

QUESTION 49

The Effects of Christ's Passion

Next we have to consider the effects themselves of Christ's passion. And on this topic there are six questions: (1) Were we liberated from sin (*a peccato*) by Christ's passion? (2) Were we liberated from the devil's power (*a potestate diaboli*) by Christ's passion? (3) Were we liberated from the debt of punishment (*a reatu poenae*) by Christ's passion? (4) Were we reconciled with God (*simus Deo reconciliati*) by Christ's passion? (5) Were the gates of heaven opened to us (*sit nobis aperta ianua caeli*) by Christ's passion? (6) Did Christ arrive at exaltation (*adeptus fuerit exaltationem*) by His passion?

Article 1

Were we liberated from sin by Christ's passion?

It seems that we were not liberated from sin by Christ's passion (*per passionem Christi non simus liberati a peccato*):

Objection 1: It is peculiar to God to give liberation from sin—this according to Isaiah 53:25 (“I am He who blots out your iniquities for My own sake”). But Christ suffered insofar as He was a man and not insofar as He was God. Therefore, Christ's passion did not liberate us from sin.

Objection 2: The corporeal does not act on the spiritual. But Christ's passion is corporeal, whereas sin exists only in the soul, which is a spiritual creature. Therefore, Christ's passion was unable to cleanse us of sin.

Objection 3: No one can be liberated from a sin that he has not yet committed but will commit later on. Therefore, since many sins have been committed since the time of Christ's passion and are now being committed all day long, it seems that we have not been liberated from sin by Christ's passion.

Objection 4: Once a sufficient cause is posited, nothing else is required to induce the effect. But other things are still required for the forgiveness of sins, viz., baptism and penance (*baptismus et poenitentia*). Therefore, it seems that Christ's passion is not a sufficient cause of the remission of sins.

Objection 5: Proverbs 10:12 says, “Charity covers all sins,” and Proverbs 15:27 says, “Sins are purged by mercy and faith.” But there are many other things in which we have faith and which call forth charity. Therefore, Christ's passion is not the only cause of the remission of sins.

But contrary to this: Apocalypse 1:5 says, “He has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

I respond: Christ's passion is the proper cause of the forgiveness of sins, and this in three ways:

First of all, through the mode of *one who is summoning us to charity*. For as the Apostle says in Romans 5:8-9, “God commends His charity toward us because, when we were His enemies, Christ died for us.” But it is through charity that we arrive at the forgiveness of sins—this according to Luke 7:47 (“Many sins have been forgiven her, because she has loved much”).

Second, Christ's passion causes the remission of sins through the mode of *redeeming*. For because He is our head, by His passion, which He endured out of charity and obedience, He liberated us as His members from our sins at the price, as it were, of His passion—in the same way that a man might, by a meritorious work that he performed with his hands, redeem himself from a sin that he had committed with his feet. For just as a natural body is a unity consisting of a diversity of members, so the whole Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, counts as a unified person along with her head, which is Christ.

Third, through the mode of *efficient causality*, insofar as the flesh with which Christ endured His passion is an instrument of His divine nature, because of which His sufferings and actions operate in the

divine power to expel sin.

Reply to objection 1: Even though Christ did not suffer insofar as He is God, His flesh was nonetheless a divine instrument. And because of this, as has been explained, His passion had a certain divine power to expel sin.

Reply to objection 2: Even though Christ's passion is corporeal, it nonetheless derives a certain spiritual power from His divine nature, since the flesh united to it is its instrument. And it is because of this power that Christ's passion a cause of the remission of sins.

Reply to objection 3: By His passion Christ *causally* liberated us from our sins; that is, He set up a cause of our liberation by which any sins could be remitted at any time, whether past or present or future—in the same way that a physician produces a medicine by which any sick individual can be cured, even in the future.

