

The Relationship of the Grace of the Angels to Christ in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas

Resumo

Neste artigo o autor investiga novamente a doutrina de São Tomás de Aquino acerca da relação da graça habitual dos Santos Anjos à graça de Cristo, Caput Ecclesiae. Historicamente a questão não ficou resolvida, principalmente porque: 1) era desnecessariamente ligada à questão hipotética, se a encarnação se teria realizado sem o pecado original; 2) a discussão, da parte de muitos tomistas, perdeu-se procurando demonstrar que São Tomás sempre seguiu a mesma doutrina nesta questão, o que é falso; e 3) não foi devidamente levado em consideração o desenvolvimento cristológico de São Tomás que permite uma resolução da questão.

Um estudo cronológico de cinco textos de São Tomás (Super III Sent., dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1; De Veritate, q. 29, a. 5; Ad Ephesios, 1, 22ss; Summa Theol., III q. 8, a. 4; e Super Ioannes, 1, 16ss) evidencia o profundo desenvolvimento na doutrina de São Tomás acerca da causalidade instrumental e teândrica de Cristo na economia da graça. À luz deste desenvolvimento é possível explicar porque o jovem Tomás, seguindo a teologia de seu tempo, negava a influência vital de Cristo sobre os Santos Anjos, e porque, mais tarde, nas obras de sua maturidade, afirmava, sempre com maior firmeza, a dependência total dos Anjos da graça de Cristo. Nas suas primeiras obras só atribuía uma causalidade moral (ou meritória) ao Cristo homem, e por isso não podia atribuir eficazmente a graça de Cristo nem aos Anjos, nem a Maria, nem aos justos do Antigo Testamento.

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Preface

Vatican II teaches:

Sicut sacerdotium Christi variis modis tum a ministris tum a fideli populo participantur, et sicut una bonitas Dei in creaturis modis diversis realiter diffunditur, ita etiam unica mediatio Redemptoris non excludit, sed suscitatur variam apud creaturas participatam ex unico fonte cooperationem.”¹

To know and to collaborate with these various participations in the mediatorship of Christ will not only enhance their efficacy in our lives, but will also lead us to a deeper understanding of the Mystery of Christ and the workings of His grace in the Economy of Salvation. The ministry of the holy angels is here particularly significant, for as St. Thomas points out: “... homo ... ad meritum proficere non potest nisi auxilio divino, quod homini exhibetur mediante ministerio Angelorum. Et ideo ad omnia bona nostra cooperantur Angeli.”²

In other words, the angels are hidden mediators of the grace of Christ in our lives. The question is: how does the grace of the holy angels stand in relation to this unique font of Christ’s grace and glory?

This question has long occupied the minds of theologians. Commenting on *Col 1, 19-20* – It has pleased God the Father that in Him all His fullness should dwell, and that through Him He should reconcile to Himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the Blood of His Cross. – St. Jerome observed:

We cannot know how the angels or those in the underworld benefited from the Blood of Christ, but we cannot pass over the fact that it was, indeed, beneficial to them.³

Centuries later, St. Bernard of Clairvaux would clarify:

Qui erexit hominem lapsum, dedit stanti angelo ne laberetur, sic illum de captivitate eruens, sicut hunc a captivitate defendens. Et hac ratione fuit aequae utrique redemptionis, solvens illum, et servans istum. Liqueat ergo sanctis Angelis Dominum Christum fuisse redemptionem, sicut justitiam, sicut sapientiam, sicut sanctificationem: et nihilominus tamen haec ipsa quattuor esse factum propter homines, qui invisibilia Dei non nisi per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciere possunt (*Rom 1, 20*). Sic ergo omne quod erat Angelis, factus est nobis.⁴

¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

² *S.Th.* I q. 114, a. 3 ad 3. The latter part of the text is cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 350.

³ *PL* 26, 483; citation from Alois Winkelhofer, *Angelus ne cadat*, in: *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* VI/1 (1959) p. 60. John of St. Thomas suggests that this benefaction is to be understood in terms of a certain nescience on the part of the angels with respect to the work of redemption brought about through the Blood of Christ (*Cursus Theologicus*. (Vivès edition) tom VIII, p. 284f). See treatment in: Lawrence C. JOHNSON, *Christ, Sanctifier of the Angels*. Doct. Diss. Angelicum, Rome 2001, p. 53.

Similar sentiments were expressed a generation earlier by Gottschalk von Limburg (†1098), whose Christmas sequence, *Fecunda verbo*, may well have been known to St. Bernard. In that sequence Gottschalk chants the fruits of the Incarnation along with the effective collaboration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. One of the first strophes praises the benefaction to the angels:

Angelus ne cadat, homo
lapsus hinc ut redeat
temptator nec resurgat.⁵

A subsequent strophe positively specifies what the Incarnate Word did for the angels, namely it confirmed them in the life of grace and unites them to us:

At nos vitae reparat,
Angelum firmat,
in se quos unus sociat.⁶

⁴ B. OF CLAIRVAUX, *Sermo in Cant. Cant.*, 22, 6 (PL 183, 880 B-D); cf. WINKELHOFER, *loc. cit.*, p. 60.

Both St. Jerome's observation and St. Bernard's point are mentioned frequently in the debate on the extent of Christ's supernatural influence over the angels; they are explained away or adduced according to the proclivities of the several authors. It is difficult, however, to see how St. Bernard's text can be reduced to *accidental* effects of grace, since he affirms that Christ kept the angels from falling into the captivity of sin. That was only possible during their trial in which they merited glory. Further, he speaks clearly of "redemption", "justice" and "sanctification", all of which are essential to beatitude. He also knows how to set this within the context of a redemptive economy of salvation, subordinating their sanctification to the redemption of man. John of St. Thomas wishes to attribute these graces to Christ in His divinity (*loc. cit.*, p. 282). He fails to note that St. Bernard distinguishes between the original grace of the angels ('stanti') and their conservation, and notes that the four effects were the result of Christ being "factum", i. e., incarnate. The only reason for this, though, is that the latter be attributable to another principle, namely, to the Humanity of Christ. Other thomists felt constrained to exclude the sanctification of the angels from the economy of salvation, lest the finality of the Incarnation in terms of redemption be questioned.

John Austericensis OP, while holding this position for improbable, nevertheless "defends the possibility that the holy angels had been preserved in grace by the virtue of Christ's passion." All the while, "he is careful to distinguish this preservation from that of the Blessed Virgin, in that she was truly liable to Original Sin as a descendant of Adam" (JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 842).

⁵ Cf. WINKELHOFER, *loc. cit.*, p. 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Alois Winkelhofer reflects:

It is entirely conceivable, that our Lord, as the Head of the entire creation, *merited* grace for the angels by the *anticipated efficacy* of His Incarnation and Death, not only so that they should stand in the midst of the apostasy of the evil spirits, but also that they be definitively confirmed in fidelity, in much the same way that he “pre-redeemed” Mary the just in times past.⁷

With respect to us, as Winkelhofer notes, that would have been a “redemptive action, because it immediately summoned the good angels to our defense against the evil spirits”.⁸ Indeed, the chances are, that was their choice in the trial: to serve the sanctification of mankind. As a consequence, Winkelhofer draws the conclusion:

The good angels along with man receive the same grace of Christ; thus the one Lord draws them both together in Himself into a unity. Accordingly, we find that there is an intimate interrelationship between angels and men in the redemptive order ... The confirmation of the angels meaningly secures for us a vital help, without which we would not have been truly and effectively redeemed.⁹

In the comments of these fathers of the Church and Christian thinkers one samples that line of theological thought which intuits and defends a special relation of the angels’ grace and glory to the grace of Christ.

In the present essay we wish to narrow the investigation down to the relevant texts and doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. We shall focus on five to six passages in the writings of St. Thomas, dealing with them in their chronological order:

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60; “Es ist durchaus denkbar, daß ihnen der Herr, *vorauswirkend* durch Seine Menschwerdung und den Tod, als Haupt der ganzen Schöpfung die Gnade *verdient* hat, nicht bloß inmitten des Abfalls der bösen Engel zu bestehen, sondern auch endgültig in der Treue gefestigt zu werden; ähnlich hat er ja auch Maria und die Gerechten der Vorzeit ‘vorauserlöst’”.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60; “Erlösungshandeln, weil es zugleich die guten Engel zu unserem Schutz gegen die Bösen aufbietet”.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60; “Die guten Engel wie die Menschen empfangen die gleiche Gnade Christi; so schließt der eine Herr beide in sich zu einer Einheit zusammen. Es ist also eine innere Zusammengehörigkeit von Engeln und Menschen in der Erlösungsordnung, was wir da vorfinden ... Die Festigung der Engel bedeutet für uns die Sicherung einer Lebenshilfe, ohne die wir nicht wahrhaft und wirksam erlöst wären”. Winkelhofer’s modern view does not immediately bear upon our set thomistic task, except insofar as he gives an unbiased exegesis of medieval texts that were bent by some authors to meet the needs of their *a priori* positions.

1. Commentary on Sentences of Peter Lombard, *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2c (written between the years 1254-56).
2. *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 5 and a. 7 ad 5 (between 1258-59) – The Grace of Christ.
3. Commentary on Ephesians (between 1259-65) – The Body of Christ as the Plenitude of Christ.
4. *Summa Theologiae*, III q. 8, a. 4 (between 1268-72) – Whether Christ is the Head of the Angels.
5. Commentary on St. John’s Gospel (between 1269-72) – “*From His fullness, we have all received*”.

I. First presentation of the Question

A mere presentation of the historical *status quaestionis* among Thomas’ commentators would exhaust the space available. Hence, positions more so than authors will be addressed in the course of the discussion. We will also take for granted St. Thomas’ affirmation of Christ’s accidental influence in grace over the angels in terms of enlightenment and government, since there is universal agreement on this matter. The focus shall be on the relationship of the essential grace (beatitude) of the holy angels to Christ in Aquinas’ writings.

Diverse are the opinions on this question. Basically, these come down to three groups: “Yes”, “no” and a some kind of “tertium quid”. The “Yes’s” affirm that the angels’ essential grace is causally linked to Christ, but explain this link variously. Cajetan, reinforcing Thomas’ arguments, appears to favor both the *meritorious* and *instrumental* causality of Christ.¹⁰ Some simply claim Thomas taught that Christ *merited* the es-

¹⁰ While noting that Cajetan affirms Christ to be the universal cause of the angels’ sanctity, Johnson leaves the form of this causality unresolved (cf. *loc. cit.*, pp. 84-86). However, Cajetan’s texts leave little doubt that he is thinking in terms of meritorious and instrumental causality. *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 5c he writes: “Quo aliquid est actu, et quo agit, est unus actus: oportet tamen, ad hoc ut sit quo agat in alio, quoad actus secundum eminentiam quandaum habeatur. Ergo gratia Christi habet etiam quod sit activa in alios.” On *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 6 he says that the proper activity of Christ on the Church is interior influence, which again is reducible to merit or instrumental causality, cf. his observations on III, q. 7, a. 9 and III, q. 7, a. 11 ad 2. (THOMAS DE VIO CAJETANUS OP, *Commentaria* on the *Summa Theologiae*, in: *Opera Omnia* of St. Thomas Aquinas, Ed. Leonina, Tom. XI, Romae, Propaganda Fide, 1903).

sential grace of the angels.¹¹ Others explain the influence in terms of *exemplarity*.¹² Some appeal to “*objective causality*” or to *final causality*.¹³ A few, it seems, straddle the fence, asserting a duplex title to the

¹¹ Ambrose Catharinus OP, *Opuscula De Eximia Praedestinatione Christi*, Lugduni, 1542, pp. 114-143 (cf. Johnson, *loc. cit.*, p. 87-88); John Viguerius OP, *Institutiones ad Christianam Theologiam*, Antwerp, 1565 (cf. Johnson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 88-89); Francisco Suarez, SJ, *Opera Omnia*, tom. XVIII, pp. 379-380 (cf. Johnson, *loc. cit.*, pp. 92-97).

¹² Pedro de Lorca O.Cist., advocates this and the next two options, writing: “Nam ostendimus Christum fuisse causam finalem et exemplarem praedestinationis omnium, tamquam primus praedestinatus...” “... Addi potest praeterea influxus per modum objecti, quo Christus fuit fidei et justificationis Angelorum in via...” (*Commentarium ac Disputationum in Tertiam Partem D. Thomae*, A. SANCHEZ DE EXPELETA, 1616, tom., p. 333; cited from JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 107-108). FRANCISCO SUAREZ SJ, also argues this position (*loc. cit.*, p. 382; cf. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 94).

¹³ By “objective causality” is understood that Christ was an object of angelic faith during their trial. This is usually linked with Christ’s final causality, since the angels saw Christ as their future Head in glory (and for this reason is also linked in a fashion to Christ as exemplar). Under this heading comes PETER DE LORCA O.Cist., *Commentarium ac Disputationum in Tertiam Partem D. Thomae*, tom. I, 1616, pp. 65-80 (cf. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, pp. 106-111) and the Salmanticenses [Commentary by OCD’s in Salamanca *Cursus Theologicus iuxta Miram Divi Thomae Doctrinam*, Paris, 1870-1883, tom XVI, pp. 231-258, esp. p. 256 (cf. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, pp. 111-122).

John of St. Thomas also acknowledges this to be a fact, though, he does not develop the thought: “Omnia quae de facto creata sunt, tam in esse naturae, quam gratiae, sunt ordinata ad Christum, et illi subjecta” (*loc. cit.*, p. 264). And He cites St. Thomas’ commentary to Hebrews on *Ps* 13: “Omnia non est distributio accomodata ad aliqua genera, sed absolute ad omnia, quia omnia generaliter, et universaliter sunt subjecta ei’ et fortius 1 ad Cor XV, inquit Paulus ‘cum dicat omnia subjecta sunt ei, sine dubi praeter eum, qui subjecit ei omnia, ubi illa exceptio firmat regulam in contrarium, quod praeter Deum nihil est quod non sit subjectum Christo; sed status innocentiae erat aliquid praeter Deum, ergo fuit Christo subjectum. Et praeterea, ut Christus sit caput Angelorum, sufficit, ut mereatur eis praemia accidentalialia, et non gratiam ...’” (*loc. cit.*, 264-65).

Evidently, to profess Christ as the final cause of the angels, does not necessarily mean that they effectively received their essential graces from him, at least, to the mind of John of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas clearly held that Adam and Eve before the Fall (*S.Th.* II-II q. 2, a. 7c) and also the angels in the state of faith (cf. *S.Th.* II-II q. 2, a. 7 ad 1; *III Sent.*, dist. XXV, q. 2, a. 2, qq. 2 et 3) knew about the Incarnation. That knowledge alone, depending upon how one understands the formality of their trial, could be a formal foundation for the grace and response of the angels at the beginning. While the angels’ sanctification would not have been the principal purpose of the Incarnation, it could have been secondarily intended and effected, all the more in that they were created to minister to Christ and to those who are to be His heirs in salvation (cf. *Heb* 1, 14).

angels' glory: on the one hand attributing it to the pure mercy of God and on the other hand attributing it to the merits of Christ.¹⁴ The "no's" sim-

If a father were to rush into a burning building to save his child, and in the process find another child there, whom he also carried out of the building, we would assert that he *saved* both children, but that the reason why he risked his life was to save his own child. Comparatively, even if Christ sanctified the angels through His passion, still, it would not be proper to say that He died for them (here referring to the principal order of intention), since He undertook this for us men and our salvation. St. Thomas himself points out that the graces received by the angels are a secondary effect and intention of the Incarnation: "Quantum ad finem Incarnationis; quae quidem principaliter facta est propter hominum liberationem a peccato; et sic humanitas Christi ordinatur ad influentiam quam facit in homines, sicut ad finem intentum; influxus autem in Angelos non est ut finis Incarnationis, sed ut Incarnationem consequens" (*De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 5) This, of course, was the position of St. Bernard and Gottschalk mentioned above.

