

The Trinitarian Character of Christ's Kingship in Aquinas

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Introduction

As Gilles Emery has labored to show, Aquinas's entire theological project is fundamentally rooted in the mystery of the Trinity. The task remains for readers of Aquinas today to seek the Trinity at the heart of every aspect of Aquinas's thought.¹ This intimately Trinitarian understanding of Aquinas's theology has been brought to bear on his Christology in a general way by the work of Dominic Legge, who, contra the objections of Karl Rahner, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, and Walter Kasper, has shown the deeply Trinitarian structure of Aquinas's Christology.² Building upon this project, the task for students of Aquinas today is to uncover the Trinity at the heart of particular areas of Aquinas's Christology. In this essay, we will do just that by demonstrating how, for Aquinas, Christ's kingship expresses his identity as the Word and Son of the Father who breathes (along with the Father)

¹ See Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 419: "It remains to read the rest of the *Summa* in the light of the analyses offered by the treatise on the Triune God. Trinitarian theology will prove how fruitful it can be when other fields of theological enquiry draw from it. The Christology and soteriology of the *Summa* are in particular need of revisiting in the light of Trinitarian doctrine."

² See Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), esp. 2–3 for an account of the accusations against Aquinas's Christology as being a-Trinitarian.

the Holy Spirit. This will be shown by examining Aquinas's discussions of Christ's teaching authority and promulgation of the New Law. Both teaching and promulgation are, as we shall see, kingly actions (in addition to being prophetic). Thus, Christ's teaching and promulgating, which are rooted in his Trinitarian identity, are actions of Christ as king. Beyond building on the work of Emery and Legge, the notion of the Trinitarian character of Christ's kingship complements the work of Michael Dauphinais, who has in recent years demonstrated the importance of Christ as the revealer and teacher of revelation in the thought of Aquinas.³ This will also complement the recent work of Guy Mansini who has shown the Trinitarian roots of Christ's authority.⁴

To show the connection between Christ's kingship and his Trinitarian identity, I will open this essay with a brief presentation of contemporary thought concerning Christ's kingship, focusing on Christ's kingship as considered in sociopolitical and soteriological discussions. Then I will turn to Aquinas by discussing Christ's teaching authority and how it relates to his kingship and ultimately to his identity as the Word of the Father. Afterward, I will treat Christ as the promulgator of the New Law. In doing so, I will consider the Trinitarian mode of the promulgation of the New Law and how that connects to Christ's kingship and Trinitarian identity. I will conclude by placing Aquinas's thought in dialogue with contemporary Catholic understandings of Christ's kingship to show how Aquinas's Trinitarian understanding of Christ's kingship can contribute to contemporary discussions of Christ as king and provide a basis for dogmatic reflection on Christ's kingship.

Contemporary Reflection on Christ's Kingship

In the twentieth century, Christ's kingship was reflected upon in two contexts, which I will refer to as the "sociopolitical" and the "soteriological."⁵

³ Michael Dauphinais, "The Place of Christ and the Biblical Narrative in Aquinas's Theology of Revelation," in *Thomas Aquinas, Biblical Theologian*, ed. Roger W. Nutt and Michael Dauphinais (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2020), 1–34.

⁴ Guy Mansini, "The Authority and Charity of Christ," in *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer, and Roger W. Nutt (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2021), 139–70.

⁵ My distinguishing these two groups' conceptions of Christ's kingship does not mean that the sociopolitical expression has nothing to do with soteriology or the soteriological with the sociopolitical. Indeed, in all of these authors, the two are integrally related. However, the difference is the context and the aims in which Christ's kingship is employed.

The sociopolitical conception of Christ's kingship sprung from Pius XI's 1925 encyclical *Quas Primas*. Pius sought to combat the growing secularism after the First World War by instituting the new feast of Christ the King. In the first place, Pius grounds Christ's kingship in his perfection.⁶ Pius distinguishes between the perfection of Christ's intellect and the perfection of his will. Due to Christ's knowledge and his being Truth itself, he is said to reign in human hearts, since all minds owe obedience to the truth.⁷ Furthermore, Christ's will is perfect with respect to the perfection of his love. Christ's love is perfect, and thus Pius can refer to him as the "King of hearts."⁸ Aside from Christ's perfection, Pius grounds Christ's kingship in the hypostatic union. Christ *received* his kingdom and power insofar as he is human. Nevertheless, this is not divorced from Christ's divinity, since this same power belongs to him as the creator of the world.⁹ Pius goes on to describe the nature of Christ's power as king. He identifies three essential powers of Lordship that Christ possesses. Firstly, Christ has judicial power.¹⁰ In addition to his judicial power, Christ has the power of rewarding and punishing. This is the power that will be most manifest at the end of time. This power, Pius notes, is intimately connected to

⁶ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* (1927), §7: "It has long been a common custom to give to Christ the metaphorical title of 'King,' because of the high degree of perfection whereby he excels all creatures."

⁷ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, §7: "So he is said to reign 'in the hearts of men,' both by reason of the keenness of his intellect and the extent of his knowledge, and also because he is very truth, and it is from him that truth must be obediently received by all mankind."

⁸ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, §7: "He is King of hearts, too, by reason of his 'charity which exceedeth all knowledge.'" Pius makes a similar argument in his encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio* (1922): "For Jesus Christ reigns over the minds of individuals by His teachings, in their hearts by His love, in each one's life by the living according to His law and the imitating of His example" (§47).

⁹ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, §7: "But if we ponder this matter more deeply, we cannot but see that the title and the power of King belongs to Christ as man in the strict and proper sense too. For it is only as man that he may be said to have received from the Father 'power and glory and a kingdom,' since the Word of God, as consubstantial with the Father, has all things in common with him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created." See further §13: "The foundation of this power and dignity of Our Lord is rightly indicated by Cyril of Alexandria. 'Christ,' he says, 'has dominion over all creatures, a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped, but his by essence and by nature.' His kingship is founded upon the ineffable hypostatic union."

¹⁰ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, §14: "He claimed judicial power as received from his Father, when the Jews accused him of breaking the Sabbath by the miraculous cure of a sick man."

Christ's power to judge, since it is the role of a judge to deal out rewards and punishments.¹¹ Lastly, Pius describes Christ as having executive power, since "all must obey his commands."¹²

In the years following the publication of *Quas Primas*, numerous authors followed its lead in connecting Christ's kingship to its sociopolitical relevance. For example, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange's essay "La Royauté universelle de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ" frames Christ's kingship in similar terms as *Quas Primas*. For Garrigou-Lagrange, Christ's kingship has a threefold extension. It is universal, which necessitates its extension to political affairs, governing them in accordance with "the principles of Christian law." Christ's spiritual kingship is also exercised by the hierarchy of the Church chiefly through the administration of the sacraments. Lastly, Christ's kingship is exercised in the hearts of the faithful through grace and the gifts of faith and wisdom by the operation of the Spirit.¹³ Denis Fahey, in his *The Kingship of Christ according to the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas*, expresses Christ's kingship in a similar way. Fahey classifies Christ's kingship in terms of the grace of his headship. Christ's kingship is particularly expressed in his government and direction: "The role of justification and sanctification is that of Christ as Priest, while the second prerogative of government and direction constitutes the spiritual Kingship of Christ."¹⁴ This government is spiritual due to the supernatural end of humanity.¹⁵ However, due to the temporal nature of humanity *in via*, Christ's kingship must extend to temporal affairs.¹⁶ The thought of Pius XI, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Fahey centers on Christ's kingship as expressed ultimately in the extension of his kingship into political affairs and the hearts of the faithful. This is rooted in his divinity and the grace of his humanity as head of the Church.¹⁷

Another group, which I will call the soteriological conception of

¹¹ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, §14: "In this power is included the right of rewarding and punishing all men living, for this right is inseparable from that of judging."