Reply to objection 4: Since, as has been explained, Christ's passion went ahead as a sort of universal cause of the remission of sins, it has to be applied to each individual for the deletion of his own sins. Now this is effected by baptism and penance and the other sacraments, which, as will be explained below (q. 62, a. 5), derive their power from Christ's passion (*quae habent virtutem ex passione Christi*).

Reply to objection 5: Christ's passion is likewise applied to us through faith in order for us to take possession of its fruit—this according to Romans 3:25 (“... whom God proposed as a propitiator through faith in His blood”). Now the faith through which we are washed of sin is not unformed faith (*non est fides informis*), which can exist along with sin, but is instead faith formed by charity, with the result that Christ's passion is applied to us not only with respect to our intellect, but also with respect to our affections. And it is likewise in this way that sins are forgiven by the power of Christ's passion.

Article 2

Were we liberated from the devil's power by Christ's passion?

It seems that we were not liberated from the devil's power by Christ's passion (*per passionem Christi non simus liberati a potestate diaboli*):

Objection 1: An individual does not have power over others if he cannot do anything to them without the permission of someone else. But the devil was never able to do anything to harm men except with God's permission; for instance, it is clear from Job 1 and 2 that, once the devil received the power from God, he harmed Job first with respect to the things that belonged to him and afterwards with respect to his body. Similarly, Matthew 8:31-32 reports that the demons were not able to enter into the swine unless Christ permitted them to do so. Therefore, the devil never had men in his power. And so it is not the case that we were freed from the devil's power by Christ's passion.

Objection 2: The devil exercises his power among human beings by tempting them and disturbing them in their bodies. But he still operates in this way among human beings even after Christ's passion. Therefore, we were not liberated from his power by Christ's passion.

Objection 3: The power of Christ's passion endures forever—this according to Hebrews 10:14 (“By one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified”). But liberation from the devil's power does not exist everywhere, since there are still idolaters in many parts of the world; nor will it exist forever, since at the time of Antichrist the devil will be exercising his power to the detriment of men to the highest degree. For in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 it is said of Antichrist that “his coming will be in accord with the working of Satan in all power and signs and deceptive wonders, and in all the seduction of iniquity.” Therefore, it seems that Christ's passion is not a cause of the liberation of the human race from the power of the devil.

But contrary to this: In John 12:31-32 our Lord says, with His passion imminent, “Now will the prince of this world be cast out and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.” But He was lifted up from the earth in His passion. Therefore, through His passion the devil was cast out from his power over human beings.

I respond: There are three points that have to be thought about concerning the power that the devil exercised among men before Christ’s passion:

The first point has to do *with man*, who by his sin deserved to be handed over (*meruit ut traderetur*) to the power of the devil, through whose temptation he had been conquered. The second point has to do *with God*, whom man had offended by sinning and who, in His justice, had abandoned man to the power of the devil. And the third point has to do *with the devil himself*, who, by his extremely wicked will, impeded man from attaining salvation.

Therefore, as regards the first point, man has been liberated from the devil’s power by Christ’s passion insofar as Christ’s passion is, as has been explained (a. 1), a cause of the remission of sins.

As regards the second point, one should claim that Christ’s passion liberated us from the power of the devil insofar as it reconciled us with God. This will be explained below (a. 4).

As regards the third point, Christ’s passion liberated us from the devil insofar as in Christ’s passion the devil exceeded the type of power given him by God when he skillfully planned the death of Christ, who did not deserve death because He was without sin. Hence, in *De Trinitate* 13 Augustine says, “The devil was vanquished by Christ’s righteousness, since, even though he found in Him nothing deserving of death, he nevertheless killed Him. And it is certainly just for the debtors whom he held captive to be set free when they believe in the One whom the devil killed even though He had no debt.”

Reply to objection 1: The devil is said to have had power among men not in the sense that he was able to harm them when God did not permit it, but instead because he was justly permitted to harm the men whom he had induced to give their consent by tempting them.

