

REAL RELATIONS AND THE DIVINE: ISSUES IN THOMAS'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S RELATION TO THE WORLD

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PARTICULARLY SINCE Karl Rahner's work on the Trinity,¹ it has been common for theologians to point to the deficiencies of Thomas's treatment of the doctrine of God. The putative separation of the tracts *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* is seen as symptomatic of tendencies which have led, so it is diagnosed, to a general malaise which surrounds that doctrine in the modern context. As often one registers the scandal felt in these personalist times to the Thomistic notion that there is no real relationship between God and the world. Catherine LaCugna, in her recent work *God For Us*,² picks up on these themes, but she is not alone in her dissatisfaction with Thomas in this matter. A theologian as different from her as Donald Keefe makes a similar complaint in his *Covenantal Theology*.³ LaCugna will conclude that Thomas is not salvageable in the modern context and elects to fashion a new relational metaphysics; Keefe concludes that Thomism, as it is currently practiced, is not salvageable but chooses instead to complete the Christian transformation of Aristotle begun by Thomas.⁴

When one discovers that Thomas argues that Jesus did not have a real relationship with his mother,⁵ one is strongly tempted to conclude with Rahner, Keefe, and LaCugna that something has indeed gone awry with Thomas's thought. In the remarks which follow I would hope to do two things. First, it will be necessary to set out the Thomistic discussion of God's relationship to the world in enough detail to understand why he reaches the conclusions he does. Second, I will explore some of the resources present in Thomas for addressing some of the concerns raised by these theologians which could be integrated into a revitalized trinitarian theology. It will be concluded that many of

¹ K. Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

² C. M. LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 1, 7–8.

³ D. J. Keefe, S.J., *Covenantal Theology: The Eucharistic Order of History*, 2 vols. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991) 1.30–32, and *passim*.

⁴ LaCugna, *God For Us* 167–69; Keefe, *Covenantal Theology* 1.258–63.

⁵ See *Summa theologiae* (ST) 3.35.5 corp.: “et ideo filiatio qua Christus refertur ad matrem, non potest esse realis relatio, sed solum secundum rationem.” Cf. also *In III Sententiarum* (Sent.) 8.1.5. Texts and translations of the *Summa* are from *St. Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae* (New York/London: Blackfriars/McGraw-Hill/Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964–76).

these concerns can indeed be met, but only, as Keefe urges, by a further transformation of the underlying Aristotelian conceptuality in the light of the faith.

REAL RELATIONS AND GOD'S RELATION TO THE WORLD

Three points will be considered here. The first is a clarification of what Thomas means when he distinguishes between real relations and relations of reason, and secondly what is implied about God's relation to the world. Finally, as Thomas modified his Aristotelian inheritance for the sake of the faith of the Church, that same faith can mandate other modifications.

Real Relations in Thomistic Thought

The medieval interest in relations was in part fueled by Augustine's understanding of the three Persons in terms of unchanging relations.⁶ Augustine's own discussion was conducted against the backdrop of Aristotle's categories: the Arians were pressing the question whether fatherhood is said of God accidentally or substantially; one either compromised the unchangeability of God or concluded that the Son could not be God. Augustine escaped the dilemma by positing a third mode of predication—an unchanging relation that is, accordingly, not an accident. The formulation of Augustine's response in terms of Aristotle's categorical understanding of relations merely underscored the importance of the Philosopher in this matter in the 13th-century wake of his "entries" into Europe.

Augustine, the Neoplatonist, was unconcerned with the effect that such a maneuver would have on Aristotelian metaphysics. The medievalists, who had accepted that metaphysics, did not have a similar luxury. One of the ongoing debates in the high Middle Ages was the precise ontological status of relations. Mark Henninger notes that "the participants in this discussion agreed that a relation's ontological status, whatever else it may be, must be explained in terms of its being in, 'inhering in,' a subject."⁷ Thus, categorical relations involving two different substances required the existence of corresponding accidents in both substances.

There were two focal points of discussion which forced the modification of Aristotle's fundamental categorical understanding. The first, on which Aristotle himself had something to say, was the situation of two

⁶ *De Trinitate* 5.4.5–8.9. See Mark G. Henninger, S.J., *Relations: Medieval Theories 1250–1325* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) 1. The most complete treatment of Thomas's understanding of relations is found in A. Krempel, *La doctrine de la relation chez saint Thomas: Exposé historique et systématique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1952). Constantine Cavarnos does not restrict himself to the text of Thomas in his *The Classical Theory of Relations: A Study in the Metaphysics of Plato, Aristotle and Thomism* (Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1975).

⁷ Henninger, *Relations* 4.

things whose relationship changes because one (but not the other) of the related things changes.⁸ The second issue was the doctrine of the Trinity—the divine relations simply could not be understood as accidents.⁹ This required that the understanding of relations be so formulated as to prescind from that inherence in a substance which characterizes Aristotelian accidents. One of the ways this was accomplished was to distinguish between the *ratio* or fundamental intelligibility of the relation (the *esse ad*) and its *esse* (the *esse in* in the case of accidents). Thus the divine relations share the intelligibility of relationships in general but they differ from other relations in that the *esse* of a divine relation is not an *esse in* but is rather identical with the divine essence.¹⁰ This distinction between the *ratio* and the *esse* of relations parallels the real distinction between *essentia* and *esse* in Thomas's thought and represents part of the Christian transformation of Aristotle necessitated by the faith.

This distinction also creates the possibility of distinguishing between real relations and relations that are merely "rational" or "logical." The *ratio* of a relation consists of three elements, described by George Klubertanz in the following manner: "In order that we can talk of a relation, there must be a subject (for example, the man who is the father), a term (the child), and the foundation, that by reason of which the subject is referred to the term (for example, in our case, the generation of the child by the father)."¹¹ In a "real relation" all three of these formal elements are real. If any of these elements is not real, then the relation is referred to as a "relation of reason." All relations "have the same intelligibility (that is, they are understood as involving a subject, foundation, and term). But only a real relation has 'esse.'"¹² Henninger explains it in terms of the respective causes: "A relation of reason is caused by and depends for its existence on the activity of some mind. A real relation is caused by and depends for its existence on some real extra-mental foundation in the subject of the relation."¹³

The example LaCugna gives for a relation of reason, location, can

⁸ Ibid. 8–10.

¹⁰ *ST* 1.28.2 corp.

⁹ Ibid. 16.

¹¹ G. P. Klubertanz, S.J., *Introduction to the Philosophy of Being*, 2d ed. (New York: Meredith, 1963) 270. Thomas's comments on relations (the term occurs almost three thousand times) are scattered throughout his works. Some of the relevant passages are: *In I Sent.* 8.4.3, 20.1.1, 26.2.2; *De Potentia* [*Pot.*] 7.8–11; 8.1–4; *Summa Contra Gentiles* 4.14.6–13; *In Metaphysicam* [*Meta.*] 5.17, 20; 11.9; *ST* 1.13.7, 28.1–3, 29.4, 37.2, 77.6.

