The Infused Science of Christ

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Thomas Aquinas's theory of the knowledge of Christ may seem to have little relevance for modern historical-critical study of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth.[1] In his mature work, represented emblematically by the third part of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas presents the knowledge of Christ in a fourfold descending perspective from the highest forms of knowledge to the most basic. He begins from the divine wisdom that Christ possesses as God and then examines three modes of human knowledge: the immediate vision of God that Christ possesses in his human soul, the infused science that Jesus possesses as the most perfect of the prophets, and the acquired knowledge that Christ possesses as man in virtue of the human nature that he shares with us.[2] Aquinas's account stems originally from the Chalcedonian principles of Christological doctrine. The approach might be broadly characterized as a form of "descending Christology" insofar as the deity and divine wisdom of the Lord are presupposed and his human acquired knowledge is affirmed just insofar as he is essentially human. Meanwhile, the beatific vision and infused science of Christ are interpreted as graces given to his human nature in view of his human actions on behalf of our salvation. It is due to his beatific vision and his infused prophetic knowledge, for example, that Christ as man is able to

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[2] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] III, qq. 9–12.

know perfectly who he is as the Son of God and who the Father and the Holy Spirit are so as to reveal them to us and to interpret Scripture authoritatively, foretelling of his own Passion and resurrection prophetically and instituting the Church and the sacraments effectively.

In methodological contrast, the modern historical-critical study of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth makes use of a number of normative principles that stem from the Enlightenment era, among them a presupposition of the historical homogeneity of natural causes. That is to say, the causes of human experience and consciousness for all persons at the time of Jesus (including Jesus himself) should be understood against the backdrop of and in continuity with the language, concepts, and symbols of Second Temple Judaism.[3] These in turn should be understood in continuity with the predictable natural occurrences and causes that we experience in the modern scientific era. So, for example, apocalyptic elements in the culture of the Judaism of the time of Jesus should be employed to explain Jesus's immanent expectation of the "kingdom of God," but this need not mean that there is any such thing as an eschatological occurrence in reality.[4] Likewise, the New Testament portraits of the figure of Jesus should be understood as human literary artifacts and explained in light of their cultural setting, the theological vantage points of their editors, and their intended uses for historically situated human communities.[5] This need not imply that they are inspired or that the portraits of Christ that they present must correspond to who Jesus of Nazareth really was ontologically. It follows from this that the portrait of Christ found in the Gospels might be very different from the "real" Jesus of history.

We might notice the contrasts these two methodological approaches represent. If Aquinas's presentation of the infused science of Christ seems to bespeak a knowledge derived immediately from God, and

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[3] For an excellent example of a study of the historical Jesus conducted in this mode, see E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985). The naturalistic explanation of the Gospels and of the figure of Jesus in particular arguably has its theoretical origins in the work of Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1690).

[4] See, most famously, Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), and more recently, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 91–156 and 334–40.

[5] The argument for this interpretive stance was crafted with great clarity by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing; see *Lessing: Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

therefore from "outside of time," the modern study of Jesus tends to construe his consciousness by ascetic reference uniquely to the immanent and limited horizon of his age. Pressed toward extremes, one account readily emphasizes the divine origin of Christ's message and its universality for all ages but does so to the potential exclusion of his historical particularity as a first-century Jew, while the other account seeks to identify the historically particular and limited character of Jesus's aims and self-understanding within the context of Second Temple Judaism but does so to the exclusion of his divine origin and soteriological intensions, which are universal in scope.

In this essay, however, I will argue that these two approaches, while really distinct, need not be construed in opposition to one another. On the contrary, a nuanced appreciation of Aquinas's doctrine of the human knowledge of Christ may permit us to assimilate many of the legitimate aspirations of modern historical-Jesus studies while still retaining a high doctrine of the infused knowledge of the Lord as the greatest of the prophets. To make this argument, I will advert to the Thomistic analysis of the knowledge of Christ. However, in order to engage the contemporary question of Jesus's historical self-understanding, we can invert the order of Aquinas's descending perspective from higher to lower and proceed in the opposite direction. Beginning from a consideration of the acquired knowledge of Christ, I will seek to show that the historicity of the mode in which Christ learns and expresses himself as human is compatible with both implicit and explicit forms of universal reflection. In a second section, I will consider the habitual infused science of Christ within the context of his historically situated acquired knowledge. In the final section, I will consider his beatific vision as it relates to his infused science and acquired knowledge. My aim is to show the potential compatibility of a traditional theology of the infused science of Christ with what is best in contemporary historical studies regarding Jesus of Nazareth as set against the backdrop of his epoch. Ultimately, the balance of this Thomistic perspective is rooted in the realism of biblical faith itself and the principles of Chalcedonian dogma, which affirms both the true historical humanity of God incarnate and his distinctive human graces and privileges as the man who is uniquely the Son of God.

Acquired Knowledge: The Universality of Human Thought and Its Historical Modes

Aquinas is generally thought to have been the first thirteenth-century Scholastic doctor to posit the existence of naturally acquired human

knowledge in Christ, as opposed to uniquely infused knowledge.[6] He did so based on the simple principles that Christ is fully human and that being human entails having an agent intellect by which we derive knowledge progressively from the senses, a claim that is, of course, derivative from Aristotelian philosophical anthropology.[7] This form of knowledge allows us to learn gradually of the very essences of things (such as what the human nature is that is common to all men), but it also entails learning in and through a particular sensory mode that stems from our animality.[8] This animality is not only individual but also corporate. That is to say, we learn from and with others within a broader political community and culture, which we are typically deeply dependent upon for our education in various ways. Here we should note some basic philosophical points that are pertinent to a theological consideration of Christ within his historical context.

First, while our acquired conceptual knowledge always pertains in some way to the universal, it is also always dependent upon the external and internal sense powers. The latter include the imaginative power (and sense memory), the synthetic "common" sense that collates diverse phantasms from diverse senses, the passions and cogitative sense, which both entail affective reactions or attractions to objects of knowledge.[9] In other words, as we come to acquire knowledge of realities external to us, we simultaneously imagine sounds and words that act as phantasms of support for our spiritual insight and conceptual grasp of things.

