

GRACE, INCORPORATION, INHABITATION

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AMONG THE points of doctrine emphasized in the contemporary theology of sanctifying grace, two themes are particularly prominent: the Christological character of grace, and the Trinitarian.¹ Our life of grace is nothing but the life of Christ in us, our life *in Christo*,² since our sanctifying grace is our sharing in His capital grace, *gratia capitis*, the overflow into our souls of His own habitual grace.³ In that manner we are sons in the Son, *fili in Filio*:⁴ grace incorporates us in Christ, the Son of God incarnate. Simultaneously, and apparently as a consequence of our union with Christ, sanctifying grace places us in a new relationship to each of the three divine Persons in a way which, contemporary theology is inclined to say, goes beyond mere appropriation.⁵ Christian grace is essentially Trinitarian in structure by relationships to the Persons which are not purely of the intentional order⁶ but are objective and ontological, and which are distinct despite the oneness of the divine efficiency by which the Trinity produces created

¹ Cf. our article, "Sanctifying Grace and the Divine Indwelling," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 14 (1953) 242-72; subsequent references will be abbreviated to "Divine Indwelling." Cf. also our "Contemporary Theology of Grace," *Clergy Monthly* 21 (1957) 288-97.

² Cf., e.g., W. Grossouw, *In Christus, Schets van een theologie van St. Paulus* (Utrecht and Brussels, 1948).

³ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 8, a. 5.

⁴ Cf. E. Mersch, "Fili in Filio," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 65 (1938) 551-82, 681-702, 809-30; or *id.*, *Theology of the Mystical Body*, tr. C. Vollert (St. Louis, 1951) pp. 325-73; F. Malmberg, "Onze Eenheid met den Godmensch in de Kerk," *Bijdragen der Nederlandsche Jezuiten* 5 (1942) 168-204, 360-96; *ibid.* 6 (1943-45) 48-63, 246-67 (this section is of special importance); *ibid.* 8 (1947) 223-55.

⁵ Cf. "Divine Indwelling," pp. 244, 249, 261 f., 277 f. Further, F. Bourassa, "Présence de Dieu et union aux divines Personnes," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 6 (1954) 5-23, and "Rôle personnel des Personnes et relations distinctes aux Personnes," *ibid.* 7 (1955) 751-72. That St. Thomas did not go beyond appropriation and considered the just as adopted sons of the Trinity appears, for example, from F. Bourassa, "Adoptive Sonship: Our Union with the Divine Persons," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 13 (1952) 309-35; subsequent references will be abbreviated to "Adoptive Sonship."

⁶ Even theologians who do not go beyond the appropriation theory hold special relations to the three Persons in the intentional order, relations of a moral and religious order which arise from our acts of faith, adoration, prayer, love; cf., e.g., P. Galtier, *L'Habitation en nous des trois Personnes* (Rome, 1950) pp. 130 f.

sanctifying grace, the one created foundation of this new relation of union with the Persons.⁷

The interdependence, however, of these two features of grace seems rarely to have been examined closely; yet both speculatively and practically it gives rise to real problems. Speculatively, it raises the question whether the Trinitarian structure of our grace, or the triune relationship to the Persons of the Trinity that results from grace, is so linked with its character of grace of Christ that it results from this as from its necessary prerequisite, in such manner than an economy of grace without Incarnation is not conceivable. Practically, it points to the difficulty experienced by not a few Christians who are aware of these two aspects of our life of grace, aware of the place that should be given, in the conscious living of the spiritual life, to Christ on the one hand and to the Blessed Trinity on the other. Accordingly, a study of the interrelation between our incorporation in Christ and the inhabitation of the Trinity should be rewarding. After recalling and explaining each of these two glories of divine grace, we shall endeavor to sketch an answer to both the speculative and the practical problem.

OUR TRIUNE RELATION TO THE INDWELLING TRINITY

For reasons that should become apparent presently, we begin with the explanation of our triune relation to the indwelling Trinity.⁸ On a former occasion we have pointed out the contemporary endeavor to propose a truly Trinitarian concept of grace, that is, one which reveals the structure of grace as essentially involving relationships to the three divine Persons, not merely of the intentional order, or resulting only from our conscious acts of prayer, adoration, love, and the like, but also objectively or antecedently to these acts and arising from the very essence of grace.⁹ The reason for this endeavor is, no doubt, to be looked for in the return to the sources of revelation which is characteristic of the present-day theological revival. As Père Prat wrote a number of years ago, "the common explanation which sees in the indwelling of the divine Persons only different degrees of appropriation, does not seem to harmonize sufficiently with the language of the

⁷ Cf. "Divine Indwelling," pp. 268 f.

⁸ To say it at once: our incorporation in Christ will be explained differently by one who admits a triune relationship to the indwelling Trinity and by one who does not. Incorporation as such does not involve but rather presupposes this triune relation.

⁹ Cf. *supra* n. 5.

Fathers and the Scriptures.”¹⁰ His remark has been echoed by many a theologian after him. And so we are told that “we are to admit relations from person to Person which go beyond the nominalism of a pure appropriation, without however denying the oneness of the divine action in natural and supernatural creation.”¹¹ Even theologians who feel reluctant to part company with St. Thomas, or rather to go beyond his explicit teaching on the question, seek to give the Scholastic theory of appropriation a meaning that is not liable to this objection of nominalism.¹²

Our present endeavor is an attempt at proposing a properly Trinitarian concept of grace and establishing proper relations to the three divine Persons. This can be done, not a few theologians maintain, while fully respecting the traditional Catholic doctrine which is recalled by Pius XII in *Mystici corporis*¹³ when he mentions the theological explanation of the divine indwelling: that the absolute distinction between Creator and creature persists undiminished also in our divinization through the divine inhabitation, and that every divine efficiency or production of reality *ad extra* is common to the three Persons.¹⁴ But within this Catholic context, a Trinitarian concept of grace supposes certain theological ideas about the essence of the supernatural or of grace which we have first to state before explaining the concept of a triune relationship.

Presuppositions of a Trinitarian Concept of Grace

The first and perhaps the most basic presupposition is the idea of a divine quasi-formal causality as the specific explanation of the essence of the supernatural. It would seem that only within the theological context of the self-communication of God by way of quasi-information or actuation can a Trinitarian concept of grace be held. A theology of the inhabitation which refuses as unacceptable this species of causality proper to the order of grace¹⁵ cannot consistently conceive of distinct relations to the three divine Persons.

¹⁰ F. Prat, *Theology of St. Paul*, tr. J. L. Stoddard, 2 (London, 1927) 291.

¹¹ G. Philips, in *Marianum* 14 (1952) 15.

¹² Cf. “Divine Indwelling,” pp. 255 f.; Bourassa, “Adoptive Sonship,” pp. 318 ff., 332 f.

¹³ Cf. *DB* 2290.

¹⁴ Cf. Bourassa, “Adoptive Sonship,” p. 309.

¹⁵ Some Thomists do so; cf. our article, “Created Actuation by the Uncreated Act: Difficulties and Answers,” *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 18 (1957) 60; subsequent references will be abbreviated to “Difficulties and Answers.”

The reason for the last statement should not be hard to see. If every Catholic theologian must admit that the divine efficient causality is common to the three Persons,¹⁶ and if on the other hand God's exemplary and final causality with regard to creatures is closely connected with or even measured by that efficient causality,¹⁷ then it seems to follow logically that within the setting of such causality no proper or distinct relations to the Persons can arise. The divine action and the perfection that results from it in the creature, which should be the source and foundation of these relations, are of necessity common to the three Persons who produce them by virtue of the one divine essence or nature which they possess in common. Only by appropriation can they be attributed to one Person in preference to another.¹⁸ Accordingly, if grace and the relationship between the soul and God that results from it are said to rest only with the divine efficient causality, together with the exemplary and final causality that goes with it, then a Trinitarian concept of grace would seem to be excluded a priori. If, however, the order of grace consists essentially in God's self-communication to His creature by way of actuation or immediate union in the order of formal causality¹⁹ (this causality of course being not that of a form but only of an act, and in fact of the pure Act), then a different relationship than that which unites to the Trinity as one is not inconceivable.

