

**THE REDEPTIVE MYSTERY**  
**of**  
**DIVINE FILIATION**



**according to**  
**St. THOMAS AQUINAS**

[Private use of Students]

**Joseph Henchey, CSS**

**2007**

**TABLE of CONTENTS**

<b>I.</b>	<b>Sacred Scripture</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b><u>Psalm 2: Divine Filiation</u></b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>The Text with St. Augustine’s Commentary</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>Christian Orientation</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>St. Thomas’ Commentary</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>Summary: <u>Psalms 2 &amp; 110</u>: Priesthood and Filiation</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b><u>Divine Filiation in St. John</u></b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>1. Divine Filiation and the Holy Spirit</b>	<b>39</b>
	a. Adoptive Filiation and <u>Baptismal Re-generation</u>	
	b. Adoptive Filiation and Love <u>infused</u> by the Holy Spirit	
	c. Adoptive Filiation and <u>Assimilation</u> to Jesus Christ	
	<b>2. Adoptive Filiation and the Person of the Son</b>	<b>43</b>
	a. The Incarnation	
	b. Faith in Christ	
	c. A Manifestation of Christ’s Unique Filiation	
	d. Fraternity with Jesus Christ	
	<b>3. Divine Filiation by Nature and Divine Filiation by Adoption</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>4. OT Israelites Filiation extended through Jesus Christ to the Gentiles</b>	<b>50</b>
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b><u>Filiation in HEBREWS</u></b>	<b>52</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	
	<b>Text</b>	
<b>D.</b>	<b><u>Filiation in PAUL</u></b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>1. Our Divine Filiation and the Eternal Inheritance</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>58</b>
	a. Adoptive Filiation and Corporal Glorification	
	b. Adoptive Filiation and Predestination	
	<b>2. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Holy Spirit</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>3. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Son</b>	<b>72</b>
	a. Adoptive Filiation and Faith in Christ	
	b. Adoptive Filiation and Conformity to Christ	
	<b>4. The Subject of Divine Filiation by Adoption</b>	<b>77</b>
	a. Jesus is not the Adoptive Son of God	
	b. Adoptive Filiation of OT Jews, and NT Gentiles	
	<b>5. Adoptive Filiation, Justification and Baptismal Re-generation</b>	<b>84</b>
	<b><u>Conclusion</u></b>	<b>87</b>

<b>II.</b>	<b>St. Thomas Aquinas</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b><i>Summa Contra Gentes</i></b>	<b>91</b>
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>91</b>
1.	<b>Divine Filiation by Nature, and by Adoption</b>	<b>91</b>
2.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and the Indwelling</b>	<b>94</b>
3.	<b>Our Divine Filiation and the Holy Spirit</b>	<b>95</b>
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>The <i>SUMMA THEOLOGICA</i></b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>100</b>
1.	<b>The Reality and the Fitting Nature of Divine Adoption</b>	<b>101</b>
2.	<b>Our Filiation and Eternal Inheritance</b>	<b>102</b>
3.	<b>The Efficient Cause of the Divine Adoption: the Most Blessed Trinity</b>	<b>103</b>
4.	<b>Our Divine Filiation and the Persons of the Son and of the Holy Spirit</b>	<b>104</b>
a.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and the Incarnation</b>	<b>107</b>
b.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit</b>	<b>111</b>
5.	<b>The Subject of the Divine Filiation by Adoption - Only a Rational Creature can be adopted by God</b>	<b>120</b>
6.	<b>Divine Filiation by Nature and Divine Filiation by Adoption</b>	<b>132</b>
	<b><u>Summary</u></b>	<b>137</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>The <i>COMPENDIUM THEOLOGIAE</i></b>	<b>142</b>
1.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and <i>Deification</i></b>	<b>142</b>
2.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and the Trinitarian Indwelling</b>	<b>142</b>
3.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and Hope for the Eternal Inheritance</b>	<b>143</b>
4.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and Imitation of the Father</b>	<b>144</b>
5.	<b>Adoptive Filiation by Derivation from the Grace of the Son</b>	<b>144</b>
6.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and the Privilege of the Only Son</b>	<b>146</b>
7.	<b>Adoptive Filiation and Assimilation to the Son.</b>	<b>146</b>
	<b><u>Conclusion</u></b>	<b>147</b>
	<b>†</b>	
<b>III.</b>	<b>Theological Reflections</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>Spiritual Re-Generation</b>	<b>148</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>148</b>
1.	<b><u>An Authentic Generation</u></b>	<b>149</b>
2.	<b>Its Manner</b>	<b>151</b>
3.	<b><u>Personal Purification</u></b>	<b>153</b>
4.	<b><u>Source of Spiritual Re-Generation</u></b>	<b>154</b>
5.	<b>Similitude with Divine Filiation by Nature</b>	<b>156</b>
6.	<b>Baptism of Jesus</b>	<b>157</b>
7.	<b>Second Birth – Adoption</b>	<b>158</b>
	<b><u>Summary</u></b>	<b>160</b>

<b>B.</b>	<b>Deeper Theological Insight</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>The Divine Participation by Adoption as <i>Participated Similitude</i> of the Divine of the Divine Filiation by Nature</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Participation and Similitude in St. Thomas – Lexicological Quest</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>The Expression: <i>Shared Likeness</i></b>	<b>187</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Causality <i>Ad Maximum</i></b>	<b>194</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Divine Filiation by Nature</b>	<b>200</b>
a.	Perusal of the Texts	201
b.	Doctrinal Synthesis	202
c.	Filiation and Generation	205
d.	Theological Corollaries	205
[I.]	Filial Fear	205
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>206</b>
1.]	The Object of Fear	207
2.]	Fear in Jesus Christ	208
3.]	Fear, Humility, Prayer	210
4.]	Filial Fear and Faith	211
5.]	Filial Fear and Hope	212
6.]	Filial Fear and Charity	216
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>220</b>
[II.]	Filial/ Fraternal Pardon	221
	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>221</b>
1.]	Condition	221
2.]	Filial Indebtedness, Fraternal Forgiveness	222
3.]	Nature of Pardon	224
a.]	Magnitude	224
b.]	Quality	225
1.]	From the Heart	225
a.]	Sincerity	
b.]	Initiative	
2.]	Authentic Love for the Sinner	227
a.]	Totality	
b.]	‘Neighbor’	
c.]	‘Enemy’	229
d.]	The Wicked	
e.]	Love your Enemies!	234

<b>IV. A Spirituality: Blessed Columba Marmion, OSB</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>FILIATION: DIVINE, MARIOLOGICAL, ECCLESIAL</b>	
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>1. The Economy of the Divine Plan</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>2. The Road to Holiness</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>3. Grace</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>a. A Participation in the Divine Nature – the Pinnacle of the Thomistic Tradition</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>b. A Share in Divine Filiation – proper to Jesus Christ</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>c. Dynamic Aspect of the Life of Grace</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>4. Typical Christian Virtues</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>279</b>

+++++

<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>280</b>
---------------------	------------

†  
†††  
†

**GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE BIBICAL BACKGROUND  
of the Thomistic Doctrine  
of  
DIVINE FILIATION *by ADOPTION***

**I. Sacred Scripture**

**Introduction**

[1] As the culmination of the thoughts that follow, it is more than ever clear that **Spiritual Re-generation** is a two-fold: **Christological** and **Christian Anthropological** mystery. This revealed truth is more sure than any one of the theological constructions that lead us to ponder it. The diversity of interpretations shows well the multiplicity of facts, both fragmentary and complementary, of this bond constituted by our **participation in the life of the Son of God**. In the impossibility of embracing them with just a single glance, the student needs to resolve to explore them in a successive, thought-filled manner. What we have is a research that extended accomplishes the entire academic life of St. Thomas Aquinas. What this has given to the Church is now the advantage of providing a **multiplicity of aspects of contemplating this Mystery**, corresponding to the plurality of the verses of Sacred Scripture, which in some way manifest our **Divine Filiation**. This is a further reason for the immense value of the Angelic Doctor's biblical Commentaries as well in this matter. It is perhaps far more beneficial for most students to study the many biblical contributions that he pondered, knowing precisely the chronology of the development of his thought. His doctrine is so sublime in this area it is difficult to synthesize it.

[2] Simply on the basis of the verses cited by St. Thomas the student is provided with an excellent in-depth consideration of this sublime Mystery:

[a] First of all, our adoptive Filiation is a very certain revealed teaching, an effect and a sign of divine love:

*... Think of that love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children, and that is what we are* [1 Jn 3:1].

It truly has been given to us *the power of becoming the children of God* [cf. Jn 1:12].

*God has chosen us in Him, from before the foundation of the world, in order to be holy and accomplish in His presence, in love, predestining us to be for Him the adopted sons through Jesus Christ. For his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of His grace, His free gift to us in the Beloved ...* [cf. Ep 1:4-6].

[b] This implies an **imitation of God** according to;

Jr 3:19: ***You call Me: my Father, and would never cease to follow Me. Again, in Ep 5:11: Try, then, to imitate God as children of His that He loves.***

[c] This Divine Filiation belonged already, by personal title to the just of the Former Covenant and even though they had not yet received the Spirit of Adoption, according to

Rm 9:4: ***They are descended from the Patriarchs and from their flesh and blood came Christ who is above all, God forever blessed. Amen!***

Already in ancient times, the people of God were called: ***Israel, My First-Born Son!*** [cf. Ex 4:22].

***I have said that you are gods, you are all children of the Most High*** [cf. Jr 3:19].

***They will now be called sons of the Living God*** [cf. Rm 9:26, Ho 2:1] – all by faith in Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 1:12].

[d] In fact, this great gift depends on the **Incarnation**:

***But when the appointed time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, and to enable us to be adopted as sons.*** [cf. Ga 4:4-6].

And it was only fitting [cf. Heb 2:10] – they are of the same stock and the son of God calls them **brothers**.

***Of His plenitude, we have all received, grace for grace*** [cf. Jn 1:16].

[e] The Gift of the Holy Spirit justifies us in liberating us from the slavery to sin, making us pass through the status of servant to that of sons and heirs of God. This same Spirit dwells in us as he gauge and the pledge of that inheritance of which the sons have the right, according to:

Rm 8:14-17: ***Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out: Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, we are also heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing His sufferings so as to share His glory.***

And like this text: ***The proof that you are sons is that God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of His Son which cries, Abba, Father! And so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if God has made you son, then He has made you heir*** [cf. Ga 4:4-6].

***And you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the promise, the pledge of our inheritance which brings freedom for those whom God has taken to be His own*** [cf. Ep 1:13,f.]

***... marking us with His seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, which we carry in our hearts.***

Consequently, Everyone ***moved by the Spirit is a son of God*** [cf. Rm 8:14]. ***This is manifested by the love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit*** [cf. Rm 5:5]

– and by peace: ***Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called the sons of God*** [cf. Mt 5:9]

[f] We become participants in the divine nature:

[cf. 2 P 1:4]: ***In making these gifts, He has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through whom you will be able to share in the divine nature and escape the corruption in a world that is sunk in vice.***

The Holy Spirit is the paternal seed [cf. 1 Jn 3:9] by which we come to this New Birth [cf. 1 Jn 5:18; Jn 3:7].

This permits us to accede to the heavenly inheritance, according to Jn 3:3: ***Unless one is born anew he cannot see the reign of God.***

- ***... Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in His great mercy has given us a New Birth as His sons by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we may have a sure hope, and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled or fade away*** [cf. 1 P 1:3]., This is all achieved by Baptism: ***it was for no reason except His own compassion that He saved us by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which He has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Savior He did this so that we should be justified by His grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life. This is doctrine you can rely on*** [cf. Tt 3:5-7].

[g] Our divine filiation will only expand completely in Glory, according to:

***1 Jn 3:2: ... think of the love that the father has lavished upon us by letting us be accomp God's children ... My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He truly is*** [1 Jn 3: 1, ff.]

- ***we are looking forward to God's glory*** [as His children] [cf. Rm 5:2]

- ***We groan, awaiting the adoption of the sons of God*** [cf. Rm 8:23].



[h] The Spirit of Christ, in re-generating us, **assimilates** us to the Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God, the First-Born of a multitude of brothers. We also receive a **participated similitude** of His Divine Filiation by Nature:

*They are the ones He chose especially long ago and intended to become the Images of His Son, so that His Son might be the eldest of many brothers. He called those He intended for this; those He called, He justified, and with those He justified, He shared His glory.* [Rm 8:29].

Our spiritual re-generation differs however from the eternal generation of the Word, in this, that ours is gratuitous, by the grace of adoption and not by nature. **By His own choice, He made us His children** [Jm 1:18]. This is precisely why Scripture says that He **gave the power for us to become the children of God** [cf. Jn 1:12], we have been **made** the sons of God.

[i] Only the Word is **the Only- Begotten, full of grace and truth** [cf. Jn 1:14, 18]. He is the One of whom the Father declares: **You are My Son** [cf. Ps 2:7]. **Most Beloved, Who enjoys My favor** [cf. Mt 3:17] - **He truly is His Son** [cf. 1 Jn 5:20, Vg] - **His own Son** [cf. Rm 1:3; 8:32] and Jesus marks this difference, in saying: **I am going up to My Father and Your Father** [cf. Jn 20:17].

[3] These are the principal citations that St. Thomas took from Scripture according to the sense that he gave to them. Assuredly, their being placed in order might appear somewhat manipulated, artificial, in the measure that this leads to give an approximately similar sense to those affirmations, of which certain ones are repeated with great constancy through the various formats of his work, and to others which intervene preferentially in his **Commentaries** on Scripture. It remains that one might verify that each one of these verses plays its role well and constitutes, either in a modest, or major manner, a genuine stone in the over-all theological edifice. This signals to each the attention of each one the interest to fathom the depths of these aspects that are not taken up in **III Sent., d. 10, q. 2** and **III, q. 23** [*Of Adoption as Befitting to Christ*]. There remains much to do in this regard and the **Index Thomisticus** can be of great assistance. The work undertaken on the **participated similitude**, on **Filiation**, on **re-generation**, on **Filial Fear**, has to be **prolonged**, especially in that which concerns the role of the Holy Spirit, as the gauge and the pledge of the **filial inheritance** and as the principle of **assimilation to the Divine Son**. Furthermore, the lexicological study of the dialectic between the Johannine title, **Unigenitus**, and the Pauline, **Primogenitus**, would permit an ever deeper emphasis on the so-called **Christological balance**.

[a] **Sons in the Son** would be the title given by Fr. Mersch. The formula has had a great history, in resonance with **the renewal of the Church** notably, which describes it. This title might certainly receive an interpretation conform to the

thought of St. Thomas, but it seems that he would have been orientated more towards an expressions under the form of **assimilation**, and of **conformity**, as is found in Rm 8:29: ***Conform to the Image of God***, on the condition of giving its full **ontological** weight.

[b] Although St. Thomas limits it to the degrees of **creation, grace** and **glory**, it can be judged that he would not disavow the discernment of different forms of Divine Filiation, within the very core of the present state of our adoption. The question arises: how does one reconcile, **his careful distinction of grace, the virtues and the Gifts**, with the statements that we become **the children of God by grace** and **the Divine Indwelling by faith, by the Gift of Wisdom**? On the one hand the statement of certain authors for whom our Divine Filiation is ‘formally’ independent from the Incarnation, finds an accomplish support in St. Thomas, in the measure that he holds, in considering it accomplishes, we would obtain nothing less if Some Other of the Divine Persons were incarnate. However, St. Thomas states that the Son, in being Incarnate, we receive this **by similitude to His proper Filiation**.

Without going into the intricacies of whether some other of the Divine Persons might have become Incarnate, there are many aspects of pondering a variety of titles of our own **Adoptive Filiation**. It is clear that the Incarnation has conferred our understanding of **Adoptive Filiation**, confers a **filial character on Grace** and yet, on the other hand, St. Thomas is far from always referring this similitude to it. This may be shown in the usage that he makes of the principle of *causality to the maximum*. Furthermore, one might under the inspiration of some modern accomplish [e.g., Fr. Philip of the Trinity], see in the **spiritual regeneration** itself a **participation in the very being generated, the intra-Trinitarian Procession of the Eternal Word**. In other terms, the affirmation according to which there is only a **theopoiesis** in the **huiopoiesis** is susceptible to being seen in the inverse order: the **theopoiesis** would always be a certain **huiopoiesis**.

[c] A certain number of publications have seen the light of day since 1972, treating of our **Divine Filiation** in a rather general manner, or according to other sources than St. Thomas Aquinas. A recent book has given to this a certain typology [at times, rather partial] and constitutes a vibrant plea for a **Filial Morality**. We will present a few thoughts on **Filial Pardon**. Jean Descolos believes that he has indeed found in **Filiation** a founding and organizing concept for moral theology, aroused by Vatican II for our times. According to him, the theme of the **Divine Filiation** constitutes the expression of a **Christocentrism** which would *liberate moral theology*. This work does not lean directly on St. Thomas, but far more so he makes reference to contemporary theologians for his inspiration. He does testify, however, to the actuality of the theme of **Filial Adoption** and alludes to the many

benefits that one might hope from its development. The author emphasis [c. 11] the *Filial Dimension of Christian Morality*. He seeks to draw many sources for its portrayal. He mentions conjointly: biblical backing, that of St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as Freudian Psychology and Vatican II! He even proposes to consider **Divine Filiation as that which envelops all of accomplish morality**. However accomplish this assertion may be, it illustrates in any case how the theme of our divine accomplish might be used as the promoter in contributing a renewal to moral theology hoped for by Vatican II. This present reflection hopes to bring out the fact that St. Thomas can indeed furnish for this a solid and broad base, both gradational and stimulating for anyone who would attempt to ponder this **Mystery of the Divine Son**, in expectantly awaiting its ultimate manifestation in Glory: ***we are already the children of God, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He really is*** [cf. 1 Jn 3:2].



## A. PSALM 2<sup>1</sup>

### Divine Filiation

Why this uproar among the nations? Why this impotent muttering of pagans – kings on earth rising in revolt, princes plotting against Yahweh and His Anointed, ‘Now let us break their fetters! Now, let us through off their yoke.’

The One Whose throne is in heaven sits laughing, Yahweh derides them. Then angrily He addresses them, in a rage he strikes them with panic, ‘This is My King, installed by Me, on Zion, My holy mountain!

Let me proclaim Yahweh’s decree: He has told me: ‘You are My Son, today I have become your Father.’ Ask and I will give you the nations for your heritage, the ends of the earth for your domain. With iron scepter you will break them, shatter them like potter’s ware.

So now, you kings, learn wisdom; earthly rulers, be warned: serve Yahweh, fear Him, tremble and kiss His feet, or he will be angry and you will perish, for his anger is very quick to blaze.

Happy all who take shelter in Him.

+

### Presentation

[1] This is an anonymous Psalm, like the first one is – and perhaps was broken off from it. There are a number of authoritative indications that these were once one Psalm: the Talmud states it – as does Ac 13:33: *As Scripture says in the **first Psalm**: ‘You are My Son: today I have become your Father!’ [but, Ps 2:7]*. Many scholars so interpret that both serve as a kind of **Introduction** to the first two books of the Psalter [**Pss 1-41**, introduced by **Ps 1**; and **Pss 42- 72** introduced by **Ps 2**], a kind of **messianic** introduction thus being provided especially with Ps 2. At any rate, Ps 72 serves as a Messianic conclusion to the Second Book of the Psalter [Pss 42-72].

[2] Ps 2 does seem to pertain to the Royal Era of Israelite History, which fits in neatly here, as the Psalm seems to refer to the City of Jerusalem, the Holy Mountain, Mount Sion. Reference is made to the Monarch [v. 6], part of verses 4-9, speaking of the victories of the King.

[a] A number of scholars seem to go too far, actually stating the composition of Ps 2 to a canticle chanted at the elevation of the Asmonean Prince,

---

<sup>1</sup> Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l’Homme. Etude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale. Introduction at Premier Livre du Psautier. Psaumes 1-41*. Bruges: Duculot 1975, pp. 220- 240, *passim*.

Alexander [103-76] to the Sovereign Pontificate and to the royal House. However, there do not seem to be convincing arguments to sustain so precise a dating.

[b] Other scholars have worked to date this for the occasion of the coming to power of an ancient Judean King, perhaps even Solomon [cf. 1 K 11:23-25], the biological son of David, or Joram [cf. 2 Ch 21:16-17]. These were stormy monarchies, marked by the attempt at a revolt of neighboring peoples, whom the previous monarchs had held long in subjection. Still others would opt for King Manasses coming to the Throne, following the liberation of the Monarchy by the Assyrians [cf. 2 Ch 33:11-13]. None of these views have found solid support.

[c] A further hypothesis put forward is that Ps 2 is a more general Liturgical Chant, composed to mark the **anniversaries** of a royal enthronement, and is one that projects certain universalist elements, of a style perhaps of Egyptian origin in the ancient middle East. It would be a composition perhaps sung on the occasion of a royal birth, as the composition is quite close to **Ws 8:19, ff.: ... I was a boy of happy disposition, I had received a good soul as my lot...but, knowing that I could not master Wisdom but by the gift of God – a mark itself of understanding, to know who the bounty was – I turned to the Lord and entreated Him, with all my heart I said: [Ws 9:1, ff.]: God of our ancestors, Lord of Mercy... grant me wisdom...!**

[d] A still further possibility Ps 2 is a Liturgical Chant composed for the celebration of some solemn occasion, indicated as the **Enthronement of Yahweh**<sup>2</sup>, as Mowinckel opined long years ago, that each year there would be such a celebration in common with other similar celebrations of the countries round about, even though there is scant support for such a festival celebrated in ancient Israel. Some see this Psalm as the ancient celebration of the **Covenant Festival**.

[2] Perhaps even more simply, beyond all official cultic usage, this composition, or Canticle, is simply a dramatic rendition of **the ancient Prophecy of Nathan**, concerning the Davidic Dynasty [cf. 2 S 7:11-16]. According to this view, the Canticle most likely was written in the light of, and under the guarantee of those exploits, which marked from its very outset, the founding of the Davidic monarchy. The literary affinities and the identity of view of two biblical documents might recommend this opinion. However, not all is clear: By comparing the text, one acquires the conviction that here the poet is desirous of reassuring Israel of its providential destiny, inaugurated by the Divine Oracle of Nathan, to which the David Monarchy owes its consecration, in order to draw from all this an official argument

---

<sup>2</sup> Sigismond Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/ Dearborn: Dove Publishers. Reprinted 2004, especially pp. 118, ff. [Enthronement Festival]

in favor of the stability of the Nation of Israel, through all the ageism and in the face of all hostile undertakings against her [cf. Ps 89:31-34; 132:12].

[a] In this sense, the Author finds himself at the opening up of the future of the dynasty, assured of prospects. However, there is underlying here a truly mysterious sense of perpetuity in this new monarchy. There is profiled in this edict, within the perspective of the powerful eschatology of the Lord God, the silhouette of the ideal King, only vaguely prefigured by his predecessors and the object of their vows and hopes [cf. Ps 89:29, f., 34-38; 132:13-18 – and especially Ps 110]. As an Oracle, this Psalm finds itself classified among the messianic compositions, and clearly inserted in the drama of the unfolding contemporary history. In its mysterious divine choice, this monarchy will be prolonged in an indefinite manner with **eschatological** successes, which the present history simply inaugurates. It is in this present moment that Yahweh's messianic enterprise is activated – that present time which the poet actually sees and the reigning monarch is busy in his own time. However, this King – the object of a lengthy expose', which will be contradicted by the infidelities of the dynasty [cf. Ps 89:39-46] – is already orientated unwaveringly toward its eschatological celebrations, which already mark his inauguration.

[b] Some scholars have clearly noted that **accomplish** in general was already *dynastic*, even prior to giving evidence of being **eschatological**. The hope of the community is attached to a royal series, before zeroing in on the **one future King** yet to come, who God Himself will raise up in the hour of His own choice, in order to bring closure to this history. This is the ultimate theme of Ps 2. Van Rad noted this equivalently when he noted that the **Royal Psalms**, which lead toward the Reign of God, and the Ministry of the Anointed One in the Divine Glory that they already possess, even though in a very hidden manner, but is such that at any instant it could manifest itself in brilliant fashion [cf. Ps 96].

[3] As in other Messianic Psalms [cf. Pss 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132] the terminology and the metaphors manifest a language that has been borrowed from the surrounding monarchies. The ancient faith of Israel did not immediately have any means of expression in order to speak of a royalty suddenly bestowed on them by Yahweh Himself. The phenomenon was altogether new for them. It is in this empty place that there was inserted at the very beginning the style of the surrounding ancient Middle East. The Royal Psalms speak more of the fact of this ideal prophecy of **the Anointed of the Lord and of his accompanying realm** than about his historical manifestation. They present a royalty in the service of a glory which, according to their point of view, Yahweh would confer on the nation once and for all.

[4] In this connection Israel has the great merit of having demythologized the language of the royal court which emphasized repeatedly in all the neighboring monarchies, their divinized kings, situated in a dominant position that would be totally outside, above the ordinary of the course of human events. The surrounding nations spoke about their King as having issued from among the gods, and who was one the gods still recognized as one of them, and through whom they ruled the world. However, the religion of Israel with its faith in Yahweh, the personal God, who was unique and transcendent, made it impossible for any rival, or parallel divinity, to rule as the king over the People.

[a] With the decadence of the Dynasty, and at the time of the Exile, before it became clear that Yahweh had abandoned the final descendants of David, the eschatological aspect of the Davidic messianism, following a king of 'back-up' plan, passed over gradually in the Israelite thought, and in the end totally disavowed itself from the historical aspect which had served as its basis.

[b] From this moment on, the Psalms, which up until that time had manifested a political-religious significance, began to take on more and more a deeper religious sense. There were completely forgotten, because all had perished, the historical opposition provided by a variety of nations: the Philistines, Edom, Moab, Syria, Ammon, Damascus. The Lord defeated them all in the persons of the Kings of Israel, and these were no longer rival nations – but they were lumped together as the Peoples awaiting the ideal King, the Messiah.

[c] In parallel fashion more and more receded into the background were those ephemeral triumphs of the various Davidic sovereigns over their neighbors – triumphs which nonetheless could very well have furnished the occasion for this Poem. The emphasis now was shifted toward the universal domination of the Messiah in the future [cf. vv. 8-12]. In this same Messianic perspective, the lines of history which inspired the Psalm were definitively over-turned, whereas those of religion, progressively disengaged from historical contexts, assumed more and more emphasis beyond all precedent.

[d] The Psalms then, at the end of this long effort of religious disenchantment, of which 1 Ch 17:11-14 offers in its presentation of Nathan's Oracle, a typical example: ... **and when your days are ended, you must go to your ancestors** ... Disencumbered from the political-human elements of its youth, literature and faith became the more fixed on the essential trait: **the Power of God**, victorious before rampant sin [as Paul would note, *the Mystery of Iniquity*, working across the history of the world. In this context, Yahwist accomplish acquired its own definitive physiognomy.

[e] This truth stands out the more in that the ancient Judaic tradition and the Synagogue of the first centuries of the Christian era, understood this Psalm of the King-Messiah, as the One Who was still to come. In truth Ps 2 had a two-fold tendency in its interpretation: **looking back to the best of King David, and forward toward the Messiah King.**

[5] Of necessity, the NT immediately applied Ps 2 to Jesus Christ. However, the insistence does not seem to have been that of collecting one more affirmation on His Divine Filiation [cf. Heb 1:5; 5:5]; or simply to forward some announcement regarding the hostility of the Jews and the Romans against Him during His earthly life [cf. Ac 4:25-28]. Rather it was to bring out the more the mysterious and memorable event which was due **the investiture of the eschatological sovereignty in this exaltation**, witnessing to **the evidence of His divine origin** and of His **empire over the universe** [cf. Rm 1:4-5], that **His glorious resurrection inaugurates** [cf. Ac 5:31; 13:33; Rm 1:4; Jn 17:1-5; Ph 2:7-11], and which will **culminate in His triumphal Parousia** [cf. 2 Tm 2:8; 1 Co 15:20-28; Rv 2:27; 19:15. For the NT, the act of Messianic Investiture, serving as a prelude to His decisive triumphs of God in this world, was nothing other than the **redemptive victory of Jesus over all the powers of sin**, hurled against Him, and overcoming humanity [cf. Rm 7:22-25; 1 Co 15:57].

[6] Naturally, the Christian tradition simply echoing the Apostolic thought, no longer insisted on establishing the ancient date of a Psalm, that could be inserted under the category of 'messianic'. Interest was lost in establishing whether this representative of God on earth had appeared intimately associated with Yahweh, which would mean the Psalm would be considered 'messianic', *par excellence*.

[a] Unfortunately, this same tradition eventually put this thought aside. However, many thought that in verse 7, under the title of a formal prediction, there could be discerned the very definition of the eternal generation of the Word and His Divinity. This was done to affirm **the eternal birth of Wisdom in God** [cf. Pr 8:22], this text was able to avoid every expression indicating the **today**, this day, of the Psalmist, as an insertion within time.

[b] Rather, the **day** for some provided a solid support for the **temporal birth of the Word made man**. For some, it provided support for the **Christmas Liturgy** – for others, it offered the background for His **Baptism**. The adjustments in detail often led to extraordinary insights. The Fathers discussed **today** at great length – for most, it did not imply time according to the flesh: Jesus indeed was **born of the Virgin Mary in time**. Yet, not fully emphasizing too much that He also **came forth eternally** from the mouth of God His Father. Still others see it as referring to **His resurrection from the dead**.



[c] A solid tradition dating from the Apostles saw that Jesus was ‘generated again’ in being risen from the dead unto His Glory. ***Today I have generated You*** – enough now of the shame He endured; and the infamy, and even the fact that His form as God remained so well hidden. Now is the time for His divinity to stand out! Now His holiness is evident! Now His justice appears! And the universe is resplendent in the light emanating from His incorruptible body from this New Man!

[7] Completely cleansed from all extrinsic elements, the Canticle unfolds in 4 regular strophes:

- the first two note successively the effervescence of the pagan nations, impatient to be freed from the domination exercised over them by the People of God [1-3] – and the uselessness of such rebellion before the decision taken by Yahweh to endow His People with a King, in the Person – real or fictitious – of the Psalmist [4-6].
- the third strophe is consecrated to the proclamation by the elect of the Decree of His investiture which confers upon Him the ‘lieutenancy’, the representation, of Yahweh in this world and the domination over the nations [vv. 7-9];
- the final strophe contains at last an address to all of these, an invitation from the King to be submitted to the decisions without appeal to Yahweh, as His time has dawned: Wisdom needs from now on to be their interest and their commandment [vv. 10-12].

[a] Nothing is more grandiose than this evocation of **the Messianic Design of God over Israel!** This is the most dramatic theme of all, and one that is treated with consummate art: all the great realities are expressed in just a few traits, in a language that is both energetic and limpid, and a style of the highest category, of an effect that is both all the more powerful as it is all the more sought after.

[b] Yet, in the actual state of the texts, its poetic structure leaves much to be desired and this might lead to insertions that seem to have been made after the original composition was completed. For many authors, verses 2c, 7 a, and 12d are later additions – as a result their authenticity is doubted. Verses 2c and 7a seem to have been added with some notable individual in mind, and 12c seems to be a liturgical addition: ***Happy are all who take shelter in Him!***

[c] The view that this Psalm at the beginning preceded by allusion to express data then known to all might be one indication of its true antiquity. The use

that it makes of a Hebrew classic would only reinforce this indication. The fact that the language of Ps 2 is less archaic than that of Ps 110, its parallel, could not weaken this view. As for its **universalist tone** of necessity would mean that it would have had to have been redacted after the date of the Babylonian exile [587 b.C.e.]. Expressions like: *Why this uproar* [v. 1] – *with iron scepter ...* [v. 9] – *the One Who sits in Heaven* – the work of one familiar with Scripture, seem to make use of data taken from the prophetic movement regarding the coming of a New David [cf. Jr 23:5; 30:9; Ezk 34:23; 37:24]. It is a fact well accepted that certain terms, and expressions, that are more modern have a way of being worked into earlier compositions.

[d] If all of this hypothetical reasoning is true there would be no difficulty in attributing to David himself the authorship of this composition – as the ancient Jewish tradition always thought it to be, as did the early Christ tradition as noted in Ac 4:25. He was an individual long accredited with having both the literary qualities and competence, in the world of letters and as well as in faith, to have composed this Canticle. This is a Divine Oracle, guaranteeing the perennial nature of his dynasty, while consecrating him in his messianic role of being God's spokes-person in the midst of the nations.

[e] A few scholars have even hazarded the theory that **Daniel's vision** [cf. Dn 7] provides an interpretation of Ps 2 in its **boldly eschatological sense**, having recourse to its **apocalyptic** imagery. For most others, however, this is a sheer gratuitous guess, which relies perhaps excessively on some vague similarities in the violent conflict of some pagan nations in their anger against the God of Israel.

†

### **The Text with St. Augustine's Commentary**

**v. 1:** *Why this uproar among the nations? Why this important muttering of pagans –*

This very abrupt opening [cf. Is 22:1, 2; Jr 46:7] is one of astonishment before an action that is judged to be thoughtless: an uprising, the agitation of people of which that is spontaneous, is also violent, but quite disorganized, makes this Prelude to the Psalm. This does not seem to be the language of one who is frightened, of one merely indicating his state of agitated stupefaction. Rather, he is clearly a **believer**, who is powerfully indignant, before an aberration that seems to him to be a sacrilege. This is sometimes compared to Homer's stupefaction – and cf. Ps 89:3-9.

**v. 2: ... *kings on earth, rising in revolt, princes plotting against Yahweh and His Anointed.***

a. The role of the chiefs is that of banding together in order to render efficacious a popular movement. They commit themselves to this actively, but there are only here and there preparations for this plot [cf. 10-12]. They are always planning, scheming with a view to bringing about the decisive action sooner [cf. .Ps 76: 13; 89:26; 102:16; 138:4; 148:11]. From the Palestinian perspective, the *kings of the earth, princes*, designate the directors of the Eastern Mediterranean world: as well as the heads of the Canaanite cities, as well as the sovereigns of neighboring states, such as Edom, Moab, or the Mesopotamian or Egyptian empires. A change of kingdom or a skirmish of usurpation would furnish an ideal occasion, for the raising up of the tributary peoples, anxious for independence [cf. Philistia at the death of Achaz – Is 14:28, ff.; or the vassals of Assyria, at the death of the Monarch – and in other circumstances [cf. 2 S 10:1-8].

b. The Christian vocabulary will use the verb, *to league together, to band together*, in a hostile sense [cf. Ps 31:14; 35:15] as the technical term for the various plots that were hatched against Jesus Christ [cf. Mt 22:34, 41; 26:57; 27:62; 18:12]. In Ac 4:25-27, St. Paul paraphrases the opening of the Psalm and does not hesitate to personalize also the *enemies* of Christ: Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the nations and the peoples of Israel. Quite wrongly some scholars have tried to conclude that St. Luke invented, beginning with the first two verses of this Psalm, the episode of the appearance of Jesus before Herod during His Passion [cf. Lk 23:8-11: ... *Herod was delighted to see Jesus ...* - this appears only in Lk who may have been informed by Mannaean, brought up with Herod – cf. Ac 13:1].

**v. 3: ‘Now, let us break their fetters; let us throw off their yoke’!**

a. This expresses the resolution taken by the leaders: the end-result of which is to put an end to their hated domination. The experience is like being in a strangle-hold, to which Job compares the burden of labor [cf. Jb 39:10; Hos 10:1] – a harsh yoke fixed with leather thongs is the classic image of dependence with regard to a prince, or to a sovereign people [cf. Is 9:4; 14:25; Jr 27:2, 8-12; 28:2, 4, 11, 14; Na 1:13]. In itself, it is a very eloquent image, and has been immortalized as well in the very realistic Assyrian sculpturing noted on one of the gates of Balawat depicting the prisoners taken by Salmanasar trudging along in humiliating subjection.

b. For any Israelite all is clear, despite the rather laconic texts here: this cry of revolt springs forth simultaneously from many throats from the Palestinian people, who after having been hunted down in their own land, in the providential coming of the People of God, aspire to return to their homeland [cf. Ps 78:55;

105:11] – and the neighboring nations, held in respect, even in protection for some, but by Israel now impatient to drive out from Canaan its new occupant [cf. Ps 60:8-12; 137:7; 2 S 8:1-14; 12:26-31]. To put in check the Cause of Yahweh in the Palestinian world, by reducing to insignificance the People who had been installed there. Despite all this, this is the ultimate goal pursued perseveringly, even outside all effective insurrection by the vassals of Israel [cf. Ps 9:8, 20]. Jeremiah offers the image of all this: ... *I had planted you a choice vine, a shoot of soundest stock. How is it you have become a degenerate plant, bastard vine!!!!* [cf. Jr 2:20; 5:5; Ps 140:8].

c. The Psalmist gradually presents the plan, which will eventually be made known in vv. 6-7: My King, installed by Me, on Sion ...! While the monarch's identity remains concealed, the anti-Yahwist agitation concretizes itself in ferocious hostility aimed at the King of Israel. The Anointed One, in effect, is the title given to an Israelite Monarch, in that he is always considered sacred [cf. Ps 18:51; 20:7; 28:8; 89:39; 132:10; 1 S 16:13; 24:7; 26:9; 2 S 23:1]. The fundamental notion in this 'anointing' from ancient times, was that of contact with the hand – it is as though the hand stirs the oil, or communicates it manually to the recipient. Even Pilate seems to mimic the 'dignity' in which Jesus was not held: *Do you want me to crucify your King???* [cf. Jn 19:15].

**v. 4: The One Whose Throne is in heaven, sits laughing, Yahweh derides them...**

a. In contrast with such agitation on earth, the scene is only ridiculous in heaven. From His privileged position, one that is totally inaccessible to every hostile enterprise on earth [cf. Ps 11:4; 103:19; 123:1; Is 40:22; Gn 11:5; 18:21; 21P17; 22:11; 24:7; Ex 19:11; 20:22; Dt 4:36; 26:15; Mi 1:2] Yahweh expresses His disdain for the absolute futility of their planned revolt, thumbs His nose [!] at the enemies of Israel, who are also His own enemies [cf. Ps 37:13; 59:9; Pr 1:26; Jb 9:23]. Here, no threats are uttered, no cosmic upheavals as in Ps 18:8-16 – instead, divine laughter that issues forth from sovereign divine peace.

b. This is not a bursting out in laughter, coming forth spontaneously as some crude reflex action – nor is it foolish laughter, breaking out in an excessively tense context. Rather it is the reaction of sovereign, instinctive and unforced defense. There is not so much a sense of irony here that would like to be somewhat malicious, destructive, totally unphased by the other person. It is just simple laughter, both imaginative and optimistic, accentuating the more the comic relief heaped on individuals, plots, circumstances of life. It would lead one above the situation, to laughter, to be totally detached from what makes him/ her laugh – but one that would rally the forces of those on his/ her side. This would result from this expression of wisdom and good humor. It is a humor that communicates a new aspect, previously not noticed, a new dimension. Only a God could exhibit such

superior humor, neither really amused nor irritated, which gives the impression that there would be a judicious response forthcoming. There might be a nuance of some sadness in it, or a kind of pity that might accompany it.

c. Blaise Pascal offered profound insights into the terrifying aspect of this divine ‘laughter’, but adds judiciously from the testimony of the Fathers: this divine laughter can be at times more suited to bringing about the return of human beings to their responsibilities – then, it is a manifestation of justice, with an view to eventual conversion.

d. To interpret this anthropomorphism, Jerome notes that it is not so much that God would deride someone, but that we should realize that some of our ventures truly are laughable. In Israel, the anthropomorphic language is in contrast with what takes in the non-believing world, a literary necessity for the faith in the living God. It is because God, Who is living, can be thought of as a living human being. Furthermore, it is also provides the ability of being able to speak of Him as of a human being, that one is constantly reminded that God indeed is living.

**v. 5: *then, angrily He addresses them, in a rage He strikes them with a panic...***

The divine decision comes in reply to a hostile plot. Yahweh has taken a central decision, which stupefies His opponents and paralyzes their efforts at revolt cf. Ps 48:5, f.; 83:16, 18; Gn 45:3].

**v. 6: *This is My king, installed by Me, on Zion, My Holy Mountain...***

a. This determination has as its purpose that of endowing Israel, in the person of the Psalmist himself – or, in the name of the one speaking – with a theocratic monarchy. There should be noted the emphatic tone of the pronoun of introduction, and the effect of surprise resulting from this unusual and brusque introduction.

b. The allusion is evident in view of the sacred relic, held in Jerusalem, the Holy Ark, as is envisaged by Nathan, concerning the Davidic dynasty [cf. 2 S 7:11-16]. Thus in its very nature, this manifestation of the sacred, under divine guarantee, the indefectible solidarity of Yahweh and of the King of Israel, and consequently, the fact that the enemies’ cause is simply untenable: Yahweh will sustain the king’s inviolability and that He will provide a triumph for Yahwism in the world [cf. Ps 132: 11-18; Is 37:33-35]. There is here a juridical factor inherent to the context, according to the conception of the ancient Middle East, in the very concept of the ‘sacred’. Hence, by the Covenant instituted between Yahweh and Israel, the divine determination stands out, as the very response to the bold wishful thinking noted in v. 3 of throwing off the divine yoke, and this simply introduces vv. 7-9: You

are My Son – I will give you an iron scepter to shatter these enemies! Furthermore, it is clear that far from considering this some entire distant event, the text supposes this as a fact soon to be realized, that will be inserted in the contemporary situation. Thus with this view to an immediate fulfillment, this is not some long-distance eschatological dream.

c. The etymology of Mount **Sion** is uncertain: from one possible etymology it could mean *denuded locale, barren* - others opt for a possible root meaning of *fortress*, and still another, a *fountain* - and yet others opt for *sign* [cf. Jr 31:21; Ezk 39: 15]. Here **Sion** still seems to retain its original designation of the capital city of Israel, and of the dynasty. With the passing of time, particularly under the influence of Isaiah, Sion designates in an exclusive fashion, in a strictly religious sense, **that place inhabited by Yahweh, the temple** [cf. Ps 68:17; 74:2; 76:3; 78:69; 122:9; 132:13-14; 135:21; Jr 31:6] – or, **the holy mountain** [cf. Ps 3:5; 15:1; 43:3; 99:9; Is 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11; 66:20; Jr 31:23; Ezk 20:40; Zc 8:3]. Eventually, **Jerusalem** will be its equivalent, in the particularly political sense, **the City of the Holy People, the Capital of Israel**. As to the origin and the history of Sion as Jerusalem, many studies are available [cf. G. Auzou].

**St. Augustine's Commentary on this Verse:** Christ rules over Sion, the Church: ... this statement [v. 7] is obviously put into the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

But, as for Zion, if it means **Look-out Post**, as some translate it we should understand it as nothing other than the **Church**, whose gaze is daily lifted with longing toward the contemplation of God's glory. ***We, with unveiled faces, contemplate the glory of the Lord*** [2 Co 3:18]. This, then, is the meaning: 'I have been established by Him as King over His Holy Church, which He calls a **mountain** because of its lofty dignity and stability: ***I have been established by Him as King***. I, whose claims they were plotting to burst asunder, whose yoke they planned to throw away. *Preaching His decree, yes, - who does not experience this, when it is being done repeatedly, day after day?*<sup>3</sup>

**v. 7:** ***Let me proclaim Yahweh's decree; He has told me: You are My son, today I have become your Father.*** . This is **the Solemn Promulgation of the Divine Decree of Investiture**, noted by the beneficiary himself, the Psalmist himself – or the one for whom he is speaking.

a. There is being depicted here the custom of placing upon the new King the diadem [cf. Ps 89:40] and the various insignia of his Dignity – the **Decree**, or official act promulgating this testimony, witness to one's being elevated to the royalty [cf. 2 K 11:12; Ps 89:40]. Scholars know of an Egyptian text presented as

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, ***Expositions on the Psalms***. Hyde Park NY: New City Press 200. Vol. I, pp. 72, ff.

quoting Amnon-Ra in the declaration of establishing for the centuries the dignity of his Queen Hateschepsout [cf. R. DeVaux, OP]. The ancient Gloss on this passage has simply wanted to call to mind that the Decree had been known by the party most affected by it, as may be noted in other analogous biblical passages [cf. 1 S 11:6, for Saul 2 S 23:2, f., for David; 1 K 3:5; 9:2, for Solomon; 2 K 9:3, for Jehu; 2 K 19:20-24, for Hezekiah.

b. According to a conception common throughout antiquity, the royal investiture expresses itself **in a ritual of filial adoption by the divinity**. The Code of Hammurabi has, on the juridical plane, this clarifying clause: ***The Adopting says to the adopted – you are my son!*** - and if the one being adopted wanted to break the bond, he would respond: ***But you are not my father!***

c. On the religious plane regarding relationships between one and another, the effects of the adoption are capital realities. When the god of a nation 'adopted for his own son' a member of this nation, the deity would delegate to this individual all the rights for this nation: the Chosen One became before the People, the **representative** of the divinity, his *other self*. To the Pharaoh, for example, Aman-ra declares: *I am your father!* And this deity presents himself as having **generated** his adopted son, in order for him to take over the throne of Upper and Lower Egypt. In fact, the heavenly investiture would authenticate, with regard to the entire people, the divine origin of the prerogatives of the monarch: his authority is nothing less than that of the god himself, and his government, and this would always be considered to have to be exercised in the name of, and under the direction of, the national deity. Thus there is clearly established in the fact of other nations, the foundation of the identity of the causes, equally incarnate in the person of the King, of the god and of his people [cf. Dt 32:18; Nb 11:12; 1 K 3:5].

d. However, in Israel, the divine filiation of the king took on an even more profound meaning, of a **theological order**, and assumes a **messianic character**. The Davidic King indeed, is distinguished from all its peers [cf. Ps 45:8; 2 S 7:14-16; 23:5], of all that is on earth, to the exclusion of every other **representative of the true God**, who incarnates in his own person, the **Covenant**, drawn up in the time of Moses. This **protocol of the Divine Adoption** was and remains the **collective prerogative** of the People of Israel [cf. Ex 4:22, 23; 19:5, 6; Dt 14:1, 2; Si 36:14]. He, then, is the chief beneficiary of the **Divine Promises**, made under the seal of the Covenant, guaranteeing his dynasty, with the **special love** of Yahweh, the eternal possession of the royalty [cf. Ps 89: 27-30; 132:11-14; 2 S 7:12, 13, 16, 29].

e. Furthermore, the absolute character of the words: **You are my son** – directs our attention unwaveringly toward the mysterious notion of **filiation** – not

purely metaphorical but in some manner, real and transcendent - even though still within the **created** order, and above all, contrasted with any concept of an **eternal birth**. Therefore, this is indeed a unique filiation, more or less whereby one would be crowned thereby as among the successors of David, and also the great expected descendant, the **Messiah** [cf. Is 9:5-6; 11:1-5; Dn 7:13-18].

f. The use of the word **today** reinforces this conviction. If the word has first of all and fundamentally an historical sense, it draws on the solemnity of the context, as the Document to the Hebrews will understand it [cf. Heb 1:5, 8; 5:5-10]. In Heb 3:7-4:7, it takes on a hierarchical meaning which ties the word in with a definite time-period in order to introduce it into **an era of perpetuity**. Some would limit this word **today** more in the manner with it in its much-repeated usage in Dt [cf. 26:16-19], implying a simple juridical invitation **to actualize the events of the past into a present cultic sense** - with a view to preparing for an eschatological event.

g. Furthermore, the notion of **divine filiation** will never take on in the OT an **ontological sense** or **any precise doctrinal content**. It is not without purpose that Jesus Christ would always prefer, the apocalyptic title **the Son of Man**, inspired of Dn 7, in order to affirm His supernatural reality [cf. Mk 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:8, 11, 30]. O. Cullman has pointed out that with regard to the Baptism of Jesus [cf. Mk 1:11, par.], the text from Ps 2:7 can be imposed as a text that is parallel to **Is 42:1, the Servant of the Lord**, in command of the reward of the voice *from the heavens*.

**St. Augustine's Commentary: The Eternal Son of God:** ... It might seem that the day on which Jesus Christ was born in human form is here spoken of prophetically, but the statement is more probably to be referred to **His eternal birth**. The word **today** signifies the present, and in **eternity** there is nothing, which is past, as though it had ceased to be, nor future, as though not yet in existence: **there is present only**, because whatever is eternal, always is. By this phrase: **Today I have begotten You**, the most true and Catholic faith proclaims **the eternal generation** of the Power and Wisdom of God [cf. 1 Co 1:24], Who is the Only-Begotten Son.<sup>4</sup>

**NT Echo:** ... *So, You are a King, then... It is you who say it...Yes, I am a King...* [Jn 18:36, ff.]

*... On his cloak and on his thigh, there was a name written: The King of Kings and the Lord of lords...* [cf. Rv 19:16].

**v. 8:** ... *Ask, and I will give You the nations for your heritage, the ends of the earth for your domain ...*

---

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Expositions* ... l.c.



a. This is the immediate consequence of divine royalty: **the inheritance** [cf. Gn 17:8; Dt 4:21; 32:49]. There is here a necessary relationship, brought out rather emphatically by Jr 3:19: ... And ***I was thinking: How I wanted to rank you with My sons and give you a country of delights, the fairest heritage of all the nations! I had thought you would call Me: My Father!*** Only here, since all the nations, each and every one, and without exception, all belong to Yahweh [cf. Ps 24:1, ff.], the heritage includes all the nations of the world. It is upon them all that the King will be called upon to exercise the very authority of God [cf. Ps 22:28; 59:14; 69:8; 72:8; 82:8; 98:3; Is 45:22; Jr 16:19].

b. Therefore, the early notion of the heritage, limited to Canaan, was then meant to be the domain proper to Yahweh, the Holy Land, the Chosen People [cf. Ps 78:55; 105:11] – has now expanded and is extended to the entire known world, along the lines of Am 9:12; Is 60:12; Ac 15:16-18. As once the Nations were promised as Israel's inheritance [cf. Dt 20:16], and to Jacob an assembly of Peoples with Canaan in possession [cf. Gn 48:1] – likewise here, the totality of the nations is promised to the Davidic King, to be one day his empire. As noted by the Prophets [cf. Mi 5:3; Zc 9:10], this King is called to establish His reign even to the far ends of the earth – the ultimate gift of God.

c. The perspective here of universal domination, as in 2 S 7, Nathan's Oracle, goes far beyond the immediate possibilities of the envisaged monarchy, and is opened up without any contestation, to the **Messianic Future** [cf. Ps 22:28; 67; 8; 72:8; 1 S 2:10; Is 45:22; 52:10]. Jesus Himself will echo this verse when He declares: ***all things have been entrusted to Me by the Father*** [cf. Mt 11:27; cf. Ac 10:42; Ph 2:9]. Likewise Heb 1:2 has the same idea. Judaism will eventually be convinced: Israel, the People-Messiah, has the confines of the earth incessantly being transformed, nor will the nations which disappear like a cloud ever be in the way. There will be an eternal life – at the end of days, with eternal life, all the rest who remain will come to the Messiah.

**St. Augustine's Commentary:** The Salvation of all Nations: ... This verse, on the contrary, is to be understood in a temporal sense, of the manhood He took upon Himself, He Who **offered Himself** as a **sacrifice** to supersede all sacrifices, and intercedes for us still [cf. Rm 8:34]. The words, ask ***of Me***, then, may be referred to the whole temporal dispensation for the benefit of the human race, namely, that the nations are to be joined to the name of Christ and so redeemed from death, and become God's possession. ***I will give You the nations as Your heritage*** - means: May You possess them for their salvation, and may they bear for you spiritual fruit. ***And the ends of the earth for Your possession:*** here the same idea is repeated. ***The ends of the earth*** replaces ***nations***, to make it clearer that all the nations are envisaged, and ***your possession*** instead of the previous ***your heritage***. .

**NT Echo:** ... *This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him* ... [cf. Mt 21:38; Mk 12:6, 7] - ...*God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, Abba, Father! And it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave any more, and if God made you a son, then He has made you heir...* [cf. Ga 4:7]

**v. 9: ... *With iron scepter you will break them...***

a. The Master of the Nations, the king will handle everything according to His own discretion – He is also endowed with the power of destroying. The metaphor does not leave room for much doubt. The ‘scepter’ here is not some sign merely of power and authority, but seems to be presented here as a most awesome war-like instrument, made of iron – perhaps a new metal for that era, of recent discovery. Perhaps at this period, iron was more rare than gold – and was only in possession of the Babylonian and Egyptian kings. In a very ancient stele, now a museum piece, an ancient monarch is shown brandishing a weapon of fearsome destruction. This came to be a common instrument, one of universal usage, one that would strike fear in the hearts of even sturdy soldiers. One of these early eastern monarchs bombastically boasted that with his weaponry he could decree the life and death of surrounding monarchs, imposing on anyone he chose a most harsh yoke.

b. Therefore, the sovereign and implacable power of the Yahwist prince [cf. Ps 110:6; Is 11:3-4] is so endowed with awesome power. The King-Messiah will be endowed with judiciary acumen. This becomes an apocalyptic image in the book of revelations – the monarch is presented in the guise of a formidable, unstoppable warrior [cf. Rv 2:27; 12:5; 19:15].

**v. 9 b: ... *you will shatter them like potter’s ware!***

This verse provides a symbol of the ease with which the King will handle his enemies – as well as presenting an image of the definitive character of their annihilation, without any hope of relief from any side [cf. Is 30:14; Jr 19:11; 22:28; Pr 6:15]. This seems to echo an Egyptian ritual of the shattered glass. The Pharaoh would have the names of his enemies inscribed on the fragile pottery that would be shattered in a rage, a kind of voodoo ritual of annihilation of all the hostile nations so listed. The king is threatening to employ the very power of God against the hostile milieu [cf. Is 10:5; 11:4; 14:6; 51:20, 23; Jr 13:14; 19:11].

**St. Augustine’s Commentary:** Spiritual Rule over the earth: the iron rod refers to **unbending justice**, and *you will dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel*, i.e., you will dash to pieces in them **earthly desires** and **the muddy preoccupations of the old man**, and whatever has been contracted, or implanted from the slime of sin.

***And now...*** it is speaking to these ‘kings’ who are renewed already. You whose grimy garments have been destroyed, those carnal implements of delusion which belong to your former life, ***understand now***; you are already kings; you are strong enough to subdue whatever in you is servile and brutish, and strong enough to fight, not like people beating the air, but chastening your bodies and bringing them into subjection [cf. 1 Co 9:26-27]. ***So be instructed all you who judge the earth.*** The same idea is expressed twice: be ***instructed*** has the same meaning as ***understand***, and ***you who judge the earth as kings***; for by those who judge the earth, he means ***spiritual persons***. Whatever we judge is beneath us, and whatever is beneath a spiritual person is rightly called *earth*, because it is impaired by earthly taint.<sup>5</sup>

***v. 10: ... So now, you kings, learn wisdom, earthly rulers, be warned, serve Yahweh and fear Him....***

Properly instructed by the decision of Yahweh for the benefit of His own People, the opponents – leaders and subjects as well - will come to understand that in attacking Israel, they will hurl themselves against the All-Powerful ‘Son of Yahweh.’ They are being cajoled to use good sense in renouncing any attempt of any rebellion destined to be defeated: they are getting all agitated, all frothing at the mouth, in a vain cause! [cf. Ps 8:32; Ws 6:1]. The title of Judge is often used of governments [cf. 1 K 3:9; 2 K 15:5; Ps 148:11; Is 60:23; Mi 4:14; Dn 9:12; Pr 8:16].

***St. Augustine’s Commentary:*** The Understanding of Kings: ... ***Serve the Lord in reverence.*** This is said lest the previous address: ***you kings, who judge the earth*** - might tempt you to arrogance. ***And rejoice before Him with awe:*** most appropriately is ***rejoice*** added, in case the exhortation: ***serve the Lord in reverence***, might induce gloom; but then to ensure that such an invitation does not itself lead the believers into rashness, the Psalm adds: ***with awe***, to urge caution and the careful preservation of holiness.

***And now, you kings, understand*** can also be interpreted as follows: ‘Now that I am established as king, do not be despondent as though your pre-eminence had been taken from you; but understand rather and be instructed.’ It is to your advantage not to exercise lordship irresponsibly, but to serve the Lord of all reverence, and rejoice in most certain and most pure blessedness, while exercising due caution and consideration to avoid falling away from it through pride.<sup>6</sup>

***vv. 11, 12 a: ... tremble and kiss His feet! Or He will be angry with you and you will perish...***

---

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine, *Expositions...*l.c.

<sup>6</sup> ib.

a. For all who would rebel, the best counsel still is: rather than be subjected, simply accept the terms of settlement in good stead, with the presence of Yahweh in Canaan, and be submitted to the sovereignty of Yahweh and His Anointed [cf. Ps 18:44; 72:11; 102:33; 34:12; 111:10; cf. Jr 6:8].

b. The ritual of kissing one's feet is part of the oriental ceremonial of homage for a sovereign. There is a similar metaphor not infrequently noted in Scripture [cf. Is 49:23; Mi 7:17]. Here addressed to Yahweh, it is an anthropomorphism that is rather bold, but also significant. It provides explicit recognition and without reserve for the true God. The 'kiss on the mouth' was given to Joseph in recognition of his elevation to the superintendence over Egypt by the Pharaoh [cf. Gn 41:40] – or the kiss given by Samuel to Saul, as a sign of deference with regard to the Anointed One of Yahweh [cf. 1 S 10:1] – or even those ritual kisses given to idols by their adorers.

c. St. Hilary will note here: this gesture is prophetic of Jesus putting on all of human nature, both sinful and fallen. To adhere to Him, means to embrace in our response the One who offers us His divine nature!

**v. 12 b, c ...for His anger is very quick to blaze!**

Once again, in the long run this is for the interest of those in opposition, to keep in mind the Divine Wrath, which can be terrible [cf. Ps 18:8-16; 60:3; 79:5; 83:14-19]. It is proper, moreover, not to put off **submission**, for the wrath of God might become unleashed in a sudden manner, totally overwhelming the opponents [cf. Ps 83:5; Is 30:27; Jr 21:12]. In brief, in a strong and almost stark manner, the warning has gone out to the princes, to those responsible, in the form of a kind of warning, if not an ultimatum. The choice is either 'take it or leave it': the choice is either spontaneous submission, implying association with the King-Messiah – or, merciless destruction. There is no other alternative. This is the proposal from Dt 6:13, ff. ... ***Fear the Lord Yahweh and serve Him, or His wrath will lash out, and He will make you disappear from the face of the earth!!!*** [cf. Is 60:12; Mi 7:17; N1:6].

**v.12 d: ... Happy are all who take shelter in Him!**

a. This is a liturgical votive offering, inspired by Na 1:7 – where the 'benedictions' are announced for those who will put their trust in Yahweh. This is what follows immediately the threat of a divine barrage of maledictions against all recalcitrants, and, as it seems most likely, this style of concluding gentleness and inspiration is assisted by the desire to give to this Psalm a final conclusion less bitter [cf. similar stylistic additions: Ps 104:35 c; Ps 139:23-24]. Beyond any doubt the intention was to bring out with this insertion an antithetic phrase, one that would be most appropriate – a doctrinal accord with all that proceeded.

b. In whatever manner some of these hypotheses may be considered, some amelioration indeed was needed to be added to the rather heavy perspective, the authentic alternative of the good realized in docility to God [cf. Ps 40:5; 146:5; Pr 16:20; Jr 17:7]. This gives an entirely different tonality to the Psalm which would have been remembered primarily for its bellicose threats leveled against those thinking of insurrection and repression. This verse is like a **rainbow** promising peace, when the storm has passed [cf. Ps 5:12; 7:2; 11; 16:1; 18; 3, 31; 29:11]. On His part, God is only good – it is the sinner who should dread His justice. As Tertullian put it: He is the best in goodness, and most just in our regard. God's final enjoiner, before taking up sanctions, is that of inviting all His adversaries to enter into a Covenant with Him, in accepting His sovereignty [cf. Is 30:2]. The divine 'appeal' is to make with him a 'pledge of allegiance' in the manner that is often demanded in the biblical world [cf. Jgs 9:15].

c. There are some who conclude, from this final verse that concludes the threats that this Psalm was adapted for the Liturgies of Coronation in Jerusalem – but, this cannot be proven of course [cf. Ps 96:4, 5, 8, 12].

### Christian Orientation

[1] In praying this Psalm 2, the Christian ponders with joy and recognition on Jesus Christ, that **His glorious resurrection** has officially constituted Him King over individuals and nations [cf. Rm 1:3-4]. The believer contemplates that Jesus' messianic activity has had for its ultimate purpose that goal of inciting men and women to prepare themselves, by a sincere conversion, to prepare for the final judgment before God. The appeal is: ***Repent! Because the Reign of God is at hand!*** [cf. Mt 4:17]. One might think of St. Paul, overwhelmed by this prophetic vision of Jesus Christ, knew enough to discover in Jesus Christ that end in view of which all things were created. The committed believer comes to realize that the end of this present world, the end of History, and consequently, the objective that all creation has in view – the Divine Wisdom in Whom dwells the fullness of the Divinity. In Him is all the supremacy over all beings of creation [cf. Col 1:15-20].

[2] Surely, to this point Jesus Christ has indeed triumphed over the world without using any scepter of cold iron, without shattering anyone who would stand in His way, without ever breaking down the bruised reed [cf. Mt 12:20]. Rather, He brandishes only His 'weapons' in His message of pardon and love. However, His Mercy remains demanding: initial meekness does not obliterate final justice. ***Depart from Me, you who are wicked, into everlasting fire!*** [cf. Mt 25:41]. The Wrath of the God of Love and that of the Lamb of Meekness will lash out [cf. Rv 6:16-17: ***rocks and mountains – fall on us and hide us from the One Who sits on the Throne and from the anger of the Lamb...*** This would destroy forever the

unchained forces of evil [cf. Jn 12:31]. This provides all the more reason to use this Psalm for the purpose of obtaining that Redemptive Grace that all human beings might recognize as the authentic good fortune of the nations and to submit to the Divine Law, and to hand oneself over lovingly to Christ the King, without any fear of losing their legitimate independence. Here alone is the salvation of the world.

[3] Furthermore, in the Psalter, the Christian will never find any other Poem which adapts itself with such ease to the stages of one's **liturgical life**, that he/ she will in this Meditation on the Royalty of Jesus Christ. Here lies a veritable metaphysic of Universal History. In the end, Christ will prove victorious over all evil: **... to those who prove victorious, and keep working for me until the end, I will give the authority over the pagans, which I myself have been given by My Father, to rule with iron scepter and shatter them like earthenware. And I will give him the Morning Star....** [Rv 2:26-28].

[4] This Psalm is prayed on Sundays with its antiphon inspired by vv.11-12. It is contemplated on all the Feasts of the Lord, at Christmas and the Epiphany. It is prayed on Good Friday – on Easter – for the celebration of Christ the King – the Feast of the Precious Blood and the exaltation of the Holy Cross – and to commemorate Martyrs.