Reply to objection 2: The devil can even now, with God’s permission, tempt men with respect to their soul and disturb them with respect to their body, and yet a remedy has been prepared for man through Christ’s passion, whereby he can guard himself against the attacks of the enemy, so as not to be dragged down into the destruction of everlasting death.

What’s more, if anyone resisted the devil before Christ’s passion, it was through faith in Christ’s passion that he was able to do this—even though, as long as Christ’s passion *had not yet been completed*, there was one way by which no one was able to escape the clutches of the devil so as not to descend into hell. [By contrast,] *after* Christ’s passion, men are able to guard themselves against this by the power of the passion.

Reply to objection 3: God permits the devil to be able to deceive men by means of certain persons, at certain times and places, in accord with the hidden principles of His judgments. Yet it is always the case that through Christ’s passion a remedy has been prepared for men to guard themselves against the wicked snares of the demons, even at the time of Antichrist. But if there are some who neglect to make use of this remedy, this does not at all detract from the efficacy of Christ’s passion.

Article 3

Were men liberated from the punishment for sin by Christ’s passion?

It seems that men were not liberated from the punishment for sin by Christ’s passion (*per passionem Christi non fuerunt homines liberati a poena peccati*):

Objection 1: The principal punishment for sin is eternal damnation. But those who had been

damned in hell for their sins were not liberated by Christ's passion, since in hell there is no redemption. Therefore, it seems that Christ's passion did not liberate men from punishment.

Objection 2: No punishment should be imposed upon those who are delivered from the debt of punishment (*a reatu poenae*). But a punishment or penance that makes satisfaction (*poena satisfactoria*) is imposed on penitents. Therefore, it is not the case that men were liberated from the debt of punishment by Christ's passion.

Objection 3: Death is a punishment for sin—this according to Romans 6:23 (“The wages of sin is death”). But men still die after Christ's passion. Therefore, it seems that we were not liberated from the debt of punishment by Christ's passion.

But contrary to this: Isaiah 53:4 says, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.”

I respond: There are two ways in which we have been liberated from the debt of punishment by Christ's passion:

In one way, *directly*, viz., insofar as Christ's passion was a sufficient and superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the whole human race. But when sufficient satisfaction has been presented, then the debt of punishment is abolished.

In the second way, *indirectly*, viz., insofar as Christ's passion is a cause of the remission of sin, upon which the debt of punishment is founded.

Reply to objection 1: Christ's passion distributes its effect among those to whom it is applied through faith and charity and through the sacraments of the Faith. And so the damned in hell, who are not joined to Christ's passion in the way explained above (a. 1, ad 3), are unable to take in its effect.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained (a. 1, ad 4-5, and *ST* 1-2, q. 85, a. 5, ad 2), in order for us to attain to the effect of Christ's passion, we have to be configured to Him. Now we are configured to Him sacramentally in baptism—this according to Romans 6:4 (“We are buried together with Him by baptism into death ...”). Hence, no punishment or penance that makes satisfaction is imposed on those who have [just] been baptized (*baptizatis nulla poena satisfactoria imponitur*), since they have been completely liberated through the satisfaction made by Christ.

On the other hand, because, as 1 Peter 3:18 says, “... Christ died only once for our sins ...,” it follows that a man cannot be configured a second time to Christ's death through baptism. Hence, it is necessary for those who sin after baptism to be configured to the suffering Christ through some sort of penalty or suffering which they endure within themselves. Yet because Christ's satisfaction is operating along with it, a much lesser penalty or suffering suffices than one that would be proportionate to the sin.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (a. 1 and q. 48, a. 1 and a. 2, ad 7), Christ's satisfaction has an effect in us insofar as we are incorporated into Him as members of the head. Now the members have to be conformed to the head. And so just as Christ first had grace in His soul along with a passible body, and just as through His passion He arrived at the glory of immortality, so, too, we, who are His members, are liberated by His passion from the debt of any punishment, yet in such a way that we first receive in our soul “the spirit of adoption as sons” (Romans 8:13), and by this spirit of adoption we are designated, while still having a passible and mortal body, to inherit the glory of immortality. But afterwards, “configured to the sufferings and death of Christ,” we arrive at the glory of immortality—this according to the Apostle in Romans 8:17 (“If we are sons, we are heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ, provided, however, that we suffer with Him in order that we might be glorified with Him”).

