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SAINT THOMAS ON THE SALVATION OF INFIDELS

A careful study of the revealed doctrine on the absolute necessity of faith for salvation gives rise to a number of interesting problems which have captivated the interest of many theologians throughout the centuries. One of these problems, and undoubtedly one of the most complex in all theology, is that which concerns the salvation of infidels¹.

The problem. It is certain and Catholic doctrine that to all adults without exception is offered before death sufficient opportunity for eliciting an act of supernatural faith. This doctrine is really a theological conclusion from two revealed truths: the universal salvific will and the absolute necessity of faith for salvation². The problem of the salvation of infidels can be set down more clearly as follows: how can an adult, who through no fault of his own is invincibly ignorant of the Church and Her Founder, elicit an act of supernatural faith? Since such an act presupposes a knowledge of divine revelation, the chances for such an adult eliciting an act of faith and obtaining justification would seem to be very small indeed, unless we are prepared to admit some sort of miraculous intervention on the part of God. Therefore the heart of the problem comes down to this: how can a negative infidel come to a knowledge of divine revelation in order to elicit an act of justifying faith?

Broadly speaking, the theories advanced by theologians in their attempt to answer our question can be reduced to three:

(a) the theory of an evangelization of the dead, which is held by many Protestants³ and Oriental Schismatics⁴, but which has been condemned

¹ The following two works are among the most complete discussions on the problem of the salvation of infidels: L. Capéran, *Le problème du salut des infidèles*, Toulouse: Grand Sém., 1934; (vol. i, *Essai historique*, vol. ii, *Essai Théologique*); R. Lombardi S. J., *La Salvezza di chi non ha Fede*, Rome, Civiltà Cattolica, 1949.

² DB 799, 801, 200, 1096, 1294. Cf. Lombardi, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

³ E. G. Martensen, *Dogmatique chrétienne*, Paris, 1879, pp. 484-574.

⁴ See M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium ab Ecclesia Catholica dissidentium*, t. IV, Paris, 1931, pp. 318 f.

by the Church⁵;

(b) the theory of the existence of a limbo for adults, which was advanced by some Catholic apologists⁶;

(c) the theory of some special intervention of God at some particular time in life, at least at the moment of death.

Though the Magisterium of the Church has never taught anything explicit on this matter, the third theory is the only one that is in accord with Catholic teaching. It is up to the theologian to inquire further on the nature of this special intervention of God. Here again many theories have been put forward by Catholics, ranging from an interior inspiration whereby God reveals Himself directly to the soul⁷, to a miraculous private revelation through an angel⁸. In this paper we will examine one of the solutions proposed by St Thomas Aquinas in his theory of the *puer veniens ad usum rationis*.

Thomistic Theory. According to St Thomas, to every unbaptized person attaining the use of reason is immediately offered sufficient knowledge of divine revelation for eliciting an act of supernatural faith and thus obtaining justification. Whereas the baptized child, already possessing the infused habit of faith, need not immediately elicit an act of that virtue at the attainment of the use of reason, the unbaptized adult can be justified only by eliciting an act of faith and therefore it must be possible for him to elicit such an act from the very beginning of his adult life, that is from the moment of his first human act. One would indeed be tempted to discard from the beginning such a daring and, at first sight, oversimplified theory if it did not enjoy the authority of the Angelic Doctor. We shall therefore begin by showing how this theory is actually contained in St Thomas, and then we shall proceed to examine its merit and value in the light of Thomistic commentators and modern theologians⁹.

How taught by Aquinas. We can distinguish three steps in this theory as proposed by Aquinas. In the first place it is beyond doubt that, according to St Thomas, as soon as the child attains the use of reason,

⁵ Cf. DB 530, 531, 693.

⁶ Mancini, *De Auxiliis, Palestra del Clero*, 1939, pp. 219-37.

⁷ See Capéran, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 124.

⁸ The theory of the angel is commonly taught by theologians following St Thomas; see *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 11, ad 1.