Theologians who hold this quasi-formal causality agree that it is necessarily attended by an efficient causality, namely, by the production of a new reality in the creature to whom the divine Act unites Himself;²⁰ and this production *ad extra* is, according to the above-mentioned principle, common to the three Persons, as is the exemplary and the final causality inseparable from and commensurate with that efficiency. We have here a first reason why our relationship to the Trinity through grace should be called triune and not simply threefold

¹⁶ Cf. Pius XII, *Mystici corporis* (DB 2290).

¹⁷ Cf. St. Thomas' principle, "agens agendo communicat formam suam" (for its application to the *gratia capitis*, cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 8. a. 5), which shows the connection between efficient and exemplary causality.

¹⁸ Cf. Bourassa, "Adoptive Sonship."

¹⁹ This is the basic idea of Fr. de la Taille; cf. "Difficulties and Answers," pp. 61, 74.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 64 f.

or three distinct relations.²¹ But, it is important to note, this efficiency is not the reason and cause of the supernaturalness of grace²² to the extent namely that it is of the same order as the divine efficiency in the order of creation or of nature. It differs, however, from the natural divine efficiency in its being inseparably linked with a self-donation of God as Act of the creature, in such a manner as to be subordinate and secondary to this. The only reason for its existence is that without it the actuation or quasi-information of the creature by the divine Act would not be real but only nominal.

It is not surprising that theology has appealed to this quasi-formal causality as the explanation of what is specific to the order of grace. Both the indications of Scripture and tradition, which speak of our divinization and union with God through grace in such a manner as to say that these are not found outside the reign of grace,²³ and the common teaching about the order of creation or of nature, which is defined by the threefold causality mentioned above and to which the order of grace is irreducible, are of a nature to suggest a causality specifically proper to the supernatural. The data from the fonts of revelation, no doubt, are of themselves insufficient to require quasi-formal causality as the only plausible explanation of the order of grace. A theology of the inhabitation which finds no room for this concept of causality claims also to offer a satisfactory explanation of the sayings of Scripture and tradition.²⁴ Yet revelation insinuates a discontinuity and disparity between the order of grace and that of nature, or between the divine and the human, such as to constitute a gulf which God alone can and did bridge. And common theological doctrine, interpreting that teaching of revelation, understands the transcendence of grace with regard

²¹ By using the word "triune," we intend to convey the idea that we have here not three distinct relations to three distinct and independent terms, but that these three terms are one triune Act, having in common one and the same essence or nature and so also one action which originates the foundation of this triune relationship.

²² This is stressed by de la Taille; cf. "Difficulties and Answers," pp. 65 f.

²³ Cf., e.g., Jn 14:23 or Rom 8:9; also the teaching of the Greek Fathers on our divinization through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, e.g., St. Athanasius, *Epist. ad Serapionem* 1, 24 (PG 26, 585).

²⁴ All that such an explanation affirms of the supernatural order of grace holds good for the aspect of production of grace or of the divine efficient causality. But it is incomplete, because it leaves out the aspect of union (which belongs to the quasi-formal causality).

to nature in such a manner that nature is in no way a beginning of grace,²⁵ despite a real sort of continuity with grace expressed in the natural desire of, or at least its inherent obediential potency to, the supernatural. These two teachings naturally suggest that we seek a concept of the supernatural which derives from a proper and specific causality of its own.

The order of creation or of nature is constituted by its dependence on God as on its efficient, exemplary, and final cause. The order of grace, irreducibly distinct from that of nature, should therefore be linked to God by some other kind of causality. Revelation suggests that the economy of grace consists essentially in the self-gift of God to His creature with a view to divinizing it or to attracting and raising it to His own level, namely, to a share in the divine nature.²⁶ This divinizing self-communication of the pure Act is conceivable after the pattern of formal causality, in which an act unites itself to a potency—the essential and all-important difference from ordinary formal causality being in this case that the uncreated Act, uniting Himself to the obediential potency of the creature, in no way informs it, or inheres in it after the manner of a form, but only terminates the relation of union by which the creature is really united to Him.²⁷ He is not and cannot be more than the quasi-form of the creature.²⁸

The idea of a divine quasi-formal causality is, no doubt, new in the Scholastic system of causes. It is not found in the theory of causes by which philosophy explains the dependence of creation on the first cause. This, however, is not surprising. Rather, if the order of grace really surpasses the order of nature in the manner in which the divine transcends the human, then we should expect that new concepts are needed in an attempt to express the intelligibility of the supernatural order. The opposite would be a cause of surprise. If theology succeeded in drawing an intelligible picture of the order of grace by using exclusively the same concepts in which philosophy expresses its mental image of the order of nature, then, one would think, it might well be that the discontinuity of the two orders of reality, which all agree in

²⁵ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 24, a. 3, ad 2m.

²⁶ Cf. 2 Pt 1:3 f., and the Greek *theopoiēsis* or *theōsis*; e.g., Ps.-Dionysius, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 1, 3 (PG 3, 373).

²⁷ For further explanation we may refer to "Difficulties and Answers," pp. 62 ff.

²⁸ As noted in "Difficulties and Answers," p. 63, note 13, de la Taille did not use the expression "quasi-form"; Fr. K. Rahner does.

affirming, is more nominal than real.²⁹ Moreover, we may see a confirmation of this need of new concepts in the way in which theologians who repudiate the idea of quasi-formal causality explain the divine inhabitation by efficient and exemplary causality. They generally and rightly qualify this causality with the adjective "special." The production of sanctifying grace is a divine efficiency of a special sort; the similarity with God produced in the soul by grace is a special similitude, different from that which obtains in the order of nature between the Creator and creatures.³⁰ This qualification covers exactly what the concept of quasi-formal causality wishes to express.

If the above considerations are right, then it appears that as long as one endeavors to express the divine causality in the order of grace by the same concepts which formulate that causality in the order of nature, the door remains closed to a Trinitarian concept of grace. Just as in the order of creation no other relationship of the creature to the Creator exists except as to one God, so also our relation of union with God in the order of grace will refer us to Him as He is one, not as He is triune.³¹

But then, if it is true to say that the idea of divine quasi-formal causality with regard to creatures is absent from common Scholastic tradition, particularly from St. Thomas, we must expect to find there no other explanation of our relationships with God through grace than by appropriation. In fact, according to the nearly common opinion, it is so. There can be no question there of proper relations to the three divine Persons.³² And so, what ancient Scholastics, and in particular St. Thomas, say about the image of the Trinity in the souls of the justified has to be understood in the sense of appropriation, no less than the image of the Trinity reflected in the very nature of the spiritual creature. It would be vain to try to explain these texts in the sense of a

²⁹ Even by saying that these concepts, applied to supernatural realities, are used in an analogical sense (according to a partly different meaning), it would not be clear that the difference implied is one of kind and not only of degree.

³⁰ When this qualification "special," added to efficient or exemplary causality, is meant to express a difference in kind and not only in degree, then it tacitly introduces what is explicated by the idea of quasi-formal causality.

³¹ It may not be superfluous to note that, when Scholastics say that the Trinity effects the order of creation and that there is a vestige of an image of the three Persons in the creatures, they do not intend to say anything which goes beyond appropriation; nor do they intend more with regard to the order of grace.

³² Cf. Bourassa, "Adoptive Sonship."

properly Trinitarian concept of grace.³³ This would be all the more vain if, as a number of Thomists say, the notion of quasi-formal causality is alien to Thomism and foreign to St. Thomas' theology—an opinion, however, which a number of theologians today are reluctant to accept. In any case, the explicit teaching of St. Thomas on the inhabitation cannot be understood, even when at its face value it proposes a Trinitarian concept of grace, except in the sense of appropriation. Only those who agree that the philosophico-theological principles of St. Thomas about act and potency allow an application and extension to a new kind of causality which he himself did not explicitly envisage, are entitled to look for a deeper meaning of the theory of appropriation. They may detect in it a level which, despite appearances to the contrary as far as verbal formulation goes, allows proper and distinct relations to the Persons.³⁴

A second presupposition to a Trinitarian concept of grace, a sequel to the first, is the essentially relative character of grace. Sanctifying grace is no doubt a quality, perfection, form, or *habitus* which inheres in the soul, but it is not only that. It is a created and accidental perfection which involves a transcendental or essential relation to the indwelling God.³⁵ Sanctifying grace, while it perfects the soul and is an accidental manner of being of the soul, is of its essence the foundation of our union with the uncreated Grace, that is, with God as uncreated Gift to the soul, or as communicating or giving Himself in the manner of a quasi-form or Act. It is a perfection of the soul which results from the actual self-communication of God as from an efficient causality which, as hinted above, is not isolated or primary but only secondary and subordinate to the quasi-formal causality operative in God's self-gift to the soul.³⁶

³³ Cf., however, the attempt of W. J. Hill, O.P., *Proper Relations to the Indwelling Trinity* (Washington, D.C., n.d.), who, while excluding quasi-formal causality, detects proper relations by exemplary and final causality. Actually, nothing more than appropriation seems to be meant in the texts of St. Thomas.

