

QUESTION 19

Christ's Oneness with respect to Operation

Next we have to consider the oneness of Christ's operation (*de unitate operationis Christi*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Is there one operation in Christ belonging to the divine nature and the human nature, or more than one operation? (2) Is there more than one operation in Christ as regards His human nature? (3) Did Christ merit anything for Himself by His human operation? (4) Did He merit anything for us by His operation?

Article 1

Is there just one operation in Christ belonging to the divine and human natures?

It seems that in Christ there is just one operation belonging to the divine and human natures (*in Christo sit tantum una operatio divinitatis et humanitatis*):

Objection 1: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 2 Dionysius says, "God's most benign operation with respect to us is marked off by the fact that, for us and from among us, the supersubstantial Word becomes fully and truly human (*integre vereque humanatum est*), and that He does and suffers whatever befits His human and divine operation (*quaecumque humanae eius divinaeque operationi congruunt*)"—where he names just a single human and divine operation, which is rendered in Greek by *theandrica* (divine-human), i.e., *deivirilis* in Latin. Therefore, it seems that there is a single composite operation in Christ.

Objection 2: There is just a single operation that belongs to a principal agent and its instrument. But as was explained above (q. 7, a. 1, ad 3, and q. 8, a. 1, ad 1, and q. 18, a. 1, ad 2), in Christ the human nature was an instrument of the divine nature. Therefore, the same operation belongs to the divine and human natures in Christ.

Objection 3: Since in Christ there are two natures in one *hypostasis* or person, it must be the case that one and the same *esse* belongs to the *hypostasis* or person. But operating belongs to the *hypostasis* or person, since the only thing that operates is a subsistent suppositum; this is why, according to the Philosopher as well, acts belong to singular individuals. Therefore, in Christ the operation of the divine and human natures is one and the same thing.

Objection 4: Just as *esse* belongs to a subsistent *hypostasis*, so too does *operating* (*operari*). But as was explained above (q. 17, a. 2), because of the oneness of the *hypostasis* in Christ, there is a single *esse* in Christ. Therefore, because of the same oneness there is a single operation in Christ.

Objection 5: Where there is one deed done, there is a single operation (*ubi est unum operatum, ibi est una operatio*). But the same deed (*idem operatum*) belonged to the divine nature and human natures, e.g., the curing of leprosy or the raising of the dead. Therefore, it seems that in Christ there is just one operation belonging to the divine and human natures (*sit una tantum operatio divinitatis et humanitatis*).

But contrary to this: In *Ad Gratianum Imperatorem 2* Ambrose asks, "How can the same operation belong to diverse powers? Cannot the lesser power operate just as the greater power does? And can there be one operation where there are different substances?"

I respond: As was explained above (q. 18, a. 1), the heretics who held that there is a single will in Christ claimed that there is likewise a single operation in Him. And in order that their erroneous opinion might be better understood, notice that whenever there is more than one ordered agent, a lower agent is moved by a higher, in the way that, in a man, the body is moved by the soul and the lower powers are moved by reason. So, then, a lower principle's actions and movements are more things that are done to it

than they are operations, whereas that which belongs to the highest principle is an operation properly speaking. For instance, in the case of a man we say that walking, which belongs to the feet, and touching, which belongs to the hands, are certain things belonging to the man that are done, one of which the soul does by means of the feet and the other of which it does by means of the hands; and since it is the same soul operating in both cases, there is, on the part of what is operating, i.e., the first moving principle, a single and undifferentiated operation, whereas the difference is found on the part of the things being done themselves. Now just as, in the case of a mere man, the body is moved by the soul and the sentient appetite by the rational appetite, so, too, in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, His human nature was moved and regulated by His divine nature.

And that is why [the heretics] claimed that the operation is the same and undifferentiated on the part of the divine nature itself operating, and yet there are diverse things done insofar as Christ's divine nature does one thing by means of itself, e.g., upholding all things by the word of His power, and another thing by means of His human nature, e.g., walking bodily. Hence, in the Sixth Synod the following words of Severus the heretic were cited: "The things that were acted out and done by the one Christ differed greatly. For some are fitting for God, and some are human. For instance, to walk around with His body on the earth is most assuredly human, but bestowing healthy steps on those with unhealthy legs, totally unable to walk on the ground, is fitting for God. Still, it was a single Incarnate Word who did both the one and other, and the one was in no way from the one nature and the other from the other nature; nor is it justifiable to claim that because the things done are diverse, there are two operative natures and two operative forms."

