

Aquinas on the Nature of Christ's Punishment and its Role in His Work of Satisfaction

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Abstract

The purpose of this work is to explicate Thomas Aquinas' teaching regarding the nature of satisfaction, punishment, and the relation between the two in the Passion of Christ. This task is undertaken as a response to recent treatments of Aquinas' soteriology that misinterpret his understanding of the penal nature of Christ's work of satisfaction. I argue that Aquinas' explication of Christ's 'satisfactory punishment' on the cross does not reduce the salvific significance of the Passion to the mere endurance of a penalty in order to fulfill an arbitrary legal requirement, nor does it reflect a notion of God as wrathful and delighting in human suffering. Rather, the punishment that constitutes the Passion is a complex reality that is willed by God and chosen by Christ as a fitting means of attaining the end of his saving mission, namely, the healing and elevation of sinners.

Keywords

aquinas, satisfaction, punishment, charity, passion

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have recently pointed out that Thomas Aquinas describes Christ's work of satisfaction as a 'punishment'. On this basis, they have levelled two critiques against Aquinas: first, his union of punishment with satisfaction is a corruption of Anselm of Canterbury's satisfaction theory; second, Aquinas' satisfaction theory provides a philosophical foundation for later atonement theories that fall within the genus of 'penal substitution'. A thorough evaluation of these criticisms would require a close scrutiny of the soteriology of Aquinas, Anselm, and the proponents of penal substitution to whom Aquinas is said to bear a resemblance. This article will make an initial contribution to that greater project by providing a thorough explication and analysis of Aquinas' teaching on the nature of the punishment that Christ endured on the cross and its purpose within his work of satisfaction for sin.

The structure of this work will unfold as follows. I will begin with an examination of the above-mentioned, contemporary treatments of Aquinas' use of 'punishment' in his account of Christ's work of satisfaction. I will show that both those who are concerned with, and those who laud, Aquinas' inclusion of punishment within satisfaction have failed to address two vital questions for the proper interpretation of Aquinas' soteriology: first, *what is punishment?* Second, *what role does punishment play in acts of satisfaction?* I will then proceed to present Aquinas' answers to these questions by explicating his teaching on the nature of satisfaction, punishment, and the relation between the two, as presented in the *Summa Theologiae*. I will focus especially upon how Aquinas uses these concepts in his explanation of the saving significance of Christ's Passion, and will conclude with a consideration of his teaching regarding humanity's participation in Christ's work of satisfaction. My thesis is that, for Aquinas, God did not will and delight in the suffering of Christ as an end in itself. Rather, God willed Christ's suffering as a fitting means to bring about the real healing and elevation of sinners in grace. Christ chose to endure the punishment of the Passion because the end of his saving mission and the type of actions needed to fittingly attain that end rendered his endurance of punishment necessary. The Satisfaction wrought by Christ on the cross, with all of the punishment that it involved, was not arbitrary. Rather, Christ's punishment manifests the wisdom and saving love of God for sinners.

I. CONTEMPORARY CRITICISMS OF THOMISTIC SATISFACTION

In his mature soteriological work, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, Gerald O'Collins connects Aquinas' satisfaction theory with the doctrine of penal substitution. On the whole, O'Collins appreciates Aquinas' soteriology and lauds his emphasis on the essential role of charity in acts of satisfaction for sin.¹ But, he claims that Aquinas understood satisfaction to be a 'penance that involves a penal or punitive element, an element expressly excluded by Anselm' of Canterbury in his foundational work on satisfaction theory, *Cur Deus homo*.² In this sense, Aquinas corrupted Anselm's theory. Further, by associating satisfaction with penal penances, O'Collins says that Aquinas 'helped to prepare the way, sadly, for the idea of Christ being punished and so propitiating an angry God by paying a redemptive ransom'. He continues, 'the way Aquinas adjusted Anselm's theory of satisfaction helped open the door to a sad version of redemption: Christ as a penal

¹ Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 136.

² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

substitute who was personally burdened with the sins of humanity, judged, condemned, and deservedly punished in our place'. O'Collins interprets Aquinas' logic as follows: salvation from sin requires satisfaction; Satisfaction involves suffering a penalty or punishment; Christ suffered this penalty on our behalf. Hence, fallen humans are saved from sin and reconciled to God. For O'Collins, such an articulation of satisfaction leads to the following conclusion: 'through his death he [Christ] satisfied the divine justice, paid the required price, and propitiated an angry God'.³ O'Collins thus thinks that Aquinas' satisfaction theory lends itself to the notion that a wrathful God actively willed and delighted in the suffering of Christ as an end in itself.

O'Collins goes on to argue that the Council of Trent enshrined Aquinas' penal interpretation of satisfaction. Trent describes Christ's sacrifice as an act of satisfaction in both its decree on justification and its teaching on the sacrifice of the Mass.⁴ O'Collins takes no issue with the decree on justification, since it did not explicitly define 'satisfaction'.⁵ However, he is troubled by Trent's following statement on the Mass:

This sacrifice is truly propitiatory ... For the Lord, appeased by this oblation, grants grace and the gift of repentance, and he pardons wrongdoing and sins ... therefore, it [the Eucharist] is rightly offered according to apostolic tradition, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfaction, and other necessities of the faithful who are alive, but also for those who have died in Christ.⁶

O'Collins says, 'By aligning "satisfaction" with "punishments" and speaking of God being "appeased",⁷ the Council of Trent accepted penal elements which Aquinas and others had introduced into Anselm's theory'.⁸ O'Collins concludes, 'Satisfaction was now officially depicted as involving punishment',⁹ and so Aquinas' misinterpretation of Anselm became a part of the authoritative magisterial teaching of the Church.¹⁰ For O'Collins, Trent indicates that Christ satisfied for sin by enduring the punishment of the cross, a punishment that 'appeased' God. The implication is that Christ's saving work on the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 137-8. The seventh chapter of the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification taught that Christ's passion 'made satisfaction for us to God the Father' (*pro nobis Deo Patri satisfecit*). See Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: 43rd Edition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), paragraph 1529.

⁵ O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, p. 138.

⁶ Council of Trent session 22, chapter 2, Denzinger paragraph 1743.

⁷ O'Collins translates the Latin *placare* as 'to appease,' and interprets this as meaning that Christ's sacrifice 'appeases' the anger of God.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 138-139.

⁹ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰ The current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* promulgated by Pope John Paul II maintains the language of 'satisfaction' in reference to Christ's death. See paragraphs 615 and 616.

cross is reduced to the mere endurance of pain in order to satisfy a wrathful God's right to punish sinners.

