

QUESTION 56

The Causality that Belongs to Christ's Resurrection

Next we have to consider the causality that belongs to Christ's resurrection. And on this topic there are two questions: (1) Is Christ's resurrection a cause of our resurrection? (2) Is Christ's resurrection a cause of our justification?

Article 1

Is Christ's resurrection a cause of the resurrection of our bodies?

It seems that Christ's resurrection is not a cause of the resurrection of our bodies (*resurrectio Christi non sit causa resurrectionis corporum*):

Objection 1: When a sufficient cause is posited, the effect has to be posited. Therefore, if Christ's resurrection is a sufficient cause of the resurrection of bodies, then once He rose from the dead, all of the dead would have had to rise immediately.

Objection 2: As is explained by Dionysius in *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 7 and by Damascene in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4, the cause of the resurrection of the dead is divine justice, with the result that the bodies will be rewarded or punished together with their souls, just as they shared in merit or sin [with their souls]. But divine justice would have had to be fulfilled even if Christ had not risen from the dead. Therefore, even if Christ has not risen, the dead will rise. Therefore, it is not the case that Christ's resurrection is a cause of the resurrection of our bodies.

Objection 3: If Christ's resurrection were a cause of the resurrection of our bodies, then it would be either (a) an *exemplar* cause, or (b) an *efficient* cause, or (c) a *meritorious* cause. But it is not an *exemplar* cause, since God will effect the resurrection of the dead—this according to John 5:21 "... the Father raises the dead")—and God does not need to look to any exemplar outside Himself. Similarly, it is not an *efficient* cause, since an efficient cause acts only through contact, either corporeal contact or spiritual contact; but it is clear that Christ's resurrection does not act either through corporeal contact with the dead who will rise, because of the temporal and spatial distances, or through spiritual contact, which occurs through faith and charity, because even unbelievers and sinners will rise. Nor, again, is it a *meritorious* cause, since the risen Christ was no longer a wayfarer in this life and so was not in the state of [being able to] merit. And so it seems that there is no way in which Christ's resurrection is a cause of our resurrection.

Objection 4: Since death is a privation of life, destroying death seems to be nothing other than restoring life, which pertains to the resurrection. But Christ destroyed our death by dying. Therefore, it is Christ's death, and thus not His resurrection, that is a cause of our resurrection.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on 1 Corinthians 15:12 ("If Christ is preached as having risen from the dead, etc.") says, "He is an efficient cause of our resurrection."

I respond: As *Metaphysics* 2 says, "That which is first in each genus is a cause of all those things that come after it." But as is clear from what has been said above (q. 53, a. 3), the first in the genus of our resurrection was the resurrection of Christ. Hence, it has to be the case that Christ's resurrection is a cause of our resurrection. And this is what the Apostle is saying in 1 Corinthians 15:20-21, "Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep; for since by a man came death, by a man also comes the resurrection of the dead."

And this makes sense. For the principle of human vivification is the Word of God, of whom Psalm 35:10 says, "With you is the fountain of life." Hence, in John 5:21 He Himself says, "As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He wills." Now the divinely instituted order of things is such that each cause operates first on what is closer to it and through

that thing it operates on other things that are more remote—in the way that a fire first heats the surrounding air, through which it heats more distant bodies, and in the way that, as Dionysius explains in *Caelestis Hierarchia*, chap. 13, God first illuminates substances that are close to Him and through them illuminates more remote substances. And so the Word of God first gives immortal life to the body that is united to Himself, and through that body He effects resurrection in all the others.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, Christ's resurrection is a cause of our resurrection through the power of the united Word, who operates by His will. And so it is not necessary for the effect to follow immediately; instead, it follows according to the order determined by the Word—so that, namely, we are first conformed to Christ's suffering and dying in this passible and mortal life, and then we will come to participate in a likeness of His resurrection.

Reply to objection 2: God's justice is the first cause of our resurrection, whereas Christ's resurrection is a secondary and, as it were, instrumental cause. Now even though the power of a principal agent is not bound to *this* or *that* instrument determinately, nonetheless, by the fact that it operates through a given instrument, that instrument is a cause of the effect.

So, then, divine justice, taken in its own right (*quantum est de se*), was not obligated to cause our resurrection through Christ's resurrection, since, as was explained above (q. 46, a. 2), God was able to liberate us in a way other than through Christ's passion and resurrection. However, by the fact that He decided to liberate us in this way, it is clear that Christ's resurrection is a cause of our resurrection.

Reply to objection 3: Christ's resurrection is not, properly speaking, a *meritorious* cause of our resurrection, but it is an *efficient* cause and an *exemplar* cause of our resurrection.

It is an *efficient* cause insofar as Christ's human nature, with which He rose, is in a certain way an instrument of His divine nature and operates in the power of His divine nature. And so, just as the other things that Christ did or underwent in His human nature are, as was explained above (q. 13, aa. 2-3 and q. 19, a. 1 and q. 43, a. 2), salvific for us by the power of His divine nature, so, too, Christ's resurrection is an efficient cause of our resurrection by the divine power, to which it is proper to give life to the dead (cf. John 5:21). This power touches by its presence every place and time, and this sort of virtual contact is sufficient for the nature of the efficient causality in question (*talis contactus virtualis sufficit ad rationem huius efficientiae*). And since, as has been explained (obj. 2), the primordial cause of human resurrection is the divine justice, from which Christ has "the power to render judgment insofar as He is the Son of Man" (John 5:7 and cf. Daniel 7:13-14), the effective power of His resurrection extends itself not only to good individuals, but also to bad individuals, who are likewise subject to His judgment.

