

# **Philosophical and Theological Perspectives on the Resurrection of the Body in Aquinas**

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*The question of what happens after death has been entertained by religious traditions and philosophical reflection from the earliest times, and the answers to the question have been various, from the annihilation of the person in materialist accounts, to the immortality of the soul and reincarnation, to mystical union with the One. Saint Thomas Aquinas thought that there were philosophical reasons in favor of the resurrection of the body; however, he did not think that these philosophical reasons were sufficient to account for the resurrection. This essay focuses on three main points: first, the philosophical reasons for holding that there will be a resurrection of the body; second, the philosophical reasons which force us to consider something beyond what philosophy can provide; and third, what revelation has to say and why this is so essential to our understanding the human person.*

The resurrection of the body is a key doctrine of Christianity. It is intimately tied up with the mission of Jesus to redeem humanity. As Jesus is fully human and fully divine, our redemption must also be fully human, that is personal; and that would seem to include the redemption of our bodily life as well as our souls. The question of what happens after death has been entertained by religious traditions and philosophical reflection from the earliest times, and the answers to the question have been various, from the annihilation of the person in materialist accounts, to the immortality of the soul and reincarnation, to mystical union with the One. Saint Thomas Aquinas thought that there were philosophical reasons in favor of the resurrection of the body; however, he did not think that these philosophical reasons were sufficient to account for the resurrection. Considering the issue through the lens of Aristotle's four causes, Thomas thought that an examination of human nature as we find it provides reasons for immortality and the resurrection of the body based on the formal and final causes of humanity, but that the efficient cause and, less clearly but significantly, the material cause for the resurrection must be supernatural. In this discussion, I propose to consider first the philosophical justifications for holding that there will be a resurrection of the body, second, the philosophical reasons which force us to consider something beyond what philosophy can provide, and third what revelation has to say and why this is so essential to our understanding the human person.<sup>1</sup>

## **Philosophical Justifications for the Resurrection of the Body**

The history of philosophy includes a number of answers to what happens to the human person after death. One can hardly present all the possible responses to the question that have been given, but perhaps we can mention the major contestants that would have been available to Saint Thomas. Those thinkers who considered that whatever was real was material did not grant the

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<sup>1</sup> I have discussed some of the philosophical arguments and their limits in an earlier paper: "Aquinas on the Resurrection of the Body," *The Thomist*, 56.2 (April 1992), 165-207.

human individual any substantial unity: the stuff of the universe is all the same, either an irreducible many, as the atomists held, or all one, as the Stoics held. Those who considered the soul to be an immaterial reality provided the basis for distinguishing, not just quantitative differences between human beings and other things, but substantial differences. Still, there was a good deal of disagreement (sometimes within the same philosopher) about what this meant. If the soul is the real person and it is indestructible, as seems to be Plato's basic position, then the soul is intrinsically immortal. But then questions arise as to its relation with the body and the material world which are not easily answered. Is the soul trapped in the body as in a prison house (suggesting that the body is a kind of punishment)? Will the soul come back in different bodies—perhaps as a goat or a lion or a bee—depending on how one lives one's life? Will the soul eventually transcend the material world and break the cycle of rebirth? And if it does this, will it exist forever as individual, or will it merge with the World Soul or the Intelligence or the One? Such questions about individual immortality are raised by Aristotle's understanding of human intelligence and its transcendence of materiality, and the issue is a major question for Neo-Platonism.

Thomas thinks that the resurrection of the body is a better philosophical answer to what happens after death than any of those offered by philosophers. In fact, he argues in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, that it is hard if not impossible to prove the immortality of the soul without the resurrection of the body.<sup>2</sup> Such a claim might seem puzzling since the major argument for the immortality of the soul is its immateriality based on the insight that it has operations—understanding and willing—that transcend the body. Let us see how Thomas arrives at this rather startling conclusion.

Thomas agrees with the basic Platonic insight that the fact of human knowledge is evidence that the soul transcends the body and therefore does not die when the body ceases to function. The objects of mathematics and metaphysics are not ultimately material things and so cannot be understood by a material organ. No one has actually seen or heard or weighed a point, line, triangle, or circle. They are known by definition, by acts of intelligence, not sensation. If a point has no dimensions, then it obviously cannot be seen or weighed. There is no physical circle in the precise sense of a planar figure with points equidistant from a center. Equally, algebraic equations are intelligible not physical realities.<sup>3</sup> The same is true for essential knowledge of the world in which we live, whether of physical beings, moral ideals, or aesthetic intelligibilities. Such things are understood apart from matter, so much so that the ultimate reality of even material things is immaterial. Thus, for Plato, knowledge is innate, gained by the soul communing with the world of the Forms. The learning we do is recollecting what the soul already knows, learned apparently before this life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (hereafter *Com. 1 Cor.*), 15.2.924, trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P. (987-1046 by Daniel Keating), Html-edited by Joseph Kenny, O.P., <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/SS1Cor.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that for Plato and many contemporary mathematicians these equations and geometrical shapes are held to explain physical reality.

<sup>4</sup> See Plato, *Meno* 81d.

Aristotle, of course, thinks that there is no innate knowledge, that all knowledge is abstracted from sense experience. Still, even for him, knowledge transcends the senses: that is, knowledge is of the universal and unchanging, while the objects of sensation are particular and changing. There is, of course, a good deal of debate about the immortality of the soul in Aristotle, whether it is personal, or just for the one agent intellect which makes possible all thought.<sup>5</sup>

