

SONSHIP, SACRIFICE, AND SATISFACTION: The Divine Friendship in Aquinas and the Renewal of Christian Anthropology

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One task of the theologian is to render an account of the *depositum fidei* contained in sacred Scripture and the Church's tradition. Because of his officially recognized ability to display the interconnectedness between elements of Catholic teaching that form part of this deposit of faith, St. Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–1274) enjoys special standing among the Church's theologians.¹ This essay draws upon the writings of Aquinas to talk about the practice of the divine friendship that, as far as the Church knows, ennobles the human creature in this life as a gift given only to the baptized Christian believer.²

Jesus Christ himself announces the invitation to divine friendship: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). In order to understand what it means that Christ no longer call us slaves but friends, we need to consider three theological points that receive extended treatment in the works of Aquinas—sonship, sacrifice, and satisfaction.

As Aristotle reminds us, friendship is an activity: only with a friend is one friendly.³ St. Thomas demonstrates that the practice of divine friendship belongs properly to those who participate in the sonship of Jesus Christ. In illuminating the dynamics of this participation, Aquinas takes full account of what St. Paul reveals about the divine plan for our salvation. In sum, God "did not spare his Son, but handed him over for us all" (Rom. 8: 32). The Scriptures affirm that for Jesus to be "handed over" entailed sacrifice and the making of satisfaction. The Christian religion venerates a divine Redeemer who dies. Christ's divine status makes his death revelatory of the divine plan: "God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him" (1 John 4:10). We discover the motive for Christ's death on the cross—not in the historical circumstances of its accomplishment but

1 See Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, Encyclical Letter on Faith and Reason (September 14, 1998), 43, 44, in *Origins*, 28 (October 22, 1998): 329–40.

2 Elements of this essay were originally delivered as "The Image of God and the Sacraments of the Church: The Practice of Divine Friendship" at the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D.C., October 16, 2006, and as "The Sacraments of Healing and Satisfaction," at The Aquinas Center for Theological Renewal, Ave Maria University, Naples, Florida, on February 3, 2007.

3 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 210: "For friendship is said to be reciprocated goodwill" (1155b 32,33).

in the sinful actions that, since the commission of the original sin, have marked the human race.

In Catholic culture and piety, the Blessed Virgin Mary is held to assist us to understand the place that sacrifice and satisfaction holds in Catholic doctrine about the atonement. On Calvary, Mary especially represents the “New Eve.” From his cross, Christ announces that his mother Mary has become the new mother of the living: “Woman, behold, your son” (John 19:26; Gen. 3:20). In the person of St. John, Mary embraces a son in whom she receives each of us. She takes up actively her role as “Mother of the Church.”

Mary’s response in faith to the divine plan illuminates how Christian believers of all ages should regard the sacrificial and satisfactory character of the Christian life. While standing at the foot of the cross, Mary, Our Lady of Compassion, exhibits the full dimensions of her maternal mediation that began at the annunciation. She teaches believers that profound joy can coexist even with exquisite sorrow. Mary’s sorrow at seeing a bloodied and dying Jesus expresses the sorrow of God’s elect. All those who find their salvation in the fulfillment of the divine plan identify with the Mother of God: “Be it done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Portrayals of Mary in a swoon appear late in the history of Christian art. The earliest representations of the crucifixion show Mary sorrowful of mien but recollected in spirit. She assents in faith to the working out of the divine plan. She accepts the sorrow that any mother would undergo upon seeing her son die, especially on a shameful cross. At the same time, the New Eve experiences the joy of embracing all those who have been bought back by the shedding of her Son’s blood. Her spirit of acceptance is meant to inform the life of Christian belief practiced within the Catholic Church.

The Church is able to communicate the divine goodness to those who participate in her full communion. The Catholic theological tradition ascribes to Christ a threefold grace. This includes his capital grace, that is, the grace that establishes Christ as head of the Church. One expression of this outpouring of the divine goodness that flows from the capital grace of Christ is called *satisfaction*.

By his sacrifice on the cross Christ has accomplished satisfaction for the world’s sins. Satisfaction, then, is related directly to restoring divine friendship to the sinful creature. Without Christ’s sacrifice and satisfaction, the human race would have remained slaves of the Ultimate Divine. That is, all men and women would find themselves like those who do not know what the master is doing. Because of what happens on Calvary, however, human destiny is different. Jesus himself assures us of this comforting truth: “I have told you everything I have heard from my Father” (John 15:15). What do we learn? How we are to love unto eternal life. This text returns us to the theme of the *depositum fidei* and to the sacred tradition and sacred Scripture that it contains. Both Scripture and tradition make

“present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own ‘always, to the close of the age’ (Matt. 28:20).”⁴

The Image of God and Christian Anthropology

In Aquinas’ thought, the general themes of sonship, sacrifice, and satisfaction find their methodological and substantive underpinnings in the biblical and theological doctrine of man created in the image of God, *imago Dei*. In the early 1950s, a popular Dominican author expressed this startling view: “So vital is the doctrine that man is the image of God that we cannot understand the teachings of Christ apart from it.”⁵ This doctrine remains a foundational theme for Catholic theology, though, as the International Theological Commission has noted, few authors in the modern period appear to regard it as such.⁶

The Dominican theologian, J. Augustine Di Noia, points out that the significance of the *imago* doctrine moves beyond the level of speculative anthropology to a consideration of its relation to moral theology.⁷ *Imago Dei* relates directly to our capacity to love God. Our possession of the created *imago Dei* distinguishes us from other living beings, and at the same time provides the basis upon which rests our adoptive sonship in Christ. The Christian participates in the divine sonship when he or she, through grace, becomes a living image of the Trinity. Therefore, in order to follow what Thomas has to say about sonship, sacrifice, and satisfaction, we first must consider how he sets forth the doctrine of the image of God. Aquinas is clear that in this image there is a dynamic movement toward fulfillment: “Man is said to be after God’s image in virtue of his intelligent nature.”⁸

4 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2d. ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 80.

5 See Elwood F. Smith, O.P., and Louis A. Ryan, O.P., *Preface to Happiness* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1950), 4.

6 “Until the dawn of the modern period, the theology of the *imago Dei* retained its central position in theological anthropology. Throughout the history of Christian thought, such was the power and fascination of this theme that it could withstand those isolated critiques (as, for example, in iconoclasm) which charged that its anthropomorphism fostered idolatry. But, in the modern period, the theology of the *imago Dei* came under a more sustained and systematic critique.” See International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* (2002), 18. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html.

7 J. Augustine Di Noia, O.P., “*Imago Dei-Imago Christi*: The Theological Foundations of Christian Humanism,” in *Proceedings of the International Congress on Christian Humanism in the Third Millennium: The Perspective of Thomas Aquinas* (September 21–25, 2003), vol. 1 (Vatican City: Pontificia Accademia di San Tommaso and Società Internazionale Tommaso d’Aquino, 2004), 19–30.

