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Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial?, Revisited

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Abstract

Edmund Lazzari in "Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial," maintains that Aquinas would disagree with those who would baptize a fallen extraterrestrial on the grounds that they "disregard the necessity of a human nature for incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ," baptism being the means whereby human beings are so incorporated. Lazzari maintains that, "Because of the crucial role that that assumption of a human nature plays … in Thomistic soteriology, it is not possible to simply transfer the effects of the life of Jesus Christ to other intellectual beings who are not sharers in human nature." I first intend to show that Aquinas does not hold that a being must have a human nature to belong to the Mystical Body; rather having a rational nature suffices. Secondly, I intend to show that while the effects of Christ's death and resurrection are not such as to be automatically applicable to intelligent extraterrestrials (ETIs), much less to be automatically transferred to them through baptism, Aquinas would maintain that God is capable of ordering things in these ways, as they do not imply contradiction. Thus, if there are fallen extraterrestrials, Aquinas would not assume that it would be inappropriate to baptize them.

Keywords

Aquinas, extraterrestrial life, Gregory of Nazianzus' axiom, mystical body, soteriology

In his article, "Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial?," Edmund Lazzari maintains that Aquinas would disagree with those who would baptize a fallen extraterrestrial on the grounds that they "disregard the necessity of a human nature for incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ," baptism being the means by which

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human beings are so incorporated.[1] Lazzari maintains that, "Because of the crucial role that that assumption of a human nature plays ... in Thomistic soteriology, it is not possible to simply transfer the effects of the life of Jesus Christ to other intellectual beings who are not sharers in human nature."[2]

I first intend to show that Aquinas does not hold that one must have a human nature to belong to the Mystical Body. Secondly, I intend to show that while the effects of Christ's death and resurrection are not such as to be automatically applicable to intelligent extraterrestrials (ETIs), much less to be automatically transferred to them through baptism, Aquinas would maintain that God is capable of ordering things in these ways. I will also show that while Lazzari is not justified in denying on Thomistic grounds the possibility that baptism incorporate ETIs in the Mystical Body and allow them to receive salvific grace from Christ, what he says gives reason to think that Aquinas would regard such occurrences highly unlikely, insofar as they do not fit with what is known through revelation about God's saving action in the universe.

Does Aquinas Hold that Membership in Christ's Mystical Body is Limited to Humans?

Let us examine the possibility of the potential membership of ETIs in the Mystical Body by looking at a passage Lazzari considers, namely, *Summa Theologiae*, Bk. III, q. 8, art. 4. This is a key passage, for here Aquinas unambiguously affirms that beings other than human, namely, the angels, belong to the mystical body of the Church with Christ as their head. In response to the question of "Whether Christ is head of the angels" Aquinas affirms:

> As was said [art. 1, ad 2] it is necessary to posit one head where there is one body. However, one multitude ordered to one [end] according to distinct acts or offices is called one body by way of likeness. It is manifest, however, that men and angels are ordered to one end, which is the glory of divine fruition. Whence, the mystical body of the Church does not consist of men, but also of angels. Christ is the head of this whole multitude, for he stands nearer to God and more perfectly shares his gifts not only than men do, but also than angels do; and not only do men receive from his inflowing, but also angels. For it is said in Ep. 1:20 that "he placed him," namely, God the Father [placed] Christ, "at his right hand in heaven, above every power and sovereignty and virtue and domination and every name which is named

[1] Edmund Michael Lazzari, 'Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial?', *New Blackfriars*, 99, 1082 (July 2018), Abstract, p. 440.

[2] Ibid., p. 451.

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> not only in this age, but in the future, and he subjected all things under his feet." And therefore, Christ is not only the head of men, but also of the angels. Whence, it is read in Mt. 4 that "the angels came and ministered to him.[3]

Aquinas sees two things as establishing that the angels belong to the mystical body of the Church with Christ as their head. First, what legitimates speaking of a body by way of likeness is that a group of many are ordered to one end according to distinct acts or offices (as is the case, for example, of a legislative body). Secondly, what is essential to a head is that it is the primary cause of the influx of something into the body's other members. Aquinas affirms these two things hold true of Christ in regard to both us and the angels. The angels together with humans are ordered to one end, the beatific vision.[4] And Christ fulfills the requirement of head in regard to both angels and humans due to the primacy of the causal influence he exercises in their regard. Since one body can only have one head, angels and humans belong to the same mystical body of Christ.

