

The Hypostatic Union: Personhood, Consciousness, and Knowledge

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Introduction

I am pleased and honored to have been asked to speak at this august Dominican colloquium. I am especially delighted that I am able to address a topic most dear to my heart and mind—Jesus, the incarnate Son of God. In keeping with the overall theme of the conference, I will address the personhood of Jesus, including his human consciousness and knowledge. As many of you probably know, I have written on these matters before; here, therefore, I hope to clarify and advance what I have previously penned (metaphorically speaking).¹

My paper is divided into four sections. The first will address the divine personhood of Jesus, that he is the one person of the Son of God incarnate. The second will examine the ontological relationship between the divine person of the Son and what I refer to as his incarnate human *I*. The third will focus on the Scholastic understanding of Jesus's human knowledge as presented by St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as my critique of this interpre-

¹ See Thomas G. Weinandy, "Jesus's Filial Vision of the Father," *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 2 (2004): 189–201, and "The Beatific Vision and the Incarnate Son: Furthering the Discussion," *The Thomist* 70, no. 4 (2006): 605–15. Both essays can also be found in Weinandy, *Jesus: Essays in Christology* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2014), 279–92 and 293–301, respectively. See also Weinandy, *Jesus the Christ* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003; republished by Ex Fontibus, 2017), 83–95.

tation. The fourth section will present my account of Jesus's human filial consciousness and knowledge. These issues are philosophically complex and, at least at the present, theologically controversial.

The Divine Personhood of the Son of God Incarnate

The Council of Chalcedon (451) declared eight times, in various ways, that one and the same Son is perfectly God, and so *homoousion* with the Father, and perfectly man, and so *homoousion* with humankind. Following the lead of Cyril of Alexandria, the Council is very clear that the one Son who exists as God is the same Son who exists as man. Contrary to Nestorius's position, there are not two different *persons*—one existing as God and another existing as man. Jesus, the man, has only one ontological identity, or one *who*-ness—and who the man Jesus is, his identity, is the divine Son of God.

Moreover, because one and the same Son exists simultaneously as God and man, the Council declares that one and the same Son “must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division and without separation.” How can this be? How can one and the same Son simultaneously exist as God and as man without the two natures being confused or changed when the two natures are not divided, or separated? The Council can make such a seemingly contradictory declaration because the Council Fathers realized that the incarnational “becoming” was not the ontological compositional union of natures, not an amalgamation of the divine and human natures, which would confuse and change the natures, and so terminate in a third kind of being, a *tertium quid*, which would be neither fully God nor fully man. But how then can they not be separated or divided? The reason is, as the Council professes, that “the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one *prosopon* or one *hypostasis*—not parted or divided into two *prosopa*, but one and the same only-begotten Son, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”² The integrity of each nature is preserved because the incarnational act, the incarnational “becoming,” is not the ontological compositional union of natures, but rather the ontological uniting of the humanity to the person of the Son so that the Son now ontologically exists not only eternally as God but also temporally as man.

Thus, according to Chalcedon, when the Gospel of John declared that “the Word became Flesh,” that “becoming” espoused neither a change in

² Translation taken from *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals* [hereafter, DH], ed. Heinrich Denzinger, Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), nos. 301–2.

the nature of the Word's eternal divinity nor a change in the nature of the assumed created humanity, but rather it denoted that the Son, maintaining the integrity of his full divinity, came to exist as man, maintaining the integrity of his full humanity. Chalcedon realized that John employed the term "became" in a new and singular manner, as meaning "coming to exist." Consequently, the ontological identity of the man Jesus, the *who he is*, is none other than one and the same divine Son of God.

Chalcedon's magisterial definition of the hypostatic union becomes, then, the determinant metaphysical hermeneutical principle for discerning all that follows upon this incarnational reality, specifically with regard to Jesus's human consciousness and knowledge. Thus, we will now turn to our second topic—the human *I* of Jesus.

The Human *I* of the Son of God Incarnate

Not a few recent theologians have argued that classical Christology, in keeping with the Council Chalcedon, is Docetic or Monophysite, in that Jesus is not depicted as fully human. Since Jesus is professed to be a divine person, something essential to his being human is absent—namely, his human personhood—and therefore it is claimed that Jesus is not *homoousion* with the rest of humanity as Chalcedon demanded. While such a charge is erroneous, as it completely undermines the reality that it was precisely the person of the Son of God who came to exist as man, it was the catalyst that originally led me to address more adequately the issue of Jesus's genuine humanity.³

Importantly, "personhood" is not some discrete "thing" or supplementary distinct "module" that is added to a nature in order to make the nature personal, the absence of which makes it incomplete. Rather, "person" designates the personal identity, the *who*, of a rational being. Within the Incarnation, Jesus has a complete human nature, body and soul, but he is not a human person, for his identity, his personhood, who he is, is the Son of God. He who is personally identified as the divine Son of God within the Trinity is the same Son who is personally identified as the man Jesus. The *who* of Jesus does not diminish anything that is constitutive of humanity. What makes him extraordinarily singular is that he does not possess a human subjective identity, a human *who*-ness, as other human beings, but rather a divine identity as the Son of God, for Jesus is the person of the Son of God existing as man. This understanding of "personhood" in relationship to "nature" led me, secondly, to clarify

³ See Thomas G. Weinandy, "The Human 'I' of Jesus," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (1996): 259–68 (also in Weinandy, *Jesus: Essays in Christology*, 266–78).

further the notions of “person” and “nature” as to what pertains to each within the Incarnation.

Chalcedon distinguished the person and the manner of the person’s existence. The person of the Son of God exists both as God and as man, and so what pertains to each manner of existence must be rightly attributed to the Son of God. Now, while Jesus is one person, and so possesses one identity as Son, he also exists as man, and so possesses all that is essential to being man. As later Councils professed, Jesus, as the Son of God, possesses not only a divine intellect and will, but also a human intellect and will, for both are of the “essence” of being God and man.⁴ Thus, because the one person of the Son exists as man, I have proposed that the Son, as man, so lives his human life as to possess a human *I*. However, since Jesus is the one person of the divine Son, would that not demand that he have only one *I*, and that divine and not human *I*?