Saint Thomas agrees with the basic insight of Plato and Aristotle that the rational soul has activities of its own that transcend the body, so much so that when he talks about the human being, he thinks we are in a way two substances: a rational soul that can exist on its own (a bit of Plato and possibly Aristotle), and the soul/body composite in which the rational soul is the form of the body (Aristotle).<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the activity of knowing, the activity of freely willing indicates the transcendence of the soul over the body. This is more fully developed in Thomas than in Plato and Aristotle. As it was for Augustine, the proof for freedom of the will is moral responsibility, which makes no sense except under the condition that the will is free.<sup>7</sup> The argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*: the entire moral life—virtue and vice, rewards and punishments—is absurd if human beings are not free. Plato and Aristotle are certainly deeply interested in ethics, and there are clear indications of their recognition of the natural moral law. However, when they (Plato especially) attempt to explain wrongdoing, they do so in terms of metaphysical or psychological explanation, that is, not in essentially moral terms. Virtue is ultimately knowledge, and vice is ignorance.<sup>8</sup> It is the insight of Augustine (and in general the Judeo-Christian tradition) that one can only do what is wrong if one knows it is wrong and still does it; that is, far from making wrongdoing impossible, knowledge is essential for wrongdoing.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle's discussion of the voluntary comes close to this insight when he suggests the absurdity of our taking responsibility for our good actions but not for our bad ones (which we blame on other people or the circumstances, or something else).<sup>10</sup> One can, perhaps, make a case for a greater depth of insight into moral freedom in Plato and Aristotle than I have suggested. The essential point is that moral freedom is another indication that there is something about being human that transcends our materiality. If we are responsible for our moral actions (good or bad), then they are not reducible to psychological states, social pressures, biological drives, or other non-moral causes. Nor are they random, which might be claimed by a materialist. As freedom of choice is neither necessary nor random, our choices transcend our

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<sup>5</sup> See Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, 5.

<sup>6</sup> "Of man Who Is Composed of a Spiritual and a Corporeal Substance." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (hereafter *ST*), trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1981), 1.75.1.

<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.83.1.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps knowledge need not be restricted to physics, mathematics, and metaphysics: there could be knowledge of moral truths. However, in this view, will is ultimately determined by intellect, so that the intellect's knowledge that something is wrong precludes the will from pursuing it.

<sup>9</sup> See Augustine's discussion of stealing the pears in *Confessions* 2.4-9, in which he denies all the "reasons" for his sin besides his evil free choice.

<sup>10</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 1.

external and internal circumstances, indicating the immateriality of the soul. As immaterial, the soul which knows and chooses is not subject to dissolution, and hence is immortal.<sup>11</sup>

But how does Saint Thomas get from these insights to the requirement that the soul be reunited with the body? His route philosophically is through Aristotle, especially his understanding of formal and final causes of the human being. Thomas recognizes that Plato's account of human nature (that it is essentially the soul) faces a problem—the plain fact that as we sit around and discuss these matters, we do so as embodied. How and why did we get here? On Plato's account that the body is bad for the soul, how can Plato make sense of our “imprisonment”? The fact that there is in Plato a recognition of something like a “fall,” that we are not what and where we should be, is a genuine human insight, consistent with the moral foundations of Christian theology. Metaphysically, however, it is hard to explain in Platonic terms. To the question why the soul is associated so intimately with the body, Plato cannot say that it is good for the soul (in fact, he says the opposite). But the other alternative—that is for the sake of the body—makes even less sense, for this assumes that the body is more perfect than the soul; and is absurd, for in distinguishing body and soul, soul is clearly more perfect than body (as human beings are more perfect than animals, than plants, than stones). For these reasons, Thomas, following Aristotle's position, affirms that the reason the soul is in the body is that it is good for the soul: that is, the human soul is the kind of rational soul that requires the body to learn and to act well in the human community.<sup>12</sup>

When it comes to explaining human activities, Thomas argues that the whole individual is prior to the parts. Thus, it is more proper to say that I see, than that my eyes see, and to say that I know, than that my soul knows.<sup>13</sup> As Thomas notes in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, “the soul, since it is a part of man's body, is not an entire man, and my soul is not I.”<sup>14</sup> He brings the same insight to the debate about whether the agent intellect (the key for the idea of immortality in Aristotle) is individual or universal. How is it that Socrates knows, and not someone else?<sup>15</sup> Thomas insists on the insight of Aristotle that what is most real (primary substance) is the individual.<sup>16</sup> Thomas's doctrine of creation, with its claim that *esse* is most fundamental in each thing helps him underline the importance of the individual metaphysically. But the experience of reflecting on what it is to know—that it is I knowing, not just it knowing—is the experiential confirmation of the metaphysical insight. And the moral insight that I am responsible for my free acts confirms this.

Thus, the essence of the human being is rational animal, not just rational nor just animal. This is what we find ourselves to be. Physical death is not annihilation, for the soul has operations that transcend materiality and so is not subject to the material dissolution of the body. However,

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<sup>11</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.6.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.85.1.

<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.2ad2.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.2.924.

<sup>15</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.76.1.c.

<sup>16</sup> There is some inconsistency on this matter in Aristotle, for he ends up grounding intelligibility in what is universal and unchanging, which only belongs to the species.

Thomas says that this state is unnatural and that an unnatural state cannot last forever: therefore, there will be a resurrection of the body.<sup>17</sup> Here Thomas invokes final causality to make his case.

There are three basic arguments, one about nature in general, and the other two more specific to human nature. The first focuses on a basic metaphysical theme, the other two on the individual human being's desire for happiness and his or her knowledge of moral obligation.

Given that it is natural for us to be what we find ourselves to be—namely, unities of body and soul—it is unnatural for the soul to exist apart from the body. But no unnatural state lasts forever—nature is not in vain.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the soul and body will be reunited. Otherwise, what is unnatural (the division of soul from body) would last forever, that is, would appear to be the ultimate natural state. Water can exist on a granite slope, but not permanently. Given the nature of the world (gravity, water as fluid, granite as hard), such a state is not permanent. The water flows to the lowest point. So the division of the soul from the body is not permanent:

For it is clear that the soul is naturally united to the body and is departed from it, contrary to its nature and *per accidens*. Hence the soul devoid of its body is imperfect, as long as it is without the body. But it is impossible that what is natural and *per se* be finite and, as it were, nothing; and that which is against nature and *per accidens* be infinite, if the soul endures without the body.<sup>19</sup>

The second argument takes up the peculiar orientation of human beings to happiness. Whatever happiness may be, it is the happiness of the individual person, not an abstract tendency of nature in general or of the species. Therefore, if happiness is to be complete (and as Aristotle pointed out, incomplete happiness is not happiness<sup>20</sup>) it must involve the entire human person, body and soul.