Now as a Gloss on 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23 points out, just as the resurrection of Christ's body, by the fact that this particular body is united to the Word in a person, is the resurrection that is "first in time", so, too, it is "first in dignity and in perfection." But it is always the case that what is the most perfect of all is the exemplar that the less perfect instances imitate in their own way. And for this reason Christ's resurrection is the *exemplar* [cause] of our resurrection. To be sure, this exemplar is necessary not for the one who does the raising and who does not need an exemplar, but instead for those who are raised and who have to be conformed to Christ's resurrection—this according to Philippians 3:21 ("He will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of His glory"). Now even though the *efficient causality* (*efficientia*) of Christ's resurrection extends itself to the resurrection of both good and bad individuals, its *exemplar causality* (*exemplaritas*) extends itself, properly speaking, only to the good individuals, who, as Romans 8:29 explains, have been conformed to His sonship.

Reply to objection 4: As regards the notion of *efficient causality*, which depends on the divine power, both the death of Christ and His resurrection are together a cause of both the destruction of death and of the restoration of life.

However, as regards the notion of *exemplar causality*, Christ's death, through which He left this mortal life, is the cause of the destruction of our death, whereas the resurrection, through which He

initiated immortal [bodily] life, is the cause of the restoration of our life.

Still, as was explained above (q. 48, a. 1), it is Christ's passion that is, over and beyond this, the *meritorious cause* [of our salvation].

Article 2

Is Christ's resurrection a cause of the resurrection of our souls?

It seems that Christ's resurrection is not a cause of the resurrection of our souls (*resurrectio Christi non sit causa resurrectionis animarum*):

Objection 1: In *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, "Bodies rise again through [Christ's] human dispensation, whereas souls rise again through God's substance." But Christ's resurrection does not pertain to God's substance; instead, it pertains to His human dispensation. Therefore, even if Christ's resurrection is a cause of the resurrection of our bodies, it nonetheless does not seem to be a cause of the resurrection of our souls.

Objection 2: A body does not act on a spirit. But Christ's resurrection belongs to His body, which fell through death. Therefore, Christ's resurrection is not a cause of the resurrection of souls.

Objection 3: Since Christ's resurrection is a cause of the resurrection of bodies, the bodies of everyone will rise—this according to 1 Corinthians 15:51 ("We shall all indeed rise"). But it is not the case that the souls of everyone will rise, since, as Matthew 25:46 says, "Some will go to eternal punishment." Therefore, Christ's resurrection is not a cause of the resurrection of souls.

Objection 4: The resurrection of souls is effected through the remission of sins. But that was effected by Christ's passion—this according to Apocalypse 1:5 ("He washed us from our sins in His own blood"). Therefore, it is Christ's passion, rather than His resurrection, that is a cause of the resurrection of souls.

But contrary to this: In Romans 4:25 the Apostle says, "He rose again for the sake of our justification"—which is nothing other than the resurrection of our souls. And a Gloss on Psalm 29:6 ("Weeping will last for the night") says, "Christ's resurrection is a cause of the resurrection of our soul in the present and of our body in the future."

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1, ad 3), Christ's resurrection acts in the power of the divine nature, and this power extends itself not only to the resurrection of bodies, but also to the resurrection of souls. For it is from God that both (a) the soul lives through grace and (b) the body lives through the soul. And this is why Christ's resurrection has *instrumental efficient power* (*habet instrumentaliter virtutem effectivam*) not only with respect to the resurrection of bodies, but also with respect to the resurrection of souls.

Similarly, it has the nature of *exemplar causality* (*habet rationem exemplaritatis*) with respect to the resurrection of souls. For it is fitting for us to be conformed to the risen Christ with respect to our souls [as well as with respect to our bodies], so that "just as," according to the Apostle in Romans 6:4, "Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in a newness of life," and just as "Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more ... so, too, let us consider ourselves to be dead to sin," so that "we might live anew with Him" (Romans 6:8-9, 11).

Reply to objection 1: Augustine is saying that the resurrection of souls is effected by God as regards *participation*, since it is by participating in God's goodness that souls become just and good, but not by participating in any creature. Hence, after he had said, "Souls rise again through the substance of God," he added, "since a soul becomes blessed by participating in God, and not by participating in a holy

soul. On the other hand, it is by participating in the glory of Christ's body that our bodies are made glorious.

Reply to objection 2: The efficacy of Christ's resurrection touches souls not through the proper power of the risen body itself, but through the power of the divine nature to which that body is united in a person.

Reply to objection 3: The resurrection of souls involves merit, which is an effect of justification, whereas the resurrection of bodies is ordered toward punishment or reward, which are the effects of the one who judges. Now Christ's role is not to *justify* everyone, but to *judge* everyone. And this is why He raises each individual with respect to his body, but not with respect to his soul.

Reply to objection 4: Two things come together in the justification of souls, viz., (a) the remission of sin and (b) the newness of the life of grace.

Therefore, as regards *efficient* causality, which is through the divine power, both the passion of Christ and His resurrection cause justification with respect to the two [elements of justification].

By contrast, as regards *exemplary* causality, it is the passion and death of Christ that is properly a cause of the remission of sin, through which we die to sin, whereas the resurrection is the cause of the newness of life, which is through grace, i.e., justice.

And this is why in Romans 4:25 the Apostle says, "He was handed over"—viz., to death—"because of our sins"—viz., to remove them—"and He rose for the sake of our justification." But as has been explained (a. 1, ad 4 and q. 68, a. 1), Christ's passion is also a *meritorious* cause [of our justification].