

Albert the Great on Personhood and the Separated Soul*

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Introduction

Is a deceased human being a person? While Thomists continue to debate the personhood of the soul separated from the body at death,¹ the view of Thomas's teacher, Albert the Great, remains unexplored.² In this article, I

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¹ The "corruptionist" view denies that the separated soul is a person, while the "survivalist" view affirms it. Melissa Eitenmiller has recently contributed to this conversation about St. Thomas's position in her article "On the Separated Soul according to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 17, no. 1 (2019): 57–91. Eitenmiller's contribution favors the corruptionist view. She characterizes the debate as primarily though not exclusively among analytic Thomists, though she points to the contributions of several noteworthy Thomists of other kinds, including Serge-Thomas Bonino, "L'âme séparée," *Revue thomiste* 116 (2016): 71–103; Stephen L. Brock, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas: A Sketch* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 51–82, 109–144; Joseph G. Trabbic, "The Human Body and Human Happiness in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*," *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1041 (2011): 552–64; and Gilles Emery, "The Unity of Man, Body and Soul, in St. Thomas Aquinas," chapter 8 in *Trinity, Church- and the Human Person: Tomistic Essays* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), 209–35.

² Studies of the concept of person in Albert's theology have focused primarily on his Trinitarian theology and Christology. These include Stephen A. Hipp, *The Doctrine of Personal Subsistence: Historical and Systematic Synthesis* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2012); Hipp, "Person" in *Christian Tradition and in the Conception of Saint Albert the*

present an initial foray into Albert's position and situate his view in relation to that of his most famous disciple.

What is at stake in the question of whether a deceased human is a person? If one's personhood survives death, the deceased human maintains his or her identity and continues to deserve the reverence due to all human persons. Personhood would then be identified with the human soul, which, unlike the body, survives death. Conversely, if the deceased human soul is not to be regarded as a person due to its separation from the body, then one's identity and seemingly one's dignity as a person are lost along with one's body. Both positions present difficulties for the Christian believer.

The latter position paints a particularly bleak picture of death. In this paradigm, death consists not merely in the destruction of the body through its separation from the soul but the destruction of the person itself. Is the body essential to human personhood? Does the human person consist in a union of body and soul? If so, then the sundering of these metaphysical parts through the loss of the body entails the loss of personhood. This position complicates Christian devotion to the saints and challenges the way Christians traditionally speak of the dead. This position also requires a significant qualification of Jesus's own words, specifically his rebuttal of the Sadducees in Matt 22:32, "Have you not read 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the

Great: A Systematic Study of Its Concept as Illuminated by the Mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation (Münster: Aschendorff, 2001); Ludwig Hödl, "Wesenheit und Personenbeziehungen im frühen trinitätstheologischen Denken Alberts des Grossen," in *Albertus Magnus: Zum Gedenken nach 800 Jahren: Neue Zugänge, Aspekte und Perspektiven*, ed. Walter Senner, O.P. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2019), 493–513; Alfons Hufnagel, "Das Person-Problem bei Albertus Magnus," in *Studia Albertina: Festschrift für Bernhard Geyer zum 70. Geburtstage*, ed. Heinrich Ostlender (Münster: Aschendorff, 1952). Alfonso M. Pompei's dissertation, "La dottrina trinitaria di S. Alberto Magno O.P.: Esposizione organica del commentario delle sentenze in rapporto al movimento teologico scolastico" (PhD diss., University of Fribourg, 1953) includes an overview of Albert's understanding of divine persons in his *Sentences* lectures. Paul Thom, *The Logic of the Trinity: Augustine to Ockham* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), includes a chapter on the logic Albert's Trinitarian theology, much of which treats the logic of Trinitarian personhood. Several studies in Albert's anthropology and psychology exist, but have not treated the question of the separated soul's personhood in any direct and extended way. See Paul Dominikus Hellmeier, *Anima et intellectus: Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin über Seele und Intellekt des Menschen*. (Münster: Aschendorff, 2011). For a study of personal survival in Scholastic and modern contexts, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts," *History of Religions* 30, no. 1 (1990): 51–85.

dead, but of the living.” If the human person ceases to exist at death due to the loss of the body, then the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob remain, but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not among the living, strictly speaking. Jesus’s own words require a nuanced interpretation.

On the other hand, if one’s personhood is uncompromised by the loss of the body and perdures after death as the separated soul alone, this appears to reduce the body to an extra-personal garment or instrument. In this case, the soul alone constitutes the person, while the body is depersonalized. The specter of dualism rears its head. Death becomes less tragic, but by debasing the currency of death one also cheapens the resurrection and the dignity of the human body. If the human person is to be identified with the soul alone, why was it salvific for Jesus to rise bodily? Death presents a riddle to the Christian theologian, who must avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of denigrating the deceased saints or denigrating the body. Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great each navigate these treacherous waters differently.

For scholastics, the question of the status of the rational soul vis-à-vis the human person is at once philosophical, biblical, and doctrinal. In assessing Albert’s view, it is necessary to examine this question in terms of his philosophical, biblical, and doctrinal works. I have found it useful to compare Albert’s and Thomas’s exegeses of four pertinent texts: Aristotle’s aphorism drawn from the *Nicomachean ethics* that “the human is the intellect alone”;³ Jesus’s refutation of the Sadducees in the Synoptic Gospels that the One God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not the God of the dead, but of the living;⁴ Boethius’s famous definition of the

³ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics* 9.8.1168b32–1169a2 and 10.7.1178a 2–8. Thomas Aquinas variously quotes this as “homo est intellectus suus” (e.g., *In III sent.*, d. 22 q. 1 a. 1 obj. 7); “unusquisque homo est suus intellectus” (e.g., *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 50 a. 4 obj. 2); “homo est intellectus” (e.g., *Questiones disputatae de anima*, a. 12 obj. 13); “homo est intellectus vel maxime” (e.g., *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 4, corp.). Texts of Aquinas are taken from the Leonine edition. Albert quotes this ubiquitously in many formulations, including: “homo non est homo nisi per intellectum” (e.g., *Liber de natura et origine animae*); “secundum quod homo, solus intellectus sit” (e.g., *Metaphysica*); “solus intellectus est, quo homo est id quod est homo” (*Metaphysica*); “homo sit solus intellectus” (e.g., *De unitate intellectus*); “homo est tantum intellectus” (e.g., *Super ethica*); “homo, inquantum est homo, est aliquid, scilicet intellectus” (e.g., *Super ethica*); “homo ex hoc est homo, quod est intellectivum” (e.g. *Super ethica*); “quod est hominis, inquantum homo, intellectus est et non sensus” (e.g., *Super Dionysium caelestis hierarchia*). Texts of Albert come from *Opera omnia ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum edenda* (Monasterii Westfalorum: Aschendorff, 1951–). Unless otherwise attributed, English translations are original.

