

## QUAESTIO DISPUTATA RESPONSE TO NEIL ORMEROD, AND BEYOND

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*In an article in the September 2007 issue of this journal, Neil Ormerod had included David Coffey in his critique of Rahner, whose thought he had contrasted with Lonergan's on the Trinity and related subjects. Ormerod's article was occasioned by publicity given by Robert Doran to a trinitarian hypothesis of Lonergan. Here Coffey comments on the hypothesis itself and Ormerod's treatment of his theology, then further develops a point from his own Christology.*

IN TAKING UP NEIL ORMEROD'S CRITICISMS of my theology, I find it necessary first to address Robert Doran's article, "The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,"<sup>1</sup> which inspired Ormerod in the first place. In his article Doran presents from Lonergan what he (Doran) calls a "four-point hypothesis" linking the four intradivine relations with what he perceives as four created participations in the divine life, the four *supernaturalia*, let us call them. Doran lauds this hypothesis as constituting, along with Lonergan's theory of history, the new "starting point of systematic theology." Hence the title of his article. Ormerod endorses Doran's view and accordingly proceeds to compare Lonergan and Rahner, to the detriment of the latter. I enter the picture under Rahner's coattails, as it were. It is true that, while I have been influenced by Lonergan in my work on the Trinity, grace, and Christology, I have been more influenced by Rahner, though by no means have I been captive to him, as I had occasion to point out recently

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Doran, S.J., "The Starting Point of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 750–76.

in a response to Donald Gelpi.<sup>2</sup> In the present response I leave it to others, should they wish, to defend Rahner against Ormerod's criticisms. My plan, then, is to consider first Doran's position, then Ormerod's critique of my position, and finally some ideas concerning a further development of my Christology.

### DORAN'S PRESENTATION OF THE FOUR-POINT HYPOTHESIS

Robert Doran recounts that Lonergan first presented his four-point hypothesis in 1959 in his *Divinarum personarum conceptionem analogicam* and then again in 1964 in the revision of that work, the *pars systematica* of his *De Deo trino*.<sup>3</sup> After that, Lonergan made no further reference to it. Simply stated, and partly in my own words, the hypothesis is that to the four intradivine relations there correspond to four *supernaturalia* in the economy of salvation, thus: to paternity on the part of the Father corresponds the secondary act of existence of the divine Word in the incarnation; to active spiration on the part of the Father and the Son corresponds sanctifying grace; to passive spiration on the part of the Holy Spirit corresponds the habit of charity; and to the passive generation, or sonship, of the divine Son corresponds the light of glory.<sup>4</sup> In each case the *supernaturale* participates in and imitates its regulative divine relation.

Naturally, the promising future that Doran predicts for the four-point hypothesis is predicated on its being correct. My own view, which I will argue below, is that it is not. And I suspect that Lonergan himself, for a reason that I will state, lost confidence in it, which would explain his total silence on it after 1964.

I begin by addressing the first point of the four-point hypothesis, the only one directly and exclusively concerned with the incarnation. (The other points directly concern Christians, though in the traditional theology points two and three also involve Christ.) According to the Western tradition—to which I confine myself here—the Son, along with the Father, is the source of the Holy Spirit. This means that in the Trinity the Father alone is purely donative, the Holy Spirit alone purely receptive, and the Son alone is both receptive and donative: receptive in relation to the Father, donative in relation to the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> (This is merely a restatement of the traditional

<sup>2</sup> David Coffey, "Vive la Différence—A Response to Donald Gelpi," *Pneuma* 29 (2007) 113–30, at 129.

<sup>3</sup> See Doran, "The Starting Point of Systematic Theology" 750.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.* 752–53.

<sup>5</sup> This principle is valid only in regard to the origins and identities of the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively. It is not valid in regard to what the 1995 Roman Clarification of the Doctrine of the Filioque calls "the fullness of the Trinitarian mystery," in which other principles apply, among which, for example, the Father is

aphorism that in the Trinity the Father is the *principium non principiatum*, the Son the *principium principiatum*, and the Holy Spirit the *principiatum tantum*.) The Holy Spirit is receptive in relation to both the Father and the Son. The Son alone is receptive in relation to the Father alone. Therefore the Son's distinguishing mark, or notion (*notio*), to use the technical term, can be expressed as pure, uncreated receptivity in relation to the Father. Neither in the Trinity itself nor in the incarnation, therefore, can the Son participate in or imitate the notion of the Father, namely, paternity—as Lonergan and Doran rightly express it—without actually becoming the Father.

