

The Mystery of Christ's Beatific Suffering: A Speyrian-Balthasarian Proposal Concerning Christ's Beatific Vision in Life and Death

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IN THIS ESSAY, I would like to address the much-beleaguered question of whether Christ possessed the beatific vision throughout his earthly life, even throughout his passion and death, but with an eye on Hans Urs von Balthasar's own understanding of the issue, derived from Adrienne von Speyr's mystical experiences.¹ I cannot here do justice either to the issue of Christ's earthly beatific vision itself or to the conundrum that is Adrienne von Speyr. Instead, I will bracket the question of the legitimacy of the latter and attempt to shed light on what Balthasar must have ultimately concluded concerning Christ's consciousness in life and death, if he were to follow his professedly unparalleled theological influence, the mystic whom he counseled. I will suggest that a Balthasarian resolution to the debate concerning whether it was fitting for Christ to possess the beatific vision connaturally rises to the forefront when a number of conceptual clarifications are made: (1) the *visio beatifica* is distinct from the *fruitio*

¹ For her influence, see, for instance: Johann Roten, "The Two Halves of the Moon: Marian Anthropological Dimensions in the Common Mission of Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Works*, ed. David Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011); Michele M. Schumacher, *A Trinitarian Anthropology: Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Dialogue with Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014). See also Balthasar, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, trans. Antje Lawry and Sr. Sergia Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981).

beata, (2) divinely voluntary human nescience in the mind of Christ need not exclude possession of the beatific vision, and (3) it is both possible and fitting for the human mind of Christ hypostatically united to the Word to suspend access temporarily to particular “accoutrements” of the beatific vision that are naturally concomitant to its existence in the created intellect (i.e., secondary objects and *delectatio* or *fruitio*).

Before addressing the Speyrian-Balthasarian approach to this complex issue, I will survey briefly the recent secondary literature in Thomistic circles on the precise topic of whether Christ possessed the beatific vision during his earthly life, hinting at a possible resolution to the debate along the way. Then, I will address Balthasar’s explicit (brief) comments on the matter and follow up with an analysis of an essay of his concerning faith in Christ, evaluating whether his statements on vision and faith in Christ may be reconciled. Finally, I will utilize the scholarship of Lois M. Miles and Matthew Lewis Sutton to shed some light on the Speyrian influence in Balthasar concerning how Christ’s soul remained fully united to the Father amidst his experience of godforsakenness.

The Current Thomistic Debate concerning Christ’s *Visio immediata Dei*

The traditional view of Christ’s fullness of knowledge in the flesh dates back to the patristic era.² But in the wake of the development of modern historical-critical methods of exegesis applied to the sacred page, even Thomist scholars began to distance themselves from the notion that Christ’s human understanding of God, his natural (consubstantial) Father, is best described in terms of the *visio immediata* accorded the blessed upon glorification. Until relatively recently, all Thomists agreed on this doctrine

² See St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, Letter 14, cited by Bruce D. Marshall, “Jesus’ Human Knowledge: A Test for Theological Exegesis,” audio lecture, beginning at min. 14, <https://soundcloud.com/thomisticinstitute/dr-bruce-d-marshall-jesus-human-knowledge-a-test-for-theological-exegesis-1022015>. Still, Thomas G. Weinandy, an opponent of the view, states: “The first known author to state explicitly that Jesus possessed the beatific vision was the author, Candide, in the ninth century” (“Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father,” *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 2 [2004]: 189–201, at 189n1).

of their master,³ endorsed by the magisterium numerous times.⁴ Two principal representatives of the turned tide are Jean Galot, S.J.,⁵ from whom Balthasar draws on a semi-regular basis, and one of the most eminent living Thomists, Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P.⁶ I cannot possibly enter into all the details of the debate that has since ensued, but I will indicate wherein I think lies the truth by engaging a few more interlocutors.

Advocating for a doctrine of "mystical filial knowledge" in Christ's soul in place of the beatific vision, Galot argues that Christ need only have such perfect understanding in resurrection to be fit to communicate glory to the mankind he redeems. In order to live a life like the men with whom he has chosen total solidarity (excluding commission of sin), his mission requires nothing more than infused knowledge. In other words, it does not accord with the meaning and purpose of the Incarnation for Christ's earthly life to be suffused with the vision proper to consummate glory.⁷ Furthermore, he rejects as incommensurate the argument from analogy with mystical experiences that Christ could have uttered the cry of abandonment even while experiencing "the beatifying sentiment of the most complete union

³ See, for instance, H.-M. Diepen, "La psychologie humaine du Christ," *Revue thomiste* 50 (1950): 515–62, where the Scotist Christology of Paul Galtier is refuted. See also Bernard Lonergan's textbook for the Gregorian University in the 1950s, *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica*, particularly pt. 6, sect. 2, recently published as *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 7, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 204–230 ("The Ontological Constitution of Christ's Human Consciousness").

⁴ See Pius X, *Lamentabili* (1907), §§ 32–35 (Denzinger-Schönmetzger [DS], no. 3432–35); Decree of the Holy Office of June 5, 1918 (DS, no. 3645); Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (1943), §75 (DS, no. 3812); Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas* (1956), §56 (DS, no. 3924), which cites Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 9, aa. 1–3. Compare with the International Theological Commission, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission," *Communio* 14, no. 3 (1987): 316–25. See also Jean Galot's analysis of the authority of the previous magisterial statements in his *Who is Christ? A Theology of the Incarnation*, trans. M. A. Bouchard (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1980), 357n33. The latest magisterial statements are found in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], §473, and John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), §§ 25–27.

⁵ See Jean Galot, "Le Christ Terre et La Vision," *Gregorianum* 67, no. 3 (1986): 429–50.

⁶ See Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., "S. Thomas d'Aquin et la science du Christ," in *Le mystère du Christ chez saint Thomas d'Aquin : textes choisis et présentés par Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P.* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 198–213 (also found in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. [Paris: Editions St. Paul, 1994], 394–409). Paul Gondreau also, in his study of Christ's passions, indicates agreement with Torrell, who wrote the preface for his book.

⁷ See Galot, "Christ terrestre," 434.

with the Father.”⁸ He dismisses out of hand the view he finds in Melchor Cano and others that Christ suspends the *delectatio* proper to the beatific vision during his passion, asserting that they must have forgotten that the joy of the vision necessarily accompanies the hypostatic union.⁹ He also passes over Bertrand de Margerie’s proposal that Christ’s earthly beatitude “was perfect but incomplete,”¹⁰ and critiques Maritain’s distinction between supra-conscious and infra-conscious to explain the co-existence of beatific vision and acquired knowledge in Christ’s human soul as introducing an unbridgeable division into the human psychology of Jesus.¹¹ His solution, instead, is to appeal to *kenosis*, a profound reality indeed and very near to the heart of Balthasar (as will be seen). But the medieval solutions, particularly, are given short shrift.

Galot rightly points out that the divine essence is not known by the incarnate Son as an object, but as subject. Since “vision” implies subject–object duality, it is an inadequate analogy for Christ’s own consciousness, which is entirely unique. Echoing Bernard Lonergan here (without citing him), Galot nonetheless draws the mistaken conclusion that while Christ cannot be said to possess faith, his knowledge of his own divine essence must be infused (not beatific).¹² But how could faith be lacking for a

⁸ Galot, “Christ terrestre,” 435 (my translation).

⁹ See Galot, “Christ terrestre,” 435. This assertion seems both contradictory to Galot’s own position that the hypostatic union need only imply infused knowledge in the soul of Christ and unjustified according to Scholastic tradition. Even the classical Dominican Thomist Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange allows for the possibility of God withdrawing the joy that is concomitant with the beatific vision without causing a cessation of the vision itself (see *Beatitude: A Commentary on Thomas’ Theologia Summa, IaIIae, qq. 1–54*, trans. Patrick Cummins, O.S.B. [n.p.: Ex Fontibus, 2015], 89), going so far as to state that the vision would not cease even if God refused concurrence with the act of love that would naturally accompany it (see 94), while at the same time demonstrating the impossibility of the vision itself ceasing or being withdrawn once possessed (see 122).

¹⁰ Bertrand de Margerie, “De la science du Christ: Science, préscience et conscience, même prépascales du Christ Rédempteur,” *Doctor Communis* 36 (1983): 123–58, at 141 (my translation).

¹¹ See “Christ terrestre,” 436. William G. Most makes a similar criticism of Jacques Maritain’s proposal, concluding that Maritain’s treatment “makes him [Christ] almost schizoid” (see *The Consciousness of Christ* [Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1980], 160. A bit more will be said about Maritain’s theory later. In the end, I think something like Maritain’s articulation is necessary, although the language of psychoanalytic theory might not be the most helpful. In other words, Christ as *viator* must be distinguished adequately from Christ as *comprehensor* without dividing the person, a task indeed very difficult and complex.

¹² See Galot, “Christ terrestre,” 439–440.

soul in the state of grace and possessing imperfect knowledge of God? Furthermore, he speaks of this infused knowledge, by which Christ has human consciousness of his divine identity, developing "according to the normal conditions of human growth."¹³ But what could it mean for infused knowledge to develop in such a manner, given that humans do not naturally possess such? The attempt to render Christ an ordinary human, albeit concurrently divine, is misbegotten.

Guy Mansini points out, contrary to what Galot seems to assume, that Aquinas does not insist on the necessity of the beatific vision for Christ's human soul, but instead argues for its supreme fittingness (*convenientia*), due to the nature of the hypostatic union and, especially, the soteriological purpose of his Incarnation.¹⁴ Mansini argues that because Christ knows exactly who he is, he knows the mystery of the Trinity itself, and because he "taught them as one who has authority" (Mark 1:22), he does not have mere faith in the Trinity, as do we.¹⁵ Rather, possessing an immediate knowledge of the Trinity itself, which is precisely what constitutes the beatific vision as such, he must "share in the infinite act of understanding by which God himself in his divine nature understands and knows all things"¹⁶ or "[possess] an immediate knowledge of God as he is in himself, the finite mind's sharing in the infinite act of understanding the infinite intelligibility that God is."¹⁷ Of course, what we know of the beatific vision is very limited, as its mere existence is known only by faith, the nature of which we merely know by *via remotionis* to be a knowledge "[not] by way of a created similitude; rather, the divine being itself is what is immediately present to the created mind."¹⁸ Christ as *comprehensor* must possess this vision; meanwhile, Christ as *viator* acquires knowledge. Indeed, Lonergan

¹³ Galot, "Christ terrestre," 440. See also Galot, "Problèmes de la conscience du Christ," *Esprit et vie* 92 (1982): 145–52, and *La Conscience de Jésus* (Paris: Duculot, 1971).

¹⁴ See: Guy Mansini, "Understanding St. Thomas on Christ's Knowledge of God," *The Thomist* 59, no. 1 (1995): 91–124, at 94–96; *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1; q. 9, a. 2. Lonergan, at least according to the notes of Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., instead argues on the basis of necessity: "But in the case of Christ, he who is a divine and infinite person; from him the beatific vision proceeds not as something unowed and gratuitous but, as indicated above, as consequent upon the infinite act of existence which he is" ("The Consciousness of Christ," in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 19, *Early Latin Theology* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011], 559).

¹⁵ See Mansini, "Understanding St. Thomas," 114–20.

¹⁶ Mansini, "Understanding St. Thomas," 117.

¹⁷ Mansini, "Understanding St. Thomas," 116.

¹⁸ *ST* I, q. 12, a. 2.

speaks of the two planes of knowledge as ineffable and effable,¹⁹ respectively, such that the latter attempts to express with ever more clarity the salvific content of the former.

Building on Lonergan's discourse on "beatific knowledge" in place of the more widely used "beatific vision," Mansini speaks of "immediate knowledge" without denying its beatific quality. He explains why: "To avoid the imputation that, as perfectly happy, he could not suffer anything. Still, the problem is not to be got rid of by a terminological device. The immediate knowledge of God is, one supposes, something that, as a super-perfection of our humanity, and of our intellectual desire, makes us happy."²⁰ He rejects the notion that it is impossible to be both happy and sad simultaneously. Still, consider the following thought experiment: could a soul in heaven endure hellish suffering? If so, surely only by divine omnipotence. But, is it more intelligible for the latter to bring about such a situation by withdrawing from the soul the joy that naturally follows the vision or by piling on top of the *fruitio beata* a wholly contradictory experience of loss (i.e., dereliction)? Certainly, it is intrinsic to the beatific vision (perfect understanding and consequent union with God) to be eternal, and thus it would be supremely imperfect for an omnipotent power to withdraw such vision itself (perhaps, by annihilation). Apply this consideration to the soul of Christ, the incarnate Word, during his earthly life.

