

QUESTION 57

Christ's Ascension

Next we have to consider Christ's ascension. And on this topic there are six questions: (1) Was it fitting for Christ to ascend? (2) According to which nature was it fitting for Him to ascend? (3) Did He ascend by His own proper power? (4) Did He ascend beyond all celestial bodies? (5) Did He ascend beyond all spiritual creatures? (6) What is the effect of the ascension?

Article 1

Was it fitting for Christ to ascend?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to ascend (*non fuerit conveniens Christum ascendere*):

Objection 1: In *De Caelo* 2 the Philosopher says, "Things that exist in the best way possess their own good without any change (*sine motu*).” But Christ existed in the best way of all, since (a) in accord with His divine nature He is the highest good (*summum bonum*), and (b) in accord with His human nature He is the most glorified of all (*summe glorificatus*). Therefore, He possesses His own good without change. But ascending is a certain sort of change. Therefore, it was not fitting for Christ to ascend.

Objection 2: Everything that changes is changed for the sake of something better. But there was nothing better for Christ in heaven than on earth; for nothing accrued to Him by the fact that He was in heaven, either with respect to His soul or with respect to His body. Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Christ to ascend into heaven.

Objection 3: The Son of God assumed His human nature for our salvation. But it would have been more salvific for men if He were to live with us always on earth; for as He Himself said to His disciples in Luke 17:22, "The days will come when you desire to see the day of the Son of Man, and you will not see it." Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Christ to ascend into heaven.

Objection 4: As Gregory explains in *Moralia* 14, "After the resurrection, Christ's body did not change in any way." But He did not ascend into heaven immediately after the resurrection, since in John 20:17 He Himself said after the resurrection, "I have not yet ascended to the Father." Therefore, it seems that He should not have ascended after forty days, either.

But contrary to this: In John 20:17 our Lord says, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father."

I respond: A place should be proportioned to what is in that place. But through the resurrection Christ initiated an immortal and incorruptible [human] life. Now the place which we inhabit is a place of generation and corruption, whereas the heavenly place is a place of incorruption. And this is why it was not fitting for Christ to remain on earth after His resurrection; instead, it was fitting for Him to ascend into heaven.

Reply to objection 1: That which, existing in the best way, possesses its own good without change is God, who is altogether immutable—this according to Malachi 3:6 ("I am the Lord, and I do not change"). On the other hand, as is clear from Augustine in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 8, every creature is in some way changeable. And since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 2, a. 7, q. 16, aa. 8 and 10, q. 20, a. 1), the nature assumed by the Son of God remained a created nature, it is not unfitting for a change to be attributed to it.

Reply to objection 2: By the fact that Christ ascended in heaven, nothing accrued to Him as regards what belongs to the essence of glory, either with respect to His body or with respect to His soul. Nonetheless, something did accrue to Him because of the appropriateness of the place, and this contributes to the well-being of glory—not that His body acquired anything of perfection or preservation

from being a heavenly body, but solely because of the place's appropriateness. Yet this in some sense belonged to His glory, and He had a sort of joy from the place's appropriateness—not, to be sure, because He began to rejoice over this for the first time when He ascended into heaven, but because He rejoiced over it in a new way as over something that had been fulfilled. Hence, a Gloss on Psalm 15:10 (“At Your right hand are delights even unto the end”) says, “I will delight in sitting near You, when I am taken away from the sight of men.”

Reply to objection 3: Even though the corporeal presence of Christ was taken away from the faithful by the ascension, the presence of His divine nature is always with the faithful—this according to what He says in Matthew 28:20 (“Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world”). For as Pope Leo says, “He who ascended into the heavens does not desert those who have been adopted.”

However, Christ's ascension into heaven, by which He took away from us His corporeal presence, was itself more beneficial to us than His corporeal presence would have been:

First of all, because of *an increase of the faith which is had with respect to what is not seen*. Hence, in John 16:8 our Lord Himself says, “When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convince the world of righteousness,” viz., as Augustine comments in *Super Ioannem*, “the righteousness of those who believe; indeed, the very comparison of the believers with unbelievers is shameful. Hence, Christ adds, ‘I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me’ (John 16:10). For blessed are they who do not see and believe. And so it will be our righteousness that the world is convinced of, ‘since you will believe in me, whom you do not see’.”