The *esse* of the assumed humanity of Jesus, which Lonergan and Doran rightly characterize as “secondary,” is what constitutes Jesus of Nazareth the incarnate Son of God. It derives from the divine *esse*, which, given the divine unicity, is one and the same in all three divine Persons. But this is true of the divine *esse* only in its absolute mode, whereas here I speak of it in one of its three relative modes, for it is found differently in each of the divine Persons. In the Father it is in the purely donative mode; in the Son, as constitutive of his Person, that is, in his relation to the Father alone, it is in a purely receptive mode. In the incarnation it is “secondary” as well, because there it is the *esse* of Christ and not just that of the divine Son of the immanent Trinity.<sup>6</sup> Further, the sacred humanity must itself be regarded as receptive, indeed as pure, created receptivity. The most accurate way of conceiving this situation is to grasp the sacred humanity as receptive in relation to the *Father* and, therefore, as participating in and imitating the receptivity of the Son, that is, the sonship of the Second Person in the immanent Trinity, which is pure, uncreated receptivity in relation to the Father. Naturally the New Testament is silent about the metaphysical relation of Jesus to the Father, but it does present us with a Jesus who is dependent on the Father in all things and in the most radical way. It is legitimate, therefore, to characterize this relationship, and therefore Jesus himself, as pure receptivity in relation to the Father. The *esse* of the assumed humanity of Christ, therefore, does not participate in and imitate the divine paternity, as Lonergan and Doran would have it. Rather, it participates in and imitates the divine sonship of the Son.

At this point it is apposite to note the nonexistent role of Scripture in Lonergan's formulation of the four-point hypothesis and its relative insignificance in Doran's presentation. The response that it would be unreasonable in such a short note to expect a heavy dose of Scripture can be

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affirmed as receptive as well as donative. This issue will come up again later in my article. For a fuller treatment see my “The Roman Clarification of the Doctrine of the Filioque,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5 (2003) 3–21, at 16.

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de unione Verbi Incarnati*, a. 4.

granted, but one still has the right to expect that, as the alleged blueprint for the future, it would reflect strong scriptural principles, particularly as the Second Vatican Council, in its desire to reform Catholic theology, taught that “the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology.”<sup>7</sup> Admittedly, Lonergan formulated his hypothesis long before Vatican II, but this consideration counts as a contrary argument at least in that it shows how dated his theology is at this point. It presumes that, because there are two processions in the Trinity, the economic order will simply reflect them in parallel fashion. That is to say, the respective reciprocal relations between the Father and the Son (active and passive generation), and the Father and the Son together and the Holy Spirit (active and passive spiration), will be reproduced in the economy as the respective reciprocal relations between the secondary *esse* of the incarnate Word and the light of glory, and sanctifying grace and the habit of charity. But, had Lonergan consulted Scripture, he would have found that the historical economy by no means supports such a presumption.

The picture that the New Testament presents is roughly as follows. Those on the way to salvation respond to the preaching of the gospel and join the kingdom of God and the church by faith, thereby becoming sons and daughters of God. This is because they are admitted to participation in Jesus Christ, God (the Father’s) only-begotten Son. The transformation takes place through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is called “Spirit of sonship” (Rom 8:15) because to make human beings sons and daughters of God is his basic and primary function in the economy. It was he received in all fullness who had constituted Jesus the Christ and only-begotten Son of God in the first place, thus showing that he was the “Spirit of sonship,” the “Spirit of Christ” (see 1 Pet 1:11), in the most profound sense. And in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead he became Spirit of Christ in a new way, because he was sent by Christ upon the church as “another paraclete” (John 14:16) to perpetuate Christ’s presence and work. The faith that grounds this process in us gives way in death to the unsurpassable vision and embrace of God. And the entire process is brought to its fulfillment in the second coming of Christ.

In this scenario it is the divine Son, not the Father, and not the Holy Spirit, in whom we participate and whom we imitate. This disposes of points two and three of the four-point hypothesis. Point four can be allowed, but it will require modification, and accordingly will be treated separately. In the execution of the economy each of the divine Persons is involved in his own way: the Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son, who also sends the Spirit, becomes incarnate in Christ, and also in us

<sup>7</sup> *Dei verbum* no. 24.

in an analogous sense; and the Holy Spirit is received both by Christ and by us. In the power of this Spirit, Christ and we with him return through our lives and deaths to the Father. In all this we are firmly located at the pole of filiation, and nowhere else. We are sons and daughters in the Son. This is why I, following Petavius and *pace* Rahner,<sup>8</sup> restrict the category of divine formal causality in grace to the Holy Spirit,<sup>9</sup> recognizing our union with the Son and the Father as being by virtue of the perichoresis,<sup>10</sup> and in each case a “mediated immediacy,” as distinct from the pure immediacy with which we are joined to the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> In the unique case of Christ, by contrast, the pure immediacy exists between the sacred humanity and the divine *Son*, because only Christ *is* the Son, as distinct from merely participating in him, as we do.