¹⁴ Cf. Johnson (*loc. cit.*, p. 68ff) assigns John Asturicensis OP, Gregory Cippullus OP and Vincent Contenson OP to this group. See especially, JOHN ASTURICENSIS OP, *Relectio de Habituali Christi Salvatoris Nostri Sactificante Gratia*, Romae: ex typographia P. Diani, 1591, pp. 67-83.

While this position may be awkwardly or even improperly presented, it is not ridiculous. After all, each of us attributes our life to both our parents. And if the angels were, by supposition, constituted in grace by the pure mercy of God, and then were sustained in their trial by the merits of Christ, would they not owe their glory to these two principles, which coalesce in one spiritual reality, their beatific vision? This seems to be the position of St. Bernard.

Cardinal Charles Journet, while not buying the aspect of merit, best fits into this group. He writes: "Consequently, neither the grace conferred on the first man, nor that conferred on the angels, could, properly speaking, be the grace of Christ, *gratia Christi*. In connection with this point however, to which we shall return, there is a difference between the grace of the first man and the grace of the angels. While on the one hand the grace of innocence had to be lost in order to give place to that of redemption, to which it was ordered only indirectly and materially, the grace of the angels was ontologically pre-accorded (both intensively and extensively) to the perfect grace that was to fill the soul of Christ when the Word should eventually become incarnate. Consequently, when man's sin had shattered the harmony of innocence and the Word had resolved to become incarnate so as to die on the Cross, the plenary grace created at that instant in His heart became the center of reference, the locus, of all the graces that existed beforehand in the angels, just as the center marked afterwards in an already existing circle becomes the locus of every point in the circumference. [footnote 1: reference to: *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 4 and *Salmanticenses*] We can go further along this road and add that as soon as the incarnation of the Word was accomplished, the angels began to receive, through the physical intermediation of the humanity of Christ, those graces which hitherto they had received immediately. Thus Christ is indeed the King of angels, now distributing to them the essential grace they have always possessed and the accidental graces superadded thereto." [footnote 2: reference to *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 4 and John of St. Thomas.] (Ch. JOURNET, *L'Église du Verbe Incarné. I. La Hiérarchie Apostolique*, Friburgi (Helv.) 1941, p. 5).

ply deny that Thomas grants anything but an accidental influence of Christ in grace over the holy angels.¹⁵

St. Thomas himself may, in good part, be held accountable for the debate due to some apparently equivocal statements in his writings. Faced with opposing texts, theologians have appealed to other thomistic principles as a kind of Rosetta stone that would permit a harmonious interpretation of all the texts. This is especially the case with those who claim St. Thomas denied Christ to have exercised any influence over the essential grace of the angels. They often rally behind the *alleged* position of St. Thomas: to the effect that if man had not sinned, God would not have become man (*S.Th.* III q. 1, a. 3). I say *alleged* because what he actually affirmed is that, while the evidence points in this direction, we cannot actually know what God would have done because HE has not revealed it.¹⁶ Being a mere argument of convenience, it follows that those who plead their cause on the basis of this argument can never get beyond a probable position.

The argument goes like this: The decree for the sanctification and beatification of the angels antedates the creation and fall of man. The effective decree of the Incarnation was contingent upon the former. Therefore, Christ could not have exercised any influence on the angels' beatitude.¹⁷

¹⁵ Important commentators in this group include Domingo Bañez OP, (*Comentarios Ineditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomás*, Burgos, 1951, tom. I, pp. 191ff; cf. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, pp. 25-28), BARTHOLOMEW MEDINA OP, (*Expositio in Tertiam D. Thomae Partem*, Venice 1582, pp. 147ff; cf. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, pp. 29-34) and JOHN OF ST. THOMAS, tom. VIII, pp. 276ff; cf. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, pp. 47-57).

¹⁶ “*Convenientius* [an argument of convenience, not a demonstration!] dicitur incarnationis opus ordinatum esse a Deo in remedium contra peccatum, ita quod peccato non existente, incarnatio non fuisse. Quamvis potentia Dei ad hoc non limitetur: potuisset enim, etiam peccato non existente, Deus incarnari” (*S.Th.* III q. 1, a. 3c). St. Thomas calls this idea “an opinion” in *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 3. Notwithstanding, Cardinal Journet states: “Et il est vrai que le Christ ne serait pas venu, si Adam, tenté par les anges déçus, n’avait péché” (*L’Église du Verbe Incarné: Essai de théologie speculative. 2 augmenté* Desclée de Brouwer, 1962, footnote 17, p. 29-30). The English translation is bizarrely different: “St. Thomas, who holds that if man had not sinned God would not have become incarnate affirms nevertheless that prior to the original sin Adam was aware of the future incarnation of the Word (*S.Th.* II-II q. 2, a. 7)”.

¹⁷ A lamentable consequence of this line of thought is that Christ is first only in order and perfection, not really in intention (finality). (Ironically, these authors end up with a “duplex finality” of creation: one initially without Christ, and one subsequently with Christ. Such is hard to reconcile with the thought of St. Paul (e. g. *Eph* 1, 4. 11ff. St. Thomas remarks: “*Prædestinationis divinæ nulla alia causa est, nec esse potest, quam*

Consequent upon this *a priori* position, these authors become protagonists of those texts from the youthful period of Thomas' writings (*II Sent.*, dist. 9, a. 8 ad 2; *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 7 ad 5), wherein he, in fact, denies that Christ *merited* glory for the angels.¹⁸ These authors assume that St.

simplex Dei voluntas. Unde patet etiam, quod divinae voluntatis praedestinantis non est alia ratio, quam divina bonitas filiis communicanda" (*Ad Ephesios*, I, lect. 1, in fine).

Defective is the presentation of the divine options in a scenario contrary to fact. Rather than remedying a creation-plan gone bad, God's first thought concerning any creation whatsoever must regard His own glory (*causa finalis simpliciter*) and how best to achieve and reveal this glory in creating. From this vantage, from among the possibilities before Him, God chose to create this world in which Original Sin was allowed to take place, so that God could more perfectly reveal His love and glorify Himself by the Incarnation and redemptive death of Christ (*causa finalis proxima*). In Him the Father chose and predestined us before the foundation of the world (cf. *Eph* 1, 4-5). Unto Him all things have been created (Cf. *Col* 1, 16ff). Hence, to glorify Himself as the Redeemer is the first purpose in the Economy of Salvation; Original Sin was the foreseen occasion. Outside of this, we do not even know if God would have created a world.

¹⁸ The reason he gives, is that the Man Christ could not have merited anything that antedates His human existence. This, he holds true, not only for the angels, but also for mankind before the Incarnation (cf. *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 7). *S.Th.* III q. 59, a. 6 is also cited in favor of this position. There St. Thomas affirms that Christ does not judge the angels concerning their essential grace, but only with respect to those accidental graces which accrue to them in the exercise of their ministries. Commentators want this to be so, because Christ did not merit their essential glory. However, St. Thomas does not argue in this easy fashion. Rather, having just established: "Deus non iudicabit bis in idipsum, idest secundum idem" (*S.Th.* III q. 59, a. 5 ad 2), he applies this principle to both the angels (whose judgment about eternal beatitude was at the beginning of the world) and to the men who died before the coming of Christ, whose eternal destiny was likewise already determined (*S.Th.* III q. 59, a. 5c).

Another angle adduces St. Thomas' doctrine which holds man's merit to be more efficacious than that of the angels' since Christ's merits did not apply to their essential grace of glory (cf. *II Sent.*, dist. 9, q. 1, a. 8 ad 2; *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 11; *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 7 ad 5). Therefore, they argue, Christ's merits could not extend to the angels, for were it so, their actions would have merit proportionate to man's. This is a *non sequitur*. First, because grace is distributed by Christ according to the measure of His donation (cf. *Eph* 4, 7; cf. *S.Th.* I q. 108, a. 8c where St. Thomas appeals to this principal for the very grace of the angels); hence, there is no *a priori* reason why God should not give more grace to men than to angels (cf. *Mt* 20, 15). Furthermore, St. Thomas actually did hold Christ's grace was more efficacious after the Incarnation than before for mankind as well: "Ad decimum dicendum, quod quia nondum erat meritum Christi in actu, nec satisfactio ante incarnationem; ideo non erat tanta gratiae plenitudo sicut et post" (*De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 10). This would apply equally to the angels. Moreover, merit is not only contingent upon grace, but also upon the proportion between grace and will, the nature of which differs between man and angels.

Thomas' doctrine is completely homogenized, that there was no development in his thought. Were this the case, then these early affirmations could well serve as a point of departure to defend the "thomistic" position. But if St. Thomas himself matured in his thought, it would be wiser to interpret his texts from the vantage of his later, mature articulations. To this critical point, we shall return later.

It seems, furthermore, that a good part of the discussion of any possible "efficient causality" by Christ over the essential grace of the angels is restricted to a discussion of Christ's *merit*. Where His instrumental causality is discussed, it is not sufficiently explored. When we speak of Christ's *merit*, we are discussing the activity of His human will; when we discuss the instrumentality of His humanity, the principal agent is His divine Will. The one is temporal; the other eternal. Hence, the Son, by His divine will and in view of His own future merits as man, could cause grace as was the case in the Immaculate Conception. But His human will – not yet existing – could have had no active part in that.¹⁹ Yet, it is precisely in this area where we can verify great growth in the thought of St. Thomas. Possibly his greatest contributions to Christology and sacramental theology lies in this area of the instrumental causality of Christ's humanity.

Already in the *Sentence Commentary*, we find St. Thomas acquainted with the unique quality of Christ's merit in virtue of the Hypostatic Union. Still, it was only later, after deeper contact with Dionysius, that he developed more completely the doctrine on the theandric activity of Christ. In time, he distinguishes the twofold, concomitant causality of the divine and human wills in all the activities of the GOD-Man, Jesus Christ. The specific application of this distinction will be seen in the analysis of St. Thomas' later texts. Here, I only suggest that the failure to discern this development in his doctrine made it difficult for many commentators to harmonize St. Thomas' early and later remarks on the relation of Christ to the essential beatitude of the angels.²⁰

¹⁹ John of St. Thomas, by a certain over-accentuation of the Gratia Unionis gets confused, confounding as he does, instrumental with meritorious causality. He claims: "Si autem [Christus] gratiam habitalem non haberet, posset quidem aliis mereri gratiam, sed non ita conaturaliter..." (*loc. cit.*, p. 259, XLII). And when he discusses Christ's instrumentality, one gets the impression that the instrument is His grace rather than His humanity (*ibid.* 259-261).

²⁰ E. g., Bañez, Medina, Vasquez, Alvarez, who all deny any substantial efficacy of Christ's humanity over the angels, are accustomed to cite the young St. Thomas indis-

II. The Development in the Doctrine on Grace in St. Thomas

1. Super lib. III Sent., dist. 13, q. 2., a. 1c

Thomas' *Sentence Commentary* was written before he had reached 25 years of age. It was the standard task for (new) professors to comment upon the doctrine of Peter Lombard. In doing so, St. Thomas largely took over and repeated Lombard's traditional doctrine on the relationship between Christ and the angels. The common and traditional thought of his day was the point of departure for Thomas' reflections on Christ's influence upon the angels, but not his point of arrival.

In *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2., a. 1c Christ is affirmed to be the Head of the angels, but not in the same way that He is the Head of man. First, there is wanting the conformity in nature, which unites us men in a special way to Christ. The link with the angels is only the generic bond of a common intellectual nature.

Secondly, the relationship in grace is also diverse: for Christ exercised no influence over the angels' essential grace; for He did not free them from any obstacles; nor did He merit grace for them; nor did He intercede for them since they were already beatified – “non influit Angelis removendo prohibens, aut merendo gratiam, aut orando pro eis, quia jam beati sunt”.²¹ The influence which He did exercise in their regard was limited to the exercise and direction of their hierarchical activities. He enlightened the angels and thereby led them to a greater degree of perfection in the execution of their sacred ministries.

Thus, the youthful Thomas acknowledged only two administrative prerogatives of Christ over the angels: illumination and guidance of their ministries. This is already something significant. Still, from this theological perspective, the unity of the angels with Christ is social and extrinsic with respect to their ministries. It is extrinsic with respect to their union in grace.²²

criminally against his later works without any regard for development in thought (cf. LAWRENCE, *loc. cit.*, pp. 25. 47).

²¹ Note that the reason he gives for this is their prior beatification. It is not formally related to the fact that they are angels. For a similar reason Thomas argued that Christ could not merit for mankind that lived before the Incarnation.

²² Medina makes the interesting observation about Christ's meritorious causality:

To cull a judgment from this text alone, one would have to conclude that the essential grace and glory of the angels do not derive from the merits of Christ. It would seem to follow that the angels' relationship to (membership in) the Church is merely social or political. Whereas man's unity with Christ in the Church is vital and organic, the angels would remain, as it were, domestics, outsiders and servants.

Caution, however, is advised with this conclusion. Rather than repeating this position with ever greater clarity, St. Thomas grows more tacit. Within a few years time (i. e., after the *De Veritate*) his focal point is no longer the merit of Christ, but the instrumental causality contingent upon the Hypostatic Union. When he speaks of Christ's merits, he is more circumspect; moreover, the content of his thought is different.²³ Later, he will not hesitate to attribute the extensive causality of Christ's merit over mankind prior to the Incarnation.²⁴

“Christus est caput Angelorum et hominum, ex quo consequens est, quod tam Angeli quam homines sint membra hujus capitis, at si non causaret gratiam et gloriam in Angelis, non esset una ratio caput utrorumque, nec Angeli et homines constituerent unum corpus, nec unam Ecclesiam in genere gratiae et gloriae” (Commentary on Thomas' *Sentence Commentary*, Bk. III, Venice, 1582, p. 147; cited from L. JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 30). Interestingly, Medina rejects this position as being unlikely (*ibid.* p. 148). The mere appeal to a greater glory for Christ or for a greater formal unity in the Mystical Body does not constitute, per se, a demonstration that it must be so. God is not bound to create a “better world”. The question, of course, is: what does Scripture reveal on this matter. St. Thomas was willing to struggle with this question, even when his own theological tools were not up to the job. Others have been inclined to put Scripture on the procrustean bed of their own *a priori* position, cutting it down to match.

²³ In *S.Th.* III q. 19, a. 4c, asking if Christ could merit for others, he simply answers yes, without considering or distinguishing about Christ's relationship to the past. Similarly, in *Compendium Theologiae*, cap. 231, nr. 489 (written after 1270), he merely affirms that Christ can merit for us, but says nothing about the relationship of His merit to mankind before the Incarnation. The same peculiar silence is observed when discussing related topics: in cap. 214, nr. 429 the plenitude of Christ's grace and its diffusion to others; in cap. 215, nr. 432f in discussing the infinity of Christ's grace.