8 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part Ia, Question 93, Article 4. This important article sets forth the first principle for subsequent developments in theories of universal human rights. *Summa Theologiae*: Latin Text and English Translation, The Blackfriars English Translation Introductions, 61 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964–1980). Hereafter: *Blackfriars Summa*. There really is no adequate translation in English for *summa theologiae*. The closest

Thomas supplies a fulsome treatment of the topic in his disputed question *De veritate* [On Truth] where, in thirteen articles devoted to “*De mente*” [On the Intellect] he provides an exegesis of the doctrine of the image as set forth by St. Augustine (+430) in the last books of his *De trinitate* [On the Trinity].⁹ Because it employs the notion of relation, Augustine’s psychological model avoids the practical subordinationism that today shapes much popular preaching and instruction on the Trinity. Recall that relation is considered the weakest of the Aristotelian categories of accidental being: So the Church can use “substance” to designate the divine being in its unity and use “relation” to designate the fact that the distinction of persons lies in the relationship of each to the others.¹⁰ Subordinationist accounts are pernicious not only for the understanding of God but also for the understanding of man. When the persons of the Trinity are not regarded as equal, as was the case in the Arianist heresy, it is the human creature that suffers. For as Aquinas insists, man’s imaging of God is related especially to the second person in God, the Logos-Son.¹¹ If that second person is believed to be a second and lower god, then the human creature is an image, not of God, but only of a higher form of creaturely existence.

Augustine, along with those who followed him in the patristic and medieval theological traditions, discussed the *imago* in light of Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’”¹² Patristic commentary on this verse alone makes up a voluminous collection of texts.¹³ It is noteworthy that whereas Augustine and several other patristic authors developed analogies for the image of God in man within their treatises on the Trinity, Thomas locates

would be the “sum of theology.” For a general introduction to this classical theological source, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Aquinas’ Summa: Background, Structure, And Reception*, trans. Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

9 See *De veritate* Question 10, “*De mente*.” Text in Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, and Robert W. Schmidt, trans. *Truth*, Library of Living Catholic Thought, 3 vols. (Chicago: Regnery, 1952–54; reprint, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994). Father William J. Hill, O.P., was wont to alert his students that the use of St. Augustine’s psychological model does not solve the mystery of the Trinity, although it does illuminate helpfully what remains a mystery. See William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God. The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1982), 215.

10 See *Catechism*, no. 252.

11 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 35, Art. 2, Reply to Ojection 3: “The image of one thing is present in one of two ways. The first, as in a being of the same specific nature, for example, the king’s image in his son; the second, as in a being of a different nature, e.g., the king’s image on a coin. The Son is the Image of the Father in the first manner; man is the image of God in the second.”

12 Western Christianity based its reflections on the Latin translation of Genesis 1:26: “et ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram et praesit piscibus maris et volatilibus caeli et bestiis universaeque terrae omnique reptili quod movetur in terra.”

13 For example, see the still valuable and detailed work of John Sullivan, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and its Influence* (Dubuque: Priority, 1963).

his discussion of the *imago Dei* in a treatise on man, specifically, in the first part of his *Summa theologiae*.¹⁴ He takes up the theme in considering “the end or term of man’s production, in so far as he is said to have been made after God’s image and likeness” (*factus ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*).¹⁵

In addition to probing Augustine’s psychological model for the *imago*, Aquinas also asks what the difference is between the two words used by Scripture, “image” and “likeness” (*Ad imaginem et similitudinem*). He notes that the patristic period proffers at least two approaches to answering this question, and cites two familiar authorities: Augustine, who considered likeness as preliminary to image, and St. John Damascene (+ ca.750), who thought that likeness signified the exactness or perfection of image.¹⁶ Aquinas reconciles these apparently conflicting authorities by appeal to the Aristotelian doctrine of the transcendentals, which allows for properties of being, such as the true and the good, to be “both common to all things and applicable to any single thing.”¹⁷

The twentieth-century Thomist, Jacques Maritain, captures the temper of Aquinas’ mind: “To scatter and to confuse are both equally inimical to the nature of the mind. ‘No one,’ says [John] Tauler, ‘understands true distinction better than they who have entered into unity.’”¹⁸ Aquinas seeks to unite rather than to scatter “image” and “likeness.”

Aquinas knows that sometimes distinctions can scatter. In the second book of his *Sentences*, Peter Lombard insists on distinguishing image and likeness by strictly identifying one with intellect and the other with will. Lombard argues that since Scripture uses the two words, they are meant to be taken disjunctively. Aquinas replies by applying what might be described as a transcendental “method.” He begins by pointing out that there is something of love in knowledge and something of knowledge in love: “love of the word (*dilectio verbi*), which is a beloved awareness (*amata notitia*), belongs to the idea of ‘image’; but love of virtue belongs to ‘likeness,’ just as virtue does.”¹⁹ He further suggests that the transcendental properties of being, the true and the good, make it difficult to impose a distinction that would render “image” one thing and “likeness” another. An *amata notitia*

14 See Edmund Hill, O.P., *Man Made to God’s Image*, vol. 13 of the Blackfriars edition of the *Summa*, Appendix 4, “St. Augustine on the Divine Image in Man,” (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), 209–12.

15 *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Prologue.

16 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Art. 9.

17 *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Art. 9: “Unum autem, cum sit de transcendentibus, et commune est omnibus et ad singula potest aptari, sicut et bonum et verum.”

18 We recall Maritain’s axiom, “Distinguish to Unite.” (*Distinguer pour unir, ou Les degrés du savoir*). Eng. Trans.: *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959), “Preface to the Original French Edition,” ix.

19 *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Art. 9, Reply to Obj. 4: “Ad quantum dicendum quod dilectio verbi, quod est amata notitia, pertinet ad rationem imaginis; sed dilectio virtutis pertinet ad similitudinem, sicut et virtus.”

precedes virtue, which may be thought of as an instructed goodness (*docta bonitas*), even as the virtuous life perfects the *dilectio verbi*, which enjoys a special affinity to the second divine Person, the Logos-Word. This reference is made without prejudice to Aquinas' position that the image of God in man remains that of the whole Trinity.²⁰ This text reveals that "image and likeness" both pertain to discerning the nature of authentic virtue, which Thomas insists remains the foundation of true friendship, both human and divine.²¹

Nature and the Supernatural in the Thomistic Revival and Beyond

The anthropology of the image, then, governs the moral theology of St. Thomas. And the teleology of the *Summa's* second part finds its mooring in what theologians have called the obediential potency of human nature for completion in God—that which disposes the human creature to desire and seek the divine friendship. This question still vexes contemporary Catholic theology.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the whipping boy in many such arguments has been the theretofore-revered sixteenth-century Thomist, Cardinal Thomas de Vio Cajetan (1469–1534).²² For nearly five centuries, most Catholic theologians considered his commentary on the *Summa* authoritative. But in the twentieth century, his theological trustworthiness came under assault, as he was charged with distorting Aquinas' meaning. For instance, the lay philosopher, Etienne Gilson, called into question Cajetan's essentialism, while the Jesuit and later Cardinal Henri de Lubac criticized Cajetan's conception of human nature's openness to divine grace. The Dominican intellectual historian Marie-Dominique Chenu, who earlier in his career had inveighed against the Baroque systematization of Thomas' thought, encouraged these critical voices. Chenu himself was persuaded that much of the Thomism developed during the late Renaissance and Baroque periods reflected the outlook of the secular rationalist, Christian Wolff (1679–1754), more than it did an authentic development of the Thomas' thought.²³

Ralph McInerny has rebutted these modern critiques of Cajetan and Renaissance and Baroque Thomism.²⁴ He does so based on the common principles of Catholic theology. McInerny, the philosopher, clears the way for the theologian. He shows that it makes a great deal of difference how one conceives of the sinful

20 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Art. 5: "God's image is in man with reference to both the divine nature and the Trinity of persons."