⁴ This refutation appears in all three Synoptic Gospels: Matt 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38.

person as an “individual substance of a rational nature” from his *Contra Nestorium et Eutychem*;⁵ Richard of St. Victor’s definition of the person as an “incommunicable existence of a rational nature in his *De Trinitate*”⁶ and Thomas’s and Albert’s reflections on the event of Christ’s burial. Thomas’s and Albert’s interpretations of these passages and events provide useful examples illustrating how precisely they consider personhood to be related to the human soul. I will show that, while Albert associates personhood with the intellectual soul more completely than does Thomas, he also goes farther than Thomas by unambiguously rejecting that a separated soul is a person. After analyzing Thomas’s and Albert’s treatment of these texts, I will conclude with a systematic synthesis in which I bring together Albert’s various reflections on the separated soul into a unified picture.

The Human as “Human” Is the Intellect Alone

This Aristotelian aphorism that “the human as ‘human’ is the intellect alone,” drawn from *Nicomachean ethics* 9–10, appears to identify human personhood exclusively with the intellectual soul. In book 9, Aristotle remarks:

Just as a city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most authoritative element in it, so is a man. . . . [A] man is said to have or not to have self-control according as his reason has or has not the control *on the assumption that this is the man himself*. . . . That this is the man himself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain, and also that the good man loves most this part of him.⁷

This passage posits that, because the moral virtue of a human exists on account of one’s reason or intellect, this part of the human is to be identified with the human self. Aristotle posits an analogy to the city and its government, reminiscent of the allegory of Plato’s *Republic*. What is not immediately clear from this passage is whether, when Aristotle speaks of

⁵ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* 3.4: “Substantia individua rationalis naturae” (*The Theological Tractates*, ed. Edward Kennard Rand, H. F. Stewart, S. J. Tester, and H. F. Stewart [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973]).

⁶ Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate*: “Intellectualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia” — “Incommunicable existence of an intellectual nature” (*Patrologia Latina* [PL] 32).

⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics* 9.81168b32–1169a2 (emphasis added; *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, trans. Richard McKeon [New York: Modern Library, 2001]).

the “authoritative element” of the city as identifiable with the city, this is a use of synecdoche or an absolute statement. Is the ruler of a city merely identified with the name of his city as its ruling member, or does the ruler constitute the city itself by his rule? Analogously, is the intellect identified merely with the person as its ruling part or does the intellect constitute the human person? If the former, then the human may be constituted by more than the intellect—namely by the union of the soul and body—while possessing these elements hierarchically. The intellectual soul is primary, as the more noble and ruling part, while the body is secondary and subordinate. On the other hand, if the intellect constitutes the human person completely, then the human body may *participate* in human personhood through union with the intellectual soul, but does not constitute that human personhood strictly speaking through its composition with the soul. Which does Aristotle intend? This ambiguity also exists in the other principal passage in which Aristotle identifies the human with the intellect:

If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we . . . must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us. . . . This would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him.⁸

Aristotle appears to identify reason or intellect with the human person, but he also designates the intellect as “the authoritative and better part” of man—the “divine” part of man. Insofar as the intellect is “each man himself,” it appears to constitute the human person completely. But insofar as the intellect is a part of the human, albeit “the authoritative and better part of him,” the body and soul together appear to constitute the human person. Is this description an instance of synecdoche or does the intellect comprehensively constitute the human person?

Thomas Aquinas understands this aphorism to be an instance of synecdoche.⁹ Just as Medievals referred to a king by the name of his city, as the city’s most noble member, so the intellect, the human person’s most noble faculty, can be called the human self. This use of synecdoche is

⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics* 10.7.1178a 2–8.

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *In III sent.*, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1, obj. 7 and ad 7. For Thomas’s rejection of a literal interpretation that a human really is the intellect, see Michał Zembruski, “*Homo Non Est Intellectus*: Aquinas about Relation between Soul and Intellect,” *Studia philosophiae Christianae* 53, no. 4 (2017): 75–101.

especially fitting, since the intellect is not merely any part of a human, but the human's more principal part (*principalior pars hominis*).¹⁰ The principality of the human intellect consists in the intellect's use of powers of the soul and body as its instruments.¹¹ The whole human virtually exists (*virtualiter existit*) in the intellect, just as the whole city virtually exists in the ruler, who "disposes" the city through his rule.¹² The intellectual soul rules the body through reason, which is its proper power, just as a king rules a city through his civil power.¹³ This, however, does not indicate that the intellect is the whole human, any more than that the king is the whole city. Rather the disposition of the whole city resides in the king's rule.¹⁴

While Albert's view of Aristotle's aphorism has been characterized as synecdochic,¹⁵ Albert offers a broader interpretation than mere synecdoche.¹⁶ In fact, unlike Thomas, Albert never uses the word "synecdoche" to refer to this Aristotelian aphorism. Albert claims that, when Aristotle refers to the human as the intellect alone, he is not speaking of the intellect as a power, but as the human form.¹⁷ In this sense, the intellect is not merely the principal part of a human, nor merely the power of the principle

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 50, a. 4, ad 2.

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus*, chap. 4, corp.

¹² Thomas Aquinas, ST III, q. 50, a. 4, obj. 2.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Questions disputatae de anima*, a. 12, obj. 13.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, ST III, q. 50, a. 4, obj. 2.

¹⁵ Henryk Anzulewicz. "Anthropology: The Concept of Man in Albert the Great," in *A Companion to Albert the Great*, ed. Irvin Resnick (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 325–46, at 341. Albert does speak of the soul as a supposition for the whole human as the humans' most noble part. This does not exhaust all the ways in which Albert identifies the whole human with the intellect; but for an example, see *De anima* II, tr. 1, chap. 1: "Anima autem compositi ex anima et corpore pars essentialis et dignior est et perficit animata corpora, et ideo supponimus animam in generalitate substantiae contineri" — "The soul, however, as part of a composite of soul and body, is the essential and more noble part and perfects animated bodies; therefore, we supposit the soul in the general category of substance" (quoted in Paul Dominikus Hellmeier, *Anima et Intellectus: Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin über Seele und Intellekt des Menschen* [Münster: Aschendorff, 2011] 155).