¹² Ibid. 273 n. 6.

¹³ Henninger, *Relations* 17. LaCugna, in contrast, defines "real" and "logical" relations in the following manner: "A real relation belongs to the very nature of something (mother-daughter), whereas a logical relation is an accidental feature of something (location). God's relation to creation is *logical*, not real, because being related to creatures is not part of God's nature" (*God For Us* 153). This misses the point. Among other things, it places an accident (His relation to creation) in God, which seems an unlikely understanding of Thomas.

exemplify both sorts of relation. If I ask whether I am "in front of" or "in back of" a table, it quickly becomes clear that such a description of my location vis-à-vis the table is a relation of reason, if the table is the same on all sides. There is nothing in the table which makes the foundation "in front of" or "in back of" real. It is simply a matter of perspective. I think of myself as being in front of the table since it is in front of me ("in front of me" is real in me since I have a real front and back); a class thinks of me as being behind the table since the table is between them and me ("in front of them" is likewise real in them).¹⁴ On the other hand, I do have a real relation to the table under a different formality. I am equally in the same room as the table, for instance. I (subject) am real; my presence in the room is a real accident of the substance that is me (foundation in me); the table (term) is real; the presence in the room of the table is a real accident of its substance (foundation in the table); my presence in the room is thus comparable with the presence of the table, and since they are of the same order—presence in the room is determined in terms of bodily location—the relation "equal presence" between me and the table is real.¹⁵

God's Relation to the World

Thomas allows only two grounds for real relations: quantity, and action and passion.¹⁶ The former is not relevant to God's relation to the world since the divine essence is not corporeal.¹⁷ Action and passion, as a ground for a real relation, admits of a further distinction. Some such relations are mutual "as *being what is changed by* and *being what changes, being father of* and *being son of* and so forth."¹⁸ This is distinguished from cases in which "the truth about *x* that it is related to *y* is due to something real in *x*, but the truth about *y* that it is related to *x* is not due to anything real in *y*."¹⁹ Such asymmetrical relations exist between knowledge and the thing known: my knowledge of some external thing depends on the existence of that thing; that thing's existence does not depend upon my knowing it. My knowledge is "mea-

¹⁴ The example Thomas usually uses has motion in mind. If I walk from one side of the table to the other, it is I who have changed, not the table. Since nothing in the table has changed, its relation to me is clearly seen to be of reason, not real; see *ST* 1.13.7. This particular analysis, however, would now fail, given the discovery of gravitational and electromagnetic forces that join all material objects. If I move around the table, that table does in some measure change.

¹⁵ Thomas gives the example of comparing quantities rather than position in space (*ibid.*). Still, in this matter he allowed a rather broad understanding of quantity: "quantity or of something pertaining to quantity" (*In V Meta.* 17.1005); see Henninger, *Relations* 18.

¹⁶ *De Pot.* 7.9 corp.; *In V Meta.* 17.1001–5; see Henninger, *Relations* 17–19.

¹⁷ See *ST* 1.28.4 corp.

¹⁸ "Ut motivum et mobile, pater et filius, et similia" (*ST* 1.13.7. corp.).

¹⁹ "Quandoque vero relatio in uno extremorum est res naturae et in altero est res rationis tantum" (*ibid.*).

sured" by the thing known. Thus my knowing has a real relation to the thing known; the thing known has only a rational relation to my knowing. This asymmetry occurs, Thomas maintains, whenever the two terms of the relation are not of the same order. It is this, for instance, which distinguishes between the begetting of the Son, who is of the same order as the Father, and the creating of the world, which is not of the same order as the Creator.²⁰

An important text is found in *ST* 1. q. 28, a. 1. There Thomas notes explicitly that sameness of nature implies sameness of order, and that for this reason there will be real relations (*reales respectus*) between a principle and that which issues from that principle. Later he notes the diversity of nature between creatures and God, and states that, since "God does not make creatures because his nature compels him to do so, but by mind and will, . . . [t]hat is why in God there is no real relation to creatures."²¹ Early in his response Thomas reminds the reader of the fundamental *ratio* of all relations, that they, in contradistinction to the other Aristotelian categories, do not necessarily involve terms that are real. Relations as such "indicate only a reference to something."²² He then provides examples of two sorts of relations which correspond to "real" and "rational" relations. In the first case the reference is "in the very nature of things" (*in ipsa natura rerum*); in the second case the reference is found "only in the understanding of the mind" (*in ipsa apprehensione rationis*). Thus, since begetting is in the very nature of God, the resulting relation is real; since creation exists by the mind and will of God, the resulting relation is one "of reason." But this is not an "accidental feature" of God, even if relatedness to the creature is not, as such, by nature; God's will to create is unchangeable, indeed, is from all eternity. Since it is unchangeable, it is not an accident. Further, since God does not exist by the mind and will of creatures (dependency on God is constitutive of the nature of the creature),²³ it follows that the relation between the creature and God is real.

The relevant issues become clearer if we make every element explicit in the relations under consideration: God's relation to the world, and the converse relationship of the creature to God. From the side of God there are these three elements: God and the creature as the subject and term of the relation, and God's creative power (or God's mind or will) as the foundation. But the subject, God, and the foundation,

²⁰ Thus Henninger names the transcendence of God, rather than God's immutability as such, as the reason for Thomas's insistence that God has only a rational relation to the world.

²¹ "Non enim producit creaturas ex necessitate suae naturae, sed per intellectum et voluntatem, ut supra dictum est. Et ideo in Deo non est realis relatio ad creaturas" (*ST* 1.28.1. ad 3).

²² "Ea vero quae dicuntur ad aliquid significant secundum propriam rationem solum respectum ad aliud" (*ibid.* corp.).

²³ "Sed in creaturis est realis relatio ad Deum, quia creaturae continentur sub ordine divino et in earum natura est quod dependeant a Deo" (*ibid.* ad 3).

God's creative power, are identically the same, as follows from a consideration of the divine simplicity.²⁴ Under this formality, therefore, the relationship is not real but only rational (yet still true).²⁵ There is nothing distinct from God which serves as the foundation of God's relation with the world. From the side of the creature there are these three: the creature and God as the subject and term of the relationship, and the creature's dependency on God's creative power as the foundation for the relationship. This dependency is not to be identified in the same way with the creature as God's power is to be identified with God.²⁶ Hence the creature's relationship to God is real and not simply rational. We discover, then, that there is a lack of symmetry in the relations. There are other ways of asserting this asymmetry of relationships between God and the world. Thus, in God, existence and essence are identical; in the creature, they are not. One can dispense with this relational asymmetry only by rejecting the transcendence of God. Since the trinitarian relations are not accidents of the divine substance but rather are the divine substance, there will be only an analogical likeness between the divine relations and all other relations.

