Aquinas maintains that sins are remitted when the soul of the *offender* is at peace with the one offended.<sup>xv</sup> As he goes on to explain,

“this peace consists in the love with which God loves us. Now on the part of the act of God, the love of God is eternal and immutable. But with regard to the effect which it impresses on us, it is sometimes interrupted, insofar as we sometimes fall away from it and sometimes recover again. Now the effect of divine love on us, which is lost through sin, is grace, by which a human being is made worthy of eternal life...”<sup>xvi</sup>

So the function of satisfaction for Aquinas is not to placate a wrathful God or in some other way remove the constraints which compel God to damn sinners. Instead, the function of satisfaction is to restore a sinner to a state of harmony with God by repairing or restoring in the sinner what sin has damaged.

We can understand the gist of Aquinas’s idea about the way in which the making of satisfaction for a wrong done achieves this end by considering a homely example of minor evil. Suppose Anna is the mother of a feisty boy, Nathan, who loves soccer. Anna, on the other hand, loves flowers and has asked her son repeatedly not to play soccer on the side of the house where her flower beds are. But Nathan does play with his soccer ball near the flower beds, and the inevitable occurs: some of the flowers are trampled. Nathan, however, is so interested in his ball playing that he stops just long enough to run into the house and say,

“Sorry, Mom, I trampled your flowers” before he returns to his game. What he has done then presents his mother with two problems, one regarding the flowers and one regarding her son. She has lost some of her flowers, and it will take her some time and energy and money to replace them. But her real problem is with her son, as she must see. In the first place, he does not love what she loves; if he had had any care for the flowers, he would have played with his soccer ball in a different place. And second, he does not love her as she would like him to do, because although he knows *she* loves her flowers, he does not have a care for the flowers for her sake. So what Nathan has done has created some distance between himself and his mother. His will and hers are not in harmony, and he does not love her as he might.

In the example, in recognition of his misdeed, Nathan has offered only a hasty and casual apology and nothing more. If, however, he had any real care for his mother or her flowers, if he were really sorry for what he has done, he would also have done what he could to fix the damage. And his mother would have been very glad of his efforts, even if they were clumsy and ultimately unsuccessful, because they would have manifested a change of heart: after the fact, at any rate, Nathan would have had a care for his mother and for her flowers. And so by his efforts at undoing the damage caused by his action, he would have restored a harmony of will and love between himself and his mother which his wrong action had disrupted. In Aquinas’s terms, Nathan would then have made satisfaction for his sin. The chief value of this satisfaction is not so much that it restores Anna’s flowers. If Nathan’s efforts are clumsy enough, the flowers may even be worse off than if he had not tried to improve their condition. Rather, the value of the satisfaction is that it restores the harmonious and loving relationship between Anna and her son.

A view of this sort, I think, underlies Aquinas’s claim that, in the case of either punishment or satisfaction for sin, the important considerations have to do with the state of the sinner or the one satisfying, rather than with the state of the one sinned against.<sup>xvii</sup> So, for example, in SCG IV.55, in the reply to the twentieth objection where the context is a discussion of the acceptability of vicarious satisfaction, Aquinas says,

“Although when it comes to punishment of sins, the person who sinned is the one who must be punished..., nonetheless when it comes to satisfaction one person can bear the penalty of another. [This is] because when a penalty for a sin is inflicted, the iniquity of the person who is punished is weighed; but, in the case of satisfaction, when someone voluntarily assumes a penalty in order to please someone who was wronged, the charity and benevolence of the person making satisfaction is considered.”<sup>xviii</sup>

Just as suitable punishment is based on the state of the sinner, so also acceptable satisfaction for sin is based not on demands or needs of the person wronged but on the state of soul of the person making the satisfaction.

In fact, on Aquinas’s view, the whole goal of penance, of which satisfaction is a part, is the remission of past sin. He says,

“The detestation of [one’s] past sins belongs to penance, together with the purpose of changing [one’s] life for the better, which is, as it were, the goal of penance.”<sup>xix</sup>

But, according to Aquinas, the will moves away from past sin by moving in a direction opposed to those movements which previously inclined it to sin. Doing so requires being sorry for past sin in such a way that the past sin comes to be against one’s present will. Aquinas says,

“A human being who is rising again after [falling into] sin must both be penitent with regard to the past sin and also intend to avoid future sins. For if he did not intend to desist from sin, the sin in itself would not be contrary to [his] will. And if he willed to desist from sin but were not to sorrow for the past sin, that very sin that he did would not be contrary to [his] will.”<sup>xx</sup>

Elsewhere he says,

“although the act of sin, by which a human being distanced himself from the light of reason and the divine law, ceases, the person himself does not immediately return to the [state] in which he was

[before he sinned]. Rather, there is necessary some motion of the will contrary to the previous motion [of the will in sinning].<sup>xxxi</sup>

In my homely example illustrating Aquinas's notion of satisfaction, when Nathan attempts to rectify the damage he has done, he shows that he is truly sorry for his action, that if he had it to do over again, he would be more careful — in short, that he now wills the opposite of what he willed when he hurt his mother's flowers and feelings.

### *Vicarious satisfaction*

Vicarious satisfaction is much easier to understand on this way of thinking about satisfaction. Suppose that Nathan is too little to make any satisfaction himself. Perhaps to rectify the damage he would need to buy and plant new flowers, but he has no money and is too small either to go to the store or to use a shovel. If he is truly sorry for trampling the flowers, what can he do? Suppose that he has an older brother Aaron, who can do what Nathan cannot. And suppose that Nathan explains his predicament to his brother and asks his brother to buy flowers and plant them for him. If Aaron loves his brother enough, he may then use his own time and money to undo his brother's mischief. If Nathan's will really is set on some restitution for his misdeed, he will have returned to harmony with his mother even if all the actual work of restitution was done solely by Aaron. In this context, just in virtue of allying himself with Aaron's restitution, Nathan shows he cares for his mother and for the things she values; and so he restores the close relationship with his mother although Aaron is the one who restores the garden.

In this way, then, it is possible for one person to make satisfaction for another's sins. Because, on Aquinas's view, the point of making satisfaction is to return the wrongdoer's will to conformity with the will of the person wronged, rather than to inflict retributive punishment on the wrongdoer or to placate the person wronged, it is possible for the satisfaction to be made by a substitute, provided that the wrongdoer allies himself with the substitute in willing to undo as far as possible the damage he has done. So Aquinas thinks that one person can make satisfaction for another only to the extent to which they are united,<sup>xxii</sup> or that one person can atone for another insofar as they are one in charity.<sup>xxiii</sup> He says, for example,

“the penalty of satisfaction is in a certain sense voluntary. It can happen that those who differ with respect to guilt [worthy of] penalty are one with respect to the will in a union of love. For this reason, sometimes someone who has not sinned voluntarily bears the penalty for another person.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

Now the story in which Aaron makes vicarious satisfaction for Nathan's wrong action has obvious analogies to the doctrine of Christ's atonement; but, of course, it is also disanalogous in many ways. We can, however, alter the story till many of the disanalogies vanish, and the vicarious satisfaction is much closer to that of the atonement. Suppose, for example, that instead of Nathan's asking Aaron for help, he just continues playing soccer but that Aaron comes to *him* and asks if he would like to have Aaron fix the damage for him. That the initiation of restitution lies with Aaron is no hindrance to the subsequent reconciliation between Nathan and his mother. Provided that Nathan does now have a care for his mother and her concerns, it does not matter to their reconciliation whether the credit for his change of heart is due to Nathan himself or to his brother. The salient fact is that Nathan's will is now in harmony with his mother's.

