

CHRIST'S HUMAN KNOWLEDGE: A CONVERSATION WITH LONERGAN AND BALTHASAR

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The article explores the contribution of Balthasar and Lonergan to a contemporary understanding of Christ's human knowledge. It argues methodologically that Lonergan's account of Christ's human knowledge, by its use of technical terms and a carefully worked out analogy from human knowing, represents an advance on Balthasar's often fluid position. While sympathetic to the notion of systematic theology as primarily an explanatory discipline, the article suggests several openings where more dramatically oriented categories might complement such an approach.

THE 2006 "NOTIFICATION ON THE WORKS of Father Jon Sobrino, S.J.," from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) brought considerable attention to the theological question of Christ's consciousness and knowledge.¹ At stake in this question, the CDF implies in part, is how one understands the person of Christ as the locus of revelation: "The filial and messianic consciousness of Jesus is the direct consequence of his ontology as Son of God made man. If Jesus were a believer like ourselves, albeit in an exemplary manner, he would not be able to be the true Revealer showing us the face of the Father."² The complicated discussion that arose

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¹ The notification is available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20061126_notification-sobrino_en.html (accessed May 1, 2010).

² "Notification" no. 8.

from the CDF's notification is exemplified in the following passage from Gerald O'Collins:

Does the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ask Father Sobrino and other theologians to agree with the already widely accepted position that Jesus, during his earthly life and in his human mind, enjoyed a unique, intimate knowledge of the Father and consciousness of his personal identity and saving mission? Or does the C.D.F. require a return to the view that from the very first moment of his conception, Jesus enjoyed in his human mind the vision of God enjoyed by the saints in heaven—a view that would rule out the possibility of recognizing the perfect faith exercised by Jesus during his earthly pilgrimage?³

O'Collins points us to Hebrews 12:2, which refers to Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

The issue of Christ's knowledge has also received attention in current systematic-theological discourse. In a recent debate, for example, Thomas White and Thomas Weinandy disagreed over the centrality of Jesus' possession of the beatific vision for the theological articulation of his full humanity and full divinity. Arguing from a retrieval of Aquinas's thought on the subject, White submits that the affirmation of the beatific vision of the historical Christ is essential for maintaining the unity of his person through his two natures and two wills.⁴ Weinandy responds that "a proper understanding of the Incarnation does not warrant maintaining that the earthly incarnate Son of God possessed the beatific vision, despite the venerable, and to some extent magisterial, tradition to the contrary."⁵ According to Weinandy, the Son of God knows himself only in relationship to his Father and his Father's will.⁶ In addition to the White-Weinandy debate, Matthew Levering and Alyssa Pitstick have critiqued Hans Urs von Balthasar's position on Christ's beatific vision, rooted in Aquinas's theology.⁷

In light of current biblical scholarship, systematic-theological conversation, and magisterial statements, a key tension to navigate is the paradox between the human and historical limitations to Christ's knowledge on the one hand, and the hidden depths in Christ's knowledge on the other.⁸

³ Gerald O'Collins, "A Challenge for Theologians: Three Puzzling Positions," *America* 197.7 (September 17, 2007) 23–24, at 24.

⁴ Thomas Joseph White, "The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision," *Thomist* 69 (2005) 497–534, at 497–98.

⁵ Thomas Weinandy, "The Beatific Vision and the Incarnate Son," *Thomist* 70 (2006) 605–15, at 605.

⁶ *Ibid.* 614.

⁷ See Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004) 132; and Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent Into Hell* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007) 166–90.

⁸ See Raymond Moloney, S.J., "Two Sets of Evidence," in *The Knowledge of Christ* (New York: Continuum, 1999) 26–40. On the limitations of Christ's

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* helpfully articulates this tension. Corresponding to his voluntary self-emptying, Christ's endowment with true human knowledge suggests that it could not be unlimited. Rather, Christ's knowledge was "exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time," wherein he grew in "wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man, and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience."⁹ At the same time, the *Catechism* continues, this authentic human and historical knowledge is also the knowledge of the divine Son, which, as a result of his human nature's union with the Word, is "the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father."¹⁰ The *Catechism* captures this tension:

The Son of God who became Son of the Virgin also learned to pray according to his human heart. He learns the formulas of prayer from his mother, who kept in her heart and meditated upon all the "great things" done by the Almighty. He learns to pray in the words and rhythms of the prayer of his people, in the synagogue at Nazareth and the Temple at Jerusalem. But his prayer springs from an otherwise secret source, as he intimates at the age of twelve: "I must be in my Father's house." Here the newness of prayer in the fullness of time begins to be revealed: his *filial prayer*, which the Father awaits from his children, is finally going to be lived out by the only Son in his humanity, with and for men.¹¹

This passage suggests that Christ's human knowledge was conditioned both by his familial and communal experience as a first-century Jew, and by his unique and prayerful relationship with his Father. The attempt to hold together both the human, historical limitations and the depths of Christ's knowledge has been argued in a related way by Scripture scholar N. T. Wright. He argues, for instance, that Jesus understood his unique vocation. Jesus knew that he embodied the fulfillment of YHWH's promises and purposes.¹² "As a matter of history," Wright asserts, "Jesus of Nazareth was conscious of a vocation: a vocation, given him by the one he knew as 'father', to enact in himself what, in Israel's scriptures, God had promised to accomplish all by himself."¹³

knowledge, see Mark 13:32: "But that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Regarding the hidden depths of Christ's knowledge, see Matthew 11:27: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him"; and John 8:58: "Jesus said to them, 'Amen, Amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.'"

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1994) no. 472.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* no. 473.

¹¹ *Ibid.* no. 2599.

¹² N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 648.

¹³ *Ibid.* 653. See also Gilles Mongeau, "The Human and Divine Knowing of the Incarnate Word," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 12 (2005) 31–33.

These issues are complicated—historically, ecclesially, biblically, and theologically. My aim here is modest: to explore the question of Christ's human knowledge with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Bernard Lonergan. Within the last 15 years or so, an explicit conversation between Lonergan and Balthasar scholars has emerged.¹⁴ Most directly related to this article is Robert Doran's challenge to relate "the positive gains" of Balthasar's work "to Lonergan's systematics while complementing each of them by the other." Doran observes that if the explanatory potential "remains under-emphasized in Balthasar's work, as I think it does, then we must ask how it can be developed. It is an important emphasis that should be promoted, not reversed, and yet it will not be promoted *for systematics* unless a move can be made from description to explanation."¹⁵ In his vision of systematics, Lonergan emphasizes the importance of moving from description to explanation at the level of one's times. The language of procession, relation, and person in Thomistic trinitarian theology, for example, has a technical, theoretical meaning. "Procession," "relation," and "person" stand to scriptural and patristic writing, according to Lonergan, as "mass" and "temperature" in physics stand to the adjectives "heavy" and "cold."¹⁶

In this light, my aim is twofold: first, to show the respective ways Balthasar and Lonergan might contribute to this contemporary effort to

¹⁴ See Hilary A. Mooney, *The Liberation of Consciousness: Bernard Lonergan's Theological Foundations in Dialogue with the theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Frankfurter theologische Studien (Frankfurt: Josef Knecht, 1992). Robert M. Doran's article, "Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997) 61–84, initiated a program for an integrative complementary understanding of these two thinkers. For attempts to build on Doran's project, see John D. Dadosky, "The Dialectic of Religious Identity: Lonergan and Balthasar," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 31–52; Dadosky, "'Centering the Church': A Development in Ecclesiology Based on Balthasar and Lonergan," *Lonergan Workshop* 20 (2008) 93–103; and Anne Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 197–218. While Balthasar scholars have not shown great interest in this conversation, remarks by several indicate the need to join Balthasar and Lonergan in conversation. See Christoph Potworowski, "An Exploration of the Notion of Objectivity in Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Glory, Grace, and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Ed Block Jr. (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 2005) 86 n. 17; and Rowan Williams, "Balthasar and Rahner," in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986) 34. For critical remarks on Lonergan from a Balthasarian perspective, see Anthony Kelly, "Is Lonergan's Method Adequate to Christian Mystery?" *Thomist* 39 (1975) 437–70; and Rodney Howsare, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and Protestantism: The Ecumenical Implications of His Theological Style* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005) 167–68 n. 3.

¹⁵ Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005) 15.