Article 4

Are we reconciled with God by Christ's passion?

It seems that we are not reconciled with God by Christ's passion (*per passionem Christi non simus Deo reconciliati*):

Objection 1: Reconciliation has no place among friends. But God has always loved us—this according to Wisdom 11:25 (“You love all the things that exist, and you hate nothing of the things that you have made”). Therefore, Christ's passion did not reconcile us with God.

Objection 2: The same thing cannot be both the cause (*principium*) and the effect; hence, grace, which is a cause of meriting (*principium merendi*), does not fall under *merit*. But God's love is a cause of Christ's passion (*principium passionis Christi*)—this according to John 3:16 (“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son ...”). Therefore, it seems not to be the case that we are reconciled with God by Christ's passion, in the sense that God would begin to love us anew.

Objection 3: Christ's passion was carried out by the men who killed Christ and who thereby offended God grievously. Therefore, Christ's passion is a cause of God's indignation rather than of reconciliation with God.

But contrary to this: In Romans 5:10 the Apostle says, “We have been reconciled with God by the death of His Son.”

I respond: There are two ways in which Christ's passion is a cause of our reconciliation with God:

In one way, insofar as Christ's passion removes sin, through which men are made enemies of God—this according to Wisdom 14:9 (“To God the wicked man and his wickedness are similarly hateful”) and according to Psalm 5:7 (“You hate all the workers of iniquity”).

In the second way, insofar as [Christ's] sacrifice is the most acceptable of all to God. For what is properly the effect of a sacrifice is that God should be pleased by it—just as when a man remits an offense committed against him because of some acceptable act of submissiveness that is shown to him. Hence, 1 Kings 26:19 says, “If the Lord incites you against me, may He accept a sacrifice.” And, similarly, Christ's suffering voluntarily was such a great good that because of its being found in human nature, God was appeased for every offense of the human race as regards those who are conjoined with the suffering Christ (*Christo passo*) in the manner explained above (a. 1, ad 4, and a. 3, ad 1, and q. 48, a. 6, ad 2).

Reply to objection 1: God loves every human being with respect to the nature that He Himself created. But He hates men with respect to the sin that they commit against Him—this according to Ecclesiasticus 12:3 (“The Most High hates sinners”).

Reply to objection 2: Christ is said to have reconciled us with God not in the sense that God began to love us anew—for it is written in Jeremiah 31:3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love (*in caritate perpetua*)—but in the sense that the cause of the hatred was removed by Christ's passion, both in view of the washing away of sin and in view of sin's being compensated for by a more acceptable good.

Reply to objection 3: Just as the killers of Christ were human beings, so, too, was Christ who was killed. But the charity of Christ was more intense than the wickedness of His killers. And that is why Christ's passion was more efficacious for reconciling God with the whole human race than for provoking His anger.

Article 5

Did Christ by His passion open the gates of heaven to us?

It seems that Christ did not by His passion open the gates of heaven to us (*Christus sua passione non aperuerit nobis ianuam caeli*):

Objection 1: Proverbs 11:18 says, “To him who sows righteousness, there is a faithful reward.” But the reward of righteousness is entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, it seems that the saintly fathers, who did works of righteousness, faithfully gained entrance into the kingdom of God, even without Christ’s passion. Therefore, it is not the case that Christ’s passion is a cause of the opening of the gates of the heavenly kingdom.

Objection 2: Before Christ’s passion, Elijah was carried off to heaven, as 4 Kings 2:11 reports. But the effect does not precede the cause. Therefore, it seems that the opening of the gates of heaven is not an effect of Christ’s passion.