The issue of Christ possessing a human *I* first arose within the Christologies of Déodat de Basly and Paul Galtier, both of whom were working from within a Nestorian perspective.⁵ Because Galtier, for example, held a Scotistic version of the Incarnation—a variation of the *Assumptus-Homo* Christology where the Son of God assumed the man Jesus—he posited that there were two *I*’s in keeping with the two distinct ontological realities, that of God and that of man. Obviously, such an understanding of the Incarnation has many Nestorian features, and like Nestorius, Galtier was hard pressed to demonstrate how the Son of God and Jesus, the man, were ontologically one. Similarly to Nestorius, Galtier appeared to allow only a moral union between the divinity and humanity within Jesus, an adoptive

⁴ See the Decree of the Second Council of Constantinople (553) and the Decree of the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681), DH nos. 421–38 and 550–59, respectively.

⁵ See: Déodat de Basly, *En Christiade Française* (Paris: Vrin, 1929); de Basly, “Le Moi de Jésus-Christ, Le déplacement des autonomies,” *France Franciscaine* 12 (1929): 125–60, 325–52; and P. Galtier, *L’Unité du Christ, Être . . . Personne . . . Conscience* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1939).

Karl Rahner’s position on the self-consciousness of Christ also possesses a Nestorian flavor. He sees the man Jesus becoming aware of *his* divinity, through the *visio immediata*, as an *object* to be known, rather than the eternal Son becoming *subjectively* conscious of himself as the Son of God in a human manner. Conceiving the divinity as an object to be known implies an *I* (a knower) that is ontologically separate from the known (the divinity). See Rahner, “Current Problems in Christology,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1961), 149–200, and “Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 193–215.

moral union that is achieved through the man Jesus possessing the beatific vision. The blessed vision, in turn, allowed Jesus to consciously know that he is God. Such a solution remains inadequate, for how can Jesus *know* that he *is* the Son of God if he is *not* the Son of God *truly existing* as man?⁶

In response to Galtier, various Thomists rightly took him to task.⁷ They did so by insisting that, since Chalcedon demanded that Jesus is the one person of the Son who is man, there is only one *I*, and that divine, since it is the one *I* of the one divine person of the Son. To attribute a human *I* to Jesus would, they believed, contradict his singular divine personhood. These Thomists rightly wanted to ensure that Jesus was the one person of the Son, but I believe their insistence that this demanded that Jesus possessed one *I*, the divine, was misplaced. I would hold that Galtier is wrong in advocating two *I*'s, one divine and one human, and that the Thomists in question are also wrong in proposing one *I*, and that divine. While Aquinas does not address this issue directly, he does correctly insist, in accordance with Chalcedon, that the Son subsists as man, and I would argue that, because the Son does actually subsist as man, he must possess, in accord with Thomas, a human *I*, for a human *I* is fundamental to his subsisting in a human manner. Even though the Thomists rightly desired to maintain that Jesus is the one person of the Son, what they failed to appreciate was that for Jesus to possess a human *I* does not negate his one divine personhood. Rather, it enhances the truth that the Son did actually become fully human.

In keeping with Aquinas's love for distinctions, the issue of whether or not Jesus possesses a human *I* demands an important new distinction. We must distinguish who the person of Jesus is as the divine Son, his divine identity, and the human manner in which that divine identity is humanly lived and expressed. As incarnate, the Son of God is psychologically conscious and, so, knows himself in a human manner, and that human

⁶ Pius XII, in his encyclical *Sempiternus Rex* (1951), §§30–31, condemned the extreme view of de Basly, but left open Galtier's view that Jesus possessed a human psychological *I*. For a contemporary critique of the above authors, see Jean Galot, *La Conscience de Jésus* (Paris: Duculot-Lethielleux, 1971), 97–131, 169–72, and Galot, *Who Is Christ?: A Theology of Incarnation* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1981), 323–28.

⁷ See, for example: Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002); Pietro Parente, *L'Io di Christo* (Brescia, IT: Morcelliana, 1951 and 1955); Angelo Perego, "Il 'lumen gloriae' e l'unità psicologia di Cristo," *Divus Thomas* 58 (1955): 99–110, 296–301; and Bartomeu M. Xiberta, *El Yo de Jesu-cristo: Un conflicto entre dos cristologías*, (Barcelona, ES: Herder, 1954).

self-consciousness and knowledge simultaneously gives rise to and so is manifested within and through his human *I*. Within his incarnate state, the Son of God is conscious of himself in a human manner; he expresses himself in a human manner; he acts in a human manner; and thus he reveals who he is as the Son of God in a human manner, and so he speaks and acts from within the human psychological parameters of a human *I*. The new distinction I am making is that between the divine person—that is, the *who*—and the divine person’s human *I*. The ontological identity of that human *I* is the divine Son, but the manner in and through which that divine identity is humanly lived and manifested is as man, and thus within the confines of a human *I*. Thus, within the Incarnation there is only one person, that of the divine Son, and equally, there is only one incarnate *I*, the human *I* of the Son of God.

This is in keeping with the theandric nature of Jesus’s actions. Whether Jesus is eating a fish or working a miracle, who it is who is eating or working a miracle is always the Son of God, and the manner in which he is eating or working the miracle is always as man. Granted that Jesus, as the Son, works miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is still as man that he works them. Miracles are distinctively theandric acts in that they are divine deeds done humanly, but similarly, even Jesus’s act of eating is a theandric act, for it is the divine Son of God who is eating like any other human being.⁸ Thus, Jesus, as the incarnate Son, is always self-conscious and knows himself in a human manner, and so always acts and expresses himself through and within a human *I*. Moreover, the human *I* of Jesus is in keeping with the Communication of Idioms—that is, the predicating of divine and human attributes to one and the same divine person. As we rightfully say that the Son of God suffers as man, so we can rightly say that the Son of God is self-consciously aware as man, and so expresses himself as man within and through his human *I*.

A biblical example may clarify my proposal, and so dispel any cocked and questioning eyebrows. Jesus asks his apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” It is as man that the Son of God is asking this question, and so that *I* is a human *I*, for he is asking it in a human manner—that is, as a man. Ultimately, Jesus, knowing who he is, is asking: “Who, me, Jesus the man, wants to know who you, the apostles, think I, the man Jesus,

⁸ Dominic Legge provides a thorough discussion of Aquinas on this issue. He shows that Aquinas sees all of Jesus’s actions as inherently theandric, since it is always the Son of God who is acting in a human manner. See Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 185–210.

truly is?" Jesus wants the apostles to identify the ontological "who," the person, who humanly asks, within the parameters of a human *I*, who he is. Peter responds (according to Matthew): "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter is absolutely correct. "You, the man Jesus, are the Spirit-anointed Son of the living God." Peter accurately identifies the divine ontological *who* of the humanly spoken *I*. Who the man Jesus is, is the Son of God.⁹

Now, one might ask: Is what I am proposing concerning the human *I* of Jesus theologically and soteriologically important? I believe it is very important for at least three reasons. First, that the divine Son of God possesses a human *I* enhances the truth of the Incarnation. The Son of God actually did become man, and so exists as one of us in every way, not only in possessing a human intellect and will but also in possessing a human *I* that arises from within and gives expression to that human rationality.