¹⁶ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) 346.

understand the human and historical limitations to Christ's human knowledge on the one hand, and the hidden depths of his human knowledge on the other. Second, I intend to argue more methodologically that Lonergan's account of Christ's human knowledge, which he explains with the use of technical terms and an analogy from human knowing, represents a carefully worked out advance on Balthasar's often fluid position. Cognizant of the danger of imposing a theoretical and explanatory standard on a theology that was self-consciously not executed in such a fashion, I highlight Balthasar's cognate concerns that might be elevated into a higher plane of discourse by Lonergan's framework. This position presumes that the chief task of systematic theology is the hypothetical, imperfect, analogical, and developing understanding of the mysteries of faith.¹⁷ At the same time, Balthasar's more dramatically oriented treatment raises questions about the adequacy of Lonergan's approach. For example, Lonergan inserts into the conversation aspects of a mystical analogy that he does not consider and challenges thinkers sympathetic with his Christology to weigh the possibility of expanding their understanding of this christological mystery.

The respective ways in which Lonergan and Balthasar explore the question of Christ's consciousness and knowledge clearly reveal their different methodological choices and hence provide material for a fruitful conversation. It is crucial to point out that both thinkers find a common starting point in an explicit affirmation of the Christology of Chalcedon. For Lonergan, the principal function of systematics is to achieve an *understanding* of the mysteries of faith through (1) a natural analogy, (2) an analogy of faith, and (3) the interconnection of the mysteries with the human person's final end in the beatific vision.¹⁸ In the context of this question, Lonergan offers an ontological and psychological analysis of the human person with a careful defining of the terms used and tightly and systematically argued theses. In his Christology, Lonergan proceeds from an ontological and psychological analysis of the person of Christ to his redemptive work. Balthasar explicitly avoids a "purely extrahistorical, static, 'essence' Christology that sees itself as a complete and rounded 'part one' smoothly unfolding into a soteriological 'part two.'"¹⁹ To preserve the drama of Christ's life, Balthasar shifts from ontological to obediential terms, giving shape to the emphasis found in Hebrews 5:8–9: "Although he was Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal

¹⁷ See Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 7–9.

¹⁸ See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 335–40.

¹⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3, *Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ* (hereafter *TD 3*), trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992) 149. The original German text, *Theodramatik II: Die Personen des Spiels*, 2. Teil, *Die Personen Christus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1978) will be referred to as *TD II/II*.

salvation for all who obey him.” Hence, Balthasar offers what might be called a mission-structured Christology.

BALTHASAR ON THE HUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

In his theology of Christ, Balthasar proceeds from a “Christology of Consciousness” to a “Christology of Being.” By treating Christ’s mission-consciousness first, Balthasar intends to preserve the drama that his theology attempts to highlight. Balthasar’s “Christology of Consciousness” is found primarily in volume three of his five-volume *Theo-Drama: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*. Whereas this volume provides a set of “program notes,” volumes four and five deal with the acting arena opened up by Christ in the events of his life, and especially on the cross, his descent into hell, and his resurrection. In this arena, “created conscious subjects can become persons of theological relevance, coactors in theo-drama.”²⁰

One of Balthasar’s central methodological moves is to articulate his christological categories in *obediential* rather than *ontological* terms. The Council of Chalcedon represented the two natures of Christ in terms of a union between divine and human natures; with his shift to obediential terms, Balthasar preferred to speak of the union of human and divine activity in Christ.²¹ This shift is, in part, a result of Balthasar’s indebtedness to mystical theology.²² In his theology of the cross, for instance, Balthasar’s understanding of Jesus’ knowledge is influenced by strands of apophatic mysticism, in which “not-knowing” and “darkness” are integral parts of Jesus’ faithful obedience to the Father. Why is this shift important for Balthasar? As Mark McIntosh points out, Balthasar is attempting to do two things: (1) “to alleviate the metaphysical discomfort with essentialist language in Christology which theologians have felt since Schleiermacher”; and (2) following Karl Barth, “to capture the historical movement, the *eventful* quality, of Jesus’ existence.” McIntosh adds, “Barth and von Balthasar both want to ‘actualize’ the doctrine of the Incarnation because, as Barth put it, the older christologies began with an event and moved to an event, but too often in the center ‘there ruled the great calm of a timeless and non-actual being and its truth.’”²³ The more theoretical articulation of a trinitarian mission “is translated into the ascetical-mystical contours of a human life actively giving itself to the divine will.”²⁴

²⁰ TD 3:263.

²¹ Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2000) 5.

²² Ibid. 4–5.

²³ Ibid. 5. McIntosh is citing Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958) 106.

²⁴ McIntosh, *Christology from Within* 7.

Balthasar's emphasis on kenosis prioritizes obedience. Kenosis, a prominent theme in contemporary theology, is grounded primarily in Philippians 2:5–11, which proclaims Christ's self-emptying. The importance of kenosis is evident in Balthasar's soteriology, especially in his theology of Christ's consciousness and knowledge on the cross and in his descent into hell.²⁵ I avoid a sustained treatment of kenosis in Balthasar and Lonergan as this would require a study in itself. Nevertheless, since one of my aims is to show where Balthasar and Lonergan emphasize the human and historical limitations of Christ's knowledge, it is fitting to note Pitstick's persuasive argument that Balthasar's account of Christ's knowledge is, in part, rooted in his presentation of trinitarian kenosis. She writes:

Since the Son's procession is His Kenosis in grateful self-gift back to the Father, a like emptying of self will initiate His becoming man and continue during His mission until His return to the Father through the Descent. In other words, Christ's existence is necessarily kenotic because it is the procession of the Word in human flesh and the Trinitarian processions are kenotic by nature.²⁶

Within the Trinity, "the Son's self-awareness as God" is "inseparable from His obedience." For Balthasar, Jesus' "self-understanding is not, 'I am God, and the Son of God,' because the plenitude of divine knowledge has been 'deposited' with the Father as part of the Son's self-emptying in becoming incarnate."²⁷ Clearly Balthasar's use of kenosis deeply conditions his understanding of inner-trinitarian life and Christ's human knowledge.

Although Balthasar calls his Christology a "Christology of Consciousness," he never defines "consciousness" in relation to the mystery of Christ. As I proceed, it will become clear that, while Balthasar uses "consciousness" and "knowledge," he never defines them in relation to each another. He often uses "knowledge [*Wissen*]" and "consciousness [*Bewußtsein*]" interchangeably.

²⁵ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, trans. and intro. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990) 23–35, 89–91 and *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 4, *The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994) 317–423. See also Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, esp. chaps. 6 and 7; and Graham Ward, "Kenosis: Death, Discourse, and Resurrection," in *Balthasar at the End of Modernity*, ed. Lucy Gardner et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999) 15–68. Although I here intentionally avoid treating Christ's consciousness on the cross, it is fitting to point out that Balthasar's account of Christ's loss of the beatific vision on the cross is rooted in his understanding of the inner life of the triune God as the primordial drama of kenotic self-emptying. I am presently working on a manuscript that treats the theme of Christ's consciousness on the cross according to Lonergan and Balthasar.

²⁶ Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* 149. ²⁷ *Ibid.* 158.

Balthasar employs “mission” as the basic concept [*Sendung als Grundbegriff*] with which to explore Christology.²⁸ His fundamental position is as follows: Jesus’ absolute consciousness of mission (*absoluten Sendungsbewußtsein*) is coincident with his I-consciousness (*Ichbewußtsein*). Although Balthasar does explain his use of “absolute,” he seems to suggest that the whole content of Jesus’ human consciousness is his mission, and that this simultaneously both animates and limits his human consciousness. For Balthasar, “in the individual human consciousness of Jesus, there is something that in principle always goes beyond the purely human horizon of consciousness. A more-than-human mission—to reconcile the whole world with God—cannot be a secondary and accidental development of a human consciousness.”²⁹ Balthasar speculates that Jesus’ fundamental *intuition* concerning his identity can be summarized as: “I am the one who must accomplish this task.’ ‘I am the one through whom the kingdom of God must and will come.’”³⁰

I would suggest that Balthasar is responding to two strands of thought. First, unlike Aquinas and a Thomistic-influenced style of theology, Balthasar avoids treating Christ’s consciousness in an explanatory and theoretical way, that is, by using technical, philosophical language about consciousness and knowledge. He writes, “If, therefore, we take Jesus’ entire awareness that he belongs to God and refer it to his mission, we shall not need to agonize over the relationship of his human self-consciousness to his divine self-consciousness.”³¹ Balthasar thinks it is futile to use human psychology to discover exactly when Jesus became aware of this significance. This claim can be supported by his assertion that we should not judge Christ’s human experience “by the laws of ordinary psychology, which cannot grasp the hypostatic union.” Starting abstractly from “Christ’s vision of God will no longer make Christ’s human psyche credible.”³²

Second, Balthasar is uncomfortable with the preoccupation of the Fathers and Scholastics with safeguarding the omniscience of Jesus as a quality befitting him as head of the church and of the whole human race.³³ Balthasar suggests that the way both the Fathers and Scholastics approach

²⁸ Donald MacKinnon observes: “The focal point of Balthasar’s whole exposition is found in the concept of *Sendung* or mission. Like *doxa* in the fourth Gospel it is a focus of conceptual interpenetration” (“Some Reflections on Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Christology with Special Reference to Theodramatik II/2 and III,” in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Riches [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986] 168).