Second, as Aristotle noted already in *On Interpretation*, there is a kind of triangular reference of words to concepts and of concepts to things: the conventional significations of language denote the nonconventional, natural concepts of the mind, which themselves refer to the nonconventional, natural realities that language signi-

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6 See *ST* III, q. 12, a. 2, where he notes his change of mind on this issue with respect to his earlier position of *In* III *Sent.*, d. 14, a. 3. See the historical reflections of Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Le savoir acquis du Christ selon les théologiens médiévaux," *Revue Thomiste* 101 (2001): 355–408.

7 See *ST* III, q. 9, a. 4, which appeals overtly to Aristotelian theories of human knowledge.

8 See, for example: Aquinas, *In* III *de anima*, lec. 12, on *De anima* 3.7.431a4–43lb19; *ST* I, qq. 78–79.

9 *ST* I, q. 78, a. 4; Mark Barker, "Experience and Experimentation: The Meaning of *Experimentum* in Aquinas," *The Thomist* 76, no. 1 (2012): 37–71; Barker "Aquinas on Internal Sensory Intentions: Nature and Classification," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 52.2 (2012); 199–226.

fies.[10] At the same time, we can qualify this claim in two ways. (1) We grasp reality largely through the stimulation of linguistic naming processes, through both the formal and the informal methods by which our culture educates us. Language not only denotes but also draws our discriminating attention to various facets of reality. Symbols, language, and names do not arise in us only "after" we perceive things and grasp them intellectually. Their cultural performance also initiates us to the act of grasping the things that they denote. And (2) the realities denoted are not only purely natural but also largely artifactual. Many external realities we perceive and name are themselves at least partially informed by processes of human ethical and artistic freedom (such as customs of religion and philosophy, politics, and ethics, but also of art and artisanal objects). Many human symbols or forms of conventional reference are clearly understood only once one has a sufficient knowledge of the ambient culture in a given time and place and its references and functional symbols.[11]

Finally, even if we emphasize the reality of the knowledge of essences and the universal natural and ethical insights that are inevitably present in each human mind in every human culture, we must also recognize that there are cultures in which the *degree or intensity* of such insight differs in a given realm of understanding. And there are vastly different degrees of scientific, religious, philosophical, and moral insight (or ignorance) present in distinct cultures across time.

The point of my reflection to this point is not to suggest that all forms of knowledge are inherently *determined* by their cultural linguistic setting (as if one could only learn what one was taught and never engage reality itself), but only that they are truly qualified or *conditioned* by it in a variety ways with regard to both the *modes of acquisition* of that knowledge and, to some extent, the *objects* of knowledge that are readily available (or inaccessible) in a given culture. We should not expect to find first-century Jews writing in symbolic logic or medieval Japanese calligraphy. Nor should we think they will be actively concerned with sixth-century-BC Confucian philosophy or the twentieth-century Einsteinian theory of general relativity. This conditioning of our universal form of knowing is both culturally individuating and essentially (universally) human, just as material

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[10] Aristotle, *De interpretatione* 1.1.16a3–6.

[11] See the argument to this effect by George A. Lindbeck in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1984).

individuality, though distinctive to each person, is also (abstractly considered) an attribute of what it means for any human being to be human.[12] Like embodiment, the cultural mode of acquisition of our knowledge is not an effect of our fallen human condition (pace Origen), but simply characteristic of our animal nature with its distinctive mode of rationality, by which we learn spiritually through the senses, collectively, and across time and place.

What follows from this reflection theologically in our consideration of Christ? First, we may say that there is a certain culturally limited form of knowledge present in every human knower. Each of us speaks a particular language (or range of languages) and acquires knowledge within a given horizon of time and place, in the context of the available patterns of reflection and debate that typically shape the thinking of a given culture. Christ is no exception to this general rule. If God truly became human, then in his human life, the Word Incarnate not only acquired knowledge but also spoke and thought through the medium of the language and symbols of his epoch, set against the complex Judaic and Hellenistic backdrop that such language and symbols presupposed. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Christ was unable to speak in clearly universalistic terms about the human condition or the meaning of all that exists, for he clearly was, as were his contemporaries and disciples, for that matter. But I am saying that there were delimiting features of human cognition that were part and parcel of the reality of the Incarnation. In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, 'increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man' (Luke 2:52), and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience (Mark 6:38; 8:27; John 11:34). This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking 'the form of a slave' (Phil 2:7)."[13]

It follows from this perspective that we need not argue that the historical Christ, by virtue of his human perfection, must have been able to acquire natural knowledge of any possible intellectual subject matter available to any human person throughout time, such

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[12] As Aquinas notes in *De ente et essentia* chap. 2.

[13] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), §472.

as knowledge developed in the nineteenth or twentieth century through the experimental sciences. Christ did possess extraordinary insight into the human condition, in part from his infused science, and this in turn must have had reverberations upon the development of his acquired knowledge, as we will note further on. Likewise, due in part to the extraordinary grace that Christ enjoyed in his human intellect, we need not attribute any noetic error to the mind of Christ.[14] A limitation of knowledge by circumstances of time and place is not equivalent to and need not entail the presence of intellectual error. There is, therefore, a kind of perfection to the acquired knowledge of Christ. However, this perfection in its acquired mode should be understood as one that is culturally situated and that expresses itself intelligibly within the context and against the backdrop of the language and symbols of Second Temple Judaism.

Secondly, understood in a theological light, the culture in which Jesus of Nazareth lived was unique because it was in various respects the product of supernatural, prophetic revelation originating in the patriarchal and Mosaic epoch and following down through to the times of the monarchy, the high prophets, and postexilic redaction of the biblical texts. Biblical revelation is ultimately of divine origin, but it is also mediated through a vast mosaic of human authors, traditions, and interpreters, and thus makes use of precisely the fabric of human customs, language, and symbols that we have alluded to above. This is of capital importance because Jesus of Nazareth clearly appealed to and actively interpreted the tradition of prophetic revelation that preceded him. What this means is that, just as we can study the books of the Bible simultaneously as fonts of divine revelation and as products of human agency in a given time and place, so also we can analyze, for lack of a better term, the "theology" of the historical Christ insofar as it is an especially inspired, theologically ultimate *human* interpre-