Or, finally, suppose that Nathan shows no signs of any interest in restitution or reconciliation with his mother. If Anna were, like the mother of Aeneas, endowed with the power of transforming herself, and if she really loved her son, she might appear to him in disguise and in that disguise try to talk him into letting *her* make his restitution for him. If we think of the problem between Nathan and Anna as consisting in her loss of flowers or her distress over the damage to the flowers, then, of course, this story is just farcical, for in this story Anna is in effect giving flowers to herself. But if we understand, as Aquinas does, that the real problem lies in Nathan's will, which is turned away from his mother's, and if we suppose not that Anna is wrathful and vengeful towards her son but rather deeply loving, then the story makes good sense. For by this complicated and somewhat demeaning method Anna may succeed in turning her son's will and love back to her, so that the harmony of their relationship is restored. As long as Nathan wills heartily to undo the wrong

he did, it does not matter whether he himself or someone else, including even Anna, actually does the work of making restitution. And this version of the story of Anna and Nathan is analogous in relevant respects to the vicarious satisfaction of the atonement, on Aquinas's understanding of the notion of making satisfaction.

### *Satisfaction and the debt of punishment for sin*

So although both (P) and Aquinas's account (T) are couched in terms of a debt of punishment for past sin committed, they reflect two different ways of understanding the notion of incurring a debt of punishment. That in (P) rests on a conception of God which makes him seem something like an accountant keeping double-column books on the universe. When a person commits a sin, a debt of guilt is registered in one column which must be balanced on the same line in the other column by the payment of a punishment which compensates for the guilt. This view raises a problem about how the books could ever balance if the debt is to be paid by someone other than the sinner, because the debt stems from guilt, and guilt is not a transferable commodity.

Aquinas, on the other hand, has a different understanding of the notion of incurring a debt of punishment, which in turn rests on a different conception of God. This is a conception of God more nearly analogous to a parent than to an accountant. For a good parent, a misbehaved child incurs a debt of punishment for his misbehavior, not because the parent is trying to keep the spiritual books of the household balanced, but rather because the parent loves the child, and everything from old wives' tales to psychological theory suggests that negative reinforcement contributes to extinguishing the negatively reinforced behavior if the child can't be otherwise persuaded to give it up. The parent's concern is with the child, that the child develop into the best person she can be and that there be a loving relationship between the child and her parent. Any punishing, then, is strictly a means to the end of making the child a good person in harmony with the parent. If punishment is the only hope for achieving that end, then a good parent will not omit punishment -- but for the parent, unlike the celestial accountant, the occurrence of the punishment in itself does not produce the end desired.

So when a person sins, both on (P) and on (T), he incurs a debt of punishment. On (P), the sin results in a debt of guilt in that person's accounts, which must be paid back somehow. If the sinner could pay back the debt, as on (P) he cannot, then God would be satisfied (in more than one sense of the term). But on (T), God is not concerned to balance the accounts. He is concerned with the sinner. What he wants is for that person to love what God loves and to be in harmony with God. His aim, then, is to turn that person around; and what will satisfy him is not repayment, but the goodness and love of his creature. Punishment is one means to that end; but it is a desperate means, because while punishment is known for its efficacy in extinguishing punished behavior, it is not famous for its effectiveness at winning hearts.

So while Anna in my story may well hold some punishment in reserve for her son, if she is a wise as well as a loving mother, she will try some other means first. If she forces Nathan to fix the flower bed as punishment for his sin, he may repent, or alternatively he may hate flowers all his life. On the other hand, if she provides vicarious satisfaction for her son, in the way Aquinas understands vicarious satisfaction, she eases his return to her. She invites rather than forces his compliance. She counts as sufficient for reconciliation his willingness to undo his mischief and does not require his actually restoring the garden. And finally, in the person of the substitute making vicarious satisfaction, she sets before him a living model of what he should be if he were up for it, so that he does not need to initiate the desired state of mind in himself, but needs just to watch and copy someone else's. So if Anna in a spirit of love sends Aaron to offer to fix the damage on his brother's behalf, she stands a better chance of getting what she wants: not compensation, but the heart and mind of her disobedient son.

For Aquinas, then, the aim of any satisfaction (including vicarious satisfaction) is not to make debts and payments balance but to restore a sinner to harmony with God. On this view, a person making vicarious satisfaction is not providing compensatory payment so much as acting the part of a template representing the desired character or action, in accordance with which the sinner can align his own will and inclinations to achieve a state of mind which it is at least unlikely he would have achieved on his own. That is why,

speaking of Christ's passion, Aquinas remarks,

“by this human beings know how much God loves them, and by this they are stimulated to love God [in return]; and the perfection of human salvation consists in this;”<sup>xxv</sup>

and in listing the ways in which human beings are saved by Christ's passion, Aquinas says,

“he gave us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and other virtues shown in the passion of Christ, and these are necessary to human salvation.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

The atonement is thus the means to salvation for human beings not in virtue of altering something about or for God, but rather in virtue of helping human beings to a new and better state of will towards their past sins and towards God and his goodness.

### *A question*

Focusing on this aim of satisfaction helps to answer a question that may occur to someone at this point.<sup>xxvii</sup> If the aim of making satisfaction is just a sinner's repentance, why bother with restoration? In the example of the trampled flowers, why not just forget about the garden and the whole notion of satisfaction and aim solely at producing repentance? Aquinas says that it *was* open to God to deal with sin in just that way, that nothing required God to deal with sin by means of satisfaction (vicarious or otherwise).<sup>xxviii</sup> Nonetheless, it is not hard to see the usefulness of requiring the restoration accomplished in satisfaction. In the first place, if a person is truly sorry for a sin, he will *want* the evil he has done to be undone in whatever way and to whatever extent possible; and there is something right about this desire of his being fulfilled. In the second place, true repentance, being sorry for a sin and resolving not to repeat it, is difficult. People are apt to deceive themselves into thinking that they have achieved it when they have, in fact, just had some short-lived remorse; people who find their way easily into remorse can also easily find their way out of it and back into their sin. Participation in making compensation for the wrong done -- even the indirect involvement of making satisfaction vicariously -- helps turn remorse into repentance; the willing of restoration, voluntarily undertaken in contrition, helps strengthen the will in its resolution of repentance.

These considerations show that there is some value in the restoration involved in making satisfaction for a wrong done, and they also clarify the usefulness of vicarious satisfaction, even when the one making satisfaction is the same as the one wronged. But it is not yet clear *how* Christ is supposed to make satisfaction, on Aquinas's account. It is not clear, that is, what the theological equivalent of restoring the flowers is.

### *The restoration effected by Christ's making satisfaction*

According to Aquinas, Christ makes satisfaction for all the sins of the human race in his passion and death, that is, in the suffering which leads up to and includes his dying in physical and psychological pain.<sup>xxix</sup> Something in what Christ endured in dying, in other words, rectifies what was disordered or destroyed by the past sins of human beings.

But what is it that the past sin of human beings has ruined? In general, a person sins by preferring his own immediate power or pleasure over greater goods. Human sin has pride and selfishness at its root, then, and it constitutes disobedience to God, whose will it contravenes. So what is most directly ruined by the sins human beings have committed is human intellect and will; a proud, selfish, disobedient mind and heart are the theological analogue of the trampled garden. In Aquinas's terms, the immediate effect of sin is to leave something like a stain on the soul;<sup>xxx</sup> and the cumulative stains of sin lessen or destroy the soul's comeliness,<sup>xxxi</sup> so that by sinning a person directly mars part of God's creation, namely, himself.

The restoration involved in making satisfaction for human sinning, then, is a matter of presenting God with an instance of human nature which is marked by perfect obedience, humility, and charity and which is at least as precious in God's eyes as the marring of humanity by sin is offensive. But this is just what the second person of the Trinity does by taking on human nature and voluntarily suffering a painful and shameful death. By being willing to move from the exaltation of deity to the humiliation of crucifixion, Christ shows boundless humility; and by consenting to suffer the agony of his passion and death because God willed it when something in his own nature shrank powerfully from it, Christ manifests absolute obedience.<sup>xxxii</sup> Finally, because he undertakes all his suffering and humiliation out of love for sinful human beings, Christ exhibits the most intense charity. So in his passion and death Christ restores what sin has marred in human nature, because he gives God a particularly precious instance of human nature with the greatest possible humility, obedience, and charity. So one answer to the question why Christ had to suffer is that humility, obedience, and charity are present in suffering that is voluntarily and obediently endured for someone else's sake in a way in which they could not be, for example, in Christ's preaching or healing the sick.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In this way, then, because of his divine nature and because of the extent of his humility, obedience, and charity,<sup>xxxiv</sup> Christ made satisfaction for all the sins of the human race.<sup>xxxv</sup>

*Availing oneself of Christ's having made satisfaction*

It is clear on Aquinas's account of the nature and purpose of making satisfaction -- as it is not clear on (P) -- why Christ's having made satisfaction for all human sins does not entail that there be no human beings in hell. For Aquinas, satisfaction for sin made by a substitute for the sinner effects reconciliation between the sinner and the one sinned against only in case the sinner allies himself with the substitute by willing the restitution the substitute makes. The benefit of Christ's making satisfaction is unavailing unless a person applies it to himself by accepting Christ's suffering and death as making satisfaction for his own sins and by being united to Christ in love.