O'Collins' criticism of Aquinas was analyzed by Brandon Peterson. Peterson claims that O'Collins' rejection of the word *placare* 'arises from a linguistic misunderstanding'.¹¹ Modern English Christians who embraced forms of penal substitution tended to translate *placare* as 'appease' and used it to describe 'an action intended to assuage the rage of another'. Yet, 'Thomas uses the Latin *placo* in quite another way, namely, in the positive sense of "pleasing" another'.¹² Thus, when Aquinas says that God was *placatus* (pleased) by Christ's satisfaction, he is not using this term in the same way as it would be used later by proponents of penal substitution.

Yet, Peterson agrees with O'Collins regarding the claim that Aquinas modified Anselm's understanding of satisfaction. Peterson rightly points out that, according to Anselm, the order and harmony of creatures with God and one another is maintained by *either* punishment *or* satisfaction.¹³ The two options are mutually exclusive, and satisfaction is the superior one. Conversely, 'while Thomas has a dichotomy, punishment straddles both sides of it'.¹⁴ Aquinas defines satisfaction 'as a *kind* of punishment, rather than an *alternative* to it'.¹⁵ For Aquinas, the form of satisfaction is charity, but 'punishment serves as the "matter" of the act of satisfaction'.¹⁶ In Peterson's view, Anselm does not specify that the matter of every act of satisfaction must involve suffering and pain, whereas Aquinas does. For Aquinas, the difference between punishment and satisfaction is merely formal; the former is affliction endured involuntarily, while the latter is suffering endured out of charity.¹⁷

The claim that Aquinas' soteriology can be linked to accounts of penal substitution has merit. Such a connection is explicitly made in a recent, esteemed evangelical defense of penal substitution. In *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach identify Aquinas as a proponent of the idea that Christ's death was nec-

¹¹ Brandon Peterson, 'Paving the Way? Penalty and Atonement in Thomas Aquinas' Soteriology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no.3 (2013), p. 278.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 279.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-275. In a more recent article, Peterson again critiques those who interpret Anselm's teaching on satisfaction in penal terms. Yet, he also argues that Anselm's teaching on satisfaction is best interpreted according to its auxiliary role in the 'person-centered' soteriology of Thomas Aquinas. Thus, it is not clear if he still thinks Thomas's view of satisfaction corrupted Anselm's along penal lines. See Brandon R. Peterson, 'Would A Forgiving God Demand Satisfaction? An Examination of Mercy and Atonement', *Angelicum* 93, no. 4 (2016): pp. 875-894.

essary to pay the debt of punishment that sinful human beings owed to God. Significantly, they do not claim that Anselm promoted such a view. They appeal to the classic teaching of Aquinas, among others, to show that penal substitution is not 'a novel doctrine, invented around the time of the Reformation'. Rather, the thought of ancient theologians such as Justin Martyr, Augustine of Hippo, and Aquinas help to show that penal substitution 'has indeed been the consensus of Christian orthodoxy for almost two millenia'.¹⁸ According to these authors, Aquinas' endorsement of penal substitution can be found in questions 47–50 of the third part of the *Summa Theologiae*.¹⁹ There, Aquinas claims that God satisfies for human sin 'by paying himself a debt we could not pay. This debt was the punishment due to us for our sin against him'.²⁰ The punishment which Christ endured in his Passion paid the debt which human beings owed to God, and in doing so ransomed sinners from slavery to the devil.²¹ Hence, Aquinas provides 'a clear statement of penal substitution: God must punish sin to maintain his justice, but Christ suffered in our place and freed us from this debt'.²² Christ endured the suffering that sinful human beings deserved, satisfied the justice of God, and so opened up the possibility of salvation.

The problem with all of these treatments of Aquinas' satisfaction theory is that they never go beyond the surface of Aquinas' teaching. None of the above interpretations make any effort to define and explain Aquinas' understanding of what constitutes a 'punishment'. While Peterson is correct to identify punishment as that which constitutes the matter of satisfaction, he does not provide any further reflection upon what punishment is and how it is related to the essence and end of satisfaction. The role of punishment in the saving function of satisfaction is thus prematurely assumed to be the mere fulfilment of a seemingly arbitrary judicial requirement or, worse, the quenching of an angry deity's wrath. In order properly to understand and appreciate Aquinas' satisfaction theory, the following questions need to be addressed: *What is satisfaction? What is Punishment? How does punishment contribute to the end of satisfaction?* I will now turn to the *Summa Theologiae* in order to explain how Aquinas answers these questions, and thus rectify the above misunderstandings of his satisfaction theory.

¹⁸ Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, ed. *Pierced For Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), p. 162.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, citing *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 47, a. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 185, citing ST III, q. 48, a. 4.

²² *Ibid.*

II. AQUINAS ON THE NATURE OF SATISFACTION

Thomas Aquinas situates the concept of 'satisfaction' within his account of justice and the virtue of penance. Penance is a species of justice, and satisfaction is an effect of the virtue of penance.²³ Justice requires that those who sin against another offer compensation for their offense. Penance is the virtue by which the offending party 'grieves for the sin he has committed, inasmuch as it is an offense against God, and purposes to amend'.²⁴ Aquinas specifies, 'Now amendment for an offense committed against anyone is not made by merely ceasing to offend, but it is necessary to make some kind of compensation'.²⁵ Brian Davies comments that Aquinas 'does not think that things are made right between sinners and God simply because sinners stop sinning'.²⁶ Compensation is needed in order to eliminate, as much as possible, all of the destructive effects and consequences of the sin committed.²⁷ A person 'makes satisfaction' to God when, after acknowledging his guilt and grieving for his sins, he hands over a sufficient compensation to the Lord.²⁸

Satisfactory compensation involves the judgment of the victim and the free choice of the offender. Aquinas says, 'in penance, the offense is satisfied according to the will of the sinner, and the judgment of God against whom the sin was committed'.²⁹ God determines the offering needed to justly compensate for the damages committed against his honor, and the sinner voluntarily hands over this gift of recompense.³⁰ The same rule applies to situations involving an offense between human beings. For example, the person who is fined by the state for speeding satisfies for their offense by choosing to pay the fine which their victim (the state, representing the community) has demanded.