Second, as the Son of God, Jesus fully interacts with his contemporaries and converses as another human *I* with them. Importantly, if the Son of God interacted with his contemporaries and conversed with them from within or through a divine *I*, it would mean that he was interacting and conversing with them as God *in a man* and not interacting and conversing with them *as a man*. To hear the human voice of Jesus is to hear the actual human voice of the Son of God—Galilean accent and all. Thus, Jesus, the Son of God, interrelated with others on an equal human level, and so there arose a communion of equals, a communion of human *I*'s. Only if human beings believe, however, through the light of the Holy Spirit, that the identity of Jesus's human *I* is that of the Father's eternal Son, as in the case of Peter, is that communion consummated and come to fruition.

Third, faith in the risen Lord Jesus consequently becomes of the utmost importance. The faithful are taken up into Jesus's risen humanity and, so, become living members of his Body of which he is the head. This relationship is a radically new and singular relationship, for it is founded upon the life of the Holy Spirit, a life that both Jesus and the members of his Body share as one living reality. Jesus continues, then, to interact with the faithful and to converse with them as man, through his now risen human

⁹ This same analysis can be applied essentially to everything Jesus says in the Gospels, even within the Gospel of John. For example: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58; cf. 8:24). Jesus wants the Pharisees to realize that *he who is* humanly speaking to them, the man who humanly says "I say," is Yhwh: the eternal "I Am"—*He Who Is*. Jesus is revealing that the identity of the human *I* of his "I say," is the divine "I Am." He is none other than the eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He Who Is.

I. Within the sanctifying and transforming life in the Holy Spirit, there is a graced communion of *I*'s between Christ and his adopted brothers and sisters. Moreover, within that living communion, the faithful conjoin their voices, their human *I*'s with the human *I* of Jesus, and together all cry out, as one new man, "Abba-Father," for the faithful's *I*'s have taken on the same identity as Jesus's *I*—that of being sons and daughters of the Father.¹⁰

Aquinas's Understanding of Jesus's Human Knowledge of Himself as God

Having addressed Jesus's divine personhood and the human *I* of the Son of God incarnate, we will now examine Jesus's human knowledge as explicated by Aquinas. On a number of occasions, as noted above, I have expressed my dissatisfaction with the received Scholastic theological and, to some extent, magisterial tradition concerning Jesus's knowledge of himself as God, specifically his possessing the beatific vision.¹¹ Here, I will first present Aquinas's understanding of Jesus's human knowledge of his divine identity and express my concerns with such an understanding. I will then newly attempt to address how I believe Jesus, in keeping with the doctrine of the Incarnation, came to know himself as the Son of God and the soteriological significance of that knowledge.

Aquinas, while he treats the grace of Christ and the knowledge of Christ separately, aligns them closely, for the knowledge that Christ possessed simultaneously flows from and follows upon the grace he received.¹² The

¹⁰ It is not possible to address it here, but this communion of *I*'s is important within the sacraments. Within the baptism, the minister, *in persona Christi*, says "I baptize you." Within the Eucharist, the ordained priest declares, in an even more profound manner, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." The human *I* of the ministers and the human *I* of Jesus become one human *I*.

¹¹ In its 1985 document "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission," the International Theological Commission argues, from New Testament evidence, that the Son's filial self-consciousness and knowledge was founded upon his consciousness and knowledge of his Father (see "First Proposition" and 1.1–3). While the commission insists on the Son's human consciousness and knowledge of himself in relationship to his Father, it never broaches the issue of Christ's beatific vision. This document is published in *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents 1969–1985*, ed. M. Sharkey (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of "the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father," but does not speak in terms of the beatific vision (§473).

¹² See Legge's very clear exposition of Aquinas's understanding of the relationship between the grace of Christ and his human knowledge in *Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 132–71.

primordial or foundational grace is the grace of union—that is, God graciously and freely uniting the humanity to the person of the Son so that the Son actually exists as man.¹³ Nevertheless, since the human nature is united to the person of the Son, the divine and human natures, in accordance with Chalcedon, remain unconfused. Because the two natures are distinct (making the Son's manner of existence distinct from that of all simply human persons), Aquinas emphasizes that grace must be bestowed upon the Son's humanity, for his humanity by its very nature does not necessarily participate in grace. In addition, Aquinas further states that "it is necessary to suppose habitual grace in Christ for three reasons." The first is founded upon the grace of union. "For the nearer any recipient is to the inflowing cause, the more does it partake of its influence," and since the humanity is united to the person of the divine Son, "it was most fitting" that the fullness of grace be bestowed upon Christ's humanity. Secondly, since the soul of Christ was to be filled with love and knowledge, grace proper to this love and knowledge necessarily must be bestowed. Lastly, since Christ was to bestow all grace upon others, he must himself first possess the fullness of grace.¹⁴ Thus, Aquinas later concludes that "the abundance of grace sanctifying Christ's soul flows from the very union of the Word . . . [and] consequently, in the first instant of his conception, Christ had the fullness of grace sanctifying his body and his soul."¹⁵

As Aquinas argued that Jesus's humanity is in need of the fullness of grace, so it is also in need of the fullness of knowledge—and for similar reasons. "It is fitting that the Son of God should assume, not an imperfect, but a perfect human nature, since the whole human race was to be brought back to perfection by its means. Hence it behooved the soul of Christ to be perfected by a knowledge which would be its proper perfection."¹⁶ If Christ's humanity is to be perfect, this requires, for Aquinas, a threefold knowledge—beatific, infused, and acquired. Thus, while the grace of union does not metaphysically demand, for Aquinas, that Christ possess the fullness of grace and the fullness of knowledge, it was fitting for him to receive such fullness, since his humanity was united to the source of all grace and knowledge—that is, to the Word himself. Moreover, if Christ

¹³ See *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 2, a. 10. English translations are taken from *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

¹⁴ ST III, q. 7, a. 1. See also ST III, q. 8, a. 5, where Aquinas speaks of the fullness of habitual grace as the Capital Grace whereby Christ is the Head of his Body, the Church.

¹⁵ ST III, q. 34, a. 1.

¹⁶ ST III, q. 9, a. 1.

was to fulfill his salvific task of bestowing the fullness of grace and the fullness of divine knowledge upon the blessed, he must himself possess the fullness of both, and he must possess both from the moment of his conception.