This does not mean that the divine processions are not reflected in the economy, but it does mean that they are not reflected in parallel fashion, as conceived by Lonergan and Doran. What needed to be done was that the trinitarian processions themselves, as presented in the four-point hypothesis, be rethought in a mutual relationship that adequately reflected the full, actual situation of the economy as revealed in Scripture. Taken for granted in this statement is the universally accepted principle of contemporary theology that correct theological methodology has its starting point in the economy and moves from there to the divinity, rather than in the divinity, from which vantage point statements are made about the economy that may or may not be supported by Scripture. And, as I will now explain, it became clear to me that the achievement of the adequate trinitarian theology adumbrated above lay still in the future. The following paragraph, with its quotation, is taken verbatim from my 2005 Père Marquette Lecture, as I could not make my point any better now than I did then.

The theologian who opened my eyes on this subject was Edward Schillebeeckx, though he was speaking of Christology and not directly of the Trinity. Here is what he wrote:

From the Council of Nicea onwards one particular Christological model—the Johannine—has been developed as a norm within very narrow limits and one direction; and in fact only this tradition has made history in the Christian churches. For that reason the course of history has never done justice to the possibilities inherent

<sup>8</sup> See David Coffey, “*Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?*”: *Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology*, Père Marquette Lecture in Theology, 2005 (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2005) 15–16.

<sup>9</sup> For my explanation of the possibility of a unique kind of union with one divine Person as distinct from a single kind of union with all three, see the first part of my lecture, *ibid.* 10–42.

<sup>10</sup> See David Coffey, *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit* (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979) 58–62.

<sup>11</sup> See Coffey, “*Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?*” 37–38.

in the synoptic model; its peculiar dynamic was checked and halted and the model relegated to the “forgotten truths” of Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

Exactly the same is true in the theology of the Trinity. It was the Johannine theology rather than the Synoptic that lay behind the trinitarian theologies of East and West. It was now time to turn to the Synoptic Gospels to see what light they could cast on this central mystery.<sup>13</sup>

It was to do precisely this that I wrote *Deus Trinitas*,<sup>14</sup> the basic thesis of which is that a comprehensive trinitarian theology postulates a model of the Trinity in which the Holy Spirit proceeds as the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Mutual love is the “objectivization”<sup>15</sup> of two personal loves. In the Trinity, in so far as the mutual love is grounded in personal or rather interpersonal loves, the *Filioque*, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, is manifest. Hence the mutual-love model, as I call it, reaffirms all that is already established and affirmed in the traditional theology and doctrine. But in so far as the said love is mutual, it is objectivized and therefore personal, distinct from the Father and the Son, its originators, and existing *between* them as their bond and thus allowing to the Holy Spirit an active, mediatorial role reflected in the economy but not envisaged in the earlier model. Thus the mutual-love model complements and completes the earlier one, which for obvious reasons I call the procession model. It allows “the fullness of the Trinitarian mystery” referred to earlier<sup>16</sup> to be accessed and affirmed. In my work this model has been so central that I have felt constrained to revisit it from time to time, updating and otherwise improving it. The fullest treatment I ever gave it was in an article for this journal, “The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son,” in which I devoted 18 pages to its scriptural basis.<sup>17</sup> It received new and official prominence in the doctrine of Pope John Paul II.<sup>18</sup> It is not possible here to show how the various points in my summary of the economy given above are accounted for within the purview

<sup>12</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury, 1979) 570.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.* 46–47.

<sup>14</sup> David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (New York: Oxford University, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> To borrow John Cowburn’s term. See his *Love and the Person* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967) 295.

<sup>16</sup> See n. 5 above.

<sup>17</sup> David Coffey, “The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son,” *Theological Studies* 51 (1990) 193–229. The scriptural section is pp. 201–18.

<sup>18</sup> See John Paul II’s encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem, Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 78.9 (September 1986) 809–900; translated as *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World* = *Dominum et Vivificantem* (Boston: Pauline, 1986) nos. 10, 34, 39.

of the mutual-love model. For that I must refer the reader to my relevant publications. Economic dimensions of the two processions remain, but both terminate in being and function that are participations in, and imitations of, divine filiation.