21 See *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, Q. 106, Art. 1, ad 3: "cum vera amicitia supra virtutem fundetur."

22 See my "Cardinal Cajetan and His Critics," *Review of Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* by Tracey Rowland, *Nova et Vetera* 3 (2005): 109–118.

23 See my review of, *Aquinas and His Role in Theology* by Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 440–441.

24 Ralph McInerny, *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 125. See my review in *First Things* (May 2007): 48–51.

creature's disposition both to want and to receive the gratuitous gift of the divine friendship. To put the question in terms redolent of John 15:15—it is important to distinguish the ways that a person may be said to want to know what the master is doing. That returns us again to the question of the *imago Dei*. If we know nothing of human nature, we can say neither what it is, nor whether it is, nor whether it has been assumed by Christ's incarnation. We also do not know what claim human nature has on God.

De Lubac expresses well the Catholic doctrine that is jeopardized when lack of proper nuance introduces confusion about what it means to claim that man is created in the *imago Dei*: "In my view, which is that of every Catholic, any idea of a claim of created nature in relation to the supernatural should be absolutely excluded."²⁵ De Lubac is treating the papally condemned view of Flemish theologian Michael Baius (1513–1589) who argued that in the state of original justice, innocence and its promised eternal reward were not supernatural gifts of God to man, but the necessary complement of human nature itself.²⁶ Oddly, Baius' view resembles the practical presumption that today informs the outlooks if not the developed theories of many good-willed Christians. In his avowal of this view, de Lubac recognizes that it is important to ensure that the order of nature remains distinct from and enjoys no claim upon the supernatural.²⁷

Later, certain continental and American theologians would radicalize de Lubac's ideas about the human creature's natural desire for God. However, they failed to understand the degree to which de Lubac himself constrained the radicality of his own thesis by this prior affirmation that created nature can make no claims on the supernatural. It would be beneficial for theologians of every stripe to take another look at Pope St. Pius V's initial condemnations of Baius, whose teachings are often considered a likely forerunner to Jansenism. It is significant to

25 *Augustinisme et Théologie Moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1965). Eng. trans.: *Augustinianism and Modern Theology* (New York: Herder, 1969).

26 For example, an error of Baius cited by Pope Pius V, *Ex omnibus afflictionibus* (October 1, 1567): "Vita aeterna homini integro et angelo promissa fuit intuitu bonum operum, et bona opera ex lege naturae ad illam consequendam per se sufficiunt." Text in A. Schönmetzer and Heinrich Joseph Dominik Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), 1904. Eng. trans.: *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 1992).

27 De Lubac's avowal of Baius' view is all the more arresting because he did not concur with Aquinas' teaching (in *De malo*, Q. 1, Art. 5, Reply to Obj. 15) that deprivation of the beatific vision in a hypothetical state of pure nature would not be a punishment. Hence, even an author who is associated with denial of the claim that human nature could in a different order of providence be ordered to a lesser felicity apart from what grace creates also affirms that the order of nature is distinct from and enjoys no claim upon the supernatural. The International Theological Commission, in *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized* (2007) adverts to these discussions within the context of discussing the hope for salvation that one may have for unbaptized infants. Text at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en.html.

recall that the Louvain-based Baius repudiated the received scholastic thought of his day and claimed to have discovered a pristine account of grace and nature in the writings of the Church fathers, especially, St. Augustine. Baius, then, would have been thought of as a conservative reformer.

The point is to observe that the interpretation of how the *imago Dei* works within the dynamics of Christian living and salvation occasioned friendly, and sometimes not-so-friendly, disputes among Catholic theologians even during the heyday of the Thomistic revival encouraged by Pope Leo XIII in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In my view, while theologians may think that they have moved beyond the difficulties, they have not. Moreover, there can be no sidestepping of the question of the status of man created *ad imaginem Dei*. In short, there has not yet been any resolution of the questions about man's natural desire for God that were debated through the mid-twentieth century.

However, one of the best contemporary examples of sound Thomist teaching on the *imago Dei* and its reaching out for God is Lawrence Feingold's recent *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*.²⁸ The conclusion of Feingold's lengthy study is entitled, "Summary of the Arguments Showing that there is no Innate Appetite for the Vision of God, but only an Elicited and Imperfect Natural Desire." This should be required reading for anyone wishing to affirm that a natural desire for intrinsically supernatural beatitude is innate in man.²⁹ Indeed, Feingold clarifies from within the Thomist tradition how the *imago Dei* provides the anthropological basis for achieving the status of friendship with God through sharing in Christ's natural sonship.³⁰

Creation, Grace, and Glory in the Christian Life

To understand how we share in Christ's natural sonship requires that we do some thinking about the nature and efficacy of the sacraments of the Church. Aquinas takes up theological topics associated with the incarnation and the sacraments in the third part of the *Summa*. In this part, he makes only two direct references to the *imago Dei*—both appear in discussions of man's capacity for beatific fulfillment.³¹ This perhaps explains why one rarely sees the theme of the *imago Dei* discussed in connection with the sacraments of the Church—even though Aquinas compares

28 Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001). For further discussion of the contemporary issues that the natural desire in man for God raises, see the "Book Symposium" on Lawrence work in *Nova et Vetera* 5 (Winter 2007).

29 For further discussion, see my "Duplex Ordo Cognitionis" in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, eds., Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 327–338.

30 See my *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2005).

31 One reference occurs when Aquinas discusses whether the Holy Spirit should be called the Father of Christ in respect of his humanity, and the other when Aquinas explains that Christ enjoys possession of the beatific vision while still a wayfarer on earth. These texts are found respectively at *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 32, Art. 3 and Q. 9, Art. 2.

the sacraments to the humanity of Christ as separate to conjoined instruments of his divinity.³² At the same time, the doctrine of the *imago Dei* undergirds everything that is taught (and indeed what would have been taught) in this third part of the *Summa*.³³ In order to see why, however, we must return to the discussion of the *imago* in the first part of the *Summa*.

Aquinas there concludes that some realization of the *imago Dei* indeed occurs in all men, even in sinners.³⁴ Thomas formulates the following distinctions as to how the image is realized. The first mode of realization is man's natural aptitude for understanding and loving God. The second mode appears in those who actually or habitually, though while on earth imperfectly, know and love God. The third mode is in those who know and love God perfectly. This last group is comprised of the saints in heaven who have attained the image according to the likeness of glory—that is, those in whom the practice of divine friendship has achieved beatific consummation. So the first image is found in all men, the second only in the justified, and the third only in the blessed.

This tripartite division of the *imago Dei* is not peculiar to Aquinas. Christian tradition returns frequently to the image of creation, the image of grace, and the image of glory, although some recent spiritual and theological authors eschew this tripartite understanding of man's relationship to God.