It is important to note that Thomas's comments are not simply motivated by philosophical concerns. The faith of the Church demands the conclusions he has reached: "If then fatherhood and sonship are not real relations in God, it follows that God is not Father or Son in reality but only because our minds conceive him so, which is the Sabellian heresy."²⁷ Two articles later he underscores the point, now citing Boethius to the effect that "in divine matters substance contains unity, relation unfolds trinity."²⁸ The faith of the Church excludes a Sabellian understanding of the Trinity; Thomas alters his Aristotelian conceptuality, introducing a new kind of "real relation," to accomplish this.

The same faith will preclude any real relation, understood as unfolding or multiplying the Trinity of Persons in God, between God and the world. Such a relation affirmed of God's relation to the world would

²⁴ See *ST* 1.28.4. ad 1.

²⁵ See John H. Wright, S.J., "Divine Knowledge and Human Freedom: The God Who Dialogues," *TS* 38 (1977) 453-63. Wright explores how this is nonetheless compatible with a dialogic understanding of God. W. Norris Clarke, S.J., provides a similar treatment in "A New Look at the Immutability of God," in *God Knowable and Unknowable*, ed. Robert J. Roth, S.J. (New York: Fordham University, 1973).

²⁶ *ST* 1.45.3. Yet this issue quickly becomes difficult. Cf. Thomas Gilby, O.P., *Creation, Variety and Evil*, vol. 8, *St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae* (New York/London: Blackfriars/McGraw-Hill/Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967) 38-39, note h. Cf. also *De Pot.* 3.3. ad 3.

²⁷ "Si igitur paternitas et filiatio non sunt in Deo realiter, sequitur quod Deus non sit realiter Pater aut Filius sed secundum rationem intelligentiae tantum, quod est haeresis Sabelliana" (*ST* 1.28.1); see also *De Pot.* 8.1.

²⁸ "Sed contra est quod dicit Boëtius, quod substantia in divinis continet unitatem, relatio multiplicat trinitatem" (*ST* 1.28.3).

have the effect of erecting the world as another "Person" in the Trinity. To do this would be heresy. The only other real relation Thomas speaks of is that sort of relationality which is an Aristotelian accident and this likewise cannot be affirmed of God. Thomas is left only with relations of reason to explain God's relation to the world and Jesus' relation to Mary. I would suggest in what follows that development of yet another sort of "real relation" would help resolve this and other problems that remain in Thomas's account.

THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE WORLD

I suggest elsewhere²⁹ that the question of the Incarnation of only the Son can be reasonably handled by means of the intentional structure of the act of assumption. Even granting this, however, there still remain a number of problems reconciling the Incarnation with Thomas's notion that there is no real relation between God and the world. Thomas's contention that Jesus did not have a real relation with His mother, cited at the beginning of this article, is symptomatic. But even here Thomas is more interested in articulating the faith of the Church than he is in working out the logical necessities of his system.

The immediate context in *ST* 3. q. 35, a. 5, where Thomas argues that there can only be a rational relation of filiation between Jesus and Mary, is a series of articles in which he is arguing against various heresies, particularly Nestorianism. No specific heresy is mentioned in article 5, but the issue there likewise turns on the faith of the Church. The question is whether there are two filiations in Christ, one eternal, one temporal.

There are two ways to consider this. If one considers the cause of filiation, then there are two causes and some will argue for two filiations. However, Thomas had argued in article 1 of this question that filiation regards primarily the subject, the person generated, rather than the nature of the cause. There are not two persons in Christ; therefore there can only be one filiation. It is the eternal generation by the Father which constitutes the Person of Christ, not the temporal begetting by Mary. The latter does not add anything to the filiation of the Son with regards to His existence as a Person over that provided by the eternal generation from the Father.³⁰ Jesus' filiative relation to Mary is a rational relation, not a real relation.

The alternatives which would allow of a real relation between Jesus and Mary would seem to be unacceptable as contradicting the faith of the Church: either one accepts a double filiation and two persons in Christ; or, if the eternal Son is related to Mary in the same sort of real

²⁹ Earl Muller, S.J., "The Dynamic of Augustine's *De Trinitate*: A Response to a Recent Characterization," *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995) 65–91.

³⁰ Thomas does not raise this issue, but to reverse the priority of the temporal and the eternal in this matter would be to move into an adoptionist position—a human person becomes divine; see *God For Us* 127, 296.

relation by which He is related to the Father, then it would be difficult to avoid seeing Mary as a fourth "Person" of the Trinity; or, finally, putting a real filiative relation to Mary as an accident in the Son would seem to compromise the Son's immutability and thus His full divinity. Thomas's conclusion seems mandated by the faith of the Church, and yet it does not fully satisfy. Christ is left in some manner isolated from His humanity.

Characteristics of Filiation

One can ask whether Thomas himself would have felt the full force of the awkwardness of denying a real relation to Mary, since his understanding of human generation, following that of Aristotle, is now seen as in part defective. Citing the Philosopher, he argues that "nature's way in the generation of the animal species is that the female furnishes the matter, while from the male comes the active principle in generation."³¹ The sexual distinction is in this way subsumed to the overall act-potency schema.³²

Thus it was by a "supernatural divine power" that Christ was humanly generated and, of course, His Person was eternally generated by the Father. In fact, Thomas explicitly rejects any active power on Mary's part in the generation of Christ. But this is not unique to the case of the Incarnation: "Now in generation there are two distinct operations, that of the agent and that of the patient. It follows that the entire active part is on the male side, and the passive part on the

³¹ "Habet autem hoc naturalis conditio, quod in generatione animalis femina materiam ministret ex parte autem maris sit principium activum in generatione" (*ST* 3.31.5. corp.); see also *ST* 3.32.3.

³² This, of course, shows no awareness of the equal genetic contribution (which provides the corporeal formality in reproduction) of male and female in generation. It also leads Thomas to think of the man as more fully actualized than the woman. Still, the account is not completely wrong. The woman does also provide the matter for the nourishment and growth of the conceptus and, indeed, in the form of the ovum, most of the matter for the original zygote. Thus, the woman provides matter already partially formed by her own genetic contribution; the man provides the formality in his genetic contribution to complete the formation of the matter provided by the woman. A mistake seems to have been made in the 1972 Blackfriars edition on this point: "Haec autem materia, secundum Philosophum, est sanguis mulieris, non quicumque, sed perductus ad quamdam ampliorem digestionem *per virtutem generativam maris* ut sit materia apta ad conceptum" (*ST* 3.31.5. corp.; my italics). Every other edition consulted (Parma, Marietti, Paris, Busa, Index Thomisticus) reads *per virtutem generativam matris*. The extra "t" makes a considerable difference! On this point, at any rate, Thomas's understanding is not completely irreconcilable with modern biology. See also *ST* 3.32.4. ad 2. With regard to reproduction itself, the woman is relatively passive in that her genetic contribution is provided without any action on her part; the man is relatively active, he must bring his genetic contribution to the woman who receives it. The reception is ideally an active reception. With regard to the act of reproduction, the carnal embrace, both ideally share love equally.

female side."³³ In this view, no mother is the agent in the generation of her children.