Further, the compensation offered in satisfaction must be a gift which is abundantly pleasing to the victim. Aquinas explains, 'He properly satisfies for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offense'.³¹ This means that human beings can only make satisfaction to God for their sins by

²³ ST III, q. 85, a. 3 and q. 90, a. 1, ad 2, respectively. All citations from the *Summa* are based on the Latin Leonine Edition and the English translation by Lawrence Shapcote, of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

²⁴ ST III, q. 85, a. 3.

²⁵ ST III, q. 85, a. 2.

²⁶ Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 327.

²⁷ ST III, q. 85, a. 2. Thomas explains that compensation is needed for 'the destruction of past sin'.

²⁸ ST III, q. 85, a. 3.

²⁹ ST III, q. 90, a. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ ST III, q. 48, a. 2.

offering a gift to him which is at least as pleasing to the divine will as their sins were displeasing.

Jesus offers to God the Father a perfect gift of recompense on behalf of the entire fallen human race. Aquinas says, 'by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race'.³² God willed to receive love and obedience from Christ. Christ loved and obeyed God even to the point of shedding his blood on the Cross. By this supreme act of love, Christ voluntarily handed over the gift that God desired to receive from him, and this gift was even more pleasing to God than the history of sin was displeasing.³³ The dignity of Christ's divine personhood rendered his gift of self-infinitely pleasing to the Father.³⁴ Further, as Thomas Joseph White explains, because Christ was fully divine, as a man he possessed beatific knowledge of the divine will, and this enabled him freely, knowingly to hand himself over to suffering and death 'in a way no one else could'.³⁵

While it is grounded in the Incarnate love of the Son for the Father, Christ's satisfying work is not merely an exchange between the Father and Son, devoid of all concrete impact upon sinful human beings. Such a scenario would prevent Christ's Passion from properly being called 'satisfaction' since, as we have seen, Aquinas defines satisfaction as a penitential act which is ordered towards the destruction of the effects of sin. Consequently, in order to properly be called 'satisfaction', Christ's love and obedience amidst suffering and death must somehow heal broken human beings. Such healing of sinful humanity occurs, according to Matthew Levering, when Christ's cruciform love is 'appropriated by each person through membership in Christ's body by faith and charity'.³⁶ Aquinas explains, 'in order to secure the effects of Christ's passion, we must be likened unto him'.³⁷ He specifies, 'Christ's Passion works its effect in them to whom it is applied, through faith and charity and the sacraments of faith'.³⁸ Through the infusion of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, sinful human beings are forgiven of their sins and united to Christ. As the members of the mystical body become perfectly conformed to the charity of Christ their head, they are offered through, with, and in Christ to the Father as a pleasing gift in satisfaction for all of their past sins. In this way, humans

³² Ibid.

³³ ST III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2.

³⁴ ST III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 3.

³⁵ Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), p. 358.

³⁶ Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 58.

³⁷ ST III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 2.

³⁸ ST III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 1.

participate in the satisfaction brought about through Christ's passion.³⁹ Thus, as Rik Van Nieuwenhove remarks, 'Insofar as we share in it [Christ's death] and allow ourselves to be changed, it takes away the sins of the world'.⁴⁰ Having established the basics of Aquinas' teaching on satisfaction, we can proceed to consider more specifically the role that suffering or 'punishment' has in his account of Christ's satisfactory work.

III. THE NATURE OF *POENA* AND ITS RELATION TO SATISFACTION

Our first task is to understand what Aquinas means by the Latin word *poena*, a word which Peterson and O'Collins consistently translate as 'punishment'.⁴¹ Aquinas defines *Poena* under the category of 'evil', but he distinguishes it from moral evil. 'What St. Thomas classes *malum poenae*', says Herbert McCabe, is 'evil suffered by things'.⁴² Peter Koritansky explains, 'Because all evil consists in the privation of some good, Aquinas understands punishment to include all instances where rational creatures suffer *harm* of any kind'.⁴³ So, a person endures *poena* when they are experiencing something which is repugnant to their will, for example, 'so-called natural evils such as disease and physical disability'.⁴⁴ Brian Davies adds, 'Aquinas' notion of *malum poenae* corresponds to a high degree to what authors other than Aquinas have referred to as "naturally occurring evil," such as 'human illness or animal suffering, or even the wilting of a plant (certainly bad for the plant)'.⁴⁵

Aquinas employs *poena* in terms of 'natural evil suffered' in his treatment of the defects assumed by God the Son.⁴⁶ Christ assumed 'bodily defects, namely death, hunger, thirst, and the like'. These defects 'are the *punishment* of sin, which was brought into the world by

³⁹ ST III, q. 49, a. 1. See also ad 4 and 5, as well as a. 3, ad 2 and 3.

⁴⁰ Rik Van Nieuwenhove, 'Bearing the Marks of Christ's Passion': Aquinas' Soteriology', in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), p. 296.

⁴¹ Peterson explains his rationale in 'Paving the Way? Penalty and Atonement in Thomas Aquinas' Soteriology', p. 276, footnote 53.

⁴² Herbert McCabe, *God and Evil In The Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 117.

⁴³ Peter Karl Koritansky, *Thomas Aquinas and the Philosophy of Punishment* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), p. 103. On the other hand, *malum culpa* ('fault') is 'the evil we do' (p. 103). See Aquinas' *De Malo* q. 1, a.4 and Augustine's *On Free Choice*, bk 1, chp 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

⁴⁵ Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 68.

⁴⁶ ST III, q. 14 (bodily defects) and q. 15 (defects of soul).

Adam'.⁴⁷ Here, Aquinas explicitly equates *poena* with bodily *defectus*, and he identifies the cause of these defects.⁴⁸ He explains, 'All particular defects of men are caused by the corruptibility and passibility of the body'.⁴⁹ Adam and his descendants experience bodily *poena* as a consequence of Adam's decision to sin and thus destroy the grace of original justice.⁵⁰ As Augustine Di Noia points out, original justice included 'Freedom from bodily suffering and death'.⁵¹ Further,

Because of his personal sin (*peccatum originale originans*), Adam lost the state of original justice that he would have been able to pass along with human nature to his posterity. The state of original sin in his posterity (*peccatum originale originatum*) is nothing other than the privation or absence of original justice and the resulting disorder in the powers that is called concupiscence.⁵²

Therefore, to say that Christ experiences bodily *poena* is simply to say that he is a human being who shares in the corporal passibility that every descendant of Adam experiences.⁵³

In addition to bodily suffering, *poena* includes material and internal privation. The goods lost through *poena* can consist in the 'good of the soul, good of the body, and external goods'.⁵⁴ 'External goods' refers to human possessions such as money, shelter, or friendships. To lose such goods against one's will is to suffer a *malum poenae*. The soul experiences *poena* in several ways. First, insofar as it is the form of the body, the soul suffers in and with the body in all of the latter's pain. Second, the soul 'suffers with an animal passion', namely, 'the affections of the sensitive appetite'.⁵⁵ Craig Steven Titus points out that such suffering in the sensitive appetite includes things as simple as Christ's experience of hunger.⁵⁶ This bodily hunger is accompanied by an internal sorrow of the mind at the recognition of an absent, sensible good.⁵⁷ Such bodily passions and the sorrow that accompanies them were not in Christ due to any disorder of his soul. Rather, as Paul Gondreau explains, 'By

⁴⁷ ST III, q. 14, a. 1. Emphasis added.

