SANCTIFYING GRACE AND OUR UNION WITH THE HOLY TRINITY: A REPLY

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FEW problems in theology are more engaging than the relation between created and uncreated grace. It was pleasant, therefore, to be invited by the editors of this journal to comment on Fr. P. de Letter's recent article on sanctifying grace and our union with the Trinity.[1] The author informs his readers that he intends "to repeat and complete [Fr. Donnelly's] attempt, taking for granted the main ideas he has exposed already." His "main objection" to my attempt "is leveled against the idea of sanctifying grace, in its created reality, as some sort of miniature trinity in us."[2] Before considering this main objection I should like to comment briefly on Fr. de Letter's concept of union and presence. Then, in more detail, I shall examine critically his idea of relation and the part it plays in his theory of the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in the just soul.

UNION AND PRESENCE

For Fr. de Letter, union is relation, *esse ad*, as he puts it.[3] In considering the union between the soul and the Blessed Trinity he stresses very strongly the formal and relative aspect of the union. In my opinion he does not sufficiently emphasize union considered fundamentally in its created foundation. Such an approach can lead to a

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[1] P. de Letter, S. J., "Sanctifying Grace and Our Union with the Holy Trinity," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, XIII (March, 1952), 33–58. Cf. my articles in this journal: "The Theory of R. P. Maurice de la Taille, S. J., on the Hypostatic Union," II (1941), 510–26; "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit according to M. J. Scheeben," VII (1946), 244–80; "The Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit: A Solution according to de la Taille," VIII (1947), 445–70; also "The Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit according to St. Thomas and de la Taille," *Proceedings of Fourth Annual Meeting*, Catholic Theological Society of America (June 27–29, 1949), pp. 38–89.

[2] P. de Letter, *art. cit.*, pp. 33, 34.

[3] Cf. de Letter, p. 36: "The first aspect is that of union or relation or *esse ad*, which as such does not designate an *esse in* nor any quality or *esse absolutum*, but only an *esse relativum*, i.e., immediate union of the essence of the soul with the essence of God." For the difference between de la Taille and Billot regarding their explanations of the *gratia unionis* in the Incarnation, cf. "The Theory of R. P. Maurice de la Taille," pp. 525–26.

form of extrinsicism. That this is true in de Letter's case should be clear from his doctrine on relation.

Furthermore, Fr. de Letter's idea of presence suggests a juxtaposition between the soul and God. It hardly describes that intimate communion of the just soul with the Trinity, an utterly new kind of presence proper to the supernatural state of justification.[4] Presence, for de Letter, is synonymous with new union. Since union is for him the *esse ad* of the relation, would it not seem that by presence de Letter understands a new kind of *esse ad*? The extrinsicism of such a position is obvious. While it is true that he does not wholly omit the fundamental and real aspect of union, Fr. de Letter does, it seems to me, neglect it badly.[5]

Towards a better understanding of the meaning of presence (and union), any theologian will profit from a careful study of the masterful article of F. de Lanversin.[6] The basic concept of presence, according to this author, is the following: for two beings to be really present to one another they must communicate something that is specific to themselves.[7] Hence the carpenter is not really present to his hammer nor are two unconscious persons present to one another, for in neither

[4] Cf. de Letter, p. 37: "By presence of God in a creature we express the union of the creature with God, connoting also that God is personal. Our idea of presence, as a direct concept, expresses local vicinity or union in space." Unless further explained, such a concept of presence would be closely allied to mere juxtaposition of the two persons said to be present to one another.

[5] Since the question of the "how" of the inhabitation is a metaphysico-theological problem, and since metaphysics deals largely with causes, it would seem preferable to concentrate on the cause or foundation of the relation rather than on the *esse ad*, the relation taken formally. Considered formally, a relation denotes no reality, puts nothing in either term, is wholly a centrifugal "being," a pure *respectus* (cf. *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 9, ad 7m). If, in considering this *esse ad*, one were to attempt an adequate precision from the inherent element, *esse in*, then one would be dealing with a pure *esse imaginarium*, for the relation has no reality apart from its foundation. Cf. the excellent article of Juan B. Manyá, "Metafísica de la relación 'in divinis,' " *Revista española de teología*, V (1945), 277 f., wherein the author writes: "El *esse ad*, pues, si pudiese ser obtenido perfectamente aislado, no expresaría perfección alguna en ningún sujeto, ni en su principio ni en su término, porque prescindiría de todo sujeto, de todo principio y de todo término. En realidad sería un absurdo y, por tanto, la nada."