Second, in order to *uplift our hope*. Hence, in John 14:3 Christ says, “If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be.” For by the fact that Christ placed His assumed human nature in heaven, He gave us hope of arriving there ourselves, since, as Matthew 24:28 says, “Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Hence, Micah 2:13 says, “He ascends, opening the way before them.”

Third, in order to *direct the affection of our charity toward heavenly things*. Hence, in Colossians 3:1-2 the Apostle says, “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth.” For as Matthew 6:21 says, “Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” And because the Holy Spirit is the love drawing us up to heavenly things, in John 16:7 our Lord says to His disciples, “It is expedient for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you.” In commenting on this passage in *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, “You cannot take hold of the Spirit as long as you persist in knowing Christ according to the flesh. But when Christ withdrew in body, not only was the Holy Spirit with them spiritually, but the Father and the Son as well.”

Reply to objection 4: Even though a heavenly place was fitting for Christ after He rose to an immortal life, He nonetheless deferred His ascension in order for the reality of His resurrection to be confirmed. Hence, Acts 1:3 says, “After His passion He showed Himself alive to His disciples by many proofs during forty days.” Commenting on this passage a certain Gloss says, “Because He had been dead for forty hours, He confirmed for forty days that He was alive. Alternatively, the forty days can be understood as the time of the present world—during which time Christ dwells in His Church—insofar as man is composed of the four elements and is taught not to transgress the Ten Commandments.”

Article 2

Is it fitting for Christ to ascend into heaven with respect to His divine nature?

It seems that it is fitting for Christ to ascend into heaven with respect to His divine nature (*ascendere in caelum conveniat Christo secundum naturam divinam*):

Objection 1: Psalm 46:6 says, “God ascends in jubilation,” and Deuteronomy 33:26 says, “He who is mounted upon the heavens is your helper.” But these things are said of God even before Christ’s incarnation. Therefore, it is fitting for Christ to ascend into heaven insofar as He is God (*secundum quod Deus*).

Objection 2: It belongs to the same individual to ascend into heaven and to descend from heaven—this according to John 3:13 (“No one has ascended into heaven except Him who has descended from heaven”), and according to Ephesians 4:10 (“He who descended, He it is who also ascended”). But Christ descended from heaven not insofar as He is a man, but insofar as He is God, since it was His divine nature, and not His human nature, that had existed beforehand in heaven. Therefore, it seems that Christ ascended into heaven insofar as He is God (*secundum quod Deus*).

Objection 3: By His ascension Christ ascended to the Father. But He did not arrive at equality with the Father insofar as He is a man; for as John 14:28 reports, He Himself says so: “[the Father] is greater than I.” Therefore, it seems that Christ ascended into heaven insofar as He is God (*secundum quod Deus*).

But contrary to this: A Gloss on Ephesians 4:9 (“Now what does ‘He ascended’ mean, but that He also first descended?”) says, “It is clear that Christ descended and ascended with respect to His human nature.”

I respond: There are two things that the expression ‘insofar as He is ...’ (*secundum quod*) can designate, viz., (a) a *condition* of the one who ascended, and (b) a *cause* of His ascending.

If it designates a *condition* of the one who ascended, then it cannot be fitting for Christ to ascend with respect to the condition of His divine nature—both because there is nothing higher than the divine nature to which it could ascend, and also because ascending is a change of place, which does not befit the divine nature, since the divine nature is immoveable and not contained in a place. By contrast, ascending in the sense under discussion does befit Christ with respect to His human nature, which is contained in a place and which can be subject to movement. Hence, in this sense we will be able to say that Christ ascended into heaven insofar as He is a man and not insofar as He is God.

On the other hand, if ‘insofar as He is ...’ designates a *cause* of the ascension, then since Christ ascended into heaven by the power of His divine nature and not by the power of His human nature, one will have to reply that Christ ascended into heaven insofar as He is God and not insofar as He is a man. Hence, in a sermon on the ascension Augustine says, “It was our doing that the Son of God hung upon the cross, but it was His own doing that He ascended.”

Reply to objection 1: The passages cited in this objection are said prophetically of God insofar as He was going to become incarnate.

However, it can be said that even if ascending does not *properly* belong to the divine nature, it can agree with the divine nature *metaphorically*, viz., insofar as God is said to ascend in the heart of a man when the man’s heart subjects itself to God and humbles itself before God. And, in the same way, the divine nature can be said ascend metaphorically with respect to every creature because God subjects that creature to Himself.