Man naturally desires his own salvation; but the soul, since it is a part of man's body, is not an entire man, and my soul is not I: hence, although the soul obtains salvation in another life, nevertheless, not I or any man does. Furthermore, since man naturally desires salvation even of the body, a natural desire would be frustrated.<sup>21</sup>

The third argument is also based on final causality of the human being, grounded in our knowledge of responsibility and justice. Whether or not people actually are rewarded for their good deeds and punished for their evil deeds, we know they ought to be. But these deeds are the

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter *CG*), *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, Book Four, trans, Charles J. O'Neil (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1957), 4.79.10-12; *Compendium theologiae* (hereafter *CT*) 151; *ST* 1.76.1ad6

<sup>18</sup> Thomas refers to Aristotle, *De Caelo*, I, 2 (269b9).

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.1.924.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.2.934.

deeds of the human being—I act, not by body or soul—and therefore the entire human being, body and soul, deserves to be rewarded or punished.<sup>22</sup>

## Philosophical Challenges

However, although there are arguments for the resurrection of the body based on formal and final causality, it is clear that there is no natural efficient cause capable of restoring the unity of soul and body after death, and the extent to which the material cause could be said to be natural is unclear. Thomas freely admits as much. “The resurrection is natural as to its end inasmuch as it is natural for the soul to be the form of the body; but its active principle is not natural, but is caused solely by divine power.”<sup>23</sup> Natural generation is a temporal sequence, which does not double back on itself. Certainly essences are passed on by reproduction, so that from daisies come daisies and from dogs come dogs, but individuals are not passed on and cannot be repeated. Obviously, individuals are not passed on by themselves, for they would have to be before they are, which is impossible. Neither are individuals reproduced by nature: efficient causality in terms of matter in motion is unidirectional, the exact same temporal and spatial conditions do not obtain again. As Aristotle says, nature cannot make the same thing twice.<sup>24</sup> And in the case of human generation, even the species is not passed on entirely by reproduction, for every rational soul is created *ex nihilo* by God, as Thomas says.<sup>25</sup> So human conception, although clearly involving natural biological procreation, also requires a supernatural act. Thus, as the integration of the human being (body and soul) requires divine activity, so would the reintegration of the resurrection.<sup>26</sup>

As for the continuity between the living person and the resurrected person, Thomas thinks that the soul provides the link, for the entire blueprint for the body is contained in the rational soul, for there is just one form of the human being—the rational soul.<sup>27</sup> Still, Thomas raises numerous questions about the material for the body, how it will be gathered, what happens when it has been in two different people, etc. In other words, it is not quite enough to say that the soul is sufficient to explain everything about the human being, for such a position would not differ from Platonism, and Thomas certainly rejects that.<sup>28</sup> Just as the efficient cause of the resurrection is God alone, so

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<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *CG* 4.79.12.

<sup>23</sup> Aquinas, *CG* 4.81.14. “The dusts into which human bodies are reduced differ from other dust only according to God’s plan, inasmuch as these dusts are ordained by divine wisdom that human bodies be formed from them again. Hence the active cause of the resurrection is God alone” (*Com. 1 Cor.* 15.5. 969).

<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *De Generatio et Corruptione*, II, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.90.2.

<sup>26</sup> For this reason Thomas speaks of the resurrection as miraculous. See *IV Sententia*, dis. Xliii, a. 1, q. 3; and *CT*, 154.

<sup>27</sup> On numerical identity, Thomas writes: “I do not do violence to the intermediary forms, because I do not hold that there is any other substantial form in man except the rational soul, from which the human body will have it that it is animated by a sensible and vegetable nature, and that it is rational. Accidental forms in no way hinder the numerical identity that we maintain” (Aquinas, *Com 1 Cor.* 15.9.1015). See also, *ST* 1.76.3.

<sup>28</sup> One of the problems with the idea of reincarnation, suggested in the Platonic myths, is that it assumes that the human soul could exist in some other kind of body. But for Thomas, the only proper matter for the human soul to inform is the human body, for that is what the human rational soul requires.

the solution to puzzles about how the same numerical matter can be restored is found only in God's infinite power. "What is wanting will be supplied by the Creator's omnipotence."<sup>29</sup>

It is true that Aristotle's notion of matter (ultimately, pure potentiality), which Thomas adopts, is not the same as the atomist's notion of matter as smallest quantitative bits. Matter is an analogical term, applicable to the complex human body in its relation to the soul, to the cellulose of plant in relation to its life, to genus in relation to species, and even to species in relation to the individual. Prime matter seems to indicate a continuity among all material things—the potentiality, on some level, of one thing changing into another. But if the soul is entirely without matter, then it cannot restore to itself its body, nor can any natural cause. Only an infinitely powerful cause (God the creator) can bring something into being from nothing—restore the naturally impossible integration of immateriality with materiality. As creation is *ex nihilo*, so is the recreation that is the resurrection of the body. "For the power of nature restores what is the same in species, but not the same numerically; but God's power can restore even the same numerically."<sup>30</sup>

Thus, it is clear that the natural arguments for the resurrection of the body are not sufficient to make it happen. For just as there was no nature prior to creation which might cause God to create, so nature once created does not cause God to recreate it. That is, as intelligible as are the reasons for the resurrection of the body based on the formal and final causality of the human being, they are not sufficient to cause God to act. The creation was (is) a free act of God; and the resurrection must be equally free. Thus, our confidence in the resurrection depends on our confidence in God, and this is based on God's revelation of the fundamental act of God: the Father sending the Son to give the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup>

One point I made in an earlier paper on this topic may be of interest. When the issue of identity is raised against the philosophical arguments for the resurrection) when it is objected that because there is a time when the soul exists without the body, the resurrected person is not the same individual), one can reply that since the soul is immaterial, it does not exist in space and time, and so there really is no "time when" the soul exists without the body. As far as it goes, this is a point well taken, as is the argument that Plato's forms do not literally exist in a "world apart" for the reason that they are not spatial. However, this point only says that it is possible that the resurrection is in some sense immediate and that God could bring it about that there is no break in the unity of soul and body.<sup>32</sup> It does not change the fact that the act of continuity (its efficient cause) is the act solely of God, not of our doing and not of Nature.