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[14] This is a traditional assertion of Catholic theology, one that also is strengthened by the consideration that Christ is truth incarnate, himself the first truth, living a human life among us. Questions arise about Christ's interpretation of Scripture. Does he treat Jonah as a historical figure, or Moses as the unique author of the Torah? If so, do these constitute errors of ignorance? My own interpretation is that Christ, as a first-century Jew, frequently treats these figures as symbols of typology or authority according to the religious customs of his age and is not in every case attempting to assert a historical claim about particular Old Testament tropes of the kind modern biblical scholars characteristically engage in.

tation of the word of God.[15] Jesus is, after all, a human interpreter of the Scriptures, as is Paul or John or the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. Modern biblical scholars often examine in some great detail Jesus's interpretations of Jonah, or his reading of Second Isaiah or of Daniel, or his particular eschatology, or his teachings on divorce, or his interpretations of the Psalms of David. In part, they do so against the backdrop of the Judaism of his time so as to underscore the originality of Jesus of Nazareth, the aims of his ministry, and his claims to authority. The point I am making is that this act of locating such teaching within a particular historical context is not opposed to the idea that Jesus is the Lord, the God of Israel. If God became human, it is also normal that this man who is God should be himself an active human interpreter of the meaning of the Torah, the Prophets, and the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible and should, *as man in his human historical consciousness*, see himself indicated in Old Testament prophecy. That interpretation is aided and guided by the presence of infused science, to be sure, as we shall return to below. But the higher illumination of prophecy in the mind of Christ need not exclude the fact that he is a genuine human agent actively engaged with the living tradition of Judaism that he acquires knowledge of in and through his experiential life as a first-century Jew.

Finally, we may conclude with the following observation. Rightly understood, a philosophy of the agent intellect allows us to understand that all modes of human thought have overt degrees of universality to them. Conceptual thought simply is universal in its signification and structure, no matter how provincial or limited the horizon of understanding may be in a given time and place. For this reason, theologically speaking, we may say that it is always impossible to demonstrate a priori (from philosophical premises of unaided natural reason) the impossibility of biblical revelation simply by averting to the limitations of the historical context in which it was composed. If there is a particular culture that has become the receptive site or locus of revelation, that culture, just because it is human, will have individualizing features and limitations. At the same time, simply because it is a human culture, it is always potentially capable of signifying truths about God and humanity that are universal in scope. Christ is an ulti-

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[15] See, for example: Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990); G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), ch. 9; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).

mate revelatory figure in history, but he is so only ever within a given historical cultural setting. Jesus of Nazareth is a first-century figure with a historical consciousness deeply conditioned by his distinctive culture, but he is also capable of communicating a universal revelation of the truth about God, humanity, and salvation. There is no inherent contradiction possible in the simultaneous affirmation of these twin truths.

Infused Science: Its Nature and Economic Function

There can be little doubt that each of the four canonical Gospels ascribes extraordinary forms of knowledge to Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, these ascriptions are so prevalent, thematic, and intertwined throughout the narratives and instructions of the Gospels that their integrity and very narrative structures would appear virtually unintelligible or as mere fragments of texts were we to extract from them, by violence, as it were, every instance of the appearance of such knowledge. Jesus reads hearts and can speak with accuracy of the faith or of the judgments present in a given person's mind (Mark 2:1–2; Luke 7:50). He interprets Scripture not as one who is seeking its meaning, but as its authoritative and final arbiter (Mark 12:1–12; Matt 5:17–48; 12:38–45). He foretells the future, including his own rejection by the religious authorities of Israel, his public torture, and his death and resurrection (Mark 8:31–32; 9:30–32; 10:32–34; 12:1–12; John 3:14; 8:28). He is aware that he has the power to perform miracles prior to the action of doing so (Matt 8:3; John 11:4–11). He gives an account of the nature of the eschaton, the final judgment, and the life of the world to come (Matt 24:3; 25:31–45; Luke 18:8). He chooses twelve disciples to prolong the spiritual effects of his kingdom and commands that they celebrate the sacraments, which he institutes for the future life of the Church (Mark 3:14; 14:22–24; John 6:26–59). More generally, he seems to know what the human being is and to exhibit little surprise, scandal, or exertion of understanding in the face of human ignorance, weakness, or betrayal (John 2:25; 13:27; 19:11; Mark 14:18). In his intellectual and moral self-possession, he appears to remain somehow spiritually uncompromised by these features of fallen human existence (John 18:23; Mark 14:62).

It is of course possible that all of this knowledge gently exhibited by Christ as the Gospels depict him in his radiant holiness and majestic humility is itself purely the product of post-paschal authors and consists of retrospective projections cast back upon the historical Jesus

artificially for theological reasons. But there are both historical-critical and distinctively theological reasons to reject this view. On the merely naturalistic level, we may note that there exist no very close literary parallels in ancient Judaic (or Greco-Roman) literature to the figure of Jesus as he is portrayed in the four Gospels, insofar as he exhibits there a prophetic capacity that is not merely received from time to time (actualistically) but possessed habitually and exercised freely from his own person. This portrait has a basic originality that derives from within the early Christian community, and not as a mimicking act of reference to a preexistent model. No pure parallel exists in the representation of a Jewish prophet either in the Hebrew Scriptures or in the inter-testamental literature. Furthermore, the four canonical Gospels are neither merely the product of one person nor the singular work of a group of redactors, but bear the marks of distinct literary origins by individual authors who conveyed authoritative traditions preserved in communities that preexisted these authors, or that they accompanied. Given the multiple attestations to the infused science of Christ from independent sources, their early origin and authority in the early Church, and their uniformity of theological content despite the heterogeneity of styles among the four evangelists, it is reasonable to conclude that accounts of the extraordinary knowledge of Christ date back to the earliest strata of Christian teaching and preaching, from the primitive apostolic age. Thoroughgoing skepticism regarding the reality of the infused science, therefore, is neither obligatory nor textually and historically warranted.