In an objection, Aquinas explicitly raises the question of whether difference in nature precludes Christ *as man* from being head of the angels: "It seems that Christ, as man, is not head of the Angels. For head and members are of one nature, but Christ, according as he is man, is not like in nature with the Angels, but only with men."[5] Aquinas responds that

> The influence of Christ over all men is principally as to their souls, according to which humans agree with angels in the nature of the genus, granted not in the nature of the species. And by reason of this conformity Christ is able to be called the head of the angels, granted the conformity fails as to what is bodily.[6]

[3] *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 8, a. 4. Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, ubi est unum corpus, necesse est ponere unum caput. Unum autem corpus similitudinarie dicitur una multitudo ordinata in unum secundum distinctos actus sive officia. Manifestum est autem quod ad unum finem, qui est gloria divinae fruitionis, ordinantur et homines et Angeli. Unde corpus Ecclesiae mysticum non solum consistit ex hominibus, sed etiam ex Angelis. Totius autem huius multitudinis Christus est caput, quia propinquius se habet ad Deum, et perfectius participat dona ipsius, non solum quam homines, sed etiam quam Angeli; et de eius influentia non solum homines recipiunt, sed etiam Angeli. (Hereafter cites as *ST*.) (All translations are my own.)

[4] Beings that are sentient, but not rational, cannot experience the beatific vision, and so cannot be incorporated into the Mystical Body; see *ST* I, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3: "The sense of sight, because it is entirely material, in no manner can be elevated to something immaterial. But our intellect or the angelic intellect, because it is in some manner according to nature elevated from matter, is able to be elevated higher to something beyond its nature through grace."

[5] *ST* III, q. 8, a. 4, obj. 1.

[6] *ST* III, q. 8, a. 4, ad 1.

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Let us consider whether what Aquinas says in *ST* III 8.4 concerning the angels is applicable to ETIs. Although God need not order the ETIs to the beatific vision, he can certainly choose to do so. And Aquinas would hold that it is more likely than not that God would so choose.[7] Although God need not redeem fallen ETIs, he can certainly choose to do so; Aquinas would also see this too as being what God is more likely to do.[8] Now, there is nothing to prevent Christ from exercising causal influence in regard to ETIs, as he does in the case of the angels. This influence would be more like the influence he has on humans, given that ETIs, unlike angels, have souls. The lack of bodily conformity, which Aquinas dismissed as being a barrier to Christ's headship as man over the angels, would for the same reason not be an obstacle in the ETIs case, for there would be agreement as to the spiritual element of their nature.

A question that I will later return to is whether Christ's influence on the ETIs can be such as to redeem them. Let us first look at how Lazzari understands *ST* III 8.4:

> St. Thomas does say that the functioning of all makes a metaphorical body. His point in this passage is to establish the headship of Christ over the angels and not that the angels are part of the Mystical Body of Christ (i.e. requiring the sacraments).[9]

The Mystical Body of Christ is not other than the Mystical Body of the Church. Again, contrary to what Lazzari claims, Aquinas affirms in the passage in question: "the mystical body of the Church does not consist of men, but also of angels." And again Aquinas does not see the lack of likeness to Christ as to his bodily nature to prevent a rational creature from being a part of Christ's Mystical Body. Lazzari

[7] On the hypothesis that ETIs exist, Aquinas would regard it reasonable to think that God would give them the gift of grace which orders them to the glory of divine fruition. For the reasoning he uses to answer the question of whether angels were created in grace is applicable to ETIs. Aquinas notes that: "[O]ne cannot discover an efficacious reason for which of the [two opposite] opinions be truer, because the beginning of creatures depends on the simple will of the Creator, which is impossible to investigate by reason..." (*Scriptum super Sententiis*, Bk. II, dist. 4, q. 1, art. 3). However, he goes on to say: "nevertheless according to agreement with other of his [God's] works, one can sustain one side as more probable than the other." Using the latter mode of reasoning, Aquinas argues in a sed contra: "[I]t pertains to divine freedom to infuse grace into all who are capable of grace, unless something resisting is found in them, much more than he gives natural form to any disposed matter. But angels from the beginning of their creation had the motion of free will, and there was nothing in them impeding [the infusion of grace]. Therefore it seems that he immediately infused grace in them" (*Sent*., Bk. II, d. 4, q. 1, art. 3, sed contra 3).