¹² Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, §14: "Executive power, too, belongs to Christ, for all must obey his commands; none may escape them, nor the sanctions he has imposed."

¹³ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "La Royauté universelle de notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ," *La Vie Spirituelle* 73 (October 1925): 18–20.

¹⁴ Denis Fahey, *The Kingship of Christ: According to the Principles of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1931), 21.

¹⁵ Fahey, *Kingship of Christ*, 22.

¹⁶ Fahey, *Kingship of Christ*, 23–24.

¹⁷ We see this presentation of Christ's kingship in terms of his power in Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1951), 412, 428.

Christ's kingship, treats it in the context of the three *munera*: priest, prophet, and king. The retrieval of this threefold *munera* in sacramental and ecclesiological thought was inaugurated by Yves Congar.¹⁸ The emphasis on the *munera* by Thomistic theologians, most especially Charles Journet, Jean-Pierre Torrell, Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole, and Matthew Levering, considers Aquinas's reflection on Christ as anointed priest, prophet, and king by the Holy Spirit and the faithful's participation in the three *munera*.¹⁹ Journet, for instance, distinguishes between three kingships in Christ: divine, spiritual, and temporal. Christ possesses divine kingship in virtue of his divinity. His spiritual kingship is possessed insofar as he possesses the fullness of grace which is communicated to humanity.²⁰ Lastly, because of Christ's infused knowledge, Christ has a temporal kingship over the world. This would allow him, for example, to depose kings. Yet this power was never exercised by Christ.²¹ While, in the mind of Journet, Christ's spiritual kingship is shared with the Church, Christ's divine and temporal kingships are not.²²

Scholars have furthermore noted that Christ's kingship is expressed in his role as the new David over the new Israel.²³ Levering, in his *Christ's*

¹⁸ Yves Congar, "Sur la Trilogie: prophète-roi-prêtre," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 67, no. 1 (1983): 97–115.

¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 2, *Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington DC: Catholic University Of America Press, 2003), 149–52; Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole, "Les tria munera Christi: contribution de Saint Thomas à la recherche contemporaine," *Revue thomiste* 99, no. 1 (1999): 59–74; Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 66–79.

²⁰ See Charles Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné essai de théologie spéculative*, vol. 1, *La hiérarchie apostolique*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Journet* (Saint-Maurice: Editions Saint-Augustin, 1998), 315: "One can consider Christ insofar as he is man as charged with communicating spiritual life to the world. The capital grace which wonderfully filled his heart constituted him from the outset king of the whole supernatural order, having the mission to speak the speculative truths to be received and the practical orders to be carried out." All translations from French are my own unless otherwise indicated.

²¹ See Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, 316–18.

²² See Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, 318: "Only the second, the 'spiritual' kingship, concerning spiritual things both by nature and by occasion, has passed to the Church, in a measure that remains to be specified."

²³ See, for Example, Aquinas's commentary on Psalm 44: "In the Old Covenant, priests and kings were anointed, as is written about David in 1 Samuel 16 and about Solomon in 1 Kings 1. And the prophets were anointed, as is written about Elisha, who was anointed by Elijah in 1 Kings 19. And these things are fitting for Christ, who was a king. *He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever* (Luke 1:32). He was also a priest who offered himself to God as a sacrifice (cf. Eph 5:2). Likewise, he was a prophet who

fulfillment of Torah and Temple, focuses in on the biblical foundations of the *munera* in the thought of Aquinas. He presents Christ the king, and the other two *munera*, in terms of his fulfillment of the law.²⁴ Christ's kingship fulfills the judicial precepts of the Old Law, most especially in his Passion, by establishing "justice between human beings by undergoing more than sufficient suffering for all sins."²⁵ This establishment of justice between God and humanity in Christ's Passion points forward toward Christ's glorification and the glorification of the blessed in heaven as is seen from Christ's transfiguration.²⁶ The possession of beatitude constitutes Christ's kingdom both in the heart of Christ and in the hearts of the faithful.²⁷ It also grounds Christ's role as judge of the living and the dead, and thus his kingship.²⁸ In his recent book, *Reconfiguring Thomistic Christology*, Levering explores this biblically understood kingship of Christ by examining the typological relationship between Christ and David.²⁹ In the soteriological context, therefore, Christ's kingship is conceived of as rooted in his grace and is for the purpose of fulfilling the Law and the salvation of humanity.

Despite all of this, the relationship between Christ's kingship and the Trinity has not been adequately explored. This Trinitarian understanding of Christ's kingship, as we shall see, undergirds both the sociopolitical and soteriological understandings of that kingship.

Christ's Teaching Authority and His Kingship

Using the thought of Aquinas, let us peer more deeply into the Trinitarian character of Christ's kingship. The fullest treatment of Christ's kingship in the work of Aquinas can be found in his sermon *Ecce rex tuus* delivered in November of 1271.³⁰ Commenting on the word "king" (*rex*) in the passage

prophesied the way of salvation. *A prophet shall God raise up to you of your own brethren* (Acts 7:37; Deut 18:15)" (*Super Psalmos* 44, no. 455, in *Commentary on Psalms: Rigans Montes; Hic Est Liber*, trans. Albert Marie Surmanski and Maria Veritas Marks, Latin/English edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas 29 [Steubenville, OH: Aquinas Institute and Emmaus Academic, 2021]); Latin and English available also from the Aquinas Institute at aquinas.cc).

²⁴ Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 67.

²⁵ Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 69.

²⁶ Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 72.

²⁷ Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 73.

²⁸ Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 72–73.

²⁹ Matthew Levering, *Reconfiguring Thomistic Christology*, *Current Issues in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 227–84.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *The Academic Sermons*, trans. Mark-Robin Hoogland, *The Fathers*

"Behold your king comes to you, meek" from Zech 9:9, Aquinas mentions four requirements for kingship, all of which are possessed by Christ.³¹ The fourth criterion given by Aquinas is that a king must possess an equity of justice (*iustitiae equitatem*), since otherwise the king would not be a king, but a tyrant.³² As opposed to a tyrant who orders a kingdom to his own private good, a king directs his kingdom toward the common good.³³ In the case of Christ, Aquinas argues in his treatise *De regno* that Christ's kingship is characterized by his leading us toward the common good, which is nothing other than our supernatural end. This is why, for Aquinas, it was fitting for God to become man, since it is only God who can lead us to our supernatural end.³⁴ While earthly kings can direct their people toward a

of the Church, mediaeval continuation 11 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 62n1; J. Leclercq, "Un sermon inédit de Saint Thomas sur la royauté du Christ," *Revue thomiste* 46, no. 1 (1946): 152–66.

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Ecce rex tuus*, in Leonine ed. 44/1 (*Sermones*), 62. As Randall B. Smith has shown, Aquinas in his sermons is not providing an exegesis of the text of the opening verse of Scripture. Rather, he is using this opening verse as a mnemonic device for the benefit of his hearers (*Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*, Renewal within Tradition [Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2016], 1–19).

³² Thomas Aquinas, *Ecce rex tuus*: "Fourth, a king must be equitable, because otherwise he would be a tyrant. For a tyrant turns everything that is in his kingdom to his own benefit, whereas a king organizes his kingdom in view of the common good. Thus we read in Pr 29:4: *A just king raises up the land; a greedy man destroys it*. But this One does not come to seek after his own benefit, but after yours, because *the Son of man has not come to be served but to serve* [Matt 20:28]. And he who has come to serve surely came to give his life for the redemption of many [Matt 20:28], and to lead the redeemed to eternal glory, to which he may also lead us, et cetera" (Leonine ed. 44/1:63–64) The Leonine ed. text of *Ecce rex tuus* includes texts from two manuscripts (see 44/1:51–54). The first is from the manuscript Soissons, Bibl. mun. 125, fols. 84rb–87vb (hereafter abbreviated "Ss" based on the Leonine abbreviation). The second is the manuscripts Salamanca, Univ. 2187, fols. 169va–173va and Sevilla, Cabildo 57.2.24, fols. 121ra–124vb (hereafter abbreviated as Σ). Trans. from Hoogland (trans.), *Academic Sermons*, 70. All English citations of *Ecce rex tuus* will be taken from Hoogland's translation, which is based on Ss. The differences between the manuscripts do not affect the argument of this paper.