³⁴ Cf. the studies on appropriation mentioned in "Divine Indwelling," pp. 255 f.

³⁵ Cf. G. de Broglie, *De gratia* (unpublished manuscript) p. 139, who says that grace is also "relatio transcendentalis ad Deum ut actuantem nos."

³⁶ The same idea of the essentially relative character of grace was expressed long ago, e.g., by Lessius, *De perfectionibus divinis* 12, 11, no. 76, who called grace "vinculum Spiritus Sancti"; or more recently by Waffelaert, in *Collationes Brugenses* 15 (1910) 626, who says it is "causa dispositiva ad habendam Gratiam Increatam"; or, and independently of de la Taille, by Mersch, in *Nouvelle revue théologique* 64 (1937) 816, who defines grace as an "entity of union."

This relative character of grace differs essentially and specifically from the relative character of all created reality.³⁷ Every finite and created being, though it is an absolute reality, whether substantial or accidental, is of its very nature immediately dependent on, or in an immediate union of dependence with, its cause of being (and not only of becoming), which is God. This causality of God in the order of creation, as mentioned already, is threefold: efficient, exemplary, and final. The immediateness of the creature's union with the Creator, actually given in His efficient causality (we may leave aside now the exemplary and final causality), is expressed in the reality of the divine immanence in creatures. This immanence or omnipresence, however, for all its being without any intermediary, is not a self-gift of God to the creature; it is only the causality of God (and God *is* where He acts) producing the creatures, or giving them existence, or as it were giving the creatures to themselves. Here the act which unites itself to the potency of the creature is not the uncreated Act, but the finite and created *esse* and form which determine the creature to its specific degree of being. Accordingly, what is specific to the union of grace is not merely the immediateness of that union but the manner in which this union terminates in God as in the creature's quasi-form or Act. This is expressed by saying that by grace we are united with God as He is in Himself, and not merely (as is the case with exemplary causality) as He is manifested *ad extra*, the created image of Him produced in the creature being (in the line of formal causality) the intermediary of the creature's dependence on Him as exemplary cause.

As a consequence of this relative character, sanctifying grace presents of necessity two distinct, though inseparable, aspects.³⁸ As a quality or *habitus* which perfects and inheres in the soul, it is produced by God by way of efficient causality, and therefore by the three Persons as one efficient cause. As foundation of a relation of union with God as quasi-form of the soul, it unites us to the indwelling Trinity. This unitive aspect is not of the order of efficient causality. Union as such means only a relation, not a perfection which is produced. Union only

³⁷ The indwelling of God through grace differs from His omnipresence, all theologians agree in saying. We point here to the nature of this difference between the two kinds of immediate presence: it lies in the different order of causality, efficient or quasi-formal.

³⁸ It would seem that it is because the Scholastic explanation generally neglects one of these two aspects (that of union) that it cannot have a properly Trinitarian concept of grace (except by appropriation).

calls for a term to terminate its relation, not for a cause to produce it. In a union with God in Himself, or with God as quasi-form, the term of the relation is God in Himself, who is three Persons. Since terminating a relation is not efficient causality but belongs reductively to the order of formal causality, there is nothing against saying that it refers us to the Persons as Three.

This consideration shows that the definite awareness of this twofold aspect of grace is an indispensable condition of a Trinitarian concept of grace. If one considers grace exclusively as a perfection produced in the soul by God, and neglects its relative or unitive character, then there can result from it no other relationship with God than the relation of dependence on the one efficient cause. In fact, the reason given in St. Thomas and in common Scholastic teaching for saying that grace is Trinitarian only in the sense of appropriation, is that the production of sanctifying grace regards God as one cause and not as three distinct Persons.³⁹

The third presupposition to a Trinitarian concept of grace (actually only a different manner of envisaging the second, namely, considering the absolute and relative aspects of grace no longer statically but dynamically) is that one conceives the divine inhabitation or the work of our sanctification not merely as an action of God *ad extra*, but *secundum quid ad intra*.

Why this is required and what it exactly means should not be difficult to grasp after what was said above. If our sanctification and the divine indwelling were merely an *opus Dei ad extra*, on a par with His creative causality in the order of nature, though of a special kind, then to the extent that it is such it would preclude a relationship to God as to three Persons, according to the accepted teaching that all activity of God *ad extra* is common to the three Persons,⁴⁰ the reason being that such action is equivalent to and coincides with His efficient causality; it always means producing some reality. Whatever in our sanctification is action of God *ad extra* or productive causality is common to the three Persons and as such originates a relationship to God as One. If one says—as perhaps few if any theologians actually

³⁹ Cf., e.g., *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 23, a. 2 c; ad 2m; ad 3m.

⁴⁰ Cf. supra n. 13. But note that Pius XII says that in these matters all things must be considered as common to the Holy Trinity "*quatenus eadem Deum ut supremam causam efficientem respiciunt.*" This does not exclude, perhaps it rather suggests, that there is another aspect in these things besides that of efficient causality.

say but many take for granted⁴¹—that there is in the divine work of our sanctification nothing else than the divine action *ad extra*, then a priori a Trinitarian concept of grace in the sense of a triune relationship to the Persons is unacceptable.

But if grace, besides being a perfection produced by God, is a link of union with Him as quasi-form of the soul, then the divine work of our sanctification is not only a productive efficiency but also, and in the first place, a unitive divine initiative which draws us to Himself as to the uncreated Act⁴² fulfilling our natural desire of Him or obediential potency. Uniting us to Himself does not, as such, mean any efficient causality but only quasi-formal causality, no production of a perfection but only the origination of a relation of union with Him as quasi-form or of union with Him as He is in Himself. (The origination of this relation, as said above, is impossible without an attendant efficient causality which produces created grace; but it is not the same thing as efficient causality.) This origination of the relation, as distinct from the production of its foundation or of created grace, is nothing else than terminating the relation. This therefore, since it does not, as such, produce any new reality, is not *simpliciter ad extra*; it can truly be said to be *secundum quid ad intra*.⁴³

This means that the unitive operation by which God gives Himself as Act to the soul, or draws the soul to Himself as its quasi-form, does not as such produce anything distinct from God, but only raises the soul to His level (while, of course, leaving unchanged the absolute distinction of creature and Creator) to give it a share in His own life. In that sense of not producing a created reality but only uniting with the uncreated Act, this divine unitive operation is in that particular aspect *ad intra*. This means, among other things, that the divine function of terminating the relation of our union with Him through grace does not entail any real relationship from Him to us but only a relation of reason or rational relation. It can, of course, mean no change in

⁴¹ As St. Thomas says that we should do; cf. *supra* n. 39.

⁴² Perhaps it may be more suggestive, if not more correct, to present the union of God with the soul through grace as His attracting us to Him, rather than as His self-donation to us. But in both cases the reality expressed is the same: union with Him as quasi-form or actuating Act.

⁴³ This phrase, therefore, expresses that this union with God, unlike an *opus Dei ad extra*, does not as such produce any new reality, and in that sense and to that extent (*secundum quid*) is not *ad extra* but *ad intra*.

Him.⁴⁴ At the same time, the phrase expresses that by our real union with God in Himself we do not enter into the divine interiority as though we became one with God and were not only united with Him (oneness eliminates distinction, union maintains distinction). And so our sharing in the divine life is not the effect of a divine operation *simpliciter ad intra*: to say the opposite would involve a contradiction, since in God, *ad intra*, there cannot be anything created. Yet it may be said to be *secundum quid ad intra* to the extent that by grace we are raised to union with God as He is in Himself (and not only as Creator) and this union by a new triune relationship faces us with the subsistent relations that constitute the three divine Persons.