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<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *CG* 4.81.13, p. 307.

<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.5.970.

<sup>31</sup> As Thomas says, "faith is concerned with things that are above reason. Hence, an article of faith begins where reason falls short" (Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 17.1.896).

<sup>32</sup> There are some theological reasons to deny this in terms of the importance of time and history. Thus, Ratzinger writes that, if we are the Body of Christ, then the fullness of the Body, the consummation of history, is required for the fullness of the resurrection. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein, Volume 9 of *Dogmatic Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 190.

## Revelation and the Theological Perspective

Let us turn, then, to what theology offers us in way of making the resurrection of the body intelligible and compelling. As we are here at a transitional point from philosophy *per se* (if there is any such thing) to theology, let me affirm what I see as being the permanent contributions of Plato and Aristotle to our discussion, whether philosophical or theological. Plato (or perhaps Socrates) insists that for some reason we are not where we ought to be, that there has been some kind of disruption, some fall from perfection. This position is implied in Socrates' humble admission that he does not know and does not live in perfect virtue, but that he strives to rectify this situation, to fulfill both ends—truth and goodness. Whatever metaphysical attempts are made at explaining what, how, or why the fall happened, this Socratic/Platonic insight is essential to our human condition. Our awareness of our indigence and alienation is fundamental to the ongoing search for truth and goodness in which is embedded our confidence in our freedom of choice. As Paul says in Philippians, “forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3.13-14). Aristotle, for his part, contributes the methodological refusal of reductionism. It is the very spirit of his thought: gather up all that is true and good, rejecting only what is false and evil. Rather than the elements or atoms being the currency of intelligibility, for Aristotle, it is the human being that is the prime analogate, and even the human individual. He, of course, is not entirely consistent on this point, but it is the spirit of his philosophy. The attributes he attributes to his God—life, intelligence, and to some degree love—are irreducible aspects of the human person. Theology protects and perfects this insight: the perfect honoring of all these elements in humanity and divinity is of course Jesus Christ and human beings insofar as they are images of Christ.

As we said at the beginning, the resurrection of the body is an essential doctrine of creedal Christianity. It is intimately bound up with the notion of the good creation, the fall, and the redemption. According to revelation, the creation (which is in Christ—John 1.3, Ephesians 2.10, Colossians 1.6) is good and even very good. There is no room in God's free creative act for a necessary defect in nature which leads to the fall of humanity. On the contrary, it is the free act of human sin which leads to the disruption of nature, which disruption can only be healed by the healing of sin, its forgiveness. As Paul writes in Romans, “for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8.20-21). There is a world of difference between the explanation of how things are based on natural reason and the world as we find it, and the explanation based on what is revealed to us. Nature, for the doctrinal tradition, is what God created, not the world of conflict we experience, which has been disrupted by sin. All is created in Christ, and Christ is the first-born of all creation. This would suggest that there is no nature that is not graced with the grace of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Human nature is Christ, not a presupposed natural humanity without the grace of Christ.

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<sup>33</sup> When commenting on Paul's admission that he is the least because he persecuted Christians, but that he is what he is by the grace of God, Thomas interprets: “Therefore, he says first: of myself I am nothing, but what I am, I am by the grace of God, i.e., from God, not from me. . . . And he says, what I am, because without grace a man is nothing.” (Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.1.908).



Donald Keefe, SJ, insists on the primordality of Christ, as against the fairly common theological contention that it is the immaterial Trinitarian Son who creates and who becomes Christ by taking on our humanity. Keefe insists, following Irenaeus and Chalcedon, that Jesus Christ is “one and the same,” the son of God and the son of Mary. Creation is in the person Jesus Christ, who is from the beginning. There is no creation apart from Jesus, the Son of God and the son of Mary.<sup>34</sup> The bastion against all reductionism and falsification is the most personal name. Jesus is Lord: there is no getting behind this bold liturgical statement of faith to some deeper reality. As Keefe puts it:

‘Name’ in the Old Testament and the New is always a personal designation. . . . [Mary’s] Naming of her Son has been accepted without question by all the generations of Christians who are so by their baptism and their faith in his name: the faith that the Man whom Mary names Jesus is the Lord. The liturgical interpretation of ‘Son’ trumps all secondary speculation: it is by the liturgy that the faith is nourished, and the criterion of its truth can only be liturgical: it is in his Name that we are baptized.<sup>35</sup>

Saint Thomas, when speaking of the Incarnation, affirms the same unity of the divine and human nature in Jesus Christ. “Only in this way can we save what the Scriptures hand on about the Incarnation. Since, then, sacred Scripture without distinction attributes the things of God to that man, and the things of that man to God . . . , He of whom each class is said must be one and the same.”<sup>36</sup>

How one understands matter and its nature will be radically different according to whether one takes matter as having a nature independent of grace or whether one sees matter and all creation as graced. Thomas’s explanation of the state of humanity before the fall is one of original justice overcoming the natural tendency of matter to disintegrate.<sup>37</sup> According to Thomas, it is the

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<sup>34</sup> I am grateful for a clarification on Keefe’s position from Kevin McMahon, a colleague of mine in the Theology Department at Saint Anselm College. He writes: “I think it’s closer to Keefe to say that it is not the immaterial second person of the Trinity in whom the Father creates. On the contrary, when Colossians says that all was created in Christ, the reference is to the person of Jesus, born of Mary. The primordality of Jesus means that the order of creation is structured by his free relation to his mother, even though that free relation emerges in time. The Son is incarnated in the act of creation, and in a sense the son who is Jesus is present from that first moment, even though it is very much—though not exclusively—by anticipation, being truly born as a person only when born of the woman. The person of the Son is begotten eternally from the Father. The birth of the person of Jesus, like his coming to full measure (Ephesians 4:13), embraces the event of creation. The Incarnation, rather than simply the eternal Son entering into creation, is the Son uniting creation to himself—and doing so by creating himself as the person born of Mary, as the body that is Jesus’s is formed from her body. That is what is somewhat controversial in Keefe’s interpretation of Chalcedon’s “one and the same”: he takes it to mean that there is only one, and what is said of the eternally begotten Son must be said of Jesus, namely, that he is a person, even though a created person: the created person who is the uncreated person of the Son. Two persons, but only one subject having only one identity” (email communication).