Furthermore, there are significant theological reasons for belief in the prophetic science of Christ during the course of his earthly life prior to the resurrection. A first reason for this has to do with the identity and mission of Christ as the Son of God. If the visible mission of the Son is meant to reveal to us the mystery of the Father and to be the prelude to the sending of the Spirit, then the Son must be the self-conscious revealer of the Father and the Spirit, as well as of his own identity as the Son.[16] He must work in unity with the Father and the Spirit as the Lord, who is himself God, in his human actions

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[16] See the argument to this effect in the International Theological Commission's *The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission*, especially regarding the four propositions concerning Christ's human knowledge that are requisite to any sound Catholic theology (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1985_coscienza-gesu_en.html).

of teaching and miracles, in his foretelling of his suffering, and in his institution of the apostolic college. But, of course, Christ can be such a revealer, teacher, and redeemer *in his human life* among us only if he enjoys *as man* the assistance of a particular supernatural knowledge of the mystery of God and of the economy of redemption.[17]

A second theological reason stems from principles of biblical ontology. According to St. Paul, Jesus has been revealed to be the "new Adam" and the "perfect man." This claim is primarily soteriological in nature, but it also has ontological implications. Where the old Adam fell into ignorance, malice, and moral weakness, Christ exhibited wisdom, charity, and sinless obedience. Where the actions of the old Adam led the human race into death, the self-emptying of the new Adam has given rise to the re-creation and the resurrection (see Phil 2:6–11).[18] If this is the case, then the historical Christ prior to his resurrection must have had the requisite moral insight to cooperate with the plan of salvation that was to be effectuated through his obedience unto death and his subsequent glorification. It is necessary, in this case, to ascribe to the historical Christ a particularly acute supernatural insight of mind into the life of the virtues under the movement of the Holy Spirit, as well as an inspired understanding of the divine economy.

A final theological reason pertains to the fact that the miraculous capacity of Christ to read hearts or foretell the future is evidently intended in the Gospels to serve as a repeated "sign" of his divinely sanctioned authority.[19] This is what the First Vatican Council called a "reason of credibility": a miraculous sign given to natural human reason to suggest the presence of authentic divine revelation present in the historical figure of Jesus.[20] If the revelation itself suggests to us the credibility of supernatural belief in the authority of Christ based upon his extraordinary forms of insight, we should not seek to extract or obscure this dimension of the New Testament as if it were an embarrassment or an unwarranted addendum. On the contrary, the

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[17] See *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, where Aquinas presents similar arguments for the necessity of the presence of habitual grace in the human soul of Christ.

[18] On this theme, see N.T.Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 56–98.

[19] C. H. Dodd identified the programmatic character of this theme in John's Gospel in his *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 297–89.

[20] In *Dei Filius* (1870). More recently, see Mats Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

prophecy of Jesus of Nazareth is a feature of his existence that does make him distinctive in his own way within the broader context of the history of religions.

What, though, is the infused science of Christ, and how ought we best to understand its mode of exercise theologically? Here Aquinas's treatment of the subject is characteristically helpful. Aquinas sees the infused science as a form of insight or intellectual understanding not gained through the ordinary natural process of the agent intellect acting through the senses, but received directly from God and as prophetic in character.[21] St. Thomas speaks here in Latin of infused *species* or higher concepts analogous to but not identical with angelic ideas.[22] These are forms of knowledge that provide the soul with intuitive understanding of things that are hidden from other human beings and lie outside the scope of natural human reason, but that God might know, such as the hidden moral and intellectual dispositions of another human being or future events. Such knowledge, for St. Thomas, does not do violence to ordinary human modes of understanding, but integrates into our ordinary knowledge or happens from within the midst of it and is manifest through ordinary human speech or symbolic expression, as when the high prophets write about or enact through gesture in an "ordinary" human way what they have been given to understand in a higher mode by infused science.[23]

Three key controversies ensue whenever one approaches this subject. One pertains to the *scope or extension* of the infused science, a second to its *actual occurrence* at any given moment in the life of Christ, and a third to its *compatibility* with the historical limitations of Christ's acquired knowledge. We might characterize the maximalist perspectives here by the threefold claim that (1) Christ as man knew through infused science all things possible for man to know, (2) that he knew them actually at every given moment, and (3) that he knew them in a way that transcended and was unconditioned by his historically acquired knowledge. If we follow this line of thought,

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21 *ST* II-II, q. 172, aa. 1–2.

22 *ST* II-II, q. 173, a. 2. See also a. 4, on the extraordinary internal and external sensate forms that prophecy can take.

23 This is implied of all prophets in *ST* II-II, q. 171, a. 5. Aquinas applies the principle to the case of Christ in a distinct way in *ST* III, q. 12, aa. 1–2, where he argues that Christ, as man, can and must have both infused and acquired knowledge.

we might conclude, for example, that Christ was aware by means of infused knowledge of every conclusion of geometry that might be possible, every philosophical truth, and every law of physics, as well as every contingent fact of history and the grammar of every language, and that he had actual awareness of these realities at all times, at every given moment of his life, albeit in a higher mode of awareness. Consequently, he was obliged in some sense to actively conceal or willfully mask massive portions of this knowledge in his ordinary life of engagement with others, even while revealing to them that limited portion of extraordinary knowledge that might pertain to their salvation and his mission as Redeemer. One might characterize this viewpoint as unhelpfully Docetist, since it suggests that Christ's typically human behavior among us is slightly unreal or one given in appearance only.

Aquinas offers helpful principles for a more balanced treatment of this subject matter, especially by his characterization of the infused science of Christ as *habitual* in nature. The first observation to be made in this respect is that Christ is unique among the prophets, according to Aquinas, because he possesses the prophetic charism habitually and not merely actualistically.[24] That is to say, while other prophets receive revelatory insight passively by moment, at given times that are outside of their determination, Christ can turn freely at any given time to the extraordinary knowledge he possesses in a stable and habitual way. In this respect, Christ is not a prophet in the strict sense, according to Aquinas, but more than a prophet, due to the habitual mode in which he possesses the infused science.[25]

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[24] *ST* III, q. 11, a. 5. Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 171, a. 2.