⁹ It may be well to emphasize that in this article we are discussing only the requirements for the act of faith, and not those for first justification in general. Hence the doctrine of the Council of Trent (DB 796), on the *votum baptismi* (which in the concrete is an act of perfect charity) as the only possible substitute for the sacrament of baptism, is presupposed throughout our entire discussion.

that is, as soon as the child has become an adult in the fullest sense of the word, he will necessarily make a choice through his first human act with regard to his ultimate end in order to give a direction to his whole life. This transition from childhood to adult age need not be considered as a sudden event taking place in one single instant, but is rather a gradual and complex process of intellect and will of the child. It is at the conclusion of this process that the first free and truly human act takes place. Here are the words of the Angelic Doctor: 'For the first thing that occurs to a man who has the power of discretion, is to think of the object to which he should refer all things as to their end, since the end is the first thing in the intention. Therefore this is the time when man is bound by God's affirmative precept which the Lord expressed by saying (Zach. 1, 3) "Turn to Me... and I will turn to you" ¹⁰.

The second step of the theory is equally clear and unequivocal in St Thomas. If a man, when eliciting his first fully responsible act, does direct his life towards his ultimate end, he immediately receives sanctifying grace, unless of course he already possesses it through baptism. But if he refuses to direct his life to its end, he thereby sins mortally and becomes deserving of hell. These are Thomas's own words: 'And if he then directs himself to the due end, he will, by means of grace, receive the remission of original sin; whereas if he does not then direct himself to the due end, possessing as he does the ability of doing so at that particular age, he will sin mortally for not doing that which is in his power to do' ¹¹. And again: 'It is impossible for an adult to be in the state of original sin alone, without sanctifying grace; for, as soon as he attains the use of reason, if he has prepared himself for grace, he will receive grace; otherwise this very negligence will be imputed to him as a mortal sin' ¹². It is important to notice here that the passing to the state of grace after the completion of the first honest act is conceived by Aquinas as being so sudden, that he even excludes the possibility of venial sin co-existing in the soul with original sin alone. 'It is impossible for venial sin to co-exist with original sin, unless there

¹⁰ 'Primum enim quod occurrit homini discretionem habenti, est quod de ipso cogitet, ad quem alia ordinet sicut ad finem. Finis enim est prior in intentione. Et ideo hoc est tempus pro quo obligatur, ex Dei praecepto affirmativo, quo Dominus dicit: Convertimini ad me, et convertar ad vos, Zach. 1, 3' (I-II, q. 89, a. 6, ad 3).

¹¹ 'Et si quidem se ipsum ordinauerit ad finem debitum, per gratiam consequetur remissionem originalis peccati; si vero non ordinet seipsum ad debitum finem, secundum quod in illa aetate est capax discretionis, peccabit mortaliter, non faciens quod est in se' (Ibid. corp. art.).

¹² *De Veritate* q. 24, a. 12, ad 2; cf. *ibid.* q. 28, a. 3, ad 4; *De Malo* q. 5, a. 2, ad 8; *ibid.* q. 7, a. 10, ad 8.

is also a mortal sin in the soul¹³.

The Act of Faith. But what are the conditions that are absolutely necessary for the justification of an adult? Here we have reached the third step in St Thomas's theory, which brings us to the heart of our problem. Aquinas, of course, professed the fundamental Catholic teaching that the first requisite for justification is the act of faith. 'Those who enjoy the use of their free will', he says, 'are obliged to add their own merits to the merits of Christ. Now merit consists in the act of a virtue. But the act of a virtue depends on the act of faith, which regulates the intention; hence an act of faith is required for salvation in those who possess the exercise of free will'¹⁴. Some theologians were so far from doubting that Aquinas held the necessity of strict faith for justification, that they claimed he even held a stricter view than is commonly admitted with regard to the object of the act of faith. There is therefore no way of reading Ripalda's theory of *fides late dicta* into St Thomas's text¹⁵.

There is a text in *De Veritate* which seems to admit the possibility of a considerable lapse of time between the first free act and the grace of justification: 'If a man, brought up in the woods (*nutritus in silvis*) keeps the natural law by seeking what is good and avoiding what is evil, it is to be held that God will either reveal to him, by an internal inspiration, the truths that are necessary for salvation, or send him a preacher of the faith just as He sent Peter to Cornelius'¹⁶. This text, however, can be easily reconciled with the theory of St Thomas; since Aquinas held that an explicit act of faith in the Incarnation, Redemption and the Trinity is indispensable for salvation in the present dispensation, it follows that no adult who has kept the natural law will die before having known these mysteries. This does not necessarily mean that he will not be justified before having known them¹⁷.