³³ See also Thomas Aquinas, *De regno ad regem Cypri* I, ch. 1, in Leonine ed. 42. According to William A. McCormick, this idea of tyranny as being ordered to a private good is heavily Augustinian in origin: "In distinguishing between the proper good of the liber and the private good of the tyrant, Aquinas accepts the reality of injustice and gestures at Augustine's privative theory of evil: the tyrant's injustice is a privation of the common good in book XII of *The City of God*" (*The Christian Structure of Politics: On the De Regno of Thomas Aquinas* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022], 40).

³⁴ *De regno* II, ch. 3. Jean Leclercq, commenting on the aforementioned passage from *Ecce*

natural common good, Christ, being God, can direct his people toward their supernatural good. According to Fahey, this classifies Christ's kingship as spiritual, since it belongs to Christ to direct the faithful in the Church to their supernatural end.³⁵ This authority to direct toward humanity's supernatural end is shared with the Church, most especially the pope, since, as William A. McCormick rightly notes, a merely human king does not have the wherewithal to guide his subjects toward their supernatural end—only the grace flowing from Christ can accomplish this.³⁶ This is an important point for Journet as well, who, as we saw, conceived of Christ's spiritual kingship flowing from his grace as shared with the Church.³⁷

Furthermore, in *De regno*, Aquinas specifies this notion of the common good by connecting the idea of directing toward the common good belonging to a king with instructing others in truth, if the good consists in the "good of knowing the truth." If truth is the good to which the king's subjects are to be directed, then, according to Aquinas, the king would have the "office of a teacher."³⁸ This exemplifies the spiritual nature of Christ's kingship, since the good to which Christ's subjects are directed—the truth—is a spiritual rather than a temporal good.³⁹ Teaching, therefore, for Aquinas, can be a kingly act in circumstances where *truth* is the common good to which people need to be directed.

rex tuus, argues that this was the purpose of Christ's coming: "Christ seeks the good of all mankind, for this is the purpose of his coming: to give his life to redeem men and lead them to the glory of heavenly life" (*L'idée de la royauté du Christ au Moyen Age*, Unam sanctam [Paris: Cerf, 1959], 81).

³⁵ See Fahey, *Kingship of Christ*, 22: "To Jesus Christ then as King, Spiritual Ruler, it appertains to set before the faithful the common end they should attain and to point out to them the means of attaining it, thus guiding the exterior and visible movement of the whole mystical Body to Eternal Happiness."

³⁶ See McCormick, *Christian Structure*, 169–70: "The earthly king cannot fulfill man's final end of beatitude, because grace is required to do so. Thus, the church has been given the grace to govern man toward beatitude. For that reason, kings do not govern this spiritual kingdom; rather, priests are entrusted with this mission, and all kings are subject to the head priest, the pope."

³⁷ See notes 20 and 22 above.

³⁸ See *De regno* II, ch. 3: "If the good of the knowledge of truth were of such a kind that the multitude might attain to it, the king would have to be a teacher" (*On Kingship, to the King of Cyprus*, ed. Ignatius Theodore Eschmann, trans. Gerald B. Phelan [Westport, CT: Hyperion, 1979], 60).

³⁹ See Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, 254: "This, then, is the role of Christ the King. In virtue of his spiritual kingship, he declares not only the things to be done, but also the things to be believed, which, coming from a political principality, would be intolerable; and he declares not only simple and natural things, but foolish and supernatural things: the Trinity, the redemptive Incarnation, the Eucharist, poverty, obedience, purity."

For Aquinas, in the case of Christ, since the good to which he directs his people is truth, Christ's kingship is grounded in his teaching ministry. As Paweł Klimczak and Michael Sherwin have made clear, the idea of Christ as teacher, especially in Aquinas's commentary on John, and his commentary on Matthew, is a central theme of his Christology.⁴⁰ This can be seen in Aquinas's reading of John 18:37. In this text of the Evangelist, Christ himself links his kingship with his testifying to the truth: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice" (RSVCE trans.). Aquinas, in commenting on Augustine's reading of this Johannine passage, affirms that Christ's kingship is not physical; rather it is spiritual, since Christ was born to testify to the truth: "He explains this saying, and for this I have come into the world, by physical birth—for this is the way he came into the world . . . to bear witness to the truth, that is, to myself, who am the truth." Furthermore, one can see in Aquinas's exegesis of this passage, that he roots this testimony of Christ in the fact that he is both Truth and Light itself: "And to the extent that I manifest myself, the Truth, to that extent I establish my kingdom. For this cannot be done without manifesting the truth, which can only be done fittingly by me, who am the light."⁴¹ Christ's carnal birth was for the

⁴⁰ See Paweł Klimczak, *Christus magister: Le Christ maître dans les commentaires Évangéliques de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Studia friburgensia 117 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2013); Michael Sherwin, "Christ the Teacher in St. Thomas's Commentary on the Gospel of John," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 173–93. For studies on Christ's teaching in general, see Michael Dauphinais, "Christ the Teacher: The Pedagogy of the Incarnation according to Saint Thomas Aquinas" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2000); Michael S. Hahn, "Thomas Aquinas's Presentation of Christ as Teacher," *Thomist* 83, no. 1 (2019): 57–89.

⁴¹ See *Super Ioan* 18, lec. 6, no. 2359: "In one way by Augustine, so that the kingdom of Christ is his faithful, as was said above. Thus, Christ reigns over his faithful; and he came into the world to gather his faithful to himself and establish a kingdom: 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom' (Lk 19:12). The meaning then is this: For this I was born, that is, for this purpose I was born in the flesh. He explains this saying, and for this I have come into the world, by physical birth—for this is the way he came into the world, 'God sent his Son into the world' (Gal 4:4) to bear witness to the truth, that is, to myself, who am the truth, 'Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true' (8:14). And to the extent that I manifest myself, the Truth, to that extent I establish my kingdom. For this cannot be done without manifesting the truth, which can only be done fittingly by me, who am the light: 'The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known' (1:18); 'It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit' (Heb 2:3)" (Latin in

sake of establishing his kingdom by means of bearing witness to the truth, which is nothing other than himself, since he is Truth. This, as Mansini has noted, gives “a certain absolute and self-authenticating character” to Christ’s teaching.⁴²

Furthermore, continuing his reading of this passage, Aquinas notes that Christ’s kingship is spread by the proclamation of the truth, and thus those who hear the truth both outwardly and inwardly belong to the kingdom of Christ.⁴³ Those who hear the voice of truth preached to them, and respond by faith and love, belong to the kingdom of Christ. Christ’s proclamation of the truth, and thus his teaching the truth, establishes his kingdom in the hearts of the faithful who hear the voice of truth. His kingship, therefore, is intimately rooted in his office as teacher. As noted above, when the good to which a king directs his people is the good of truth, the king holds the office of the teacher. In the case of Christ, since the good to which he directs us is himself, who is Truth, his kingly office is a teaching office. Therefore, in the thought of Aquinas, for Christ to rule is for him to teach.

Aquinas, furthermore, grounds Christ’s ministry of proclaiming the truth (teaching) in his personal identity as the Image and Word of the Father. Reflecting on the personal name of the Son—Word—Aquinas observes that a central notion of “word” is manifestation. Words, as signs, function to manifest what they signify.⁴⁴ Thus, for Aquinas, the notion

Marietti ed. 5th ed.; trans. Fabian R. Larcher and James A. Weisheipl in *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13–21*, Thomas Aquinas in Translation [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010], 222; all further English of *Super Ioan* will be from this ed.).