¹⁶ James Schall credits Albert's concern for immortality as motivating his identification of the human with the intellect ("Immortality and the Political Life of Man in Albertus Magnus," *Thomist* 48, no. 4 [1984]: 535–65). However, in his lectures on Aristotle's *Ethics*, Albert understands this identification of the human with the soul to have been taught by Aristotle on the basis of the soul's transcendence of the body and its divine-like quality. Albert concurs with Aristotle on the basis that the soul is the unifying principle of the human person as well as its ruling part.

¹⁷ Albert, *In X ethica*, lec. 13.2, sol.

part, but both the *forma partis* and the *forma totius*.¹⁸ For Albert, *forma partis* and *forma totius* differ only in terminology.¹⁹ The human intellect assumes the body as form assumes matter and, for this reason, is the *forma partis*. Insofar as the body participates in the intellect as matter participates in form, the intellect subsumes the body into a single composite (*unum compositum*).²⁰ This union of soul and body, caused by the soul, allows the body to participate in the intellect as more than an instrument (“plus est quam instrumentum”).²¹ The intellect elevates, ennobles, and “perfects” (*perficit*) the material body by uniting it to itself. The intellect can be called the *forma totius* as it formally causes the being of the whole by perfecting the matter (“perficiendo materiam causat esse totius”).²² When united to a body, the soul is both the *forma partis* and the *forma totius* such that these terms differ only in concept. Thomas describes the *forma totius* differently, regarding the soul–body composite as the *forma totius*.²³

This distinction between Albert and Thomas is a subtle one. Albert’s account of the *forma totius* has a different, more intellectual emphasis and slightly greater degree of specificity. For Albert, the *forma totius* is nothing other than the soul exercising its power as *forma partis* to inform matter. The *forma totius* is therefore identified with the soul. The soul is most fully itself, most “whole” when informing the body. No doubt the *forma totius* is

¹⁸ Albert, *In IX ethica* IX, lec. 4.4, sol.

¹⁹ See, for example, Albert, *In IX ethica*, lect 4.2: “Solutio-eadem est secundum substantiam forma totius et partis, differens tantum secundum rationem, quia secundum hoc quod perficit materiam, dicitur forma partis et non praedicatur, secundum autem, quod ulterius perficiendo materiam causat esse totius, dicitur forma totius et sic praedicatur, quamvis Avicenna videatur dicere contrarium. Et quia ab intellectu est esse hominis, secundum quod est homo, et non a concupiscentia vel ira, ideo homo, inquantum est homo, est aliquid, scilicet intellectus”—“Solution: The form of the whole and of the part is the same in substance, differing only according to reason. For insofar as it perfects the matter, it is called the form of the part and is not predicated [of the whole]; but insofar as, by further perfecting the matter, it causes the being of the whole, it is called the form of the whole and is predicated as such—although Avicenna seems to say the contrary. And because the being of man, insofar as he is a man, is from the intellect and not from concupiscence or anger, therefore man, insofar as he is man, is something, namely, intellect.” See also Anzulewicz, “Anthropology,” 342.

²⁰ Albert, *Super Matt* 22.

²¹ Albert, *Super Matth* 22.

²² Albert, *In IX ethica*, 4.2, sol. Thomas agrees that the soul causes the *forma totius* by perfecting the matter. But he disagrees that this makes the soul to be the *forma totius*. Thomas believes that to identify the *forma partis* with the *forma totius* would entail that the *forma totius* remains after the corruption of the body. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* IV, chap. 81, no. 10.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *In III sent.*, d. 2 q. 1, a. 3 chap. 1, corp.

a composite, in that the soul informing the body enters into composition with the body.²⁴ But the *forma totius* refers properly to the soul in the act of uniting the body, and by extension the whole human. The soul, not the body, is the principle by which the whole human is united. The soul both causes the *forma totius* and is identical with the *forma totius* when informing the body.

As pertains to the analogy of the king ruling over a city and called by the name of the city, Albert understands even this to be more than mere synecdoche. He comments that a city can be considered materially or formally. A city considered materially is a gathering of humans inhabiting an order of buildings.²⁵ The city may also be considered formally, with respect to what unites the whole with its citizen members. The ruler is this formal principle of unity, who completes the city (*civitas completur*) through his ruling office.²⁶ The whole city does not reside in the king virtually alone, but rather the city *is* a city (or kingdom) through its participation in the kingship of a king. While Thomas concurs that the king's rule disposes the city through his civil power,²⁷ Albert goes farther by comparing kingship to the intellect as the substantial form of the soul itself (*forma substantialis ipsius*).²⁸ Just as the intellect can be considered either as the power of understanding or as the substantial form of a human, so kingship can be considered either as the civil power of the king or as the substantial form of the city he rules. The citizenry participate in the kingship vested in the person of the king himself. Not only are the citizens virtually present to the king through their relation to him as his subjects, but the citizens substantially participate in the kingdom as members of the whole city that

²⁴ Albert *De sex principiis*, tr. 1, chap. 7: "Haec enim forma totius forma est et non partis et compositio ipsa in composito materialis est ad illam, sicut compositum ex anima rationali et corpore materiale est ad hominem: aliter enim praedicabilis non esset nisi esset intentio, non partis sed totius, et haec est forma rationis et logica." — "For this form is the form of the whole, not of the part, and the composition itself in the composite is material in relation to it, just as the composite of a rational soul and material body is to the human being. Otherwise, it could not be predicated unless it were an intention not of a part but of the whole, and this is the form of reason and logic." See also *Liber divisionum*, tr. 2, chap. 5: "Forma vero, quae partes ad formale esse totius terminat, est compositio totius, respectu cuius compositionis partes sunt materiales" — "Without a doubt, the form that brings the parts to the formal being of the whole is the composition of the whole, in respect to which the parts are material."

²⁵ Albert, *In X ethica*, lec. 13.2, ad 2.

²⁶ Albert, *In X ethica*, lec. 13.2, ad 2.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 50, a. 4, obj. 2.

²⁸ Albert, *In IX ethica*, lec. 4.2, sol.

is headed and caused by the king. While citizenship in any particular city is accidental to the substance of the individual citizen, the citizenship of the citizens, as the king's subjects, materializes the substance of the city itself. Citizenship in any particular city is accidental to the substance of the individual citizen, but the individual citizen is not accidental to a city. Rather, each citizen is a member of the city's corporate substance. The city could gain or lose individual citizens without losing its substantial identity, just as the flesh of a human body could increase or decrease, but an individual citizen is not accidental to the city, just as a bodily member is not accidental to the human substance. Citizens are members of the city's body, and thus participate in the form of the kingship, which alone constitutes the city. The king not only causes the *bene esse* of the city by disposing the city to justice; he causes the *esse* of the whole city by constituting it though his rule. The king perfects the matter of the city, causing the form of the whole city (*forma totius*) to exist.