Thomistic Commentators. Having established how the theory known as that of the *puer veniens ad usum rationis* is contained in the writings of St Thomas¹⁸, we now proceed to a closer view of it in the light of

¹³ 'Dicendum quod impossibile est quod peccatum veniale sit in aliquo cum originali peccato absque mortali' (I-II, q. 89, a. 6, corp.art.).

¹⁴ In III Sent., q. 25, a. 2, sol. 1; cf. *Summa Theol.*, q. 68, a. 1, ad 1.

¹⁵ Cf. S. Harent S.J., 'Infidèles', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, Paris: Letouzey, t. vii, col. 1864; cf. also Lombardi, op. cit., p. 449, note 2.

¹⁶ *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 11, ad 1.

¹⁷ Capéran, op. cit. vol. ii, p. 59.

¹⁸ Impossible d'élever ici le moindre doute: la doctrine de l'option nécessaire pour ou contre Dieu, des l'éveil du sens moral, est un point de doctrine thomiste des plus fermes' (Ibid. p. 65).

Thomistic commentators and theologians. From the foregoing it is clear that the parts of the theory that need further investigation are only the first two, as it is beyond discussion that an act of faith is absolutely required for justification. With regard to the first part of the theory, namely the strict obligation in conscience of directing one's life to the ultimate end at the attainment of the use of reason, most theologians agree with Aquinas, provided emphasis is laid on the fact that the attainment of the use of reason is considered as a psychological process of fairly long duration, and not as an indivisible physical instant in time. The second part of the theory, which claims that justification follows immediately upon the first free human act, if that is morally good, has met serious opposition on the part of most commentators and modern theologians; in fact even those who agree with Aquinas on this score do very little more than rephrase the Thomistic doctrine and consider it quite unnecessary to develop further arguments in support of the theory. A number of other theologians, perhaps more sincere, are not prepared to grant the theory as a whole more than a note of probability. What follows is a brief review of some of the outstanding commentators and theologians.

The Dominican School. Capreolus, the Prince of Thomists, arguing against Durandus, refers to the theory of Aquinas with approval and considers the arguments put forth against the theory as 'manifestly false'¹⁹. Elsewhere Capreolus simply rephrases the theory without proving it: 'The child, when the time comes when he is capable of using his reason, refers to God his whole being (*se et sua*); if he fails to do so, he sins mortally *juxta imaginationem Sancti Thomae*'²⁰. Cajetan is less optimistic than his predecessor in his interpretation of the Angelic Doctor. In his refutation of Gregory of Rimini, who had defended the view that all actions of infidels are sins, he refers to this theory of St Thomas and recalls that infidels can avoid mortal sin because they are capable of tending to God, their ultimate end, at least implicitly; this they do when they tend to the *bonum honestum*, which they can know by reason. But this implicit tendency to God, adds Cajetan, is not sufficient for eternal salvation because it is not an act of perfect charity and therefore is not of itself justifying²¹. Hence Cajetan admits that an adult infidel can place a morally good act at the attainment of the use of reason without thereby being justified; in other words, Cajetan teaches, against the opinion of St Thomas, that original sin can remain in an adult infidel without personal mortal sin.

¹⁹ Capreolus, *In IV Sent.*, Vives, 1893, t. vi, pp. 344 ff.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, t. iv, p. 462.

²¹ Cajetan, *Comment in I-II*, Rome; Leon., 1892, t. vii, p. 147.

Soto and Cano. The remaining Dominican commentators of the sixteenth century are likewise reserved in expressing their views on the theory under discussion. Thus Dominic Soto, in a work dedicated to the Fathers of the Council of Trent, regards the theory as 'not certain'²², though in a later work he prefers to say that it is 'not without foundation'²³. Melchior Cano believes that the theory is only probable, and claims that it is so also in the mind of St Thomas himself, because the argument that he uses (*facienti quod est in se, etc.*) is one of fitness only²⁴.