⁴² See Mansini, “Authority and Charity,” 145: “Just as the manifestation of the Father is by his Word, so the manifestation of a divine Person to us must similarly be achieved by speech and action that is informed by speech. Such manifestation, however, will have a certain absolute and self-authenticating character to it, as noted previously.”

⁴³ See *Super Ioan* 18, lec. 6, no. 2361: “Now he shows over whom he reigns. Before (10:11), he said that he was a shepherd and those under him were sheep; that is the same as what he is saying here, that he is a king and his subjects are the kingdom. This is so because a king is to his subjects as a shepherd to his sheep; and just as a shepherd feeds his sheep—‘Should not shepherds feed the sheep?’ (Ez 34:2)—so a king supports his subjects. He said in particular, ‘My sheep hear my voice’ (10:27); accordingly, he also says here, every one who is of the truth hears my voice, not just outwardly, but with an interior belief and love, and carrying this out in action: ‘Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me’ (6:45). But why does a person hear my voice? Because such a one is of the truth, which is God.”

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 4, a. 3, ad 6: “When Augustine says that the Son ‘is called a Word for the same reason that He is called an image,’ he is referring to the

of Word within the Trinity bears the ideas not only of origin and of procession, but also of manifestation or communication. Wherever there is a word, the word manifests that which it signifies. This is seen in the very life of the Trinity, where the Word of the Father eternally manifests the Father to himself.⁴⁵ The personal property of the Son as Word is also accompanied in the thought of Aquinas, as Emery describes, with the Son's relation toward the Father as proceeding from the Father.⁴⁶ However, when the Word became flesh, this eternal manifestation was expressed humanly, by virtue of his human nature, in Christ's teaching ministry, as Aquinas expresses in commenting on John 17:6: "This is the characteristic work of the Son of God, who is the Word, and the characteristic of a word is to manifest the one speaking it."⁴⁷ Thus, according to Aquinas, Christ's ministry of teaching is the human expression of Christ's personal identity as

distinguishing personal characteristic of the Son, which remains the same whether He is called, because of it, the Son, the Word, or the Image of the Father. But in the manner of signifying, these three predicates are not of the same type, for word implies not only the notion of origin and imitation but also that of manifestation. Consequently, the Word is, in a fashion, the word of creatures, because creatures are manifested by means of the Word" (Leonine ed. 22; trans. Robert W. Mulligan in *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Library of Living Catholic Thought [Albany, NY: Preserving Christian Publications, 1993; emphasis Mulligan].

⁴⁵ *De ver.*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 5.

⁴⁶ See Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 203–4: "St Thomas' speculative work on the Trinitarian mystery helps him out here: he can account for the Word's achieving this by means of the two central planks of his doctrine of the divine person. First, the personal property of the Word: since he is properly the Word, it comes down to the Son to unveil the Father. Second, the Word's relation towards the Father: 'everything which is from another discloses that from which it comes: likewise, the Son discloses the Father because he is from the Father'" (quoting *Super Ioan* 16, lec. 14, no. 2107). For how this is present in Aquinas's commentary on John, see Gilles Emery, "Biblical Exegesis and the Speculative Doctrine of the Trinity in St. Thomas Aquinas's Commentary on St. John," in Dauphinais and Levering, *Reading John*, 23–61.

⁴⁷ *Super Ioan* 17, lec. 2, no. 2194: "Chrysostom reads it this way. I say that I have finished the work you gave me to do. What this work was he adds by saying, I have manifested your name to the men. . . . This is the characteristic work of the Son of God, who is the Word, and the characteristic of a word is to manifest the one speaking it: 'No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Mt 11:27); 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known' (1:18)." For further reading on the centrality of Christ's teaching in Aquinas's thought see Klimczak, *Christus Magister*; Gilles Emery, "Le Verbe-vérité et l'Esprit de vérité," *Revue thomiste* 104 (2004): 167–204; Hahn, "Thomas Aquinas's Presentation." Emery argues that Aquinas's presentation of the Son as Word might be more developed in his commentary on John than the *Summa* ("Biblical Exegesis," 26).

the Image and Word of the Father.⁴⁸ Klimczak has noted: “The Son-Word manifests and reveals the Father by reason of his eternal generation. Even more: the Word is this manifestation in person, as Thomas explicitly says.”⁴⁹ Not only is Christ’s teaching revelatory with respect to its content, but its very act is revelatory, since it expresses the identity of Christ as Word.⁵⁰

Given this link between Christ’s kingship and his teaching authority, we can say that Christ’s kingship, as expressed in his teaching, reveals Christ as the Image and Word of the Father. Christ is the king who leads us toward the good of truth. This teaching ministry expresses his personal identity as the second person of the Trinity, and thus leads us to a knowledge of the Trinitarian persons. Therefore, by way of his kingly teaching office, Christ’s kingship reveals to us his Trinitarian identity as the Word and Image of the Father.

The Promulgation of the New Law

The idea of Christ as teacher is fundamentally connected in the mind of Aquinas with the New Law. In question 42 of the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae* (*ST*), Aquinas links Christ’s teaching with the New Law when he discusses whether Christ’s teaching should have been written down. Aquinas holds that it was due to the dignity and perfection of Christ as a teacher that he did not write down his teaching. The reason for this is that, while the ordinary teacher moves the intellects of the students by his words, Christ, being the most excellent teacher, can move the intellects and the hearts of his students directly by imprinting his own teaching onto their hearts: “Consequently it was fitting that Christ, as the most excellent of teachers, should adopt that manner of teaching whereby His doctrine is imprinted on the hearts of His hearers.”⁵¹ The ultimate goal of teaching

⁴⁸ Mansini has recently put this idea in this way: “Just as the manifestation of the Father is by his Word, so that manifestation of a divine Person to us must similarly be achieved by speech and action that is informed by speech.” Mansini, “Authority and Charity,” 145.

⁴⁹ Klimczak, *Christus Magister*, 43.

⁵⁰ We shall see this further on when we consider Christ’s interior teaching by means of an interior wisdom.

⁵¹ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] III, q. 42, a. 4: “I answer that, it was fitting that Christ should not commit His doctrine to writing. First, on account of His dignity: for the more excellent the teacher, the more excellent should be his manner of teaching. Consequently it was fitting that Christ, as the most excellent of teachers, should adopt that manner of teaching whereby His doctrine is imprinted on the hearts of His hearers; wherefore it is written (Mt 7:29) that He was teaching them as one

is for the teacher's teaching to be imprinted on the hearts and minds of his students. While this normally takes place by an external teaching combined with an internal assent of the student, in the case of Christ, he can work directly on the hearts of his students.

For Aquinas, the inner impression of Christ's teaching has a filial and a pneumatological dimension.⁵² The filial dimension of Christ's teaching is the notion of Christ acting as the inner teacher by illuminating the soul interiorly.⁵³ The notion of Christ as illuminating the soul is particularly strong in Aquinas's commentary on John.⁵⁴ Christ teaches from within by the giving of an interior wisdom which instructs the faithful.⁵⁵ This illumination by wisdom, as Klimczak notes, "belongs to Christ as the Word and the Truth."⁵⁶ Christ's interior teaching by wisdom thus instructs the faithful in the fact that he is the Word and the Truth of the Father. This wisdom, as we shall see, relates directly to Christ's invisible mission in the souls of the faithful.

The pneumatological dimension of Christ's interior teaching expresses Christ's interior teaching by the sending and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful. In his response to the second objection of article 4 of question 42, Aquinas identifies the teaching which is imprinted

having power. And so it was that among the Gentiles, Pythagoras and Socrates, who were teachers of great excellence, were unwilling to write anything. For writings are ordained, as to an end, unto the imprinting of doctrine in the hearts of the hearers" (all English quotes from *ST* are from the Dominican Fathers trans.; a good edition of the Latin *Editio altera emendata* of *ST* has been done by the Piana Commission of Canada [Ottawa, 1953]).