Does that imply that all children have only a relation of reason to their mothers?³⁴ In principle, however, such a conclusion should not follow; action and passion both are named as the basis for real relations as noted above. Further, Thomas tells us that if there were a multiplication of filiations according to causes, then "every man would have to have two filiations in himself, one to his father and one to his mother."³⁵ But father and mother, in their union, act as one cause of their child. The child, accordingly, has but one relation to both. Thomas may not have felt the full force of rejecting a real relation of filiation between Jesus and Mary because Mary acted only as the passive principle of His human generation, but the problem remains even within this framework.

There is a broader issue here involving human generation and how this is to be understood. Action and passion serve as the foundation for the real relation when the terms joined are of the same ontological order. Matter and the divine Son of God are not of the same ontological order. But the filiation of the Son is not of the material order. Thus Mary, as the material cause of Jesus, is really related to her Son as His mother but He has only a relation of reason to her as her Son. The problem with this line of analysis is that it is also true that matter and the human person are likewise not of the same ontological order. Even assuming Thomas's biology, what happens when man and woman join in carnal embrace and generate a child? It is clear that their united causality extends to the production of the body of their child. But does their carnal embrace cause the production of their child's soul? To argue so would be to argue either that a corporeal causation could produce a spiritual reality³⁶ or that there is some sort of traducianism that comes into play. Thomas would reject either alternative.³⁷ There is another causality involved in the generation of a human person: the

³³ "In generatione autem distinguitur operatio agentis et patientis. Unde relinquitur quod tota virtus activa sit ex parte maris, passio autem ex parte feminae" (*ST* 3.32.4. corp.).

³⁴ When Thomas speaks of filiation as a real relation, he tends to use only the example of a father and son.

³⁵ "... oporteret quod quilibet homo in se duas filiationes haberet, unam qua referretur ad patrem, at aliam qua referretur ad matrem" (*ST* 3.35.5. corp.).

³⁶ "Corporeal" is used to distinguish the causality of parents from a purely material causality. They act as efficient agents with their own proper formality which effects the body of their child. Their agency is taken up by God, a higher agent; see *ST* 1.118.2 ad 3.

³⁷ See, e.g., *ST* 1.75.2, where the soul has operations *per se* apart from the body. It cannot, therefore, receive its actuality from any bodily operation. Thomas is explicit on the point in *ST* 1.118.2. corp.; in 1.118.3 he rejects the position that human souls were created together at the beginning of the world.

direct creation of the rational soul by God.³⁸ Now the soul is intrinsically ordered to a body but in itself is immaterial. The human parents do not serve even as passive causes of the soul as such. They are the causes of that body toward which the soul created by God is ordered. It is on that basis only that they are said to be the parents of that person who is their child. But that person, as a person, as a rational subsistence, owes his or her existence directly to God.

These problems are exacerbated when one considers the case of Christ. The ordinary human person has a mother who, in Thomas's thought, serves as the passive agent in the production of the child's body, a father who serves as the active agent in the production of that body, and God (Father, Son, and Spirit acting inseparably) who uses the agency of the parents in creating the subsistent individual substance, the person composed of body and soul. Christ, in the Incarnation, has a mother who serves as the passive agent, the creative action of God (Father, Son, and Spirit acting inseparably) which serves as the active agent in the creation of the body, and the Father who eternally generates the Son. There is in this a curious exchange between the "father" and "God" so that, although God's taking over of the role of the "father" is not understood by Thomas as paternity,³⁹ God is nonetheless the Father of Jesus Christ.

The relevant question at this point is whether Mary and God are able to be understood as a single cause of Jesus? The issue arises because Thomas, as noted earlier, holds that the mother and father, in their union, are a single cause of their child with the result that there is a single filiative relation of the child to both parents. And yet, and this is not explored as such by Thomas, the subsistent individual, the person, comes into existence by a single conjoint act: God working through the agency of the human parents for the creation of another human individual. The same relation of dependence on another for personal existence (which must be a single relation in the person so generated because there is only a single personal existence involved) is understood variously depending on the causal term. If the causal term is the mother or father, then the relation of dependence on another for personal existence is *understood* as filiation. If the causal term is God, then the relation of dependence is *understood* as creaturely dependence and not filiation. In both cases the relation is understood as a real relation. The ontologically more important causal term is the creator God who can bring anything into existence without the use of instrumental causes. But God has eternally chosen to use such causes. If the same relation of dependence on another for personal existence cannot be understood to be both filiation and creaturely dependence, then it follows that the ordinary human person has only a relation of

³⁸ "Et cum sit immaterialis substantia, non potest causari per generationem, sed solum per creationem a Deo. . . . Et ideo haeticum est dicere quod anima intellectiva traducatur cum semine" (*ST* 1.118.2 corp.).

³⁹ *ST* 3.35.3 ad 2.

reason to their human parents, the real relation being with God. This, however, is not how we speak. We affirm a real relation of the child to the parents. Children are related to their parents in a real relation of filiation because God has chosen to act in such a way.

Does Jesus Christ come into existence by a single conjoint act of God and Mary? If He does not, then there are two persons in Christ. But this cannot be allowed. Jesus Christ, through whom Mary was created because He is the Son of God through whom all things are created, is nonetheless dependent on Mary for His individual human existence as are all human individuals born of woman. That dependence is *understood* as filiation, a human filiation. The humanity of Jesus is a creaturely reality. Jesus' human dependence on God is *understood* as a creaturely dependence.⁴⁰ But Jesus is also eternally dependent on the Father for His existence. That dependence is *understood* as filiation, divine filiation. The relation to Mary can be understood as being merely rational, but Jesus is not unique in this. The relation of every human person to their parents can be understood in this fashion. But this is not the way we speak. Nor is it the way that God has chosen to act. Perhaps we should be consistent in the way we speak of all those born of woman. This would require such a development of the Thomistic understanding as not to run afoul of the dogmatic concerns he had in originally constructing his understanding of real relations.