²⁴ Cf., *S.Th.* I-II q. 114, a. 6 and *S.Th.* III q. 19, a. 4. In *S.Th.* III q. 48, a. 1c, without mentioning the angels, he predicates the merits of Christ over all the members of the Mystical Body: “Christus per suam passionem non solum sibi, sed etiam omnibus membris suis meruit salutem.” The point here is that the merit extends somehow back before the Incarnation, at least for mankind (cf. *De Verit.*, q. 26, a. 6 ad 21). How that applies he does not specify clearly, but it could be linked to the fact the whole Church is like the “mystic person of Christ”. “In Christo non solum fuit gratia sicut in quodam homine singulari, sed sicut in capite totius Ecclesiae, cui omnes uniuntur sicut capiti membra, ex quibus constituitur

Why was it that Thomas articulated himself so forcefully at the beginning, and with such reserve later on? In his youth, St. Thomas (along with his contemporaries) did not attribute any strict *efficient* causality to the Man, Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption, but only to Christ in His Divinity.²⁵ His understanding of Christ's merit, or perhaps its application, develop along with his deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ and His relationship to the Church.²⁶ Upon this depends the entire mediation, priesthood and Headship of Christ in the soteriology of St. Thomas.

Thomas' own mentor, St. Albert the Great, never considered the humanity of Christ as the *instrumental cause* of grace and salvation, neither in His crucifixion nor in the sacraments. Consider this affirmation of St. Albert:

Ipse [Christus] quidem qui est caput, adhuc effective influit, sed non in quantum homo: sed influit sic tripliciter, scilicet meritorie, quia meretur nobis influxum gratiae:²⁷ et mediatoris modo sive redemptionis, quia tollit obstaculum influxus in nos, quod obstaculum est debitum Adae quod solvit. Tertio modo exemplariter.²⁸

And a bit later he says that for us to receive habitual grace in His similitude:

Exigitur influentiae capitis quae supra dicta est, scilicet ad hoc quod efficienter secundum quod Deus, et meritorie secundum quod homo nobis influat similem gratiam suae gratiae, licet non tantam.²⁹

mystice una persona. Et exinde est quod meritum Christi se extendit ad alios, in quantum sunt membra eius, sicut etiam in uno homine actio capitis aequaliter pertinet ad omnia membra eius, quia non solum sibi sentit, sed omnibus membris" (*S.Th.* III q. 19 a. 4c).

²⁵ There is a certain "efficiency" to *merit*, but he always treated it as something which disposed man for grace rather than being the immediate cause of the infusion of grace.

²⁶ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 48, a. 1c: "Cristo data est gratia non solum sicut singulari personae, sed in quantum est caput Ecclesiae, ut scilicet *ab ipso redundaret ad membra*. Et ideo opera Christi hoc modo se habet tam ad se quam ad sua membra... Christus per passionem non solum sibi, sed etiam omnibus membris suis meruit salutem." Also ad 1: "Christus a principio suae conceptionis meruit nobis salutem aeternam." And what He merited was sanctifying grace, and not just the removal of the impediments to grace, which was Thomas' earlier position in the *Sentence Commentary*.

²⁷ St. Albert's notion of the "mechanics" of merit is also different. The good Christ does, brings it about that God infuses grace directly into others. For Thomas Christ's merit brings about the inflow into others precisely in the measure that they are members of His body. It is an organic, internal operation (cf. preceding footnote).

²⁸ St. ALBERT MAGNUS, *In III Sent.*, dist. 13, a. 3c.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, dist. 13, a. 5c.

And with respect to Christ our Head: “Si autem consideretur ut principium influens effective tantum, est caput omnino secundum deitatem.”³⁰

Emilio Sauras resumes well the state of Thomas’ thought at this point of his career:

In his first works he does not disassociate himself completely from the manner in which his contemporaries explained the redemptive causality of Christ the Man. In the question which he dedicates to the capital grace of Christ in the *Sentence Commentary* of Peter Lombard, he declares that the Man Christ “accomplished a most noble deed in the Church, namely, redeeming and edifying it with His Blood” (*III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1). Furthermore, through Him “we receive the sense [gift] of faith and the movement of charity” (*ibid.*). He says nothing about the efficient, instrumental causality which He employs to realize these things.

A little before this, speaking about Christ’s individual, habitual grace, he recalls a doctrine of St. John Damascene according to which the assumed humanity was an instrument of the Word in His exterior actions, in the way in which the body is also an instrument of the soul for its exterior actions (*III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 1, a. 1 ad 4). The Word worked by means of the humanity, and for this reason the humanity needed to be sanctified. But he does not say that these *instrumental acts* of the humanity were specifically redemptive. We already recalled that the theologians of his time insisted that the intervention of Christ the Man in the work of redemption was exclusively moral, reserving the entire efficient [causality] for Christ as God. The Angelic Doctor defends the divine [efficient] causality and the moral [causality] of Christ the Man in his commentary on the *Sentences*, something which he will continue to defend in all his subsequent works. He recalls that Christ the Man exercises an instrumental function for the Word in his personal actions; but still he does not apply this instrumentality to the redemptive works.³¹

³⁰ *Ibid.*, dist. 13, a. 2c.

³¹ Cf. Emilio SUARAS OP, *El Cuerpo Místico de Cristo*, BAC, Madrid 1956: “En sus primeras obras no se desentiende totalmente de la manera como explicaban sus contemporáneos la causalidad redentora de Cristo hombre. En la cuestión que dedica a la gracia capital en el *Comentario a las Sentencias* de Pedro Lombardo dice que Cristo hombre ‘realiza un acto dignísimo en la Iglesia, a saber, redimirla y edificarla con su sangre’ (*III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1), y que por El ‘recibimos el sentido de la fe y el movimiento de la caridad’ (*ibid.*). No dice nada sobre la causalidad eficiente instrumental que desempeña para realizar esto.”

“Un poco antes, hablando de su gracia habitual individual, recuerda una doctrina de San Juan Damasceno, según la cual la naturaleza asumida era instrumento del Verbo en sus acciones exteriores, a la manera como el cuerpo es instrumento del alma en las acciones

Since merit is that type of “causality” which issues from the *human will*, it is understandable that authors would tend to deny any such efficacy to Christ before the existence of His humanity. However, even in this there is a danger of “proving too much”. Why? Because formally this argument would apply equally to mankind before the Incarnation, such that even as Christ was unable to merit anything for the angels, even so would He have been unable to have merited anything for mankind before Him.³²

The question, of course, is how the grace of Christ could be applied to men (and angels) before the mystery of the Incarnation. To radically deny this possibility would derogate the unique mediatorship of Christ. In fact, arguing from *I Tm* 2, 5 St. Thomas goes so far as to say that Christ, as mediator, justified those of the OT through the action of *their* faith and hope in Him. Though he does not designate this as efficient causality, as he does the active merit of Christ upon the living, it nevertheless sufficed for Christ to be their Head according to His humanity.³³ He also observes: at that point in time “nondum erat meritum Christi in actu, ... ideo non erat tanta gratiae plenitudo sicut et post.”³⁴ *Ergo*, grace related to His merit

exteriores también (*In III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 1, a. 1 ad 4). El Verbo obraba mediante la humanidad, y por eso la humanidad debía estar santificada; pero no dice todavía que estos *actos instrumentales* de la humanidad fueran específicamente redentores. Hemos recordado que los teólogos de su tiempo aseguraban que la intervención de Cristo hombre en la redención era sólo moral, dejando la eficiente para Cristo Dios. El Angélico defiende en su comentario a las *Sentencias* la causalidad de Dios y la moral de Cristo hombre, cosa que seguirá defendiendo en todas sus obras siguientes. Recuerda que Cristo hombre ejerce funciones de instrumento del Verbo en sus obras personales. Pero no aplica todavía la instrumentalidad a las obras redentoras.” (pp. 209-210)

A further verification of this position with respect to the principal effect of sanctifying grace can be found later in the 4th Book of the *Sentence Commentary*, where St. Thomas explains that the instrumental causality of the sacraments extends only to certain effects but does not cause sanctifying grace (cf. *IV Sent.*, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1c: “Ad ultimum autem effectum, quod est gratia, non pertingunt etiam instrumentaliter, nisi dispositive, in quantum hoc ad quod instrumentaliter effective pertingunt, est dispositio, quae est necessitas, quantum in se est, ad gratiae susceptionem.”)

³² *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 9.

³³ Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 9. In *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 7 ad 5 he notes that Christ could merit only for “viatores”, that is, not for those who had already finished their course, like angels and men of the OT before the Incarnation, at least, with respect to their essential determination (cf. *S.Th.* III q. 59, a. 6).

³⁴ *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 10; cf. *S.Th.* III q. 62, a. 6c: efficient causality presumes actual

was somehow made present, since the saints of the OT were vivified by the grace of Christ.

A formal explanation is not forthcoming, other than the fact that the final cause can be posterior in time to the events which it “influences”.

Still, the difficulty is not resolved with the mere claim that people of the OT were justified by their faith and hope in the coming Redeemer (*causa finalis!*). First, because that very revelation was either a benefit attributable to Christ or it was not. If not, then Christ is not the only mediator between God and man (cf. *1 Tm 2, 5*). Secondly, in order to make such acts of faith and hope in that revealed truth, man required *actual* graces, which – if not attributable to Christ – would necessarily introduce mediators of grace into the economy of salvation, who do not draw from the Mystery of Christ, sole source of grace (at least for mankind).

Ministries of the Angels are a Principle of Grace

Christ’s unique mediatorship is also not guaranteed by the mere claim that Christ illuminates and governs the ministries of the holy angels. First, because the denial of the applicability of His merit before the Incarnation would obliterate His mediation – not only over the essential grace of the angels, not only over their accidental graces, but also over the whole of mankind in the OT.

And going further: even after the Incarnation, Christ’s unique mediatorship is not safeguarded under the supposition that His influence over the angels is restricted to the accidental order of grace. Why? Because the angels’ ministerial power is itself *formally* an instrumental cause in the order of grace. St. Thomas teaches this in several places, affirming that the hierarchical offices of the angels are formally due to sanctifying grace (better: *lumen gloriae*) and only dispositively due to nature.³⁵ The angels’ supernatural, ministerial power to enlighten man about the mys-

existence. The point in *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 7, 5 comes from a different perspective: since the essential judgment of the angels and men of the OT is already determined, Christ could not merit for them, since merit is for “viatores” (cf. also *S.Th.* III q. 59, a. 6).

³⁵ In this question St. Thomas held one position consistently throughout his life. “Ordo in Angelis non attenditur secundum distinctionem naturae, nisi per accidens, in quantum ad distinctionem naturae sequitur in eis distinctio gratiae. Attenditur autem per se secundum distinctionem in gratia, quia eorum ordines respiciunt participationem divinorum, et communicationem in statu gloriae, quae est secundum mensuram gratiae, quasi gratiae finis et effectus quodammodo. Sed ordines Ecclesiae militantis respiciunt participationem sacramentorum, et communicationem, quae sunt causa gratiae, et quodam-

teries of the faith is only possible on the basis of their beatific vision; it is not some *gratia gratis data* that can be accidentally conferred on the angels. In an analogy to Christ (whose personal habitual grace is identical *secundum rem* to His *gratia capitalis*),³⁶ the angels' grace of glory is identical *secundum rem* with their ministerial power to enlighten and minister. Inasmuch as this is a formal and essential contributor to the grace they mediate, the exclusive mediatorship of Christ over mankind cannot be guaranteed unless the very supernatural power of the angels to minister also be anchored in the grace of Christ. Their ministerial power must be a share in His ministry, even as St. Thomas elsewhere teaches it to be.³⁷

Accordingly, the position presented by St. Thomas in *III Sent.*, d. 13, q. 2., a. 1c is already problematic in itself. While he never formally adverts to this difficulty, his final solution does give an answer to the problem (without really resolving, that is, explaining it). The way to the resolution lies in the deeper understanding of the theandric activity of Christ, and possibly also in the dual causality that is contingent upon the Hypostatic Union, i. e., meritorious and instrumental causality. Such that the divine Person could apply what He would later merit.³⁸

modo gratiam praecedunt; et sic non est de necessitate nostrorum ordinum gratia gratum faciens, sed solum potestas dispensandi sacramenta; et propter hoc etiam ordo non attenditur per distinctionem gratiae gratum facientis, sed per distinctionem potestatis" (*IV Sent.*, dist. 24, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1 ad 3; cf. *II Sent.*, dist. 9, a. 7).

And in the *De Malo*, one of his last works, he writes: "Cum ordo in Angelis ponatur pars hierarchiae, quae est sacer principatus, manifestum est quod ordo essentialiter consistit in dono gratiae; et secundum differentiam donorum gratuitorum ordines distinguuntur; licet distinctio naturalium bonorum praesupponatur materialiter et dispositive. Sed notandum est, quod donum gratiae potest considerari dupliciter. Uno modo quantum ad hoc quod unit Deo, et secundum hoc non distinguuntur ordines Angelorum, sed omnes conveniunt... . Alio modo potest considerari donum gratiae in quantum ordinat ad opus; et secundum hoc gratia diversificatur in diversis ordinibus prout ad diversa officia ordinantur" (q. 7, a. 3 ad 12; cf. *S.Th.* I q. 108, a. 4). Note that Thomas is speaking of "grace" in the singular. This is the essential grace of the angels. As their personal grace it unites them to God in glory; at the same time it is the foundation for their ministry.

³⁶ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 5.

³⁷ "Christus autem maior Angelis fuit, non solum secundum divinitatem, sed etiam secundum humanitatem, in quantum habuit plenitudinem gratiae et gloriae. Unde etiam excellentiori modo hierarchicam seu sacerdotalem potestatem prae Angelis habuit, ita etiam quod ipsi Angeli fuerunt ministri sacerdotii eius" (*S.Th.* III q. 22, a. 1 ad 1).

³⁸ The Church does something like this in the pastoral ministry of the Sacrament of Penance. The "matter" of this sacrament are the acts of the virtue of penance, which, as a

2. De Veritate, q. 29, a. 5c: De Gratia capitalis Christi

Three or four years after writing the *Sentence Commentary*, St. Thomas publicly debated questions on Christ's grace of Headship.³⁹ It was a period of transition in his thought. We focus our attention on *Article 5* which asks: "whether in order to be Head of the Church Christ required habitual grace, that is, sanctifying grace". In the intervening years, St. Thomas had deepened his appreciation of two complementary doctrines, drawn from two Greek fathers of the Church, Dionysius and John Damascene. Their intuitions helped revolutionize St. Thomas' understanding of the mystery of Christ and His efficacy in the economy of salvation.

St. John Damascene had perceived that the humanity of Christ served the Word as an instrument, in much the same way that our hand serves the soul as an attached, organic instrument,⁴⁰ Strangely, Damascene did not develop this truth in its soteriological ramifications. St. Thomas perceived that the humanity of Christ served the Word not only as an instrument in those things proper to His own humanity, but also in all things proper to His mission as Redeemer and Sanctifier, as Head of the Church. The humanity of Christ is the fulcrum in the economy of salvation.

This efficacy goes beyond merit. Centuries earlier, Dionysius articulated the fundamental idea of the theandric or divine-human activity of Christ.⁴¹ Since in Christ there is one person with two natures, and ac-

part of justice has three integral parts: self-accusation (confession), contrition, satisfaction (restitution). In the early Church, it was required of the penitents that they complete all these acts before absolution. With time the Church understood that she could absolve those penitents on the basis of their sincere resolution to complete the work of satisfaction (restitution) in the future. The same applies, in cases of necessity, with general absolution, whereby the faithful are obliged to complete the self-accusation of their sins in the next confession. Hence, grace is communicated in anticipation of the actual presentation of the acts of the virtue of penance.