⁵² This is especially the case in Aquinas's commentary on the John, as Bruce Marshall has shown ("What Does the Spirit Have to Do?," in Dauphinais and Levering, *Reading John*, 62–77).

⁵³ For more on the manners in which Christ teaches interiorly, especially in Aquinas's commentary on John, see Klimczak, *Christus Magister*, 175–209.

⁵⁴ See Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 201: "The John Commentary, in particular, pays close attention to the role of the Word as illuminator. This action on the part of the Word is not restricted to revelation in this strict sense, but concerns, in the strict instance, understanding in a more general way."

⁵⁵ See *Super Ioan* 3, lec. 1, no. 428: "For to come as a teacher from God is common to all good prelates: 'I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will feed you with knowledge and doctrine,' as it says in Jeremiah (3:15). Therefore, this is not unique to Christ even though Christ taught in a manner unlike other men. For some teachers teach only from without, but Christ also instructs within, because 'He was the true light, which enlightens every man' (above 1:9); thus he alone gives wisdom: 'I will give you an eloquence and a wisdom' (Lk 21:15), and this is something that no mere man can say."

⁵⁶ Klimczak, *Christus Magister*, 179.

onto the hearts of Christ's students as being nothing else than the "law of the Spirit of life."⁵⁷ The inner teaching of Christ, imprinted on the hearts of his students, is nothing other than the grace of the Holy Spirit. As we shall see, this imprinting of the grace of the Spirit on the hearts of the faithful is the New Law. For Aquinas, therefore, there is an intimate connection between the New Law and the teaching of Christ.

In the numerous pieces written about Aquinas on the New Law, surprisingly little has been said about the *mode* and *time* of the New Law's promulgation.⁵⁸ The clearest articulation on the mode of the promulgation of the New Law is given by Levering, who links the promulgation of the New Law with the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.⁵⁹ Dauphinais also describes the promulgation of the New Law as having occurred by Christ's teaching, and it is ongoing by Christ teaching through his apostles and their successors.⁶⁰ Therefore, before connecting Christ's kingship with the New Law, we will need to first discuss what the New Law is in the thought of Aquinas and how it was promulgated.

After treating the Old Law, Aquinas opens his discussion concerning the New Law by asking, "Whether the New Law is a written law?" As distinct from the Old Law, which was written on stone, the New Law consists in the grace of the Holy Spirit that dwells in the hearts of the faithful: "Now that

⁵⁷ See *ST* III q. 42, a. 4 ad 2: "Since the Old Law was given under the form of sensible signs, therefore also was it fittingly written with sensible signs. But Christ's doctrine, which is the law of the spirit of life (Rom 8:2), had to be written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart, as the Apostle says (2 Cor 3:3)." See also Dauphinais, "Christ the Teacher," 60 ("Drawing from Thomas's comments earlier in the *Summa* about the New Law instituted by Christ, it can be concluded that Thomas regards the primary content of the *doctrina Christi* as the interior instruction wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit"); Hahn, "Thomas Aquinas's Presentation," 77.

⁵⁸ For studies of Aquinas on the New Law, see Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2005); Pinckaers, "The Return of the New Law to Moral Theology," in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 369–84; Matthew Levering, *Biblical Natural Law: A Theocentric and Teleological Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Levering, "Thomas Aquinas on Law and Love," *Angelicum* 94, no. 2 (2017): 412–42.

⁵⁹ See Levering, "Thomas Aquinas on Law and Love," 436: "The promulgation of the New Law was done by Jesus Christ and most fundamentally by his sending of his Spirit upon his apostles at Pentecost, as well as by the Spirit's inspiration of the New Testament writings."

⁶⁰ Dauphinais, "Place of Christ."

which is preponderant in the law of the New Testament, and whereon all its efficacy is based, is the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is given through faith in Christ. Consequently the New Law is chiefly the grace itself of the Holy Spirit, which is given to those who believe in Christ.”⁶¹ It is important to understand in what sense Aquinas is naming the Holy Spirit as that which constitutes the New Law. Without a doubt, it is not *only* the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the faithful by the New Law. All three persons of the Trinity dwell in the soul inseparably by means of sanctifying grace.⁶² However, there is a kinship between the Holy Spirit and sanctifying grace by reason of the Holy Spirit being the gift of the Father and the Son.⁶³ Grace, for Aquinas, is the created effect of the Holy Spirit being given to the faithful.⁶⁴ Thus, when Aquinas speaks of the New Law and the interior teaching of Christ as being the grace of the Holy Spirit, he is appropriating this gift to the Holy Spirit by reason of his being the gift of the Father and the Son. This does not, therefore, exclude the other two

⁶¹ *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 1. See also Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 174–75: “The essence of the evangelical Law was something other: it was formed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, given in response to faith in Christ. Here we are in perfect accord with St. Paul when he defines Christian action as life in the Spirit and when he places faith in Christ, rather than Jewish justice and Greek wisdom, at the beginning of the moral life” (for larger context, see 174–77).

⁶² See *ST* I, q. 42, a. 3.

⁶³ See *ST* I, q. 42, a. 5, ad 1: “Although all the gifts, considered as such, are attributed to the Holy Spirit, forasmuch as He is by His nature the first Gift, since He is Love, as stated above (Q. 38, A. 1), some gifts nevertheless, by reason of their own particular nature, are appropriated in a certain way to the Son, those, namely, which belong to the intellect, and in respect of which we speak of the mission of the Son. Hence Augustine says (*De Trin.* iv, 20) that *The Son is sent to anyone invisibly, whenever He is known and perceived by anyone.*” See also Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 40: “As we have seen, St Thomas mainly speaks about habitual or sanctifying grace in connection with the Holy Spirit, since he views the procession of the Holy Spirit as Love and Gift as the origin and exemplar of the whole dispensation of salvation and of every gracious gift given to creatures.”

⁶⁴ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2:179–80: “If we now turn to the gift of grace, we certainly mean that God is at work, and more precisely the Holy Spirit, uncreated reality. But when a person receives the gift of grace which he did not have earlier, this does not mean that it occurs through a change in the Holy Spirit himself. Rather, the person himself changes under the effect of the Spirit’s action. When we say, then, that the Holy Spirit is given to someone, it means that this creature received the gift of God’s love that he did not previously have. This gift is necessarily a created reality freely given by God.”

persons of the Trinity. Rather, it highlights the gratuitous nature of grace and its connection with the Holy Spirit by means of appropriation.⁶⁵

The New Law as consisting in the grace of the Holy Spirit, as one can imagine, raises issues for Aquinas, since, if this is the case, one would have to affirm that there were people who lived before the time of Christ who were under the New Law. However, Aquinas uses this issue to drive home his point: all those who possess the grace of the Holy Spirit in their hearts are members of the New Testament and thus the Law of Grace.⁶⁶

Even though the New Law consists primarily in the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, there is still a central place in the Law of Grace for what Aquinas calls “secondary aspects.” These elements of the New Law are perhaps the most familiar to us. The written elements of the New Law, most especially found in the Gospels, serve to aid the primary element of the New Law, the grace of the Holy Spirit. By the Gospels manifesting both the humanity and the divinity of Christ, the believer is more disposed to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, by these secondary aspects, the New Law is more strongly imprinted onto the hearts of the faithful.⁶⁷ These secondary aspects, too, give the believer instructions on how to live a life in accordance with the Law of Grace through the life Christ lived in his humanity.⁶⁸ It is important to note, however, that the term “secondary aspects” (*quae sunt quasi secundaria in lege nova*) does not mean that they are not necessary. Rather, Aquinas uses this phrase to express that they are not what is most fundamental in the New Law, but they exist for the sake of what is most fundamental, which is the grace of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹

For Aquinas, one of the four essential features of law is that a law needs

⁶⁵ For more on Aquinas and Trinitarian appropriation see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 312–37.