The International Theological Commission acknowledges Aquinas' tripartite distinction, and contrasts his teaching on the *imago Dei* with that of St. Bonaventure and of the fourteenth-century Dominican Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–ca. 1328).³⁵ The commission also observes that the sixteenth-century reformers rejected the notion that this image was ontological, reducing it instead to the category of a relation, something extrinsic to man. Catholic theology, on the other hand, aims mightily to follow Thomas' lead—envisioning that image gives way to sonship, that the *imago Dei* of creation gives way to the adoptive sonship of grace. Nothing qualifies with greater profundity the human person than the gift

32 But see my *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from Anselm to Aquinas*, Studies in Historical Theology VI (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1990).

33 Aquinas did not finish his masterwork. For an account of the composition of the *Summa theologiae*, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 1: *The Person and His Work*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2005).

34 *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Art. 4.

35 See International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship*: "In Thomas Aquinas, the *imago Dei* possesses an historical character, since it passes through three stages: the *imago creationis* (*naturae*), the *imago recreationis* (*gratiae*), and the *similitudinis* (*gloriae*) (S.Th. I Q.93 a.4). For Aquinas, the *imago Dei* is the basis for participation in the divine life. The image of God is realized principally in an act of contemplation in the intellect (S.Th. I Q.93 a.4 and 7). This conception can be distinguished from that of Bonaventure, for whom the image is realized chiefly through the will in the religious act of man (Sent. II d.16 a.2 Q.3). Within a similar mystical vision, but with a greater boldness, Meister Eckhart tends to spiritualize the *imago Dei* by placing it at the summit of the soul and detaching it from the body (Quint. I, 5,5-7;V, 6,9s)."

of sanctifying grace. And the Church always explains sanctification in terms of transformation.

Di Noia identifies this dominant theme of Thomas' theology in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI. The council and post-conciliar popes, he says, also express the vision that "the human person is created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) in order to grow into the image of Christ (*imago Christi*)."³⁶ Since the human person is created after the image of God, and inasmuch as this imaging enjoys a special relationship to the second divine Person who is the divine Logos of creation, there exists an affinity between the image of creation and the sonship of grace—*imago creationis (naturae)*, and *imago recreationis (gratiae)*.

Thomas distinguishes the causal communication of divine goodness that sustains all that is created from the grace of adoptive sonship made complete by glory. One commentator explains Thomas' distinction this way:

The mystery of Christ is that hidden for all ages until revealed in him. It is the mystery of the sonship and of the Father whose Son he is. That revelation means that the divine relation to creation is paternal in having reference to the natural filiation of Jesus Christ and to all who are conjoined to him. That is to say, that all creation is ordered to the personal fatherhood: of the Father to Jesus Christ and of the Father to the sons by adoption; "All things are yours for you are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:22-23).³⁷

It follows that before and outside of the revelation communicated by Christ, there is never any question of speaking about God as Father, except metaphorically. Nor can we speak of the Christian believer as an adopted son, except as a way of expressing the relation of creation that sustains in existence the intelligent creature, that is, the image of creation. This becomes important when we seek to understand the necessity of the sacramental life of the Church. We must remember that the infusion of divine grace that makes us sons in the Son results from a causal exercise of the divine goodness that is distinct from what produces the intelligent creature *ad imaginem Dei*.

Christ stands at the center of the mystery of adoptive sonship. Thomas observes with great care the distinction between natural and adoptive sonship. Christ perfectly embodies the divine sonship: "Christ, however, remains Son of God according to a perfect definition of filiation."³⁸ (*Christus autem est Filius Dei*

³⁶ Di Noia, "Imago Dei-Imago Christi," 21.

³⁷ See T. C. O'Brien, *Blackfriars Summa*, 7:247.

³⁸ *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 32, Art. 4.

secundum perfectam rationem filiationis). Christ, again, is “the Son of God by nature, [and who] under no aspect may be said to be an adoptive son.”³⁹

Adoptive sonship, on the other hand, remains the preferred way to speak about the divine image of God actualized in those who have been born into the new life of water and the Holy Spirit in baptism. The graced image appears in the form of what the New Testament calls adoptive sonship (Rom. 8:23; Gal. 4:5). The proximate source of this grace in the Church remains Christ, Son by nature not adoption. However, “the whole Trinity adopts men as sons of God.”⁴⁰

Aquinas invents nothing. His language of sonship comes from Scripture and he seeks the connections between the truths revealed there. Thus the Dominican theologian Colman O'Neill can explain: “The member of Christ is an adopted son of God because he is to share in Christ's inheritance.”⁴¹ The doctrine of the image as realized in sonship illustrates the dynamic interpretation of the *imago* that permeates Aquinas' thought. The movement of the *imago Dei* remains Godward, teleological, perfective, bound for glory. We recognize, then, a familiar sequence for modern theology: anthropology, Christology, and eschatology.⁴²

O'Neill argues that three theological topics are required to illuminate the meaning of adoptive sonship—*imago Dei*, likeness to God, and participation in the divine goodness. As we have seen, Thomas locates the reason for man's privileges and responsibilities in the divine imaging that occurs in the intellect and in freedom. The human creature can know and love, and this native “capacity for the supreme good” can be fulfilled by a revelation of God's inward life that summons man to a participation in the divine knowledge and love.⁴³

The adopted son knows what the master is doing. To the adopted son, Christ reveals all that he has heard from the Father. This revelation creates a special kind of friendship between man and God. Sonship of this kind, on Thomas' account, consists in the reproduction of the life of the Blessed Trinity in man through his activity of supernatural knowledge and love. For the Catholic theologian, the emphasis in sonship remains theological—knowing and loving God in faith, hope, and charity—not principally humanistic. This is why, in order to stress the

39 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 23, Art. 4.

40 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 23, Art. 2.

41 Colman E. O'Neill, O.P., “Adoptive Sonship,” in *The One Mediator*, Vol. 50 (3a. 16-26) of St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965). The following paragraphs summarize the content of this dense essay, 250–257, at 250.

42 See Di Noia, “*Imago Dei-Imago Christi*,” 20: “Over thirty years ago, in one of the first theological commentaries on *Gaudium et Spes*, the now [2003] Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger argued that it is essential to take into account the intrinsic linking of anthropology with christology (and thus with eschatology) which unfolds across the entire text and which in his view constitutes its crucial insight.”

43 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 93, Art. 2, Reply to Obj. 3.

ontological difference that precedes the practice of the theological virtues, the *Catechism* speaks of a “theological” life.⁴⁴

In considering adoptive sonship, likeness to God is always to be understood analogically. The adopted son does not share a specific nature with God. So, adoptive sonship resembles the image of a ruler on a coin. Finally, the adoptive son’s participation in the divine goodness achieves its highest degree only in those to whom God himself chooses and positively transmits it to through predestination.⁴⁵ There is no room in the Thomist vision of sonship for naturalism or Pelagian strategies.

O’Neill sums up: “If the adopted son of God is to be equated with man as the image of God by grace, then it must be said that sonship consists in the reproduction of the life of the Blessed Trinity in man through his activity of supernatural knowledge and love.”⁴⁶ This knowledge and love of the persons of the Trinity occur only within the context of the theological and infused moral virtues, which, under the impulse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, can produce a “semi-experimental” awareness of the divine Persons.