Medina. Among the Dominican commentators of St Thomas, Bartholomew Medina was the first one to discuss the theory in detail. Commenting on the theory, Medina begins by saying that it has given rise to innumerable discussions and occasioned some grave errors among subtle theologians. Subsequently he analyses the various objections that have been raised against the theory, and concludes by stating that the theory is highly probable²⁵. He also lines up a number of arguments in its favour, like the following: (a) a man is obliged to accept a law from the moment it is promulgated to him; but the natural law is promulgated to every man when he attains the use of reason, and acceptance of a law implies a sincere resolution to keep it, i.e. to regulate one's life according to its dictates; therefore at the attainment of the use of reason every man is obliged in conscience to accept the natural law and to direct himself to his ultimate end to which the law is ordained; (b) it is a sin of grave negligence to fail to do as soon as possible what is supremely important in one's life, or to postpone it without sufficient reason; but the supreme thing in one's life is to ordain one's life to the ultimate end, nor can there be a sufficient reason for postponing it since by hypothesis the end is already sufficiently known by reason; therefore it is a grave sin not to ordain one's life to the end at the attainment of the use of reason. (c) If the child were not bound in conscience to take such a step at the attainment of the use of reason, it could happen that he commits a venial sin before he actually does take the step; in that case venial sin would co-exist in the soul with original sin alone; but this is quite impossible, because if he should die in that state he could not expiate his venial sin after death, for he cannot be admitted to hell, limbo or purgatory.

Bañez, John of St Thomas, Gonet. In the seventeenth century the theory of the Angelic Doctor was more favourably received by his commentators.

²² Dom. Soto, *De Natura et Gratia*, Salamanca, 1561, p. 127.

²³ *De Justitia et Jure*, Anvers, 1567, p. 44.

²⁴ Cano, *Relectio de Sacramentis in genere*, Venice, 1776, t. ii, p. 342.

²⁵ Medina, *Expositio in I-II S Thomae*, Venice, 1590, pp. 472 ff.

Bañez, after repeating Medina's arguments, puts forth what seems to be a most convincing argument in favour of the first part of the theory. The first thing, says Bañez, that occurs to a child at the attainment of the use of reason is to think of himself: because the child knows and loves himself more than anything else around him and naturally relates everything to himself. But should he not relate his own being to something superior than himself, as to the ultimate end? It would surely constitute a grave disorder if he should establish himself as the ultimate end contrary to the dictates of his conscience²⁶. Nevertheless, when Bañez comes to examining the second part of the theory, he is satisfied by saying that it is 'a pious belief'. Both John of St Thomas and Gonet accept the Thomistic theory as certain and without reserve, but they too consider it quite unnecessary to advance fresh arguments in its favour. To the objection that a child cannot possibly learn in one instant the articles of faith which are necessary for the act of faith, John of St Thomas replies that the child learns these articles of faith successively and yet within the limits of the intellectual process that precedes the first free human act. He thus assigns a beginning and an end to the first use of reason, and it is only at the termination of the process that the precept of turning to God obliges²⁷. Gonet is more vigorous in expressing himself in favour of the theory. 'The Angelic Doctor', writes Gonet, 'speaks so clearly, so unequivocally and so repeatedly about this doctrine, that to my mind whoever departs from him on this score has no right to be called Thomist'²⁸.

Billuart. Billuart, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, falls back on his sixteenth century predecessors by defending the first part of the theory as certain and rejecting the second part. As regards the strict obligation of directing one's life to the ultimate end when eliciting the first human act, Billuart insists that by 'use of reason' we must understand a full and perfect use of the spiritual faculties such as is necessary and sufficient for man to distinguish between right and wrong and to direct himself to the ultimate end. The instant in which this takes place is one only in the moral sense, for it comprises in itself a series of physical moments. Hence the thesis of Aquinas, according to Billuart, should read as follows: At the first moral instant in which man makes the first perfect use of his reason, he is held, under pain of mortal sin, to turn to God either implicitly or explicitly²⁹. As to the

²⁶ Bañez, *Scholastica Commentaria in II-II Angelici Doctoris*, Douai, 1615, pp. 245 f.