[6] "Le concept de présence et quelquesunes de ses applications théologiques," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXIII (1933), 58–80.

[7] Cf. *art. cit.*, p. 61: "C'est sans doute que, de façon générale, on ne dira guère qu'un être est présent, s'il ne communique quelque chose au moins de son être spécifique."

case is there an interchange of anything specifically *human*. True, the carpenter and his hammer, the first and second unconscious persons, may communicate heat and perhaps electric radiation, but such is hardly specific to human beings. On the other hand, when the carpenter meets a fellow workman or when the two unconscious persons recover from the anesthetic and begin to converse among themselves, they then become truly present to one another. Why? Because they now communicate to each other something that is specific and proper to human beings.

If one applies the ideas of de Lanversin to God's presence in the just soul, a supernatural presence implies that the Blessed Trinity communicates to the soul something that is specifically trinitarian. On the other hand, a mere natural presence of God in creatures, the presence of *Deus unus*, not *Deus trinus*, would mean that God gives to creatures a finite, created, analogous participation in the absolute perfections of God, such as being, goodness, beauty, intellection, and the like. With his usual clearness St. Thomas thus characterizes the supernatural presence of God: " . . . ipsae personae divinae quadam sui sigillatione in animabus nostris relinquunt quaedam dona."[8] The conferring of created grace may be envisaged as the impressing upon the soul of the divine seal of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Viewed this way, grace becomes, so to speak, the concave impression on the soul of the convex trinitarian seal.[9] As St. Thomas says, the just soul possesses God "per quemdam modum passionis."[10] We shall return later to this concept of grace as a miniature trinity in the soul.

FR. DE LETTER'S CONCEPT OF RELATION

Fr. de Letter maintains that between the just soul and the Blessed Trinity there are three relations, relations that are truly real and actually distinct one from another.[11] These three relations are real because their foundation is real. However, the relations are multiple,

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[8] *In I Sent.*, d. 14, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2m.

[9] The concept of the Holy Spirit as a seal (*sphragis*) impressed on the soul as on wax is a commonplace among the Greek Fathers; cf., e.g., Cyril of Alexandria, *De sanctissima trinitate*, dial. VII (*PG*, LXXV, 1090 A–B), and especially his *Thesaurus*, XXXIV (*PG*, LXXV, 610 D f.).

[10] *In I Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 5, ad ultimum.   [11] Cf. de Letter, p. 45 ff.

namely, three distinct relations, not because of their foundation (which is one) but because of the termini of the relations. "The distinction of these relations finds its reason and ground in God *alone*."[12] Again: "The real distinction of our special relations to each of the three divine Persons does not originate in any threefoldness in created grace, foundation of our supernatural union with God: it results from the real distinction of the divine Persons within one divine nature to which and to whom we are, through grace, immediately united."[13]

These citations make it abundantly clear that for Fr. de Letter a relation has unity or multiplicity, not from the oneness or multiple character of its foundation but solely from the termini of the relation. Is such doctrine metaphysically sound and in accord with the explicit and constant teaching of St. Thomas? Let Aquinas answer that question himself.