Albert identifies the human person with the intellect for another reason, also rooted in Aristotle's aphorism that "the human as 'human' is the intellect alone." The human person achieves final happiness (*finale desiderium omnis hominis*) through the intellect.²⁹ By virtue of the intellect, the human is ordered to know the divine (*ordinetur ad scire divinum*).³⁰ While the body comes to participate in this final happiness, the body does

²⁹ Albert, *De natura et origine animae*, tr. 2, chap. 7: "Ergo anima intellectualis, in quantum huiusmodi est, separata est et esse perpetuum habet, nihil commune habens cum corpore corruptibili pereunte, in quantum est huiusmodi. Est autem per naturam huiusmodi, hoc est intellectualis, ita quod totum aliud quod est in ipsa, est ut potentia in ipsa. Ergo per naturam est separata et perpetua, non destructa destructione corporis. Haec igitur est natura, qua omnes homines scire desiderant, et cum omne scire ordinetur ad scire divinum, quod est intellectuale sine continuo et tempore, finale desiderium omnis hominis est ad illud sicut ad optimum secundum naturam, eo quod admirabiles delectationes habet huiusmodi scire puritate eius quod intelligitur, et firmitate sapientiae, quae primorum et manifestissimorum est secundum naturam"—"Therefore, the intellectual soul, insofar as it is this kind of thing, is separate and has perpetual existence, having nothing in common with the corruptible body that perishes, insofar as it is such. It is by nature this kind of thing, that is, intellectual, so that everything else that is in it exists as potential within it. Therefore, by nature it is separate and eternal, not destroyed by the destruction of the body. This, then, is by nature that all humans desire to know, and since all knowing is ordered toward divine knowledge, which is intellectual and without continuity and time, the ultimate desire of every human is directed toward that as the supreme good according to nature, because this kind of knowledge has marvelous delights, due to the purity of what is understood and the firmness of wisdom, which pertains to the first and most manifest things according to nature."

³⁰ Albert, *De natura et origine animae*, tr. 2, chap. 7.

not mediate final happiness to the intellectual soul. The intellectual soul exclusively mediates final happiness to the body.

Aristotle describes reason as something divine in man.³¹ He exhorts that humans should make themselves “immortal” by striving to live in accord with this best thing in them. Transposed to a Christian context, Albert associates Aristotle’s aphorism with Augustine’s treatment of human communion with the angels in the beatific vision. Augustine describes humans as equal to the angels by virtue of the intellect.³² Albert interprets this with reference to final beatitude of the intellect, but distinguishes that, while humans receive an intellectual good that is blended (*permixtum*), the angels receive the same intellectual good in a pure manner. He quotes from Averröes on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* that the human is intellectual by participation alone.³³ Humans have a certain connaturality with the angels: both have intellects, but only humans are naturally embodied. Nevertheless, through the common intellectual vision of God in beatitude, a human and an angel find themselves equal. The separated human soul immortally enjoys God through intellectual vision, as does an angel. Aristotle’s description of the intellect as something divine in man, paired by Albert with Augustine’s description of heavenly communion, amounts to more than a metaphor. The intellect has a connaturality to divine things, the contemplation of which is the highest end of the human person.³⁴ This, according to Albert, is the reason why Aristotle said that the human is nothing except the intellect.³⁵

³¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics* 10.7.1178a 2–8.

³² Albert, *In Dionysium de caelsti hierarchia*, chap. 9, arg. 1: “Homo est aequalis angelo secundum intellectum.”

³³ Albert, *In Dionysium de caelsti hierarchia*, chap. 9, ad 1: “Homo est intellectualis participatione tantum.”

³⁴ Albert, *De natura et origine animae*, tr. 2, chap. 6: “Taliter autem felicitas contemplativa se habet ad intellectum. Est autem felicitas illa contemplatio divinorum, non tamen continua et tempore, sicut in scientia de Anima probatum est et de Intellectu et intelligibili, quae Deo convenit et intellectibus divinis omnibus coelestibus et homini. Propter quod Aristoteles dicit quod homo non est nisi intellectus, eo quod bonum intellectus sibi solum proprium et connaturale est. Igitur una analogia erit Dei et intellectuum supernorum et hominis ad hoc optimum” — “In this way, contemplative happiness relates to the intellect. Now, that happiness is the contemplation of divine things, not, however, in continuous time, as has been proven in the science of *De anima* and *De intellectu et intelligibili*, which pertains to God and all divine intellects, celestial and human. For this reason, Aristotle says that man is nothing but intellect, because the good of the intellect is proper and natural to him alone. Therefore, there is one analogy between God, the higher intellects, and man with respect to this supreme good.”

³⁵ Albert, *De Natura et origine animae*, tr. 2, chap. 6.

This account of human personhood nevertheless forecloses dualism. By affirming that the soul is the *forma corporis* constituting a single composite with the body it animates, Albert excludes mechanistic accounts of the soul and body as separate entities. Albert balances the affirmation that the soul informs the body with the affirmation that the human soul is much more than a *forma corporis*. The human soul, according to Albert, is first and foremost an intellect. It is conjoined to the body by its lower faculties of vegetative and sensitive powers, but transcends the body by its highest power—reason. This results in a paradox. While the intellectual soul is not a different entity from the body, it operates through the body like a sailor steering a ship.³⁶ The distinctive feature of the human soul is its ability to move and direct the body like an intelligence employing an instrument, while, nevertheless, being formally united to the body, thereby making the body more than an instrument. The intellectual activity of the soul manifested through the body perfects the body in a higher manner than merely constituting the body as its principle of life and unity. The intellectual soul ennoble the body through its activity that transcends the body; the body participates in the intellectual nature of the soul in a manner analogous to an instrument. The living human person is nothing other than an embodied intellect. Corporality expresses the intellect without being a different substance from the intellect.