However, in this the heretics were deceived. For the action of that which is moved by another is twofold, one of which it has by its own proper form, and the other of which it has insofar as it is moved by the other. For instance, the operation of an axe by its proper form is cutting, whereas insofar as it is moved by the craftsman, its operation is to make a bench. Therefore, an operation that belongs to an entity by its form is proper to it and belongs to its mover only insofar as the mover makes use of an entity of this sort for its own operation; for instance, to make something hot is the proper operation of a fire, but not of the blacksmith except insofar as he makes use of the fire to heat the iron. But the operation that belongs to a thing insofar as it is moved by another is nothing other than the operation of its mover; for instance, making a bench is not an operation of the axe separately from the operation of the craftsman. And so in a case in which the mover and what is moved have diverse forms or operative powers, the proper operation of the mover has to be distinct from the operation of what is moved, even though what is moved participates in the operation of the mover and even though the mover makes use of the operation of what is moved; and so each of them acts in communion with the other.

So, then, in the case of Christ, the human nature has a proper form and power through which it operates, and so does the divine nature. Hence, the human nature has a proper operation distinct from the divine operation, and vice versa. And yet the divine nature makes use of the human nature's operation as an operation of its own instrument, and, similarly, the human nature participates in the divine nature's operation in the way that an instrument participates in the operation of a principal agent. And this is what Pope Leo is saying in *Epistola ad Flavianum*: "Each of the forms does what is proper to it, i.e., both the divine nature and the human nature in Christ, each in communion with the other—more specifically, with the Word doing what belongs to the Word and the flesh executing what belongs to the flesh."

By contrast, if there were just a single operation belonging to the divine and human natures in Christ, either (a) one would have to claim that the human nature does not have its own form and power (for it would be impossible for this to be said about the divine nature), and from this it would follow that, in the case of Christ, there is just a divine operation; or (b) one would have to claim that in Christ there is a single power melded together from the divine power and the human power. Each of these alternatives is impossible, since the first one claims that the human nature in Christ is incomplete, whereas the second

posits a fusion of the natures (*confusio naturarum*).

And so there was good reason for the opinion under discussion to be condemned in the Sixth Synod, whose determination states: “We confess two natural, indivisible, non-interchangeable, unfused, and inseparable operations in the same Lord Jesus Christ, our true God”—that is, a divine operation and a human operation.

Reply to objection 1: Dionysius posits a ‘theandric’ (*theandricam*), i.e., Godlike-manlike (*divamvirilem*) or divine-human (*divamhumanam*), operation in Christ not because of any fusing of the operations or powers of the two natures, but because (a) His divine operation makes use of His human operation and because (b) His human operation participates in the power of His divine operation. Hence, as Dionysius himself says in a certain letter, “Those things that belong to a man He does beyond a man—something that is demonstrated by the Virgin conceiving supernaturally and by the water [of the sea] sustaining the weight of His earthly feet.” For it is clear that being conceived belongs to human nature and so does walking, but each of them existed in Christ supernaturally. And, similarly, the divine nature operated in a human way, as when He cured the leper by touching him. Hence, in the same letter Dionysius adds, “... but when God became man, [He operated] by a sort of new operation of God and man.”

Now the fact that he means that there are two operations in Christ, one belonging to the divine nature and the other to the human nature, is clear from what he says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 2, where he claims that in those things that belong to Christ’s human operation, “the Father and the Holy Spirit do not share in any way, unless one were to claim that they share in that operation by their most gracious and merciful will,” viz., insofar as the Father and the Holy Spirit will by their mercy that Christ should do and undergo human things. But he adds, “... along with every sublime and ineffable divine operation (*Dei operationem*) which He did among us by the fact that He is the immutable God and Word of God.”

So, then, it is clear that Christ’s human operation, in which the Father and the Holy Spirit do not share except by the approval of their mercy, is different from the operation which He has as the Word of God and in which the Father and the Holy Spirit share.

Reply to objection 2: Something is called an instrument by the fact that it is moved by a principal agent, but, beyond this, it can have its own proper operation in accord with its form, as has been explained for the case of fire. So, then, the action of an instrument insofar as it is an instrument is not different from the action of the principal agent, but it can have another action insofar as it is an entity of a certain sort.