⁶⁶ See *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 1, ad 3: “No man ever had the grace of the Holy Spirit except through faith in Christ either explicit or implicit: and by faith in Christ man belongs to the New Testament. Consequently whoever had the law of grace instilled into them belonged to the New Testament.”

⁶⁷ See *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 1.

⁶⁸ See *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 1, ad 1.

⁶⁹ See Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 176: “We can put it this way: the principle of the New Law, and consequently of Christian ethics, is not the Gospel viewed as a text or an external word, comparable to a physical body, but rather the life principle, the breath of God which animates this body. Without it [we] would have only an inert material object. We hasten to add, however, that the body formed by the Gospel texts is indispensable if we are to receive the breath of the Spirit, for it was formed by him and is perfectly adapted to his action. The Spirit could not animate a body of doctrine that was not conformed to the Gospel.”

to be promulgated. Since law is fundamentally the sharing of the reason of the lawgiver to the one governed, there needs to be an application for there to be a law.⁷⁰ The New Law is no exception to this. To say that the New Law is a law, one must give an account as to when and how the New Law was promulgated.

As we saw, for Aquinas, Christ's teachings as articulated in the Gospels serve as a secondary element of the New Law, since the New Law consists primarily in the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful. As Richard Schenk has noted, in the thought of Aquinas, there is a priority of the action of the Holy Spirit in Christ's teaching and miracles for them to be received and recognized as divine.⁷¹ This is reflected as well in Aquinas's teaching concerning the primacy of the action of God in the individual's assent of faith. To witness a miracle is not sufficient for an ascent of faith. If it were sufficient, then all who witnessed a miracle would believe. Rather, an interior movement in the believer by God is needed for one to assent in faith.⁷² Thus, even though it is a central element of the New Law, Christ's outward teaching cannot itself account for the mode of the promulgation of the New Law. Hence, by considering Christ's outward teaching, we do not have a full explanation of *when* the New Law was promulgated, since the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is the New Law, is prior to Christ's outward teaching, which is the external element of the New Law. I would like to propose that the solution to this question can be found in Aquinas's understanding of the invisible missions of the Holy Spirit and the Son.

For Aquinas, there are two aspects of a mission.⁷³ First, a mission implies a source of something, or someone, who is sent. Second, there is a *terminus* of the mission. Both are found in the sending of the Son and Holy Spirit

⁷⁰ See *ST* I-II, q. 90, a. 4.

⁷¹ See Richard Schenk, "Omnis Christi Actio Nostra Est Instructio. The Deeds and Sayings of Jesus as Revelation in the View of Thomas Aquinas," in *La doctrine de la révélation divine de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, ed. Leo Elders, Studi Tomistici 37 (Vatican City, 1990), 104–31. Torrell notes this as well when commenting on *ST* III, q. 42, a. 4: "The second reason deepens the first by emphasizing that it is not enough to have read a book to have assimilated its doctrine. Nor is the reading of the Gospel, even assiduous, sufficient to reveal its meaning if the writing is not finally enlightened by the inner Master who leads into the whole truth" (*Encyclopédie Jésus le Christ chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* [Paris: Cerf, 2008], 679).

⁷² See *ST* II-II, q. 6, a. 1.

⁷³ For more information on the Trinitarian missions in Aquinas's thought see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology*, 360–412; Emery, "Theologia and *Dispensatio*: The Centrality of the Divine Missions in St. Thomas's Trinitarian Theology," *Thomist* 74, no. 4 (2010): 515–61.

insofar as they proceed from another, and they exist in the world in a new way.⁷⁴ Aquinas holds that a divine person can exist newly in the world in two ways: visibly and invisibly.

A divine person is invisibly sent into the soul by means of sanctifying grace.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, even though all three persons are present in the soul by means of sanctifying grace, which he often appropriates to the Holy Spirit as gift, the presence of the Son and the Holy Spirit are appropriated to wisdom and charity in a particular way, since these gifts reflect the eternal precessions of the Son as the Wisdom of the Father and the Holy Spirit as the Love of the Father and the Son.⁷⁶ Moreover, Scripture also describes the Holy Spirit, as well as the Son, as being sent visibly. With respect to the Spirit's visible sendings, Aquinas identifies four visible sendings of the Spirit: Christ's baptism, Christ's Transfiguration, Christ's breathing forth the Holy Spirit on the Apostles in John 20, and the tongues of fire in Acts 2.⁷⁷ The visible missions of the Holy Spirit at Christ's baptism and his breathing forth of the Holy Spirit in John 20 instruct us in the invisible mission of the Spirit as occurring through the sacraments. On the other hand, the visible mission of the Spirit at Christ's transfiguration and the tongues of fire in Acts 2 shows us the distribution of grace, and hence the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, as occurring through the teaching

⁷⁴ See *ST I*, q. 43, a. 1.

⁷⁵ See *ST I*, q. 43, a. 3.

⁷⁶ See *ST I*, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2: "The soul is made like to God by grace. Hence for a divine person to be sent to anyone by grace, there must needs be a likening of the soul to the divine person Who is sent, by some gift of grace. Because the Holy Spirit is Love, the soul is assimilated to the Holy Spirit by the gift of charity: hence the mission of the Holy Spirit is according to the mode of charity. Whereas the Son is the Word, not any sort of word, but one Who breathes forth Love. Hence Augustine says (*De Trin.* ix 10): *The Word we speak of is knowledge with love*. Thus the Son is sent not in accordance with every and any kind of intellectual perfection, but according to the intellectual illumination, which breaks forth into the affection of love, as is said (*John* 6:45): *Everyone that hath heard from the Father and hath learned, cometh to Me*, and (*Ps* 38:4): *In my meditation a fire shall flame forth*. Thus Augustine plainly says (*De Trin.* iv, 20): *The Son is sent, whenever He is known and perceived by anyone*. Now perception implies a certain experimental knowledge; and this is properly called wisdom, as it were a sweet knowledge, according to *Ecclus.* 6:23: *The wisdom of doctrine is according to her name*." See also Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 31: "Just as the perfect Word of the Father breathes forth the Holy Spirit (the Father and his Word spirate the Holy Spirit) so also the sending of the Word to the soul breaks forth into the love in which there is a mission of the Holy Spirit."

⁷⁷ See *ST I*, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2.

of doctrine.⁷⁸ The consideration of the one who sends a divine person serves a pedagogical purpose. The Son sends the Spirit, because both he and the Father are the singular principle of the Spirit.⁷⁹ Thus, by the visible and invisible missions, we are led to knowledge of the Trinitarian relations, since, through the sending of the Spirit, God the Son is identified, along with the Father, as the origin of the mission of the Holy Spirit, and thus the origin of the Spirit's spiration.⁸⁰

Given this, what is the relationship between Christ's exterior teaching and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the Son? We saw earlier that Christ's teachings as articulated in the Gospels do not constitute the essence of the New Law, but they are rather secondary aspects of the New Law. Furthermore, there is a priority of the action of grace and the Holy Spirit for Christ's teachings to become effective—that is, for someone to recognize them as true. Moreover, we have seen that the excellence of Christ's teaching consists in the fact that his teaching impresses itself on the hearts of his hearers, and this impression is nothing else than the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Son. However, as we have seen, Christ's interior teaching is an act of the sending of the Holy Spirit (sanctifying grace) into the hearts of his hearers and the inner illumination of the Son

⁷⁸ See *Super Ioan* 20, lec. 4, no. 2539: "Notice that the Holy Spirit was sent over Christ, first, in the appearance of a dove, at his baptism (1:32), and then in the appearance of a cloud, at his transfiguration (Mt 17:5). The reason for this is that the grace of Christ, which is given by the Holy Spirit, was to be distributed to us by being proliferated through the sacraments. Consequently, at Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, which is an animal known for its proliferation. And since the grace of Christ comes through teaching, the Spirit descended in a luminous cloud, and Christ is seen to be a Teacher, 'Listen to him' (Mt 17:5). The Spirit descended over the apostles the first time through a breath to indicate the proliferation of grace through the sacraments, whose ministers they were. Thus Christ said, 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt 28:19). The second time the Spirit descended on them in tongues of fire to indicate the proliferation of grace through teaching; and so we read in Acts (2:4) that right after they were filled with the Holy Spirit they began to speak." Aquinas also expresses this in the *Summa*; however, he emphasizes the idea that, at Christ's baptism, the Spirit's appearance in the form of a dove instructs us in Christ's ability to bring about spiritual regeneration as the author of grace (see *ST* I, q. 43, a. 7, ad 6).