²⁷ John of St Thomas, *Cursus theol.*, Ed. Vives, 1886, t. VII, p. 99

²⁸ Gonet, *De Vitiis et peccatis*, Ed. Vives, 1876, t. IV, p. 431.

²⁹ Billuart, *Summa S. Thomae hodiernis academiæ moribus accomodata sive*

second part of the theory, Billuart follows Cajetan's interpretation that there is no certain reason why justification should follow immediately after the first good human act. Billuart's views are shared by Hugueny, who asserts that while God can give an illuminating grace to the infidel at the beginning of his moral life, He has not promised to do so in every individual case³⁰.

) *Other Schools.* We now pass to examine briefly some of the more outstanding non-Dominican theologians. Among these too we find a difference of opinion with regard to the theory of the Angelic Doctor. St Bonaventure, the first one to comment on the theory, was also the first one to reject it as a whole, admitting the possibility of venial sin existing in the soul with original sin and without personal mortal sin³¹. The Camelites of Salamanca, on the other hand, are in agreement with Gonet in their whole-hearted acceptance of the Thomistic theory. They affirm without hesitation that 'this theory constitutes an essential part of the whole system of the Angelic Doctor, nor can one abandon it without ceasing to be a Thomist'³². Peter of Aragon, an Augustinian monk who also taught at Salamanca in the sixteenth century, believes that fidelity to St Thomas can be reconciled with a certain liberty and considers the theory only as probable³³.

Suarez. Among the opponents of the theory, Suarez seems to have been the most vigorous of all. According to Suarez neither part of the theory has been sufficiently proved, either by St Thomas or by Thomists. His main objection to the first part of the theory is his contention that determining one's way of life for the future is a matter of such importance that it requires prudence and mature judgement; it is therefore hard to see, claims Suarez, how a child can be obliged in conscience to make such a choice with the very first free act of his will³⁴. The second part of the Thomistic theory is equally false to Suarez's view, nor does it necessarily follow from the first part, for God is not obliged to give the light of supernatural faith immediately after the position of the first good act. The dogma of the universal salvific will, adds Suarez, is sufficiently saved if we hold that God will give the necessary proximate means of salvation some time before death. Furthermore, to save the gratuitous character of grace, it is necessary to exclude every infallible

cursor theologicus, Wircemb.: Stahel, 1758, t. VIII, p. 379.

³⁰ P. Hugueny, O.P., *Revue Thomiste*, 13 (1905) pp. 667 f.

³¹ Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, q. 42, a. 2, ad 2.

³² Salmanticenses, *De Vitiis et Peccatis*, Ed. Palme, t. VIII, p. 491.

³³ *Commentaria in II-II Sancti Thomae*, Venice, 1625, p. 79.

³⁴ Suarez, *De Vitiis et Peccatis*, Ed. Vives, t. IV, p. 540.

link between man's disposition and the granting of justification. Hence it is more probable that God does not offer it at all at the beginning, even though the first human act be according to natural law³⁵.

Lugo. Lugo is more favourable to the theory and regards it as common opinion among theologians. He believes, however, that it should be interpreted rather broadly and in such a way as to allow the possibility of a delay between the first good act and justification itself³⁶. Lugo's favourable opinion was followed by two Benedictines who wrote towards the end of the seventeenth century, namely Cardinal d'Aguirre³⁷ and Paul Mezger³⁸, both of whom accepted the Thomistic theory without restriction. The latter was the first one to point out that from the theory it follows that negative infidelity, understood as invincible ignorance of faith, is an impossibility.

Modern Theologians. Coming now to examine some of the modern theologians who have discussed the theory of the Angelic Doctor in their works, we will not be surprised to find the same difference of opinion that existed among earlier writers. Thus while Schiffini³⁹ and Beraza⁴⁰ find the theory 'hard to understand', Capéran⁴¹ and Van der Meersch⁴² accept the theory without reserve. Two other modern theologians, Harent⁴³ and d'Alès⁴⁴, after examining the opinions of some of their predecessors, declare that no convincing arguments have yet been advanced in favour of the second part of the theory. Cardinal Billot touches upon the Thomistic theory only in passing, when developing his own doctrine

³⁵ *De Gratia*, Ed. Vives, t. VIII, pp. 348 ff.