Jean-Pierre Torrell thinks it is impossible for beatific joy and the experience of abandonment to co-exist together and, therefore, rejects the traditional notion that Christ possessed the beatific vision in life (without considering the possibility entertained here). Emphasizing that Aquinas only argues for the fittingness of such vision,²¹ based on the divine economy according to which the salvation toward which human beings are directed is communicated only through the incarnate Word, Torrell points out that Aquinas never specifies at which point Christ received the

¹⁹ See Bernard Lonergan, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964), 332.

²⁰ Mansini, "Understanding St. Thomas," 119. In a fashion complementary to his "immediate knowledge," I have utilized the language of "perfect understanding" to allow room for the suspension of access to the "secondary objects" of the vision or whatever might not be pertinent to His mission at hand, which seems to be allowed by Lonergan in *De Verbo Incarnato*, thesis 15, pt. 6, cited by Mansini on 111n49, along with *ST* III, q. 10, a. 1. "Knowledge" typically connotes data, whereas "understanding" connotes profundity, something more active than receptive.

²¹ Torrell, "La science du Christ," 200.

vision, or "the moment at which Jesus became the Christ."²² He also points out that when faced with "the Aristotelian doctrine of the impossibility of opposed intense passions [co-existing] in the same subject at the same time,"²³ Aquinas invokes the fact that Christ is entirely unique, and thus exempt from such a principle, choosing John Damascene over Aristotle.²⁴ Torrell recognizes that, at least according to Thomistic logic, Christ must have either the beatific vision or the virtue of faith, and Sacred Scripture never alludes to Christ possessing faith, but to him as the perfect revelation of the Father.²⁵ Without disputing such logic, he concludes that Christ's knowledge of the Father must be a "perfect and total" form of prophetic knowledge, a supreme form of infused knowledge.²⁶

Paul Gondreau seconds Torrell's principal objection to Christ's earthly possession of the beatific vision, namely, that mutually opposed passions cannot co-exist with such intensity in the soul of Christ at one and the same time. Gondreau sums up Torrell's position in a manner very reminiscent of Galot's objections (without mentioning him):

After pointing out that the causal exigency of Christ's enjoyment of the *visio Dei*—whereby Christ must first enjoy the full vision of God before he can lead the human race to this vision—is satisfied by the *resurrected* state of Jesus rather than by his entire earthly state (there is no need, in other words, to attribute a glorified condition to Jesus' humanity during his entire earthly existence if what characterizes his glorified resurrected state meets this same soteriological requirement), Torrell looks to the revealed knowledge offered to the prophets as analogous to the kind of human knowledge one can suppose was possessed by Christ. To explain, the prophets, as Thomas insists, partake in a special 'light' (*lumen propheticum*) which permits them to know the divinely revealed realities they are charged to impart in a way that is fully consonant with a human mode of knowing; by a similar yet vastly superior kind of prophetic "light," Jesus, one could say, is permitted to know (in a human way rather than in the angelic mode that characterizes infused knowledge) all things that concern his redemptive mission.²⁷

²² Torrell, "La science du Christ," 205. There is here, perhaps, a Schillebeeckxian undertone here. Hence, the underlying issue may be how seriously one takes the conclusions of modern historical-critical biblical exegesis.

²³ Torrell, "La science du Christ," 204.

²⁴ Torrell, "La science du Christ," 205.

²⁵ Torrell, "La science du Christ," 207.

²⁶ Torrell, "La science du Christ," 211–12.

²⁷ Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*

One might argue, in answer to Mansini's article (which neither Torrell nor Gondreau engage), that such "Christic" vision is sufficient to have the certainty Jesus had about the mysteries he proclaimed. But if the knowledge infused is nonetheless finite (i.e., not the divine essence itself), is there not room still for doubt? Could not the angels with their infused knowledge before their respective beatifications and condemnations still doubt what God had revealed to them, which was in all likelihood cognitively superior to any human prophet (*quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*)? Finally, would it not be more fitting for Christ to possess perfect knowledge of the Godhead connaturally and not through some process akin to merit-reward, or better, is it not fitting that the Redeemer possess the beatitude he wishes to impart upon the redeemed while he redeems them (i.e., not simply in resurrection, but also in death and even life, given that each one of his acts was sufficient by itself to redeem mankind)?

None of this is considered. But the main concern for both Torrell and Gondreau (who does a superb job of exploring Christ's passions in Aquinas's writings) is "Thomas' suspension of the natural laws governing human psychology, whereby the bridge linking the higher and lower powers of the soul is effectively severed in order to allow for simultaneous suffering and joy in Christ's soul."²⁸ While Mansini also expresses puzzlement at the co-existence of intense joy and suffering in Christ's soul during the passion, he must have realized that the marvelous works of God in Christ often suspend natural laws—"oh ye of little faith!" (Matt 8:26). The "natural law" here referenced is the medieval notion of *redundancia*, whereby what the higher powers of the soul enjoy naturally redound to the lower powers; yet, it is universally accepted that Christ's body did not enjoy the perfection of his soul by divine decree so that he might share more profoundly in the human condition (without sin—and it might be added, without intellectual defect).²⁹ Ultimately, Gondreau designates the doctrine of Christ as *viator et comprehensor* as "highly problematic,"³⁰ which he recognizes as, at least in part, an attempt to specify "the way in

(Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009), 451–52.

²⁸ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul*, 449.

²⁹ It would not be an intellectual defect of Christ's human mind not to know calculus or Chinese, but it would be one not to understand perfectly the truths He uttered, not because humans ordinarily understand their own speech perfectly, but because He is more than simply human—He is the God-man, a divine Person. Yes, he acquired knowledge of much in life, but as long as He possessed human self-consciousness, He could not have lacked perfect understanding of His own identity, which must involve nothing short of immediate knowledge of God's essence.

³⁰ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul*, 450.

which Christ could undergo both affective suffering as a result of his possible soul and supreme joy or beatitude as a consequence of the direct *visio Dei* his soul enjoyed.³¹ Again, no consideration is given the possibility that such suffering co-existed with the *visio* but not the *fruitio* or *delectatio*.

Underlying the entire issue, of course, is to what extent one accepts the purported findings of modern historical-critical (i.e., diachronic) methods of scriptural exegesis, which are perpetually in tension with dogmatic claims about Christ.³² Hence, the reason he states for rejecting such a Scholastic axiom:

As J.-P. Torrell remarks, “[the Evangelists] describe Jesus’ agony in quite strong terms that hardly leave one suspecting of the joy that could have felt the effects of his sufferings.” This witness of the Gospels explains why modern Biblical exegesis favors an image of Jesus that is closer to the man who “learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb 5:8) than to the Christ who experienced a beatified soul since the very moment of his conception.³³

I am happy to see Torrell (and Gondreau) take seriously Christ’s “cry of dereliction,” but I am disappointed in Gondreau for implying that Aquinas’s Christ cannot learn obedience—that is precisely the point of the acquired knowledge, which Gondreau so often points out distinguishes Aquinas’s Christology from the other medievals. Finally, I think it is inaccurate to speak of Christ *experiencing* beatitude from the moment of conception, both because there is no reason to suppose his human psychology did not develop self-awareness in accord with the natural laws of human development and because possessing beatitude (objective) need not mean experiencing it (subjective).

Throughout this struggle to reconcile Christ as man (*qua homo*) with Christ as God (*qua Deus*) is, of course, the effort to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of Monophysitism and Nestorianism. Thomas G. Weinandy is most explicit in his attempt to steer clear of such heresies, meanwhile adding his voice to the modern choir questioning the Scholastic consensus on Christ’s beatific knowledge. Weinandy claims that the question itself of whether Christ possessed the beatific vision is inspired by a Nestorian

³¹ Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 441.

³² Literature on this topic super-abounds and certainly cannot be engaged here.

³³ Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 450–51. The internal quote is from Torrell’s *Le Christ en ses mysteres*, vol. 2, *La Vie et L’Oeuvre de Jesus selon Saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1999), 338.

Christology rather than a Cyrlian-Chalcedonian one, since for the former “the Son of God and the man Jesus are not ontologically united within the Incarnation, and so stand over against one another.”³⁴ For him, then, in the context of the latter Christology, the only proper and meaningful question is: “Did the Son of God as man, within his human consciousness and intellect, possess a vision of the Father such that he (the divine Son) was humanly aware of himself as Son and so knew himself to be the Son, and thus, as a consequence perceived all that the Father willed for him during his earthly life?”³⁵ But this is simply a convenient (and perhaps disingenuous) way out of the debate. Why cannot one ask: Did the Son of God as man, in his human intellect, possess a vision of the Father (i.e., the Godhead by *circumincessio*) such that he (the divine Son) possessed in his human mind an immediate knowledge of his own identity and so of the divine essence itself, and thus, as a consequence, understood things that are proper only to the beatific vision granted mere humans upon glorification?

Referring also to Lonergan’s work, Weinandy proposes in place of the beatific vision “a human ‘hypostatic vision,’” whereby “the person (*hypostasis*) of the Son possessed, as man, a personal human vision of the Father by which he came to know the Father as the Father truly exists.”³⁶ He acknowledges that “Lonergan insists that Christ must also possess beatific knowledge [not just human self-awareness] in order for him to have a full and objective knowledge that exceeds that of subjective conscious experience.”³⁷ But he disagrees with Lonergan that in being humanly aware of *who he is*, Christ’s human mind must be(come) “fully knowledgeable as to *what he is*—God.”³⁸ Weinandy clarifies that, while he holds in agreement with Lonergan “that the Son’s human conscious experience is the subjective experience of the Son and not the perceptive experience of an object apart from himself,”³⁹ he adds: “I have equally argued that he obtained

³⁴ Weinandy, “Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father,” 190.

³⁵ Weinandy, “Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father,” 190–91.

³⁶ Weinandy, “Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father,” 193.

³⁷ Weinandy, “Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father,” 193n7.

³⁸ Weinandy, “Jesus’ Filial Vision of the Father,” 193n7. He also notes there that Lonergan holds (and he himself expresses no disagreement with this) that “no created intellect can know God in his essence save through the beatific vision” (*Ontological and Psychological Constitution*, 217). When did he become aware of his divine identity? “Such an awareness would have come much earlier [than the age of twelve]—at the normal age when a human person becomes aware of who he or she is. The difference being that a human person becomes aware of his or her human identity and the Son incarnate becomes humanly aware of his divine identity as Son” (Weinandy, “Jesus’ Filial Vision,” 198n14).

³⁹ For fuller understanding of Lonergan’s point here, see *Ontological and Psychologi-*

his human conscious awareness of who [he] is as the Son in relation to his human objective vision of the Father.⁴⁰ But how can he have an objective vision of the Father and not of the divine essence of which he is the originating hypostasis? Furthermore, if "it was in becoming humanly aware of the Father as Father that he became self-consciously aware that he was truly the Son of the Father,"⁴¹ was he not also humanly aware of the Holy Spirit? Moreover, is it fitting for the Son of God to have only imperfect human awareness not only of his own hypostasis, but also of those eternally consubstantial to him?

His answer to the first and second questions is to distinguish between objective and subjective knowledge:

Obviously, in having a filial vision of the Father, the Son as incarnate is aware of the whole Trinity for to know the Father necessarily entails knowing the Son and the Spirit. However, it must be stressed that the Son's incarnate knowledge of the Trinity was not an objective knowledge, that is, a knowledge of a being ontologically distinct from himself, but rather a subjective knowledge, that is a knowledge of who he is—himself being a person of the Trinity.⁴²

This distinction, of course, bespeaks a peculiarly modern cognitional theory. Certainly, it is valid to distinguish between an informational type of knowledge and a personal familiarity kind of knowledge, as most modern languages do. But why does it make sense to put limitations on Christ's "human objective vision of the Father"? (This is my third question put in his terms.) Even Lonergan's peculiar cognitional theory does not prevent him from recognizing that in order to be totally self-aware, Christ must have possessed immediate knowledge of the divine essence:⁴³

For Christ as man to understand clearly and to judge with certainty himself to be the natural Son of God and himself true God, the following conditions are required and sufficient: (1) consciousness of himself; (2) in which the subject (that which is aware of itself

cal Constitution of Christ, 267.

⁴⁰ Weinandy, "Jesus' Filial Vision," 193n7.

⁴¹ Weinandy, "Jesus' Filial Vision," 193n7.

⁴² Weinandy, "Jesus' Filial Vision," 197n13.