To ally oneself with Christ's making satisfaction involves, first of all, having faith in his passion. As Aquinas says,

"the passion of Christ is applied to us by faith"<sup>xxxvi</sup>

That is, availing oneself of Christ's vicarious satisfaction involves believing that the incarnate Christ suffered for the sake of human beings and in their stead. But this belief by itself is not enough, as we can see by remembering the example of satisfaction in my example. Nathan might believe that Aaron was restoring the flowers for his sake and in his stead and yet, in a fit of perversity, hate what Aaron is doing. In that case, on Aquinas's understanding of making satisfaction (but not on that which (P) employs), Aaron's action would not be successful in producing reconciliation between Nathan and his mother.

Consequently, according to Aquinas, for Christ's passion to be applied to a person, that person must have both faith and charity. He must not only believe that Christ has made satisfaction for his past sin; he must also have the love of God and of goodness which makes him glad of the fact. So, Aquinas says,

"The faith by which we are cleansed from sin is not lifeless faith, which can exist even with sin, but rather it is faith informed by charity.... And by this means sins are remitted by the power of the passion of Christ."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In such a case, then, the mind and heart of the sinner cleave to Christ, and the benefit of Christ's making satisfaction in his passion and death is extended to that sinner for the remission of his sin<sup>xxxviii</sup> and for reconciling himself with God.

In this way, too, we can see that although Aquinas's account superficially resembles (P), it is in fact very different from it. Aquinas sees the problem of the alienation between God and human beings as

consisting not in God's wrathfulness toward human beings or in his inability to avoid damning them but rather in human withdrawal from God. And he understands Christ's passion as atoning, as producing reconciliation between God and human beings, not because God in his justice must inflict the punishment for sin on someone and the innocent Christ substitutes for guilty human beings, but rather because by allying their hearts and minds with Christ in his passion as he makes satisfaction for their past sins human beings are converted to a state of mind in harmony with God's will with regard to what they have done.

There is real mercy and forgiveness on Aquinas's account, because, according to Aquinas, God does not require the penalties for sins either from human beings or from Christ. God does not inflict Christ's suffering on Christ as a punishment for human sins; rather God receives it as an act of making satisfaction whose goal is the alteration of human intellects and wills. The homely example drives this point home. In accepting Aaron's restoration of her flowers Anna does not inflict restoration of the flowers on Aaron as punishment even if she is the instigator of his action. The purpose of Aaron's action (and Anna's participation in it) is not to make sure that there is punishment to balance the misdeed done by Nathan but rather to change Nathan's will with regard to his past deed in such a way that he is again in harmony with his mother.

And so it is clear on Aquinas's account, as it is not on (P), why not all people experience the benefit of the atonement, namely, because on Aquinas's account it is not possible for Christ's atoning action to be efficacious for anyone unless that person allies himself with Christ's act of making satisfaction.

Finally, Aquinas's account, unlike (P), provides some comprehensible connection between Christ's atoning action and the remission of past sin, because, according to Aquinas's account, when a person allies himself with Christ's making satisfaction, he wills the contrary of the pride, selfishness, and disobedience he willed when he sinned, and in *this* willing he moves away from the past sin he committed.<sup>xxxix</sup>

### *The second problem*

If we return now to the example of Susan and her alcoholic friend David with which I began, we can see that Aquinas's account of the atonement as making satisfaction is only part of the solution to the problem of human evil. According to the story in that example, David drove while drunk and in consequence killed Susan's child. One way of restoring Susan and David to friendship with each other again afterwards, on Aquinas's view, is for David (or someone else acting for David) to make satisfaction for the evil David did by offering Susan something which she would not have had otherwise and which she values as much as (or almost as much as) what she lost, thereby evincing the real care for Susan and for what she loves which David lacked in the actions that resulted in the death of Susan's daughter. Suppose, for example, that Susan has a second child who is dying from kidney disease and for whom a donor has not been found; and suppose (*mirabile dictu*) that David's tissues are compatible with those of the sick child. If in a spirit of contrition David donates one of his kidneys and thereby saves Susan's sick child from death, he goes a long way toward restoring his friendship with Susan.

But even in such rare felicitous circumstances, their friendship will not be restored to its previous state as long as David remains an alcoholic, and Susan knows this about him. In his current condition David does not share many of Susan's most important concerns and desires; and, as he and Susan both know, he may at any time again do something as terrible as killing a child.

Analogously, although Aquinas's account of the atonement as making satisfaction explains how Christ's passion remits past sin, this account by itself is not enough to show that Christ's passion solves the problem of human evil, because simply making satisfaction for past sin still leaves a person with the same proclivities to do evil in the future. Taken just in its function of making satisfaction, Christ's passion does not alter human proneness to evil, the disordered relationship among human reason, will, and passions which, on Aquinas's view, is responsible for the tendency of human beings to sin.<sup>xl</sup> This disordered condition of human nature constitutes the problem of future sin.

Aquinas, however, thinks that Christ's passion also helps with this problem. He says,

“by his passion Christ not only freed man from sin but also merited for man justifying grace and the glory of beatitude.”<sup>xli</sup>

On Aquinas's view, Christ's passion is like a medicine for sin<sup>xlii</sup> available to cure sin in all ages of human history.<sup>xliii</sup> And so he says,

“by his passion Christ freed us from [our] sins causally, that is, [by] constituting (*instituens*) the cause of our being freed. And from this all sins at any time can be remitted, whether they are past or present or future, as if a doctor were to prepare a medicine by means of which all sicknesses could be cured, even in the future.”<sup>xliv</sup>

For Aquinas, Christ's passion and death are, as he puts it, both a remedy of satisfaction and a sacrament of salvation.<sup>xlv</sup> Christ's suffering thus has *two* principal beneficial effects: satisfaction for one's past sins and salvation from one's sinful nature.<sup>xlvi</sup>

When Aquinas's account of Christ's passion as making satisfaction is supplemented by an explanation of the passion as Christ's meriting grace and thereby healing the sinfulness of the human mind and will, Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement also explains how the passion and death of Christ provide a solution to the problem of future sin.

#### *Christ's meriting grace*

This second part of Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement is more complicated and difficult than his explanation of the atonement as making satisfaction. It is couched in the technical terminology of medieval theology; it is set in the context of Aquinas's elaborate treatment of the nature and varieties of God's grace; and on first hearing it is likely to strike a contemporary audience as obscure and implausible at best. In what follows I will give a brief summary of the salient points of Aquinas's account, presenting just as much of his work on grace as I need to do in order to make this part of his interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement intelligible and without pausing to comment on the many questions Aquinas's views raise. After this uncritical presentation I will try to illustrate Aquinas's interpretation with a concrete case in order to give some insight into the general idea that animates his views. With the help of this concrete case, we will be in a position to consider whether Aquinas is successful in arguing that the atonement, taken in the way he understands it, is a solution to the problem of future sin.