³⁹ Probably written in 1258-59. We follow the chronology presented by Raymund Spiazzi OP, in *S. Thomae Aquinatis, Quaestiones Disputate*. Vol. I. *De Veritate*. Marietti, Rome, 1964, p. xiv.

⁴⁰ *De fide orthodoxa*, III, 15 (PG 94, 1060) and III, 19 (PG 94, 1080). St. Thomas makes the reference at the beginning of the response of *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 5: "Dicendum, quod, sicut dicit Damascenus, humanitas Christi quasi instrumentum divinitatis fuit; et ideo actiones eius nobis poterant esse salubres".

⁴¹ Cf. *De Divinis Nominibus*, II, 5, in fine (Marietti, nr. 207); *S.Th.* III q. 19, a. 1.

cordingly two wills, it follows that the actions of the Man Jesus Christ have simultaneously a double efficacy. First, there is a divine efficacy inasmuch as these actions are willed by God but accomplished through His hypostatically united humanity. Secondly, they have a meritorious efficacy in the measure that they proceed from Christ's human will. Concerning the divine-human activity, St. Thomas observes:

Divina natura utitur operatione naturae humanae sicut operatione sui instrumenti; et similiter humana natura participat operationem divinae naturae, sicut instrumentum participat operationem principalis agentis.⁴²

Operatio quae est humanae naturae in Christo, in quantum est instrumentum divinitatis, non est alia ab operatione divinitatis; non enim est alia salvatio qua salvat humanitas Christi, et divinitas eius.⁴³

Each nature, the divine and human, has its own proper principle of operation. His human acts flow from His human nature, sanctified by grace, and from His human will. As such, they are *meritorious*. Moreover, the merits of the Man Christ are infinite in view of the dignity of the divine Person Who performs them in and through His human will. Additionally, the divine will is active producing the work of redemption in and through Christ's humanity as its instrument. The human nature of Christ is the contact point between God and creation. St. Paul exclaims: "*God was truly in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself*" (2 Cor 5, 19). The efficient cause is God. The instrumental cause of grace (and not merely the occasion) is the humanity of Christ. The instrumentality of Christ's humanity is not that of an inanimate object which is entirely passive and moved wholly by the principal agent. Rather, as the "Servant of the Lord", the Man Jesus also acts and collaborates with the divine causality with His human will. In the Hypostatic union Christ's human nature and will are existentially united to the Logos, they are the human nature and human will of the Logos Himself.

Restating this point with respect to the work of redemption: the Son as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, are the divine efficient cause of redemption;⁴⁴ they work it in and through the humanity of Christ. Here is the instrumental causality

⁴² *S.Th.* III q. 19, a. 1c.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, q. 19, a. 1 ad 2.

⁴⁴ God is the principal agent of salvation, the "auctor gratiae".

of Christ. But the Son exercises this causality in a unique way, because the humanity of Christ is His own personal humanity, and not that of the Father or of the Spirit.

In addition to this divine efficient causality, which the Son exercises with the other two divine persons, the Son, additionally and solely, enjoys the human meritorious causality that is proper to His human nature and will. Thus our salvation – our grace – is both merited and efficiently caused through the humanity of Christ.⁴⁵

The ramifications of this doctrine permeate all of Christology and Soteriology. They can be seen clearly, for example, in the sacramental doctrine of St. Thomas. Before his time theologians referred only to the meritorious causality of Christ with respect to the sacraments, but did not consider them as actual efficient causes of the infusion of grace. The young Thomas himself held this opinion. The sacraments were largely seen as the ritual occasion used by the Holy Spirit to infuse grace into the soul. For example, the water of baptism was said to “wash away sin”, but was not actually held to instrumentally cause the infusion of sanctifying grace.⁴⁶

For the sake of completeness, it is proper to note that already in the *Sentence Commentary* St. Thomas did grant a certain instrumental causality of the sacraments. There he states: God “utitur sacramentis quasi quibusdam instrumentis justificationis”.⁴⁷ As sacramental signs, what they externally signified on the body, be it the washing with water or the anointing with oil, “ulterius, in quantum sunt instrumenta divinae misericordiae justificantis, pertingunt instrumentaliter ad *aliquem effectum* in ipsa anima”.⁴⁸ In certain sacraments this effect was said to be the sacramental character. However, he refused to extend this instrumental causality to sanctifying grace – the very issue of our investigation:

Ad ultimum autem effectum, quod est gratia, non pertingunt [sacramenta] etiam instrumentaliter, nisi dispositive, in quantum hoc ad quod instrumentaliter effective pertingunt, est dispositio, quae est necessitas, quantum in se est, ad gratiae susceptionem.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 48, aa. 1 et 6.

⁴⁶ St. Thomas rectified this theology; cf. *S.Th.* III q. 62, a. 1c et ad 2; q. 62, a. 2c; q. 69, a. 4, etc.

⁴⁷ *IV Sent.*, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1c.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *IV Sent.*, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1c. Even less so did he understand how to explain the

The effect of sanctifying grace was something that Thomas, at that point of his career, understood to be necessarily reserved to the direct causality of God:

Sed quaedam sunt quae sibi Deus retinuit, immediate ea operans; et in his creatura Deo non cooperatur hoc tertio modo, sed quarto modo potest ei cooperari; sicut patet in creatione animae rationalis, quam immediate Deus producit, sed tamen natura disponit materiam ad animae rationalis receptionem. Et quia recreatio animae rationalis creationi ipsius respondet, ideo in emundatione ipsius immediate operatur; nec aliquis ei quantum ad hoc cooperatur tertio modo, sed quarto; et hoc dupliciter: vel ex opere operante, sive docendo, sive merendo; et sic homines ei cooperantur in peccatorum remissione, de quibus dicitur 1 Corinth. 3, 9: *Dei adiutores sumus*, vel ex opere operato, sicut qui conferunt sacramenta, quae ad gratiam disponunt ...⁵⁰

From this text Thomas' problem becomes evident: he saw the infusion of grace as equivalent to the creation of grace. Since in the act of creation no creature can function, even instrumentally, neither the humanity of Christ nor the sacraments could be an instrumental cause of sanctifying grace.

At that point he realized that, as such, the sacraments of the New Law would not have any special causal excellence over those of the Old Law. But since the humanity of Christ is the instrument of the divine Person, indeed of the Godhead, the sacraments are, in fact, the instrumental cause of holiness and not merely an extrinsic occasion.⁵¹

That awareness helped him to perceive the infusion of grace, not as an act of creation in the strict sense, but rather as a participation in the grace already present in the soul of Christ, as St. John exclaims: "From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (*Jn* 1, 16).⁵² Thus, it is by

transubstantiation in the Holy Eucharist: "Ad sextum dicendum, quod in transubstantiatione, cum sit quasi quidam motus vel mutatio, duo sunt, scilicet recessus a termino, et accessus ad terminum. Verba ergo sacramentalia pertinent instrumentaliter ad transubstantiationem quantum ad recessum a termino a quo; sed quantum ad accessum ad terminum ad quem non pertinent instrumentaliter, nisi dispositive, sicut in aliis sacramentis accidit" (*IV Sent.*, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1 ad 6).

⁵⁰ *IV Sent.*, dist. 5, q. 1, a. 2c.

⁵¹ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 62, aa. 1-5.

⁵² Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 48, a. 1 ad 1: "Caput et membra sunt *quasi una persona mystica*. Et ideo satisfactio Christi ad omnes fideles pertinet sicut ad sua membra" (cf. *De Verit.*, q. 29,

incorporation into Christ that we share His life. Therefore, St. Thomas links these ideas:

Necesse est dicere sacramenta novae legis per aliquem modum *gratiam causare*. Manifestum est enim quod per sacramenta novae legis homo Christo *incorporatur*, sicut de Baptismo dicit apostolus, Galat. III, quotquot in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis. Non autem efficitur homo membrum Christi nisi per gratiam.⁵³

These insights, though, were first articulated by St. Thomas with respect to the Church and to the Capital Grace of Christ. In *De Veritate*, q. 29, art. 5, he writes:

Dicendum, quod, sicut dicit Damascenus, humanitas Christi quasi instrumentum divinitatis fuit; et ideo actiones eius nobis poterant esse salubres. In quantum ergo speciale divinitatis instrumentum fuit, oportuit quamdam specialem coniunctionem ipsius ad divinitatem esse.

Unaquaeque autem substantia tanto a Deo plenius bonitatem eius participat, quanto ad eius bonitatem appropinquat, ut patet per Dionysium XII cap. *Caelestis Hierarchiae* [cap. IV]. Unde et humanitas Christi, ex hoc ipso quod prae aliis vicinius et specialius divinitati erat coniuncta, excellentius bonitatem divinam participavit per gratiae donum.

Ex quo idoneitas in ea fuit ut non solum gratiam haberat, sed etiam per eam gratia in alios transfunderetur, sicut per corpora magis lucentia lumen solis ad alia transit.⁵⁴

Et quia Christus in omnes creaturas rationales quodammodo effectus gratiarum influit, inde est quod ipse est principium quodammodo omnis

a. 7 ad 11). Also *S.Th.* III q. 49, a. 1c: “Passio Christi est propria causa remissionis peccatorum... Passio Christi causat remissionem peccatorum per modum redemptionis. Quia enim ipse est caput nostrum, per passionem suam, quam ex caritate et obedientia sustinuit, liberavit nos, tanquam membra sua peccatis... ita tota Ecclesia, quae est mysticum corpus Christi, computatur quasi una persona cum suo capite, quod est Christus. [Uterius], per modum efficientiae, in quantum caro secundum quam Christus passionem sustinuit, est instrumentum divinitatis, ex quo eius passiones et actiones operantur in virtute divina ad expellendum peccatum.”

⁵³ III q. 62, a. 1c. Christ himself makes the matter even clearer, declaring Himself to be the vine, and we the branches (cf. *Jn* 15, 1ff).

⁵⁴ Christ is compared to the sun, because with respect to the first cause, the sun is a secondary agent. In the same way, Christ is the “secondary” agent of grace. But the sun, in the philosophy of St. Thomas, acts formally in shining, and even so does Christ according to His singular hypostatic constitution.

gratiae secundum humanitatem, sicut Deus est principium omnis esse: unde, sicut in Deo omnis essendi perfectio adunatur, ita in Christo omnis gratiae plenitudo et virtutis invenitur, per quam non solum ipse possit in gratiae opus, set etiam alios in gratiam adducere. Et per hoc habet capitis rationem.⁵⁵

With this text he makes a breakthrough in his understanding of the causality and Headship of Christ. The works and humanity of Christ are no longer simply occasions for God to infuse grace, but are the proximate cause of this infusion of grace. And this permits him to overcome the arbitrary strictures of Peter Lombard concerning the relationship of the angels to Christ. From the foregoing text, let us retain the following points:

1. It is a question here of the supernatural, **vital influence** of Christ as man **over all rational creatures**, men and angels.
2. It is a question of Christ being the **source of all grace** including sanctifying grace, and not just some graces.
3. The predication is restricted twice by the term “quodammodo” (“in a certain sense”). This restriction refers to the distinction between the *principal* agent whose efficient causality is predicated absolutely, and the *instrumental* agency of the humanity of Christ, which is a predication “secundum quid”, that is restricted in a certain sense.⁵⁶
4. The comparison with the divine causality could not be stated more emphatically. Thomas compares the sanctifying power of the humanity of Christ to the creative power of God:

God the Creator — Christ according to His humanity

The being of creatures — The grace in all rational creatures

The title of Headship over the Church is no longer understood as an administrative office of directing the ministries of men and angels in the Church, but Headship is now understood *vitally* with respect to the influence of all grace unto men and angels. Accordingly, this Headship is the principle of the organic unity in the Church.

⁵⁵ *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 5c. Note also that he does not limit Headship here to government, but to the more radical efficacy of drawing others into the state of grace.

⁵⁶ This distinction was explained in the preceding article, *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4c: “Potest aliquis intelligi *influer*e dupliciter. Uno modo sicut principale agens: et sic solius Dei est influere gratiam in membra Ecclesiae. Alio modo instrumentaliter: et sic etiam humanitas Christi causa est influentiae praedictae.”

Whereas the *meritorious* causality of Christ is through His human will, the *instrumental* causality predicated of Christ is caused by His divine will acting through His humanity. This distinction is all the more poignant since, in a subsequent article, the young Thomas will deny again that Christ *merited* beatitude for the angels: “Angeli autem non sunt viatores quantum ad praemium essentiale; et ideo quantum ad hoc nihil eis meruit.”⁵⁷

It would be false, though, to isolate this affirmation so as to be applicable only to the holy angels. He also applied it to mankind before Christ and, notwithstanding, by their faith they share His grace and He was their head:

Christus, secundum quod homo, **dupliciter** nos iustificare dicitur. *Uno modo* secundum suam actionem, in quantum nobis meruit et pro nobis satisfecit; et secundum hoc **non poterat dici caput Ecclesiae ante Incarnationem**. *Alio modo* per operationem nostram in ipsum secundum quod dicimur per fidem eius *justificari*; et per hunc modum etiam poterat esse *caput Ecclesiae* ante Incarnationem secundum humanitatem.⁵⁸

The new discovery of the instrumental causality of Christ will offer a new solution to the problem that he will articulate later. Here, it is the *action* of the saints of the OT towards Christ in Faith that brings them grace. Later, he will relegate the question of merit to a secondary level and attribute the causality directly to Christ, the Son of God, acting through His humanity.

This is why the mere affirmation that Christ did not actively merit for the angels does not suffice to conclude that their essential grace is not Christological. Already in the *Sentence Commentary*, he had found a way by means of which the future Incarnation could somehow be made “present”, and therefore effective, at least through faith:

Quamvis Christus nondum fuisset incarnatus tempore patrum veteris testamenti secundum rem, *erat tamen jam incarnatio ipsa in Dei ordinatione, et in fide ipsorum*, secundum quam fidem justificabantur: quia tempora mutata sunt, et non fides, ut dicit Augustinus. Sed tamen **non fuit tanta influentia** ante incarnationem, quanta est modo: quia tunc non erat remotum obstaculum, nec sacramenta gratiae exhibita erant, sicut modo sunt.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 7 ad 5.

⁵⁸ *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 9.

⁵⁹ *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 2 ad 4; cf. *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 10. Of course, if there was “less grace” then there **was grace!**

The transition from merit to instrumental causality allows a quantum leap with respect to the efficacy of Christ's grace before the Incarnation. The application, though, is slow in coming. In the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas continues to maintain that the order of efficient causality is limited to that which is presently existent.⁶⁰ It is not that he will change this principle, but will rise to the eternity of the Word. Where it is a question of merit, men's faith had to act upon the future Christ; practically drawing Him (His grace) into their hearts. But that same grace was also, at the disposal of the eternal Logos, to be infused into the hearts of men.