Objection 3: As we read in Matthew 3:16, “the heavens opened” when Christ was baptized. But Christ’s baptism preceded His passion. Therefore, the opening of heaven is not an effect of Christ’s passion.

Objection 4: Micah 2:13 says, “He goes up, opening the way before them.” But to open the way to heaven is nothing other than to open the gates of heaven. Therefore, it seems that the gates of heaven were opened to us not through the passion of Christ, but through His ascension.

But contrary to this: Hebrews 10:19 says, “We have confidence about entering into the Holies”—that is, into the heavenly places—“through the blood of Christ.”

I respond: The closing of the gates is a certain obstacle that prevents men from entering. But men are prohibited from entering the heavenly kingdom because of sin, since, as Isaiah 35:8 says, “That way shall be called holy, and the unclean shall not pass over it.” But there is a twofold sin that prevents one from entering the kingdom of heaven.” The first is the *sin common to the whole of human nature*, i.e., the sin of the first parent. And because of this sin entrance into the kingdom of heaven is closed off to man. Hence, we read in Genesis 3:24 that after the sin of the first man, “God stationed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” The second is the *specific sin of each person*, which is committed by the proper act of each person.

Now by Christ’s passion we are liberated not only (a) from the sin common to the whole of human nature, both with respect to its guilt and with respect to its debt of punishment, with Christ Himself paying the price for us, but also (b) from the sins proper to each individual who shares in His passion through faith and charity and the sacraments of the Faith. And that is how Christ has opened to us the gates of the heavenly kingdom. Again, this is what the Apostle is saying in Hebrews 9:11-12: “Christ, appearing as high priest of the good things to come, ... by virtue of His own blood entered once for all ... into the Holies, with eternal redemption secured.” And this is what is meant by Numbers 35:25ff., when it says that the killer “will abide there”—that is, in the city of refuge—“until the death of the high priest, who has been anointed with holy oil.” And when He has died, He will be able to return to His house.

Reply to objection 1: The saintly fathers, doing works of righteousness, merited entrance into the heavenly kingdom through faith in Christ’s passion—this according to Hebrews 11:33: “The holy ones by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, etc.,” through which each of them was purged from sin as regards the cleansing of their own persons.

However, it was not the case that anyone’s faith or righteousness was sufficient to remove the obstacle which arose from the debt [of punishment] of the whole human creature. This was removed by the price of the blood of Christ. And that is why before Christ’s passion no one was able to enter the heavenly kingdom, viz., by attaining to eternal beatitude, which consists in the full enjoyment of God.

Reply to objection 2: Elijah was raised to the airy heaven, but not to the Empyrean heaven, which is the place of the beatified (*locus beatorum*). Similarly, Enoch did not go to the Empyrean heaven, either, but was instead taken off to an earthly paradise, where he is thought to live with Elijah until the coming of Antichrist.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 39, a. 5), when Christ was baptized the heavens were opened, not because of Christ Himself, to whom heaven was always open, but in order to signify that heaven is open to those who have been baptized with Christ's baptism, which has its efficacy from His passion.

Reply to objection 4: By His passion Christ merited for us entrance into the heavenly kingdom, and He removed an impediment, whereas by His ascension He introduced us, as it were, to the *possession* of the kingdom of heaven. And this is the sense in which "by going up, He opened the way before them."

Article 6

Did Christ by His passion merit to be exalted?

It seems that by His passion Christ did not merit to be exalted (*Christus per suam passionem non meruit exaltari*):

Objection 1: Just as cognition of the truth is proper to God, so, too, is preeminence (*sublimitas*)—this according to Psalm 112:4 ("The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens"). But Christ as a man had cognition of every truth, not because of some preceding merit, but by virtue of the union between God and the man—this according to John 1:14 ("We have seen His glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth"). Therefore, He had exaltation not because of the merit of His passion, but because of the union alone.

Objection 2: As was established above (q. 34, a. 3), Christ merited from the first instant of His conception. But it is not the case that there was more charity in Him at the time of His passion than before that. Therefore, since charity is the principle of meriting, it seems that He did not merit exaltation through His passion more than He did before that.