⁷⁹ See *ST* I, q. 43, a. 7: "This mode of manifestation applies in different ways to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. For it belongs to the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds as Love, to be the gift of sanctification; to the Son as the principle of the Holy Spirit, it belongs to be the author of this sanctification. Thus the Son has been sent visibly as the author of sanctification; the Holy Spirit as the sign of sanctification."

⁸⁰ See *ST* I, q. 43, a. 8.

by means of wisdom.⁸¹ Christ's interior teaching, therefore, as opposed to his exterior teaching, is not a secondary element of the New Law; rather, it is how the New Law is established in the hearts of the faithful. Hence, we can see that Christ's interior and exterior teaching are directly related both to the establishment of the New Law in the faithful and, consequently, to the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Now that we have come to an understanding of the New Law and its promulgation, we can assess how the promulgation of the New Law relates to Christ's kingship. De la Soujeole has already suggested the relationship between the *munera* and the New Law, since Christ is the font of all graces.⁸² However, I would like to suggest that the very promulgation of the New Law is a kingly act. Returning to Aquinas's discussion in his sermon *Ecce rex tuus* of the necessary characteristics of kingship that belong to Christ, Aquinas explicitly links the promulgation of laws with the fullness of power (*plenitudinem potestatis*) belonging to a king. Since Christ established the New Law, Christ thus possesses the fullness of power needed for kingship.⁸³ From this sermon, we can see that, for Aquinas, the promulgation of the New Law is a kingly act. Jean Leclercq echoes this

⁸¹ See *Super Ioan* 17, lec. 6, no. 2269: "So he says, I made known to them your name, and I will make it known. He is indicating the two types of knowledge which the faithful have through him. First, there is the knowledge of his teaching, and he refers to this by saying, I made known to them your name, teaching them by my external words. . . . The other knowledge is from within, through the Holy Spirit. Referring to this he says, and I will make it known by giving them the Holy Spirit." This is also expressed in Aquinas's understanding of the visible missions of the Spirit in the form of a cloud at Christ's transfiguration and in the form of fire on the apostles as indicating the invisible mission of the Spirit as caused through the teaching of doctrine. See note 78 above.

⁸² See de La Soujeole, "Les Tria Munera Christi," 72: "We can also see, by comparing the *tria munera* and the triad of aspects of the New Law, the manifestation of the same idea which seems to run through the whole work of St. Thomas: the principal of the Christian life, both individual and communal, lies in the presence of the grace of the Holy Spirit."

⁸³ See Aquinas, *Ecce rex tuus*: "Second, 'king' means fullness of power. Someone who does not rule with the fullness of power, but in accordance with laws imposed upon him, is not called a king, but a magistrate or a man in power. It had to happen, however, that, when Christ came, the Law from God would be changed as for the ceremonial laws. Thus Christ himself is the One who can establish the Law. Therefore, he says: 'It is said to our ancestors: "You shall not kill." Yet I say, as if he says, 'I have the power and I can establish laws.' Hence we read in Is 33:22: 'The Lord our judge, our lawgiver, he himself will come and save us.' We read that 'the Father has given every judgment to the Son' [Jn 5:22] and that the Lord is our lawgiver, and by consequence he is our king. Thus we read in Est 13:9 (Vg): 'Lord, almighty King, all things together are placed under your dominion.' Hence the Son says: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth' [Mt 28:18]" (Leonine ed. 44/1:62).

idea when he says, commenting on this passage, that "Christ is the lawgiver of the New Covenant; he brings the Old Testament law to its perfection and completion." Thus, he has absolute power.⁸⁴ The kingly act, therefore, of promulgating the New Law by the sending of the Holy Spirit by means of sanctifying grace traces itself back to Christ's capital grace, as Fahey and De la Soujeole have made clear.⁸⁵ This shows the uniqueness of Christ's kingship, since he is head of humanity by reason of his capital grace, as Aquinas argues.⁸⁶

This link between Christ's kingship as expressed in his promulgation of the New Law and the sending of the Holy Spirit shows us the revelatory character of Christ's kingship in the economy of salvation, since it shows us Christ's personal identity as the Word of the Father. In sending the Holy Spirit, and thus promulgating the New Law, Christ is revealed to be the source, along with the Father, of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Trinity. Thus, the kingly act of promulgating the New Law, for Aquinas, is a reflection of the eternal spiration of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.

Christ promulgating the New Law does not just reveal to us how the Holy Spirit relates to the Father and the Son; for Aquinas, it also teaches us that Christ is the Word of the Father. We have already seen how this is the case in considering Christ's teaching, and thus the New Law, as occurring through Christ's interior teaching by means of interior wisdom. Thus, Christ is also revealed, by his interior teaching by means of an interior wisdom, as the Wisdom of the Father. Furthermore, in discussing the Eternal Law in the *prima secundae*, Aquinas appropriates the promulgation of the Eternal Law to the Son as Word. Laws are promulgated both by word and by writing, both of which can be found, by way of similitude, in God. This Word by which the Eternal Law is promulgated is nothing other than the eternal Word of the Father who is the eternal and personal promulgation of the Eternal Law.⁸⁷

It is thus fitting that the second person of the Trinity promulgated the New Law, since he is the personal promulgation of the Eternal Law. The fact that Christ promulgates the New Law, therefore, expresses his personal identity within the Trinity. It is the personal promulgation of the Eternal

⁸⁴ Leclercq, *L'idée*, 81.

⁸⁵ See Fahey, *Kingship of Christ*, 22; Soujeole, "Les Tria Munera Christi."

⁸⁶ See *ST* III, q. 22, a. 1, ad 3.

⁸⁷ See *ST* I-II, q. 91, a. 1, ad 2: "Promulgation is made by word of mouth or in writing; and in both ways the eternal law is promulgated: because both the Divine Word and the writing of the Book of Life are eternal. But the promulgation cannot be from eternity on the part of the creature that hears or reads."

Law who promulgates the New Law by sending the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the faithful both visibly and invisibly. Thus, Christ's kingship, as expressed in his promulgation of the New Law, tells us that he, along with the Father, is the origin of the Holy Spirit, and that he is the Eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father. Furthermore, in Christ's kingship as expressed in his promulgation of the New Law and sending the Holy Spirit, one can see the mirror image of the eternal order of natural origin among the Trinitarian persons.⁸⁸ The Son sends the Spirit, and the Spirit then leads the faithful back to the Son and thus to the Father.⁸⁹

An objection could be raised against my thesis. So far, I have grounded the Trinitarian character of Christ's kingship in the relationship among Christ's kingship, his teaching authority, and his promulgation of the New Law. Yet, for Aquinas, both Christ's teaching authority and his promulgation of the New Law are also considered expressions of his prophetic office. We see, for example, in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 8, that Christ as *comprehensor* (prophet) announces what is "beyond the knowledge of other wayfarers"; that is, he teaches.⁹⁰ Furthermore, in *ST* III, q. 22, a. 1, obj. 3 and the response, we see that that both Moses's and Christ's prophetic office are described as legislative (*legislator*).⁹¹ How can we reconcile the notion of

⁸⁸ See *ST* I, q. 42, a. 3: "I answer that, Order always has reference to some principle. Wherefore since there are many kinds of principle—namely, according to site, as a point; according to intellect, as the principle of demonstration; and according to each individual cause—so are there many kinds of order. Now principle, according to origin, without priority, exists in God as we have stated (Q. 33, A. 1): so there must likewise be order according to origin, without priority; and this is called 'the order of nature': in the words of Augustine (*Contra Maxim.* iv): Not whereby one is prior to another, but whereby one is from another."