So, then, the operation that belongs to Christ’s human nature insofar as it is an instrument of His divine nature is not different from the operation of His divine nature; for instance, the act of saving by which Christ’s humanity brings about salvation is not different from the act of salvation by which Christ’s divinity brings about salvation. Nonetheless, as has been explained, the human nature in Christ, insofar as it is a certain nature, has its own proper operation in addition to His divine operation.

Reply to objection 3: Operating belongs to a subsistent *hypostasis*, but in accord with a form and nature from which the action (*operatio*) receives its species. And so diverse species of operation come from a diversity of forms or natures, whereas the numerical oneness (*unitas secundum numerum*) of an operation of a given species comes from the oneness of the *hypostasis*. For instance, fire has two operations differing in species according to the difference between light and heat, viz., to illuminate and to give warmth, and yet there is numerically one act of illuminating that belongs to a fire that is illuminating during a given interval of time (*est una numero illuminat ignis semel illuminantis*).

Similarly, in the case of Christ there have to be two operations differing in species in accord with the two natures, but each of the operations is numerically one in Christ, done during a given interval of time (*semel facta*), e.g., a single act of walking and a single act of healing.

Reply to objection 4: *Esse* and operating (*operari*) belong to a person in relation to a nature (*est personae a natura*), but in different ways.

For *esse* pertains to the very constitution of the person and so in this regard has the character of a *terminus* (*et sic quantum ad hoc se habet in ratione termini*). And so oneness of person requires a oneness of complete and personal *esse* itself.

By contrast, operating is a certain *effect* of the person in accord with some form or nature. Hence, a plurality of operations does not undermine the oneness of the person.

Reply to objection 5: In the case of Christ, the proper deed done (*proprium operatum*) by the divine operation is different from the proper deed done by the human operation. For instance, the proper deed done by the divine operation is the curing of the leper, whereas the proper deed done by the human nature is touching him. Yet, as has been explained, the two operations come together for one deed insofar as the one nature acts in communion with the other.

Article 2

Is there more than one human operation in Christ?

It seems that in Christ there is more than one human operation (*in Christo sint plures humanae operationes*):

Objection 1: Just like the rest of men, Christ as a man shares in a nutritive nature with plants, whereas He shares in a sentient nature with animals and in an intellective nature with angels. But the operation of a plant insofar as it is a plant is different from the operation of an animal insofar as it is an animal. Therefore, Christ, insofar as He is a man, has more than one operation.

Objection 2: Powers and habits are distinguished by their acts. But there were diverse powers and diverse habits in Christ's soul. Therefore, there were diverse operations.

Objection 3: Instruments have to be proportioned to their operations. But the human body has diverse members differing in form. Therefore, they are accommodated to diverse operations. Therefore, in Christ there are diverse operations involving His human nature (*diversae operationes secundum humanam naturam*).

But contrary to this: In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, "Operation follows upon nature." But in Christ there is just one human nature. Therefore, in Christ there is just one human operation.

I respond: Since a man is what he is because of reason, an operation that is said to be human without qualification is one that proceeds *from his reason through his will*, which is reason's appetite. On the other hand, if there is an operation in a man that does not proceed from his reason and will, then it is not without qualification a human operation; instead, it is an operation that belongs to a man in accord with some part of human nature—sometimes (a) in accord with the nature of a *corporeal element*, e.g., being borne downward, sometimes (b) in accord with the *vegetative power* of the soul, e.g., being nourished and growing, and sometimes (c) in accord with the *sentient part* [of the soul], e.g., seeing and hearing, imagining and remembering, desiring and getting angry. There is a difference among these operations. For the operations of the sentient soul are in some way obedient to reason and so, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 1, they are in some way rational and human, viz., insofar as they obey reason. By contrast, the operations that follow upon the vegetative soul or, again, those that follow upon the nature of an elemental body, are not subject to reason and so are not in any way rational; nor are they human without qualification, but are instead human only in accord with a part of human nature.