According to Aquinas, Christ is the head of the Church,<sup>xlvii</sup> and since all human beings are potentially members of the Church, Christ is (at least potentially) the head of the whole human race.<sup>xlviii</sup> By saying that Christ is the head, Aquinas means that he is first among human beings in order, perfection, and power;<sup>xlix</sup> but, more importantly, he also means that together Christ and human beings form one mystical body, analogous to the physical body formed by the head and other members of a human body.<sup>1</sup> All human beings are potentially and believers are actually part of this mystical body. In his passion Christ merits grace sufficient to cure all human sin;<sup>li</sup> and as head of the body of the church, he infuses the grace he has merited into those persons actually united with him in this mystical body.<sup>lii</sup>

For someone to merit something is for him to bring it about that some good thing should in justice be given him, and the source of Christ's merit that provides grace for human beings is his will.<sup>liii</sup> In the last analysis, good things for human beings are those which contribute to obtaining eternal life, and so the grace that Christ merits is grace bringing salvation to human beings. Now an action meriting eternal life must be an action done out of charity.<sup>liv</sup> In fact, charity is the root of all merit<sup>lv</sup> because it is the love of God,<sup>lvi</sup> who is goodness personified,<sup>lvii</sup> and the love of other persons and things for the sake of goodness. Without charity, then, no true virtue is possible,<sup>lviii</sup> and charity is, as it were, the form of all virtuous acts.<sup>lix</sup> But Christ in his passion suffered out of the deepest charity, for he voluntarily accepted great suffering and death out of love for all human beings.<sup>lx</sup> His suffering was intense, both physically and psychically, partly because during his

passion he grieved for all the sins of the human race at once,<sup>lxi</sup> and partly because there is more charity involved when a greater person submits to suffering for the sake of others.<sup>lxii</sup> So because of the intensity of his love for human beings Christ merits grace leading to eternal life; and as the head of all human beings (at least potentially), he merits this grace for all people.

### *Grace and salvation*

To understand this part of Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, we have to be clear about at least a part of his complicated account of grace. (Although Aquinas recognizes several species of grace, in what follows I will not generally distinguish among these kinds of grace, because the distinctions are not necessary for my purposes here.<sup>lxiii</sup>) In general, Aquinas thinks of the grace necessary for salvation in this way:

“a human being is said to have the grace of God not only in virtue of the fact that he is loved by God in eternal life, but in virtue of the fact that there is given to him some gift by means of which he is worthy of eternal life.... For otherwise a person existing in mortal sin could be said to be in grace if ‘grace’ meant divine acceptance alone, since it is possible for some sinner to be predestined to eternal life.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

Explaining the work of grace, Aquinas says,

“by grace the will of a human being is changed, for grace is what prepares the human will to will the good.”<sup>lxv</sup>

For Aquinas, grace is a habit or disposition bestowed in virtue of Christ's passion by the Holy Spirit on a person, inclining that person toward freely complying with God's precepts and prohibitions.<sup>lxvi</sup> This disposition is bestowed when a person's mind is illuminated to know things which exceed reason and when his affections in consequence cleave to God in love, being inclined to do all the things such love requires.<sup>lxvii</sup> The end or purpose of this grace is the union of a human person with God.<sup>lxviii</sup> Grace accomplishes this end by inclining the natural powers of the mind to the love of God and by making that love come easily and pleasantly.<sup>lxix</sup>

Nonetheless, this inclining of a person's mind and will to charity is always accomplished by the Holy Spirit by means of a free act<sup>lxx</sup> of that person's will.<sup>lxxi</sup> While grace is being infused into a person, that person assents to the process in an act of free will,<sup>lxxii</sup> so that the infusion of grace is simultaneous with the movement of the will.<sup>lxxiii</sup> According to Aquinas,

“the motion of the free will, which occurs in the justification of an impious person, is the ultimate disposition to grace. For this reason, in one and the same instant there is the infusion of grace together with this motion of the free will... The act of penitence is comprised in this motion.... And so, insofar as the motion of free will in penitence is more or less intense, to this degree the penitent receives greater or lesser grace.”<sup>lxxiv</sup>

And so, on Aquinas's views, no one comes to God by grace without freely willing to do so.<sup>lxxv</sup> He says,

“in adults, who can know and love God, there is required some use of free will by means of which they may know and love God; and this is conversion to God.”<sup>lxxvi</sup>

It is God who moves a person toward charity, from which the virtues flow. But God moves everything in accordance with the nature of the thing moved; and since it is part of human nature to have free will, God's movement of a person in the process of infusing grace does not take place without a movement of free will.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

Furthermore, what grace confers is a habitual disposition. But one can always act against a disposition or habit, and so a person in grace is always capable of sinning.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> And, finally, grace is available to all human beings; the only human beings who are deprived of grace are those who offer an obstacle to grace within themselves.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Grace itself is not a virtue;<sup>lxxx</sup> but it helps ready the will for virtue by giving it a disposition, by preparing the will to love God and to act rightly.<sup>lxxxxi</sup> So grace gives rise to all the virtues,<sup>lxxxii</sup> and especially the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The process of the infusion of grace and the consequent effects of grace on the mind of the person receiving it is the process of sanctification, in which a person's sinful nature is slowly converted into a righteous character. Thus, Aquinas says, there are five effects of grace in human beings: (1) healing of the soul, (2) desire of the good, (3) carrying out the good desired, (4) perseverance in good, and (5) attainment of eternal life.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

### *Grace and Christ's passion*

Even if this account of grace were entirely clear and wholly plausible as a solution to the problem of future sin, however, it would not yet suffice as part of an interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, because so far we have no connection between the bestowal of grace, on the one hand, and Christ's passion and death, on the other. That connection is provided by Aquinas's theory of the means by which God has chosen to bestow grace, particularly in the sacraments. According to Aquinas,

“One must hold that the sacraments of the new law are, in a certain way, the cause of grace.... Neither the sacraments nor any created thing can give grace in the manner of a cause acting per se... but the sacraments function as an instrument of grace. ... the humanity of Christ is an instrumental cause of [our] justification, and this cause is applied to us spiritually by faith and corporeally by the sacraments... the passion of Christ is said to work in the sacraments of the new law, and in this way the sacraments of the new law are the cause of grace, working as it were as an instrument of grace.”<sup>lxxxv</sup>

There is no way that salvation from sin can occur without grace, Aquinas says,<sup>lxxxvi</sup> and he holds that the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, confer this grace. Partaking of the Eucharist is not necessary to salvation,<sup>lxxxvii</sup> but, according to Aquinas,

“the grace of the sacraments is especially ordained to two [ends], namely, to taking away the defects of past sins, insofar as they have passed away in act and remain in guilt, and furthermore to perfecting the soul in those things that pertain to the worship of God according to the religion of the Christian life. Now it is manifest... that Christ has freed us from our sins especially by his passion.... And so it is manifest that the sacraments of the Church have their virtue particularly from the passion of Christ, and the power (*virtus*) of this is joined to us by the reception of the sacraments. As a sign of this, from Christ's side, while he was hanging on the cross, there flowed water and blood, one of which pertains to baptism, and the other to the Eucharist, which are the most powerful sacraments.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

And so Aquinas says,

“the Eucharist is the sacrament of the passion of Christ insofar as a human being is perfected [by means of it] in union to Christ in his passion (*Christus passus*).”<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Grace is thus involved in all the sacraments, but the one most important for Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement is the Eucharist:

“The most perfect sacrament is that in which the body of Christ is really contained, namely, the Eucharist, and it is the consummation of all the others.”<sup>xc</sup>

On his view, Christ's passion works its effect of saving human beings from their proclivity to (future) sin through all the sacraments,<sup>xc<sup>i</sup></sup> but particularly through the Eucharist. The sacraments are for the spiritual life what certain physical things are for bodily life, according to Aquinas,<sup>xc<sup>ii</sup></sup> the Eucharist is nourishment for the psyche, and it provides growth in virtue<sup>xc<sup>iii</sup></sup> precisely by conferring grace.<sup>xc<sup>iv</sup></sup> In fact, Aquinas says,

“this sacrament has in itself the power of conferring grace.... And so it is due to the efficacy of its power that even from a desire of it a person attains grace, by which he is revived spiritually.”<sup>xc<sup>v</sup></sup>