⁴⁸ See also ST III, q. 14, a. 3, ad 1.

⁴⁹ ST III, q. 14, a. 4, ad 1.

⁵⁰ ST I-II, q. 85, a. 5.

⁵¹ J.A. Di Noia, O.P. 'Not 'Born Bad': The Catholic Truth about Original Sin In A Thomistic Perspective', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, no. 81 (2017), p. 350.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁵³ ST III, q. 14, a. 4.

⁵⁴ ST I-II, q. 87, a. 7.

⁵⁵ ST III, q. 15, a. 4.

⁵⁶ Craig Steven Titus, 'Passions In Christ: Spontaneity, Development, and Virtue', *The Thomist* 73 (2009), pp. 66-67: 'The notion of *passio* as a 'defect' . . . entails that his *passiones* involve . . . his capacity to hunger, suffer, and die. In the wake of various denials of the passibility of Christ (esp. Hilary of Poitiers), Aquinas needs to underscore the possibility and psychosomatic reality of Christ's physical pain and psychological suffering'.

⁵⁷ ST III, q. 15, a. 6.

virtue of a unique grace, Christ's affectivity *instinctively* and *innately* followed the good of reason, which ensured that every passion worked towards its natural end'.⁵⁸

Third, Christ's soul experienced suffering even in his rational will. Jesus' soul experienced sorrow, fear, and anger not only towards material realities, but towards spiritual realities as well.⁵⁹ Aquinas explains, 'the object and motive of sorrow is anything hurtful or evil interiorly apprehended by the reason or the imagination'.⁶⁰ Jesus' soul grieved, was angered, and felt fear on account of his knowledge of immaterial realities such as sin and hell.⁶¹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange specifies that Christ's rational appetite suffered not in its 'higher reason', the object of which is God, but rather in its 'lower reason', which 'has to do with temporal things', such as sin. 'However', he adds, 'the sadness a just man experiences at the sight of sin comes from the 'higher reason' which contemplates the eternal law of God. Sin makes the just suffer chiefly inasmuch as it is an offense against God'.⁶² In sum: the mind of Christ recognized the absence of spiritual and material goods, and this caused him to suffer the pain of sorrow in the lower part of his rational appetite as well as in his sensitive appetite.

Aquinas explicitly identifies sorrow as a form of *poena*. He says, 'All sorrow is an evil of punishment (*poenae*), but it is not always an evil of fault, except only when it proceeds from an inordinate affection'.⁶³ Sorrow is painful, and it exists only in a fallen world, but this does not mean that the experience of sorrow is a sin or a purely negative event. While one would generally prefer not to be sorrowful, there are times when sorrow is reasonable, fitting, and virtuous. On this point Aquinas quotes St. Augustine, who says, 'Whenever these affections follow reason, and are caused when and where needed, who will dare to call them diseases or vicious passions?'⁶⁴ Thus, as a 'defect' of the soul, sorrow (as well as anger and fear) is just as much a *poena* as any bodily defect. However, insofar as sorrow is an appropriate reaction to

⁵⁸ Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2009), p. 310. Joseph Wawrykow explains, 'Basically, Aquinas ascribes those perfections and those defects to Christ that will further his salvific work, confirm his genuine humanity, and allow him to serve as the moral exemplar of other humans who aspire to God as end. And he denies to Christ those defects that would put his salvific work in jeopardy', such as sin and concupiscence. See his chapter 'Grace', in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 214.

⁵⁹ ST III, q. 15, a. 6, 7, and 9, respectively.

⁶⁰ ST III, q. 15, a. 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus: Volume One*, trans. Sister Jeanne Marie (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co. 1948), p. 209.

⁶³ ST III, q. 15, a. 6, ad 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

evil, whether spiritual or corporal, it is a manifestation of wisdom and charity.

We are now in a position to understand Aquinas' description of Christ's Passion as a 'punishment'. Aquinas' intent in using this term is evident in his discussion of the various kinds and degrees of pain which Christ endured in the Passion.⁶⁵ He explains,

Christ suffered from friends abandoning Him; in His reputation, from the blasphemies hurled at Him; in His honor and glory, from the mockeries and the insults heaped upon Him; in things, for He was despoiled of His garments; in His soul, from sadness, weariness, and fear; in His body, from wounds and scourgings.⁶⁶

Here we see that Christ suffered external *poena* (social rejection and nakedness), corporal *poena* (scourging and crucifixion) and internal *poena* (sorrow and fear). Aquinas further specifies the objects of the sorrow that constituted Christ's internal pain. Christ grieved for (1) the sins of every human person in history, (2) especially for the sins of his Chosen People, his Apostles, and all those directly involved in his death, (3) the suffering and death of his body, 'which is naturally horrible to human nature'.⁶⁷ Hence, we can see that Christ's Passion may properly be called a 'punishment' insofar as it involved suffering the loss of various kinds of goods.

We can now make some initial observations regarding the causal relationship between God's will and Christ's experience of corporal, external, and internal *poena*. The proximate causes of Christ's *poena* were (1) the passible human nature that God the Son chose to assume, (2) the natural forces of the world which afflicted Christ, such as heat, cold, etc. (3) the moral evil of those human beings directly involved in his Passion, and (4) the sins of humankind, the knowledge of which caused Christ to grieve. By directly choosing to assume a passible human nature, God the Son *indirectly* willed to endure the various forms of *poena* (2–4, above) to which that passible nature made him vulnerable. Yet, this is not the same as saying that God actively willed the suffering described in points 2–4. For example, a person who chooses to get married indirectly chooses to make themselves vulnerable to being an object of their spouse's scorn, or to grief on account of their spouse's premature death. Further, nothing in the notion of *poena* itself necessitates the conclusion that God directly wills corporal, external or internal suffering upon Jesus *beyond that which is unavoidable to his passible nature* (e.g. hunger, thirst, weariness, etc.). While God the Father *could have* actively afflicted his incarnate Son with migraine headaches, for instance, Aquinas' exposition of the *poena* endured by

⁶⁵ ST III, q. 46, a. 6.