I stated earlier that I suspected that Lonergan himself had lost confidence in the four-point hypothesis, which would explain his silence on it after 1964. By 1972, the publication year of *Method in Theology*, he had “moved out of a faculty psychology with its options between intellectualism and voluntarism, and into an intentionality analysis that distinguishes four successive layers of conscious and intentional operations.”<sup>19</sup> This move entailed not an abandonment of metaphysics but a relegation of metaphysical terms and relations to the realm of the derived and the consequent embrace of a “critical metaphysics” in which “for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.”<sup>20</sup> In a lecture delivered at Marquette University in 1968, Lonergan had said that the study of the subject “prescinds from the soul, its essence, its potencies, its habits, for none of these is given in consciousness.”<sup>21</sup> The skepticism thus expressed did not extend to the existence of the soul: “Subject and soul, then, are two quite different topics. To know one does not exclude the other in any way.”<sup>22</sup> From this it appears that he no longer held that there was any real distinction between the essence of the soul and its potencies and habits. By this move, however, he had apparently abolished the ground for distinguishing between sanctifying grace and the habit of charity. And, given that the light of glory is the eschatological perfection of faith animated by charity (see 2 Cor 5:7), neither did there appear to be any longer a ground for distinguishing between the eschatological state of sanctifying grace and the light of glory.

The reader will now understand why I remarked earlier that if anything was to be retained of point four of the four-point hypothesis, it would require drastic revision. It would seem that the four *supernaturalia* had been reduced to two, the *esse secundarium* and sanctifying grace. And I think that Lonergan was mistaken in what he said about the first of these, as I will explain below when considering Ormerod’s views. In the light of all this, Lonergan’s later silence on the four-point hypothesis was perfectly understandable.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1972) 340.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 343.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “The Subject,” *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1974) 69–86, at 73.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

### ORMEROD'S TREATMENT OF MY WORK

Neil Ormerod's attitude toward my work in Christology, grace, and the Trinity seems largely determined by his devotion to Lonergan and aversion to Rahner, whose influence not only on me but probably on the majority of theologians, both Catholic and non-Catholic, has been considerably greater. I address his treatment of my work for two reasons: first to correct certain misstatements he has made about it, and, second, to avail myself of the opportunity to develop further a key point from it. This part of my response will consist of two sections, the first of which will address the first of these concerns. In the second section I take the opportunity to correct certain misapprehensions that Ormerod reveals on the questions of the beatific vision and of efficient causality in grace. Then will follow a third part devoted to the new development.

First, then, the misstatements. In her review of Ormerod's recent book in this journal, Gill Goulding alludes to a propensity of Ormerod to engage in "unhelpful polemic."<sup>23</sup> This propensity is evident also in the essay under discussion, and in regard to his treatment of my work. My reason for drawing attention to this propensity is that I regard it as accounting for the misstatements to which I draw attention below. Page references to his article will be supplied in the text.

The first misstatement is that I accept that "Rahner's approach [to Christology] can appear as a Monophysitism (from below)" (669). I make no such concession. Ormerod supplies a reference to my writing, which I invite readers to check. If they do, I hope they will see that my words cannot be construed in this way. The second misstatement depends on an insupportable attribution made to Rahner, namely, that in his theology there is only a difference of degree between grace and the beatific vision (see 669). On this basis Ormerod discerns the principal defect of my Christology as its being "what Paul Molnar has called a 'Christology of degree.'" As I have laid out my position above, it cannot be subject to this objection—as I also argued in my reply to Molnar,<sup>24</sup> which Ormerod did not cite. This misinterpretation suggests a possible shortcoming in Ormerod's own theological understanding, namely, about the nature of analogy. He seems not to have grasped that two things can be partly the same and partly different without there necessarily being a mere difference of degree between them: thus, grace and beatific vision on the one hand, and the divine filiation of Christians and the divine sonship of Christ on the other. Theology and doctrine

<sup>23</sup> See the review by Gill Goulding, I.B.V.M., of Ormerod's *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition*, *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 456–58, at 457.