²⁹ *TD* 3:166.

³⁰ *TD* 3:166.

³¹ *TD* 3:172.

³² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982) 1:328 n. 141.

³³ *TD* 3:191–92.

this issue is rooted in a static view of the dignity of Jesus. Very few allowed for a genuine progress in Jesus' human knowledge. Furthermore, thinkers such as Augustine, Maximus, John Damascene, Bernard, and Anselm do not allow for any form of ignorance in the Son. Instead, Balthasar wants to recover an underappreciated Johannine emphasis—that John “emphasizes Jesus' obedience as strongly as his supramundane knowledge [*überirdisches Wissen*]” and that the greater good of this obedience required that the Son's intrinsically ‘fitting’ and ‘direct knowledge’ [*gebührenden und zugänglichen Wissens*] should be ‘laid up’ with the Father for reasons of ‘economy.’”³⁴

If Balthasar gives more weight to Jesus' mission than to the “beatific vision” as the measure of his knowledge and freedom, what then are the implications for the extent and the limits of Jesus' knowledge concerning God's salvific work in the world? Using his “mission” as the reference point will “allow for every possible variation, as the particular situation demands.”³⁵ The following text provides a sense of the possible variations:

Thus he [Jesus] may have the prophet's detailed prospect of the world's entire situation and its relation to God, or of individual events of the present, the past or the future; or he may have an intuition of these things. So too his field of attention may be restricted, for obedience's sake, to a particular horizon, as in a narrow ravine: the flow of his mission is contracted as it pushes its way through. The much agonized saying that “the Son does not know the hour” (Mk 13:32) can find its place here without any difficulty. Moreover, the equally great variations found in Christian mystical experience of God—ranging from moments of illumination to the constrictions of dryness and forsakenness—can give us an inkling of the possible variety of forms of knowledge experienced by the earthly Jesus.³⁶

What is reflected in this passage, according to McIntosh, is Balthasar's “concern to give full scope to Christ's deep immersion in the most realistic details of alienated human existence.” He adds that “Jesus' commitment to his mission brings about his full actualization as a concrete human being and so his full sharing in the extremes of the human relationship to God.”³⁷

In light of Balthasar's emphasis on the variety of forms of knowing and unknowing that constituted Christ's human consciousness, it is fitting to note Balthasar's seemingly controversial claim that Jesus exercises “faith” vis-à-vis the Father “in the very midst of his intuition of his mission.”³⁸ Balthasar immediately mentions the importance of being careful when using this term with regard to Jesus' relationship with the Father. We should not treat the faith of Jesus as identical with our faith. As with

³⁴ TD 3:192.

³⁵ TD 3:196.

³⁶ TD 3:196–97.

³⁷ McIntosh, *Christology from Within* 50.

³⁸ TD 3:170. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, “*Fides Christi: An Essay on the Consciousness of Christ*,” in *Explorations in Theology II: Spouse of the Word*, trans. A. V. Littledale and Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991) 43–79.

O'Collins's point cited above, Balthasar emphasizes that Jesus is, *à la* Hebrews 12:2, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.³⁹ The qualitative difference between his faith and ours is that

we only receive our mission on the basis of our coming to faith, whereas Jesus always has and *is* his mission; in his mission, he has utterly abandoned himself to the Father who guides him and in whom he has complete trust. Insofar as he does not know (and does not wish to know) the paths God sets before him for the fulfillment of his mission, but has the certainty that the Father will bring it to its conclusion, we can apply to him the definition of faith found in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction . . . of things not seen" (Heb 11:1).⁴⁰

The faith described here can be termed an exemplary faith or what the Scholastics have called a *fides lucida* as opposed to a *fides aenigmatica*.⁴¹ In "*Fides Christi: An Essay on the Consciousness of Christ*," Balthasar roots his discussion of the "faith of Christ" and Jesus' "economic ignorance" in—to reiterate a theme introduced at the beginning of this section—his understanding of "kenosis": "It is entirely a matter of indifference how one might explain in detail this 'economic' ignorance . . . of the Son; it is a reality, and for us that is enough. It belongs to his kenosis, which renounces all kinds of privileges and possibilities that by right belong to the *forma Dei* and thus also to the Son of Man."⁴² Nevertheless, whether exemplary or not, the following question must be posed to Balthasar: If Christ had an immediate vision of God, and if faith is about not-seeing, then is it a contradiction in terms to attribute faith to Jesus, insofar as, during his earthly life, he shared in what we only hope to share?⁴³

Furthermore, Balthasar stresses the unfolding of Jesus' mission-consciousness in history—in sum: "If Jesus' consciousness of an absolute (divine) mission is to coincide with his I-consciousness, how can the child Jesus ever have awakened to self-consciousness without simultaneously knowing of his mission—at least implicitly?"⁴⁴ Balthasar acknowledges a long theological tradition that maintains that Jesus, from the moment of his incarnation, "not only had knowledge of his mission but also a knowledge of everything knowable to man, at least everything that has a bearing on salvation."⁴⁵ This is why patristic thinkers were embarrassed by the idea that Jesus did not know when the Day of Judgment would occur.⁴⁶

³⁹ See *ibid.* 56–64.

⁴¹ *TD* 3:171–72.

⁴³ Balthasar is aware of this objection. See *ibid.* 70, where he argues against the "narrow boundaries" of the Scholastics' definition of faith. See also Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* 160–66.

⁴⁴ *TD* 3:174.

⁴⁶ *TD* 3:174.

⁴⁰ *TD* 3:171.

⁴² Balthasar, "*Fides Christi*" 53.

⁴⁵ *TD* 3:173–74.

Balthasar is uncomfortable with this theological judgment. It ignores an elemental truth of human nature, a truth he stresses repeatedly in his writings: “unless a child is awakened to I-consciousness through the instrumentality of a Thou, it cannot become a human child at all.”⁴⁷ Jesus cannot escape both the initial awakening to self-consciousness and the initiation into the world of a spiritual tradition. This is why Mariology is an inner component of Christology;⁴⁸ in this connection Balthasar writes:

For if it is true that Jesus’ sense of mission coincides with his self-consciousness, and thus had always been there (however implicitly) ever since he had understood himself as a human being; and if, on the other hand, it is essential for self-consciousness to be awakened by a “thou” and subsequently initiated into a spiritual world of tradition (in his case, practically speaking, the “religion of the Fathers”), it follows that the “I” who awakens this unique “thou” of the Child Jesus must have been shaped in a unique way. We do not have to assume that the Mother knew fully all that this Child’s mission involved—in fact, her “not understanding” (Lk 2:50) explicitly confirms the contrary—but, on the basis of her experience of virginal conception and birth, we can assume that she had a substantial grasp of what Luke explicates in the three statements of the angel of the Annunciation (Lk 1:28, 30–33, 35–37).⁴⁹

Mary is not charged with inculcating the whole of Jesus’ mission from the outside. As suggested in the passage from the *Catechism* quoted above, what she ensures is that Jesus’ historical initiation into the human world is in harmony with the inner initiation by the Father. This requires deep familiarity on Mary’s part with “the religious tradition that looks to the fulfillment of Israel’s hope” and the ability to “teach it to the child.” It is sufficient “to awaken the sense of mission latent in the Child’s person; it will be clarified in contact with the world as it presents itself, through interior meditation on the task that lies before him and through his ever-intensifying consecration to it by the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰ In the fullest sense, Mary’s spiritual handing on of a religious tradition and her bodily gift of a mother’s milk and care make it possible for the Word to become flesh. Being-in-the-flesh is marked by receptivity. And although Jesus is the Word from the beginning, growing in age and wisdom was part of his Father’s will. In Mary, the Abrahamic faith “becomes a contributory element in the Incarnation.”⁵¹

Thus far I have highlighted Balthasar’s emphasis on “mission” over the “beatific vision” as the measure of Jesus’ consciousness and knowledge.

⁴⁷ For an explanation of “The Mother-Child Paradigm” as an analogy for the relationship between infinite and finite freedom, see Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997) 51–57.

⁴⁸ For an explanation of the connection between the communication of idioms, Mary, and the incarnation, see Nicholas J. Healy, *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Oxford University, 2005) 96.

⁴⁹ TD 3:175–76.

⁵⁰ TD 3:176.

⁵¹ TD 3:177.