Obviously, the sacrament of the Eucharist is intimately related to Christ's passion. On Aquinas's theology of the sacraments, in accordance with Christ's institution at the last supper, Christ's body and blood are actually, literally, present in the sacrament. Christ's body, however, is not in the sacrament as a physical body is in a place, that is, contained by the place and filling it. Rather it is in the sacrament only substantially, as being the substance of what was bread. Thus Christ's body is in the (apparent) bread in such a way that the whole body of Christ is comprised in every part of the bread.<sup>xc<sup>vi</sup></sup> (Something roughly similar applies also to the wine, but I omit the details here.) Furthermore, the nature of the Eucharist is such that when a believer partakes of it, he does not turn the sacrament into his substance, as happens when he eats other food, but instead he becomes part of the body of Christ and is incorporated into the body of Christ. Aquinas says,

“there is this difference between corporeal and spiritual food: corporeal food is converted into the substance of the human being who is nourished [by it]... but spiritual food converts a human being into itself.”<sup>xc<sup>vii</sup></sup>

This process, however, occurs only in those who partake of the Eucharist appropriately. Although the grace Christ merited by his passion is sufficient for undoing bad habits acquired in the past and preventing further sin in the future, it is efficacious to cure the sinful tendencies only of those united to him. The uniting is effected by faith and love.<sup>xc<sup>viii</sup></sup> Aquinas says,

“the power of Christ is joined to us by means of faith. Now the power of remitting sins in a certain special way belongs to Christ's passion. And therefore by means of faith in his passion human beings are specially freed from sins.... And therefore the power of the sacraments, which are ordained to taking away sins, is principally from faith in the passion of Christ.”<sup>xc<sup>ix</sup></sup>

The faith in question here is living faith, what Aquinas tends to call ‘faith informed by charity’. And although charity or love of God can be stimulated by other examples of God's love for his creatures, it is stirred especially by reflection on Christ's passion.<sup>c</sup> So, for example, in one of the many passages in which he makes the point, Aquinas claims that we are freed from our sinful nature by the passion of Christ in three ways, the first of which is

“by means of stimulating us to charity, because, as the Apostle says in Romans 5, ‘God commends his charity to us since when we were enemies, Christ died for us’.”<sup>ci</sup>

Union with Christ in love is thus needed to receive this sacrament appropriately; but union (or perhaps increased union through increased love) is also the effect of this sacrament, since in the sacrament a believer receives Christ within himself in such a way as to become incorporated into the body of Christ.<sup>c<sup>ii</sup></sup> So the effect of the sacrament for those who receive it with charity, that is, with the right sort of will, is that they are united with Christ to such an extent that they become part of the body of Christ.<sup>c<sup>iii</sup></sup> But if a person is part of the body of Christ, then the grace Christ merited on the cross by his passion flows into that person. By this means, the grace won by Christ's passion is bestowed through the Eucharist on those who partake of the sacrament appropriately.<sup>c<sup>iv</sup></sup> The result of the believer's becoming part of the body of Christ and receiving grace from Christ is that his mind and will are strengthened against future sin, because by the grace bestowed through the sacrament a believer's love of God and love of goodness is stimulated and strengthened.<sup>c<sup>v</sup></sup> In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Aquinas says (in one of the few lyrical passages in his scholastic prose), a believer's soul is inebriated by the sweetness of the divine goodness.<sup>c<sup>vi</sup></sup>

This is so because, when a person cleaves to Christ in faith and love in this way, an act of free will is elicited in him simultaneous with the infusing of Christ's grace. The act of free will is directed both toward

past sins and toward future acts; in this act of will, a person hates his past sin and loves God's goodness. In consequence, the believer withdraws from sin and draws nearer to righteousness.<sup>cvii</sup> Simultaneously with this free act of willing on the believer's part, God infuses grace into the believer's soul. God adds to the believer's mind and will a disposition inclining the believer toward the good and away from sin. The repetition of this cooperative action of free willing and the simultaneous infusion of grace is the process of gradually conforming the believer's mind and character to Christ's, a process whose culmination is eternal life with Christ in the afterlife.<sup>cviii</sup>

So the atonement solves the problem of future sin because by means of the sacrament of the Eucharist a union of love is effected between a believer and Christ such that the grace merited by Christ in his passion is transferred to the believer in one cooperative divine and human action in which the believer freely loves God's goodness and hates his own sin and God adds to the believer a strengthened disposition for the good, with the result that in the course of time the believer comes to be more righteous and more like Christ.

### *Illustration and explanation*

Because Aquinas's account of grace is complex and problematic, this part of his theory of the atonement may leave us cold and uncomprehending. It is, for example, not clear how God could infuse the grace of a disposition for willing the good into a believer simultaneously with a free act of will for the good on the believer's part. And why should it take a religious ceremony like the Eucharist for God to bestow this grace? Furthermore, the connection Aquinas makes between Christ's passion and the bestowal of grace through the Eucharist is not immediately obvious. The talk of the mystical body of Christ is more perplexing than helpful, and it is difficult to see why it was necessary for Christ to suffer in order to effect this mystical body. The transfer of grace, which was merited by Christ in his passion, to believers united to Christ in charity raises moral and metaphysical problems. The nature of grace is or at least includes a disposition to goodness, and it is hard to understand how this disposition of Christ's could be directly transferred from him to another person, no matter how they are joined together. And finally, it is not clear why a good God could not and would not simply bestow grace directly without the suffering of Christ's passion or the ritual of the Eucharist.

Part of the trouble we have in understanding Aquinas's account, I think, stems from the fact that he explains in medieval metaphysical terms what we would be more inclined to explain in psychological terms. But it is possible, I think, to see what Aquinas has in mind if we think through his claims in terms of a concrete case. Doing so will not explain the details of the metaphysics in which Aquinas's interpretation is couched; but I believe it will clarify Aquinas's general idea of the way in which the atonement solves the problem of future sin, and it will provide answers to some (but not all) of the questions I just raised about this part of Aquinas's account.

So consider again David, an alcoholic who kills a child while driving drunk. Suppose that David is a Christian (of a Thomistic sort) and that shortly after his dreadful accident, still in the grip of his alcoholism but nonetheless full of sorrow and remorse over his killing of the child, he returns to church; and in this state of sorrow and remorse he participates in the sacrament of the Eucharist. What will this experience be like for David?

Consider first what he believes (on the supposition that he is a Thomistic sort of Christian). He believes that he has done something morally reprehensible and that he did it because of his continuing enslavement to alcohol, and he will see himself in consequence as a hateful person. Since he is a Christian, however, he also believes that God does not hate him but rather *loves* him intensely. God himself is perfectly good, holy in righteousness, and he also sees completely all the evil in David's will and actions. And yet Christ's love for David, for the hateful, alcoholic David, was so great that he voluntarily undertook the shame and agony of crucifixion for him. And for what purpose? To heal David of his sin; to offer for David what David himself could not offer to God, so that he might be reconciled to God, no matter what awful evil he had done, and to transform David from something hateful into someone holy, into someone like Christ.

Furthermore, Christ's great love for David is not just part of some old historical narrative or abstruse theological argument. On the contrary, the divine person who loves David so intensely as to die for him in order to keep David from dying in his sin is right there then in the sacrament, present to David's spirit even if hidden from his eyes. In fact, not only is he present, but (David will believe) in the sacrament of the Eucharist the God who loves him comes closer to him and is more intimately united to him than it is possible for two created persons to be in this life. That is because, David himself believes (since he is a Thomistic Christian), in receiving the sacrament David receives the body and blood of Christ in such a way that he himself becomes a part of the body of Christ, bound together with Christ into one spiritual entity.

If David believes all this, what is the effect on him likely to be?<sup>cxix</sup> In the first place, his feelings of guilt will be assuaged; Christ has made satisfaction to God for David's sin and restored the relationship between David and God which David's past sin had disrupted. In consequence, David's hostility to himself will be alleviated; the judge most in a position to despise and condemn him instead loves him and means to rescue him from his evil. Then, too, David's hope for himself will be strengthened. God, who sees David as he is and who can do anything, is himself on David's side. It is God's intention that David be turned into a righteous person, at peace with God and with himself. And if God be for him, what can be against him? Furthermore, David will feel a great debt of gratitude to Christ, who suffered so to free him, and with that gratitude will come a determination that Christ's suffering should not be for nothing. Finally, David will feel a surge of love for Christ, who so loved him, and also a sense of joy, for the divine person who loves David is present to him *now* and united with him.