<sup>24</sup> See David Coffey, "In Response to Paul Molnar," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 67 (2002) 375–78, esp. 375–76.



abound in instances of *specific* differences between pairs of analogous realities. An example from doctrine would be the common and the ordained priesthood.<sup>25</sup>

The next misstatement uses a device as old as Cicero: the denial of something in order to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of readers (670). Ormerod would never suggest that I would deny the existence of the Second Person of the Trinity, but this very denial lies at the end of the trajectory of my chosen approach to Christology. Aside from the rhetorical problem, Ormerod's grasp of my approach could scarcely be further from the truth. I am "forced into a rewriting of traditional trinitarian theology" (670): nothing or no one has forced me, and in any case the elements of my Christology are all traditional. I have combined them in a new way, but that is something that theologians are supposed to do. He claims that I have "relativized the processions" (670). I think not, but what I have relativized is the single, dominant trinitarian model, and this I have done by introducing another, not to replace the first but to complement it. Ormerod alleges that I have also relativized the *Filioque* (670). I find this allegation puzzling, because I affirm the *Filioque* in both of my trinitarian models. Ormerod then calls my orthodoxy into question by associating me with Roger Haight (670) because he and I both profess a Spirit Christology. Yet Haight's Spirit Christology is very different from mine.

The fourth and last misstatement is that I "lessen the distinctiveness of the incarnation" (670). This misstatement exemplifies again Ormerod's difficulty with analogy. In his mind, because my Christology recognizes a greater commonality between Christ and Christians than the traditional Christology has postulated, it necessarily limits the distinctiveness of Christ. But I affirm that *however* much Christians might have in common with Christ, the essential difference remains intact: he alone is the unique Son of God incarnate, while his followers are sons and daughters of the same God, and by the power of the same Spirit, through participation in him.

I now turn to Ormerod's misapprehensions about the questions of the beatific vision and of efficient causality in grace. On the beatific vision, Ormerod claims my support in his criticism of Rahner for conceiving it differently in Christ and in us, "drawing a line" between the two conceptions, to use his expression (666). In the case of Christ the beatific vision is "a consequence of his divine sonship," whereas in our case it is "the completion of the life of grace." This is not what I say on p. 63 of *Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, to which Ormerod refers. What I do say is this: "The beatific vision, then, is the eschatological determination, in the field

<sup>25</sup> See *Lumen gentium* no. 10.

of operation, of both ways in which the ontological self-communication of God or divine sonship is given in the present age, namely, as incarnation and grace.” This is not to draw a line between two totally different conceptions; rather it is to emphasize their sameness, given that there is also a difference, corresponding to the difference between Christ’s filiation and our own. For Ormerod to suggest otherwise is, again, due to an insufficient grasp of analogy. This said, Ormerod is correct in pointing out that I was, and still am, critical of Rahner for seeing the beatific vision purely in terms of divine filiation. This is what it is ultimately, but its immediate ground is faith and love, which flow from filiation, faith giving way to vision (the light of glory) in death. Ormerod acknowledges both the scriptural ground (2 Cor 5:7) and the truth of this observation.<sup>26</sup>

It remains to offer some comment on Ormerod’s words about efficient causality in the theology of grace. It is true, as Ormerod suggests, that I am critical of Aquinas’s theology of grace in so far as it is based on efficient causality alone and so inevitably issues in a theology of appropriation.<sup>27</sup> My reason for this assessment is that in regard to grace, Aquinas’s theology seems to be dictated by a philosophy that flies in the face of Scripture. Ormerod himself recognizes that “clearly a distinctive role must be given to the Holy Spirit in any theology of grace” (667). I say “seems” above because I believe that a better philosophy than that deployed by Aquinas on this occasion allows the Holy Spirit the distinctive role attributed to him in Scripture.

My own position combines an insight from Petavius, mentioned earlier, that recognizes the Holy Spirit, alone of the three divine Persons, as exercising formal causality in grace, with an insight from Rahner that efficient causality is the “deficient mode” of formal causality.<sup>28</sup> The latter insight means that in any given instance of formal causality, efficient causality will be contained within it as its “deficient mode.” Hence my own theology here, which is both Petavian and Rahnerian, has the Holy Spirit alone exercising the assimilative formal causality, but all three exercising the logically prior but chronologically simultaneous projective efficient causality. This means that, even though the special union is with the Holy Spirit alone, the accompanying created sanctifying grace is the work of all three divine Persons.

<sup>26</sup> I am mystified as to why Ormerod should say that, having made this observation, I “dismiss it as irrelevant.” Readers are invited to check this for themselves. Note that the page reference Ormerod gives is one out: it should be 62, not 63.

<sup>27</sup> See the quotation from Pius XII in my “*Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?*” 14.

<sup>28</sup> See Karl Rahner, “Selbstmitteilung Gottes,” *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed., 9:627 a.