[8] See *Sent*., Bk. III, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 2, s.c.: "It was not suitable that one of the most noble creatures be entirely frustrated in achieving its end. But human nature is among the noblest natures. Since, therefore the whole [nature] was corrupted through sin in the first parent, and was so deprived of the beatitude for which it was made, it was fitting that it be repaired." Since ETIs are material rational beings the same reasoning applies to them.

[9] Lazzari, "Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial?", p. 455, note 57.

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does not clearly state why the angels are part thereof; he refers to "the functioning of all." Aquinas specifically names that they are members of a multitude ordered to the same end (the "glory of divine fruition" or beatific vision), and that Christ as man exercises causal influence over them—two things again that could hold true of ETIs.

Towards the very end of his article, Lazzari acknowledges that Aquinas in ST III 8.4 holds that the angels are incorporated in Christ's Mystical Body, and more or less concedes that Aquinas could then envisage ETIs as part of Christ's mystical body:

> It certainly seems as though being incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ by baptism requires a human nature because this is the remedy for the human fall, which, as we saw must be distinct from an extraterrestrial one." However, St. Thomas does say that the angels have been incorporated into the mystical body of Christ in an analogous way because of their unity of will with God. It is possible that the unity of will (cooperating with grace) could also suffice for extraterrestrial life forms to be incorporated into the mystical body of Christ without needing a human nature. This will in union with the divine will may even be meritorious for salvation, as the patriarchs were saved by the desire for Christ.[10]

Aquinas does not say in *ST* III 8.4 that the angels are incorporated into the mystical body of the Church in an analogous way. Nor does Aquinas mention unity of will with God as being the cause of their incorporation, granted they would not belong to the company of the blessed if their will was not in union with God's will. The primary issue, however, is that Lazzari, in affirming the possibility that fallen ETIs be members of Christ's mystical body, largely dismantles his main argument, which is that only through being incorporated in Christ's mystical body can the salvation Christ wrought on the cross flow to the ETIs.[11] Note how Lazzari shifts from categorically affirming the impossibility of a fallen non-human rational being from sharing in Christ's salvific grace through baptism to saying "it certainly seems."

Before considering the reason Lazzari offers for denying that that Christ as man could exercise causal influence over ETIs by applying the fruits of his Passion to them, let us look at another passage where Aquinas speaks about the headship Christ as Man exercises

[10] Ibid., p. 456. Note that if the ETI fall was prior to Christ's death and resurrection, Aquinas would hold that the ETI individuals living at the time could not be saved by Christ as instrumental cause of grace, but rather would be saved, as were the Patriarchs, by faith in a future savior. Similarly, Aquinas would reject the notion that the angels received the grace moving them to submit themselves to God, (thereby gaining their beatification), from Christ as man, as this event occurred before the Incarnation.

[11] See ibid., p. 450: "Christ's Passion redeems us by our being incorporated into His mystical body and thus our sharing in His saving actions."

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over the angels, in order to be sure some essential point has not been overlooked.

De Veritate 29.4: "Whether the grace proper to the head belongs to Christ in his human nature"

Aquinas speaks in greater detail about Christ's headship in an earlier work, the *De Veritate*, than he does in the *Summa Theologiae*. He opens his discussion by noting that "head" first names a part of a natural living body and then it is transferred to name something in the spiritual realm; thus, we need to consider the relation of a physical head to the body's members if we are to understand in what manner Christ is head of the Church. Aquinas then explains that the basis of the word being transferred to name other things is one or more similarities to the three characteristics of a living body's head: dignity or eminence of what is like in nature, union of order to one end, and continuity by way of influence. He goes on to say:

> Christ, according to his human nature, is called head of the Church in these three ways. For he is of the same nature according to species with the rest of men; and in this manner it belongs to him to be head by reason of dignity, according as grace is found more abundantly in him. There is also a unity of order in the Church, according as the members of the Church serve one another and are ordered to God; and in this manner Christ is said to be the head of the Church as governor. There is also a certain continuity in the Church by reason of the Holy Spirit, who, one and the same in number, fills and unites the whole Church; whence also Christ according to human nature is said to be head by reason of influence.[12]

Aquinas then points out that to flow into (influere), as applied in the spiritual realm, can be understood in two ways: "In one way, as principal agent; and in this manner it belongs only to God to cause an influx of grace in the members of the Church." The other way is to cause this influx in an instrumental manner. This is true of Christ's humanity, insofar as "his humanity was an organ, as it were, of his divinity."