**St. Thomas Aquinas**

**Commentary on Ps 2<sup>7</sup>**

**v. 6: *But I am appointed King by Him over Sion, His Holy Mountain, preaching His commandment.***

a. He is making known that He has been established by God as King over Jerusalem – and that He has led the people to God by His teaching, put in other terms: these others act as they do, but they cannot have a proper intention. He states: ***I have been appointed*** - i.e., in a stable manner, as ***King over Sion***, i.e., over the People of the Jews who were in Jerusalem, whose citadel is on Sion, i.e., by God.

b. The Lord has been my aid – I will not be afraid of anything a human being may do to me [cf. Ps 117:6]. ***You yourself must take my own guarantee since no one cares to clasp his hand on mine*** [cf. Jb 17:3]. ***But I am appointed King over***

<sup>7</sup> Thomas d'Aquin. *Commentaire sur les Psaumes*. Paris: duCerf 1996, pp. 49, ff.

***His Holy Mountain, not*** for myself, but so that the people might respond according to the Law of God – this is why the text reads: ***preaching His commandment.***

c. But, in the mystical sense He has been established King in virtue of this line from Jeremiah: ***... a virtuous Branch for David Who will reign as true king and be wise, practicing honesty and integrity in the land*** [cf. Jr 23:5]. This is ***on Sion***, i.e., on the Church of the Jews, which is called ***the holy mountain***. The reason is because ***it first received the rays of the sun***. I have been sent only for the lost sheep of the House of Israel [cf. Mt 15:24].

d. Is it that I do not know that I have become today the King over Israel? ***Preaching His commandment***, i.e., His Gospel in its totality, or rather this particular precept, of which he has said: ***I am giving you a new Commandment: that is that you love one another...*** [cf. Jn 13:34]. Or indeed: ***this is My commandment, i.e., that you love one another as I have loved you*** [cf. Jn 15:12]. Or, this commandment which He personally preached to the Jews, i.e., in His own Person: ***Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom*** [cf. Mt 4:23]. And the Apostle Paul says in this regard: ***The reason why Christ became the servant of the circumcised Jews was not only so that God could faithfully carry out the promises made to the patriarchs, it was also to get the pagans to give glory to God for His mercy...*** [cf. Rm 15:8].

***v. 7: ... The Lord has said to Me: You are My Son; this day I have begotten You.*** – The Lord makes known beginning with this same history how He conducts Himself with regard to the Nations. And in this regard, He makes known two truths:

a. ***He begins by showing that Power over the Nations is fitting for Christ to exercise:***

1.] In treating of this matter, the Psalmist shows first of all on what right this is based. Then he exposes the bestowal of this power. Thus he states: ***The Lord has said to me.*** This word was not totally fulfilled in the person of David, and that is why he extends it here to include Christ, to Whom pertains the power over the nations according to a two-fold right: i.e., by inheritance, as: ***The Lord has said to Me: You are My Son***, etc. and: by merit, ***Ask of Me...!***

a.] ***By Inheritance:*** The Christ is the King of all, as is said in the Document to the Hebrews [cf. Heb 1:2 – the reading may be ***heir***] and this is in virtue of His quality as Son. ***If He is the Son, he is also the heir*** [cf. Ga 4:7]. And this is why the Psalmist treats of the ***eternal generation*** of Jesus with regard to which, three points come to the fore:

- the manner of His generation: this is indicated in this same statement: ***the Lord has said to Me***, i.e., He has proceeded in the manner of thought. Each type of **generation** is made according to its proper manner. The manner of **generation** of the divine nature is not carnal, but **intellectual**, even though it is that of thought itself. Thus, this generation is a **procession according to origin**, such as would be encountered in the intelligible **reality**, in the sense where **the conception of the Word proceeds from the intellect**. And that means **the Word in the heart**. And this is why he states: The ***Lord has said, as though in the act of speaking He has generated Me***. Thus, **the Son is the Word which the Father has said**, i.e., has **produced in generating**.
- the distinctive character of this Filiation: this is shown when he says; ***My Son***, not by adoption, as those of whom it is said: ***He has given them the power to become sons of God; to those who believe in His Name; who are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God*** [cf. Jn1:12, f.]. He is Son by nature. This is why He says: ***You are My Son***, by nature, unique, consubstantial: ***this is My beloved Son*** [cf. Mt 3:17].
- the eternity of this generation: this is exposed in the words, ***today I have generated You*** - i.e., eternally. For this generation is not new, but eternal. And this is why He says: ***today I have generated You***, for the word ***today*** designates presence, and that which is eternal lasts forever. He also says: ***I have generated You***, and not simply I generated You, so that there might be signified the **perfection** of this generation: for as generation is brought about without movement, to be generated and to have been generated, are one and the same action. He says further: ***today***, so that there might be signified the actual and glorious presence which echoes in Jesus Christ: ***He Who dwells in inaccessible Light*** [cf. 1 Tm 6:16]. And this means that He truly is, in Whom nothing is past, or future, but all in one in Whom all is clear.

b.] By Merit: ... ***Ask of Me, and I will give you the Gentiles for your inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for your possession.*** [v. 8].

Up above, the Psalmist exposed the privilege of eternal generation which confers on Christ the power to rule the nations in virtue of his inheritance rights: here, he shows that He has acquired this right by merit.

To explain this, it is necessary to offer the following consideration: just as in natural realities matter is informed with a view to its dispositive capacity; thus, in **spiritual realities**, God gratuitously dispenses His Gifts: ***It is God, Who, for His own living purpose, puts both the will and the action into you*** [cf. Ph 2:13]. And this is why He wills that we should receive His Gifts by asking for them, and praying for



them. And He has willed to show us this example in Jesus Christ, in having Him ask for that which was His by right of inheritance.

Now this petition made with a view to calling out to the nations, can be understood in two manners:

- first of all, by prayer, for He prays for them: ***I do not pray for these only, but also for those who by the word of these will come to believe in Me*** [cf. Jn 17:20]
- likewise, by His Passion: ***He brings a New Covenant, as the Mediator, only so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance may actually receive what was promised: His death took place to cancel the sins that infringed the earlier Covenant*** [cf. Heb 9:15]. Such a petition clearly was not in vain, since in everything, ***He submitted so humbly that His prayer was heard*** [cf. Heb 5:7]. This is why He has made mention of the gift when he adds: ***And I will give you the nations.***

It should be noted here that nothing comes to us in Christ if it is not a gift from the Father. ***No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me, draws him*** [cf. Jn 6:44]. Now making a donation of the nations is purely a gift: for the Jews had been as though given back, since they had been His earlier: ***I say that Christ Jesus had been the minister of the circumcision I*** [cf. Rm 15:8]. And this is why the text reads: ***And I will give you the nations***, i.e., those who had been submitted to You and that these become Your heritage: ***so that in the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in the heavens, on earth, and under the earth*** [cf. Ph 2:10] – ***Who stands by His pledge at any cost*** [cf. Ps 15:6].

Furthermore, He does not possess them in the manner of servants, as Peter or Paul, but in so far as He is indeed the Master: ... ***It is true that Moses was faithful in the House of God, as a Servant, acting as witness to the things which were to be divulged later; but Christ was faithful as a Son and as the Master of the House...*** [cf. He 3:5]. And this is why the text reads: ***Your possession: ... It is not enough for you to be My servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob, and bring back the survivors of Israel; I will make you the Light of the Nations so that My salvation might reach the end of the earth*** [cf. Is 49:6].

And the text adds: ***to the ends of the earth*** – because the Church has been established in the whole world. But, later some of the faithful apostatized because of the Heresy of Nicholas or Mohammed. Now, the Church awaits to be founded: ***God has established Him the Heir of all*** [cf. Heb 1:2].

2.] ***With iron scepter You will break them, and shatter them like a potter's water*** [v. 9].

- Then the text reads: ***You will break them.*** This exposes the carrying out of His power over the nations. And according to the historical sense, it is necessary to know that David had been established as King of the Jews. He also reigned over certain other nations which he had subdued, all of which served as **a figure of the universal sovereignty of Jesus Christ**. However, it is clear that it is one matter the manner of reigning over the citizens, i.e. under **a regimen of mercy**, and it is quite something else to have submitted one's enemies, i.e., under a regimen of rigorous justice. This is why the text reads: ***with iron scepter.***

But, even more it is better to apply these words to the **spiritual sovereignty** of Jesus Christ. For indeed it is necessary that He is the One Who rules be endowed with a scepter: ***It is a scepter of fairness which is the scepter of Your Reign.*** [cf. Ps 44:7]. And because Christ has been established King by God in order to rule the people, the text reads: ***You will shatter them with a scepter of iron.*** And there is added: ***of iron,*** in order to signify the discipline of justice. For the scepter with which the Jews were submitted was not one of iron, since they gave themselves excuses often to adore idols. But, the scepter with which Jesus reigns over the nations is one of iron, so that the Jews would no longer reject Christ's sovereignty, since the totality of the nations had entered the Church: ***The woman brought a male child into the world, the Son Who was to rule over the nations with an iron scepter*** [cf. Rv 12:3].

- ***shatter them like potter's ware.*** This verse is explained in this passage from the book of Jeremiah: ***So, I went down to the potter's house and there he was working at the wheel And whatever the vessel he was making, came out wrong, as it happens with the clay handled by potters, he would start afresh and work it into another vessel*** [Jr 18:3, ff.] and the application follows: ***And as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in mine.*** Indeed, as long as the potter's ware is new, it can easily be broken if it is mal-formed and it has been restored into some new shape.

Thus, the Jews were converted, and they also have to be shattered; for their faith is the same as ours. But, the gentiles were idolaters, and that is why they have to be shattered in order to receive another form. I.e., another faith, which is genuine. ***You will shatter them with a scepter of iron,*** i.e. the good, ***and like potter's ware you will shatter them,*** i.e., the wicked who finally have to be shattered. ***He is destined for the fall and the rising of many in Israel*** [cf. Lk 2:34].

***A breach on the point of collapse, which suddenly and all at once comes crashing down, irretrievably shattered, smashed like an earthenware pot – so that of the***

*fragments not one shard remains big enough to carry a cinder from the hearth, or scoop water from the cistern.* [cf. Is 30: 13, f.]. *Meanwhile let the sinner go on sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let those who do good, go on doing good* [cf. Rv 22:11].

3.] *And now, O you kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth* [v. 10] - **And now** - the text shows the conduct asked of the kings. He represses them in admonishing them and in winning them over to the service of God: a] He begins by exposing His warning; b.] then there is assigned the reason for this: serve **the Lord with fear and trembling - lest at any time, the Lord be angry.**

a.] **His warning** opens three aspects: on the truth of the doctrine; on the humility of submission: **Serve the Lord, etc.**; on the reception of the correction: **receive instruction.** Human beings can know truth in two ways: either by **discovery**; and such as these rightfully are qualified as **intelligent**; or by **being taught**, and such as these are qualified as being **docile**. In like manner, there are two kinds of those governing: to certain ones, there is confided **universal government**: these are **kings**. To others, there is entrusted particular judgment: and these are **judges**. The text exhorts the former to comprehend: for the intelligent man will learn the art of governing [cf. Pr 1:5] And the latter let themselves be taught, i.e., to receive from others the *forum* of judgment. And that is why the text reads: **understand, and receive instruction... Listen kings, and understand; be instructed, judges of the confines of the earth** [Sgs 6:2????].

**vv. 11, 12:** ... *Serve the Lord with fear; and rejoice with Him in trembling. Embrace discipline: lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way...*

Then the text goes on to say: **Serve** - and there is indicated the type of service sought, after having spoken of intelligence. For the **service of God** is *latría*, is a **profession of faith**. And this is why that there is required first of all **to believe**, and then **to confess one's faith** and **to serve**. **For with the heart, we believe unto justice, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation** [cf. Rm 10:10]

And the text continues: **the Lord** - for the one who serves human beings, it suffices that one should submit oneself to another by exterior obedience; while for the one who serves God, it is necessary that one should submit oneself to Him with a **heart that is well disposed**: **Now my soul will be submitted to God** [cf. Ps 61:6].

Then there is read: **with fear**, for the one who persists in the way of holiness it is not enough that one be preserved from sin, according to this warning of Scripture: **Wherefore, he that thinks himself to stand, take heed lest he fall** [cf. 1 Cp 10:12]. And one will note, with St. Augustine, that the king serves God in so far as he is a man living a faithful life; but, in so far as this man is king, in bearing laws against that which opposed God's justice. This is why **the constitution of the Church is**

**prefigured in this Psalm.** For from its origin, there have been kings of the earth who would prescribe laws against Jesus Christ and Christians, but from this time on, they will promulgate only laws in favor of Jesus Christ.

The text shows its cognizance of the first attitude here when it says: **lest the Lord be angry**; the second attitude is indicated in these words: **serve the Lord**. But for fear that such service might give the impression of being a penalty, the text adds: **and rejoice unto Him with trembling**. For the fear of the Lord is not made out of penalty, but out of joy, as it states in Leviticus that Aaron responded to Moses: **How can the Lord be pleased with a sad spirit** [cf. Lv 10:19]. But, then out of fear that this joy might tend toward presumption, or negligence, the text adds: **with trembling** - which is the effect of sudden fear. **Work out your salvation in fear and trembling!** [cf. Ph 2:12].

The text then exhorts one to accept this, as it adds: **Embrace discipline**. This is so that a person might not live just according to his own whims, but as is fitting. And this is why there is then stated that it is **discipline** that should be embraced, i.e., the precepts, good morals, or a kind of help and defense in adversity **And Your discipline corrects me** [cf. Ps 17:36].

b.] And the text then exposes the reason for its warning, when it states: **lest at any time the Lord be angry**. And this reason is two-fold: to avoid chastisement, and to obtain glory: **blessed are all they who trust in Him**.

The text notes: **with fear**. This is stated by reason of God's patience, the delay of which is experienced in this world: **God is a just judge, strong and patient; Is He angry every day?** And it continues: **except you will be converted** [cf. Ps 7:12, f.] - which means in other terms: heed My warning out of fear that there may not be time enough before the time of punishment comes.

**And you perish from the just way** i.e., outside of justice and the society of the good, which is a great chastisement for those who have tasted the sweetness of His justice. In his translation, *According to the Hebrews*, Jerome reads: Lest **you perish from the way** - but the word **just** is not found here. What is meant here is that even when a man has been a long time in this world, he is as though in a state of still being *on the way*, for he can always fall, just as one may not fall from the way, but along the way. But, if one leaves 'the way' entirely, his situation is irreparable. **And because no one understands, they shall be cut down from morning until evening** [cf. Jb 4:20]. And the text goes on:

**... When His wrath shall be kindled in a short time, blessed are all they that trust in Him...**

The text exposes here the other reason which consists in the acquisition of glory, put in other terms: **Embrace discipline** because **when His wrath shall be kindled in a short time, blessed are they who trust in Him**. This is rightly stated: **when His wrath shall be kindled in a short time** - for now as a father, this is not kindled in chastisement – but, at the Last Judgment, His wrath will swallow them up and burn them when it will punish them with an eternal chastisement: **Behold the name of the Lord comes from afar; His wrath burns and is heavy to bear. His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire** [cf. Is 30: 27]. This is why this Judgment will be brief and will not last a thousand years as Lactantius has said. Scripture says: **In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...** [cf. 1 Co 15:52]. And then all the good will be changed into the glory of immortality.

**Blessed are all they who trust in Him!** In other words: the vengeance in this instant will not wait for those who trust in God, but they will be blessed for they will achieve the Kingdom. This Beatitude, or glory will appear more brilliant than the chastisement of the wicked: **Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be a tree that is planted by the waters that spreads out its roots towards moisture: and it shall not fear when the heat comes. And the leaf thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought, it shall not be solicitous; neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit.** [cf. Jr17:17, f.]



### Summary

#### Psalms 2 & 110: Priesthood and Filiation<sup>8</sup>

[1] The coming together of these two Psalms presents a real challenge for interpreters in the coming together of the **Divine Filiation** and the **Eternal Priesthood of Jesus Christ**.

[a] The High Priest's basic function is to **make atonement for sin** – and this corresponds to **the salvific function of Jesus Christ**. Every High Priest is an intermediary between God and humanity – the depiction balances the emphasis on the need of humanity in the priest [so that He can accomplish with human weakness from His own lived experience] – with His service with regard to God. Every High Priest is called to relate to God, and make sacrificial offerings for sins.

[b] The second point is the sympathy which the High Priest exercises [cf. Heb 4:15]. This is a good description of Jesus' human behavior – the earthly priest is

<sup>8</sup> cf. Attridge, l.c. pp. 143-147, *passim*.

capable of ‘acting with moderation’ toward sinful humanity. While mere men may need to work on controlling anger when offended by others, Jesus **infinitely manifests compassion**. His Divinity, His Person, His redemptive suffering far surpasses all high priests of all time. This unique High Priest can act with moderation because He, too, is characterized by inherent weakness, His humanity. [cf. Ex 12:14 – Aaron; Zc 3:3 – Joshua].

In the ‘old’ days, the high priest certainly had to **make amends for his own sins** – there were endless regulations for celebrating the Day of Atonement. This fact is stressed: that all Levitical high priests had to offer atonement for themselves – but, this will serve as a major distinction for the Priesthood of the sinless High Priest, Jesus Christ.

[c] The third trait is that the High Priest must be **Chosen of God**. This corresponds to the divine installation, not unlike the Voice from Heaven in the Baptism and accomplishes scenes: ***This is My Beloved Son – listen to Him!***

[2] Ps 2 as does Ps 110, attribute a priestly status to the King – thus accomplishes a Christological theme – **the Eternal Son of God is attributed a Priest forever**. The citation of these two texts together serves as a link to the **two Christological motifs** of Jesus as **Son** and **High Priest**:

[a] In academic circles, the discussion rages as to the precise moment when Christ ‘became’ a priest. As there are various Christological traditions, there are also some tensions regarding the precise moment that Christ ‘became’ the High Priest. In the light of Ps 2, Christ’s Filiation is sometimes accomplishing with His Exaltation. There is something similar with Christ’s High Priesthood: the Socinians, by and large, held that Jesus only became High Priest in His Exaltation. Their support is found in associating **being perfected** and being **addressed as High Priest** [cf. Heb 5:9, f.] This same connection may be noted in Heb 2:19; Christ as Heavenly Intercessor is emphasized in Heb 4: 14-16 – as is true of a number of later references [cf. 6”20’ 7:16-17, 23-26, 8:1, alluding to Ps 110].

[b] Other passages clearly associate Christ’s Priesthood with His **earthly sojourn**. His Priestly activity will culminate in the Heavenly Sanctuary [cf. 9:25] – but this would include His actual dying [cf. 9:14, 26; 10:10. It is most unlikely that Christ the High Priest is only brought out in the light of His heavenly activity.

[2] These differing tensions – regarding His Filiation and the High Priesthood motifs are perhaps due to the existence of differing traditions – or to a reinterpretation of the traditional image of Christ’s Priesthood focusing on His role as Heavenly Intercessor, as the celebrant of the true **Yom Kippur** – seeing His intercessory role as beginning with His Exaltation. The emphasis on Jesus as High

Priest in this life, accomplishes as the celebrant of the authentic Yom Kippur, would emphasize, of course, His sacrificial death.

[3] More important than resolving the precise moment when Christ became High Priest is to discern how the image, in great complexity, serves as the means through which the Confession of Christ as Divine Son is re-interpreted and given new life. The picture of the High Priest who enters the true Heavenly sanctuary through His willing **Self-sacrifice** holds both the **divine** and the **human**, the **eternal** and the **temporal**, in some tension. Since **the sacrificial death of the Son is the oblation of a High Priest**, it has both heavenly and spiritual effects, produced through concrete human, free will action. The Priestly action of Jesus Christ derives its special character from the very fact that it is the theandric activity of the Eternal Son of God. The Son is the effective **Mediator**, because He is the High Priest who suffered and is now enthroned in heavenly glory.

[4] All this opens a new possibility of existence for those who enter into this **New Covenant**. Because it is the act of flesh and blood, an act of the Eternal Son of God who leads many other sons and daughters to glory it can in some sense be imitated, lived by other followers of Jesus Christ. The emphasis on the High Priest motif in Hebrews holds together the most fundamental affirmations of the work. Attempts to be overly precise about when Christ became High priest ignore this complexity.

## B. DIVINE FILIATION In St. JOHN

St. Thomas Aquinas

*Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura*

### 1. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Holy Spirit

#### a. Adoptive Filiation and Baptismal Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

St. Thomas refers explicitly to Baptism for the **spiritual regeneration** by which we are generated as **Sons of God**:

**In Jn 1:13, n. 164**: If we wish to connect to Baptism as the reason according to which we are regenerated as children of God, these words: **He gave them the power of becoming the sons of God**, we can see in them the order of Baptism. For that which is required in the first place is **faith**. And so the catechumens had **first of all to be instructed in the faith**, so that they might believe in His Name, and then be re-generated by Baptism, by which they would be **born**, certainly not in blood, or in a carnal manner, but of God, **in a spiritual manner**.

On the occasion of Jesus' response to Nicodemus [cf. Jn 3:3], Jesus sates: ***Unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God***, St. Thomas distinguishes the **carnal vision** from the **spiritual vision**, and this latter being the sole manner that is apt to grasp the spiritual reality of which the reign of God is, and which proceeds from the regeneration achieved by the Holy Spirit in Baptism:

***In Jn 3:3, n. 432:*** ... By the carnal vision spiritual realities cannot be seen: ... ***An unspiritual person is one who does not accept anything of the Spirit of God*** [cf. 1 Co 2:14]. However, these realities are seen by the spiritual vision: this is why one reads in the same spot that: ***he sees it all as accompli; it is beyond his understanding because it can only be understood by means of the Spirit*** [v. 11].

Now it is this Spirit Who regenerates, and this is why the Apostle says: ***The Spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; but it is the Spirit of sons and it has us cry out, Abba, Father!*** [cf. Rm 8:15]. And this Spirit we receive assuredly by **spiritual regeneration**: ***He saved us by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit*** [cf. Tt 3:5].

If there can be a spiritual vision only by the Holy Spirit, and if the Holy Spirit is infused into us by the bath of spiritual regeneration, then we cannot see the Reign of God other than by the bath of regeneration. This is why the Lord says: ***Unless one is reborn by water and by the Holy Spirit, one cannot enter into the Reign of God***, this is the same as saying: it is not astonishing that you do not see the reign of God for no one can see Him unless he receives the Holy Spirit, by which he is reborn as a son of God.

A little bit further on in his commentary, with regard to Jn 3:5 [***Unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God***] – St. Thomas clarifies why the work of **spiritual regeneration** is attributed to the Holy Spirit. The reason he furnishes holds to the fact that we are like the **Son** in the measure that we have His Spirit:

***In Jn 3:5, n. 442:*** It is here explained just how the **spiritual regeneration** is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. For the **one being generated has to be regenerated in the likeness of Him Who generates him/ her**. Now that regeneration that makes of us the sons of God renders us **like the true Son**: therefore it is necessary that the regeneration come about by that which we are rendered like the true Son, i.e., by the fact that we have His Spirit: ***In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to Him*** [cf. Rm 8:9]. ***We can know that we are living in Him and He is living in us because He lets us share His Spirit*** [1 Jn 4:13]. It is necessary then that this spiritual regeneration be brought about by the Holy Spirit. ***The Spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bring***



***fear into your lives again; it is the Spirit of sons*** [cf. Rm 8:15]. ***It is the Spirit that gives life*** ... [cf. Jn 6:63].

#### **b. Adoptive Filiation and Love infused by the Holy Spirit**

During the episode of the Nuptials at Cana, ***they ran out of wine ... the mother of Jesus said to Him: 'They have no wine!'*** [cf. Jn 2:3]. St. Thomas sees here a figure of the **inferiority of the old law with regard to the new**. The wine, he points out, is bitter, it rejoices the heart, it inebriates. It thus represents respectively **justice, wisdom and charity**. According to these three meanings, the wine has run out in the OT. Jesus comes now, in particular, to change the water of fear into the wine of charity:

**In Jn 2:3, n. 347:** ... The wine of charity had indeed run out, for the ancients had received a spirit of slavery, which left them in fear. However, Christ changed the water of fear into the wine of charity, when He gave the ***Spirit of the adoption as sons which makes us cry out, Abba, Father!*** [cf. Rm 8:15] – and when ***the love of God had been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*** [cf. Rm 5:5].

This interior love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is the proper sign of our divine filiation:

**In Jn 8:42, n. 1234:** ... St. John shows that the sign of divine filiation is **interior love**. In effect, we become the sons of God by the communication of the Holy Spirit [cf. Rm 8:15]: ... ***You have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but the Spirit of Adoption..*** Now the Holy Spirit is the cause of the love of God, ***for the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us*** [cf. Rm 5:5]. The special sign of divine accomplishment is therefore **love** [cf. Ep 5:1]: ***Be imitators of God as children of His that He loves, and follow Christ by loving as He loved you.*** This is why he says: ***If God were your Father, assuredly you would love Me.***

Such love as this ought to know how to prefer Jesus Christ to all other natural relationships, according to Mt 10:37: ***Whoever loves his mother, or father, more than he loves Me, is not worthy of Me.*** Anyone, therefore, accomplished from further sin is thus an orphan of all carnal relationships and is thus adopted by God as His son:

**In Jn 14:18, n. 1922:** ... a human being can have a father in three ways: first, according to his origin: ***We have had fathers according to the flesh*** [cf. Heb 12:9]. Secondly, according to a depraved form of imitation: ***You have the Devil as your***

**father!** [cf. Jn 8:44]. Thirdly, according to a gratuitous adoption: ***You have received the adoption of son*** [cf. Rm 8:15].

Those who imitate the Devil as their father, God does not adopt them as his children, for there is no agreement between the light and the darkness, according to 2 Co 6:15. He does not adopt those who are too attached in a carnal manner to their own parents: ***Who loves his father or his mother more than Me is not worthy of Me!*** [cf. Mt 10:37]. Such a person, therefore, will be an orphan, i.e. detached from the affection to sin, and free of carnal affection for his parents, such as this God adopts as His children: ***Since my father and my mother have abandoned me, the Lord has adopted me*** [Ps 26:10]. With all the more reason this applies to the one who is separated from them: ***Forget your people and your father's house, and the King will desire your beauty*** [cf. Ps 44:11].

God's love furnishes the matter for a New Commandment: **to love one another as Christ has loved us** [cf. Jn 13:34]. The novelty, St. Thomas explains, is extended in three ways: first of all, according to the particular of the **interior renewal** which charity works out; then, according to the cause which produces this: the **New Spirit**, not of fear, but of love; and lastly, according to the general effect which the NT is, the **New Covenant** which is compared to the Old as love is to charity:

**In Jn 13:34, n. 1836:** ... This Commandment is called New for three reasons: first, because of the effect of the **renewal** which it produces: ***You have stripped off your old behavior with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of the Creator*** [cf. Col 3:9]. This newness proceeds from **charity**, to which Christ exhorts us.

Secondly, this commandment is called new by reason of the cause which produces it, for it proceeds from a **New Spirit**. There is in effect a two-fold spirit: one old and one new. The **old is the spirit of slavery**, the **new is the Spirit of love**: the first generates slaves, the second sons: ***You have not received a spirit of slavery in order to fall again into fear; but, you have received the Spirit of Adoption as sons*** [cf. Rm 8:15]. ***I will give you a new heart and I will place in you a New Spirit in your midst*** [cf. Ezk 36:26]. And this Spirit burns with charity, ***for the charity of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit*** [cf. Rm 5:5].

Thirdly, by the effect that it realizes, i.e., the **NT**. For, briefly the difference between the OT and the NT is summarized in that between fear and charity: ***I will draw up a New Covenant with the House of Israel...*** [cf. Jr 31:31]. The fact that this commandment in the OT proceeds from a holy fear and love, that was said in the NT. This commandment figured then in the old law, not as being proper to it, but as **preparing for the New Law...**

This love inserts then **a multiple rapport with adoptive filiation**. The love of God which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts is the **cause** of our adoption, and it is also its **sign**. It is finally the reason through which Christ loves us as His **brothers** and **sisters**. Since we are **sons** to the extent that we are in **resemblance** to Him is the cause of love, the **Only Son of God** loves us **by reason of our conformity to Him**:

**In Jn 13:34, n. 1838**: ...As all friendship is founded on some **communication**, the **resemblance is in effect, the cause of love**. This friendship is right which is caused by the resemblance of the communication of goods. Now, the Christ has loved us to the extent that we are similar to Him by the grace of adoption. He loves us according to this resemblance in order to draw us to God: ***With an everlasting love I have loved you; this is why I have taken pity on you*** [cf. Jn 31:3].

### c. Adoptive Filiation and the Assimilation to the Son by His Spirit

In adopting us as sons of God, the Holy Spirit **configures** us to the Son. In commentary on Jn 25:26 [***When the Paraclete comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who comes from the Father, He will give witness regarding Me*** - St. Thomas notes that it is because He is the **Spirit of the Son** that He makes of us His **sons**: in every movement, in every change, the accomplish is in proportion to its principle:

**In Jn 15:26, n. 2062**: ... this name of **Spirit** connotes a certain **impulsion**: now all movement produces an effect that is homogenous to its principle. Thus, heat warms. There results from this that the Holy Spirit renders those in whom He is sent **similar** to the One of Whom He is the Spirit. Consequently, since He is the Spirit of Truth, **He teaches everything**, as is said [cf. Jn16:13; and Jb 32:8]: ***The Spirit of the Omnipotent gives intelligence***. In like manner, as He is the **Spirit of the Son**, He makes sons [cf. Rm 8:15]: ***You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons...***

Furthermore as the Spirit, He carries us **towards** the spiritual and heavenly realities.

†

## 2. Our Adoptive Filiation and the Person of the Son

### a. Adoptive Filiation and the Incarnation

The Commentary of the Prologue of the Gospel according to John makes clear that 'it pertains to the **visible mission of the Son**, to the **Incarnation of the Word**, to render our **adoption possible**.' Thus, with regard to Jn 1:12 b: [***He gives them the power to become the sons of God***] there is read:

**In Jn 1:12 b, n. 149:** The fruit of the coming of the Son of God is great. For by it men **become** the sons of God: ***God sent His Son, born of a woman ... that we might receive the adoption as sons*** [Ga 4:4, 5]. And this is fitting that we are the children of God by the fact that we are **assimilated** to the Son in that we are re-formed by this same Son.

Likewise, with regard to Jn 1:14 a, ***And the Word became flesh***, St. Thomas' commentary explains this:

**In Jn 1:14 a, n. 165:** ... According to St. John Chrysostom, the Gospel continues thus: ***He gave them the power of becoming sons of God***, as though to say: if you seek out the explanation of how the Word of God could bestow on human beings the power to become the sons of God, the Evangelist responds: it is because ***the Word became flesh*** that He gives us to us the power of becoming the sons of God [Ga 4:5]: ***God has sent His Son so that we might receive the adoption as sons of God***.

The commentary on Jn 1:12 makes even more explicit how the Incarnation of the Word renders possible our **divine filiation by adoption**. This is brought about by a three-fold assimilation to God: by the gift of **grace**; by the perfection of **our works**; and by the acquisition of **glory**:

**In Jn 1:12 b, n. 150:** The Evangelist states, therefore: ***He gave them the power of becoming sons of God***. To comprehend this it is necessary to know that human beings become His children in being **assimilated** to God in a three-fold manner:

- first, by the **infusion of grace** – hence, anyone who has accomplished grace, becomes the son of God: ***You have not received a spirit of slavery***, etc. [cf. Rm 8:15]; ***because you are His sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son*** [cf. Ga 4:6].
- secondly, one is **assimilated** to God by the perfection of the works because whoever accomplishes the works of justice is His son: ***Love your enemies ... so that you might become the son of your Father who is in heaven*** [cf. Mt 5:44];
- thirdly, one is assimilated to God by the acquisition of glory: as for the soul this means the Light of Glory: ***When He appears we will be similar to Him*** [cf. 1 Jn 3:2] – as far as the body is concerned ***He will transfigure our body of wretchedness*** [cf. Ph 3:21]. Of each it is said: ***they await the adoption of the sons of God*** [cf. Rm 8:12].

The Divine Filiation and resemblance with God thus increases simultaneously from grace toward glory: ***As of now we are the children of God, and that***

***which we are to be is not yet revealed. We know that from this revelation we will be like unto Him, since we will see Him as He is*** [cf. 1 Jn 3:2].

A question arises with regard to this gift which has been given to us, i.e., the ***power of becoming the sons of God*** - what is the role of our personal freedom in all this? St. Thomas resolutely understands this ***power of becoming sons of God***, as an active power. The accession to the divine filiation is not referred to some obediential power of human nature in connection with grace, but it is presented as a work of freedom prepared, accompanied and conserved through grace:

**In Jn 1:12 b**: Thus, ***He has given them the power of becoming the sons of God***, by sanctifying grace, by the perfection of our works, by the acquisition of glory, and all this by preparing, by moving and in conserving grace.

To conciliate **the gratuitous gift of grace** and this **active power of becoming the sons of God**, St. Thomas has recourse to three forms, or degrees of **assimilation to God**, by which divine filiation is realized. The perfection of one's works and the acquisition of glory do not offer any difficulty whatsoever. It is clear in effect that these two follow the gift of grace. Once this is given, a human being can freely accomplish the perfect works of a **son of God** and thus inherit eternal life. A problem does arise as to the first assimilation to God, i.e., the very gift of grace. How do we speak here of a ***power to become a son of God***, understood as an active power, without turning into some form of Pelagianism? God, in proposing His grace, and in preparing the soul of the just to receive it, **moves the free will** to this acceptance and conserves it, respects and sustains the freedom that He has created:

**In Jn 12 b**:

**n. 153**: One should respond thus: as for the gift of grace, it is required of the adult person for his justification, his consent by the movement of his free will. This is why, since it is within the power of man to give, or to refuse his consent, ***God has given him the power of becoming the son of God***. God has given to human beings the power of receiving grace in two ways: by **preparation**, and by **proposition**. Indeed, regarding one who composes a book, and in proposing its reading to another man, it is said that he gives to the other the power of reading this book. In the same way, Christ from Whom grace comes, and ***He has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth*** [cf. Ps 73:12], has ***given to us the power of becoming the sons of God*** by the reception of grace.

**n. 154**: Secondly, because this does not suffice – since in order to be moved to receive grace, the free will needs the help of divine grace, not certainly that of habitual grace, **but of grace as motion**. God gives this power in moving the free will

of a human being, to consent to receive grace, following this word; ***Convert us to You, o Lord***, in moving our will to love You, ***and we will be converted*** [Lm 5:21]. It is a matter of that **interior appeal** of which the Apostle speaks: ***Those whom He has called***, in inciting interiorly their will to consent to the grace, ***He has justified***, in infusing into them the grace [cf. Rm 8:30].

**n. 155:** But how by this grace a man has the power to preserve himself in his divine filiation, this can be explained differently: ***He has given to them***, i.e., to those who receive Him, ***the power of becoming sons of God***, i.e., grace, by which they can keep themselves in their divine filiation: ***Whoever is born of God does not sin, but the grace of God*** by which we are regenerated into the sons of God, ***preserves them*** [1 Jn 5:18].

This power of ***becoming a son of God*** appears then simultaneously on the one hand as a gift [***He has given him the power to become the son of God***] and under this title, the one who receives it is passive. Then, on the other hand it is active in the one who exercises it: by the infusion of grace, the man receives from God the power of becoming and of remaining actively, vitally, a son of God.

#### **b. Adoptive Filiation and Faith in Christ**

After having mentioned that **the Incarnate Word** gives the power of becoming a son of God, the Commentary on the Prologue of the Gospel according to St. John examines two complementary questions: who can benefit by this divine filiation? And how does the grace of adoption come to us?

St. Thomas remarks first of all that ‘the acquisition of the power to become a son of God **results from Faith in Christ**.’ That is, for all those who have received Him, for those who believe in His Name that the Word has given the power to become a son of God, i.e., according to the interpretation to which the Angelic Doctor gives the preference: ‘those then who have received Him believe in His Name.’ In order to accede to this divine filiation, it is necessary to be born of God – by a generation that is not carnal, but spiritual. Jn 1:13 affirms this without any hesitancy: ***Who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God***. St. Thomas adroitly explains that solely the **Only-Begotten Son of God, consubstantial to the Father**, can be ***de Deo*** of God. The adoptive sons of God are ***ex Deo***, from God. Both of these expressions connote material and efficient causality, but the prior expression indicates Jesus Christ in His **consubstantiality** with the Father, which pertains to Him as the Divine Word of God.

c. **Our Adoptive Filiation as a Manifestation of the Divine Filiation of Christ**

The bond of Baptism with **divine filiation by adoption** is such that it manifests by itself, that Jesus is the **Only-begotten Son of God**. Commenting on the word of St. John the Baptist with regard to the Baptism of Jesus: ***Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God*** [cf. Jn 1:34], St. Thomas reasons thus: this constitutes us as son, in that the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, it is by the intermediation of the One by Whom we are adopted. We become the adoptive children of God by **similitude** to the Son of God by nature. It is therefore He Who constitutes us sons. Therefore it is **He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit**, i.e., the Christ, Who is the true Son of God by nature.

d. **Adoptive Filiation and Fraternity with Jesus Christ**

The Angelic Doctor uses the occasion of an exegesis by Origen on Jn 2:19: ***destroy this temple and in three days I will build it up again***. A short phrase expresses at the same time the bonds between the **Incarnation** and **Adoption**, between **grace** and **indwelling**, between **adoption** and the **Church**:

**In Jn 2:19, n. 404**: ...Just as in the Body of Christ the divinity dwells by the **grace of union**, so also the divinity dwells in the Church **by the grace of adoption** ...

In this way there is emphasized the **ecclesial** aspect of spiritual regeneration:

**In Jn 12:26, n. 1648**: ...the honor which the Divine Son enjoys **by nature**, these others will have **by grace**. This is why St. Augustine says: the adoptive son cannot receive honor greater than being where the Only Begotten Son is. Rm 8:29: ***Those whom He predestined to be confirm to the image of His Son so that He is the First Born of many brothers and sisters***.

We are **brothers of Christ**, not only because we have the same human nature that He has, but above all in the measure that we have become the sons of God **by grace of adoption, we have the same Father as He does**:

**In Jn 20:17, n. 2519**: ... ***Go to My brothers***, the Apostles, who are ***My brothers by conformity of nature***. Heb 2:17: ***He should become completely like His brothers, assimilated*** to Him by the adoption of grace, for they are the **adopted sons of the Father** of Whom He Himself, the Christ, is His Son by nature.

One might notice the mention of the fact that **we are the adoptive sons of the Father**. This in no way is a disavowal of the thesis according to which the three Divine Persons concur in the adoption. The perspective, here, is to show the reason for the **fraternity** which re-binds us to Jesus Christ. This is constituted solely by the

**community in the same Father.** In other terms, in that the Father and the Holy Spirit are, no less than the Father, the efficient cause of our divine Filiation is not denied. However, this does not suffice to justify for St. Thomas that we are **brothers of the Word Incarnate.**

### 3. Divine Filiation by Nature and Divine Filiation by Adoption

The analogy the Grace of Union and the Grace of Adoption implies not only likeness, but also differences. It is therefore under different titles that the First Divine Person can be called by Christ, **My Father** – and the way He is called by us, **Our Father**:

**In Jn 20:17, n. 2521:** According to St. Augustine, there must also be understood differently **My Father and Your Father**: Jesus says **My Father** by nature – and **Your Father** is said by our sharing in His grace, as if to say: ‘that you are the adoptive children by grace, i.e., **God sent His only Son ... that we might receive the adoption as sons** [Ga 4:4, f.]. **For whom He foreknew... to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born of a multitude of brothers** [cf. Rm 8:29].

Nathanael’s exclamation: **Rabbi, You are the Son of God** [Jn 1:49] brings to the fore two remarks relative to divine adoption.

The first observes that it is always **by grace** that a man is a son of God: even in the case of Christ, His **Divine Filiation [by nature]** is **by grace**, not that of **adoption**, but that of **union**:

**In Jn 1:49, n. 327:** ... The fact that a man is **a son of God by adoption** cannot be unless through **grace**. Even to be **the Son of God by nature** by the hypostatic union that which is accomplish to one sole man Who is the Christ is **by grace**, for this is not in virtue of any preceding merit but by the **Grace of Union** that this Man is the Son of God.

The second remark explicit making reference to St. John Chrysostom explains why the same explanation which would enable the Apostle Peter to be proclaimed **blessed** and the **foundation of the Church**, does not produce the same proclamation of praise on the part of Christ with regard to Nathanael, but obtains rather to the former that promise that even better will transpire than what Peter confesses. Peter **recognized in the Christ the Son of God by nature**, while Nathanael [cf. Jn 1: 49: **Rabbi, You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!** ] discerns simply the excellence of **the grace adopting him as son**<sup>9</sup>, according to Ps 81:6: **you are gods and all are sons of the Most High** : it is necessary to distinguish between the still incomplete knowledge that Nathanael has of the identity of Jesus

---

<sup>9</sup> **In Jn 1:49, nn. 328, 329**



Christ, and the Christological heresies that came after the period of Revelation ended:

**In Jn 17:1, n. 2181:** ... So, Jesus says [to His Father], **Clarify**, i.e., manifest to the whole world that **I am Your Son**, that is, Your own Son, and this by **birth**, not by creation, against Arius who holds that the Son of God is a **Creature**; clarify that I am Your Son **in truth**, and not merely by being called so: against Sabellius who says that it is all the same when one says 'Father' and when one says 'Son'; 'by **origin**, and not by adoption, against Nestorius, who says that Christ is the adoptive son of God...

It is through one similar interpretation that there is resolved the apparent discordance between these two texts:

**... stop turning My Father's House into a Market!** [Jn 2:16]

**... He spoke of Himself as God's own Son, and so made of Himself God's equal** [Jn 5:18].

In the first of these two passages, Christ in fact does not seem to scandalize His listeners as long as He speaks of His Father's House. However, in the second of these two passages, the Evangelist notes that following the healing of the sick man at the Pool of Bethzatha, the Jews wanted to kill Him for He referred to God as **His own Father**. In both texts, Jesus speaks of **His Father** – but only in the second text, by that very fact, He arouses hatred and persecution in His own regard. St. Thomas explains this:

**In Jn 2:16, n. 390:** Why were the Jews not troubled when He here calls God His Father – while it is said further on that they persecuted Him [cf. Jn 5:18] for this reason? It must be said that God is the Father of some **by adoption**, i.e., He is the Father of the Just, and that this idea was not new for the Jews: ***I had thought that you would call Me: My Father, and would never cease to follow Me*** [cf. Jr 3:19].

But, **by nature**, God is 'Father' only of Jesus Christ: ***The Lord said to Me: You are My Son*** [cf. Ps 2:7], i.e., His genuine Father and **by nature**, and that was annoying to them. It is therefore because Jesus said that He was the true Son of God that the Jews persecuted Him: ***It is accomplish He did things on the Sabbath that the Jews began to persecute Jesus... He made Himself equal to God...*** [cf. Jn 5:18].

But, [in the Temple] when Jesus called God His Father, the Jews believed that this was **by adoption**.

#### 4. The Divine Adoption of the Israelites in the OT and the Extension of this to the Gentiles through the Incarnation

The preceding text mentions the fact that **Divine Filiation by adoption** was not unknown to the Jews. It is moreover the same citation from Jr 3:19: ***I had thought you would call Me My Father*** - which is utilized in the Commentaries on Jn 2:16 and Jn 5:18 in order to sustain that already in the OT the just Jew benefitted from Divine Adoption:

**In Jn 5:18 a, n. 741:** ... As all just persons also call God their Father: ***You would call Me Father [Jr 3:19]***, the Jews were not content in saying ***that He claimed that God was His Father***, but they added that He had recourse to blasphemy: ***making Himself equal to God***, as this is what they deduced from His own words: ***My Father goes on working up to now, and I do, too!*** Here in effect He calls God His Father, in order to give it to be accomplished that the Father is ***indeed His Father, by nature***, just as the Father is that for others ***by adoption***. It is along this same line that He will state later on: ***I go up now to My Father*** by nature, and to ***Your Father***, by grace.

If 'adoption' is extended also to the gentiles, this belonged however in the first place to the Jews.

**In Jn 19:7, n. 2387:** The crime imposed on Christ was in acting against the Jewish Law, because He made Himself the Son of God, for which they considered Him to be worthy of death. Above Jn 5:18: ***Therefore, the Jews sought to kill Him, because not only did He not keep the accomplishment, but He claimed that God is His Father, making Himself equal to God.*** And also above, Jn 10:33, the text reads: ***We are not stoning You for any good work, but because of blasphemy: because You, Who are a man, have made Yourself as God.*** And everywhere they maintained that He had made Himself to be the Son of God, even though for them He was not. This is not against the Jewish Law, as is proven above in Jn 10: 34, through that text in Ps 81:6: ***I have said: you are gods.*** If then, other human beings who are adoptive sons, without any accusation of blasphemy claim to be the sons of God, how much more so can Christ claim this, ***He Who is the Son of God by nature?*** But because they did not understand eternal generation, therefore they thought Him to be false and a blasphemer, for which crime all would incur the penalty of death.

**In Jn 20:3-5, n. 2480:** ... For first to the Jews was this promise made. Rm 9:4: ***[My kinsmen] are Israelites: to whom belongs the adoption as children and the glory and the testament and the giving of the law and he service [obsequium] of God and the promise: whose are the fathers and of whom is Christ, according to the flesh...***

How then can one reconcile this mention of a divine filiation among the Jews of the OT – with the bond precisely recognized between the **Incarnation** and the **Grace of Adoption**? The apparent antinomy is resolved with regard to Jn 11:52, where it is said that Jesus was going to die for the nation, ***and not for the nation only, but further together into one the dispersed children of God.*** These assuredly had not yet received the Spirit of Adoption, but are they already **the sons of God by predestination**?

In Jn 11:52, n. 1580: ... And so when the text reads, ***in order to gather into one the dispersed sons of God,*** this should not be understood that they already would have received **the Spirit of Adoption**, for, as St. Gregory notes, these were not yet either His flock nor His sons by adoption. But, this must be understood as having been noted **according to predestination**, their being ***the sons of God***, predestined from all eternity. Rm 8:29: ***Those whom He foreknew as conform to the image of His Son, so that He might be the First-born of a multitude of brothers.***

†††

### Conclusion

This Commentary on the Gospel of St. John emphasizes above all the relationship between **our divine filiation** and **the Divine Persons** of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Our filiation is founded on a **spiritual re-generation**. It is by the **infusion of the Spirit of Love** that we ourselves become sons of God. The Love of God poured into our hearts by this same Holy Spirit manifests therefore, our divine filiation and the free possession of this Spirit, in so far as He is **the Spirit of the Son**, Who renders us **similar** to Him and **makes us loved by Him**.

It is the Incarnation that has made it possible that there be **communicated** to us, through faith in Christ, and the Baptismal regeneration, the Divine Filiation to which God has accomplished us. If we are **assimilated** to the Only-Begotten Son, we will not be ever anything less than His adoptive sons. This is the reason why Christ never says *Our Father*, but **My Father, by nature- and your Father, by adoption.**

It can be seen that St. Thomas' teaching is thus very close to the text of Scripture upon which he comments. This is why certain aspects have been admirably emphasized, such as the **role of the Holy Spirit**, and also others which do not enter here into the context of this present reflection – such as **the right of a heavenly inheritance**, or further the **essential paternity of the Trinity**. The question of **appropriation** is left in the order: St. Thomas is not theorizing here, he is simply echoing the tradition and uses without any accomplished originality the same

manner of expression as the biblical expression. One might indeed regret the fact that he did not himself elaborate an accomplish of the diverse aspects that he notes throughout the course of his commentary. His systematic reflection, as noted in III Sent., c. 10, q. 2, and in the Summa, III, q. 23 – perhaps would have benefitted even more from his rigorous Christological orthodoxy, a greater visibility of his rich spiritual implications.

### C. FILIATION IN HEBREWS

Harold W. Attridge<sup>10</sup>

... God has never said to an angel: 'You are My Son, today I have become Your Father'; or: 'I will be a Father to Him and He a Son to Me.' Again, when He brings the First-Born into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' About the angels, He says: 'He makes His angels winds and His servants flames of fire,' but to His Son He says: 'God, Your throne shall last forever and ever'; and: 'His royal scepter is the scepter of virtue; virtue You have as much as You hate wickedness. This is why God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness, above all Your rivals.' And again: 'It is You, Lord, Who laid earth's foundations in the beginning, the heavens are the work of Your hands; all will vanish, though You remain, all wear out like a garment; You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But Yourself, You will never change and Your years are unending.' God has never said to an angel: 'Sit at My right hand and I will make Your enemies a footstool for You.' The truth is they are all spirits whose work is service, sent to help those who will be the heirs of salvation. [Heb1:5-14]

No one takes this honor on himself, for each one is called by God, as Aaron was. Nor did Christ give Himself the glory of becoming High Priest, but He had it from the One who said to Him: 'You are My Son, today I have become Your Father', and in another text: 'You are a Priest of the order of Melchisedech, and for ever...' [Heb 5: 5, ff.]

†

### Introduction

[1] The unknown author's citation of Psalms 2 and Ps 110, and their interpretation, still remain unclear:

[a] Some believe that there is a rather 'fuzzy' notion here that Jesus Christ **became** Son – this unique instant was some major event, perhaps **Creation** – or, the **Incarnation** – His **Baptism** – or **Exaltation**. Due to the nature of Hebrews, there are many who would try to interpret this latter as constituting Jesus as **Son**, His **entrance into the Eternal Holy of Holies** – however, the Document refers to Him as

<sup>10</sup> *Hebrews*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress 1989, pp. 54-65, 146-147.

**Son** on other occasions [cf. Heb 2: 11-13; 5:8]. Those who argue for Christ's becoming Son at some major point believe this title is properly so at the Exaltation, and only proleptically stretched and applied to Jesus before-hand. If this is correct, then, Jesus would be understood from all eternity as ***He who would eventually become Son.***

[b] These two Christological perspectives [**Pre-existence** and **Exaltation**] do see the proclamation of Christ as **Son** as the ultimate recognition, or revelation, of what Christ always has been, but now 'becomes' so in the common faith of the Church, following the Resurrection.

[c] Still other interpreters see that no harmony is introduced to bring together the **Pre-existence Christology** – with that of saying that Jesus *became* Son in some later event, this would imply that Psalm 2 is being used metaphorically, allegorically, for the **Eternal Generation of the Son.**

[2] However in simple terms, it is noted that the revealed text makes no effort to reconcile these two Christologies – these are **two very different Christological traditions** that the unknown author has brought into his Document and he made them stand together. It would not be the interpreters' task to harmonize them. There are also other materials used here from varying conceptual backgrounds that stand side by side, and the faith of the Church has always seen them as one coherent theological presentation of Jesus Christ.

[3] The author is not trying to teach a basic seminary course in Christology! There is no evidence that he ever attempted to systematize his Christology here. His fundamental ideal is to bring out the enormous, uniquely important accomplishments of Jesus Christ throughout time, into eternity. Jesus is simply superior to all other agents, such as OT personalities called by God for the accomplishments of His Plan of Salvation, Jesus is even superior to the angels themselves.

[4] The exordium gives clear evidence of a **High Christology**:

*... in the last days, He has spoken to us through His Son; the Son that He has appointed to inherit everything and through Whom He made everything that is. He is the radiant Light of God's Glory and the perfect copy [karakter] of His nature... He has gone to take His place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty...* [cf. Heb 1: 2, ff.].

The 'High Christology' of the exordium is a basic characteristic of the Document's presentation of Jesus Christ. This ideal seems to permeate Hebrews:

*... You have put Him in command of everything ... He has left nothing which is not under His command ... we do see in Jesus One Who was for a short time, lower than the angels and is now crowned with glory and splendor because He submitted to death – by God's*

*grace He had to experience death for all mankind ... it was His purpose to bring a great many of His sons into glory ... God should make perfect through suffering the Leader Who would take them to their Salvation...* [Heb 2:8-13].

*... You remember that Melchisedech ... by the interpretation of his name, He is first: King of Righteousness and also ... King of Peace; He has not father or mother or ancestry and His life has no beginning or ending; He is like the Son of God. He remains a Priest forever...* [cf. Heb 7:1, ff.].

[5] To be the Son of the Most High – **today** - does combine His Pre-existence [cf. Jn 1:1, f.] and His Exaltation [cf. Ph 2:5-11: *... But God (the Father) raised Him on high and gave Him a Name above all names...*]. It is noted that St. Paul has combined the Exaltation of Jesus [cf. Rm 1:3] and His pre-existence [cf. 1 Co 8:6: *... for there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for Whom we exist, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all things come and through Whom we exist ...*].

†

### TEXT

**Heb 1:6, f.:** *God has never said to any Angel: 'You are my Son, today I have become Your Father' or: 'I will be a Father to Him and He a Son to Me. Again, when He brings the First-Born into the world*

a. This is God's own Introduction of the First-Born into this world – and as noted, this could have truly taken place at one of these 'times': the **Incarnation**; the **Exaltation**; or the **Second Coming**. As for the *Parousia* as the time of this introduction, there is scant support – the stronger 'candidates' would accomplish be at the **beginning** of Christ's earthly sojourn, when He is 'consecrated' and sent into this world [cf. Jn 10:36] as a 'host', or 'priest' – the exaltation takes place when Christ leads the procession into the eternal Holy of Holies. The **exaltation** seems to be the emphasis of Hebrews.

b. There are those who see an ancient **Enthronement Ritual**: adoption, presentation, proclamation: the Danish scholar, Sigismond Mowinckel, held for **special Psalms**, and maybe the **Servant Canticles**, as the background for an **annual Enthronement Festival of Yahweh**. He noted an intimate connection with the festivals of an Epiphany, Harvest, Tabernacles, New Year and the Consecration of the Temple.<sup>11</sup> This view remains considered, but not espoused by many scholars. It does not seem as though Hebrews would exclusively emphasize one aspect of

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Sigismond Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Translated by D. R. Ap-Thomas. Two Volumes in One. Grand Rapids MI/ Cambridge UK: Eerdmans Publishing Co – Dearborn MI: Dove Booksellers 2004 [First published in 1967], pp. 106- 192, especially pp. 118-130

Christology the exaltation, in the three-fold traditional understanding: Pre-existence, Incarnation; Exaltation – noticeable to some scholars in the *Kenosis Hymn*: Ph 2:5-11.

c. Jesus is introduced as the First-Born – this seems to flow from the royal imagery of Ps 2, and the great Prophecy of Nathan:

*... Yahweh will make you great; Yahweh will make you a House ... I will make his royal throne secure forever. I will be a father to him and he a son to me... Your house and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established forever ...* [2 S 7: 5, ff.].

This is echoed in Ps 89:

*... He will invoke Me: 'My Father, My God, My Rock of My Safety,' and I shall make Him My First-born, the Most High for kings on earth. I will keep My love for Him always, My Covenant with Him shall stand, I have founded His dynasty to last forever, His throne to be as lasting as the heavens....* [vv. 26, ff.].

d. Such Canticles of Praise are used as well to celebrate **Wisdom, the Logos** – and the early Church used them to describe Christ's **Resurrection**:

*... They are the ones He chose especially long ago and intended to become true images of His Son, so that His Son might accomp the eldest of many brothers...* [Rm 8:29]...

*... Do not be afraid; it is I, the First and the Last, I am the Living One...!* [cf. Rv 1:5, ff.].

However, there is a special one that praises accomplish:

*... He is the Image of the unseen God, and the First-born of all Creation, for in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, everything visible and invisible...all things were created through Him and for Him... As He is the Beginning, He was the first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in Him, and all things be reconciled through Him and for Him...* [cf. Col 1:15, ff.].

So, for many interpreters it is a bit of a toss-up in Hebrews: what we have **celebrated** here is both an **eschatological messianic title** – as well as the **worship of the Eternal Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ**.

e. There are other connections here as well – the Document celebrates, worships the Great High Priest, the Divine Son: *...the heavens proclaim His righteousness, all nations see His glory!* [cf. Ps 97:6] – so along with the Angels in the heavens all will give praise to Him: *... Havens rejoice with Him, let the Sons of God pay Him homage! Nations, rejoice with His people, let God's envoys tell of His*

**power!** [cf. Dt 32:43, f.]. It is noted also by the fact that it has long been used in the **Easter Vigil Liturgy**. The liturgical celebration of the Song of Moses is referenced here. It is alluded to broadly throughout the NT [cf. Rm 10:19; 11:11; 12:19; 15:10; 1 Co 10:20, 22; Ph 2:15; Lk 21:22; Rv 6:10; 10:5; 15:3; 18:20; 19:2]. Angels and nations are called to sing praise to Him, the heavens and the land.

**Heb 1:7:** ... *He makes His angels winds, and His Servants flames of fire. But, to His Son He says: God, Your Throne shall last forever and ever; and His royal scepter is he scepter of virtue* ... this seems to be a reference to the Psalm 104: 4. This seems to be an old idea perhaps coming from the OT theophanies accompanied by weather and meteorological phenomena [cf. Ex 3:2; 19:16-18]. All of this leads to the supremacy of Jesus – over all creation since He pre-existed and took part in the creation of it.

**Heb 1:8-12:** the lavish praise of Jesus seems to be rooted in an OT wedding song [Ps 45]. The author takes this *epithalamium* as an address to the Son as God. While the divinity is not often accomplish stated, it does seem to be here, as well as in other NT texts [cf. Rm 9:5; Tt 2:13; Jn 1:1; 20:28; 2 P 1:1]. The High Christology here shows unmistakable Wisdom roots.

The mysterious monarch's reign and justice flow toward the royal messianic notion of the Psalm – Christ will be the eschatological Judge. This royal imagery very soon gives way to the discussion on the **Eternal Priesthood** of Jesus Christ. The Priestly Kingdom is not a political entity, but an unshakeable realm [cf. Heb 12:28] of God's abiding presence, and all His followers have welcome access to it.

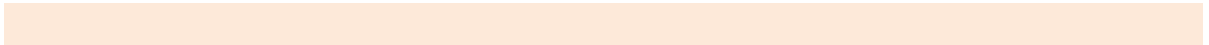
Along with the Kings, also the Prophets of Israel [cf. 1 K 19:16; 5s 61:1] and Priests [cf. Ex 29:7; Lv 8:12; Ps 132:2] as part of their installation. Jesus is thus the **Anointed One**, *par excellence*. The anointing made one superior – thus, all of Christ's followers share in His heavenly call and goal. Thus Christ is clearly distinguished from all others who participate in His Divine Sonship.

There is much **garment imagery** here: on the one hand, the skies are unrolled like cloth – and the image of the garment that grows old, is familiar in II-Is [50:9; 51:6] – clearly contrasted with the Great High Priest who abides – His is an eternally abiding office, like that of Melchisedech. The *Logos* is to be vested with the world, symbolized by **the vestments of the High Priest**. [In the Apocalypse, the Bride dresses in the good deeds of the Saints: Rv 19:8]. The decay of the heavens suggests an end of time idea. The **clothing imagery** goes on: when the heavens are 'rolled up', they will eventually be removed – but the High Priest will endure in **eternal sameness**.



The Divine Declarations are much repeated in this passage: ***God said – He never said – He says - and again...*** [followed by a quote] suggest a formal action of **installation** – while it all took place in the distant past, **it will last continuously, forever.**

Heb 1:13: The words: ***sit at My right hand and I will make Your enemies a footstool*** - this is from Ps 110, a royal Psalm, which develops the theme of **Melchisedech** [cf. Gn 14: 17, ff.], although he is not mentioned yet in Hebrews. The closeness of the King of Israel as God's Partner in the Covenant is used rarely in the Church to express her faith in the mystery of Jesus Christ. The deep seated conviction is the assurance that God's Son is enthroned forever, at the right hand of God, indicating superiority over all creation.



## D. ADOPTIVE FILIATION IN THE PAULINE CORPUS

and COMMENTARIES of St. THOMAS<sup>12</sup>

### APPENDIX

+++

#### Outline

1. Our Divine Filiation and the Eternal Inheritance
  - A. Adoptive Filiation and Corporal Glorification
  - B. Adoptive Filiation and Predestination
2. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Holy Spirit
3. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Son
  - A. Adoptive Filiation and Faith in Christ
  - B. Adoptive Filiation and Conformity to Christ
4. The Subject of Divine Filiation by Adoption
  - A. Jesus is not the Adoptive Son of God
  - B. Adoptive Filiation of OT Jews, and NT Gentiles
5. Adoptive Filiation, Justification and Baptismal Re-generation

#### Conclusion

+++

### 1. Our Divine Filiation and the Eternal Inheritance

#### Presentation:

1.] The Simple principle is: that those whom the Spirit of God animates, acquire the Heavenly Inheritance. This is the conclusion which results from the rather sylogistic presentation by St. Paul:

*... For the Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of god, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him...* [cf. Rm 8: 16, ff.]

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. Somme, *Fils adoptifs de Dieu par Jésus Christ : la filiation divine par adoption dans la théologie de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris : J. Vrin, 1997.pp.99-128, passim.

The ‘major premise’ of this apparent syllogism might appear a few verses above:

**... For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God ...** [cf. Rm 8:14].

**Nam:** Those who are the sons of God achieve the eternity of His Glorious Life.

**Atqui:** But, those who are ruled by the Holy Spirit are the sons of God.

**Ergo:** those who are ruled by the Holy Spirit, achieve the inheritance of the glorious Life of the risen Lord<sup>13</sup>.

2.] The expression, ***heirs of God***, has to be understood in a double sense: God is not only the Giver but also the very Content of the Inheritance. That which is in effect constituted by the Wealth of the Testator. Now, the essential Wealth of God is nothing other than Himself, the three Persons of the Most Blessed trinity, ***rich in Mercy***. There is nothing that can be added to the perfection of His Infinite Being. In other words nothing can be added to the perfection of His Divine Infinite Being and Mercy. The Inheritance of the Children of God resides therefore in God Himself. This inheritance is that same glory which God has in Himself<sup>14</sup> - merited by the Paschal Mystery of the head of the Mystical Body for His members.

3.] St. Thomas notes<sup>15</sup>: it is said of one that he is the ‘Heir’ of another whenever he receives, or obtains the other’s principal goods, and not just some mediocre, or second-rate presents. Now, the principal good which comprises the wealth of god, is god Himself, father, Son and Holy Spirit – the most blessed Trinity. In effect, God is ***rich in/ of Himself***, and not by something of someone else, for He is absolutely no need of any outside goods. It is noted in Ps 15:1. F.: ***... Preserve me, O Lord, for I have put my trust in You. I have said to the Lord, You are my God, for You have no need of my goods...!*** It is therefore God Himself whom the sons of God obtain for their inheritance. ***The Lord is the Portion of my inheritance and of my cup...*** [cf. v. 5]. ***The Lord is my Portion; therefore, I will wait for Him!*** [Lm 3:24].

4.] Different from human inheritance constituted by the material wealth that can be divided up, in the case of a spiritual inheritance the death of the Testator is not necessary, since the number of those who will receive it in no way diminishes anything of that wealth which each one can enjoy. St. Thomas states the same rather boldly that one might even mention ‘the death of God’, in so far as our own death makes us pass from the knowledge of faith to the immediate vision of the

<sup>13</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, In Rm 8:14, Marietti n. 634.