Immanent and Economic Aspects of Filiation

At the heart of this understanding is the "substitution" of the eternal begetting of the Person of the Son for the creation of a human person which occurs in every other human begetting; in either case God is productive of the person or Person. Two questions can be raised here. The first is whether the eternal and the temporal can be brought together in this way. Can God choose to associate a creature with the eternal begetting of the Son? The answer has to be "not in the production of the Person as such."⁴¹ Thomas himself comes close to affirming the possibility of such an association: "mission includes an eternal procession, but also adds something else, namely an effect in time."⁴² He is, of course, restrained by his conviction that the Son cannot have a real relation to the world. The question, therefore, remains. But, secondly, a mere association is not sufficient. To argue that the Son has a real relation, of whatever sort, to Mary requires that there be a real foundation in the Son. Is there anything real in the Son to ground this? There are only two possibilities: the Son's relation to the Father and the eternal decision for the Son to become incarnate through Mary.

⁴⁰ *ST* 3.16.8.

⁴¹ Nor is this really at issue, since human parents do not have any agency in the production of the human soul, and in the last analysis, of the person as such, of their child. What is at issue is the production of the complete concrete individual, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Mary.

⁴² ". . . missio includit processionem aeternam et aliquid addit, scilicet temporalem effectum" (*ST* 1.43.2 ad 3).

With regard to the first, help may be provided from Augustine's discussion whether the Spirit is properly understood to be Gift, a discussion which Thomas embraces. "The word 'gift' conveys the idea of being givable."⁴³ Perhaps one can also understand in the eternal filiation of the Son the idea of "being filiable." This would have to be understood as not excluding other than a divine filiation. If so then the problem of positing a real relation between Jesus and Mary largely vanishes, and on solid Thomistic grounds. Henninger notes that Thomas "agrees with Aristotle that if you become equal in height to me, I without changing in any way become really related to you. He argues that in no way am I changed since the relation of equality to you already existed in me 'as in its root' (*in sua radice*) before you changed size."⁴⁴ This is said with regard to categorical relations but there is no clear reason why it cannot also apply to divine relations. The key doctrinal concerns for the immutability of the divine essence and the threeness of Persons would not be endangered.

This line of thought would also clarify the issue of why precisely the Son was incarnated and not one of the other Persons.⁴⁵ There are two parts to Thomas's argument. In the first part, arguing from the divine nature, he will affirm that any of the Three could have become incarnate and could have become incarnate any number of times; these are treated in *Pars Tertia*, questions 5 to 7. In the second part, he will affirm that it was appropriate that only the Son became incarnate only once in Jesus Christ; this is treated in question 8.

The fundamental issue for Thomas in the first part is the divine power to assume a human nature. This "power is present in all the persons together and in the same way."⁴⁶ Now, assumption involves two elements: "the act of assuming and its term."⁴⁷ Thomas's argument is that whenever a power holds itself indifferently toward several, it is able to terminate indifferently in each of the several.⁴⁸ He

⁴³ "Dicendum quod in nomine doni importatur aptitudo ad hoc quod donetur" (*ST* 1.38.1 corp.).

⁴⁴ Henninger, *Relations* 20; he cites *In V Physica* lect. 3 (ed. Leonine, vol. 2, 237b, n. 8) (ed. Pirota, 1292).

⁴⁵ LaCugna argues that Thomas's affirmative response to the question whether any of the divine Persons could have become incarnate provides support for her contention that there is an unacceptable separation between *economia* and *theologia* in his thought (*God For Us* 99–100, 145, 212). She objects not only to this but also finds the use of a theory of appropriations to maintain the connection between *theologia* and *economia* inadequate. The present argument should address the former concern; the latter concern, if pressed, leads either to a determination of the trinitarian character of God by creation or to a necessitarian logic governing divine freedom or to an unacceptable division of the divine power.

⁴⁶ "Virtus autem divina communiter et indifferenter se habet ad omnes personas" (*ST* 3.3.5).

⁴⁷ "... ipsum actum assumptis et terminum assumptionis" (*ibid.*).

⁴⁸ "Quandocumque autem virtus aliqua indifferenter se habet ad plura potest ad quodlibet eorum suam actionem terminare" (*ibid.*).

then considers the various possibilities: more than one divine Person assuming one individual (the individual in view here is human nature individuated by matter, not a human person), and one divine Person assuming more than one individual. As long as one focuses on the divine power, nothing can stand in the way of any of these possibilities. Of course, such an incarnation in the former case would be quite different from the one which in fact has taken place. There would, for instance, not be an assumption of the human nature "to the unity of one person." As to the second, if God has the power to assume one human individual, what is to stand in the way of His assuming as many as He chooses? His power is infinite.

In short, any argument for the Incarnation of precisely the Son and for a single Incarnation must proceed on lines other than a consideration of the power of God. This is not a power that the Son has that the Father and the Spirit do not have; it is a matter of God's free choice and that choice is revealed in history, in the economy. When one looks at the economy one discovers that God chose to be born of woman. This is not the only way God could have become incarnate,⁴⁹ but, once given that choice, it was necessary that it be precisely the Son who was made incarnate. Had the Father or the Spirit been "born of Mary" they could not have had to her a real relation of filiation. Only the Son has "filiability."

The other half of this question of why it was the Son and not one of the other Persons who was incarnated dovetails with the second part of the question about whether there is something real in the Son to ground the real relation to Mary. The issue is the eternal decision of God to become incarnate and to become incarnate in precisely this way. At this point theology must proceed by way of an argument from the appropriateness of these things. No necessitarian logic will be true to the reality. There are two sets of reasons given. From the side of the humanity assumed, Thomas addresses the question whether Christ should have been born of woman. He responds that it was fitting that both sexes be involved in redemption, that this underscored the fullness of Christ's humanity, and that it was fitting for the production of humans to be accomplished in every possible manner.⁵⁰ From the side of the divinity assuming, Thomas asks why it was appropriate for the Son rather than the Father or the Spirit to assume human nature. Thomas first points to the similarity of the Son to creation; since creation is through the Son as the Word of the Craftsman, the Son "is the exemplar for all creation."⁵¹ Similar things are fittingly united. Second, given the purpose of the Incarnation in making possible our adoption by God, there is fittingness that a natural Son should be the cause

⁴⁹ *ST* 3.31.4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ This is precisely an argument which depends on an understanding of creation as from the Father, through the Son. "Quia verbum artificis, idest conceptus ejus, est similitudo exemplaris eorum quae ab artifice fiunt" (*ST* 3.3.8).

of our filiation in grace. Third, sin in the Garden of Eden was a grasping after knowledge; it is fitting that the Word, who is true Knowledge, should lead us back. The reasons can be multiplied.

Thomas's understanding of divine simplicity demands that this act of decision be understood, like all divine activity, as identical with the divine essence. God wills this in willing the divine goodness, just as God knows created realities in knowing Himself. The decision to become incarnate in the way in which God became incarnate is real in God. Thomas argues that there is only a relation of reason to creation because God and God's will are identical; term and foundation are distinguished only by the mind, but the decision itself is nonetheless real as God is real. Rahner's insistence that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity follows immediately from this. The distinction between the two follows only from the distinction that can be made by the mind between what is necessary to the divine nature and what is from the divine freedom. But the divine freedom is the divine nature.