Ormerod asks, “Is this gracious indwelling of the whole Trinity simply a consequence of *perichoresis*, subsequent to the gift of the Holy Spirit? Or is this indwelling proper to each Person in a trinitarian mode?” (668) My answer: it is both. The perichoresis, as the interpenetration of the three divine Persons, is not the collapse of the three into an undifferentiated unity. Rather it is the assertion of their unity precisely in the maintenance of their distinctiveness by virtue of their relations of opposition. So although the union is immediately with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is there as proceeding from the Father and as proceeding also from the Son. In grace the Holy Spirit mediates the distinctive trinitarian relations that we have with the Son and with the Father. And this is what I mean when I say that our union with them is by virtue of the perichoresis. Now the only way we can enter upon specifically trinitarian relations is by identification in some way with *one* of the Persons, who thus makes it possible for us to enter the circle of inner-trinitarian relations. Scripture insists that the divine Person we are thus identified with is the Son, and this by the power of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit incorporates us into the Son, and the Son admits us to his own intimate relation with the Father (see Rom 8:14–17; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Mt 6:9). The theology of formal (or “quasi-formal”) causality gives expression to this.

### A FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

In this final part, I take an objection of Ormerod (669–71) as the point of departure for a further development of my Christology. I do this in three steps. Step one responds directly to Ormerod’s objection that focuses on a position I took before 1999 (he seems unaware of a change after that date); the second restates with slight enhancement the advance of 1999; and the third is devoted to the entirely new development.

Right through my work in Christology I have characterized the hypostatic union as the creation of the sacred humanity, its sanctification, and its becoming-united to the divine Son, all in the one divine act. In line with the greater part of modern and contemporary theology, I was using the “ascending” rather than the “descending” christological method. Working from the Synoptic Gospels, and Luke in particular, rather than John, I discovered that this tripartite event was the work of the Holy Spirit, thus finding for the Spirit an essential role in the accomplishment of the incarnation, a role not possible to find within the Johannine purview. This was the birth of my Spirit Christology. Thus far I had stood Aquinas’s Christology on its head, for he had used the traditional and, at his time universal, descending method, so that for him the order of the hypostatic union was creation (assumed, not stated), union, sanctification, with the latter seen as the fullness of habitual (sanctifying) grace. (The relevant Thomistic texts

are supplied by Ormerod.) At the same time, however, I remained within the Thomistic framework, in so far as I accepted from Thomas that the sanctification of the sacred humanity was the work of sanctifying grace, and indeed in its fullness.

Never did I claim that there was some “temporal priority” here, as Ormerod infers. It was a question of a different kind of order, called by Thomas an *ordo naturae*, or “order of nature,” a logical order determined by the perspective adopted. His perspective was that of descending Christology, but for me it was that of ascending Christology, which required an inversion of his order of union and sanctification. This made it a “disposition” in my theology, and here I was using the word in a sense similar (analogous) to that used by Thomas in *Summa theologiae* 1–2, q. 113, a. 8, ad 2, where he acknowledged that a consequence from one perspective became a disposition from another. This is my direct response to Ormerod’s objection.

My 1999 article, “The Theandric Nature of Christ,” marked a significant shift in my position.<sup>29</sup> In the article I traced a continuity and development of thought from Pseudo-Dionysius to Rahner. I concluded that Christ had a concrete human nature, which was “theandric” in this sense: it was essentially human but also divine in that, by grace and in the same act as that by which it came into existence, it achieved the full potential of humanity for divinity. This was the concrete human nature that was the recipient of, and was proportionate to, the *esse secundarium* of the divine Son, of which mention was made earlier. This conjunction resulted in a Jesus Christ who was the only begotten Son of God not only in his divinity but also in his humanity, as the Gospels had taught. In the course of writing the article I came to see that my position abolished not only the necessity but also the possibility of sanctifying grace in Christ. Aquinas had insisted on a fullness of accidental, sanctifying grace for Christ because Aquinas lacked the option of recognizing this far more important substantial grace, which rendered the accidental one redundant.<sup>30</sup> I was heartened to note that an early mentor of mine, Felix Malmberg, had the same idea, and I quoted him at

<sup>29</sup> David Coffey, “The Theandric Nature of Christ,” *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 405–31, esp. 425–29.

<sup>30</sup> In his note 35 Ormerod misreads both Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer and the Thomist tradition. In his discussion of substance and accident, Jacobs-Vandegeer, in note 72 of his article “Sanctifying Grace in a ‘Methodical Theology,’” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 52–76, is talking about the distinction between the subject and his or her acts, not about the nature of sanctifying grace (as substance). On the essence of sanctifying grace in Aquinas there is no doubt whatever. Far from its being a “substantial effect” as Ormerod avers, it is an accident and an entitative habit. See *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 110, arts. 1–4.

some length in the article.<sup>31</sup> The only respect in which I differed from him was that in line with my Spirit Christology I maintained that it was the Holy Spirit, as Spirit of sonship, who was the agent of this grace, and hence that the grace itself, viewed comprehensively, was the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift “without measure” of John 3:34.