Reply to objection 2: He who ascends and He who descends are the same. For in *De Symbolo* Augustine asks, “Who is it who descends? The God-man. Who is it that ascends? The selfsame

God-man.”

Yet there are two descents attributed to Christ:

The one is the descent by which He is said to have descended from heaven and which is attributed to the God-man insofar as He is God. For this descent is to be understood not as a movement with respect to place (*non secundum motum localem*) but as an emptying (*secundum exinanitionem*) by which “even though He was in the form of God, He took on the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:6-7). For just as it is called an ‘emptying’ not because He lost His own plenitude, but because He took on our smallness, so He is said to have descended from heaven not because He deserted heaven, but because He assumed an earthly nature in the unity of a person.

The second descent is the one by which “He descended into the lower parts of the earth,” as Ephesians 4:9 puts it. This was indeed a descent in place. Hence, it was fitting for Him in accord with the condition of His human nature.

Reply to objection 3: Christ is said to ascend to the Father insofar as He ascends to being seated at the Father’s right hand. This, to be sure, befits Christ in some sense with respect to His divine nature, but, as will be explained below (q. 58, a. 3), it also in some sense befits Him with respect to His human nature,.

Article 3

Did Christ ascend by His own power?

It seems that Christ did not ascend by His own power (*Christus non ascenderit propria virtute*):

Objection 1: Mark 16:19 says, “The Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to the disciples, was taken up into heaven,” and Acts 1:9 says, “He was lifted up before their eyes, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.” But that which is “taken up” and “lifted up” seems to be moved by another. Therefore, Christ was borne into heaven by the power of another and not by His own power.

Objection 2: Christ’s body was earthly, just as our bodies are, and it is contrary to the nature of an earthly body to be borne upwards. But there is no movement, by its own power, of a body that is moved in a way that is contrary to its own nature. Therefore, Christ did not ascend into heaven by His own power.

Objection 3: Christ’s proper power is the divine power. But the movement in question does not seem to have come from His divine power; for since the divine power is infinite, such a movement would have been instantaneous and so He could not have been lifted up into heaven “before their eyes,” as Acts 1:9 says. Therefore, it seems that Christ did not ascend by His own power.

But contrary to this: Isaiah 63:1 says, “This beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength.” And in a homily on the ascension Gregory says, “Note that Elijah is said to have ascended in a chariot, so that it might be clearly shown that a mere man needed the assistance of another. By contrast, our Savior is not said to have been lifted up by a chariot or by angels, because He who had made all things was borne up above all things by His own power.”

I respond: In Christ there are two natures, viz., the divine nature and a human nature. Therefore, ‘His own power’ can be understood with respect to each of the natures.

Now with respect to the human nature there are two powers of Christ that can be thought of:

One is His *natural power*, which proceeds from the principles of His human nature. And it is clear that Christ did not ascend by this sort of power.

The other power in His human nature is the *power of glory*, and Christ ascended into heaven by this

power.

To be sure, there are some who understand the character of this power to come from the nature of the *fifth essence*, i.e., [celestial] *light*, as they affirm. They claim that (a) this fifth essence is involved in the composition of the human body and that (b) through it the contrary elements are harmonized and made one. The result is that in the *state of our present mortality* the elemental natures dominate in human bodies and so, in accord with the natures of these predominant elements, the human body is borne downward by its natural power. By contrast, in the *state of glory* the celestial nature will predominate and, in accord with its inclination and power, the body of Christ and the bodies of other saintly individuals are borne to heaven. But we discussed this opinion in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 76, a. 7) and will also discuss it further below, in the treatise on the general resurrection (*Supplement*, q. 48, a. 1).

So setting this opinion aside for now, other writers trace the character of the power just mentioned to the glorified soul, by whose overflow the body is glorified, as Augustine explains in *Ad Dioscorum*. For the obedience of the glorified body to the beatified soul is such that, as Augustine puts it in *De Civitate Dei* 22, “Where the spirit goes, the body will be there immediately; nor does the* spirit* will* anything that is not fitting for either the spirit or the body.” Now as has been explained (a. 1), it is appropriate for a glorious and immortal body to be in a celestial place. And so Christ’s body ascended into heaven by the power of the soul willing it to ascend.