I have not yet treated Balthasar's position on Christ's beatific vision. A survey of his corpus reveals, in my estimation, a fluid position. One clue to unlocking his enigmatic position, I suggest, is to attend to his distinction between *visio beatifica* and *visio immediata*. Balthasar often denies Jesus the *beatific vision*, but grants him an *immediate vision*. As Pitstick writes, "Although the two normally would be identified, Balthasar's choice of terminology suggests a distinction, and the identification should not be immediately assumed."⁵² In this regard, it seems that Christ's *immediate vision* is understood solely in terms of his mission. His awareness of his divinity is inseparable from his "intuition of his mission-consciousness" and is "defined and limited by this same mission-consciousness." In other words, the content of his *visio immediata* is his mission. Balthasar posits that we have no reason to ascribe to this immediate vision "another, as it were, purely theoretical content, over and above his mission."⁵³ The beatific vision, on the other hand, is deemed abstract and unhelpful. In *Glory of the Lord*, volume 7, for instance, Balthasar writes of a "deep experience of being united to God and of life derived from the Father—an experience that the Son must have had, not only in Heaven, but also as a man, even if this does not mean that his spirit must already enjoy a perpetual *visio beatifica*."⁵⁴ This same line of reasoning is reiterated in *TD* 3 with the claim that Jesus "does not see the Father in a *visio beatifica*"; rather, "his awareness of his mission is only immediate."⁵⁵ Does Balthasar understand the beatific vision as "something like a movie" and not as "the union of God with the soul in the most intimate and living communion"?⁵⁶ In my next section I will examine Lonergan's insistence that beatific knowledge is knowledge of all goods in the aggregate and not a linear progression.

⁵² Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* 166. ⁵³ *TD* 3:166.

⁵⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 7, *Theology, the New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V., ed. John Kenneth Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) 216; see Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* 166.

⁵⁵ *TD* 3:200. "Aber weil Jesus nicht in *visio beatifica* den Vater schaut, sondern ihm der Auftrag des Vaters vom Heiligen Geist vorgestellt wird, er also nur seiner Sendung unmittelbar inne ist, wird für ihn die Situation der Versuchung möglich" (*TD* II/II:183). The English translation incorrectly translates *unmittelbar* as "indirect." It actually means "direct" or "immediate." See also Balthasar's later work, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 5, *The Final Act* (hereafter *TD* 5), trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998) 122–31. Here he seems to affirm a certain ambivalence with regard to the beatific vision. He holds that Christ experiences a vision of God that did not prevent him from being perfectly obedient (124). But according to Balthasar we must also presuppose, from the moment of the incarnation, "a certain veiling of his sight of the Father: he must leave it in abeyance, refrain from using it; this is possible because of the distance between the Father and Son in the Trinity" (125).

⁵⁶ Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* 172.

So far I have detailed a certain ambiguity in Balthasar's position on how to adequately account for Christ's experience of the beatific vision or the immediate vision of the Father. Balthasar's account of the human person's eschatological place in God's inner life (*TD* 5) may give us some sense of why Balthasar hesitates to wholeheartedly embrace Jesus' constant possession of the beatific vision. On this point Balthasar argues that "describing God's entrusting of himself to us as a *visio Dei* is always an inadequate and one-sided portrayal of this open encounter, since God can never be an object totally available to our sight."⁵⁷ Balthasar prefers to imagine this eschatological encounter as "the opening-up of endless rooms."⁵⁸ For him, we can "speak of the encounter with God in terms of vision, but we cannot stop there." If we keep this metaphor of vision, however, "we must speak in dialectical terms of the highest presence of something that is beyond all that we can grasp." God offers Godself to us in the "light of glory," but even in heaven this vision cannot comprehend God's incomprehensibility. In short, Balthasar believes that the metaphor of vision is unhelpfully static. As Thomas Dalzell states, "the language of *visio* alone is inadequate to describe a participation in the liveliness of the trinitarian event." The term "beatific vision" suggests "a static gazing at the divine essence."⁵⁹ For Balthasar, Augustine's ideal of "rest" and a Scholastic ideal of "vision" inadequately express finite freedom's personal encounter with infinite freedom. Balthasar discerns within the scriptural data a "strange paradox": a communication of both seeing and not-seeing God.⁶⁰ Only by conceiving this reality as a trinitarian *event* rather than as "the abstract contemplation of essence" can we hold together the "interplay of vision and nonvision."⁶¹

In sum, what we have seen by turning to Balthasar's analysis of the beatific vision in *TD* 5 is his desire not to completely disregard understanding the creature's encounter with God in terms of vision. But Balthasar thinks that "vision" inadequately communicates the dynamic, exhilarating, and incomprehensible nature of the person's encounter with the trinitarian life of God. Balthasar articulates this as an encounter that is direct and immediate yet also shrouded in mystery.

LONERGAN ON THE HUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

In this section, I describe Lonergan's account of Christ's knowledge in thesis 12 of his *De Verbo Incarnato*.⁶² Lonergan wrote this text prior to his

⁵⁷ *TD* 5:395–96.

⁵⁸ *TD* 5:395.

⁵⁹ Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom* 201.

⁶⁰ *TD* 5:404–5.

⁶¹ *TD* 5:407.

⁶² Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* (hereafter *OPCC*), trans. Michael G. Shields, from the 4th ed. of *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica* (Rome: Gregorian University,

breakthrough to the functional specialties presented in *Method in Theology*. As Frederick Crowe notes, “The *De Verbo Incarnato* of 1964 was written in the triple context of Scholasticism, Thomism, and a theological method of proving theses that derives from Melchior Cano.”⁶³ The question that must continually be asked is what this theology would look like within the framework of *Method in Theology*. After *Method* was published, Lonergan “saw two options before him: to concentrate on Christology and rework it in the way his *Method* would suggest, or to return to his very early interest in economics. . . . He chose economics, working on it for the rest of his active career and producing material for two volumes, published posthumously.”⁶⁴

Earlier I remarked that Balthasar explicitly attempted to avoid a Christology that sees itself as “a complete and rounded ‘part one’ smoothly unfolding into a soteriological ‘part two.’”⁶⁵ One might argue that Lonergan’s methodological treatment of the incarnate Word does just this. Lonergan proceeds from the hypostatic union to the consciousness and knowledge of Christ, and ultimately to redemption—in short, from the ontology of Christ’s person to his work. More immediately, Lonergan’s thesis on Christ’s knowledge presupposes his treatment of Christ’s consciousness in *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* and thesis 10 of *De Verbo Incarnato*. There Lonergan argues that the ontology of the Incarnation can be transposed into psychological terms and relations: the one divine person who subsists in two natures is also one divine subject of two consciousnesses. Lonergan predicates this transposition on the fact that Christ has two natural intellectual natures: one finite and one infinite, without confusion and without change. One who has two intellectual natures has two consciousnesses and two wills. Lonergan understands consciousness as experience, as self-presence. Knowledge properly speaking

1964), *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (hereafter CWBL) 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002); Lonergan, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Gregorian University Press *ad usum auditorum*, 1964) (hereafter *DVI*); Charles Hefling’s translation, to be published in CWBL, has been a great help to me.

My analysis will draw from Lonergan’s *DVI*, 2nd ed., which appeared in 1964. The first edition appeared four years after *OPCC*. As Hefling notes, while the material on Christ’s consciousness, for the most part, overlapped with the material in *OPCC*, the 1964 version of thesis 12 on Christ’s knowledge “differs almost entirely from the thesis that had appeared in the edition of 1960 and again, unchanged, in 1961” (Charles Hefling, “Another Perhaps Permanently Valid Achievement: Lonergan on Christ’s [Self-] Knowledge,” in *The ‘Not-Numerous Center’: For Insight’s 50th Anniversary and Method in Theology’s 35th Anniversary*, ed. Frederick Lawrence, *Lonergan Workshop* 20 [2008] 127–164, at 146).

⁶³ Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., *Christ and History: The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982* (Toronto: Novalis, 2005) 90.

⁶⁴ Crowe, *Christ and History* 11–12. ⁶⁵ *TD* 3:149.

occurs when understanding and judgment are added to experience. Here I am concerned primarily with knowledge.