With regard to beatific knowledge, Aquinas states that, since human beings are brought to beatitude through the humanity of Christ, “it is necessary that the beatific knowledge, which consists in the vision of God, should belong to Christ pre-eminently, since the cause ought always to be more efficacious than the effect.”¹⁷ As Christ possessed the fullness of grace from his conception, so “from the first moment of his conception Christ saw God’s essence fully.”¹⁸ Because the blessed see the divine essence from the light that flows from the Word of God, “the soul of Christ, since it is united to the Word in person, is more closely joined to the Word of God than any other creature. Hence it more fully receives the light in which God is seen by the Word himself than any creature. And therefore more perfectly than the rest of creatures it sees the First Truth itself, which is the essence of God.”¹⁹

Following upon the same principle, Aquinas holds that, for Christ’s humanity to be perfect, it must possess infused knowledge, “in as much as the Word of God imprinted upon the soul of Christ, which is personally united to him, intelligible species of all things to which the possible intellect is in potentiality.”²⁰ Thus Christ possesses “beatific knowledge, whereby he knows the Word, and things in the Word; and an infused knowledge, whereby he knows things in their proper nature by intelligible species proportioned to the human mind.”²¹ Since the beatific vision, which is the immediate beholding of the very essence of God, is beyond all human comprehension, even beyond Christ’s human intellect, it is through his infused knowledge that Christ is able to humanly conceive and reveal through his words the whole of divine revelation, for example, who he is as the Son of God.²² Moreover, since his possible intellect must be fully in act for it to be perfect, Christ, through infused knowledge, knew everything that could be possibly known by man—all human sciences; and he “could use it (such infused knowledge) when he pleased.”²³

¹⁷ *ST* III, q. 9, a. 2.

¹⁸ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 3.

¹⁹ *ST* III, q. 10, a. 4. See also *ST* III, q. 9, a. 2.

²⁰ *ST* III, q. 9, a. 3.

²¹ *ST* III, q. 9, a. 3.

²² See *ST* III, q. 11, a. 1. See also III, q. 7, a. 8, and q. 31, a. 2, which speak of Christ possessing prophetic knowledge.

²³ *ST* III, q. 11, aa. 1 and 5.

Now, with regard to acquired knowledge, Aquinas argues that, while his intellect possesses the fullness of all knowledge, divine and human, Christ's active intellect must nevertheless also be actualized; so, "by acquired knowledge it knew whatever can be known by the action of the active intellect."²⁴ Thus, while Christ's knowledge did not advance or increase because of his beatific and infused knowledge, his empirical knowledge could increase by comparing what he knew through infused knowledge with what he came to know through his senses. Moreover, Christ was said to advance in wisdom and grace not in the sense that he learned more as he grew in age, but that, as he grew in age, he was able to reveal more fully what he already and always knew.²⁵ Similarly, for Aquinas, since as the head of his Body, the Church, he possessed the fullness of grace and knowledge, "it did not befit his dignity that he should be taught by any man."²⁶

Thus, for Aquinas, Christ is at once a wayfarer and a comprehensor. To be a "wayfarer" means that one is on the way to beatitude, and to be a "comprehensor" means that one has obtained beatitude. "Now before his passion Christ's mind saw God fully and thus he had beatitude as far as it regards what is proper to the soul; but beatitude was wanting with regard to all else, since his soul was passible, and his body both passible and mortal."²⁷ Christ's soul was, therefore, passible in relationship to its passible and mortal body, while in its relationship to its divinity and the grace and knowledge that fittingly flows from this incarnational relationship, it was impassible, and so a comprehensor.²⁸

With Aquinas's above understanding of Christ's human knowledge in mind, I want now to offer a critique, for only in the light of such a critique is my own positive proposal intelligible. There resides, I believe, at the heart of Aquinas's account of Christ's human knowledge, as well as within the whole of the Scholastic tradition, (1) a false presupposition, and (2) a misconceived incarnational principle that, in turn, contains (3) the use of one flawed concept.²⁹

²⁴ *ST* III, q. 12, a. 1.

²⁵ *ST* III, q. 12, a. 2.

²⁶ *ST* III, q. 12, a. 3.

²⁷ *ST* III, q. 15, a. 10. See also III, q. 15, a. 10, ad 3, and q. 11, a. 1, ad 2.

²⁸ See *ST* III, q. 15, aa. 3–4.

²⁹ Before proceeding to my critique of Aquinas, it would be just of me to note the many contemporary defenses of Aquinas's position concerning the threefold knowledge of Christ. See: Benedict M. Ashley, "The Extent of Jesus' Human Knowledge According to the Fourth Gospel," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington DC:

First, the false presupposition is that Christ's earthly humanity must be perfect. This presupposition is the motivating force that demands that Christ possess the fullness of grace such that he possesses the fullness of knowledge, both beatific and infused. That said, however, there is no antecedent theological basis that requires such a principle of perfection. Rather, the doctrine of the Incarnation itself would seem to mandate the opposite. This insistence on Christ's human perfection may be an attempt to accentuate the humanity's singular union with the person of the divine Son such that it shares in the Son's divine perfection; yet this misguided emphasis undermines the reality of the Incarnation itself, for such a principle demeans the authenticity of the Son's humanity by depleting it of its genuine earthly reality.³⁰ Aquinas himself, as we saw, emphasizes that the fullness of grace and the fullness of knowledge within Christ are not metaphysically necessitated by the humanity's incarnational union with the person of the Son. While he argues that it is "most fitting" that the fullness of grace and knowledge be bestowed, yet because the natures

Catholic University of American Press, 2005); Romanus Cessario, "Incarnate Wisdom and the Immediacy of Christ's Salvific Knowledge," in *Problemi teologici alla luce dell'Aquinate, Atti del IX Congresso Tomistico Internazionale, Studi Tomistici* 44, no. 5 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991): 334–40; Frederick E. Crowe, "The Mind of Jesus," *Communio* 1 (1974): 365–84; Crowe, "Eschaton and Worldly Mission in the Mind and Heart of Jesus," in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. M. Vertin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 193–234; Simon Francis Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?: Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015); Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 172–86; Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 32–33, 38–39, 59–63, 73–75; Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: The Incarnate Word* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016), and *Collected Works: Ontological and Psychological Constitution*; Guy Mansini, "Understanding St. Thomas on Christ's Immediate Knowledge of God," *The Thomist* 59 (1995): 91–124; Raymond Moloney, "The Mind of Christ in Transcendental Theology: Rahner, Lonergan, and Crowe," *Heythrop Journal* 25 (1984): 288–300; Albert Patfoort, "Vision béatifique et théologie de l'âme du Christ: À propos d'un ouvrage récent," *Revue thomiste* 93 (1993): 635–39; Claude Sarrasin, *Plein de grace et de vérité: Théologie de l'âme du Christ selon Thomas d'Aquin* (Vénasque, FR: Éditions de Carmel, 1992); Terry J. Tekippe, "Towards a Systematic Understanding of the Vision in Christ," *Method* 11 (1993): 77–101; Thomas Joseph White, "The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 497–534.