The Exemplarity of Christ in the Order of Grace

The potential "efficacy" of the exemplarity of Christ's humanity merits further consideration. Christ is the exemplar of the entire creation – through Him and unto Him all things are created, Who is the Head of the Church – (Col 1, 17-18). Speaking of the divine ideas, St. Thomas notes: "In omnibus enim quae non a casu generantur, necesse est formam [idea] esse finem generationis cuiuscumque."⁶¹ This ordering in the divine mind is nothing less than divine providence, and insofar as providence orders rational creatures to eternal life, it is called predestination: "Ratio autem alicuius fiendi in mente actoris existens, est quaedam praesistentia rei fiendae in eo. Unde ratio praedictae transmissionis creaturae rationalis in finem vitae aeternae praedestinatio nominatur, nam destinare est mittere".⁶²

This all has a more momentous application in the present case since the Person, Jesus, actually exists eternally and orders all rational creatures to be formed in His supernatural likeness. In the way of such exemplarity and anticipation, Christ's graces could have been bestowed before the Incarnation. The thesis can surely be raised as a consequence of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which is attributed to the future merits of Christ.⁶³ If Christ is truly the universal exemplar, then all grace

⁶⁰ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 62, a. 6c: "Illud quod nondum est in rerum natura, non movet secundum usum exteriorum rerum. Unde causa efficiens non potest esse posterior in esse, ordine durationis, sicut causa finalis. Sic ergo manifestum est quod a passione Christi, quae est causa humanae justificationis, convenienter derivatur virtus justificativa ad sacramenta novae legis, non autem ad sacramenta veteris legis."

⁶¹ *S.Th.* I q. 15, a. 1c.

⁶² *S.Th.* I q. 23, a. 1c.

⁶³ Cf. *Ineffabilis Deus* (PIUS IX., 8. Dec. 1854): "Definimus doctrinam, quae tenet,

in creation is through Him, inclusive of all the graces of the angels. St. Thomas establishes this priority with respect to Christ's Headship, stating:

Primo enim, secundum propinquitatem ad Deum gratia eius altior et prior est, *etsi non tempore, quia omnes alii acceperunt gratiam per respectum ad gratiam ipsius*, secundum illud Rom. VIII, quos praescivit, hos et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis filii sui, ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus.⁶⁴

Considered strictly, there is an equivocation when we speak of exemplarity in terms of human and divine thought and causality. We say that the building in the architect's mind is the exemplar of the building which he is about to build; in his mind it only has intentional existence. And still,

beatissimam Virginem Mariam in primo instanti suae conceptionis fuisse singulari omnipotentis Dei gratia et privilegio, *intuitu meritorum Christi Jesu Salvatoris humani generis, ab omni originalis culpa labe praeservatam immunem, esse a Deo revelatam.*" (DS 2803).

Commenting, Royo Marin OP, states: "Dios omnipotente, previendo desde toda la eternidad los méritos infinitos de Jesucristo Redentor rescatando al género humano con su sangre preciosísima, derramada en la cruz, *aceptó anticipadamente el precio de esse rescate* y lo aplicó a la Virgen María en forma de redención *preventiva*, impidiendo contraer el pecado original. ... Con la cual la Virgen María recibió de lleno la redención de Cristo – más que niguún otro redimido – y fue, a la vez, concebida en gracia, sin la menor sombra del pecado original" (*La Virgen María*, BAC, Madrid, 1968, p. 75). Marin points to an early text from St. Thomas, wherein he affirms the Immaculate Conception (*I Sent.*, dist. 44, q. 1, a. 3 ad 3). Garrigou-Lagrange suggests that at that early period St. Thomas simply followed the liturgical tradition in favor of the doctrine (*The Mother of the Saviour*, Herder, St. Louis, 1949, p. 66f). In a second period, he resisted a position that held Mary to be Immaculate and un-redeemed (*S.Th.* III q. 27). In a third and final moment, in his *Expositio super salutatione angelico* [1272 or 1273], he declares that she did not incur the guilt of Original Sin (p. 69f). Unfortunately, Garrigou-Lagrange does not specify how St. Thomas had overcome this hurdle of no application of efficient causality before the Incarnation itself.

⁶⁴ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 1c. This is also the position of John of St. Thomas: "In articulo primo [quaestionis 8], inquirat D. Thoma utrum Christus sit caput Ecclesiae, ubi Ecclesia sumitur pro universalissime omnium pertinentium ad militantem, et triumphantem, et respondet conclusione affirmativa" (*loc. cit.*, p. 247).

It is rather fabricated to make a difficulty out of the question of "brothers". The angels are called "sons of God" in the OT. In Tobit St. Raphael both identifies himself as a brother and is called such: "I will go with you; I am familiar with the way, and I have stayed with our *brother* Gabael." (5, 6); "I am Azarias the son of the great Ananias, one of your relatives." Then Tobit said to him, "You are welcome, my brother" (5, 12-13); etc. In the Book of Tobias, of course, these designations belong to the spiritual truth that is being communicated.

it is the true measure of the structure to be build and by which it is to be judged. But this “exemplar” is only a collection of accidentals!

The exemplar in the divine mind embraces the full substance of creatures and is not merely “intentional existence”. It exists there in an eminently more perfect manner in the very being of God, or more proximately, in the Word of God. Now in Christ, the “exemplata” of the sanctified creation is one – with respect to the person – with the exemplar: “Hoc modo se habet Verbum incarnatum ad Verbum increatum, sicut verbum vocis, ad verbum cordis.”⁶⁵ While His humanity did not yet exist in the flesh, it “existed” along with his habitual grace in its exemplarity in the divine plan, as the divine Idea after which all things were ordered and sanctified. While Christ’s merits (human will) did not yet exist, the Son of God did, and could act *through* the exemplarity of the GOD-Man to perfect men and angels in grace even before the exemplar itself began to exist outside of God in the flesh.⁶⁶

3. Commentary on Ephesians 1, 22ff: The Body of Christ, the fullness of Christ

In commenting on the letter to the Ephesians, St. Thomas applies once more his understanding of the instrumental causality of the human nature of Christ with respect to the Church. St. Paul, after affirming that Jesus has been established by the Father as the Head of the Church consisting of men and angels, continues saying that the Church “est corpus ipsius, et plenitudo eius, qui omnia in omnibus adimpletur” (1, 23).

St. Thomas first considers the dignity of the *Head* with respect to the *Body*, giving the reasons for its priority:

⁶⁵ St. THOMAS, *Ad Hebraeos*, I. lect. I, nr. 15 (in Marietti), referring to St. Augustine.

⁶⁶ “Sed sciendum est, quod ista praepositio ‘per’ denotat causam actus. Sed hoc est dupliciter: Uno modo, quia est causa factionis ex parte facientis, ut cum scilicet causale cui adiungitur, est causa actionis secundum quod exit ab agente. Semper enim factio est medium inter faciens et factum. Potest ergo denotare circa agens causam finalem, ut artifex operatur per lucrum; aliquando causam formale, ut ignis calefacit per calorem; aliquando vero causam efficientem, ut balivus operatur per regem. Nullo istorum modorum est Filius causa Patris, quod per illum operatur, sicut nec quod ab ipso sit.

Aliquando vero causale est causa actionis, secundum quod terminatur ad factum, ut artifex operatur per martellum. Martellus enim non est causa artificis, quod agat; sed est causa artificiato, quod ab artifice procedat, ut ferro, quod recipiat operationem ab artifice, et sic Filius est causa facti, et Pater operatur per Filium” (*Ad Hebraeos*, I. lect. I, 22).

Primo quidem quo ad praeminentiam in situ; secundo, quo ad diffusionem virtutum, *quia ab eo omnes sensus derivantur in membra*; item, quo ad conformitatem in natura. Sic ergo quantum ad praeminentiam et quantum ad diffusionem Christus est caput Angelorum. Nam Christus praeest Angelis, etiam secundum humanitatem.⁶⁷

In the following paragraphs, St. Thomas reverses the order of his reflection, considering now the relationship of the *Body* to the *Head*: “Quantum ad habitudinem Ecclesiae ad Christus, dicit ‘quae est corpus eius,’ scilicet in quantum est ei subiecta, et recipit ab eo influentiam, et habet naturam conformem cum Christo”⁶⁸ Here he explains why the Body is the fullness of Christ.⁶⁹ To this end he first reflects on the natural phenomenon of the body: “Quaerenti enim cur in corpore naturali sint tot membra, scilicet manus, pedes, etc”⁷⁰ The body, he explains, exists for the sake of the *head*, for the sake of the *soul*, and not vice versa. Note the formal shift in Thomas’s thought from the “head” to the “soul”!

The answer to the question is:

respondetur hoc esse ideo ut deserviant diversis operibus *animae*, quorum **ipsa potest esse causa, principium, et quae sunt virtute in ipsa**. Nam corpus est factum propter *animam*, et non e converso. Unde secundum hoc corpus naturale est quaedam *plenitudo animae*.⁷¹

The body serves the *soul*. The body has as many physical organs as are necessary to express and implement the capacities which are contained in the *soul*. The body, therefore, reveals the capacities of the *soul* and manifests its fullness in a corporeal, visible way.

St. Paul uses this natural relationship to illustrate the supernatural relationship of the Church to Christ. Now, whereas St. Paul speaks of the *head* and the body, his thought implicitly includes the soul, at least, to the mind

⁶⁷ St. THOMAS, *Ad Ephesios*, in: *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, II, Marietti, Romae 1953. ad 1, 23, I. lect. VIII, nr. 69. At this juncture, citing *Heb* 1, 4; *Is* 63, 1 and referring to Dionysius, he points out that Christ enlightens the angels. Those, who wish to restrict the efficacy of Christ over the angels to accidental graces, take this example as their demonstration, and ignore what follows.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, nr. 70.

⁶⁹ This predication perplexes translators, who are bluffed at the thought of the Church being the fullness of Christ, rather than Christ being the plenitude of the perfections in the Church. In fact, both positions are true, taken in their proper perspective.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, nr. 71.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, nr. 71.

of St. Thomas. And so St. Thomas, in this context, applies the body-soul relationship to the Church's relationship to Christ. In this way, he expands the natural metaphor of Headship to include the vivifying aspect of the soul.⁷² Christ the Head, exercises, namely, a *vital influence* over the Body the Church. Thus, St. Thomas discloses the implicit transition in St. Paul's thought where he calls the Body the "fullness of Christ".

St. Thomas follows the modern line of exegesis, when he interprets 1, 23 actively in terms of Christ: the Church is His fullness, "qui omnia in omnibus adimpletur". While the Latin "adimpletur" (to be filled) is passive, the Greek πληρουμένου is a medial participle, yielding an active sense.⁷³ It

⁷² In the whole discussion of the Headship of Christ too little attention is given to the biblical fact that St. Paul in different groups of epistles at different times uses the metaphor of the Headship of Christ to refer either to his governmental supremacy over creation, over his Body or to his imminent, vivifying power of His Body, the Church. Sauras makes the point: in the letter to the Romans, to the Corinthians (I & II) and to the Galatians, where he is resisting the "false Jews" who insisted on the temple and the synagogue, St. Paul insists on the dignity of the Church by appealing to the imminent, vivifying presence of Christ. Similarly, in the later letters of captivity (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon) he counteracts more certain Gnostic tendencies which would have minimize Christ's dignity; accordingly, St. Paul insists on the transcendent position of Christ over the Church and all creation (cf. SAURAS, *loc. cit.*, pp. 75-76).

The point is valid, but could be overstated. Notwithstanding it is germane to the discussion, because one could forget while discussing the metaphor of Headship and body that we are dealing with the data of revelation. A vivifying power is not necessary to every metaphor of Headship, ... but it is certainly essential and central to much of the doctrine of St. Paul. And it was apparently this fact that led Pedro de Lorca to complain, that the accidental influx of grace to the angels "non sufficit ut Angeli sint membra Ecclesiae atque adeo non sufficit ut sint membra Christi capitis Ecclesiae; nam membrum non constituitur nisi per formam quae est forma corporis; Ecclesiae autem forma non est illuminatio vel gloria accidentalis, sed essentialis, quemadmodum non recte diceremus esse membrum Ecclesiae militantis eum qui haberet a Christo aliquem influxum, v. g., auxilium ad aliquod bonum opus morale, si non haberet influxum fidei" (*loc. cit.*, p. 333; cited from JOHNSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 107). The analogue of "fidei" for the heavenly city, of course, would be "lumen gloriae".

⁷³ Cf. DELLING, *πληρόω*, in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT*, Stuttgart 1990, pp. 290-291; CORNELIUS A LAPIDE, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram*, XVIII, ad Ephesios, Vivès, Paris 1886, p. 598. It can be that St. Paul plays on the equivocal meaning in the medial form (either passive or active) that is appropriate for the body. While the soul (head) is the vital source filling the members with their power to act, the activity of the members redounds to the fullness of the head. Through their good works, namely, the members contribute to the final plenitude in glory of Christ, the whole man (cf. *Eph 2*, 10.21; 4, 7.11-16).

is Christ the Head, Who fills “*all* the members in *all* things”; in order to do this He must fill them with the first fullness which is life! The soul is the principle and cause of sensation not immediately but through the faculties, which act through the members of the body. In this the soul differs from the head. The sense faculties are, indeed, located in the head, but behind them all stands the soul, which is the basis of the Angelic Doctor’s argument.

St. Thomas argues in this fashion:

Similiter itaque est hoc de Cristo et de Ecclesia. Et quia Ecclesia est instituta propter Christum, dicitur quod Ecclesia est plenitudo eius, scilicet Christi, id est, ut *omnia, quae virtute sunt in Christo*, quasi quodam modo in membris ipsius Ecclesiae impleantur, dum scilicet omnes sensus spirituales, et dona, **et quidquid potest esse in Ecclesia**, quae omnia superabundanter sunt in Christo, ab ipso deriventur in membra Ecclesiae et perficiantur in eis. Unde subdit *qui omnia in omnibus adimpletur*, scilicet dum hunc quidem, qui est membrum Ecclesiae facit sapientem secundum perfectam sapientiam, quae est in ipso: illum vero justum secundum perfectam justitiam, et sic de aliis.⁷⁴

To repeat: St. Thomas links and identifies the efficacy of Christ over the Mystical Body by comparing it to the causal principal and relationship of the *soul to the body*. He does **not** limit that efficacy to the similitude of the natural functions of a *head*. Just as the soul is the source of all life and activity in the body, so too is it true that *all* that can supernaturally exist in the Church derives from Christ: “et quidquid potest esse in Ecclesia, ... ab ipso deriventur in membra ecclesiae et perficiantur in eis.” That this statement is to be understood formally about the angels is evident both from the text of St. Paul, who has just declared Christ to be Head of men and angels, who form the Church (*Eph.* 1, 20-21), and from the commentary of Thomas.⁷⁵

The fullness is not just the activation or stimulated operation of spiritual faculties, but the infusion of the very faculties themselves: “omnes sensus spirituales, et dona, et quidquid potest esse in Ecclesia, ... ab ipso [Christo] derivantur”.⁷⁶ These “spiritual senses” are nothing less than the infused

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, nr. 70-71.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, lect. VIII, nr. 69: “Quantum ad primum dicit *et ipsum dedit*, Deus Pater, *caput super omnem Ecclesiam*, scilicet tam militantem, quae est hominum in praesenti viventium, quam triumphantem, quae est ex hominibus et Angelis in patria.”

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, lect. VIII, nr. 71.

virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are not infused except concomitantly with grace, or better, as an efficacy of grace.⁷⁷

In his early writing, Christ's humanity was only seen as the dispositive cause of grace for all His members. Therefore, it was not possible to predicate Christ as the formal or effective cause for the infusion of the spiritual senses, inasmuch as these are inseparable from sanctifying grace. In the early texts, these "senses" are made present to the rest of the body by a certain kind of trans-action from Christ, the Head, whereby there is a certain equivocation in the argumentation.