Aquinas develops the doctrine of the image so as to bring us to realize that our awareness of the Trinity develops through the image that we bear in ourselves. Friendship produces a beloved awareness of the Beloved, an *amata notitia*. The teaching on adoptive sonship is as startling in its conclusion as it is overarching in its complete command and delicate treatment of several key elements of Catholic doctrine related to sacramental life in Christ.

The Divine Love and the “Efficacy” of the Sacraments

The life of adoptive sonship finds its external expression and source in the sacramental structures of the Church. A heavy emphasis on sacramental symbolism has dominated much theology since the Second Vatican Council’s *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.⁴⁷ This has sometimes obscured the plain truth of Catholic sacramental theology that each of the sacraments does something.⁴⁸ They are signs to be sure, but signs that cause. Pope Benedict XVI expresses this truth with clarity: “Since the Eucharist makes present Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, we must start by

44 See *Catechism*, no. 2686. For further discussion, see my *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1996), esp. 1ff.

45 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 23, Art. 1.

46 O’Neill, *One Mediator*, 253.

47 Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, (December 4, 1963), in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (Piscataway, NJ: New Century, 1966).

48 See my “The Sacraments of the Church,” in *Vatican II Renewal Within Tradition*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

acknowledging that ‘there is a causal influence of the Eucharist at the Church’s very origins.’”⁴⁹

No account of a sacramental theology is complete without addressing the question of sacramental causality—how the sacraments bring forth their effects.⁵⁰ Dominican theologian Benedict Ashley reminds us of the importance of Thomas’ concept of efficient causality in explaining the hierarchic reality of the sensible universe.⁵¹ In short, nothing comes into being without some exercise of efficient causality. This assertion is made within a classical philosophical context and applies to the order of being. But the same principle applies as well to the order of supernature. It is difficult to conceive that the order of nature would exhibit a richness that does not exist in the order of supernature. Efficient causality offers to explain what brings something into existence.

Today, however, this is difficult for people to recognize. That is because since the Renaissance, discussions about efficient causality have become almost exclusively the concern of the observational sciences. Modern philosophy remains strong on developing accounts of formal and final causality. But the moderns retreat from expounding efficient causality, preferring to consign that to scientific theorists. As a consequence, Catholic theology no longer possesses philosophical concepts to describe “hierarchic reality” and the unity and plurality of creation. This turn of events further leaves Catholic theology without a useful tool for explaining the double agency at work in the sacraments.

In the Christian understanding of the sacraments there is an ordered series of causes that are necessary to explain the effect that the Christian Church holds out as either the result or the promise of sacramental administration. Only God sanctifies. Still, each of the sacraments does something. Take the example of holy orders. Catholic theology must provide an explanation to account for why a man is not deputed, licensed, authorized, designated, or simply chosen for ministry, but rather is radically transformed in order to exercise the sacred power of the priesthood. The Church speaks about an “ontological bond” with Christ.⁵² The explana-

49 Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (February 22, 2007) (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2007), 14, quoting John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in its Relation to the Church (April 17, 2003) (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2003), 21.

50 Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels has observed that the scientific revolution, which observes that the theses dealing with sacramental causality require reworking: “Classical theologians have worked out a wide array of theories in response to this question [how do the sacraments bring forth their effects], but most of them are extremely difficult to uphold today.” See “Current Challenges for Sacramental Theology,” *Antiphon* 5 (2000): 44–45, at 45.

51 Benedict M. Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006).

52 See Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (March 25, 1992), 11, 13, 72, in *The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations of John Paul II*, ed. J. Michael Miller, C.S.B. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1998).

tion will entail some account of efficient or agent causality that can illuminate the truth that only God makes a man a priest and at the same time that this change never occurs outside of the sacramental act duly performed.

What is true for one sacrament holds true for the practice of divine friendship. Catholic theology today faces a serious challenge when asked to give an account of the transformation worked by grace. One needs to provide some explanation for how man created in the image of God becomes an adoptive son, when it is the case that this sonship consists precisely in the actual or habitual knowing and loving of the triune God. What transforms the human person? How does one account for the newness of life that the New Testament makes part of its central proclamation?

The ordinary way in which adoptive sonship is bestowed and sustained are discovered in the divine agency mediated through the sacraments, especially the sacraments of initiation and of healing. Thus, we recall the well-known teaching that baptism remains the only way known to the Church by which the gift of justification is bestowed.⁵³

The Eucharist stands at the center of the Church's life. The Church comes forth from the eucharistic sacrifice. There exists a reciprocal relationship between the Eucharist and growth in the practice of divine friendship. Theologians speak about the grace of the Eucharist as charity and unity. Beatific fellowship or communion finds its anticipation here below in the Eucharist. It is necessary, however, to understand this sacramental consecration of the Christian life, of the theological life of faith, and of hope, and of charity, with reference to the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.⁵⁴

Pope Benedict, referring to 1 John 4:19, uses the language of causality to explain how divine love comes to exist in the world: "The causal influence of the Eucharist at the Church's origins definitively discloses both the chronological and ontological priority of the fact that it was Christ who loved us 'first.'"⁵⁵ Where does Christ first show on earth his maximal love? The tradition expressed by Aquinas replies: on Calvary. Discussing the efficacy of Christ's passion and death, Thomas says: "Christ, suffering in a loving and obedient spirit, offered more to God than was demanded in recompense for all the sins of mankind, because first, the love which led him to suffer was a great love (*propter magnitudinem charitatis*)."⁵⁶

53 *Catechism*, no. 1257.

54 John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 12: "The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since this sacrifice is made present ever anew, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it at the hands of the consecrated minister."

55 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 14.

56 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 48, Art. 2.

The Advent of Mercy

To inquire about the purpose of the sacraments is to inquire about the divine goodness and mercy. Recall St. John's words: "he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Aquinas speaks about the sacraments as instruments of the divine saving mercy—*'qui sunt instrumenta divinae misericordiae salvantis.'*⁵⁷ This is a cardinal feature of his sacramental theology. The sacraments communicate God's saving mercy within the structure of a twofold movement of image-restoration and image-perfection. The basis for communicating these perfections is the divine goodness. God is merciful inasmuch as his goodness casts out from us every defect.⁵⁸

The expression, "*adventus misericordiae*" ("the coming of [the divine] mercy") evokes a theme in Thomist theology that today remains very much misunderstood.⁵⁹ How does the divine mercy take hold of one who receives worthily the sacraments of Christ? Pope Benedict XVI takes up this question in discussing "the connection between the *eucharistic form of life and moral transformation.*"⁶⁰ Moral transformation remains a serious question for Catholic theology to the extent that many contemporary efforts to resolve moral problems remain disconnected from the Eucharist and from Christ. The Catholic tradition, however, regards both the sacramental life and the moral life as a single expression of the divine goodness active in the world.⁶¹ Christian satisfaction forms part of the Church's sacramental life. It derives its efficacy from the sacramentalization of contrition that we call the sacrament of penance or reconciliation. We move, then, to discuss the place that medicinal satisfaction holds in the life of Christian sacraments and conversion.