³⁰ Such perfection is merited, I believe, through his Passion and death and acquired in his Resurrection. Such perfection is required of the risen Jesus only when he fully becomes Lord and Savior.

remain distinct, such grace and knowledge must, nonetheless, be freely given. I too want to maintain, as will be seen, that Christ possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and so is without sin, yet I also want to safeguard another important, albeit at times underappreciated, truth: he is like us in every way (see Heb 2:17 and 4:15). The Incarnation demands that the Word actually became flesh (*sarx*) (see John 1:14), not in some perfect idyllic state, but in a manner that is to be perfected through what he suffers (see Heb 2:10). This eventual perfection pertains, I would insist, to the whole of Christ and not simply to the perfection of his mortal body and those lower passions that are intrinsically associated with his flesh. The marvelous mystery of the Incarnation lies precisely in the Son of God actually assuming a human nature like our own and, so, existing as a genuine earthly human being.³¹

³¹ I have argued that, while he is without sin, Jesus was of the lineage of sinful Adam, and so bore the birthmark of Adam's sinful race. The Son of God had to assume the whole of Adam's sinful humanity if that sinful humanity was to be healed and saved. See Thomas G. Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

Aquinas does address the issue of Christ's defects of body and soul, but his governing principle is the perfection that Christ must possess from his conception—perfection of grace and knowledge. Such perfection invariably mitigates much of the authenticity of Christ's earthly life. See *ST* III, q. 14 and q. 15. For example, in response to the objection that Christ would seem not to know all things, since he says that he does not know the day or the hour of the last day, Aquinas answers: "He is said, therefore, not to know the day or the hour of the judgment, for he does not make it known. . . . he was unwilling to reveal it." However, "the Father is said to know, because he imparted this knowledge to the Son. Hence, by saying *but the Father*, we are given to understand that the Son knows, not merely in the divine nature, but also in the human nature" (*ST* III, q. 10, a. 2, ad 1). Also, for Aquinas, when Jesus asked, in John's Gospel, where Lazarus was buried, he did so in order to prove to those present that Lazarus was truly dead, while he himself actually knew where the tomb was (see *Super Ioannem* 11, lec. 5, Marietti no. 1536). During the course of Jesus's life, then, whenever he expressed ignorance or asked questions, he did so not because he lacked the knowledge, but rather for some pastoral reason that would benefit his hearers. Because Jesus knew everything, he could not be taught by anyone, including Mary and Joseph (see *ST* III, q. 12, aa. 3–4). Similarly, his prayerful reading of the Old Testament would not actually aid him in discerning his salvific vocation or discerning his Father's will, for it would simply be an exercise in coming to know what he already knew but now in a new manner, but ultimately in an unnecessary manner.

The imputing of all of this knowledge to the earthly Jesus, I believe is unwarranted and contrary to the very nature of the Incarnation. Jesus's infused or prophetic knowledge should be limited to his salvific mission—the knowing of his Father's will, his awareness that he must suffer and die and be raised on

Second, the misconceived incarnational principle is that Jesus ultimately comes to know who he is as the Son of God because of the incarnational union of the divinity and humanity in the one person of the Son—that is, from within the one incarnational reality. Jesus knows, therefore, his divine identity, from the moment of his conception, through the graced internal interplay between his divinity and humanity—the relational interchange, founded upon the beatific vision, between his divine knowledge as God and his human intellect as man, whereby what is known divinely comes to be known humanly. Such a perfecting of the humanity by the divinity, it appears to me, undercuts the separate and distinct natures—the unconfused manner in which the Son of God exists as God and as man. While there may not be an ontological confusion and mixture of natures, the perfecting attributes of the Son's divine nature appear to be graciously imparted upon, or fittingly seep or even wash into, his human nature, providing it beatific and infused knowledge. Such an osmosis, so to speak, would seem to lend itself to confusion of natures.

Thirdly, as intimated above, inherent within the above-criticized misconceived incarnational principle is a flawed concept of the beatific vision. If *the manner* by which Jesus comes to know that he is God infers the improper direct imparting of divine knowledge from the divine nature into the human intellect of the human nature, then *the concept* of the beatific vision itself tends toward an improper division or flawed separation of the natures. The beatific vision, as first conceived and traditionally employed, is defined as the immediate vision of God possessed by the blessed souls in heaven, and so as a knowledge of God enjoyed by those who are not God. Jesus is not in this ontological situation. Jesus does not possess a full knowledge of God as if he were not God. For this very reason, to employ the concept of the beatific vision for Jesus is inappropriate, for it implies that the man, Jesus, is different and separate from his being the Son of God. The concept of beatific vision is not in accord with the theological or Christological issue at hand—how or in what manner does the Son of God as man come to know humanly that he is the Son of God? The knowing subject must be the Son of God, and the manner in which the

the third day, his ability to know what the Pharisees are thinking and that Judas would betray him, etc. There is no salvific value in Jesus knowing when the last day would occur or where Lazarus was buried or that there are giant redwood trees in California. To attribute to Jesus the fullness of knowledge undermines the actual authentic life that Jesus lived on earth. His daily human life verges on being a mere pretense and charade. I will express this same concern throughout my critique of Aquinas.

one subject of the Son comes to know must be as man, within the Son's human consciousness and intellect—within his human *I*.

Moreover, the concept of the beatific vision, as seen above, is, by its very nature, a post-death concept. Under normal circumstances, as Aquinas argues, only the blessed in heaven obtain the beatific vision and, so, come to experience God fully, even if they cannot comprehend him fully.³² Aquinas and the Scholastics, following upon the principle of perfection and the necessity of wanting Jesus to know that he is God, attributed to Jesus this post-death heavenly beatitude already from the moment of his conception. This position demanded, as Aquinas acknowledges, that the significance of Jesus's Resurrection pertained only to the glorification of his body. Again, however, under normal causal circumstances, the beatific glory possessed by the human soul would, by its very ontological and graced relationship to the body, glorify the body. For Aquinas, however, it was for the sake of "the divine economy" that "the glory [beatific glory] did not pass from his soul to his body, in order that by his passion he might accomplish the mystery of our redemption."³³ Here we find an artificial preventive intervention, a positive hindering of a causal effect that would naturally—or better, supernaturally—flow from the causal agent. Aquinas himself acknowledges that, immediately upon Jesus's death, "the soul communicated its glory to the risen body in the Resurrection; and so that body was made glorious."³⁴ It strikes me that, when one has to prevent—in an artificial and positive way—a cause from achieving its natural/supernatural end for the sake of another end, in this instance for the sake of making real Jesus's Passion and death, there is something inherently wrong with one's entire conception of the issue. In this occasion, the inappropriate demand is that Jesus possessed the perfection of the beatific vision from the moment of his conception for the sake of his knowing that he is God. This possession of the beatific vision has further very detrimental soteriological repercussions.