For example, in the *Sentence Commentary*, he speaks of the "traductio" or the transmission of the senses from the Head over to the body: "sensus et motus traducuntur a capite in membra".⁷⁸ However, his supernatural application of this principle stumbles. While remaining faithful to the data of Scripture, he fails to explain the matter satisfactorily. Lacking is his doctrine of the instrumental causality of Christ's humanity:

In hoc quod de Christi plenitudine omnes accepimus, est aliquid simile *traductioni*, quamvis **non sit proprie** traductio. Est igitur similitudo quantum ad ipsum Spiritum Sanctum increatum, qui idem numero est in capite et in membris, et **aliquo modo** a capite ad membra descendit, non divisus, sed unus.⁷⁹

See how he has avoided answering the question directly in terms of grace. The corresponding argument is based on the truth: "gratia, quae motum vitae facit in corpore Ecclesiae". Since he did not yet acknowledge Christ as the instrumental cause of sanctifying grace, he had to leap to the Holy Spirit, the divine principle of grace. At that point, he could only attribute a dispositive causality to the Humanity of Christ. In this limited sense of "ministry" Christ prepared His members for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who, as God, caused grace in the members of the Church.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 2c: "Sicut gratia respicit essentiam animae, ita virtus respicit potentiam eius. Unde oportet quod sicut potentiae animae derivantur ab eius essentia, ita virtutes sint quaedam derivationes gratiae." (See also: *S.Th.* I-II q. 63, a. 3; q. 65, aa. 2 et 3).

⁷⁸ *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2.

⁷⁹ *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1 ad 2.

⁸⁰ Cf. *II Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1c, et ad 1, ad 2, ad 3. Cf. *Compendium Theologiae*, cap. 214, nr. 429 for a more mature, but not unequivocal statement of his position: "Ex hoc autem quod a Christo ad alios gratia et veritas derivantur, convenit ei ut sit caput Ecclesiae. Nam a capite ad alia membra, quae sunt ei conformia in natura, quodammodo sensus et motus derivatur. Sic a Christo et gratia et veritas ad alios homines derivantur: unde ad

In *De Veritate* he raises the *argument* more challengingly:

Christus est caput nostrum, secundum humanam naturam. Sed capitis est **sensus et motus** in membra *diffundere*. Ergo Christus secundum humanam naturam diffundit spirituales sensus et motus, per quos gratiae intelliguntur, secundum Augustinum, in membra corporis mystici.⁸¹

To this, he *responds*, “Christus, secundum quod Deus, infundit gratiam effective: secundum quod homo, *ministerio*”.⁸² The sense of ministry here, however, is no longer merely dispositive, but is now understood instrumentally with respect to the communication of sanctifying grace.⁸³

Those who claim that St. Thomas only wished to grant an accidental influence of Christ over the angels in his *Commentary on Ephesians* oversee these precise formalities and developments of his argumentation. True, he does mention here such accidental graces of illumination and influence: “Item Christus, etiam secundum quod homo, Angelos illuminat **et in eis influit**”⁸⁴.

Ephes. I, 22: ‘et ipsum dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam, quae est corpus eius’. Dicitur etiam potest caput non solum hominum, sed etiam Angelorum, quantum ad excellentiam et influentiam, licet non quantum ad conformitatem naturae secundum eandem speciem.”

To the mind of St. Thomas, of course, the infusion of the virtues is inseparable from the infusion of sanctifying grace. (*Compendium Theologiae* was written between 1270-1273).

⁸¹ *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 3, 5.

⁸² *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 3 ad 5. Here he says, ministerially, which remains rather equivocal, since in his earlier writings he means herewith “dispositively”. Later, as we showed, he revised this in terms of instrumental causality, which can also be understood under “ministerio”.

The point is also made in *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1c where he distinguishes the *acts* of the several powers from their *infusion* by the head into the other members: “Christus dicitur caput Ecclesiae per similitudinem capitis naturalis. Inveniuntur enim in capite naturali tres condiciones respectu aliorum membrorum singulariter. Prima est quod excellit ea dignitate... Secunda est quod *a capite sunt omnes vires animales in aliis membris*; et sic dicitur *esse principium aliorum membrorum*, dans aliis sensum et motum. Tertia est quod **dirigit** omnia membra in *suis actibus, propter imaginationem et sensus*, qui in eo abundant formaliter.”

⁸³ In *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 3 ad 7, he predicates this instrumentality with respect to certain supernatural effects: “Ipsa Christi humanitas fuit quasi quoddam instrumentum divinitatis: et ideo quasi instrumentaliter ea quae sunt humanitatis, ut resurrectio, passio, et alia, ad effectum divinitatis se habent”. Beyond this, the sacraments “sunt gratiae et signum et causa” (*De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 4c). And again: “Humanitas Christi est instrumentalis causa justificationis” (*De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 4c).

⁸⁴ *Loc. cit.*, nr. 69.

“Influence” may be accidental or vital. When applied simply to the natural head, it is often understood to be governmental, and therefore accidental. Here, however, Christ’s relationship to the body has been equated to the *animating influence* of the soul. Indicative of this expansion are his subsequent statements which are universal. Christ not only directs the angels in their justice and wisdom, but Christ makes the member to be perfect in wisdom or justice. This cannot be except by the infusion of sanctifying grace.⁸⁵ With regards to the angels, this must necessarily apply to their essential grace, since there is no addition subsequent upon their admission into glory.

The “Head” and the “Heart”

This effective identification of “head” and “soul” in the Thomas’ treatment of *Eph* 1, 22ff, finds reflection in a similar treatment under the binomial of “head” and “heart” in *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 4: Christ the Man, Head of the Church.

To begin, let us look at the body of the argument which is also germane to the discussion. St. Thomas first reviews the natural relationship of the *head* to the *body*. He reduces the matter to two categories: reasons of **distinction** and reasons of **conformity**. Three are the perfections which *distinguish* the head from the body:

1. in the point of **dignity**, since it possesses fully all the powers present the body;
2. in the point of **government**, for it directs all the other members of the body; and
3. in the point of **causality**, since it produces (“influx”) sensation and movement in all the members.⁸⁶

And three are the elements of **conformity**:

1. a unity in **nature**;
2. a unity in **order**, for head and members mutually serve one another in common unity and purpose;

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, nr. 71. With respect to the angels the matter is all the more clear, since they grow neither in wisdom or in justice, for they are already in the beatific vision.

⁸⁶ This is distinct from the “governmental” argument, inasmuch as he here refers to the physiological fact of the central nervous system having its root in the brain. (*De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4c).

3. a unity in **continuity** (“continuitatis”), for the head is actually united to the members of the body and exercises an influence over the body.

Where these terms of **conformity** are taken *metaphorically*, the noblest nature is the head, as the lion is the king of beasts. The unity of order is understood with respect to some final goal, as the general is the head of the army. “Sed ubi est continuitas, dicitur caput ratione influentiae, sicut fons dicitur caput fluminis.”

Applying both sets simultaneously and supernaturally to the humanity of Christ, St. Thomas writes:

Et istis tribus modis Christus secundum humanam naturam dicitur Ecclesiae caput.

- a. Est enim eiusdem *naturae* secundum speciem cum ceteris hominibus; et sic competit ei caput ratione **dignitatis**, secundum quod gratia in eo abundantior invenitur.
- b. Est etiam in Ecclesia invenire *ordinis unitatem*, secundum quod membra Ecclesiae sibi invicem deserviunt, et ordinantur in Deum; et sic Christus dicitur Ecclesiae caput ut **gubernator**.
- c. Est etiam in Ecclesia *continuitas* quadam ratione Spiritus sancti, qui unus et idem numero totam Ecclesiam replet et unit: unde etiam et Christus humanam naturam dicitur caput ratione **influentiae**.⁸⁷

First, note that St. Thomas separates here the idea of “influence” from the governmental aspect of Christ’s Headship. He explains that such an “inflow” can come about in one of two ways:

Uno modo sicut *principale agens*: et sic solius Dei est *influer*e gratiam in membra Ecclesiae. Alio modo *instrumentaliter*: et sic etiam humanitas Christus causa est influentiae praedictae.⁸⁸

There might seem to be a discrepancy here, since he had just previously attributed this interior “continuity” of “influence” to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, St. Thomas adds:

Sicut ferrum urit propter ignem sibi coniunctum, ita actiones humanitatis Christi erant propter divinitatem unitam, cuius quasi organum erat ipsa humanitas. Nam hoc ad rationem capitis sufficere videtur. Nam et caput naturalis corporis non influit in membra nisi ratione latentis virtus.

⁸⁷ *De. Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4c.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

The Holy Spirit is this “virtus latens”; He is this conjoined fire, which inflames with charity, which animates the Body, making it one, with the waters of grace. His presence there is attributed to the causal influence of the Humanity of Christ, through which the Godhead works instrumentally.

Cor est membrum latens, caput autem apprens; unde per cor potest significari divinitas Christi, vel Spiritus sancti; per caput autem ipse Christus secundum naturam visibilem [humanam], cui natura divinitatis invisibilis influit.⁸⁹

This “influx” of grace is not merely accidental. To the objection against Christ exercising such interior “influence” Thomas answers in terms of *vivification*, thus identifying “influire” with “vivificare” - “dicendum quod vivificare tam animas quam corpora attribuitur divinitati Verbi sicut principaliter agenti, humanitati vero sicut instrumento.”⁹⁰

It is at this point that St. Thomas predicates this entire causality of Christ over the angels as well as mankind: “Christus tamen secundum duas ultimas conditiones capitis potest dici caput Angelorum secundum humanam naturam.”

By implication, St. Thomas assigns Christ’s humanity as the instrumental cause for the interior mission of the Holy Spirit to the angels as well. Again, this is not predicated in a governmental sense, but in the vital sense. Only later in *Summa Theologiae* III, 8, 1 ad 1 does St. Thomas formally state this instrumental causality of Christ over the sanctifying mission of the Holy Spirit in the Church (prior to affirming that the angels are members of the same in a later article): “Dare gratiam aut Spiritum Sanctum convenit Christo secundum quod Deus, auctoritative; sed instrumentaliter convenit etiam ei secundum quod homo, inquantum scilicet eius humanitas instrumentum fuit divinitatis eius.”⁹¹ The Holy Spirit, of course, is only said to be sent with respect to the infusion of sanctifying grace and charity⁹² and not according to charisms or enlightenment. Since the unity of the Mystical Body is due to this vivifying presence of the Holy Spirit it would follow

⁸⁹ *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 7.

⁹⁰ *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 4 ad 1.

⁹¹ Cf. In *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 1 ad 3 the Holy Spirit is again called the “Heart” of the Mystical Body.

⁹² Cf. *S.Th.* I q. 43, a. 3c; *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 13c

that the angels too are beneficiaries of this mission. Otherwise, how is the principle of unity maintained?

4. Summa Theologiae III q. 8, a. 4c: Whether Christ as Man is the Head of the Angels

In the third part of the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas again raises the question whether Christ is the Head of the angels. Two of the opposing arguments (1 & 3) point to the disparity of nature.⁹³ These he resolves by showing that the causality of Christ is supernatural and is applied principally to the soul of man, wherefore, there is no reason to preclude such a spiritual causality with respect to the pure spirits.⁹⁴ Indeed, as man, He enjoys a generic unity with them according to the rational nature,⁹⁵ and is more perfect than they on account of the Hypostatic Union and His perfection in grace.⁹⁶ The other argument, which proceeds from a false conception of the Church as being the congregation of *believers*, is countered simply by noting the fact that the Church embraces both heaven and earth.⁹⁷

The fact of Christ's Headship over the angels is established through the authority of Scripture in the *Sed Contra: Col 2, 10*: "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him Who is the Head of every Principality and Power you have received of that fullness".

In the development of the formal response, St. Thomas follows the pattern set in *S.Th. III q. 8, a. 1c*, where three criteria are given for Christ's Headship over the Church: "ordinem, perfectionem et virtutem". Applying this also to the angels in *S.Th. III q. 8, a. 4c*, he shows that Christ "propinquius se habet ad Deum, et perfectius participat dona ipsius". And thirdly, "de eius influentiae non solum homines recipiunt, sed etiam Angeli". This gives the theological proof for Christ's Headship over the angels, but not the extension of this Headship.

⁹³ This is his first argument in *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2; qc. 1, arg. 1 as well.

⁹⁴ *S.Th. III q. 8, a. 4 ad 3.*

⁹⁵ *S.Th. III q. 8, a. 4 ad 1.*

⁹⁶ This answers *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 3 which claims an angel cannot be enlightened by a soul. The other argument from *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 2, claiming that Christ cannot "influence" the angels is resolved in the body of *III q. 8, a. 4c.*

⁹⁷ *S.Th. III q. 8, a. 4, arg. 2 et ad 2.*

The debate hinges largely on the meaning, or extension, of this ‘influence’. A comparison with the preceding exposé of *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 4 indicates that “influence” may reasonably be taken in its deeper, stronger sense. In the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, the verb “influire” is used 12 times. The sense of at least 75% of these is the interior infusion of grace.⁹⁸ The others refer to *exterior* governmental direction or some kind of persuasion; two of which refer to the activity of the devil.⁹⁹ The use of “influentia” (15x’s) and “influxus” (6x’s) follow a similar pattern, whereby the efficient causality is paramount over any external governmental direction.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the use of this vocabulary is restricted almost exclusively to this section on the grace and Headship of Christ.

In his earlier works, the *Commentary on the Sentences* and *De Veritate*, the usage of these terms is parallel.¹⁰¹ Still, it is too generic to

⁹⁸ *S.Th.* III q. 6, a. 4, arg. 3: “causa prima plus *influit* in causatum, et prius unitur ei quam causa secunda”; *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 1, arg. 1: a) “Caput enim *influit* sensum et motum”; b) “qui est per gratiam, non *influitur* nobis a Christo homine” [will be denied in the response]; III q. 8, a. 2, arg. 1: “Christus enim dicitur caput Ecclesiae in quantum *influit* spiritualem sensum et motum gratiae in Ecclesiam”; *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 2c: “Unde tota Christi humanitas, secundum scilicet animam et corpus, *influit* in homines et quantum ad animam et quantum ad corpus”; *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 4, arg. 3: “Ergo Christus, secundum quod homo, non *influit* vitam Angelis”; *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 6, arg. 2: “Christus dicitur caput Ecclesiae quod gratiam *influit* Ecclesiae membris.”

In *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 6c et 7c: “*influit*” refers both to vital influence as well as to governmental direction. In III q. 8, a. 8c it refers strictly to the exterior suggestions of the devil.

⁹⁹ Illumination, which pertains also to governmental activity is, however, an interior influence.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 1c especially on the divine “influence” (infusion) of grace into the soul of Christ. *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 9c: “Et hoc quidem apparet primo, ex propinquitate animae Christi ad causam gratiae. Dictum est enim quod, quanto aliquod receptivum propinquius est causae influenti, abundantius recipit. Et ideo anima Christi, quae propinquius coniungitur Deo inter omnes creaturas rationales, recipit maximam influentiam gratiae eius.” *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 1c: “Tertio, virtutem habuit [Christus] influendi gratiam in omnia membra Ecclesiae, secundum illud Ioan. I, ‘de plenitudine eius omnes accepimus.’” *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 2c: “Sic ergo dicendum quod habet vim influendi Christi humanitas in quantum est coniuncta Dei verbo.” *S.Th.* III q. 69, a. 6c: “in Baptismo efficiuntur membra Christi. Unde necesse est quod a capite recipiant influxum gratiae et virtutis.”