The French Benedictine theologian, Ghislain Lafont, among others, suggested that Aquinas had placed too much emphasis on the medicinal effects of the sacraments.⁶² Lafont's work brings us back to the theological airs of the late 1950s. In fact, he represents a class of mainly European theologians who easily

57 "In hoc autem pro tota natura meruit, in quo debitum naturae, scilicet mortis, quae pro peccato ei debebatur, exsolvit ipse peccatum non habens; ut sic non pro se mortem solvere teneretur, sed pro natura solveret; unde satisfaciendo pro tota natura, sufficienter meruit peccatorum remissionem aliis qui peccata habebant. Tertio modo dicitur agens instrumentale; et hoc modo sacramenta delent peccata, quia sunt instrumenta divinae misericordiae salvantis." See Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis* [On the Book of Sentences by Peter Lombard], Book 3, Distinction 19, Question 1, Article 1. (Paris: Sumptibus P. Lethielleux, 1929).

58 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 21, Art. 3.

59 See *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q.1, Art. 6, Reply to Obj. 3: "Unde patet quod non debuit adventum misericordiae differre usque in finem mundi." Here Aquinas treats the fittingness of the timing of the incarnation.

60 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 82.

61 The very structure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes this point explicitly. Part Two treats the sacraments. Part Three treats the moral life, life in Christ.

62 In his 1961 *Structure et méthode de la Somme théologique de saint Thomas d'Aquin* [The Structure and Method of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*] (Paris: Le Cerf, 1996).

assumed that the sixteenth-century reformers' critiques of satisfactory expiation were valid reactions to Aquinas' teaching on satisfaction. These theologians went on to argue that Aquinas' treatment of the sacraments places too much emphasis on the need for satisfaction for sin. In support of their contention, they highlighted the medicinal metaphors used by Aquinas.

Here we may wonder whether these theological criticisms, which so reflected a certain temper of the times, did not contribute to what we now recognize as a general breakdown and retreat from the discipline of the sacraments of healing—penance and holy anointing—in the post-conciliar period.⁶³ But when full account is taken of the careful way that St. Thomas treats the coming of the divine mercy, the "*adventus misericordiae*" we can see how seriously these critics misunderstood Thomas.

It is true that Thomas frequently speaks about healing the wounds of sin (*vulnus peccati*). But the overall context of his *Summa theologiae* makes clear that his treatment of healing is influenced more by his understanding of the divine goodness than by therapeutic metaphors.⁶⁴ Thomas presents satisfaction as a sweet grace to embrace, not a bitter medicine to avoid. And his account should be the basis for a reformulation of sacramental theology, one that explains forcefully how and why the sacraments are "instruments of mercy."

"The Seventh Seal" and the Theology of Satisfaction

Fortunately, French theology has not been monolithic. One should observe the influence that French-speaking theologians from the Suisse Romande and Provence have played and continue to play in the re-shaping of contemporary Catholic theology. This influence can be seen especially in the reformulation of Catholic beliefs in satisfaction which, like Aquinas' teaching on sin, has been subject to caricature in the modern period.⁶⁵

63 The generation (and spirit, *l'esprit parisien*) that Lafont represents may be excused for thinking that one ought to explain the dynamics of Christian salvation by softening the emphasis on the medicinal effects of the sacraments, and in general on the role that personal reformation of life plays in the Christian dispensation. Many European theologians of that period, including the *nouveaux théologiens*, seem to have flourished as the Marshall Plan (1947–51) restored economic prosperity in Catholic Europe. These circumstances, along with more scholarly explanations such as the findings of historical-critical biblical studies, made it seem out-of-date to talk much about sin and original sin. At the same time, the Parisian critiques of sacramental causality and of nature and grace dynamics coincided with radical changes in the way Catholics observed the duties of their religion, especially in the area of the sacraments of healing. The effects remain. It does not require the services of a sociologist to observe that the two sacraments of healing—penance and holy anointing—exemplify the sacraments least administered to the Christian people, even though contemporary Catholics, it may be supposed, require these "instruments of divine saving mercy" as much as did Catholics of earlier ages.

64 See *Summa theologiae*, Ia-IIae, Q. 87, Art. 7, Reply to Obj. 3.

65 In the United States, much of this influence may be found at the work done by the Aquinas Center for Theological Renewal located at Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida. Matthew

One good illustration of the misconstrual of the role that medicinal practices hold in Christian life dominates Ingmar Bergman's (1918-2007) captivating 1957 film, "The Seventh Seal." By aiming to exhibit medieval practices, Bergman purported to portray what he thought constitutes Catholic teaching on satisfaction. In his contemporary apocalypse, Bergman depicts survivors of Death whipping

Levering deserves great commendation for the efforts that he has expended during the past five years to translate the works of authors such as Gilles Emery and to publish articles from French authors in the journal *Nova et Vetera*.

In some oblique way, I can associate myself with this respected strain of theological reflection that traces its modern origin to 1859 when Père Lacordaire bought back a portion of old Saint-Maximin, the Var property that preserved the relics of St. Mary Magdalene and which had been securely in Dominican hands since the fourteenth century, in order to base a *studium* or study house of the Dominican Order. The *couvent* had been seized in 1791 by the Revolution—the Dominicans taking flight. Lacordaire was not able to buy back all of the old property and a good part of the *couvent* remained and remains still the property of the *mairie* of St. Maximin. It is said that the basilica was spared because Napoleon's brother, Lucien, ordered "La Marseillaise" to be played on the eighteenth-century classical organ housed in the church. (The 1773 organ was built by J. E. Isnard at the basilica of Ste. Marie Madeleine in St. Maximin-en-Var in south France.) After 1859, Saint-Maximin remained an important intellectual center of Thomist theology for almost a century, until 1957 when the Provençal Dominicans transferred the location of their study house to Toulouse. One illustrious carrier of the southern French tradition was Father Jean-Hervé Nicolas, O. P., who was one of my directors at Fribourg in the 1970s. In 1976, I arrived in Fribourg to begin my doctoral studies under the tutelage of the Irish Dominican, Eugene Colman O'Neill. The results were published first in 1981, and a second edition, with a different title, in 1990. See *Christian Satisfaction in Aquinas* (Washington, D.C. Catholic University of America, 1982), and *The Godly Image: Christ and Salvation in Catholic Thought from Anselm to Aquinas*, Studies in Historical Theology VI (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1990). The revised edition is still available at Fordham University Press.

In the 1970s, with the ecumenical impetus launched by the Second Vatican Council in full and optimistic swing, Father O'Neill had become actively involved in ecumenical exchanges, especially with Reformed theologians in Switzerland. O'Neill had read his Calvin: "We are indignant," John Calvin replied to the reforming Cardinal Jacobo Sadoletto (1477-1547), "that in the room of the sacred Supper has been substituted a sacrifice, by which the death of Christ is emptied of its virtues." "Reply by John Calvin to Cardinal Sadoletto's Letter" (Basel, September 1, 1539) in *A Reformation Debate*, ed John C. Olin (New York: Fordham University, 2000), 68. In Catholic Fribourg during the 1970s, Catholic worship—*la sainte messe* and *Heilige Messen* (the Holy Mass)—was celebrated more frequently than these Lord's Supper celebrations. Still, O'Neill had come to the realization that eventually Catholics would need to dialog with Reformed and other Christian believers about the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice. His conviction was based on what Pope Benedict XVI has expressed so succinctly in *Sacramentum Caritatis*: "We hold that eucharistic communion and ecclesial communion are so linked as to make it generally impossible for non-Catholic Christians to receive the former without enjoying the latter." To embrace ecclesial communion with the Catholic Church requires embracing what she holds about the Eucharist. We witness another example of the interconnectedness of the *depositum fidei*.