Unlike Balthasar, Lonergan limits kenosis to the divine Son. To say that Jesus emptied himself, argues Lonergan, should not imply “a laying aside of the divine person or of the divine nature or of the consciousness that belongs to a divine person and nature.” Rather, Jesus’ kenosis “consists in a certain acquisition, in that he who is God has also become human in the true and proper sense.” This kenosis, for Lonergan, is twofold: ontological and psychological. Christ’s ontological kenosis was brought about by the assumption of human nature, by the fact that he is truly and properly human. The psychological kenosis is predicated on the ontological. That is, not only is Christ human; he also experiences himself as human.⁶⁶ On the connection between the ontological and psychological kenosis Lonergan writes:

Since in Christ, God and man, the divine and human natures are neither changed nor mixed, the divine and human consciousnesses are likewise neither changed nor mixed as a result of the hypostatic union. Hence as the Son of God is aware of himself in his infinite perfection through his divine consciousness, so also the same Son of God is aware of himself through his human consciousness in the poverty of human nature.⁶⁷

As Crowe has commented, Lonergan’s basic explanation of kenosis is fully Thomist: this self-emptying is “an addition rather than a subtraction”; the divine Son “emptied himself, not by laying aside the divine but by adding the human.”⁶⁸ The distinctiveness of Lonergan’s approach is his extension of Chalcedon’s ontological claims into the psychological realm: that Jesus *experienced* himself from infancy to adulthood on the side of the subject. His *understanding* and *judgment* of his identity are further moments in the knowing process and are attributed to his beatific *knowledge*.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ OPCC 223. Frederick E. Crowe, in his essay, “A Threefold *Kenosis* of the Son of God,” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1989) 315–23, has suggested a third kind of kenosis, a *historical* kenosis: “the Son of God not only *is* human in the ontological *kenosis*, not only *experiences* humanly in the psychological *kenosis* the self he is, but also lives in a particular sociocultural situation, with the accompanying limitations that constitute the historical *kenosis*” (320).

⁶⁷ OPCC 223.

⁶⁸ Crowe, “A Threefold *Kenosis*” 318.

⁶⁹ I do not comprehensively explain the theme of kenosis in Balthasar and Lonergan because my aim here is merely to point out a difference in trajectory. Balthasar emphasizes “subtraction” more than does Lonergan. I show here that, although both thinkers attribute certain elements of “not-knowing” in the Son, Balthasar speaks more freely and more often about Christ’s loss of knowledge than does Lonergan. It is a real question to what degree this loss is conditioned by the different way “kenosis” operates in their respective Christologies.

Lonergan conceives of the historical development of the doctrine of Christ's knowledge in three stages: patristic, medieval, and modern.⁷⁰ Whereas medieval thinkers such as Aquinas were thinking of Christ's knowledge with Aristotelian precision in terms of acts, potencies, and especially habits, modern thinkers are more interested in understanding "the life narrated in the Gospels, and they want to hear about consciousness, about psychological process, about the conceiving and carrying out of a historical work."⁷¹ Despite this contemporary challenge, the radical problem, according to Lonergan, is the same today as in the medieval era: knowing about human knowing must be discerned from one's own experience.⁷² "Those who do not achieve this [human knowing] successfully," writes Lonergan, "have neither the beginning nor the foundation from which they can proceed by analogy to think clearly and distinctly about other knowing. Absent an analogy, it can only be that divine knowledge, Christ's ineffable knowledge, Christ's effable and supernatural knowledge, and Christ's effable and natural knowledge will merge into one big hazy fog."⁷³ Notice Lonergan's emphasis on the role of natural analogy in the systematic-theological task. I now examine Lonergan's theoretical and constructive way of understanding Christ's knowledge.

Lonergan's thesis on Christ's knowledge is this:

Living on earth, Christ had both effable and ineffable human knowledge, besides his divine knowledge. As a beholder (*comprehensor*), he immediately knew God by that ineffable knowledge that is also called beatific, and in the same act, though mediately, he also knew everything else that would pertain to his work. As a pilgrim (*viator*), however, he elicited those natural and supernatural cognitional acts that constituted his human and historical life.⁷⁴

Lonergan affirms that Christ as God exercises divine knowledge, but the weight of his thesis is given to Christ's human knowledge since we can more confidently speak about this. To speak of divine nature and divine knowledge says nothing about and does not prejudice Christ's genuinely human knowledge. The undivided Christ possessed two natures without confusion; by these natures he exercised two sets of natural operations. In the incarnation, the Word subsists in a human nature and hence is the subject of a genuinely human consciousness. It follows, then, that through his conscious human acts Christ exercised human knowledge. To understand well the kinds of human knowledge that Jesus possessed, however, requires important systematic distinctions.

Lonergan understands Christ as both a comprehender of beatific knowledge and a pilgrim. Christ had immediate, ineffable, beatific knowledge on

⁷⁰ *DVI* 353.

⁷¹ *DVI* 354. Translations from *DVI* are mine, with an eye to Hefling's.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *DVI* 332.

the one hand, and effable knowledge on the other. Balthasar makes a passing reference to this distinction between Christ as *comprehensor* and *viator*.⁷⁵ Lonergan, however, regards these terms as integral to his understanding and explanation of the knowledge that Christ possessed. Lonergan's central argument can be summarized as follows: the mystery of Christ demands ineffable knowledge for Christ to know the divine mystery and effable knowledge for him to reveal, manifest, and communicate the divine mystery in an incarnate way.⁷⁶

As a comprehender of beatific knowledge, Jesus knew God immediately. In contrast, proportionate human knowing is a compound of the acts of empirical, intellectual, and rational consciousness. There is an intrinsic connection here between the sensible and the intelligible. Whatever is understood and judged naturally by human beings presupposes sense data. Ineffable or inexpressible knowledge, however, is not intrinsically connected to sense data; ineffable knowledge reaches the intelligible immediately.

Lonergan uses a *mystical analogy* to explain what ineffable, inexpressible knowledge might be like. He refers specifically to Aquinas's discussion of "rapture" in *Summa theologiae* 2–2, q. 175, a. 4, where Aquinas asks whether Paul, when in rapture, was withdrawn from his senses. In article 3, Aquinas argued that since Paul heard secret words pertaining to a vision of the blessed, which cannot be uttered by any person—an experience that transcends the state of a pilgrim (*viator*), it is fitting to hold that he saw the essence of God.⁷⁷ In article 4, Aquinas argues that, since Paul saw God's essence, it is reasonable to conclude that he was withdrawn from his senses. Only the human intellect with the divine aid can see the divine essence without turning to the phantasms. As Gilles Mongeau writes on the mystical way of knowing:

The knowledge of God that is given in such an event is real, but it requires the suspension of ordinary operations of knowing. When mystics "return," they have a new knowledge of God, but they cannot articulate what that knowledge is. It has transformed them, their viewpoint, the horizon within which they know everything else, but in itself the knowledge they really have eludes their efforts to express it. It is only over time, and after much effort of reflection and appropriation of the fruits

⁷⁵ This distinction is found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) 3, q. 15, a. 10 c.; translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1948; repr., Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria, 1981).

⁷⁶ *DVI* 335.

⁷⁷ *ST* 2–2, q. 175, a. 3. In *ad* 1 Aquinas acknowledges that human beings can experience rapture through the imagination as Peter did in Acts 10:10, or through the contemplation of divine truth through its intelligible effects as in Psalm 115:11: "I said in my excess: Every man is a liar." But Paul's is a more fitting analogy to Jesus' ineffable knowledge, since Paul saw God's essence, which involves a withdrawal from his senses.

of the encounter that the mystics have been able to articulate approximate understandings gesturing to what happened.⁷⁸

The kind of mystical encounter emphasized here by both Aquinas and Mongeau is constituted by a withdrawal into the ineffable, devoid of images and words.

Loneragan preferred the term beatific “knowledge” rather than “vision,” because the ocular metaphor is misleading.⁷⁹ For Lonergan, beatific knowledge is *knowledge*, not just *consciousness*. Consciousness makes a subject present to itself; human knowing makes objects present through the compound of conscious acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging. Beatific knowledge is not divine knowledge, but rather the inexpressible knowledge of Christ’s human consciousness, which is in some sense limited compared to divine knowledge.⁸⁰

Loneragan refers to scriptural statements that indicate Jesus’ unique relationship with the Father, which was accompanied by knowledge of him.⁸¹ Jesus the revealer ought to be believed because there is no discontinuity between God the Father and the words and actions of Jesus in his earthly life. For Lonergan, this intimate union with the Father should not be understood by analogy to prophecy or inspiration, as in the case of biblical writers. Rather, as the Word made flesh who came from the Father and returned to the Father, he *knew* the Father.⁸² It would be contrary to the Gospel authors, according to Lonergan, to understand this intimate union in merely intuitive, moral, and affective terms.⁸³ The fact that Christ knew the Father renders our faith reasonable. For Christ this knowledge was the principle out of which he exercised his mission. As the locus of revelation, his human and historical life was the very process of communicating and incarnating in an effable way what he knew ineffably.