In the other parts of the *Summa Theologiae* these terms refer principally to the original causality of God with respect to existence in addition to grace.

¹⁰¹ Likewise in the *Sentence Commentary* these terms [“influire” (40x’s); “influentia” (103x’s); “influxus” (21x’s)] and in the *De Veritate* [“influire” (23x’s); “influentia” (31x’s);

permit a strong conclusion on either side of the question. Hence, the intention of St. Thomas in the present article cannot be resolved in terms of a generic analysis of his use of “influentia”, but can only be resolved by considering *Article 4* in the local context of this and preceding articles.

In the preceding articles of *Question 8*, St. Thomas discusses the Headship of Christ over the Church simply speaking. As we saw, he does not restrict it to the mere consideration of humanity. Using St. Paul in the *Sed contra* to *Article 1: Utrum Christus sit caput Ecclesiae* he establishes that the Father “*Ipsium dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam*”, where the Church is Christ’s Body (cf. *Eph 1, 20-22*).¹⁰² In the development of the response he explains the priority of Christ in order and in finality, noting: “**omnes alii** acceperunt gratiam per respectum ad gratiam ipsius, secundum illud *Rom 8, 20*”. The plenitude of His graces – “*secundum illud Ioann. 1, 14: ‘Vidimus eum plenum gratiae et veritatis’*” – is the founda-

“influxus” (13x’s)] are also used to predicate some effect infused into the subject (being, life, grace, etc.). It is also used with respect to illumination (cf. *I Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 a. 1 ad 5; *II Sent.*, 2, dist. 11, q. 2, a. 3 ad 5; *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1 sc 2 etc.). In the context of Christ’s Headship “influit” is used generically of His power to infuse any kind of supernatural effect into others (cf. *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 1c; et dist. 13, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2c). There where St. Thomas denies Christ’s causality over the essential grace of the angels, he uses this term: “*Christus, secundum quod homo, est caput Angelorum; non tamen ita proprie, ... quantum ad influentiam: quia non influit Angelis removendo prohibens, aut merendo gratiam, aut orando pro eis, quia jam beati sunt; sed in his quae ad actus hierarchicos pertinent, secundum quod unus Angelus illuminat alium, purgat, et perficit*” (*III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1c).

The balance of his usage of “influire”, “influentia” et “influxus” comes down to this: these are generic terms which refer to some kind of causality produced by an agent (God or a creature) upon and in some way modifying a subject. The effects range from the communication of being and grace to the infusion of the virtues, to illumination and purgation (cf. *III Sent.*, pref. on *Eccl. 1, 7*: “*Flumina ista sunt naturales bonitates quas Deus creaturis influit, ut esse, vivere, intelligere, et hujusmodi*”). Only in an accommodated sense does he use it to refer to the exterior “influence” of example or persuasion. It is not so much these terms which experience a development in their usage; rather their usage is adapted to Thomas’ doctrinal development in other areas. This applies especially to the causality of Christ. In the early works, the greatest influence of Christ’s humanity upon us does not exceed merit (cf. *III Sent.*, dist. 18, q. 1, a. 6, qc. 1 sc 1: “*Sed contra, Christus, secundum quod homo, est caput nostrum. Ergo nobis aliquid influit. Sed non nisi meritorie. Ergo Christus nobis aliquid meruit*”). In his later works, the influence of Christ’s humanity is understood to extend to all grace by means of instrumental causality. Parallel to this development is that St. Thomas uses these terms ever more rarely outside the context of the supernatural efficacy of Christ.

¹⁰² Cf. *S.Th. III q. 8, a. 1sc*.

tion of His power: “virtutem habet influendi gratiam in **omnia** membra Ecclesiae, secundum illud *Ioann* 1, 16: ‘De plenitudine eius nos omnes accepimus’.”

Note that St. Thomas’ argument is, first of all, biblical in nature and that these are the very texts he elsewhere uses to establish the Headship of Christ over the whole Church, angels included.

Here arises the methodological question. In this first and subsequent articles, St. Thomas establishes certain universal principles concerning Christ’s efficacy as Head of the Church. In *Article* 4, he establishes that this Headship applies to the angels with the sole exception of the specific conformity in nature. Normally speaking, these universal statements should be predicated of the angels as well, unless otherwise qualified. Those who argue against such a simple predication cite principles and qualifications drawn from outside the present context and antedating St. Thomas’ development of the instrumental causality of Christ. Thus in *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 1 ad 1, he establishes:

... dare gratiam aut Spiritum Sanctum convenit Christus ... instrumentaliter ... secundum quod homo, inquantum scilicet eius humanitas instrumentum fuit divinitatis eius. Et ita actiones ipsius ex virtute divinitatis fuerunt nobis salutiferae, utpote gratiam in nobis causantes et per meritum et per efficientiam quandam.¹⁰³

Against this background we can understand why the brunt of Thomas’ answer in *Article* 4 is directed simply to showing that the angels are true members of the Church. Once that is established, all that he has generically demonstrated in the first article about the universality of Christ’s grace in the Church, now applies – unless revoked – to the holy angels as well. Accordingly, he shows that there is only one Mystical Body of Christ ordered in and through Him to the glory of divine fruition, in which the angels are necessarily included. Indeed, he cements the argument by appealing to practically the same text of Ephesians: “Dicitur enim Ephes. 1, 20, quod ‘constituit eum’ scilicet Christum Deus Pater, ‘ad dexteram suam in caelestibus supra omnem potestatem et principatum etc.’”¹⁰⁴

The arbitrary delimitation of his words – “de eius influentia non solum homines recipiunt, sed etiam Angeli”¹⁰⁵ – to merely accidental graces is

¹⁰³ This position he justifies again biblically with *Gal* 3, 5: “Qui tribuit vobis Spiritum”.

¹⁰⁴ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 4c.

¹⁰⁵ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 4c.

belied by the unity of the larger context. Taken out of context, this interpretation were, *a priori*, possible. However, this view fails to perceive that, for St. Thomas, the grace of Headship is **principally** to be understood as the **vital** principle which animates and orders the Body of the Church with all its members to fruition in God.

In further demonstration of this, let us consider Thomas' own statements from this part of the Summa. In the following *Article 5* the question is raised whether the capital grace of Christ is the same as His own sanctifying grace.¹⁰⁶ The answer is given:

In anima Christi recepta est gratia secundum maximam eminentiam. Et ideo ex eminentia gratiae quam accepit, competit sibi quod gratia illa ad alios derivetur. Quod pertinet ad rationem capitis. Et ideo eadem est secundum essentiam gratia personalis qua anima Christi est iustificata, et gratia eius secundum quam est caput Ecclesiae *iustificans alios*.¹⁰⁷

In *Article 6* he explains:

Caput in alia membra *influit* dupliciter. Uno modo quodam *intrinsic*o influxu, prout scilicet virtus motiva et sensitiva a capite derivatur ad cetera membra. Alio modo secundam quandam exteriorem gubernationem, prout scilicet secundum visum et alios sensus, qui in capite radicanter, diriguntur homo in exterioribus actibus.¹⁰⁸

This interior influence is not about illumination, but rather implies a participation in sanctifying grace since the virtues cannot be infused except in conjunction with grace. He states here: "Interior autem *influxus gratiae* non est ab aliquo nisi a solo Christo, cuius humanitas, ex hoc quod est

¹⁰⁶ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 5: "Utrum Gratia Christi secundum quam est caput Ecclesiae sit eadem cum gratia habituali eius secundum quod est quidam homo singularis."

¹⁰⁷ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 5c. If his statements prior to *Article 4* are to be disqualified because he has not yet predicated Christ's Headship over the angel, what is to be done with these subsequent articles?

St. Thomas also develops the argument on the level of the Church as the *Mystical Person* of Christ. While in the given context of *S.Th.* III q. 19, a. 4c he only speaks of the human members, the principle, if true, will also apply to the angels as member of the same body: "In Christo non solum fuit gratia sicut in quodam homine singulari, sed sicut in capite totius Ecclesiae, cui omnes uniuntur sicut capiti membra, ex quibus constituitur mystice una persona. Et exinde est quod meritum Christi se extendit ad alios, in quantum sunt membra eius; sicut etiam in uno homine actio capitis aequaliter pertinet ad omnia membra eius, quia non solum sibi sentit, sed omnibus membris."

¹⁰⁸ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 6c.

divinitati coniuncta, habet virtutem *justificandi*”.¹⁰⁹ To justify, of course, is to sanctify through habitual grace; indeed, through a sharing in Christ’s own personal, sanctifying grace, as we have just seen.

Now let us go back to *Question 7* of the *Tertia Pars* on the grace of Christ. There too, we can verify this position with an even more generic affirmation of the universal causality of the humanity of Christ in the order of grace. There, St. Thomas explains the twofold meaning of the plenitude of grace which St. John declares to be in Christ: “*We saw His glory – glory as of the only-begotten of the Father – full of grace and truth*” (*Jn 1, 14*). It is first to be understood with respect to the plenitude of **intensity**: Christ has grace in the fullest possible meaning of grace before all other creatures. In this way, His soul was the closest to God. Secondly, plenitude is said with respect to the **causal power of grace** in Christ’s soul. On this pertinent point St. Thomas makes two universal statements:

Similiter etiam quantum ad virtutem gratiae, plene habuit gratiam, quia habuit eam ad *omnes* operationes vel effectus gratiae. Et hoc ideo quia conferebatur ei gratia *tanquam cuidam universali principio in genere habentium gratiam*. Virtus autem primi principii alicuius generis universaliter se extendit ad *omnes effectus illius generis*.¹¹⁰

The expression “in genere habentium gratiam” is evidently custom-made and therefore the fruit of reflection. Hence, it is unreasonable to restrict this statement’s applicability, as opponents do, to mankind alone. And this is reinforced, as he speaks of the universal extension of the first principle over the remaining members of any genus. He reinforced it again by the comparison to the sun according to a statement of Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, which Thomas explains thus:

Dictum est enim quod divina bonitas dat esse omnibus per creationem, sed in hoc aliquam similitudinem eius habet sol, qui dat esse per generationem. *Confert enim ad generationem sensibilibus corporum, sicut quoddam universale agens et causa non univoca*. Dictum est etiam quod Deus vivificat res et in hoc assimilatur ei sol, quod movet inferiora corpora ad vitam.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 6c. Recall how he denied this very causality in the *Sentence Commentary*.

¹¹⁰ *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 9c.

¹¹¹ *De Divinis Nominibus*, cap. IV, lect. 3. This is in perfect conformity, moreover, with St. Thomas’ doctrine on the instrumental causality of Christ. By proportion, it would extend to all rational creatures.

Again, if Christ were only said to have the *power* capable of producing all the effects of grace, one might still remain in doubt about the de facto *exercise* of this power over the angels. However, St. Thomas' key point – to repeat it – is that God gave Him so much grace that, according to His humanity, He be the “*universal principle in the genus of those having grace*”. One is not a principle of grace simply for having the power, but rather for the fact that all graces issue from Him in some way. Most any star has sufficient energy to be the cause of the germination of plants on earth; de facto, only the sun is actually the principle. This is why in the following *Article 10* St. Thomas proves that only Christ has such a plenitude of grace, and this because He alone is the only begotten of the Father.¹¹² That is to say, the plenitude of Christ's habitual grace is a function of the Hypostatic Union, such that there be a certain proportion between the grace in His soul and the very grace of personal union.

These articles line up harmoniously with our investigation on the Headship of Christ over the angels. Both the plenitude of grace and the grace of Headship are predicated on the sanctifying grace in Christ's soul, whose efficacy extends over all: here, over “all those who have grace”, and in *Question 8*, a. 4 over the angels. This line of thought respects the development of Thomas' doctrine on the instrumental causality of the humanity of Christ which finds its most emphatic statement in his last treatment of the subject in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*.

5. The Commentary on St. John. 1, 16ff: “De plenitudo eius nos omnes accepimus”

After declaring the fullness of grace and truth to be present in the Word made flesh, St. John exults in the fact that “*de plenitudo eius nos omnes accepimus, et gratia pro gratia*” (*Jn 1, 16*). St. Thomas cites this text on many occasions,¹¹³ but nowhere does he develop his thought more thoroughly than in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, where he applies it with rigor to the angels. This commentary is perhaps the last major work of St. Thomas and his last formal statement on the grace of the angels.

¹¹² *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 10c.

¹¹³ There are no less than 48 citations of this verse in his various works.

Following the exegesis of Sts. Augustine and Chrysostom, who attribute the words to John the Evangelist,¹¹⁴ he explains the latter's intention: "Ostendit Christum esse fontalem originem *omnis* spiritualis gratiae."¹¹⁵ Negatively stated, there is no supernatural grace which does not issue from the spring of Christ's soul.

St. Thomas then explains the three kinds of plenitude. The first two deal with the plenitude of **merit**! There is the *plenitudo of sufficiency*, which sufficed to permit the saints, like St. Stephen, to bring forth great and meritorious works of grace.¹¹⁶ Then, there is the "*plenitudo redundantiae*" which befits only the Blessed Virgin Mary, who in virtue of her eminent and abundant **merits** can distribute graces to others.¹¹⁷ Finally, at the peak there is the "*plenitudo efficientiae et effluentiae*", the plenitude of efficient causality and outpouring. This is proper to the man Jesus Christ; proper as man inasmuch as the "quasi auctori gratiae".¹¹⁸ St. Thomas qualifies the term, calling Him "quasi author of grace", in order to distinguish Him from the "auctor gratiae" in the strict sense, namely, God alone. But Christ, as man, is the "quasi author" due to the instrumental causality of His humanity. Failing to observe this distinction, many

¹¹⁴ *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis. Lectura*, Marietti, Romae 1952, ad cap. 1, 16, lect. X, nr. 200, p. 40. Prior to this, he refers to Origen, who attributed the words to John the Baptist. Still, his exegesis would follow: "Vere 'prior me erat', quia 'de plenitudine eius', scilicet gratiarum, non solum ego, sed etiam 'omnes' Prophetae et patres, 'accepimus', quia omnes gratiam quam habuerunt, habuerunt per fidem incarnati Verbi." (*l.c.*, nr. 200).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, nr. 200. St. Thomas expresses a similar thought in *De Verit.*, q. 20, q. 4c: "Christus vero constitutus super omnem creaturam est etiam quantum ad dona gratiae, quia 'de plenitudine eius omnes accepimus' (Ioan. 1, 16)". While the text is about the knowledge of Christ, the conclusion seems to be drawn from a deeper principle of the grace of Christ.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, nr. 201: "Est autem plenitudo sufficientiae, qua aliquis est sufficiens ad actus *meritorios* et excellentes faciendos, sicut in Stephano."

