

THIRD PART, QUESTION 49

Of the Effects of Christ's Passion (In Six Articles)

We have now to consider what are the effects of Christ's Passion, concerning which there are six points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether we were freed from sin by Christ's Passion?
- (2) Whether we were thereby delivered from the power of the devil?
- (3) Whether we were freed thereby from our debt of punishment?
- (4) Whether we were thereby reconciled with God?
- (5) Whether heaven's gate was opened to us thereby?
- (6) Whether Christ derived exaltation from it?

Whether we were delivered from sin through Christ's Passion?

IIIa q. 49 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that we were not delivered from sin through Christ's Passion. For to deliver from sin belongs to God alone, according to Is. 43:25: "I am He who blot out your iniquities for My own sake." But Christ did not suffer as God, but as man. Therefore Christ's Passion did not free us from sin.

Objection 2. Further, what is corporeal does not act upon what is spiritual. But Christ's Passion is corporeal, whereas sin exists in the soul, which is a spiritual creature. Therefore Christ's Passion could not cleanse us from sin.

Objection 3. Further, one cannot be purged from a sin not yet committed, but which shall be committed hereafter. Since, then, many sins have been committed since Christ's death, and are being committed daily, it seems that we were not delivered from sin by Christ's death.

Objection 4. Further, given an efficient cause, nothing else is required for producing the effect. But other things besides are required for the forgiveness of sins, such as baptism and penance. Consequently it seems that Christ's Passion is not the sufficient cause of the forgiveness of sins.

Objection 5. Further, it is written (Prov. 10:12): "Charity covereth all sins"; and (Prov. 15:27): "By mercy and faith, sins are purged away." But there are many other things of which we have faith, and which excite charity. Therefore Christ's Passion is not the proper cause of the forgiveness of sins.

On the contrary, It is written (Apoc. 1:5): "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

I answer that, Christ's Passion is the proper cause of the forgiveness of sins in three ways. First of all, by way of exciting our charity, because, as the Apostle says (Rom. 5:8): "God commendeth His charity towards us: because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us." But it is by charity that we procure pardon of our sins, according to Lk. 7:47: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much." Secondly, Christ's Passion causes forgiveness of sins by way of redemption. For since He is our head, then, by the Passion which He endured from love and obedience, He delivered us as His members from our sins, as by the price of His Passion: in the same way as if a man by the good industry of his hands

were to redeem himself from a sin committed with his feet. For, just as the natural body is one though made up of diverse members, so the whole Church, Christ's mystic body, is reckoned as one person with its head, which is Christ. Thirdly, by way of efficiency, inasmuch as Christ's flesh, wherein He endured the Passion, is the instrument of the Godhead, so that His sufferings and actions operate with Divine power for expelling sin.

Reply to Objection 1. Although Christ did not suffer as God, nevertheless His flesh is the instrument of the Godhead; and hence it is that His Passion has a kind of Divine Power of casting out sin, as was said above.

Reply to Objection 2. Although Christ's Passion is corporeal, still it derives a kind of spiritual energy from the Godhead, to which the flesh is united as an instrument: and according to this power Christ's Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sins.

Reply to Objection 3. Christ by His Passion delivered us from our sins causally—that is, by setting up the cause of our deliverance, from which cause all sins whatsoever, past, present, or to come, could be forgiven: just as if a doctor were to prepare a medicine by which all sicknesses can be cured even in future.

Reply to Objection 4. As stated above, since Christ's Passion preceded, as a kind of universal cause of the forgiveness of sins, it needs to be applied to each individual for the cleansing of personal sins. Now this is done by baptism and penance and the other sacraments, which derive their power from Christ's Passion, as shall be shown later (q. 62, a. 5).

Reply to Objection 5. Christ's Passion is applied to us even through faith, that we may share in its fruits, according to Rom. 3:25: "Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood." But the faith through which we are cleansed from sin is not "lifeless faith," which can exist even with sin, but "faith living" through charity; that thus Christ's Passion may be applied to us, not only as to our minds, but also as to our hearts. And even in this way sins are forgiven through the power of the Passion of Christ.