We are still considering what Christ knew as one who comprehends beatific or ineffable knowledge. While he knew God immediately by this ineffable knowledge, Lonergan also argues that Christ, in this same act that he has as a comprehender of beatific knowledge, knew mediately (*mediate*) everything that pertained to his work. Lonergan grounds this claim on the supposition that anyone who knows God’s essence immediately also knows all those things to which the divine will extends. This knowledge mediated

⁷⁸ Mongeau, “Human and Divine Knowing of the Incarnate Word” 39.

⁷⁹ Charles Hefling, “Revelation and/as Insight,” in *The Importance of Insight: Essays in Honour of Michael Vertin*, ed. John J. Liptay Jr. and David S. Liptay (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007) 106.

⁸⁰ See *ibid.* 106.

⁸¹ See Crowe, *Christ and History* 76 for an indication of how Lonergan over time changed his method of using Scripture, especially in light of his appropriation of both the German Historical School and with human historicity in general.

⁸² DVI 386.

⁸³ DVI 387.

by divine essence “is knowledge of finite realities, things and events that are not God, and it admits of degrees, but it does not admit of multiplicity or sequence.”⁸⁴ “What must therefore be acknowledged in Christ as man,” according to Lonergan, “is the wisdom, the knowledge, and the fullness of truth which were required for the proper carrying out of his work.”⁸⁵ In the Augustinian and Thomist traditions, this kind of knowledge is referred to as “knowledge in the Word” (*cognitio Verbo*).⁸⁶ Lonergan conceives of this kind of knowledge, building on Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 10, a. 2–3, as the apprehension of the possible and actual “not immediately in themselves, not one by one, not one after the other, but all together, mediated by the divine essence.”⁸⁷ Hence, this knowledge is known through an act of understanding only, without the mediation of the senses or imagination.

It is fitting in this context to entertain an objection to this ineffable “knowing in the Word” of Christ. *Prima facie*, it seems to suggest that Jesus lives in a kind of fantasyland. Charles Hefling offers the following scenario: “The Magi come to Bethlehem bearing their gifts, and the baby in the manger says to himself, ‘Yes, I see it all. They have brought me gold, because I am a king, and incense, because I am God, and myrrh, because my death will be a sacrifice.’” The problem with this way of understanding Christ’s “knowing in the Word” is that it has the baby Jesus articulating this knowledge in images and concepts. In response, Lonergan stresses that the term “ineffable” is a technical, not a rhetorical term, and denotes the exercise of human knowledge without the senses.⁸⁸ It is inexpressible and hence neither perceptual, nor imaginal, nor discursive. As Hefling puts it, “Attempting to imagine what exercising it would be is attempting to imagine the impossible.”⁸⁹ Similarly, Crowe argues that immediate knowledge of God is not a knowledge of particular items, but a more global view; it is more an understanding than a concept. As an understanding it is marked, not so much by a list of objects as by the power and range of activity it gives to the subject. Despite this immediate knowledge, there still remains the difficult process for the human mind of Jesus of understanding and knowing the created universe and the course of human history.⁹⁰

Christ’s ineffable knowledge corresponds to the “hidden depths in Christ’s knowledge” discussed above. It is important to clarify that ineffable

⁸⁴ Hefling, “Another Perhaps Permanently Valid Achievement” 152.

⁸⁵ *DVI* 396.

⁸⁶ See Augustine, *City of God* 11.7, trans. Gerald G. Walsh et al. (Garden City, N.Y.: Image, 1958) and *ST* 3, q. 9, a. 3.

⁸⁷ *DVI* 341–42.

⁸⁸ *DVI* 334.

⁸⁹ Hefling, “Another Perhaps Permanently Valid Achievement” 153.

⁹⁰ Frederick E. Crowe, “Eschaton and Worldly Mission in the Mind and Heart of Jesus,” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1989) 193–234, at 203.

knowledge should not be equated with divine omniscience.⁹¹ Even though Christ knew by his ineffable human knowledge what was necessary for the execution of his mission, in his human consciousness he did not know everything that God knows. For Lonergan, Christ as man was not ignorant, but he was nescient:

With respect to ineffable knowledge: Christ the man did not know everything that is possible. He was therefore unable to compare with each other all possible world-orders, and so it was unknown to him why, instead of some other possible order of things, God chose this one, in which he himself had to suffer and die. This [lack of knowledge] can be referred to as a "positiveness of not-knowing (*nescientia*)," or in traditional terms, to the excellence of obedience.⁹²

The importance of mission in relation to Christ's knowledge offers a parallel to Balthasar's mission-structured Christology.

I have limited my discussion so far to Christ's ineffable or beatific knowledge, but for Lonergan, Christ also had effable knowledge. Again, Lonergan's central thesis is that the mystery of Christ demands both ineffable and effable knowledge. Whereas ineffable knowledge enables Christ to know the divine mystery, his effable knowledge enables him to reveal, manifest, and communicate divine mystery in an incarnate way. The thesis states that, as a pilgrim, Jesus elicited by effable knowledge those natural and supernatural cognitional acts that constituted his human and historical life. For a human being "can say or do nothing except through effable knowledge."⁹³

Lonergan's use of the phrase "human and historical life" is an indication that, although he was still writing in a predominantly neo-Scholastic form, a new theological language was emerging. As he would later remark in 1975, "If we are to think of Jesus as truly a man, we have to think of him as a historical being, as growing in age, wisdom, and grace in a determinate social and cultural milieu, as developing from below the way other human beings do and from above on the analogy of religious development."⁹⁴ With "human and historical life," Lonergan characterizes the life of Christ as man, as a pilgrim who progressed from infancy to adulthood in such a way as to freely shape who he actually was; in Lonergan's later expression, Christ participated in "man's making of man"—not abstractly, but rather in concrete self-realization.⁹⁵ Lonergan emphasizes that, as modern psychology sees it, human maturation is constituted by development:

⁹¹ Hefling, "Revelation and/as Insight" 106.

⁹² *DVI* 400 ⁹³ *DVI*, 401.

⁹⁴ Lonergan, "Christology Today" 82.

⁹⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," *A Third Collection: Papers*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (New York: Paulist, 1985) 169–83, at 171.

“Not only, then, is it a matter of growth and aging, but of a developing human process, at once physical and psychic, at once apprehensive and affective, at once intellectual and elective.”⁹⁶ Christ accepted an infant humanity which allowed him to become a mature adult through his own empirical, intelligent, rational, and moral acts. He formed his own character through the ways he acted, spoke, and lived.⁹⁷

Christ's life is also historical because it was lived in a human world—a world constituted by family and friendship within a particular economic, political, social, cultural, and religious context.⁹⁸ In this light, Lonergan writes that “Christ accepted not only the humanity of an infant but also a humanity descended from David, in the land of Palestine, in the time of Augustus, such that he spoke Aramaic, was educated under Jewish law, and grew up among Galileans.” In addition to these elements of facticity, Lonergan also emphasizes that Jesus “made that world, that language, that culture, his own.” Making something one's own involves both “acceptance and assimilation” and “adaptation and refashioning.”⁹⁹

What does it mean to say that Christ elicited natural and supernatural cognitional acts? Lonergan indicates that to elicit “indicates origin of an act in its natural aspect.”¹⁰⁰ Natural acts are those that attain their objects according to the proportion and norm of human nature. A natural act of knowing attains the intelligible in the sensible, and is attained through the human process of experience, inquiry, study, learning, judgment, etc.¹⁰¹ For instance, Jesus did not eat and drink mindlessly, but rather consciously and prudently.¹⁰² This activity is natural because the object to which it refers does not exceed what is proportionate to human nature. Natural effable knowledge corresponds to what Aquinas and others knew as acquired knowledge.¹⁰³ But Christ also elicited supernatural cognitional acts. According to Lonergan, supernatural acts are “those which attain their objects beyond the proportion or the norm of human nature, but do not immediately attain the very separate and infinite intelligibility.”¹⁰⁴ Christ, then, in his human nature elicited absolutely supernatural acts that absolutely exceed the proportion of human nature. Here Lonergan has in mind all the words and deeds of Christ the man that constitute the mystery of Christ; that is, the words and deeds that “incarnately reveal, manifest, and communicate the divine mystery.” Whereas Lonergan's use of “natural effable knowledge” corresponds to what the Scholastics called “acquired

⁹⁶ DVI 345.

⁹⁸ DVI 346.

¹⁰⁰ DVI 347.

¹⁰² DVI 402.

¹⁰³ See *ST* 3, q. 9. For a brief summary of Aquinas's account of Christ's divine, beatific, infused, and acquired knowledge, see Maloney, *Knowledge of Christ* 57–63.

¹⁰⁴ DVI 348.

⁹⁷ DVI 345.

⁹⁹ DVI 306.