[25] Aquinas, *Super Ioannem* 4, lec. 6 (Marietti no. 667): "But was Christ a prophet? At first glance it seems not, because prophecy involves an obscure knowledge: 'If there is a prophet of the Lord among you, I will appear to him in a vision' (Nm 12:6). Christ's knowledge, however, was not obscure. Yet he was a prophet, as is clear from, 'The Lord your God will raise up a prophet for you, from your nation and your brothers; he will be like me. You will listen to him' (Dt 18:15). This text is referred to Christ. I answer that a prophet has a twofold function. First, that of seeing: 'He who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer' (I Sm 9:9). Secondly, he makes known, announces; Christ was a prophet in this sense for he made known the truth about God: 'For this was I born, and for this I came into the world: to testify to the truth' (below, [John] 18:37). As for the seeing function of a prophet, we should note that Christ was at once both a 'wayfarer' and a 'comprehensor,' or blessed. He was a wayfarer in the sufferings of his human nature and in all the things that relate to this. He was a blessed in his union with the divinity, by which he enjoyed

However, it also follows from this, in relation to the second controversy mentioned above, that, according to Aquinas, Christ does not know all that he can know by infused science at any given instance in an actualistic way, as if he were always to actively think about the weather in Tokyo in February of AD 1437 at each instant of his life. Rather, the power of Christ's extraordinary knowledge is actuated at given times, just as any habit lies in potency until it is actuated.[26] This is in keeping with the *human mode* of Christ's infused science. Human beings pass from potency to act in their vital activities, including the activity of thinking and deliberately choosing.[27] Christ's prophetic insights rise habitually within the horizon of his ordinary human way of knowing, and he has discrete prophetic insights regarding particular objects at distinct times and places.

This leads us back to the first point of controversy noted above, that of the extension or scope of the infused science in Christ. Here Aquinas makes a twofold assertion. On the one hand, Christ has the potency to know by infused science anything that can be known to human beings throughout time. On the other hand, the *actuation* of his habit occurs only with respect to those things that are of fitting importance for Christ's soteriological mission and for the sake of the revelation he wishes to communicate to the human race.[28] Both of these points are significant. The latter point is evidently pertinent, because it allows us to understand why Christ's extraordinary knowledge that is manifest in the canonical Gospels is always related to the revelation of his identity, his saving mission, and the mystery of the Cross and his resurrection. This knowledge is actuated in view of divine revelation and the salvation of the human race. It does not contain anything extraneous to this purpose, such as the truths of geometry or manifest judgments about the philosophical errors of logical positivism. At the same time, it is significant that Christ is able at least in potency to have infused understanding of all that is

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God in the most perfect way. There are two things in the vision or seeing of a prophet. First, the intellectual light of his mind; and as regards this Christ was not a prophet, because his light was not at all deficient; his light was that of the blessed. Secondly, an imaginary vision is also involved; and with respect to this Christ did have a likeness to the prophets insofar as he was a wayfarer and was able to form various images with his imagination" (*A Commentary on St. John's Gospel*, trans. J. A. Weisheipl, vol. 1 [Albany, NY: Magi, 1998]).

[26] *ST* III, q. 11, a. 5, ad 1.

[27] *ST* III, q. 11, a. 5, corp.

[28] *ST* III, q. 11, a. 5, ad 2.

human. This is of decisive importance eschatologically, in the resurrected and glorified state of Christ, where his infused science does *now* have a much broader extension of purpose of range. We should not say, for example, that a military scientist who is praying today to Christ in English about the moral decision of making a nuclear warhead is *unintelligible* to the risen Christ in his human mind. On the contrary, precisely because Christ in his glory is able to assist such a person with the gift of his grace, the situation of that person must be not only divinely but also humanly intelligible, and in the light of Christ's own understanding. We might conclude, then, that Aquinas's characterization of the habitual character of the infused science of Christ allows us to understand why the exercise of his prophecy should be both of a limited, even if utterly consequential, kind during his human historical life among us, on the one hand, and of a far more radiant extension in the mystery of the resurrection, on the other, as we see indeed in the New Testament itself in the risen Lord's prophecies given to the seven churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation (Rev 2:1–3:22).

Finally, there remains the controversy of the congruity of the infused science of Christ with regard to his ambient culture and his own acquired knowledge. Was Christ obliged to hide from his auditors the vast majority of what he knew overtly and explicitly even while behaving as a human being of his own historical epoch? In one sense, it should be stated directly that Christ in the Gospels clearly does know many things that he reveals to his disciples only partially and cryptically. Consequently, we should accept that Christ had extraordinary knowledge that he *did not* reveal in its fullness to the disciples (Acts 1:7; John 14:26). However, based upon the characterization we have offered, it also should be clear that the infused science of Christ is actuated only ever from within the context of the more foundational structure of his human acquired knowledge. Otherwise said, it was precisely as a first-century Jew in the epoch of Second Temple Judaism, with its particular cultural-linguistic tropes and symbols, that God the Son made man acted as a prophetic figure in such a way as to teach the whole of the human race. His extraordinary knowledge was conveyed *to* his first century auditors, and through them to us, and this knowledge was conveyed *through* the medium of the language and symbols of his epoch, including those of inspired Scripture that were so deeply influential within his ambient culture. One may affirm that Christ knew many things that he did

not tell the apostles. However, as Aquinas notes, charismatic graces are intended primarily to help those to whom they are directed, not the one who possesses them.[29] This is true in the case of Christ's infused science: he communicates his higher prophetic insight in forms that those around him are capable of receiving (themselves enlightened by the grace of supernatural faith) in and through the idioms of the era.

This pattern continues in the later life of the Church: infused knowledge is a charism and charisms are oriented to the common good of the ecclesial community. They are therefore culturally significant, or corollary to the era and people they are given to. The revelations of Catherine of Siena, the elocutions of St. Teresa of Avila, and the confessional insights of St. Jean Marie Vianney are culturally situated in determinate ways, and yet extraordinarily magnificent and miraculous. Jesus's miracles and teaching are signs meant to allow us to perceive his own identity, soteriological mission, and eschatological judgment on the world. They were given to the people of his time and embedded within the cultural-linguistic features of his historical epoch that we referred to above. In other words, the infused science is superior to but also exerted only from within—and, in a way, at the service of—the ordinary world of persons who learn by acquired knowledge and who are enlightened by the grace of faith.

The Infused Science as It Relates to the Beatific Vision of Christ

This brings us to our final topic, the question of how the infused science of Christ relates to that higher form of human knowledge that Aquinas identifies: the beatific or immediate vision of God in the human intellect of Christ. Here we may first ask the evident question: why should we posit anything more than the infused prophetic knowledge of Christ and specify a distinct form of graced knowledge present in his human intelligence? Does the infused knowledge mentioned above not suffice for a complete understanding of the special human knowledge of Christ, in his earthly life?