Now just as the body is made glorious, so, as Augustine explains in *Super Ioannem*, “the soul is made blessed by participating in God.” Hence, the first origin of the ascension into heaven is the divine power.

So, then, Christ ascended into heaven by His own power—first, to be sure, by His divine power, but, second, by the power of His glorified soul moving His body as it willed.

Reply to objection 1: Just as Christ is said to have risen by His own power and yet to have been raised from the dead by the Father, since the Father’s power is the same power as the Son’s [divine] power, so, too, Christ likewise ascended into heaven by His own power and yet He was “lifted up” and “taken up” by the Father.

Reply to objection 2: This objection proves that Christ did not ascend into heaven by that power of His own that is natural to human nature. Yet He did ascend into heaven (a) by the power of His own that is the divine power and (b) by the power of His own that belongs to His beatified soul. And even though ascending upwards is contrary to the nature of the human body in its present state, in which the body is not altogether subject to the spirit, this movement will be neither contrary to nature nor violent for the glorified body, the whole nature of which is altogether subject to the spirit.

Reply to objection 3: Even though the divine power is infinite and operates in an infinite manner on the part of the one who is acting, it is nonetheless the case that the effect of the power is received in things according to their capacity and according to God’s plan (*secundum Dei dispositionem*). Now a body is incapable of being moved in place instantaneously, because a body is commensurate with space and, as *Physics* 6 proves, time is divided in accord with the division of space. And this is why it is not necessary for a body moved by God to move instantaneously; instead, it moves with the velocity that God arranges for it.

Article 4

Did Christ ascend above all the heavens?

It seems that Christ did not ascend above all the heavens (*Christus non ascenderit super omnes caelos*):

Objection 1: Psalm 10:5 says, “The Lord is in His holy temple, His throne is in heaven.” But what is *in* heaven is not *above* heaven. Therefore, Christ did not ascend above all the heavens.

Objection 2*: As *De Caelo* 2 shows, there is no place above all the heavens. But each body must be in a place. Therefore, Christ’s body did not ascend above all the heavens.

Objection 3: Two bodies cannot be in the same place. Therefore, since there is no passage from one endpoint to the other without going through the middle, it seems that Christ could not have ascended above all the heavens unless heaven were divided—which is impossible.

Objection 4: Acts 1:9 says, “A cloud took him out of their sight.” But clouds cannot be lifted up above the heavens. Therefore, Christ did not ascend about all the heavens.

Objection 5: We believe that Christ is going to remain forever where He ascended to. But what is contrary to nature cannot be everlasting (*non potest esse sempiternum*), since what is in accord with nature exists in most cases and more frequently. Therefore, since it is contrary to nature for an earthly body to be above the heavens, it seems that Christ’s body did not ascend above the heavens.

But contrary to this: Ephesians 4:10 says, “... He it is who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fulfill all things.”

I respond: To the extent that given bodies participate more perfectly in the divine goodness, they are higher in the corporeal ordering, which is an ordering with respect to place (*qui est ordo localis*). Hence, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Physics* 4 and *De Caelo* 2, we see that bodies which are more formal (*magis formalia*) are naturally higher, since, as is clear from *Physics* 1, it is through its form that each body participates in the divine *esse*. Now a body participates in the divine goodness through *glory* to a greater degree than any natural body does through the form of its own nature. And compared with the other glorified bodies, it is clear that Christ’s body shines with more glory. Hence, it was absolutely fitting for it to be placed above all the bodies on high. And that is why a Gloss on Ephesians 4:8 (“Thus it says, ‘Ascending on high’”) says, “[Highest] in place and in dignity.”

Reply to objection 1: God’s throne is said to be in heaven not in the sense of its being within something that contains it, but rather in the sense of its being within something that it contains. Hence, there does not have to some part of heaven that is higher than it is; instead, it has to be the case that it itself is above all the heavens—just as Psalm 8:2 proclaims: “Your magnificence, O God, is elevated above all the heavens.”

Reply to objection 2*: A place has the character of something that contains. Hence, the first containing thing has the character of a first thing that locates—which is the first heaven. Therefore, bodies need to be in a place in their own right to the extent that they need to be contained by a celestial body. Therefore, a glorified bodies, and especially Christ’s body, do not need any such containing thing, because they receive nothing from celestial bodies. Hence, there is nothing to prevent Christ’s body from being outside of the entire containment of celestial bodies and from not being in a containing place.