<sup>35</sup> Donald J. Keefe, S.J., “‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1.14),” *Studia Missionalia*, 51 (2002): 23-52, at 27.

<sup>36</sup> Aquinas, *CG* 4.39.1, p. 189.

<sup>37</sup> See Aquinas. *ST* 1.97.1c & ad3, and 1-2.82.3; *CG* 4.81.1-2; *CT*, 152.

nature of matter to fall apart, which is why we die. In the state of original justice, God had given us a disposition of grace which kept soul and body together—so that there would be no death. That original justice was lost by original sin, and so the natural material processes of decay and death asserted themselves in human nature and the rest of creation. This account does suggest the grace of God before the fall, but it seems to presuppose a human nature without Christ, a nature naturally ordained as material to dissolution and death that is graced by God so that it has immortality, body and soul. But if Christ is human nature, and all creation is in Christ, then all creation was created in harmony, and matter in that creation did not have the tendency to disintegrate.<sup>38</sup>

This integral good creation suggests a notion of matter rather like Aristotle's idea of prime matter, that is, the foundational continuity among all things. Clearly, one can affirm a continuity on some level among all created things. Some medieval thinkers such as Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales and the Franciscan tradition in general, held that there is a kind of universal matter in all things, angels included. Thomas, of course, rejects this claim, for he follows Plato and Aristotle in affirming that understanding and choice transcend all material conditions. Of course, Thomas does affirm a continuity, but he does so in terms of what all things share in common—their existence (*esse*). This is a notoriously difficult matter to get clear on, for *esse* is to form as form is to matter; that is, it is more actual than form, not a potency dependent on and activated by form. Now of course, created *esse* is dependent on God, and this dependency is true for all creatures. Their ability (potentiality) to exist is their createdness, is the grace of God given in creation.

Thomas's notion of *esse* is a great metaphysical contribution to understanding the faith, for the very commonality that it brings to all things is radically individual. That is, the existence of anything, any human person most obviously, but every creature on every level, is its very own—the direct presence of God to it in all its particularity. Thus, the good creation, the intimate presence of God to his creatures, is never broken. If it were, all would cease to be.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, it is broken in a way, but the break is a matter of sin, not nature. God creates things to be what they are. To be human is to be free, and for some reason we (in the beginning, in Adam and Eve) chose to affirm our freedom by defying our Creator.<sup>40</sup> This was sin only because

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<sup>38</sup> As Donald Keefe notes, "The creation of humanity—and all things—in Christ carries no implication of fallenness. Further, it cannot but freely entail free membership in his Body, the Church, whether this membership be fallen or unfallen." Donald J. Keefe, SJ, "*Bāsār-Nepeś: Sarx-Pneuma*; Body-Soul: Death-Resurrection: An Essay in Pauline Anthropology," in *Christianity and the Human Body: A Theology of the Human Body*, Proceedings of ITEST Workshop, October, 2000, ed. Robert A. Brungs (St. Louis: ITEST/Science Press, 2001), 105-152, at 127.

<sup>39</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 1.8.1.

<sup>40</sup> The doctrine of original sin is a very difficult teaching to understand correctly, inasmuch as all sin must be free but we in some sense inherited this sin. Keefe insists that ultimately, we must judge of the original sin of the first Adam in light of the second Adam. The second Adam came to set us all free, who were enslaved to sin and death. "The only possible source of the solidarity of man in the first Adam is his solidarity in the Second Adam, which at bottom is his creation in Christ. . . . [O]ur sole positive solidarity is our recapitulation in Christ, apart from whom we can understand nothing of a solidarity with the fallen first Adam" (Keefe, "*Bāsār-Nepeś: Sarx-Pneuma*; Body-Soul: Death-Resurrection: An Essay in Pauline Anthropology," fn.14, 146). In other words, we can only understand the bad news (original sin) in the light of the good news (our salvation in Christ).

we knew it was wrong and still did it deliberately. This has to be the case: if we acted in complete ignorance, the act was not willful and therefore not ours. The result of this choice was the violation of our covenant with God, with each other (most dramatically in the violation of the nuptial covenant), and of the unity of body and soul—which spelled death. Thus, the upshot of revelation is that moral infidelity preceded metaphysical fragmentation. Against all forms of Gnosticism, it is not matter that is the cause of physical and moral evil, but moral evil that is the cause of physical fragmentation and decay in general. Love is primary: it is the way of unity, and its violation is the cause of disunity. And only through love's activity can unity be restored.

The continuity between the good creation and our present situation is in the obligation to love and the gift that makes the fulfillment possible. This implies freedom of the will, for no one can be forced to love. However we find ourselves falling short in love, we know that we do this freely. Augustine is unrelenting in his judgment: the only thing we do independently of God (that is of love) is sin.<sup>41</sup> All our good acts are done in covenant with God. Thomas says the same thing.<sup>42</sup> So the way back from the fall is through love. And as John says, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4.10). Our salvation, our way back, must be initiated by God.

If the fullness of our redemption includes the resurrection of the body, then that is dependent on God's activity. Our resurrection is an effect of Christ's resurrection. But there is no way back for us without our loving, too; and all love is free. So it makes no sense to say that we are saved against our will, nor, of course, that we are damned against our will: the fundamental reason for our damnation lies in our rejection of God's love. When arguing for the numerical identity of the resurrected body, Thomas makes use of an analogy from free will: our self-knowledge of ourselves as free is an intelligible transitional element between this world and the world to come. "Just as free will is of the same nature and the same numerically, while it is in a changeable mode to either side, and when it will be firmly fixed in the final state, so too the body will be of the same nature and the same numerically, in that corruptible mode and then, when by free will it will be firmly fixed by the glory of the soul, it will be incorruptible."<sup>43</sup>

Here is a radical difference in approach between traditional philosophical metaphysics, and a properly theological metaphysics. Plato tries to shed light on our moral failure by presenting metaphysical reasons for it. We do wrong because we are ignorant, and ignorance is ultimately ignorance of the way things are. It is too simple to say that the Platonic answer to sin is matter, but it is at least a recurring theme and is picked up by Neo-Platonism and the Gnostics.<sup>44</sup> As I said above, Plato saw that we have a responsibility that we are not fulfilling. But it can only be our responsibility if we are somehow free to fulfill it. If our salvation is freedom from the body and this cycle of rebirth—to leave the material world behind, to fly alone to the alone, as Plotinus puts it—then this whole material world is just some kind of giant mistake or illusion. On the other hand,

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<sup>41</sup> See Augustine, *Confessions* 12.11.