Objection 1. It would seem that we were not delivered from the power of the devil through Christ's Passion. For he has no power over others, who can do nothing to them without the sanction of another. But without the Divine permission the devil could never do hurt to any man, as is evident in the instance of Job (1,2), where, by power received from God, the devil first injured him in his possessions, and afterwards in his body. In like manner it is stated (Mat. 8:31,32) that the devils could not enter into the swine except with Christ's leave. Therefore the devil never had power over men: and hence we are not delivered from his power through Christ's Passion.

Objection 2. Further, the devil exercises his power over men by tempting them and molesting their bodies. But even after the Passion he continues to do the same to men. Therefore we are not delivered from his power through Christ's Passion.

Objection 3. Further, the might of Christ's Passion endures for ever, as, according to Heb. 10:14: "By one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." But deliverance from the devil's power is not found everywhere, since there are still idolaters in many regions of the world; nor will it endure for ever, because in the time of Antichrist he will be especially active in using his power to the hurt of men; because it is said of him (2 Thess. 2:9): "Whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and in all seduction of iniquity." Consequently it seems that Christ's Passion is not the cause of the human race being delivered from the power of the devil.

On the contrary, our Lord said (Jn. 12:31), when His Passion was drawing nigh: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." Now He was lifted up from the earth by His Passion on the cross. Therefore by His Passion the devil was deprived of his power over man.

I answer that, There are three things to be considered regarding the power which the devil exercised over men previous to Christ's Passion. The first is on man's own part, who by his sin deserved to be delivered over to the devil's power, and was overcome by his tempting. Another point is on God's part, whom man had offended by sinning, and who with justice left man under the devil's power. The third is on the devil's part,

who out of his most wicked will hindered man from securing his salvation.

As to the first point, by Christ's Passion man was delivered from the devil's power, in so far as the Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sins, as stated above (a. 1). As to the second, it must be said that Christ's Passion freed us from the devil's power, inasmuch as it reconciled us with God, as shall be shown later (a. 4). But as to the third, Christ's Passion delivered us from the devil, inasmuch as in Christ's Passion he exceeded the limit of power assigned him by God, by conspiring to bring about Christ's death, Who, being sinless, did not deserve to die. Hence Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, cap. xiv): "The devil was vanquished by Christ's justice: because, while discovering in Him nothing deserving of death, nevertheless he slew Him. And it is certainly just that the debtors whom he held captive should be set at liberty since they believed in Him whom the devil slew, though He was no debtor."

Reply to Objection 1. The devil is said to have had such power over men not as though he were able to injure them without God's sanction, but because he was justly permitted to injure men whom by tempting he had induced to give consent.

Reply to Objection 2. God so permitting it, the devil can still tempt men's souls and harass their bodies: yet there is a remedy provided for man through Christ's Passion, whereby he can safeguard himself against the enemy's assaults, so as not to be dragged down into the destruction of everlasting death. And all who resisted the devil previous to the Passion were enabled to do so through faith in the Passion, although it was not yet accomplished. Yet in one respect no one was able to escape the devil's hands, i.e. so as not to descend into hell. But after Christ's Passion, men can defend themselves from this by its power.

Reply to Objection 3. God permits the devil to deceive men by certain persons, and in times and places, according to the hidden motive of His judgments; still, there is always a remedy provided through Christ's Passion, for defending themselves against the wicked snares of the demons, even in Antichrist's time. But if any man neglect to make use of this remedy, it detracts nothing from the efficacy of Christ's Passion.

Objection 1. It would seem that men were not freed from the punishment of sin by Christ's Passion. For the chief punishment of sin is eternal damnation. But those damned in hell for their sins were not set free by Christ's Passion, because "in hell there is no redemption". It seems, therefore, that Christ's Passion did not deliver men from the punishment of sin.

Objection 2. Further, no punishment should be imposed upon them who are delivered from the debt of punishment. But a satisfactory punishment is imposed upon penitents. Consequently, men were not freed from the debt of punishment by Christ's Passion.

Objection 3. Further, death is a punishment of sin, accord-

^{*} Office of the Dead, Resp. vii.

ing to Rom. 6:23: “The wages of sin is death.” But men still die after Christ’s Passion. Therefore it seems that we have not been delivered from the debt of punishment.