Nor is it necessary for there to be a vacuum outside the heavens, since it is not in a place. Nor does it have the power to receive a body; instead, the power of reaching it exists in Christ. Moreover, what Aristotle proves in *De Caelo* 2, viz., that outside the heavens there is no body, should be understood as having to do with bodies that are constituted in their purely natural condition (*de corporibus in solis naturalibus constitutis*); this is clear from the arguments.

Reply to objection 3: Even though it is of the nature of a body that it cannot be in the same place with another body, nonetheless, God can make it the case through a miracle that they are able to be in the same place—in the way that, as Gregory points out, He made “Christ’s body leave the closed womb of the Blessed Virgin,” and in the way that Christ’s body “entered in through the closed doors.” Therefore, it can be fitting for Christ’s body to be with another body in the same place—not because of any property of His body, but through the divine power assisting and bringing this about.

Reply to objection 4: The cloud in question did not provide assistance for the ascending Christ in the manner of a vehicle, but instead appeared as a sign of the divine presence (*in signum divinitatis*), in the way that the glory of the God of Israel used to appear over the tabernacle in a cloud.

Reply to objection 5: A glorified body does not have, by the principles of its own nature, the wherewithal to be able to be in heaven or to be above the heavens. Instead, it has this from its beatified soul, from which it receives its glory. And just as the upward movement of a glorified body is not violent, so neither is its rest violent. Hence, nothing prevents that rest from being everlasting (*nihil prohibet eam esse sempiternam*).

Article 5

Did Christ's body ascend above every spiritual creature?

It seems that Christ's body did not ascend above every spiritual creature (*corpus Christi non ascenderit super omnem creaturam spirituales*):

Objection 1: A comparison cannot appropriately be made when there is no unified concept for the terms. But as is clear from what was said in the First Part (ST 1, q. 8, a. 2, ad 1 and q. 52, a. 1), *place* is not attributed under the same concept to bodies and to spiritual creatures. Therefore, it seems that one cannot say that Christ's body ascended above every spiritual creature.

Objection 2: In *De Vera Religione* Augustine claims that a spirit takes precedence over every corporeal thing. But a higher place is owed to a more noble thing. Therefore, it seems that Christ did not ascend over every spiritual creature.

Objection 3: Each place is such that there is a body in it, since there is no vacuum in nature. Therefore, if there is no body which occupies a higher place than a spirit in the order of natural bodies, then there is no place above every spiritual creature. Therefore, Christ's body could not have ascended above every spiritual creature.

But contrary to this: Ephesians 1:20-21 says, "God set Him above every Principality and Power, and above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come."

I respond: To the extent that an entity is more noble, a higher place is owed to it, regardless of whether it is owed a place (a) in the manner of bodily contact, as in the case of bodies, or (b) in the manner of spiritual contact, as in the case of spiritual substances. For on this basis, spiritual substances are, according to a certain fittingness, owed a heavenly place, which is the highest of places, since these substances are the highest in the ordering of substances.

Now even though, if we consider just the condition of a corporeal nature, Christ's body is lower than the spiritual substances, nonetheless, if we consider the dignity of the union by which that body is conjoined to God in a person, it exceeds the dignity of all the spiritual substances. And this is why, in accord with the notion of fittingness noted above, Christ's body is owed a place above all other creatures, even spiritual creatures. Hence, in a homily on the ascension Gregory says, "He who made all things is borne above all things by His power."

Reply to objection 1: Even though place is attributed to the corporeal and the spiritual substance by different concepts, there is nonetheless a common concept for them both, viz., that a higher place is given to a more dignified entity.

Reply to objection 2: This argument goes through for Christ's body in accord with the condition of a corporeal nature, but not in accord with the character of its union [with God in a person].

Reply to objection 3: The comparison here can be thought of either (a) with respect to the *notion*

of a place, and in this sense—which is the sense according to which the objection proceeds—there is no place so high that it exceeds the dignity of a spiritual substance, or (b) with respect to the *dignity* of the things to which a place is attributed, and in this sense it is owed to Christ's body that it should be above spiritual creatures.

Article 6

Is Christ's ascension a cause of our salvation?

It seems that Christ's ascension is not a cause of our salvation (*ascensio Christi non sit causa nostrae salutis*):

Objection 1: Christ was a cause of our salvation insofar as He merited our salvation. But He did not merit anything for us by His ascension, since the ascension involved the reward of His exaltation—and the merit is not the same thing as the reward, just as the path is not the same thing as the endpoint. Therefore, it seems that Christ's ascension was not a cause of our salvation.