⁶⁶ ST III, q. 46, a. 5.

⁶⁷ ST III, q. 46, a. 6.

Christ does not require such a view. In fact, Aquinas does not even suggest such a conclusion.

We can now begin to examine the connection between *poena* and satisfaction. Aquinas distinguishes between *poena* 'simply' and 'as being satisfactory'.⁶⁸ A person is punished 'simply', in the ordinary sense of the term, when he involuntarily suffers the loss of some good. Examples of such punishments include when a person's wallet is stolen, or when someone falls and breaks their wrist, or when a student suffers great anxiety prior to an examination. Yet *poena* may be used in a qualified sense as well. Unlike punishment simply, 'Satisfactory punishment is, in a way, voluntary'. *Poena* is endured in a satisfactory manner when a 'man suffers the loss of a lesser good, that he may profit in a greater good'. For example,

when he suffers the loss of money for the sake of bodily health, or loss of both of these, for the sake of his soul's health and the glory of God. In such cases the loss is an evil to man, not simply but relatively; wherefore it does not answer to the name of punishment simply, but of medicinal punishment, because a medical man prescribes bitter potions to his patients, that he may restore them to health.⁶⁹

In Aquinas' vocabulary, the loss of money which occurs as a result of paying the doctor for medical treatment could be called a *poena*. When freely handed over, this financial payment is a satisfactory *poena*. Such a loss involves real pain, but it is pain endured in order to avoid greater pain and acquire a good which otherwise could not be attained. This means that satisfactory punishment is primarily about gain, not loss. As Eileen Sweeney comments, 'the concept is something of an oxymoron'.⁷⁰

Aquinas' analysis of the voluntary nature of satisfaction provides further insight into the medicinal function of *poena*. He comments,

when punishment is satisfactory, it loses somewhat of the nature of punishment: for the nature of punishment is to be against the will; and although satisfactory punishment, absolutely speaking, is against the will, nevertheless in this particular case and for this particular purpose, it is voluntary. Consequently it is voluntary simply, but involuntary in a certain respect, as we have explained (q. 6, a. 6) when speaking of the voluntary and the involuntary.⁷¹

Poena is by nature against the will. Satisfactory *poena* is against the will 'in a certain respect', but, such *poena* is voluntary 'simply', when it is freely chosen in a given set of circumstances. Aquinas refers to ques-

⁶⁸ ST I-II, q. 87, a. 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Eileen Sweeney, 'Vice and Sin', in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), p. 157.

⁷¹ ST I-II, q. 87, a. 6.

tion six, article six of the *prima-secundae* in order to provide an example of such voluntarily chosen *poena*. There, he explains, 'the throwing of the cargo into the sea becomes voluntary during the storm, through fear of the danger: wherefore it is clear that it is voluntary simply'.⁷² Apart from these particular circumstances, the loss of cargo would be 'repugnant to the will' and involuntary, in an absolute sense.⁷³ Yet, the sailor will rejoice at the loss of cargo if this loss enables him to save his ship, his life, and the lives of all those on board. So too, satisfaction involves a particular set of circumstances in which a good generally willed is voluntarily surrendered in order to prevent further loss and acquire a greater good. Hence, again, we can see that while satisfaction involves an element of loss and so can be called a *poena*, its final cause is the acquisition of the good.

Before proceeding to consider how Christ's Passion functions as a satisfactory, medicinal punishment, we must first grasp Aquinas' distinction between the formal and material elements of satisfaction. He explains,

The penalties one suffers for another's sin are the matter, as it were, of the satisfaction for that sin; but the principle is the habit of soul, whereby one is inclined to wish to satisfy for another, and from which the satisfaction has its efficacy, for satisfaction would not be efficacious unless it proceeded from charity.⁷⁴

Here, bodily defects are identified as the punishment which constitute the 'matter' of Christ's satisfaction. The Son assumed these defects so that 'the matter of satisfaction should not be wanting'.⁷⁵ Elsewhere, Aquinas asserts that Christ's internal pain of sorrow was 'employed as a useful means of satisfying for sins'.⁷⁶ He remarks, 'to satisfy for the sins of all men, Christ accepted sadness, the greatest in absolute quantity, yet not exceeding the rule of reason'.⁷⁷ The importance of these statements for this stage of our inquiry lies in their clear distinction between the 'matter' and the 'principle' (or, form) of satisfaction. Joel Matthew Wallace states that the relationship between the form and matter of a human act 'is able to be understood in terms of a relationship between an interior and exterior act'.⁷⁸ Christ's work of satisfaction is an exterior act of enduring *poena* (whether of soul, body, or possessions) that proceeds from an internal act of charity. Christ's endurance

⁷² ST I-II, q. 6, a. 6.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ ST III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ ST III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Joel Matthew Wallace, *Inspiravit ei voluntatem patiendi pro nobis, infundendo ei caritatem*: *Charity, the Source of Christ's Action according to Thomas Aquinas* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2013), p. 374.

of suffering could be offered to God as a pleasing gift of satisfaction only because of the charity with which it was borne. As Wallace explains, the charity of Christ is the 'efficient cause' of his decision to endure suffering, and this means that his acceptance of *poena* was ordered 'toward God and toward us'.⁷⁹ That is, Christ's charity ordered his suffering to his own eternal union with God as well as toward our liberation from sin. Merely the suffering of Christ was not pleasing to God. Rather, charity and its exterior acts are pleasing to the Father.

Even with this distinction in place, the role of Christ's suffering in his work of satisfaction is not entirely evident. As William Loewe puts it, we must 'ask about the link between these two elements (form [charity] and matter [*poena*]). Why do Christ's love and obedience find expression precisely in his passion and death?'⁸⁰ That is, how was Christ's internal, corporal and external suffering ordered towards the real destruction of human sinfulness, and thus real satisfaction for our sins? Put differently, how was Christ's Passion a medicinal punishment on behalf of humanity? In order to answer this question, we need to read Aquinas' account of the Passion in light of his fundamental principles regarding human acts.