As long as David is in this frame of mind, what chance has his addiction got of retaining its mastery over him? To use Aquinas's terminology for a moment, what David has done in this state is to cleave to Christ in charity and thus to will freely to draw near to righteousness and withdraw from sin.

If at some other time out of love for David God were simply to alter David's will, in such a way as to strengthen a determination in David not to drink, for example, he would be destroying David's free will, because he would be making David will contrary to what David himself wills absent the divine intervention. But if God acts on David's will while David is in the frame of mind outlined above, if in these circumstances God strengthens David's will in its resolution to stop drinking, he is not violating David's will, for in these circumstances David has in effect a second-order will for a will not to drink.<sup>cx</sup> In other words, the beliefs and desires stimulated in David by the Eucharist and reflection on Christ's passion evoke in David a will to have a will that wills not to drink. In giving David grace when David has a second-order will of this sort, God infuses David with a disposition (of one degree of strength or another) to first-order willing against drinking; but that God does so in no way detracts from the freedom of David's will because it is David's own (second-order) will that he have a (first-order) will against drinking. In strengthening David's will in its resolution, then, God does not undermine the freedom of his will but rather cooperates with it to produce the state of will which David himself wills to have. This is, I think, the sort of thing Aquinas has in mind when he says that the grace bestowed to help human beings will the good *cooperates* with free will and is infused simultaneously with an action of free will.<sup>cxii</sup> (A different and much more complicated question has to do with the relation between Christ's passion and grace which is operating, rather than cooperating; but I have already discussed that question in the chapter on faith, because it is intimately bound up with Aquinas's understanding of the nature of justifying faith, and so I omit it here.)

It is clear that if David's response to the sacrament is of the ordinary human variety, if it is not the unusually powerful and life-transforming conversion of the sort had by Paul on the road to Damascus, David's exalted state of mind will fade, and his second-order resolution will weaken. Even so, however, he will have made some progress, because God will have acted to alter David's will simultaneously with David's free (second-order) will to have a will that wills the good, to enable David to be successful in repudiating his past sin and drawing nearer to the goodness of God. But not even omnipotence can make David's will stronger in its willing of goodness than David wills it to be, on pain of violating David's will. Without the sudden wholesale conversion of will of the sort experienced by Paul, David will also have a strong disposition toward first-order willings to drink, which will undermine his second-order willing to have a will not to drink and which will thus resist God's grace.<sup>cxiii</sup> So David's road away from his sin and toward the goodness he wants in himself will take time, during which some second-order willing and some grace

will occur together, in consequence of which there will be more divine strengthening of David's will in willing the good, and this strengthening in turn will stimulate further cooperative willing and grace.<sup>cxiii</sup>

On the basis of this sort of concrete case illustrating Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement as providing a solution to the problem of future sin, we can sketch some answers to the questions with which I began this section.

We can understand the bestowal of grace in the process of the sanctification of a believer as God's simultaneous cooperation with the believer's willing to have a will for the good. Such grace is tied to the Eucharist because (for believers of the sort Aquinas has in mind) it is the Eucharist which breaks down a believer's resistance to grace and thus contributes to producing that second-order willing. Both the bestowal of grace and the second-order willing associated with the Eucharist are connected to Christ's passion, because it is Christ's love as manifested in his passion which elicits the believer's love and consequent willingness to repudiate his sin and will the good. It is also clear why God could not bestow grace directly without Christ's passion. The commemoration of Christ's passion in the Eucharist serves to undermine a person's refusal of grace, so that God's bestowal of grace does not violate the will of that person. On this way of understanding Aquinas, then, whatever else the mystical body of Christ may be, it is or at least essentially includes a union of minds and wills, when the believer values and wants what Christ does, in the love engendered by the intimacy and poignancy of the Eucharist.

In this sort of way, it is also possible to see what Aquinas has in mind with his claim that Christ's grace is transferred to a believer through the Eucharist. When David acquires grace on partaking of the Eucharist, it is not because some moral disposition of Christ is magically plucked from Christ and transplanted into David. Instead in loving Christ because he believes Christ loves him and wants David's love in return, with all that that love of Christ's implies in the context, David allies himself with Christ and takes on a frame of mind like that which he believes characterized Christ in his passion, namely, charity accompanied by a hatred of sin (in David's case, his own sin) and a love of goodness. In this frame of mind David forms a second-order willing to have first-order willings of the sort he believes he ought to have, so that God can simultaneously infuse in David (to the degree suitable to the condition of David's second-order will) a disposition to will not to drink without thereby violating the freedom of David's will.

In this way, then, Christ's grace is transferred from Christ to David, not in the way that tulip bulbs are transferred from one plot to another but rather in the way that understanding is sometimes transferred from one mind to another, by the two minds being joined together in certain aims and beliefs and one mind's being kindled and illuminated by the other.

#### *Conclusion and caveat*

If we combine the two main parts of Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, Christ's passion as making satisfaction and Christ's passion as meriting grace, we can see that Aquinas has an interpretation of the doctrine which can handle the problems of both past and future sin.

If we return to the story of Susan and David, we can see that this story is in many (but certainly not all) respects analogous to the Christian view of the relationship between God and a post-Fall human being. To reconcile Susan and David requires David's doing what he can to make satisfaction for the evil he has already done and then his abandoning his addiction. On Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, a post-Fall human person is alienated from God because of the sins he has already committed and because of his on-going tendency to will the contrary of what God wills, generally his own pleasure or power in preference to greater goods. Christ out of love for humans initiates the process of making satisfaction by offering in his passion what human beings cannot offer to God, namely, an instance of human nature with perfect humility, obedience, and love of God. In addition, for a human being and God to be at one again, a person needs to convert from his post-Fall disordered nature with its inclination to evil to a new Christ-like character inclined to goodness. On Aquinas's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, Christ also provides the means for effecting this conversion by his passion and by its commemoration in the Eucharist.

The love manifested by Christ's passion and the loving union experienced by the believer in the Eucharist call forth the believer's love of Christ, together with a second-order will to will goodness and withdraw from sin. Simultaneous with this free second-order will on the believer's part, God gives the believer's will supernatural aid by infusing in it a disposition for the good, thereby assisting and strengthening the will to will the good, without violating the believer's free will.

Finally, although I have canvassed many elements of Aquinas's interpretation of the atonement, there are still others that I have left to one side. For example, readers familiar with other theories of the atonement, such as Calvin's, may wonder at the fact that there is here hardly any mention of the work of the Holy Spirit, which features significantly in Calvin's account, as in the theories of some other theologians. In fact, however, Aquinas's interpretation does assign a prominent place to the Holy Spirit, because on Aquinas's view the grace bestowed through the sacraments is given by the Holy Spirit,<sup>cxiv</sup> so that the infusion of grace is the Holy Spirit working in the heart. But covering all the complexities and elaborations of Aquinas's account of the atonement is more than can be managed in one chapter, and so I have left to one side any issues which could be omitted without distorting the heart of Aquinas's interpretation. The work of the Holy Spirit is one such matter; the role of Christ's resurrection in the process of atonement is another.

There is, however, one idea important in theories of the atonement found, for example, in the Reformation which is not mentioned in this chapter because, as far as I can see, it is not in Aquinas. Luther, for example, in his explanation of the atonement, emphasizes the idea that Christ somehow actually bears all human sin; that is, in some way all the sins ever committed in human history are transferred to Christ's soul in his suffering on the cross. There is no similar or analogous claim in Aquinas's account. There is consequently some problem for Aquinas in squaring his account with the New Testament story of the passion. At any rate, the cry of dereliction from the cross is certainly easier to explain on Luther's view than on Aquinas's interpretation; and so is Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. For Aquinas, it is difficult to explain why the incarnate deity should have been in such torment over his death when so many of the merely human martyrs went gladly, even cheerfully, to death by tortures worse than crucifixion.