Aquinas also holds that Jesus possessed beatific and infused knowledge, for he must be, from his conception, the head of the Church and the revealer of all divine knowledge. Moreover, as head of the Church, this beatific and infused knowledge allowed Jesus to will and so merit humankind's salvation from the first moment of his conception. "Since the sanctification of Christ was the most perfect, because he was so sanctified that he

³² Aquinas argues that no one in this life can possess the beatific vision. See *ST* I, q. 12, a. 11.

³³ *ST* III, q. 54, a. 2.

³⁴ *ST* III, q. 54, a. 2.

might sanctify others; consequently he was sanctified by reason of his own movement of the free-will towards God. Which movement, indeed, of the free-will is meritorious. Consequently, Christ did merit in the first instant of his conception.”³⁵ What then is the purpose of Jesus’s life, death, and Resurrection? Aquinas states: “Nothing prevents the same thing belonging to someone from several causes. And thus it is that Christ was able by subsequent actions and sufferings to merit the glory of immortality, which he also merited in the first instant of his conception; not, indeed, so that it became thereby more due to him than before, but so that it was due to him from more causes than before.”³⁶

Here once again, I fear, Aquinas has evacuated Jesus’s humanity of its full and authentic earthly soteriological significance. Salvation was instantaneously merited at the moment of Jesus’s conception because he already possessed the fullness of actualized grace and the fullness of beatific and infused knowledge, thus knowing perfectly who he is as the Son of God, and so as a zygote, he could will and so merit humankind’s salvation. It is, however, only the intellect and the will of this one-celled zygote that is truly soteriologically decisive. The materiality of that cell is only important in that it provides a “home” for the intellect and will. This materiality is not actively contributing anything to humankind’s salvation—the actual material body of Christ is not soteriologically in play because it is physically impossible; being but a zygote, it cannot contribute any salvific act, for only the intellect and will are soteriologically acting. This smacks of a Platonic notion of the soul–body union, but more importantly it deprives the full humanity of Christ, specifically his material body, of any salvific consequence. What is really important is simply Christ’s soul, for it, through its intellect and will, is the sole active salvific agent. Moreover, then, Jesus’s human life, Passion, death, and Resurrection are deprived of their critical salvific meaning and purpose. They no longer comprise those ultimate, decisive, *sine qua non* human acts that effect humankind’s salvation, for all was already achieved from the moment of Jesus’s conception. I find this biblically unacceptable. Nowhere does Jesus, throughout his entire life, give the impression that he has already achieved humankind’s salvation from the moment of his conception. Rather, the forward-looking trajectory of his entire public ministry purposely and inevitably leads to and culminates in his Passion, death, and Resurrection, for Jesus is acutely aware that only in his enacting these acts will humankind be saved.

All of the above-mentioned consequences—which have detrimental

³⁵ *ST* III, q. 34, a. 4 (see also a. 3).

³⁶ *ST* III, q. 34, a. 4, ad 3.

biblical, Christological, and soteriological ramifications—logically follow upon the false presupposition that the earthly Christ must be perfect, and so know his divine identity from his conception through his beatific and infused knowledge. How are we then to sort out what I consider to be a Christological and soteriological muddle?

Jesus's Filial Vision of His Father

We must return to the Chalcedonian metaphysics of the Incarnation: Jesus is one and the same divine Son who actually exists as a genuine human being. Thus, who it is who must come to know humanly who he is, is the divine Son. Moreover, Chalcedon would then demand that the path by which the Son of God came to know his divine self-identity as man must be a thoroughly human manner. With the above in mind, I want now to present my own understanding of Jesus's human consciousness and knowledge, hopefully in accord with Chalcedon and the New Testament.

Since the Son of God is conceived as man in Mary's womb by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit—that is, through the singular grace of union—Jesus, the incarnate Son, possesses, within that same incarnating act, the fullness of the Spirit of Sonship. As the Father eternally begets his Son in the love of the Holy Spirit, he thus eternally possesses fully the Father's Spirit of Sonship, and so the Father lovingly sends forth his Son into the world so as to be begotten or conceived as man by the Holy Spirit so that the Son's humanity, from the first moment of conception, possesses fully the same Spirit of Sonship that he eternally possesses as God. This possession of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, founded upon the incarnating act of the Holy Spirit, is the fullness of habitual grace that is freely given to the Son of God *as* man. In accordance with Aquinas, as the grace of union, the incarnating act of the Holy Spirit is a free gracious act, and so the full indwelling of the Holy Spirit that flows from the incarnating act of the Spirit is equally a free gift bestowed upon the incarnate Son. Moreover, then, Jesus's habitual grace, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, does not come upon him *from without*, as with other human beings, such as Aquinas conceives it, but arises *from within* him, since it is founded upon the very incarnating act by which the Son of God becomes man, the Son of God being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as the Son constitutively possesses the Spirit of Sonship as the Father's Son, so he constitutively possesses the Spirit of Sonship as the Father's incarnate Son. As the Father's incarnate Son, Jesus, therefore, possesses the Spirit of Sonship in a unique manner that differs in kind from the manner in which Christians possess the Spirit of Sonship. Similarly, this singular possession

of the Holy Spirit is what constitutes Jesus, from his conception, as the anointed Messiah.

While Jesus, the Son of God, possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit from conception, that habitual abiding of the Spirit of Sonship is actualized, comes to be in act, only as the incarnate Son of God is capable of bringing it into act. This means that the infant Jesus, the incarnate Son, while he possesses fully the Spirit of Sonship, is not humanly conscious of his divine identity as the Father's Son, nor is he capable of meriting salvation, for as an infant, he is humanly incapable of actualizing the fullness of grace that he possesses. This inability is simply in keeping with the metaphysical principle that one can enact an act only to the extent that one is in act.