<sup>14</sup> Marietti, In Rm 5:2, n. 385.

<sup>15</sup> Marietti, n. 385.

First Truth: It might be said that ‘God dies’ to us in so far as He is in us through faith: He will be our inheritance in so far as we will see him through a species.

5.] St. Thomas comprehends the statement of Paul: ***If we are the sons, we are also the heirs - as*** the affirmation of a veritable right to the inheritance. He thus writes<sup>16</sup>: St. Paul shows that the inheritance is to the sons, in saying: *If certain ones are sons by the Spirit, it only follows then, that there are also Heirs, for the inheritance is due not only to the son by nature, but also to the adoptive sons.* St. Peter offers us a synopsis of all we hope for: ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in His great Mercy has regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.*** Thus the Psalmist cited above exults: ***... for my inheritance is goodly for me!*** [cf. Ps 15:6].

6.] In like manner, with regard to another passage from Rm [8:15, ff.]<sup>17</sup>: For by the race of Jesus Christ we have received the ***spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry: ABBA!*** Canticles also notes: ***What manner of one is your beloved of the beloved...?*** [cf. Sgs 5:9]. It is to the sons that there is due the inheritance of the Father. Rm 8:1: ***If we are sons, then we are the heirs.*** His inheritance is the glory which God possesses in Himself: ***And do you have an arm like God...*** [cf. Jb 40: 4]. This is the hope that He has bestowed on us by Jesus Christ [cf. 1 P 1:3, ff.: ***... the Father has regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you!*** [cf. 1 P 1:3, ff.]. This glory which will be completed one day for us, and has even now been begun through hope [cf. Rm 8:24]: ***For we are saved by Hope!***<sup>18</sup> - ***Let all them be glad that hope in You: they shall rejoice forever, and You shall dwell in them!*** [Ps 5:12].

7.] It is important that students do not misunderstand the true sense of St. Thomas’ thought. He does not imply in any manner, any ‘right’ for our adoptive filiation: we are not sons of God by nature, but once our filiation is indeed granted to us, it establishes then in us a right to inherit from His Father. This is why the Spirit of Filial Adoption is pondered in this description of Paul:

***... that we may be unto the praise of His glory, we who before hoped in Christ: in whom you also, after you had heard the word of truth, [the gospel of your salvation], in whom also believing you were signed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, Who is the Pledge of our Inheritance, unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of His glory...*** [Ep 1:13-14].

<sup>16</sup> In Rm 8:17 – Marietti n. 646.

<sup>17</sup> In Rm 8:15, ff. – Marietti, n. 385

<sup>18</sup> cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical ***Spe Salvi***. Nov. 30, 2007.

8.] This is the Sign, the Pledge that the promised inheritance is certain<sup>19</sup>: He is called the Spirit of the Promise for a three-fold reason:

- first, because He had been promised to the faithful;
- second, because He had been given with a promise: the fact is that when He is given to us, we become one with Christ: *...But, you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his...* [cf. Rm 8:9]. Consequently we become the adoptive sons of God in having the promise of the eternal heritage, for if we are the sons, we are also heirs [cf. Rm 8: 17];
- thirdly, He is said to be the Pledge in so far as He gives the certitude of the promised inheritance. For the Holy Spirit, in so far as adopts us as the sons of God, He is the Spirit of the Promise, and He Himself is the sign of the Promised to be received.

9.] The following is another important text for St. Thomas:

*... For you are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus. For s many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bon, nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the Promise...* [cf. Ga 3:26-29].

St. Thomas comments on this verse in explaining that since by Baptism we all make up 'one' with Christ, as we are all the children of God by the Faith, in Christ Jesus. We are indeed baptized in Christ – we have 'put on' Christ Jesus is the son of Abraham, and it results from this that we are sons of Abraham and heirs of the Promise which God made to him. The perspective here is that of a co-heir with Christ, not according to that which He is, as the Word Incarnate, and **the Son of God by nature** - but we are sons according to that which Jesus is by his humanity, i.e., the son of Abraham<sup>20</sup>.

10.] We are indeed the adoptive sons of God because we are united, by the faith, to Jesus Christ, Who is the Son of God by nature. Furthermore, Jesus is the Son of Abraham – so, as a result, if we are of Christ, i.e. in Christ through grace and faith, we are of the descendants of Abraham, i.e., his sons – since Jesus Christ is his Son. And if we are his sons, we are also heirs with him, i.e., the inheritance of his belongs to us, according to the ancient promises made to him: **that is to say, not**

<sup>19</sup> In Ep 1:13-14 – Marietti, nn. 42-43.

<sup>20</sup> In Ga 3:28-29 – Marietti nn. 189-200.

***that they are the children of the flesh, are the children of God; but they are the children of the Promise...*** [cf. Rm 9:4].

a.] The notion of Co-heirs with Jesus Christ in Rm 8:17 is in retrospect explained by the fact that we are the children of God in the measure that we **participate in the divine Filiation of the Word**. Therefore, we receive in virtue of the adoption, the Inheritance which pertains to Him by nature<sup>21</sup>. As He is the **principal** Son in that Filiation of which we share. He is therefore the Principal Heir to which we are associated by the Inheritance.

b.] This same reasoning appears also in Heb 2:10:

***... But, we see Jesus Who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that through the grace of God, He might taste death for all. For it became Him, for whom are all things, Who had brought many children into glory to perfect the author of their salvation, by his Passion ...***  
[cf. Heb 2:9, ff.].

They are thus conducted into glory those who **participate in the Filiation of the Son by nature**, in the measure that He is, according to Hebrews, the **Splendor of the Father: *The Son, being the brightness of the father's Glory, and the figure [karakter] of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His Power, making purgation of sins, sits on the right hand of the majesty on high...*** [cf. Heb 1:3].

c.] Grace is ordained toward glory<sup>22</sup> - Rm 6:23: ***For the wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** Now, God has predestined eternally those who ought to end in glory. And these are those who are **Participants in the Filiation of Christ**, since: if they are sons, they are also heirs [cf. Rm 8:17]. For this reason the Apostle says that He ought to lead to glory a great number of sons, as though to say, that there is **only one son perfect by nature**. All the others are the **adoptive children**, and ought to be led toward glory.

d.] Jesus Christ is thus for all human beings, the Author of their salvation, in communicating to them a participation at one and the same time of His quality of Divine Son and of His inheritance which comes to Him naturally<sup>23</sup>: This salvation of which Jesus is the Author, consists in two things: to be son, and to be the heir. They are sons which they have by the One Who is Son by nature: ***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the Image of His Son; that He might be the First-born among many brothers.*** [cf. Rm 8:29]. However,

---

<sup>21</sup> In Rm 8:17 – Marietti n. 649.

<sup>22</sup> In Heb 2:10 – Marietti, n. 127

<sup>23</sup> In Heb 2:10 – Marietti, n. 128.

they obtain glory and the inheritance only from the One to Whom these belong **naturally**, He Who is the Splendor of the Splendor of the Father's Glory. Since it is by the son that we obtain these two gifts, it is most fitting for us to call Him the **Author of our Salvation**.

**a. Adoptive Filiation and Corporal Glorification**

1.] The Pauline notion of the Heavenly Inheritance, indicating union with God in the Beatitude as the **Final Cause of our Adoptive Divine Filiation**, places in evidence the development by which the adoption by grace expands into a **filiation in glory**. The Gospel is the Good News. There is announced therein the union of humanity with God, He Who is the First Good of human beings: ... ***But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God*** [cf. Ps 72:28]. Now, in the Gospel, there is announced a three-fold union of human nature with God:

- the first is by the Grace of Union, according to Jn 1:14: ***The Word became flesh!*** ;
- the second is by the Grace of Adoption, as one may deduce from this ancient passage ... ***I have said: You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High***. [cf. Ps 81:6] ;
- the third is by the Glory of Fruition: Jn 17:3: ... ***Now, this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One whom You have sent...*** - Thus the Prophet: ... ***How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings and preaches peace: of him that shows forth good, that preaches salvation, that says to Sion: Your God shall reign!*** [cf. Is 52:7].

2.] This **Filiation of Glory** includes not only an assimilation of the soul to God, but also according to Ph 3:21: [... ***Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby He also is able to subdue all things unto Himself...***] - a\ transformation of our body of misery in order to conform it to the glorious Body of Jesus Christ.

a.] Two-fold is the similitude of the predestined to the Son of God:

- one of which is imperfect, which is **by grace**.

- And it is said to be 'imperfect' – first because it is only according to the reformation of the soul about which is spoken in Ep 4:28: ... ***And put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth*** ...

- And I is said to be imperfect, secondly because: ... ***when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away with.*** Cf. 1 Co 13:10].

- ***the other similitude is perfect*** and this will be in **glory**: and as far as the body is concerned: ***Who will reform the body of our lowness...?*** [cf. Ph 3:21]. Now, as far as the soul is concerned, because when that which is perfect will come, ***that which is only in part, will be done away with...*** [cf. 1 Co 13:10, f.].

b.] Rm 8:23: ... ***But ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body*** ... this verse likewise affirms that the Adoptive Filiation of here below will experience in heaven a perfection with the glorification of the Body.

c.] The Apostle expresses the object of our expectancy<sup>24</sup> when he says ***waiting for the adoption of the sons of God***, i.e., the perfection of this adoption. This adoption has in effect begun by the Holy Spirit Who justifies the soul. ***You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons*** [cf. Rm 8:15]. But, this will be consummated by the glorification of the body itself. Hence, the Apostle noted earlier: Rm 5:2: ... ***By whom also we have access through faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God...*** This is why the Apostle adds the redemption of our body, just as that of our soul has been purchased back from sin – thus our body will be purchased back from the corruption of death. Ho 13:14 ... ***I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your death; o hell, I will be your bite...*** [cf. Ho 13: 14] - ***He will reform our body of misery*** ... [cf. Ph 3:21].

+++

## b. Adoptive Filiation and Predestination

1.] The Heavenly Inheritance is also represented further by the Epistles of the Pauline Corpus as the **term of our predestination to adoptive filiation**:

***... For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the First-born among many brethren*** ... [cf. Rm 8:9.

***... Who has predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself: according to the purpose of His will*** ... [cf. Ep 1:5].

---

<sup>24</sup> In Rm 8:23 – Marietti, n. 680.



The term of this predestination is therefore principally constituted by the **adoptive filiation** in its fullness, i.e., realized in glory.

a.] The Apostle says, therefore,<sup>25</sup> God has predestined us, i.e., pre-chosen also by His grace, to the adoption as sons, i.e., so that we might be associated with other adoptive children in those good which we will have. This is why he notes: **to the adoption as sons.**

b.] Rm 8:15: ... **For you have not received the spirit of bondage again fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: ABBA, Father!** Further on the text adds: **hoping in the adoption of sons.** It should be noted here that there exists a two-fold similitude of those predestined with the son of God:

- one is imperfect, by b;
- the other, by contrast, is perfect in **glory.**

While the Apostle states that God has predestined us to the adoption as sons, that can be related to the imperfect assimilation to the Sons of God, in this life, by grace, but it is better to refer it to the perfect assimilation as Sons of God, in heaven. It is of our adoption that the Apostle speaks in Rm 8:23: **We groan, awaiting the adoption of the sons of God.**

2.] Predestination to the adoptive filiation, however, does not exclude the terrestrial status of this and those gifts that God grants us by His grace, gratuitously and without foreseen merits, in order to prepare us for glorious filiation<sup>26</sup>.

a.] As is noted in Rm 1:4<sup>27</sup>: **Who was predestined the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead** – for just like man, Christ is not predestined on account of His preceding merits, but from grace alone – so we are not predestined from our merits so that we might be adoptive sons – so, too, it is only by grace It is stated in Dt 9: 4 ...**Say not in our heart when the lord your God shall have destroyed them in your sight: For my justice has the Lord brought me in to the possession of this land, whereas these nations are destroyed for their wickedness...**

b.] On the subject of the gratuity of this predestination, St. Thomas offers a lengthy gloss in a perspective that is clearly anti-Pelagian, in the expression: He has predestined us according to the good pleasure of His will [cf. Ep

<sup>25</sup> In Ep 1:5 – Marietti nn. 9-10

<sup>26</sup> In Rm 8:29 – Marietti n. 703.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Marietti, n. 48], it is stated

1:5]: **...Who has predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of His will....** The Angelic Doctor comments on this<sup>28</sup>: this does not contradict the notion of the ‘right to the heavenly inheritance’, for the affirmation bears on the gratuity of the first grace and not on the fruit consequent to merit.

c.] Col 1:12: **... Giving thanks to God the Father, Who has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light ...** - St. Thomas notes<sup>29</sup> that we are to thank God for creating us, for adopting us – **He** has made us worthy. Some are of the opinion that we are thanking God for the gifts of graces given to us due to our own merits, and that God gives grace only to the [already] ‘worthy.’ However, for St. Thomas this is precisely what the Apostle excludes – whatever anyone of us has of dignity or grace, God has done this all in us – every good within us is the effect of His previous grace. This is why Paul says in Col 1:13 that God the Father has made us worthy. Thus St. Paul adds: 2 Co 3:5: **... Not that we are sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God!**

d.] On the order of predestination and of fore-knowledge, certain authors have maintained that foreknowledge of the merits of the good and the evil is the reason for predestination and of reprobation, leaving it therefore to be understood that God predestines some because He foresees the good and that they will believe in Jesus Christ. In this sense, one can understand the verse: ‘Those whom He has known in His foreknowledge who are to be conformed to the image of His Son, He then predestines them!’

e.] This explanation would not do justice if predestination would only regard eternal life, which is granted according to merits – but, this view comprehends every benefit in the order of salvation, prepared by God for man, from all eternity: for the same reason, all the benefits which God grants us in time, He has prepared them from all eternity. Therefore, to suggest that some merit is presupposed on our part, the foreknowledge of which would be the ultimate reason for our predestination, goes back to the position of thinking that grace is given only after our merits and that the principle of our good works comes from ourselves and only their perfection would come from God. It is therefore, more fitting to understand the verse thus: ‘Those whom He has known in His foreknowledge, He has predestined to become conform to the image of His Son’ – so that this conformity is not the reason for our predestination, but rather its term, and effect.

---

<sup>28</sup> In Ep 1:5 Marietti, nn. 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. In Col 1:12 – Marietti, n. 2242.

The Apostle says in effect [cf. Ep 1:5]: ***Who has predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of His will...***

3.] Since Christ is predestined to be the Son of God by nature, and since our Divine Filiation is a **participated similitude** of His, our predestination is therefore regulated and measured by His. It is a **participation** of His Natural Filiation<sup>30</sup>. Now it is evident that that which exists of itself is the **measure** and the **rule** of that which is reputed such by something else and by **accomplishes**. The predestination of Jesus Christ, Who was predestined to be the Son of God by Nature, is therefore the measure and the rule of our life, and thus of our predestination, for we are predestined to adoptive filiation, which is a certain participation and image of natural filiation, according to Rm 8:29: Those whom He has known in His foreknowledge and has predestined to be conform to the image of His Son.

4.] This holds true therefore for predestination itself: this is the argument proving that adoption is realized **through the intermediation of the Son of God by nature**: that which is **such by participation** is only that by the intermediary of that which is **such by nature**<sup>31</sup>.

Hebrews present it this way: ***... For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, Who had brought many children into glory, to perfect the Author of their salvation, by His Passion ...*** [cf. Heb 2:10]<sup>32</sup>: here follows this profound Commentary from St. Thomas:

127: Then, when he says, ***For, it became Him, etc.*** he shows the fittingness from the usefulness.

For God the Father is He Who was the cause of Christ's death. For He it is ***through Whom are all things***, as through an efficient cause, ***and for Whose sake are all things***, as through a final cause. For His sake are all things, since they exist for the sake of communicating His goodness. And this was the cause moving Him to produce things, and thus, so far as their end is concerned, all things exist for the sake of God. Pr 6:4: ***... The Lord has made all things for Himself.*** So far as the efficient cause is concerned, they also exist through Him. Ps 145:6... ***Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them.*** He is therefore the principle and the end of all things. Rv 1:8: ***I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.*** Rm 11:36: ***For of***

<sup>30</sup> In Rm 1:4 – Marietti, n. 48.

<sup>31</sup> In Ep 1:5 – Marietti n. 9.

<sup>32</sup> In Heb 2:10 – Marietti, nn. 127-128 – cf. ***Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.*** Translated and edited by Chrysostom Baer, O. Praem.. Preface by Ralph McNerney. South Bend Indiana: St. Augustine's Press 2006, pp.

**Him, and by Him and in Him, are all things.** Therefore it became Him, Who is the agent of all things to provide for all. Ws 6:8: **He has equally care of all.**

Second, it was fitting on the part of the cause, which, as was said, was the grace of God; but grace is ordered to glory. Rm 6:23: **the grace of God, life everlasting** - God, however, predestined from eternity those whom He must bring into glory. And these are all those who are **participants** in the **Sonship** of His Son, since **if sons, heirs also**, as it says in Rm 8:17. And therefore, he says, **Who had brought many children into glory**, as if he were to say: He has **one perfect Son naturally**. Mk12:6: **... therefore, having yet one Son, most dear to Him**, etc ... Who is naturally the **brightness of His glory**, as it says above in vv. 1:3. The others, however, are **adoptive children**, and therefore, they are to be brought into glory. Wherefore he says: **Who had brought**, i.e., Who had preordained them to be brought in.

128: And what became Him? Namely this: that He is **the Author of their salvation**, etc.

This salvation consists in two things, namely, that they be made children, and that they be introduced into the inheritance. However, through the natural son, they have it that they are children. **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son**, as it says in Rm 8:29. However, they do not obtain glory and the inheritance except through Him to whom the inheritance naturally belongs, who is the Splendor of Glory. Since, therefore, we obtain these two things through the Son, He is fittingly called the Author of Salvation [Mt 1:21: **For He shall save His People from their sins**. Below 12:2: **Looking on Jesus, the author and Finisher of faith**. It was fitting, therefore, that the Father should send the Author of Salvation, namely the Son, as was expounded; the father, i.e., who had brought many children into glory through the Son. And thus is clear the fittingness on the part of the cause.

To perfect ... by his Passion, i.e., through faith. For insofar as He is the **natural son**, He is **totally perfect**; but since He was lessened in His Passion, He had to be perfected through the merits of His Passion. Therefore, from this perfection, there is clear the fittingness of the **measure**, about which He had spoken when he said that He tasted death. For he only tasted death, since he accepted it, except so that through the merit of His Passion, he would be perfected. For His very perfection is His glorification. Lk 24:26: **Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?** He tasted it also, since Just as a **physician tastes a medicine** so that a sick man may not loathe it, but drink it more securely, so Christ Himself, when He was

**bringing children into glory, tasted death**, so that no one might flee away from death; since without death there is no salvation, once the necessity of death is present...

As one is **enkindled**, this has to be by fire, **for nothing can participate in something if it is not through that which is naturally that which one participates in**. Therefore, it is necessary that the filial adoption is realized by that intermediary of the One who is Son by nature.

+++

## 2. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Holy Spirit

1.] The reality of our divine filiation and its attribution to the Holy Spirit are admirably expressed in the celebrated verses of Rm 8:14-16:

*... For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father! For the Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God...*

This text inspired St. Thomas to develop remarkably that **liberty and filial response** animated by the Holy Spirit. He explains then briefly why those who are **moved** by the Holy Spirit are indeed the sons of God<sup>33</sup>: It is necessary to consider in what manner are they who are moved by the Spirit of God Truly the 'sons of God.' The matter is evident in the comparison drawn with carnal children who are generated by their parents by means of a corporal seed. Now, the spiritual seed proceeding from the Father is the Holy Spirit. By this seed there is given to certain human beings the result of being generated as 'sons of God': ... **Whoever is born of God, commits no sin: for his seed abides in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God...** [cf. 1 Jn 3:9].

2.] In a manner quite similar there can be a reflection on a parallel text in St Paul commented then by St. Thomas Aquinas. This presents the grace of the Holy Spirit is that Seed by which we are spiritually regenerated: Ga 4:6:

*... And because you are sons of God, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying: Abba, Father...!*

St. Thomas notes that there are two kinds of generation:

- one is **physical**, which is realized through the operation of a physical seed in the work of generation. This seed, no matter how apparently insignificant in quantity contains within the being to be generated, totally in potency;

<sup>33</sup> In Rm 8:14, ff. – Marietti, nn. 635, ff.

- the other generation is **spiritual** – and this is achieved by a spiritual seed at work in the process of spiritual generation, i.e., the spirit, or the heart of a human being, since we become generated as the children of God by the renewal of our spirit. Now, this spiritual seed is **the grace of the Holy Spirit**:

*... We know that whosoever is **born of God**, sins not: but the generation of God preserves him, and this wicked one touches him not ...* [cf. 1 Jn 5:18].

*... Who is the **Pledge of our inheritance**, unto the redemption of acquisition unto the praise of his glory ...* [cf. Ep 1:14].

Thus, this divine Seed contains in its efficacy the entire perfection of Beatitude forever.

a.] The development of the Commentary on Rm 8:14-16 explains the effects produced by the Mission of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the [Filial] Fear and love. This type of Fear proceeds from the greater perfection charity has, and is not opposed to the freedom of sons, but filial fear is strengthened by filial love. The love of charity establishes the freedom of sons. It brings it about that the believer would act willingly for the honor of God, which is proper to sons. St. Thomas inserts in this Commentary<sup>34</sup> a veritable brief commentary on Fear and its different types. He characterizes it more or less as did St. Augustine before him, by showing the relationship in and through the OT and the NT between Love and Fear. Love is only contrasted by servile fear. In Ph 3:9<sup>35</sup> St. Thomas teaches that as Augustine states that the ultimate difference of Law and Gospel is love and fear. We have not received the spirit of fear, but rather the Spirit of **filial love** and **adoption** [cf. Rm 8:15]. In his Commentary on Heb 12:21<sup>36</sup>, St. Thomas emphasizes the presence of OT Fear, the terror in the hearts of the Israelites, which was somewhat prone to the worship of false gods. The emphasis in the NT is always love: we have not been given the spirit of slaves, but of sons.

b.] The Spirit of Love makes itself particularly known as the Spirit of Filial Adoption<sup>37</sup>: But you have received the **Spirit**, i.e. **Charity**, which the Spirit is, that of **Adoption** as sons. In other words, by this we are adopted as the Sons of God [cf. **Ga 4:5: so that we might receive the adoption as Sons**]. In his Commentary on 1 Tm 6:2, St. Thomas<sup>38</sup> notes that the text speaks of **beloved**, that is, we are the more excellent over other creatures, because we are adopted as children: **Behold what**

<sup>34</sup> In Rm 8:14 – Marietti, nn. 638-641.

<sup>35</sup> cf. Marietti n. 119.

<sup>36</sup> cf. Marietti n. 703.

<sup>37</sup> In Rm 8:15 – Marietti n. 643.

<sup>38</sup> cf. Marietti n. 643.

***manner of charity the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God...*** [cf. 1 Tm 3:1].

c.] This Spirit enables us to proclaim: **Abba, Father!** Not only by word, but through a totally interior filial affection: we speak therefore, not so much by the sound of the voice as by the **desires of the heart**. Desire, due to its vivacity, is called a cry. This vivacity of desire proceeds from the depths of a filial sentiment of love which the Holy Spirit produces in us. And this is why St. Paul says: **In whom**, i.e. to say that Holy Spirit, **we cry out; Abba Father!**<sup>39</sup> It is the Spirit Who cries, i.e., Who makes us cry out: **Abba, Father!** This is not so much by the sudden proclamation of the voice alone, but more by the grandeur and by the fervor of charity of affection. For we cry out: **Abba, Father!** – when by the affection we are enflamed by the warmth of the Holy Spirit and borne to desire God.<sup>40</sup>

d.] Love is that sign by which according to Rm 8:16, the Spirit renders testimony to our spirit that we are indeed the sons of God<sup>41</sup>: this testimony, is not rendered to the ears of other human beings by some exterior voice as the Father in fact did proclaim in the transfiguration regarding His only begotten, most beloved natural Son [cf. Mt 3:17]. Rather testimony is rendered by the effect of filial love which it produces in us. This is why the Apostle says that the Holy Spirit renders testimony not to our ears, but rather to our spirit.

e.] By the invisible Mission of the Holy Spirit, the intelligence is illumined to direct human action and the will is fortified in order to accomplish this<sup>42</sup>: since the one who is led does not act solely on his own. Thus, the Spiritual man is instructed by the Holy Spirit on that which he should do, but even ore his heart is moved by the Holy Spirit.

f.] Divine inspiration in no way violates the liberty, but rather sustains it by including in it the will and the free will in moving them towards their own proper good<sup>43</sup>: the spiritual man is inclined to that action not principally by the movement of his own will, but by the instinct of the Holy Spirit. This in no way excludes, however, that spiritual men would act by their will and by their own free will, but the Holy Spirit causes in them the very movement of the will and of their freedom, according to Ph 2:13: ... **For it is Good who works in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will...** . St. Paul notes in Ga: 5:18: ... **But, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law...** The state of faith in Christ leads the apostle to freedom, and this is freedom itself. And therefore, he tells us you are

<sup>39</sup> Cf. In Rm 8:15 – Marietti, n. 644.

<sup>40</sup> In Ga 4:6 – Marietti n. 215.

<sup>41</sup> In Rm 8:16 – Marietti, n. 645.

<sup>42</sup> In Rm 8:14 – Marietti, n. 635.

<sup>43</sup> In Rm 8:14 – Marietti n. 635.

called by God into the freedom of grace [cf. Rm 8:15]. You have received not the spirit of slavery in fear, but you have accepted the Spirit of the adoption of the sons of God [cf. Rm 8:15]. ... ***we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.*** [cf. Ga 3:31]<sup>44</sup>: further, ***And if you be Christ's, then you are the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise...*** [cf. Ga 3:29]. You are the adoptive sons of God because you are united through faith in Christ Who is the natural Son of God.<sup>45</sup>

†††

### 3. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Son

#### a. Adoptive Filiation and Faith in Jesus Christ

Ga 3:26: ... ***For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...*** this text provides the occasion of making clearer the relationship between the filial adoption and faith in Jesus Christ. This Faith uniting us to Jesus, and in making us adhere to Him, renders us thus participants, by adoption in the divine filiation which He possesses by nature<sup>46</sup>.

Indeed, we are all the children of God by faith – not by the ‘law’. As has often been noted, St. Paul in Rm 8:15 reminds us that we have not received a spirit of slavery, i.e., one of fear, which was given under the old law. Rather, we have received the spirit of adoption of sons, i.e., the Holy Spirit of charity and of love, which is given under the New Covenant by faith. As St John notes: ... ***He gave them the power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe In His Name ...*** [Jn 1:12].

If, therefore, we are indeed the sons of God by Faith, there would never again be a right reason to once again become slaves by observances of ancient prescriptions. For Faith alone renders men the adoptive sons of God. No one, indeed, is an adoptive child of God unless he is united and unless he adheres to the Natural Son of God. Rm 8:29 reminds believers that they are those whom He has foreknown that they would become conform to the Image of His Son. For it is faith that makes of us His sons in Christ Jesus. Paul teaches: ... ***that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that being rooted and founded in charity ... you might be able to comprehend what the charity of Christ is, which surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God ...*** [Ep 3:17, ff.]. It is thus by Jesus Christ that we become the sons of God.

<sup>44</sup> In Ga 3:26 – Marietti n. 181

<sup>45</sup> In Ga 3:29 – Marietti, n. 190.

<sup>46</sup> In Ga 3:26 – Marietti, n. 181.



## b. Adoptive Filiation and Conformity to Christ

1.] In receiving the Spirit of Christ, we are **conform** to the Son of God by nature, and by that very fact, **adopted** as sons. The student can find this in the Angelic Doctor's Commentary on Ga 4:5: ... ***God sent His son, made of a woman, made under the law - that He might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption as sons...***<sup>47</sup>: we are adopted as sons of God by the fact that we receive the Spirit of Jesus Christ and that we are made conformed to Him. As in Rm 8:9 - if one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he cannot belong to Him. And this adoption pertains specially to Jesus Christ. For we cannot become the adoptive sons without being conformed to the Son by nature. In Rm 8:29 Paul states that those whom has known in His foreknowledge that they would become conformed to the Image of His son – and thus the Apostle states so that we might receive the adoption of sons, i.e., so that by the Son of God by nature, we have become the adoptive sons of God according to grace by Jesus Christ.

2.] Likewise, for this other Pauline text: ... ***who has predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself: according to the purpose of His will...*** [cf. Ep 1:5]<sup>48</sup>:

a.] We are **in** Christ [cf. v. 7 here] in that we are similar to Christ and conform to Him, according to the fact of our adoption as sons. Thus, Paul speaks of our adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. He has predestined us - meaning that God has predestined us, i.e., by His grace alone He has chose us to render us His adoptive sons, i.e., so that He might associate us to other adoptive sons in order to take part, to share in those goods that they will obtain. This is why the Apostle says that we are predestined for the adoptions as son. In Rm 8:15, so often noted by the Angelic Doctor, we have not received a spirit of slavery in order to fall back into fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons.

b.] Further on, St. Paul noted [Rm 8:23]: ... ***we ourselves roan within waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body...*** We hope for this all through Jesus Christ [cf. Ga 4:4, f.] – God has sent His Son, but of a woman subject to the Law, so that He might redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we might receive the adoptions as sons. It is said that we are **in Him**, i.e., in so far as we are **conform** to Him and that we serve in spirit. 1 Jn 3:1 adds: ... ***Behold what manner of charity the father has bestowed on us that we should be called and could be the sons of God...*** This last text goes on in v. 2: ... ***we know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is...!***

---

<sup>47</sup> In Ga 4:5 – Marietti, n. 209.

<sup>48</sup> In Ep 1:5 – Marietti n. 9.

3.] The major text supporting the relationship between the divine filiation by adoption and the conformity to Jesus Christ, the natural Son of God – pertains to Rm 8:29 – those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conform to the image of His son, so that He might be the first-born of many brothers. In his Commentary, St. Thomas makes two important points<sup>49</sup>:

a.] First, conformity to Christ is an **effect**, and **not the cause** of the predestination of the just: On the order of the predestination and of His foreknowledge, some authors have thought that the foreknowledge of the merits of the good and the evil provides the ultimate reason for either their predestination or their reprobation. This would mean that God predestines some good men because He foresees that they will accomplish good and that they will grow in Christ. In this sense, one reads this verse in this sense: those whom God has known in His foreknowledge ought to be conform to the image of His Son, He has predestined these. Rather, it is more proper to understand Paul's text here, as the Angelic Doctor notes: Those whom God knew in His foreknowledge that He has predestined to become conform to the image of His Son. This would imply that this conformity is not the **reason**, but its **term, effect**. For the Apostle notes in Ep 1:5: **He** has predestined us for the adoption to become sons of God.

b.] Secondly, this conformity **is** the adoption itself. The expression here is quite rigorous: **the adoption as sons is nothing other than this conformity**. This goes well beyond the statement of a purely **moral conformity** – in the sense that the son of God would have to strive to live in correspondence with divine grace, to live according to the dignity that this title implies. The conformity to Christ which essentially constitutes adoption is most importantly of the **ontological order**:

(1) While this **moral** perspective would not suffice to **define** Divine Filiation, it must not on that account be excluded<sup>50</sup>. For Paul states that we are to **imitate God as well beloved children of His** [cf. Ep 5:1]. This is necessary, even though it is very difficult. For human nature will never be perfected unless it is in conjunction, union with God. Therefore, God is to be **imitated** in such an extent that we have the possibility to do this, as He has elected us for a participation in Himself. The fact that we are the most beloved sons, this is what charity poured into us accomplishes [cf. Rm 8:15] – we have not accepted the spirit of slavery, to once again fall into fear. But we have received the Spirit of the adoption as sons, in which we can cry out: **Abba, Father!** The Spirit Himself bears

---

<sup>49</sup> In Rm 8:29 – Marietti, n. 703.

<sup>50</sup> In Ep 5:1 Marietti nn. 267; 269.

witness to our spirit, that we are the sons of God Therefore, in love, we need to imitate Him.

(2) Indeed the **adoption** as sons is nothing other than this **conformity itself** – for the one who is adopted as a son of God is brought into conformity to His true Son by nature.

- In the first place one comes to participate in the right to the same inheritance as the natural Son, as Paul has noted [cf. Rm 8:17]: if we are the sons we are also His heirs. We are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ;
- secondly, in the participation of His splendor, for He has been generated by the father as ***the Splendor – the perfect emanation – of His glory*** [cf. Heb 1:3]. Also, in illumining the saints with the same light of the wisdom and of grace, He makes them become conform to Himself. This is why it is written in Ps 110:4” ***in the brightness of the saints – from the womb before the day star, I begot you.*** In other words, God is the ultimate Source from which flows the whole splendor of the saints.

4.] This **ontological conformity of the adoptive Son of God to the Son of God by nature** - does not exclude, but rather amplifies a **moral conformity, a mystical unity** in this sense, that the adoptive son, before discarding the divine heritage ought first of all be associated, conformed, to the suffering, to the Passion – to be trumpeted and tried as was the Son of God by nature, in His humanity. We are children, therefore heirs – heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ – if we suffer with Him, this is so that we can also be glorified with Him [cf. Rm 8:17]. If He merits in full right the heavenly glory, and as He only obtained this through His dolorous passion and death – with all the more reason we who participate in His Divine Filiation and therefore, in His inheritance, we, too, have to support trials and suffering<sup>51</sup>.

a.] It needs to be considered here that Jesus Christ, Who is the principal Heir, has come to enjoy His inheritance of the eternal glory only through His sufferings and death. Lk 24:26 reminds us: was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer and that He would only then enter in His glory? Now we cannot pretend to enter into possession of the inheritance with conditions any easier. This is why one has to come to the inheritance only through sufferings.

b.] The Church is reminded in Ac 14:22 ... ***Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continence in the faith: and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.*** Indeed we can

---

<sup>51</sup> In Rm 8:17 – Marietti n. 651

only receive an immortal and impassible body provided that we indeed do suffer with Jesus Christ. This is why St. Paul said: ***Provided that we suffer with Him!*** This means that all the baptized [cf. Rm 6] are personally called so support patiently with Jesus Christ the tribulations of this world, so that we might be glorified with Him [cf. 2 Tm 2:11]: ... ***if we died with Him, we will reign with him!***

5.] If God has not spared His only-begotten Son, but rather has **handed Him over** for us [cf. Rm 8:33] – there can be no astonishment that He allows those to suffer whom He has personally adopted as sons out of His love. Those whom the Lord loves, He corrects them, and He chastises them” ... ***For whom the Lord loves, He chastises; and He scourges every son whom He receives Persevere under discipline. God deals with you as His sons; for what son is there whom the Father does not correct*** [cf. Heb 12: 6, f.].

a.] If He chastises, this is so that His beloved do not tend toward evil. And as our senses and our thoughts are disposed toward evil, as is noted in Gn 8:21, the Lord chastises us in order to withdraw us from evil:

***... for the imagination and thought of man’s heart are prone to evil from his youth...***  
[cf. Gn 8:21].

***... The Lord chastising has chastised me: but He has not delivered me over to death...*** [cf. Ps 117:18].

***... You have chastised me, and I was instructed as a young bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke ...*** [cf. Jr 31:18].

b.] He chastises by scourging not as condemnation but rather for eventual salvation. This is why the Apostle says that he scourges the son He loves. And indeed, those who are not scourged are not of the number of His sons. So, it is not surprising that He scourges all the sons that He receives by adoption: for ***He did not spare His own Son.*** [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16]. It is simply necessary that Christ had to suffer<sup>52</sup>

6.] The Commentary at the beginning of the Letter to the Ephesians<sup>53</sup> establishes a correspondence between conformity to Jesus Christ and the love borne by the Father for His **adoptive sons**:

***... As He chose us in him before he foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity. Who has predestined us unto adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself: according to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which he has graced us in His beloved Son...*** [Ep 1:4-6].

<sup>52</sup> In Heb 12:6 – Marietti, n. 703.

<sup>53</sup> In ep 1:6 b – Marietti, n. 15.

a.] If He should grant us His grace, St. Thomas explains, this is because God has rendered us worthy by His love. It is a matter therefore of His, rendering one justified. Here the Apostle said **has gratified**, i.e., made the recipients 'graced', so that we might become worthy of His predilection. This is noted in St. John: ... **Behold what manner of charity the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God** [cf. 1 Jn 3:1].

b.] He elevates us to this dignity in rendering us similar to him, for love is founded on **resemblance**. Now, it is the **Son of God by nature** Who is the **Perfect ICON** of the Father. For this fact, which He manifests *par excellence*, He is beloved of the Father. In the measure, therefore, that we are **conformed** to Him we participate ourselves in His identity as Son and of the Image and therefore, of that love which He bears the Father.

c.] The Apostle adds **In His beloved Son**, i.e., through Him it is that the Father loves us, in so far as we are similar to Him. **This predilection is in effect, founded on similitude**. Hence, we read: ... **so every man loves him that is nearest to himself...** [Si 13:19]. Now, the Divine Son by nature is most similar to the Father: therefore, He is particularly loved for this, and for Himself, and naturally and in the most excellent manner. We are sons by adoption in that we are made conformed to His Son, and that we have therefore a certain participation in the divine love. As John puts it: ... **The Father loves the Son: and He has given all things into His hand** [cf. Jn 3:35] - **He has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love** ... [Col 1:13].

+++

#### 4. The Subject of the Divine Filiation by Adoption

##### a. Jesus Christ is not An Adoptive Son of God

1.] Jesus Christ, being the Divine Son by nature, would not be a Son by Adoption: for whoever is **Son of Himself**, is **not that by participation**. This is why Scripture says of Christ, by relation to the Father, who is His Son, in such a way that this qualifies Him as the **First-Born of a multitude of Brothers**. Three verses illustrate the manner with which St. Paul speaks of *the Christ*, *par excellence*:

a.] **Rm 1:3: ... Concerning His Son, Who was made to Him of the seed of David, according to the flesh...** Some have said that the Christ had only an adoptive accomplish. Thus, Photin advanced that idea that the Christ was born from the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary as an ordinary man, and that once He had arrived at such an elevation by the merit of His life, He would have been held in preference to all saints, called sons of God. But, beyond this one could not say that

the **Christ had descended to humanity**, but rather that He had been elevated to the divinity, which would contradict St. John: *... I am the living Bread which came down from heaven...* [cf. Jn 6:51]. The Apostle adds expressly, **His Son**, i.e., **His proper Son by nature**. For as Ste. Hilary states: this Son is proper and authentic, as **He is this by origin and not by adoption** in truth, and not only by name, **by birth and not by creation** He proceeds indeed from the Father, as the **Word proceeds from the heart**. In saying that He is *of the race of David*, the Apostle excludes Photin's idea. If indeed the Christ had become by adoption the son of God, one could not say that He is born of the race of David, but rather that he has been born of the Spirit, i.e., of the Spirit of the adoption of Sons, as in Rm 8:15 – and of the race of God, according to 1 Jn 3:9: *... whoever is born of God ...* [cf. 1 Jn 3:9].

b.] **Rm 8:32<sup>54</sup>**: *... He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all...* - once again here the Apostle applies to Jesus Christ the expression. *Par excellence*, **His own son**: as the context had just mentioned the numerous sons of God, in saying: **you have received the Spirit of the adoption of sons** [cf. Rm 8:15], St. Paul separates this unique Son from all the others, in emphasizing **His very own Son**. this means, not the adoptive son, but the **Son of God by nature**. The heretics say in their lies that He is only 'adopted' – whereas the Church consistently teaches through the Scriptures that **Jesus Christ is the Son of God, by nature and c o-eternal**: *... And we know that the Son of God is come and He has given us understanding that we may know the true God, and may be in His true on. This is the true and life eternal.* [cf. 1 Jn 5:20] - *... And behold a voice from heaven , saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...!* [cf. Jn 3:17].

c.] **Ga 4:4-5<sup>55</sup>**: *...Bu when the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law: that He might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption as sons ...* - finally, the Apostle makes mention of the visible mission of **His Son** in order to make us **His sons**. The Apostle states that He has sent His Son, i.e., His own Son by nature. And if He is Son, He is also the Heir. He says: His Son, i.e., His own, proper, natural and unique son, not adoptive: **God so loved the world that He gave up His only Son!** [cf. Jn 3:16].

2.] The Christ, therefore, is in no way, merely one of the adoptive sons of God, even in a most special sense. In so far as He is Man, **He is the Son of God by grace, and not by adoption**, but by the **Grace of Union**. The student may read in the Commentary on the address of the Epistle to the Romans:

---

<sup>54</sup> In Rm 8:32 – Marietti n. 71.

<sup>55</sup> In Ga 4:4 – Marietti n. 202

*... the Gospel of God concerning His Son, issued from the line of David according to the flesh, established the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Savior...* [cf. Rm 1:1-4].<sup>56</sup>

Beyond the nature of a rational creature, there is only God alone, to whom the rational creature is untied by grace in several ways:

- in a first manner, as regards the act of God Himself – thus, by the grace of Prophecy, there is communicated to man the foreknowledge of the future, that which pertains only to God. This sort of grace is called gratuitously, that **grace gratuitously given**;

- in a second manner as pertains to God Himself, to Whom the rational creature is untied in a common manner, according to the effect of dilection, as is noted in 1 Jn 4:16: *...In this we know that we abide in Him and He in us: because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world...* [cf. 1 Jn 4:16]. In this case that which renders one agreeable to God, **that grace rendering one graced** - and this is the **Grace of Adoption**;

- finally, there is a manner which is proper to Jesus Christ, by that unique **Union in His Personal Being**, and this is called the **Grace of Union**.

3.] It is therefore uniquely in virtue of the union of the two natures, the divine and the human, in a unique *supposit*, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. St. Thomas explains this in connection with the ***Kenosis Hymn, Ph 2:9***<sup>57</sup>: ***And God has exalted Him and given Him a Name above every other name...*** - In Jesus Christ, there is a double nature and a unique *supposit*. Therefore, this Person is God and man, and consequently this verse can be explained in two ways:

- in a first manner, the Father has given to him this Name in so far as He is the **Son of God, and that by nature, by an eternal generation**;

- in a second manner, it is said of Christ as man: the Father has given to this man the Name, in that He is God, **not by his human nature**, for one is the nature of God and the other is this human nature. But the Name is given to Him in that **He is God by Grace**, not **the Grace of Adoption**, but **by the Grace of Union, through which He is both God and man**.

†††

---

<sup>56</sup> In Rm 1:4 – Marietti, n. 46.

<sup>57</sup> In Ph 2:9 – Marietti, n. 70.

**b. The Divine Adoption of the Jews in the OT and Its extension to the Gentiles by the Incarnation**

[... The New Adam who is *the image of the invisible God* [cf. Col 1: 15] is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in Him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by His Incarnation, He, the Son of God, has in a certain way united Himself with each man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, He acted with a human will, and with a human heart He loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been one of us, like to us in all things except sin [Heb 4:15] [GS 22 b].

+++

1.] St. Thomas Aquinas recognized in the just, in the spiritual persons of the OT, the benefice of **divine adoption**. It is based on this text:

*... Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as of children, and the glory, and the testament, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God and the Promises ...* [cf. Rm 9:4]<sup>58</sup>.

The Apostle shows the dignity of this people, from the perspective of its benefits received from God, among which he places in the first rank the spiritual gifts with regard to the present time. In this matter he states that to them pertains **the adoption as of children**. This is based on an ancient text – Ex 4:22: *Israel, My First-born*. It is manifest that this pertains to those spiritual persons who make up part of this people. As for the ‘carnal’ members the Apostle has implied in Rm 8:15 that they have only received the spirit of slavery in fear. He mentions further one more benefit, which pertains to the future and does this when he speaks of their future glory, i.e., of the sons of God who have been promised this.

2.] Divine Adoption is one of those outstanding privileges reserved by God for His very own People, and this is a mark of their superiority, which is ‘great in every regard’ [cf. Rm 3] indicating their superiority over the non-believer. There is another special text:

*... not that they are the children of the flesh are the children of God; but they are the children of the promise, are accounted for the seed of God...* [cf. Rm 9:8]<sup>59</sup>.

Adoption consists then in a personal gift which is not owed merely to human nature transmitted by natural generation. It is not enough simply to be born of Abraham in

<sup>58</sup> In Rm 9:4 – Marietti n. 744.

<sup>59</sup> In Rm 3:2 – Marietti n. 249; In Ep 2:12 – Marietti n. 249



order to pertain to his posterity: only Isaac who is his son according to the promise makes part of his posterity, and Ismael did not have this right – according to the ancient scriptures.

a.] Already in the OT, God had promised to provide a New Covenant – thus, the Israelites were indeed the children of God with the Covenant, the Law and the service of God [cf. Rm 9:4]. More was given to the ancient Israelites as the Psalms remember:

*... Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel...* [cf. Ps 71:18].

*... the Lord will not cast off His People ...* [cf. Ps 93:14].

*... He has not done in like manner to every nation ...* [cf. Ps 147:20].

b.] The Apostle concluded those merely ‘born according to the flesh’ are not the adopted children of God – i.e. it is not the mere fact that they are of the flesh that they are spiritually ‘born’ of Abraham. But, only those are reputed to be of the race of Abraham and those to whom He has made His promises, who become the ‘children of the promise’. These are the ones who live in the grace of the divine promise – these are the genuine sons of Abraham in that they are called to imitate His faith, as in Mt 3:9: **God can raise up from these stones sons of Abraham** [cf. Mt 3:9]. In this manner, Ismael, born only according to the flesh, has not been included in the race, but only Isaac, born in virtue of the Promise.

3.] The Incarnation of the Word then extends to the Gentile world the gift of Divine Filiation, according to:

*... And it shall be, in the place where it was said unto them: ‘You are not My People!’ - there they shall be called the sons of the living God...* [cf. Rm 9:26]<sup>60</sup>.

a.] St. Paul is quoting Ho 2:1 here: as God promised the gentiles the dignity of becoming the sons of God, a dignity of which the Israelites had taken glory in as was stated in Is 2:1: **... I have brought up children, and exalted them: but they have despised Me!** - and the Lord’s own anguished question: **... Is not the Lord your Father, Who possessed you, and made you, and created you....?** [cf. Dt 32:6].

b.] In Paul’s letter to the Romans we read again:

*... the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they ought also in carnal things to minister unto them. ...* [cf. Rm 15:27].

---

<sup>60</sup> In Rm 9:26 – Marietti – In Rm 15:27 – Marietti n. 1185

These spiritual things were once the exclusive prerogative of the Israelites – they were privy to His Word, His promises, His graces, as Paul noted: **... to the Israelites belong adoption... the glory ... the Covenant ...** [cf. Rm 9:4] - and the Lord made known to Pharaoh: **... to this purpose have I raised you, that I may show My power in you, and that My Name might be declared throughout the earth ...** [cf. Rm 9:17].

c.] Furthermore, not only were the Gentiles not privileged with the title of ‘sons of God’ – this title is the prerogative of those who serve God out of Love, as is noted in Rm 8:14: **For whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.** But neither were they regarded as worthy of being called the ‘Peoples of God’, a title which could pertain even to those who had received the spirit of slavery in fear. Thus, the Apostle says that ‘there will arrive in the same place’, i.e., in Judea, ‘where it was said to them’, i.e., to the Gentiles by the Jews as though speaking in the Name of God: ‘You are not My People!’

d.] Indeed, they were not regarded as the People of God. Among the believers in ancient Israel they were the ones who merited this title fully, the sons of God. The expression: ‘in this place’ - i.e., in the whole world in which they will be converted to the<sup>3</sup> true faith, so that they might be brought to understand that they will not be converted like the proselytes which the Israelites made, once they had emigrated from their native lands and moved into Israel, moving into Judea. He has pointed out that this ought not to happen also to those who are to be converted to Jesus Christ: **... and they shall adore Him every man from his own place all the islands of the Gentiles...** [cf. So 2:11]. The same where it has been said, once by divine proclamation, to all, dwelling in their place: **... But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His Name ...** [cf. Jn 1:12].

4.] It is interesting to note how the Commentary of St. Thomas details minutely the passage from Ga 4:4-5:

**... But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons –** [vv. 4-5]

**and because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father!** [v. 6].

This articulation between a double affirmation: the adoption of the Jews, on the one hand – and then, its extension, on the other hand, to the pagans who become converted to the true faith in the Son of God<sup>61</sup>. The Apostle has shown a bit

---

<sup>61</sup> In Ga 4:6 – Marietti nn. 210-211.

above the benefit granted to the Jews of old. He shows here that this same benefit pertains likewise equally to the Gentiles. He holds, therefore, that the benefit of adoption as sons of God pertains not only to those under the law, but also to the Gentiles this is why he says: ‘since you are the sons of God’, etc. – i.e. if you are indeed the sons of God the cause of this is that not only to the Jews, but also to all the others who come to believe in the son of God, are adopted as the children of God: ... **He gave them the power to become the sons of God** [cf. Jn 1:12].

5.] The pagans are, of course, not joined to Christ by ties of blood –it is not to them that He preached. If indeed they are united to Him, it is by a community of spirit. The manner by which they receive the benefit of the Divine Filiation is nothing other than the **invisible mission of the Holy Spirit**<sup>62</sup>.

a.] The manner by which one obtains this gift is the Mission of the Holy Spirit of God in their hearts. St. Augustine had noted that the Christ during His mortal life, preached principally to the Jews, and once in a while to the Gentiles: ... **For I say that the Christ Jesus was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers** ... [cf. Rm 15:8]. Consequently all that pertains to the state of the Jews is fittingly attributed to Jesus. And because those who could say that the Galatians had not been adopted as sons of God, since the Christ had not taken from them His flesh nor had He preached to them, so that they did not seem to have any point of union with Him – but, the Apostle does bring out showing the manner of this adoption of theirs. He shows that they had not been united to Christ according to the flesh, i.e., according to their particular race. Nor by preaching. However, they did become united to him and were adopted sons of God by the Holy Spirit.

b.] This is why the conversion of the Gentiles is specially attributed to the Holy Spirit. Also when St. Peter was reprimanded by the Jews for having gone to preach to the Gentiles he laid claim to the Holy Spirit in saying [cf. Ac 11:17: ...**If then God gave them the same grace, as to us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; who was I that could withstand God...?** It was by his charism as Prince of the Apostles, and by the instinct of grace as an Apostolic Missionary that he acted as he did. And therefore, it is because God the Father has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, i.e. to those of the Jews and of the gentiles, that we are all united to Jesus Christ – and by this fact, all are the sons of God.

6.] The fact that this adoption might be common to the Jews and to the Pagans who had been covered to the true faith in the Son of God is confirmed, according to St. Thomas, by the two-fold cry that the Spirit moves to

---

<sup>62</sup> In Ga 4:6 – Marietti, n. 212.

come forth from our hearts – God is both **Abba, and Father!**<sup>63</sup> The different terms used in separate languages [*Abba* = Hebrew; *Pater* = Greek, Latin] have the same meaning. The Apostle mentions them together to bring out the more that grace, as such, is common to all peoples.

## 5. Adoptive Filiation: Justification and Baptismal Re-generation

1.] The Epistle to Titus teaches the dependence of the acquisition of the heavenly inheritance of Justification<sup>64</sup>, and therefore the renovation and the regeneration which the Holy Spirit works in Baptism:

***... Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Spirit, Whom He has poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior... [Tt 3:5-7]***<sup>65</sup>.

a.] This bond between adoption and justification is well indicated in St. Thomas' Commentary on Ga 4:7<sup>66</sup>. When it is stated that this comes to us from 'God our Father', the entire trinity may be understood – as a work *ad extra*. As for the deliverance from every evil from which we are liberated by the adoption of the Spirit, this is our deliverance from slavery [cf. 1 Co 1:3]. This is all worked out according to the will of God and the Father – the father of Christ by nature, which from all eternity proceeds as Word [cf. Ps 2:7] - ***this day I have generated you!*** And there is a counter-part, in Jn 1:1: In the beginning was the Word, etc. Hence, is our Father by adoption – as He has given us the power to become the sons of God [cf. Jn 1:12]

b.] St. Thomas remarks on the Trinitarian character of this justification of Baptism: God the father sends out His Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, our savior. Although he does not insist here on this point, it is clear that there is here an argument in favor of the thesis by adoption by the three Divine Persons. One becomes a son of God by Baptism, in the Name of the father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – and not by the name of the father alone. If he notes that the Holy Spirit realizes this regeneration, he also observes that He has sent the Christ, and that it is of the fullness of the grace of Him inspires our souls so that the Baptism, as the other sacraments. Possesses their efficacy only in virtue of the humanity and Passion of the Lord. <sup>67</sup> We have not received the spirit of fear but of loving trust enabling us to pray, **Abba, Father!**

<sup>63</sup> In Ga 4:6 – Marietti n 215.

<sup>64</sup> In Ga 4:7 – Marietti, n. 216

<sup>65</sup> In Tt 3:5-6 – Marietti, nn. 92-93.

<sup>66</sup> cf. Marietti, n. 216.

<sup>67</sup> In Tt 3:4, ff. – Marietti nn. 92, f.

c.] As for the effects of the Baptismal bath the Apostle adds he points regarding **regeneration** and **renovation**. It must be known that in the state of perdition, two realities are lacking for a person he had obtained from Christ: to participate in the divine nature, and to put aside old age! This is separation from God: ***But your iniquities have divided between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you that he should not hear*** [cf. Is 59:2]. This is what it means to age in a spiritual way: ***You have grown old in a strange country, you are defiled with the dead...*** [Ba 3:11] Now, the first effect we have obtained it from Christ, i.e., by **participation in the divine nature** [cf. 2 P 1:4]

d.] Now, a new nature can only be acquired by **generation**. But, this nature is given in such a manner that ours subsists and this is added unto it. This there is generated a participation as **a son of God** without destroying the human being. Jn 3:7: ***... It is necessary to be born anew.*** This is why it is called generation. As is noted in Jn 1:18: ***Willingly He has generated us by the word of His truth.*** The human being puts away also through Christ spiritual ageing caused by sin, and which was renewed in the integrity of His nature. And this is called **renewal, renovation**. Ep 4:33: ***Be renewed in the spirit of your judgment.*** But, the Holy Spirit is also given by Jesus Christ. Jn 15:26 ***... the Paraclete, Whom I will send...*** [Jn 15:26].

e.] In Christ, one finds two natures and to each of these it is fitting that the Christ gives the Holy Spirit. In the Latin Church expression the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Word and the Father, as love. Love proceeds in us from the conception that takes place in the heart, a conception which is the Word. As for the human nature, the Christ has received the Spirit in such plenitude that the Latter derives from the Former in such plenitude for all. ***He is full of grace and truth*** [cf. Jn 1:14] - and a little later, ***And from His plenitude we have all received, grace for grace.*** [Jn 1:16]. In Jn 3:34: ***... He gives His Spirit beyond measure.*** It is for this reason that Baptism and the other Sacraments only have efficacy through the instrumentality of the humanity and passion of Jesus Christ.

2.] Justification, compared to a movement, has two terms: **renewal, or renovation, i.e., the remission of every sin – as its terminus a quo** - and **regeneration, its terminus ad quem**. By this latter, which exists only through grace, the just man becomes a participant, the Heir of eternal life<sup>68</sup>.

a.] Heb 12:7: ***... God deals with you as with His sons; for what son is here, whom the Father does not correct?*** There is, of course, a difference between God as Father and any father by natural generation of another human being. When one man generates a child as far as the body is concerned, but he does not do so regarding the soul which is by creation. God is our most excellent father,

---

<sup>68</sup> In Tt 3:7-8 – Marietti nn. 94-95.

i.e., as regards the soul, which He immediately creates. He justifies the soul, by adopting us as children. As Paul states: ... ***Therefore, the Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God...*** [cf. Rm 8:16].

b.] When the Apostle states that all this is ‘so that one is **justified by the grace of Jesus Christ**’, there is indicated the end, the purpose, of our salvation, which is **participation in eternal life**. This is why the Apostle uses the word ‘Heirs’, ‘Justified’ as synonymous with **regenerated** - employed earlier. In the justification of the impious, the sinner, there are two terms, ***a quo*** [this is the **remission of the sin – renovation**] - and ***ad quem***, the **infusion of grace** – and this refers to **regeneration**.

c.] Therefore, the Apostle says: the Word was made flesh ***so that we might be justified***, i.e., renewed **by grace**, for there is no justification without grace. When a person is loved by God, it is necessary that He loves the person and that as God loves one, it is necessary that grace be bestowed on this person, for without grace, He would not be able to love the individual. All this leads to the fact that those loved by God can be called ‘heirs’.

d.] This is described in 1 P 1:4 ... ***Unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that you can not fade, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time*** ... This inheritance is eternal life.

e.] Ps 15:6: ... ***For my inheritance is goodly to me...*** How then, are we ‘heirs’ The only response is: ***in hope!*** Hope is what determines the present life. Rm 5:2: ... ***Being justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God*** ... [cf. Rm 5:1, ff.].



## CONCLUSION

[1] St. Thomas Commentaries on the Epistles attributed to St. Paul [several of which appear in English] <sup>69</sup> are very valuable for the study of our adoptive filiation. The student finds in these many texts no formal, systematic exposition of the passages but numerous indications based on the Word of God. It is necessary to take well into account the specific nature of these works of the Angelic Doctor and the end result of a study of this nature, as the biblical theme of our **adoptive filiation** is repeatedly discussed. With regard to the major theological works also presented in this survey by Fr. L. Sommes, OP on Filiation in Paul and Thomas it is clear that the notations relative to our adoption by grace are commanded by the development of the Pauline text. Hence, they are not organized, or presented in an orderly fashion but are extremely helpful precisely as they are for the saint's learned insights.

[2] Certain of Paul's principal texts recur:

*... For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear' but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father! For the Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. ...* [cf. Rm 8:14-17].

*... But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law: that he might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father!* [cf. Ga 4:4-6].

These texts justify certain assertions that offer a profound commentary, and thus clarify the use that the Angelic Doctor makes of them in other works of his. On the other hand, certain aspects rarely, or briefly called to mind elsewhere, are here a bit more developed. It is necessary, as a result, to take these important biblical commentaries under consideration. They are closer to the biblical language, as would be expected, for their usage in the works of speculation stands up under theological scrutiny.

---

<sup>69</sup> NB: the following have been consulted: *St. Thomas Aquinas. Commentary on Colossians*. Translated by Fabian Larcher, OP. Ed. by Daniel A. Keating. Naples FL; Sapientia 2006; *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*. Aquinas Scripture Commentaries. Vol I.. Translated by F. R. Larcher, OP. Introduction by Richard T. A. Murphy, OP. Albany NY: Magio Books Inc. 1966; *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*. Aquinas Scripture Commentaries. Vol II.. Translation and Introduction by Matthew L. Lamb OCSO., OP. Albany NY: Magi Books Inc. 1966; *Thomas Aquinas. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Translated and edited by Chrysostom Baer, O. Praem. Preface by Ralph Miclnerly South bend IN: St. Augustine's Press 2006.

[3] St. Paul's statement regarding the 'right to an eternal inheritance' for the sons of God is likewise defended by the Angelic Doctor in his works of greater theological speculation and contemplation. It is neither the juridical aspect of a legal right, nor the power of created grace which is found principally under discussion and that are principally put forward. Rather, it is the certitude that is conferred by the presence of the Holy Spirit in these transactions that is the most pondered. According to Ep 1:13-14:

*... In whom you also, after you had heard the word of truth [the Gospel of your salvation] in whom also believing you were signed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, Who is the Pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of His glory ... ]*

– these are very pregnant terms – all providing the sign of the promised Inheritance is a certain Promise and the inheritance revealed earlier on the relationships of Abraham of whom the adoptive sons of God, by their union with Christ, are the authentic descendents. Lastly St. Thomas shows better that in addition to the fact that the Christ is the **Principal Heir, by nature**, to Whom we are associated, rendered participants in this inheritance. The under-lying idea is that of a derivation of His inheritance, analogous to the derivation of divine filiation, from Him to us. Likewise, the predestination of Jesus Christ to be the Son of God by nature is the ultimate measure and the rule of our predestination to this divine filiation by adoption. Furthermore, the commentaries on other Pauline texts put forward the fact that the consummation of our divine filiation in heaven includes corporal glorification:

*... Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto himself... [Ph 3:21].*

*... And not only it, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even when we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body ... [cf. Rm 8:23].*

[4] In that which concerns the relationship between our divine filiation and the Third Divine Person, the most striking point here is the fact that the Holy Spirit is characterized as **the spiritual Seed of the Father**: the realism of our regeneration is expressed in a vigorous manner. One also notes the insistence of St. Thomas to show how the Spirit of Adoption of the sons is **the Spirit of Love and of Freedom**, and how our freedom is pressed into service with the motion of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the cry in us of **Abba, Father!** is interpreted as the intensity of the love appropriated to the Spirit of God.



[5] An original trait appeared on the occasion of commenting on this important text:

*... For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus* [cf. Ga 3:26].

St. Thomas interprets **this** verse as the affirmation that faith in Christ, in assimilating us to the Only-begotten, most beloved Son of God. This enables us to participate in His own Divine Filiation. The concept of **assimilation** to the Divine Son is frequently expressed here by the word, **conformity**. There simply is no **divine filiation by adoption** without being in **conformity to Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God**. This **conformity** is not the **reason**, but rather the **term, the effect of predestination**: it is, in the last analysis quite another reality, than the divine adoption itself. This conformity manifests itself in the right to *co-inherit* with the Only Son of God by nature, and in the **participation** of His Splendor, by the light of the **Wisdom and grace**. St. Thomas resumes thus the relationships between adoptive filiation, love and conformity to the Only Begotten Son of God: we are beloved of the Father, as His **adoptive sons** in the measure that we are in conformity to the Son passes invariably by an assimilation in His suffering: ***we are sons, therefore heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ, if we suffer with Him in order to be glorified with Him...*** [cf. Rm 8:17].

[6] In order to justify the fact that Jesus Christ is not an adoptive Son of God, St. Thomas remarks on the scriptural usage of the expression *par excellence*, His Son. This reserves to Jesus Christ the **divine filiation by nature** without denying assuredly the reality of our adoption. He recognizes to the OT ‘just’ the enjoyment of adoptive accomplish. The Incarnation then comes to extend the benefit of all this to pagans.

[7] The Commentary on Titus furnishes an important complement to the theological works of St. Thomas:

*... Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His Mercy, He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Spirit, Whom He has poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting ...* [cf. Tt 3:5-7].

Here the benefit between adoptive filiation and Baptism is brought forward quite rarely and briefly. Here the redemption of a **participation** in the Divine Nature, i.e., **regeneration**, is placed in relationship with **justification**, and **renovation**. **Justification** is explicitly described as a movement of which the **terminus a quo** is **renovation**. **Remission** from the sin – and of which the **terminus ad quem** is **regeneration**.