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, nr. 201: "Item est plenitudo redundantiae, qua beata Virgo excellit omnibus sanctis, propter eminentiam, et abundantiam *meritorum*."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, nr. 201: "Est etiam plenitudo efficientiae et effluentiae, quae soli homini Christo competit, quasi auctori gratiae." In *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1c (on the plenitude of grace) his category of efficient causality deals with illumination, and his category of formal causality deals with the virtues. He exemplifies with St. Stephen and the Blessed Mother there too. The singular dispositive causality of Christ's merits, though, only prepared for grace by the removal of impediments. The comparison of the two texts, shows that Thomas is making a radically new statement about the effective causality of Christ.

commentators said Thomas was speaking of Christ's divinity. Of course, it is absurd to call God the "*quasi auctor gratiae*".¹¹⁹

"Ut ergo Evangelista hanc singularem plenitudinem redundantiae et efficientiae de Christo ostenderet, dixit '*De plenitudine eius omnes accepimus*'".¹²⁰ Now the question is: Who does St. Thomas understand under "accepimus"? He responds: "*De plenitudine eius omnes accepimus, scilicet omnes Apostoli, et Patriarchae, et Prophetae, et iusti, qui fuerunt, sunt et erunt, et etiam omnes Angeli.*"¹²¹ Here again, we see an express attribution of the causality (extension) of Christ's grace over the time before the Incarnation which is no longer qualified as a final cause dependent upon the hope of the patriarchs.¹²² Moreover, St. Thomas understands the statement as absolutely fundamental for the entire economy of salvation. He understands that it is to be distributed universally, also to the angels.

If St. Thomas had stopped here, the text would have remained equivocal, as Benoît D'Azy would have us believe it to be. For him, "also to the angels" means that they *also* received *some* graces, such as illuminations from Christ, but certainly not *all* their graces.¹²³ This minimalist position, however, is not sustainable for reasons advanced immediately thereafter by St. Thomas, which preclude any such delimitation. He explains the three possible meanings of the preposition "de" in the expression, "de plenitudine eius". First, he explains its actual meaning in this text:

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Compendium Theologiae*, cap. 216, nr. 435: "Quia igitur Christum dicimus esse humanae salutis auctorem, necesse est dicere, quod talis cognitio sic animae Christi conveniat ut decet auctorem.... Conveniens igitur fuit Christum humanae salutis auctorem ab ipso suae incarnationis principio plenam Dei visionem possedisse." Cf. *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 9 ad 1 where Christ in His humanity is also called "auctor gratiae".

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, nr. 201.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, nr. 201.

¹²² Even in the *De Veritate* he insisted on the actual faith of those of the Old Testament because his point of reference there was the merits of Christ. Cf. q. 9, a. 4 ad 9: by His active merit Christ could not be Head of the Church before the Incarnation but only through men's faith (cf. q. 29, a. 4 ad 11). His merit considered actively and efficiently was not "in actu" before the Incarnation (cf. q. 29, a. 4 ad 10).

¹²³ "*Le Christ et ses anges dans l'oeuvre de saint Thomas*" in: Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique (1943): "Le mot 'efficience' doit être pris ici dans le sens fort que saint Thomas lui donnait à la fin de sa vie et un texte contemporain (*S.Th.* III q. 8, a. 1 ad 1) l'oppose justement à la causalité méritoire." Following John of St. Thomas and other commentators, he prefers to interpret "la première partie du passage 'secundum distribu-

Nota, quod haec propositio *de* aliquando quidem denotat efficientiam, seu originalem causam, sicut cum dicitur, radius est vel procedit de sole; et hoc modo denotat in Christo **efficientiam** gratiae, seu **auctoritatem**, quia plenitudo gratiae, quae est in Christo, est causa **omnium** gratiarum quae sunt in **omnibus intellectualibus** creaturis.¹²⁴

Aquinas' doctrine could not be expressed more clearly. The plenitude of grace, which he here discusses, is proper to the humanity or soul of Christ; he declares it to be the **source** and **efficient cause** for the outflow, the infusion – and here he uses two universal terms – of **all** graces into **all** intellectual creatures.¹²⁵ That he is not speaking simply of Christ's divinity, as some would have, is also clear from the fact that he further explains that the preposition "*de*" on occasion may denote consubstantiality, and according to this the plenitude of Christ is said of His divinity and is the Holy Spirit Himself.¹²⁶ In the *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 5 Thomas had predicated this instrumental causality of grace over all *rational* creatures, a term that more properly identifies man. Here in his last work the plenitude of Christ's grace is declared to be universal over all *intellectual* creatures, a term which more properly identifies the angels.

tionem accommodam', tous ayant reçu quelque chose, mais les uns à titre essentiel, les autres à titre accidentel" (p. 21).

¹²⁴ *Commentary on John*, nr. 202a.

¹²⁵ This corresponds to the very nature of the plenitude of grace, which St. Thomas establishes in *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 10c: "Dicitur esse plenitudo ex eo quod aliquis pertingit ad summum gratiae et quantum ad essentiam et quantum ad virtutem; quia scilicet habet gratiam et in maxima extensione ad omnes gratiae effectus. Et talis gratiae plenitudo est propria Christo." From this, it follows, that if Christ's grace did not effectively extend to the angels, he would not really have the plenitude of grace. This is the argument of Cajetan: "loquens de quantitate intensiva gratiae, dicit quod Christus habuit eam 'in summo'. Et hoc diligentissimus nota, contra attribuens Auctori quod non datur summum possibile in gratia. Non enim haberet Christus gratiam in summo intensive, nisi habere summa possibile; sicut not habetur albedo in summo, si possibile esset dari albedinem intensiorem, ut patet." (*loc. cit.*, on *S.Th.* III q. 7, a. 9c p. 117).

In the *Sentence Commentary*, of course, he also speaks of the plenitude of Christ's grace. There, however, his thought is limited to illumination and the dispositive causality of Christ's virtues (cf. *III Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1c).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, nr. 202b: "Aliquando autem haec praepositio *de* denotat consubstantialitatem, ut cum dicitur, Filius est de Patre; et secundum hoc plenitudo Christi est Spiritus sanctus, qui procedit ab eo consubstantialis ei in naturae, in virtute et maiestate." In the third place "*de*" is to be understood partitively, meaning that we receive part of the graces and virtues of Christ, but not all of them, according to the donation of Christ (cf. *Eph* 4, 7; *ibid.* 202,

For those like D’Azy who want to understand the text partitively, St. Thomas explains: “Tertio modo haec praepositio *de* denotat partialitatem, sicut cum dicimus, ‘Accipe de hoc pane, vel vino’, idest partem accipe, et non totum; et hoc modo accipiendo, notat in accipientibus partem de plenitudine derivari”.¹²⁷ It is true that each intellectual creature only has a part of Christ’s grace, but whatever grace it has, comes from Christ. This is the lucid statement of St. Thomas.

III. Conclusion

The task we set for ourselves at the beginning was to enunciate St. Thomas’ understanding of the grace of the angels in their relationship to Christ, the Head of the Church. We list the results:

1. At the beginning of his academic career, he taught in harmony with the doctrine of Peter Lombard and St. Albert the Great, his mentor, that Christ only mediated accidental graces of light and strength to the angels. Moreover, any efficient causality had to be traced to the moral category of merit.

2. Later, after having assimilated the doctrine of Dionysius and St. John Damascene on the theandric and instrumental causality of the humanity of Christ, he taught that, along side the merits of the Humanity of Christ, there stands the mystery of the instrumental causality of His humanity which gives unity and a special efficacy to the entire work of redemption. Christ is no longer seen only disposing souls for grace by His redemptive work, but His humanity is understood to be the efficacious instrumental cause in the communication of all graces. For this reason, even in His Humanity, He is called the “auctor gratiae” since the Word effects this grace through His humanity.¹²⁸ On the basis of this deepened understanding of the efficacy of Christ in the order of grace, St. Thomas revised the whole of Christology and the theology of the sacraments and grace.

3. The development of his doctrines on the plenitude of Christ’s grace, His Headship over the Mystical Body (made up of men and angels) and

p. 41). This meaning is, however, in complete subordination to universally predicated causality of Christ.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, nr. 202c.

¹²⁸ Cf. *S.Th.* III q.19, a.1.

the instrumental causality of His Humanity are fundamental to his final solution. As Head, Christ acted in the name of all; He exercises an efficient power to communicate all graces to all rational creatures.¹²⁹

4. Christ not only enlightens the angels and exercises governmental authority over their ministries, but the angels owed their holiness and beatitude to the Man Jesus Christ, as universal Head of the Church. Accordingly, the holy angels are not simply servants of Christ, but rather like us, they too have a substantial share in the grace of Christ. By this sanctification they are already substantially associated with us in the divine Covenant; we are fellow-members in the very same Body of Christ, the Church.

5. We also argued that this anchoring of the essential grace of the angels in the grace of Christ is an essential condition for the integration of their ministries under the Headship of Christ, since their light of glory is their ministerial power. If it were not from Christ, then Christ would not be the sole mediator of grace between God and man, inasmuch as the angels' ministry is also a principal of grace. To enlighten is to offer a share in one's own supernatural light to another.¹³⁰

Still, there is a very sober moment to these conclusions. St. Thomas never definitively explains how he understands the dynamics of this efficient influence of Christ which he predicates over the angels; he only gives witness to it. It seems that his reflection on the biblical data on the plenitude of Christ's grace and His Headship lead him to conclusions about the **fact** of faith in the matter, for which he did not arrive at a full theological explanation at the end of his life.

In his earlier writings, he did not accept that Christ *merited* either for the angels or for mankind before the Incarnation precisely because they antedated Christ's physical existence. His insufficient solution was that it was by their hope in Christ, in view of His future merits, they could share

¹²⁹ On a parallel plane we saw that he attributed such a perfect efficacy of grace also over the Blessed Mother, such that in a final work he affirmed the Immaculate Conception, thus establishing the principal of the efficient causality of Christ's grace before the Incarnation.

¹³⁰ Only Christ can offer a direct participation in His own sanctifying grace. The "share" that is proper to illumination, belongs to the category of actual graces.

in His grace.¹³¹ That early position, as noted, bore the defect of failing to explain how men of the OT were to receive the actual graces of Christ necessary to believe and hope in Him. If these graces were not from Him, then it would follow, that Christ would not be the sole mediator between God and man, which is impossible.

After developing the doctrine of the instrumental causality of Christ's humanity he became conspicuously more, if not entirely, reticent on this matter.¹³² The mere distinction between the *merit* of Christ and His *instrumental causality* alone does not suffice to resolve the matter, for he reduced merit to the order of efficient causality.¹³³ However, we drew attention to a further distinction: meritorious causality demands the existence of Christ's human will, whereas the instrumental causality demands the existence, first of all, of His divine will. It would also, of course, demand in some fashion the existence of the instrument, the humanity of Christ. St. Thomas never articulated a resolution to this dilemma as to how the grace of Christ could be effective over all time, past and future, such that the "plenitudo gratiae, quae est in Christuo, est causa omnium gratiarum

¹³¹ Cf. *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 7 ad 7: "Gratia etiam personalis nulli unquam post peccatum primi hominis data fuit, nisi per fidem mediatoris explicitam vel implicitam." This is the extrinsic efficacy of final causality.

¹³² In *S.Th.* III q. 26, a. 1c he calls Christ "perfectus Dei et hominum mediator, in quantum per suam mortem *humanum genus* Deo reconciliavit." In the Question on the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Womb (*S.Th.* III q. 27, aa. 1-6), St. Thomas is utterly silent as to the mode in which this took place, whether with her consent or as a totally free gift. After the initial profession of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in the *Sentence Commentary*, he became so embroiled with the difficulties of the question, that as late as the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* he could still not attribute a freedom from "fomites" to Mary before the actual event of the Incarnation (cf. *S.Th.* III q. 27, 3c). This gives witness to the fact that he was not able to resolve satisfactorily to his own mind the question of such causality, that was necessary to explain the Immaculate Conception or the actual sanctification of the angels through Christ. In one of his final works on *the Hail Mary*, he again seems to have professed the Immaculate Conception (see observations of Garrigou-Lagrange in footnote 63 above), thus indicating that he had overcome in some fashion the time barrier for the application of efficacy of Christ's grace in the past.

¹³³ Cf. *De Verit.*, q. 29, a. 6c: "Nam meritum est causa praemii, non quidem per modum finalis causae: sic enim magis praemium est causa meriti; sed magis secundum reductionem ad causam efficientem: in quantum meritum facit dignum praemio, et per hoc ad praemium disponit. Id autem quod est causa per modum efficientis, nullo modo potest esse posterius tempore eo cuius est causa: unde non potest esse quod aliquis mereatur quod iam habet."

quae sunt in omnibus intellectualibus creaturis.¹³⁴ Still, we recall his statement cited above: “Ratio autem alicuius fiendi in mente actoris existens, est quaedam praexistencia rei fiendae in eo.”¹³⁵

A complete explanation of St. Thomas’ position is, therefore, still outstanding. It was proposed that this development in doctrine be articulated in terms of the Word’s activity. In view of and through the *exemplarity* of the Hypostatic Union and Christ’s (future) plenitude of habitual grace, the Word could effectively confer grace on both the men of the Old Testament and the angels. A model is an instrument in the mind of the artist! If an architect can build a church according to an exemplar which, till it be executed, exists only in his mind, how much more could the divine Exemplar Himself – through Whom and unto Whom all things are created – produce His grace in men and angels before His coming in the flesh, giving them the light to believe and hope in His coming! In this context, the following citations from St. Thomas offer a foundation:

Primordiale autem principium totius processiois rerum est Filius Dei, secundum illud Io. I, 3: “omnia per ipsum facta sunt”. Et ipse ideo est primordiale exemplar, quod omnes creaturae imitantur tamquam veram et perfectam imaginem Patris. Unde dicitur *Col.* I, 15: “qui est imago Dei invisibilis primogenitus omnis creaturae, quia in ipso condita sunt universa”. Speciali tamen quodam modo exemplar est spiritualium gratiarum, quibus spirituales creaturae illustrantur, secundum illud quod in *Ps.* CIX, 3 dicitur ad Filium: “in splendoribus sanctorum ex utero ante Luciferum genui te”, quia scilicet genitus est ante omnem creaturam per gratiam lucentem, habens exemplariter in se splendores omnium sanctorum.¹³⁶

Deus omnia in sua sapientia dicitur facere, quia sapientia Dei se habet ad res creatas, sicut ars aedificatoris ad domum factam. Haec autem forma et sapientia est Verbum, et ideo omnia in ipso condita sunt, sicut in quodam exemplari, *Gen.* I: “dixit, et facta sunt”, quia in Verbo suo aeterno creavit omnia ut fierent ... [and after discussing the 9 choirs of angels] ... et sic concludendo dicit “omnia per ipsum”, sicut per causam *effectivam*, “et in ipso”, sicut per causam *exemplarem*. *Io.* I, 3: *omnia per ipsum facta sunt*, et cetera. Sed quia posset aliquis dicere: numquid omnia sunt aeterna? Ideo apostolus quasi respondens ad hoc, dicit quod non, sed ipse est *ante om-*

¹³⁴ *Commentary on John*, nr. 202.

¹³⁵ *S.Th.* I q. 23, a. 1c.

¹³⁶ *Super 1 Corintios*, cap. XI, lect. I. [reportatio vulgata]

nia, scilicet tempora et res alias. Prov. VIII, 22: *dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum, antequam quidquam faceret a principio*, et cetera.¹³⁷

Forma autem et exemplar operationis divinae in nos, est operatio divina in Christo.¹³⁸

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¹³⁷ *Super Colossenses*, cap. I, lect. IV.

¹³⁸ *Super Ephesios*, cap. I, lect. VII.