IV. THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST'S CHARITY AND SUFFERING

Aquinas' account of the natural teleology of human activity can help us to discern the nature of the link between the formal and material elements of Christ's Passion. As Nicholas Austin points out, Aquinas embraces the Aristotelian principle that 'Nature acts for an end'. This means that the nature of a creature (its 'substantial form') determines the end (*telos*) for which it exists, and the end specifies the type of activity which that creature can and should perform.⁸¹ Further, 'Natural telic activity for Aquinas arises from an internal source (*principio intrinseco*), which itself is derived from an external source (*principio extrinseco*)', namely, 'God's intelligence and power'.⁸² Consequently, (1) A human act is good only insofar as it is properly ordered towards the goods for which the human nature exists, and it is evil, at the formal or material level, when it fails in relation to the good ends of human

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 378 and p. 372, respectively.

⁸⁰ William Loewe, *Lex Crucis: Soteriology and the Stages of Meaning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Park, 2016), p. 136.

⁸¹ Nicholas Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2017), p. 94: 'Aquinas sees the basis for the final causality of natural beings in the formal causality of nature. It is because of what they are - that is, because of their substantial forms - that natural beings have a directedness toward an end'.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

nature; (2) the distinction between good and evil is not the arbitrary result of a voluntaristic god's decision. Rather, God gave human beings a natural law which is intrinsic to them, not extrinsic and oppressive. Further, as Austin notes, (3) God himself is the 'exemplar cause' of this human nature and its ends, such that natural telic human activity is a participation in the very existence and goodness of God.⁸³

This foundation enables us to make an initial point regarding the link between Christ's charity and suffering, namely, that Christ's charity could only be expressed materially through acts which were in accordance with the ends of his human nature. No human, Jesus included, can perform an exterior act that is objectively immoral and attempt to offer that act as a pleasing gift to the Father in satisfaction for sins. For example, if Jesus' suffering was a result of objectively immoral behavior such as self-harm, alcohol or drug abuse, it would have been suffering divorced from charity. We see such suffering exemplified in Judas' decision to hang himself. Suicide is never a material expression of charity, for the object of the act as such is opposed to the natural law. Such suffering would be displeasing to God, and so cannot be voluntarily chosen and offered to God in satisfaction for sins.

The relationship between the Son's dual missions also serves to clarify the order between his charity and his suffering. Dominic Legge comments, 'all of Christ's activity in his earthly life—the whole of his visible mission—is ordered to, and reaches its accomplishment in, the invisible missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, and the Father's indwelling presence that accompanies them'.⁸⁴ The 'invisible missions' of the Son and Holy Spirit refers to their dynamic indwelling in the human soul through sanctifying grace, the theological virtues and the gifts of the Spirit.⁸⁵ This presence of the Son and Spirit to the soul brings the human into 'a union of love with God' which, as Eleonore Stump states, 'is the greatest of goods for a human being and the best of personal relationships'. This is especially so when that union becomes permanent in eternal life.⁸⁶ This means that Christ's decision to endure *poena* of various kinds is salvific insofar as it is ordered towards the chief end of the divine economy: the unification of God and the sinner in a relationship of love, constituted in grace and enduring onto eternal life.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 76–78. Aquinas 'sees God as the subsistent exemplar cause by which other things, through participation, have their being and goodness' (p. 76), and thus 'exemplar causality sketches a 'theocentric' ethics in which the human person, as the image of God, is made by God, for God, and like God' (p. 78).

⁸⁴ Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 57.

⁸⁵ ST I, q. 43, a. 3 and 5.

⁸⁶ Eleonore Stump, 'Providence And The Problem of Evil', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 403.

Before considering how Christ's suffering could be ordered toward the end of the invisible missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, we first need to clarify the various ways in which a human act can be ordered towards an end. Regarding human acts, Steven Long explains, 'Either the object [of the act] is *per se* ordered toward the end sought by the agent, or it is not'.⁸⁷ In a *per se* order between object and end, '*the achievement of X by its very nature requires the performance of Y, and in those cases where, although there is perhaps more than one way to achieve X, nonetheless Y of itself and essentially tends toward X.*'⁸⁸ Quenching one's thirst requires drinking water, and the very act of drinking water directly achieves the end of satisfying thirst. The opposite of a *per se* order between object and end is a '*per accidens*' order. For example, there is 'nothing about stealing that of itself tends towards fornication',⁸⁹ and 'we know that beastiality is not *per se* ordered toward improved proficiency in calculus'.⁹⁰ A *per accidens* order is inorganic; doing Y is naturally irrelevant to the acquisition of X, such that any relation between the two is imposed from without. Our question, then, is whether or not there is a *per se* or merely *per accidens* order between Christ's charitable acceptance of the Passion and our access to life in the Holy Spirit.

We will focus upon two particular ways in which Christ's voluntary, loving endurance of suffering was *per se* ordered towards the real internal sanctification of sinners. First, the Son assumed a human nature capable of suffering so as to empower humanity to bear its defects with charity. Christ could have assumed a human nature that was preserved from passibility.⁹¹ Instead, 'Christ healed the passibility and corruptibility of our body by assuming it'.⁹² Aquinas explains that Christ assumed our defects 'in order to show us an example of patience by valiantly bearing up against human passibility and defects'.⁹³ Christ's virtue amidst suffering revealed his 'spiritual strength, wherewith he vanquished the devil and healed human weakness'.⁹⁴ Christ 'sustained an external assault on the part of the world and the devil, and won the crown of victory by overcoming them'.⁹⁵ As a result, the person who is united to Christ by faith and charity 'can safeguard himself against the enemy's assaults, so as not to be dragged down into the destruction

⁸⁷ Steven A. Long, *The Teleological Grammar of the Moral Act: Second Edition* (Ave Maria: Sapientia Press, 2015), p. 92.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁹¹ ST III, q. 14, a. 3, ad 1.

⁹² ST III, q. 14, a. 4, ad 1.

⁹³ ST III, q. 14, a. 1.

⁹⁴ ST III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 4.

⁹⁵ ST III, q. 15, a. 2, ad 3.

of everlasting death'.⁹⁶ For, 'after Christ's Passion, men can defend themselves from this [the attacks of the devil] by its [the Passion's] power'.⁹⁷ Perhaps most importantly, Christ assumed the defects of sin in order to enact the perfect example of the virtue of penance. Explaining why Christ assumed these defects, but not personal guilt, Aquinas says, 'A penitent can give a praiseworthy example, not by having sinned, but by freely bearing the punishment of sin. And hence Christ set the highest example to penitents, since he willingly bore the punishment, not of his own sin, but of the sins of others'.⁹⁸ By living a life of perfect charity amidst the experience of bodily and spiritual *poena*, Christ radically transformed the human capacity for virtue and enacted a life-giving example to all those who live in a fallen world.