Aquinas then addresses the manner in which Christ is the head of the angels:

> Christ according to the last two conditions of head [i.e., governance and influence] is able to be called head of the angels according to human nature, and head of both human and angels according to his divine nature; but not according to the first, unless fellowship (communitas) is taken as to the nature of the genus, according as man and angel come

[12] *De Veritat*e, q. 29, a. 4.

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> together as to their rational nature, and further by the community of analogy, accord as it is common to the Son with other creatures to receive from the Father, as Basil says; by reason of which he is called the first born of every creature (Col. 1:15).

Christ, as to preeminence over those like in nature, is not able to be called head of the angels according to what is specific to human nature, but is able to be called head according to what is generically shared by angels and humans, namely, an intellectual nature; in addition, he can be called head by reason of the analogous manner in which everything that exists receives from the Father. In these same ways, Christ, in his human nature, could be head of the ETIs, in addition to being their head by way of governance and influence.

Aquinas makes some further comments in the *De Veritate* about Christ's headship over the angels in response to an objection that reads:

> The good angels and men belong to one Church. However, there is one head of one Church. Therefore, since Christ is not the head of the good angels, who never sinned, nor are conformed to him in nature, it seems that neither did he exist as head of men according to his human nature.

Aquinas does not respond by denying that the angels belong to the one Church, but rather says:

> Christ is not only head of the angels according to his divine nature, but also according to his human nature; for he illuminated them according to his human nature, as Dionysius says ... whence also Col. 1:16 says that he is the head of every sovereignty and power.

Aquinas does then add some qualifications as to how Christ is the head of the angels:

> Nevertheless the humanity of Christ stands other to the angels than to men as to two things. First, as to conformity in nature, through which he belongs to the same species as men, not angels. Secondly, as to the end of the Incarnation, which was done principally for the sake of the liberation of man from sin; and in this manner the humanity of Christ was ordered to influence which he made in men, as to an end intended; the influx, however, in the angels was not [intended] as the end of the Incarnation, but as a consequence of the Incarnation.

The first qualification, concerning likeness in nature, has already been discussed. The second qualification concerns Christ's influence on the angels; he did not redeem them nor does his grace come to them through the sacraments. Whatever effects that Christ as man has

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on the angels was not the end for which he took on human nature.[13] If one conceded that Christ's sacrifice redeemed ETIs, the question would arise as to whether their redemption should be regarded as an end or as a consequence.

We have seen then that what Aquinas says about Christ's headship of the mystical body in the *De Veritate* accords with what he says in the *Summa Theologiae*.

It Appears that the Effects of Christ's Passion are Inapplicable to ETIs

Lazzari acknowledges that Aquinas holds that rational beings other than human can become incorporated into Christ's mystical body. Why then does he deny that the salvific grace that comes to us instrumentally through Christ's death and resurrection could also come to ETIs? He justifies his position by invoking "the Chalcedonian necessity of a common nature for salvation." Aquinas appears to agree with this view: "the action of one is not able to sufficiently pass over to another, except insofar as the former has some fellowship with the latter, which can be through sharing in nature or being joined in affect."[14] Aquinas goes on to say that the latter form of fellowship, since it is accidental, rather than essential, is insufficient to have an effect upon human nature. He also affirms that the action of a pure man is insufficient to effect a change in human nature. Aquinas thus concludes that: "Only Christ is able to sufficiently merit for others."[15]

Lazzari's case seems to be further strengthened by Aquinas's reliance on St. John Damascene's dictum: "what is not assumable is not healable" (quod est inassumptibile, est incurabile[16]). Aquinas directly quotes it six times, and paraphrases it at least once.[17] He relies on it to argue that Christ should have assumed a sex, a human intellect,

[13] In *ST* III, q. 8, a. 4 Aquinas speaks of Christ as man illuminating the angels. Aquinas speaks of another effect that Christ's Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection had on the angels in *Super Epistolas S. Pauli*, ad Ephesios, #2: "The effect of this hidden plan was to restore all things. For insofar as all things are made for the sake of man, all things are said to be restored. . . . *All things* he says *which are in heaven*, i.e., the Angels—not that Christ died for the Angels, but by redeeming man, the fall of the Angels was repaired."