<sup>42</sup> See Aquinas *ST* 1.83.1ad3 and 1-2.79.2.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.8.1015.

<sup>44</sup> "The bodily kind, in that it partakes of Matter, is an evil thing" (Plotinus, *Ennead* I, 8, p. 59).

if our salvation depends on our love—that love given to us and our response to it—then questions of materiality and immateriality, change and permanence, time and eternity, are secondary.

This point is captured in St. Paul's discussions of the distinction between "flesh" and "spirit." This is a complicated issue, and there are grounds in some passages for interpreting this distinction as between the body as material and the spirit as immaterial. However, the key to the distinction is what it is we love. This is not so much a question of loving material things or immaterial things as loving ourselves or God.<sup>45</sup> Yes, there are times that we are wearied of this world and all the things we have to do to continue in it—pay our taxes, correct bad grammar, vacuum the house—when we long for an end to this ongoing drudgery. But this is not the main issue. It is not that material things are bad and immaterial things are good, that temporal things are bad and eternal things are good: it is that loving things for myself apart from God is bad, and loving things for God is good. As Paul says, "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Romans, 8.9). Of course, Paul and those listening to him were still in the "flesh," in the sense of in bodies, but they were also (not perfectly, but in the cause, that is, in the resurrected Jesus) in the "spirit." Christ says, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). This life is offered to us now and always. As Thomas says, commenting on this passage from Paul, "unless you live, namely, the life of grace, you cannot attain to the kingdom of God, i.e., to the life of glory, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. What we must not think, as some heretics say, is that flesh and blood will not rise again according to substance."<sup>46</sup> It is not our corporeality that cannot attain heaven; in fact, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body insists that it will inherit heaven. Spiritual matter, which is what Paul says we will have in the resurrection, is solidarity with Christ in the sense of being part of his body. It is the universally given grace of God—matter in the deepest sense. "We must not think that by flesh and blood, he means that the substance of the flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but rather flesh and blood, i.e., those devoting themselves to flesh and blood, namely, men given to vices and lusts, cannot inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>47</sup> Even physical death is not altogether bad, though it is the wages of sin. As Augustine says, because we know that it is coming, and we know that we are not where we ought to be, its possibly immediate advent can help turn us to what is important, to a conversion to the life that is love which alone conquers death.<sup>48</sup> This, of course is not automatic,

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<sup>45</sup> Augustine, in Book I of *On Free Choice of the Will*, seems to argue that the problem is that we love things that are changeable, that we can lose. Later, however, he develops his theory of the two cities, the City of God and the City of man, which are distinguished by love of God and love of self. See Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIV.

<sup>46</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.7.999.

<sup>47</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.7.1000.

<sup>48</sup> God's mercy counteracts both despair and presumption. "Therefore, because of those who are endangered by despair, he has proposed the harbor of forgiveness; because of those who are endangered by hope and deluded by delays, he has made the day of death uncertain. You who do not know when the last day may come. Are you ungrateful because you have today, in which you may be corrected?" Augustine, *Tractates on John*, 33.8.4, in *The Fathers of the Church*, A New Translation, v. 88, trans. John W. Rettig (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993) p. 59. According to Keefe, death is the universal way back to salvation. Everyone faces that moment, believer and nonbeliever. Christians can, through the sacraments, die in this life, and live the life of Christ. "The Christian, in the here and now of salvation history, having been restored by baptism to the free unity of personal integrity, is objectively—sacramentally—freed from sin and death, and enabled freely to enter into the full measure of historical freedom" (Keefe, "An Essay in Pauline Anthropology," 124).

but must be freely chosen. So the life of grace transcends the distinction between immaterial and material for us, and even for all creation. For our rejection of life lived toward ourselves and our acceptance of life lived toward Christ spells the redemption of the entire universe. Thomas quotes Paul from Romans at the end of this discussion: “Because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8.21).<sup>49</sup>

Let us now reconsider the notions of material cause and efficient cause from the perspectives of what is revealed. Scripture tells us many times that we are the body of Christ; that is, the *totus Christus* is Christ the head and the Church the body. On one level this is established in the good creation, which is in, through, and for Christ. No one can separate us from the love of Christ, who is from the beginning.<sup>50</sup> As Paul says, there are two Adams, the first through whom sin and death came into the world, the second through whom we are saved and given life. Commenting on Paul’s discussion, Thomas writes: “there are two principles of human generation; one according to natural life, namely Adam; the other according to the life of grace, namely Christ. But animality is distributed in all men by the first principle, namely Adam. Therefore, it is certain that to a much greater extent, by means of the second principle, that is to say Christ, spiritual life is distributed in all men.”<sup>51</sup> But the grace of Christ ultimately precedes the sin of Adam. According to Thomas, Paul “lays down the condition of the second principle, saying, the last true Adam, i.e., Christ. And he is called the last Adam because Adam introduced one state, namely of guilt; Christ [the state] of true glory and life.”<sup>52</sup> Christ is the true Adam, the true man, who is from the beginning. Thus, Thomas adds here the words of Christ: “I am the First and the Last” (Rev. 1.17), and “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev. 21.6). All things are created in Christ, and Christ is ever present to his creation and never separated from it.

We, however, do separate ourselves. The grace is always offered, but we can refuse it. We know that we can freely reject God because we do so. Keefe says that because of the fall (this free turning away from God), the mission of the Son from the Father to give the Spirit involved the suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ.<sup>53</sup> And his resurrection is the cause of our resurrection. But the resurrection to Life, which is the only one that really matters, must be freely accepted by us. As Keefe puts it, “The fact of this universal grace of our creation, which is not overcome by the Fall, means that the sinfulness, the mortality, which afflicts every human person

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<sup>49</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.7.1000.