⁴³ See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), which he composed concurrently with his major Christological texts, *De Constitutione Christi* and *De Verbo Incarnato*.

through consciousness) is the natural Son of God and himself true God; (3) a clear understanding of the quiddity of the natural Son of God and of the true God; and (4) a grasp of the identity between the conscious subject and the object thus quidditatively understood. But these necessary and sufficient conditions are fulfilled by Christ's human consciousness and his beatific knowledge. . . . The third condition is required, since one who does not understand what the natural Son of God is cannot clearly understand himself to be the natural Son of God.⁴⁴

The modern instinct is to divest Christ's humanity of perfection in order not to fall into Monophysitism, that is, to strip away (*kenosis*!) the divine implications for his humanity in order to make room for the latter to appear in greater solidarity with the rest of us. The alternative, in this perspective, is Nestorianism—that is, *Christus viator et comprehensor* must be two hypostases ("persons"), not one, which simply does not follow. Therefore, echoing Galot,⁴⁵ Weinandy concludes: "the Son did not fully grasp, as man, the awesome glory and incomprehensible splendor of who he is until he was raised gloriously from the dead."⁴⁶ Thus, it is only in resurrection that Christ graduates from *viator* to *comprehensor*.

Thomas Joseph White, O.P., takes issue with both Galot's and Weinandy's treatments. Utilizing Herman Diepen, Jacques Maritain, and Jean Miguel Garrigues,⁴⁷ he argues that holding the traditional view is "essential for maintaining the unity of [Christ's] person in and through the duality of his natures."⁴⁸ In short, in order for Christ's human nature to be the sacred *organon* ("instrument") of his divine hypostasis, all his thoughts, words, and deeds must express "his intra-Trinitarian, filial relationship with the Father."⁴⁹ This requires not only that all his actions reflect the

⁴⁴ Lonergan, *Ontological and Psychological Constitution*, 215, 217 (Latin original available on 214, 216).

⁴⁵ Weinandy does not, however, cite Torrell.

⁴⁶ Weinandy, "Jesus' Filial Vision," 198n14.

⁴⁷ Diepen, "La psychologie," and Diepen, "La critique du basilisme selon saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 50 (1950): 290–329; Jacques Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus* (London: Burns and Oats, 1969); Jean Miguel Garrigues, "La conscience de soi telle qu'elle était exercée par le Fils de Dieu fait homme," *Nova et Vetera* (French) 79, no. 1 (2004): 39–51, and "L'instrumentalité rédemptrice du libre arbitre du Christ chez saint Maxime le Confesseur," *Revue thomiste* 104 (2004): 531–50.

⁴⁸ Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision," *The Thomist* 69, no. 4(2005): 497–534, at 498.

⁴⁹ White, "Voluntary Action," 499. Concerning the instrumentality of Christ's

divine will, but that he have immediate knowledge of the divine will.⁵⁰ Against Galot's capricious reluctance to grant that the absence of vision mandates the presence of faith in a soul united to God, White pits his ally, Torrell, against him:

The presence of a prophetic, infused knowledge cannot act as a substitute for faith, in the way Galot proposes. The Jesuit theologian claims that there is no faith in Christ, nor vision, but only a higher knowledge attained by prophecy. Yet as Jean-Pierre Torrell has shown, prophetic or infused knowledge alone is only a mediate, *indirect* knowledge of God attained through the *effects* of God. Necessarily, outside of the vision, all knowledge of God is through effects, and *only faith* permits a quasi-immediate contact with God, through love. Therefore even in-fused knowledge requires faith in order to orient it toward God. This latter contact, however, is obscure (nonevidential). . . . [The intellect of Christ] would believe in his divinity and divine will through faith.⁵¹

humanity (intellect and will), White refers the reader to Theophil Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi als Heilsorgan der Gottheit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag nicht ermittelbar, 1939), [French trans.: *L'humanité du Christ comme instrument de salut de la divinité* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003)].

⁵⁰ I have restated the argument somewhat here, as White usually tends to say that, in order for all his actions to reflect the divine will, he must have immediate knowledge of the divine will (citing *ST* I-II, q. 4, a. 4). But this is not necessarily true, if the Blessed Virgin Mary is indeed sinless, as she certainly did not enjoy the beatific vision in life. God may predestine any created will to perform all good acts without granting perfect understanding of his will. Nonetheless, one might develop an argument on the basis of the distinction in spiritual theology between sin and imperfection (see, e.g., Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross* [Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2010], 428–35), which might allow one to conclude that, while Mary did not commit any sins, the deeds of Christ alone were always perfect.

⁵¹ White, "Voluntary Action," 517–18. In fact, Torrell states: "With faith we are in the order of the supernatural *quoad essentiam*, while with prophetic knowledge we remain in the order of the supernatural *quoad modum (acquisitionis)*. The two orders do not exclude one another, certainly, but the second is ordered to the first, and because the two are different kinds of realities, they must not be confused or made to play the role of one another. . . . If we accord to [Jesus] infused illuminations characteristic of the charismatic knowledge of revelation, he will be enabled for his role as a divine messenger, but he will still not have direct access to God, since these illuminations do not suffice as a replacement of faith" ("La Science du Christ," 404, translated in White, "Voluntary Action," 41). Concerning prophecy, see Torrell's *Recherches sur la théorie de la prophétie au moyen âge, xii^e–xiv^e siècles: études et textes* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 1992).

White adds the following argument:

In the absence of the vision, the infused science of Christ would lack such immediate evidence, and would have to be accompanied by faith. In this case, the prophetic awareness Christ had of his own divinity and will would have to be continuously accompanied by an autonomous decision of faith in the human heart of Christ and a repeated choice to welcome in trust this revelation *from his own divine self*. This would create, in effect, a kind of psychological autonomy in the man Jesus distinct from the willing of his divine subject, resulting in a schism between the two operations of the Incarnate Word.⁵²

Alternatively, the infinite distance between Christ's created intellect and uncreated being can be bridged only by an immediate vision, which effectively "safeguards the unity of activity in the person of Jesus."⁵³

If the beatific vision does not corrupt but, rather, perfects the human being, then for Christ's humanity to possess the same from conception would not make him any less human than the rest of us, no more than being conceived without sin rendered Mary less human, but rather more perfectly human in accord with God's original designs. Thus, White concludes concerning the Scylla and Charybdis of opposite Christological heresies:

At least in one very important aspect (i.e., with regard to the divine will), Christ's human actions *must not* be characterized by ignorance, or defectibility. What is at stake is not a principle of ideal humanity, but the very unity of the operations of Christ in his practical actions. In order for Christ to be fully human, his psychological choices must be rational and natural (against Monophysitism), but for them to be the choices of his divine person, they must be unified with his divine will on the level of his personal action (against Nestorianism).⁵⁴

White does not seem to find difficulty with the notion of Christ possessing the beatific vision in the "heights of the soul" even while suffering spiritual

⁵² White, "Voluntary Action," 519.

⁵³ White, "Voluntary Action," 521.

⁵⁴ White, "Voluntary Action," 515.

and physical agony, even calling the former “pacifying.”⁵⁵

Weinandy later responds to White’s criticisms of this position that he had recently espoused. He does not respond in detail to White’s arguments, but instead undermines the mentality he thinks pervades White’s article as crypto-Nestorian. The Nestorian accusation seems to imply that coming to human awareness of his divine identity and possessing a (supra-conscious) immediate vision of the Father are mutually exclusive notions. But they are not, given that what is known by *visio* may be learned experimentally due to the distinction between acquired, infused, and beatific planes of consciousness/knowledge in Christ’s soul. Weinandy advocates in place of the beatific vision the existence of a “human hypostatic vision of the Father,”⁵⁶ which would necessarily be ontologically inferior the beatific vision Christ purportedly achieves in resurrection.

He sums up his own argumentation in the previous article thus:

I gave two reasons why Jesus did not possess the beatific vision. The first is that the beatific vision is traditionally understood as a heavenly vision and thus a vision that is resurrectional in nature. Such a vision would then be contrary to Jesus’ being able to live an authentic earthly life. Moreover, because the beatific vision has traditionally been understood as an objective vision of God obtained by someone who is other than God, to say that Jesus possessed the beatific vision implies Nestorianism, as if the man Jesus, who possessed the beatific vision, were a different subject/being from that of the Son.⁵⁷

If Jesus having the beatific vision implies Nestorianism, then he must not possess it either in life or in resurrection. I think that White successfully argues that it is actually Weinandy’s position that requires Nestorianism, a thesis Weinandy never addresses. Even if Weinandy’s view is not Nestorian (let us not gratuitously accuse each other of heresy!), does not speaking of the beatific vision as “resurrectional in nature” imply divergence from Benedict XII’s solemn proclamation against the idea that the beatific vision is only granted at the general resurrection?⁵⁸

⁵⁵ White, “Voluntary Action,” note 68.

⁵⁶ Thomas Weinandy, “The Beatific Vision and the Incarnate Son: Furthering the Discussion,” *The Thomist* 70, no. 4 (2006): 605–15, at 613–14.

⁵⁷ Weinandy, “Beatific Vision,” 613n4.

⁵⁸ Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336) (DS, no. 1000) Of course, Weinandy might hold the Rahnerian notion of resurrection in death. For a critique of this theory, see my “The Possibility of Universal Conversion in Death,” *Modern Theology* 32, no. 3 (2016): 307–24.

Against White's purportedly ambiguous use of language in reference to Christ's subjectivity, Weinandy explains:

Because the Son is the sole person or subject within the Incarnation, what he knows and wills as man is done by him and so, from the very ontology of Incarnation, the human intellect and will are never autonomous "things" in need of being "brought into line," whether by the beatific vision or by any other means.⁵⁹

Thus, Weinandy characterizes White's view in the following manner:

The Son's humanity is the personal instrument through which he acts, in a similar way as I personally act through the use of my hand. However, my hand does not act 'instrumentally' and neither does Christ's 'human will.' Moreover, a 'will' does not act apart from the one whose will it is, nor does a 'will,' as if it were an acting subject, subordinate itself to another will. Only persons subordinate their will to another person. To say that one will subordinates itself to another will implies two persons.⁶⁰

But the last statement is patently false, as the Chalcedonian dogmas clarify: there are two wills in Christ, human and divine, but one divine person (the Son/Word). Is the human not subject to the divine? Granted, a will does not act on its own, and Christ's will is not most properly designated an "autonomous thing."⁶¹ But, surely, if there are distinct natures in Christ (personally united), one can speak of distinct operations and reflect on their inter-relatedness. Likewise, a hand is not an instrument of the human person in the same way that the human nature of Christ is the instrument of his divine personhood because nature and person are not related in the same manner as part of a body is to the person who possesses (or rather, lives!) it. Yet, Christ is an entirely unique reality—nature, what a thing is

⁵⁹ Weinandy, "Beatific Vision," 609.

⁶⁰ Weinandy, "Beatific Vision," 611.

⁶¹ Still, Diepen says: "[It is] not only the sanctity and impeccability of Christ which demands that constant dependence of the human will in its relationship to the divine will, but also His personal unity. Every person is not only a metaphysical and substantial unity, but also a psychological unity. And there is no psychological unity if each of Christ's two psychological centers that comprise the intimate constitution of the God-man is autonomous in its activity" ("La psychologie," 535). He then quotes St. John Damascene for support (see *De fide orthodoxa* 1.3.18).

with respect to its operations, is distinct from person, the subsistent subject of all (real) predications.

Adopting language similar to Galot, Diepen, and Lonergan (about the Son becoming humanly self-conscious),⁶² Weinandy points to a few places where White's language is insufficiently precise with regard to the nature-person distinction. While the former language is indeed preferable (that is, until it denies the beatific vision), Weinandy seems to want to make it impossible to speak meaningfully of the distinct natures in Christ. Hence, Weinandy is mistaken when he speaks as if the beatific vision and hypostatic union are opposed rather than congruent: "For White, it is not the *hypostatic* union, the ontological union whereby the Son of God exists as man, that guarantees the unity, and so conformity, of the human intellect and will with the divine intellect and will, but the beatific vision."⁶³ Rather, the hypostatic union implies the beatific vision, even if it does not necessitate it, and thus it is through the beatific vision (instrumentality!) that the hypostatic union renders the human intellect and will of Christ completely conformed to his divine intellect and will.

Thus, it was most fitting for Jesus the Christ, the incarnate Word, to be endowed with the immediate vision of God's essence, toward which the prophets of old strived to direct his people's gaze. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI points out, it is most proper for the "New Moses," the prophet of all prophets, to possess an immediate and perfect vision of God:

Although Moses' immediate relation to God makes him the great mediator of Revelation, the mediator of the Covenant, it has its limits. He does not behold God's face, even though he is permitted to enter into the cloud of God's presence and to speak with God as a friend. The promise of a "prophet like me" thus implicitly contains an even greater expectation: that the last prophet, the new Moses, will be granted what was refused to the first one—a real, immediate vision of the face of God, and thus the ability to speak entirely from seeing, not just from looking at God's back. This naturally entails the further expectation that the new Moses will be the mediator of a greater covenant than the one that Moses was able to bring down from Sinai (cf. Heb 9:11–24). This is the context in which we need

⁶² The question about Christ's human consciousness of his divine identity is not understood in terms of "how a man becomes conscious that he is the Son of God, but how the Son of God becomes humanly conscious of himself" (Galot, *Who is Christ?* 336–37). See also Diepen, "La psychologie," 531.