First, in his *Summa*, in answering the question whether there is one filiation in Christ or two, St. Thomas teaches that the relation gets its unity or multiplicity, not from the termini of the relation but from the cause or subject of the relation.[14] How different this doctrine is from the statement of Fr. de Letter: "Because a relation is specified, or made what it specifically is, by what terminates it. If three distinct realities terminate a real relation, then this relation is of necessity threefold: it is three distinct relations."[15]

According to Fr. de Letter, therefore, a child would have two distinct relations to his parents, one to the father and another distinct relation to the mother. He would speak similarly of the multiple relations between the professor and his pupils or between a statue and many other statues of equal weight or of equal quantity. But St. Thomas says exactly the opposite. It is an axiom with Aquinas

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 49; italics added.   [13] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[14] *Sum. theol.*, III, q. 35, a. 5 c: "Unitas enim relationis vel eius pluralitas *non* attenditur secundum terminos, sed secundum causam, vel subiectum. Si enim secundum terminos attenderetur, oporteret quod quilibet homo in se duas filiationes haberet: unam qua refertur ad patrem, et aliam qua refertur ad matrem. Sed recte consideranti apparet, *eadem relatione* referri unumquemque ad suum patrem et matrem, propter unitatem causae. Eadem enim nativitate homo nascitur ex patre et matre, unde *eadem relatione* ad utrumque refertur. Et eadem ratio est de magistro qui docet multos discipulos eadem doctrina; et de domino qui gubernat diversos subiectos eadem potestate" (italics added).

[15] De Letter, p. 49, note 47.

that a relation is real, only if the foundation be real, and that a relation is multiple, only if the foundation be multiple.[16]

In the *Sentences* we read that a thing has its unity or multiplicity from that which gives it its being. Therefore, it is according to that in which a relation has its foundation that one must judge and decide whether the relation is actually one relation or many relations.[17] In the same place St. Thomas teaches that, although the *respectus* of a relation be multiple according to the multiplicity of the *termini*, nevertheless it is not true that the relations are actually and really multiplied.[18]

In *Quaestiones quodlibetales* we find the same doctrine. A being gets its unity and existence from the same source. If there is but one foundation for a relation, then there is but one real relation, even though the *respectus* of the relation be multiple.[19] Elsewhere in the same work St. Thomas holds that a boy is said to be the son of both mother and father by one filiation, although the *respectus* be multiplied.[20] It seems superfluous to add that in *Compendium theologiae* St. Thomas repeats that, just as a relation depends on its cause for its actual existence, so it is also dependent upon its cause for its actually being one or multiple.[21]

[16] The matter becomes apparent if one but consider the philosophical adage, "ad relationem non datur generatio"; cf. *In I Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1 c.

[17] *In III Sent.*, d. 7, a. 5, resp.: "Et quia ex eo res habet unitatem et multitudinem ex quo habet esse; ideo secundum id in quo relatio fundatur, de ea judicandum est, utrum sit secundum rem una vel plures."

[18] *Ibid.*, ad 4m: "Unde quamvis ex terminis multiplicentur respectus relationis, non tamen oportet quod multiplicentur relationes secundum rem, sicut motus secundum rem multiplicantur ex diversitate terminorum."

[19] *Quodl.*, I, q. 2, a. 2 c: "Sed relatio habet quod sit res naturae ex sua causa, per quam una res naturalem ordinem habet ad alteram; qui quidem ordo naturalis et realis est ipsis ipsa relatio. . . . Ex eodem autem habet aliquid quod sit ens et quod sit unum; et ideo contingit quod est una relatio realis propter unitatem causae, sicut patet de aequalitate; propter unam enim quantitatem est in uno corpore una aequalitas tantum, quamvis sint respectus plures, secundum quos diversis corporibus dicitur esse aequale. Si autem secundum omnes illos respectus multiplicarentur realiter relationes in uno corpore, sequeretur quod in uno essent accidentia infinita vel indeterminata. Et similiter magister est una relatione magister omnium quos idem docet, quamvis sint multi respectus." Need I say that this statement of St. Thomas is directly contrary to Fr. de Letter's doctrine on relation?

[20] *Ibid.*, q. 2, a. 3 c.

[21] *Comp. theol.*, cap. 212. This work is available in an excellent English translation by Cyril Vollert, S.J., *Compendium of Theology, by Saint Thomas Aquinas* (St. Louis: Herder, 1947).