Unless, therefore, one admits in grace an aspect of interiority with regard to God—grace, Fr. Mersch said, is of the order of the “interiorized”⁴⁵—there can be no question of a Trinitarian concept of grace. If nothing but divine causality *ad extra* enters the order of grace, then grace is the common work of the three Persons by reason of their one nature, and only by appropriation can it be said to be an image of Trinity.

A Triune Relationship

What do we mean by a triune relationship to the three divine Persons? Rather than speak of three distinct relations from the soul in grace to each of the three Persons, it would seem preferable and more correct to call our relationship to the indwelling Trinity triune. This term intends to express the junction of the two aspects of our union with God through grace: its oneness and its threefoldness, after the analogy of the Trinity which is trinity. The oneness of the relationship to the indwelling Trinity springs from two factors that go to originate this relationship: the created reality of sanctifying grace as a perfection or form in the soul (this is one and not threefold),⁴⁶ and the

⁴⁴ It may be good to recall that even the relation of the Word to the humanity of Christ is a relation of reason or rational relation only, however difficult it may be for us to conceive this. A fortiori the revelation of God to us, in our union with Him through grace, will be the same.

⁴⁵ *Nouvelle revue théologique* 65 (1938) 826.

⁴⁶ If there is any distinction in the gifts of grace (as the common, especially Thomistic, theory holds: grace and the virtues or gifts are really distinct from one another), this distinction does not originate in a diversity or distinction in the divine action that produces them, but in the multiplicity of the creature, in which essence and potencies are really distinct: the supernaturalization of the essence is also really distinct from the supernaturalization of the potencies,

uncreated Act or absolute *esse* or absolute perfection which, by uniting itself to the soul as its quasi-form or Act, and so to speak impressing in the soul its own likeness, produces the created actuation. Considered from these aspects, the relationship of grace is one. There is one created foundation of a relationship of union with the one uncreated Act. But this way of envisaging that union with God is, as it were, extrinsic; it does not touch on what is characteristic of the union with God as quasi-form or with God in Himself. The uncreated Act to whom grace unites by an immediate union—grace itself as created actuation *not* being an intermediary between God and the soul, but only the ontological entity that gives reality to this relation of union⁴⁷—is both one and three, or triune. Consequently, that union regards at the same time one term, the uncreated Act, and three terms, the three divine Persons, but each of these three terms is in His own way identical with the one term. The relationship of union with God, actuating Act, is therefore both one and three, indivisibly and by equal right or necessity. Its threefoldness does not follow on the oneness of the relation, neither in time nor by nature, no more than the trinity of the Persons in God is in any way posterior to the oneness of the divine essence. Both are together in order of nature and of time. The best manner of expressing the necessary junction of this oneness and this threefoldness of our relationship to the indwelling Trinity seems to be to call it triune.⁴⁸

Shall we say that we have here a case of one created foundation of three distinct relations to the Persons, the distinction of the relations arising only from the distinction of the terms, and not from the distinction in the foundation—a concept which goes against commonly accepted and Thomistic metaphysics of relation?⁴⁹ The expression, to say the least, is paradoxical and may be misleading. As just pointed out, it is preferable to speak of a triune relationship rather than of three distinct relations, because the second phrase makes abstraction

⁴⁷ Cf. "Difficulties and Answers," p. 65.

⁴⁸ Let us note here that such a triune relationship is not to be found in the order of nature (except by appropriation) because every relation to God in that order is based on efficient causality or on an *opus Dei ad extra* which regards God as One.

⁴⁹ Cf. M. J. Donnelly, "Sanctifying Grace and Our Union with the Holy Trinity: A Reply," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 13 (1952) 190–204. Fr. Donnelly's critical remarks have been helpful in reenvisioning our relationship to the Blessed Trinity as triune (rather than as threefold or as three distinct relations).

from the oneness that exists between the three terms of these relations, while the first connotes it explicitly. For that reason it is preferable. If, then, we bear in mind this particular distinction of the relations which is not merely threefoldness but triunity, we can see how it stands to reason to say that from one created foundation arises a triune relationship, that is, three distinct relations that are one, though distinct, if we consider the act which gives them reality.

The reason for the distinction in the triunity—one which is absent from the relationship of the creature to the Creator as such—lies first in the nature of the created reality that is its foundation, not in the sense that there is a real threefoldness of absolute perfection or that there are three “forms” in this foundation, but in the sense that, being an actuation by the triune Act, it unites the soul to this Act in an immediacy of union (as just said, not even the reality of grace itself standing between), so as to allow this relation of union to terminate in the triune Act. Consequently, the real distinction of the Persons within the unity of the nature or of the Act is the formal and last reason for the triunity of this relationship. That there can be no threefoldness in created grace itself or in the foundation of the triune relationship should be evident from the very manner in which grace comes into existence, namely, by the divine efficient causality which attends the quasi-information of the soul by the uncreated Act; the effect reflects the one nature of the uncreated Act, all the threefoldness of the pure Act consisting in the subsistent relations that distinguish and constitute the Persons.⁵⁰ That, however, there ought to be a triunity in this relationship appears from the fact that the creature, which through grace is united to the uncreated Act, is a person who in that union (which is never unity) comes, as it were, face to face with the three divine Persons; for God as person is not one but three.⁵¹ If the notion and reality of a person involves communion with and opposition to

⁵⁰ For that reason we are unable, even after Fr. Donnelly’s explanations, to see our way of conceiving grace as a miniature of the Trinity.

⁵¹ Let it be noted again that this immediate union and opposition of person to Persons is proper to the order of grace, because it can follow only on quasi-formal causality. As Mersch wrote, *op. cit.* (supra n. 4) p. 465: “The natural order is defined as a relation to the God of reason, the Pure Act of the philosophers; we submit that the supernatural order should be defined as a relation to God such as faith and the supernatural order show Him to be, namely, God who is Trinity.”

other persons,⁵² then the supernaturalization of the human person by grace or his being raised to the level of the divine (while remaining human and creaturely) of necessity involves his communion with and opposition to the divine Persons. The relationship of grace is, therefore, of necessity both one and three, or triune.

If one were to say that this seems too static a conception of the inhabitation and fails to show the special role of each of the divine Persons in our sanctification, such as this is proposed in the fonts of revelation and as a Trinitarian concept of grace is expected to express,⁵³ then we must turn for an answer to the consideration of the divine operation itself: of the Trinity sanctifying our souls by producing sanctifying grace and so uniting us to Itself as uncreated Grace or actuating Act.

Our sanctification, conceived as the self-communication to us of the uncreated Act by which we are renewed and divinized, is a triune act. Unlike creation, which is only production of created reality, it is indivisibly efficient production of sanctifying grace, or of an absolute perfection which inheres in our souls and transforms them, and union with the three divine Persons who are the uncreated Act. This latter quasi-formal causality as such is not productive of any perfection;⁵⁴ as explained already, it only originates the triune relation of the souls to the Persons. Each of the three components of the triune relationship has its own distinct character: for the Father it is adoption or union with adopted sons; for the Son it is a mystical identification or sharing of the adopted sons in His own filiation; for the Spirit it is the indwelling of the Gift or of the Spirit of the sons of God. Each of these particular roles of the three Persons, when abstraction is made from the efficient causality which goes with them but is common to the Three, is nothing else than terminating a relation of union. The Father terminates the relation of adoptive sonship; the Son that of brotherhood; the Holy

⁵² This relative aspect of the personality is much stressed in contemporary personalism. For an example of it, cf. A. Chavasse, "L'Eglise dans son mystère et dans son histoire," *Masses ouvrières* 50 (1949-50) 95-150, especially 117 ff.

⁵³ Cf. the remark made in *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 29 (1953) 168, on our article, "Divine Indwelling."

⁵⁴ Quasi-formal causality, being in the order of formal causality, is only union of the Act with the potency; as such it does not effect or produce anything; cf. "Difficulties and Answers," p. 62.