⁶³ Weinandy, "Beatific Vision," 612.

to read the conclusion of the prologue to John's Gospel: "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn 1:18). It is in Jesus that the promise of the new prophet is fulfilled. What was true of Moses only in fragmentary form has now been fully realized in the person of Jesus: He lives before the face of God, not just as a friend, but as a Son; he lives in the most intimate unity with the Father. We have to start here if we are truly to understand the figure of Jesus as it is presented to us in the New Testament; all that we are told about his words, deeds, sufferings, and glory is anchored here. This is the central point, and if we leave it out of account, we fail to grasp what the figure of Jesus is really all about, so that it becomes self-contradictory and, in the end, unintelligible.⁶⁴

Although Ratzinger is clearer here than is Balthasar, it should become evident by the end of this article that the Balthasarian-Speyrian perspective accounts for the problem that preoccupies Galot, Weinandy, and Torrell without replacing the *visio immediata* with an infused super-prophetic species. Furthermore, rather than designate Christ's human knowledge as simply a "filial vision," this approach sees the vision as properly Trinitarian in scope.⁶⁵ This view manages to take the nescience passages of Scripture seriously without sacrificing what the hypostatic union implies by maintaining that Jesus possessed in exemplary fashion the dimension of trust that pertains to the virtue of faith, the certainty of his mission by virtue of his vision, the power to "deposit" or "lay up" in the Father both the *fruitio beata* in his passion and until the resurrection certain items of knowledge not pertinent to his mission at present (e.g., the time of the eschaton).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, *From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 5–6. I owe this reference to Bruce D. Marshall (see his "Jesus' Human Knowledge," min. 4), which he thinks operates as the hermeneutical key that pervades Benedict's entire "trilogy."

⁶⁵ Speyr appropriates knowing God to the Father as origin, loving God to the Son as beloved, and enjoying that knowledge and love to the Spirit as fruition, understanding the doctrine of appropriation; see, e.g., *John*, vol. 3, *The Farewell Discourses: Meditations on John 13–17*, trans. E. A. Nelson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 214.

⁶⁶ The nescience passages would, at least, suggest that despite Jesus's vision of the Father, his earthly mind was not cognizant of all that would naturally be known of created things by the mind that is given understanding of the divine essence via the *lumen gloriae* (i.e., the blessed in heaven). Hence, Balthasar speaks a number of times of Christ "laying up" with the Father knowledge that is unnecessary to his mission (see *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3, *The Dramatis*

Evaluating Balthasar on Christ's *Visio Beata* (in the Passion)

John Saward's brief critical appraisal of Balthasar's treatment of Christ's experience of godforsakenness is the most persuasive argument in favor of the Thomistic view that Christ enjoyed his vision of the Father in the intellective appetite (i.e., human spiritual faculties) while suffering a kind of *visio mortis* in the concupiscent and irascible appetites (i.e., animal faculties). He utilizes John Paul the Great's words concerning the co-existence of his "clear vision of God and the certainty of his union with the Father" and "the tragic experience of the most complete desolation": "In the sphere of feelings and affection this sense of the absence and abandonment by God was the most acute pain for the soul of Jesus, who drew his strength and joy from union with the Father. This pain rendered more intense all the other sufferings. That lack of interior consolation was his greatest agony."⁶⁷ While John Paul's adherence to the Scholastic tradition may be assumed, his words might also be interpreted in line with the theory he proposed as a possibility. But Saward concludes: "It is at least arguable that the greatest possible spiritual suffering is not so much the Godforsakenness of One who *hitherto* has enjoyed the vision of the Father but rather the feeling of God's absence in a soul that still, at some level, rests in his presence. . . . A hint of what this coincidence of profound peace and acute anguish might mean is to be found in the great mystics."⁶⁸ Ordinarily in tune with Balthasar, Saward here interprets him to be at odds with the tradition without good reason.⁶⁹ While I tend to agree with Saward's assertion that

Personae: The Person in Christ [hereafter, *TD* III], trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993], 192 [German: *Theodramatik*, vol. II/2, *Die Personen des Spiels: die Personen in Christus* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1978), 176]), even going so far as to say: "since all is obedience, he *is* moving toward the Father through this utter estrangement, but for the present he must not be allowed to know this" (*Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 4, *The Action* [hereafter, *TD* IV], trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994], 356 [German: *Theodramatik*, vol. III, *Die Handlung* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1980), 332]). Concerning his mission-consciousness, see also *TD* III, 166 [German II/2:152].

⁶⁷ See John Paul's General Audience of November 30, 1988, available in *Jesus, Son and Savior* [Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1996], 472), cited from the *L'Osservatore Romano* edition in John Saward, *Mysteries of March: Hans Urs Von Balthasar on the Incarnation and Easter* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 56.

⁶⁸ Saward, *Mysteries of March*, 58 (emphasis original).

⁶⁹ Saward quotes Balthasar's *Theo-Logic* (see *Mysteries of March*, 166n49), where he asserts that the Thomistic position "seems quite incredible and cannot be salvaged by the arguments adduced" (*Theo-Logic*, vol. 2, *Truth of God* [hereafter, *TL* II], trans. Adrian J. Walker [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004], 287 [German:

“[Balthasar] seems to me to distinguish insufficiently between the *feeling* of abandonment and its *reality*,” again admirably citing a catechetical address from Pope John Paul II, I do not think it necessarily follows that Balthasar’s view of Christ’s passion “runs counter to the Scholastic view that from his conception, even during his Passion, Jesus as man was *simul viator et comprehensor* . . . enjoying the beatific vision of his Father, and yet feeling a sorrow surpassing all the suffering endured or endurable by men in this present life.”⁷⁰

In fact, Saward himself notes in passing that in place of the Scholastic depiction of Christ’s dereliction, “[Balthasar] would prefer to develop Adrienne’s intuitions about Christ having vision as ‘beholder’ and faith as ‘pilgrim,’” a thesis he notes is “*apparently* at odds with the traditional view” that Christ possessed the beatific vision during his earthly life. But he adds: “Balthasar and Adrienne try to get beyond the opposition of faith to sight. The Son as man does not like us ‘walk by faith,’ but he does have on earth ‘the form of vision most closely comparable to our faith’; (faith, in any case, as St. Thomas Aquinas perceived, is itself a kind of seeing, has its own light).”⁷¹ He does not elaborate on this latter point, which is precisely where the key to dissolving the tension lies, not in maintaining that faith and knowledge may co-exist per se, but in exploring one’s understanding of what constitutes the *visio beata* and its distinction from the concomitant *fruitio beata*. In other words, Saward and John Paul do not envision the possibility that Christ’s experience of abandonment is “all-consuming, enveloping and penetrating the whole of Our Lord’s soul,”⁷² excluding the perfect beatitude ordinarily consequent to perfect knowledge of God, but not the intellectual solace of knowing by virtue of infused grace that God has not in fact abandoned him and enjoying the profound (intellective) peace that accompanies all mystical participation in the “dark night.”⁷³

Not only does Balthasar not affirm outright that Christ’s soul suffered

Theologik, vol. II, *Wahrheit Gottes* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1985), 261]), but he is simply dismissing contemporary Thomistic articulations particularly, not necessarily the notion that Christ in some sense possessed full vision of the Father.

⁷⁰ Saward, *Mysteries of March*, 55–56 (emphasis original).

⁷¹ Saward, *Mysteries of March*, 57 (emphasis added).

⁷² Saward, *Mysteries of March*, 55. Saward continues this sentence characterizing Balthasar’s understanding of such with the clause, “excluding, *at any level*, joy or beatitude,” which is precisely what I dispute here by way of distinction and qualification.

⁷³ Hence, the charity that engulfs Christ’s soul exemplified in eminent fashion the knowledge and consolation that is intrinsic to the infused virtues of faith and hope, enjoyed by everyone who suffers in union with the love of God.

the pains of Sheol while his body lay in the tomb, but also nowhere does he state that the *visio mortis* involves utter loss of the *visio immediata Dei*.⁷⁴ In fact, in a footnote to Christ's descent as a "state of perdition" (not a place), Balthasar says: "Of course, this does not mean approval of Calvin's doctrine, for the reason that the continuous *visio immediata Dei in anima Christi* makes his experience of hell wholly incommensurate with any other, gives it an 'exemplary', soteriological and trinitarian significance."⁷⁵ In other words, the immediate vision of God in Christ (whether it be located in his human consciousness at all times or not) is precisely what permits him to suffer so incomparably with the sinners for whom he descends into the deepest regions of the earth. He experienced complete abandonment without actually losing the grace/charity connatural to his beatified soul, even if his psychological awareness of his own blessed state of grace was temporarily suspended in becoming the object of the infinity of his Father's righteous anger.⁷⁶ In this way, it was possible for Christ to suffer the worst hell possible, experiencing in his soul at the culminating point of his passion (i.e., death) what it means to "become accursed for us" (Gal 3:13), the solitary object of the Father's wrath.

⁷⁴ Lois M. Miles recounts a double aspect of this "vision" in the symbolic language of Speyr's competing metaphors: "Speyr does not attempt to unify the ideas of shapes or husks of sin within what she sees as an amorphous mass of melted and unrecognizable sin. These are two different aspects of sin in hell. There is the sin without the redeemed soul on which the Son gazes, the sin which he has discarded in hell. There is also the sin that the unredeemed sinner confronts and recognizes that this is who he is: this is his eternal state since he refused to repent. The Son contemplates sin in hell as an amorphous mass of objective sin, stripped away from any relationship to people as if it were sin without containers . . . These sins have a sensible reality to which the sinner has given something of his own form. One could recognize the sinner from the sin. Every person in hell must confront their own sin and recognize that this is now what they are. Because the Son has gathered together every sin of every sinner in the world, he confronts each sin as his own. This great amorphous mass of sin appears to von Speyr as if it were a river in hades that seems to include all 'the sediment of the world, the sin, so heavy, that it wholly sinks until the bottom of everything'" ("Obedience of a Corpse: the Key to the Holy Saturday Writings of Adrienne von Speyr" [PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 2013], 180–81).

⁷⁵ Balthasar, *Explorations*, vol. 1, *The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A. V. Littledale and Alexandre Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 264n20 [German: *Verbum Caro: Skizzen zur theologie*, vol. 1 (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1960), 285n6].

⁷⁶ "One cannot describe this Night of the Lord simply as an antithesis to Grace, because it is also Grace; it cannot be described as the negation of an abundance" (Speyr, *Das Wort und die Mystik*, vol. 1, *Subjektive Mystik* [Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1970], 109 [trans. Miles, "Obedience of a Corpse," 109]).

However, one might argue that his position later evolved into one in which the hermeneutic of *kenosis* takes absolute priority. In the third volume of his *Theo-Drama* (volume II/2 in the German edition), for instance, Balthasar seems to feel compelled to deny the *visio immediata* in order to make sense of Christ's mission of obedience in his earthly life, having assumed the *fomes peccati*:

We can say that Jesus is aware of an element of the divine in his innermost, indivisible self-consciousness; it is intuitive insofar as it is inseparable from the intuition of his mission-consciousness, but it is defined and limited by this same mission-consciousness. It is of this, and of this alone, that he has a *visio immediata*, and we have no reason to suggest this *visio* of the divine is supplemented by another, as it were, purely theoretical content, over and above his mission. Of course, the particular shape of the mission (which draws its universality from its identity with the self-consciousness of *this particular* "I") can contain a wealth of content, successively revealed, but its source and measure remain the mission itself. . . . *Since Jesus does not see the Father in a 'visio beatifica'* but is presented with the Father's commission by the Holy Spirit, that is, his awareness of his mission is only indirect, it is possible for him to be tempted.⁷⁷

Balthasar rightly asserts that it is not *necessary* to conclude from the hypostatic union to a perfect vision of God's essence in Christ's human mind, which is traditionally thought to involve knowledge of all things as caused by God. But he seems to assume this means Christ did not actually possess perfect knowledge of the divine essence, which had to be suspended for the sake of the mission of obedience in solidarity with sinful mankind.

Thus, David Stuart Yeago challenges the idea that Balthasar assumes the traditional position on Christ's possession of the beatific vision, arguing that for him Christ's self-consciousness is simply his mission-consciousness, which is simply not enough. On the basis of some texts from the third volume of the *Theo-Drama*, Yeago states:

⁷⁷ Balthasar, *TD* III, 166, 200 [German II/2:152, 183] (emphasis added). He further explains his position on 172–73 [German II/2:158]. In the last sentence, there is a mistranslation of *unmittelbar* as "indirect," when it should read "immediate" (or "direct"), as Randall Rosenberg notes ("Christ's Human Knowledge: a Conversation with Lonergan and Balthasar," *Theological Studies* 71 [2010]: 817–45, at 828n55).