The answer to this question can be posed in two stages. First, we might ask what difference it would make to affirm the beatific or immediate knowledge of God in the human mind of Christ as something distinct from his infused prophetic knowledge. Second,

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[29] *ST* I-II, q. 111, a. 1.

we might ask how the two relate in distinct ways to Christ's acquired knowledge.

Regarding the first question, the key insight to a treatment of the question comes from Jean-Pierre Torrell, who notes rightly that prophetic knowledge that is infused, however elevated it may be, is compatible with supernatural faith and is, in fact, "typically" received by persons who have such faith.[30] Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets, as well as Catholic saints or friends of God who have received infused knowledge, do so while abiding in faith, and they still live in the darkness of faith even while receiving such extraordinary revelation from God. The human nature of Christ is no different from theirs, such that, if he had infused prophetic knowledge alone in his human intellect, he too would live in faith. However, unlike the prophets, apostles, and saints, Jesus Christ is both true God and true man, a divine person subsistent in a human nature. He is also the unique savior of the human race. Traditionally, then, for various reasons, both the Catholic magisterium and classical Catholic theology have eschewed the attribution of supernatural faith to the Son of God made man.[31]

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[30] Jean-Pierre Torrell, "S. Thomas d'Aquin et la science du Christ," in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle*, ed. S.-T. Bonino (Paris: Éditions St. Paul, 1994), 394–409; See 403–4: "If one renounces the beatific vision and if one follows the logic of the Thomistic perspective, it must be said that Christ had faith. . . . The [bearer of prophecy] does not attain God in his experience [of infused science] but only expressive signs of the divine. He knows *that* God speaks to him, but *what* God says he can only believe. . . . The grace of faith is another kind of supernatural gift. . . . A created participation in the life of God, it conforms the believer, . . . to the mystery itself. . . . In other words, with faith we are in the order of the supernatural *quoad essentiam*, while with prophetic knowledge we remain in the order of the supernatural *quoad modum* (*acquisitionis*). The two orders do not exclude one another, certainly, but the second is ordered to the first, and because the two are different kinds of realities, they must not be confused or made to play the role of one another. Concerning Jesus, then, . . . if we accord to him infused illuminations characteristic of the charismatic knowledge of revelation, he will be enabled for his role as a divine messenger, but he will still not have direct access to God, since these illuminations do not suffice as a replacement of faith" (my translation). See, likewise on this question, *ST* II-II, q. 171, a. 5.

[31] For the recent magisterium, see especially: Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (1943), §75; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §473; John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), §§25–27; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Notification on the works of Jon Sobrino, S.J." (2006), §8. See the recent study and defense of the traditional position by Simon Francis Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*

We may note briefly three reasons for this affirmation. A first reason is given by Aquinas: Jesus is the Savior of the human race not only due to his divine nature (as the source of our grace) but also by virtue of his human nature. Christ as God communicates grace to us in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Christ as man communicates grace to us instrumentally, through the medium of his human actions of deliberate willing, in concord with his divine will as God. Salvation for the human race consists, however, not only in redemption from sin but also in union with God, culminating in the beatific vision in which the soul knows God immediately and possesses God perfectly, without danger of loss. Therefore, if Christ did not possess this grace in his earthly life, then in a very real sense, Christ was not saved as of yet and lived in faith, awaiting the salvation or redemption of his human nature.[32] This is incongruent because it means that Christ, while in solidarity with us by virtue of his faith, would also be in solidarity with us in his awaiting redemption from another (the Father, for example). He would not be the savior, but only one saved. That is to say, if Christ as the God-human is the active savior of the human race in and through his earthly life, then he is so in part by virtue of his immediate and perfect knowledge of God. He knows that he is one with the Father and does not merely discern or believe himself to be so through the medium of faith, as if through a mirror darkly.[33]

A second reason is that Christ as man should be able, as all human beings typically are, to grasp who he is as a person. But Christ, unlike all other human beings, is a divine person, and one can understand who a divine person is in an immediate way only through the grace of the beatific vision. Therefore, for Christ to have an immediate grasp of who he is as the Son of God in his human self-awareness, it is necessary that he possess the beatific vision. The vision is, in other words, essential to his personal unity and integrity, because Christ as a person is God subsisting as a human being.[34]

A final reason has to do with the salvific human will of Christ.

Christ, Salvation, and the Vision of God (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

[32] See the argument in *ST* III, q. 9, a. 2.

[33] I have offered a more developed version of this argument in *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), ch. 8. I am indebted for this argument to conversations with Bruce D. Marshall.

[34] See the arguments to this effect in Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), ch. 3.

Unlike other human beings, Christ is a person who has two wills: divine and human. His human will subsists in concord with and subordination to his divine will. If a person lives in supernatural faith, however, he cannot perceive immediately what the divine will is for his life at any given moment. One must act prudently in hope of living in accord with the will of God, even in obscure moments of prudential discernment. If Christ as man lived in faith (even with the infused science), he would be obliged to act in obscure hope of conforming his life to the divine will at each instance, something that is commonplace to all ordinary believers. However, in Christ's case, he would be acting personally as man, with the obscure hope of conforming himself to *his own will* as the eternal Son of God. That is to say, the life of faith would introduce a kind of moral bifurcation or dualism into the life of Christ, as he would seek humanly *without certainty* to do what he himself willed himself to do divinely. Or he would will himself divinely to do things that humanly he could not be certain of but that, as man, he only hoped he might be doing faithfully, while failing to perceive clearly. This picture of things does not correspond accurately to the Gospels, however, which depict Christ as acting decisively with certain knowledge of his identity and mission, as well as of contingent choices that the Father wills him to make and that he makes as man in conjunction with the Father and the Holy Spirit.[35]

For various reasons, then, it is fitting to attribute the beatific vision to Christ in his earthly life, albeit in such a way that this mysterious grace respects the human dimensions of acquired and infused knowledge that we have named above. How, then, does the beatific vision coexist in Christ with his acquired knowledge, and how should we understand this coexistence in relation to the infused knowledge of Christ? The topic is very obscure, not in itself, but from our vantage point. It obliges us to consider the distinction and relationship of two forms of supernatural knowledge, each present within the human mind of Christ in the course of his human historical experience, and each of which are (in two different ways) superior to the grace of supernatural faith that we ourselves possess.