³⁶ Albert, *De natura et origine animae* tr. 2, chap. 6: “Iste igitur est intellectus Aristotelis et omnium Peripateticorum dicentium animam non esse sic perfectionem corporis, sicut forma est materiae, sed potius sicut nauta est perfectio navis gubernatae et motae ab ipso, cuius forma sumitur ab arte nautica, et non a navi, eo quod artifex formam operis non sumit ab instrumento, sed potius per instrumentum ponit eam in operatione” — “This, then, is the understanding of Aristotle and all the Peripatetics that the soul is not the perfection of the body as form is to matter, but rather like the sailor is the perfection of the ship, steering and moving it by his own power, whose form is derived from the art of navigation, and not from the ship. For the craftsman does not derive the form of the work from the instrument, but rather impresses it upon the operation through the instrument.” Albert’s point is not to deny that the intellectual soul is the *forma corporis*, but to affirm that it is more than a *forma corporis*. Thomas Aquinas attributes the metaphor of a sailor navigating a ship to Plato. Thomas emphasizes that the intellectual soul is not the act of the body in a mechanistic way, but as the form of the body. See Thomas Aquinas, *De anima* II, lec. 2, no. 9: “Et quia Plato ponebat quod anima est actus corporis non sicut forma, sed sicut motor, subiungit quod hoc nondum est manifestum, si anima sic sit actus corporis sicut nauta est actus navis, scilicet ut motor tantum” — “And because Plato held that the soul is the act of the body not as form but as mover, it is added that it is not yet clear whether the soul is the act of the body in the way the sailor is the act of the ship, namely, as merely a mover.”

Not the God of the Dead

Jesus's response to the Sadducees—"I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;" he is not the God of the dead but of the living"—presents the paradox that deceased saints are alive. In what sense are they alive? Albert understands this to entail more than an affirmation that the soul survives the body, or even that the soul will one day reunite with the body in the resurrection. More immediately, Albert understands this verse to refer to deification through the beatific vision. That the souls of the just are "alive" means that, as comprehensors, they have similitude to and unity with God, the fount of life.³⁷

This deiformity involves an epistemic change for the human intellect. Upon death, the human soul undergoes punishment, either temporal or eternal, and if temporal, then commences its final happiness through the beatific vision of God and heavenly communion with the angels. This vision is purely intellectual, as God and the angels are pure spirits. God and the angels do not appear to the soul through theophanies of corporeal forms, but rather manifest themselves directly to the human intellect. This results in a plenitude of knowledge of universals that reverses the epistemic process humans experience on earth.³⁸ Whereas humans, as wayfarers, receive nearly all knowledge through the mediation of the senses and abstract from sense-knowledge to the knowledge of universals, humans as comprehensors will perceive universals through the intellectual vision of the angels and of God himself. After the general resurrection, when the beatified human souls again form single composites with their bodies, this knowledge of universals will ripple down into the bodily senses. This will result in a deeper, more potent sensation, as the deeper grasp of forms by the intellect will attune the soul's sense appetites to the material world more deeply. This reversed intellectual process will also weed out causes

³⁷ Albert, *In Dionisium de ecclesiasti hiererarchia*, chap. 3.

³⁸ Albert, *De resurrectione*, tr. 3, q. 4: "Respondeo, quod alia est via accipiendi cognitionem ante mortem et alia post. Ante mortem cognitio accipitur a sensu et ascendit per phantasiam in intellectum, post mortem autem erit e converso, et descendet cognitio sensibilis ex intelligibili"—"I respond that there is one path for receiving knowledge (*cognitio*) before death, and another after. Before death, knowledge is received from sense and ascends through the imagination (*per phantasiam*) to the intellect, whereas after death it will be the reverse, and sensible knowledge will descend from the intelligible" (*On Resurrection*, trans. Irvn M. Resnick and Franklin T. Harkins [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020], 216).

for error arising from the confusion of senses or the disintegration of sense information.³⁹

In his lectures on the Gospels and on Matthew and Luke, Albert considers this verse as a proof-text for the resurrection. The saints merited by their good deeds in the flesh; it is just that they receive their reward in their flesh as well.⁴⁰ In his lectures on the Gospel of Luke, Albert considers this verse a proof-text that separated souls remain distinct from each other through their orientation to particular bodies.⁴¹ He adduces a further argument for the immortality of the soul from fittingness. It is more

³⁹ See Albert, *De resurrectione*, tr. 4, q. 2, a. 4, sol.: "Sensus non erunt ibi sicut hic, sed erit deus replens sensus per modum gloriae; et sensibile, quod distinguit sensum, descendet ab intellectu. Sicut enim nunc universale, quod distinguit intellectum, ascendit in intellectum per exspoliationem formarum sensibilium, ita tunc e converso ab intelligibili descendet sensibile, distinguens sensum per vestitionem et circumpositionem formarum sensibilium circa ipsum. Utrum autem illud intelligibile universale sit vel particulare, patebit posterius. Et sic etiam patet, qualiter actus sensuum principiantur a deo, et sic sunt vitae aeternae" — "The senses will not exist there in the way they do here, but that God will fill up the senses by means of glory. And the sensible object, which differentiates the senses, will descend from the intellect. For just as now the universal, which differentiates the intellect, ascends to the intellect by the extraction of sensible forms, so in the future conversely the sensible object will descend from the intelligible object, distinguishing the senses by clothing them and surrounding them with sensible forms. But whether the intelligible is universal or particular will become clear later. And so it also is clear how the acts of the senses will originate from God, and in this way they will pertain to life eternal." (Resnick and Harkins trans., 296).

⁴⁰ Albert, *Super Matt 22*: "Argumenti autem vis est in hoc quod, si deus est servorum, debet remunerare eos, in quo servierunt opere iustitiae; servierunt autem in corpore; remunerabuntur igitur in corpore" — "The force of the argument lies in this. If God is the God of the servants, he ought to reward them in the work by which they served in justice. But they served in the body; therefore, they will be rewarded in the body." See also, Albert, *Super Marcum*, chap. 12: "Non anima sola meruit sed corpus animae oboediens, virtutibus operam dedit. Et ideo radicem immortalitatis per virtutem acquisivit" — "It was not the soul alone that merited, but the body, obedient to the soul, performed virtues. And so it acquired the root of immortality through virtue."

⁴¹ Albert, *Super Luc 20*: "Hoc autem negabant Saducae, qui dicebant quidem Angelos esse, sed animas perire cum corpore. Si autem animae sunt et distinctae, et est anima Abrahae una, et anima Isaac alia, Jacob tertia. Tunc oportet de necessitate quod sint animae proprietatibus distinctae. Hae autem proprietates individuantes non sunt nisi ex comparatione propotionis et connaturalitatis ad hoc corpus et illud. Ergo illas connaturales habent proprietates animae." — "The Sadducees denied this. They said that angels existed, but souls perished with the body. But if souls exist and are distinct, and the soul of Abraham is one, Isaac's another, and Jacob's a third, then necessarily souls are distinguished by properties. These individuating properties arise only from their relation and connaturality to this or that body. Therefore, souls possess these connatural properties."

perfect for souls to inform bodies than for them to remain separated. Were the separated state of the soul to be final, this would entail God's works proceeding from greater to lesser degrees of perfection. This does not befit the works of God.⁴²