On the contrary, It is written (Is. 53:4): “Surely He hath borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows.”

I answer that, Through Christ’s Passion we have been delivered from the debt of punishment in two ways. First of all, directly—namely, inasmuch as Christ’s Passion was sufficient and superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the whole human race: but when sufficient satisfaction has been paid, then the debt of punishment is abolished. In another way—indirectly, that is to say—in so far as Christ’s Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sin, upon which the debt of punishment rests.

Reply to Objection 1. Christ’s Passion works its effect in them to whom it is applied, through faith and charity and the sacraments of faith. And, consequently, the lost in hell cannot avail themselves of its effects, since they are not united to Christ in the aforesaid manner.

Reply to Objection 2. As stated above (a. 1, ad 4,5), in order to secure the effects of Christ’s Passion, we must be likened unto Him. Now we are likened unto Him sacramentally in Baptism, according to Rom. 6:4: “For we are buried together with Him by baptism into death.” Hence no punishment of satisfaction is imposed upon men at their baptism, since they

are fully delivered by Christ’s satisfaction. But because, as it is written (1 Pet. 3:18), “Christ died” but “once for our sins,” therefore a man cannot a second time be likened unto Christ’s death by the sacrament of Baptism. Hence it is necessary that those who sin after Baptism be likened unto Christ suffering by some form of punishment or suffering which they endure in their own person; yet, by the co-operation of Christ’s satisfaction, much lighter penalty suffices than one that is proportionate to the sin.

Reply to Objection 3. Christ’s satisfaction works its effect in us inasmuch as we are incorporated with Him, as the members with their head, as stated above (a. 1). Now the members must be conformed to their head. Consequently, as Christ first had grace in His soul with bodily passibility, and through the Passion attained to the glory of immortality, so we likewise, who are His members, are freed by His Passion from all debt of punishment, yet so that we first receive in our souls “the spirit of adoption of sons,” whereby our names are written down for the inheritance of immortal glory, while we yet have a passible and mortal body: but afterwards, “being made conformable” to the sufferings and death of Christ, we are brought into immortal glory, according to the saying of the Apostle (Rom. 8:17): “And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.”

Whether we were reconciled to God through Christ’s Passion?

IIIa q. 49 a. 4

Objection 1. It would seem that we were not reconciled to God through Christ’s Passion. For there is no need of reconciliation between friends. But God always loved us, according to Wis. 11:25: “Thou lovest all the things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made.” Therefore Christ’s Passion did not reconcile us to God.

Objection 2. Further, the same thing cannot be cause and effect: hence grace, which is the cause of meriting, does not come under merit. But God’s love is the cause of Christ’s Passion, according to Jn. 3:16: “God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son.” It does not appear, then, that we were reconciled to God through Christ’s Passion, so that He began to love us anew.

Objection 3. Further, Christ’s Passion was completed by men slaying Him; and thereby they offended God grievously. Therefore Christ’s Passion is rather the cause of wrath than of reconciliation to God.

On the contrary, The Apostle says (Rom. 5:10): “We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”

I answer that, Christ’s Passion is in two ways the cause of our reconciliation to God. In the first way, inasmuch as it takes away sin by which men became God’s enemies, according to Wis. 14:9: “To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike”; and Ps. 5:7: “Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.” In another way, inasmuch as it is a most acceptable sacrifice to God. Now it is the proper effect of sacrifice to appease God:

just as man likewise overlooks an offense committed against him on account of some pleasing act of homage shown him. Hence it is written (1 Kings 26:19): “If the Lord stir thee up against me, let Him accept of sacrifice.” And in like fashion Christ’s voluntary suffering was such a good act that, because of its being found in human nature, God was appeased for every offense of the human race with regard to those who are made one with the crucified Christ in the aforesaid manner (a. 1, ad 4).

Reply to Objection 1. God loves all men as to their nature, which He Himself made; yet He hates them with respect to the crimes they commit against Him, according to Eccles. 12:3: “The Highest hateth sinners.”

Reply to Objection 2. Christ is not said to have reconciled us with God, as if God had begun anew to love us, since it is written (Jer. 31:3): “I have loved thee with an everlasting love”; but because the source of hatred was taken away by Christ’s Passion, both through sin being washed away and through compensation being made in the shape of a more pleasing offering.