Fr. de Letter has this in common with P. Galtier, S.J.: neither of the two admits that there is any difference whatsoever in the mode of inhabitation of each divine Person. Galtier, on the one hand, concludes very logically that, since the created foundation for the indwelling is one *sub omni respectu*, the relation to the Trinity is one, single relation. Contrariwise Fr. de Letter insists on three distinct relations. But for St. Thomas three distinct and real relations with only one foundation is an impossibility. To understand, as far as one can, how Fr. de Letter arrives at what one must admit is an unusual conclusion, perhaps it will help to cite from G. Philips' review of Galtier's book, *Le saint Esprit en nous d'après les Pères grecs*.[22] P. Philips says:

> Il [Galtier] admet que chacune des trois personnes vient et habite en nous à sa manière propre, l'une comme Père, l'autre comme Fils, l'autre comme Esprit des deux (p. 244) .... Mais la réalité qui fonde cette attribution serait *toute* dans les relations intratrinitaires des personnes elles-mêmes et il n'en résulterait aucun "titre spécial" pour des attributions particulières. Autant dire que les relations intratrinitaires ne transparaissent point du tout dans l'union de la grâce, alors que les textes scripturaires et patristiques nous décrivent la vie divine des âmes comme une participation et une assimilation progressive à cette même vie intratrinitaire. Ce ne seront pas là, pour les personnes divines, de pures relations *avec le dehors* (p. 245), puisque aussi bien la grâce nous fait pénétrer réellement *ad intra Dei*. Voilà précisément la différence entre l'ordre purement naturel et l'élévation qui nous unit à Dieu *tel qu'il est en lui-même*.[23]

With Galtier, de Letter will allow that all the newness of the inhabitation must be found on the side of the human soul. Further, he will admit that each Person dwells in, and is united with, the soul as a distinct Person. Despite all this, the *mode de référence* (Galtier's expression) is exactly the same *in every respect* for each divine Person. The only difference lies within the trinitarian relations themselves. I disagree with this position because, in my opinion, it does not allow for the *in*dwelling of the Trinity as *distinct* Persons.

It cannot, I believe, be too strongly urged that *all* the newness of the inhabitation must be found in the creaturely element.[24] The

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[22] Rome: Gregorian Univ., 1946.

[23] "Le saint Esprit en nous," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, XXIV (1948), 133–34.

[24] It is precisely this created element in the inhabitation (and Incarnation) that must be explained. True, a deep mystery is involved, but we can acquire some knowledge even

reason is obvious. As St. Thomas clearly teaches, the difference in the manner of God's being in the just soul cannot be founded in God, for He looks upon all things in the same way.[25] The difference between the inhabitation of the Blessed Trinity and the natural presence of God in all creatures must be placed in the human soul, not in God. My contention is this: if the three divine Persons dwell within the soul as three distinct Persons, then there must be something in the soul itself which justifies our saying that the Trinity *qua tres* inhabits the soul. That means *some kind* of threefoldness in the foundation of the union with, presence of, and relation to, the Trinity as such.

As I see the matter, it is futile, wishful thinking and unmetaphysical imagining for a theologian to maintain that, since in God there are three really distinct relations by which the divine Persons are really three distinct Persons, therefore, in the grace state, the relation of the soul to God must be a threefold relation, for we can only be related to God as He really is in Himself. On the contrary, all the reality and all the newness of this special presence and union and relation must be in the created element, sanctifying grace. For God looks upon all things in the same way and, if we have Him within us by a special presence, then it is because we are related to Him and possess Him in a special manner. The foundation of the relation and this passive possession of God by the soul—this passive presence, if you will—is what must be explained. And we cannot do that by appealing to the real distinction of the trinitarian relations. The distinction must be in the only thing that is new here, namely, the created foundation for the new relations.

Allow me to quote somewhat at length from Fr. de Letter's article; he is speaking of the "special role" of each divine Person.

But the phrase "special role" can have another meaning. It may signify that each of the three Persons terminates the soul's union with the divinity in His own

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of mysteries. The attitude of Fr. de Letter (p. 48, note 39) could, to my mind, lead to intellectual defeatism.