Jesus and Other Humans

The second question regarding the "substitution" of the eternal begetting for the creation of a human person is whether the result is to erase the distinction between Jesus and ordinary human persons? It does not if the relationship that Jesus has with every time and every place in the universe is the relationship that God has. This line of thought does suggest that given the eternal decision by God to become incarnate, the only understanding of creation possible is that of a creation in Christ, who is related to every moment in creation as God is.⁵² Still, the question of Christ's similarity to other human individuals needs to be examined.

Thomas asks the question "whether the soul is the man." Answering the objection that since the soul is a substance, indeed a particular substance, it is a hypostasis or person, Thomas replies that "not every particular substance is a hypostasis or person, but rather that which has the full nature of the species."⁵³ Of course, he runs into Christological problems. Thomas does not argue precisely on these terms, but from what he does say it is clear that if one identified the human soul with the human person, then, given that Christ has a human soul,⁵⁴ it would follow that Christ assumed a human person. Either that person would be destroyed on assumption by Christ, and Thomas sees no point in God assuming something only to destroy it, or one argues that there

⁵² And on this point I would concur with Keefe, *Covenantal Theology* 1.27 and passim.

⁵³ "Non quaelibet substantia particularis est hypostasis vel persona, sed quae habet completam naturam speciei" (*ST* 1.75.4 ad 2).

⁵⁴ Defined at Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople II; see *ST* 3.5.3.

⁵⁵ *ST* 3.4.2.

are two persons in Christ, a heretical position.⁵⁵ The soul cannot be identified with the human person, therefore.

One of the definitions provided by Boethius, identifying hypostasis (and by implication, person) as particular substance, creates a problem. Christ's body and soul in composition result in a particular substance. Thomas responds that it is only the completed substance that can be called a hypostasis. Christ's human nature "is, to be sure, a particular substance, but it comes into union with something more complete, namely with the whole Christ as God and man: that complete reality to which it is joined is called the hypostasis or suppositum."⁵⁶ The question is, of course, whether body and soul constitute a completed substance for the ordinary human being or whether there is some additional reality that completes the individual human substance. Thomas really does not pursue this question. He does not need to. For most purposes an identification of the human person with the materially individuated member of the human (rational) species serves well enough. Thomas modifies Boethius's definition of a person only minimally—an individual subsistence of a rational nature⁵⁷—because, among other reasons, he wishes to distinguish between vegetative, animal, and human souls. Of these only the human soul "subsists," which is to say, has proper operations apart from the body.⁵⁸ But in not pursuing this question Thomas is in no position to question whether there is a significant difference between the relations Christ has to temporal realities and the relations ordinary humans have to those same realities. One may discover that human persons in general only have a relation of reason to temporal realities, as noted above in the case of the relationship to parents, and that the incarnate Son of God is not unique in this matter. Be that as it may, linguistic usage dictates that persons who are human are in real relations with temporal realities. Socrates, in conversing with Plato, was in a real relationship with Plato.

Thomas writes in defense of Christ's experimental knowledge that, while Christ's infused and beatific knowledges were perfect from the beginning, this is not true of His acquired knowledge, which is caused gradually by the active intellect. His reason for insisting that Jesus acquired knowledge in this manner is that the specific perfection of the active intellect, a part of human nature, involves acquiring knowledge in this manner. Christ does not have a defective human nature; therefore, His active intellect achieved its perfection in Him and He acquired knowledge.⁵⁹ What is of interest in the present context is that

⁵⁶ "Et similiter humana natura in Christo, quamvis sit substantia particularis, quia tamen venit in unionem cujusdam completi, scilicet totius Christi prout est Deus et homo, non potest dici hypostasis vel suppositum" (*ST* 3.2.3 ad 2).

⁵⁷ *ST* 1.29.1, and esp. 1.29.2 ad 2.

⁵⁸ *ST* 1.75.2–3.

⁵⁹ *ST* 3.12.2 ad 1.

knowledge acquired experientially requires a real relationship between the knower and the thing known. Thomas does not consider this at this point. Furthermore, he has a way out of the dilemma which this consideration poses; the real relation is between the knowledge as such and the thing known and not between the person and the thing known: "knowledge only belongs to a person by reason of some nature."⁶⁰ But, of course, this "distance" between the person who knows something and the thing known is true of all humans. Christ is not unique in this.

What is more problematic is that Jesus engaged any number of persons in dialogue. Part of the perfection of human nature involves communication between the members of the human species, but this involves real relations between those participating in the dialogue. The perfection of human nature thus requires that the members of the species be in real relationships with one another. If Jesus possesses human nature fully and perfectly, then He is in real relationships with other humans.⁶¹

Accidents provide the foundation for many real relations among humans in the Aristotelian conceptuality. Jesus had a certain complexion, height, and weight, which implies that there are accidents in Christ. But what does it mean to say that there are accidents in the Son of God? As the eternal Son He does not change; as Son of Mary He does. The problem does not emerge with the same force when considering ordinary human persons. The Aristotelian conceptuality identifying the person with a materially individuated member of the human species can be followed more closely and is by Thomas. Still, the understanding of "person" has been decisively shaped by the trinitarian and Christological controversies of the first Christian centuries. The Christological problems may simply be symptomatic of a more general need of conceptual development.

One example will have to suffice. Returning to the case of human generation, we can ask whether the filiative relation of a child to his or her parents is one that can ever change. For all eternity that person will remain the child of those parents. There is no soul waiting to be joined to some arbitrary body of some arbitrary parents. Changing someone's relation of human filiation would require the uncreation of that individual. Why is it any more appropriate to describe such an unchanging relation as an accident of the human substance when such unchangeability in divine relations has historically led to a rejection of their accidental status? This, like the case above of the relation of the

⁶⁰ "Scientia autem non convenit personae nisi ratione alicujus naturae" (*ST* 3.9.1 ad 3).

⁶¹ Wright's analysis of God's dialogue with humanity (see n. 25 above) will not completely serve. The issue here is not the divine-human dialogue between the transcendent God and finite creatures as such, but the human-human dialogue of Jesus with His disciples.

creature to the Creator, involves a relation that is awkwardly described as an accident of the substance, and therefore dependent on that substance for its *esse*, since this relationality to God or to parents is presumed in the very existence of the individual. But this is simply to suggest that perhaps what is needed is some additional way of predicating real relations than the two ways provided by Thomas.