In keeping with his human maturation, as his human self-consciousness developed—that is, his human *I*—Jesus became aware of who he is as the Son of God. This becoming aware of who he is, however, is not, in relationship to himself, an inner act of reflection by which the human soul or intellect contemplates the divinity of the Word within the beatific vision, and so, through the accompanying infused knowledge, grasps his divine identity. Rather, as ordinary human children differentiate themselves in relationship to others, parents and siblings, and so conceive themselves as *I*'s, so the child Jesus came to differentiate himself in relationship to others. Most importantly, in keeping with the singular metaphysics of the Incarnation, as Jesus humanly matured he humanly became aware of his Father, through and in the light of the indwelling Spirit of Sonship, and within this knowing of his Father, he became consciously aware, and so humanly knew himself, within his human *I*, as the Father's only-begotten Son. The Son of God did not come to know who he is as man in relationship to himself, but in and through his relationship to his Father. The indwelling Father's-Spirit-of-Sonship is the foundational principle by which the Son humanly came to know his Father, and in so doing simultaneously came to know himself as the Father's Son. He did not, then, come to know God as if God were an object distinct from himself, as in the beatific vision, but he came to know God the Father as the Father's Son, for the Father, in the love of the Holy Spirit, revealed himself to his Son, Jesus; and Jesus, the Son, in the same love of the Holy Spirit, came to know himself as the Father's beloved Son. Apart from humanly knowing his Father, within the communion of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the Son, would not humanly know himself as the Father's Son. Chalcedonian incarnational metaphysics demands this. Jesus, the Son of God existing as man, must, as man, come to know humanly that he is the Father's Son not in relation to his own divinity, but in and through his human relationship with his heavenly

Father. It is no wonder, then, that, in the Gospels, Jesus reveals his Sonship not in relationship to himself, but rather insofar as he reveals the Father. Hence, he never says: "I am the Son of God." Instead, Jesus reveals who he is by revealing his Father, "my Father," and in revealing his Father, he reveals that he is indeed the Father's Son.

Moreover, this coming to know that he is the Father's Son is not a protracted psychological or intellectual process. By the time the child Jesus could humanly say, "I," the human *I* of a divine *who*, he had some self-conscious awareness of who he is, and so had some knowledge that God is his Father, and thus he concurrently knew himself to be the Father's Son. Possessing the fullness of the Spirit of Sonship, the child Jesus, as he prayed the Psalms with his parents, particularly with Joseph, and as he weekly heard and pondered the Scriptures together with them in the synagogue, and as he went with them to the temple to celebrate the great high feasts, enacted the power of the Spirit that dwelt within him, and in so doing, came to know ever more clearly and intensely that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is truly his eternal Father. In so doing Jesus, the Son, humanly became ever more conscious, within his human *I*, that he is truly the Father's Son, that this is who he is—the Son of God. Jesus's human self-conscious awareness of his Sonship was most dramatically manifested when he, at the age of twelve, was well aware that he was in his Father's house, the temple, and must be about his Father's business (Luke 2:41–51).

As seen above, my understanding of the manner in which the Son of God humanly comes to know that, in and through his Spirit of Sonship, he is the Father's Son is fully in keeping with the inner Trinitarian divine relationships. Within the Trinity, the Father knows himself as Father only in the begetting and knowing his Son in the love of the Holy Spirit, and the Son knows himself as Son only in being begotten and knowing his Father in the love of the Holy Spirit. The Father and the Son do not know themselves in relation to themselves, but only in relation to one another within the communion of the Father's Spirit of Sonship. As they subsist as persons only in relation to one another, the persons of the Trinity know themselves only in knowing one another. Apart from knowing the Son in the Holy Spirit, the Father would not know himself as Father, and apart from knowing the Father in the Holy Spirit, the Son would not know himself as Son. The self-identity of the persons of the Trinity, and thus their own self-awareness, resides not in themselves, but only as they subsist in relation to one another. Apart from one another, they are, literally, no one and nothing. Thus, as I have argued, the Son humanly knows that he is the Father's Son not through an introspective relationship between his divinity and humanity founded upon the beatific vision, but only through

his filial vision of the Father founded upon his possessing his Father's Spirit of Sonship.

Furthermore, while the earthly Jesus possesses a filial vision of his Father, and so knows himself to be the Father's Son, he possesses the fullness of this filial vision only within his glorious Resurrection. This gives rise to four soteriological issues.

The first concerns his being the revealer of the fullness of divine truth. Because the earthly Jesus does not possess the fullness of his filial vision, which would be incomprehensible, and so incapable of being humanly fully conceived and articulated, he does not need infused knowledge, as envisioned by Aquinas—that is, in order to conceive and articulate the divine truth he humanly possesses. Jesus, within the light of the indwelling Spirit, is able to know his Father, and so reveal his Father through his human words and actions. Moreover, in his filial vision, again through the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to know the will of his Father, and this would entail his having, what I would term “prophetic knowledge.” The Father revealed to Jesus, within their Spirit-filled communion, his messianic mission—the establishing of God's kingdom through death and Resurrection. It would also entail his ability to read hearts and minds so as to know, for example, the heart of Judas and what the scribes and Pharisees were thinking. This prophetic knowledge would not, however, be an act of faith in what the Father revealed to him. Rather, it would be something that he actually knew as the Father's incarnate Son. This would be in keeping with what Aquinas sees as part of Jesus's infused or prophetic knowledge.³⁷ All of this takes place within Jesus's ever-present filial relationship with his Father that would be especially enacted and manifested within his prayer.

Second, because he possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit and, so, is imbued with the fullness of love, Jesus, throughout his salvific ministry, enacts this love. Every word he speaks and every act he performs, particularly his miracles, healings, and exorcisms, are performed in the fullness of love. Yet, while every act that Jesus performs is done in the fullness of love, not every act expresses or enacts the fullness of love. Only within his Spirit-filled sacrificial death does Jesus perform the perfect act of love, and so enact the fullness of the indwelling Spirit. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). In this perfect act of Spirit-filled love, the sacrificial giving of his life in love to his Father out of love for humankind, Jesus merits the forgiveness of our sins

³⁷ See *ST* III, q. 7, a. 8. For a good exposition of Aquinas's understanding of Christ's prophetic knowledge, see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 182–86.

and simultaneously merits the fruit of that supreme act of love—his own glorious Resurrection and that of the faithful who are in communion with him. Within this resurrected glory, the life and love of the Holy Spirit, the life and love he possessed from the moment of his conception, becomes fully actualized so that Jesus's filial vision of his Father is fully actualized, and within that fully actualized filial vision, Jesus experiences the fullness of being the Father's Son. Only when love is fully actualized does love merit its full reward—the immediate absolute unmitigated vision of God. Within the glorious perfecting of the totality of who he is as the incarnate Son, Jesus's ardent prayer to his Father is answered. "I glorified you [Father] on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in your presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made" (John 17:4–5). It was precisely because Jesus as the Father's Son did not cling to his divinity but emptied himself in becoming man even to the point of obediently accepting death on the Cross that his Father "highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name which is above every name," the name "Lord" (Phil 2:6–11).