Second, Christ's supremely just life upon earth led to the suffering of his Passion. Aquinas claims that the spiritual value of Christ's Passion lies in the fact that he suffered 'for justice's sake'.⁹⁹ He specifies this comment by quoting Matthew 5:10: 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake'.¹⁰⁰ Loewe explains, 'Thomas, thus, casts Christ's passion as a martyrdom: Christ incurs death because he persevered in truth and justice even in the face of the murderous opposition his ministry evokes'.¹⁰¹ Christ not only bore the defects that belong to all human beings as a result of their relation to Adam. In addition, he bore the additional defects that accompany a life of perfect virtue in a fallen world. Christ testified to the truth of his divinity, proclaimed the kingdom of God, and instructed his followers regarding the way to eternal life. As a result, he was condemned by those who rejected his message. Persevering in justice, Christ held fast to the truth and never recanted his teaching. Consequently, he was killed, but this death served as a proof of the validity of his teaching. Aquinas explains that 'the divine power of Christ' was revealed 'in the force of his righteousness shown in his sinless manner of life'.¹⁰² Similarly, Christ unveiled 'his Godhead to all, by preaching and working miracles, and by leading among men a blameless and righteous life'.¹⁰³ The righteousness of Christ, maintained through persecution and execution, disclosed his divinity for all to see.

We can now see how the material *poena* of Christ's Passion could be chosen out of charity and *per se* ordered towards the destruction of human sin. Jesus' suffering was not foolish and arbitrary, nor was it

⁹⁶ ST III, q. 49, a. 2, ad 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ ST III, q. 15, a. 1, ad 5.

⁹⁹ ST III, q. 48, a. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Loewe, *Lex Crucis*, p. 136.

¹⁰² ST III, q. 42, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁰³ ST III, q. 40, a. 1, ad 1.

endured to calm the rage of a violent god. Rather, Christ's public death as a martyr on the cross naturally provided the goods of witness to divine truth and perfect moral example. In the very act of suffering on the cross, Jesus witnesses to the truth, so much so that the centurion guarding him is moved to publicly confess Jesus' divine sonship. By personally choosing, constantly, to fulfill every demand of the natural and divine law even as he hung from the cross, Jesus' obedience in itself perfected the human capacity for virtue and provided its greatest possible display. Christ's Passion was thus truly a medicinal *poena* undertaken on behalf of humanity. Christ endured the *poena* of the Passion in order to bear witness to the truth that saves, and in doing so to enact the greatest example of human righteousness. Through the Passion Christ experienced tremendous loss, but this loss was endured for the sake of a great gain: the proclamation of saving truth and the perfection of the human capacity to live justly towards God and neighbor. Christ's suffering enables us to receive his revelation in faith and so to participate in his perfect obedience. In this way, his Passion enables us to make satisfaction for our sins.

V. CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE SATISFACTORY *POENA* OF CHRIST

We have seen why Christ's satisfactory work included *poena*, and now we can examine why every act of Christian satisfaction must also involve *poena*. The nature of satisfaction as a medicinal *poena* becomes evident if we analyze the act in terms of its two primary stages: (1) cease sinning and begin to obey God again, (2) repair the damages of your past sins.

Stage one in the process of satisfaction is marked by a return to obedience, and obedience to God in a fallen world will always be painful. According to Aquinas, says Daria Spezzano, 'Even after justification, [the justified person] is still afflicted with the remnants of sin, inordinately directed to temporal things'.¹⁰⁴ This disordered desire for temporal things makes obedience to God's commandments a painful effort, especially at the outset of the moral life. Even with growth in virtue, the sensitive appetites of sinners will never be completely healed from the traces of concupiscence on this side of eternity.¹⁰⁵ As Joseph Wawrykow explains, 'The healing brought by habitual grace is not complete in this life; full healing and full restoration awaits the next

¹⁰⁴ Spezzano, "Be Imitators of God' (Eph 5:1): Aquinas on Charity and Satisfaction", *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15, no. 2 (2017), p. 636.

¹⁰⁵ ST I-II, q. 109, a. 8.

life, when the person is in the immediate presence of God'.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, selfish impulses will never completely disappear, and the pain of resisting such impulses in order to obey God's commands will always involve the pain of self-sacrifice. This is why Aquinas affirms, "by obedience we *slay* our own will."¹⁰⁷ Obedience is a battle against a fierce enemy, the fallen will. Our will is our most cherished possession, and handing it over to God is an excellent yet painful sacrifice:

Among the moral virtues, the greater the thing which a man contemns that he may adhere to God, the greater the virtue. Now there are three kinds of human goods that man may condemn for God's sake. The lowest of these are external goods, the goods of the body take the middle place, and the highest are the goods of the soul; and among these the chief, in a way, is the will, insofar as, by his will, man makes use of all other goods. Therefore, properly speaking, the virtue of obedience, whereby we condemn our own will for God's sake, is more praiseworthy than the other moral virtues, which condemn other goods for the sake of God.¹⁰⁸

Commenting on this passage, Guy Mansini remarks that obedience 'is better than sacrifice because it renders to God what is most precious, our will'.¹⁰⁹ The prideful, self-serving will is what a sinner holds most dear, and by obedience they surrender that possession to God. This sacrifice of obedience must be offered at every moment of everyday to God. Such obedience is the first and fundamental step in the process of satisfaction. In order to repair the damages of their sins, the repentant sinner must first cease sinning. That is, they must exercise obedience.

Stage two in the process of satisfaction is marked by painful penances which seek to repair the damaging effects of sin. Aquinas' comments,

the very fact that human nature needs a treatment of penal medicines, is due to the corruption of nature which is itself the punishment (*poena*) of original sin. For there was no need, in the state of innocence, for penal exercises in order to make progress in virtue; so that whatever is penal in the exercise of virtue, is reduced to original sin as its cause.¹¹⁰

Sin darkens the intellect of the sinner and distorts the inclinations of their rational and sensitive appetite. While complete healing from these damages will only be received in heaven, the repentant sinner can begin to cooperate with God's healing grace now. Grace illuminates the

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Wawrykow, 'Grace', in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 194-5.