Here O'Neill was persuaded that before discussions about the nature of eucharistic sacrifice and therefore communion could begin, the nettlesome question of satisfaction must once more be taken up by both parties to the ecumenical dialogue. It had been exhausted in the period of the Catholic reform. O'Neill was convinced that what Aquinas had taught about satisfaction did not conform to the modern caricatures of medieval theologies which had continued to inhabit Protestant and some Catholic thought throughout the Eisenhower years (1953-61).

themselves so that God will spare them, hoping to atone for their sins through self-flagellation. The son of a Swedish Lutheran pastor, Bergman in fact visualized what was generally held to be the Catholic, that is, the medieval, outlook on medicinal Christianity. The film appeared during the waning years of post-Tridentine polemics about Christian satisfaction. The cinematic effects were mesmerizing. Through the well-crafted lens of Ingmar Bergman, the image of Christians observing the rubrics of satisfaction approached the sadistic.

Yet it was another Swede who more directly shaped (or misshaped) twentieth-century theological reflection about Christian satisfaction in Aquinas: Lutheran Bishop Gustaf Aulén (1879–1978). His 1931 book, *Christus Victor*, provided a historical account of what he considered the misadventures of St. Anselm's medieval treatise, *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why Did God Become Man?") and the supposed perpetuation of Anselm's errors by Aquinas.⁶⁶ *Christus Victor* was translated into English in the same year that Bergman's film was released.

Against these strongly negative and distorted views perpetuated by the filmmaker and theologians both Protestant and Catholic alike, we must return to a correct understanding of Aquinas and satisfaction.⁶⁷ The way that St. Thomas treats Christian satisfaction affects profoundly his account of the sacramental dispensation. He discussed the healing that Christ brings under three headings: the anthropology of healing; the cause of healing; and the objective of healing. These headings correspond to three of the four causes that Aristotle considers necessary to explain what something is: material (man); efficient (God); and final (Beatitude).

The fourth cause, the formal cause of the sacraments, is located in the divine mercy that the incarnation introduces into the world—the *adventus misericordiae*. The sacraments follow the incarnation of the Eternal Son and prolong and continue the *adventus misericordiae* that his incarnation represents.

Again, Aquinas insightfully distinguishes principal and instrumental efficient causes, and among the instrumental causes, those conjoined from those separated. He thus shows that there exists one causal flow of divine goodness that moves from the Trinity to Christ to the sacraments to the adopted son. We see, then, that the Church's sacraments and the practice of divine friendship go hand in hand. We recall a familiar text from Aquinas concerning the effects of Christ's passion:

When we say that Christ's passion reconciled us to God, we do not mean that God has begun anew to love us, for it is written

66 Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Herber (New York: Macmillan, 1977).

67 "Aquinas on Christian Salvation" in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed., Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap., Daniel Keating, John Yocum (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 117–37.

in Jeremiah 31:2, “with age-old love I have loved you.” Thanks to Christ’s passion the cause for hatred has been removed, both because sin has been wiped away and because compensation has been made in the form of a more agreeable offering.”⁶⁸

By his sacrificial death on the Cross, Christ introduces into the world a mercy that otherwise would not exist. This fulfillment of the *adventus misericordiae* changes the human creature. Our defects are removed. We no longer find ourselves without a place to turn in the face of our sins. We no longer have reason to doubt that God loves us. In other words, we are able to think credibly of ourselves as friends of God.

The Sacraments and the “New Man”

Only God makes us his friends. But if one were to inquire about the reasons for the eclipse of discussion about how God makes us his friends—the aforementioned sacramental causality—the inquiry would point back to erroneous views in some contemporary presentations of Christian anthropology.

O’Neill, whose important work was discussed above, said that ignorance of the modes in which the *imago Dei* can exist explains why so many theologians of our period have thought an adequate account of the sacraments can be rendered by appeal only to the categories of formal and final causality.⁶⁹ The sacraments, however, as we have seen, are about more than symbols and promises of heaven. They also figure in the working out of predestination. O’Neill put it this way: “Through Christ and his grace the goal [of life] becomes immediate knowledge and love of God, the Blessed Trinity, as he is in himself. Such a goal, which is beyond man’s natural resources, can be won only by those whom God himself chooses and positively transmits to it through predestination.”⁷⁰

Predestination represents a form of divine agency. Efficient causality transposed into the proper theological and biblical categories—for example, the biblical category of the vine and the branches—provides an adequate philosophical basis to account theologically for this transmission.⁷¹ We discover how God communicates to his creatures the benefits that only he can bestow on, and, to be more precise, create in man. Thomists adopted a view of sacramental causality

68 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 49, Art. 4, Reply to Obj. 2.

69 O’Neill did not view sacramental theology as a sub-specialty within the theological sciences. He rather interpreted the sacraments within the overall context of the *depositum fidei*. See his *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, rev. Romanus Cessario (New York: Alba House, 1991), and his *Sacramental Realism* (Chicago: MidWest Theological Forum, 1998). The latter forms a long essay on sacramental causality.

70 O’Neill, *One Mediator*, 253.

71 See John 15:5: “I am the vine; you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing” (Douay-Rheims translation).

that they described as “physical.” They did this in order to emphasize that the new man of Ephesians 4:24 (“And put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth”) and the new nature of Colossians 3:10 (“And have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator”) are more than mere metaphors for expressing mental relations or religious sentiment.

In sum, as we have said before, the sacraments do something. We are now in a position to state more precisely what it is that they do. The sacraments enact the work of image-restoration and image-perfection. They supply the way that Christ makes sons out of images. Image-restoration, as the phrase suggests, brings about healing, whereas image-perfection creates and serves communion. Beatific fellowship or communion finds its anticipation here below in the Eucharist. The Eucharist introduces the themes of charity and communion, which epitomize the work of image-perfection. Healing and satisfaction are ordered on the other hand to image-restoration. Both image-restoration and image-perfection represent expressions of the communication of divine goodness that the incarnation of the Son of God makes possible for the human race.

Divine Healing: The Communication of Perfection

Why does the Christian require sacraments of healing? The divine love that communicates itself through the sacraments must first of all remove the obstacles to itself before raising men to a participation in itself. We find ourselves back to considering the effects of Christ’s passion: “Thanks to Christ’s passion the cause for hatred has been removed, both because sin has been wiped away and because compensation has been made in the form of a more agreeable offering.”⁷² *Adventus misericordiae!*

To wipe sin away entails satisfaction. It is a work that the Christian cannot omit. Why? Because only the saints love one another in a bond of authentic friendship. Sinners do not. Commenting on that passage in the *Summa* in which Thomas inquires whether sinners love themselves,⁷³ the sometimes maligned Cajetan tells us why:

Guard in your heart the conclusions of this article: (1) that evil is the kind of thing that makes it impossible for sinners to love themselves; (2) that there are five signs of authentic self-love which can only be found in the good: to want to live a spiritual life in accord with right reason; to want to develop within this life the good of virtue; to want to act so as to realize this; to be free of anxiety, and to want to get along peacefully with others.