[8] Therefore, these *Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* by St. Thomas Aquinas bring forward helpful developments and complements to the teaching of his more theological works. He develops notably, regarding Baptismal Regeneration, for the achievement of adoptive filiation, by **corporal glorification** and **divine adoption** of the just of the OT. One thus sees how much of a pity it would be never to be introduced to these texts.

+++++

## II. FILIATION in ST. THOMAS

### A. Summa, Contra Gentiles

#### Presentation

The different texts in **CG** in which the Divine Filiation by adoption is treated by the Angelic Doctor, these may for the most part be divided into three groups of texts all in Book **IV of the CG**.

- the first group among these constitutes **a refutation of the Adoptionism of Photius** [cf. CG IV, **c. 4**];
- the second group of texts concerns **the Procession of the Holy Spirit** [cf. CG IV; cc. **21, 22, 24**];
- the final text is in opposition to **the errors of Theodore Mopsuestus and Nestorius**, with regarding to the **Hypostatic Union** [cf. CG IV, **c. 34**].

†

#### 1. Divine Filiation by Nature and Divine Filiation by Adoption:

**IV CG , c. 4** comments on the fact that since Sacred Scripture applies to the just the title of ***son of God***, and even ***of the gods***, some scholars erroneously have not been able to distinguish clearly the Divine Filiation of Jesus Christ from that of those who are just:

After this fashion, therefore, they formed the opinion that Jesus Christ was **pure man**, that **He had a beginning** from the Virgin Mary, that by the merit of His blessed life, He had received the honor of divinity above all others; and they thought that He was, like other men, **a son of God by the Spirit of adoption, begotten of God by grace**, and **by a kind of likeness to God** called God in Scripture not by nature, but by **partaking in the divine goodness**, just as it says of the saints in 2 P [1:4]: ***That by those you have made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world...***

While clearly rejecting Adoptionism. This text, almost in passing, manifests three characteristics of **the divine filiation of the just person**:

- first, the one who is the *son of God by the Spirit of adoption*;
- second, one who is *begotten of God by grace*;
- third, one is as God by **assimilation** by *a kind of likeness to God, partaking in the divine goodness*.

This final point, illustrated by the citation offering the classical definition of grace, from 2 P, characterizes according to the plan of exemplarity, the assimilating virtue of grace: it is that which assimilates us to God in the measure where it is a **participation** [St. Thomas' Latin here is *consortium*].

The general thrust of **IV CG, c. 4** includes not only a finality to showing the faulty reasoning of Photin's Adoptionism, but even more a method of refutation of Scripture. In the concluding n. 16 of this c. 4, St. Thomas summarizes the teaching of the Church:

**16:** The scriptural testimonies by which they tried to show that Christ was not God by nature are useless for establishing their proposition. For it is our confession that in Christ the Son of God, after the mystery of the Incarnation, there were two natures; namely, human and divine. And so, things are said of Him which are proper to God by reason of the divine nature, and things are also said which seem to involve deficiency by reason of the human nature, as will be more fully explained later [cf. c. 9, 27 & 28]. But now, for the present consideration of the divine generation, let it suffice to have pointed out in accord with the Scriptures that Christ, the Son of God, is also called God, not only as a pure man is **by the grace of adoption**, but by reason of the nature of divinity.

Heb 3:5, for example, comes to prove that it is not for the same reason that Moses and Jesus might be called *sons of God*: ... ***And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be said: Christ as the Son in his own house...*** From this verse, St. Thomas retains the opposition between the quality of servant attributed to Moses, and the quality of Son recognized in Christ. He keeps himself from stating that Moses will never be anything more than a servant of God, and that he would never be a son of God in any manner whatsoever. What is important here is to place in evidence that **the unique quality of Son possessed by Jesus** is literally, 'incomparable', with regard to ever effect of grace in a pure human creature, especially when this grace would be particularly abundant as in the case of Moses. St. Thomas shows that he is well aware of this:

**13.** Furthermore, among all the rest of those who had the grace of God, Moses had it in abundance; it says of him in Exodus [33:11]: ***the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend***. If, therefore, Jesus Christ is not said to be a son of God except by the grace of adoption, like other saints, on the same grounds Moses should be called **son** and **Christ**, even though Christ was endowed with more abundant grace: among the other saints, too, one is endowed with greater grace than another, but all are called **sons of God** on the same ground. But Moses is not called **son** on the same ground that Christ is so called, for the Apostle distinguishes Christ from Moses, as the Son from the servant. He says in Hebrews: [3:5-6: ... ***And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a***

*testimony of those things which were to be said: Christ as the Son in his own house:]. Manifestly, then Christ is not called the Son of God by the grace of adoption, as other saints are.*

In this perspective, the fact seems to matter little that St. Thomas evaluates, as he often does, quoting Rm 8:15: [*Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the Spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out: Abba, Father!*] the passing over from servile fear to **filial fear**, occurs under the motion of the **Spirit of Adoption**. That which is of interest for the moment is the fashion accomplish to which the Scriptures reserve to Jesus Christ the singular manner which is at least ‘privileged’, the title of **Son**. He brings forward as his proof the Baptism of Christ, where the Heavenly Voice of the Father makes itself heard, saying: ***This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased*** [cf. Mt 3:17]:

**14:** One can gather a similar understanding from several other places in Scripture, in which Christ is named in some singular way, and prior to others, as **the son of God**. Sometimes singularly and without others, He is named **Son**: as the voice of the Father thundered at the Baptism: ***This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased*** [cf. Mt 3:1] ...

He comments above all on the manner in which the Prologue of St. John designates the Incarnate Word by the title **Unigenitus**, the **Only Begotten Son** [cf. Jn 1:14, 18]:

**14:** ... Sometimes He is named **Only-begotten**, as in John: ***We saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father***; and again: ***The Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him***. If He were to be called *son* in some common fashion like others, He could not be called the Only-begotten...

But the Angelic Doctor makes haste to point out that St. Paul accomplish Him as **Primogenitus, the First Born**, as the eldest of a multitude of brothers and sisters [cf. Rm 8:20]:

**14:** ... Sometimes also, He is named **First-Begotten** to show an overflowing of filiation from Him to others: as in Romans [8:29]: ***Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brothers***; and Galatians [4:4-5] says: ***God sent His Son that we might receive the adoption of sons***. On another ground, therefore, is He a Son, through likeness to whose filiation others are called sons.

In comparing these two adjectives, he does not offer a work of exegesis, but he builds arguments from Scripture to defend the thesis situating **divine filiation by adoption** as a similitude and a derivation of the **divine filiation by nature**. The

conclusion of this paragraph notes, furthermore, that it is in resemblance to this filiation of the *Unigenitus*, that all the others acquire the quality of sons.

## 2. Adoptive Filiation and Indwelling

After having refuted the errors of Photius, of the Manichaeans, of Apollinaris and Arius concerning the Incarnation of the Word [cf. CG IV 27-33] St. Thomas dedicates c. 34 to Nestorianism:

**34:** [The heretical view]... the human soul and the true human body came together in Christ by a natural union to **constitute one man** of the same species and nature with other men, and that in this man **God dwelt as in His temple**, namely, by **grace**, just as in other holy men.

Hence, it says in John [cf. 2:19, 21], that He said to the Jews: ***Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up;*** and later the Evangelist, by way of exposition says” ***But He spoke of the temple of His Body.*** And the Apostle says: ***In Him it has well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell*** [cf. Col 1:19]. And out of these arose further a certain affective union between that man and God, when that man cleaved to God with his own good will, and God lifted up that man with His will, in the words of John [cf. 8:20: ***He that sent Me is with Me, and He has not left Me alone: for I always do the things that please Him.***

Let one understand that the union of that man to God in such as was the union of which the Apostle said: ***He who is joined to God is one spirit*** [cf. 1 Co 6:17]. And just as, from the latter union, names which properly befit God are transferred to men so that they are called ***gods***, and ***sons of God***, and ***lords***, and ***holy ones***, and ***accomplish*** – as is clear from a diversity of places in Scripture; so also the divine names befit that man, so that , by reason of God’s indwelling and the affective union, he is called ***God***, and ***the Son of God***, and ***Holy*** and ***Christ***.

Nonetheless, because there was in that Man a greater fullness of grace than in other holy men, He was before all the rest the temple of God, He was united to God more closely by affection, and it was **by a singular kind of privilege** that He shared the divine names. And because of this outstanding grace, He was established **in a share of the divine dignity and honor** – namely, that He be **co-adored with God**. So, then, consequently on the things just said there must be One Person of the Word of God, and another person of that man who is **co-adored with the Word of God**. And if one Person of each of the two be mentioned, this will be by reason of **the affective union** aforesaid; so that man and the Word of God may be called **one Person**, as is said of man and woman that ***now they are not two, but one flesh.*** [Mt 19:6].

After having described **this Nestorian Christological thesis**, St. Thomas takes up his own view with strength:

But, let one earnestly consider the matter and he will see that the position described **excludes the truth of the Incarnation**. For, in that position, the Word of God was united to that man only through an indwelling by grace, on which a union of wills follows. But, the Indwelling of God's Word in a man is not for God's Word to be made flesh...

The perspective of St. Thomas' argument to be orientated toward a refutation, by Scripture, of the confusion between the Incarnation of the Word in Christ and His Indwelling in the Soul of the just. Not to **distinguish these two manners of presence** leads unavoidably to pose a two-fold divine filiation in Christ: **natural** and **adoptive**: therefore, implicitly, this would lead to a double hypothesis since the subject of the relationship which the filiation is the person:

[14] The Word of God, furthermore, is called **God's Son by nature**; this was made plain above [c. 11]. But, a man **through the indwelling is called God's son by the grace of adoption**. But in the position now opened, one must accept in our Lord Jesus Christ each of these modes of Filiation; for the indwelling Word is the Son of God by nature; the man in whom He dwells is a son of God by the grace of adoption. Hence, that man cannot be called *His very own*, or *only-begotten Son of God*; the **Word of God alone in His own proper birth is uniquely begotten of the Father ...**

One may note in this an incidental argumentation: this is because of the Indwelling of God that the just person is called a child of God by the grace of adoption. The fact that the mention of the **Indwelling** is occasioned by the context of Nestorianism should not lead to relativize this affirmation and the accompli that it raises, i.e., the determination of the relationship between the Indwelling and the grace of adoption. The text cited does not yet allow one to respond, but it establishes what is **by the grace of adoption** and, by reason of the Indwelling, that the just person is indeed the **child of God**.

### 3. Our Divine Filiation and the Person of the Holy Spirit

While **IV CG 34** does present the anti-Nestorian Christological point of view on the relationship between the Indwelling of the Word of God and the divine filiation by adoption, it should not be concluded from this that this adoption would not be caused in any manner by the Holy Spirit. Even in this context St. Thomas quotes Rm 8:15: ***You have received a Spirit of adoptive children*** - thereby affirming that **adoptive filiation is due to the Holy Spirit**. He makes use of in a rather unexpected manner this verse in a process of reasoning leading to establishing the fact that the Son sent by the Father is likewise His Divine Son by nature. One might thus summarize the argument: filial adoption is caused by the

Holy Spirit, according to Rm 8:15; now, the Holy Spirit is God – therefore, adoption is caused by God, or is caused by the Son, born of a woman and sent by the Father, according to Ga 4:4: therefore, this Son is God.

Without this being in any way contradictory, the argument proposes to accomplish the inverse of that exposed in **CG IV 17** - which, in the line of Greek Patristics, alleges adoption as a proof of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit:

[21] Furthermore, to adopt as children can be the work of no other than God. For no spiritual creature is called child of God by nature, but **by the grace of adoption**. Hence, the Apostle attributes the work to the Son of God Who is true God: **God sent His Son that we might receive the adoption of sons** [cf. Ga 4:4-5]. But the Holy Spirit is the cause of the adoption, as the Apostle says: **You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father.** [Rm 8:15]. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is not a creature but God.

The same verse Rm 8:15 is found also in **IV CG 21**, which explains the attribution of adoption to the Holy Spirit by the fact that this is an effect of benevolence:

[9] Furthermore since out of good will which one has to another it comes about that he adopt that other as his child – and so the inheritance belongs to that other as adopted – it is fitting that the adoption of the sons of God is attributed to the Holy Spirit in the words of Romans [8:35]: **You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry: Abba, Father.**

**IV CG 24** is consecrated to showing that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, also contains many precious indications on the causality exercised by the Third Person of the Trinity with regard to the divine filiation by adoption:

It is manifest in sacred Scripture that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, for Romans [8:9] says: **If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.** But that one might be able to say that the Spirit that proceeds from the Father is one, and the Son's Spirit another, it is shown from the words of the same Apostle that the Holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son is identified. For the words just cited: **If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His** - the Apostle added after he had said: **If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us and so forth.**

But one cannot say that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ merely because He had Him as man, according to the words of Luke [4:1]: **Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan.** For one reads in Galatians [4:6]: **Because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father.** The Holy Spirit, therefore, makes us the sons of God precisely because He is the Spirit of the Son of God. But we are made the adoptive sons of God by assimilation to the natural Son of God, as in Romans [8:29] has it: **Whom He**



***foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren.***

Thus, then, is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ: so far as He is God's natural Son. But there is no relation in accord with which the Holy Spirit can be called the Spirit of the Son of God except a relation of origin, for this is the only distinction we find in divinity. Therefore, one must say that the Holy Spirit is the Son's Spirit by proceeding from Him.

It appears thus that it is in so far as He is the Spirit of the Son that the Holy Spirit adopts us as children of God. It is indeed under this title that He assimilates us, that **He renders us conform to the Son of God by nature.**

This **assimilation** by which the Holy Spirit **conforms** us to the image of the only Son by nature, does not do violence to our freedom: **the Spirit of Adoption as children** [according to the expressive formulation of Rm 8:15], inclines us in effect to act voluntarily, freely, out of love, and not by any servile fear. This **com-possibility of the divine action of the Spirit in us and of the liberty of our human action** constitutes a recurring and fundamental theme of the theology of St. Thomas. The proper comprehension of this doctrine depends necessarily on the taking into account the realism of **the divine filiation by adoption** and **the inherence of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in our soul**. It is only in the measure where the Gift of the Spirit makes itself truly ours that He can intimately inspire our acting. If one shifts ever so little from the perspective of this inherence, the risk comes to the fore of placing in concurrence, if not in rivalry, the Gift of God and the action of the human being. St. Thomas' position, beyond any doubt, is situated between the two points of such an antagonism:

**IV CG 22:** [4]... Hence, since we are established as God's lovers by the Holy Spirit, by Him, too, we are in a way, driven to fulfill the precepts of God, as the Apostle's word goes: ***Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*** [Rm 8:14].

For all that, one must bear in mind that the sons of God are driven not as slaves, but as free men. For, since he is free who is for his own sake, we do that freely which we do of our very selves. But this is what we do of our will, but what we do against our will, we do not freely, but as slaves: be the violence absolute, as when 'the whole principle is extrinsic, with the sufferer contributing nothing' – for instance, a man is pushed into motion; or be the violence mixed with the voluntary – for instance, when one wishes to do or to suffer what is less contrary to his will to avoid what is more contrary to it. But the Holy Spirit so inclines us to act that He makes us act voluntarily, in that He makes us lovers of God.

Therefore, the sons of God are impelled by the Holy Spirit freely out of love, not slavishly out of fear. Hence, the Apostle says: ***You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but the Spirit of adoption of sons*** [Rm 8:15].

**IV CG 70**, with regard to a matter that is apparently quite different, but it does not hold anything opposing the above. The question examined is to know whether one can still sin after having received the sacramental grace of the Sacrament of Penance. Two texts from 1 Jn seem to impose a negative response: ***Whoever lives in Him does not sin*** [1 Jn 3:6] – and: ***No one who has been begotten by God sins; because God's seed remains inside him; he cannot sin when he has been begotten by God*** [1 Jn 3:9]. In his response, St. Thomas accomplish the ***re-birth*** to the accomplish, and now at the same time, on the one hand, the 'power of not sinning', explained by the virtue that is sufficient for this effect, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – and then, on the other hand, a certain 'power of sinning' bound to the bad usage of freedom:

But the remarks taken from the Epistle of John are said for this reason: The gifts of the Holy Spirit by which a man is adopted, or born again as a son of God have of themselves power enough to be able to preserve a man without sin, and a man cannot sin who lives by those gifts. He can, for all that, act against them, and sin by departing from them. For ***whatever is born of God ... cannot sin***, was said just as though one should say that 'the hot cannot cool', What is hot, nonetheless, can be made cool, and then it will make cool. Or, it was said as though one should say that 'the just man does no unjust things'; namely in so far as he is just.

Furthermore, it might be pointed out, in this text, that the statement that it is 'by the gifts of the Holy Spirit that one is adopted, or that one is reborn as a child of God.' The plural ***gifts*** orientates the interpretation not toward the Uncreated God, but, rather toward the created gifts. It would be a misunderstanding to oppose the created gifts with the uncreated God. The entire effort ought to tend toward ***the manner of coordinating in differentiating in them the diverse causative factors of adoptive filiation*** but there is no doubt that ***this adoption*** is caused according to St. Thomas ***by the Spirit Himself*** no less than by ***His gifts***, and more especially, the ***grace*** which is their common root. Thus in **III CG 150**. After having mentioned God's universal love for all of His creation, according to Ws 11:24: ***You love All that exists, You hold nothing of what You have made in abhorrence.*** This is then used to show how Ep 1:5-64 in being predestined toward adoption, one is rendered by ***grace*** [*gratia gratum faciens*] truly agreeable to God:

... But a special mark of divine love is observable in the case of those to whom He offers help so that they may attain a good which surpasses the order of their nature, namely, the perfect enjoyment, not of some created good, but of Himself. So this help is appropriately called ***grace***, not only because it is given *gratis*,

as we showed but also because by this help man is, through a special prerogative, brought into the good graces of God. Hence, the Apostle says, in Ephesians [1:5-6]: ***Who has predestined us into the adoption of children ... according to the purpose of His will, unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He has graced us in His beloved Son.***

### Conclusion

[1] The refutation of Adoptianism of Photius led St. Thomas to mark clearly the difference between **the Divine Filiation of Jesus Christ and our own**. He notes, therefore, that the **Son of God by nature** is called by Scripture by titles such as ***Unigenitus*** [cf. Jn 1:14] - ***Primogenitus*** [cf. Rm 8:29], this latter qualification manifesting the exemplarity [the **assimilation** of the adoptive children to the Divine Son by nature] and the derivation [of the divine filiation by nature towards the divine filiation by adoption]. It appears thus that the analogical character of the divine accomplish can be resumed in the dialectic between the two Christological titles, that from John, the **Only-Begotten** - and that from Paul, the **First-Born**.

[2] The critique of Nestorianism brings into focus the bond between Divine Filiation and the Divine Indwelling in Christ, there is more than Indwelling that is common to the children of God by adoption. It is necessary to state that in Him the Word is incarnate. In this perspective the relationship between the Divine Filiation by nature and the Divine Filiation by adoption there is expressed the opposition between the Incarnation and Indwelling of the Word – the former placing in action an **entitative hypostatic union**, while the latter opens out into an **operative, affective union**. Keeping in mind the anti-Nestorian perspective at play here, the Indwelling of which St. Thomas speaks here is that of the Word and so it is necessary to read His remarks in behalf of his own teaching on the **Divine Missions** and on the **Indwelling of the Trinity**. In all this, it is necessary to keep in mind in accomplish, his affirmation, according to which the presence in the soul of the just person of One of the Divine Persons is never without the presence of the two Others.

[3] The correspondence between **the Mission of the Holy Spirit** and our **Divine Filiation by Adoption**, according to Rm 8:15 – is so clearly perceived by St. Thomas in following the line of Greek Patristics. This serves him to justify the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In basing himself on Rm 8:29, St. Thomas characterizes thus the role played by the Third Divine Person in our Adoptive Filiation: it is as the **Spirit of the Only Son of God** that He makes us the adoptive children God in **assimilating us** to the Son of God by nature. He moves us then by His gifts to act in a **Filial Manner**, free and loving and this communicates to us the power of avoiding sin.



## B. The *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* of St. THOMAS AQUINAS

### Presentation

[1] While the careful student will discover mention of the theme of Divine Filiation in almost each of the great parts of the *Summa* of St. Thomas, it is above all in the four articles of III, q. 23 - on the Adoption of Christ, where the most direct concentration of his teaching might be found;

- q. 1: Whether it is fitting for God to adopt Children?
- q. 2: Whether to adopt is fitting for the entire Trinity?
- q. 3: Whether to be adopted is proper to a rational creature?
- q. 4: Whether Christ, in so far as he is man, is an adoptive Son?

The general structure of this question follows that of the text parallel to the Angelic Doctor's *Writing on the Illrd Sentences*.

[2] However, the student will observe two differences:

- on the one hand, within the little question [*quaestiuncula*] examining whether this adoption is realized through the inter-mediation of the Divine Son or the Holy Spirit, there does not correspond here an entire Article;
- then, on the other hand, the fittingness of this adoption for human beings and for the angels is studied in one single article, relative to rational creatures.

[3] This 23<sup>RD</sup> Question of Part III pertains to the final Part of the Tract on the Incarnate Word, consecrated to the **mutual relationships** of Christ and the Father. The organization of this is presented in the **Prologue** to the 20<sup>th</sup> Question:

- the submission of Jesus Christ to His Father [ q. 20];
  - the Prayer of Jesus Christ [q. 21];
  - His Priesthood [q. 22];
  - Jesus Christ and the Divine Adoption [q. 23];
  - His Predestination [q. 224];
  - His Adoration [q. 26];
  - His Mediation [q. 27].

[4] When the student compares the plan of these 8 questions [III, qq. 20-27] with that of **III Sentences**, it is clear that the common point resides in this question studied here, relative to **Divine Adoption [q. 23]** – having for its parallel **III. Sentences**. This is followed then by the question concerning the Predestination of Christ [III, q. 24 – parallel to **III Sentences**, d. 10, a. 3]. The theme of the Adoration of Christ [III, q. 25] comes then to take its place after those of the Adoption and Predestination of Christ while in **III Sent.**, it precedes them [**III Sent.**, d. 9].

[5] This comparison shows that the relationship between Adoption and Predestination, which finds its origin in the very plan of the **Sentences** of Peter Lombard, remains stable in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas.

†

## 1. The Reality and the Fittingness of Divine Filiation

In the first Article, St. Thomas intends to show how fitting it is for God to adopt children, i.e., that this in no way is contradictory with His nature. For this reason, he characterizes Divine Adoption as an effect of His goodness:

I answer that, A man adopts someone as his son forasmuch as **out of goodness** he admits him as **heir to his estate**. Now God is infinitely good: for which reason **He admits His creatures to a participation of good things**; especially rational creatures, who forasmuch as they are made to the image of God, are capable of Divine beatitude. And **this consists in the enjoyment of God**, by which also God Himself is happy and rich in Himself – that is, in the enjoyment of Himself.

Now a man's inheritance is that which makes him rich. Wherefore, inasmuch as God, of His goodness, **admits men to the inheritance of beatitude**, He is said to adopt them. Moreover **Divine exceeds human adoption**, forasmuch as God, by bestowing His grace, makes man whom He adopts worthy to receive the heavenly inheritance; whereas man does not make him worthy whom he adopts; but rather in adopting him he chooses one who is already worthy.<sup>70</sup>

In this same Article, in the argument *Sed contra* is taken from Ep 1:5, which has recourse to this verse in order to justify the existence of our divine adoption:

On the contrary, It is written (Ephesians 1:5) that “He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children of God.” But the predestination of God is not ineffectual. Therefore God does adopt some as His sons.<sup>71</sup>

†

<sup>70</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1 c.

<sup>71</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1, sed contra

## 2. Our Divine Filiation and Eternal Inheritance

Human adoption results not only from a gratuitous goodness, but this includes also the right of inheritance. The notion of this adoption might therefore be shifted to God. His goodness being infinite, it admits creatures to participate in His goods. But this applies only to rational creatures to share in His goods and it is to these alone that he communicates His inheritance, i.e., in His own Beatitude.

*Furthermore, St. Thomas brings out the superiority of the divine adoption over human adoption: the former, in fact confers the aptitude to perceive the heavenly inheritance, while the latter supposes a previous suitability.*

According to the juridical definition of [human] adoption, the adopted person ought to be a stranger to the person who takes him/her on as son or daughter. Can this also hold for adoption by God of a human being whom He has created and who owes to Him all his/ her being? The response furnished here by St. Thomas accomplish substantially with that given in *III Sent.*<sup>72</sup>: this is not so much for the natural being of a rational creature that there is verified the condition of extraneity, but in the supernatural character of the heavenly inheritance. One might observe that the juridical aspect of ‘the right of inheritance’ passes to the back ground in the *Summa*, to the benefit of a formulation that is more resolutely ontological:

Reply OBJ 1: Considered in his nature man is not a stranger in respect to God, as to the natural gifts bestowed on him: but **he is as to the gifts of grace and glory; in regard to which he is adopted.**<sup>73</sup>

The acquisition of the inheritance by the adoptive son does it not suppose that he/she would be the only one to rejoice in it? The response to this compares human material goods, which cannot be possessed by several persons simultaneously, unless they can be divided, or shared – and those spiritual goods that are indivisible and can be shared simultaneously by accomplish at once:

Reply OBJ 3: Spiritual goods can be possessed by many at the same time; not so material goods. Wherefore none can receive a material inheritance except the successor of a deceased person: whereas all receive the spiritual inheritance at the same time in its entirety without detriment to the ever-living Father. Yet it might be said that God ceases to be, according as He is in us by faith, so as to begin to be in us by vision, as a gloss says on Romans 8:17: “If sons, heirs also.”<sup>74</sup>

†

---

<sup>72</sup> d. 10, q. 2, a. 1, qa 1 ad 1um

<sup>73</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 1 um.

<sup>74</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 3 um.

### 3. The Efficient Cause of Divine Adoption: the Most Blessed Trinity

Since the teaching of the Angelic Doctor does admit that it befits God to adopt children, **III, q. 23, a. 2** takes up the reflection on whether it is the entire Trinity, or only one or other of the Divine Persons Who elevates us gratuitously to the dignity of a son of God. The argumentation coincides substantially with that of the little question with parallel views in *III Sent.* <sup>75</sup>:

By reason of the unity of nature, every production of any effect whatsoever in creatures is **common to the whole Trinity**: for there where there is a unity of **nature**, there is a unity of **power** and **operation**. Hence, this word of the Lord [cf. Jn 5:19]: *... the son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He sees the Father doing; for accomplish He does, these the son does also in like manner...* Thus, it is **to the entire Trinity** that it befits to adopt men and women to make of them the children of God ... <sup>76</sup>

The Article of the *Summa* brings furthermore an importance to this, that is both numerical and qualitative, to Sacred Scripture. Thus, being based on Rm 8:15: **You have received a Spirit of adoptive sons which has you cry out: Abba, Father!** St. Thomas remarks that adoption befits the One who can be called ‘Father’, and therefore, to the entire Trinity:

On the contrary, It belongs to Him to adopt us as sons, Whom we can call Father; whence it is written (Romans 8:15): “You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba [Father].” But when we say to God, “Our Father,” we address the whole Trinity: as is the case with the other names which are said of God in respect of creatures, as stated in the I, q. 33, a. 3, OBJ 1; I, q. 45, a. 6. Therefore to adopt is befitting to the whole Trinity. <sup>77</sup>

There may be noted the objection that issues from the qualification bestowed in Rm 8:29 regarding Christ, as the **First-born of a multitude of brothers**. These brothers and sisters have the same Father:

**OBJ 2:** Further, by adoption men become the brethren of Christ, according to Romans 8:29: “That He might be the first-born among many brethren.” Now brethren are the sons of the same father; wherefore our Lord says (John 20:17): “I ascend to My Father and to your Father.” Therefore Christ’s Father alone has adopted sons. <sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> d. 10, q.2, a. 1, qa. 2

<sup>76</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2 c.

<sup>77</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2 sed contra

<sup>78</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2, obj. 2.

The response to this makes clear that it is indeed the Person of the Father who adopts us, even if He does not do this separate from the two other Divine Persons, that we are the brothers and sisters of Christ, it is simply the First Divine Person:

Reply OBJ 2: By adoption we are made the **brethren of Christ**, as having with Him the same Father: Who, nevertheless, is His Father in one way, and ours in another. Whence pointedly our Lord says, separately, My Father, and Your Father (John 20:17). For He is Christ's Father by natural generation; and this is proper to Him: whereas **He is our Father by a voluntary operation, which is common to Him and to the Son and Holy Ghost: so that Christ is not the Son of the whole Trinity, as we are.**<sup>79</sup>

The qualities of a brother/ sister of Jesus Christ and of an adoptive child of God are not contradictory, nor equivalent. The former resides on our relationship to the Father alone. The latter bring out an operation common to the entire Trinity and unites us inseparably to the three Divine Persons. It is interesting to note that this very text of St. Thomas authorizes one to consider distinctly our relationship to one of the Divine Persons, independently from those uniting us to the other Two, even though the Divine Persons are really inseparable – the entire Trinity dwells in the just person.

†

#### 4. Our Divine Filiation and the Persons of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

The appropriation of **adoption** to the different Divine Persons is presented in a somewhat different manner from that found in *III Sent.*:

Reply OBJ 3: As stated above (a. 1,r 2), **adoptive sonship is a certain likeness of the eternal Sonship**: just as all that takes place in time is **a certain likeness of what has been from eternity**. Now man is likened **to the splendor of the Eternal Son by reason of the light of grace** which is attributed to the Holy Ghost. Therefore adoption, though common to the whole Trinity, **is appropriated to the Father as its author; to the Son, as its exemplar; to the Holy Ghost**, as imprinting on us the likeness of this exemplar.<sup>80</sup>

This short text draws several remarks. First of all, it expresses an analogy of proportionality between two similitudes: on the one hand, that between adoptive filiation and eternal Filiation – then, on the other hand, that between temporal realities and eternal realities. Secondly, it relates our divine filiation distinctly to the

<sup>79</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 2 um.

<sup>80</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3 um.



Three Divine Persons by appropriations proper to them. The first, with regard to the Father as Author, poses the least difficulty which the entire complexity of the article keeps one from finding there anything more than an **appropriation** of a work common to the entire Trinity. Thirdly, in appropriating to the Holy Spirit the impression in us **exemplarity**, there is grasped in the light of the indication which precedes this: i.e. the grace which, on the one hand, **assimilates** us to the Son – and which, on the other hand, is **appropriated** to the Third Divine Person. St. Thomas does not employ here the expression: ***inhering formal cause***, utilized in the parallel passage in *III Sent.*<sup>81</sup> and which could present an ambiguity: this would be legitimate with regard to **charity**, but would be erroneous if one were to understand here the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit, to Whom this virtue is accomplished. Furthermore it appears ever more clearly that it is **created grace** which is, properly speaking, the formal intrinsic cause of our divine filiation. By the ***inhering formal cause*** we are rendered participants in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4], and, by the Indwelling in us of the Holy Spirit, this enables us to merit genuinely, with a *condign merit*, the inheritance due to sons:

I answer that, Man's meritorious work may be considered in two ways: first, as it proceeds from free-will; secondly, as it **proceeds from the grace** of the Holy Ghost. If it is considered as regards the substance of the work, and inasmuch as it springs from the free-will, there can be no condignity because of the very great inequality. But there is congruity, on account of an equality of proportion: for it would seem congruous that, if a man does what he can, God should reward him according to the excellence of his power.<sup>82</sup>

If, however, we speak of **a meritorious work, inasmuch as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting**, it is meritorious of **life everlasting condignly**. For thus the value of its merit depends upon the power of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting according to John 4:14: "Shall become in him a fount of water springing up into life everlasting." And the worth of the work depends on the dignity of grace, whereby a man, being made a partaker of the Divine Nature, is adopted as a son of God, to whom the inheritance is due by right of adoption, according to Romans 8:17: "If sons, heirs also."

It is not therefore according to a juridical perspective deriving from Roman Law that the Right of Inheritance should be understood here, which confers adoptive filiation. Its foundation is to be sought in the essence of grace as a participation in the divine nature and the seed of glory and in the Trinitarian Indwelling:

---

<sup>81</sup> d. 10, q.2, a. 1. qa 3 c.

<sup>82</sup> I-II, q. 114, a. 3 c.

Reply OBJ 3: The grace of the Holy Ghost which we have at present, although unequal to glory in fact, is equal to it virtually **as the seed of a tree**, wherein the whole tree is virtually. So likewise by grace of the Holy Ghost dwells in man; and He is a **sufficient cause of life everlasting**; hence, 2 Corinthians 1:22, He is called the “**pledge**” of our inheritance.<sup>83</sup>

The attribution of the Adoption to the Divine Son, in retrospect, brings forth a difficulty. Keeping to the literal expression of this passage, it might seem that it would be a matter of an appropriation: ***adoption... is accomplished to the Son as to the Exemplar***. It is clear however, that the Eternal Generation of the Word is in no way common to the three Divine Persons, but is most proper to the Second Person among Them. The text of the response does not necessarily signify that the exemplarity of the Divine Filiation would be the expression of an appropriation. One might understand in this sense that this exemplarity, proper to the Son being recognized, this establishes the appropriation to the Divine Person of the Son, i.e., to the exemplarity of our filiation, of the common supernatural efficiency by which we are adopted.

With regard to the conception of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas works out a connection between the **appropriation** by which Scripture declares that we have been adopted by the Holy Spirit, and that affirming that the Christ has been **conceived by the Holy Spirit**. For in fact:

***On the contrary, It is written (Luke 1:35): “The Holy Ghost shall come upon Thee.” I answer that, The whole Trinity effected the conception of Christ’s body: nevertheless, this is attributed to the Holy Ghost, for three reasons.***

First, because this is befitting to the cause of the Incarnation, considered on the part of God. For the Holy Ghost is the love of Father and Son, as stated in the I, q. 37, a. 1. Now, that the Son of God took to Himself flesh from the Virgin’s womb was due to the exceeding love of God: wherefore it is said (John 3:16): “God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.”

Secondly, this is befitting to the cause of the Incarnation, on the part of the nature assumed. Because we are thus given to understand that human nature was assumed by the Son of God into the unity of Person, not by reason of its merits, but through grace alone; which is attributed to the Holy Ghost, according to 1 Corinthians 12:4: “There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit.” Wherefore Augustine says (Enchiridion 40): “The manner in which Christ was born of the Holy Ghost . . . suggests to us the grace of God, whereby man, without any merits going

---

<sup>83</sup> I-II, a. 114, a. 3, ad 3 um.

before, in the very beginning of his nature when he began to exist was joined to God the Word, into so great unity of Person, that He Himself should be the Son of God.”

Thirdly, because this is befitting the term of the Incarnation. For the term of the Incarnation was that that man, who was being conceived, should be the Holy one and the **Son of God**. Now, both of these are attributed to the Holy Ghost. For by Him men are made to be sons of God, according to Galatians 4:6: “Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your [Vulgate: our] hearts, crying: Abba, Father.” Again, He is the “Spirit of sanctification,” according to Romans 1:4.

Therefore, just as other men are sanctified spiritually by the Holy Spirit; so as to be the adopted sons of God, so was Christ conceived in sanctity by the Holy Spirit, so as to be the natural Son of God. Hence, according to a gloss on Romans 1:4, the words, “Who was predestinated the Son of God, in power, are explained by what immediately follows: “According to the Spirit of sanctification, i.e. through being conceived of the Holy Ghost.” And the Angel of the Annunciation himself, after saying, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,” draws the conclusion: “Therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”<sup>84</sup>

#### a. **Adoptive Filiation and the Incarnation**

Does there exist a relationship between the Incarnation of the Word and our Divine Filiation, between the Son of God, making Himself man, and man becoming the child of God? St. Thomas in his review of the Fathers, responds in a resolutely affirmative manner; there is no need to become convinced of this beyond citing the 5<sup>th</sup> reason for the ‘Convenience of the Incarnation’:

On the contrary, It would seem most fitting that **by visible things the invisible things of God should be made known**; for to this end was the whole world made, as is clear from the word of the Apostle (Romans 1:20): “For the invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” But, as Damascene says (De Fide Orthodoxa iii,1), by the mystery of the Incarnation are made known at once the **goodness**, the **wisdom**, the **justice**, and the **power** or might of God – “His goodness, for He did not despise the weakness of His own handiwork; His justice, since, on man’s defeat, He caused the tyrant to be overcome by none other than man, and yet He did not snatch men forcibly from death; His wisdom, for He found a suitable discharge for a most heavy debt; His power, or infinite might, for there is nothing greater than for God to become incarnate... “

I answer that, To each things, that is befitting which belongs to it by reason of its very nature; thus, to reason befits man, since this belongs to him

---

<sup>84</sup> III, q. 32, a.1 c.

because he is of a rational nature. But the very nature of God is goodness, as is clear from Dionysius (De Divinis Nominibus i). Hence, what belongs to the essence of goodness befits God. But **it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others**, as is plain from Dionysius (De Divinis Nominibus iv). Hence it **belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature**, and this is brought about chiefly by “His so joining created nature to Himself that one Person is made up of these three – the Word, a soul and flesh,” as Augustine says (De Trinitate xiii). Hence it is manifest that it was fitting that God should become incarnate.<sup>85</sup>

A little after this, St. Thomas writes in a manner no less succinct:

**OBJ 1:** It would seem that no other Divine Person could have assumed human nature except the Person of the Son. For by this assumption it has been brought about that God is the Son of Man. But it was not becoming that either the Father or the Holy Ghost should be said to be a Son; for this would tend to the confusion of the Divine Persons. Therefore the Father and Holy Ghost could not have assumed flesh.<sup>86</sup>

It was fitting that it would be the Second Divine Person Who would be incarnate, with regard to the end of the Hypostatic Union:

On the contrary, Damascene says (De Fide Orthodoxa iii,1): “In the mystery of the Incarnation the wisdom and power of God are made known: the **wisdom**, for He found a most suitable discharge for a most heavy debt; the **power**, for He made the conquered conquer.” But power and wisdom are appropriated to the Son, according to 1 Corinthians 1:24: “Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Therefore it was fitting that the Person of the Son should become incarnate.

I answer that, It was most fitting that the Person of the Son should become incarnate.

**First**, on **the part of the union**; for such as are similar are fittingly united. Now the Person of the Son, Who is the Word of God, has a certain common agreement with all creatures, because the word of the craftsman, i.e. his concept, is an exemplar likeness of whatever is made by him. Hence the Word of God, Who is His eternal concept, is the exemplar likeness of all creatures. And therefore as creatures are established in their proper species, though movably, **by the participation of this likeness**, so by the non-participated and personal union of the Word with a creature, it was fitting that the creature should be restored in order to its eternal and unchangeable perfection; for the craftsman by the intelligible form of

---

<sup>85</sup> III, a. 1, a. 2, c

<sup>86</sup> III, q. 3, . 5, OBJ. 2

his art, whereby he fashioned his handiwork, restores it when it has fallen into ruin. Moreover, He has a particular agreement with human nature, since the Word is a concept of the eternal Wisdom, from Whom all man's wisdom is derived. And hence man is perfected in wisdom (which is his proper perfection, as he is rational) by participating the Word of God, as the disciple is instructed by receiving the word of his master. Hence it is said (Ecclesiasticus 1:5): "The Word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom." And hence for the consummate perfection of man it was fitting that the very Word of God should be personally united to human nature.

Secondly, the reason of this fitness may be taken from **the end of the union**, which is the fulfilling of predestination, i.e. of such as are preordained to the heavenly inheritance, which is bestowed only on sons, according to Romans 8:17: "If sons, heirs also." Hence it was fitting that by Him Who is the natural Son, men should share this likeness of sonship by adoption, as the Apostle says in the same chapter (Romans 8:29): "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."

Thirdly, the reason for this fitness may be taken **from the sin of our first parent**, for which the Incarnation supplied the **remedy**. For the first man sinned by seeking knowledge, as is plain from the words of the serpent, promising to man the knowledge of good and evil. Hence it was fitting that by the Word of true knowledge man might be led back to God, having wandered from God through an inordinate thirst for knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

It is clear moreover that the change implies in the divine adoption is all on behalf of man, not of God. For it is only the creature can indeed acquire a perfection previously lacking:

Reply OBJ 1: Since the Divine Person is infinite, no addition can be made to it: Hence Cyril says (Council of Ephesus, Part 1, chapter 26): "We do not conceive the mode of conjunction to be according to addition"; just as in the union of man with God, nothing is added to God by the grace of adoption, but what is Divine is united to man; hence, not God but man is perfected.

This being understood that *de facto*, we receive Divine Filiation thanks to the Incarnation of the Word, the question is presented to know whether this could have been accomplished in any other manner. It is not a question here to bending toward a mere kind of 'hypothetical' accompli, but rather to show that of all which was metaphysically possible, the divine wisdom has disposed in the best possible manner, i.e., according to its own infinite perfection. It is therefore interesting to note that St. Thomas, as an objection to the possibility of the Incarnation of the

---

<sup>87</sup> III, q. 3, a. 1, ad 1 um.

Father and of the Holy Spirit, opposes the fact that the adoptive filiation is a similitude shared with that Filiation by nature, proper to the Second Divine Person:

OBJ 2: Further, by the Divine Incarnation men have come into possession of the adoption of sons, according to Romans 8:15: “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but the spirit of adoption of sons.” But sonship by adoption is **a participated likeness of natural sonship** which does not belong to the Father nor the Holy Ghost; hence it is said (Romans 8:29): “For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.” Therefore it seems that no other Person except the Person of the Son could have become incarnate.<sup>88</sup>

The Angelic Doctor responds:

Reply OBJ 2: Adoptive sonship is **a certain participation of natural sonship**; but it takes place in us, by **appropriation**, by the Father, Who is the principle of natural sonship, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and Son, according to Galatians 4:6: “God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father.” And therefore, even as by the Incarnation of the Son we receive adoptive sonship **in the likeness of His natural sonship**, so likewise, had the Father become incarnate, we should have received adoptive sonship from Him, as from the principle of the natural sonship, and from the Holy Ghost as from the common bond of Father and Son.<sup>89</sup>

One might comment on this text: adoptive accomplish is **a shared similitude in the natural Filiation of the Divine Word** because we receive it from Him, by His Incarnation, in so far as He is the Son of God by nature. It seems that one might synthesize in the accomplish manner the thought of St. Thomas on the subject of the relationship which ties our adoption with the different Divine Persons: in virtue of the community of the divine works *ad extra*, it is **the entire Trinity Who adopts us**, but the **Divine Filiation** which is thus communicated to us can be referred distinctly to the three Divine Persons **by appropriation**. It remains however, that there is here a support from the above cited text, that **there exists by the Incarnation, a relationship, not only appropriated, but one that is indeed proper, uniting us to the instrumental cause of our adoption, i.e., to the humanity of the Incarnate Word.**

However, if the assumption of human nature by the Word in so far as this is a divine work *ad extra*, has the Trinity as its principle, this has none other manifestly for its term than the Second Divine Person, for only the Verb is incarnate. Should

---

<sup>88</sup> III, q. 3, a. 5, obj. 2.

<sup>89</sup> III, q. 3, a. 5, ad 2<sup>um</sup>.

not thought then proceed from the Grace of Adoption as from the Grace of Union? In other terms, although there is in the order of efficient causality, the entire Trinity as its principle, would not our divine filiation terminate rather than in the Incarnation, in one of the Divine persons, to Whom this would unite us in a privileged manner?<sup>90</sup> It would thus if there existed a clear univocity between the Grace of Adoption and the Grace of Union, but if these communicate regarding the principle, they differ regarding the term. The Incarnation terminated effectively in the Divine Word alone, since in adoptive filiation, we participate in the divine life itself, in the Trinitarian life:

Reply OBJ 3: The assumption which takes place by the grace of adoption is terminated in **a certain participation of the Divine Nature**, by an **assimilation** to its goodness, according to 2 Peter 1:4: “That you may be made **partakers** of the Divine Nature”; and hence this assumption is common to the three Persons, in regard to the principle and the term. But the assumption which is by the grace of union is common on the part of the principle, but not on the part of the term, as was said above.<sup>91</sup>

St. Thomas asks likewise whether or not it was fitting that the Son of God should not assume human nature in all individuals, but in only Jesus:

OBJ 3: Further, a skilful workman completes his work in the shortest manner possible. But it would have been a shorter way if all men had been assumed to the natural sonship than for one natural Son to lead many to the adoption of sons, as is written Galatians 4:5 (Hebrews 2:10). Therefore human nature ought to have been assumed by God in all its supposita.<sup>92</sup>

St. Thomas remarks then that it is in harmony with the Divine Wisdom that One should enjoy Filiation by nature and that, by Him, others receive adoptive filiation:

Reply OBJ 3: In order to shorten the way, which every skilful workman does, what can be done by one must not be done by many. Hence it was most fitting that by one man all the rest should be saved.<sup>93</sup>

#### **b. Adoptive Filiation and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

According to Rm 8:14, ***For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*** This citation appears already in I-II, q. 68, on the subject of the

---

<sup>90</sup> III, q. 3, a. 4, obj. 3:

<sup>91</sup> III, q. 3, a. 4, ad 3 um.

<sup>92</sup> III, q. 4, a. 5, obj 3

<sup>93</sup> III, q. 4, a. 5, ad 3 um.

necessity for salvation to be endowed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are like habits, perfections which dispose a person to follow well the impulsion of the Holy Spirit.<sup>94</sup> The reasoning here of St. Thomas allows itself easily to form a syllogism: in order to inherit heaven, it is necessary to **be a child of God**, according to Rm 8:17. Now to be a child of God, it is necessary to be **moved by the Holy Spirit**, according to Rm 8:14; therefore, to inherit heaven, it is necessary to be moved by the Holy Spirit:

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Sermone Domini in Monte i,4): “It seems to me that the sevenfold operation of the Holy Spirit, of which Isaiah speaks, agrees in degrees and expression with these [of which we read in Matthew 5:3]: but there is a difference of order, for there [viz. in Isaiah] the enumeration begins with the more excellent gifts, here, with the lower gifts.”

I answer that, The excellence of the gifts can be measured in two ways: first, simply, viz. by comparison to their proper acts as proceeding from their principles; secondly, relatively, viz. by comparison to their matter.

If we consider the excellence of the gifts simply, they follow the same rule as the virtues, as to their comparison one with another; because the gifts perfect man for all the acts of the soul’s powers, even as the virtues do, as stated above (a. 4).

Hence, as the intellectual virtues have the precedence of the moral virtues, and among the intellectual virtues, the contemplative are preferable to the active, viz. wisdom, understanding and science to prudence and art (yet so that wisdom stands before understanding, and understanding before science, and prudence and synesis before eubulia): so also among the gifts, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel are more excellent than piety, fortitude, and fear; and among the latter, piety excels fortitude, and fortitude fear, even as justice surpasses fortitude, and fortitude temperance.

But in regard to their matter, fortitude and counsel precede knowledge and piety: because fortitude and counsel are concerned with difficult matters, whereas piety and knowledge regard ordinary matters. Consequently the excellence of the gifts corresponds with the order in which they are enumerated; but so far as wisdom and understanding are given the preference to the others, their excellence is considered simply, while, so far, as counsel and fortitude are preferred to knowledge and piety, it is considered with regard to their matter.<sup>95</sup>

A second citation of Rm 8:14 may be found in I-II, q. 93, a. 6, with regard to the Eternal Law, and makes clearer by its closeness to Ga 5:18, the tie between the

<sup>94</sup> cf. I-II, q. 68, a. 2, c; a. 3 c.

<sup>95</sup> I-II, q. 68, a. 7 c.



motion of the Holy Spirit, and the free will of the adoptive son. To the question, ‘are all human realities subjected to the Eternal Law?’, the first objection is presented contrary to the expected answer:

OBJ 1: It would seem that not all human affairs are subject to the eternal law. For the Apostle says (Galatians 5:18): “If you are led by the spirit you are not under the law.” But the righteous who are the sons of God by adoption, are led by the spirit of God, according to Romans 8:14: “Whosoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Therefore not all men are under the eternal law.<sup>96</sup>

In his response, the Angelic Doctor shows that it is freely that the sons of God carry out His Law:

Reply OBJ 1: This saying of the Apostle may be understood in two ways.

First, so that a man is said to be under the law, through being pinned down thereby, against his will, as by a load. Hence, on the same passage a gloss says that “he is under the law, who refrains from evil deeds, through fear of punishment threatened by the law, and not from love of virtue.” In this way the spiritual man is not under the law, because he fulfills the law willingly, through charity which is poured into his heart by the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, it can be understood as meaning that the works of a man, who is led by the Holy Spirit, are the works of the Holy Spirit rather than his own. Therefore, since the Holy Ghost is not under the law, as neither is the Son, as stated above (a. 4, r. 2); it follows that such works, in so far as they are of the Holy Spirit, are not under the law. The Apostle witnesses to this when he says (2 Corinthians 3:17): “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”<sup>97</sup>

It is once more with regard to the submission to the Law of God that Rm 8:14 is used in an objection:

OBJ 2: Further, Pope Urban says (Decretals, casus xix, Q2): “He that is guided by a private law need not for any reason be bound by the public law.” Now all spiritual men are led by the private law of the Holy Spirit, for they are the sons of God, of whom it is said (Romans 8:14): “Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Therefore not all men are subject to human law.<sup>98</sup>

The response shows how the Law of the Holy Spirit transcends human law, but, without annihilating it:

---

<sup>96</sup> I-II, q. 93, a. 6, obj. 1.

<sup>97</sup> I-II, q. 93, a. 6, ad 1 um

<sup>98</sup> I-II, q. 96. a/ 5, obj. 2.

Reply OBJ 2: The law of the Holy Spirit is above all law framed by man: and therefore spiritual men, in so far as they are led by the law of the Holy Ghost, are not subject to the law in those matters that are inconsistent with the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless the very fact that spiritual men are subject to law, is due to the leading of the Holy Ghost, according to 1 Peter 2:13: “Be ye subject. . . to every human creature for God’s sake.”<sup>99</sup>

The fourth and final occurrence of Rm 8:14 in the *Summa* of St. Thomas is read in an objection relative to the **Gift of Counsel**. It is not a matter in this text of the relationship between the Holy Spirit, the Law, human freedom – but that between the **Spirit of God** and the **human spirit**:

OBJ 3: Further, it is written (Romans 8:14): “Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” But counselling is not consistent with being led by another. Since then the gifts of the Holy Ghost are most befitting the children of God, who “have received the spirit of adoption of sons,” it would seem that counsel should not be numbered among the gifts of the Holy Ghost.<sup>100</sup>

The response shows how the reason of the son of God opens freely under the motion of the Holy Spirit by the Gift of Counsel:

Reply OBJ 3: The children of God are moved by the Holy Spirit according to their mode, without prejudice to their free-will which is the faculty of will and reason (Sententiarum iii,24). Accordingly the gift of counsel is befitting the children of God in so far as the reason is instructed by the Holy Ghost about what we have to do.<sup>101</sup>

The **Gift of Fear** is so bound up with the **filial quality of the Christian Life** that it has come to be called **filial**, or **chaste fear**. St. Thomas notes that both appellations have **charity** as their common root:

Reply OBJ 3: The relation of servant to master is based on the power which the master exercises over the servant; whereas, on the contrary, the relation of a son to his father or of a wife to her husband is **based on the son’s affection towards his father to whom he submits himself**, or on the wife’s affection towards her husband to whom she finds herself in the union of love. Hence filial and chaste fear amount to the same, because **by the love of charity God becomes our Father**, according to Romans 8:15, “You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba [Father]”; and by this same charity He is called our spouse, according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a

---

<sup>99</sup> I-II, q. 96, a. 5, as 2 um.

<sup>100</sup> II-II, q. 52, a. 1, obj. 3.

<sup>101</sup> II-II, q. 52, a. 1, ad 3 um.

chaste virgin to Christ”: whereas servile fear has no connection with these, since it does not include charity in its definition.<sup>102</sup>

The **filial dimension** of the Christian life, no longer considered in the concern of not offending the Heavenly father – but rather in that of filial love which the Holy Spirit pours out into our hearts, is deployed also in the **Gift of Piety**:

On the contrary, It is reckoned among the gifts in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah (Isaiah 11:2) [Douay: godliness] (Pietas, whence our English word pity, which is the same as mercy.)

I answer that, As stated above (I,q. 68,a. 1; I,q. 69, aa.1,3), the gifts of the Holy Ghost are **habitual dispositions of the soul, rendering it amenable to the motion of the Holy Ghost**. Now the Holy Ghost moves us to this effect among others, of **having a filial affection towards God**, according to Romans 8:15, “You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father).” And since **it belongs properly to piety to pay duty and worship to one’s father**, it follows that piety, whereby, at the Holy Ghost’s instigation, **we pay worship and duty to God as our Father, is a gift of the Holy Ghost**.<sup>103</sup>

The **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** only perfect the appetitive powers of the human being:

OBJ 1: It would seem that the **Beatitudes** are unsuitably enumerated. For the beatitudes are assigned to the gifts, as stated above (a. 1,r 1). Now some of the gifts, viz. **wisdom** and **understanding**, belong to the **contemplative** life: yet no beatitude is assigned to the act of contemplation, for all are assigned to matters connected with the active life. Therefore the beatitudes are insufficiently enumerated.<sup>104</sup>

St. Thomas places these respectively with regard to the vision of God and adoptive filiation:

Reply OBJ 1: The acts of the gifts which belong to the active life are indicated in the merits: but the acts of the gifts pertaining to the contemplative life are indicated in the rewards, for the reason given above. Because to see God corresponds to the gift of understanding; and to be like God by being adoptive children of God, corresponds to the gift of wisdom.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> II-II, q. 19, a. 2, ad 3 um.

<sup>103</sup> II-II, q. 121, a. 1, c.

<sup>104</sup> I-II, q. 69, a. 3, obj. 1.

<sup>105</sup> I-II, q. 69, a. 3, ad 1 um.

The Question consecrated to the **Gift of Wisdom** [II-II, q. 45] is accomplished by a justification of the co-relationship between this Gift and the Seventh Beatitude, that of the Divine Filiation promised to the Peace-Makers:

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Sermone Domini in Monte i,4) that “wisdom is becoming to peacemakers, in whom there is no movement of rebellion, but only obedience to reason.”

I answer that, The seventh beatitude is fittingly ascribed to the gift of wisdom, both as to the merit and as to the reward. The merit is denoted in the words, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Now a peacemaker is one who makes peace, either in himself, or in others: and in both cases this is the result of setting in due order those things in which peace is established, for “peace is the accomplishe of order,” according to Augustine (De Civitate Dei xix,13).

Now it belongs to wisdom to set things in order, as the Philosopher declares (De Metaphysica i,2), wherefore peaceableness is fittingly ascribed to wisdom. The reward is expressed in the words, “they shall be called the children of God.” Now men are called the children of God in so far as they participate in the likeness of the only-begotten and natural Son of God, according to Romans 8:29, “Whom He foreknew. . . to be made conformable to the image of His Son,” Who is Wisdom Begotten. Hence by participating in the gift of wisdom, man attains to the sonship of God.<sup>106</sup>

The assimilation to the Son of God by nature according to adoptive filiation, on the one hand – and the Gift of Wisdom on the other: are **co-relatives**, from the fact that the Only Son of God is Himself the **un-engendered, uncreated** Wisdom. St. Thomas explains the association of the Gift of Wisdom and the Seventh Beatitude and the adoptive filiation is explained in **III Sent.**<sup>107</sup>: the Gift of Wisdom whose task it is to judge the spiritual matters which the intellect grasps, either to order these, or approve these, it will judge these infallibly and rightly and order everything which are subjected, whether these are apprehensions, or affections, or operations. In this, a certain similitude of the Divinity in man will appear, since God by providing and judging accepts His Name, according to which man as the son of God manifestly will be shown. Hence, in the seventh beatitude, which is reduced to wisdom, is noted: states that they will be called sons of God. In the state of this life it works more by removing impediments which might disturb this noted ordering, which would follow from it. Therefore peace-making is placed in the seventh beatitude, in so far as the state of this life is concerned through which these things disturbing the peace which is the term of the above-mentioned ordination, strives to quiet, both in

---

<sup>106</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 6 c.

<sup>107</sup> d. 34, q. 1, a 4 c

oneself and also as far as others are concerned in any manner they obey it. The similitude with God is designated as ‘divinity’ ‘deity’, and not as uncreated and generated Wisdom. The bond with the second divine person is not yet explained. In the Commentary on Mt 5:9, the bond with Charity is well known, the relationship with the seventh beatitude with wisdom is justly noted in a lapidary manner, probably only to assure the coherence of the complexity of the accomplish corresponding to one another.

Does not peace seem to be more in regard to Charity than with Wisdom. St. Thomas examines the following objection:

**OBJ 1:** It seems that the seventh beatitude does not correspond to the gift of wisdom. For the seventh beatitude is: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Now both these things belong to charity: since of peace it is written (Psalm 119:165): “Much peace have they that love Thy law,” and, as the Apostle says (Romans 5:5), “the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us,” and Who is “the Spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba [Father]” (Romans 8:15). Therefore the seventh beatitude ought to be ascribed to charity rather than to wisdom.<sup>108</sup>

The response shows that to make peace, to be an artisan of peace, supposing the make good use of reason, befits **Wisdom**. If Wisdom has its cause in the will, i.e., **charity**, it resides in its essence in the intellect:

I answer that, As stated above (A1), **wisdom denotes a certain rectitude of judgment according to the Eternal Law**. Now rectitude of judgment is twofold: first, on account of perfect use of reason, secondly, on account of a certain connaturality with the matter about which one has to judge.

Thus, about matters of chastity, a man after inquiring with his reason forms a right judgment, if he has learnt the science of morals, while he who has the habit of chastity judges of such matters by a kind of **connaturality**. Accordingly it belongs to the wisdom that is an intellectual virtue to pronounce right judgment about Divine things after reason has made its inquiry, but it belongs to **wisdom as a gift of the Holy Ghost to judge a right about them on account of connaturality with them**: thus Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus ii) that “Hierotheus is perfect in Divine things, for he not only **learns**, but is **patient** of, Divine things.” Now this sympathy or **connaturality for Divine things is the result of charity**, which unites us to God, according to 1 Corinthians 6:17: “He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.” Consequently wisdom which is a gift, has its cause in the will, which cause is charity,

---

<sup>108</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 6, obj. 1.

but it has its essence in the intellect, whose act is to judge a right, as stated above (I-II, q. 14, a. 1).<sup>109</sup>

St. Thomas adds in accompli to the second part of the objection, and to bring out that the attribution of adoption to the Holy Spirit, to which Divine Love is appropriated, does not imply that the seventh beatitude should correspond to charity rather than wisdom:

Reply OBJ 1: It belongs to charity to be at peace, but it belongs to wisdom to make peace by setting things in order. Likewise the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of adoption in so far as we receive from Him the likeness of the natural Son, Who is the Begotten Wisdom.<sup>110</sup>

It is certainly not a question for that which one might refer more or less happily accomplish to the objective character of the pejorative nuance of its use], the ‘intellectualism’ of St. Thomas to down-play charity. If therefore, adoptive filiation is found placed in relationship here with **Wisdom**, this does not in any way annul the repeated affirmations of his being **rooted in Charity** – and even, and even more so, in habitual grace – for wisdom is itself presented as an effect of Charity. This is why St. Thomas refutes the following objection:

OBJ 2: Further, a thing is declared by its proximate effect rather than by its remote effect. Now the proximate effect of wisdom seems to be charity, according to Wisdom 7:27: “Through nations she conveyed herself into holy souls; she maketh the friends of God and prophets”: whereas peace and the adoption of sons seem to be remote effects, since they result from charity, as stated above (q. 29, a. 3). Therefore the beatitude corresponding to wisdom should be determined in respect of the love of charity rather than in respect of peace.<sup>111</sup>

The response re-establishes the just relationship between Charity and Wisdom:

Reply OBJ 2: These words refer to the Uncreated Wisdom, which in the first place unites itself to us by the gift of charity, and consequently reveals to us the mysteries the knowledge of which is infused wisdom. Hence, the infused wisdom which is a gift, is not the cause but the effect of charity.<sup>112</sup>

In the last analysis, charity, peace, wisdom, divine filiation: all accompli toward the one union with God:

On the contrary, stands the authority of Our Lord Who propounded these rewards.

---

<sup>109</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 2 c.

<sup>110</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 6, ad 1 um.

<sup>111</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 6, obj. 2.

<sup>112</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 6, ad 2 um.

I answer that, These rewards are most suitably assigned, considering the nature of the beatitudes in relation to the three kinds of happiness indicated above (a. 3).

For the first three beatitudes concerned the withdrawal of man from those things in which sensual happiness consists: which happiness man desires by seeking the object of his natural desire, not where he should seek it, viz. in God, but in temporal and perishable things. Wherefore the rewards of the first three beatitudes correspond to these things which some men seek to find in earthly happiness. For men seek in external things, viz. riches and honors, a certain excellence and abundance, both of which are implied in the kingdom of heaven, whereby man attains to excellence and abundance of good things in God.

Hence Our Lord promised the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit. Again, cruel and pitiless men seek by wrangling and fighting to destroy their enemies so as to gain security for themselves. Hence Our Lord promised the meek a secure and peaceful possession of the land of the living, whereby the solid reality of eternal goods is denoted. Again, men seek consolation for the toils of the present life, in the lusts and pleasures of the world. Hence Our Lord promises comfort to those that mourn.

Two other beatitudes belong to the works of active happiness, which are the works of virtues directing man in his relations to his neighbor: from which operations some men withdraw through inordinate love of their own good. Hence Our Lord assigns to these beatitudes rewards in correspondence with the motives for which men recede from them. For there are some who recede from acts of justice, and instead of rendering what is due, lay hands on what is not theirs, that they may abound in temporal goods. Wherefore Our Lord promised those who hunger after justice, that they shall have their fill. Some, again, recede from works of mercy, lest they be buried with other people's misery. Hence Our Lord promised the merciful that they should obtain mercy, and be delivered from all misery.

The last two beatitudes belong to contemplative happiness or beatitude: hence the rewards are assigned in correspondence with the dispositions included in the merit. For cleanness of the eye disposes one to see clearly: hence the clean of heart are promised that they shall see God. Again, to make peace either in oneself or among others, shows a man to be a follower of God, Who is the God of unity and peace. Hence, as a reward, he is promised the glory of the Divine sonship, consisting in perfect union with God through consummate wisdom. <sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> I-II, q. 69, a. 4, c.

St. Thomas even goes so far as to place the dignity of the **adoptive son of God**, related to the Gift of **Wisdom**, even higher than the fact of seeing Him face to face, which refers to the Gift of Understanding:

Reply OBJ 3: The rewards are also arranged in ascending order. For it is more to possess the land of the heavenly kingdom than simply to have it: since we have many things without possessing them firmly and peacefully. Again, it is more to be comforted in the kingdom than to have and possess it, for there are many things the possession of which is accompanied by sorrow. Again, it is more to have one's fill than simply to be comforted, because fullness implies abundance of comfort. And **mercy surpasses satiety**, for thereby man receives more than he merited or was able to desire. And yet more is it to see God, even as he is a greater man who not only dines at court, but also sees the king's countenance. Lastly, the highest place in the royal palace belongs to the king's son<sup>114</sup>

Thus Wisdom, that is both uncreated and generated, i.e., the only-begotten Son of God by nature, pours into our hearts by the Gift of His Spirit that charity from which is derived infused Wisdom, Gift of the Holy Spirit. The participation of this infused wisdom, assimilating us to the Uncreated Wisdom, therefore makes us become sons of God.