³⁶ Lugo, *De Incarnatione*, Ed. Vives, t. II, p. 425.

³⁷ D'Aguirre, *Sancti Anselmi theologia commentariis et disputationibus illustrata*, Rome, 1688, t. I, p. 145.

³⁸ Mezger, *Theologia Scholastica secundum viam et doctrinam D. Thomae*, Augsburg, 1719, t. III, p. 51.

³⁹ Schiffini, *De Gratia Divina*, Freiburg, Herder, 1901, p. 548.

⁴⁰ Beraza, *Tractatus de Gratia Christi*, Bilbao, 1929, p. 403: 'Doctores Catholici de hac doctrina varie loquuntur. Plures enim, clausis mentis oculis, toto corde illam amplectuntur; alii suis commentariis illam obscure videntur; alii ei aperte contradicunt; alii denique, quos et nos sequimur, summa cum reverentia suo auctori relinquunt'.

⁴¹ Capéran op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 65 ff.: 'Si Dieu accord aux infidèles, en temp et lieu, des grâces de salut suffisantes, ce sera assurément à l'heure suprême, mais aussi à d'autres moments de la vie et tout d'abord, ce semble, au premier éveil de sens moral'.

⁴² Van der Meersch, 'Grâce', *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*, t. VI, cols. 1601 ff.

⁴³ Harent, art. cit., cols. 1863-94.

⁴⁴ D'Alès, 'Salut', *Dictionnaire apologetique de la foi catholique*, t. IV, cols. 1166 f.

on the existence of moral infants, that is of persons who are adult with regard to their age and physical development, but infants as regards spiritual and moral development⁴⁵. Without formally pronouncing himself either in favour or against the theory of Aquinas, Billot sees in it a confirmation of his own doctrine, because 'the Angelic Doctor teaches that a man, to be truly adult in the moral sense, must not only know God as the ultimate end of human life, but have the consciousness of an obligation to relate himself to Him by an act of perfect charity'⁴⁶.

Lombardi. In Father Lombardi's recent book, 'La salvezza di chi non ha Fede', which deals at great length with the whole problem of the salvation of non-Catholics, we have one of the most detailed analysis of the Thomistic theory⁴⁷. After examining the various arguments that have been advanced either for or against the theory, Father Lombardi very reluctantly departs from the Angelic Doctor. While admitting a degree of probability for the first part of the theory, he adheres to Suarez in rejecting the second part, without however subscribing to all the Suaresian objections against it.

Summarizing our historical inquiry on the interpretation and views of commentators and theologians with regard to the theory of the Angelic Doctor, we can state the following: of the twenty-five authors we have examined, ten accept the theory in its entirety, four consider it as only probable, and four others reject it as a whole; the remaining seven accept the first part but reject the second. Hence it is clear that, as far as extrinsic probability goes, one cannot hesitate to say that the theory of Aquinas is probable. But what about its intrinsic probability?

Intrinsic Probability. As we come to examine the arguments advanced by St Thomas and his commentators in favour of the theory, we must again distinguish the first from the second part. The arguments for the first part are, in our view, quite conclusive and it is therefore no wonder that they have been rejected as false only by four out of the twenty-five authors mentioned in this paper. The best of these arguments is that proposed by St Thomas himself and developed by Medina⁴⁸. It can be formulated as follows: The activity of a non-baptized person is not yet habitually referred to the end; it therefore remains unrelated to the end until the person knows the end and formally refers himself to the end through a free human act. But every man already knows the end by reason

⁴⁵ Billot, 'La Providence de Dieu e le nombre infini d'hommes hors de la voie normale du salut', Etudes 1919-23.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 1920, pp. 515 ff.

⁴⁷ Lombardi, op. cit., pp. 444-66.