Thus for von Balthasar Jesus' knowledge that he is the Son of God is simply identical with his knowledge of his mission: to know oneself as primordially the bearer of such a mission—a mission of universal scope and unsurpassable significance—is to know oneself a divine, even if one does not and could not form for oneself the sentence, "I am divine." And to know oneself to be related to the Father by this commission is to know oneself as the unique Son of the Father, even if one has no "theoretical" awareness of the metaphysical implications of this relationship. On this same basis, von Balthasar simply denies the traditional position (recently affirmed in a strong form by Karl Rahner) that this self-knowledge implies the possession by Jesus of the visio immediata of the divine nature in his earthly career. Jesus' knowledge of himself as Son and of God as his Father is contained within his knowledge of his task, mediated to him by the Holy Spirit, and this mode of consciousness of his identity "excludes" the beatific vision. As von Balthasar points out, "mission essentially presses forward" towards its fulfillment, and therefore consciousness of mission is not compatible with the beatific vision. The "contemplative moments" within the mission "mean no interruption in the life of mission, but rather the ever-new enabling of perseverance in it."⁷⁸

He adds the following note:

Balthasar adds in parentheses "zumindest zeitweise" which, whether zeitweise is to be taken as "sometimes" or "for a time," seems to leave open the possibility that Jesus could have experienced the beatific vision as one experience within his life, though not as an abiding constituent of his life. The analogy to Christian mystical experience invoked on p. 180 may be the background to this; von Balthasar may have in mind episodes in the Gospels such as the Transfiguration and Jesus' ecstatic rejoicing in the Spirit (Lk 10:21-24)."⁷⁹

Thus, he thinks that, according to Balthasar's reasoning, not only does Christ's consciousness of his divine mission not entail perfect vision of the Godhead, but it is actually befitting of his *kenosis* that he not possess the beatific vision.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ David Stuart Yeago, "The Drama of Nature and Grace: A Study in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1992), 149–51.

⁷⁹ Yeago, "Drama of Nature and Grace," 151n59.

⁸⁰ Yeago also notes that, while Balthasar "borrowed from Rahner several import-

Still, in volume IV, Balthasar is clearly struggling with how best to do justice to Christ's experience of abandonment, suggesting that Thomas's insistence upon Christ's beatific vision hinders his ability to develop further conclusions regarding the immensity of Christ's suffering:

When Thomas comes to speak of Christ's sufferings—which, in contrast to Anselm, he does regard as having a value as *satisfactio* (49, 1-5)—his portrayal is strangely flat, almost moralizing in tone, in spite of all the superlatives he employs. He goes through the Passion narratives (46, 5) and gives why Christ has endured “all human sufferings” (if not *secundum species*, then *secundum genus*); he suggests why his pains were greater than any that can be experienced in this life (explicitly excluding hell: 46, 6, cf. obj. 3); but all the time he is careful to insist that, during the Passion, Christ could not lose the blessed vision of God: “God was never a cause of grief to his soul”: 46, 7. . . . Finally, it is strange that Thomas, who had given a thorough account of the sufferings of Christ's soul, should later prefer to describe the Passion as a bodily event in a way that almost recalls Athanasius. There is no emphasis whatsoever on Christ's abandonment by God as the center of the Passion.⁸¹

This, despite the fact that Thomas, he says, holds that Jesus “possessed *similitudinem peccati in carne*” and mentions Christ's abandonment “once, in order to show that the Father did not hinder the Son from suffering.”⁸²

While the third volume of his *Theo-Drama* gets the most attention on this score, there are a number of other places in the “great trilogy” (*Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-Logic*) where Balthasar grapples with the problem of Christ's “immediate vision of God.”⁸³ Hence, as Matthew

ant conceptual moves, especially the notion that not-knowing can under some circumstances be a perfection of human agency . . . and the notion of an implicit self-knowledge that gradually becomes explicit in and through a personal history,” Rahner presents Jesus's *visio immediata* of God “as a direct consequence of the hypostatic union,” rather than arguing from fittingness (*convenientia*) (“Drama of Nature and Grace,” 150n58).

⁸¹ TD IV, 263–64 [German III:243–44].

⁸² TD IV, 263 and 264n12.

⁸³ In the seventh volume of the *Glory of the Lord* (original German published in 1969), Balthasar in passing merely allows for the possibility that Christ need not possess the *visio beatifica*, not asserting its absence (as Lyra Pitstick claims in her *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007], 166) or actually treating the question: “The deepest experience of abandonment by God, which is to be

Levering points out: "It is worth noting that volume V was published five years after volume III. In the later volume, Balthasar is taking the opportunity to clarify some of the positions adopted in the earlier volume, and he goes over much of the same terrain again in volume II of the *Theologik*."⁸⁴ Nonetheless, it all occurs in the context of Christ's "mission-consciousness," which is fulfilled in absolute obedience to the Father's will that he suffer the cursedness of sin itself and conquer it in resurrection.

In the final volume of the *Theo-Drama* (*Das Endspiel*), he seems to have obtained greater clarity on the matter, without of course treating it with Scholastic precision. He wants to deny Christ's human (conscious) mind full access to the beatific vision that is connatural to him by virtue of his union with the Father *during the Passion*.⁸⁵ Thus, relying on volume V of the *Theo-Drama* (pp. 123–25), Matthew Levering concludes:

Balthasar's insistence that Jesus must enjoy the immediate vision of the Father is likewise qualified. He emphasizes that "in the Lord's Passion his sight is veiled, whereas his obedience remains intact." This veiling holds for Jesus' entire life, if not to the same degree as the ultimate not-knowing Jesus experiences on the Cross: his mission "presupposes (right from the Incarnation) a certain veiling of his sight of the Father: he must leave it in abeyance, refrain from using it; this is possible because of the distance between Father and Son in the Trinity."⁸⁶

vicariously real in the Passion, presupposes an equally deep experience of being united to God and of life derived from the Father—an experience that the Son must have had, not only in Heaven, but also as a man, even if this does not mean that his spirit must already enjoy a perpetual *visio beatifica*. Only one who has known the genuine intimacy of love, can be genuinely abandoned (not merely lonely)" (Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 7, *Theology: The New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil, ed. John Riches [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989], 216 [German: *Herrlichkeit: Eine Theologische Ästhetik*, vol. III/2: *Theologie: Neuzeit* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1969), 200]).

⁸⁴ Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 128n88.

⁸⁵ See *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 5, *The Final Act* [hereafter, *TD V*], trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), 123–24 [German: *Theodramatik*, vol. IV, *Das Endspiel* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1983), 107–8]. He also there attributes a sort of faith to Christ's obedience, which will be discussed shortly.

⁸⁶ Matthew Levering, "Balthasar on Christ's Consciousness on the Cross," *The Thomist* 65, no. 4 (2001): 567–81, at 577; see also Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 128. Hence, it is also true that, for Balthasar, "the Son's obedience on the Cross, in

This kind of approach to Christ's knowledge is similar to that of Jacques Maritain in his last book, *De la grace et de l'humanité de Jesus*.⁸⁷ Distinguishing between the supra-conscious and infra-conscious dimensions of the human mind, discovered by modern psychology, Maritain holds that Christ's supra-conscious enjoys perfect knowledge of God, while His infra-conscious mind grows in "wisdom and grace" (Luke 2: 52).⁸⁸

Independently concurring with Balthasar on the profundity of Christ's intellectual suffering, he goes so far as to say:

At the moment of the Agony and of the Passion He can no longer enter there [his nest of refuge in the Father], He is barred from it by uncrossable barriers, this is why He feels himself abandoned. That has been the supreme exemplar of the night of the spirit of the mystics, the absolutely complete night. The whole world of the Vision and of the divinized supraconscious was there, but He no longer experienced it at all through His infused contemplation. And likewise the radiance and the influx of this world on the entire soul were more powerful than ever, but were no longer seized at all by the consciousness, nor experienced. Jesus was more than ever

order to bear sin fully, must be characterized by two elements: absolute faithfulness, and absolute lack of grounding in knowledge. Jesus only moves to the pinnacle of obedience (the pinnacle of union with the Father's will) by simultaneously entering the abyss of not-knowing. The highest obedience—the highest charity—is that which obeys without conscious knowledge or hope" (*Scripture and Metaphysics*, 131). I take "lack of grounding in knowledge" to indicate Balthasar's notion of "laying up" or "depositing" with the Father the knowledge not necessary for his mission at present. This is a very Ignatian understanding of obedience, as Miles elucidates throughout "Obedience of a Corpse."

⁸⁷ For interesting reflections on the distinct planes of consciousness in Christ, see Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 48–61 [originally *De la grace et de l'humanité de Jesus* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 50–63].

⁸⁸ See Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, especially 49, 55–58. Andrew V. Rosato recently contested Maritain's thesis that Christ's humanity grows in grace, defending Aquinas's position against Maritain's attempts to revise it (see "Aquinas and Maritain on Whether Christ's Habitual Grace Could Increase," *Nova et Vetera* [English] 15, no. 2 [2017]: 527–46). Essentially, the debate is about whether Christ's soul grew in habitual grace or simply *auxiliae*. Rosato does not get at the heart of the issue, which is the reality that habits are perfected through acts enabled by particular graces (*auxiliae*) and that there must not be anything sinful in Christ's soul for the *habitus* of grace and charity to grow in this manner. Thus, it is not adequate to speak only of a growth in the *manifestations* of Christ's habitual grace, as if habitual grace is not perfected through particular works, operative grace brought to fruition by cooperative graces.

united with the Father, but in the terror and the sweat of blood, and in the experience of dereliction.⁸⁹

Yet, Maritain's treatment of Christ's consciousness also differs from Balthasar's, invoking a "partition" in Christ's soul, something Balthasar will oppose.⁹⁰ In an attempt to try to reconcile Christ's enduring vision of the Father with his suffering the loss of experiencing it, Maritain says concerning the passion:

In one sense—in the sense that He had the Vision of the divine essence—He was indeed blessed (III, 9, 2 ad 2), and even during His Passion (46, 8), in that which St. Thomas calls the higher part of the soul and which we call the divinized supraconscious of the latter. But, St. Thomas teaches, there was no *derivation* or *redundantia*, there was no repercussion of the higher part on the lower part, this is why the Beatific Vision has not at all prevented the suffering of Christ, in His Passion, from being greater than all the sufferings (46, 6)—*Dum Christus erat viator, non fiebat redundantia gloriae a superiori parte (animae) in inferiorem, ne ab anima in corpus* (46, 8). In this assertion of St. Thomas one finds an indication, quite inchoative no doubt and merely sketched, but valuable, of the notion of "partition," in the soul of Christ, between the world of the Beatific Vision and that of the conscious faculties, which I introduce here, and to which I attach a particular importance.⁹¹

Meanwhile, in the second volume of the *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar very briefly criticizes similar Thomistic treatments of the issue:

⁸⁹ Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 61 [F 64]. Hence, Maritain may have accepted a Balthasarian view of the descent. See also Maritain, "Beginning with a Reverie," in *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*, vol. 20, *Untrammelled Approaches*, trans. Bernard Doering (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 3–26, at 11n13; Maritain, *Approaches sans Entraves* (Paris: Librairie Arthem Fayard, 1973), 15n12. But he, like Ratzinger, does not project Christ's sufferings into the Trinitarian processions.

⁹⁰ Although Maritain speaks of "partition" in Christ's consciousness between "the supra-conscious of the spirit divinized by the beatific vision" (*On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 55; cf. 50), which takes the place in Christ of man's "pre-conscious of the spirit" (49n2; cf. 56, 58), and the "infra-conscious" plane of experimental/acquired knowledge (that is, his ordinary human consciousness), Maritain strives to maintain Christ's psychological unity (see especially 68, 77), particularly by reflecting on the influence of the former upon the latter (see 101–8).

⁹¹ Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity*, 60n15.