[25] *In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1, contra: "Constat quod Deus aliquo modo est in sanctis quo non est in creaturis. Sed ista diversitas non potest poni ex parte ipsius Dei, qui eodem modo se habet ad omnia. Ergo videtur quod sit ex parte creaturae, scilicet quod ipsa creatura habet aliquid quod alia non habent."

manner, i.e., as He exists in the Trinity, in such wise that our relation to the Father is not the same as our relation to the Son or to the Holy Ghost, because the Father is really distinct from the Son and from the Holy Ghost. This function of terminating our union with them is only a relation and, as such, entails no production of *esse absolutum*. It is moreover, only a relation of mere reason in them. Yet our union with the Persons is real, because its foundation in us is real.[26]

Let us break up this statement into its component parts, for it is at the very heart of the author's extrinsicism. There are the following contentions. (1) Each of the divine Persons terminates the soul's union with the divinity in His own manner. (2) This results in our relation to each of the three divine Persons being completely and really distinct from the relation to any of the other two divine Persons. (3) This function of terminating our union with them is only a relation. (4) As such, it entails no production of *esse absolutum*. (5) It is, moreover, only a relation of mere reason in them. (6) Yet, our union with the Persons is real, because the foundation is real.

It follows, from what I cannot but call a very strange statement, that the function of terminating, on the part of the divine Persons, our union with them is something of mere reason, having no reality in the objective order. We all agree on this. And, nevertheless, the *real* distinction between the three relations which result from this "something of mere reason," is not at all something of mere reason, but truly a real and objective distinction. Therefore, summing up de Letter's thought on this matter, the distinction between the relations is real because of "something of mere reason," but the relations themselves are real because of something that is assuredly not "something of mere reason," namely, the very real foundation which is created grace.

To repeat, Fr. de Letter surely does not speak of "union" in the abstract. He must have in mind a concrete union in the real and objective order. Hence by "union" he must mean *three* unions; for by union he means relation, *esse ad*. These three unions, then, are real unions because of the foundation. However, they are not "three" because of the foundation, but solely because of the three divine Persons "terminating our union with them." This "terminating our

²⁶ De Letter, p. 51.

union with them" is, on his own insistence, a relation of *mere* reason. I agree.

He concludes: these three real relations get their *threefold* reality from a relation of mere reason and at the same time get their reality from the foundation, but *not as three realities*. I hold that a relation of mere reason cannot account for a real distinction. (St. Thomas' example of the Ethiopian is too familiar to me!) The created foundation does not give the distinction—as de Letter insists and freely admits. We have, therefore, a so-called real distinction hanging between heaven and earth, with support from neither source. This I cannot accept.

FR. DE LETTER'S MAIN OBJECTION

Since he objects to my speaking of grace as a "sort of miniature trinity,"[27] Fr. de Letter will likely be surprised to hear that St. Thomas himself teaches that, in grace, "the proper relation of the divine Person Himself is represented in the soul through a likeness received by the soul. And this likeness is patterned after, and takes its origin from, the very property of the eternal relation."[28] Grace comes into being by the divine Persons impressing their likeness on the soul.[29]

If it be objected that St. Thomas is speaking here merely of the gifts of wisdom and charity (*sapientia, caritas*), he himself assures us that what he says about these two gifts (*dona*) applies a fortiori to grace.[30] There is no need in my delaying longer in defending the

[27] Had Fr. de Letter pointed out (as I believe he should have) just how I arrived at my conception of grace as "a sort of miniature trinity," certain overtones in his article might have been avoided.

[28] *In I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1: "Sicut in exitu rerum a principio dicitur bonitas divina in creaturas procedere, inquantum repraesentatur in creatura per similitudinem bonitas divina in ipsa recepta: ita in reductione rationalis creaturae in Deum intelligitur processio divinae personae, quae et missio dicitur, *in quantum propria relatio ipsius personae divinae repraesentatur* in anima *per similitudinem* aliquam receptam, *quae est exemplata, et originata ab ipsa proprietate relationis aeternae.* . . ." Surely this is bold language. Again, St. Thomas uses expressions that justify speaking of grace as "a sort of miniature trinity": "Et quia secundum receptionem horum duorum efficitur in nobis *similitudo ad propria personarum*; ideo secundum novum modum essendi, prout res est *in sua similitudine*, dicuntur personae divinae in nobis esse, secundum quod novo modo eis *assimilamur* et secundum hoc utraque processio dicitur missio" (*ibid.*, d. 14, q. 4, a. 1 c).