Spirit that of union with the indwelling Guest. These relations, as such, do not designate any perfection or form; filiation, for example, as such is a relation and says nothing about the perfection of him who is son; so is brotherhood and union with the Spirit. These three relations, ingredients of our triune relationship with the Trinity, are of necessity together and proportionate to each other, if for no other reason than because they are the constituents of that triune relationship. The particular role, then, of each of the three Persons is not to produce in our souls some reality exclusively of His own, but to be the term of the special relation which unites our souls to Him.

It may be difficult for us not to conceive this terminating of a relation as something static and at the same time to avoid the impression that it involves some sort of passivity. To play a role inevitably evokes the idea of doing something or producing something.⁵⁵ But for the divine Persons, their very presence in our souls, even apart from the efficient production of sanctifying grace which does not distinguish but unites them, is dynamic and has a transforming effect on our human personality: we really are in communion with the Father as Father, and the Son as Son, and the Holy Spirit as our hallowing Spirit; and this communion, without any move or as it were agitation on their part, is the ontological call for us to live as sons of the Father, brothers of the Son, and living temples of the Spirit. The role of Persons, therefore, apart from their common causality in producing created grace, is to move us without being moved themselves (as the immovable Mover of Aristotle) to the affections and actions which befit our communion with them. On this ontological Trinitarian grace naturally follow the intentional relations to the three Persons in our religious attitude.⁵⁶ So it appears that this Trinitarian structure of sanctifying grace, or the triune relationship to the divine Persons which is inherent in grace of its essence and before any actions of our own, is the ontological foundation of a Trinitarian spirituality such as we find in the liturgy of the Church and in the lives and writings of mystics.

⁵⁵ But this is evidently excluded: all production or efficiency is common to the three Persons.

⁵⁶ Here lies the difference between a Trinitarian concept of grace by appropriation only, which holds distinct relations to the Persons of the intentional order only, and a Trinitarian concept according to which the triune relationship exists before any operation of ours.

Grace, Image of the Trinity

If, then, we wish to visualize in what manner grace is the image of the Trinity or what is the expression of the exemplarism of the Trinity in our life of grace,⁵⁷ we have to say that it cannot consist in some threefoldness among the gifts of grace as created perfections inherent in our souls. When grace, wisdom, and charity are said to be the supernatural image of the Trinity in us, this cannot be in any other way than by appropriation.⁵⁸ Each of these gifts is the common effect of the three Persons and as such unites us to the Three. It is here that the theory of appropriation has a real function in giving a correct interpretation and understanding of the texts of Scripture and of the Fathers. Whatever may have been the particular mind and intention of the writers, when their sayings attribute a distinct and special efficient causality to one or to each of the divine Persons, they cannot be taken at their face value. Since the Persons as such are only subsistent relations and have one numerically identical perfection of nature or essence in common, they cannot, in the work of our sanctification, have any separate or exclusive effect in our souls.

Nor can sanctifying grace be said properly to be an image of the Trinity in the sense of a miniature of the Trinity:⁵⁹ a created reality, one in the aspect of absolute being and threefold as the foundation of three distinct relations to each of the Persons. Trinity as such is not a perfection but a relationship, the intra-divine relationship which (revelation, unveiling the mystery, tells us this) of necessity constitutes the pure Act as triune. This intra-divine relationship of Persons is not, and cannot be, manifested *ad extra* in created grace, for the very reason that it is a relationship, and not an absolute perfection of being.⁶⁰ It does not and cannot leave an impress on the soul, because it is absolutely *ad intra* and in no way *ad extra*; the Trinity of the divine Persons is a mystery in the strict sense of the term which reason

⁵⁷ Cf. G. Philips, "De ratione instituendi tractatum de gratia nostrae sanctificationis," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 29 (1953) 355-73, especially 358 ff.

⁵⁸ Cf. F. Bourassa, "Présence de Dieu et union aux divines Personnes," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* 6 (1954) 5-23; also S. I. Dockx, *Fils de Dieu par grâce* (Paris, 1948).

⁵⁹ Cf. supra n. 50.

⁶⁰ *Opus ad extra* = producing a reality; this refers to the one absolute essence or nature, not to the Trinity of the Persons.

cannot in any way detect from created realities, either natural or supernatural. It is only by the communication of His absolute *esse*, which is one and simple, that the uncreated Act leaves an impress on our souls, as a created actuation or perfection or inherent form. Moreover, sanctifying grace does not entail that we as it were imitate God in being three persons in one nature (and in our case, in addition to our own personality), but that we are in communion with the three Persons, communion involving both union with and opposition to the Persons. This precisely is the meaning of our triune relationship with the Trinity.

Accordingly, grace is the image of the Trinity in this sense only, that it entails this triune relationship with the three Persons.⁶¹ While fully safeguarding our own created personality, grace raises us to the level of the divine life, where our supernaturalized personality enters into communion with the divine Persons. In what order of sequence we communicate with each of the divine Persons—ontologically, before doing so psychologically—is a matter of little consequence. Perhaps, if we did not have the revelation of the Incarnation and of all that it involves for our life of grace, and if then we were to follow the Trinitarian theology of the Greek Fathers, we should say that by receiving the Spirit of God we are made like unto the Son of God, and so adopted sons of the Father.⁶² It is at this point that we have to consider what faith and theology teach about our incorporation in Christ.

OUR INCORPORATION IN CHRIST

Our sanctifying grace, in the present economy of the Incarnation-Redemption, comes to us through Christ, the Word-Incarnate Redeemer. He is, the Council of Trent defined, the meritorious cause of our justification,⁶³ and Scholastic theology, particularly St. Thomas, explains further that He is also the universal instrumental cause of our sanctification and so has an efficient causality in the distribution of grace.⁶⁴ His sacred humanity is the “instrumentum [coniunctum]

⁶¹ Any other Trinitarian exemplarism, which refers to distinct absolute realities in us, must therefore be interpreted by appropriation.

⁶² Cf. Th. de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité* 4 (Paris, 1892) especially 466–500. ⁶³ Cf. *DB* 799.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1m. On this question cf. Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 61 ff.; H. F. Th. Borgert, C.S.S.R., *In Geest en Waarheid: Over de Inwoning Gods in de Zielen* (Nijmegen, 1950) especially pp. 313 ff.

divinitatis.”⁶⁵ On that score, our life of grace involves a special relationship to Christ, commonly expressed by saying, after St. Paul and patristic tradition, that by grace we are incorporated into Christ. The phrase is meant to express something more than the causality of Christ in giving us grace. It says that our grace is not only *ex Christo* but also *in Christum*, though the second idea flows from the first. And this orientation to Christ, essential character of Christian grace, involves a twofold reality: sanctifying grace is a link with Christ, and it is a communion of life with Him, our grace being a sharing in His and, in a way, of the same kind as His habitual grace, just as in a body the same life is common to the head and the members, or the same sap courses through the vine and the branches.⁶⁶ For our present purpose of studying the interrelation between incorporation and inhabitation, we have to examine mainly two points: In what sense does sanctifying grace link us with Christ in a communion of life, and what is our relationship to the Word, or to the divine Person of Christ, which arises from this communion?

Communion of Supernatural Life

Our life of grace is the life of Christ in us, or our life in Christ. For a correct understanding of this communion of life between Christ and Christians, it is necessary to recall what the life of grace is in Christ Himself. With St. Thomas, we must distinguish a threefold grace in Him. There is first the grace of union, that is, the reality by which his humanity is united hypostatically to the Word.⁶⁷ In the conception of the supernatural as actuation by or self-communication of the uncreated Act, the grace of union is the created actuation by which Christ's human nature is united, as potency to being, to the Act which is the *esse* of the Word.⁶⁸ It is a substantial sanctification of His humanity on the level of being, prior to that of the operations. Insofar as it is a created actuation and is produced, it depends on the common efficient causality of the Trinity: the Trinity it is who effected the Incarnation.⁶⁹ Insofar as it finds a relation of union of the humanity

⁶⁵ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 13, aa. 2, 3, ff.; Malmberg, *loc. cit.*; Borgert, *op. cit.*, pp. 320 ff.

⁶⁶ Cf. 1 Cor 12:27 or Eph 4:15 and 5:30; Jn 15:5.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 2, a. 10; q. 6, a. 6; cf. also A. Vugts, *La grâce d'union d'après s. Thomas d'Aquin* (Tilburg, 1946); Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 5, 361 ff.