There is little difference between Thomas and Albert's treatment of separated souls in conjunction with Jesus's rebuttal of the Sadducees. Thomas does not take up the question of the personhood of the separated souls when commenting on this verse in his lectures on the Scriptures. Instead, Thomas understands "not God of the dead, but of the living" to entail three doctrines: the soul perdures after separation from the body; there will be a resurrection of the dead; the souls are "alive" in a spiritual sense through the vision of God.⁴³ The affirmation that the Lord is God "of the living" attributes the spiritual life of bliss to deceased saints. Only in the *Summa theologiae* does Thomas refer to the phrase "I am the God of Abraham, etc." to discuss the question of the separated soul's humanity. He raises an objection to the doctrine of the Church that the saints in heaven pray for us:

The soul of Peter is not Peter. If therefore the souls of the saints pray for us, so long as they are separated from their bodies, we ought not to call upon Saint Peter, but on his soul, to pray for us: yet the Church does the contrary. The saints therefore do not pray for us, at least before the resurrection.⁴⁴

Thomas's response to this objection is instructive, not only in what portion of the objection he disputes, but most especially in what he does not dispute.

It is because the saints while living merited to pray for us, that we invoke them under the names by which they were known in this life, and by which they are better known to us: and also in order to indicate our belief in the resurrection, according to the saying of Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham," etc.⁴⁵

⁴² Albert, *Super Luc* 20.

⁴³ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Matt* 22.

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 83, a. 11, obj. 5; all trans. from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries* (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964).

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 83, a. 11, ad 5

Thomas here qualifies that we simply use the earthly names of the saints when we pray to their separated souls. He does not dispute the first premise of the objection that the soul of Peter is not Peter. Thomas understands the scriptural attestation “I am the God of Abraham” to indicate merely the doctrine of the resurrection; not to entail that the separated soul is a human.

Elsewhere Thomas affirms the proposition that the souls of the dead are *not* humans, as, for example, in his treatment of the burial of Christ.

He Died and Was Buried. He Descended into Hell.

In his treatment of Christ in the tomb, Thomas returns to the proverbial example of St. Peter’s separated soul. He raises the objection:

The Philosopher says (*Ethic.* ix) that “each man is his intellect”; consequently, when we address the soul of Peter after his death we say: “Saint Peter, pray for us.” But the Son of God after death was not separated from His intellectual soul. Therefore, during those three days the Son of God was a man.⁴⁶

He responds to this objection by explaining Aristotle’s aphorism as synecdoche, as previously discussed, and concluding that during the triduum, Christ was *not* a human. Nevertheless, Thomas hedges his position on the humanity of the separated soul. In the very same article of the *tertia pars*, Thomas opines that the separated soul could be called a “dead human” (*homo mortuus*).⁴⁷ He concedes that we can speak of the soul separated from its body as a human, and even as the same human who walked the earth, so long as we qualify that the separated soul is a “dead” instance of a human.⁴⁸ Thomas elsewhere specifies that a dead human is called “human” only equivocally.⁴⁹

In his treatment of Christ in the tomb, Albert shares Thomas’s view in both points. He denies that, during the triduum, Christ was a human.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 50, a. 4, obj. 2.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 50, a. 4, corp.

⁴⁸ By refusing to speak of the separated soul as a person without the qualification of “dead,” Thomas affirms the dignity of the body, retains the bitterly high currency of death, and by extension enriches the mystery of the resurrection.

⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* III, q. 2, a. 2, corp.

⁵⁰ Albert *De Incarnatione*, tr. 3, q. 3, a. 3: “Contra: Mortuus homo non est homo; ergo in triduo non fuit homo. . . . Solutio: Dicimus, quod in triduo non fuit homo.”—“Objection:

He adds that a dead human is not a human except equivocally.⁵¹ This comes as a surprise, given Albert's capacious interpretation of Aristotle's aphorism that "the human as 'human' is the intellect alone." One would expect Albert to affirm that the separated soul is a human, since it is, after all, still an intellect. Why, then, does Albert deny that a separated soul is a human? This question must be evaluated in conjunction with Albert's denial that a separated soul is a person.

As for Christ in the tomb, Albert and Thomas remark on the marvel that Christ remained a person by virtue of the hypostatic union, despite the sundering of his humanity in death. Thomas takes as his proof-text the article of the Apostles' Creed that the Son of God suffered, died, was buried, descended into hell, and on the third day rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures.⁵² The subject of all these actions is the one divine person of the Son. The personhood of Jesus Christ differs from that of all human persons because it is not a human personhood. Rather, Jesus is a divine person with a human nature. Death cannot touch his single, divine personhood; it can only rend him asunder by cleaving the conjoined instrument of his humanity. By virtue of his immortal personhood, the Son is impermeable to death. In dying he destroyed death by withstanding the blow that destroys other persons.

Albert deploys three proof-texts in favor of the same position. In John 10:18, Jesus asserts that he has power to lay down his soul and to take it up again. Albert understands this through the Aristotelian distinction between act and potency. The soul actualizes the body while the body is in potency to be ensouled. When Jesus claims he has the power (or potency) to take up his soul again, Albert understands this to mean that the one person of the Word Incarnate retains the power (or potency) to be ensouled; that is, he retains union with his flesh even in death.⁵³ This is

A dead man is not a man; therefore, in the three days (between death and resurrection), he was not a man. . . . Solution: We say that in the three days he was not a man."

⁵¹ Albert, *Meteora* IV, tr. 4, chap. 7: "Homo enim mortuus cum non habeat nisi figuram hominis et non actum formae ipsius, aequivoce dicitur"—"For a dead man, not having the act of his own form except the figure of a man, is called a man only equivocally"; Albert, *De anima* II tr. 1 chap. 4: "Ideo separata anima ab huiusmodi corpore, corpus iam non erit habens esse et nomen, et ideo mortuus homo non est homo, neque caro eius est vere caro, sed potius corruptum a carne hominis"—"Therefore, once the soul is separated from such a body, the body will no longer have being or a proper name, and thus, a dead man is not a man, nor is his flesh truly flesh, but rather something corrupted from the flesh of a man."

⁵² Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 50, a. 3, resp.

⁵³ Albert, *Problemata. determinata.*, q. 1: "Hanc enim potestatem caro habuit, ut ibidem in

singular, and differs from every other human experience of death. Albert adduces passages from the Psalms and the Acts of the Apostles to support this reading. "You will not let your holy one see corruption" says the psalmist.⁵⁴ Similarly, Peter proclaims on Pentecost that the bonds of hell could not hold the Son's soul,⁵⁵ nor could death hold captive his flesh.⁵⁶ The Son remained personally united to both soul and body even in death.