¹⁰¹ DVI 348.

knowledge,” his use of “supernatural effable knowledge” corresponds to what they called “infused knowledge.” The words and deeds of Christ that believers appropriate as true through faith, Christ knew through ineffable knowledge. His task was to consciously communicate the ineffable in an effable way.¹⁰⁵ To reiterate, Christ’s natural and supernatural effable knowledge are distinct from his ineffable beatific knowledge, since they are properly proportionate to “the discursive nature of the human mind.”¹⁰⁶

The fact that these natural and supernatural acts were mediated through Jesus’ human and historical life raises the question of development. Were Christ’s natural and supernatural acts always the same, or were they different at different times in his development? Lonergan opts for the latter answer in a qualified manner. Christ’s natural acts were different at different times. Mindful of the reference in Luke 2:52 to Jesus’ advancement in wisdom and age, Lonergan refers to the work of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, who has shown that the significant amount of time needed for a child to learn the things that constitute an adult human life indicates, not an imperfection, but an enormous capacity for perfection in human bodily, sensitive, and intellectual development.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, for Lonergan, the supernatural acts of Christ were different at different times. This does not imply that his dignity as the Son changed: “As the dignity of the Son did not change, neither did the ineffable knowledge following upon that dignity; and the same thinking applies to the acts of charity and obedience that proceeded immediately from his ineffable knowledge.”¹⁰⁸ But supernatural acts, insofar as they occurred in accordance with his effable knowledge, did differ at different times. One’s words and deeds change and develop through experience: “Jesus did not just repeat one and the same word, or one and the same deed throughout his whole life.” The natural acts of Jesus as baby, as boy, as adolescent, as young man, and as adult were all different. With the growth of his natural acts, “his supernatural acts were able to grow, since they had something successively different to complete and perfect.”¹⁰⁹

Despite the distinctions I have made between effable and ineffable knowledge, and furthermore between natural effable and supernatural effable knowledge, Lonergan reminds us that Christ’s human consciousness was one. So it is a mistake both to distinguish the natural and supernatural acts of Christ as if he had two human consciousnesses and two human lives, and to understand the natural and supernatural as parts of one conscious process, while at the same time relegating his ineffable knowledge to a separate and secret compartment in his mind.

¹⁰⁵ *DVI* 348–49.

¹⁰⁷ *DVI* 404.

¹⁰⁹ *DVI* 405.

¹⁰⁶ Maloney, *Knowledge of Christ* 62.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

How then does Lonergan positively understand the relationship between Christ's ineffable knowledge and his natural and supernatural effable knowledge? Lonergan emphasizes a natural analogy¹¹⁰ based on the desire to know in its two dimensions: the light of the intellect and the notion of being.¹¹¹

What the natural light of intellect and the supernatural light of faith do in us, then, immediate knowing of God did in Christ the man. What is ineffable in us, what our life is the expression of, is the light in which all knowledge is originally imparted to us, the light by which we naturally desire to know being and therefore to know God by his essence. What was ineffable in Christ the man, however, and what Christ's human and historical life expressed, was the divine Word itself, immediately known. Thus where we operate from intention of an end to attaining that end, Christ the man poured out goodness from an end achieved, beheld, and loved. This diffusion was in the first instance his own human and historical life, but it extends to include everything Christ effected by means of his life.¹¹²

In other words, according to this analogy between the human knowing of Christ and our own human knowing, what we desire and intend by the natural light of intellect, Christ as man knew immediately in his beatific knowledge. Just as we proceed from the ineffable intention of being to the acquisition of our effable knowledge, so also the human Christ proceeded from his ineffable knowledge in the beatific vision to the formation of his effable knowledge.¹¹³ In Lonergan's words, "There were things that Jesus himself discovered by his effable knowledge so that he might express ineffable knowledge, in speech or otherwise, to himself and to others."¹¹⁴

BALTHASAR AND LONERGAN IN CONVERSATION

So far I have explained key elements of Balthasar's and Lonergan's respective positions on Christ's human knowledge. I have highlighted the respective ways they might contribute to the concern for doing justice to, on the one hand, the human and historical limitations to Christ's human knowledge and, on the other hand, the hidden depths of his human knowledge. While there are many parallels to be discovered, for my purposes here, I will now bring their positions into conversation under the following themes: (1) the inadequacy of vision, (2) the role of mission, and (3) mystical analogies. Pitstick's critique of Balthasar's theology has received much attention. McIntosh, commenting on her reading of Balthasar, writes that she "makes very fine precisions, always shepherding Balthasar's admittedly

¹¹⁰ Lonergan, citing Vatican I's *Dei Filius*, writes: "Reason illumined by faith . . . can with God's help attain a highly fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith . . . from the analogy of what it naturally knows" (*Method in Theology* 336).

¹¹¹ See Crowe, *Christ and History* 83; Ogilvie, *Faith Seeking Understanding* 187–91.

¹¹² *DVI* 406.

¹¹⁴ *DVI* 406.

¹¹³ See Crowe, *Christ and History* 83.

tumultuous ideas towards the approved sheepfolds of normative dogmatic language and neo-scholastic rigor.”¹¹⁵ He adds that Balthasar’s theology “appears rather wild, even outrageous, when it is prodded towards these formal expectations—just as poetry would seem incorrigibly inept were one to insist on interpreting it as a species of chemical formulae.” McIntosh reminds us, however, that Balthasar “spent his entire adult life as a spiritual teacher and guide” and that his writing is often “imaginative, dramatic, iconic, evocative; it works not by declaring in a positive fashion some settled truth but by stirring his readers to live ever more deeply into the mysteries of the faith.”¹¹⁶ Although Lonergan’s position could often be used to support Pitstick’s critique, McIntosh’s criticism challenges us to avoid the dangers of imposing a theoretical and explanatory standard on a theology that was self-consciously not executed in such a fashion. My aim, therefore, is to show where Balthasar’s cognate concerns might be elevated into a higher plane of discourse by Lonergan’s theology, not in an attempt to impose such standards on Balthasar’s style, but to show the limitations of such a style and to reach an imperfect and speculative understanding of the mysteries of faith at the level of our times. That said, I will also suggest places where Balthasar’s treatment raises questions about the full adequacy of Lonergan’s approach and might challenge thinkers sympathetic to Lonergan’s Christology to weigh the possibility of expanding their understanding of this christological mystery.

The Inadequacy of “Vision”

Whether or not Jesus shared the beatific vision is important to both Lonergan and Balthasar. Although the writings of both on this issue focus on the inadequacy of the metaphor of vision for the consciousness and knowledge of Christ, Balthasar manifested a certain hesitancy and even an ambiguity in his position. He distinguished *visio beatifica* and *visio immediata*. He wanted to avoid the implication of a kind of static gazing at the divine essence in the metaphor of vision. My intention is to retrieve Balthasar’s chief concern by complementing it and grounding it theoretically with Lonergan’s understanding of beatific knowledge. Balthasar did not want to completely disregard the creature’s encounter with God in terms of vision, which he thought did not adequately communicate the dynamic, exhilarating, and incomprehensible nature of the person’s encounter with the trinitarian life of God. He preferred to speak of both vision and nonvision. He used various terms, which I highlighted above, to express Jesus’ knowledge of the Father: “intuition,” “implicit

¹¹⁵ Mark A. McIntosh, review of Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, *Modern Theology* 24 (2008) 137–39, at 138.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

preknowledge,” “inalienable knowledge,” possessing his entire mission in his “mind’s eye” and searching for ways of implementing his task. I argue that Lonergan’s employment of the technical terms “ineffable” and “effable” through an analogy from human knowing addresses in a more systematic and *explanatory* way Balthasar’s reluctance to use only “vision” as a metaphor for Christ’s knowledge—a reluctance he expressed primarily in a *descriptive* way through a constellation of terms. Lonergan’s theological formulation shows that a reluctance fully to embrace Christ’s permanent beatific knowledge might be mitigated by articulating in a more rigorous way what constitutes beatific *knowledge*. Recall Crowe’s attempt to draw out the implications of Lonergan’s position, that ineffable knowledge is not knowledge of particular items or concepts or objects, but rather consists in a more global view, more like “understanding” than “seeing”—an understanding marked by the power and range of activity it gives to the subject. Lonergan’s use of “knowledge” and not “vision,” and his insistence on the dynamic, and even dramatic, nature of translating the ineffable into effable terms offer a way of responding to Balthasar’s concerns.