Now it was explained above (a. 1), that when a lower agent acts through its proper form, then the

operation of the lower nature is different from the operation of the higher nature, but when the lower agent acts only insofar as it is moved by the higher agent, then the operation of the higher and lower agents is the same. So, then, in the case of every mere man, an elemental operation or an operation of the vegetative soul is different from the will's operation, which is properly speaking human. The same thing also holds for an operation of the sentient soul to the extent that it is not moved by reason; on the other hand, to the extent that an operation of the sentient soul is moved by reason, the operation of the sentient part [of the soul] is the same as the operation of the rational part. Now there is a single operation of the rational soul as long as we focus on the principle itself of the operation, whereas the operation is diversified by its relation to diverse objects. Some have called this latter diversity a diversity of things done (*diversitatem operatorum*) rather than a diversity of operations, judging the oneness of the operation only on the part of the operative principle; it is in this sense that we are now asking about the oneness or plurality of operations in Christ.

So, then, in every mere man there is just one operation that is called human properly speaking, but, as has been explained, beyond this there are in a mere man other operations, which are not called human properly speaking. However, in the case of the man Jesus Christ there were no movements of the sentient part [of the soul] that were not ordered by reason. Even His natural and corporeal operations belonged in some sense to His will, insofar as it was His will that His flesh should do and undergo whatever was proper to Him; this was explained above (q. 18, a. 3). And so there was a single operation in Christ to a greater extent than in any other man.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, the operation of the sentient and nutritive parts [of the soul] are not properly speaking human. And yet in Christ operations of this sort were more human than in other men.

Reply to objection 2: Powers and habits are diversified by their relation to their objects, and so diversity of operations in this sense corresponds to diverse powers and habits in the same way that it likewise corresponds to diverse objects. We do not mean to exclude this sort of diversity from Christ's human nature, just as we do not mean to exclude the diversity of operations which accords with different times. Instead, as has been explained, we mean to exclude only a diversity of primary active principles (*solam illam [diversitatem] quae est secundum primum principium activum*).

Reply to objection 3: [No reply is given.]

Article 3

Was Christ's human action able to be meritorious for Him?

It seems that Christ's human action could not have been meritorious for Him (*actio humana Christ non potuit ei esse meritoria*):

Objection 1: Before His death Christ was a comprehender [of the divine essence], just as He is now. But meriting does not belong to a comprehender; for a comprehender's charity pertains to the reward of beatitude, since enjoyment (*fruitio*) accompanies it. Hence, a comprehender's charity does not seem to be a principle of *meriting*, since merit is not the same as the reward. Therefore, before His passion Christ did not merit, just as He does not now merit.

Objection 2: No one merits what is owed to Him. But by the fact that Christ is the Son of God by nature, what is owed to Him is an eternal inheritance that other men merit through their good works. Therefore, Christ, who was from the beginning the Son of God, could not have merited anything for Himself.

Objection 3: If anyone has the principal thing, then he does not, properly speaking, merit what follows from what he has. But Christ had the glory of the soul, from which, as Augustine explains in *Epistola ad Dioscorum*, the glory of the body follows in the common course of things—even though, by a dispensation, it happened in the case of Christ that the glory of the soul did not overflow into His body. Therefore, it is not the case that Christ merited the glory of the body.

Objection 4: The manifestation of Christ's excellence is not a good that belongs to Christ Himself, but a good that belongs to those who come to know Him; this is why those who love Christ are promised, as a reward, that He will be made manifest to them—this according to John 14:21 (“If anyone loves me, he will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and make myself manifest to him”). Therefore, Christ did not merit the manifestation of His own greatness.

But contrary to this: In Philippians 2:8-9 the Apostle says, “He became obedient unto death, and because of this God exalted Him.” Therefore, by being obedient He merited His own exaltation, and so there is something that He merited for Himself.

I respond: To have a good in through oneself (*per se*) is more noble than to have it through something else (*per aliud*). For as *Physics* 8 says, “Being a cause through oneself is always better than being a cause through something else.” But someone is said to have through himself what he is in some sense a cause of for himself.

Now the first cause of all our goods is God by His authorship, and in this sense no creature has any good through itself—this according to 1 Corinthians 4:7 (“What do you have that you have not received?”). However, in a secondary sense an individual can be a cause for himself of having some good, viz., insofar as he cooperates with God Himself in this. And so an individual who has something through his own merit has it through himself in a certain way. Hence, what is had through merit is more noble than what is had without merit.

Now since all perfection and nobility has to be attributed to Christ, it follows that He has through merit what others have through merit, unless the thing in question is such that lacking it contributes more to Christ's dignity and perfection than gaining it through merit does. Hence, He does not merit grace or knowledge or beatitude of soul or divinity; for since merit has to do only with what is not yet had, Christ would have lacked these things at one time and lacking them would decrease His dignity more than merit would increase it. On the other hand, the glory of the body, or anything else of this sort, is less than the dignity of meriting, since the latter pertains to the virtue of charity.