+++++

## 5. The Subject of Divine Filiation by Adoption - Only a rational Creature can be adopted by God.

**III Sent.**<sup>115</sup> Distinguishes a three-fold Filiation: by **nature**, by **creation** by **adoption**. This corresponds to **III, q. 23, a. 3** – thus explaining a three-fold **assimilation** to the Son in so far as He in His turn proceeds from the Father, as the intellectual Word, remaining one with Him:

On the contrary, Adopted sons are the “heirs of God,” as is stated Romans 8:17. But such an inheritance belongs to none but the rational nature. Therefore it is proper to the rational nature to be adopted.

I answer that, As stated above (a. 2, r 3), **the sonship of adoption is a certain likeness of natural sonship**. Now the Son of God proceeds naturally from the Father as the Intellectual Word, in oneness of nature with the Father. To this Word, therefore, something may be likened in three ways.

<sup>114</sup> I-II, q. 69, ad 3 um. *In Mt 5:9* [Marietti n. 440]:... *It is more to be the son of the king than to see the king.*

<sup>115</sup> d. 10, q. 2, a. 2, qa.1



First, on the part of the form but not on the part of its intelligibility: thus the form of a house already built is like the mental word of the builder in its specific form, but not in intelligibility, because the material form of a house is not intelligible, as it was in the mind of the builder. In this way every creature is like the Eternal Word; since it was made through the Word.

Secondly, the creature is likened to the Word, not only as to its form, but also as to its intelligibility: thus the knowledge which is begotten in the disciple's mind is likened to the word in the mind of the master. In this way the rational creature, even in its nature, is likened to the Word of God.

Thirdly, a creature is likened to the Eternal Word, as to the oneness of the Word with the Father, which is by reason of grace and charity: wherefore our Lord prays (John 17:21,22): "That they may be one in Us . . . as We also are one." And this likeness perfects the adoption: for to those who are thus like Him the eternal inheritance is due. It is therefore clear that to be adopted belongs to the rational creature alone: not indeed to all, but only to those who have charity; which is "poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 5:5); for which reason (Romans 8:15) the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of adoption of sons."<sup>116</sup>

This Grace of Adoption can never be lost without some fault having been committed.<sup>117</sup>

If one would place in relationship these different degrees of **assimilation** [cf. III, q. 23, a. 3], with the different levels of **filiation** [cf. *III Sent.*, d. 10, q. 2, a. 2, qa. 1], one would note then that the second assimilation is in relationship with the first degree of accomplish, i.e., by creation] – while the third assimilation corresponds to the adoption, the second degree of divine filiation is unique:

I answer that, The **adoption of the sons of God is through a certain conformity of image to the natural Son of God**. Now this takes place in two ways: first, by the **grace** of the wayfarer, which is imperfect conformity; secondly, by **glory**, which is perfect conformity, according to 1 John 3:2: "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be: we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is." Since, therefore, it is in baptism that we acquire grace, while **the clarity of the glory to come was foreshadowed in the transfiguration**, therefore both in His baptism and in His transfiguration the natural sonship of Christ was fittingly made known by the

---

<sup>116</sup> III, q. 23, a. 3, c.

<sup>117</sup> cf. III, q. 50, a. 2 c.

testimony of the Father: because He alone with the Son and Holy Ghost is perfectly conscious of that perfect generation.<sup>118</sup>

In virtue of this splitting of the third **assimilation**, creature's *canthus* be divided by the intensifying order of assimilation to God in four categories:

- those of the created being, a vestige of God;
- those of the human being, natural image of God, so of God by creation;
- those sons of God by the grace of adoption;
- those of the sons of God in glory, the blessed in heaven

This structure was already pondered upon in I, q. 33, a. 3, with regard to the quadruple **Paternity of God**:

On the contrary, The eternal comes before the temporal. But God is the Father of the Son from eternity; while He is the Father of the creature in time. Therefore paternity in God is taken in a personal sense as regards the Son, before it is so taken as regards the creature.

I answer that, A name is applied to that wherein is perfectly contained its whole signification, before it is applied to that which only partially contains it; for the latter bears the name by reason of a kind of similitude to that which answers perfectly to the signification of the name; since all imperfect things are taken from perfect things. Hence this name "lion" is applied first to the animal containing the whole nature of a lion, and which is properly so called, before it is applied to a man who shows something of a lion's nature, as courage, or strength, or the like; and of whom it is said by way of similitude. Now it is manifest from the foregoing (q. 27, a. 2; q. 28, a. 4), that the perfect idea of paternity and filiation is to be found in God the Father, and in God the Son, because one is the nature and glory of the Father and the Son.

But in the creature, filiation is found in relation to God, not in a perfect manner, since the Creator and the creature have not the same nature; but by way of a certain likeness, which is the more perfect the nearer we approach to the true idea of filiation. For God is called the Father of some creatures, **by reason only of a trace**, for instance of irrational creatures, according to Job 38:28: "Who is the father of the rain? Or who begot the drops of dew?" Of some, namely, the rational creature (He is the Father), **by reason of the likeness of His image**, according to Deuteronomy 32:6: "Is He not thy Father, who possessed, and made, and created thee?" And of others He is the Father **by similitude of grace**, and these are also

---

<sup>118</sup> III, q. 45, a. 4 c.

called adoptive sons, as ordained to the heritage of eternal glory by the gift of grace which they have received, according to Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also.”

Lastly, He is the Father of others **by similitude of glory**, forasmuch as they have obtained possession of the heritage of glory, according to Romans 5:2: “We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.” Therefore it is plain that paternity is applied to God first, as importing regard of one Person to another Person, before it imports the regard of God to creatures.<sup>119</sup>

One sees that divine filiation by adoption, both of grace as well as that of glory, included a conformity to the son and assumes a **moral** character<sup>120</sup>, and one might even see, it has a **mystical** aspect. This is expressed notably in the fact that the adoptive children before receiving the inheritance with Him of eternal **glory**, they have to be **configured** to His sufferings and death:

Reply OBJ 3: Christ’s satisfaction works its effect in us inasmuch as we are incorporated with Him, as the members with their head, as stated above (a. 1). Now the members must be conformed to their head. Consequently, as Christ first had grace in His soul with bodily passibility, and through the Passion attained to the glory of immortality, so we likewise, who are His members, are freed by His Passion from all debt of punishment, yet so that we first receive in our souls the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby our names are written down for the inheritance of immortal glory, while we yet have a passible and mortal body: but afterwards, **being made conformable to the sufferings and death of Christ, we are brought into immortal glory**, according to the saying of the Apostle (Romans 8:17): “And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.”<sup>121</sup>

The distinction between **filiation by creation** and **filiation by adoption** had already permitted to place in evidence that the latter already presupposing the former, only rational creatures can therefore benefit by divine adoption, but not all- in the measure where the Gift of created nature contains no right to a supernatural inheritance of divine beatitude. The presentation of the three degrees of assimilation advances more the reflection in making more explicit the foundation of the right to the heavenly inheritance, i.e., grace and charity:

---

<sup>119</sup> I, q. 33, a. 3 c.

<sup>120</sup> cf. I-II, q. 69, a. 3, ad 1 um: to be conformed to God by a certain **adoptive filiation** pertains to the **Gift of Wisdom**.

<sup>121</sup> III, q. 49, a. 3, ad 3 um.

On the contrary, Adopted sons are the “heirs of God,” as is stated Romans 8:17. But such an inheritance belongs to none but the rational nature. Therefore it is proper to the rational nature to be adopted.

I answer that, As stated above (a. 2, r. 3), the sonship of adoption is a certain likeness of natural sonship. Now the Son of God proceeds naturally from the Father **as the Intellectual Word**, in oneness of nature with the Father. To this Word, therefore, something may be likened in three ways.

First, on the part of the form but not on the part of its intelligibility: thus the form of a house already built is like the mental word of the builder in its specific form, but not in intelligibility, because the material form of a house is not intelligible, as it was in the mind of the builder. In this way every creature is like the Eternal Word; since it was made through the Word.

Secondly, the creature is likened to the Word, not only as to its form, but also as to its intelligibility: thus the **knowledge** which is begotten in the disciple’s mind is likened to the word in the mind of the master. In this way the rational creature, even in its nature, is likened to the Word of God.

Thirdly, a creature is likened to the Eternal Word, as to the oneness of the Word with the Father, which is **by reason of grace and charity**: wherefore our Lord prays (John 17:21,22): “That they may be one in Us . . . as We also are one.” And this likeness perfects the adoption: for to those who are thus like Him the eternal inheritance is due. It is therefore clear that to be adopted belongs to the rational creature alone: not indeed to all, but only to those who have charity; which is “poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 5:5); for which reason (Romans 8:15) the Holy Ghost is called “the Spirit of adoption of sons.”<sup>122</sup>

Not only is charity the foundation, the condition of the accomplishes of the sons of God, but it is also that by which the rational creature accedes to the divine filiation. It is in effect in the measure where it infuses charity into hearts [and therefore, by apparition of the works of the love of God toward creatures] which the Holy Spirit is the spirit of adoption of sons:

By the love of charity, God makes Himself our Father, according to St. Paul [Rm 8:15]: ***you have received a spirit of adopted sons, in which we cry out: Abba, Father!***<sup>123</sup>

The rational creature is capable of receiving adoption, but this is an effect not of one[s nature, but from grace:

<sup>122</sup> III, q. 23, a. 3, c.

<sup>123</sup> II-II, q. 19, a. 2, ad 3 um. Cf. II-II, q. 45, a. 6, obj. 2: Peace and the adoption of sons proceed from charity ...

Reply OBJ 3: Adoption is a property resulting not from nature, but from grace, of which the rational nature is capable. Therefore it need not belong to every rational nature: but every rational creature must need be capable of adoption..<sup>124</sup>

Grace constitutes us sons of God ordaining us to the celestial inheritance:

On the contrary, The eternal comes before the temporal. But God is the Father of the Son from eternity; while He is the Father of the creature in time. Therefore paternity in God is taken in a personal sense as regards the Son, before it is so taken as regards the creature.

I answer that, A name is applied to that wherein is perfectly contained its whole signification, before it is applied to that which only partially contains it; for the latter bears the name by reason of a kind of similitude to that which answers perfectly to the signification of the name; since all imperfect things are taken from perfect things. Hence this name “lion” is applied first to the animal containing the whole nature of a lion, and which is properly so called, before it is applied to a man who shows something of a lion’s nature, as courage, or strength, or the like; and of whom it is said by way of similitude. Now it is manifest from the foregoing (q. 27, a. 2; q. 28, a. 4), that **the perfect idea of paternity and filiation is to be found in God the Father, and in God the Son**, because one is the nature and glory of the Father and the Son. But in the creature, **filiation is found in relation to God**, not in a perfect manner, since the Creator and the creature have not the same nature; but **by way of a certain likeness**, which is the more perfect the nearer we approach to the true idea of filiation. For God is called the Father of some creatures, by reason only of a **trace**, for instance of irrational creatures, according to Job 38:28: “Who is the father of the rain? Or who begot the drops of dew?”

Of some, namely, the rational creature (He is the Father), **by reason of the likeness of His image**, according to Deuteronomy 32:6: “Is He not thy Father, who possessed, and made, and created thee?”

And of others He is the Father **by similitude of grace**, and these are also called adoptive sons, as ordained to the heritage of eternal glory by the gift of grace which they have received, according to Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also.”

Lastly, He is the Father of others **by similitude of glory**, forasmuch as they have obtained possession of the heritage of glory, according to Romans 5:2: “We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.” Therefore it is plain that paternity

---

<sup>124</sup> III, q. 33, a. 3ad 3 um.

is applied to God first, as importing regard of one Person to another Person, before it imports the regard of God to creatures.<sup>125</sup>

If it is by grace that we are adopted, it is therefore gratuitously by a free choice of God predestining to such a dignity:

OBJ 1: It would seem unfitting that Christ should be predestinated. For the term of anyone's predestination seems to be the adoption of sons, according to Ephesians 1:5: "Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children." But it is not befitting to Christ to be an adopted Son, as stated above (q. 23, a. 4). Therefore it is not fitting that Christ be predestinated.

Reply OBJ 1: The Apostle there speaks of that predestination by which we are predestinated to be adopted sons. And just as Christ in a singular manner above all others is the natural Son of God, so in a singular manner is He predestinated.<sup>126</sup>

We have therefore in common with Christ that of being predestined to filiation, in a manner that is not univocal, but analogical between Him and us:

OBJ 3: Further, that is predestinated from eternity which is to take place at some time. But this proposition, "The Son of God was made man," is truer than this, "Man was made the Son of God." Therefore this proposition, "Christ, as the Son of God, was predestinated to be man," is truer than this, "Christ as Man was predestinated to be the Son of God." III, q. 24, a. 3, obj. 3.

The relationship between the predestination of Jesus Christ to divine accomplish and ours can be characterized not only by analogy, but also by exemplarity: it is according to His Model that we are predestined to divine filiation by grace:

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Praedestinatione Sanctorum xv): "The Savior Himself, the Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus is the most splendid light of predestination and grace." Now He is called the light of predestination and grace, inasmuch as our predestination is made manifest by His predestination and grace; and this seems to pertain to the nature of an exemplar. Therefore Christ's predestination is the exemplar of ours.

I answer that, Predestination may be considered in two ways. First, on the part of the act of predestination: and thus Christ's predestination cannot be said to be the exemplar of ours: for in the same way and by the same eternal act God predestinated us and Christ. Secondly, predestination may be considered on the

---

<sup>125</sup> I, q. 33, a. 3 c

<sup>126</sup> III, q. 24, a. 1, obj. 1 et ad 1 um.

part of that to which anyone is predestinated, and this is the term and effect of predestination.

In this sense Christ's predestination is the exemplar of ours, and this in two ways.

First, in respect of the good to which we are predestinated: for He was predestinated to be the natural Son of God, whereas we are predestinated to the adoption of sons, which is **a participated likeness of natural sonship**. Whence it is written (Romans 8:29): "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."

Secondly, in respect of the manner of obtaining this good – that is, **by grace**. This is most manifest in Christ; because human nature in Him, without any antecedent merits, was united to the Son of God: and of the fullness of His grace we all have received, as it is written (John 1:16)<sup>127</sup>.

By the reception of this gift of the Grace of the just <sup>128</sup>, the spiritual man, constituted a child of God, becomes inaccessible to the third temptation brought by Satan against Christ:

I answer that, The temptation which comes from the enemy takes the form of a suggestion, as Gregory says (Hom. 16 in Evangelia). Now a suggestion cannot be made to everybody in the same way; it must arise from those things towards which each one has an inclination. Consequently the devil does not straight away tempt the spiritual man to grave sins, but he begins with lighter sins, so as gradually to lead him to those of greater magnitude. Wherefore Gregory (Moralium xxxi), expounding Job 39:25, "He smelleth the battle afar off, the encouraging of the captains and the shouting of the army," says: "The captains are fittingly described as encouraging, and the army as shouting. Because vices begin by insinuating themselves into the mind under some specious pretext: then they come on the mind in such numbers as to drag it into all sorts of folly, deafening it with their bestial clamor."

Thus, too, did the devil set about the temptation of the first man. For at first he enticed his mind to consent to the eating of the forbidden fruit, saying (Genesis 3:1): "Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" Secondly [he tempted him] to vainglory by saying: "Your eyes shall be opened." Thirdly, he led the temptation to the extreme height of pride, saying: "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

---

<sup>127</sup> III, q. 24, a. 3 c.

<sup>128</sup> cf. I-II, q. 93, a. 6, obj. 1: 'Just men, who are the sons of God by adoption, are acted upon by the Spirit of God.'

This same order did he observe in tempting Christ. For at first he tempted Him to that which men desire, however spiritual they may be – namely, the support of the corporeal nature by food. Secondly, he advanced to that matter in which spiritual men are sometimes found wanting, inasmuch as they do certain things for show, which pertains to vainglory. Thirdly, he led the temptation on to that in which no spiritual men, but only carnal men, have a part – namely, to desire worldly riches and fame, to the extent of holding God in contempt. And so in the first two temptations he said: “If Thou be the Son of God”; but not in the third, which is inapplicable to spiritual men, who are sons of God by adoption, whereas it does apply to the two preceding temptations. And Christ resisted these temptations by quoting the authority of the Law, not by enforcing His power, “so as to give more honor to His human nature and a greater punishment to His adversary, since the foe of the human race was vanquished, not as by God, but as by man”; as Pope Leo says (Sermone 1, De Quadrag. 3).<sup>129</sup>

+++

After all these considerations, St. Thomas concludes in behalf of the **unicity of real filiation** in Jesus Christ. The unicity of real filiation in Christ does not mean, of course, that the Virgin Mary would not really be His Mother:

On the contrary, As Damascene says (De Fide Orthodoxa iii), things pertaining to the nature are multiple in Christ; but **not those things that pertain to the Person**. But **filiation belongs especially to the Person**, since it is a personal property, as appears from what was said in the I, q. 32, a. 3; I, q. 40, a. 2. Therefore **there is but one filiation in Christ**.

I answer that, opinions differ on this question. For some, considering only the cause of filiation, which is nativity, put two filiations in Christ, just as there are two nativities.

On the contrary, others, considering only the subject of filiation, which is the person or hypostasis, put **only one filiation in Christ**, just as there is but one hypostasis or person. Because the unity or plurality of a relation is considered in respect, not of its terms, but of its cause or of its subject. For if it were considered in respect of its terms, every man would of necessity have in himself two filiations – one in reference to his father, and another in reference to his mother.

But if we consider the question aright, we shall see that every man bears but one relation to both his father and his mother, on account of the unity of the cause thereof. For man is born by one birth of both father and mother: whence he bears

---

<sup>129</sup> III, q. 41, a. 4, c.



but one relation to both. The same is said of one master who teaches many disciples the same doctrine, and of one lord who governs many subjects by the same power.

But if there be various causes specifically diverse, it seems that in consequence the relations differ in species: wherefore nothing hinders several such relations being in the same subject. Thus if a man teach grammar to some and logic to others, his teaching is of a different kind in one case and in the other; and therefore one and the same man may have different relations as the master of different disciples, or of the same disciples in regard to diverse doctrines. Sometimes, however, it happens that a man bears a relation to several in respect of various causes, but of the same species: thus a father may have several sons by several acts of generation.

Wherefore the paternity cannot differ specifically, since the acts of generation are specifically the same. And because several forms of the same species cannot at the same time be in the same subject, it is impossible for several paternities to be in a man who is the father of several sons by natural generation. But it would not be so were he the father of one son by natural generation and of another by adoption. Now, it is manifest that Christ was not born by one and the same nativity, of the Father from eternity, and of His Mother in time: indeed, these two nativities differ specifically.

Wherefore, as to this, we must say that **there are various filiations, one temporal and the other eternal**. Since, however, the subject of filiation is neither the nature nor part of the nature, but the person or hypostasis alone; and since in Christ there is no other hypostasis or person than the eternal, there can be no other filiation in Christ but that which is in the eternal hypostasis. **Now, every relation which is predicated of God from time does not put something real in the eternal God, but only something according to our way of thinking**, as we have said in the I, q. 13, a. 7.

Therefore the filiation by which Christ is referred to His Mother cannot be a real relation, but only a relation of reason. Consequently each opinion is true to a certain extent. For if we consider the adequate causes of filiation, we must needs say that there are two filiations in respect of the twofold nativity. But if we consider the subject of filiation, which can only be the eternal *suppositum*, then no other than the eternal filiation in Christ is a real relation. Nevertheless, He has the relation of Son in regard to His Mother, because it is implied in the relation of motherhood to Christ. Thus **God is called Lord by a relation** which is implied in the real relation by which the creature is subject to God. And although lordship is not a real relation in God, yet is He really Lord through the real subjection of the creature to Him. In

the same way Christ is really the Son of the Virgin Mother through the real relation of her motherhood to Christ.<sup>130</sup>

There remains to explain the fact that Christ, Whose humanity is endowed with sanctifying grace, does not as a result receive adoption as an effect. **The Habitual Grace of Christ results in deed from the Grace of Union** through which He is the son of God by nature. Consequently, Jesus being, by the Grace of Union, the Son of God by Nature, He is not the adoptive son by habitual grace, even though He does possess this. In other terms, the unicity of the filiation of Christ, in His humanity – i.e., Filiation by nature [proceeds from His Grace of Union:

Reply OBJ 2: This comparison of Augustine is to be referred to the principle because, to wit, just as it is granted to any man without meriting it to be a Christian, so did it happen that this man without meriting it was Christ. But there is a difference on the part of the term: because by the grace of union Christ is the natural Son; whereas another man by habitual grace is an adopted son. Yet habitual grace in Christ does not make one who was not a son to be an adopted son, but is a certain effect of Filiation in the soul of Christ, according to John 1:14: “We saw His glory . . . as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth.”<sup>131</sup>

The objections and their solutions in III, q. 23, a. 4, are similar to those of the parallel place in *III Sent.*<sup>132</sup> The first two refer to *De Trinitate* [II, 27] of St. Hilary, and to the *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* [c. 15] of St. Augustine. ‘The adoption of humanity’ designates there the union of human nature to the Person of the Son:

Reply OBJ 1: As sonship does not properly belong to the nature, so neither does adoption. Consequently, when it is said that carnal humanity is adopted, the expression is **metaphorical**: and **adoption is used to signify the union of human nature to the Person of the Son.**<sup>133</sup>

The community of grace between Christ and the Christian, which the second objection mentions, holds not for the term of the grace, but for its principle: the absence of any previous merit both regarding the union as well as the adoption:

Reply OBJ 2: This comparison of Augustine is to be referred to the **principle** because, to wit, just as it is granted to any man without meriting it to be a Christian, so did it happen that this man without meriting it was Christ. But there is a difference on the part of the **term**: because **by the grace of union Christ is the natural Son**; whereas another man **by habitual grace is an adopted son**. Yet

<sup>130</sup> III, q. 35, a. 5 c.

<sup>131</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2 um.

<sup>132</sup> d. 10, q. 2, a. 2, qa 2.

<sup>133</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4 ad 1 um.

habitual grace in Christ does not make one who was not a son to be an adopted son, but is a certain effect of Filiation in the soul of Christ, according to John 1:14: “We saw His glory . . . as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth.”<sup>134</sup>

In distinguishing *principle* and *term*, St. Thomas responds here in an analogous manner in *III Sent.*<sup>135</sup> which distinguishes the *ratio* and the *effect* of grace. The realities compared are only two: i.e., the **Grace of Union** by which Jesus is the Christ - and the **Grace of Adoption** by which we are all Christians. Now, there intervenes a third element: **the Habitual Grace of Christ**. This addition has become possible from the fact that St. Thomas no longer takes up again here in our subject the expression: **Grace of Adoption**, but utilizes rather the expression: **Habitual Grace**. Both of these are identified in us, but not in Christ.

As for this new element which is the **Habitual Grace of Christ**, St. Thomas brings to bear an important precise clarification in the measure that this permits the student to comprehend the absence of adoption in Christ under a very positive turn. It expresses that this **Habitual Grace of Christ** is an effect, in His human soul, of His **Divine Filiation by nature**. He had already shown in III, q. 7, a. 3, that this resulted from the **Grace of Union**. Now that we have become the adoptive sons of God, since we receive **Habitual Grace**, **Christ receives the plenitude of Habitual Grace because He is the Son of God by nature**.

The response to the third objection makes use of the reasoning sustaining that if Christ is the **Servant**, He must enjoy with all the more reason, a dignity greater than that of an adoptive son:

Reply OBJ 3: To be a creature, as also to be subservient or subject to God, regards not only the person, but also the nature: but this cannot be said of sonship. Wherefore the comparison does not hold.<sup>136</sup>

Let us remark lastly that as the apocryphal citation attributed to St. Ambrose [*I pondered and pondered again, the Scriptures and I never found that Christ is mentioned as an adoptive son*], the argument, *Sed, contra* invokes the encounter of Adoptionism in an extract of St. Ambrose's *De Incarnatione* :

On the contrary, Ambrose says (*De Incarnatione viii*): “We do not call an adopted son a natural son: the natural son is a true son.” But Christ is the true and natural

<sup>134</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2 um.

<sup>135</sup> d, 10, q.2, a. 2, qa 3.

<sup>136</sup> III, q, 23, a. 4, ad 3 um.

Son of God, according to 1 John 5:20: “That we may . . . be in His true Son, Jesus Christ.” Therefore Christ, as Man, is not an adopted Son.<sup>137</sup>

†

## 6. Divine Filiation by Nature and Divine Filiation by Adoption

Different from human adoption, divine adoption does not supply for the absence of filiation by nature. Adoptive filiation appears, on the contrary, as a **shared participation in Filiation by nature**.<sup>138</sup> God grants this to man in order to communicate to him the abundance of His perfection, according to Rm 8:29: ***For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son.***<sup>139</sup>

St. Thomas notes the analogy between the supernatural similitude brought to the human being by the Divine Adoption and the natural similitude communicated to every being by creation:

Reply OBJ 2: Man works in order to supply his wants: not so God, Who works in order **to communicate to others the abundance of His perfection**. Wherefore, as by the work of creation the Divine goodness is communicated to all creatures in a certain likeness, so **by the work of adoption the likeness of natural sonship is communicated to men**, according to Romans 8:29: “Whom He foreknew . . . to be made conformable to the image of His Son.”<sup>140</sup>

The fact of characterizing adoptive filiation as a accomplishes similitude in the Natural Filiation of the Divine Word implies between the two types of Filiation **exemplarity** and **analogy**. The first analogate, the **Divine Natural and Perfect Filiation** is found just as in the case of **Paternity** and **Birth**, in God Himself: **In God, there is truly and properly paternity, filiation and birth.**<sup>141</sup>

From this fact, there is derived **Adoptive and Imperfect Filiation**:

On the contrary, The eternal comes before the temporal. But God is the Father of the Son from eternity; while He is the Father of the creature in time.

<sup>137</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4, Sed contra.

<sup>138</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2 um: ***By the act of adoption, there is communicated to men a similitude of natural filiation.*** This same idea is found in several passages of III, q. 23.

<sup>139</sup> This is found many times in St. Thomas: III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2um. St. Thomas often makes use of Rm 8:29 to attest to the fact that the Divine Filiation by adoption is a similitude with the Divine Filiation by Nature:

I, q. 33, a. 3, ad 1 um; q. 41, a. 3 c; q. 93, a. 4, obj 2 et ad 2 um.

II-II, q. 45, a. 6 c. III, q. 3, a. 5, obj. 2; a. 8, c.; q. 23, a. 2, obj. 2; q. 24, a. 3 c; q. 39, a. 8 c.

<sup>140</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2um.

<sup>141</sup> I, q. 41, a. 3 c.

Therefore paternity in God is taken in a personal sense as regards the Son, before it is so taken as regards the creature.

I answer that, A name is applied to that wherein is perfectly contained its whole signification, before it is applied to that which only partially contains it; for the latter bears the name by reason of **a kind of similitude** to that which answers perfectly to the signification of the name; since all imperfect things are taken from perfect things. Hence this name “lion” is applied first to the animal containing the whole nature of a lion, and which is properly so called, before it is applied to a man who shows something of a lion’s nature, as courage, or strength, or the like; and of whom it is said by way of similitude.

Now it is manifest from the foregoing (q. 27, a. 2; q. 28, a. 4), that **the perfect idea of paternity and filiation is to be found in God the Father, and in God the Son**, because one is the nature and glory of the Father and the Son. But in the creature, filiation is found in relation to God, not in a perfect manner, since the Creator and the creature have not the same nature; but **by way of a certain likeness**, which is the more perfect the nearer we approach to the true idea of filiation.

For God is called the Father of some creatures, **by reason only of a trace**, for instance of irrational creatures, according to Job 38:28: “Who is the father of the rain? Or who begot the drops of dew?” Of some, namely, the rational creature (He is the Father), **by reason of the likeness of His image**, according to Deuteronomy 32:6: “Is He not thy Father, who possessed, and made, and created thee?” And of others He is the Father **by similitude of grace**, and these are also called adoptive sons, as ordained to the heritage of eternal glory by the gift of grace which they have received, according to Romans 8:16,17: “The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also.”

Lastly, He is the Father of others **by similitude of glory**, forasmuch as they have obtained possession of the heritage of glory, according to Romans 5:2: “We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.” Therefore it is plain that paternity is applied to God first, as importing regard of one Person to another Person, before it imports the regard of God to creatures.<sup>142</sup>

This previously quoted text from Pars I, q. 33, relative to the Paternity of God in regard to His creatures, shows well, on the one hand, how the fact that God and the created being do not have the same nature, excludes the univocality between the Natural and Adoptive Divine Filiations [i.e., how the accomplish of being implies the analogy of filiations]. Then, on the other hand there is made known how analogy enables the student to take into account the **derivation** of the filiation of

---

<sup>142</sup> I, q. 33, a. 3 c.

Jesus Christ in us. Lastly, there is manifested that this analogy permits a dynamic perspective of gradation in the realizations of ***Divine Filiation***.

If one considers Divine Filiation in its perfect notion, only the Divine, Eternal Word is the **true and proper Son of God**, and to this title there is qualified the only Son of God. But if one envisages the analogous realization which Adoptive Filiation is, the Incarnate Word appears then as the First-Born [***primogenitus***] of a multitude of brothers and sisters:

I answer that, The Son was not begotten from nothing, but from the Father's substance. For it was explained above (q. 27, a. 2; q. 33, aa. 2,3) **that paternity, filiation and nativity really and truly exist in God.**

Now, this is the difference between true "generation," whereby one proceeds from another as a son, and "making," that the maker makes something out of external matter, as a carpenter makes a bench out of wood, whereas a man begets a son from himself. Now, as a created workman makes a thing out of matter, so God makes things out of nothing, as will be shown later on (q. 45, a. 1), not as if this nothing were a part of the substance of the thing made, but because the whole substance of a thing is produced by Him without anything else whatever presupposed. So, were the Son to proceed from the Father as out of nothing, then the Son would be to the Father what the thing made is to the maker, whereto, as is evident, the name of filiation would not apply except by a kind of similitude.

Thus, if the Son of God proceeds from the Father out of nothing, He could not be properly and truly called the Son, whereas the contrary is stated (1 John 5:20): "That we may be in His true Son Jesus Christ." Therefore the true Son of God is not from nothing; nor is He made, but begotten. That certain creatures made by God out of nothing are called sons of God is to be taken in a metaphorical sense, according to a certain likeness of assimilation to Him Who is the true Son.

Whence, as He is the only true and natural Son of God, He is called **the "only begotten,"** according to John 1:18, "The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"; and so as others are entitled sons of adoption by their similitude to Him, He is called the **"first begotten,"** according to Romans 8:29: "Whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born of many brethren."

Therefore the **Son of God is begotten of the substance of the Father**, but not in the same way as man is born of man; for a part of the human substance in generation passes into the substance of the one begotten, whereas the divine nature cannot be parted; whence it necessarily follows that the Father in begetting the Son does not transmit any part of His nature, but communicates His whole

nature to Him, the distinction only of origin remaining as explained above (q. 40, a. 2).<sup>143</sup>

The difference between our accomplish and that of Jesus Christ does not stand up solely on the fact that His Filiation finds its term in the Father alone, while ours, follows from the entire Trinity. Indeed, even if one should mentally isolate our **relationship of filiation** with regard to the first Person of the Trinity only, its manner would remain different from that of Jesus Christ. His is natural, whereas ours results from a gratuitous decree, voluntary, of the Father, together with the Son and the Spirit:

Reply OBJ 3: As stated above (a. 1, r. 2), adoptive sonship is a certain likeness of the eternal Sonship: just as all that takes place in time is **a certain likeness of what has been from eternity**. Now man is **likened to the splendor of the Eternal Son by reason of the light of grace which is attributed to the Holy Ghost**. Therefore adoption, though common to the whole Trinity, is **appropriated to the Father as its author; to the Son, as its exemplar; to the Holy Ghost, as imprinting on us the likeness of this exemplar**.<sup>144</sup>

The adoptive filiation of man is distinguished from the filiation by nature of the Word as respective effects with of a production and a generation. The Second Divine Person is *engendered, generated*, while the human being is **made** a son of God, according to Jn 1:12: ... **He gave them power to be made the sons of God...** the son by nature does not proceed from the Father, as though drawn from nothing, but as engendered, generated from the substance of the Father:

I answer that, The Son was not begotten from nothing, but **from the Father's substance**. For it was explained above (q. 27, a. 2; q. 33, aa. 2,3) that **paternity, filiation** and **nativity** really and truly exist in God.

Now, this is the difference between true "generation," whereby one proceeds from another as a son, and "making," that the maker makes something out of external matter, as a carpenter makes a bench out of wood, whereas a man begets a son from himself. Now, as a created workman makes a thing out of matter, so God makes things out of nothing, as will be shown later on (q. 45, a. 1), not as if this nothing were a part of the substance of the thing made, but because the whole substance of a thing is produced by Him without anything else whatever presupposed.

So, were the Son to **proceed from the Father as out of nothing**, then the Son would be to the Father what the thing made is to the **maker**, whereto, as is evident,

---

<sup>143</sup> I, q. 41, a. 3 c.

<sup>144</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2 ad 2 um.

**the name of filiation would not apply except by a kind of similitude.** Thus, if the Son of God proceeds from the Father out of nothing, He could not be properly and truly called the Son, whereas the contrary is stated (1 John 5:20): “That we may be in His true Son Jesus Christ.” Therefore **the true Son of God is not from nothing; nor is He made, but begotten.**

That certain creatures made by God out of nothing are called sons of God is to be taken in a metaphorical sense, **according to a certain likeness of assimilation to Him Who is the true Son.** Whence, as He is the only true and natural Son of God, He is called the “**only begotten**,” according to John 1:18, “The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”; and so as others are entitled sons of adoption by their similitude to Him, He is called the “first begotten,” according to Romans 8:29: “Whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born of many brethren.”

Therefore the Son of God is **begotten of the substance of the Father**, but not in the same way as man is born of man; for a part of the human substance in generation passes into the substance of the one begotten, whereas the divine nature cannot be parted; whence it necessarily follows that the Father in begetting the Son does not transmit any part of His nature, but communicates His whole nature to Him, the distinction only of origin remaining as explained above (q. 40, a. 2).<sup>145</sup>

However, St. accomp accomplish admits the legitimacy of speaking with regard to adoptive filiation, a kind of **accomplish regeneration**, that is gratuitous and not natural, according to Jas 1:18: ***For of His own free will, has He begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of His creation :***

There is this difference accomp the adoptive son of God and the Natural Son, that the natural Son is generated, not ‘made’: whereas the adoptive son is made, according to that line in Jn 1:12: ***He gave them the power to be made the sons of God***. It is said sometimes that the adoptive son is **begotten** on account of a accomp **spiritual regeneration**, which is gratuitous and not natural: hence, it is read in Jas 1:18: ***For of His own free will, has He begotten us by the word of truth ...***

As is noted in ***I Sent.***<sup>146</sup> it is in connection with the Baptism of Christ that St. Thomas mentions that this **spiritual regeneration** is realized:

**Reply OBJ 3:** It was becoming that Christ’s Godhead should not be proclaimed to all in His nativity, but rather that It should be hidden while He was subject to the

<sup>145</sup> I, q. 41, a. 3 c.

<sup>146</sup> d. 16, q. 1, qu 3.



defects of infancy. But when He attained to the perfect age, when the time came for Him to teach, to work miracles, and to draw men to Himself then did it behoove His Godhead to be attested from on high by the Father's testimony, so that His teaching might become the more credible.

Hence He says (John 5:37): "The Father Himself who sent Me, hath given testimony of Me." And specially at the time of baptism, by which men are born again into adopted sons of God; since God's sons by adoption are made to be like unto His natural Son, according to Romans 8:29: "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."

Hence Hilary says (Super Matthaeum 2) that when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Ghost descended on Him, and the Father's voice was heard saying: "This is My Beloved Son, that we might know, from what was accomplished in Christ, that after being washed in the waters of baptism the Holy Ghost comes down upon us from on high, and that the Father's voice declares us to have become the adopted sons of God." <sup>147</sup>

Baptism communicates to us the grace of adoption through Baptism:

I answer that, The adoption of the sons of God is through **a certain conformity of image to the natural Son of God**. Now this takes place in two ways: first, **by the grace of the wayfarer**, which is imperfect conformity; **secondly, by glory, which is perfect conformity**, according to 1 John 3:2: "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be: we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is."

Since, therefore, **it is in baptism that we acquire grace**, while the clarity of the glory to come was foreshadowed in the **transfiguration**, therefore both in His baptism and in His transfiguration **the natural sonship of Christ was fittingly made known by the testimony of the Father**: because He alone with the Son and Holy Ghost is perfectly conscious of that perfect generation. <sup>148</sup>

†††

### Summary

[1] The comparison of the *Summa* of St. Thomas and his previous works, especially his work on the 4 Books of the *Sentences*, offers some real rewards. In his work of maturity, the text found in III, q. 23, gives us a teaching that is far from accomplished elaborated, and is one that is rich and suggestive. Divine Filiation by

<sup>147</sup> III, q. 39, a. 8, as 3 um.

<sup>148</sup> III, a. 45, a. 4 c.

Adoption is not accomp here in itself, but with regard to the early Church heresy known as **Adoptianism**. The Saint's work in this regard leads the inquisitive student to seek other aspects of the theme. Furthermore, a number of insights just presented as though in passing, do not assume their sublime meaning until compared with other texts. Even though some of these prove to be brief, they confirm, clarify and prolong his views. Deeper insights come to the fore so that while their over all particulars are both dense and sublime, resulting in a deeper appreciation of the Saint's theological fresco. This is far more than a specific treatise – while it remains under some aspects rather incomplete, it is also indispensable – over-lapping reflections on the **Trinity**, the **Incarnation**, **Redemption**, **Grace** and the **Sacraments**.

[2] The question arises among careful Thomistic scholars: are we able to note an evolution, any doctrinal variations, regarding the theme of our divine filiation, since the Angelic Doctor's composition of his Four Books of **Sentences** up to the writing of the **Summa**? In order to respond to this, it would be necessary to take a look at the Saint's very rich biblical commentaries. If one were to limit the study just between what is found in **III Sent.** D. 10 – and the **Summa**, III, q. 23 – i.e. these two parallel texts where our present theme is found the most directly pursued, the differences between the two are not that impressive.

They are, in fact, non-existent: furthermore, the concept of the 'right of the heavenly inheritance', becomes, it seems, less juridical, more bound to Grace and to Merit, and marked as a result with the definition of the Divine Filiation by Adoption – as a **shared likeness of the Divine Filiation by nature** which emerges, is developed and amplified, and clarified. It seems clear then, that between these two key texts – one early, and the latter from the **Summa** – the composition of his mature age – there are not found any contradictions or retractions. It is necessary above all to consider that these texts are far from exhausting the complexity of the indications of the works of which they are but extracts. The full teaching from the **Summa**, therefore offers a comparison between the two texts. There is no doubt that the text from the **Summa** does not come across as the most complete imaginable, nor the most precise or the most spiritually rich of all the theological works of the saint.

[3] Let us zero in somewhat on the points for our enrichment:

[a] First of all, as for the relationship between Adoptive Filiation and the Heavenly Inheritance, the juridical perspective of the 'right of Inheritance' recedes in favor of **the capacity to receive it**. This acquisition is related to the bond uniting **Grace to Glory**, and **merit to eternal life**. According to this perspective and the context of the Thomistic doctrine of grace, any hint of Pelagianism is fully rejected

as there is no pre-required aptitude for this. It is God Himself who gives both the Inheritance as well as the capacity to await it – and, at the same time, **the realism and the certitude of the hope** of this inheritance can be boldly affirmed in the measure that they exalt not so much any human pretention, but much more, the very Gift of God.

[b] The **appropriation** to the different Divine Persons of adoption, common to the entire trinity, presents itself under a different perspective from that noted in the Books on the **Sentences**. The difficulty which gave rise to the suggestion of an intrinsic formal causality exercised by the Holy Spirit, disappears here.

[c] Although each one of the Divine Persons could have become incarnate, the fact that it was only the Son Who actually did realize this, links to the resultant consequence that **our divine accomplish by adoption is indeed a likeness, a similitude with His Divine Filiation by nature**. This similitude is even presented as a ‘reason of convenience’ for the Incarnation of the Second Divine Person preferentially over the other two. It is therefore evident that *de facto* our divine filiation is a tributary from the Incarnation of the Word – and it might even be said that its very nature is deeply affected by the natural Filiation. It is most clear that St. Thomas exercises great care in bringing out the opposition between the **Grace of Union** and the **Grace of Adoption**. He affirms in particular, that or adoption is common to the entire Trinity, not only from the perspective of the **principle**, but also from that of the **terminus** of the union to which it is ordained, i.e., not only with regard to efficient causality, but also in so far as **the final causality** is concerned.

[d] It is also to the immense credit of the **Summa** to discern the development of our divine Filiation as deriving from the Person of the Holy Spirit - by **grace**, by **charity** and by the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**. The spiritual perspectives thus opened do not fail to prove to be most accomplish, notably the role recognized of the Gift of Wisdom, in order to assimilate us to uncreated **Wisdom**.

[4] The effort to characterize the manner of our assimilation into the Divine Son, in so far as He proceeds from the Father as the Eternal Word, leads further to represent our divine filiation by adoption according to a certain gradation. The order of this rests on the support of a human being **in the state of grace** in the hierarchy of creation. The fact that St. Thomas expresses himself in the terms of a vestige and image of God, of filiation or **assimilation**, there appears in the end four degrees, four states, each one presupposing the preceding state: the **creature**, the **rational creature**, the rational creature in the state of **grace** i.e., the state of **inchoative** glory - and finally, the rational creature in the state of **consummate**

**glory.** There comes the crown of this exemplary towards which this entire progression is directed, i.e., the Only-Begotten Son of God, the Eternal Word. Furthermore, as long as there is to be considered the manner according which this **assimilation** to the Son in the concrete Christian existence, St. Thomas does not omit noting the implication of the **Incarnation** of the Word, within the plan of **moral exemplarity**, according to Rm 8:17: *...if we are the sons of God, we are heirs, too, heirs of God, and co-heirs of Christ* - on the condition always that we **suffer with Christ in order to be glorified with Him.**

[a] One might further remark how our accompli filiation establishes intimate bonds with our predestination, which is the term of this entire process, according to Ep 1: 5: *He has predestined us to become adoptive children* - and Rm 8:29: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the First-born among many brothers and sisters.*

[b] The **Summa** repeats the statement that Jesus Christ in no way is the adoptive Son of God, from the fact that filiation directly regards not so much nature, but **person**. The unicity of the Person in Jesus Christ excludes as a result the existence of any other divine filiation than that by which **He is eternally the Only-Begotten Son of God.** St. Thomas does even more here than to show that Filiation by nature excludes filiation by adoption in one and the same *supposit*. In justifying that the presence of habitual grace in the soul of Christ does not confer on Him the Divine Filiation by adoption, St. Thomas adds a clarification with regards to his earlier works, i.e., the comparison between Christ and us, with regard to the relationship between **Habitual Grace** and **Filiation**: our divine filiation by adoption is in effect, habitual grace, since the Habitual Grace of Jesus is in effect His **Divine Filiation by nature.** This antithesis is reinforced by a certain symmetry, or, more precisely, by an analogy: we are sons of God by **grace**, but of adoption] – **Jesus Christ is also the Son of God by Grace, but of Union.**

[c] The bond of exemplarity and analogy between the Divine Filiation of Jesus Christ and ours is expressed frequently by the affirmation that the divine filiation by adoption is a **shared similitude of the Divine filiation by nature.** St. Thomas orients himself the comprehension of that which recovers this **supernatural shared similitude** when he compares it to the natural similitude of the divine goodness communicated to every creature<sup>149</sup>, or further to the similitude of the temporal realities with regard to those that are eternal.<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> III, q. 23, a. 1 ad 2 um.

<sup>150</sup> III, a. 23, a. 2 ad 3 um.

[d] The shared likeness also indicates a **derivation** of the **authentic and perfect similitude of the Only Begotten Son** in a multitude of brothers and sisters, under the form of adoptive and imperfect filiation. The entire comparison between the divine filiation of Jesus Christ and ours might therefore be resumed in the consideration of the Son of God, conjointly the ***Unigenitus*** and the ***Primogenitus***. Furthermore St. Thomas shows that the foundation of the similitude between these Filiations resides in another likeness, that between natures. This provides the occasion of emphasizing that if the Only Begotten Son is authentically and eternally engendered of God, it is given to us as for us the **power of becoming the sons of God** [cf. Jn 1:12], by a **spiritual baptismal regeneration**: in receiving in **Grace**, a **shared likeness** of the divine nature we have become as though **generated into the life of God** and established in a relationship of filiation in His regard.

[e] Whenever he treats of the Only Begotten Son of God, Aquinas is content in showing how His Filiation is beyond all comparison with regards to ours – and so is simply a **participation** [cf. 1 P 1:4], a **derivation**, an **effect**, an imperfect likeness of that of the Only Begotten Son. This apparent oscillation is unavoidable since it is intrinsic to the analogy. The contemplation of the Mystery of our Divine Filiation is revealed therefore formidable by reason of the permanent temptation of reducing analogy to univocity. This draws not even the least interest in St. Thomas' view other than showing the consequences of any like reduction: in the matter of Divine Filiation, univocity leads directly to **Adoptianism**. The study of our Divine Filiation does not therefore constitute a free spiritual question, nor an optional subject for reflection, and does not permit any **divine reading – sacra lectura** that one could at one's leisure and without any risk, return there time and time again for the refreshment of heart and soul. This risk is a serious one, for this theme implies, bears with it our entire relationship to Jesus Christ, the contemplation of the Mystery of the Eternal, Incarnate Word. This is why St. Thomas leads us, and this is not principally, nor solely *a fortiori*, to amaze us with the Gift that God offers to us. He challenges us to ponder this **similitude**, to raise our reflection to the exemplarity, even to the very Person of the genuine Son of God, eternally generated by the Heavenly Father.



## C. The *COMPENDIUM THEOLOGIAE*

### 1. Adoptive Filiation and Deification

The *Compendium Theologiae* contains only a few passages relative to the theme of our Divine Filiation, but their content cannot be neglected. The final chapters of Book I point out a number of Christological errors. For Photin, Jesus Christ would not be God by nature, but only by adoption:<sup>151</sup>

Photin taught that our Lord Jesus Christ had been simple a man, that He had not existed before the Virgin Mary, but that He had merited deification because of the merits and the excellence of His life, and the sufferings of His Passion and His death, so that He was 'called' God, not by nature, but by the grace of Adoption. Therefore, there had not been the union of the divinity with the man, but the man would have been deified by grace: and this is not proper to Jesus Christ, but is common to Him with the saints, even though in this grace certain ones excel very much over others. Now, this error is contrary to Holy Scripture. It is said in Jn 1:1: ***In the beginning was the Word*** - and then it follows: ***and the Word was made flesh...*** So it is that He is the Word, Who was already at the beginning with the Father, Who had assumed human flesh, and not some inexistent man before and was one who had become deified by the grace of adoption...

This text, in rejecting the attribution to Christ of adoptive filiation, offers us a description of it. One can summarize this as a 'deification of the just', of the holy person, 'by the grace of adoption'. A little reflection leads to conclude that since certain ones possess the grace of a matter that is more excellent than others, there results from this that the intensity of the divine filiation by the grace of adoption is proportional to the subjective rooting of grace in the human being.

### 2. Adoptive Filiation and Trinitarian Indwelling

Prior to refuting this position basing his argument on Scripture, St. Thomas offers a kind of summary of the teaching of Nestorius:<sup>152</sup>

Nestorius, wishing to distance himself from this consequence, rejected in part the error of Photius, by affirming that the Christ is the Son of God, not only by the Grace of Adoption, but also by the Divine Nature in which He is co-eternal with the Father; however, he did agree in part with Photius, in saying that the Son of God is not united to a man, in such a manner that there would be in Him but a single Person, but only an Indwelling in this man, Jesus: therefore, this man, who according to Photius, is 'called' God but only by grace – according to Nestorius he is

<sup>151</sup> CT, I, c. 202.

<sup>152</sup> CT, I, c. 203.

‘called’ the son of God. Not because He is truly God, but, by reason of the Son of God in Him, and that this is by pure grace...

Among the arguments that St. Thomas opposes to Nestorianism there might be pointed out the affirmation according to which the Divine Indwelling by Grace is necessarily Trinitarian, common to the different Divine Persons, and it would not therefore be attributed properly to the Second Divine Person:<sup>153</sup>

This union in effect of God with man, the Apostle calls *self-emptying*, in saying with regard to the Son of God: ***Having the condition of God, He did not cling jealously to the rank that equaled God, but that He emptied [kenosis] Himself taking on the condition of a slave*** [cf. Ph 2:6]. Now, this is not an *emptying* for God to indwell by grace a rational creature; unless the Father and the Holy Spirit also empty Themselves, in that they, too, indwell the rational creature by grace... the Lord indeed says of Himself and of the Father: ***we will come to him and make Our abode with him...*** [Jn 14: 23] – and the Apostle states with regard to the Holy Spirit: ***The Spirit of God dwells in us*** [1 Co 3: 16].

Once again, with regard to that which is denied in Christ, further information comes to the fore on the contrary concerning us directly: our Divine Filiation by the grace of adoption does not repose on Indwelling, in us, of the Son alone, but of all Three Divine Persons. In the eyes of St. Thomas, Photius and Nestorius both misunderstand the contradiction that exists between the fact of **being God by nature**, and that of **becoming a deified being by adoption**!

That which has become God, is not God naturally, but by adoption...<sup>154</sup>

### 3. Adoptive Filiation and the Hope of Eternal Inheritance

The Second Book of the *Compendium Theologiae*, which was still incomplete when the saint undertook a Commentary on the **Lord’s Prayer**, shows how our adoptive filiation motivates our hope for an eternal accomplishe: by the reception of Grace, one is rendered a participant in the divine nature [cf. 1 P 2:4] and as such, as **re-generated, engendered anew**, as a son of God:<sup>155</sup>

It is therefore for man, that over his nature, there is granted the perfection of grace by which one becomes **a participant in the divine nature**, [2 P 1:4]. From this and for this reason, it can be said that we are **re-generated** sons of God, according to Jn 1:12: ***He gave them the power of become the sons of God***. Now those who become sons can reasonably hope for the inheritance of their father,

<sup>153</sup> CT, I, c. 203.

<sup>154</sup> CT I, c. 210

<sup>155</sup> CT, II, c. 4.

according to Rm 8:17: ***If we are sons, we are heirs.*** Consequently, by virtue of this **spiritual regeneration**, it pertains to man to have a higher hope of God, i.e., to obtain a heavenly inheritance, as noted in 1 P 1:3-4: ***according to His great mercy, He had regenerated us unto a lively hope... unto an inheritance incorruptible...*** And since, by the Spirit of adoption which we receive, we can cry out: ***Abba, Father*** according to Rm 8:15. The Lord, in order to show us that He has had to radicate our prayer in this hope, has begun His prayer by the invocation of the Father, by saying: Our **Father**.

#### 4. Adoptive Filiation and Imitation of the Father

If the adoptive son can hope to inherit from the heavenly Father, this is based on **praying** and on **imitating** his Father: <sup>156</sup>

In saying **Father**, the heart of man is disposed to a pure prayer and to obtain that for which one hopes. Children should also **imitate** their parents: this is why the one who recognizes God as his Father, ought to strive to imitate Him, by avoiding that which destroys, and in seeking out that which increases our resemblance with God. Hence, it is said in Jr 3:19: ***you shall call Me Father, and shall not cease to walk after Me...***

#### 5. Adoptive Filiation by Derivation of the Grace of Son

The doctrine of the **Capital Grace** of Christ permits the Saint to show how the infusion in us of Grace, which constitutes us as ‘sons’, depends *de facto* on the **Son’s visible mission** and therefore, on the **hypostatic union**. The derivation in us of the grace of Son thus takes account of the fact that it is the Only-begotten Son of God Who enables us to participate in His Divine Filiation. St. Thomas begins by showing that our manner of union with God differs from that of Jesus Christ: <sup>157</sup>

The union of man with God is achieved in two ways: the first, by affection, and this union is produced by **charity**, which unites in some way by affection, the man with God, according to 1 Co 6:17: ... ***But he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit with Him.*** By means of this union, God indwells also in a person, according to Jn 14:23: ***If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him...***

There is another union of man with God which is achieved not only by affection, or indwelling, but by the unity of the *hypostasis*, or the Person, so that this *hypostasis* or Person is both God and man. This union with God is proper to Jesus Christ.

<sup>156</sup> CT II, c. 4.

<sup>157</sup> CT, I, c. 214.



After having thus distinguished the **affective union** with God through **habitual grace**, common to all the saints - and the **hypostatic union**, proper to Christ, St. Thomas compares these and shows that the plenitude of habitual grace in the soul of Christ results from the hypostatic union: <sup>158</sup>

The more a creature approaches God, the more does it participate in His goodness and receives from His influence His abundant gifts: similarly, those who approach more closely to the fire, participate all the more from its heat. Now, there is not, nor can any be imagined, for a creature to uncover any other means of adherence that is more intimate to God than that of being **united in the unity of person**. It is therefore necessary as a consequence of this union of human nature with God in the unity of Person, that the soul of Christ had been filled more than all the others, with those habitual gifts of grace. And thus, habitual grace in Christ is not a disposition to union, but rather an effect of union. That which appears in an evident fashion after the manner of the Evangelist's expression in the cited passages, when he notes: ***We have seen Him, as the only-begotten Son of the father, full of grace and of truth.*** Now the only Son of God is the man Christ, in so far as the Word has become flesh. Therefore, for this very fact that the Word has become flesh, there results from this that the Christ is full of grace and truth...

It being admitted that the plenitude of habitual grace in the soul of Christ results from the hypostatic union, the final step of reasoning consists in showing that this plenitude of Grace is poured into other men: <sup>159</sup>

In those realities which are full of goodness, or of some perfection or other, one notes that that which gives to others from its superabundance, is all the more provided with them – as a luminous body which illumines others possesses more light. Therefore, as Christ the man has obtained, in His quality of being the Only-Begotten Son of God, **a sovereign plenitude of grace**, it has to be as a consequence, that this grace abounds in Him and proceeds from Him into others, in such a way that the Son of God made man, in His turn, sees to it that the men become gods and the sons of God, according to these words of the Apostle, Ga 4:4: ***God sent His Son, made of a woman ... that we might receive the adoption of sons.*** Now from the fact that grace and truth derive from Christ into other men, it is fitting that He is the head of the Church; since it is from the head that sensation and movement are communicated to the other members who are conform to Him in nature. It is thus that grace and truth derive from Christ to other men, as is noted in Ep 1:22: ***... He has made Him Head over all the Church, which is His Body.***

---

<sup>158</sup> CT I, c. 214.

<sup>159</sup> CT I, c. 2224.

## 6. Adoptive Filiation and the Privilege of the Only Son

While expressing in a manner that could not be accomplished more clearly than it is through the Son of God by nature that we become His adoptive children. Aquinas brings out clearly that the power which has been given to us to say to God: ***Our Father***, does not remove anything of the unique privilege of Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God by nature: <sup>160</sup>

It is indeed by Him Who is the Only-Begotten Son of God by nature that we become the adoptive sons, according to Gn 4:4: ***God sent His Son, born of a woman ... that we might receive the adoption of sons***. We therefore ought to invoke God as ‘our Father’ in a manner that does not bring any attempt on His privilege as the Only-begotten Son. This is what St. Augustine states about the matter: ‘You are not claiming anything special here. It is of Christ alone of Whom God is specially Father, while He is for us all nothing other than common Father, because He has only generated Christ alone, and we, He has created all of us: thus, it can be said: Our Father!’

## 7. The Holy Spirit and the Assimilation as Sons

A text from *De Potentia*<sup>161</sup>, destined to establish that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son, lays special value on the role of the Third Divine person in our **configuration** to Christ, and is presented as the **Character of the Son**, proceeding from Him and **assimilating** us there:

One knows from Holy Scripture that by the Holy Spirit we have been **configured** to the Son, according to Rm 8:15: ***You have received the spirit of adoption as sons*** - and Ga 4:6: ***... And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.*** Nothing is **configured** to another unless this is through the character proper to this other. Even in created natures it goes this way, too: that which conforms something to something else, comes from this latter. As the seed of man is not assimilated to a horse, but to the man from which it emanates. Now, the Holy Spirit is of the Son as His **proper character**. From this it is said of Christ in 2 Co 1:21-22: ***...Now He that confirms us with you in Christ and has anointed us, is God: who has also sealed us and given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.***

+

---

<sup>160</sup> CT II, c. 5.

<sup>161</sup> De Pot., q. 10, a. 4 c.

### Conclusion

[1] It is worthwhile to point out that in these texts from the *Compendium Theologiae*, from composed during the final period of St. Thomas' life, the Angelic Doctor recognized positively that which previously, he only vaguely alluded to, namely, our spiritual regeneration.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, there may be noted the statement that the **habitual grace** in Christ is an effect of His hypostatic union. The clarification he brought forward is indeed precious, in noting that the fullness of the Habitual Grace of Christ flows from Him into us: thus, **the Son of God became flesh so that human beings could become the children of God**.

[2] In integrating thus the data from his preceding works, especially those from the *Summa*, one can with accomp contemplate how the communication to the faithful of the divine filiation is integrated into the Divine Plan which flows out of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word: the Son of God, eternally generated by the father is incarnate in Jesus Christ. By reason of His hypostatic union, Jesus is the True and Only Son of God. The fullness of Habitual Grace in His soul, postulated by the perfection of His human nature, results from His Grace of Union.

[3] This **participation** in his **Habitual Grace** derives in us and blossoms into the communication of **a shared similitude of His Divine Nature** [cf. 1 P 2:4]. This Grace, derived from Jesus Christ, is a work *ad extra* of the entire trinity, Who adopts us as sons of God by a **spiritual regeneration** in which we receive a **participation** into the **life** of the One God in three Divine Person.

[4] Thus, **grace, charity, the Holy Spirit** and **His Gifts assimilate** us to the Only Begotten Son of God, so that our Adoptive Filiation is a **shared similitude** of His Divine Filiation by nature. These **unite** us to the Divine Persons who indwell in the souls of the saints. Having become sons of God by adoption, we are therefore constituted **heirs of God and coheirs of Christ**, and we enter into the joy of the eternal inheritance.




---

<sup>162</sup> CT II, C. 4.

### III. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

#### A. Spiritual Re-Generation

*Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in His great mercy has given us a new birth as His sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope, and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoiled, or soiled, or fade away, because it is being kept for you in the heavens. Through your faith, God's power will guard you until the salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the end of time...* [cf. 1 P 1:3-5].

#### Introduction

[1] In simple terms, **Filiation** is a relationship binding its subject, the person of a son to another person, his father. This is the dependence with regard to the point of origin which is expressed: the 'father' is not the term of the relationship of just any kind whatsoever, but formally in so far as he is the principle of the person of the son. From the beginning of his existence, the son depends causally and historically on his parents, in the sense that **filiation** is concomitant with this coming to life: from the fact that one human being exists, he is the 'son', and he becomes such only from that instant that he begins to be. This inter-personal relationship finds therefore its foundation in that which provokes the debut and the existence of the son, i.e., in the extended generation in the passive sense, in that fact that he has been generated.

[2] The existence and the reality of our **Divine Filiation**, which pertains to the revealed data, postulate therefore a **generation** which would be its foundation. Since God adopts us in such a manner that we are indeed His children, this means therefore that He brings us to birth, **it is He Who generates us to His own life**. The son, in effect, does not live of himself in a different species from that of his parents: in the natural domain, generation assures precisely the conservation and the increase of the species. It is fitting to note in this regard that the concept of generation adds three distinctive notes of birth, the fact that the one engendered proceeds from his principle by way of a specific resemblance. Birth, or nativity presents the three following distinctive notes:

- the living possess a generative power;
- this birth occurs *in the manner of an exitus from the one generating*;
- the engendered one adheres to his principle

The definition is, therefore: *the origin of a living being from a living principle conjoined in the similitude of the nature of each species.*

[3] There is to be noticed here the notion of **resemblance, similitude** enters into the definition of generation, and as a consequence in that of **Filiation** no less than that of **Image**. One understands well, then, from this that the description of the spiritual life presents the Christian both as **son** as well as the **image** of God. **Filiation**, however, presents the particularity of implying in its definition more exactly in that of its foundation which is **generation**, the fact that the father and the son are living beings. In other terms, filiation includes in its concept a **certain dynamism**, that of life itself. Furthermore, for St. Thomas at least, filiation is directly **personalist** in its subject: not only does it reach its term in the person of the father, but it is also **directly rooted** in the person of the son. **Directly** here means that filiation does not occur either to a nature, nor to a person through the intermediary of nature.

[4] It lends itself in a particular favorable manner to the personalist developments in terms of the freedom of the sons of God, with filial affection and gratitude, etc. One difficulty arises however, regarding its legitimacy in applying to our **adoption** the strict concept of filiation. **Adoption** in fact far from demanding a generation, seems rather to exclude it: it comes to remedy a situation of sterility, the impossibility of a natural generation. If our Divine Filiation is adoptive, ought there then from then on be postulated a **spiritual generation** to serve as its foundation? To respond to this in an adequate manner, it is necessary to revert to revealed data. The statements of Scripture do not require in any way to hold back on spiritual regeneration. They affirm it clearly without any ambiguity.

†

**1. An Authentic Generation:** Our divine filiation presupposes an authentic generation in the very measure that this corresponds to a **truly divine life**. This is precisely the case: a spiritual and divine being is **communicated** to the just, i.e., **the most sublime participated similitude of God**, not only as regards **being**, but also in so far as it is **living, intellectual**, but according to a **participation in the deity itself**.

a.] If it is indeed true that grace does not suppress nature, but perfects it, the fact remains that **divinization** is not communicated solely as built upon humanity, but the super-natural to which it opens us is **properly divine**, even though **only by participation**. It is very important that the **divine similitude** is shared in here **in the very order of the divine**, as such. In generation, the son, as has been said, proceeds from his parents by way of a **specific resemblance**.

b.] This cannot be the case in the strict sense here since God **transcends** all *genus*, and with all the more reason, every *species*. It follows from our observation that the foundation of divine filiation by adoption, as real as it is, can only be an **analogue** to a generation. This occurrence remains valid in the fact that

the **similitude** of the son is to the utmost in so far as the manner according to which it is **participated**.

c.] The analogy between **spiritual generation** implies other differences. Our divine filiation occurs indeed to a subject which already subsists in human nature transmitted by means of a **natural generation**. Generation then into the supernatural life thus presupposes a generation in the natural life. This is why Scripture seems to prefer to express it this way: that we are all **made** the sons of God, or **adopted** as such.

d.] Here there is found expressed a difference between this Filiation and that by which we are born from our human parents. To mark the pre-existence by creation of its subject, one would be able to speak in this context of a **re-generation**. This appears analogous to **generation** under a two-fold aspect:

- first of all, one might consider the concept of **re-generation** in itself and to verify in what manner there might be applied to it the definition of a natural generation. In this regard, **spiritual re-generation** appears analogous to natural generation;

- then, if one envisages that life, to which it opens up and to that accomplish on which it is founded, **spiritual re-generation** manifests itself as **analogous to divine generation**.