[29] Cf. note 8 above.

[30] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d. 14, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3m: "Hoc autem non potest esse sine gratia gratum faciente. . . ."

expression "some sort of miniature trinity," as applied to grace. Such a description of grace is a commonplace with the Greek Fathers and the great theologians.[31]

Furthermore, I contend that the very language of Fr. de Letter will justify such a description of created grace. Let me explain. In showing how P. de la Taille complements the various deficient theories, de Letter says: "For God, the Uncreated Act, to be present in the just soul by way of grace is identically the same as to actuate the soul by Himself. Actuation necessarily means presence of the Act that actuates."[32]

I shall now substitute certain words for expressions in de Letter's original statement and we read: "For (the Trinity, *qua tres*), the Uncreated (trinitarian) Act, to be present in the just soul is identically the same as to actuate the soul by (themselves *qua tres*)." This substitution I justify for the following reasons. (1) Fr. de Letter insists that the Blessed Trinity *qua tres*, not simply *qui tres*, is present in the soul. (2) As far as the newness of the presence of God in the soul is concerned, this newness of presence lies in the created actuation by which we are referred to, and united with, God in a new way. (3) If being present in the soul and actuating the soul are identically the same, and, again, if the Blessed Trinity *qua tres* is present in the soul *qua tres*, then they must actuate the soul *qua tres*. (4) Finally, since Act and actuation are correlative terms, granted that the Act is threefold, then the actuation coming from this threefold Act must have a threefold character. In other words, it may be described as a "sort of miniature trinity" within the soul.

This seems to follow necessarily from de Letter's own words. He holds that "to be present" and "to actuate" are identical. But the presence is threefold. Therefore, the actuation is also threefold, representing the Trinity *qua tres*.

The actuation, in my theory, is the communication, received into the soul, of divine life as proper to the trinitarian Act that actuates but does not inform. The actuation, viewed in this light, is not an

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[31] M. J. Scheeben, the great dogmatic theologian of the last century, made use of the best in patristic and Scholastic writings; for his doctrine cf. my article mentioned in note 1 above.

[32] De Letter, p. 42.

effect of efficient causality. It is a union with the three, distinct, divine Persons. This is union and presence, considered passively in the created foundation. It is also the passive possession of the divine trinitarian Act. At all costs this must be made clear. If, as de Letter admits, the actuation is the presence (taken passively and fundamentally) and the presence is a strictly trinitarian presence, then there must be something of the trinitarian in the actuation itself. And this is precisely what I hold. The actuation, which is the passive presence of the Trinity *qua tres*, flows from the Trinity actuating *qua tres*. Each divine Person communicates by actuation the same one reality, but in a manner that is relatively different, as determined by the proper hypostatic character of each divine Person. The divine life, so to speak, flows through a trinitarian channel into the soul. Through this flow of divine life the three divine Persons are present to, united with, the soul in a new manner. All the newness and the reality of this new presence and union are to be founded on and in the human element. The divine Persons do not engage in any type of separate *efficient* causality. We are concerned here with a union, and efficient causality does not enter into a union, considered formally as such. The Persons here are considered as they exist in actuality, *specificative sumptae, non reduplicative sumptae.*[33]

From its threefold (not absolute, but relative) character, created grace gives rise to three distinct relations, one to each divine Person, who *ad modum passionis*[34] communicates trinitarian life to, and impresses His own likeness upon, the soul. By such communication of divine life we are made sharers in the divine nature precisely as possessed by each divine Person. There are three real, distinct relations, not because of the termini of the relations but rather because of the threefold *passio*, coming from the Blessed Trinity and giving a real foundation to each distinct relation. By this impression of the Blessed Trinity on our souls we have within the essence of the soul

[33] As Scheeben insisted in his famous controversy with Granderath: "Alsdann aber kann und muss das mit uns vereinigte göttliche 'Wesen' Natur und Person in sich begreifen, so dass die Natur eben als in der Person subsistierend, die Person aber als die Natur in sich einschliessend—und mithin als Person nicht reduplicative sondern bloss specificative—aufgefasst wird" ("Die Controverse über die Formalursache der Kindschaft Gottes," *Katholik*, LXIV [1884], 38).