⁸⁹ See Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*, Thomistic Ressourcement (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 643: "This relationship of the Son to the Spirit pertains, of course, to the temporal aspect of the visible mission, but we see mirrored in it the eternal relation of the Son to the Spirit, as the Spirit is he who proceeds eternally from the begotten Son and Word of the Father. The relationships of temporal sending manifest the relationships of eternal proceeding, since the missions of the persons simply are the processions with an additional effect ad extra in the world."

⁹⁰ See *ST* III, q. 7, a. 8: "Now Christ before His passion touched our state, inasmuch as He was not merely a comprehensor, but a wayfarer. Hence it was prophetic in Him to know and announce what was beyond the knowledge of other wayfarers: and for this reason He is called a prophet."

⁹¹ See *ST* III, q. 22, a. 1, ad 3: "As stated above, other men have certain graces distributed among them: but Christ, as being the Head of all, has the perfection of all graces. Wherefore, as to others, one is a lawgiver, another is a priest, another is a king; but all these concur in Christ, as the fount of all grace. Hence it is written (Isa 33:22): *The*

teaching and legislating as an expression of prophecy with them being an expression of kingship? To begin, with respect to Christ, it is first necessary to note that the three *munera* in Christ are not altogether separate. They flow from Christ's grace as head of the Church.⁹² Christ possesses the three *munera* as unified in his person. Thus, overlap between these three *munera* is to be expected. This is certainly seen, as Levering notes, with Christ as the new David, since David was both a king and a prophet.⁹³ This is, for Aquinas, why Christ was referred to in the genealogies as being a descendant of Abraham and David. While Abraham was a priest, David was both a prophet and a king.⁹⁴ Thus, Christ's genealogy in Scripture articulates the unity of these *munera* in Christ. Furthermore, as Aquinas argues, due to the necessity of a perfect king to be able to guide his subjects toward their end, as we have seen with Christ, there is a need for the king to be a prophet.⁹⁵ Thus, as the perfect king, Christ's prophetic actions are kingly, and his

Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our King: He will come and save us." See also Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 69: "In describing Christ's threefold office, Aquinas uses the terms 'prophet' and 'lawgiver' interchangeably. A prophet teaches the people how to live according to God's law, awaiting the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Christ is thus a prophet, and more than a prophet, because he gives (primarily by his passion) God's salvific gift of the New Law, which is the inner principle by which human beings are enabled to observe the moral precepts."

⁹² See *ST* III, q. 22, a. 1, ad 3. See also de La Soujeole, "Les Tria Munera Christi," 62: "In this concise passage [*ST* III, q. 22, a. 1, ad 3], St. Thomas is careful to distinguish the fullness of the personal anointing of Christ—the *personal grace* of Christ—from the communication of this fullness to men, that is, the *capital grace* of Christ. As this personal grace and this capital grace are not numbered in Christ, it is this unique triform anointing of the Lord which flows to the faithful, henceforth and rightly, to be called law also 'Christ,' or better 'Christian'" (emphasis original).

⁹³ See Levering, *Reconfiguring Thomistic Christology*, 271: "First, Aquinas perceives David to be a prophet, and, second, he holds that David received a promise about the coming Davidic Messiah. Aquinas goes on to say that Christ was born in Bethlehem, the city in which David was born, in order to show that God's promise to David was being fulfilled. Aquinas does not use the phrase 'New David,' but it is clear that this is what Jesus is, symbolized by his being born in the same city in which David was born."

⁹⁴ *ST* III, q. 31, a. 2: "A second reason is because Christ was to be king, prophet, and priest. Now Abraham was a priest; which is clear from the Lord saying unto him (Gen 15:9): *Take thee a cow of three years old*, etc. He was also a prophet, according to Gen. 20:7: *He is a prophet; and he shall pray for thee*. Lastly David was both king and prophet."

⁹⁵ See *ST* I-II, q. 172, a. 1, ad 4: "The prophetic light extends even to the direction of human acts; and in this way prophecy is requisite for the government of a people, especially in relation to Divine worship; since for this nature is not sufficient, and grace is necessary."

kingly actions are prophetic. Therefore, even though teaching and legislating are prophetic actions, teaching is still proper to a king when truth is the good to which the people are to be directed, which is the case with Christ, who was born to testify to the truth. Beyond this, the promulgation of the New Law is not merely a legislative act, but it is also an executive act, since it brings about justice by means of justification in the hearts of those who receive it.⁹⁶ This establishment of justice, as we have seen in Aquinas's treatise *Ecce rex tuus*, is proper to a king.⁹⁷ Thus, Christ's promulgation of the New Law seen as a kingly act adds an essential element which is not present in the promulgation as seen as a prophetic act, since, as an executive act, it brings about the justice it contains. Hence, since it is both a legislative and an executive act, Christ's promulgation of the New Law is more proper to him as king than as prophet.

Conclusion

From these considerations, we can see the revelatory power of Christ's kingship in the mind of Aquinas. Christ as a kingly teacher instructs us in his being the Image and Word of the Father who reveals to us of whom he is the Image and Word. Furthermore, Christ's kingship as expressed in his promulgation of the New Law leads us to the invisible sending of the Holy Spirit and the Son into the hearts of the Faithful, which leads us to knowledge of the Trinitarian relations. Aquinas's understanding of Christ's kingship, therefore, is inherently Trinitarian. Christ's kingship in the economy of salvation is the expression of his personal identity in the Trinity and reveals to us the inner life of the Trinity.

With this Trinitarian understanding of Christ's kingship, we can grasp more clearly the sociopolitical and soteriological conceptions of Christ's kingship discussed at the beginning of this essay. Christ's kingly acts of teaching and promulgating the New Law point to his filial identity. This teaching and promulgating establishes the New Law, the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of the faithful. In this way, the faithful share in Christ's *munus* of kingship, as well as the other two *munera* of prophet and priest. Thus, the soteriological conception of Christ's kingship follows the Trinitarian, insofar as Christ sends the Holy Spirit. The sociopolitical idea of Christ's kingship follows from this soteriological conception, insofar as it is

⁹⁶ See *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 1.

⁹⁷ *Ecce rex tuus* (Leonine ed. 44/1:63–64). See also Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 69. As we have seen, this is a theme brought up by Pius XI as well (*Quas Primas*, §14).

necessary for Christ's authority to extend to human affairs to guide humanity toward its supernatural end and remove obstacles to that end. Thus, given this understanding of Christ's kingship, one can unify the different ways theologians have conceived of Christ's kingship.⁹⁸

By employing Aquinas's understanding of Christ's kingship as rooted in his teaching and his promulgating the New Law and in how these relate to his divine personhood, one can arrive at a fuller, intimately Trinitarian understanding of Christ's kingship. By considering Christ's kingly office of teaching and promulgation of the New Law, one can reach an understanding, guided by faith, of Christ's identity as the second person of the Trinity, the divine Word.⁹⁹

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⁹⁸ I would also like to suggest that this understanding could aid theologians in understanding the shift in emphasis that accompanied the revision of the Feast of Christ the King from a political to an eschatological emphasis. See Dylan Schrader, "The Revision of the Feast of Christ the King," *Antiphon* 18, no. 3 (2014): 227–53; David M. Friel, "The Feast of Christ the King: From Religious Tolerance to Religious Freedom" (STD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2022).

⁹⁹ I would like to thank Dr. Russell Hittinger, from whose course this paper was conceived, and who aided me tremendously in shaping it, and Dr. Matthew Levering for his advice and comments on this essay.