⁶⁸ Cf. "Difficulties and Answers," pp. 67 f. ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68 f.

of Christ with the uncreated Act in the order of quasi-formal causality, it terminates in the Person of the Word exclusively,⁷⁰ not in the Father or the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the faith has it that the Word alone was made flesh. As grace of hypostatic union, it entails that there is in Christ no human person, but only the divine Person existing in two natures, human and divine. That is why Christ as man is Son of God by nature, and not by adoption.⁷¹ That is also why the grace of union is strictly personal and cannot be communicated by participation to other persons.⁷² We, therefore, do not share in this grace of Christ.

Besides the grace of union, there is in Christ the fulness of habitual grace or of created sanctifying grace.⁷³ This is the created actuation by the uncreated Act which sanctifies His humanity as (remote) principle of supernatural operations.⁷⁴ It is the necessary concomitant, St. Thomas explains, of the grace of union, and as fulness of grace it means that Christ's habitual grace is the supreme perfection in the order of grace.⁷⁵ As a created reality, it is produced by the common efficient causality of the three Persons.⁷⁶ As the foundation of the immediate union of Christ's humanity with the uncreated Act in the order of quasi-formal causality, Christ's sanctifying grace also is Trinitarian, originating in His human nature a triune relationship to the Three Persons,⁷⁷ and not only a relation exclusive to the Word. The reason for saying so is rather obvious. It is not sanctifying grace which unites His human nature hypostatically to the Person of the Word; this is the proper function of the grace of union. Accordingly, the habitual grace of Christ is an accidental perfection by which His human nature as principle of operation is raised to the level of the divine life. What is proper to it is its absolute perfection: all the perfection that can belong to sanctifying grace is found in Christ.⁷⁸

Because of this perfection, Christ's habitual grace is also *gratia capitis*, the grace which He imparts to His Mystical Body.⁷⁹ He is

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69. ⁷¹ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 23, a. 4.

⁷² According to St. Thomas, *Comp. theol.* 1, 222, it is a "gratia singularis"; cf. Vugts, *op. cit.* (supra n. 67) p. 109 f.

⁷³ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 7, aa. 1 and 9-12; cf. Malmberg, *loc. cit.* (supra n. 67).

⁷⁴ Cf. M. de la Taille, *Mysterium fidei* (3rd ed.; Paris, 1931) p. 516.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 7, aa. 9-12.

⁷⁶ Cf. de la Taille, quoted in "Difficulties and Answers," p. 71. ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 7, aa. 9-12; cf. Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 5, 378 ff.

⁷⁹ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 8, a. 5; Malmberg, *ibid.*, pp. 382 ff.

the agent of the sanctification of His members. To act, St. Thomas explains, is to communicate one's form;⁸⁰ and as the form by which an agent acts is the same as that by which he is, the grace which Christ imparts to His members is the same as His own habitual grace. There is, however, a capital difference between the grace which we receive from Christ and His own: Christ's sanctifying grace is absolutely perfect in the order of grace and is of necessity linked with the grace of union—there is a necessary connection, according to St. Thomas, between the grace of union and the fulness of sanctifying grace.⁸¹ Our grace is always limited and finite, also in the order of grace, and bears no necessary connection with the grace of union; it does not belong to the hypostatic order. When, then, we say that our grace incorporates us in Christ, we mean that our sanctifying grace is a permanent link of union with the humanity of Christ (for Christ is its cause not only of becoming but also of being)⁸² and that it is nothing else but a sharing in His sanctifying grace.⁸³ The efficient causality by which Christ produces grace in us is, considering His humanity, instrumental⁸⁴ and subordinate to the divine efficient causality which He has in common with the two other Persons of the Trinity. This instrumental causality of Christ's humanity, and our incorporation in Him which is consequent on it, does not modify the divine efficiency which produces grace as principal causality.⁸⁵ The production of created grace, as created actuation, is concomitant and subordinate to the self-communication of the uncreated Act or to the quasi-formal causality which originates in us the triune relationship to the Trinity.⁸⁶ This also is not modified by the intervening instrumental causality of the humanity of Christ—this concerns only the production of grace, not the union of grace. And so the grace received from Christ and in Christ apparently does not originate a different relationship to the uncreated Act, since

⁸⁰ Cf. *De pot.*, q. 2, a. 1: "agere nihil aliud est, quam communicare illud, per quod agens est actu, secundum quod possibile est."

⁸¹ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 7, a. 13; Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 5, 361–78.

⁸² Cf. Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 251; and *DB* 809, "iugiter virtutem influit."

⁸³ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 8, a. 5: "eadem est secundum essentiam gratia personalis . . . et gratia eius, secundum quam est caput ecclesiae justificans alios."

⁸⁴ Cf. Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 61, for a list of references to the *Summa theologica*, e.g., 3, q. 8, a. 1.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 1–2, q. 112, a. 1 c; ad 1m.

⁸⁶ Cf. "Difficulties and Answers," pp. 64 f. and 70 f.

it is not a sharing in the grace of union but in the habitual grace of Christ.

The qualification, then, which our incorporation in Christ adds to the idea of our sanctification through actuation by the uncreated Act regards the production of created grace or of the created actuation. In this production the humanity of Christ is the universal instrumental cause of God who sanctifies us in Christ, with the consequence that grace incorporates us in Him, that is, unites us with His humanity as members who live by His life of sanctifying grace. It does not, however, on that score modify the divine quasi-formal causality which is operative in our sanctification, for the obvious reason that Christ's sacred humanity, though hypostatically united with the uncreated Act, is created and is not itself the uncreated Act. The humanity of Christ, or His created habitual grace,⁸⁷ does not exert any quasi-formal causality; this causality belongs exclusively to the uncreated Act. In the order of the quasi-formal causality, or of union, Christ's humanity is not an intermediary or instrument; the very notion of actuation or quasi-information by the uncreated Act excludes an intermediary.

Accordingly, our sanctifying grace links us with Christ in a communion of life in the sense that we receive through His humanity, as through a universal instrumental cause operative in subordination to the divine efficient causality which produces grace, a share in His own sanctifying grace. This grace is in us, as it is in Christ also, the foundation of a triune relationship to the Trinity in the order of quasi-formal causality in which the uncreated triune Act gives Himself to us or attracts us to Himself. God now raises men to the level of His divine life *in Christ*.⁸⁸ There is no self-communication of the uncreated Act to men except in Christ. Christ's humanity is the locus in which the divinization of human persons now takes place. As such, however, the mediation of Christ's sacred humanity does not enter the order of the divine quasi-formal causality. It is not Christ's humanity but only the

⁸⁷ Yet Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 247 ff., speaks of the grace of Christ being the act which actuates our souls.

⁸⁸ This is another way of saying that Christ is *caput ecclesiae*; *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 8, aa. 1 and 6.

divine nature that divinizes us. But our divinization does not take place except in Christ.

Our Relationship to the Word

Does our communion with Christ—which is an ontological dependence of our grace on the causality of His humanity, the instrument of the divinity communicating to us a share in His sanctifying grace—involve a special relationship to the Person of Christ, the Word or Second Person of the Trinity?⁸⁹ If it does, then we touch here on the inner structure of our triune relationship to the Trinity, and grace must be said to be Trinitarian because it is the grace of Christ. The question has been answered in the affirmative by several recent authors, as Mersch, Malmberg, Philips, Borgert, De Haes.⁹⁰ Perhaps somewhat hastily. There is something to be said for the many theologians who, after St. Thomas, refuse to conclude that, being sons in the Son, by our union with and incorporation in Christ we share in Christ's filiation and are sons of the Father and not of the Trinity.⁹¹ These authors conclude to the opposite because precisely our filiation is only a derivation by adoption from Christ's natural filiation, and so, they hold, the analogy which exists between the two does not imply that our filiation regards the Father exclusively. According to them the difference lies precisely in this, that the natural filiation of the Son does so, but not our adoptive filiation—this refers us to the Trinity.⁹² Both schools are agreed on the common teaching about the threefold grace in Christ and our sharing in His *gratia capitis*, the overflow of His own sanctifying grace. The reason for their opposite conclusions must lie elsewhere.