- The first analogy clarifies, even though quite modestly, the comprehension that we might have of our **divinization** in its relationship with our divine filiation: since we receive from God **a new being, a new life**, which are **divine by participation [grace]**. We are therefore **engendered by God**, and thus constituted His sons.

- The second analogy opens up **Christological perspectives** of great importance: He is the **Principal Analogate**, the One in Whom alone are there verified perfectly the notions of generation and divine filiation. This, of course, is the Eternal Word of God, incarnate in time.

e.] Since we participate in this second Divine Person we become in our turn, **sons of God by adoption**. It is certainly not at all possible to see here below the Divine Word proceeding eternally from His Father, but He is rendered visible by His Incarnation. This provides us with the possibility of **contemplating in His earthly existence the accomplished Model** our own adoptive filiation. The study of this second analogy orientates us toward a **morality, spirituality of the Imitation of Jesus Christ, in so far as He is the Son of God**.

## 2. The Manner of this Spiritual Re-Generation:

a.] The most precise description of this may be condensed: we are re-generated as the **adoptive sons** of God by baptismal grace.<sup>163</sup> There are two Greek Patristic sources [St. John Damascene and Pseudo-Dennis] which St. Thomas condenses to express many times, distinguishing from the ritual administered by St. John the Baptist, that **Baptism of the New Covenant**.<sup>164</sup> This truly enjoys the rank of **spiritual re-generation**, to the point that it might be identified with this<sup>165</sup>. This may be stated even though strictly speaking these may be distinguished as an effect is from its cause:

[1] **St. John Damascene**: considers this Sacrament as that through which we receive the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit and the principle of another life – a new life, the principle of the spiritual life. This is understood clearly as distinct from natural life, but also as bound to the accomplishes of the Holy Spirit. This is the life of our own spirit under the motion of the divine Spirit. This coincides with the **Dei-form ability to act in one's human nature** i.e., with the capacity for human nature to pose certain acts pertaining to divine nature. Since acting follows being, it is necessary to go back to the consideration *de facto* of a Dei-form activity presupposing a *de iure* **Deification** regarding human nature.

In designating thus Baptism as the principle of the spiritual life, St. John Damascene is inexorably led to characterize it as a **re-generation**: it is called **re-generation** since it is homogenous to **another life**, to acts of **another nature**, a **new nature**, and **generation**, for this is movement toward being. And this *being* is nothing other than **the divine nature participated in by the adoptive son of God**. In his definition, St. John Damascene associates to this **re-generation** three titles: **seal – guard – illumination**.

St. Thomas justifies this enumeration by the relationship to the form communicated in the generation. In fact, this is realized in the bosom of a species, endowed with a form transmitted by the parents to their child. The **seal** brings forward the impression of a form such as the **imprint** is similar to the **exemplar**, as a **conform copy**. The association of the **seal** to the re-generation emphasizes then the bond of similitude of the one engendered to the one engendering the son.

Furthermore a like conformity remains stable and permanent, just as the filiation which provides its foundation. It is necessary then that **the form of the spiritual being** which is communicated in Baptism must be **conserved**. This is what

<sup>163</sup> I-II, q. 110, a. 4, sc.

<sup>164</sup> I Sent., d. 16, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1m.

<sup>165</sup> IV Sent., d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 4, obj.2

is expressed by the third title, **custodian, guardian**. And lastly, since this sacrament is the principle of the spiritual life, the above-mentioned **form** cannot be restrained from being this, but it ought to be deployed in acting this out. Since the principle of spiritual action, Baptism is manifested then as **illumination**.

The support of a quote from St. John Damascene parallels then the identification of **Baptism** with **spiritual regeneration**. One finds there associated other not less scriptural characterizations of this **Sacrament of our re-birth**. St. Thomas arrives at the point, and not without merit, to project in all this a certain accomp, associated around the concept of **form**. He thus poses a foundation for a formulation of the spiritual life in terms of **con-formity, con-figuration, assimilation**.

[2] **Pseudo-Dennis** in his *ecclesiastical Hierarchy* [c. 2], designates Baptism as: **the spiritual re-generation by which we receive a spiritual being**. Just as St. John Damascene observes that one cannot posit actions corresponding to a given species unless one has received this by generation in his very being. The old principle: *accom sequitur esse*, which is still on the natural level, in the bosom of the same species, is then found transposed to the supernatural level. This **retrogradation** in the spiritual life all the way to its principle, connects **divine accomplish by adoption**, by way of **baptismal regeneration**, to **Divinization**. The implications of such a doctrine in the matter of the theology of the sacraments are not minimal: the Baptismal Character is manifested as a *accomplis sine qua non* of the spiritual operations relating to the other sacraments. The re-generation appears here as the *terminus a quo* of the deployment of the spiritual life. This is **a birth, ready for another growth, development**.

b.] This double Patristic source converges with biblical terminology, **assimilating** Baptism to a **re-generation** in the water and in the Holy Spirit. In Tt 3:5 this sacrament is designated as the **Bath of Re-generation** and of **renovation** in the Holy Spirit. Jn 3:7 shows Jesus exhorting Nicodemus about being **re-born** of water and the Spirit. . St. Thomas explains why the **spiritual generation** is realized by water and by the Spirit. He does not justify this by the ritual of Baptism, but proceeds to the opposite: it is the manner of this Sacrament which is clarified. The water, first of all, is fitting for the sacrament of re-generation, i.e., Baptism, for this is the original milieu of life and it presents a particular aptitude to signify the principle of the spiritual life.

Citing Aristotle, Aquinas notes that in the genesis of the world, the first living beings came forth from the midst of the sea. The Angelic Doctor produces another proof, hauntingly close to those works raised by contemporary experimental psychology. Some hold in these fields that water holds in the metaphor of **spiritual**



**re-generation** the role of liquid in the maternal womb. This comparison has found support among the experts in the field, particularly when one observes that it bears precisely on the generation and birth in the supernatural life: there is needed water as the milieu of all giving birth to a child.

Lastly, the fittingness of water for our baptism still holds for certain conditions of the realization intended by Jesus Christ, in the Jordan. Nor is there lacking an instance of singular exemplarity: the disciples of St. John the Baptist were likewise baptized in this manner. In truth, it pertained to Christ to communicate this element, water, in contact with His sacred humanity, bestowing upon it the faculty of spiritually re-generating, and by this path of efficient causality as God, and of meritorious causality as a man. The Baptism of Jesus Christ is therefore a **spiritual regeneration** in a totally different way, and to put it better, in our way: the Son of God by nature, would not have known any other way of being regenerated, but He radically re-generates us in giving to the future matter of this sacrament the aptitude of generating us as sons of God.

The spiritual re-generation by water is realized by the Holy Spirit, explains St. Thomas in so far as it is a gratuitous effect of the benevolent will of God. Notwithstanding the role of Christ in our spiritual re-generation, this is attributed to the Holy Spirit rather than to the Divine Son, in order to signify that it is effectuated not by nature, and of necessity, but by the will, and with gratuity. The student may note here the difference between divine filiation by nature and **divine filiation by adoption**, and that this latter is appropriated to the Third Divine Person in so far as it is **a work of gratuitous love.**

### 3. Personal Purification of All Sin

a.] By Baptismal re-generation, we are personally purified of all sin, both actual as well as that which is accompli. Indeed, St. Thomas recalls, the communication of one form demands the exclusion of every contrary form, and even, save any deficiency that might be still in one who receives it, a freedom from every disposition for a contrary form. All generation implies the transmission of form and species. This has to hold true as well for spiritual re-generation, in virtue of the analogy between the natural order and the accomplishes order. Consequently, Baptism, **in infusing grace, excludes, rejects and destroys all sin**, the presence of which would be contrary to it. This Sacrament **restores** to us accomp that which the sin of Adam had stolen. If it indeed it does leave behind certain consequences of the sin of our first parents, such as death, it nonetheless **re-generates us in the hope of life**, where these will ultimately disappear. From being children of wrath He makes us become **sons of grace**. No less that the Divine

Filiation which serves as its foundation, the spiritual re-generation might therefore be said to be **by grace**.

b.] This expression can moreover be extended according to a plurality of meanings, which St. Thomas knew and had mastered. First of all in the sense of **gratuitous divine benevolence and initiative**, without any previous merit on our part. This view is therefore anti-Pelagian. **By grace**, then, we are spiritually generated, i.e., out of **pure mercy**, independently of every right or pretention. The gratuity of love which presides over this gift is always found moreover connoted by the term **adoption** which designates our divine filiation which is founded there.

c.] In a second sense the expression **by grace** expresses the distinction with the generation of the Word considered natural and necessary. God adopts us according to the free design of His love and gives us the capacity of becoming really sons of God, but according to a filiation struck with contingency, different from that of the Word. In this second sense, **by grace** is opposed to the words, **by nature**. This is the technical term [*kata charin*] noted in the Christological definitions of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The perspective in this is Anti-Adoptionist. Under this relationship a very clear difference is placed between the Word, the Only Begotten before all the centuries, and all of us – **re-generated** spiritually on the day of our Baptism.

d.] Lastly, in a third sense, it is a matter of stating that spiritual re-generation is realized **by the gift of sanctifying grace**. The bond to the Second Divine Person is not at all lost from view, for grace itself is **Christic**, in its source: with merit it all derives from Jesus Christ in each one of His members, even to the smallest infants who are baptized. One can note here the important doctrine of **Capital Grace**.

#### 4. The Source of Spiritual Re-generation variously expressed

a.] If one seeks the principle of Spiritual Re-generation, St Thomas may seem somewhat disconcerting. In the different passages where he treats of this, without their really being discordant, they do come across with varying explanations:

- first of all, he designates as the principal cause of Baptism **the Most Blessed Trinity**, in the Name of Whom it is administered.<sup>166</sup> In Mt 18:19, Baptism is conferred in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- then, the **unity of the essence of the Divine Persons** implies their unity of operation.

<sup>166</sup> III, q. 66, a. 5 c.

- It does not stand out as much that Aquinas distinguishes each of the Three Persons in their common endeavor: the **Holy Spirit by Whom** generation occurs – the **Son is through Whom** it happens, and the **Father is for Whom**.
- the **Third Person** is as the **seal** of our **resemblance** with the Only-Begotten Son and the **spiritual re-generation** is always accompanied by the Gift of this Spirit. His presence, His Indwelling, is inseparable from **habitual grace**. This is why the Spirit can also be designated as the **principle of re-generation**.
- St. Thomas also adds **Jesus Christ** and the accomplish of his **spiritual marriage**<sup>167</sup> with the **Church**.

b.] There remained for him then to give some order to these varying factors. The **plurality of the generating principle** should not in the end be disconcerting, for it does not imply the slightest contradiction. Different persons can exercise a common causality: such is the case of the **Three Divine Persons** as to Their **principal efficient causality**. One and the same Person can exercise different kinds of causality. Thus, **the Incarnate Word** is at one and the same time the principal efficient causality in so far as the divine Person is the efficient instrumental cause in His humanity assumed by the divinity. He is furthermore, the exemplary cause of our supernatural generation and of our filiation.

c.] One may then also integrate this analysis by the mention of the meritorious and satisfactory causalities. Remaining within the plan of efficiency, it is fitting to distinguish even further the principal instrumental causality of the **sacred humanity** of Jesus Christ, and the second instrumental causality of the **Sacrament** of Re-generation, i.e., **Baptism**.

d.] One might further note that there exists a **hierarchy** of principles of this generation corresponding to the order of the **mediations** through which the divine operation reaches us: **Sacrament, Grace, the Spirit**, do not remain on the same level, even though concretely that come together in Baptism. Furthermore, this reflection on the Generating Principles relate back to the **Divine Missions**, which themselves refer deep within to the **Intra-Trinitarian Processions**:

- the **Son** is sent only by the One who generated Him;
- the **Spirit** is sent by that from which He proceeds: the Father and the Son;

---

<sup>167</sup> IV Sent., d. 38, q. 1, a. 5 c; d. 42, q. 1, a. 2 ad 1m.

- the **Father** comes to remain in the soul of the just with the Son and the Spirit, but He is not 'sent'.

e.] The **Three** cooperate in our **spiritual generation** as the adoptive sons of God. It remains that for this it is proper to maintain that He is uniquely the ***absolute Principle from Whom***. This is He Who engenders us into the Image of His Son, by the communication of their **Common Spirit**. St. Thomas has legitimately insisted on the commonality of essence and Efficiency of the Divine Persons: we are baptized in the Name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But, in the bosom of this **inseparability** there remains authorized, in so far as one might be able to penetrate somewhat into this august Mystery, to distinguish the **manner proper** to each of the Three working out Their common endeavor.

## 5. Similitude with the Divine Filiation by Nature:

a.] It is clearly by this **similitude** that we are regenerated as the **adopted sons of God**. We are sons in the **Image of Christ** – in the resemblance of the Only-Begotten Son. More needs to be said: in **being configured to the Passion of Christ, to His Death**, this constitutes a **spiritual re-generation, in Christ**. This **ecclesiological** and **sacramental** aspect also draws near to the Pauline formula, **in Christ**. This is also what is intended in the Patristic expression, **sons in the Son**.

b.] In making precise that spiritual re-generation is **in Christ**, there is able to be understood that which divine filiation by adoption owes to the **Incarnation**. This does not alter, and above all does not multiply the divine accomplish by nature. Consequently that of which divine filiation by adoption is a participated similitude, is neither more, nor less, nor anything other than **a share in the divine accomplish of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word**. Of course, and it is only right to insist on this, this divine filiation does not differ from that of the Pre-existent Word, but it is manifested in Jesus and also, by the Incarnation, it is the **archetype** of our own divine filiation that has become visible.

c.] The spiritual re-generation **in Christ** likewise goes back to the redemptive causality of the humanity of the Incarnate Word. Since this **sacred humanity** is the **conjoined instrument of the divinity** of the Word, and each one of these operations exercises its efficient causality relative to our salvation. To this instrumental causality there are joined the meritorious and satisfactory causalities of the mysteries of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. The **Passion** appears therefore as a major salvific event with regard to **satisfactory** causality. The mysteries of the life of Christ exercise finally a redemptive causality proper to each one of these in the line of **exemplarity**. The **death and resurrection of Christ** for example, exercise a common efficiency in Justification, but since the former is the exemplary cause of the death of sin, the latter is the cause of a **new life**.

d.] One can, then, in one way or another connect the spiritual re-generation to each one of the mysteries of the life of Christ. The **Incarnation** already causes this re-generation in permitting the elevation of the adoptive son of God by the proper **abasement** of the Divine Son by nature: in order to show and to tend towards heaven human nature has to be reinvigorated. For this reason, each person needs the help of the One Who has come down. The **circumcision** of Jesus represents, according to an analogical exemplary causality, a **spiritual circumcision**, i.e., the destruction of sins

e.] Jesus' **Baptism** is the **perfect model** of our own. As we will see just ahead. The **Passion** of Christ, i.e., His Death *in process* [*in accom*], in addition to the instrumental causality common with the other 'mysteries' of the earthly sojourn of Jesus Christ, opens up to salvation by **meritorious** and **satisfactory** causality. The merits and the satisfaction of Christ are applied to us once we are **sacramentally configured** to His passion: we are then **re-generated** into **members of Christ Crucified**. In dying to sin, the faithful believer participates in the death of Christ and is re-generated into Him for a **new life**. The death of Jesus, as a completed fact [*in facto esse*] which can no longer provide the setting for meritorious causality, exercises instead an exemplary causality, analogically according to which it destroys **spiritual death**, which **sin** is.

f.] In addition to the Passion, Death and Burial of Jesus Christ, His **resurrection**<sup>168</sup> especially enjoys a primordial role in that which concerns His exemplarity with regard to the **positive effects** of our Justification. If the destruction of sin had been tied in with the Passion of Jesus, the coming - through spiritual re-generation of a New Life can in an excellent manner, in an analogous way, tied in with His **Resurrection** and **Ascension**. Therefore, it is the over-all visible Mission of Jesus Christ on this earth which exercises a **multiple causality** with regard to **the re-generation of the just as a child of God**.

## 6. The Baptism of Jesus

a.] St. Thomas connects this with the Institution of our own. With the immersion of the Flesh of the One Who, without sin, has willed to bear the sins of the world, it is the old Adam within us which is plunged into the **Bath of Renewal** and **Re-generation**. The contact of His Flesh with the **water** accomplish upon it the **re-generative power** necessary for the Sacrament. The presence of the **Dove** figures the Gift of the Divine Spirit bestowed upon us.

b.] The **heavens opened** represent the new life to which the spiritual re-generation introduces us. Even though the Baptism of Jesus, as far as merit and

---

<sup>168</sup> III, q. 56, a. 2, ad 4 m.

satisfaction are concerned, receives its efficacious power only in the Passion of the Lord. This is indeed the **principal exemplary cause** of our own Baptism.

c.] It is helpful to ponder the connection that St. Thomas draws between **spiritual re-generation** and the **Paschal Mystery**, by his *excursus* on the metaphysical analysis of generation. The condition needed to be re-born into the **New Life** is to die to the old life of sin: the **generation** of the New Life cannot take hold without the **corruption** of the old life. The **Old Man** has to die in order for the **New Man** to be able to be engendered. The usage of philosophical argumentation serves the theology of Baptism as the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the analogy with natural life furnishes an argument explaining why the re-generation by this sacrament cannot be repeated: to one and the same life, one can only be born and die once!<sup>169</sup>

d.] Furthermore, considerations such as these find **Christological** support, that is sublimely biblical: Baptism cannot be repeated because it associates us to the death of Jesus Christ, Who died only once, once and for all, for all. The bond unifying our **spiritual re-generation to the Paschal Mystery** **emphasizes all that is due to the Incarnation of the Word** – since the death and the resurrection to which we are **assimilated** bring us to belong to Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of God, Who became flesh for our salvation. This manifests the primordial importance of the exemplarity of the Son of God, with regard to our own insertion into Him.

e.] The sacramentality of spiritual re-generation allows the understanding here of how the **ontological** and **ethical** aspects of **our assimilation, participation of Jesus Christ**: death to sin for **a new life is caused by being signified**. The relationship between the Paschal Mystery and our Re-generation furnishes a supplementary contribution for the explanation of the analogy between our Filiation and that of the Eternal Word. The Spiritual Re-generation, which is indeed analogous, follows this path: firstly with reference to the **eternal generation of the Word**; secondly, His **temporal generation of Mary**; and finally, thirdly it relates to His **Resurrection**. Therefore, the **New Life**, is a **New Birth, a Spiritual Resurrection**. The adoptive son of God is a **New Man**, born of the death of the old man of sin.

## 7. Our Second Birth and Christian Initiation

a.] Our Spiritual re-generation is a second birth, by the reception and the participation of the divine nature. It becomes possible to contemplate the deployment of this New Life, the point of departure in these reflections. By means of the analogy emphasized by Pseudo-Dennis, between the spiritual life and the New Life one can perceive from the outset that the **Dei-form acts** of the New Life

<sup>169</sup> IV Sent., d. 6, q. 2, a. 1, qu 1, c; IV CG 72, n. 4066; III, q. 66, a. 9 c.; q. 80, a. 10, ad 1m.

have to proceed from a habit and faculties brought into proportion to this new life, and therefore no less than Dei-form. This is quite similar to the role played by the natural powers with regard to their proper operations.

b.] It is here that theology is able to insert the doctrine of **sacramental Character**, which enables the faithful to posit actions in complete harmony with this re-generation, and to accomplish those works of an **adoptive son** of God. Following the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, St. Thomas develops the sacramental deployment of the spiritual life. The spiritual life has its root in this re-generation: Jesus Christ, uniting us, and incorporating us into Himself by Baptism<sup>170</sup> communicates to us the salvific effects of His Passion and Death.

c.] The participation in the Divine Filiation of Jesus Christ is therefore, inseparable from **union** with Christ. Adoptive accomplish is manifested as **life in Jesus Christ**. This is not to be understood, nor 'lived', in an individualistic manner, but by an **incorporation** which provides each with a **communitary, ecclesial, fraternal form**. Spiritual Re-generation leads one to be a contributing member of a family, the **Body of the Lord, the Church**.

d.] In the light of this analogy between natural life and supernatural life, it appears that spiritual re-generation should be followed by a **conservation** and **growth** to that point of spiritual maturity of the new being who has been born. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, leading to the development in strength [*ad robur, sapientiam*]. **Confirmation**<sup>171</sup> fortifies and augments this divine life inaugurated in spiritual re-generation.

e.] With the **Eucharist**, the third sacrament of Christian Initiation, the Spiritual Life finds its indispensable nourishment permitting it to be conserved and to grow. This Sacrament perfects even further the Spiritual re-generation along the lines of its **unifying nature**. For in fact, there exists a certain union between the one engendered and its generating principle: these realities **stay in contact**. The truth of the matter is that this union with the Incarnate Word of God, giving Himself to the Faithful Believer, is of a **physical type, according to substance**.<sup>172</sup> The spiritual nourishment which the Consecrated Bread and Wine are, provide **a union with Christ accomplish to a unique mode in the entire spiritual organism**. Only the Eucharist can be said to **contain substantially the Incarnate Word of God**. It is why this sacrament perfects the Adoptive Filiation, using from Spiritual Re-generation. Here St. Thomas draws very close to St. Cyril of Alexandria, even though he does not push his explanation as far, perhaps because of his preferential concentration on

<sup>170</sup> IV CG 55, # 28, n. 3959; IV CG 72, # 7, n. 4072; III, q. 73, a. 3, ad 3m.

<sup>171</sup> III, q. 65, a. 1 c; IV CG 60, n. 11.

<sup>172</sup> IV CG # 61, # 3.

the principle of our Divine Filiation rather than on the totality of its manifold manifestations.

### Summary

The importance of this doctrine of Spiritual Re-generation is such that one can, at first contact, be somewhat astonished at the precautions, the reservations, with which St. Thomas makes reference to all this in the back-drop of **Divine Filiation by adoption**. The reason, of course, for this is simple: under the perspective of the *engendered Son of God by nature*, and to clarify this teaching beyond any linguistic doubt, Jesus **IS** the Only Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God – we **become** the adopted sons of God. The Angelic Doctor chose to avoid any and all risk of univocity and **Adoptianism**. Once this is clarified, there is no hesitation in accentuating the analogy between our **Spiritual Re-generation by adoption** and **Jesus' unique eternal generation**.





## B. Deeper Theological Insight

### The Divine Filiation by Adoption according to St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>173</sup>

#### Presentation

[1] Certain authors have noted an imperceptible evolution in the manner in which St. Thomas treats the question of **filial adoption**. The right to **inheritance** recedes progressively to the advantage of the analogy between our Divine Filiation and that of the Word. This difference of perspective might be summarized in the passage of filial adoption, as a work of which God is the origin – to the adoptive filiation, as a relationship of the human subject and of whom God is the term. One might still represent this displacement of the focal object as that of a **relationship of reason** – the Paternity of God towards us [as He endures no dependence' upon us] – to a **real relationship** – as in **our filiation towards Him** [where we do enjoy a dependence upon Him].

[2] The most perfected form, or in any case, the last chronologically speaking, of St. Thomas' thought in this matter seems to be constituted by his affirmation that 'the divine filiation by adoption is a **participated similitude, shared likeness**, of the Divine Filiation by nature.' Without neglecting that this phrase does not summarize the totality of the Angelic Doctor's teaching, it does seem worthy to be fathomed the more. Outside of some bibliographical data on **Participation** and **Causality *ad maximum*** this segment is more a lexicological investigation – by means of the ***Index Thomisticus*** - which will be utilized here for the sake of explicating the elements comprising the characterization of our divine filiation. This work of Thomistic exegesis has no intention of spicing up a bit his own doctrine by pretending that this will provide a clear consciousness of certain points that might be brought forward. This is not just an explication. It is up to the reader to note that this is not a mere extrapolation. The reflection leads to the concept of **re-generation**, of which St. Thomas apparently did not exploit all the ramifications, perhaps because of his staunch **anti-Adoptianism**. This opens the perspective of an enrichment based on the very core of the Angelic Doctor's teaching.

[3] Lastly, the concern to grasp how the children of God should not mask the manner in which our lives as adoptive children unfolds. This is an occasion to exhume the beautiful Augustinian inspiration of the Thomistic teaching on Filial Fear.

†

---

<sup>173</sup> L. Somme, pp. 316-347.

## 1. Participation by Similitude, Likeness in St. Thomas Aquinas

1.] Since the II<sup>nd</sup> World War, several authors have shown the major role played by the doctrine of **participation** in the w

ritings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Among these works there are two studies which stand out directly consecrated to this theme: ***The metaphysical notion of participation according to St. Thomas Aquinas***, by **Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS** - and the French work, ***Participation in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas***, by L.B. Geiger, OP. The former distinguishes a 'predicamental participation' and a 'transcendental participation'.<sup>174</sup> He also develops a supernatural participation, notably in Christ, and namely in His Filiation.<sup>175</sup> Geiger, on his part, distinguishes two systems of participation in the doctrine of St. Thomas:<sup>176</sup> the 'participation by composition' and 'participation by similitude', also called **participation by formal limitation**.<sup>177</sup> Whatever may be the pertinence of such a division,<sup>178</sup> the different research studies on participation are in agreement in their appreciation of the importance that this plays in St. Thomas' synthesis and to unite in this a clear tie with the concept of **similitude, likeness**.

2.] According to Fr. Geiger, St. Thomas bases his thoughts regarding **participation by similitude** principally on Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite, St.. Augustine and Aristotle. At the point of departure of Denys' Neo-Platonic cosmogony, God is considered to be the Primary Perfection. He communicates Himself to creatures – they return then to their Principle. All fine perfection thus constitutes a **participation, sharing** and a **similitude, likeness** more or less perfect with the Primary Perfection from Which each derives. Consequently, to **participate**, means for a form to be in the limited state to that which another form is, or to a degree more or less perfect, or in the absolute state. **Participation** expresses either the reality itself which is participated, or the relationship of deficient similitude between a finite form, and another of the same series, that might be more perfect, or absolutely perfect and outside the series. One might discern three varieties of participation by similitude: this might oppose first of all the Premier, **Primary**

<sup>174</sup> C. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tomaso d'Aquino*. TORINO, 1939. Parte Seconda. Sez. Seconda: *La partecipazione predicamentale* Sez. Terza: *La partecipazione transcendatale come partecipazione degli enti all'essere*.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, Parte terza, Sez. seconda. *La partecipazione soprannaturale. La partecipazione di Cristo*. pp. 307-314. This perspective suggested here by C. Fabro will be widely exploited by Fr. Ocariz, *Hijos de Dios en Cristo. Introducción a una teología de la participación sobrenatural*. Pamplona 1972.

<sup>176</sup> L.-B. Geiger, P, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris: Vrin 1942; 1953. Livre premier: *Les deux systèmes de la participation*. Première partie: *La participation par composition*. Deuxième partie: *La participation par similitude*.

<sup>177</sup> Geiger reproaches Fabro for having neglected almost totally **participation by similitude** [o.c., p. 24].

<sup>178</sup> Cf. HO Joseph Chiu Yuen, *La doctrine de la participation dans le commentaire de Saint Thomas d'Aquin sur le 'Liber de Causis'*, dans: *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 70 (1972) 360-383.

**Perfection**, and all the limited perfections whatever these may be; it could oppose then Absolute Perfection: ‘life’, for example, and the different degrees of life; and finally, it might oppose the degrees and the modes of the same absolute perfection – for example, the life of the plant, and the life of an angel. In the first case, between Premier Perfection and the limited modes, **Participation by Similitude, Likeness**, would include qualitative opposition and a difference expressing itself by the *binomes*, extremes such as ‘by essence’/ by participation - *maximum*, or the premier/ and ‘that which follows’. On the poetic level, there corresponds the analogy of one to another.

a.] These remarks find a confirmation in the manner in which St. Thomas characterizes our divine filiation as a **communication**, a **derivation**, a **participation** of that of the Only-Begotten, Unique Divine Son by nature, that distinguishes these often by opposing them. He alone is the Divine Son by nature, such that we are by adoption, gratuitously, through **participation by similitude**.

b.] Thus, the Thomistic teaching here on Participation through Similitude counts among its roots the work of Pseudo-Denys. We might peruse some of his thoughts presented in his **The Divine Names**, with a comparison with the Commentary St. Thomas made on these. First of all, that participation flowing toward the unchangeable identity of God is represented by something much like radiance of God and as a **Deifying** communication.

c.] God is that Eternal Being, that Being perfection Himself, Who remains in Himself identical to Himself in the unity and in the identity of a unique Form. He **spontaneously radiates a share** on all capable of participating in His own identity, which binds to these others the heterogeneous elements by **extending the overflow of His identity**. The reason for this is because He contains before-hand the manner of identity even to their opposites, in so far as He is the Unique Cause, unifying and transcendent of all identity. This is expressed by Thomas: that which is God **super-radiates** to all that all might participate His identity, accomplish to what is fitting for each one.

d.] However, God is at the same time, ‘Otherness’. Because He is everywhere present thanks to His Providence and He becomes all in all by His **power of universal salvation**. Of course, in Himself He remains unchangeable in His own identity and indivisible in His unicity of His incessant operation, but thanks to His indefectible power, **He communicates Himself** at the same time to **deify** all those who turn toward Him. St. Thomas puts it this way: there are two ways in which one may be attributed to God: the first of these is that one is attributed to God in so far as He is present in all, as participating in Him by a certain similitude which by His Providence, they all receive. **Because of their salvation and the good of all**, God

becomes present in all, in so far as there is no perfection in reality that is not a certain similitude of God, so that it might always be said that by a participation in His similitude, there is wisdom in the wise; justice in the just; life in the living; power in the powerful; and so with all other attributes. God, by His undiminishable virtue gives Himself through a certain participation of Himself to the **Deification** of those converted, i.e., that He might assimilate to Himself all that turns toward Him.

3.] There follows then a reflection on the **likeness, similitude** of the creature with regard to God. This context invites the student to bind what preceded regarding the **radiance** from the Principal Cause and **participation**, as well as those on **communication** and **Deification** – to those coming up here on **similitude, image** and **assimilation**. Furthermore, the Commentary of St. Thomas shows in an excellent manner how **relationship** between effect and cause induces in the former a desire for assimilation to the Cause, to the Exemplar, in virtue of the principle: **one loves and desires that with which one is similar.** In the matter of the similitude of God by comparison to other beings, it is noted that God, Who exists above all things,, according to that which is considered in His being, nothing can be said to be similar to Him.

a.] However, theologians do say that He gives His likeness to other beings that are turned toward Him – i.e., they accede to Him according to a certain imitation possible to them in accord with their inner ability. And so it is not possible to imitate Him perfectly because He is beyond and above all definition and distinction, i.e., He is beyond the ultimate *terminus* of each nature, and above each reason of being, i.e., beyond every apprehension. And the strength of this similitude to God which is given by God to realities is evident in this that all things proceed from God as effects from a cause, and they are **converted through desire to Him**, as to their own cause. This would not be unless they would be endowed with some likeness, similitude to God, for each one loves and desires what is similar to himself. So all things are converted by desire into God it is fitting to say that all things are similar to God, not according to equality, but rather by a certain assimilation and accomplishes a from which the reason of image is taken.

b.] So, if one calls God 'Imitable' in so far as He is identical and because He is totally and in every manner imitable to Himself, in a unique and indivisible manner, we would not have any reproach to level regarding the use of this name, 'Imitable', to designate God. However, at the same time, theologians affirm that in Himself, **in His total transcendence**, God is imitable by nothing and that however the same divine similitude, **likeness**, is **shared** with those who turn themselves towards Him and imitate the One Who is, in a totally transcendent Being and beyond definition – and their reason, to the measure that within them lies. Divine Similitude is the One Who causes all beings, and produces them. This is why it has

to be stated that these creatures resemble God, that they are made to the Image and Likeness of God. God, however, does not resemble them any more than a man could resemble his own image. St. Thomas notes that in the causes and in those realities that are caused, there ought not to be any **conversion of similitude**: what is caused is drawn from another and cannot be said to be similar to the cause, as neither can an image be to the man. And this is so because the cause does not depend on the effect, that it gives its similitude to this or that, but the effect depends on the cause from which alone it participates in the matter of accomplish. And this dependence is designed when it is stated that the effect is in the cause. So, therefore, it is clear that God, Who is the cause of everything cannot be said to be similar to others, but others are said to be similar to Him.

c.] The text goes on with the affirmation of an absence of reciprocity in this relationship of accomplish based on dependence [which is not reciprocal] of the effect in relationship to the cause. If one considers realities within the same level it can very well be that they are similar to one another, that between them the similitude is reciprocal and that they are mutually like each other, in virtue of the pre-existence in them of a similar form. But when it is a matter of a relationship of the cause to the effect, then we cannot admit of any reciprocity.

4.] Pseudo-Denys follows stating that the divine similitude is extended to every creature and that God is the ultimate foundation of every similitude.

a.] For it is not only to this, or to that that God accords His **likeness**, but it is to all beings which participate in the similitude which He confers, and that He constitutes Himself even to the very substance of the similitude in Himself. Consequently, nothing possesses any similitude that does not owe to each trace in Him of the divine Similitude, and it is this Similitude that accomplishes every union. Lastly, after having evaluated the similitude, Pseudo-Denys comes to relativize in a paradoxical manner all that resembles God and that is nothing that does not resemble Him.

b.] St. Thomas specifies further what he means by 'dissimilar' – and goes on to note that even more needs to be said why God is not similar to created realities. He is rather the cause of similitude because sacred teaching preaches Him to be similar and yet that He is not of the same order with others. He is different from all others, as is clear from Psalm 40: ***whom have You made similar to God?*** And again in Psalm 85: ***there is none like You among the gods, O Lord.*** And yet, this is not contrary to that which has been said above regarding the assimilation of all to God: for both similar and dissimilar realities can be said of God: similar realities can be said of Him because they imitate God; and dissimilar realities can be said of Him according to the principle which states that what is caused has less

perfect than what is its cause. Nor would anyone ever understand through this that when less is said, any proportion as occurs in things which are of the same genus of which one is more perfect than the other. Theology adds that creatures defect from God, not according to some determined measure, but infinitely and in an incomparable manner – and thus, dissimilar realities can be said of Him.

c.] Why do we speak this way? It is theology itself which declares that God is dissimilar, which maintains that no one has the right to compare Him to any being. He is different from all, and the supreme paradox is that nothing resembles Him. To tell the truth, his affirmation does not contradict in any fashion the presence in God of a similitude. For, with regard to God, the same realities are both similar and dissimilar – they are similar in so far as they imitate to the extent that they are able to imitate; and they are dissimilar in that the effects remain inferior to the cause and they are distant from it in the measure that He escapes all limitation and comparison.

d.] This last point assumes a particular importance for the study of divine Filiation [even though this does not enter into the consideration of Pseudo-Denys]. In effect, St. Thomas, while indicating the similitude of our divine filiation with regard to that of Christ, he opposes them frequently, for the manifest purpose so that one does **not** think of them as in a **univocal** manner. From what can be seen that the teaching on participation which St. Thomas assumes, adjusts well to the perspective of the Anti-Adoptionist Christology according to which he takes up the study of our divine filiation.

## 2. Participation and Similitude in St. Thomas: A Lexicological Quest

1.] Since St. Thomas characterizes Adoptive Filiation as a **participated similitude of Filiation by nature** – it seems useful to be interested in the meaning that he gives to the expression **participated similitude**. For this reason one would question from his work certain passages where there are found the notions of the similitude of participation, notably in the expression **to participate in the similitude**. This chapter tries to synthesize the conjoined uses of **similitude** and **to participate**, taken from the *Index Thomisticus*.

a.] One encounters first of all the participated similitude, shared likeness, in the resemblance of the effect with relation to the cause. Every effect bears a similitude of form of its agent cause. This holds true for the created being, in so far as it is a being, with regard to the Creator God. He can be known beginning with creatures, in the measure that these participate from Him, some similitude.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>179</sup> De Ver., q. 18. a/ 2 ad 5 m: 'The creature is but a shadow in so far as it is from nothing; but in so far as it is from God it participates in some similitude of His and so is endowed with some similitude of Him.'

Consequently it is not this good, as such, which occasions the sin of the devil and of the first man, but their attempt to appropriate to themselves His knowledge [of good and evil] and the divine powers.

b.] St. Thomas teaches:

... The other is a **likeness of imitation**, such as is possible for a creature in reference to God, in so far as the creature participates somewhat of God's likeness according to its measure. For Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus ix): "The same things are like and unlike to God; like, according as they imitate Him, as far as He can be imitated; unlike, according as an effect falls short of its cause." Now every good existing in a creature is a participated likeness of the first good. Wherefore from the very fact that man coveted a spiritual good above his measure, as stated in the foregoing Article, it follows that he coveted God's likeness inordinately.

It must, however, be observed that the proper object of the appetite is a thing not possessed. Now spiritual good, in so far as the rational creature participates in the Divine likeness, may be considered in reference to three things. First, as to natural **being**: and this likeness was imprinted from the very outset of their creation, both on man – of whom it is written (Genesis 1:26) that God made man "to His image and likeness" – and on the angel, of whom it is written (Ezekiel 28:12): "Thou wast the seal of resemblance." Secondly, as to **knowledge**: and this likeness was bestowed on the angel at his creation, wherefore immediately after the words just quoted, "Thou wast the seal of resemblance," we read: "Full of wisdom." But the first man, at his creation, had not yet received this likeness actually but only in potentiality. Thirdly, as to the power of **operation**: and neither angel nor man received this likeness actually at the very outset of his creation, because to each there remained something to be done whereby to obtain happiness.<sup>180</sup>

1.) Participated Similitude: resulting from a causality can be specific or generic, according to whether the form of the effect belongs to the same species, or to the same genus as that of the agent. The Participated Similitude can only be analogical in the case where the agent does not allow any weakness whatsoever in any genus: such is the case of creation by God, the Efficient Cause of all that exists:

On the contrary, It is written: "Let us make man to our image and likeness" (Genesis 1:26), and: "When He shall appear we shall be like to Him" (1 John 3:2).

---

<sup>180</sup> II-II, q. 163, a. 2 c.

I answer that, Since **likeness** is based upon agreement or communication in form, it **varies according to the many modes of communication in form**. Some things are said to be **like**, which communicate in the same form according to the same formality, and according to the same mode; and these are said to be not merely like, but **equal** in their likeness; as two things equally white are said to be alike in whiteness; and this is the most perfect likeness.

In another way, we speak of things as alike which communicate in form according to the same formality, though **not according to the same measure**, but according to more or less, as something less white is said to be like another thing more white; and this is imperfect likeness.

In a third way some things are said to be alike which communicate in the same form, but **not according to the same formality**; as we see in **non-univocal agents**. For since every agent reproduces itself so far as it is an agent, and everything acts according to the manner of its form, the effect must in some way resemble the form of the agent. If therefore the agent is contained in the same species as its effect, there will be a likeness in form between that which makes and that which is made, according to the same formality of the species; as man reproduces man. If, however, the agent and its effect are not contained in the same species, there will be a likeness, but not according to the formality of the same species; as things generated by the sun's heat may be in some sort spoken of as like the sun, not as though they received the form of the sun in its specific likeness, but in its generic likeness.

Therefore if there is an agent not contained in any "genus," its effect will still more distantly reproduce the form of the agent, not, that is, so as to participate in the likeness of the agent's form according to the same specific or generic formality, but **only according to some sort of analogy**; as existence is common to all. In this way all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being.<sup>181</sup>

Even prime matter in so far as it participates in being, is a participated similitude, shared likeness, of God: this cannot be said of evil:

Prime Matter has a similitude with God in so far as it participates in Being. Thus, a stone is similar to God in so far as it is an entity, even though it is not intellectual as God is, thus prime matter has similitude with God in so far as it is being, but not in so far as it is being in act. **Common entity is like potency to act.**<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>181</sup> I, Q. 4, a. 3, c.

<sup>182</sup> *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 1., ad 12 m.



Similitude is grasped according to form in some way participated. It simply cannot be that evil would have some similitude in God, since something is said to be evil when it recedes from participating in the divinity.<sup>183</sup>

2.) All that exists proceeds through similitude with **Divine Wisdom:**

**Reply OBJ 2:** Wisdom is called mobile by way of similitude, according as it diffuses its likeness even to the outermost of things; for **nothing can exist which does not proceed from the divine wisdom by way of some kind of imitation**, as from the first effective and formal principle; **as also works of art proceed from the wisdom of the artist**. And so in the same way, inasmuch as the similitude of the divine wisdom proceeds in degrees from **the highest things, which participate more fully of its likeness**, to the lowest things which participate of it in a lesser degree, there is said to be **a kind of procession and movement of the divine wisdom to things**; as when we say that the sun proceeds to the earth, inasmuch as the ray of light touches the earth. In this way Dionysius (De Coelesti Hierarchia i) expounds the matter, that every procession of the divine manifestation comes to us from the movement of the Father of light.<sup>184</sup>

The Creator is the Exemplary Cause of all things:

On the contrary, The exemplar is the same as the idea. But ideas, according to Augustine (QQ. 83, Q46), are “the master forms, which are contained in the divine intelligence.” Therefore the exemplars of things are not outside God.

I answer that, **God is the first exemplar cause of all things**. In proof whereof we must consider that if for the production of anything an exemplar is necessary, it is in order that the effect may receive a determinate form. For an artificer produces a determinate form in matter by reason of the exemplar before him, whether it is the exemplar beheld externally, or the exemplar interiorly conceived in the mind.

Now it is manifest that things made by nature receive determinate forms. This determination of forms must be reduced to the divine wisdom as its first principle, for **divine wisdom devised the order of the universe, which order consists in the variety of things**. And therefore we must say that in **the divine wisdom are the types of all things**, which types we have called ideas – i.e. exemplar forms existing in the divine mind (Q15, A1). And these ideas, though multiplied by their relations to things, in reality are not apart from the divine essence, according as the likeness to that essence can be shared diversely by different things.

---

<sup>183</sup> *De Ver*, q. 3, a. 4 c.

<sup>184</sup> I, q. 9. a. 1, ad 2m.

In this manner therefore God Himself is the first exemplar of all things. Moreover, in things created one may be called the **exemplar** of another by the reason of its **likeness** thereto, either in **species**, or by the **analogy** of some kind of **imitation**.<sup>185</sup>

Furthermore, every agent by reason of the similitude which it communicates to its effect, exercises upon this a certain attraction – it is the object of its appetite:

On the contrary, It is written (Lamentations 3:25): “The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.”

I answer that, To be good belongs pre-eminently to God. For a thing is good according to its desirableness. Now everything seeks after its own perfection; and the perfection and form of an effect consist in a certain likeness to the agent, since **every agent makes its like**; and hence **the agent itself is desirable and has the nature of good. For the very thing which is desirable in it is the participation of its likeness**. Therefore, since God is the first effective cause of all things, it is manifest that the aspect of good and of desirableness belong to Him; and hence Dionysius (De Divinis Nominibus iv) **attributes good to God as to the first efficient cause**, saying that, God is called good “as by Whom all things subsist.”<sup>186</sup>

God is therefore also **the universal Final Cause**:

I answer that, God is the **first exemplar cause of all things**. In proof whereof we must consider that if for the production of anything an exemplar is necessary, it is in order that the effect may receive a determinate form. For an artificer produces a determinate form in matter **by reason of the exemplar** before him, whether it is the exemplar beheld externally, or the exemplar interiorly conceived in the mind.

Now it is manifest that things made by nature receive determinate forms. This determination of forms must be **reduced to the divine wisdom as its first principle**, for divine wisdom devised the order of the universe, which order consists in the variety of things. And therefore we must say that **in the divine wisdom are the types of all things**, which types we have called ideas – i.e. exemplar forms existing in the divine mind (Q15, A1). And these ideas, though multiplied by their relations to things, in reality are not apart from the divine essence, according as the **likeness to that essence can be shared diversely by different things**. In this manner therefore God Himself is the first exemplar of all things. Moreover, in things created one may be called the exemplar of another by the reason of its likeness thereto, either in species, or by the analogy of some kind of imitation.

---

<sup>185</sup> I, q. 44, a. 3 c.

<sup>186</sup> I, q. 6, a. 1, c

**Reply OBJ 3:** All things desire God as their end, when they desire some good thing, whether this desire be intellectual or sensible, or natural, i.e. without knowledge; because nothing is good and desirable except forasmuch as it participates in the likeness to God.

**Reply OBJ 4:** Since God is the efficient, the exemplar and the final cause of all things, and since primary matter is from Him, it follows that the first principle of all things is one in reality. But this does not prevent us from mentally considering many things in Him, some of which come into our mind before others.

I answer that, As the Philosopher says (De Physica ii,2), the end is twofold – the end for which and the end by which; viz. the thing itself in which is found the aspect of good, and the use or acquisition of that thing.

Thus we say that the end of the movement of a weighty body is either a lower place as thing, or to be in a lower place, as use; and the end of the miser is money as thing, or possession of money as use.

If, therefore, we speak of man's **last end** as of the thing which is the end, thus all other things concur in man's last end, since God is the last end of man and of all other things. If, however, we speak of man's last end, as of the acquisition of the end, then irrational creatures do not concur with man in this end.

**For man and other rational creatures attain to their last end by knowing and loving God:** this is not possible to other creatures, which acquire their last end, in so far as they share in the Divine likeness, inasmuch as they are, or live, or even know.<sup>187</sup>

Every realization of a matter by a form **filiation by similitude** in the first act:

... For matter does not receive from every part equally the similitude with the first act – but from some it does imperfectly, while from others more perfectly. Thus, some **participate in the divine similitude** according to what they **know**, and some according to what they **understand**. Therefore, similitude of the first act existing in every matter is its form; but a specific form in certain realities brings them to 'be' only, in others it brings them also to 'live', and so it is...<sup>188</sup>

1. There exists among creatures a diversity of degrees of participation by similitude with God. Their form by which each one pertains to its proper species, is in effect **a participated similitude of the divine essence, or goodness:**

<sup>187</sup> I, q. 44, a. 4, especially ad 3 m.

<sup>188</sup> *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, q. 4, a. 2, c.

Moreover, the reason for the order of things is derived from the diversity of forms. Indeed, since it is in accord with its form that a thing has being, and since anything in so far as it has being approaches the likeness of God Who is His own simple being, it must be that form is nothing else than a **divine likeness that is participated** in things...

... Hence many ideas exist in the divine mind, as things understood by it; as can be proved thus. Inasmuch as He knows His own essence perfectly, He knows it according to every mode in which it can be known. Now it can be known not only as it is in itself, but as it can be participated in by creatures according to some degree of likeness.

But every creature has its own proper species, according to which it **participates in some degree in likeness to the divine essence**. So far, therefore, as **God knows His essence as capable of such imitation by any creature**, He knows it as the particular type and idea of that creature; and in like manner as regards other creatures. So it is clear that God understands many particular types of things and these are many ideas.

The action of every being corresponds to its nature. For example, what is hot, causes heat. But every created thing has, in keeping with its form, **some participated likeness to the divine goodness**, as we have pointed out [c. 102] <sup>189</sup>

The unique divine essence is participated in a multiple manner, without it in any way being divided. For this reason it can be participated in, not in what is proper to it, but through a **similitude by participation**. It is in this manner that Scripture affirms that **we are as gods** [cf. Ps 81:6]:

I answer that, A name is communicable in two ways: **properly**, and **by similitude**. It is properly communicable in the sense that its whole signification can be given to many; **by similitude** it is communicable according to some part of the signification of the name. For instance this name “lion” is properly communicable to all things of the same nature as “lion”; by similitude it is communicable to those who participate in the nature of a lion, as for instance by courage, or strength, and those who thus participate are called lions metaphorically.

To know, however, what names are **properly communicable**, we must consider that every form existing in the singular subject, by which it is individualized, is common to many either in reality, or in idea; as human nature is

---

<sup>189</sup> III CG 97, n.3 *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Summa Contra Gentiles*. Book 3: Providence, Part II. Translated by Vernon J. Bourke. University of Notre dame Press 1975 edition, reprinted 2002.; I, q. 15, a. 2 c.; *St. Thomas Aquinas, Compendium Theologiae*, c. 103. English translation: *Aquinas's Shorter Summa. Saint Thomas's Own Concise Version of His Summa Theologica*. Manchester NH: Sophia Press 2002, p. 113.

common to many in reality, and in idea; whereas the nature of the sun is not common to many in reality, but only in idea; for the nature of the sun can be understood as existing in many subjects; and the reason is because **the mind understands the nature of every species by abstraction from the singular**. Hence to be in one singular subject or in many is outside the idea of the nature of the species. So, given the idea of a species, it can be understood as existing in many.

But the singular, from the fact that it is singular, is divided off from all others. Hence every name imposed to signify any singular thing is incommunicable both in reality and idea; for the plurality of this individual thing cannot be; nor can it be conceived in idea. Hence no name signifying any individual thing is properly communicable to many, but only by way of similitude; as for instance a person can be called “Achilles” metaphorically, forasmuch as he may possess something of the properties of Achilles, such as strength. On the other hand, forms which are individualized not by any *suppositum*, but by and of themselves, as being subsisting forms, if understood as they are in themselves, could not be communicable either in reality or in idea; but only perhaps by way of similitude, as was said of individuals. Forasmuch as we are unable to understand simple self-subsisting forms as they really are, we understand them as compound things having forms in matter; therefore, as was said in the first article, we give them concrete names signifying a nature existing in some suppositum.

Hence, so far as concerns images, the same rules apply to names we impose to signify the nature of compound things as to names given to us to signify simple subsisting natures. Since, then, **this name God** is given to signify the divine nature as stated above (A8), and since the divine nature cannot be multiplied as shown above (Q11, A3), it follows that this name God is incommunicable in reality, but **communicable in opinion**; just in the same way as this name “sun” would be communicable according to the opinion of those who say there are many suns.

Therefore, it is written: “You served them who by nature are not gods,” (Galatians 4:8), and a gloss adds, “Gods not in nature, but in human opinion.” Nevertheless **this name God is communicable, not in its whole signification, but in some part of it by way of similitude**; so that those are called gods who share in divinity by likeness, according to the text, “I have said, You are gods” (Psalm 82:6). But if any name were given to signify God not as to His nature but as to His suppositum, accordingly as He is considered as “this something,” that name would be absolutely incommunicable; as, for instance, perhaps the Tetragrammaton among the Hebrew; and this is like giving a name to the sun as signifying this individual thing.<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> I, q. 13 a. 9, c.

Every divine similitude, as Pseudo Denys had noted is intended not in any absolute equality, but **by imitation**:

I answer that, likeness is twofold. One is **a likeness of absolute equality** (I, q. 93, a. 1): and such a likeness to God our first parents did not covet, since such a likeness to God is not conceivable to the mind, especially of a wise man. The other is **a likeness of imitation**, such as is possible for a creature in reference to God, in so far as the creature participates somewhat of God's likeness according to its measure. For Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus ix): **"The same things are like and unlike to God; like, according as they imitate Him, as far as He can be imitated; unlike, according as an effect falls short of its cause."**

Now every good existing in a creature is **a participated likeness of the first good**. Wherefore from the very fact that man **coveted a spiritual good above his measure**, as stated in the foregoing Article, it follows that he coveted God's likeness inordinately. It must, however, be observed that the proper object of the appetite is a thing not possessed.

Now spiritual good, in so far as the rational creature participates in the Divine likeness, may be considered in reference to three things:

First, as **to natural being**: and this likeness was imprinted from the very outset of their creation, both on man – of whom it is written (Genesis 1:26) that God made man "to His image and likeness" – and on the angel, of whom it is written (Ezekiel 28:12): "Thou wast the seal of resemblance."

Secondly, as **to knowledge**: and this likeness was bestowed on the angel at his creation, wherefore immediately after the words just quoted, "Thou wast the seal of resemblance," we read: "Full of wisdom." But the first man, at his creation, had not yet received this likeness actually but only in potentiality.

Thirdly, as **to the power of operation**: and neither angel nor man received this likeness actually at the very outset of his creation, because to each there remained something to be done whereby to obtain happiness. Accordingly, while both (namely the devil and the first man) coveted God's likeness inordinately, neither of them sinned by coveting a likeness of nature.

But the first man sinned chiefly **by coveting God's likeness as regards "knowledge of good and evil,"** according to the serpent's instigation, namely that by his own natural power he might decide what was good, and what was evil for him to do; or again that he should of himself foreknow what good and what evil would befall him. Secondly he sinned by coveting God's likeness as regards his own power of operation, namely that by his own natural power he might act so as

to obtain happiness. Hence Augustine says (De Genesi ad literam xi,30) that “the woman’s mind was filled with love of her own power.”

On the other hand, the devil sinned **by coveting God’s likeness, as regards power**. Wherefore Augustine says (De Vera Religione 13) that “he wished to enjoy his own power rather than God’s.” Nevertheless both coveted somewhat to be equal to God, in so far as each wished to rely on himself in contempt of the order of the Divine rule.<sup>191</sup>

Furthermore, **participation by similitude** does not hold regarding pairs. For example, one is a man, not by participating in the similitude of another man, but in entering by generation, in participation of the human species. There is only a **participated similitude** with equality and an inferiority with regard to cause.

2.] The divine perfections are **participated in by similitude** in a diverse and ordered manner, according to the ontological hierarchy of creatures. The more noble these **perfections** are the more do the creatures, endowed with them **resemble** God and **participate** in His beatitude.<sup>192</sup> Symmetrically, the closer these creatures are to God, the more perfect is this **similitude**, and the more numerous are the divine perfections in which they participate: ‘the nearer certain things are to God, the more they participate in His likeness...’<sup>193</sup>:

... the **more perfect** the **power** of a being, by **so much does its causality extend** to more, and more remote, things as was said above [c. 70]. But the causality of the end consists in this that other things are desired for its sake. **The more perfect the end**, therefore, and the more willed, by so much does the will of one willing the end extend to more things for the sake of that end. But the divine essence is most **perfect as goodness** and as end. It will therefore **supremely diffuse** its causality to many, so that many things may be willed for its sake; and especially so by God, Who wills the divine essence perfectly according to its power.<sup>194</sup>

Every divine perfection **participated by similitude** – whatever may be the being, the wisdom, the life, the goodness and the beauty – is caused by God, and every perfection in creatures participates by similitude in God.

<sup>191</sup> II-II, q. 163, a. 2, c.

<sup>192</sup> *I Sent.*, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4 m.

<sup>193</sup> *III CG*, n. 4: **St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles**. Book III, Providence. Part 1. Translated by Vernon J. Bourke. University of Notre Dame Press. First published 1956 Re-printed 2001, pp. 242, f.

<sup>194</sup> *I CG*, c. 75, n. 6. **Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles**. Book I: God. Translated by Anton C. Pegis. University of Notre Dame Press First published 1955, reprinted 2003, p 247. cf. also *I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2 ad 5 m.

3.] That which is such as it is by **participation**, is this by **similitude** to that which is such by essence. For this reason, nothing is **good** other than by reason of a **participation by similitude** to goodness by essence, in the universal, premier and sovereign good:

Furthermore what is said **essentially** is said **more truly** than what is said **by participation**. But, **God is good essentially** while other things are good by participation, as we have shown [c. 38], the good of every good. God is, therefore, the highest good.<sup>195</sup>

For **God is the universal good**, all other beings are good by participating in His similitude.<sup>196</sup>

... the Will of God is directed to things other than Himself, as has been shown [c. 75], in so far as, by willing and loving His own being and His own goodness, God wills it to be **diffused** as much as possible **through the filiation of likeness**...this is the good of each thing, namely, to **participate in the likeness of God**; for every other goodness is nothing other than a certain likeness of the first goodness [c. 30, § 3].<sup>197</sup>

Nothing is, or appears **good unless in so far as it filiation** in some similitude of the supreme good, which is God.<sup>198</sup>

Whatever good there is existing in creatures is **some participated similitude of the First Good**.<sup>199</sup>

In so far as being and acting, every creature participates in the goodness of God, without which, as has been said, this similitude would attain equality. Furthermore, since good is the object of the intellect, the participation in the goodness of God includes in some manner **a participation by similitude** in His **Will**, in His **Love**, and – in the case of the rational creature – in His **Providence** and **Lordship**:

I answer that, According to what has been stated above (q. 101, a. 3), where there are different aspects of that which is due, there must needs be different virtues to render those dues. Now **servitude** is due to God and to man under different aspects: even as **lordship** is competent to God and to man under different aspects.

<sup>195</sup> *ICG* c. 40, n. 3 – o.c. p. 157.

<sup>196</sup> *ICG* c. 89, n. 12.

<sup>197</sup> *ICG* c. 96, n. 3.

<sup>198</sup> I, q. 105, a. 5 c.

<sup>199</sup> *II-II*, q. 163, a. 2 c.



For God has absolute and paramount lordship over the creature wholly and singly, which is entirely subject to His power: whereas **man partakes of a certain likeness to the divine lordship**, forasmuch as he exercises a particular power over some man or creature. Wherefore *dulia*, which pays due service to a human lord, is a distinct virtue from *latria*, which **pays due service to the lordship of God**. It is, moreover, a species of observance, because **by observance we honor all those who excel in dignity**, while *dulia* properly speaking is the reverence of servants for their master, *dulia* being the Greek for **servitude**.<sup>200</sup>

4.] The **participated similitude** of the divine perfections attains its **maximum** in the creature meriting to mention properly the title the **Image** of God, i.e., through enjoying intellectuality, which permits him to direct freely his actions. This **participated likeness** inherent in the **Image** provides its influence not only on the form of the being, but also on his actions. It is manifested above all in his **superiority** over other participated similitudes which concern only the form: ‘... for what receives a likeness of both form and action from some agent is more perfect than what receives a likeness of form but not of action...’<sup>201</sup> By reason of the **participated divine similitude** that these ‘**Images**’ hold by their created nature, other creatures may participate at times, in a certain manner, in that quality of Image of God which is not recognized for these to hold as proper:

**Reply OBJ 1: Everything imperfect is a participation of what is perfect.** Therefore even what falls short of the nature of an image, so far as it possesses **any sort of likeness to God, participates in some degree the nature of an image**. So Dionysius says that effects are “contingent images of their causes”; that is, as much as they happen [*contingit*] to be so, but not absolutely.<sup>202</sup>

St. Thomas notes that the order imprinted by **divine wisdom** among the different creatures is such that this is at the summit of a degree participated in by similitude to that which is at the base of the degree that is immediately superior.<sup>203</sup> He preferred as his example of this the fact that the animal, deprived of reason, participates nonetheless in some manner in human filiation.<sup>204</sup>

5.] Since there already is a **participated divine likeness** in the rational creature in so far as he is a created being [at through the form of his body], his intellect, furthermore perfects by intelligible species, themselves participated likenesses of **the divine essence**<sup>205</sup>, can be characterized as a participated likeness

<sup>200</sup> *II-II*, q. 103, a. 3, c.

<sup>201</sup> *Comp. Theol.*, c. 124.

<sup>202</sup> *I*, q. 93, a. 2 ad 1 m.

<sup>203</sup> *II Sent.*, d. 39, q. 3, a. 1 c.; *I*, q. 57, a. 3 ad 4m.; *I-II*, q. 3, a. 6 c.;

<sup>204</sup> *De Ver.* q. 24, a. 2 c.

<sup>205</sup> *I*, q. 89, a. 4, c.

of **the divine intellect**. That is why, since there is not, properly speaking, an invisible Mission of God the Son other than by sanctifying grace, every intellectual Gift is, however, a **participated likeness of the Word**:

... Now it is manifest both that God is the author of the intellect power, and that He can be seen by the intellect. And since **the intellectual power of the creature** is not the essence of God, it follows that it is **some kind of participated likeness of Him who is the first intellect**. Hence also the intellectual power of the creature is called **an intelligible light**, as it were, derived from the first light, whether this be understood of the natural power, or of some perfection superadded of grace or of glory.

Therefore, in order to see God, there must be **some similitude of God on the part of the visual faculty**, whereby the intellect is made capable of seeing God. But on the part of the object seen, which must necessarily be united to the seer, the essence of God cannot be seen by any created similitude.

First, because as Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus i), “by the similitudes of the inferior order of things, the superior can in no way be known;” as by the likeness of a body the essence of an incorporeal thing cannot be known. Much less therefore can the essence of God be seen by any created likeness whatever.

Secondly, because the essence of God is His own very existence, as was shown above (q. 3, a. 4), which cannot be said of any created form; and so no created form can be the similitude representing the essence of God to the seer.

Thirdly, because the divine essence is uncircumscribed, and contains in itself super-eminently whatever can be signified or understood by the created intellect. Now this cannot in any way be represented by any created likeness; for every created form is determined according to some aspect of wisdom, or of power, or of being itself, or of some like thing.

Hence to say that **God is seen by some similitude**, is to say that the divine essence is not seen at all; which is false. Therefore it must be said that to see the essence of God, **there is required some similitude in the visual faculty, namely, the light of glory strengthening the intellect to see God, which is spoken of in the Psalm 36:9, “In Thy light we shall see light.”** The essence of God, however, cannot be seen by any created similitude representing the divine essence itself as it really is.<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> I, q. 12, a. 2, c.

In particular, Wisdom is a participated likeness of the Second Divine Person, in so far as He is proceeding as a **Word**<sup>207</sup>, spirating with the Father Divine Love. This seems to be for St. Thomas the summit of **assimilation** to the Son.

6.] Despite its similitude with regard to the divine intellect, the created intellect cannot of itself see the essence of God. There is needed for this a **more elevated participated likeness**, i.e., the **Light of Glory**:

... light can only become the act of a body if the body participates somewhat in the filiation. But the divine essence is the proper intelligible form for the divine filiation and is proportioned to it; in fact, these three are one in God: the intellect, that whereby understanding is accomplished, and the object which is understood. So, it is impossible for this essence to become the intelligible form of a created intellect **unless by virtue of the fact that the created intellect participates in the divine essence**. Therefore, this participation in the divine likeness is necessary so that the substance of God may be seen.<sup>208</sup>

The imperfect beatitude of man here below is a **participated likeness** in the perfect beatitude, which will be enjoyed in Glory:

... Now man's final happiness, which is his final perfection cannot consist in the knowledge of sensibles. For **a thing is not perfected by something lower, except in so far as the lower partakes of something higher**. Now it is evident that the form of a stone or of any sensible, is lower than man. Consequently the **intellect** is not perfected by the form of a stone, as such, **but inasmuch as it partakes of a certain likeness to that which is above the human intellect**, viz. the **intelligible light**, or something of the kind. Now whatever is by something else is reduced to that which is of itself. Therefore man's final perfection must needs be through knowledge of something above the human intellect...<sup>209</sup>

7.] In the essence of the human soul, a **participated likeness** of the divine nature – **sanctifying grace** – confers on the just a **re-generation**, or a **re-creation**:

On the contrary, By grace **we are born again sons of God**. But **generation** terminates at the **essence** prior to the powers. Therefore grace is in the soul's essence prior to being in the powers.