<sup>50</sup> As Keefe says, the body is never without the head; the spouse is never without her husband. “It must be understood at the outset that the Church is primordial, at one with her Head in the Beginning, and thus is prior in being to all those who are her members” (Keefe, “An Essay in Pauline Anthropology,” 115). “It is thus that our fallen history is salvific: viz., by the Eucharistic immanence of the Second Adam, One Flesh with his Bridal Church, the Second Eve. . . . This is the nuptial unity of the *Christus integer*, the One Flesh of Christ and his Church” (Keefe, “An Essay in Pauline Anthropology,” 116).

<sup>51</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.7.991.

<sup>52</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.7.992.

<sup>53</sup> The mission of the son is prior to the fall. “However, the Christ could not abandon the Good Creation by reason of its Fall, for he cannot abandon his Mission from the Father; thus his outpouring of the Spirit bars the final dissolution upon which the world and flesh are intent” (Keefe, “An Essay in Pauline Anthropology,” 114).

is not a bar to moral freedom: upon maturity, every human being is free at every moment to choose to be free.”<sup>54</sup>

There is no great bonus to existing forever if it involves endless alienation or if it is a matter of being reabsorbed into the One. The first is infinite loss; the second is annihilation. Just as Jesus’s resurrection is the resurrection of the person Jesus, so resurrection is a personal event for each of us. Here, philosophical reflection, that is, reflection without adverting to explicit Revelation, can aid us. For who among us sees his or her happiness as a meaningless or painful existence without end, or as mere absorption into the One. There is no happiness in either. There is no happiness for me unless *I* am happy. If death is fearful, it is because life is good. Thus, death and resurrection to life are really moral categories, not mere facts. Why should endless existence or annihilation be fearful, unless they imply loss of good? But in the context of the good creation, loss of good only occurs because of sin, because of our moral failure. Thus, although the resurrection is in some way a universal fact of human nature, the efficient cause of the resurrection to Life is *both* the personal gracious act of Jesus the Christ and one’s own personal grateful assent. This is personal to the depths, bestowed on us in the Name by which we are to be saved *and* in the name given us by Jesus.<sup>55</sup>

As the most fundamental meaning of “flesh” is sin, not temporal-spatial stuff, there is a way in which the material cause or continuity among all human beings (and indeed among all creatures) is our sin. But we are also included in the body of Christ—a material cause of redemption, in which case, the continuity (solidarity) among all human beings is grace. This is what Keefe calls participation in *sarx* (flesh) and *pneuma* (spirit) passively speaking.<sup>56</sup> We find ourselves in a reality in which there is real community in sin and community in the offer of grace. But Keefe sees that we also participate in *sarx* and *pneuma* actively: that is, we sin and we turn to Christ. We are responsible for our sin, even though we are born into a world disoriented by the sin of another. Thomas deals with this question in *Summa theologiae* 2-2.2.9 where he recognizes that if there is universal responsibility for not turning to God, then everyone must on some level know about God, that there is in each of us a kind of interior instinct of God.<sup>57</sup> In his *Commentary on John*, he expands on Jesus’s statement that “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day” (John 6.44). To be drawn by God (*trahi a Deo*) is part of being created in Christ. But an objection can be raised that if one is drawn, then one is compelled; and then whether or not one comes to Christ is determined. If this is so,

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<sup>54</sup> Keefe, “An Essay in Pauline Anthropology,” 109.

<sup>55</sup> “Thereby it may be understood that Jesus, the human source of the free unity of our redeemed humanity, cannot but be Personally consubstantial ‘with us.’ His consubstantiality with us, like his consubstantiality with his Father, cannot be assigned merely to ‘his humanity,’ as distinct from his divinity, for it is as Named, as Jesus, that the Nicene Creed teaches that he is the Only-begotten Son, consubstantial with the Father; it is as Named, as Jesus the Lord, the one and the same Son, that the Formula of Union and the Symbol of Chalcedon teach that Jesus is the Head of our human substance, the Personal source of our free created unity, thereby consubstantial with us as the Father, his Head, is consubstantial with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit whom the Father sent Jesus to give.” Donald J. Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, Volume III: *A Historical Vindication of Covenantal Metaphysics*, Unpublished, Forward, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> For Keefe’s discussion of our passive and active solidarity in *pneuma* and *sarx*, see Keefe, “An Essay in Pauline Anthropology,” 127-129 and 134-135.

<sup>57</sup> Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.2.9ad3, and 2-2.5.1

there is no human freedom; and hence no one really, that is personally, comes to Christ at all. Thomas presents three basic ways in which this drawing can happen without coercion. In the first place, one can be persuaded by a reason, either through some interior revelation or through miracles. The second way is by way of attraction. “Again, one person draws another by attracting or captivating him.”<sup>58</sup> This also works on a level that is not grounded in revelation whether interior or exterior. We are drawn to Christ when we are drawn to truth, and goodness. Here he follows Augustine’s interpretation from his *Tractates on John*. “They are also drawn by the Son, through a wonderful joy and the love of the truth, which is the very Son of God himself. For if, as Augustine says, each of us is drawn by his own pleasure, how much more strongly ought we to be drawn to Christ if we find our pleasure in truth, happiness, justice, eternal life: all of which Christ is?”<sup>59</sup> Now we are naturally drawn to all these things: it is part of our human orientation, even in our fallen state. And we are not forced to pursue these things; in fact, they can only be pursued freely. Finally, Thomas says that, in addition to external revelation and objects of virtue, “there is also an interior impulse (*interior instinctus*) that incites and moves us to believe. And so the Father draws many to the Son by the impulse of a divine action, moving a person’s heart from within to believe.”<sup>60</sup> God calls all; if some do not come, it is their choice. In our present state of fallen nature, we are all called, and we are all held back from this drawing by the obstacle of sin; “and so all need to be drawn.” Thomas writes, “God, insofar as it depends on him, extends his hand to every one, to draw every one. . . . Therefore, since God is ready to give grace to all, and draw them to himself, it is not due to him if someone does not accept; rather, it is due to the person who does not accept.”<sup>61</sup> It is a personal call, and the response can only be personal.