In fact, the question is more complex than the reasonings of Mersch or Borgert may seem to suggest. We are through grace *fili in Filio*; all

⁸⁹ Our incorporation in Christ, as explained so far, regards Christ as man. The question now is whether it involves a union with Christ as God, i.e., with the Person of the Word.

⁹⁰ E. Mersch, *op. cit.* (supra n. 4) p. 330 (cf. "Divine Indwelling," p. 267); Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 253 f.; G. Philips, "Notre filiation dans le Fils," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 24 (1948) 50–52; *ibid.* 29 (1953) 306 f.; Borgert, *op. cit.* (supra n. 64) (cf. "Divine Indwelling," pp. 266 f.); P. de Haes, "Filii in Filio," *Collectanea Mechliniensia* 38 (1953) 674–78.

⁹¹ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 23, a. 2 c; ad 2m; ad 3m.

⁹² Cf., e.g., Bourassa, "Adoptive Sonship," pp. 312 ff.

agree on this. But what needs to be examined is whether our filiation by adoption, though different from the natural filiation of Christ who even as man is the natural Son of the Father,⁹³ imitates and shares in this natural filiation in the precise aspect of its being an exclusive relation to the Father. This supposes a special relation from us to the Person of the Word by which we are one with Him as distinct from the Father and from the Holy Spirit. Does our incorporation in Christ and our sharing in His sanctifying grace involve such a relation?

It would seem insufficient to answer that it does because the Person of Christ is the Word, and as there is no human person in Him, our dependence on His humanity for sharing in His grace necessarily connects us with His Person, because the acts belong to the subject or the Person.⁹⁴ This answer overlooks apparently the distinction between two aspects of grace, which is both a quality or form and the foundation of a relation to the uncreated Act,⁹⁵ or the distinction between the divine causalities that enter the work of our sanctification: the efficient production of grace common to the three Persons, and the quasi-formal causality by which, through created grace, the uncreated Grace communicates Itself to us or attracts us to Itself.⁹⁶ As explained above, the causality of Christ's sacred humanity in sanctifying us enters as a universal instrumental causality in the efficient production of our created grace—a sharing in His own sanctifying grace—which is produced by the Trinity (the Word included) operating by the one divine nature. The Word, of course, is in no way instrumental in producing grace: as one of the Trinity He is principal cause of created grace.⁹⁷ On the score of the efficient causality which Christ, whether as God or as man, exerts in producing sanctifying grace in us, there does not seem to be any reason for saying that there arises any special or distinct relation to the Person of the Word. Both of these causalities regard an *opus Dei ad extra* which is common to the three Persons. If there is a special relation to the Word, as we believe there is, it must arise elsewhere, on other grounds.

⁹³ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 23, a. 3 c; ad 2m.

⁹⁴ *Actiones sunt suppositorum*. Yet we should remember that the relation from the Word to the humanity of Christ (and to all that pertains to this humanity) is only of reason, and that every efficiency of the Word is common to the three Persons.

⁹⁵ Cf. supra nn. 35 and 36.

⁹⁶ Cf. supra nn. 40–43.

⁹⁷ Compare *Sum. theol.* 1–2, q. 112, a. 1, ad 2m.

Must we say that the divine quasi-formal causality which is inseparable from the divine efficiency by which the Trinity (and the Word as one of the Trinity) produces sanctifying grace, is proper to the Word (just as the Incarnation is proper to Him, in the aspect of quasi-formal causality), and that because of this special quasi-formal causality our grace unites us directly to the Word and indirectly to the Father and the Holy Spirit? It does not seem so. Granting even that the actions of Christ are proper to the Word in a way in which they do not belong to the two other Persons of the Trinity, yet the case is different for Christ's own sanctifying grace and ours. We may concede (even though not all theologians may agree to this) that Christ's own sanctifying grace refers His sanctified humanity directly to the Word and to the Word alone; this is only another way of saying that it is necessarily connected with the grace of union; and hence it is evident that His sanctifying grace cannot refer Him, even as man, to the three Persons of the Trinity, since He Himself is one of the three (there being no human person in Christ). But our sanctifying grace is really, numerically distinct from that of Christ, as Pius XII stated in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei*;^{97a} it inheres in a human nature that is a person distinct from the Person of Christ. Therefore, the difference between the grace of Christ and ours, from the aspect of the divine quasi-formal causality that enters in its production, is that in the first case that causality is exclusively proper to the Word, but in the second it is not. Our sanctifying grace is not that of a human nature which belongs to a divine Person; it is the grace of human natures of human persons. And so our grace refers us, thanks to the divine quasi-formal causality, to the three Persons of the Trinity (and not to two only, the Father and the Spirit, as in the case of Christ, even as man). Accordingly here also there does not seem to be a ground for saying that our grace is Trinitarian formally because of our incorporation in Christ.

Moreover, Christ as man, being no human person, is by nature the Son of God the Father by virtue of the grace of union or because of the hypostatic union, not by virtue of His sanctifying grace (if this does not make Him a son by adoption, it is because there is in Him no human person who could be adopted, there is only the divine Person).⁹⁸

^{97a} AAS 39 (1947) 593.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2m: "Christus per gratiam unionis est Filius naturalis."

But as said already, we share, not in the grace of union, but in the sanctifying grace of Christ coming to us as *gratia capitis*. Accordingly, no more than in the efficient causalities which enter into our incorporation and by which our grace is produced, is there in the fact that our grace is a sharing of Christ's grace any ground for saying that we have a special relationship to the Word.

Should we say, with Malmberg, that the reason why our sanctifying grace originates a special relation to the Word lies in the necessary dependence of Christ's habitual grace (of which our grace is a participation) on the grace of union? The fulness of sanctifying grace, he explains, is possible only as a consequence of the hypostatic union, that is, in a special relationship to the Word. On that account, our grace also entails an indirect share in that relationship, namely an accidental, and not hypostatic, union with the Word.⁹⁹ Even granting the necessary mutual connection of the grace of union and the fulness of sanctifying grace, and the necessary dependence of our sanctifying grace on the fulness of grace in Christ, the conclusion that on this score our sanctifying grace involves an exclusive relationship to the Person of the Word and a sharing in His sonship with regard to the Father, still does not seem to follow with perfect stringency. For it remains true that our grace is a sharing in the habitual grace of Christ, not in the grace of union, and that even as man He is the natural Son of God not because of the fulness of grace but because of the grace of union. So it would seem that only a sharing in the grace of union which involves an exclusive relation to the Father would entail a sonship by adoption relating to the Father (and not to the Trinity);¹⁰⁰ just as Christ Himself as man is Son of the Father (and not of the Trinity) not because of His sanctifying grace, even in its fulness, but because of the grace of union.¹⁰¹ Then only would our incorporation in Christ immediately entail special relations to the Word and to the Father. To say that, because of our incorporation in Christ, we are sons by adoption of the

⁹⁹ Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 48, 253 f.

¹⁰⁰ The inseparability and essential connection of the grace of union and the fulness of habitual grace in Christ do not do away with the real distinction between the two. And it is not so immediately evident that by *sharing* in the second we necessarily share in or profit by what is proper to the first. Our share in grace is never a fulness of grace, and only this fulness is essentially connected with the grace of union.

¹⁰¹ Cf. supra n. 98.

Father (and not of the Trinity) would seem to be equivalent to saying: we share in the grace of union (though not to the extent of being hypostatically, but only accidentally, united to the Word).¹⁰² Such sharing, however, seems hard to conceive: the grace of union concerns the *esse* in Christ and not the *agere*; it is not the form by which Christ's humanity acts, it is the actuation by which it *is*.