Third, precisely because Jesus is the risen incarnate Lord, he is now empowered to send forth his Spirit upon the whole of humankind and, in so doing, as the now-risen Head, found the Church, his living body. Thus, unlike in Aquinas's notion that Jesus possessed his Capital Grace from the moment of his conception, Jesus now achieves such grace of headship within his death and Resurrection, for only in these definitive salvific acts does Jesus merit fully his supreme dignity as Lord of the Church and Head of his Body. Only in those decisive salvific acts is the Church born from his pierced side and is his Mystical Body enlivened by his risen glory.

Fourth, while the earthly Jesus, as the incarnate Son, revealed his merciful and loving Father, he reveals the fullness of who the Father is, and so the fullness of the Father's love and mercy, as the risen Lord Jesus. Likewise, the risen Jesus, in fully revealing his Father, fully reveals that he is the Father's risen and glorified Son, and he does so by sending forth the Father's Spirit of Sonship. While Jesus promised his Spirit to the faithful, the Spirit is given only when Jesus is glorified (see John 7:37–40). This is why it is better that Jesus goes—that is, ascends to his Father in the fullness of glory—for only then, as the glorious Lord, can he send forth the Holy Spirit (see John 16:7). While Jesus enacts the fullness of revelation on earth, he makes it fully luminous to his Apostles and disciples only when he, as the risen Lord and Savior, sends forth the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth who will guide his followers to all truth (see John 16:12–15).

My hope is that what I have proposed concerning Jesus's human consciousness and knowledge conforms to the Creed of the Council of Chal-

cedon and is in keeping with the Gospel proclamation. While my exposition is not as complex as Aquinas's or that of the Scholastic tradition as a whole, I believe its greater simplicity more clearly embodies the metaphysical principles that reside within the ontology of the Incarnation—that is, that Jesus is the one divine person of the Son truly existing as an authentic man. As man, then, the Son of God, through the indwelling of the Spirit of Sonship, comes to know his Father, and in so doing, comes to know himself as the Father's Son. This understanding of Jesus's human personal filial vision of the Father, a vision that is imbued with the Spirit of Sonship, accentuates the reality that it is truly the Son who exists as man and who, within his humanity, comes to know consciously his identity as Son in knowing his Father. Moreover, I believe that I have recovered the definitive salvific importance of Jesus's earthly life and death and enhanced the decisive salvific significance of his Resurrection—elements that seem almost superfluous if we take the Thomistic/Scholastic theology to its conclusions. Such an emphasis is in accord with the Gospel narrative, which portrays the whole progression of Jesus's life, from his conception, leading to and climaxing in his death and Resurrection, for upon these acts is humankind saved from sin and death so as to obtain fellowship in Jesus's resurrected glory. This Spirit-filled fellowship with the risen Jesus leads me to my concluding point.³⁸

Sharing in Jesus's Filial Vision of the Father

First, Aquinas maintained that Jesus must possess the beatific vision from his conception so that the faithful might obtain his blessed vision through his humanity. While it is necessary for Christians to obtain the blessed vision of God through the humanity of Jesus, this does not necessitate that Jesus possess that vision from his conception. What is necessary is that Jesus possesses his blessed vision of the Father within his bodily Resurrection, for only as the risen Lord of the Church and Head of his Body is his heavenly vision shared with the risen faithful through their fully sharing in Jesus's Spirit of Sonship.

Second, I have insisted that the concept of the beatific vision, when applied to Jesus, is inappropriate. Instead, I have proposed that it is more fitting to speak of Jesus possessing a personal filial vision of the Father, since

³⁸ My understanding of the incarnate Son's filial vision of the Father has some similarities with the positions espoused by Lonergan (see *Collected Works: Ontological and Psychological Constitution*) and, especially, Galot (*La Conscience du Jésus and Who Is Christ?*). However, I significantly differ with them on key points. For these similarities and differences see, as noted above, Weinandy, "Jesus's Filial Vision of the Father."

it is the Son as man who becomes conscious of himself as Son in knowing his Father. I want now to submit that it is equally appropriate to speak of the blessed in heaven possessing a filial vision of the Father.

Traditionally, as noted before, the beatific vision is an objective, immediate vision of God as God exists in himself by those who are not God. Since, however, those who come to faith and are baptized become members of Christ's body by sharing his Spirit of Sonship, they too become adopted children of the Father. This adoption means that the faithful share in the same divine life, in the same divine relationships, that exists within the Trinity. In union with Jesus, the risen incarnate Son, through the transformative indwelling Spirit, the faithful come to live in communion with the Father as his children. Thus, in Spirit-filled communion with Jesus and after the manner of Jesus, the faithful, too, rightly cry out "Abba, Father" (see Rom 8:7 and Gal 4:6). This filial cry fulfills Jesus's filial prayer that "they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21). Because Christians relate to the Father as his sons and daughters, their knowledge of him is not simply an objective knowledge of someone who stands over against themselves, as in the beatific vision, but a filial knowledge, a filial vision, of him whose very life they now share. They partake of and share in one and the same blessed, Spirit-imbued filial vision of the Father as does Jesus, the risen Son. Similar to Jesus then, the faithful come to know who they truly are not in relation to themselves, but in relation to their Father: they recognize their authentic identity as his sons and daughters. This filial vision and knowledge finds its completion in heaven, where the blessed will share fully in Christ's resurrected glory, and so share fully in his Spirit of Sonship, and thus participate fully in his glorious immediate filial vision of the Father. There is really, then, only one filial vision of the Father, that of his exalted incarnate Son, Jesus, in which all the Saints who are in communion with him share, for together in Christ, all share in the Father's Spirit of Sonship.³⁹

I trust that I have not caused additional confusion or cultivated undue ambiguity as to the mystery of the Incarnation. Rather, I hope that what I have articulated has engendered greater clarity and understanding, and in so doing, fostered greater love for Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father and our definitive Lord and universal Savior.

N.V

³⁹ For another rendering of the filial vision of the blessed see, as noted above, Weinandy, "Jesus Filial Vision of the Father," 290–92.