Thus, we are responsible for our salvation (which includes the resurrection), even though neither is possible without the lead of Christ. Solidarity in sin is not merely someone else’s doing; nor is solidarity in salvation merely someone else’s doing. Covenantal relations are free unities. Given that such a covenant is always offered us, we are complicit in rejecting it. And although initiated by God, our covenantal restoration (if it is to be ours) must be our doing, too. Salvation is freely given and can only be freely received.<sup>62</sup> The resurrection of the body, in the full sense of the resurrection to Life, is freely given and can only be freely received. That is, it is primarily a moral event, not just a fact of nature. As Thomas says in this passage on John, hearing and free judgment “are necessary for every teaching of faith.”<sup>63</sup> God teaches within by a free act of grace, but our free assent is required. “These two things are necessary for every teaching of faith.

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, (hereafter, *Com. John*), 6.5.935, trans. James A. Weisheipl (Albany, NY: Magi Books), [hspriority.org/thomas/SSJohn.htm](http://hspriority.org/thomas/SSJohn.htm).

<sup>59</sup> Aquinas, *Com. John*, 6.5.935.

<sup>60</sup> Aquinas, *Com. John*, 6.5.935.

<sup>61</sup> Aquinas, *Com. John* 6.5.937. One might ask why God does not draw all who turn away from him. Thomas answers that it is the order of divine justice, but this is not really for us to parse out. The answer, and he follows Augustine here, is not to try to sort out why or why not others do not convert, but to pray that we do and that they do. “So Augustine says, ‘whom he draws and whom he does not draw, why he draws one and does not draw another, do not desire to judge if you do not wish to err. But accept and understand: if you are not yet drawn, then pray that you may be drawn’” (Aquinas, *Com. John* 6.5.938).

<sup>62</sup> Of course, the resurrection of the body is for all, including the damned; but here we are considering the fullness of salvation.

<sup>63</sup> Aquinas, *Com. John* 6.5.946.

**Everyone who has heard the Father, teaching and making known, and has learned, by giving assent, comes to me.**<sup>64</sup>

## Conclusion

According to Thomas Aquinas, there are reasons for the resurrection based on what we know from our experience, and yet they are not the full explanation. To be a human being is to be seeking truth and goodness. These objects of our intelligence are not limited to any particular instance. Every recognition of a limitation of truth or goodness encourages us to seek further. Thus, we are made for on-going participation and growth. But, such on-going participation and growth seem to end with physical death. However, nothing natural is in vain, as Aristotle pointed out. Thus, there will be the opportunity for ongoing seeking for the fullness of truth and goodness. But these activities are activities of the human person, body and soul. Although one can understand that some aspect of us even now transcends the material world and that there is reason to believe that this (the rational soul) is immortal, it is impossible that only this should live on. For it would mean that what is naturally a unity of body and soul for the good of the person is to be forever fragmented—that what is not natural is to be natural, an obvious contradiction. Therefore, based on human nature as we know it, there will be a resurrection of the body. However, the efficient cause for the resurrection is strictly supernatural, and the material to be resurrected and the disposition which makes it incorruptible must also be supplied by the creator.<sup>65</sup> To explain how this happens or what spiritual matter might be is impossible for natural reason, for neither has a natural cause. At best we arrive at the affirmation that there is such an efficient cause and such matter.

Would we know more, we must turn to revelation. Revelation is all about the personal, from the personal call of Abraham, to the personal gathering of the chosen people, to the personal calling of the prophets, to the most personal Incarnation—Jesus the Christ. The personal is free, and so even the most universal conditions of our creation and fall and redemption are free. As mysterious as is original sin, it is not sin without human freedom. And as universal as is the forgiveness of sin through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, salvation is also impossible without human freedom. The call to each human being (*trahi*) is a personal call, which can only be answered personally. When Mary Magdalene meets Jesus outside the tomb after his resurrection, she does not recognize him until he calls her name, addressing her personally (John 20.16). And it is in the name of Jesus that Peter and John work their miracles (Acts 3.6). The source of grace is personal, and the response to grace is personal. As Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace” (Luke 8.48)). Obviously, the woman is healed through the power of Christ, but that power operates in covenant with her free choice to be healed.

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<sup>64</sup> Aquinas, *Com. John* 6.5.946.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas says that it will be the same numerical body, with anything missing supplied by God, but that it will be given a special disposition from God to make it incorruptible. See Aquinas, *CG* 4.84-85 and *CT* 155.



Thus, the notions of efficient and material causes are at once more universal and more personal in theology than in philosophy. They are more universal: all things are created in Christ, fallen in Adam and Eve, and redeemed in Christ. They are more personal: the resurrection of the body is personal in Jesus' case, and that personal touch is extended to each member of the Body of Christ. Thus, community is more personal, and the individual within the community is uniquely in covenant with the Redeemer. Redemption is not inevitable, for each of us can freely turn away from the offered grace. Nor, as Ratzinger says, is our salvation merely personal, for we are part of the Body of Christ, and the history of the body of Christ is not complete.<sup>66</sup>

Near the end Chapter 15 of his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, Thomas reflects on Paul's contention that corruptibility must put on incorruptibility and why there must be a resurrection of the body. Here he gives three reasons. The first two are much like those he gave earlier, from human nature and the nature of justice. The first is "for the completion of human nature." The soul separated from the body is imperfect, and for perfect human happiness, the soul must be united with the body forever. The second is "for the necessity of divine justice, so that those who have done good or evil in the body are rewarded or punished likewise in the same bodies." But the third reason is the most essential, complete, and personal, for it is rooted in God's revealed truth about Christ and his mission. One must put on incorruptibility, the resurrection of one's person—body, soul, and spirit—"for the conformity of the members to the head, so that 'just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life' (Romans, 6:4)."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "The Body of Christ means all human beings are one organism, the destiny of the whole the proper destiny of each. True enough, the decisive outcome of each person's life is settled in death, at the close of his earthly activity. . . . But his final place in the whole can be determined only when the total organism is complete, when the *passio* and *actio* of history have come to their end" (Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 190).

<sup>67</sup> Aquinas, *Com. 1 Cor.* 15.8.1013.