And so one should reply that Christ had through merit the glory of the body and those things that pertain to his outward excellence, such as His ascension, His being venerated, and other things of this sort. And so it is clear that there is something that He was able to merit for Himself.

Reply to objection 1: Enjoyment (*fruitio*), which is an act belonging to charity, belongs to the glory of the soul, which Christ did not merit. And so if He merited something through His charity, it does not follow that the merit is the same as the reward.

And yet He merited not through charity insofar as it was the charity of a comprehender, but through charity insofar as it was the charity of a wayfarer. For as was established above (q. 15, a. 10), He was simultaneously a comprehender and a wayfarer. And so since He is not now a wayfarer, He is not now in the state of meriting.

Reply to objection 2: What is owed to Christ, insofar as He is God and the Son of God by nature, is divine glory and dominion over all things as the first and supreme Lord. However, as is clear from what was said above, as a beatified human being He is still owed glory—which He was due to have in part without merit and in part with merit.

Reply to objection 3: The overflow of glory from the soul into the body occurs by divine ordination through its congruence with human merits, so that just as a man merits by an act of the soul

which he executes with his body, so, too, he is rewarded by the soul's glory flowing over into the body. And because of this, it is not only the glory of the soul, but also the glory of the body that falls under merit—this according to Romans 8:11 (“He will bring to life our mortal bodies because of His Spirit, who dwells within us”). And so [the glory of the body] was able fall under Christ's merit.

Reply to objection 4: The manifestation of Christ's excellence belongs to His own good as regards the existence that He has in the knowledge of others, even though it belongs more principally to the good of those who have cognition of Him in accord with the existence that He has within them. But this very thing is referred back to Christ insofar as those individuals are members of Him.

Article 4

Was Christ able to merit for others?

It seems that Christ could not have merited for others (*Christus aliis mereri non potuit*):

Objection 1: Ezechiel 18:20 says, “The soul which has sinned will itself die.” Therefore, by parity of reasoning, the soul which merits will itself be rewarded. Therefore, it is impossible that Christ should have merited for others.

Objection 2: As John 1:16 says, “Of the fullness of Christ's grace we all receive.” But other men who have the grace of Christ are unable to merit for others; for Ezechiel 14:20 says, “If Noah and Daniel and Job live in the city, they shall not liberate either son or daughter, but instead they will liberate their own souls by their own justice.” Therefore, neither was Christ able to merit anything for us.

Objection 3: As is clear from Romans 4:4, “The reward” that an individual merits “is owed in justice and not by grace.” Therefore, if Christ merited our salvation, it follows that our salvation is not by God's grace but by justice, and that He acts unjustly with respect to those whom He does not save, since Christ's grace extends to everyone.

But contrary to this: Romans 5:18 says, “As through the sin of one, all men are condemned, so, too, through the justice of one, all men receive justification unto life.” But Adam's demerit flowed over into the condemnation of others. Therefore, *a fortiori*, Christ's merit flowed over to others.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 8, aa. 1-5), in Christ grace existed not only as in an individual man, but also as in the head of the whole Church, to which all are united as members of the head, and in a mystical way a single person is composed of them. And hence it is that Christ's merit extends to others insofar as they are His members, in the way that in a single human being the action of the head likewise involves in some way all his members, since it perceives not only for itself alone, but for all the members.

Reply to objection 1: The sin of a singular person harms only himself. But the sin of Adam, who was set up by God as the source of the whole nature (*principium totius naturae*), flows into others through the propagation of the flesh. And, similarly, the merit of Christ, who was set up by God as the head of all men with respect to grace, extends to all His members.

Reply to objection 2: Others “receive of the fullness of Christ” not in the sense that they receive the font of grace, but in the sense that they receive certain particular graces. And so it is not necessary for other men to be able to merit for someone else in the way that Christ does.

Reply to objection 3: Just as the sin of Adam flows into others only through carnal generation, so the merit of Christ flows into others only through spiritual re-generation, which is effected in Baptism, through which we are incorporated into Christ—this according to Galatians 3:27 (“As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ”). And this very thing, viz., its being granted to a man to be re-generated in Christ, is by grace. And so the salvation of a human being is by grace.