PERSON TO PERSON REAL RELATIONS

God suffered and died. Being put to death involves a real relationship to the ones who put to death. God is in a real relationship with those who put Him to death. The alternative would seem to be docetism: if God cannot be in a real relation with those who killed Him, then it would follow that His suffering and death can be affirmed not as involving real relations but only relations of reason. Is God's suffering and death then merely an artifact of our minds? Did God only "appear" to suffer and die. There is a point of faith at stake here: the full humanity of Christ. Given this fact, perhaps one could modify the Aristotelian account of real relations once more so as to provide a more consistent account of these matters.

There are already some strategies in place for handling some of the difficulties explored above. In particular, the *communicatio idiomatum* can and has been employed to great effect.⁶² The passion and death of Christ is the most important example of this usage. But, to my knowledge, this has not been brought to bear on the question of real categorical relations as such. There is no real reason, however, why the application cannot be made. Since a variety of real relations are proper to human nature, these relations may be predicated of God, "not when signified by an abstract term," but when "concrete terms stand for a subject subsisting in a certain nature. In consequence, attributes of either nature may be predicated without distinction of concrete terms."⁶³ The divine substance cannot be understood to have such accidents. Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Mary, does.

Another complementary strategy would be to develop another sort of real relation in a Thomistic perspective. As a relation it would share the fundamental *ratio* of all relations, the *esse ad* mentioned above.

⁶² See *ST* 3.16.4. Klubertanz makes the expected comment that "all relations of God to the world are relations of reason, even though what we understand in them is true," but then in a footnote he goes on to say, "except, of course, such relations as are involved in, or are a consequence of, the Incarnation" (*Introduction to the Philosophy of Being* 275 n. 7). Krempel would support this, arguing that in the Incarnation there are mixed relations: real by virtue of Christ's humanity, rational by virtue of His divinity (*La Doctrine* 563–82).

⁶³ "Et ideo ea quae sunt unius naturae non possunt de alia praedicari, secundum quod in abstracto significantur. Nomina vero concreta supponunt hypostasim naturae. Et ideo indifferenter praedicari possunt ea quae ad utramque naturam pertinent, de nominibus concretis" (*ST* 3.16.5 corp.).

The *esse* of this relation must be contrasted with the other forms of real relation found in the thought of Thomas. It cannot be an *esse in*. This would make of it an accident. The alternative would seem to be an identification of the *esse* of this relation with the *esse* of the subsistent individual, though this may not be necessary as such since the "person" would not be simply identified with the *esse*. Still, Thomas insists that "subsistence" is a better word to describe person than "substance," and this has the effect of bringing "person" down firmly on the side of existence (*esse*) rather than essence (*essentia*).⁶⁴

In line with this, I would suggest the appropriateness of shifting to an understanding of the human person as a subsistent relationality.⁶⁵ This would bring the understanding of human personhood in line with the trinitarian and Christological developments of the term "person." This sort of relation would allow a coherent account of the creation of the human individual. As noted above, the relation to the causes of one's existence is awkwardly understood as an *esse in*, dependent on the very existence that the relationship makes possible. There is no such difficulty if the relationality is understood as subsistent. Such a relationality would be unchanging, as already noted, and accordingly not an accident. For all eternity a child will be the child of his or her parents. This could change only by the uncreation of the child. Such a relationality is not productive of persons as such—it is God, not the parents, who creates a new subsistent relationality—and yet the child has a real relation to those parents. Such a real relation poses no conflict with the divine relations and would not constitute Mary as a "fourth Person" of the Trinity. It is in each case established by the divine decision to use such instrumental causes as parents for the multiplication of the human species, whether one considers ordinary human persons or the divine decision for the Son to become incarnate.

If this line of development, which understands Jesus' relation to Mary as real because it is "rooted" in His eternal relation to the Father, is allowed, it would follow that similar understandings of the Father and the Spirit would be possible. If there is a "filiability" which can ground such a real relation to Mary, then one can also understand the Spirit's "givability" and the Father's "paternability" as likewise grounding real relations to creatures. That God is "our Father" would be a real relation to us and not merely rational, though one might expect that the Father's paternal relation to us is real to the extent our own filial relation to Him is grounded in that of the Son. It would

⁶⁴ See *ST* 1.29.2 ad 2. Indeed, a similar reason underlies Augustine's preference for essence over substance: the connection with existence; see *De Trinitate* 5.2.3. For a recent development of this aspect of Thomas's thought, see W. Norris Clarke, S.J., *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1993).

⁶⁵ In this I would concur with LaCugna, *God For Us* 243–317, though I would argue that her abandonment of a substance metaphysics is a mistake.

remain true that, insofar as all things have been created by Father, Son, and Spirit acting inseparably, the relation between God and the world is a relation of reason. The only real relation that God can have to the world must be understood in terms of a Person-to-person relationality rooted in the eternal relations. It should be possible, however, to understand all of God's covenantal relations with humanity in such a fashion.

A somewhat different approach converges with the above reflections. Insofar as creation is not simply by Father, Son, and Spirit acting inseparably but specifically in terms of an action by the Father through the Son and in the Spirit, other possibilities are opened up. Thomas addresses the question whether creation is proper to any Person in *ST* 1, q. 45, a. 6 by noting that creative action is common to the three Persons. This much will also yield the philosophical judgment that there is no real relation between God and the world whereas there is a real relation between the world and God. Thomas goes on to note that "the causality concerning the creation of things answers to the respective meaning of the coming forth each Person implies."⁶⁶ What he has in mind is God's action through His mind and will.⁶⁷ But here also there is no real relation between God and the world, as was noted and cited above in *ST* 1, q. 28, a. 1. However, Thomas is preparing us for a shift: "In like manner God the Father wrought the creature through His Word, the Son, and through his Love, the Holy Spirit. And from this point of view, keeping in mind the essential attributes of knowing and willing, the comings forth of the divine Persons can be seen as types for the comings forth of creatures."⁶⁸

Although Thomas does not take notice of the difference this makes, the shift he has executed produces significant results when one reformulates the elements of the relation now, not in terms of God and the world, but in terms of the Father and the world. The Father is related to the world through the Son and in the Spirit. The Father and the world are the subject and term of the relationship; the Word of God serves as the foundation. As long as one considers the issue in terms of God's mind, one does not have a distinct foundation, because God and God's mind are identically the same. But the Son is not the same Person as the Father even if He is the same God, and thus the relationship between the Father and the world can be understood as having a distinct foundation.

⁶⁶ "Sed tamen divinae Personae secundum rationem suae processionis habent causalitatem respectu creationis rerum" (*ST* 1.45.6 corp.).

⁶⁷ "Deus est causa rerum per suum intellectum et voluntatem" (*ibid.*).

⁶⁸ "Unde et Deus Pater operatus est creaturam per suum Verbum, quod est Filius, et per suum Amorem, qui est Spiritus Sanctus. Et secundum hoc processiones Personarum sunt rationes productionis creaturarum, inquantum includunt essentialia attributa, quae sunt scientia et voluntas" (*ibid.*). "Types" is too weak a translation for *rationes*; "grounds" is perhaps better.