[34] *In I Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 5, ad ultimum.

a created, finite, analogous replica of the Trinity. In short, there is in the essence of the soul a "sort of miniature trinity," a reality which we call sanctifying grace.

There is no violation here of the axiom, "omnia opera ad extra sunt communia toti trinitati," for this communication does not, in itself, involve efficient causality. It is a union; and a union, considered fundamentally, is the communication of form to matter, of act to potency. Efficient causality, surely, is required and presupposed; but, as already mentioned, the efficient cause does not enter formally into the union as such, any more than the preambles of faith, the motives of credibility, and the motives of credentity enter into the act of faith considered formally as such.

I have pointed out how union with the three divine Persons is impossible if one holds Fr. de Letter's metaphysic of relation. There is an additional reason which, I believe, renders his position untenable. He maintains that, because of the immediacy of the union, created grace can unite the soul to God only as He exists in Himself, one nature and three Persons.[35] This is looking upon the union *in facto esse*. Now it is a maxim in metaphysics that "fieri est via ad factum esse." My contention is that, if the union *in facto esse* terminates at the divine Persons *qua tres*, then the *fieri* of the union must come from the divine Persons, also under the aspect of *qua tres*.

How does the created foundation of the union arise? Whence its origin? That is a question of paramount moment. Under the aspect of an absolute, accidental modification of the essence of the soul, created grace is produced by divine efficiency on the part of *Deus unus*, the *indistinctum principium creationis*. But, under the aspect of an actuation of the essence of the soul by the Uncreated Act and viewed as an *accidens essentialiter relativum et unitivum*, whence does it come? From the divine essence communicating itself? Hardly; for the coming of grace into the soul is intimately connected with, and arises from, the temporal processions or missions—and the divine essence does not proceed, either eternally or temporally.[36] The mode

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[35] Cf. de Letter, p. 51.

[36] *In I Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 4, ad 2m: "...essentia non accipit novum esse in Spiritu Sancto per processionem, cum unum et idem sit esse trium personarum; et ideo non procedit neque per se, neque per accidens, neque etiam processionem consequitur...."

of the temporal procession is the same as the mode of the eternal procession, with this difference that, in the temporal procession, there is connoted a created effect in virtue of which the divine Person is said to proceed or be sent temporally.

If the temporal effect has as its end to unite us with God as three distinct Persons (in facto esse), because God can unite the soul immediately with Himself only as He exists (de Letter's contention), then I hold that God can communicate His own life and nature (in a finite, created, and analogous manner) only as it exists in Himself. It exists there as one nature in three Persons. This communication should show forth its proper trinitarian origin, should be, so to speak, a "sort of miniature trinity" within the soul. And there I stand.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Certain infelicitous statements of Fr. de Letter could, in conversation, be excused as lapsus linguae. In serious, reflective writing the case is otherwise. For example, he says: "This quasi-information of the Pure Act is not information, because Uncreated Act can in no way derive any perfection from actuating the creature (as a form does when informing its matter)."[37] With regard to the phrase I have underscored, is it true that a form does receive perfection when actuating or informing its matter? Rather, does it not simply receive limitation? The act can depend upon the potency either for its existence (in the case of the non-subsistent form) or as upon a subject necessary for the completion, i.e., exercise, of its fundamental powers (ses énergies radicales), as in the case of the human soul's dependence upon the body as upon a subject in which alone the soul can exercise its powers of vegetation and sensation.[38] "The actuation is therefore the communication of the act to the potency, or correspondingly the reception of the act into the potency: it is the perfecting of the potency by the act: a perfecting, a changing, not of the act, but of the potency."[39] Clearly, for a form to receive perfection in informing its matter, it would have to have a subjective potency within itself, and that is a contradiction in terms, at least in Thomistic metaphysics.