One can only regret here that Johannes Stohr . . . rehashes the old Thomistic theses on this point, relying above all on the incorrigible school Thomist B. de Margerie, S.J. The claim that on the Cross Jesus experiences the beatific vision in the “apex of the soul,” whereas the “lower parts of his soul” experience Godforsakenness, is especially incredible today and cannot be rescued with the arguments these authors have advanced.⁹²

Notice, however, that this criticism does not apply to what Thomas himself says:

It is evident that Christ’s whole soul suffered. . . . Christ’s “higher reason” did not suffer thereby *on the part of its object*, which is God, who was the cause, not of grief, but rather of delight and joy, to the soul of Christ. Nevertheless, all the powers of Christ’s soul did suffer according as any faculty is said to be affected *as regarded its subject*, because all the faculties of Christ’s soul were rooted in its *essence, to which suffering extended* while the body, whose act it is, suffered.⁹³

More significantly, this parenthetical criticism appears in a footnote to the following main text:

Von Speyr maintains almost always that on earth the Son possessed

⁹² Balthasar, *TL* II, 28n9 [German II:261n9]. The same applies to M.-J. Nicolas, whom Jacques Servais quotes in support of his very brief argument that Balthasar maintained the traditional position on Christ’s beatific knowledge and merely intended to reject Thomas’s doctrine of *fruitio beata* in the experience of Calvary: “It is one thing to say that the vision of the divine essence remained during the most profound throes of the Cross; it is something else to say that it was entirely beatific. It did not in fact affect the lower powers that Jesus fully abandoned to their natural objects and to all the causes of suffering. But . . . Saint Thomas clarifies that the soul itself, being by its essence the form of the body, was the subject of the Passion while it was also the subject of beatitude. It is the same being that at once suffers and enjoys” (Nicolas, *Somme theologique*, vol. 4 [Paris, 1986], 343; quoted in Servais, *To the Heart of the Mystery of Redemption*, trans. Anne Englund Nash [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010], 102–21 [“Postscript”], at 103n2). His main contention is that Balthasar does not go so far as to oppose the condemnation of the following proposition by the Holy Office in June 5, 1918: “It is not certain that there was in the soul of Christ, while he was living among men, the knowledge possessed by the blessed or those who have the beatific vision” (DS, no. 3645).

⁹³ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 7 (emphasis added by Thomas Joseph White in “Jesus’ Cry on the Cross,” *Nova et Vetera* [English] 5, no. 3 [2007]: 555–82, at 575n54).

the vision of the Father. It is rare that she speaks of Christ's faith. But we also find her saying that Jesus' obedience existed despite this vision or that as *comprehensor* [comprehender] he had vision and as *viator* [wayfarer] faith or that vision could veil itself into obedience.⁹⁴

After noting that Adrienne von Speyr attributes the vision of the Father to Christ as *comprehensor* and faith to Christ as *viator* exercising obedience to the Father, Balthasar argues that because "in his human nature he must experience how man comes to terms with God," "we can speak of a depositing, a dimming, a non-use of his divine vision; his prayer must spring from his having become man."⁹⁵ Applying this kind of reasoning to the contentious topic of Christ's hellish suffering, Balthasar speaks of an "absolute overtaxing of knowledge" involved in the descent, wherein, "because he is dead, he cannot know [his victory, the sin separated from man on the Cross] as what he has made it to be. He can only 'take cognizance' of it as the fearsome agglomeration of all sins that no longer has the slightest connection with the Father who is the good Creator."⁹⁶

Somewhat similar to Maritain's distinction between supra-consciousness or pre-consciousness and infra-consciousness (or simply, consciousness) is Lonergan's distinction between *conscientia-experientia* and *conscientia-perceptio*. The former is the "unstructured awareness of oneself and one's acts" or a "certain presence of oneself to oneself," whereas the latter is the reflexive knowledge of oneself as an object in a world of objects.⁹⁷ This distinction between one's original consciousness of oneself (and one's acts) and one's conceptualization of this experience, like Maritain's distinction between the pre-conscious mind and the conscious mind, does not directly translate into the distinction between Christ's *visio immediata* (or "divinized supra-conscious of the spirit") and his acquired or experimental knowledge (i.e., ordinary human object-consciousness). Nonetheless, as Aaron Pidel, S.J., recounts:

Applying *conscientia-experientia* to the case of Christ's human knowledge turns out to have several advantages. First and foremost, it eliminates a tendency to posit an exaggerated psychological

⁹⁴ Balthasar, *TL* II, 286–287 [German II:261]. Speyr even says, "[Mary] knows somehow about his vision of the Father, about his beatific vision of the Father" (*Subjektive Mystik*, 86, trans. Sutton, *Heaven Opens*, Kindle loc. 1778).

⁹⁵ *TL* II, 288 [German II:262–63].

⁹⁶ *TL* II, 348 [German II:317–18].

⁹⁷ See Lonergan, *Ontological and Psychological Constitution*, 165 and 187.

dichotomy in Christ. If the “I” belongs to person and consciousness belongs to nature, then there is in Christ one divine “I” experiencing himself *ex parte subiecti* through both divine and human consciousness. If the Word were present to Christ’s human consciousness only *ex parte obiecti*, on the other hand, this would introduce a sort of unbridgeable chasm between the humanity and divinity of Christ. The human nature of Christ, conceived in this case almost as an autonomous “I,” would gaze at Word from an infinite distance.⁹⁸

In other words, Christ’s *visio immediata*, unlike in the case of every other blessed soul, exists in the form of self-consciousness. Hence, for Lonergan, Christ’s immediate knowledge of the divine essence is implied in Christ’s awareness (or understanding) of his own identity.

Pidel also alludes to the fact that Balthasar’s difficulties with conceptualizing the doctrine concerning Christ’s beatific vision in life may derive from his understanding of what precisely constitutes the *visio beata*:

“Mission-consciousness” is sufficient to ground Christ’s “supra-historical radiance.” Here Balthasar parts company with Lonergan, who sees *scientia beata* as the condition for the possibility of revelation. . . . This ostensible disagreement owes much to Balthasar’s hyper-literal understanding of the “beatific vision.” What Balthasar actually affirms of Christ comes close to what Lonergan affirms in Christ’s “ineffable knowledge.” Despite his reservations about the beatific vision, Balthasar depicts Christ, in substance, as a qualitatively unique *comprehensor*. He acknowledges that the theological tradition that would ascribe to Christ “everything knowable to man” is “long,” “serious,” and “solidly based on a biblical theme.”⁹⁹

While diverging from Pius XII’s characterization of Christ’s *visio* in *Mystici Corporis*,¹⁰⁰ Balthasar’s main qualm seems to be the necessity of denying to Christ knowledge of certain contingent objects that would ordinarily pertain to the beatific vision, as perfect understanding of the *causa prima* entails perfect understanding of all the effects pre-existent therein. But there is nothing to prevent God from possibly withholding particular

⁹⁸ Aaron Pidel, S.J., “The Consciousness and Human Knowledge of Christ according to Lonergan and Balthasar,” *Lumen et Vita* 1, no. 1 (June 2011): 1–25, at 6.

⁹⁹ Pidel, “Consciousness and Human Knowledge,” 15–16. He relies here on *TD III* alone.

¹⁰⁰ DS, no. 3812.

items of knowledge (in addition to the *possibilia* commonly thought to be inaccessible to creatures) from one who possesses the immediate vision of God, as Lonergan seems to admit.¹⁰¹

Thus, understanding Christ's vision in terms of "mission-consciousness," whereby Jesus knows whatever the Father chooses to reveal to him in the moment, is Balthasar's way of avoiding both a naïve conception of it as well as an overly abstract understanding of it. The former would paint a "pious picture" of "the little Child playing with pieces of wood in the form of a cross," that is, of Jesus as an infant knowing the details of his future.¹⁰² The latter creates a division between the "upper regions" and "lower regions" of Christ's soul, which Balthasar thinks undermines Christ's humanity.¹⁰³ Thus, Pidel is right to characterize the notion of the *visio* rejected by Balthasar as "a sort of discursive omniscience."¹⁰⁴ Whereas Pidel thinks that Balthasar's conception of beatific knowledge in Christ is limited by "the ocular metaphor,"¹⁰⁵ Randall Rosenberg notes

¹⁰¹ This is implied, for instance, in Lonergan's definition of Christ's beatific knowledge: "to know the triune God through the divine essence and, *in proportion to the perfection of this knowledge*, to know all other things in God as secondary objects" (see *Ontological and Psychological Constitution*, 206–7, referencing *ST* I, q. 12, and III, q. 10). Charles Heffling, likewise, notes that for Lonergan Christ's *scientia ineffabilis* is stripped of anything "empirically residual" ("Lonergan on Christ's [Self-]Knowledge," *Lonergan Workshop* 20 [2008]: 127–64, at 152). Hence, Pidel asserts, based on Lonergan's distinction between effable and ineffable knowledge in Christ, that "Christ does not, therefore, 'see' a detailed trajectory of his life," as "both Christ's immediate knowledge of the Trinity and his knowledge mediated 'in the Word' are beyond conceptualization and verbalization" (10–11). But this kind of approach would have to take into account the tradition of Christ's infused knowledge as the means by which the ineffable is rendered effable in some sense.

¹⁰² *TD* III, 173 [German II/2:158]. Thus, in the same place, he criticizes Aquinas for teaching that Jesus could only learn from things, not persons, as the latter would be unbecfitting to his dignity (see *ST* III, q. 12, a. 3).

¹⁰³ *TD* III, 196 [German II/2:180].

¹⁰⁴ Pidel, "Consciousness and Human Knowledge," 19.

¹⁰⁵ Pidel, "Consciousness and Human Knowledge," 18. I think, rather, that Balthasar's misgivings revolve around the question of the contingency of "secondary objects," perhaps unbeknownst to him. Miles (as will be seen later) discerns in Balthasar the Scotistic view that the "vision" (i.e., supernatural beatitude) is constituted by perfect love, rather than perfect understanding. Miles notes that, for Speyr: "[In] the surrender of the consolation of seeing with spiritual eyes such as in the beatific vision, . . . the 'optical' loss can be construed as epistemological if one equates seeing with knowing and understanding with enlightenment. This distinction makes no difference in von Speyr's thought, however, since she also maintains that the Son surrenders his understanding to the Father in *Suscipere Bereitshaft*" ("Obedience of a Corpse," 165).

that Balthasar's reticence to use the terminology of *visio* is due precisely to his judgment that "describing God's entrusting of himself to us as a *visio Dei* is always an inadequate and one-sided portrayal of this open encounter, since God can never be an object totally available to our sight."¹⁰⁶ He adds with Balthasar: "Only by conceiving this reality as a trinitarian *event* rather than as 'the abstract contemplation of essence' can we hold together the 'interplay of vision and nonvision.'"¹⁰⁷ Of course, all of this comes to a head in the question of Christ's consciousness in his passion and death, where his experience of abandonment seems to exclude the possibility of an enduring beatific bliss.

Thus, it is not enough to say that "the content of his *visio immediata* is his mission," as does Rosenberg,¹⁰⁸ because comprehension of his mission implies complete understanding of the divine essence, since his *missio* and *processio* are identical, as Balthasar frequently asserts,¹⁰⁹ even if Christ kenotically suspends access to everything that would ordinarily be included in the *visio immediata Dei*. Moreover, asserting along with Lyra Pitstick a distinction in Balthasar between *visio beatifica* and *visio immediata*, Rosenberg states: "Balthasar often denies Jesus the *beatific vision*, but grants him an *immediate vision*."¹¹⁰ I maintain that this is not so much a technical distinction in Balthasar as it is a preference for different terminology, given that, in his view, Christ's suffering in the passion-descent must exclude beatific joy. Finally, Rosenberg notes that, in volume III of the *Theo-Drama*, Balthasar attributes faith as defined in Hebrews 11:1 to Christ in his economic assumption of ignorance concerning the details of his own future, contrary to what the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will later teach in opposition to the work of Jon Sobrino, S.J., namely, that faith even in an exemplary form cannot be attributed to Christ's human soul.¹¹¹ Therefore, to complete the present Balthasarian-Speyrian

¹⁰⁶ *TD V*, 395–96, cited in Rosenberg, "Christ's Human Knowledge," 829. Here there is convergence with Lonergan, but his remedy to the inadequacy is more Speyrian than Thomistic. The predominant influence of the Eastern Fathers on Balthasar's conception of heaven is palpable in *TD V*, 395–407 [German IV:361–73].

¹⁰⁷ Rosenberg, "Christ's Human Knowledge," 829, quoting *TD V*, 407.

¹⁰⁸ Rosenberg, "Christ's Human Knowledge," 828.

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g.: *TD V*, 80–81, 124 [German IV:70–71, 108]; *TD III*, 154, 173, 201 [German II/2142, 158, 184].

¹¹⁰ Rosenberg, "Christ's Human Knowledge," 828.

¹¹¹ See: *TD III*, 171 [German II/2:157]; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the Works of Father Jon Sobrino SJ* (1991–1992), §8, available at the Vatican Website, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20061126_notification-sobrino_en.html; Rosenberg, "Christ's Human Knowledge," 826.

consideration of the nature of Christ's enduring *visio*, it is necessary to examine an earlier explicit treatment of faith in Christ.

Balthasar and Speyr on Faith and Vision in Christ

One might be tempted to think that Balthasar did not accept the doctrine of Christ's *visio immediata* because he clearly held that Christ possessed the virtue of faith (albeit, in an exemplary manner), but this is to misunderstand in which sense he attributes faith to Jesus. In a relatively early essay entitled "Fides Christi: An Essay on the Consciousness of Christ," he tackles the issue.¹¹² Scripture scholars will immediately think here of the unending debate about the meaning of πιστις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (see Gal 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9; Rom 3:22, 26).¹¹³ Balthasar does not try to resolve the technical question concerning whether the genitive in question ("the faith of Christ Jesus") is objective or subjective, but he is happy to conclude that "it is a third term towering over both."¹¹⁴ This conclusion reflects his understanding of how faith may be ascribed to Christ (during both his earthly life and heavenly glory).