However, the most striking confirmation of my view of the nature of the created grace of Christ came from Maurice de la Taille. Of this grace he wrote:

Here again we have an actuation by uncreated Act: a created actuation, as before; but this time of a substantial order, not an accidental order, because it brings the human nature into existence, and into an existence that is not of an accidental, but of a substantial order. This substantial actuation is precisely the grace of union; created grace, like sanctifying grace; not, however, like the latter, purely habitual, that is, a simple accidental disposition, but a truly substantial adaptation and conformation to the Word; yet not a substance nor part of a substance; no more so than the substantial existence of creatures forms part of their substance, although it actuates that substance substantially.<sup>32</sup>

Missing from this statement are my trinitarian perspective and Spirit Christology, but the main point could hardly be clearer. De la Taille, in contradistinction to the accidental grace of Christians, spoke of the substantial grace of Christ; I specified this grace in terms of its essence (the theandric nature) and its existence (the *esse secundarium*). It seems to me that we are both supported in principle by Aquinas when he writes of the union of humanity and divinity in Christ as a relation that on the human side is real and that arises from the “change” brought about in the creature.<sup>33</sup> De la Taille and I are speaking of this change in our own ways. I say “in principle” because I would not dispute that Aquinas had a quite different understanding from either of us of what the change was.

An insuperable difficulty with the Thomistic view is the problematic nature of a fullness of sanctifying grace in the case of Christ. How, for Thomas’s theology, could this fullness be other than a difference by degree? Would it not imply that the divine sonship of Christ differed only by degree from the filiation of Christians? As the grace of union considered as uncreated grace (Thomas teaches, in *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 6, a. 6 in corp., that it is the *esse personale* of the divine Son) rests on the foundation of the

<sup>31</sup> See Coffey, “Theandric Nature of Christ” 426.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice de la Taille, S.J., “Actuation créée par Acte increée,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 18 (1928) 253–68, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. as “Created Actuation by Uncreated Act,” in Maurice de la Taille, *The Hypostatic Union and Created Actuation by Uncreated Act* (West Baden Springs, Ind.: West Baden College, 1952) 29–41, at 35.

<sup>33</sup> See *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 2, a. 7 in corp.

created grace of Christ, there must be a proportion, itself created by grace, between the two. This proportion would imply that the created grace of Christ, by which his humanity is sanctified so as to constitute the “last disposition” (I insist on this term) for the grace of union, must be a unique grace such as de la Taille, Malmberg, and I envisage, yet not so unique that Christians cannot participate in it in their own way, that is, by sanctifying grace. This leaves Mary’s fullness of grace to be a fullness (by degree) of sanctifying grace, as befits the first Christian, the blessed one among Christians (and not only among women). Readers will note that I unrepentantly retain the order creation–sanctification–union when viewing the hypostatic union in the perspective of ascending Christology. The only difference is that I have replaced sanctification by habitual grace with sanctification by substantial grace, to use de la Taille’s term. It should always be understood that I speak of a single divine act within which the three are distinguished in an *ordo naturae*. And when I said above that I thought that Lonergan was mistaken in what he said about the *esse secundarium*, I meant that the *supernaturale* corresponding to the divine paternity in the first of his four points was not this *esse*, but rather the substantial grace of Christ of which I have been speaking. However, this adjustment would not redeem Lonergan’s point. My critique of it remains. The substantial grace of Christ participates in and imitates not the divine paternity but the divine sonship of the Son. For me the grace of union has two interrelated elements, one uncreated and the other created. The uncreated one is the Person of the Holy Spirit, agent of the incarnation, and the created one is the sanctification of the sacred humanity by the same Spirit, identical with the substantial grace of Christ.

What should the substantial grace of Christ be called? The only clear way I can suggest to differentiate between it and sanctifying grace would be to call the first “substantial grace” and the second “accidental grace,” but such Scholastic terminology is hardly appropriate today. Each is sanctifying, each an instance of sanctification, though in different ways. It may be acceptable to call the substantial grace “the grace of sanctification” or simply “sanctification,” while continuing to call the accidental grace “sanctifying grace,” though this, I admit, is a merely verbal solution. But until something more suitable emerges, it is the terminology I will use.