Exploring whether Balthasar’s metaphor of the dramatic actor’s dual relationship with the writer and the audience can provide a more dramatic understanding of the process of rendering the ineffable into effable terms, but such an exploration would go beyond the limits of this article. The question would, however, be worth pursuing, since, as Balthasar contends, it is the actor’s job to incarnate the author’s dramatic idea. Just as the actor’s role is to incarnate the authorial idea for an audience, the Son’s mission is to incarnate the Father’s “unified vision” he shares in a creative way with particular images and stories.¹¹⁷

The Centrality of Mission

This article also highlighted the way “mission” was central to both Balthasar’s and Lonergan’s accounts of Christ’s human knowledge. This mutual emphasis on “mission” offers insight into the historical limitations and the hidden depths of his human knowledge. Both thinkers argued that Christ knew what was necessary for the execution of his mission, but that he did not know *everything* in his human consciousness; hence, they ascribe a central place to an obdiential “not-knowing.”

Nevertheless, their positions are certainly not identical. In many places, Balthasar argues that Christ’s immediate vision is entirely constituted by and limited to his mission. Whereas Balthasar even allows for Jesus’ loss of the beatific vision as part of his obedience to his mission, Lonergan roots his

¹¹⁷ See especially Balthasar’s analysis of the three elements of dramatic creativity in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988) 268–305.

account of Christ's knowledge of mission in his ineffable or beatific knowledge. That is, Christ as beholder immediately knew God in God's essence, and in this same act as a beholder, he knew mediately all that was necessary for the execution of his work. Lonergan bases this claim on the supposition that to know God's essence immediately is also to know mediately all those realities to which the divine will extends.

This contrast illuminates the way Lonergan's and Balthasar's different theological styles condition their respective positions on this issue. Lonergan's systematic presentation argues that Christ's ontology conditions his consciousness, and so his knowledge. Whereas Lonergan moves rigorously from the ontological to the psychological, Balthasar largely avoids a sustained treatment of the ontological and psychological constitution of Christ, choosing instead to explore the issue through the lens of "mission." Balthasar's more dramatic, mission-oriented treatment of the same theme opens up interesting avenues of exploration. For example, Balthasar suggests that Christ's mission consciousness might have given him a special prophetic knowledge, or what he enigmatically calls "cardio-gnostic knowledge." This kind of knowledge enabled Jesus to be affected by the "inner constitution" (*innere Verfaßtheit*) of his fellow human beings in such a way that "the entire temporal and eternal destiny of any and every person comes to lodge within *his own sphere*."¹¹⁸ In a deeply personal way, Christ's experience of persons is filtered through his mission. The *Catechism* offers a similar suggestion in its claim that the "Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts."¹¹⁹

Balthasar's move, however enriching on many levels, proves to be inadequate for those who understand the task of systematic theology to reach an explanatory understanding of the mysteries of faith. Nevertheless, even for one committed to an understanding of systematic theology as primarily a speculative, theoretical enterprise, it is worth exploring areas of possible complementarity. For example, it seems plausible that Lonergan's theoretical articulation of Christ's knowing of all other things to which the divine will extends as secondary objects can include Balthasar's acknowledgment of Christ's being affected by "the inner constitution" of persons and of his having a deep knowledge and concern for their ultimate destiny. In fact, I contend that Balthasar's fuller articulation of the drama of Jesus' mission can enrich Lonergan's theoretical treatment, because of its—in Doran's terms—meaningfulness from the perspective of the "aesthetic-dramatic operator" of human consciousness and God's self-disclosure in esthetic-dramatic forms.¹²⁰ These suggestions not only support Doran's suggestion

¹¹⁸ *TD* 3:178, emphasis original.

¹¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 473

¹²⁰ Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 92.

that we relate the positive gains of Balthasar's works to "Lonergan's systematics while complementing each of them by the other," but also redeem Doran's hunch about the hitherto underemphasized explanatory potential in Balthasar's work.¹²¹

Mystical Analogies

For Balthasar, Christian mystical experience of God can give us some, albeit inadequate, sense of the variation of Jesus' knowledge, which must have ranged from moments of illumination on the one hand, to moments of dryness and forsakenness on the other. In his writings, Balthasar draws upon such mystics as John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Adrienne von Speyr to substantiate his claim that in the life of his mission, especially in his passion, death, and descent into hell, Jesus lost his beatific knowledge.¹²²

Lonergan's mystical analogy focuses on the tension mystics experience in translating their new knowledge of God into humanly accessible terms. What is relevant in mystical experience "is the inexpressible character of their knowledge, and the great efforts they make to express to us what is beyond words," such as Teresa of Avila's four ways to water a garden.¹²³ The presumption here is that whatever the mystics had, Christ had in a greater degree.¹²⁴

Lonergan's and Balthasar's respective uses of mystical analogies make for an interesting contrast. Balthasar uses the mystical analogy as an imperfect way of accounting for the various forms of knowledge—from illumination to aridity and forsakenness—that Christ could have experienced. Balthasar uses the mystics as evidence that Christ could have at times lost the beatific vision. Lonergan, for his part, uses the mystical analogy as a way of accounting for the difficult process of moving from ineffable knowledge to effable knowledge. Just as the mystics have to translate their momentary ineffable experience into effable terms, so Christ had to translate, one might say, his permanent mystical vision into effable terms as his human and historical life progressed. It is a real question whether Balthasar's and Lonergan's different uses of the mystical analogy can be complementary. The answer seems to hinge on the question of whether it is possible for Christ to lose the beatific vision in dryness and forsakenness.¹²⁵ Or, from another angle, with Lonergan's understanding of

¹²¹ Ibid. 12.

¹²² Again, I here deliberately avoid treating Christ's consciousness on the cross. In a manuscript in process, I discuss this theme in Lonergan and Balthasar.

¹²³ Crowe, "Eschaton and Worldly Mission" 207.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ For reservations about this possibility, see Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* 185–88; and Maloney, *Knowledge of Christ* 136.

ineffable knowledge and the fact that it does not necessarily mitigate the drama of Christ's life, is it possible to hold for a permanent mystical knowledge or, in Balthasar's words, an "immediate vision" while at the same time maintaining that it is possible for Christ to experience aridity and abandonment?

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan refers to mystical experience as an element of religiously differentiated consciousness. It is the withdrawal "from the world mediated by meaning into a silent and all-absorbing self-surrender in response to God's gift of his love."¹²⁶ He adds that while this is the central component of mystical experience, "mystical attainment is manifold."¹²⁷ In light of this, is it possible that Balthasar illuminates other aspects of the mystical mode of apprehension that Lonergan does not explicitly include, and hence can inform the categories used in systematic theology? In *Mysterium Paschale*, Balthasar contrasts a "conciliar and scholastic dogmatics" with a "theology of the saints and their encounters with Christ."¹²⁸ He appreciates the Scholastic mode but has set out to explore a systematic theology rooted "in the great holy figures of Christian history. Their charism consisted in the ability to reimmerge themselves, beyond everything that convention might dictate, in a 'contemporaneity' with the Gospel so as to bequeath the legacy of their intimate experience to their spiritual children."¹²⁹ In short, Balthasar's particular use of mystical experience here challenges those more sympathetic to Lonergan's account to weigh the possibility of expanding their vision of what informs the category of religiously differentiated consciousness. This challenge, however, cannot be met in my brief study.

CONCLUSION

I have explored the relationship between the thought of Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar on the issue of Christ's knowledge. I have highlighted the respective ways these two thinkers might contribute to the concern for doing justice to the human and historical limitations to Christ's human knowledge on the one hand, and to its hidden depths on the other. My final comparative section focused on three common issues that emerged in this study: the inadequacy of vision, the role of mission, and the question of a mystical analogy. I have argued that, methodologically speaking, Lonergan's explanatory account of Christ's human knowledge through the use of technical terms and an analogy from human knowing represents a more carefully worked out advance on Balthasar's

¹²⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 273.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale* 36–37.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 38.

position. Recognizing the danger of imposing a theoretical and explanatory standard on Balthasar's theology, I have highlighted where Balthasar's cognate concerns might be elevated into a higher plane of discourse by Lonergan's framework. This position presumed, however, that the chief concern of systematic theology (an issue certainly open for debate) is the hypothetical, imperfect, analogical, and developing understanding of the mysteries of faith. While I am sympathetic to the notion of systematic theology as primarily a theoretical, explanatory discipline, I have also suggested several openings where more esthetically and dramatically oriented categories might complement such an approach. In this way, my account is sympathetic to Doran's desire to relate the positive gains of Balthasar's work to Lonergan's theoretical systematics while complementing each by the other. Lonergan's and Balthasar's respective uses of a mystical analogy, for example, raise questions about the possible complementarity of their theological styles. Balthasar inserts into the conversation dimensions of mysticism that Lonergan does not explicitly recognize and that, if theologically plausible, raise questions about the full adequacy of Lonergan's account. Reaching a definitive answer on this question, however, is beyond the scope of this article.