It is helpful to treat this difficult question by making a fundamental observation. Aquinas gives us reason to think that the beatific

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[35] I present this argument at greater length in *The Incarnate Lord*, ch. 5. See also Jean-Miguel Garrigues, "La conscience de soi telle qu'elle était exercée par le Fils de Dieu fait homme," *Nova et Vetera* 79, no. 1 (2004): 39–51.

vision exists in the historical Christ in a way that preserves the ordinary structure of his human acquired knowledge and self-reflexive consciousness. He makes this point in at least two ways. First, he notes that the beatific vision is present in the historical life and agency of Christ according to a particular *dispensatio* or economic exercise.[36] The Incarnation occurs in view of the redemption of the human race, and this mystery of the humanization of God entails God's living in ontological solidarity with us. In Christ, God took upon himself our actual human condition. Because Christ was subject to the ordinary conditions of human existence (which include mental and psychological suffering), Aquinas thinks that he possessed the beatific vision in such a way that his lower powers (his corporeal and sensate-psychological experience of reality) retained their ordinary structure and vulnerability.[37] This state is to be contrasted to that of the resurrection, in which Christ in his glorified humanity enjoys the effects of the beatifying vision of God not only in the heights of his soul but also in his corporeal-sensate subjectivity and is affected by this grace even in the very matter of his glorified human flesh.[38]

A second principle is analogous to the first. Aquinas stresses not only that Christ possessed the beatific vision in the midst of an ordinary human life of psychological and physical vulnerability. He also stresses that the higher intuitive knowledge derived from the vision did not impede or supervene upon the ordinary acquisition of knowledge that comes by way of human experience. Here Aquinas contrasts "higher reason" with "lower reason," but not so as to distinguish two faculties of the intellect, or even two habits (such as speculative and practical reason). Rather, he means to distinguish two types of objects of knowledge.[39] With regard to the mystery of God, Christ's human reason was always illumined from above by his intuitive knowledge of the Father, of himself, and of the Holy Spirit. With regard to temporal things, however, the vision did not supervene upon his acquisition of knowledge by way of direct experience.

Interpreters debate over the question of whether Aquinas might think that the human intellect of Christ could "naturally" avail itself of knowledge from the vision of God and translate it into conceptual knowledge in an almost immediate way. John of St.

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[36] See: *ST* III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 2; III, q. 15, a. 5, ad 3; q. 45, a. 2; q. 46, a. 8.

[37] *ST* III, q. 46, aa. 6–8.

[38] *ST* III, q. 46, a. 8; q. 54, a. 3.

[39] Aquinas, *Compendium theoligiae* I, ch. 232.

Thomas thinks not, while modern interpreters like Marie-Joseph Nicolas and Simon Francis Gaine think so.[40] On one reading, then, Christ would know he is the Son of God by immediate vision, not by faith, but he would be able to actively cognize this knowledge humanly primarily through the medium of his infused science, and only secondarily through his acquired knowledge. Since the beatific vision is non-conceptual, and therefore, in a sense, incommunicable, Christ would need the infused prophetic knowledge to "translate" his vision into terms that he might conceptualize and represent for us in ordinary terms.[41] On the alternative reading, Christ would know he was God through the medium of the beatific vision and not by faith, but he would also be able to understand something of the vision and articulate this knowledge directly by way of his ordinary, acquired knowledge, without recourse to any special infused, prophetic knowledge. His agent intellect in its ordinary human mode of operation would have some form of access to the higher intuitive knowledge he possesses in virtue of the vision.[42]

We need not seek to revolve this dispute here, which is incidental to the argument of this essay. For, however one resolves the debate, a key distinction remains as regards the *natural character* of the two forms of knowledge: the immediate vision of God and the grace of the infused science. Aquinas clearly affirms that the beatific vision affords a much higher form of knowledge than the infused science, since it allows the human nature of Christ to know the divine essence in a direct manner. However, it is also the form of knowledge that most directly fulfills the natural human longing for absolute knowledge of God.[43] The grace of the beatific vision is formally supernatural,

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[40] See: John of St. Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, vol. 8, q. 9, d. 11, a. 2, nos. 3–5; Marie-Joseph Nicolas, "Voir Dieu dans la 'condition charnelle,'" *Doctor Communis* 36 (1983): 384–94; Simon Francis Gaine, "Is There Still a Place for Christ's Infused Knowledge in Catholic Theology and Exegesis?" *Nova et Vetera* (English), in this same issue. In the arguments that follow, I am greatly indebted to Gaine's recent framing of the question, though I do not align with him on all points.

[41] The text of Aquinas that comes closest to affirming this idea is found in *ST* III, q. 9, a. 3, corp. and ad 3, coupled with q. 11, a. 5, ad 1.

[42] For a text that seems to lean in this sense, see Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 20, a. 3, ad 4.

[43] *ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 8. I have offered my own treatment of the famous "natural desire for God" question in Thomas Joseph White, "Imperfect Happiness and the Final End of Man: Thomas Aquinas and the Paradigm of Nature-Grace Orthodoxy," *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 247–89.

of course, and is the highest and most naturally inaccessible of all forms of grace. But in its term or purpose, this grace is intrinsically human and epitomizes the maxim that grace does not destroy nature but brings it to completion. This is the case even as it coexists in Christ with all that is proper to ordinary experience: his psychological sensate development and human vulnerability and suffering. This is congruent in key ways with life in the resurrection. There one finds no suffering, since it entails a transformed state. However, it is also the case that, even in the resurrection, the grace of the beatific vision coexists in Christ in perfect harmony with his ordinary sensate experiences and his acquisitional mode of animal reasoning. In other words, the beatific vision is a much higher form of knowledge, but also a more "ordinary" one, given that it effectuates the perfection of human beatitude.

By contrast, the infused knowledge is not ordinary from a natural point of view, either formally or in its teleological term, but extraordinary, since it is knowledge that is not gained through the senses and the activity of the agent intellect, nor one that contributes essentially to the final fulfillment of the subject. Rather, it is particularly gratuitous in mode and consists in a charismatic form of knowing that is primarily oriented not toward the good of the individual, but to the assistance of others. The prophet may express his knowledge in and through the ordinary language of his time and may employ symbols that everyone can understand, but even when he does this, he does so based upon a gift of knowledge that others do not have and that is charismatic in kind.