Reply to Objection 3. As Christ’s slayers were men, so also was the Christ slain. Now the charity of the suffering Christ surpassed the wickedness of His slayers. Accordingly Christ’s Passion prevailed more in reconciling God to the whole human race than in provoking Him to wrath.

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ did not open the gate of heaven to us by His Passion. For it is written (Prov. 11:18): “To him that soweth justice, there is a faithful reward.” But the reward of justice is the entering into the kingdom of heaven. It seems, therefore, that the holy Fathers who wrought works of justice, obtained by faith the entering into the heavenly kingdom even without Christ’s Passion. Consequently Christ’s Passion is not the cause of the opening of the gate of the kingdom of heaven.

Objection 2. Further, Elias was caught up to heaven previous to Christ’s Passion (4 Kings 2). But the effect never precedes the cause. Therefore it seems that the opening of heaven’s gate is not the result of Christ’s Passion.

Objection 3. Further, as it is written (Mat. 3:16), when Christ was baptized the heavens were opened to Him. But His baptism preceded the Passion. Consequently the opening of heaven is not the result of Christ’s Passion.

Objection 4. Further, it is written (Mic. 2:13): “For He shall go up that shall open the way before them.” But to open the way to heaven seems to be nothing else than to throw open its gate. Therefore it seems that the gate of heaven was opened to us, not by Christ’s Passion, but by His Ascension.

On the contrary, is the saying of the Apostle (Heb. 10:19): “We have [Vulg.: ‘having a’] confidence in the entering into the Holies”—that is, of the heavenly places—“through the blood of Christ.”

I answer that, The shutting of the gate is the obstacle which hinders men from entering in. But it is on account of sin that men were prevented from entering into the heavenly kingdom, since, according to Is. 35:8: “It shall be called the holy way, and the unclean shall not pass over it.” Now there is a twofold sin which prevents men from entering into the kingdom of heaven. The first is common to the whole race, for it is our first parents’ sin, and by that sin heaven’s entrance is closed to man. Hence we read in Gn. 3:24 that after our first parents’ sin God “placed...cherubim and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” The other is the personal sin of each one of us, committed by our personal act.

Now by Christ’s Passion we have been delivered not only from the common sin of the whole human race, both as to its

guilt and as to the debt of punishment, for which He paid the penalty on our behalf; but, furthermore, from the personal sins of individuals, who share in His Passion by faith and charity and the sacraments of faith. Consequently, then the gate of heaven’s kingdom is thrown open to us through Christ’s Passion. This is precisely what the Apostle says (Heb. 9:11,12): “Christ being come a high-priest of the good things to come...by His own blood entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption.” And this is foreshadowed (Num. 35:25,28), where it is said that the slayer* “shall abide there”—that is to say, in the city of refuge—“until the death of the high-priest, that is anointed with the holy oil: but after he is dead, then shall he return home.”

Reply to Objection 1. The holy Fathers, by doing works of justice, merited to enter into the heavenly kingdom, through faith in Christ’s Passion, according to Heb. 11:33: The saints “by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice,” and each of them was thereby cleansed from sin, so far as the cleansing of the individual is concerned. Nevertheless the faith and righteousness of no one of them sufficed for removing the barrier arising from the guilt of the whole human race: but this was removed at the cost of Christ’s blood. Consequently, before Christ’s Passion no one could enter the kingdom of heaven by obtaining everlasting beatitude, which consists in the full enjoyment of God.

Reply to Objection 2. Elias was taken up into the atmospheric heaven, but not into the empyrean heaven, which is the abode of the saints: and likewise Enoch was translated into the earthly paradise, where he is believed to live with Elias until the coming of Antichrist.

Reply to Objection 3. As was stated above (q. 39, a. 5), the heavens were opened at Christ’s baptism, not for Christ’s sake, to whom heaven was ever open, but in order to signify that heaven is opened to the baptized, through Christ’s baptism, which has its efficacy from His Passion.

Reply to Objection 4. Christ by His Passion merited for us the opening of the kingdom of heaven, and removed the obstacle; but by His ascension He, as it were, brought us to the possession of the heavenly kingdom. And consequently it is said that by ascending He “opened the way before them.”