It is reasonably clear, of course, that Thomas would not consider this to be a legitimate argument. The chief objection he would raise is that the Father and the world are of different ontological orders. God's causality in creating us through our parents is not a paternal causality. There would seem to be no real relation between the Father and the individual human on this basis. The issue becomes less clear-cut when one turns to our divinization in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. One way to underscore that our adoption as children of God involves truly being given divine life would be to develop some way of speaking of the Father's real relation to us as "our Father." In any case, it is clear that one cannot understand God as having a real relation to the world apart from understanding that relationship as a Person-to-person relationship, and that relationship cannot be understood as multiplying the Trinity though it is real in God only as "rooted" in the real relations that do multiply the Trinity.

Such a Person-to-person real relation would have to be matched with a corresponding person-to-Person relation. Focusing for the moment on the relation between the Father and the individual human person we can name the creature and the Father as the subject and term of the relationship. Two things are clear at this point. First, it remains true that with regard to existence the creature remains really dependent on God and thus on the Father and is thus really related to the Father. Second, if one shifts from a consideration of existence itself and attempts to formulate a relationship which corresponds to the Father's real relation to the creature, as has been developed above, then it follows that the only sort of creature that would be capable of corresponding to a personal relation on the part of God would itself have to be a person.

If one now looks for the foundation in the creature of this personal relation (as personal) between the creature and the Father, then there are only two possibilities. Either this foundation is to be found in the *imago Dei*, precisely understood as subsistent relationality "since every agent enacts its like," or in our filiative relation to God effected by Christ. The former is possible only if the *imago* is also understood as filiative, as will be briefly argued below. This would require an understanding of creation as creation in Christ, since Christ is the cause of our filiative relation to God. Second, this *imago* can be damaged (but not destroyed since that would involve the uncreation of the creature by someone other than the Creator God) by the free choice of the creature in an action that is irrational and hateful. This will have the effect of damaging, but not destroying, the foundation for any real relationship between the creature and the Father in a personal mode. Third, this action on the part of the creature cannot change the fact that there is a real relation between the Father and the creature which rests on the foundation of the true Image of God, the Son. Fourth, the Father is able to restore the *imago Dei* in the creature through the

Image who is His Son. Fifth, "God," in point of fact, has "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17). Sixth, one might accordingly expect that a real personal relationship with the Father is possible only through the Son and in the Spirit, and that this will be preeminently and primordially actualized in the eucharistic worship of the Church in which the Son has given Himself "for us."

These considerations occasion further considerations. There is an asymmetry between the Father and the Son in the eternal generation. It is the Father who generates, not the Son. It is the Son who is generated, not the Father. Despite this asymmetry there is a reciprocity that is real: the Son is in the Father; the Father is in the Son. There is a comparable perichoresis in the relation between God and the world. The world, particularly the redeemed world, is in Christ, and therefore in God. Conversely, God is in the world: first, in Christ; second, through Christ in the Spirit; and through Christ and the Spirit we are in the Father. Individually and communally we are in Christ, in God; God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is in us.

More can be said. The above analysis was posited on seeking the foundation of the creature's relation to the Father in terms of some intrinsic *imago*. This is not the only foundation that can be considered. In the act of Christian worship Christ Himself is the foundation of the relationship of the creature to the Father. It is here that one finds the perfect correspondence to the real relation of the Father through the Son to the creature in a personal mode; in that worship the creature is really related to the Father through the Son in a personal mode. There is likewise a reciprocal shift that takes place in the relationships. The Father, as the eternal Father of the eternal Son, is in a real relation with everyone who is "in the Son" (at least if the Son is understood as having a real relation to Mary). This eternal procession of the Son from the Father grounds the mission of the Son into the world under the conditions of space and time, so that through Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, the Father recreates the *imago* in us who have been called. In worshipping the Father under the conditions of space and time through that same Jesus Christ we are "rooted" in the eternal relationship between the Son and the Father.

Then is the relationship we have to the Father which is founded on Christ in the act of Christian worship different from the relationship we have to the Father which is founded on the *imago Dei* which has been renewed in us by the action of Christ? One can affirm this only if one is willing to affirm that the latter relationship is not structured as an act of worship or that it is not an act of Christian worship. Either conclusion is intolerable. There is no true worship of God apart from Christ; the only real personal relationship to the Father possible is one

that is structured as worship. But this line of thought will force us to argue that the intrinsic foundation for our personal relationship to the Father is no longer diverse from Christ, some created *imago Dei*. If Christ Himself is the foundation for our inner worship of God as individuals, then it can only be that He has come to dwell in our hearts as the Image of God within us. Augustine long ago came to a similar conclusion.⁶⁹

An understanding of the human person in terms of subsistent relationality may provide other benefits. Thomas at points treats grace as an accident of the human substance.⁷⁰ It may make more sense to understand grace in terms of a subsistent relationality. Becoming a "new creation" would then imply a divine transformation of our subsistent relationality rather than the addition of some accidental quality. The problem with the latter approach is that accidental predication presumes that the accident is part of the overall intelligibility of the essence. Supernatural grace, however, is awkwardly understood as part of the intelligibility of human nature.

Subsistent relationality does not have reference only to relations of origin. The doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage would make better sense if the marriage relationship were understood on the level of subsistent relationality, a "marriageability," rather than on the level of accident. A real relation brought into existence with such a subsistent relationality as a foundation—"what God has joined together"—would be indissoluble apart from the dissolution or death of one of the terms of the relation. The foundation itself, "marriageability," is unchangeable, inalienable.

CONCLUSIONS

In part because of certain common misreadings of Thomas, the resources available in Thomas to address modern concerns in trinitarian theology have in some measure been overlooked. It is common to find Thomas censured because he held that there is not a real relation between God and the world. It has been shown above just how narrowly this must be understood and how, with a modest development of the same conceptuality, it becomes possible to understand God as being in a real relation to the world, though only in a personal mode. An examination was made of Christ's relation to the world, particularly to His mother. The development of a person-to-person real relation whose *esse* is the *esse* of the subsistent individual (or at least identified with the existence of the person) allows for consistency in our discourse about the birth of Christ and of other human persons. Such a subsistent relationality would also allow a development in our understanding of the divine covenants with humans and of the relations the Fa-

⁶⁹ *De Civitate Dei* 10.3, 6.

⁷⁰ See *ST* 1-2.110.2.

ther, Son, and Holy Spirit have to individuals. These relations can be understood as a bringing us into the divine relations. The human creature is able to reject such a person-to-Person relationality in a way which damages but cannot destroy that relationality. That relationship is grounded in and renewed through the Incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of the Son. The perfect complement to the personal relation of the Father to us is to be found in the worship of the Church mediated by the Risen Lord.

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