An Individual Substance of a Rational Nature⁵⁷

Finally, we come to the famous definition of "person" established by Boethius and developed by Richard of St. Victor. How does Albert evaluate the separated soul in relation to these two definitions? Boethius's definition contains two basic elements. A person is (1) an individual substance (2) of a rational nature. Albert has committed himself to the rational nature of the soul. However, in his *Summa theologiae*, Albert denies that the separated soul is an individual substance.⁵⁸ Albert has elsewhere posited that the human intellect is both the *forma partis* and

glossa dicit Augustinus, virtute in se latens divinitatis."—"For the flesh had this power, as Augustine says in the gloss here, by virtue of the divinity hidden within it."

⁵⁴ Ps 16:10

⁵⁵ See Acts 2:24

⁵⁶ Albert, *Probl. determ.* q. 1: "Infernus deitatem tenere non poterat in anima et mors deitatem tenere non poterat in corpore, et sic non poterat videre per experimentum et dominium inferni vel mortis corruptionem"—"Hell could not hold divinity in the soul, and death could not hold divinity in the body; and so it could not experience or dominate the corruption of hell or death."

⁵⁷ Boethius, *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* 3.4, in *The Theological Tractates*, ed. Edward Kennard Rand, H. F. Stewart and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁵⁸ Albert, *Summa theologiae* I, tr. 10, q. 44, chap. 2, arg. 13 ("Videtur enim, quod secundum eas anima separata sit persona, est enim 'substantia individua rationalis naturae' et est 'existens per se solum secundum quendam intellectualis existentiae modum'")—"It seems, then, that according to these definitions, the separated soul is a person, for it is 'an individual substance of a rational nature' and 'exists by itself alone in a certain intellectual mode of existence'"; ad 13 ("Et ideo anima separata persona non est, <quia est> 'quiddam' ut forma"—"And thus the separated soul is not a person, because it is a 'thing' as a form"); ad 14 ("Ad id quod in communi obicitur contra omnes, dicendum, quod 'individua,' quod ponitur in diffinitione Boethii, et 'incommunicabile,' quod ponitur in diffinitione Richardi, omnem modum communicationis excludit secundum actum et potentiam, communicabile autem 'quiddam' est ut pars, et hoc nec individuum nec incommunicabile est. Et ideo anima separata persona non est, [quia est] 'quiddam' ut forma"—"To what is generally objected against all, it must be said: "Individual" in Boethius's definition and "incommunicable" in Richard's definition exclude all modes

the *forma totius* of the human. It both informs the body as *forma partis* and causes the being of the whole (*totius*). Albert has also posited that the *forma partis* and the *forma totius* differ only in concept. He states that the soul is the *forma totius* because it finalizes (*terminat*) all the human parts.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the soul is also a part. When separated from the body, it is not actively causing the being of the *totus*, since it causes this only when informing matter, and thus the whole is not present. The separated soul is not an individual substance in the sense of a whole, but only the individual form of the substance, the *forma partis*. Insofar as the soul is not actively finalizing all the human parts, including the material parts, the rational soul is reduced to a part. Death reduces the human soul to a part by stripping away every material part it unites. As a separated form, the soul is not a complete substance, and therefore does not conform to Boethius's definition of person: an individual substance of a rational nature.

Even if it be conceded that the soul is, in some sense, a substance, in that it "stands under" (*sub stans*) the "genus" of the human soul, it is not an individual substance distinct from the body when united to the body. The soul forms one single substance with the body. The *post mortem* soul is therefore not completely "individual." Its individuality is shareable to a body, even if only in potency.

Thomas too notes the rational nature of the separated soul, but similarly rejects that it could be called a full or complete individual substance.⁶⁰ He lays the contrary opinion at the feet of Hugh of St. Victor. Thomas insists that all "modern" people follow the opinion of Aristotle that a human is constituted by both soul and body together as a single substance. For this reason, the separated soul cannot be called an individual substance.

of communication in act and in potency. And thus the separated soul is not a person, because it is a "thing" as a form").

⁵⁹ Albert, *Meteora* IV, tr. 4, chap. 7: "Caro autem refertur ad formam manus vel capitis et caput ad formam et rationem formae totius, quae est anima rationalis in homine, quia forma totius compositi naturalis per modum proportionalem informat et terminat omnes partes dissimiles et similes" — "Flesh is referred to the form of the hand or head, and the head to the form and reason of the whole, which is the rational soul in man, because the form of the whole natural composite informs and finalizes all parts, both dissimilar and similar, in a proportional manner."

⁶⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *In III sent.*, d. 5, q. 3, a. 2, corp.

An Incommunicable Existence of a Rational Nature?⁶¹

Richard of St. Victor recognized that Boethius's definition requires nuance in application to the Trinity, as there is only one divine substance (understood as the essence) shared equally by the three divine persons. Richard crafted his definition of person according to the pattern of Boethius' definition, substituting "incommunicable existence" for "individual substance."⁶² This definition befits Trinitarian theology more neatly, while remaining broad enough to accommodate angelic and human persons as well. Thomas affirms that this is an important correction and improvement of the Boethian definition.⁶³ Richard offered another formulation of his definition of person: "something existing through itself alone according to a mode of rational existence."⁶⁴

Albert notes that, while the human soul exists through itself according to a mode of rational existence, it does not necessarily do so "alone," and certainly not as incommunicable. When united to a body, the human soul communicates its own first-person existence to the body, with whom it forms an individual substance. The living human body exists through the soul. Even if it be conceded that the soul united to the body still exists through itself, since the soul does not receive existence from the body, it is still not alone in its existence. Therefore, the human soul, as a form that naturally communicates existence to a body, does not conform to Richard of St. Victor's definition either.⁶⁵

Albert observes that both Boethius's and Richard's definitions exclude

⁶¹ Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* 4.18, 4.24 (PL 32).

⁶² Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* 4.18.

⁶³ See, for example Thomas Aquinas, *In I sent.*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 8; *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 2, ad 12; *ST I*, q. 29, a. 3, ad 4.

⁶⁴ Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* 4.24.