[14] Sent., Bk. III, d. 19, q. 1, qc. 1.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Note that Aquinas worked with an inexact translation of Damascene. Damascene states categorically "for what is not assumed, is not healed" ("to gar aproslepton, atherapeuton"). This axiom was articulated earlier by Gregory of Nazianzus in *Epistola*, 101.7 and is more commonly attributed to him.

[17] Aquinas quotes Damascene's dictum three times in objections, twice as a sed contra and once in the body of an article. And in *ST* III, q. 3, a. 1 he paraphrases it: "Et ideo conveniens fuit ut carnem sumeret ex materia ab Adam derivata, ut ipsa natura per assumptionem curaretur (so that through assumption the nature itself would be healed)."

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and a human will. For example, in regard to the question of whether Christ ought to assume a human intellect, he says:

> Secondly, it [the non-assumption of a human mind] opposes the utility of the incarnation, which is the justification of man from sin. For the human soul is not capable of sin, nor of the grace that justifies, except through the mind. Whence it was chiefly fitting that the human mind be assumed. Whence Damascene says in Bk. III [c. 6, *On the Orthodox Faith*] that the Word of God assumed a body and an intellectual and rational soul, and he adds afterwards that "the whole was united to whole that He might in His grace bestow salvation on the whole of me. For what is unable to be assumed, is unable to be healed."[18]

"What is unable to be assumed is unable to be healed" in Context

Aquinas's usage of Damascene's dictum needs to be understood in the context of the resolution of a prior question, namely, whether the Incarnation was necessary. As Lazzari correctly points out, Aquinas holds that it was not necessary, but rather it was fitting, that the Word become incarnate and die for our salvation: "God through his omnipotent power could have repaired human nature in many other ways [than through the Incarnation]."[19] Having acknowledged this, Aquinas goes on to quote Augustine who affirms that there was "no more suitable manner to heal our misery" than through the Incarnation. Thus, whenever Aquinas addresses questions such as whether Christ should assume a human will or a human body, etc. it needs to be understood that he is doing so in a context in which God's decision to redeem human beings by the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of the Word Incarnate is taken to be fitting rather than necessary. Therefore, that God act in a way in keeping with this decision also carries with it fittingness rather than necessity. This can be seen from one of the passages in which Aquinas invokes Damascene's dictum. In response to the question of whether Christ should have assumed a sex, Aquinas presents as a *sed contra*: Moreover, what is not assumable is not curable, as Damascene says. But sex, in which original sins chiefly reigns, is especially in need of healing."[20] Note the language Aquinas then uses in the corpus:

[18] *ST* III, q. 5 a. 4: "Secundo, repugnat utilitati incarnationis, quae est iustificatio hominis a peccato. Anima enim humana non est capax peccati, nec gratiae iustificantis, nisi per mentem. Unde praecipue oportuit mentem humanam assumi. Unde Damascenus dicit, in III libro, quod Dei verbum assumpsit corpus et animam intellectualem et rationalem, et postea subdit, totus toti unitus est, ut toti mihi salutem gratificet idest, gratis faciat, quod enim inassumptibile est, incurabile est."

[19] *ST* III, q. 1, a. 2.

[20] *Sent*., Bk. 3, d. 12, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, s.c. 2.

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> Christ came to repair human nature, which he repaired through assumption [of that nature]; and therefore it was necessary (oportuit[21]) that he assume whatever is a per se consequence of human nature, namely, all the properties and parts of human nature, included among which is sex; and therefore it was befitting (decuit) that he assume a sex.[22]

Aquinas does not use the language of absolute necessity, but rather of fittingness. It appears, then, that the correct way of understanding the dictum "what is not able to be assumed is not able to be healed" is as indicating that on the supposition that God determined that a fallen nature was to be healed by means of a divine person assuming that nature, it is fitting that the divine person assume the fallen nature in its integrity, rather than in a piece-meal fashion. Understanding the dictum in this manner fits with how Aquinas speaks in regard to whether Christ should assume a true body:

> The first reason [for why the Son of God ought to assume a true body] is taken from the notion of human nature, to which it pertains to have a true body. Therefore, on the supposition, drawn from what was said before, that it is fitting that the Son of God assume human nature, it follows that he would assume a human body.[23]

Damascene's dictum is not meant to exclude the possibility that human beings could have been saved in many other ways. Thus, it need not be understood to exclude the possibility that fallen ETIs be saved by a divine person united to a human nature.

Is it Possible for God to Apply Christ's Sacrifice to Rational Beings Other Than Human?