I answer that, This question depends on the preceding. For if grace is the same as virtue, it must necessarily be in the powers of the soul as in a subject; since the soul's powers are the proper subject of virtue, as stated above (Q56,A1). But if

<sup>207</sup> *I Sent.*, d. 15, q. 5, a. 1, qa. 1, obj. 3 and ad 3 m.

<sup>208</sup> *III CG*, c. 53, n. 2 – o.c., p. 180.

<sup>209</sup> *I-II*, q. 3, a. 6 c.

grace differs from virtue, it cannot be said that **a power of the soul is the subject of grace**, since every perfection of the soul's powers has the nature of virtue, as stated above (q. 55, a. 1; q. 56, a. 1).

Hence it remains that grace, as it is prior to virtue, has a subject prior to the powers of the soul, so that it is in the essence of the soul. For as man in his intellectual powers participates in the Divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power of will participates in the Divine love through the virtue of charity, so also **in the nature of the soul does he participate in the Divine Nature, after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation.**<sup>210</sup>

I answer that, As was said above (I-II, q. 110, a. 1), grace is taken in two ways: first, as **the will of God gratuitously bestowing something**; secondly, **as the free gift of God**.

Now human nature stands in need of the gratuitous will of God in order to be lifted up to God, since this is above its natural capability. Moreover, human nature is lifted up to God in two ways: first, by operation, as the saints know and love God; secondly, by personal being, and this mode belongs exclusively to Christ, in Whom human nature is assumed so as to be in the Person of the Son of God.

But it is plain that for the perfection of operation the power needs to be perfected by a habit, whereas that a nature has being in its own *suppositum* does not take place by means of a habit. And hence we must say that if grace be understood as the will of God gratuitously doing something or reputed anything as well-pleasing or acceptable to Him, **the union of the Incarnation took place by grace, even as the union of the saints with God by knowledge and love**. But if grace be taken as the free gift of God, then the fact that the human nature is united to the Divine Person may be called a grace, inasmuch as it took place without being preceded by any merits – but not as though there were an habitual grace, by means of which the union took place.

**Reply OBJ 1:** The grace which is an accident is **a certain likeness of the Divinity participated by man**. But by the Incarnation human nature is not said to have participated a likeness of the Divine nature, but is said to be united to the Divine Nature itself in the Person of the Son. Now the thing itself is greater than a participated likeness of it.<sup>211</sup>

This **shared likeness** remains inferior to the union to the divine nature in the Incarnate Word. The term of the **assimilation** realized by grace is sometimes

---

<sup>210</sup> I-II, q. 110, a. 4 c.

<sup>211</sup> III, q. 2, a.10, c. and ad 1m.

designated by St. Thomas as **God**, sometimes as **the Only-begotten Son by nature**<sup>212</sup>:

... The Word of God leads to Christ: for Christ Himself is the natural Word of God. Moreover, **every word inspired by God is a shared likeness of Him**. Since therefore every shared likeness leads to its principle, it is manifest that **every inspired word of God leads to Jesus Christ...**<sup>213</sup>

In particular, by means of the **conformity to the suffering Christ**, there is given to us the possibility of sharing in His **resurrection**:

On the contrary, The Apostle says (**Romans 4:25**): **“He rose again for our justification,”** which is nothing else than the resurrection of souls: and on Psalm 30:5: **“In the evening weeping shall have place,”** the gloss says, **“Christ’s Resurrection is the cause of ours, both of the soul at present, and of the body in the future.”**

I answer that, As stated above, **Christ’s Resurrection works in virtue of the Godhead**; now this virtue extends not only to the resurrection of bodies, but also to that of souls: for it comes of God that the soul lives by grace, and that the body lives by the soul. Consequently, **Christ’s Resurrection has instrumentally an effective power not only with regard to the resurrection of bodies, but also with respect to the resurrection of souls.**

In like fashion it is **an exemplar cause with regard to the resurrection of souls**, because even in our souls we must be conformed with the rising Christ: as the Apostle says (Romans 6:4-11) **“Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life”**: and as He, **“rising again from the dead, dies no more, so let us reckon that we [Vulgate: you]”** are dead to sin, that we may **“live together with Him.”**

**Reply OBJ 1:** Augustine says that the resurrection of souls is wrought by God’s Substance, **as to participation**, because souls become good and just by **sharing in the Divine goodness**, but not by sharing in anything created. Accordingly, after saying that souls rise by the Divine Substance, he adds: the soul is beatified by a participation with God, and not by a participation with a holy soul. But our bodies are made glorious by sharing in the glory of Christ’s body.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>212</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qa 2, ad 2m; d. 11, q. 1, a. 1, sc 4; *In Jn* 1, lc. 6; *IV CG*, 24, n. 2; *In Ep* 1, 5.

<sup>213</sup> *Super Evang. Jn.*, c. 5, lc 6, n. 820.

<sup>214</sup> *III*, q. 56, a. 1, c and ad 1 m.

8.] Adoptive Filiation is a **shared likeness** in the Divine Filiation by nature:

**OBJ 2:** Further, by the Divine Incarnation men have come into possession of the adoption of sons, according to Romans 8:15: “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but the spirit of adoption of sons.” But sonship by adoption is a participated likeness of natural sonship which does not belong to the Father nor the Holy Ghost; hence it is said (Romans 8:29): “For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.” Therefore it seems that no other Person except the Person of the Son could have become incarnate...

On the contrary, Whatever the Son can do, so can the Father and the Holy Spirit, otherwise the power of the three Persons would not be one. But the Son was able to become incarnate. Therefore the Father and the Holy Spirit were able to become incarnate.

I answer that, As was said above (aa, 1,2,4), assumption implies two things, viz. the act of the one assuming and the term of the assumption. Now the principle of the act is the Divine power, and the term is a Person. But the Divine power is indifferently and commonly in all the Persons. Moreover, **the nature of Personality is common to all the Persons, although the personal properties are different.** Now whenever a power regards several things indifferently, it can terminate its action in any of them indifferently, as is plain in rational powers, which regard opposites, and can do either of them.

Therefore the Divine power could have united human nature to the Person of the Father or of the Holy Ghost, as It united it to the Person of the Son. And hence we must say that **the Father or the Holy Ghost could have assumed flesh even as the Son.**

**Reply OBJ 1:** The **temporal sonship**, whereby Christ is said to be the Son of Man, does not constitute His Person, as does the eternal Sonship; but is something following upon the temporal nativity. Hence, if the name of son were transferred to the Father or the Holy Ghost in this manner, there would be no confusion of the Divine Persons.

**Reply OBJ 2:** Adoptive sonship is a certain participation of natural sonship; but it takes place in us, by appropriation, by the Father, Who is the principle of natural sonship, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and Son, according to Galatians 4:6: “God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father.” And therefore, even as by the Incarnation of the Son **we receive adoptive sonship in the likeness of His natural sonship**, so likewise, had the Father become incarnate, we should have received adoptive sonship from Him, as

from the principle of the natural sonship, and from the Holy Spirit as from the common bond of Father and Son.<sup>215</sup>

On the contrary, Ambrose says (De Incarnatione viii): “We do not call an adopted son a natural son: the natural son is a true son.” **But Christ is the true and natural Son of God, according to 1 John 5:20: “That we may . . . be in His true Son, Jesus Christ.”** Therefore Christ, as Man, is not an adopted Son.

I answer that, **Sonship belongs properly to the hypostasis or person, not to the nature**; whence in the I, q. 32, a. 3 we have stated that **Filiation is a personal property**. Now in Christ there is no other than the uncreated person or hypostasis, to Whom it belongs by nature to be the Son.

But it has been said above (a. 1, r. 2), that **the sonship of adoption is a participated likeness of natural sonship**: nor can a thing be said to participate in what it has essentially. Therefore Christ, Who is the natural Son of God, can nowise be called an adopted Son. But according to those who suppose two persons or two hypostases or two *supposita* in Christ, no reason prevents Christ being called the adopted Son of God.

**Reply OBJ 1:** As sonship does not properly belong to the nature, so neither does adoption. Consequently, when it is said that carnal humanity is adopted, the expression is **metaphorical**: and adoption is used to signify the union of human nature to the Person of the Son.<sup>216</sup>

Spiritual generation achieved by grace has God for its principle – or, in the case of a non-univocal engendered one, is no of the same species as the one engendering him: this is why we are **Sons of God**, filiation in a real way, but by a **shared likeness**. The Commentary on Rm 8:29 establishes explicitly a comparison between the participation by similitude, natural, put to work in the communion with the divine goodness – and that, supernatural, playing on the gift of divine filiation:

... ‘That He might be the First-born of many brothers.’ For just as God willed to communicate His natural goodness to others, by **sharing with them the likeness of His Goodness**, so the Son of God willed to communicate the conformity of His Filiation to others, so that He would not only be the Son, but that He be the First-Born of many sons. And thus, He Who is the Only-Begotten Son of God by eternal generation, according to Jn 1:18: **The Only Begotten Who is in the bosom of the Father** - according the conferral of grace might become **the First-Born of many brothers** [cf. Rv 1:5] - **from Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the First-Born from**

<sup>215</sup> III, q. 3, a. 5.

<sup>216</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4 c, and ad 1 m.

***the dead and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.*** Therefore, Christ has us as His brothers, both because He has communicated to us a likeness of His Filiation, as is said here, and also because He assumed the likeness of our human nature, according to Heb 2:17: ***It was essential that He should in this way become completely like His brothers ...***<sup>217</sup>

So that this **sharing by likeness**, considered on the natural plane, might also be applicable on the supernatural level, there is no guess-work, or excessive audacity here, as it is observed that this distinction of levels only holds true on that of the creature, and not of the divine nature which is shared.

9.] Divine Filiation is attributed to the rational creature in so far as the person shares by likeness to the Only-Begotten Son of God by nature:

**Reply OBJ 1:** Common terms taken absolutely, in the order of our intelligence, come before proper terms; because they are included in the understanding of proper terms; but not conversely. For in the concept of the person of the **Father**, **God is understood; but not conversely.**

But common terms which import **relation to the creature** come after proper terms which **import personal relations**; because the person proceeding in God proceeds as the principle of the production of creatures. For as the word conceived in the mind of the artist is first understood to proceed from the artist before the thing designed, which is produced in likeness to the word conceived in the artist's mind; **so the Son proceeds from the Father before the creature**, to which the name of **filiation** is applied as it participates in the likeness of the Son, as is clear from the words of Romans 8:29: "Whom He foreknew and predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son."<sup>218</sup>

This is why it was more fitting that the Divine Person of the Son should be incarnate:

On the contrary, Damascene says (De Fide Orthodoxa iii,1): "In the mystery of the Incarnation the wisdom and power of God are made known: the **wisdom**, for He found a most suitable discharge for a most heavy debt; the **power**, for He made the conquered conquer." But power and wisdom are appropriated to the Son, according to 1 Corinthians 1:24: "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." Therefore it was fitting that the Person of the Son should become incarnate.

I answer that, **It was most fitting that the Person of the Son should become incarnate.**

---

<sup>217</sup> **Super Rom.** C. 8, lc. 6

<sup>218</sup> I, q. 33, a/ 3, ad 1 m.



First, on the part of the union; for such as are similar are fittingly united. Now the Person of the Son, Who is the Word of God, has a certain common agreement with all creatures, because **the word of the craftsman**, i.e. his **concept**, is an **exemplar likeness** of whatever is made by him. Hence the Word of God, Who is **His eternal concept**, is the **exemplar likeness of all creatures**. And therefore as creatures are established in their proper species, though movably, by the **participation of this likeness**, so by the non-participated and personal union of the Word with a creature, it was fitting that the creature should be restored in order to its eternal and unchangeable perfection; for the craftsman by the intelligible form of his art, whereby he fashioned his handiwork, restores it when it has fallen into ruin.

Moreover, He has **a particular agreement with human nature**, since the Word is a concept of the eternal Wisdom, **from Whom all man's wisdom is derived**. And hence **man is perfected in wisdom** (which is his proper perfection, as he is rational) by **participating the Word of God**, as the disciple is instructed by receiving the word of his master. Hence it is said (Ecclesiasticus 1:5): "The Word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom." And hence for the consummate perfection of man it was fitting that the very Word of God should be personally united to human nature.

Secondly, the reason of this fitness may be taken **from the end of the union, which is the fulfilling of predestination**, i.e. of such as are preordained to the heavenly inheritance, which is **bestowed only on sons**, according to Romans 8:17: "If sons, heirs also." Hence it was fitting that by Him Who is the natural Son, men should share this likeness of sonship by adoption, as the Apostle says in the same chapter (Romans 8:29): "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."

Thirdly, the reason for this fitness may be taken **from the sin of our first parent**, for which the Incarnation supplied the remedy. For the first man **sinned by seeking knowledge**, as is plain from the words of the serpent, promising to man the knowledge of good and evil. Hence it was fitting that by the Word of true knowledge man might be led back to God, having wandered from God through an inordinate thirst for knowledge.<sup>219</sup>

In receiving the Gift of Wisdom we **share by likeness with uncreated Wisdom**, i.e., in the Only-Begotten Son of God by nature, and we acquire Divine Filiation:

---

<sup>219</sup> III, q. 3, a. 8 c

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Sermone Domini in Monte i,4) that “wisdom is becoming to peacemakers, in whom there is no movement of rebellion, but only obedience to reason.”

I answer that, The seventh beatitude is fittingly ascribed to the gift of wisdom, both as to the merit and as to the reward. The merit is denoted in the words, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Now a peacemaker is one who makes peace, either in himself, or in others: and in both cases this is the result of setting in due order those things in which peace is established, for “peace is the filiation of order,” according to Augustine (De Civitate Dei xix,13).

Now **it belongs to wisdom to set things in order**, as the Philosopher declares (De Metaphysica i,2), wherefore peaceableness is fittingly ascribed to wisdom. The reward is expressed in the words, **“they shall be called the children of God.”** Now men are called **the children of God in so far as they participate in the likeness of the only-begotten and natural Son of God**, according to Romans 8:29, “Whom He foreknew. . . to be made conformable to the image of His Son,” Who is Wisdom Begotten. Hence by participating in the gift of wisdom, man attains to the sonship of God.<sup>220</sup>

Since knowledge is had by **assimilation the more we participate** in Him by likeness, the more are we on the level to know intensely:

By natural likeness because a son is naturally like his father. Wherefore it follows that one is called a son of God insofar as he shares in the likeness of his natural son; and one knows him insofar as he has a likeness to him, since **knowledge is attained through assimilation, or likeness to** . Hence, 1 Jn3:2 says, **Now we are sons of God**, and he immediately adds: **when He comes, we will be like Him, and we will see Him as He is**. Therefore, when the Evangelist says **Son**, he implies a **likeness** as well as an **aptitude for knowing God**.<sup>221</sup>

**Divine Filiation** and the **knowledge of God** are proportional: the heavenly inheritance of the sons of God is nothing other than the vision of the divine essence. Divine Filiation by adoption implies several states of conformity to the Son of God by nature: one of **baptismal grace**, and the one of **glory**. This is why the Father declares on two occasions, on the subject of Jesus: **this is My Beloved Son**, i.e., at His Baptism and at His Transfiguration. This indicates the different manners according to which a man might **participate in the eternal filiation**:

<sup>220</sup> II-II, q. 45, a. 6, c.

<sup>221</sup> *Super Evang. Jo.*, c, I, lc. 11, n. 216. [English translation: *St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*. James A. Weisheipl, OP and Fabian Larcher, OP. Albany NY: Magi Books, Inc. 1980, p. 104.

I answer that, **The adoption of the sons of God is through a certain conformity of image to the natural Son of God.** Now this takes place in two ways: first, **by the grace of the wayfarer**, which is imperfect conformity; **secondly, by glory, which is perfect conformity**, according to 1 John 3:2: “We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be: we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”

Since, therefore, it is in **baptism** that we acquire grace, while the clarity of the glory to come was foreshadowed in the **transfiguration**, therefore both in His baptism and in His transfiguration **the natural sonship of Christ was fittingly made known by the testimony of the Father**: because He alone with the Son and Holy Ghost is perfectly conscious of that perfect generation.

**Reply OBJ 1:** The words quoted are to be understood of God’s eternal speaking, by which God the Father uttered the only-begotten and co-eternal Word. Nevertheless, it can be said that God uttered the same thing twice in a bodily voice, yet not for the same purpose, but in order to show the divers modes in which men can be **partakers of the likeness of the eternal Sonship**.<sup>222</sup>

### 3. The Expression: *Shared Likeness*

1.] In the course of these reflections this expression has been met several times. It would be helpful to examine it more close at hand. While this expression is already attested to in the *Writings on the Sentences*, it does not appear at all in the *Contra Gentiles*. St. Thomas, however, uses it 12 times in his work, and 7 of these are in the *Summa*.

a.] In a first group of texts the expression may be found applied to created being in comparison to God. Thus the form of every being is a **shared divine similitude**: it is necessary that form is nothing other than a shared divine likeness in reality.<sup>223</sup> St. Thomas uses the expression also of **grace** which renders us sharers in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4]: Grace is nothing other than a certain shared likeness of the divine nature.<sup>224</sup>

b.] This affirmation intervenes in response to the question: are the sacraments the cause of grace? The response distinguishes two agent causes: one that is Principal, God – and the other is instrumental, the sacraments. St. Thomas develops his thought thus: the principal cause acts by reason of its form, to Whom the effect is **assimilated**; now, according to 2 P 1:4, grace is a shared likeness of the divine nature. Consequently, the principal cause of grace is that in **Whom it**

<sup>222</sup> III, q. 45, a. 4 c., and ad 1 m.

<sup>223</sup> III CG, c. 97, n. 3.

<sup>224</sup> III, q. 62:1. 1, c.

**participates by likeness**, i.e. God Himself. It is a matter of a participation of an application of the principle of causality, in which the result of the Efficient Cause is achieved explicitly by going back to **exemplarity**.

c.] Another passage of the IIIrd Part qualifies Grace in a similar manner. The context is quite different and almost the reverse. It is a matter of **comparing grace to the divine nature**, but in the concern of showing that the former is inferior to the latter: that is, grace is a **shared likeness of God**. ‘Is the union of the two natures in Christ filiation by grace?’ This establishes that the hypostatic union in Jesus Christ bases it on the union to God by habitual grace.<sup>225</sup> There is noted that the shared likeness is related here to the Aristotelean category of accident.

2.] We have also seen that the **good** and the **beautiful** in creatures, are also shared likenesses, respectively of the Primary Good and of the Divine Beauty:

On the contrary, Augustine commenting on Psalm 69:4 (Enarrationes in Psalmos 69), “Then did I restore [Douay: pay] that which I took not away,” says: “Adam and Eve wished to rob the Godhead and they lost happiness.”

I answer that, **likeness is twofold**. One is a **likeness of absolute equality** (I, q. 93, a. 1): and such a likeness to God our first parents did not covet, since such a likeness to God is not conceivable to the mind, especially of a wise man. The other is **a likeness of imitation, such as is possible for a creature in reference to God, in so far as the creature participates somewhat of God’s likeness according to its measure**.

For Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus ix): “The same things are like and unlike to God; like, according as they imitate Him, as far as He can be imitated; unlike, according as an effect falls short of its cause.”

Now **every good existing in a creature is a participated likeness of the first good**. Wherefore from the very fact that man coveted a spiritual good above his measure, as stated in the foregoing Article, it follows that **he coveted God’s likeness inordinately**.

It must, however, be observed that the proper object of the appetite is a **thing not possessed**. Now spiritual good, in so far as the rational creature participates in the Divine likeness, may be considered in reference to three things:

First, as to **natural being**: and this likeness was imprinted from the very outset of their creation, both on man – of whom it is written (Genesis 1:26) that God made

---

<sup>225</sup> III, q. 2, a. 10, ad 1m.

man “to His image and likeness” – and on the angel, of whom it is written (Ezekiel 28:12): “Thou wast the seal of resemblance.”

Secondly, as to **knowledge**: and this likeness was bestowed on the angel at his creation, wherefore immediately after the words just quoted, “Thou wast the seal of resemblance,” we read: “Full of wisdom.” But the first man, at his creation, had not yet received this likeness actually but only in potentiality.

Thirdly, as to the **power of operation**: and neither angel nor man received this likeness actually at the very outset of his creation, because to each there remained something to be done whereby to obtain happiness.

Accordingly, while both (namely the devil and the first man) coveted God’s likeness inordinately, neither of them sinned by coveting a likeness of nature.

But the first man sinned chiefly by coveting God’s likeness as regards “knowledge of good and evil,” according to the serpent’s instigation, namely **that by his own natural power he might decide what was good, and what was evil** for him to do; or again that he should of himself foreknow what good and what evil would befall him.

Secondarily he sinned by coveting God’s likeness as regards his own power of operation, namely that by his own natural power he might act so as to obtain happiness. Hence Augustine says (De Genesi ad literam xi,30) that “the woman’s mind was filled with love of her own power.” On the other hand, the devil sinned by coveting God’s likeness, as regards power. Wherefore Augustine says (De Vera Religione 13) that “he wished to enjoy his own power rather than God’s.” Nevertheless both coveted somewhat to be equal to God, in so far as each wished to rely on himself in contempt of the order of the Divine rule.<sup>226</sup>

This also holds true regarding love and of the human intellect with regard to love and the divine intellect:

On the contrary, Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus iv) that “the Divine love produces ecstasy,” and that “God Himself suffered ecstasy through love.” Since therefore according to the same author (De Divinis Nominibus iv), **every love is a participated likeness of the Divine Love, it seems that every love causes ecstasy.**

I answer that, To suffer ecstasy means to be placed outside oneself. This happens as to the apprehensive power and as to the appetitive power. As to the apprehensive power, a man is said to be placed outside himself, when he is **placed outside the knowledge proper to him**. This may be due to his being **raised to a**

---

<sup>226</sup> II-II, q. 163, a/ 2 c.

**higher knowledge**; thus, a man is said to suffer ecstasy, inasmuch as he is **placed outside the connatural apprehension of his sense and reason**, when he is raised up so as to comprehend things that surpass sense and reason: or it may be due to his being cast down into a state of debasement; thus a man may be said to suffer ecstasy, when he is overcome by violent passion or madness.

As to the appetitive power, a man is said to suffer ecstasy, when that power is borne towards something else, so that it goes forth out from itself, as it were.

The first of these ecstasies is **caused by love dispositively in so far, namely, as love makes the lover dwell on the beloved**, as stated above (a. 2), and to dwell intently on one thing draws the mind from other things.

The second ecstasy is caused by love directly; by **love of friendship**, simply; by love of concupiscence not simply but in a restricted sense. Because in love of concupiscence, the lover is carried out of himself, in a certain sense; in so far, namely, as not being satisfied with enjoying the good that he has, he seeks to enjoy something outside himself. But since he seeks to have this extrinsic good for himself, he does not go out from himself simply, and this movement remains finally within him. **On the other hand, in the love of friendship, a man's affection goes out from itself simply; because he wishes and does good to his friend, by caring and providing for him, for his sake.**<sup>227</sup>

Let us remark once again that it is always the same Patristic authority that supports these assertions – the **Divine Names** of Denys the Areopagite. In the other texts the **shared likeness** is not with regard to God. Outside of one text conceding to animals a certain shared prudence, the passages are either about the relationship of every inspired word to the Word of God, or regarding the relationship between filiation by adoption and filiation by nature.

3.] This last point is found in two articles of Part III<sup>228</sup>: St. Thomas asks whether another divine person could have been incarnate. His response is positive. The second objection rests on the two-fold bond between our adoptive filiation, on the one hand, on the Incarnation which renders it possible – and then, on the other hand on the divine filiation by nature, pertaining exclusively to the Second Divine Person and of Whom it is a **shared likeness**:

**OBJ 2:** Further, **by the Divine Incarnation men have come into possession of the adoption of sons**, according to Romans 8:15: “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but the spirit of adoption of sons.” **But sonship by adoption is a participated likeness of natural sonship which does not belong to the**

<sup>227</sup> I-II, q. 28, a. 3, c.

<sup>228</sup> III, q. 3, a. 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> Obj.

**Father nor the Holy Ghost;** hence it is said (Romans 8:29): “For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.” Therefore it seems that no other Person except the Person of the Son could have become incarnate.

It might be remarked the important role played by the citation of Rm 8:29 to justify the relationship of **shared likeness** between the two divine filiations. The response to the second objection has therefore the duty to filiation the two verses: on the one hand, the divine filiation is communicated to us by the Incarnation of the Son – and, on the other hand, the three Divine Persons concur there in a way that the Father and the Holy Spirit could have been incarnate no less than the Word<sup>229</sup>. The reception then of our adoptive filiation would be different:

**Reply OBJ 2: Adoptive sonship is a certain participation of natural sonship;** but it takes place in us, **by appropriation, by the Father,** Who is the principle of natural sonship, and **by the gift of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and Son,** according to Galatians 4:6: “God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father.” And therefore, even **as by the Incarnation of the Son we receive adoptive sonship in the likeness of His natural sonship,** so likewise, had the Father become incarnate, we should have received adoptive sonship from Him, **as from the principle of the natural sonship,** and from the Holy Ghost **as from the common bond of Father and Son.**<sup>230</sup>

This text presents itself in a very interesting manner in order to clarify the bond between our divine filiation and the Incarnation. There may be noted from the outset that the theological explanation which has recourse to the **Trinitarian appropriations** is supported here solidly on the citation from Ga 4:6 mentioning the three Divine Persons. The body of the article works out furthermore a very careful distinction, regarding the assumption by Christ of human nature, between the act itself of which the principle is the Divine Virtue common to the entire Trinity – and the term, which is the Person of the Son. It remains that the Divine Person assuming this human nature would have been able, according to St. Thomas, to be the Father and the Holy Spirit. If one considers **the act** of the Incarnation, our adoptive filiation which results from it could be referred by appropriation to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit, manifesting thus respectively **Paternity, Filiation, Divine Love.** This makes abstraction from the fact that it is indeed the Son Who is incarnate. If the **term** of the Incarnation is considered to be **a new relationship** that is exclusive, is established between our adoptive filiation and the divine Incarnate Person:

---

<sup>229</sup> cf. *III Sent.*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3

<sup>230</sup> *III*, q. 3, a. 5, ad 2m

I answer that, As was said above (aa. 1,2,4), **assumption** implies two things, viz. the act of the one assuming and the term of the assumption. Now the principle of the act is the **Divine power**, and **the term is a Person**.

But the Divine power is indifferently and commonly in all the Persons. Moreover, the nature of Personality is common to all the Persons, although the **personal properties are different**. Now whenever a power regards several things indifferently, it can terminate its action in any of them indifferently, as is plain in rational powers, which regard opposites, and can do either of them. Therefore the Divine power could have united human nature to the Person of the Father or of the Holy Ghost, as It united it to the Person of the Son. And hence we must say that the Father or the Holy Ghost could have assumed flesh even as the Son.<sup>231</sup>

4.] Among the different references of our filiation toward each of the Divine Persons, such as these have been envisioned above in the subject of the act of Incarnation, the **likeness** of our adoptive filiation with regard to the Divine Filiation by nature, is privileged by the fact that **only the Second Divine Person** is filiation incarnate, and He alone is the **term** of this act. There is no foundation for the thought that St. Thomas intends here to annul those relationships to other Divine Persons, such as he recognized them. While the fact is that only the Son is incarnate, our adoptive filiation could very well have been referred to the **Paternity** of the First Divine Person, and to the **Love** of the Third. It remains that there exists with the Son, and with the fact of His Incarnation, **a special relationship of likeness** between our Filiation and His.

The question arises: this relationship coincides in its content with the Second Relationship noted above, but is this an **appropriation**? This seems to be Aquinas' idea: the Divine Son, being incarnate. And we receive our adoptive filiation in the image of His natural Filiation.<sup>232</sup> So, it appears that the same **relationship of likeness**, would be qualified by appropriation if one considers the **act** of the Incarnation. This finds in the realization of this a new title for existence. St. Thomas does not explicitly say that here, but it is evident that the distinction of a two-fold point of view leads him to a more refined position than would the consideration of just **the principal efficient causality** would, on which to rest the doctrine of appropriation. It is worth the while to emphasize that the bringing out the evidence of a relationship that is non-appropriative of our divine filiation with the Person of the Son is based certainly not on the principle of the gift of this Filiation, but on the mediation by which we receive it, i.e., on the **instrumentality proper** to the Incarnate Word.

---

<sup>231</sup> ib.,c.

<sup>232</sup> III, q. 3, a. 5, ad 2 m.



5.] The statement that the adoptive filiation is a **shared likeness** of the Filiation by nature is expressed clearly in a number of texts.<sup>233</sup> Different from the text in III, q. 3, a 5, it is the **participation**, and no longer the **likeness** that is found in the fore-ground. In III, q. 23, . 4 c, there is in play the adverbs: **participatively** and **per se** in order to exclude to Christ Himself any attribution of adoptive filiation to His own Person:

... the sonship of adoption is a **participated** likeness of natural sonship: nor can a thing be said to participate in what it has **essentially**. Therefore **Christ, Who is the natural Son of God, can in nowise be called an adopted Son.**<sup>234</sup>

6.] St. Thomas gives here full weight to the adjective **shared** - we are the sons of God **by participation**, since the Word is the Son of God, **per se, essentially, by nature**. The perspective brings out the filiation and difference, but at the same time, its **derivation**, since it is that which is **of itself** is the cause of what which is **shared**:

... if we consider that which is **proper** to the Son as Begotten, and consider the way that He is the **Only-Begotten** of God: because since He alone is **naturally begotten** by the Father, the Begotten of the Father is One only. But, if we consider the Son in so far as Sonship is conferred on others through a likeness to Him, then there are many sons of God through **participation**. And because they are called 'sons of God' by **likeness** to Him, He is called the **First-born of all**. **Those whom He foreknew, He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the First-Born of many brothers** [Rm 8:29].

So, Christ is called the Only Begotten of God by nature; but, He is called the First-Born insofar as His natural sonship, by means of a **certain likeness and participation**, a sonship granted to many.<sup>235</sup>

There can be seen here the view of **participation by likeness**, that integrates itself so helpfully in St. Thomas' Christology. It permits him to maintain at one and the same time the parenthood, or tie, of the Adoptive Sons with the Divine Son by nature – and at the same time, their total difference. This view keeps in mind the causality exercised by the Divine Filiation by nature on our divine filiation by adoption. St. Thomas uses in this regard from this final point, a citation from a passage of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which may be called **the principle of the causality of the maximum**, which will be examined now.

<sup>233</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4 c; it is found in passing in III, q. 24, a. 3 c

<sup>234</sup> III, q. 23, a. 4 c.

<sup>235</sup> *In Jn*, 1 14 b, c. 1, lc. 8, n. 187. English Translation, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, St. Thomas Aquinas*, Weisheipl, OP – Larcher, OP, o.c., p. 92.

#### 4. The Causality of the *Maximum*

1.] Fr. Vincent Couesnongle, OP [the late Master General] very minutely studied this principle and found it mentioned 16 times by St. Thomas.<sup>236</sup> The concept is used in a variety of contexts:

- with regard to general propositions, or principles, on the relationships between different beings making up part of the same genus;
- the most frequent usage – 16 times - is found in this form: in a genus, the first, or the *maximum* is the cause of all other beings in this genus.

It is found used in the context we are studying here, to express adoptive filiation:

... According to the Philosopher, that which is first [*maximum*] in a genus, is the cause of that which comes after in the same genus. Now, **Filiation is first found in the Divine Son by nature.** It is then by Him that we become sons, since it is by the goodness of God that all become good, and that from the Heavenly Father all **Paternity**, in heaven and on earth, draws its name...<sup>237</sup>

2.] A French scholar, J. Tricot has studied this passage. He notes that it is with good reason that the Philosopher appeals to the knowledge of truth. **The ultimate purpose of speculation is the truth.** When human beings examine the conduct of a reality, men of action hardly ever give a thought to the reality in its eternal nature, but more in relationship to that determined purpose and at the specific moment. But, **we really do not 'know' what is true without knowing its cause;** and this reality, among others, possesses eminently a nature that is always that with which other things may hold in common this nature: for example, fire is hot, *par excellence*, because among other beings it is the cause of heat. Consequently that which is the cause of the truth which resides in beings derived from it, is the truth, *par excellence*. From this it is clear that the principles of eternal beings are necessarily the most true of all, for they are not true only for this or that specific moment, and there is no other cause of their being. On the contrary, there are the beings which are the cause of the being of other realities. Therefore, **to the extent that something has being, so much does it have the truth.**

3.] As for the phrase inspiring the principle of **causality of the *maximum*,** it has been shown that the Greek text has known a number of translations:

<sup>236</sup> P. Vincent Couesnongle, OP, in: *RSPT* 38 (1954) 658-680.

<sup>237</sup> *III Sent.*, d. 10, q. 2, a. 1, qu. 3, obj. 2.

- the first reading of it begins with the word **maximum** in a genus in order to open out into its effects: this handling of the terms affirms the causal role of being which possesses, *to the maximum*, an filiation given over all the beings affected by this attribute.

- the second reading goes back to the **effects** of this cause: beginning with the effects, this affirms a universal cause possessing this attribute *to the maximum*.

a.] These are two ways of the use of this citation open up then corresponding to two different dialectics: **descending** according to the first translation, and **ascending** according to the second. The question arises as to how Aristotle understood it. The clear answer for some is as follows: the second interpretation is the one that is more convincing. It is too clear that the principle should be read according to this second interpretation, **ascending** from effects to the cause.

b.] The principle, then, should be translated as follows: 'It possesses *to the maximum* an attribute among other subjects, each subject by relation to which the others possess also this same attribute, i.e., **to the inverse manner in which St. Thomas almost always quotes this phrase from Aristotle**. The principle, ***The first is any genus is the maximum in this genus*** - is not found in our text which for one thing, does not use the word **first**. But, that which is striking above all in the different citations, is the formulation in descending dialectic which is practically an exception – one text out of 17. St. Thomas reads the principle this way: **The maximum in a genus is the cause of all that makes up part of this genus**. If the **ascending dialectic** which was given above is exact - and the original text allows of no other – 'filiat' principle would prevail over Aristotle.

4.] Fr. Geiger in his fundamental study on participation in St. Thomas that appeared a little before the studies of Fr. De Couesnongle, makes the same observation as this: St. Thomas has reversed Aristotle in citing him. It is shown that the reason for this is to be found in the edition of *Metaphysics* that he used. This establishes that St. Thomas depends on the one called *Arabica*, and most probably from the commentary of Averroes which it contains. This is the only Medieval Greek-Latin version including the principle in the sense that St. Thomas uses it. Other Greek-Latin versions are more in conformity with the Greek original. However, even after St. Thomas wrote his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he persists in using the inverse interpretation as it appears in the *Arabica* edition. There is in this the very pivot of his argumentation, since it exposes the **Fourth Way** of proof for the existence of God. He there makes voluntary recourse to show the **universal causality** of the Supreme Being.

5.] If there is anything to be made of all this from the fact that this principle is cited in a manner that is notably variant and sometimes, even without explicit reference, one can grasp the difficulty of filiation the texts that treat of it. Fr. DeCousenongle noted 17 different texts. In rectifying certain references, and going on in his research, without any pretensions of being exhaustive, one might really find 27 such occurrences:

**Books of Sentences** - 9 texts [*I Sent.* Prologue ; d. 18, q. 1, a/ 3, sc 1 ; d. 24, q. 1, a. 1, c. ; d. 32, q. 1, a. 3, c ; *II Sent.* , d. 37, q.2, a. 2, c. ; *III Sent.* , d. 1, q. 2, a. 2, sc 2 ; d. 10, q.2, a. 1, qa 3, obj. 2 ; *IV Sent.* D. 43, q. 1, a. 2, qu 1, sc 1; d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qu 4, c.

**Summa contra Gentiles** - 1 Text: [*III CG* , 8, n. 6]:

Furthermore, wherever the distinction of more or less is found, there must be certain things arranged in hierarchic order ...<sup>238</sup>

**Summa Theologica** – 4 texts:

**I, q. 2, a. 3 c:** On the contrary, It is said in the person of God: “I am Who am.” (Exodus 3:14) I answer that, **The existence of God can be proved in five ways.**

**The first and more manifest way** is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards **whatever is in motion is put in motion by another** which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus, that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, **whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another**. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the

<sup>238</sup> *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Book 3: Providence.* Part I, translated by Vernon Bourke, o.c., p. 51

hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

**The second way** is from the nature of **the efficient cause**. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

**The third way** is taken from **possibility and necessity**, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence – which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.

**The fourth way** is taken **from the gradation to be found in things**. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the *maximum*, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; **for those things that are greatest in truth are**

**greatest in being**, as it is written in De Metaphysica ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the **governance** of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

**I, q. 45, a. 6, : OBJ 1:**

It would seem that to create is proper to some Person. **For what comes first is the cause of what is after; and what is perfect is the cause of what is imperfect.** But the procession of the divine Person is prior to the procession of the creature: and is more perfect, because **the divine Person proceeds in perfect similitude of its principle; whereas the creature proceeds in imperfect similitude.** Therefore the processions of the divine Persons are the cause of the processions of things, and so to create belongs to a Person.

**I-II, q. 22, a. 2, OBJ 1:**

It would seem that passion is in the apprehensive part of the soul rather than in the appetitive. **Because that which is first in any genus, seems to rank first among all things that are in that genus, and to be their cause, as is stated in De Metaphysica ii,1.** Now passion is found to be in the apprehensive, before being in the appetitive part: for the appetitive part is not affected unless there be a previous passion in the apprehensive part. Therefore passion is in the apprehensive part more than in the appetitive.

**III, q. 56. A. 1, c:**

On the contrary, on 1 Corinthians 15:12: “Now if Christ be preached, that He rose again from the dead,” the gloss says: “Who is the efficient cause of our resurrection.” I answer that, As stated in De Metaphysica ii,4: **“Whatever is first in any order, is the cause of all that come after it.”** But Christ’s Resurrection was the **first in the order of our resurrection**, as is evident from what was said above (Q53,A3). Hence Christ’s Resurrection must be the cause of ours: and this is what the Apostle says (1 Corinthians 15:20,21) : “Christ is risen from the dead, the first-

fruits of them that sleep; for by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead.”

And this is reasonable. Because the principle of human life-giving is the Word of God, of whom it is said (Psalm 36:9): “With Thee is the fountain of life”: hence He Himself says (John 5:21): “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth life; so the Son also giveth life to whom He will.” Now the divinely established natural order is that **every cause operates first upon what is nearest to it, and through it upon others which are more remote**; just as fire first heats the nearest air, and through it, it heats bodies that are further off: and God Himself first enlightens those substances which are closer to Him, and through them others that are more remote, as Dionysius says (*De Coelesti Hierarchia* xiii). Consequently, the Word of God first bestows immortal life upon that body which is naturally united with Himself, and through it works the resurrection in all other bodies.

***Quaestiones Disputatae et Quodlibetales***: there are 5 texts : [*De Ver.* Q. 5, a. 9, sc 3; *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 6, obj. 8; *Me Malo*, q. 3, a. 3, obj. 6. *Quodl.*, q. 4, a. 3, obj. 1.]

***Opuscula***: 4 texts [*De subs. Sep.* C. 9; *De ente et essentia*, c. 6 ; *Comp. Theol.* C. 68: **The Effects Produced by God**:

After considering the truths which pertain to the unity of the Divine essence and to the Trinity of Persons, we turn to a study of the effects produced by the Trinity. The first effect wrought by God in things is existence itself, which all other effects presuppose and on which they are based. Anything that exists in any way must necessarily have its origin from God. In all things that are arranged in orderly fashion, we find universally that **what is first and most perfect in any order is the cause of whatever follows in that order**. Then fire, which is hot in the highest degree, is the cause of heat in all other heated bodies. Imperfect objects are always found to have their origin from perfect things. Seeds, for instance, come from animals and plants. But, as we proved above [cc. 3 & 21] God is the first and foremost Being. Therefore, he must be the cause of being in all things that have being.

Again, whatever has some perfection by participation is traced back, as to its principle and cause, **to what possesses that perfection filiation**. Thus molten iron has its incandescence from that which is fire by its essence. We showed above [cc. 6 & 11] that God is existence itself; hence, **existence belongs to Him in virtue of His essence, but pertains to all other things by way of participation**. The essence of no other thing is its existence, for being that is absolute and *per se* subsistent cannot

be more than one, as was brought out above [cf. c. 15]. Therefore, God must be the cause of existence of all things that are.<sup>239</sup>

6.] St. Thomas uses this principle of **causality to the maximum**, in his earlier works as well as in his later ones. It is only applied to Divine Filiation in the **Books of Sentences**, but not in the **Summa** - which uses much more the expression **shared likeness**. Is there equivalence, or contradiction in the philosophical formulations of a data remaining both biblical and patristic?

a.] The common point is the affirmation of an **exemplar causality** tying Divine Filiation by Nature to the Divine Filiation by Adoption. The [pseudo] Aristoteleian principle underlines the **descending** derivation by which the Second Divine Person communicates – and this is a paradox! – that which He has **proper** to Himself in the bosom of the Trinity: His own Filiation. This principle, in weakening the exemplar cause and its effect in a community of this type, does not however allow it to express the discontinuity between the **Only Begotten** and His brothers and sisters.

b.] It fell to St. Thomas to mark this difference, not so much to limit our divine filiation, as it is to avoid that there be in any way lessened that of the Only Begotten Son in the sense of Adoptianism which he rejects. To cite the same principle according to the original Greek, i.e., in an **ascending** dialectic, this filiation would not result, keeping in mind that it is not a matter of showing that our adoptive filiation has need of a cause.

c.] The better issue consists then in placing our divine filiation with that of the Son in a manner so that the exemplarity would be signified and that all equality with it denied. St. Thomas happily inspired by Pseudo-Denys, seems to have attained an admirable balance in recurring to the doctrine of the **shared likeness**, even though the causality of exemplarity is much less explicit in this. Whatever the final solution may be, one question remains: what is the **likeness** of our divine filiation with that of the Eternal Word?

## 5. Divine Filiation by Nature

The comparison of two terms requires the knowledge of each one of them. This is why no one other than God is up to responding in a perfect manner to this question: in what does our divine filiation share in the likeness of that of the Eternal Word? For this, it is necessary to know in a perfect manner the Divine Filiation of the Son by nature, Who is none other than the very Person of His Only-Begotten Son. All theology of divine filiation is inexorably inclined to establishing this limit.

<sup>239</sup> *Aquinas's Shorter Summa. St. Thomas's own Concise Version of His 'Summa Theologica'*, c. 68, o.c., p. 64.



This is something like the difficult experienced in trying to explicitate in how grace is a **shared likeness** of the Divine Nature, as this would require knowing the divine nature. In awaiting the manifestation of the Divine Filiation in the Beatific Vision<sup>240</sup>, we make the effort here to look at the indications furnished by St. Thomas.

**a. Perusal of the Texts**

1.] Thomas uses some basic expressions:

- ***filiatio naturalis*** - 17 times;
- ***filiatio eterna*** - 11 times;
- ***filiation divina*** - 11 times;
- ***filiatio Dei*** - 5 times.

Among the 17 usages of ***filiatio naturalis***, 7 are in relation to the affirmation: adoptive filiation is **shared likeness** with the Divine Filiation by nature. There can be found only once the analogous expression with ***filiatio eterna***.<sup>241</sup>

2.] The examination of the doctrinal content of these passages concerning the ***filiatio naturalis*** leads first of all to putting into relationship; **birth** and **filiation**: the second follows from the first as from its principle<sup>242</sup>; thus, divine filiation by nature as its principle, the **eternal birth** - the principle of divine filiation by adoption consists in the **infusion** of grace, and the involvement of the **Father** is understood. There is to be noted furthermore that by reason of the Incarnation we receive adoptive filiation by **likeness to Filiation by nature**.

a.] As for **eternal filiation** it is necessary to note that this constitutes the very Person of the Divine Son – and that man can participate in this according to different manners – as by **grace** on earth, and by **glory** in heaven. The other passages aim at showing that by reason of the unicity of the *supposit* in Christ His **temporary birth** does not induce a real temporary filiation, but of reason only with regard to the Virgin Mary.

b.] In the subject of ***filiatio divina*** there should be observed that curiously this expression is found only three times out of 11 under the subject of the Divine Filiation by nature. The 8 other references are in regard to our divine filiation by adoption, and concern its **sign**, which is **love**, or the **power** which

<sup>240</sup> I-II, q. 69, a. 2, obj. 3 – 1 Jn 3:2: ***we are already the sons of God ... we will see Him as He is ...***

<sup>241</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2, S 3 m.

<sup>242</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3 m.

the Son of God reserves of maintaining this through grace – or, its expansion in **glory**.

c.] Lastly, in that which concerns the *Filiatio Dei*, there is noted on the one hand that the divine filiation is communicated by **faith in Christ**, but the **Gift of Wisdom** – and, on the other hand, it accompanies **humility**, and the **fear of the Lord**, and this is qualified as *filial*, inseparably bound to love.

†††

## b. Doctrinal Synthesis

1.] There exists in God two processions, by intelligence and love.<sup>243</sup> The first, the Procession of the Word, is a **generation**, to which two relationships correspond, that from the Principle to the One Proceeding - this is called **Paternity** - and that from the One proceeding to the Principle – and this is called **Filiation**.<sup>244</sup> **Active spiration** which is common to both the Father and the Son, is nothing other than the essential definition of Divine Filiation.<sup>245</sup> In a general manner, the name of Filiation refers to only one generation of living beings, i.e., to one birth<sup>246</sup>, as to its cause.<sup>247</sup> The reception of the nature from another can only serve as the basis for filiation when it is achieved through **generation**. In God, the procession of the Word verifies the definition of the generation of a Living Being, of a **birth**: *the origin of one living being, proceeding from a living principle conjoined by a specific similitude* :

On the contrary, It is said (Psalm 2:7): "This day have I begotten Thee."

I answer that, The procession of the Word in God is called **generation**. In proof whereof we must observe that **generation has a twofold meaning**: one **common** to everything subject to generation and corruption; in which sense generation is nothing but change from non-existence to existence. In another sense it is **proper and belongs to living things**; in which sense it signifies the origin of a living being from a **conjoined living principle**; and this is properly called birth.

Not everything of that kind, however, is called **begotten**; but, strictly speaking, **only what proceeds by way of similitude**. Hence a hair has not the aspect of generation and sonship, but only that which proceeds by way of a similitude. Nor will any likeness suffice; for a worm which is generated from animals has not the aspect of generation and sonship, although it has a generic similitude; for this kind of generation requires that there should be a **procession by way of similitude**

<sup>243</sup> I, q. 27, a. 5.

<sup>244</sup> I, q. 28, a. 4, c.

<sup>245</sup> **IV CG** 24, n. 15.

<sup>246</sup> III, q. 35, a. 3, ad 1 m.

<sup>247</sup> III, q. 35, a. 5, obj. 1.

in the same specific nature; as a man proceeds from a man, and a horse from a horse.

So in living things, which, such as men and animals, generation includes both these kinds of generation. But if they **proceed from potential to actual life** there is a being whose life does not proceed from potentiality to act, procession (if found in such a being) excludes entirely the first kind of generation; whereas it may have that kind of generation which belongs to living things.

So in this manner **the procession of the Word in God is generation; for He proceeds by way of intelligible action**, which is a vital operation: - **from a conjoined principle** (as above described): - by way of **similitude**, inasmuch as **the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the object conceived**: - and exists in the same nature, because in God the act of understanding and His existence are the same, as shown above (Q14, A4). Hence the procession of the Word in God is called generation; and **the Word Himself proceeding is called the Son**.<sup>248</sup>

2.] Filiation is a relationship:

I answer that, **A notion is the proper idea whereby we know a divine Person**. Now the divine persons are **multiplied by reason of their origin**: and origin includes the idea of someone from whom another comes, and of someone that comes from another, and by these two modes a person can be known.

Therefore the Person of the Father cannot be known by the fact that He is from another; but by the fact that He is from no one; and thus the notion that belongs to Him is called innascibility.

As the source of another, He can be known in two ways, because as **the Son is from Him**, the Father is known by the notion of paternity; and as the Holy Ghost is from Him, He is known by the notion of common spiration.

The Son can be known as **begotten** by another, and thus He is known by filiation; and also by another person proceeding from Him, the Holy Ghost, and thus He is known in the same way as the Father is known, by common spiration.

The Holy Spirit can be known by the fact that He is from another, or from others; thus He is known by **procession**; but not by the fact that another is from Him, as no divine person proceeds from Him.

Therefore, there are Five notions in God: **innascibility, paternity, filiation, and procession**. Of these only four are relations, for innascibility is not a relation,

---

<sup>248</sup> III, q. 27, a. 2, c.

except by reduction, as will appear later (q. 33, a. 4, r. 3). Four only are properties. For **common spiration is not a property**; because it belongs to two persons. Three are personal notions - i.e. constituting persons, paternity, filiation and procession. Common spiration and innascibility are called notions of Persons, but not personal notions, as we shall explain further on (q. 40, a. 1, r. 1).<sup>249</sup>

In man, this is an accident, whereas in God it is the very divine essence itself<sup>250</sup>. The difference between the **notional acts** and the **relations** only has a bearing on the manner of signification; consequently, in God **birth** and **filiation** do not really differ.<sup>251</sup> One can say however, that according to our reason, even in God **passive generation, birth**, logically precedes **filiation** and therefore, the Person of the Son, as does **active generation**, presupposes the Person of the Father:

### Generation with respect to the Father and with respect to the Son

However, we should see that the order of **active generation** [with reference to **paternity**] is to be taken one way and the order of **passive generation**, or **nativity**, [with reference to **Filiation**], is to be taken another.

In the order of nature, **active generation** presupposes the person of the begetter. But, in the same order, **passive generation**, or **nativity**, precedes the begotten person, for the begotten person owes his existence to his birth. Thus, active generation, according to our way of representing it, presupposes paternity, understood as constituting the Person of the Father.

**Nativity**, however, does not presuppose filiation, understood as constituting the Person of the Son but, according to our manner of conceiving precedes it in both respects, i.e., both as being constitutive of the person and as being a **relation**. And whatever pertains to the procession of the Holy Spirit is to be understood in a similar way.<sup>252</sup>

In the bosom of the Trinity, paternity and filiation are real relations<sup>253</sup> and really distinct, since each of these is really identical to the unique Divine essence<sup>254</sup>.

3.] In God, the relation of filiation is nothing other than the Person of the Son<sup>255</sup>; it is a **personal relationship**, a **personal property**, in this sense, that

<sup>249</sup> I, q. 32, a. 3 c.

<sup>250</sup> *IV CG* 14, nn. 8-9.

<sup>251</sup> I, q. 41, a. 1 ad 2 m.

<sup>252</sup> *Comp. Theol.* C. 64. – *Aquinas' Shorter Summa. Saint Thomas's Own Concise Version of his 'Summa Theologica'*, o.c. p. 60.

<sup>253</sup> I, q. 40, a. 2 c.

<sup>254</sup> I, q. 28, a. 2.

<sup>255</sup> I, q. 40, a. 2, c.

it constitutes the very Person of the Son<sup>256</sup>, to the point that without filiation there would not be had the *hypostasis* of the Son.<sup>257</sup> Totally entire in the Son, the Divine Filiation by nature is therefore unique. Christ, being the Son of God in a perfect manner, there is no place in Him for any other filiation, if this were to correspond to His Eternal Generation<sup>258</sup>. It is from this unique Filiation that there is derived that of all the adoptive sons of God.<sup>259</sup>

### c. Filiation and Generation

1.] Let us resume now the bond between **filiation** and **generation**. There can be had in God a Filiation in the measure that there exists a power of generation, active in the Father, and passive in the Son.<sup>260</sup> If one considers Divine Filiation by nature as to its **origin**, there is noted that the Son of God receives the divinity by His eternal **birth**.<sup>261</sup> In a general manner, **filiation** logically follows **generation**<sup>262</sup>, from a living being, in the occurrence of the person, i.e., **birth**<sup>263</sup>, which is a way to be received by the Father<sup>264</sup>. Properly speaking there is only Filiation when there is generation effected by **likeness**, to the one who begets - and the perfection of Filiation by nature, the **Image** of the Father enjoys the perfect divine Filiation<sup>265</sup> – ours can only be relative and imperfect.

2.] The analysis of the notion of **Filiation** in St. Thomas leads logically to explore that of **generation**. If there really is given to us the power of becoming sons of God, this supposes that we are begotten into the Divine Life. A spiritual generation such as this coming to an existing person could be designated a **re-generation**. This notion also merits to be examined.

### d. Theological Corollaries

#### [I.] FILIAL FEAR

##### According to St. Thomas Aquinas

*... There is no need to be afraid, or to worry about them. Simply reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope you have ... [cf. 1 P 3:14, f.]*

<sup>256</sup> I, q. 30, a. 2 ad 1m.

<sup>257</sup> I, q. 40, a. 3, sc.

<sup>258</sup> III, q.32, a. 3, c.

<sup>259</sup> IV CG 4, n. 14.

<sup>260</sup> I Sent., d. 7, q. 2, a. 1 c.

<sup>261</sup> I Sent., d. 18, q. 1, a. 4 c.

<sup>262</sup> I Sent., d. 9, a. 2, a. 2, obj. 4.

<sup>263</sup> III Sent., d. 3, q.2, a. 2, obj. 1.

<sup>264</sup> III Sent. d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qu. 1, c.

<sup>265</sup> cf. In Ps 2.

### Presentation

[1] St. Thomas offers a rather broad treatment of the reality of *fear* in his many works: he speaks of *chaste fear*, and the *fear of reverence*, as well as *reverential fear*.<sup>266</sup>

[2] There is a certain paradox in the expression *filial fear*. Ordinarily, in the ideal, authentic filial conduct should be more indicated by confidence, and intimate affection. In a common understand of ‘fear’, it usually implies a movement of retreat, withdrawal, standing apart, even flight in the face of impending evil, or danger.

[3] Prior to the Incarnation, there were those who were subjected to *the law of fear*, dreading the prospect of risking death in being seen before the face of God. Admitting this, but there were also those who lived their lives under *the law of love*, and yet even these were expected **to fear this Father, full of tenderness**. This is what is so hard to understand. The scriptures tell us:

*... Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The Spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, **Abba, Father!** The Spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are the children of God ... !* [cf. Rm 8:13, ff.]. – *... In love, there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love: because to fear, is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is imperfect in love. We are to love because He loved us first ...* [cf. 1 Jn 4: 18].

†

<sup>266</sup> cf. *De Spe*, a. 4, ad 2<sup>um</sup>. The Angelic Doctor offers two specific treatises on Fear [cf. *III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 2; *III-II*, q. 19]. He then makes abundant use of the adjective *filial* as follows:

*IV Sent.*, d. 14, q. 1, a. 2, qu. 2, obj. 4, regarding penance. *II*, q. 80, a. 10, ad 3<sup>um</sup>; q. 85, a. 5, fear in the act of repentance.

*I-II*, q. 67, a. 4, obj. 2, as 2<sup>um</sup> regarding hope – q. 113, a. 4, regarding the purification of faith.

*II-II*, q. 7, fear as the effect of faith: q. 22, a. 2, c ad 1<sup>um</sup>, the precepts concerning fear; q. 25, a. 1, ad 1<sup>um</sup>; q. 121, a. 1, c, et ad 3<sup>um</sup>, the Gift of Piety.

*De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 7, obj 2; q. 28, a. 4, obj, 4 et ad 3<sup>um</sup>, 4<sup>um</sup>.

*De caritate*, a. 10, sc. 4; *De Spe* a. 4, as 2<sup>um</sup>.

*In Is* 1:2; 11 and 33.

*In Rm* 8, lect. 3.

*In Ps* 18, n. 6; 21, n. 19; 51, n. 4

*In Mt* 5, lect. 2; *Jn* 4, lect 3l 13, lect 3; 15, lect. 3l 16, lect 6; 17, lect. 1.

*In 2 Co* 7, lect. 1 and 4.

It can be noted that absence of it in *Prima Pars* and in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. However, there are abundant quotations in the Scripture commentaries, and in particular in the Saint’s *Comment in Jn*.

## 1.] The Object of Fear

a.] Fear, in so far as it is a passion, designates a movement of sensibility, manifesting itself by flight from a future and menacing evil, to which one can resist only with real difficulty<sup>267</sup>. Fear thus pertains to the irascible appetite since its object is the arduous. As such, this passion to many seems unsuited to be then elevated by an analogous transposition to the level of **Filial Fear**. Certainly, this analogy implies not only resemblance but also dissimilarity. It remains that if the object [which assumes a function of specification, of form, in the order of morality] is an evil in the case of the passion of fear – and then a Good [Which is nothing less than the Heavenly Father!] in the case of filial fear, it is hard if not impossible to escape from pure equivocality.

b.] St. Thomas perceived this himself quite well, and he weaves into the article consecrated to the object of fear, the possibility of a fear relative to God.<sup>268</sup> He ably recognized that fear, including its movement of flight, considers, first and foremost, evil as the proper object of fear. He adds, however, that genuine good is not at all a total stranger to the object of fear. Indeed, that which in itself, is a good, may produce a result that we might experience as painful: this is the situation of all punishment, even that inflicted by a good pedagogue. Then, on the other hand, the privation of a good that is much loved can be looked upon as an evil to redress. It is under this double title that God, Who is the Sovereign Good, can in some manner, be the object of fear. One might fear as one who might inflict punishment, which may be good in itself, even though very painful as far as we are concerned: to this evil of punishment there responds **Servile Fear**.

c.] One might fear thus that through our own fault we might indeed be separated from Him: to this evil of fault there responds, a **Chaste**, or **Filial Fear**. In the case of Servile Fear the subject is more occupied with itself and with the inconvenience that suffering may heap on one, than in the case of **Filial Fear**. This implies that an offense has been committed against a loving and beloved God. The passage from the first to the second corresponds then to this **movement of conversion** by which every son of God recognizes a purification of his, even to the point of perfect abandonment, totally without self-interest, and yearning solely for the glory of the Father.

d.] There exists further an *intermediary fear* which recognizes that to injure a beloved person, but this being something over which one expects to suffer

---

<sup>267</sup> St. Thomas sometimes uses the expression: *affectus filialis*. In Rm 8:15 [n. 644]; In Jn 16:23, n. 2142; In Jn 17:1, n. 2181 – or, *amor filialis*, in Rm 8:15, n. 2142. There might be noted here II-II, q. 21, a. 1 c, and ad 3m, where the emphasis is on The Gift of Piety.

<sup>268</sup> I-II, q. 42, a. 1; II-II, q. 19, a. 1.

some consequences: this is not only servile but is even more a filial fear, and such fear is termed initial. This division of fear [not forgetting human, worldly fear] into servile, initial, and filial, describes this the spiritual journey of a human being liberated from all slavery by divine love, under the motion of the Holy Spirit, truly interests all the people of God: each one is called to live personally and in the Church, the passage over from servitude to filiation by **adoption**. This passage is nothing more than the impact of the Paschal Mystery in the life of the faithful Christian. This is because of its **Christic, Christo-conforming** which the grace which derives in us from the Incarnate Word makes us participate in the **filial fear**, by which Christ Himself would exclaim: **Abba, Father !**

## 2.] Fear in Jesus Christ

a.] The doctrine of St. Thomas on the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** takes its biblical source in the Saint's meditation and commentary on **Is 11:2**, according to the **LXX version of the Vulgate: Upon Him** [the Messiah] **will rest the Spirit of God, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and fortitude, a spirit of knowledge and piety and the spirit of the Fear of God will fill Him**. It is therefore manifest that Jesus Christ personally possessed eminently all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

b.] St. Thomas comments on this thought: Jesus Christ had these gifts according to their most excellent employment, just as they are exercised in the heavenly homeland. He did not have servile fear, in that He would have feared any penalty – nor did He have any filial fear of ever sinning. However, He did have that **guiltless (chaste) fear, called reverence**. His prayer was heard because of His reverence (submitted so humbly) [cf. Heb 5:7]. And this is the way it is with all the Gifts [cf. **In Is 11:2**]. [This may be the only passage where **filial fear** is not considered to be the same as **chaste [guiltless] fear** – and the only passage in St. Thomas which holds that Christ did not have filial fear].

c.] And so it is, that **from His plenitude that we have all received, grace for grace**. Jesus Christ did enjoy the Gift of Fear in its sublime fullness, as St. Thomas points out in his work on Isaiah the Prophet – which may have been one of his very first works.

d.] In the **Books on the Sentences**, *III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 2 – is entirely dedicated to the **Gift of Fear**. Here, when the Angelic Doctor speaks of **filial** fear, he adds, **or, chaste [guiltless] fear**.<sup>269</sup> Fear, the saint wrote, is that which consists in a flight from the evil of fault only in so far as this would result in being separated from God, i.e., **chaste, or filial fear**.

---

<sup>269</sup> Cf. *III Sent.*, d. 34, a. 1, qa. 2 c.



e.] A bit later,<sup>270</sup> the Angelic Doctor comments: Fear, which is a gift caused by the love of God, and so it is called **amicable, or filial fear** in so far as God is called **Our Father**. It is also called **chaste**, in so far here God is metaphorically called **the Spouse of our Souls**.

f.] And still later<sup>271</sup> the expression **filial fear** is also quite rare – and the reason seems to be, as it was with Peter Lombard, **chaste fear** is the same as **filial fear**: that family reverence for one who is sublimely loved. This relationship may also be found in the later master-piece of the Saint [II-II, q. 19].

g.] Less than a year and a half prior to his death, in his *Summa* on the question concerning the **Personal Grace** of Jesus Christ, the Angelic Doctor consecrated again an article to bring this out.<sup>272</sup> This Fear, which is counted among the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, is simply **Filial Fear**<sup>273</sup> - keeping in mind that the **servile fear** that comes from the Holy Spirit is also **good**<sup>274</sup> - even though it does not proceed from the perfection of charity. The eminent manner of **filial fear** in Jesus Christ clarifies the comprehension of our own participation in Jesus' own **filial affection**, in His humanity<sup>275</sup>, towards His Father. St. Thomas adds the real challenging comment: 'One does not fear unless through **eminence**.'

h.] This remark goes a long way in safe-guarding the general notion of fear, such as it is, before being elaborated in the tract on the Passions. The object of fear has to, in some manner appear as **difficult** to the subject experiencing it. In the case of Jesus Christ it is thus considered flowing from the distinction, without confusion of the two natures in the very bosom of the hypostatic union: the humanity of the Word cannot be separated from the divinity, to which it is united, even though this human nature is something 'other' than the Divine Nature, and less than it. Therefore, in Jesus Christ, His **fear** is **a movement of affectionate respect: the eminence of its object arouses reverence in the subject**.

i.] Therefore, it should be said that in Jesus Christ there was indeed **fear of the Lord**. This was not present in so far as it was concerned with any evil of separation from God because of sin. Nor was this Fear present in the Son of God in so far as it would have been concerned with the evil of being punished for one's faults. But **filial fear** is present in Jesus Christ in so far as it is directly concerned with **divine eminence**, i.e., in so far as the soul of Jesus Christ is moved with a **certain affection of reverence** toward God, by the actions of the Holy Spirit. Hence, Heb

<sup>270</sup> ib., a. 3, qa. 1, c.