¹⁰⁷ ST II-II, q. 104, a. 3, citing St. Gregory. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ ST II-II, q. 104, a. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Guy Mansini, 'Obedience Religious, Christological, and Trinitarian', *Nova et Vetera* (English) 12, no. 2 (2014), p. 401. See also ST III, q. 47, a. 2, where Aquinas references 1 Kings 15:22: 'Obedience is preferred to all sacrifices'.

¹¹⁰ ST I-II, q. 87, a. 7.

sinner's mind and turns their will towards its proper object, God. Then, Spezzano says, 'freely accepted temporal suffering' is needed so as 'to counteract the inordinate movement to temporal things'.¹¹¹ Such freely accepted temporal suffering is exemplified in the virtue of penance.

Penance is a medicinal *poena* ordered towards the reparation of the sinner's disordered appetites. Aquinas alludes to the painful character of penance when he says, 'Penance is a kind of sacrifice, according to Ps. 50:19: "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit."¹¹² The form of penance is charity, and the matter or 'fruit' is 'contrition of the heart, confession in words, and satisfaction in deeds'.¹¹³ Contrition and confession involve the *poena* of sorrow. Romanus Cessario points out that, for Aquinas, the 'deeds' element of penance consists principally in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. All of these 'deeds' of penance involve real *poena*: through almsgiving we lose our material possessions; fasting involves bodily suffering; in prayer, the penitent is humbled before God and suffers the loss of pride and self-absorption.¹¹⁴ Yet, the purpose of penance is medicinal. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving, says Cessario, are ordered towards 'cutting out the root causes of sin ... concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life'.¹¹⁵

Penance is also ordered towards the reparation of the damages caused to the sinner's neighbors. Sin does not just harm the sinner, it also directly harms the immediate victim of the sin and indirectly harms the sinner's entire community. Consequently, as Eileen Sweeny reminds us, satisfaction of necessity 'restores justice to the one injured and to the community scandalized by the evil done. Hence, the same act repairs both the internal order of powers and ends and relationships in the community'.¹¹⁶ Depending upon the nature of their sin, a sinner can afflict their neighbor with internal, corporal and/or external *poena*. This loss must be restored by prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Such penances will aid the victims in their suffering while also repairing the disordered will of the sinner.

Through the satisfactory *poenae* of obedience and penance, Christians materially participate in the satisfactory suffering of Christ. According to Aquinas, 'Christ's satisfaction works its effect in us inasmuch as we are incorporated with him, as the members with their

¹¹¹ Spezzano, "'Be Imitators of God' (Eph 5:1): Aquinas on Charity and Satisfaction", p. 637.

¹¹² ST III, q. 85, a. 4.

¹¹³ Spezzano, "'Be Imitators of God' (Eph 5:1): Aquinas on Charity and Satisfaction", p. 634; citing ST III, q. 85, a. 2.

¹¹⁴ Romanus Cessario, *The Godly Image* (Petersham: St. Bede's Publications, 1990), pp. 62-63.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹¹⁶ Eileen Sweeney, 'Vice and Sin', in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, p. 157.

head. Now the members must be conformed to their head'.¹¹⁷ For, 'The head and members are as one mystic person'.¹¹⁸ This configuration to Christ regards both interior and exterior acts. Internal incorporation with Christ is enacted through the theological virtue of charity, while externally the disciple is 'likened unto Christ's suffering by some form of punishment (*poenalitatis*) or suffering (*passionis*) which they endure in their own person'.¹¹⁹ This suffering is not arbitrary. Rather, as we have seen, Christian satisfactory *poena* consists in acts of obedience and penance. By the charitable exercise of obedience, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the members of the mystical body materially participate in the cross of Christ, their head. Through these exterior acts, proceeding from the interior disposition of charity, Christians share in the medicinal *poena* which Christ suffered on the cross in order to satisfy for the damages caused by human sin. The Passion of Christ, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains,

[is] reproduced in different degrees in souls for their own purification and for their cooperation in their neighbor's salvation with and by our Lord and through the means that He Himself used. So, in a sense, Christ is in agony until the end of the world in His mystical body, until it is fully purified and glorified, until the word of the Master, 'I have overcome the world', is perfectly realized by the final victory over sin, Satan, and death.¹²⁰

By material acts of obedience and penance informed by theological charity, the members of the mystical body share in the salvific suffering of their head. In this way, Christians participate in Christ's personal conquest over the powers of evil and establishment of God's reign in the world.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to explicate Aquinas' teaching regarding the nature of satisfaction, punishment, and the relation between them as it exists in the saving Passion of Christ. For Aquinas, the 'punishment' which Christ endured on the cross was not inflicted upon him by an angry, vengeful god, nor was this pain arbitrarily connected to human salvation. Rather, Christ chose, out of love, to endure the various *poenae* of the Passion precisely because doing so was a fitting way for him to make satisfaction for the sins of the human race. Christ died as a martyr; his suffering was a direct result of his refusal to recant

¹¹⁷ ST III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 3.

¹¹⁸ ST III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 1.

¹¹⁹ ST III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 2.

¹²⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus: Volume One*, p. 221.

the truth of his teaching or violate the moral laws of his divine Father. Consequently, Jesus' suffering was *per se* ordered towards the revelation of divine truth and the perfection of the human capacity for loving obedience to God. Christ's perfect self-gift to the Father even amidst the agony of the Passion conquered all the powers of evil and was infinitely more pleasing to God than sin is displeasing. Christ's very being and activity is thus the exemplar cause of all satisfaction for sin. Because of his heroic witness unto death, Christ draws sinners to faith in himself and moves them to become spiritually incorporated into his mystical body. Then, justified and sanctified by charity, the members of Christ's body are able to participate in his continual, self-giving love to the Father. They do so through acts of obedience, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These acts are rightly called *poenae* because they include an unavoidable element of loss. Yet, they are even more rightly called medicinal or satisfactory *poenae*, for their final cause is not loss, but rather gain: these acts are *per se* ordered towards the honor of God and the reparation of the damages caused by sin. God does not delight in the suffering which obedience entails; he delights in the goodness of the internal and external act which the obedient person carries out. So too, God is not pleased by the pain of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; God is pleased by the healing effects which these penitential acts have on their agent and those for whom they are undertaken. Through the ongoing execution of charitable obedience and penance, the members of the mystical body gradually become conformed to their perfect head, Christ, and cooperate with him in bringing about the salvation of the world. In this way, they become a pleasing sacrifice to the Father.

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