The crucial question that remains is whether or not God could choose to accept Christ's sacrifice in reparation for the sin of another generically similar species. Again, Aquinas affirms that God could have saved the human race in many different ways, and the same would be true in the case of ETIs. Is it impossible for the God-man to be an instrumental cause of ETI salvation?

[21] "Oportuit" can be translated as "it is proper or becoming" rather than as "it is necessary." Even if one translates it in this passage as "it is necessary," it still could be understood in a sense that falls short of absolute necessity; see note 37.

[22] *Sent*., Bk. 3, d. 12, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1.

[23] *ST* III, q. 5, a. 1. Here is another similarly qualified statement: "As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 13, God could have taken on man elsewhere than from the stock of that Adam who bound the human race by his sin. But God judged it better to assume vanquished human nature–through which he would vanquish the enemy of the human race–from the very same race" (*ST* III, q. 4 a. 6).

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Given that it is possible for God to save a fallen rational species in ways other than by Incarnation, what precludes God from doing so in the case of fallen ETIs by means of the God-man's sacrifice on the cross? Does the difference in nature render it impossible for Christ to be a universal redeemer for all of the fallen, regardless of their nature?

We have seen Aquinas would hold that ETIs are able to be incorporated in Christ's mystical body. We have also seen that Aquinas holds that Christ as man exercises causal influence over the angels who are members of his mystical body, despite the difference in nature. The only thing that could preclude God from choosing to let ETIs share in the salvific effects of Christ's death and resurrection would be if doing so involved a contradiction or, in other words, it would have to be the case that there can be no such thing as redemption of a fallen nature by a divine person who is incarnate in another nature.[24] There is nothing contradictory, however, in the notion of Christ as man redeeming ETIs.

One might concede that the ETI elect could be saved individually through grace coming instrumentally from Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, while denying that this sacrifice healed their nature. Christ is the new Adam, not the new ETI. However, God could by divine fiat accept the death and resurrection of Christ as healing the fallen ETI nature, as this does not involve contradiction.[25] What Aquinas says is true in the case of the angels, namely, that they are generically like us in nature, would be true of the ETIs, and thus the need Aquinas speaks of for there to be "some fellowship in nature" for the action of one (Christ) to pass into another (ETIs) is met.[26]

It is certainly true that the "divine dilemma" in regard to the fallen ETIs would not be solved were Christ's sacrifice to save them, as then it would not be an ETI who made satisfaction for the race's sin.[27]

[24] God cannot choose the past to never have been does because there is no such thing (an event cannot both have been and not have been), nor can he create another God, as God is the uncreated one. See *De Potentia*, q. 1, a. 3.

[25] Aquinas does hold that certain acts by a divine person could not secure human salvation. He says that "if his [Christ's] body was not a true body but an imaginary body, then he did not undergo a true death either. . . . And in this manner it would also follow that the true salvation of man did not ensue; for it is necessary for an effect to be proportioned to its cause" (*ST* III, q. 5, a.1). A fake atonement is in nowise meritorious; paying the price of sin in false currency is no payment at all.

[26] Sent., Bk. III, d. 19, q. 1, qc. 1. This text was quoted earlier; it corresponds to note 14.

[27] See *Summa contra Gentiles,* Bk. IV, chap. 54: "The order of divine justice so stands . . . that sin is not remitted by God without satisfaction. No one purely human, however, could make satisfaction for the sin of the entire human race, because anyone who is purely human is something less than the entire ensemble of the human race. It was necessary, therefore, so that the human race could be freed from the sin common to it that someone would make satisfaction who would be a human being, to whom the satisfaction pertained,

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Still, it is not impossible for God to waive the need for an ETI to make satisfaction. Indeed, Aquinas would hold that God could forgive the fallen ETIs without demanding any satisfaction whatsoever.[28]

Here lies the central difference between Lazzari's view and mine. I acknowledge that it is within God's power to allow ETIs to be saved as an effect of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, be it by healing their nature or through grace given to them only individually, whereas he denies it.