His fundamental argument is that Jesus possessed (and possesses) faith as it is conceived in the Old Testament, not as it is conceived in the New. The former functions in a provisional manner, as Old Covenant gives way to New, but it essentially signifies God's own fidelity to His people. Thus, he opens his essay with the following argument:

If it is true that the Bible as a whole increasingly uses the term *faith* (in growing measure up to the prophets, and especially Isaiah) as the adequate expression for the way the chosen people related to God; and thus, if within this framework, this term also truly reflects how the individual members of the people of God related to their God of the Covenant; if indeed the Biblical idea of faith includes even more so *God's* faithfulness toward his people and assumes that this fidelity is a presupposition and prototype to be imitated (recall that the Hebraic term encompasses more shades of meaning than the Greek); then, speaking a priori, it cannot be otherwise in the case of Jesus.¹¹⁵

¹¹² See Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 2, *Spouse of the Word*, trans. A. V. Littledale and Alexander Dru. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 43–79.

¹¹³ These are the passages Balthasar cites in *Explorations*, 2:57n15.

¹¹⁴ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:57.

¹¹⁵ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:43.

He later adds, in response to Aquinas's objections to the notion that Christ could possess faith on the basis of Christ's possession of the beatific vision:¹¹⁶

Now if we proceed only from the concept of faith based on the specific differences between the meaning of faith in the New Testament in its relation to the Old, then this conclusion is unavoidable. But if we keep in mind that the New Testament concept *completes* and *perfects* the Old Testament concept, fully displaying its crucial priority, then we will not automatically emphasize the moment of negativity (the nonseeing) and thus the provisionality of the attitude of faith. To do so would obscure the perfection already lurking in the very core of faith itself: faith's definitive nature, which expresses the complete correspondence between God's fidelity and man's fidelity, would be overshadowed.¹¹⁷

He does not, therefore, reject the position of Aquinas, or, for that matter, the position of Augustine and Bonaventure,¹¹⁸ that faith and vision are mutually exclusive, that is, when faith is conceived as provisional (in the New Testament manner). Hence, he also states:

If one simply juxtaposes the Platonic-Aristotelian concept of intuitive or conceptual vision with the New Testament concept of faith, then of course Thomas is absolutely right: one cannot at the same time see *and* believe something. Faith by definition is an assent to something as true, based on what authority says rather than what the evidence of one's own senses attests. However, this answer to the limitations of Greek thought does not mean that the fullness of the act and attitude of faith of the Old Testament have thereby been exhaustively described, particularly in its central dynamism.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ See *ST* III, q. 7, a. 3 (cited on Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:64–65). He also notes without citation concerning the impossibility of faith in Christ: "Not only do the scholastic theologians speak this way, but we find even Augustine already saying this" (65).

¹¹⁷ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:65 (emphasis original).

¹¹⁸ Balthasar, See *Explorations*, 2:69.

¹¹⁹ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:65–66. He also explains: "The man who is perfect before God, Jesus Christ, cannot possibly relate with indifference to this integration of the true attitude of man to God as it took shape in the course of the Old Testament. It is only if we look at the distinctive New Testament meaning in the Greek term *pistis* (which means holding the announced kerygma to be true as well as the

In other words, if faith is conceived simply as a virtue of the intellect, then Christ has no need of it; but if it is conceived in a broader manner, similarly to the sense in which hope can be attributed to Christ's soul,¹²⁰ then it may be ascribed to him. Hence, while "the darkness and enigmatic obscurity in the knowledge that faith provides, which seems to be an essential feature of it," because "the sight of the countenance of God makes the act of faith interiorly impossible,"¹²¹ insofar as it is synonymous with trust or self-surrender, "he [Jesus] is the only one who possesses this attitude in all its fullness and who can impart it to those who have entrusted themselves to him."¹²² Again, "precisely in this dimension of faith as struggle [see Rom 1:17] one is linked with what faith must have been for Jesus himself."¹²³ Thus, he thinks that there is some sense in which the blessed in heaven also possess faith. He cites Matthew of Aquasparta, who, despite agreeing with the scholastic consensus "on the logical ground of a wholly intellectual definition of faith,"¹²⁴ nonetheless introduces a caveat, arguing that because the beatific vision does not "grasp God exhaustively" (as Aquinas teaches as well),¹²⁵ "they therefore come to appreciate God ever more as the One who is ever greater than what they see . . . in this sense it would not be inappropriate to say that the blessed believe something because they do not *know* everything."¹²⁶

Balthasar does not fail to note that he is not in total agreement with Aquinas on the matter when he alludes to his preference for Durandus and Gerson, noting that while the latter "sought to have the *habitus*

individual statements either contained in it or implied by it) that we will of course have to admit that Christ, who is the essential content of this kerygma, has nothing to do with this kind of faith. In this sense he stands over faith" (51).

¹²⁰ "Christ's foreknowledge has not hindered his hope. Hope does not need to be uncertain. On the contrary: uncertainty is the worm in the fruit of hope and stands in contrast to its formal object. Thus infallible hope is the most perfect hope. The saints in heaven, however, hope in the sense of their earthly mission: Peter hopes for the visible Church; Christ, however, hopes for the salvation of the whole world" (Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:67). Aquinas also says hope in some sense can exist in Christ, as Balthasar notes (see 67); see *ST* III, q. 7, a. 4.

¹²¹ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:69.

¹²² Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:54.

¹²³ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:62.

¹²⁴ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:69.

¹²⁵ See Aquinas's distinction between immediate vision of the divine essence and comprehension of it, which God alone possesses in *Summa contra gentiles* III, chs. 51 and 55.

¹²⁶ Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de fide*, q. 6, ad 3, cited in Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:69.

fidei continue on in the *visio* even without the act of faith,” Aquinas “in contrast, felt that this held true only for certain features of faith: its certainty and steadfastness.”¹²⁷ He does not seek to refute the latter, but he adds concerning the former that they returned to the “oldest interpretations” of 1 Corinthians 13:13 in Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Origen, according to Paul Henry’s analysis. Therefore, he concludes: “The love that believes all and hopes all (1 Cor 13:7) will never die out, ‘and so there remain (*nuni de menei*) these three: faith, hope and love.”¹²⁸

Henry Donneaud challenges this account of faith by pointing out that the material and formal objects of both faith and (beatific) vision are the same. Perhaps he is right to question the assertion that the dynamism of abandonment and surrender in the midst of obscurity continues into the blessed afterlife.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, there is a rich tradition of *epektasis* (roughly translated as “upward striving”) in the East, particularly, St. Gregory of Nyssa,¹³⁰ whose influence on Balthasar, alongside St. Gregory of Nazianzus and Origen, is easily discernible throughout his work.¹³¹ Leaving aside the details of this ancient debate, it is also noteworthy that what Balthasar calls Old Testament faith is precisely the notion of faith that Martin Luther advances over the Scholastic theology of the three infused virtues.¹³² In any case, it is evident from what has been said that Balthasar’s qualified attribution of faith to Christ does not stand against the doctrine of Christ’s possession of the beatific vision during his earthly life.¹³³ Hence, in the first

¹²⁷ Balthasar, *Explorations* II, 70. Note that even Durandus and Gerson (and, thus, also Balthasar) here remain in line with *Benedictus Deus*, where Benedict XII declares that “such a vision and enjoyment of the divine essence [in the blessed] do away with the *acts* of faith and hope in these souls, inasmuch as faith and hope are properly theological virtues” (DS, no. 1001 [emphasis added]).

¹²⁸ Balthasar, *Explorations*, 2:70.

¹²⁹ See Henry Donneaud, O.P., “Hans Urs von Balthasar contre saint Thomas d’Aquin sur la foi du Christ,” *Revue thomiste* 97, no. 2 (1997): 335–54, at 353.

¹³⁰ See his *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist, 1978).

¹³¹ The same kind of conception of divine life as “eternal increase” is present also in Adrienne von Speyr (see, e.g., *John*, 3:251).

¹³² For faith as trust or confidence [*Zuversicht*], see Martin Luther, “Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans,” trans. E. Theodore Bachman, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 370–71. Pope Benedict XVI favors Aquinas to Luther in *Spe Salvi*; see Adam G. Cooper, “Hope, A Mode of Faith: Aquinas, Luther and Benedict XVI on Hebrews 11:1,” *Heythrop Journal* 53 (2012): 182–90. I thank Michael Root for the Luther reference.

¹³³ For Speyrian reference to the co-existence of knowledge and faith (super-excellently) in God, see, e.g., Balthasar, *TD* V, 97, 124 [German IV:85, 108].

volume of the trilogy, he affirms the co-existence of the two in Christ:

In christological terms this universal Biblical structure at the very least means that the *visio immediata* which Christ has of the Father (that is, of God) may fluctuate between the mode of manifestness (which befits the Son as his "glory") and the mode of "concealment" (which befits the Servant of Yahweh in the hiddenness of his Passion). . . . A living faith is content to stand before the face of the God who sees, whether or not one sees him oneself. . . . He, proclaiming the Word of the Father, is always coming *from* the vision of the Father, that he always has this vision "at his back," as it were, while he is in the process of accomplishing his mission; and it also means . . . that he is always on this way back to the Father.¹³⁴

Based on this and other texts, in a dissertation on Adrienne von Speyr, Miles opines that Speyr and Balthasar share a view of the beatific vision that is more Scotistic than Thomistic, that is, as primarily a union of love rather than of knowledge, even if Balthasar sometimes also seems to incorporate the Thomistic understanding.¹³⁵ This enables Miles to explain the apparent discrepancy between Balthasar's Speyrian admission that Christ possesses perfect vision of the Father (in the manner willed by the Father, according to the present moment of Christ's missionary purpose) and his reluctance at times to grant that Christ was endowed with the beatific vision during his earthly life. Thus, Miles implies that while Balthasar may deny presence of the beatific vision in Christ's earthly consciousness when

¹³⁴ *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio, S.J., and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 329 (cited in Miles, "Obedience of a Corpse," 121). Speyr also says about Christ's consciousness, particularly during his passion: "The Lord comes out of the eternity of the Father, bringing his entire vision with him. Not until death does he attain the full poverty of being nothing but human, which a human person already has at birth. His death, fundamentally, is his birth. Here too he first lives through the experience of total forsakenness" (*John*, 3:283). Speyr is not here denying the hypostatic union (see Miles, "Obedience of a Corpse," 165), as a literalist interpretation (à la Pitstick) would insist, but rather reflecting on the profundity of humility exercised in the Incarnation. What Speyr conveys here is that each of the two apparently opposite truths—namely, Christ's immediate *scientia Dei* and his kenotic surrender in absolute trust (i.e., his total solidarity with sinful humanity in righteousness)—are more perfectly fulfilled at different times in his mission, the former during His public ministry (before and after death), the latter during His nativity and passion.

¹³⁵ See Miles, "Obedience of a Corpse," 117–21,

he is confronted with the Thomist conceptualization of it,¹³⁶ he nonetheless preserves the doctrine in a Scotistic manner (i.e., emphasizing beatitude as a perfect union of love). If this is the case, then, Balthasar would be arguing that while Christ's love never waivers, the beatific knowledge that would ordinarily precede such may be "laid up" or suspended from his human consciousness by the divine will in its paternal mode (that is, via the subsistent hypostasis of paternity).¹³⁷ But this says nothing of the joy that ordinarily follows perfect love, and perhaps there is a way to view Speyr's mystical insights, appropriated by Balthasar, in a way that is consonant with Thomistic thought.

Miles makes clear that Speyr's Ignatian vision of Christ's passion involved the God-man's willing suspension of everything that belonged to him, except for his love, including all his understanding, memory, and knowledge.¹³⁸ She recounts: "the Son surrenders his understanding to the Father in *Susciperean Bereitschaft*. Once again, von Speyr understands the love of God to be the source of the Son's vision."¹³⁹ If Christ is said not to lose his *visio immediata* and yet to surrender his entire intellect to the Father in solidarity with sinful humanity, then perhaps the former is constituted more by perfect love than perfect knowledge or understanding—so reasons (or assumes) Speyr. In any case, whether supernatural beatitude is properly constituted by perfect knowledge or by perfect love or somehow by both simultaneously (as if neither intellect nor will possessed causal priority), the joy to which each gives rise in heaven could be "laid up" by Christ with the Father (more precisely, with the three divine persons in their hypostatically distinct manners), and this is precisely what would constitute the most profound suffering of Christ's passion in full solidarity with the death of sinful humanity.

Concerning the question of Christ's surrender of the beatific vision, Matthew Lewis Sutton sums up Speyr's perspective, based on the latter's posthumously published *Subjektive Mystik*:

¹³⁶ See Miles, "Obedience of a Corpse," 118–23, 165.