We can conclude from this that the beatific vision of Christ and the prophetic knowledge (infused science) of Christ are soteriological in two distinct ways. The first is soteriological in a more properly exemplary and universalistic way. The immediate vision of God is the perfection of noetic beatitude for each human being.[44] Christ is the savior because he can communicate to us what he himself first possesses, the perfection of the knowledge of God that utterly and ultimately fulfills the human mind and heart. The second form of knowledge is soteriological because it represents an extraordinary charismatic gift of prophecy that most do not receive and that no one other than Christ has in a habitual way. It is oriented toward the economy of revelation and allows Christ to teach others those

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[44] See: 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§1023–29; *ST* I, q. 12, a. 1.

received truths that are essential to the New Testament revelation so as to instruct them in the faith. It is true that the blessed, in the life to come, may well enjoy infused science as well as the beatific vision, even as the soul of the saint separated from the body must possess some form of infused science in order to cognate, given the absence of the body.[45] Nevertheless, the infused science is not typically human and remains extraordinary for our human nature, while acquired knowledge and the beatific vision are more typically human, the first by way of nature and the second by way of grace.[46] The latter is a highest and most extraordinary grace, but it fulfills what is deepest and most distinctively rational in human animals: the natural desire for the truth and the natural desire to know God immediately.

Conclusion

The modern rise of historical-Jesus studies was conceived initially in opposition to classical dogmatic perspectives regarding the person of Christ.[47] It was thought by many that the historical-critical method could be employed to go back behind the portrait of Christ in the New Testament and the early Church, to recover a more realistic vision of Jesus of Nazareth "before dogma." Although this approach is still maintained by some, it is no longer associated with the use of the historical-critical method as such. On the contrary, the modern quest for the historical Jesus has increasingly been conducted in seeming congruity with classical dogmatic teaching, especially by some "third quest" representatives who emphasize Jesus's eschatological message within the context of Second Temple Judaism.[48] Many of these scholars argue that Jesus of Nazareth must have understood himself to be the definitive, eschatological emissary of God in history, one who was bringing the covenant of Israel to its definitive resolution.[49] Understood in this way, one may reconcile a modern appreciation of Jesus's

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45 *ST* I, q. 89.

46 We might contrast this with the case of angels, for whom infused knowledge is typical (*ST* I, q. 55).

47 See here the historical argument of Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy in the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 197–229 and 447–76.

48 See the argument of Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

49 See, for example: Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, esp. ch. 8; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), esp. chs. 12, 15, and 16.

historically contingent human consciousness (within the context of Second Temple Judaism) and the principles of Nicene Christology.

Nevertheless, the modern historical synthesis is also often subject to a kind of theological Apollinarianism, not of the classical kind (in which the human mind of Christ was denied problematically in order to assert the reality of his divinity), but of an inverted kind. On this view, the divine wisdom of Christ as God is eclipsed kenotically for the duration of his incarnate life among us. Only the human historical consciousness of Christ appears in all its contingent ordinariness, and the graces of Christ's prophetic awareness and special knowledge of his own identity are construed as mere "post-paschal theologomena" added by the later Christian community in order to exalt the historical figure of Christ.[50] This theology is Nicene because it affirms the divinity of Christ, but it is not properly Chalcedonian, due to a kenoticism that obscures the presence of divine operations in the historical Christ, thus failing to grapple with authentic dyotheletism, in which the divine and human operations of Christ are each present and are coordinated hierarchically.[51] The infused science and beatific vision of Christ are graces that pertain to his human nature, but they are graces that allow his human mind to cooperate actively with the divine wisdom that he possesses as God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The affirmation of these graces in the human mind of Christ is necessary in order to understand properly the real cooperation and coordinated harmony of Christ's divine wisdom and human understanding, his divine willing and his human decision making. How then might one accept the classical principles of dyotheletism while also embracing the legitimate insights of modern historical-critical studies?

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[50] Most illustrative of this problem in systematic theology is the intriguing and historically influential work of Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1968), esp. 307–64, where he offers systematic challenges to traditional dyotheletism. It seems to me that Wright's portrait of Jesus in *Jesus and the Victory of God* aligns closely (intentionally or not) with that of Pannenberg in significant ways.

[51] Joseph Ratzinger has noted the need for a renewal of dyotheletist Christology within a modern context in *Behold the Pieced One* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986). On the prospects for dyotheletism in dialogue with modern objections, see Thomas Joseph White, "Dyotheletism and the Instrumental Human Consciousness of Jesus," *Pro Ecclesia* 17, no. 4 (2008): 396–422. For a helpful treatment of the historical sources of dyotheletism, see Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Return to a balance requires acknowledging the acquisitions of the modern historical studies and the realism they imply about a historically situated Incarnation while also finding a way to acknowledge the infused science of Christ as a key element in his historical mission. The extraordinary human knowledge of Christ is something integral to the New Testament, and therefore a real element of the life of Jesus of Nazareth that can be subject to historical consideration. The early Christian community understood the earthly Jesus to be a person gifted with extraordinary knowledge of the divine economy, capable of foretelling key events that were to come, able to read hearts and minds, and uniquely aware of his own authority and identity as the Son of God.

Aquinas's treatments of the infused science and beatific vision of Christ provide needed balance for Christian theology because they help us to understand the grace of the human mind of Christ and to explain how this grace is enrooted in his nature, and therefore in the context of his human acquired knowledge with its cultural-linguistic and temporally situated shape. Aquinas's affirmation of Jesus's human acquisition of knowledge allows us to understand how the Word Incarnate would have learned from his experience within the context of his surrounding culture. This temporal specificity of the knowledge and language of Christ need not mean Christ's mission has less universality. On the contrary: the Word became flesh in first-century Galilee and, from that particular flesh in that particular time and place, cast a light upon the whole world. As Jesus says prophetically about his own crucifixion as the privileged place of the revelation of his divine identity: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know, that I AM" (John 8:28). Jesus could think about the meaning of the divine name of Exodus 3:14–15 based on his natural, acquired knowledge as a first-century Jew. By virtue of his vision and his infused science, he also knew that he could apply this name to himself as one who is one in being with the Father (John 10:30). Christological realism requires that we hold the two affirmations together in unity, just as we must affirm both the true divinity and the true humanity of Christ. In this aspiration, the theological vision of the knowledge of Christ offered by Thomas Aquinas is of essential help for the future of a sound modern Christology. NV