Similarly, I hold that it falls within God's power to use baptism as the means by which fallen ETIs would be incorporated into the Mystical Body. Indeed, given that ETIs and humans would belong to the same Church, the expectation would be that we would share the same sacraments.[29]

In regard to baptism, Lazzari shows hesitancy in categorically denying the possibility that ETIs could be saved through baptism: "Since baptism is the remedy of original sin for human beings, it seems as though one must have a human nature to undergo baptism."[30] He is right to qualify that statement, as the conclusion does not follow with necessity. Take a parallel case: Since X is a remedy for digestive problems in humans, therefore one must be human in order for X to remedy one's digestive problems.

and someone beyond human, so that the merit would be sufficient for satisfying for the sin of the entire human race. As far as the order of beatitude, there is no one greater than man except for God; for angels, granted that they are superior as to the condition of their nature, are not nevertheless as to the order of the end, because they are made blessed in the same way as humans. It was therefore necessary that God become man in order to destroy the sin of the human race so that man might attain beatitude."

[28] See *ST* III, q. 46, a. 2: "For if he [God] had wanted to free man from sin without [man] making any satisfaction, he would not have acted contrary to justice. For a judge cannot dismiss a fault without punishment and preserve justice when his place is to punish a fault committed against another, be it against another man or against the whole republic or against a higher ruler. But God does not have some superior, but he himself is the supreme and common good of the universe. And therefore, if he remits sin, which has the notion of fault from this that it is committed against him, he causes injury to no one; just as any man who remits an offense committed against himself without satisfaction [being made], does not act unjustly, but mercifully."

[29] See *ST* III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 3: "The Apostle and their successors are vicars of God as to the regimen of the Church instituted through faith and the sacraments of faith. Whence, just as it is not permitted to them to constitute another Church, so too it is not permitted to them to hand on another faith or institute other sacraments; rather the Church of Christ is built by the sacraments which flowed from the side of Christ hanging on the cross." If God were to apply the salvific effects of Christ's cross to ETIs, he most likely would do so through baptism, given that ETIs and humans would belong to the same Church. However, as institutor of the sacraments, God could determine that fallen ETIs be incorporated in the Mystical Body in a manner other than by baptism.

[30] Lazzari, "Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial?", 451.

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Lazzari is correct to think that transference of Christ's merits to ETIs would not automatically occur.[31] The Word's Incarnation, death, and resurrection is suited in all its details to human salvation, but not to ETI salvation.[32] What Lazzari fails to see, however, is that it is not impossible for God to choose to apply the effects of Christ's salvific acts to ETIs.

The Element of Truth in Lazzari's Position

While Aquinas would not deny the possibility that ETIs be saved through Christ's death and resurrection, he would regard a divine decision to order things this way as highly unlikely in light of what God has revealed to us concerning his salvific activity in the universe. There are many things that God could do that he does not do because it does not befit his wisdom, e.g., he could annihilate a thing, but this does not befit his wisdom.[33] Aquinas says about the Incarnation:

> Granted that the will of God suffices for doing all things, nevertheless divine wisdom requires that individual things be provided for by God in ways that befit them; for it [divine wisdom] appropriately instituted proper causes for each particular thing. Whence, granted that God by his will alone could bring about in the human race all the benefits which we say have come from the incarnation of God ... nevertheless it was suited to human nature that benefits of this sort were brought about by God made man, as is apparent in a certain measure from the reasons adduced.[34]

Aquinas gives dozens of reasons for the Word's incarnation as man, some concerning the reparation of our nature and others concerning how Christ serves as an example for us, motivating us to live in accord with God's will, as is necessary for our salvation.[35] In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas, after listing multiple benefits that accrue to us humans due to the Incarnation, concludes: "Someone can conceive from these and other like reason that it was not unfitting that God, by divine goodness, become man, but rather it was most expedient for human salvation."[36] ETIs would not be the recipients of many of the benefits that accrue to us as a result of the Incarnation; to give two examples:

[31] See *ST* III, q. 64, a. 2, s.c.: "Only God can instutite sacraments."

[32] See *De Rationibus Fidei*, c. 5: "The mode of repair ought to be such that it is suited to the nature to be repaired and to the wound."

[33] See *ST* I, q. 104, a. 3, *ST* I, q. 104, a. 4, ad 1 and *De Potentia*, q. 5, a. 4.

[34] *Summa contra Gentiles*, Bk. 4, chap. 55.

[35] See *ST* III, q. 1, a. 2 and *Summa contra Gentiles,* Bk. 4, chap. 55.

[36] *Summa contra Gentiles,* Bk. IV, chap. 55.