⁴⁸ I-II, q. 89, a. 6, ad 3; cf. ibid. q. 88, a. 1.

when he elicits his first human act: that is, as soon as he becomes a true adult in the moral sense. Therefore, every man can direct himself to the end when he elicits his first human act. But if he can, he is obliged in conscience to do so; otherwise he is responsible for a free act that is unrelated to, and therefore averted from, the end. Such an act is a grave deordination, a mortal sin. It cannot be a venial sin, because a venial sin is an action substantially in conformity with the end. Hence the first part of St Thomas's theory follows logically: the first human act of a non-baptized adult is necessarily either a mortal sin or a morally good act. The force of this argument is more easily perceived if one recalls the remark made by Billuart and others, emphasizing the fact that the attainment of the use of reason does not take place in an indivisible physical instant, but is rather a psychological process made up of several physical acts.

Facienti quod est in se. The argument advanced by the Angelic Doctor to support the second part of his theory is substantially as follows: God gives grace to a man who prepares himself for it by doing what is right, i.e. *facienti quod est in se*⁴⁹. But the unbaptized adult who substantially refers himself to God through his first human act does what is right. Therefore, God gives grace to the unbaptized adult whose first free act is morally good⁵⁰. Conclusive as this argument seems at first sight, it is open to one rather serious objection. Granted that the condition implied in the principle *facienti quod est in se* is already verified in the first human act, it is not yet clear that the grace immediately given by God is sanctifying grace and not merely an actual grace; or, to put it inversely, if the grace that God has promised to give is sanctifying grace, it is nowhere revealed that God has promised to grant it immediately after the first free good act⁵¹. This objection, however, does not at all deprive the theory of its intrinsic probability, since its contention is that God has not revealed to us whether He actually grants justification immediately after the first good act or waits for further dispositions in the good adult. The objection, in our view, contains nothing that positively militates against the theory. What is more, as Capéran remarks⁵², if there is a convenient time for God to be liberal with His

⁴⁹ Ibid., q. 112, a. 3; Aquinas does not here mention explicitly the first human act, but treats the problem in general: 'utrum necessario detur gratia se praeeparanti ad gratiam, vel facienti quod est in se'.

⁵⁰ All proportion between the naturally good act of an unbaptized person and sanctifying grace is, of course, excluded; it is possible, nevertheless, that the same honest act be elevated to the supernatural order through actual grace and thus have proportion to sanctifying grace to which actual grace itself is ordained.

⁵¹ Cf. Lombardi, op. cit., p. 459.

⁵² Op. cit., vol. ii, p. 65; cf. note 41, supra.

grace, that time surely must be when man directs himself to God through his first free act. To Suarez's main objection, that the Thomistic theory destroys the gratuity of grace, we can reply that the infallible connection between the good act of the unbaptized adult and justification is, in the mind of St Thomas, not in the nature of things, nor is it to be attributed to the intrinsic merit of the action, but is exclusively due to the free choice of God who will never let Himself be overcome by men in generosity⁵³.

Conclusion. It is therefore sufficiently clear from the foregoing that the theory we have discussed in this paper enjoys sufficient intrinsic probability. While among the several objections that have been raised against it there is not a single one that positively weakens its plausibility, the very authority of the Angelic Doctor throws such a great weight of extrinsic probability on it, that one can safely accept it without fear of contradicting any of the truths of faith⁵⁴. There is no way of knowing here on earth how many souls actually benefit from this 'extraordinary' way by which God communicates himself to souls; but meanwhile the theory of Aquinas cannot but inspire fresh hopes in every Catholic who has at heart the salvation of his fellow men.

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⁵³ Cf. I-II, q. 89, a. 6, ad 3.

⁵⁴ The dogmatic axiom '*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*' remains universally true. Such souls justified and eventually saved apart from the sacramental system of the Church, are nevertheless justified and saved through the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. They are therefore 'invisible' members of the one visible Church. On the subject of 'invisible membership', see: Yve de Montcheuil, *Aspects de l'Église*, Paris: Cerf., 1949, p. 138; P. Lippert, *Die Kirche Christi*, Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 1931, p. 268; A. Léonard, 'Simone Weil et l'appartenance invisible à l'Église', *Supplément de la Vie Spirituelle*, 1952, pp. 137-67.