Objection 1. It seems that Christ did not merit to be exalted on account of His Passion. For eminence of rank belongs to God alone, just as knowledge of truth, according to Ps. 112:4: “The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens.” But Christ as man had the knowledge of all truth, not on account of any preceding merit, but from the very union of God and man, according to Jn. 1:14: “We saw

His glory...as it were of the only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth.” Therefore neither had He exaltation from the merit of the Passion but from the union alone.

Objection 2. Further, Christ merited for Himself from the first instant of His conception, as stated above (q. 34, a. 3). But His love was no greater during the Passion than before. Therefore, since charity is the principle of merit, it seems that He did

* The Septuagint has ‘slayer’, the Vulgate, ‘innocent’—i.e. the man who has slain ‘without hatred and enmity’.

not merit exaltation from the Passion more than before.

Objection 3. Further, the glory of the body comes from the glory of the soul, as Augustine says (Ep. ad Dioscor.). But by His Passion Christ did not merit exaltation as to the glory of His soul, because His soul was beatified from the first instant of His conception. Therefore neither did He merit exaltation, as to the glory of His body, from the Passion.

On the contrary, It is written (Phil. 2:8): “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; for which cause God also exalted Him.”

I answer that, Merit implies a certain equality of justice: hence the Apostle says (Rom. 4:4): “Now to him that worketh, the reward is reckoned according to debt.” But when anyone by reason of his unjust will ascribes to himself something beyond his due, it is only just that he be deprived of something else which is his due; thus, “when a man steals a sheep he shall pay back four” (Ex. 22:1). And he is said to deserve it, inasmuch as his unjust will is chastised thereby. So likewise when any man through his just will has stripped himself of what he ought to have, he deserves that something further be granted to him as the reward of his just will. And hence it is written (Lk. 14:11): “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Now in His Passion Christ humbled Himself beneath His dignity in four respects. In the first place as to His Passion and death, to which He was not bound; secondly, as to the place, since His body was laid in a sepulchre and His soul in hell; thirdly, as to the shame and mockeries He endured; fourthly, as to His being delivered up to man’s power, as He Himself said to Pilate (Jn. 19:11): “Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above.” And, consequently, He merited a four-fold exaltation from His Passion. First of all, as to His glorious Resurrection: hence it is written (Ps. 138:1): “Thou hast known my sitting down”—that is, the lowliness of My Passion—“and My rising up.” Secondly, as to His ascension into heaven: hence it is written (Eph. 4:9): “Now that He ascended, what is it, but because He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens.” Thirdly, as

to the sitting on the right hand of the Father and the showing forth of His Godhead, according to Is. 52:13: “He shall be exalted and extolled, and shall be exceeding high: as many have been astonished at him, so shall His visage be inglorious among men.” Moreover (Phil. 2:8) it is written: “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross: for which cause also God hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names”—that is to say, so that He shall be hailed as God by all; and all shall pay Him homage as God. And this is expressed in what follows: “That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.” Fourthly, as to His judiciary power: for it is written (Job 36:17): “Thy cause hath been judged as that of the wicked cause and judgment Thou shalt recover.”

Reply to Objection 1. The source of meriting comes of the soul, while the body is the instrument of the meritorious work. And consequently the perfection of Christ’s soul, which was the source of meriting, ought not to be acquired in Him by merit, like the perfection of the body, which was the subject of suffering, and was thereby the instrument of His merit.

Reply to Objection 2. Christ by His previous merits did merit exaltation on behalf of His soul, whose will was animated with charity and the other virtues; but in the Passion He merited His exaltation by way of recompense even on behalf of His body: since it is only just that the body, which from charity was subjected to the Passion, should receive recompense in glory.

Reply to Objection 3. It was owing to a special dispensation in Christ that before the Passion the glory of His soul did not shine out in His body, in order that He might procure His bodily glory with greater honor, when He had merited it by His Passion. But it was not becoming for the glory of His soul to be postponed, since the soul was united immediately with the Word; hence it was becoming that its glory should be filled by the Word Himself. But the body was united with the Word through the soul.