⁶⁵ For a treatment of this, see Hipp, *Doctrine of Personal Subsistence*, 51. Hipp helpfully outlines three degrees of incommunicability in Albert's understanding of the person. The first degree of incommunicability can be called "perseity" or particularity; it excludes universality. The second degree can be called completeness; it excludes communication to additional substantial parts. The third degree can be called individuality; it excludes assumption into the being of another individual. A human soul has perseity but does not exclude communication of existence to the body. Thus it is not incommunicable in the full sense. Human nature has completeness, but lacks perseity (viz. particularity) when not supposed. The humanity of Christ has particularity and completeness, but not individuality. It never has existence apart from union with the Second Person of the Trinity. Incommunicability for a person requires all three degrees. A separated soul, supposed human nature, and the humanity of Christ cannot be considered persons, because they each lack a different aspect of incommunicability.

any composition of act and potency from the concept of person.⁶⁶ A person could not be only the act or the potency that enters into composition with something else. A separated soul could inform a body through an act–potency relation, as it will in the resurrection, and so cannot be regarded as a person. As for the etymological definition of person, *per se una*,⁶⁷ which Albert attributes to Isidore of Seville,⁶⁸ “perseity” is a feature of an individual substance of a rational nature. The intellectual soul is *per se una*, but the living human body is one being only through the soul. The intellectual soul naturally communicates its being to the body, and so does not exhaust the totality of its “perseity” when separated from the body.

Exegetical Conclusions

Albert understands the Aristotelian aphorism “the human as ‘human’ is the intellect alone,” drawn from *Nicomachean ethics* 9–10, to entail more than mere synecdoche. He reads Aristotle’s analogy comparing the intellect to the ruler of a city as a description of the soul formally, that is, as the

⁶⁶ Albert, *Summa theologiae* I, tr. 10, q. 44, chap. 2, ad 14.

⁶⁷ See Albert, *Summa theologiae* I, tr. 10, q. 44, chap. 1, sol.: “Enim persona dicatur, ut dicit Isidorus, ‘per se una,’ per se autem ‘unum sit indivisum in se et divisum ab aliis’ divisione, quae essentialis et per se divisio est”—“A person, says Isidore, is called ‘one through itself,’ and what is ‘one through itself’ is indivisible in itself and divided from others by a division that is essential and through itself.” However, Isidore of Seville did not actually describe “person” in these terms. Instead, Isidore says that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each *in se* (*Etymologiarum Libri* VII, chap. 4, nos. 1–2 [PL 82:272]). Alexander of Hales attributes the *per se una* etymology to Isidore (*Summa Fratris Alexandri* I, no. 571, in *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis Minorum Summa theologica*. ed. Bernardinus Klumper. Ad Claras Aquas [Quaracchi] prope [Florence Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924]). Subsequent scholastics, including Albert, echo this attribution. The precise origin of the *per se una* etymology of *persona* remains to be clarified. However, Gilbert of Poitiers and Alan of Lille, two pre-Halenian Scholastics use this etymology in close chronological proximity to each other; see Gilbert, *Expositio in Boethii librum Contra Eutycen et Nestorium* chap. 3. For a critical edition of this work, see Nicholas M. Häring, “The Commentary of Gilbert, Bishop of Poitiers, on Boetius’ *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*” in *Archives d’histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire Du Moyen Âge* 21 (1954): 241–357. For Alan’s use of this phrase, see *Regulae caelestis iuris*, ed. N. M. Häring, *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, vol. 48 (1982), 97–226 (*regula* 32).

⁶⁸ Albert, *De sacramentis*, tr. 9, q. 4, a. 2: “Et si quaeritur, quomodo sumitur ibi persona, dicendum, quod sumitur pro hypostasi sive pro individuo rationalis naturae, secundum quod dicitur persona ‘per se una’”—“And if it is asked how ‘person’ is understood there, it must be said that it is taken as hypostasis or an individual of rational nature, according to the definition of person as ‘one through itself.’”

principle by which the whole human is unified. This reading differs from that of Thomas Aquinas, who understands Aristotle to be speaking of the soul “materially” as the most noble part of a human, and therefore in a synecdochic manner. Albert’s interpretation leads him to associate personhood more completely with the intellect than does Thomas. Whereas Thomas describes the intellect as the “more principle part” of a human, Albert conceives of the intellectual soul as the *forma totius* of the human being, albeit ceasing to cause (and be) this *forma totius* in death.

Thomas and Albert present parallel analyses of Jesus’s rebuttal of the Sadducees that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive. It is difficult to identify significant interpretive differences between Albert and Thomas in their exegesis of these passages in the Synoptic Gospels. Neither Albert nor Thomas understands this verse to entail that the separated souls of the saints are humans or persons. Both understand this verse to entail multiple doctrines including the survival of the intellectual soul *post mortem*, the eventual resurrection of the dead, and the saints’ present enjoyment of the beatific vision.

In their interpretation of biblical and creedal texts, both Albert and Thomas affirm that the humanity of Christ was rent asunder by his death on the Cross and hence that Christ was not a human during the triduum. Both Albert and Thomas concede the phrase “dead human” to speak of a separated soul, but stipulate that this use of “human” is equivocal. Albert goes further than Thomas in explicitly denying that a separated soul is a person. He tests the separated soul against Boethius and Richard of St. Victor’s definitions of person and finds that the separated human soul falls short of either definition.

Systematic Conclusions

In the system of Albert the Great, the human soul is first and foremost an intellect. It is joined to the body as form. However, *forma corporis* more accurately refers to the mode of the union between the human soul and body, rather than comprising an exhaustive definition of the human soul itself. The most remarkable and distinctive feature of the human soul is its intellectual nature, by which it transcends the body and by which the human is a person.

The human person is to be identified with the intellectual soul for two reasons. First, and more importantly, the intellectual soul unites the various parts of a human, including the material parts, and disposes them to be one substance with the intellect as more than mere instruments.

The intellectual soul finalizes all parts of a human, causing the being of the whole person. Second, the intellect is the highest and noblest part of a human.

This results in a paradox: the intellectual soul is both a part and, in a sense, the whole human being. The intellectual soul extends being to the bodily parts, incorporating them as one substance. Death results in the reduction of the intellectual soul to a mere part. When separated from the body by death, the intellectual soul cannot be regarded as a human, or as a person, because it ceases to perform its function of finalizing the human parts and causing the being of the whole person. The separated human intellect remains the whole human person only in potency. While Albert considers the *forma partis* and the *forma totius* to differ only in concept so long as the intellectual soul informs the body, the intellect ceases to cause the *forma totius* at death. The powers and experiences proper to a person, such as acts of knowing, loving, beholding God, being deified, and interceding with God for the Church remain.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, this separated soul is only a potential person, albeit with some personal powers actualized. In sum, although Albert associates human personhood more completely with the intellect than does Thomas, he also goes farther than Thomas by denying unambiguously that the separated soul is a person. N·V

⁶⁹ Albert, *De sacramentis*, tr. 8, q. 8, a. 1; *Super Matt* 9; *Super Isa* 62.