¹³⁷ Speyr recounts: "He [the Son] has asked him [the Father] to remove this knowledge [of 'the hour'] in order to be better and more fully human. He has 'pruned' himself, so to speak, in order to be a real human being" (*Die Nachlasswerke*, vol. 11, *Ignatiana*, ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar [Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1974], 21).

¹³⁸ See Speyr: *Das Buch vom Gehorsam* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1970), 46; *John*, vol. 4, *The Birth of the Church*, trans. David Kipp (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 76, 100, 142; *World of Prayer*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 51; *Das Wort und die Mystik*, vol. 2, *Objektive Mystik* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1970), 230.

¹³⁹ Miles, "Obedience of a Corpse," 165.

In descending to the dead, the Son gives up his vision of the Father, which is von Speyr's understanding of the Son's becoming sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). There is nothing more for him than the stark blindness of his obedience. The blindness is complete. It is a cave with no light. The Son's renunciation of the vision of God substitutes for Adam and Eve's lost vision of heaven. The Son descends into the night of hell. In the formless, timeless night of hell, the Son loses all dialogue with and vision of the Father. He is blinded by the sin of the world and understands himself as completely abandoned: "the way is wayless as the time is timeless."¹⁴⁰

Again: "The Son took on Adam and Eve's nonvision. Through the resurrection of the Son by the Father, this night of nonvision has been changed into the light of the full vision of the Father."¹⁴¹ Even prior to his passion, Christ chooses to live in solidarity with human ignorance, at least concerning the hour of his death. Speyr articulates Christ's nescience thus: "The triune, divine love is so great that if the Son as man would decide for himself the hour, the divine Father would certainly agree with him. But since the Son as man wants to be only the reflection of this divine love, he chooses uncompromisingly not to know. He wants what the Father wants."¹⁴²

In another place, Speyr makes clear that this entails neither that he surrendered His own divinity nor that he lacked the beatific vision during his earthly life: "As God, Christ has the same knowledge as the Father and the Holy Spirit. As man, he possesses from the first instance of his existence the beatific vision of God."¹⁴³ But Sutton adds: "However, she under-

¹⁴⁰ Sutton, *Heaven Opens*, locs. 1737–42. The internal quote is from *Subjektive Mystik*, 13. Miles sums up Speyr's perspective on time: "No relationship exists between time in hell and either earthly or eternal time. Since hell expends 'non-time' in a 'non-place,' there is no method of measuring space or time. It is a 'way-less' and 'time-less' 'non-place.' Von Speyr explains that if one outside of hell were to observe one going through hell—such as a mystic experiencing the descent into hell—that outside observer could measure the time such a one had been gone, just as the disciples could measure the days that the Son spent in the tomb. But 'whoever goes through it, feels the non-passage of time; everything stops and remains the same or develops itself more and more into non-time. . . . Going through hell takes either all time or no time. The way is way-less as the time is time-less.' For von Speyr, the expression 'time stands still' aptly describes the experience of hell" ("Obedience of a Corpse," 78).

¹⁴¹ Sutton, *Heaven Opens*, locs. 1759–1760.

¹⁴² Speyr, *Das Buch vom Gehorsam* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1966), 40, trans. Sutton in *Heaven Opens*, loc. 3684.

¹⁴³ Speyr, *Die Magd des Herrn: Ein Marienbuch* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1969),

stands the coming darkness of the passion as the Son letting his humanity take on human sin and all its grave effects, which include being robbed of the vision of God.”¹⁴⁴ At the same time, referencing another work of hers, he asserts: “Von Speyr’s account, I must emphasize, maintains that the Son even in the absolute night of forsakenness always has the essential beatific vision of the Father.”¹⁴⁵ I assert that the best interpretation of such apparently conflicting statements is precisely the theses defended here: that God suspended the access of his human mind to at least some of the “secondary objects” pertinent to the beatific vision and, ultimately, suspended his experience of the *fruitio beata* during his passion, or at least, in the existential moment of his death-descent.

Conclusion

By engaging Balthasar and forcing him into dialogue with several contemporary Thomists, I have argued that it is fitting for Christ to possess the very (beatific) vision he wills to impart to those for whom he suffers while he endures the very passion by means of which he desires to do so, but it seems unfitting that he enjoy the *fruitio beata* naturally concomitant to such vision (even in “the higher passions” of his rational soul) while he endures such pain. In fact, it seems most fitting that he suffer precisely the loss of that consequence of his hypostatic vision which constitutes the misery of the sinners for whom he so deigns to suffer (i.e., the *fruitio*), “becoming sin without knowing sin” (2 Cor 5:21), not by partaking in it but by co-assuming even its most profound (subjective) consequence (i.e., the ultimate consequence of sin for the sinner). What greater work of solidarity is there than solitarily undergoing the fate proper to sinful mankind in such a manner unnatural to a being most perfectly (i.e., hypostatically) united to the Word of Love Itself?

Such a work of omnipotence is no less impossible than the economic prevention of the joy of the “higher parts” of Christ’s soul from redounding to its “lower parts” and hylemorphically bound sacred body. Without denying the possibility of the latter proposal for how Christ could have possessed the beatific vision and yet experienced dereliction on the Cross,

97n1 [English trans. in *Handmaid of the Lord*, trans. E. A. Nelson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984)].

¹⁴⁴ Sutton, *Heaven Opens*, loc. 3811, citing Speyr, *Die Passion von Innen* (loc. 3812) [English trans.: *The Passion from Within*, trans. Lucia Wiedenhover (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998)].

¹⁴⁵ Sutton, *Heaven Opens*, locs. 4225–26, citing Speyr, *Der Grenzenlose Gott*, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1981), 54 [English trans.: *The Boundless God*, trans. Helena M. Tomko (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004)].

it is not necessary to divide Christ's human psychology in such a fashion if he, instead, forfeited the *fruitio beata* itself even while maintaining the intellective *visio immediata* fittingly integral to his incarnate status. There is no such incongruent partitioning of his human identity (or "personality," in contemporary psychological terms), if the vision alone is maintained during his passion. An analogous scenario occurs among the mystic saints: the person suffers great spiritual attacks on all levels (e.g., via imagination, memory, perception, emotion/passion, even sensation), but none of the doubts or temptations that accost the saint penetrate the intellect itself as the harbinger of faith or the will itself steadfast in hope (which, of course, accompany the invisible infusion of divine charity constitutive of habitual grace). These may report possessing still a deep peace in knowing that they have not separated themselves from God, but the deepest and darkest of agonies are mere participations in Christ's own total loss of consolation, intellective and appetitive, which nonetheless left his immediate knowledge and love of God untouched. Finally, there is no added theological benefit to the possible view that Christ maintained the *fruitio beata* and, at the same time, paradoxically suffered a most hellish passion, as if the *fruitio* itself would permit greater suffering or the concomitance of opposites would befit the redemptive work.

Speyr is clearer than Balthasar in affirming that Christ did indeed possess an unmediated vision of the Father during his earthly life, that is, until his passion. Balthasar is apparently unsure of the matter, wavering between assuming something like Maritain's view of Christ's beatific vision, namely, that it exists in some supra-conscious realm but not the infra-conscious (until the resurrection), and conceding to the view popular among modern exegetes, namely, that God in Christ assumed the ignorance of fallen humanity. What is consistent in his peripheral references to the problem is his confusing usage of the phrase "laying up" or "depositing," or more often "laid up" or "deposited" (in German, *hinterlegung* or *hinterlegt*), which he derives from Speyr's speculations regarding Christ's kenotic surrender during his earthly life of divinely infused knowledge (not his perfect union with the Father that she thinks constitutes the *visio beata*).

If Balthasar truly was of one mind and mission with Speyr, he must have held that Christ's chief suffering in his passion, culminating in that mysterious event of death itself, is precisely the loss not of his perfect knowledge of God or of his perfect love of God, but the loss of the perfect joy that ordinarily follows perfect knowledge and love of God. I have argued that such a loss willed by God (the Father) is possible, but also that according to Speyr-Balthasar, Christ's possession of the beatific vision in

life is not ruptured by the suspension of his access to certain secondary objects of the vision (e.g., future contingents that need not be known for the fulfillment of his mission). Thus, the language of “depositing” concerns items that would ordinarily be known by a soul hypostatically united to the Word, but which the Father (in communion with the Son as well as the Spirit) wills to withdraw from his human consciousness without affecting his supernatural beatitude.¹⁴⁶ The descent of Christ into hell is, then, that paradigmatic, enigmatic, and exemplary instance of the Father’s withdrawal of something ordinarily concomitant to the beatific vision, namely, the joy itself naturally (but perhaps not necessarily) consequent to the perfect vision that most fittingly belongs to the incarnate Word. What could be more hellish a loss than this? Perhaps, here is the key to the analogy between Christ’s own suffering and the pain of loss suffered by those who are deprived of supernatural life: He does not lose grace or glory, but he experiences the loss of the *fruitio beata* even while remaining in perfect union of intellect and will with God.

Given that Christ’s human awareness of his divine identity is infused as a result of the grace of hypostatic union, that it is possible and fitting for God to withhold knowledge of certain contingencies from his human consciousness so that he may better fulfill his mission in solidarity with sinful humanity, and that Christ’s own union of intellect and will with God is unlike any other, perhaps it is more fitting to call his own vision of God a hypostatic vision (as Weinandy does), instead of imposing on Christ’s intellect a category that properly applies to creatures elevated to the order of glory (i.e., beatific vision). In other words, Christ’s hypostatic vision of God may not be most aptly understood in terms of the human intellect being gratuitously enlightened by the impression of the intelligible species of God’s own essence by means of a perfect *lumen gloriae*,¹⁴⁷ but better understood in terms of Christ’s own peculiar communion with the Father, whereby he was in some sense capable of growing in “age, wisdom, and grace” (Luke 2:52), yet without ever being humanly unaware of his own divinity or of what the Father willed (not to withdraw from his human intellect) in fulfillment of the Son’s redemptive mission on earth. In this manner, in his passion and death, Christ was able to know with complete certainty the Father’s infinite love for him and all human

¹⁴⁶ Hence, Balthasar states that “the greater good of [Jesus’s] obedience required that the Son’s intrinsically ‘fitting’ and ‘direct’ knowledge should be ‘laid up’ with the Father for reasons of the ‘economy’” (*TD* III, 192 [German II/2:176]).

¹⁴⁷ St. Thomas speaks of qualitative difference in regard to the *lumen gloriae* granted the blessed and Christ in *ST* III Suppl., q. 92, a. 3, ad 12 (cf. *ST* I, q. 12, aa. 7–8).

beings in him (since faith is never properly attributable even to his human intellect as such), and at the same time, to endure the greatest pain of being stripped of the infinite joy that naturally accompanied his hypostatic union with God for the sake of making friends out of his enemies (Col 1:21–22; Rom 5:10), that is, every human being as in need of redemption from sin.

While Balthasar is at times unsure of whether any knowledge is necessary to Christ besides awareness of his own divine identity and filial mission, and while he speculates that out of kenotic love the Son humbly suspends access to his divine intellect in his human consciousness, if he indeed follows Speyr, he must believe that the *fruitio beata* was taken from Christ during the passion, expressed most fully in the cry of dereliction, which is the triumphant means by which he glorifies every person dead in sin, whom he meets in timeless solidarity. It is most fitting that the joy of the beatific vision (*fruitio beata*) be taken away from Christ's human soul during his passion and death, that is, for him to suffer the loss of the infinite joy that is naturally consequent to the immediate knowledge (*visio immediata*) and the perfect love of God that are essential to supernatural beatitude, regardless of which logically follows the other. To suffer such a fate, at the hands of his own Father no less, is a greater hell (that is, pain of loss) than any hell/loss possibly suffered by a creature that never possessed such an immense grace. Surely, the timelessness proper to Christ's hell (i.e., his temporary loss of eternal bliss) would be incommensurable with that of the damned and that of the blessed, as even the time of earth is incommensurable with the time of purgatory (and yet the mystics are sometimes granted a participation in each).¹⁴⁸ Of course, this view of Christ's passion and death, wherein the element of subjective timelessness would enter most profoundly, requires the admission of the existence of a perfect union of intellect and will between Christ's human nature and divine nature.

N.V

¹⁴⁸ Perhaps, Einstein's theory of general relativity provides an analogical (and thus imperfect) glimpse into the incommensurability that exists between all kinds of (super-)temporalities. Ratzinger alludes to this in *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1988), 230 [originally *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, *Auferstehung Und Ewiges Leben*, repr. (Freiburg: Herder, 2012): 31–276, at 230]. For Ratzinger's development of the related Augustinian notion of *memoria* time, see *Eschatology*, 187–88 [originally, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977), 151–152].