In his eagerness to show that more than mere efficient causality is

[37] De Letter, p. 35; italics added.
[38] Cf. de la Taille, "Actuation créée par Acte incréé," Recherches de science religieuse, XVIII (1928), 253.
[39] De la Taille, loc. cit.

involved in actuation, Fr. de Letter falls again into untenable meta-physics. I quote: "And because actuation here is *prior* to efficiency—the latter being necessary only insofar as the 'passion' in the creature is a 'created' reality—this foundation of our relation to God is in a way *consequent* on, rather than antecedent to, the relation."[40] But de la Taille holds the opposite concerning the priority of efficient causality in reference to the union: "Et cette puissance naturelle est toujours quant à soi une oeuvre du Créateur: de telle sorte que (de ce second chef) la présence de Dieu par opération [presence by efficient causality] est *essentiellement présupposée* à la présence de Dieu par communication."[41] Let the reader judge whether or not Fr. de Letter is following de la Taille in this rather important matter.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

In this critique I have tried to be wholly objective. But the deficiencies in Fr. de Letter's endeavor "to repeat and complete [my] attempt" had to be shown. I mean his extrinsicism, resulting from a false metaphysic of relation, especially the isolation of the *esse ad*, or *respectus*, from the foundation of the relation. He clearly shows an incorrect understanding of the cause of unity or multiplicity in relations. And one could hardly pass over Fr. de Letter's incomplete treatment of union and presence, and (in my opinion) unwarranted emphasis on the formal aspect of union.

Furthermore I believe that there is an overindulgence in the use of the imagination in metaphysics, a fault against which Boethius warned us long ago.[42] This is seen in Fr. de Letter's strange oscillation from the *esse absolutum* in God to the *esse absolutum* in created grace.[43] There is imagining involved also in maintaining that, since there are three really distinct relations and Persons in God, our relation to them must be three really distinct relations, even though the foundation of our relation be one and only one foundation. With regard to the tendency towards separating the *esse ad* in relation from the *esse in*, Billot's admonition should be remembered.[44]

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[40] De Letter, p. 36; italics added.   [41] De la Taille, *art. cit.*, p. 264.

[42] *De trinitate*, II: " ... in divinis intellectualiter versari oportet neque deduci ad imaginationes." Cf. St. Thomas, *De pot.*, q. 3, a. 19.

[43] Cf. de Letter, p. 52.

[44] *De Deo uno et trino* (7th ed.; Rome: Gregorian Univ., 1926), p. 409: "Sed cave ne concipias haec duo tamquam se habentia ad invicem eo modo quo potentia se habet ad

It is to be hoped that, from serious discussion of this subject, we may all acquire greater understanding of the Uncreated Grace, the loving Guest of every just soul.

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actum, puta essentia ad esse, non secus ac si *esse ad* significaret essentiam relationis realis, et *esse in* eius existentiam. Hoc enim verum non est, quia esse aliquid cui competit existere *in* subiecto, profecto ingreditur essentiam relationis realis in quantum realis est. Neque etiam, generatim loquendo, concipi debet *esse ad* et *esse in* per modum duorum componentium, quia nec est ibi compositio physica, puta materiae et formae, nec compositio metaphysica, puta generis et differentiae. Si enim de *compositione* ageretur, sive realis illa esset sive rationis tantum, haberemus unionem partium vel quasi partium, quarum singulae ex sibi propriis afferrent realitatem, sicut videre est in omnibus compositionum modis. Unde consulto dixi distinguendas esse *duas notas*, id est duos inadaequatos aspectus unius simplicis atque incompositae essentiae realis, quae tota est *ad* et tota *in*, tametsi conceptus *ad*, ex hoc quod dicit *ad*, non involvat conceptum *in* qui solus est ratio realitatis in iis quae dicuntur ad alterum. Quippe *esse ad* non implicat rationem entis realis, nisi quia et in quantum est *in* substantia vel per inhaerentiam vel per identitatem. . . ."