Objection 3: As Augustine explains in *Epistola ad Dioscorum*, the glory of the body results from the glory of the soul. But it was not by His passion that Christ merited exaltation with respect to the glory of the soul, since His soul was beatified from the first instant of His conception. Therefore, neither was it by His passion that He merited exaltation with respect to the glory of His body.

But contrary to this: Philippians 2:8-9 says, "He became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, and because of this God exalted Him."

I respond: Merit implies a sort of balance of justice (*quandam aequalitatem iustitiae*); hence, in Romans 4:4 the Apostle says, "To the one who acts, the reward is credited as something due." Now when an individual, by an unjust act of will, accrues to himself more than is his due, it is just that even what is due to him should be diminished; for instance, as Exodus 22:1 says, "When someone steals one sheep, he shall pay back four sheep." And this is said to be merited or deserved insofar as the one whose will is wicked is thereby punished. So, too, when someone, by a just act of will, subtracts something from what he ought to have, then he merits or deserves that something more should be superadded as a sort of reward for his just act of will. And so it is that, as Luke 14:11 says, "He who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now in His passion Christ humbled Himself below His dignity, and this is four ways: First of all, *with respect to His passion and death*, in regard to which He owed nothing (*cuius debitor non erat*). Second, with respect to *place*, since His body was placed in the sepulcher while His soul was in hell.

Third, *with respect to the shame and dishonor which He endured*. Fourth, *with respect to His being handed over to a human power*—this according to what He Himself says to Pilate in John 19:11 (“You would not have power over me if it had not been given to you from above”).

And so by His passion He merited exaltation with respect to four things:

First of all, with respect to *His glorious resurrection*. Hence, Psalm 138:2 says, “You have known my sitting down”—that is, the humility of my suffering—“and my rising up.”

Second, with respect to *His ascension into heaven*. Hence, Ephesians 4:9-10 says, “He descended first to the lower parts of the earth ... and He who descended, He it is who also ascended above all the heavens.”

Third, with respect to *His being seated at the right hand of the Father and having His divinity made manifest*—this according to Isaiah 52:13-14 (“He shall be exalted and elevated, and He shall be exceedingly high (*sublimis erit valde*)—even as many were amazed at Him, so marred was His look beyond human semblance”). And Philippians 2:8-9 says, “He became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, and because of this God exalted Him and gave to Him a name above every name,” viz., so that He was named ‘God’ by everyone, and everyone showed reverence to Him as to God. And this is added (Philippians 2:10): “... and at the name of Jesus every knee shall bend of those above the earth, and on the earth, and below the earth.”

Fourth, with respect to *His power to judge*. For as Job 36:17 says, “Your cause has been judged as that of the wicked; judgment and cause you shall receive.”

Reply to objection 1: The *principle* of meriting exists on the part of the soul, whereas the body is an instrument of the meritorious *act*. And so it was not fitting for the perfection of Christ’s soul, which was the principle of meriting, to be acquired through merit in Him—in the way that the perfection of the body *was* acquired through merit, given that the body was subject to suffering and was thereby an instrument of His merit.

Reply to objection 2: By His previous merits Christ merited exaltation on the part of His soul, since the will of His soul was informed by charity and the other virtues. But in the passion He merited His exaltation on the part of His body as well, through the mode of a sort of compensation. For it was just for His body, which out of charity had been subjected to suffering, to receive its compensation in glory.

Reply to objection 3: By a certain dispensation it happened in the case of Christ that, before the passion, the glory of His soul did not flow over into His body, in order that He might obtain the glory of His body in a more honorable way when He merited it by His passion.

Now it was not inappropriate for the glory of the soul to behave differently [from the glory of the body]. For the soul was united *immediately* to the Word, and so it was fitting for it to be filled with glory from the Word Himself. By contrast, the body was united to the Word *by the mediation of the soul*.