We might be tempted to suppose that Aquinas's interpretation does not include an idea such as Luther's because Luther's idea makes no sense and so did not occur to Aquinas; sins, we might think, cannot be transferred like money in bank accounts. But, in fact, Luther's idea is less counterintuitive than it seems at first, and Aquinas has the philosophical concepts and distinctions necessary for supporting something at least resembling it.

For example, Aquinas distinguishes between the very act of sinning itself and what he calls 'the stain on the soul' left by that sinful action.<sup>cxv</sup> By 'the stain on the soul' Aquinas understands the effects wrought on the intellect and will by the past act of sin which remain after the act is over, even when the past sin has been repented. Whatever exactly Aquinas meant these effects to be, it seems to me that among the effects left by past sin are the distressing knowledge of what it feels like to be a person who has committed a particular sin and the tormenting awareness of what it is like to want to do such an evil action. It is, arguably, possible to have a stain on the soul, so understood, without having the very act of sin which usually precedes it. To take just one example, a powerful scene in a movie portraying a brutal sexual assault may succeed in evoking in some receptive members of the audience a mild version of the stain on the soul ordinarily produced only by the evil action itself.

Something like Luther's idea could thus be explained in Aquinas's own terms by claiming that in his passion Christ acquires all the stains on the soul produced by all the sins of all human beings, or at least of the human beings with whom Christ is united.<sup>cxvi</sup> The (foreseen) horror and pain of such a burden would certainly explain the agony in Gethsemane and the cry of dereliction on the cross. And that Christ suffer in such a way could perhaps be explained as a necessary concomitant of Aquinas's idea that a believer is united to Christ in the mystical body of Christ through the Eucharist. If David is united with Christ in this way, then Christ is also united with David. In my example, David experiences that uniting as allying himself with an overwhelmingly holy, loving person. By parity of reasoning, then, one might argue that Christ experiences the uniting as allying himself with a selfish, alcoholic killer of a child, with the mind and heart of that killer somehow one with his own.

So it is possible for Aquinas's account of the atonement to accommodate something like Luther's idea. That Aquinas has no equivalent idea stems, I think, from his tendency to emphasize the divine nature of Christ at the expense of his human nature, rather than from any philosophical absurdity (in Aquinas's terms or ours) in the version of Luther's idea at issue here. But Aquinas's theory of the atonement would have been theologically more powerful, in my view, and also perhaps more humanly compelling, if it had included something equivalent to this idea.

Finally, it is, of course, clear that Aquinas's account is not the only theory of the atonement that is an alternative to the unreflective (P) with which this chapter began. Anselm, Abelard, Luther, Calvin, and John of the Cross, to name just a few, also worked out sophisticated theories of the atonement. What my examination of Aquinas's account shows is not the preferability of his version to any of these others but rather just the nature of one defensible theory of the atonement and the general constraints on any acceptable account. Aquinas's theory of the atonement is a reflective analogue of (P). As Aquinas explains it, Christ in virtue of his passion really does solve the problem of human evil and really does make people at one with God. Whatever the details of other theories of the atonement, they must explain how the atonement solves the problem both of past and of future sin; and they must do so, like Aquinas's account, in a way which does not undermine God's justice and mercy or human nature.

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<sup>i</sup> In *ST* IIIa.48, Aquinas says Christ's passion operated as a source of merit, as a sacrifice, as a mode of redemption, and as satisfaction making atonement for human sins.

<sup>ii</sup> See, e.g., *CT* 226-230. Robert Adams has suggested to me that alcoholism may be a bad example to illustrate the problem of future sin because we tend to think of alcoholism as a disease involving physical addiction, and perhaps his suggestion is right, although it seems to me that the cure of alcoholism typically includes a painful and difficult moral struggle which is illustrative of the problem of future sin. We could, however, readily replace the example involving alcoholism with other examples of habitual evil such as chronic marital infidelity.

<sup>iii</sup> See, e.g., *CT* 227.

<sup>iv</sup> *CT* 227. Cf. also *ST* IIIa.46.1 and *SCG* IV.55.

<sup>v</sup> *ST* IIIa.22.3.

<sup>vi</sup> *ST* IIIa.46.2.

<sup>vii</sup> *ST* IIIa.46.2 ad 3.

<sup>viii</sup> *ST* IIIa.46.3. In conversation with me, Thomas Tracy raised a problem for this part of Aquinas's account and also helpfully suggested a solution. According to Tracy, it might occur to someone to wonder whether God would be justified in allowing the innocent Christ to suffer if his suffering was not necessary for salvation, as Aquinas claims it is not. In terms of my analogy (yet to come in the text), we might wonder whether Anna was morally justified in allowing Aaron to suffer in the process of restoring the garden if his suffering was not necessary to bring about a change of heart in Nathan. Tracy's solution is to suggest that Aquinas's account requires a traditional Christology. In the case of Anna, we might very well be inclined to deny that she is justified in allowing the unnecessary suffering. But if we add traditional Christology to Aquinas's account of the atonement, then the one who suffers unnecessarily is both truly man and truly God. Thus God does not allow the unnecessary suffering of some third party but rather himself endures it as a means of redemption. And just as we would have no moral qualms about the case if Anna herself chose to endure some unnecessary suffering to rescue her son, so there seems no basis for objecting to God's undergoing unnecessary suffering as a means to human redemption. So although Aquinas does not hold that the passion and death of Christ are necessary for salvation, once God has chosen to save people in that way it is necessary that God be the one suffering. I have some sympathy for Tracy's solution.

<sup>ix</sup> *ST* IIIa.1.2. Cf. also *ST* IIIa.46.1.

<sup>x</sup> *ST* IIIa.46.1 ad 3.

<sup>xi</sup> *ST* IIIa.90.2.

<sup>xii</sup> *ST* IIIa.84.5.

<sup>xiii</sup> *ST* IIIa.85.1.

<sup>xiv</sup> *ST* IIIa.85.3 and IIIa.86.2.

<sup>xv</sup> *ST* IaIIae.113.2.

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- xvi *ST IaIIae.113.2.*
- xvii *SCG IV.55.*
- xviii *. SCG IV.55.*
- xix *ST IIIa.90.4.*
- xx *SCG III.158.*
- xxi *ST IaIIae.86.2.*
- xxii *ST IaIIae.87.8.*
- xxiii *ST IIIa.48.2.*
- xxiv *ST IaIIae.87.7.*
- xxv *. ST IIIa.46.3.*
- xxvi *ST IIIa.46.3.*
- xxvii I am grateful to Philip Quinn for raising this question in his comments on an earlier draft.
- xxviii *ST IIIa.46.2-3.*
- xxix *ST IIIa.48.2.*
- xxx *ST IaIIae.86.2.*
- xxxi *ST IaIIae.89.1.*
- xxxii See, e.g., *In Sent III.19.1.4.*
- xxxiii *ST IIIa.46.3 ad 2; cf. SCG IV.55.*
- xxxiv *ST IIIa.48.2.*
- xxxv *ST IIIa.49.4.*
- xxxvi *. ST IIIa.49.1 ad 5.*
- xxxvii *ST IIIa.49.1 ad 5.*
- xxxviii *ST IIIa.49.1 and IIIa.49.3 ad 1; cf. also ST IIIa.62.5 ad 2 and SCG IV.72.*
- xxxix Cf., e.g., *SCG III.158.*
- xl See, eg, *ST IaIIae.82.3.*
- xli *ST IIIa.46.3.*
- xlii *ST IIIa.49.1.*
- xliii As for those who lived before Christ, Aquinas holds that all persons in hell were visited by Christ in the period between his crucifixion and resurrection; see, e.g., *ST IIIa.52.* Aquinas interprets the doctrine of Christ's harrowing of hell in a traditionally stern fashion; those whom Christ takes out of hell with him are only those who had some foreknowledge of him and were united to him in faith and love, namely, the righteous among the Jews who were awaiting him as Messiah.
- xliv *ST IIIa.49.2 ad 3.*
- xlv *CT 227.*
- xlvi *ST IIIa.49.1 and IIIa.49.3.*
- xlvii *. Cf. QDV 27.3 ad 6 and QDV 29.4.*
- xlviii *ST IIIa.8.3.*
- xliv *ST IIIa.8.1.*
- l *ST IIIa.8.1.*
- li See, e.g., *ST IIIa.8.5.* See also *QDV 29.6-7.*
- lii *ST IIIa.8.6 and IIIa.48.1.*
- liii See, e.g., *In Sent III.18, divisio textus.*
- liv *In Sent III.18.1.2.*
- lv *ST IaIIae.114.4.*
- lvi *ST IIaIIae.23.1.*
- lvii For an exposition and defense of the Thomistic doctrine of simplicity, on which this claim is based, see the chapter on God's simplicity.
- lviii *ST IIaIIae.23.7.*
- lix *ST IIaIIae.23.8.*
- lx *In Sent III.18.1.5.*
- lxi *ST IIIa.46.6.*
- lxii *SCG IV.55.*
- lxiii For explanation of the different philosophical and theological problems posed by operating grace and cooperating grace, together with some attempt to find a Thomistic solution to these problems, see the chapter on faith.