Accordingly, if we have to find in our incorporation in Christ the reason for a special relationship to the Word, we should look elsewhere than in His efficient causality, whether principal or instrumental, producing sanctifying grace, and in the exemplary causality of His habitual grace in regard to our grace which is a share in His.¹⁰³ Someone might say: Just as the Trinity as one cause effects the Incarnation with all that it entails for Christ's humanity, in particular causing the relation of His humanity to be terminated by the Word alone, and not by the three Persons, so also the Trinity produces grace in us through the instrumentality of Christ's humanity and for our incorporation in Him, so as to cause the relationship springing from our sharing in Christ's grace to terminate in the Word alone, and so make us adopted sons of the Father and not of the Trinity.¹⁰⁴ The reason for saying so may apparently be found in the sayings of Scripture and tradition about our special union with Christ and, in Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

But there is a difficulty. There is no parity between the Incarnation

¹⁰² Our indirect link with the grace of union in Christ, considered by Malmberg, *art. cit.* (supra n. 4) 6, 48, as an indirect sharing in it, would seem to be insufficient to account for an exclusive relationship to the Word. Only the fulness of grace is necessarily connected with the grace of union; our grace *de facto* derives from Christ's fulness of grace, but does it also derive from this origin a connection with, in the sense of a sharing in, the grace of union?

¹⁰³ No essential difference in the matter seems to follow from the union with Christ which Malmberg, after some modern authors as Malevez and Congar, says results for all mankind from the fact of the Incarnation. Even if we see our way to admit what Karl Rahner called the "supernatural existential" (cf. J. P. Kenny, "Reflections on Human Nature and the Supernatural," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 14 [1953] 280-87), this sort of pre-grace, a consequence of and, as it were, a sharing in Christ's grace of union, does not do away with the singularity of the hypostatic union and the incommunicability of the grace of union.

¹⁰⁴ There may not be any apparent reason against the intrinsic possibility of this supposition, but a more positive proof for asserting its reality is required than the imperfect parity with the Incarnation. The sayings from Scripture and tradition, in the mind of many a theologian, are not sufficient to give that proof.

and our sanctification on the precise point of divine sonship. Revelation tells us that only the Word became man.¹⁰⁵ If the relation of Christ's humanity to the uncreated Act terminates in the Word alone, this is so because of the hypostatic union in which the Person of the Word communicates His *esse* to the humanity which He assumed: this hypostatic union of its nature involves an exclusive relationship to the Word, else there would not be the Incarnation of the Word only.¹⁰⁶ But in the case of our sanctification, if the preceding considerations are acceptable, none of the factors that enter into it on account of our incorporation in Christ demands such an exclusive relationship to the Word. And so, if the indications of Scripture and tradition pointing to such relationship must be taken at their face value, there should be, it seems, some other element in our incorporation or in our sanctification which allows and postulates an exclusive relation to the Word.

It would seem that only the consideration of the specific divine quasi-formal causality, that goes of necessity with the production of sanctifying grace, can account, as far as is possible, for our special relation to the Person of the Word and for our adoptive sonship regarding the Father which arise from our incorporation in Christ. If the divine quasi-formal causality is left out and only the efficiency of God producing sanctifying grace is considered, then a priori there can be no room for a special relationship to the Word or to any of the divine Persons.¹⁰⁷ This is apparently the reason why St. Thomas and his followers on this point say that by grace we are sons of the Trinity and not of the Father as Christ is: they consider the adoption as efficient causality only and as an *opus Dei ad extra*; to that extent their

¹⁰⁵ We need not enter into the question of other possible ways of the Incarnation; cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 2, aa. 5-7.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. "Difficulties and Answers," p. 69.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *supra*, the first of the presuppositions to a triune relationship with the Trinity. The determination of these special relationships (filiation with regard to the Father, brotherhood with regard to the Son, and possession of the indwelling Spirit), explained in the body of this article, supposes, as we have it from revelation, that our elevation to the supernatural order happens by way of regeneration; it does not, however, according to our present argumentation, suppose that this regeneration takes place in the Son of *necessity*, though *in fact*, in the present economy of grace, it does not take place except in Christ.

conclusion is justified.¹⁰⁸ The divine quasi-formal causality, as explained in the first part of this study, allows for a special relationship to the Word, as also to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the sole consideration of our incorporation in Christ through grace, as though it were the formal and sufficient reason of our special relationship to the Person of the Word, and so also of our triune relationship to the Trinity, would seem to be unsatisfactory after what we said above.¹⁰⁹ Though insufficient to account for our special relation to the Word, yet our incorporation in Christ does have a meaning and function with regard to that relation. There evidently exists a reason why He is the way or why we must pass through Him if we wish to share in the life of grace and in the triune relationship to the Trinity that is rooted in grace. And the reason seems to be that our union with Christ as members of His Body—a relation of mystical identification and of supernatural brotherhood with Christ as man—aptly exemplifies our relationship to His Person.¹¹⁰

Therefore, our incorporation in Christ, though not of itself and as such giving rise to the special relation to the Word—this originates by way of quasi-formal divine causality in which the Word has a part as one of the Trinity—yet causes it in conjunction with that causality: first, in the sense that this quasi-formal causality now takes place only in Christ, and is attended by the efficient causality (both principal and instrumental) which produces grace as a sharing in that of Christ; second, in the sense that it reveals to us what that relationship to Christ is, namely, one of brotherhood based, not on a community of human nature with the Word Incarnate, nor even formally on the communion of sanctifying grace as such, but on the immediate union with the triune Act into which we enter through communion with

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *supra* n. 91.

¹⁰⁹ Our incorporation in Christ refers us to the humanity of Christ, not directly to the divinity. And, as shown above, it does not involve by itself a special relation to the Word.

¹¹⁰ This exemplary causality of our union with Christ as man by way of brotherhood or membership in His Body, based on the life of grace, with regard to our relationship to His divine Person, fits well in the sacramental economy of grace such as is the present order of the Incarnation. Our incorporation in Christ both signifies and effects our special relationship with the Word and the Trinity. But it effects this only “materially,” to the extent that our incorporation in Christ is through grace, and this involves the quasi-formal causality which originates that relationship.

Christ. He it is who introduces us into the triune relationship with the Trinity by making us one with Himself through grace, the foundation of that relationship. Our union with the Person of the Word, one of the constituents of that triune relationship, which actually exists in our incorporation in Christ and only there (though not caused by it except insofar as it implies the quasi-formal divine causality which originates our triune relation to the triune Act), appears therefore as one of brotherhood. And so the relation to the Father reveals itself as sonship, and that to the Holy Spirit as indwelling of the guiding Spirit of the sons. Accordingly, our incorporation in Christ, though materially constitutive of our special relation to the Word, does not seem to be formally so. Its precise formal function in this respect is to be manifestative rather than constitutive of our relationship to the Word. Our incorporation in Christ is the "sacramental" sign of our triune relationship to the Trinity.

CONCLUSION

If the above considerations are right, then we must say that our triune relationship with the Trinity through grace is not absolutely linked with our incorporation in Christ as with its necessary prerequisite. It is so only *de facto*. The Incarnation belongs to the present economy of grace, as far as we can see, not of necessity but for reasons of fittingness.¹¹¹ When our sharing in grace is to follow the pattern of our social and corporal nature, as we may expect it will since grace perfects nature after the manner of nature, then it is fitting that we enter the life of grace and share in the divine life through incorporation in Christ, God made man. In the context, our union with Christ both effects and reveals our triune relationship to the Trinity and our special relation to Him as our Head and Brother. Thus incorporation and inhabitation meet in the triune relationship born from the grace of Christ.

As to the practical difficulty about the place which Christ and the Trinity should take in a balanced Catholic spirituality, we can do no better than refer to the liturgical prayer of the Church. She generally

¹¹¹ The sacramental economy of grace itself is based on reasons of fittingness; cf. *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 41.

prays to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.¹¹² It is not unnatural, however, that Christ, the God-man, should take a more prominent place in the devotional life of Christians than the Blessed Trinity.¹¹³ As was remarked in the review of *Foundations for a Devotion to the Blessed Trinity*, perhaps it is best that this exalted mystery “be the subject of an all-pervading homage, as indeed It is, rather than become in some sense rival to other devotions”; rather the foundation and general background for the whole of Christian spirituality than an object of a particular devotion.¹¹⁴ Yet it may be well to follow the example of Mother Church and thus to grow more conscious of the Trinitarian structure of our union with God in Christ.

¹¹² Cf. the conclusion of most orations in the liturgy.

¹¹³ If for no other reason than that the Christian life consists in the imitation of Christ, who in His life on earth has set the example of a supernatural life lived on the human level.

¹¹⁴ Cf. the review of G. M. Dupont, *Foundations for a Devotion to the Blessed Trinity* (Calcutta, 1947), in *Month* 184 (1947) 192.