Finally, I come to the key point on which I wish to propose a further development. As long as I continued to hold Aquinas’s position that the two graces of Christ were the grace of union and the fullness of sanctifying grace, I had a problem trying to understand his sending of the Holy Spirit after, and as a result of, his resurrection. There is no doubt that he did this: it is the clear teaching of Scripture. Further, Scripture teaches that the Spirit thus sent conveyed to the community the continuing presence and

power of Christ and, in this sense, was the Spirit of Christ.<sup>34</sup> As Son of God the risen Christ certainly possessed the requisite authority to send the Spirit. But is it merely a question of authority, a legality, or rather one grounded in the being of Christ, an ontological question? Clearly the latter alternative is preferable, but if Christ's humanity was divinized only by sanctifying grace, how could it serve as an instrument of the divinity in the mission of the Holy Spirit considered as a continuation of the trinitarian procession itself? That was my problem, and it should have ceased being such when I wrote "The Theandric Nature of Christ." But the implications of this article took time to settle in my mind. Now I am clear about the matter: the theandric nature of Christ allows and explains the mission of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ proceeding precisely from the Son as incarnate.

Moreover, if the grace of Christ is substantial rather than accidental, it must make a difference to the way he possesses the virtue of charity, love of God and of neighbor. In the case of Christians the jury is still out on the question of whether Lonergan would admit a virtue of charity distinct from sanctifying grace, but in the case of Christ himself the question does not arise. For Christians, love is a human love in the Holy Spirit; for Christ, love both as a virtue and as acts must be the Holy Spirit himself, respectively immanent in, and proceeding from, the incarnate Son and directed in the first place to the Father and in the second place to Christ's fellow human beings, according to his own supreme principle of the inseparability of the two loves. Rahner has rightly interpreted this inseparability as meaning that the two loves are distinct but inseparable aspects of the one human love.<sup>35</sup> As directed to the Father, the love of Jesus is an answering love, for the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son is the love both of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. But because the Son is incarnate, his love for the Father also embraces all people and especially his brothers and sisters in the church. Thus is the miracle of Pentecost made manifest in ontological and psychological terms.

### CONCLUSION

According to Scripture, the entitative mode in which God is received into the world is that of filiation. In the Trinity the divine Son is both receptive and donative. The receptivity of the Son is reflected in the world in the two forms in which divine filiation is given, namely, the sonship of

<sup>34</sup> This was the burden of my article "The 'Incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ," *Theological Studies* 45 (1984) 466–80.

<sup>35</sup> Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God," *Theological Investigations* 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 231–49.

Christ in the hypostatic union, and the adoptive filiation of Christians or sanctifying grace. The donativity of the Son is likewise reflected in the world according to the two forms of filiation: the mission of the Holy Spirit as Spirit of Christ, which is the obverse of the return of the Holy Spirit to the Father by Christ as the expression of his love for the Father, and the love of Christians for the Father and for their fellow human beings, which is a human love elevated, empowered, and directed by the Holy Spirit, a love *in* the Holy Spirit. In these two instances love is both fruit and act of filiation. For Christians, love (“faith working through love,” Gal 5:6) is transformed in its eschatological dimension into the vision of God (the Father), or more precisely, the “light of glory.” In Christ’s case too the eschatological condition of love for the Father is characterized by the vision of God, but there is a sense in which this was the condition of his earthly life as well. However, *something* in this respect must have changed in his death. What it was, I cannot go into here, but it must have resulted in something like the light of glory. This leaves the three basic *supernaturalia*, namely, the substantial sanctification of the sacred humanity in the hypostatic union, sanctifying grace, and the light of glory. Each of these is related to a different divine Person: the first to the Son, the second to the Holy Spirit, and the third to the Father, but, more importantly, each is a form of filiation, the first two in its receptive mode and the third in its donative mode. Even more basically, the three *supernaturalia* reduce to two, in that the third is the eschatological dimension of the others, which themselves are intrinsically related, the second a participation in the first.

Readers will recognize traces of de la Taille and Rahner in this synthesis. Both theologians maintained that there are three *supernaturalia*, and indeed the same three: the hypostatic union, sanctifying grace, and the beatific vision.<sup>36</sup> De la Taille, as has been pointed out above, could have been more precise about the hypostatic union: he could have named the *supernaturale* in that case as the substantial grace of Christ. My own position, namely, that there are three *supernaturalia*: the sanctification of the sacred humanity, sanctifying grace, and the light of glory, and all three are the work of the Holy Spirit, owes more to de la Taille than to Rahner. The three of us, however, have much in common, and I believe that I can claim from the other two a high level of support for the position that I here advance as an alternative to Lonergan.

<sup>36</sup> References are the same as for notes 32 and 28 respectively.