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> Since the perfect beatitude of man consists in divine fruition, it was necessary that the affect of man be disposed to desiring divine fruition. . . . The desire for the fruition of something is caused, however, by love of that thing. Therefore, it was necessary that man, as tending toward perfect beatitude, be led to love what is divine. Nothing, however, induces us to love someone as the experience of that person's love towards us. The love of God for human beings cannot be demonstrated in a more efficacious manner than by this that he wanted to be united to man in person; for it is proper to love to unite the lover with the beloved to the extent that this is possible. It was therefore necessary for man, as tending to perfect beatitude, that God become man.[37]

Here is a second example:

> Since friendship consists in a certain equality, those who are highly unequal are seen to be unable to be joined in friendship. Therefore, to this end that there would be a more familiar friendship between man and God, it was expedient that God become man, since man is naturally a friend to man, and when we know God in this visible manner, we are borne away to love of what is invisible.[38]

There are many other benefits that accrue to human beings as a result of the Incarnation that would be absent to fallen ETIs if Christ were to be their savior. Aquinas would certainly grant that if ETIs were saved through Christ, they would have gained the greatest possible benefit. Yet, upon considering how the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ are so carefully tailored in so many details to human benefit alone, Aquinas would regard it as unlikely that God would intend Christ's salvific actions to apply to other rational beings. As Aquinas says in a passage quoted earlier: "[divine wisdom] appropriately instituted proper causes for each particular thing." God does not act in an arbitrary and whimsical manner, but "orders all things sweetly" (Ws. 8:1). When one compares human salvation through Christ to ETIs' salvation through Christ, and considers the myriad benefits that accrue to humans due to God adopting this plan which are absent to the ETIs, it is hard to see ETI salvation through Christ as God acting "in keeping with the proper causes for each particular thing." The question raised earlier comes up here: if one conceded that Christ's sacrifice redeemed ETIs, should their redemption be

[37] *Summa contra Gentiles,* IV chap. 54. Note that Aquinas distinguishes two senses of "necessary:" "Something is said to be necessary for some end in two ways; in one way as that without which it is not possible, as food is necessary for the preservation of human life; in another way, as that through which one more suitably arrives at an end, as a horse is necessary for a journey. That God become incarnate in order to repair human nature was not necessary in the first way, for God through his omnipotent power could have repaired human nature in many other ways" (*ST* III, q. 1 a. 2).

[38] *Summa contra Gentiles,* Bk. IV chap. 54.

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regarded as the primary end of the Incarnation or only as a consequence of human redemption. Either response seems problematic.

Conclusion

Again, it is one thing to argue that it does not seem fitting that God redeem ETIs through Christ sacrifice, and it is another to say that he is unable to do so. If Lazzari had restricted his thesis to the improbability of fallen ETI salvation through Christ, rather than the impossibility of ETI salvation through Christ, and had focused on whether fallen ETI salvation through Christ is in keeping with what we know about divine wisdom, he would have been able to make a Thomistic case for the negative position.

The theologians Lazzari mentions who affirm that "any fallen intelligent extraterrestrial life would be incorporated into the sacrifice of Christ"[39] hold that God almost certainly would redeem a fallen ETI species, and are quite aware that he is under no obligation to do so. Col. 1:15-20 gives them reason to hold that Christ is the universal redeemer: "As he is the Beginning, he was first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to dwell in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and everything on earth when he made peace through the blood of the cross." Certainly, Christ's sacrifice is infinite in its saving power. As Aquinas puts it: "The passion of Christ was of such great power that it suffices for expiating all the sins of the entire world, even if there would be a hundred thousand worlds."[40] Since there is no contradiction involved in affirming that Christ is savior of ETIs (for God can choose to apply the salvific graces of Christ's cross to generically similar beings), these theologians conclude that if fallen ETIs exist, they are, most likely, redeemed by Christ. This view does not commit them to holding that the existence of fallen ETIs is likely. Aquinas, arguably, would hold that the existence of ETIs is unlikely.[41] However, if they

[39] See Lazzari, "Would St. Thomas Aquinas Baptize an Extraterrestrial?", p. 451, note 59; Lazzari names theologians Gerard O'Collins and Augustine Di Noia.

[40] *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 4.

[41] Aquinas would most likely regard fallen ETIs existence as improbable on the grounds that God is unlikely to leave them unredeemed and yet their redemption through Christ, though possible, is hard to reconcile with divine wisdom.

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were to be discovered, Aquinas, who agrees with the premises the aforementioned theologians rely on, would maintain that the effects of Christ's death and resurrection could be applied to fallen ETIs, and he would not assume that it would be inappropriate to baptize them.

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