⁷² *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 49, Art. 4, Reply to Obj. 2.

⁷³ *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, Q. 25, Art. 7.

Examine your conscience on these points if you want to know whether you are good or not, whether you truly love yourself, whether you truly are a friend to yourself. And do this frequently, at least once a day!⁷⁴

These considerations are hardly what one would describe as prescriptions drawn up by a man who is fixated on essentialism. They rather express the view of a man who understood the predicament of the human condition without Christ. Cajetan's reflection on love within the *communio* of the Church would not have made the final cut of Bergman's "The Seventh Seal." The true Cajetan simply does not correspond to the caricatures that certain northern Europeans have made of him and of the Thomism he represents.

The practice of the divine friendship follows upon Aquinas' teaching on the tripartite modes of the *imago Dei* and his very strong teaching on sacramental causality. What else can explain how fallen human beings can rise up to become authentic lovers of God and neighbor?

But in order to reestablish Aquinas' teaching, Thomists must criticize what I call "inclusivist theologies"—theologies that take umbrage at nature and grace distinctions. Promoters of this outlook, whether stridently orthodox or shadowy heterodox, take too much for granted when it comes to explaining the dynamics of conversion. Leaving aside the orthodox inclusivists, who in any event are usually loyal to what the Church prescribes for the moral life, we find ourselves left with the wide-spread presumption promoted by the shadowy heterodox. When one reflects on the list of things that those who profess themselves to be Catholics hold to be compatible with Christian truth and virtue, the results are sadly disappointing. It would serve them well to make every dissenting moral theologian read Cajetan's commentary on whether sinners love themselves.

We are made for happiness with God. But our capacity to achieve the realization of this beatitude, whether inchoatively on earth or consummatively in heaven, depends on the absolute priority of the divine initiative. God loves us because *he* is good, not because *we* are. As Thomas says: "Purely and simply, other considerations apart, it is of his goodness that God communicates perfections."⁷⁵

The divine prevenient grace that governs all that transpires in the world for the good moves the human creature to the Church of Christ and to baptism, which, as I have noted, remains the only way that the Church knows to introduce a human creature into the fellowship of divine friendship.⁷⁶ Baptism, as Aquinas says,

74 Thomas de Vio Cardinal Cajetan, *In secunda-secundae* [Commentary on the Second Section of the Second Part of the *Summa*], Q. 25, Art. 4. Text in Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, *Summa totius theologiae D. Thomae Aquinatis cum commentariis* (Rome: Apud Iulium Accoltum, 1570).

75 *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 23, Art. 3.

76 The 2000 declaration *Dominus Iesus* reaffirms the advantages that one finds only within the circle of full communion with the See of Peter. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,

is the door to the other sacraments.⁷⁷ Sacramental mediation marks every step of the Christian life and of the spiritual life. Baptism requires no satisfaction of the one who receives it. The power of Christ takes hold of the whole person, “just as if he himself had sufficiently made satisfaction for all his sins.”⁷⁸

The rest of the sacramental economy involves satisfaction. Thomas stopped writing his *Summa* as he was discussing the place that satisfaction holds in the sacrament of penance. The few passages in the *Summa* that mention holy anointing (*extrema unctio*),⁷⁹ suggest that this sacrament of healing completes penance in a way that is parallel to the way that confirmation completes baptism. In each of the sacraments, we discover a special “*adventus misericordiae*.” Each of the sacraments brings effectively a remedy against some effect of sin. The sacraments of healing accomplish this objective poignantly:

Penance against actual sins committed after Baptism; Extreme Unction against those elements of sin which remain, those namely which, whether through negligence or ignorance, are not sufficiently removed by Penance.⁸⁰

To be specific, this effect occurs through the satisfactory works that penance sacramentalizes. This remark brings us back to confessional lines and Catholic deathbeds.⁸¹ The urgency is great. Young men should willingly sacrifice their lives to become ministers—and only priests can serve as the ministers of these sacraments of healing—of these saving instruments of Christ’s mercy. Aquinas compares extreme unction to diet and exercise in the human life. This specific *adventus misericordiae* removes what remains of sin in us and renders us “*paratam . . . ad finalem gloriae*” (“Ready . . . for final glory”). This means ready for the fullness of the *imago Dei*, ready to possess a filial fear that expresses itself as reverence.⁸² The Church allows the priest to anoint a Catholic as long as there is some expectation that the breath of life remains, a period that is not determined by the declaration of physical death. At the very end, the dying man—no matter how holy a life he may have led—still needs the *adventus misericordiae* that Christ imparts through the sacraments of the Church: penance, holy anointing, Eucharist. To get ready for final glory, even the saint needs spiritual medicine to cast out every defect.

Dominus Iesus, Declaration On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (August 6, 2000) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000).

77 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 68, Art. 6. See also, Q. 66, Art. 2.

78 See *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 69, Art. 2.

79 For example, see *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 65, Art. 1.

80 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 65, Art. 1.

81 See note 63 above.

82 See *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, Q. 19, Art. 11.

Freed from Sin by Way of Sacrifice

"It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus completes his redemptive work on Calvary. Mary, according to the tradition, holds on her lap the lifeless body of her Son. The *Pietà*! She remains the sorrowful Mother, though she never succumbs to being a sad Mother. There is a difference between experiencing sorrow and being sad. Sadness arises when one is overcome by evil. While caressing Jesus' dead body, Mary contemplates the supreme goodness that the incarnation reveals. At the same time, she ponders the plain fact that God "did not spare his Son, but handed him over for us all" (Rom. 8:32). Mary touches the pierced side of her Son, the fountain of sacramental life. Her sorrowing affords Mary time to meditate on the benefits that we receive from Christ's death: "In all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

Mary comprehends the divine plan better than any other member of the Church. For this reason, she is able to participate fully in her Son's redemptive work. She merits the unique title, *Co-Redemptrix*. Though she is conceived without original sin and so escapes the burden of making up for sin, Mary is the first to experience vicariously in the dead body of her Son the price paid for our sins. The sacraments of healing and the sacramentalized practices of penitence allow Catholics to enter deeply into the mystery of conversion that Christ's death on the Cross makes possible. Without his divine power, nothing in us would change. Let St. Thomas have the last word:

When Christ's passion is viewed in relation to his divinity, it can be seen to act in an efficient way; in relation to the will which is rooted in Christ's soul, by way of merit; in relation to the very flesh of Christ, by way of satisfaction, since we are freed from the guilt of punishment; by way of redemption, inasmuch as we are thereby freed from the slavery of sin; and finally, by way of sacrifice, thanks to which we are reconciled to God.⁸³

83 *Summa theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 48, Art. 6.