Objection 2: If Christ's ascension is a cause of our salvation, then it seems that this is especially because His ascension is a cause of our ascension. But our ascension was granted to us because of His passion, since, as Hebrews 10:19 says, "We are free to enter the Holies in virtue of the blood of Christ." Therefore, it seems that Christ's ascension is not a cause of our salvation.

Objection 3: The salvation given to us through Christ is everlasting—this according to Isaiah 51:6 ("My salvation will be everlasting"). But Christ did not ascend into heaven in order to be there forever; for Acts 1:11 says, "He will come in the same way as you have seen Him going up to heaven." We likewise read that He has shown Himself to many saints on earth after His ascension, as in the case of Paul (Acts 9). Therefore, it seems that His ascension is not a cause of our salvation.

But contrary to this: John 16:7 says, "It is expedient for you that I depart," i.e., "that I withdraw from you through my ascension."

I respond: There are two ways in which Christ's ascension is a cause of our salvation: in one way, *on our part*; in other way, *on His part*.

On our part, insofar as through Christ's ascension our mind is moved toward Him. For as has been explained above (a. 1, ad 3), through His ascension a locus of *faith* is given first, a locus of *hope* second, and a locus of *charity* third. Also, fourth, our reverence for Him is increased by the fact that we think of Him no longer as an earthly man, but as the God of heaven. As the Apostle puts it in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh"—Gloss: 'that is, as mortal, whereby we have thought of Him as a mere man'—"yet now we know Him so no longer."

On His part, with respect to those things which He, by ascending, has done for the sake of our salvation:

First of all, He has prepared a way for us to ascend into heaven—this according to what He says in John 14:2 ("I go to prepare a place for you"), and according to Micah 2:15 ("He ascends, opening the way before them"). For since He is our head, the members have to follow to where the head has gone before; hence, John 14:3 says, "... that where I am, you also may be." And as a sign of this, He led across to heaven the souls of the saints whom He had led them out of hell—this according to Psalm 67:19 ("Ascending on high, He held the captivity captive"), because those who had been held captive by the devil He took with Him into heaven, as into a place strange to human nature, captives now of a good captivity, since they had been acquired by His victory.

Second, because just as the high priest in the Old Testament entered the sanctuary to stand before

God on behalf of the people, so, too, Christ entered heaven “to make intercession for us,” as Hebrews 7:25 says. In fact, His very presentation of the human nature which He brought into heaven is a sort of intercession on our behalf, so that by the very fact that God exalted the human nature in Christ to such a great degree, He was also showing mercy to those on whose behalf the Son of God had assumed the human nature.

Third, in order that, having been set upon the throne of heaven as God and Lord, He might from there transmit divine goods to men. This is in accord with Ephesians 4:10, “He ascended above all the heavens in order to fulfill all things”—Gloss: ‘viz., by His gifts’.

Reply to objection 1: Christ’s ascension is a cause of our salvation not in the manner of a *meritorious* cause (*non per modum meriti*), but in the manner of an *efficient* cause (*per modum efficientiae*), as was explained above (q. 56, a. 1, ad 3-4) for the case of the resurrection.

Reply to objection 2: Christ’s passion is, properly speaking, a cause of our ascension by removing the impediment of sin (*per remotionem peccati prohibentis*) and in the manner of a meritorious cause (*et per modum meriti*). On the other hand, Christ’s ascension is directly [an efficient] cause of our ascension by initiating it in our head, to which the members have to be conjoined.

Reply to objection 3: Once Christ ascended into heaven, He forever acquired for Himself and for us the right to, and dignity of, a heavenly mansion. Yet it does not detract from this dignity if, by a dispensation, Christ sometimes descends bodily to earth, either (a) in order to show Himself to the everyone, as at the [general] judgment, or (b) to show Himself specifically to a given individual such as Paul (Acts 9). And lest anyone think that Christ was not bodily present when this occurred, the contrary is clear from what the Apostle himself says in 1 Corinthians 15:8 to confirm faith in Christ’s resurrection: “Last of all, as by one born out of due time, He was seen also by me.” But this vision would not confirm the reality of the resurrection if his real body had not been seen by Paul.