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- lxiv *QDV* 27.1.
- lxv *QDV* 27.3.
- lxvi See, e.g., *ST* IaIIae.108.1 and IaIIae.109.4.
- lxvii *CT* 143.
- lxviii *ST* IIaIIae.7.12.
- lxix *ST* IIaIIae.23.2.
- lxx For Aquinas's views of free will, see the chapter on freedom. For detailed discussion about the way in which the bestowal of grace can be taken to be compatible with free will, see the chapter on grace and free will.
- lxxi *ST* IIaIIae.23.2.
- lxxii *ST* IaIIae.111.2.
- lxxiii *ST* IaIIae.113.7.
- lxxiv *ST* IIIa.89.2.
- lxxv Cf. *QDV* 28.3 where Aquinas says that no one having the use of free will can be justified without the use of the free will he has at the time of his justification.
- lxxvi *QDV* 28.3.
- lxxvii *ST* IaIIae.113.3. See also the discussion of justification in *QDV* 28.3, where Aquinas says, "Justification is a certain change of the will. Now 'will' refers both to a certain power and to an act of [that] power. But an act of the power [that is] the will cannot be changed unless the will itself cooperates, for if [the act] were not in [the will], it would not be an act of the will. ... And so for the justification of adults an act of free will is required." Cf. also *QDV* 28.4-5.
- lxxviii *SCG* IV.70.
- lxxix See, e.g., *CT* 144; *ST* IaIIae.112.3 ad 2 and IaIIae.113.2; and *SCG* III.159. For some discussion of Aquinas's notion of an obstacle to grace and the role of the will in producing such an obstacle, see the chapter on faith.
- lxxx *ST* IaIIae.110.3.
- lxxxi *ST* IaIIae.109.3-4.
- lxxxii *In Sent* II.26.4.
- lxxxiii *ST* IaIIae.110.3.
- lxxxiv *ST* IaIIae.111.3.
- lxxxv *QDV* 27.4.; see also *QDV* 27.7
- lxxxvi *QDV* 28.2.
- lxxxvii See, e.g., *ST* IIIa.73.3.
- lxxxviii *ST* IIIa.62.5.
- lxxxix *ST* IIIa.73.3 ad 3.
- xc *QDV* 27.4.
- xc1 *ST* IIIa.49.3.
- xcii *SCG* IV.58.
- xciii *SCG* IV.61.
- xciv *ST* IIIa.79.1.
- xcv *ST* IIIa.79.1 ad 1.
- xcvi *ST* IIIa.75.1 and IIIa.76.4-5.
- xcvii *ST* IIIa.73.3 ad 2.
- xcviii In fact, Aquinas goes so far as to say that faith and love are efficacious without the Eucharist if a person has an implicit desire for the Eucharist but is somehow prevented from acting on that desire; see, e.g., *ST* IIIa.73.3.
- xcix *ST* IIIa.62.5 ad 2.
- <sup>c</sup> *In Sent* III.19.1.1.2. Cf. also *ST* IIIa.1.2, where Aquinas is discussing the benefits of the incarnation and points especially to charity in human beings, which (he says) "is stimulated to the highest degree by this".
- ci *ST* IIIa.49.1.
- cii *ST* IIIa.49.1.
- ciii *ST* IIIa.73.3 and IIIa.80.2.
- civ *ST* IIIa.79.1.
- cv *ST* IIIa.79.4 and IIIa.79.6.
- cvi *ST* IIIa.79.1 ad 2.

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<sup>cvi</sup> *ST IaIIae.113.6.*

<sup>cviii</sup> Cf. *QDV* 28.1, where Aquinas says that justification is the movement whereby sin is removed and righteousness is acquired.

<sup>cix</sup> ‘Likely’ is a necessary qualifier here, because grace is not efficacious without an act of free will. It is possible for David to react to the Eucharist with perversity or hardness of heart.

<sup>cx</sup> The grace at issue in my example is cooperative grace; for an example illustrating the relationship of the atonement to operative grace, see the chapter on faith. For a more detailed discussion of operative grace, see the chapter on grace and free will.

<sup>cx</sup> Cf., e.g., *ST IaIIae.111.2.*

<sup>cxii</sup> Compare, for example, Augustine’s struggle for continence and his agonized prayer that God give him chastity -- ”but not yet;” *Confessions*, tr. Edward Pusey (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1961), Bk VIII, p. 125.

<sup>cxiii</sup> In telling this story of David, of course, I have picked an example of a person whose sense of himself makes him naturally likely to receive the Eucharist in a way favorable to Aquinas’s interpretation of the atonement, and it might occur to someone to wonder whether so unusual a story as that of David could be generalized to ordinary cases, involving people (with Thomistic Christian views) who come to the Eucharist with relatively untroubled consciences. I know of no way to prove that the Eucharist would have similar effects on such participants in the rite. But it does occur to me to point out that Aquinas, who was reputed never to have confessed a deadly sin, was apparently deeply moved by the Eucharist, as the poem about the Eucharist *Adoro devote* (which has been generally attributed to him) shows. For those interested, I include here a translation of that poem.

“I venerate you with devotion, hidden truth,  
who lie beneath these forms, truly hidden.  
My whole heart gives itself to you  
because, contemplating you, it is wholly undone.

Sight, touch, taste are deceived in you;  
hearing alone is safely believed.  
Whatever the son of God has said I do believe;  
nothing is more true than this Word of truth.

Only deity was hidden on the cross;  
humanity as well lies hidden here.  
And I, believing and confessing both,  
seek from you what the thief sought, repenting.

Like Thomas, I do not see your wounds,  
and yet I confess you as my God.  
Make me always increase in belief in you,  
in hope in you, in love of you.

O memorial of the death of the Lord,  
bread providing true life to man,  
provide for my mind to live from you,  
to know always the sweet taste of you.

Pelican of pietas, Jesus Lord,  
cleanse my unclean self in your blood;  
one small drop of it could cleanse  
the whole world, from every evil saved.

Veiled Jesus, whom I now look upon,  
when will what I so desire come to be?  
When will I see your face, unveiled,

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and in the vision of your glory blessed be?”

<sup>cxiv</sup> *ST IaIIae.112.1*; cf. *ST Ia.38.2*.

<sup>cxv</sup> *ST IaIIae.86*.

<sup>cxvi</sup> . Nothing about Aquinas’s theory of the incarnation rules this idea out. It is true, of course, that in his divine nature Christ could not have any “stains”, and it is also true that for Aquinas Christ cannot have anything sinful even in his human nature. But a stain, understood in the way I have explained here, isn’t by itself a sin, and it is therefore possible, consonant with the other things Aquinas wants to say about the incarnation, for Christ to have stains on the soul in his human nature.