<sup>271</sup> IV Sent., d. 14q. 1, a. 2, qa. 1, obj. 4

<sup>272</sup> III, q. 7, a. 6.

<sup>273</sup> III Sent., d. 34, q. 2, a. 1, qa 3; II-II, q. 19, a. 1; III, q. 7, a. 6, S 3M.

<sup>274</sup> III Sent., d. 334, q. 2, a. 2, qa 1; II-II, q. 19, a. 4.

<sup>275</sup> III, q. 7, a. 5, ad 2m; a. 6 c.

5:7 maintains that all of Jesus' prayers were heard because of His reverence. It might also be noted explicitly that there is a **filial fear** experienced by the disciples with regard to Jesus Christ: it is that which kept them from interrogating Him when they found Him in conversation with the Samaritan woman [*In Jn 4, 27, n. 623*]. The question arises whether Fear is a theological virtue. And the answer is 'no', because its formal object is not God Himself, but rather that **eminence** of the divinity over humanity.<sup>276</sup> While Fear of the Lord does not enjoy 'theological level' as do Faith, Hope, and Love – however, it is intimately bound up with them.

### 3.] Fear, Humility, Prayer

**a.] Humility:** By this respectful submission, filial fear uproots pride and fortifies humility of the one experiencing it. Fear excludes the principle of pride – for this reason fear plays a role against pride. However, it does not follow from this that fear is the same of humility. But rather it is its principle. This principle will exhibit **reverence** to the Creator of all, from the consideration of His **majesty**, residing in one's own **smallness**.<sup>277</sup> In St. Thomas' view, humility is associated with the virtue of temperance, of which humility is a 'potential part'.<sup>278</sup> In conformity with the Commentary of St. Augustine on the Sermon on the Mount, it is also tied in with the **First Beatitude**, which is that of **Poverty of the Spirit**<sup>279</sup> – to those who live it, there is promised the Kingdom of the Heavens. **Filial fear** in arousing **humility** and **poverty of spirit**, by the reverence which it implies, constitutes thus the port of entry into **the life according to the Spirit**<sup>280</sup>, the beginning of **Wisdom** [cf. Ps 110:10]. This wisdom, as knowledge of the divine realities implies, along with its speculative character a practical dimension in that which it grasps in the contemplation of its object, from which it can direct human actions and life toward the ultimate destination. Fear is therefore the beginning of wisdom, its first effect.

**b.] Prayer:** since the ultimate notion of fear consists in **reverence for God**, this is manifested particularly in **Filial Prayer**. The discussion on this appears especially in St. Thomas' Commentary *In Jn*: the Son prays to the Father. This flows from the very nature of the 'Son' to seek the Father, and to present to Him His requests out of love. This is why the Evangelist calls God 'Father', to make believers understand that it is out of **filial affection** that each of the faithful should pray: ***You call Me Father, and would never cease to follow Me*** [cf. Jr 3:19]. Thus, the **filial quality** of prayer appears as a condition for its to be ever heard. Does not Christ remind us: ***that which you ask the father in My Name, He will give it to you***

<sup>276</sup> II-II, q. 19, a. 9, a. 4.

<sup>277</sup> De Ver. q. 24, a. 4, ad 4m.

<sup>278</sup> II-II, q. 141, a. 1 ad 3m.

<sup>279</sup> II-II, q. 19, a. 12; *In Mt 5*, n. 418.

<sup>280</sup> II-II, q. 19, a. 12, obj 1.

[cf. Jn 16:23 b]? St. Thomas is able to find seven conditions in order for prayer to be good: to ask for **spiritual** goods; with **perseverance**; with agreement **in the Church**; that prayer should proceed out of a **filial affection**, as well as from **humility**, that it happen in the **time that is needed**; that it be for the **well being** of the subject.<sup>281</sup> There is a clear dependence in that the effectiveness of prayer depends on its filial character.

c.] **Filiation:** this prayer which is enrooted in the intimacy of the heart has its source in the **Holy Spirit**. It is He Who enables us to say genuinely, **Abba, Father!** Commenting on Rm 8: 15, St. Thomas remarks that this **filial cry** is not principally vocal, but proceeds from the most profound **spiritual interiority** – it is a prayer engraved by the Spirit of Jesus Christ on our hearts. It is He in effect Who attests to our divine filiation of our filial love infused into our hearts.

#### 4.] Filial fear and Faith

a.] It is true that ***without faith it is impossible to please God*** [cf. Heb 11:6]. Therefore, there is every right to expect a tight bond between **the filial and reverential dimension** of the Christian life on the one hand – and then on the other, the **dynamic presence of the Faith** in the heart of the believer. This theological virtue maintains with regard to filial Fear a bond like that of a cause with regard to its effect. It is the **faith** indeed which shows that God is a sovereign good and that a separated being is the most awesome evil. This would be when one pretends to equal God, in the place of adoring Him, and its absurd pride.

b.] Faith therefore causes **filial fear** in presenting its object to it. Pondering on Si 2:8 [... ***You who fear the Lord, believe in Him*** ] - St. Thomas notes that Filial Fear, for its part, **comforts Faith**<sup>282</sup>. The formal object of this latter is the First Truth Himself, which means in other terms that the motive for the act of faith is **the authority of God, revealing Himself**. Since Filial Fear leads the believer to **reverence** God, it at the same time inclines each one to submit his/her native intelligence to believe in His Promises. This indication of the inter-action between Faith and Fear can be suggestive in the matter of theology and of the spiritual paths: the more **faith-filled, faithful** is our life, the **more filial is our love**. Reciprocally, this is likewise true: for the Faith and Filial Fear are firmly united in the **loving adoration, reverence** toward God.

c.] It goes without saying that this Faith, which augments conjointly **Filial Fear** and **Living Faith**, comes to be **acting, formed by Charity**. Separation from God and the lack of respect toward Him are two evils, diametrically opposed to the

<sup>281</sup> *In Jn 16: 23*, n. 2142.

<sup>282</sup> II-II, q. 7, a. 1.

sublime goods of union with God and honor shown to Him, and these are so loved. All lesser goods are loved with regard to God, the sovereign good. This is why in the process of Justification there intervene both a movement of **perfect Faith, informed by charity** – as well as the inclination of free will to **submit oneself to God**, and this is achieved through **filial fear** and **humility**.<sup>283</sup>

**d.]** That which **Filial Fear** is for informed Faith, **Chaste Fear** is for **formed Faith**. St. Thomas wrote this early in his *III Sent.*<sup>284</sup> He makes this clearer in his *Summa* : servile fear has for its cause inform faith, but **Filial Fear** has for its cause **Formed Faith**, that which brings a believer **through charity**, to **adhere to God** and **to submit to Him**.<sup>285</sup> He notes, however, a major difference: inform faith and formed faith constitute one and the same habit, for they have one and the same Object, **God Himself**. This is different in the case of Fear: servile fear and Filial Fear are concerned with evil, which even though they have in common that this is with regard to God, remain specifically different [as a penalty that can be inflicted, or as separation from Him. They are therefore specifically distinct. **Filial fear flees the evil of penalty – whereas Filial Fear flees the evil of sin**.<sup>286</sup>

## **5.] Filial Fear and Hope**

**a.]** In the moral synthesis which constitutes **Pars II** of the *Summa*, St. Thomas associates the gift of Filial Fear not only with the Cardinal Virtue of Temperance, but also – and above all, with the virtue of **Theological Hope**. In his writings on the *Sentences*, St. Thomas places Fear within the general study on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>287</sup> After having discussed the Gifts in General here [q. 1], St. Thomas lays out in three articles the matter of fear in itself [q. 2, a. 1], servile fear [q. 2, a. 2] and filial fear [a. 3]. He considers then the Gifts of **Fortitude** and **Piety** which flow from that of Fear [q. 3]. In the *Summa*, in addition to his discussion of the human Passions, the student may discover a tract on Fear in the treatise on **Theological Hope** in the course of a study on this Virtue and before that of the sins which are opposed to hope, and the precepts which regulate it.

**b.]** For it is indeed by **Hope** that we desire to be united to God, and it is by **Fear** that we dread being separated from Him. On earth, Hope and Fear do not co-exist as two adversaries that would cancel each other out, but rather they **collaborate** like two allies. Their appetitive movements are assuredly contrary, since one tends toward the good, while the other flees from a menacing evil and thus they do seem though be really opposed. Their respective objects, **God Himself**

<sup>283</sup> I-II, q. 113, a. 4, ad 1m.

<sup>284</sup> d. 34, q. 2, a. 3, qu 1, obj. 1.

<sup>285</sup> II-II, q. 7, a. 1, c.

<sup>286</sup> II-II, q. 19, a. 5.

<sup>287</sup> cf. III Sent., d. 34, q. 2.

as our beatitude – and separation from Him, are opposed to each other in so far as good and evil converge in the measure that **to fear being separated from God would never be without hoping to be united to Him**. Thus, Fear is opposed to Hope as by the opposition to good and evil. Yet, Filial Fear is not contrary to Theological Hope.

c.] It is stated that Filial Fear and Hope are *formally* opposed to each other, in so far as their meaning flows from the objects with which they are concerned [good and evil]. However, there is a bond between them in their mutual cohesion and perfecting. It might be noted further that if the Gift of Fear comes to the help of the theological Virtue of Hope, in order to sustain it and perfect it, as is fitting for the Gift with regard to the Virtue to which it is associated, they also reciprocate one another: hope aids and embellishes Filial Fear. Their lot is so intimately bound that they can only grow together. This entire analysis is valid only for that particular act of Filial Fear by which it dreads ever being separated from God, and this act disappears in the bestowal of eternal glory. The mutual cohesion and the perfecting of Hope and of Fear only stand up during our earthy sojourn. In Heavenly Glory Hope disappears and Fear subsists, but this can only be true by reason of other of the actions of Fear – **reverence for the Almighty**.

d.] The analysis of Fear as a Passion of the irascible appetite is contrary to Theological Hope marks so markedly St. Thomas' reflection, that it will always seem to cause him a bit of discomfort by the fact that the object of all fear has to be an evil. This presents him with the occasion of constantly refining his concept of filial fear. This cannot be limited to the Fear of offending the Father Whom each loves. If this were the case, one would not be able to explain the **permanence of the Gift of Fear in the glory of heaven**. St. Thomas is constant in his interpretation of Ps 18:10: ***the holy fear of the Lord remains forever***. He sees there an indubitable affirmation of the existence of **a filial fear in the blessed life**, especially since then one's free will is no longer subjected to the flexibility which would allow sin, the offense with regard to the Father. From St. Thomas' early writing<sup>288</sup> there are distinguished two acts of filial fear of which the first, which is the **fear of separation from God, disappears under the light of glory** and with it every possibility of sinning. The second act, though, is the **admiration and reverence** for the **superiority and the eminence of God**, which lasts throughout the beatific vision. The same explanation is found in the two parallel places dating from the last years of the Angelic Doctor.<sup>289</sup>

<sup>288</sup> III Sent., d. 34, q. 2, a. 3, qu 4.

<sup>289</sup> De Spe, a. 4, ad 2m; I-II, q. 67, a. 4 ad 2m.

**e.]** Keeping in mind the cohesion and the inter-dependence here below between the **Virtue of Hope** and the **Gift of Fear**, there was posed from this fact the problem of bringing into harmony **the disappearance of Hope** and **the permanence of Filial Fear in the life of glory**. In this regard, III Sent. D. 34, q. 2, a. 3, qu. 4 furnished an explanation apparently different from the parallel passages. This teaching is that Hope, contrary to Fear, implies a distance with regard to its object It has to be admitted; however, this response seems to pose more difficulties than to what it responds. From the moment that it is present and acquired, i.e., when the **distance** in question has been abolished, the appetitive movement finds repose in the possession of the object formerly hoped for, now present in happiness and joy.

**f.]** Is there anything similar with regard to Fear? It seems that like Hope, the object of Fear is likewise absent, distant. To argue from the immediate presence of God to the intellect of the just in the beatific vision would not respond in any way to this question, in the measure that if God is directly the Object of the Beatitude, this is only indirectly so with regard to Fear. Properly speaking, it is the distance between the creature and God Who is the object of Fear. This response, though, does not resolve anything here, because it falls into the dilemma of presupposing what it seeks *petitio principii*. If in effect one were to declare: Fear does not require distance with regard to the object since it remains in Glory, and then its 'distance' is absorbed by the immediacy of the vision, one seems to have already acquired the very point offering the difficulty, i.e., the **permanence of Fear in Glory**. It is necessary then to admit that in Beatitude, against the literalness of the proposed text [cf. III Sent., d. 34, q. 2, a. 3, qu 4, ad 2um] Filial fear remains with an incomprehensible distance with regard to its object. If, furthermore, the Saint in heaven finds himself in the happy impossibility of being unable to sin, and, as a consequence, of being ever separated from God, it must be concluded from this that the act of Filial Fear which remains does not rest on the possibility of offending God.

**g.]** The distance of human beings from God in glory, and the immediacy of the Beatific Vision by the Light of Glory cannot be overcome. Nor can the operative union by way of knowledge and love annulled. The entitative difference between God in Himself and human beings considered 'gods' by participation, a term used for all those who become, by grace, **sharers in the divine nature** [cf. 1 P 2:4], and hence, are **adopted sons**.

**h.]** This ontological distance remains infinite: that which is received by participation is only possessed as that which is not proper to either. The *divinization* of the Christian, as real as it is, elevates human nature without violating it by any impossible substantial mutation, which would break down the limitations of its

finitude as a creature: the old principle: ***whatever is received is received according to the manner of the recipient*** holds true also for the sublime influence of Grace.

i.] The infinite distance, both ontological and permanent, between human nature and the divine nature, also is the reason for the act of Filial Fear which is **reverence toward God**. Bring to the light of day the veritable identity of this distance clarifies then the reason **why Fear can remain while Hope disappears**. Hope always implies some deficiency, the absence of beatitude, that absence which the eventual presence of the possession of beatitude<sup>3</sup> will make disappear. But, Fear supposes a natural deficiency of the creature because of its infinite distance toward God, and this deficiency will remain in heaven. And this is why Fear never completely disappears.

## 6.] Filial Fear and Charity

a.] Filial Fear, at least in its **act of reverence toward God**, just as Charity itself does, surpasses the gate of death. Faith [will become vision], Hope [will become Possession] disappear, whereas **love** and **reverential fear** remain. There exists between these not only **a relationship of concomitance**, but also one of **causality**: Charity in effect excludes all servility in fear. This is the sense that St. Thomas seems to derive from 1 Jn 4:18: ***Perfect love banishes fear***. He understands this certainly not of **Filial Reverential Fear** which subsists in Glory, but of servile Fear. More precisely that which the infusion of charity chases away is not so much the substance of servile fear, which is a good, one that is given by the Holy Spirit, but its servility which is **accidental** to it. 'Servility is opposed to freedom. Therefore, one is free when he is the master of himself – consequently, he is a slave who does not act as his own master but as one who is moved from the outside. Now, to act through love is for every man to act of himself, for this is his proper inclination which leads him into action. And this is why it is against the notion of servility to act out of love. Thus, **servile fear**, in so far as it is servile, is **contrary to charity**.' In Justification, servile fear intervenes therefore solely as an antecedent disposition, since servile fear participates in the very movement of infused and operating charity.

b.] Perfect charity having chased away the servility of fear still stimulates the growth of its **filial** quality. In effect, **love is the cause of fear**: one does not flee an evil except in the measure that one loves the good to which it is contrary. Now, therefore that the **servile fear** proceeds from the **self-love**, to which there is opposed the penalty that one dreads, **filial fear is rooted in the love for God which charity is**. Filial Fear increases then with charity as an effect with its cause. It also happens furthermore with other virtues and Gifts of the Holy Spirit infused conjointly with charity.

c.] It might be observed in this regard, if not a change in his teaching, at least a modification between the two parallel texts noted above [III Sent., d. 34, q. 2, a. 3. qu 3 and II-II, q. 19, a. 10] in the subject of the growth of charity. In the earlier text [*Sentences* ], St. Thomas emphasizes that it reduces the imperfection that constitutes the possibility of being separated from God - and that this, as a consequence, increases the perfection which love is in one fearing to be separated from God]. In the later text of the *Summa*, the Angelic Doctor mentions that servile fear diminishes, especially in its act, **when charity increases**, for one fears less the penalty, the challenge required in loving God more: in the first place, because one lends less attention to his own personal good, which contrasts with all personal inconvenience; then, in the second place, because **the one who adheres more strongly to God hopes for the recompense with more confidence, and consequently dreads penalty less**. These two points of view are legitimate but the first one goes further in the sense that it attests that it is in from the **reverential aspect that filial fear grows with Charity** – since, according to its act, with the fear of being separated from God, true love for God diminishes. In fact, even though St. Thomas does not express it here, the perfection of the Gift of Fear, in Christ, which responds to His fullness of grace and charity, is eminently verified in the act of **reverence for the Father**, not in the fear of any impossible rupture of the Son's hypostatic Union with Him.

d.] According to Rm 5:5, ***The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us*** - and according to 2 Co 3:17: ***Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty***. It follows from this that where the Spirit bestows His love, He grants freedom. If one prolongs the reasoning of St. Thomas, one could not help but note that **reverence toward God** coincides with **the event of liberty through love**. There thus exists an inter-dependence between **love, liberty** and **reverential fear**. We only truly love God freely; such loving thus liberates us and leads us to **reverence** Him; And **to revere God** incites us to love Him: it is necessary to recall here that St. Thomas does not oppose the law for liberty – on the contrary, he does not hesitate to define the **New Law** as the **interior grace itself of the Holy Spirit, received by faith in Christ and operating through charity**. Thus, when one wonders whether it is fitting that fear should play a role in precepts, there is little surprise to read these words of the Saint: 'as far as Filial Fear is concerned, which testifies to the **reverence of God** – this is as a *genus* relative to the **Love of God** and a principle for all observances accomplished in reverence to God. And this is why, through Filial Fear, the Law has given precepts, as also through charity, for both are a preamble for exterior acts which are ordered in the Law, and which look toward the Precepts of the Decalogue<sup>290</sup>. And he forcefully clarifies: 'Filial fear is a preamble to the Law, not as something exterior to it, but as

<sup>290</sup> II-II, q. 22, a. 2.



the principle of the Law, such as dilection also is. This conception of Fear as the Principle of the Law expresses profoundly that our obedience toward the Law and the will of God proceed from love and from filial reverence which it provides us with to have for Him.

e.] The commentary on this verse: *I no longer call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master does; but I call you friends* [cf. Jn 15:15] – in his *Commentary on John* takes great care to read here the affirmation of a radical opposition between the titles servant and friend. The author sees primarily in the first member of the verse: *I no longer call you servants* - the statement that **friendship** and **servitude** are contrary, that the former excludes the latter. Then, the second member of the same verse: *for the servant does not know what the Master does* - explains that the servant, being as a stranger with regard to his master, does not enjoy his confidences.<sup>291</sup>

f.] Up to this point, the exegesis remains literal and without any excess of originality. There might arise immediately two interesting objections the solutions for which provide the occasion for some remarks that are quite refined regarding the relationships between **Fear, Love** and **Liberty**<sup>292</sup>:

- **The first objection** reposes on the title of servant, slave, applied by Scripture to the Apostles, to the Psalmist, to the Blessed: *Paul, servant [slave] of Jesus Christ* [Rm 1:1] - *I am Your servant* [cf. Ps 118:125] - *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your lord* [cf. Mt 25:23].

The response to the first objection has recourse to the distinction between servile fear and filial fear. One has to say, with St. Augustine, that servitude, properly speaking, is created by fear. Now, there exists a two-fold fear: servile, which charity eliminates [cf. 1 Jn 4:18]: *There is no fear in love*. And then there is filial fear which is engendered by charity, for one does not fear that which he loves. This is a good and chaste fear, of which Ps 18:10 declares: *The holy fear of God remains forever*.

To these two fears there corresponds two subjections: the one proceeds from filial fear: it is by this that all are meant to be the servants, the just and the sons of God, as the objection shows. The other proceeds from the fear of chastisement and is opposed to love and according to this the Lord says: *I do not call you servants*. There follows a very instructive development on the difference between the free man and the slave. The man is free when he fulfills the old Roman elliptic formula when he is *the cause of his own destiny*.

<sup>291</sup> In Jn 15: 15, n. 2o14.

<sup>292</sup> Ib., n. 2015.

This is understood not only of the efficient cause but also of the final cause. The free man acts for himself and by himself. The servant does not act for himself but for his master. 'But it happens sometimes that a servant might act through someone else [when his cause is that of another], which is for him the final cause, but nonetheless he acts of himself, in being the proper mover of his own action.

Such is the situation of the good servant which is moved by charity to produce good works. He does not act for himself for charity does not seek its own interests, but those of Jesus Christ of the salvation of one's neighbor. As for those who do not act in any way for the sake of another, these are bad servants'. In this text, St. Thomas justifies therefore the qualification **the good servant**<sup>293</sup> for the Apostles and all the just, for all those who furthermore, we know are the friends and the sons of God by grace and charity.

There only remains, then, to make explain the existence of filial fear, by recourse to the Aristoteleian philosophy on causality, in showing its freedom and lack of self-interest. The **good servant**, which means **the same as 'son'**, is *the cause of his own destiny*, through that which he does as efficient cause [and for this, he is free], and *the cause of another*, as for the final cause: thus, his lack of self-interest.

These two causalities, and their consequences of freedom and lack of self-interest, are not found in this Commentary simply juxtaposed, but resolutely coordinated their tie, their bond, which will astonish no one, is **charity**. This is because such a one is moved by charity, which the Good Servant acts freely. St. Thomas does not explain here how the divine inspiration does not constrain freedom. He does show this sufficiently elsewhere<sup>294</sup>. He is content stating that love includes and arouses freedom. Furthermore, it is also because one is moved by charity which the Good Servant manifests this lack of self-interest proper to **filial reverence**. This lack of self-interest is exercised with regard to oneself – but, extraordinary interest, in an eminent manner, is shown toward God, as the final cause. The Good Servant, moved by charity, and consequently by Filial Fear, therefore relates every action to the glory of God. He does all, freely [*the cause of his own destiny*] for God [his cause is that of Another]. At least, the Good Servant tends in this direction.

- **The second objection** connects with the fact that according to Am 3:7, the masters frequently reveal their secrets to their servants: **God does not do anything kept a secret from His Servant the prophets.**

<sup>293</sup> In Jn 13:16, n. 1783.

<sup>294</sup> I-II, q. 106-108; In rm 8l:14, n. 635.

The response to the second objection explains why the Lord unveils His Will on the Good Servant. This is not to imply that he is merely an instrument. He does not merely collaborate in the execution of the work, but also has a role in its conception<sup>295</sup>. In revealing to His Good Servant the secrets of His heart, the Lord, then treats the Good Servant as a **Friend**. Indeed, this is the authentic sign of **friendship** which the friend reveals to his beloved the secrets of his heart. As this is the proper attitude among friends, i.e., to be of one heart and one soul, that which the friend reveals follows from the depths of his own heart. Pr 25:9 states; ***that which concerns you, treat of it with your friend*** .

Now God, in making us **participate in His wisdom**, reveals His secrets. Ws 7:27 notes: ***Among the nations, wisdom passes into holy souls, she makes them friends of God and prophets.***<sup>296</sup> In the number of secrets pertains the revelation of that which God works in the depths of our heart. This is all hidden from the wicked servant because of his pride. Filial Fear is never without Humility, necessary so that one would never appropriate the Gifts of God. Ph 2:13 notes: ***It is He who works in us His will and He accomplishes it.***

**g.]** In the lives of the sons of God, there is a life of faith, of hope and of charity. This is constitutive of our relationship to God which St. Thomas calls a **reasoned fear**, since in its growth, there is an intimate and profound transformation. By the Grace of the Holy Spirit it stretches out of servility in order to approach ever more **filial reverence**. In order to avoid the real risks of misunderstanding in the matter of the role of Fear in Theology, it might prove to be fitting, while holding on to the concept, and by calling it by other terms, such as **reverence**, or the term invented for the occasion, **filiality**.

**h.]** This temptation, as laudable as may be its pastoral intention, presents the danger of diminishing and obscuring the Thomistic analysis of fear. The mere fact that the Latin term, **timor**, designates also different species of servile fear and filial fear, emphasizes that alongside the receptive subject of grace, it is without solution of continuity, that it operates the movement of Justification. There is indeed here a radical novelty in the regeneration, in the re-birth, in the re-creation, realized by the infusion of grace, but the psychological structure of fear is not annihilated. It therefore implies that even though in heaven there is nothing other than **reverence, perfect adoration, filial affection**, the Holy Fear of God remains forever, If the perfection of love banishes the servility of fear, it is only that it might perfect its **filial** quality.

---

<sup>295</sup> In Jn 15:15, n. 2015.

<sup>296</sup> Ib. n.2016.

### Conclusion

[1] As it is a matter of **participation by similitude** is the expression St. Thomas develops to characterize the analogy of our Divine Filiation and that of the Eternal word. When it is a matter of **deification, spiritual regeneration**, the inquest from the dictionary shows a real explicit dependence of St. Thomas on Pseudo-Denis. On the other hand, his doctrine on Filial Fear does not hide his Augustinian dependence and the application of the **Principle of the causality of the maximum**, going back to Aristotle. One might see how St. Thomas very discreetly brings together sources that apparently are disparate, in order to express **the filial character of the Christian Life**. It is permitted to think that there was not necessarily full cognizance of the influences playing a role in the development of his thought. This unfolded furthermore in **an anti-Adoptianist mentality** which provided him with a rare Christological balance in his usage of the **participated similitude**. This all contributed to his evaluating the sublime spiritual regeneration we receive.

[2] The concepts of **generation, birth**, seem to present a special aptitude to give proper understanding to the foundation of Filiation. These are biblical and patristic terms, and may easily refer to the infusion of grace and Justification, and verify the Scholastic definition of **Filiation**, including the **similitude of nature**, an expression of **deification**, and the union with the principle - all of which might be placed in relationship to the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, they place in evidence a similitude with the **Eternal Generation of the Son of God by Nature**, as well as the role of Baptism and the Paschal, Ecclesiological, Sacramental implications which is included here.

[3] However, it is necessary also to show that if we are really **sons of God**, no one other than Jesus Christ is the **true Son of God**. In this regard, **the participated similitude** signifies **assimilation, derivation**, and achieves marking simultaneously the intangible distance separating the many **adopted sons** of God by their **participation is the One Who is Son, of Himself**.



## **[II.] FILIAL AND FRATERNAL PARDON**

### **Presentation**

The final clause in the 5th Petition of the OUR FATHER brings out a new aspect of the mutual relationship with God as "Father", which will always imply relationship with neighbor, as is evident in the "OUR." The Petition is formulated in such a way that the one offering the Prayer agrees to forgive others, as the condition also to receiving pardon from God. This idea seems unique in religious literature, in that it does come from the OT background. Nonetheless, it assumes new heights in the teaching of Jesus regarding forgiveness.

### **1.] The Condition for Divine Pardon**

a.] The powerful meaning of the word AS in the 5th Petition can only be measured in the light of Jesus' over-all teaching. Whenever one is to present an offering at the altar, and remembers some fraternal upsetment, the one making the oblation is directed first to reconciliation with the offended / offending party, and then return to make the oblation (cf.. Lk 5:23,f.). The remarkable feature of divine forgiveness is that the sinner cannot be forgiven until he/she has extended pardon to other human beings. "Filial" expiation - i.e., a holocaust, oblation made to the Father - is not accepted until there is "fraternal" forgiveness. This is the ultimate condition in order to receive God's pardon.

b.] This same principle is worded perhaps in stronger terms in Mark's gospel:

***And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your failings, too.*** (cf.. Mk 11:25).

So, in order to receive the Father's pardon, it is necessary to have this disposition, this effort to extend pardon.

c.] The same teaching comes forth most strongly in the parable of the unjust steward, the wicked servant (cf.. Mt 18:23,ff.). His master had been "moved by compassion" at his appeal, and forgave an enormous debt. Then, this same steward turns around and refuses to forgive a much smaller debt that a fellow servant had incurred. When the master hears of this, he orders a punishment of the unjust steward until he pays the very last fraction of the debt owed. Jesus then warns that this will be the conduct of the heavenly Father toward anyone who does not pardon from the depths of his/her hearts the offences they have borne.

d.] In other and repeatedly clear words - the Father's forgiveness has attached to it a very demanding condition. The gratuitous pardon of the heavenly

Father is so-called in that He offers it without the sinner ever being able to make sufficient compensation - but, the "penance", or the previous indication of sorrow on the part of the sinner, will be his/her willingness to forgive offences already endured from other human beings. As human beings are made to the image and likeness of God, their conduct is meant to follow along the lines of imitation: Be holy / merciful as the heavenly Father is! (cf.. Lk 6:36).

e.] Whoever has truly experienced pardon can do no less than extend it, share it, by pardoning gratuitously those who have so sorely offended them. If forgiveness is not extended to others, there is the clearest sign that the sinner is not rightly disposed to receive God's pardon, and hence it will not be bestowed. The unsolicited and total pardon that is essential to the biblical picture we have of God, whose central divine relative attribute seems to be HESED / Covenant Love/ Mercy – washes away enormous stains, forgives terrible faults. This eternal divine attitude must become the state of mind and heart of those modeling their lives on the word of God.

f.] This is the condition that He has set. In Mt's rendition of the LORD'S PRAYER (Mt 6:9-13), the gospel adds an explanation of this 5th Petition (cf. vv.14,f.):

***... if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.***

g.] This conclusive comparison: forgiveness received, AS forgiveness is extended - is the underlying condition that God has established. It offers a summary of the repeated teachings of Jesus Himself. All who have received initial pardon from God can receive no more unless they allow fraternal forgiveness to permeate their lives. It is also necessary to identify "those who have trespassed against us."

## **2.] Filial Indebtedness and Fraternal Forgiveness**

a.] Christ's emphasis is that all sinners forgive from their hearts all their brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 18:35). This offers the first "identification" of those who might "trespass against us". The debtor can be the unfortunate servant, the unjust steward, disciples, one's own friend, brother or sister, relative. Whatever the initial offence that has brought the disruption, this is much more aggravated by the failure of the offended party to work at Christ's own mercy. The "neighbor" is not merely the proximus: but perhaps every OTHER: not some kind of vague, abstract sense of forgiveness, but one directed to specific human beings. It is only in accepting the life of grace, with the accompanying theological virtues that others really are brothers and sisters. All those who have come into one's life are within the sphere of this fraternal pardon - and all those who might ever do so, somehow are already included in the extension of charity: it is already universal, not consciously excluding

anyone - it needs then, for as long as life lasts, to be "intensified" the more.

b.] Mt's text (cf. 6:14,f.) adds the significant "others" as his interpretation of "brother / sister" - he universalizes the extent of the pardon. Mk makes "others" intimate - every "other" becomes a brother, sister (cf. Mk 11:25). Those who may "trespass" is any "other" struggling through life to work out its ultimate meaning and purpose. Along the way, inevitably offences will be committed.

c.] Christ's teachings further specify what kinds of transgressions might be suffered from "others":

- those who may malign, calumniate (cf. Mt 5:11; Lk 6:28)
- those who may strike one cheek (cf. Mt 5:39; Lk 6:29);
- those who insult, steal, make demands (cf. Mk 5:40,f.; Lk 6:29,f.);
- even those who hate (cf. Lk 6:22; Mt 10:22; Mk 13:13, par.; Jn 15:18,ff.; 17:14);
- those who persecute (cf. Mk 4:17, par.; 10:30; 13:9, par.; Mt 5:11, 44; 10:23; 23:24; Lk 11:49; Jn 15:20);
- even those who have brought great harm to one (cf. Mk 12:3,5, par.; 13:9; Mt 10:17; 23:34)
- even those guilty of capital crimes (cf. Mt 10:28; 23:34; Lk 11:49; 12:4; 13:34; Mk 12:5, par.; Jn 16:2).

d.] In Jesus' teaching, the "enemy" can be anyone who has offended in a broad variety of ways - from the insignificant level, to that of much more serious proportions. The on-going effort needs to be the example of Jesus Himself; "Forgive them... for they know not..." (cf. Lk 23:34; Ac 7:59,f.).

e.] As the divine pardon included loving the enemy, as Christ has done (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27) - this has been the Father's conduct toward the evil, the unjust - while not condoning ever their malice, **their** injustice. Divine Providence allows the sun and the rain to pour forth on the perverse as well as on the innocent (cf. Mt 5:45): this has served as a good image for the universal extension of divine Mercy.

f.] Every human being, then, before God is a "debtor", "transgressor" to a greater or lesser extent. All the most intimate followers of the Lord, as well as the most far-flung children of the most High, in some way have contracted debts before the Lord. In order to understand ever better the Christian requirement to forgive others in order to be forgiven, it might be helpful to look even further into the very nature of pardon.

### 3.] The Nature of the Pardon:

The kind of pardon that should be extended to one's neighbor is precisely the same kind that has been received from the divine AGAPE. Since the charity in which each one can share is of the very nature of God, in like manner the pardon that expresses this AGAPE has to be of the same kind that God Himself extends. This would shed some light on Jesus' insistence of pardoning others, even prior to praying to God (cf. Mk 11:25). Filial forgiveness is analogous to divine pardon.

#### a.] The Magnitude of This Pardon

1.) The preceding developments regarding the Father's pardon of the sinner have shown insistently that "totality" is a characteristic of this forgiveness on the part of God. This is brought home implicitly in the parable of the Compassionate Father: the prodigal son is re-established into the full family membership, all has been condoned, he has been restored to his pristine situation of filiation (cf. Lk 15:20,ff.). The unpayable debt has simply been taken off the books, his name blotted out of the record book of charges and debits (cf. Mt 18:24,ff.). These parables exemplify the divine pardon.

2.) This divine pardon is the kind that is now imposed on all who share a filial relationship with God, and a fraternal relationship with Christ. Reconciliation - at least in the disposition of one's mind and heart, with positive efforts being made to achieve it - with the offended and the offending brother / sister (cf. Mt 5:23,f.) has to be sincere and humble, as well as being integral.

No traces of antipathy can be nurtured or any rancor hidden away, to be brought out at the proper time! This sense of humility, sincerity and integrality are taught by Jesus by a multiplicity of examples.

3.) Jesus' own injunction is that those who follow Him are called also to forgive whatever one might hold against any other. (cf. Mk 11:25). The Father is eternally disposed for relationship, Covenant - even to restore it (cf. Ex 34). He will always take the initiative and has moved the sinners of the centuries to seek His pardon, reinstatement into the Covenant once more. He knows what we are made of, he knows we are dust (cf. Ps 103) - the "primary motive" of our hope is infinite divine mercy; perhaps the "secondary motive" is our own abysmal weakness.

4.) Even though the pastoral injunctions required confessing the "species" and the "number", there is no species or number that cannot be forgiven: Jesus' "Semiticism" to describe this is the equation: not 7 times only, but 70 x 7. (cf. Mt 18:22).



5.) There are seasons of reconciliation, days and years as well - but, there is no limited time for divine Pardon: for the Lord a thousand years are like an hour in the night (cf. Ps 90:4), something of an image of the eternity of God. The LORD'S PRAYER teaches its devotees to ask for the bread of "this day": "now" is also the proper time to extend pardon. There are simply no numerical, temporal or specific barriers to God's forgiveness. Its real, temporal and numerical availability is the challenge for Christian charity **and** for filial / fraternal forgiveness. It implies simply living out the Good News through to the end: St. Paul tells us that we are to be imitators of him, as he is of God (cf. 1 Th 1:6).

### **b.] The Quality of This Pardon**

The novelty of the pardon demanded by Jesus for all who accept to follow after Him, cannot be limited to its quantity: how often, how much; nor is there any time<sup>f</sup>rame in which it is to be extended, and then not outside this privileged period of reconciliation. There is necessary **also** to **look** at the manner of this pardon, its kind, or species: what kind of forgiveness is intended by Jesus? In this analysis, there can surely be noted the totality, and the increasing intensity of what is being offered.

### **1.) A Pardon from the Heart**

Jesus Himself has rooted the pardon to be extended in the same pardon that is received: in the heart (cf. Mk 7:21,ff., par.). There has to be sincerity in order that the pardon truly merit the qualifying "Christian", meaning like Christ's.

### **a.) Its Sincerity**

There is a great instruction to be found in how this teaching culminates in the Master's words regarding it, particularly in the parable of the unforgiving steward, himself a debtor. (cf. Mt 18:35). The gratuitous pardon that is to be extended must be one that is most sincere, heart-felt. It is not enough to forgive only with the lips, as was already made clear in the prophetic tradition (cf. Is 29:13; Mt 15:8). It has to come from deep within, a forgiving and a forgetting (and when the latter is not possible to human nature, each "remembering" is an invitation to forgive again). It needs to be a forgiveness like that of God: one that blots out the offence. (cf. Ps 51:1,ff.).

Such sincerity is what characterizes the Compassionate Father's forgiveness of his prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:20,ff.). The very evident and concrete signs of his total, deeply felt pardon, are most express and leave no room for doubt.

Jesus' own pardon of sinners is evident in the manner He

speaks to them: He is referred to as their friend (cf. Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34). even knowing that Judas would betray Him, He still calls him friend in the act of betrayal (cf. Mt 26:50). Anyone who pardons as Christ has truly forgives as the Father forgives. This is the challenge set by the 5th Petition: "Forgive us... **AS WE forgive all others.**

### **b.) Its Initiative**

With all of this, still the full nature of filial / fraternal pardon is not complete. One is called to reach out to the transgressor, the offending party, as one would to a friend, brother, sister. As God has taken the initiative in creation, redemption and sanctification, this same ideal is lived in Christian forgiveness. Those who follow after Christ are invited to take the first step as He always does.

The Christian is called to forgive any and everyone, any and everything (cf. Mk 11:25), and consider the "other" as brother / sister (cf. Mt 18:35). Each one is called to take the first step (cf. Mt 5:24) even before standing before the altar. This is simply the living out of the divine image, a share in His creativity. In the story of the unjust steward, the Lord of the manor took the first step in his regard, hoping that the indebted steward would do the same. (cf. Mt 18:27). The same is true of the good shepherd, and the woman who lost the drachma (cf. Lk 15:4,8).

All of this together adds up to Jesus' important teaching on the initiative in extending pardon. Jesus reached out often to sinners (cf. Lk 15:2), inviting them to come to Him (cf. Mk 2:15), and inviting Himself to go to them (cf. Lk 19:5). He thus teaches the initiative in extending pardon, as He did in one of His Seven Last Words (cf. Lk 23:34).

All of these instances together mount up to a very "strong case" that each of His followers is asked to take the first step toward reconciliation with a fellow human being. It is the "father of lies" who inspires hatred for others, the lack of forgiveness, hardness of heart (cf. Jn 8:40,ff.; 16:2). The devil is the principal author of sin. The evil one does inspire hatred into the human heart (cf. Mt 5:37; 6:13).

Paul who himself experienced a total forgiveness for a terrible crime then becomes an expert on charity, as it had so deeply penetrated his life:

***Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins, but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes*** (cf. 1 Co 7:6,f.).

## 2.) Authentic Love for the Sinner:

The terribly challenging principle that the Lord lays down is: Love your enemies! (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27). This divine precept has been studied repeatedly through the generations and does not admit of any watering down of the challenge. It continues to attract attention of biblical scholars and theologians. Some would attribute the formulation not to Jesus Himself, but to the early community; but there are many proven authors who include this among the *ipsa verba* of the historical Jesus. However, this particular discussion is resolved, a few facts do emerge regarding the notion of "authentic love" for the transgressor.

### a.) Its Totality:

The first two evangelists (cf. Mk 12:28,ff.; Mt 22:34,ff.) relate one of the debates of early times - from the point of view of a "scribe" (Mk), or a "doctor of the Law" (Mt) - which is the greatest of the commandments. Jesus' answer is the quote from the SHEMA of ancient Israel:

**LISTEN, Israel! The Lord our God is the one God; you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength (words from Dt 6:4,f.) - and the second is: You will love your neighbor as yourself." (words from Lv 19:18).**

There is no other precept greater than these (cf. Mk 12:29,ff.; Mt 22:37,ff.)

Jesus' response, therefore, is formulated by citing the well known Creed of ancient Israel, prayed at least twice daily by the faithful for centuries. There is a good chance that this was also part of Jesus' own daily prayer. It is a prayer whose central feature is faith in the one God, and a love without reserve on both the "affective" as well as on the "effective" levels. This is a creed that was quite well known and familiar to all.

The emphasis in Jesus' response is the exclusivity and the demands placed by love for God: no one can serve two masters - as one will either love God or money (cf. Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13). This exclusive service of the one God demands that God be loved totally with all that one is and has, interior faculties and energies, with an integrality of response, a totality of love.

It is this kind of totality that Jesus in a most special way extends to other human beings: as He has loved us, He imposes on His followers, that of loving other human beings: it is that same love by which God has loved Him, which now must be extended to others. This mysterious God - infinitely knowable, rational - yet, totally incomprehensible, fully beyond reason and all expression:

ineffable! In this demand of universal divine charity human beings must simply accept this mystery. In the acceptance of God in faith, His response to initial correspondence with grace is an increase in divine love. This is the first precept: to lo<sup>v</sup>e God with all that one is and has.

Since God alone is the ultimate source of divine love, He can instill in humanity the capacity to extend the identical love to other human beings: simply to love others as He does. While they are distinct here, these two precepts are always united: and here we find all three "objects" of divine love: God, self, neighbor. This is the broadest extension possible of the Law: to love neighbor AS oneself. Jesus adds: there is no greater precept than the first one: and that the second is much like it. 6 Jesus was much moved by the response that the scribe gave, and assured him that "he was not far from the kingdom" (cf. Mk 12:34) - another way of saying, not far from the total love, the total service of the one Lord - which will always include total love, total service of one's neighbor.

**b.) A Description of "Neighbor":**

There is some evidence that this very question was debated much in the time of Jesus, and the question is put to him by one of the contemporary theologians (cf. Lk 10:29). Perhaps the question arose in order to penetrate more deeply into this vital matter of the "greatest" of the precepts (cf. Lk 10:25,ff.). Jesus makes the well-known response of the parable of the Good Samaritan. (cf. Lk 10: 30,ff.).

As has often been noted, the "Samaritans" were not much thought of in Jesus' time - whereas the other protagonists of the story (a priest, a Levite) - they were very highly thought of. However, these last mentioned did nothing to assist the poor person who had fallen to the thieves - but, the schismatic, the rival, the Samaritan stops and is moved by compassion. The only answer to the question - which of the three proved to be "neighbor" would be the one who exercised mercy to one worse off than himself. The challenge then is presented by Jesus: go forth and do likewise yourself.

Love "creates" the neighbor, finds the "other", truly searches out the stranger. The true follower of Christ is the one who extends mercy, healing, help - even if the other is a rival, an "enemy." In these simple words, once more Jesus removes all barriers to the concept. The classical "theology" of the time had a very limited, nationalistic idea of "neighbor" - all others were "gentiles" - it had to be one of the descendency of Israel (cf. Lv 19:18).

In Jesus' presentation, however, the "neighbor" does not have limits imposed by race, nationality, or religion - one who lives near-by, or is

similar in outlook. Love of this nature is the same as that of "pagans", those who do not accept God's word - they already practice this much (cf. Mt 5:46,f.; Lk 6:32,ff.). There is not much of a challenge beyond nature to love those who are already united by some bond, the "alter ego" is the most natural relationship in the world. This is not the new concept of "neighbor" that Jesus is inculcating. This could even be a kind of egotistical love, offering very little challenge.

While Jesus does legislate to love others as oneself - this love is also to be as the Father has loved us and Him - and as He has loved us: God so loved the world that He gave up His only Son (cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16). Every "other" can include those who may be pleasant, gratifying,- but the word can also include an adversary, an enemy. And this leads to the next challenge that Jesus offers.

**c.) "Neighbor" includes "Enemy":**

The Lord's precepts include offering no resistance to the wicked (cf. Mt 5:39), to love the enemy (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27): these precepts are in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5-7), or in the Plains, as Luke would have it (cf. 6:17,ff.). These are redacted in the Gospels as an ancient Christian catecheses.

This principle placed so very early in the gospels does offer something of a "blueprint" for the Christian, the true follower of Jesus Christ. This is the paradigm, the map, for the narrow way, the ambitious migration (cf. Mt 7:13,f.; Lk 13:22,f.). This challenging teaching of Jesus is given to the multitudes, and is proposed as a compendium of what perfection really means. He has put to death the old injunction:"an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"!

There is the interpretation of this rather extended message of Mt's Sermon on the Mount (cc. 5-7, including the Beatitudes and the OUR FATHER) perhaps in its first historical setting - may have been a series of statements taken from a variety of episodes of Jesus' life put together then as the Sermon on the Mount. Whatever the truth of this view may be, what is really clear is that this is not some "secret" message just meant for the closest collaborators with Him. This is not reserved merely to those who were "with Him from the beginning", or who were the eye-witnesses of His special deeds (cf. Mt 13:16,f.; Lk 10:23,f.)

This whole instruction is presented in the setting of "filiation", meant for all those seeking for salvation from the Lord. In order to reach it, this will be one of the underlying requirements. The Lord will always maintain that His burden is light, His yoke is sweet, and that He does not multiply heavy burdens for the shoulders of those who really would like to follow Him (cf. Mt 23:4;

Lk 11:46; cf. also Mt 11:28,f.). This is the Law of the New Covenant, unto the remission of sins, that He would establish definitively with His shedding of His blood on Calvary. This is that new, interior Covenant, based on "not remembering" offenses (Cf. Jr 31:33). A New Spirit will be given to us, and this Law will no longer be written on stones, but deep within each human heart (cf. Ezk 36:26,f.).

This is a hardy challenge - not meant for those who would prefer to be "babied": there is need to grow in the challenge. It is a mature teaching, but one meant for those strengthened by the gifts of the Spirit. These particular words were directed toward those who indeed were poor in spirit, suffering for justice's sake, mourning who would be comforted, the merciful, the peacemakers. Those who can carry out this program indeed become the salt of the earth, the light of the universe and all the nations in it. Jesus "perfected" the old law: it is not only murder that's wrong, but anger (cf. Mt 5:21,ff.); not only adultery, but even evil thoughts (cf. vv. 27,ff.). He has more interiorized the Law. There is such need to get over the "law of retaliation" (cf. vv. 38-42) and go beyond to the Law of Love. Even with all this, He adds a further most challenging particular.

**d.) Offer the Wicked No Resistance (cf. Mt 5:39):**

This precept that Jesus offers is found in the 5th, and next to last contrast that he makes with the Law of Moses (cf. Mt 5:38,ff.; Lk 6:29,ff.). This, too, has presented a tremendously difficult challenge both for the exegete, as well as for the simple follower of the Lord.

Here Jesus takes as His point of departure the ancient Law of Moses regarding the "Justice" to be meted out for offences, in order to keep peace, most likely in times before law-enforcement was ever organized. The Law of Retaliation was quite well documented in early times (cf. Ex 21:23,ff.; Lv 24:19,f.; Dt 19:16,ff.). This prescription is one of the most ancient forms of legislation, or judicial determination for the struggling community. It does not seem it was license for personal vengeance, as there is always built into this the inevitable escalation. The ultimate formulation as it is found almost seems to have been touched up by a Roman lawyer - but, is perhaps still too "crude" for the later refinement of Roman law. Whatever is the ultimate source of this law, the prescriptions were clear: beginning with an "eye for an eye", and then becoming more specific with the listing of kinds of harm that asked for retaliation. The lesser wrongs should be **paid** back with lesser penalties: what was really in the balance here was a just proportion between the harm suffered and the penalty to be meted out. This ancient law seems to be one of the most elemental forms of the principle of jurisprudence of all the ancient codices of law known to history.

Jesus, however, demands of those who would choose to follow Him, to surpass this ancient legislation, by means of a positive "non-resistance" in four specific cases:

a) If someone strikes one cheek, offer the other: (cf. Mt 5:39; Lk 6:29).

This seems to be a Semiticism, meaning "to suffer a very personal injury." This was already sanctioned in the old law with an equivalent punishment or fine. Some have reasoned when the first cheek to be struck was on the "right" side, this would have implied an initial grave offence, perhaps followed by others of less gravity. At any rate, to be struck in the face was equivalent to suffering the greatest insult to one's personal dignity.

§ 1 The genuine disciples of Jesus will be prone to undergoing personal insult (cf. Ac 23:2) - they will be treated as "here-tics". In this supreme insult of the times, they were to offer no resistance, but to be patient - not to give any occasion for persecution, as is found all through Peter's First Letter. Jesus is appealing for patience, tolerance in the face of all insults. SO many times what is actually done is not all that painful - but, many feel deeply the "principle" of the thing that is even more offensive.

§ 2 In this context, Jesus is appealing to let these insults pass - even to be willing to accept others, even to suffer the loss of a good name, because one would truly like to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

§ 3 The biblical example that immediately comes to mind is that of the Suffering Servant (Is 53) and the tormented "Wise Man", claiming to be God's son (cf. Ws 2):

I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard... (cf. Is 50:5,ff.)

Let us test the virtuous man... (cf. Ws 2:10,ff.)

§ 4 Far beyond all this, is the mysterious example of Jesus Himself: He is repeatedly insulted by His enemies as a glutton and a drunkard (cf. Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34) - He seemed to be one possessed (cf. Jn 8:48,f.) - He seemed even to be the prince of the devils (cf. Mk 3:22, ff.); He was referred to as a false prophet (cf. Lk 7:39,ff.) a blasphemer (the very One Who had such respect for the divine Name, which He had come to glorify) (cf. Mk 2:6,ff.; Jn 10:33,ff.) - disrespectful before the High Priest, for which He was slapped (cf. Jn 18:22,f.).

§ 5. In no one of these episodes did Jesus lash out, or

send a legion of angels with flaming swords for vengeance. He continuously offered no resistance, and sometimes even literally the other cheek. He repeatedly extended an invitation to those from whom the insults came to share a meal with Him (cf. Lk 7:26; 14:1; cf. Mk 2:15,f.). In gentle kindness, He invited them to repent, conversion (cf. Lk 15:25,ff.). He reminded even His adversaries, various sinners, that God loved them (v. 31).

§ 6. It is necessary to see how He reacted to injuries received:

- He was silent as the Suffering Servant (cf. Is 53:7);
- Herod made fun of Him putting a cloak on Him (cf. Lk 23:11);
- they struck His head with a reed and spat upon Him (cf. Mk 15:19,par.);
- they spit on him, blindfolded Him, struck Him (cf. Mk 14:65, par.);
- as He was on the cross, the passers-by jeered at Him: come down from the Cross (cf. Mk 10:29,ff.).

His response to all this was simply and totally one of pardon (cf. Lk 23:34) - He had come to give His life in redemption for all (cf. Lk 10:45, par.).

§ 7. The Christian is very clearly called to imitate this positive reaction of Jesus on receiving these most grave acts of insult. Those who have become His Disciples also receive His Spirit and will have the strength, the courage to receive these blows of misfortune, without responding in kind: evil will be conquered with good (cf. Rm 12:17,21).

b) If a man wants your tunic, give him the cloak as well: (cf. Mt 5:40; Lk 6:29).

§ 1 In Jesus' time, as may perhaps still be seen in some primitive areas, the inner garment was a kind of tunic, held at the waist with a kind of belt, or rope - not unlike the single tunic that Jesus ordered His disciples to have, without a "spare" (cf. Mk 6:9,par.) This word appears again at the crucifixion scene, His seamless garment, symbol for many of the Church (cf. Jn 19:23).

§ 2 This inner tunic was really the last bit of clothing one could give to another- literally, "the shirt off one's back." The tunic could be given as a kind of pledge. The woman with the hemorrhage simply wanted to touch His cloak (cf. Mk 5:27,f.; 6:5,f.; Mt 14:36), the exterior part. On Palm Sunday, Jesus' disciples threw their cloaks on His mount, the colt of a donkey, for the procession (cf. Mk 11:7, par.; Lk 22:36).



§ 3 The tunic was all of a piece. The poor blind man of Jericho threw his off, and stood before Jesus asking to be able to see again (cf. Mk 10:50). This garment was regulated in the ancient prescriptions:

***If you take another's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity*** (cf. Ex 22:25,ff.).

§ 4 For the poor, this "cloak" represented the very last possession - covering for a storm, for the cool night (cf. Ex 22:26; Ac 12:8). Perhaps from this biblical background it might be seen what it would mean if literally the cloak were taken away as a pledge. It was seen as a very grave injustice to deprive a poor man of his cloak. Jesus' disciples were told to live a real poverty, to have only one of these (cf. Mt 5:40). If one were to take away this very last possession, it would indeed be a grave injustice. Such a deed of defrauding the poor, demanding overly strict justice from them was considered in harsh terms by the old law:

***You must not pervert justice in dealing with a stranger or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge.*** (cf. Dt 24:17).

§ 5 Yet, despite these rules of the old Law Jesus tells His disciples - who are only supposed to have the one "cloak" - not to go to the authorities if someone takes away this last possession. Jesus' injunction is to the point: "If someone takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well (cf. Mt 5:40). The implications are: offer all that you own. This is one of the extremes that the Lord suggests as the new code for discipleship.

§ 6 In other terms, this unusual sounding injunction in modern ears might be "translated" to mean: when one receives a very grave injustice, it is not necessary to rectify it in every case. One is not to repay in kind the one perpetrating the injustice - but rather, a bit of honey draws more than a quantity of vinegar: return an injustice with a kindness, to defuse the spiral of hatred, unkindness.

c) If ordered to go a mile, go two (cf. Mt 5:41)

§ 1. This 3rd example of positive non-resistance to the "wicked" is one taken from the ordinary life of His own time. It seems to be an injunction that could be imposed on beasts, or men of burden, in solitary areas, by some authority - doing a service for the authority, and not receiving any compensation for it. It is really a violence done to the sovereignty of any individual to be forced unfairly to render services for which there would be no compensation.

§ 2 Once again, Jesus' new rules for discipleship would also enter into this act of "violence" perpetrated against one. The poor, or the slave, might try to see justice done - always a risk! Nonetheless, Jesus is asking for His disciples, to let it go, not to seek "their day in court." This is not the resistance of a pacifist - His over-all purpose is that one go "the extra mile", give more to the act of injustice.

§ 3 There is no doubt that this injunction goes beyond the laws of justice. It is something that would only make sense - if all else is equal - in the overall picture of the message of love and forgiveness that Jesus preached. Its hope was that it would manifest the Father's mercy - this unusual Father Who also loved the unjust (cf. Mt 5:45) - and was kind toward the perverse (cf. Lk 6:35).

d) Give to anyone who asks; do not turn the borrower away: (cf. Mt 5:41):

§ 1. In practical living, this further instance of the Lord is also a challenge to work out in concrete terms. This "give" to anyone who asks, whether rich or poor. These injunctions are a challenge in practical living to work out in modern times - unless they are just summarily erased, or thought to be pious exaggerations. Theology, however, is also challenged to see in what way these words of the Lord might be lived.

§ 2 Jesus' disciples know that they have been called not merely to live out commutative justice, which they are - and that they are not only to be good and patient, which they also are! Indoctrinated, however, with the teaching and example of the Master they also know that almsgiving takes away sin (Si 3:30) - giving attracts the divine blessing (cf. Si 7:32. Tob 4:7); charity toward others delivers one from death and keeps one from falling into the exterior darkness (cf. Tb 4:10). It is far better to give than to receive.

§ 3 The culmination of all these prescriptions is what Jesus offers here, as the 4th example of accepting even the "wicked". Jesus reasons that the heavenly Father is most generous toward both the just and the unjust. The "generous" are those who have received His Spirit and for this reason, they are His "own" and are called to manifest the love of God Himself in the world, and times, in which they live. hence, the injunction: Give to whoever asks.

e) Love Your Enemies:

This new precept is formulated by Jesus in this context (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27). It is presented as something of an antithesis of the old Law (cf. Mt 5:43,ff.; Lk. 6:27, ff.), and in some contrast to an old law - which, however, is not<sup>1</sup> found written

in these terms: Love your neighbor and hate your enemy (cf. Mt 5:43). Rather than being a formal written precept, it seems that this was a practical life-style with the majority.

### **The Old Mosaic Law of Lv 19:18:**

***You must not exact vengeance, nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbor as yourself.***

The part of hating the "enemy" very easily surfaced with the emphasis here on "the children of YOUR people". In a overly nationalistic spirit one could easily become hostile toward non-nationals. While it was never the written law to "hate one's enemy" (non-Israelites), the risk was always there - and in some sects, it was explicit.

**Jesus' precept seems new:** it has not yet been found in other Judaic literature - and perhaps no parallel in any other code. It seems so "human" to hate those who already hate, or have done despicable things. However, the threat of endless escalation in violence shows that hatred is not really the answer - at least, the Church cannot accept it. Justice is often described as giving to the other his/her due, and the most natural response to human beings is to love those who love, and hate those who hate.

a) Jesus seems well aware of this "common-sense", very "human" manner of response: in making the "pitch" for His kind of discipleship, He points out that simply to love those who love us, one's friends, relatives - this is what the publicans and sinners already do (cf. Mt 5:46,f.; Lk 6:32,ff.).

b) Jesus' injunction, though, is for His "own" to go beyond what is normal, natural: to become light, salt (cf. Mt 5:13,f.) Beyond all the good deeds, therefore, Jesus lays down this rule: love your enemies! Lk's rendition seems to flow from an analogous precept of Jesus: do good to those who hate you (cf. Lk 6:27,f.). The "enemies" of the disciples are they who strike out - make unjust demands - hate in response to good - lay on extra burdens: do good to them!

c) Jesus' "overt" enemies seem to have been the scribes and Pharisees - His "covert" enemy, one who did Him irreparable human harm, was Judas. On the one hand, His enemies openly contradicted Him, sought to trap Him in His speech (cf. Jn 12:3,ff.) - and then, those of His own household, would betray Him, one with whom He shared the bread from the same plate (cf. Mk 14:18, par.; Jn 13:22, par.). Judas was hardly suspected by any of them, as Jesus had also entrusted him with the purse (cf. Jn 12:6;13:22,29).

d) In carrying out the humiliating task of a slave in washing the feet of His

"own", whom He lo<sup>v</sup>ed till the very end - He knew that they would abandon Him in just a little while. Yet, He really wanted to purify that which was not clean, hoping to give a sign, leave an example and reveal the mystery of redemption. This sublime gesture of love on His part enters into the program that Jesus taught by words. His example was as convincing.

e) Despite it all, Satan entered into Judas - and He betrays Jesus with a kiss. He is addressed as "Friend" (cf. Mt 26:50). In becoming the servant of all, Jesus hoped that this example - this washing what was not totally clean - would strengthen their hearts, convert them, to be faithful through to the end. To a man, they all seemed to have failed Him, leaving Him alone with those who had come to arrest Him. His words echo still: "Pray for those who persecute you" (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:28) - "bless those who curse you!" (cf. Lk 6:28). Most believers would pray for their own loved ones - but Jesus transcends this precept with His new injunction - prayer has to include one's enemies, persecutors. The heartfelt pardon must extend to including them in one's prayer - love is also shown by praying.

**Such Love responds to evil with good:** this precept to love one's enemies (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27), and to pray for them (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:28) shows Jesus offering His own brand of justice, justification. Evil is eventually conquered by good (cf. Rm 12:17,ff.).

a) Self-centeredness and avarice, in this new plan, are overcome with generosity; envy and hatred are overcome by love. While war has not been officially declared immoral by a specific act of the Magisterium - nor has the absolute possibility of a "just war" been totally ruled out: nonetheless being assisted by the signs of these times, and a reflection on history, Jesus' message seems to rule out all war for these times - forgiveness, dialogue are of the order of this time.

b) Pray for those who persecute you, bless those who hate you - no one before Jesus of Nazareth had offered this kind of program for His followers. The previous wisdom was: if you want peace, be ready for war. In Jesus' message, peace is not the fruit of fear instilled into the hearts of potential adversaries. The best road for peace is love for the enemy. The early Church catecheses which has come down to us in the DIDACHE (cf. 1:3) develops this catechesis: if you love those who hate you, you will not have enemies.

c) Jesus' principles represented a totally new "theology" for the times. It is a way of life for those who want to follow after Jesus Christ. For this, they have received the Spirit of God, with His gifts. For some, it is all utopistic - unrealizable - impractical - unworkable. Jesus seems to present it to be tried. So many other "systems" have been, with terrible results.

**Jesus realized that much of His message was a "hard" saying:**

a) His sole explanation, or underlying principle for His entire "theology" is simply this: the gratuitous love of God for His enemies - the sun shines on the good, as well as on the evil. This is a symbol of God's love. (cf. Mt 5:45).

b) In the face of malice and injustice, ingratitude and perversity - the Father responds by offering mercy, manifesting to them all His goodness through the daily care of His Providence, and loving them with His divine love. So, along with the awesome mystery of the divine nature, the conduct of Jesus Himself, revealing the Father, the ICON of the Invisible God - remains very hard to explain. In Lk's gospel, the austere old law of Holiness from the Book of Leviticus (cc. 17-26) was changed to read: Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful (cf. Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36).

c) In Jesus' story, the "enemies" were not all outside His chosen few. So often they did not understand the core of His message, wondering who would have the better places (cf. Mk 9:33,f.) - the others then got angry against the two brothers who felt they were more privileged (cf. Mt 20:24; Mk 10:41), as they yearned for the first places in the Kingdom (cf. Mt 20:20,ff.). For all of these, the LORD'S PRAYER has a specific message: they will all be forgiven in accord with their own capacity to forgive. In the place of personal ambition, Jesus offered His personal example of humble service (cf. Mk 10:43,ff., par.). He imposed on them the new precept, of loving one another as He had loved them (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12).

d) The Lord banks heavily on His chosen ones being able to live out this precept of charity. He exhorts all to mutual pardon, reciprocal love. He personally has forgiven all of them repeatedly and of far graver sins than what they will be called upon to forgive. All have been deeply indebted to the heavenly Father - Who has taken the initiative and forgiven His enemies: what proves that God has loved us is that Jesus has died for us while we were still enemies.

**SYNTHESIS**

(1) It can truly be said that the OUR FATHER is Jesus' Synoptic teaching, His SUMMA, the Breviary of the entire Gospel. In the various petitions, there is a true synopsis of more developed teaching, to be found in other areas of His message.

(2) The OT tendency was to be distanced from sinners, at least the way it was often understood, particularly in the Law of Holiness. The sense of the "sacred" was so awesome, it could not envisage mixing in with the sinful.

(3) However, Jesus' message sheds light on the Law of Holiness, associating the extending of mercy to lead to perfection: the core of Jesus' entire

teaching is love for one another, which is the same AGAPE found in the Trinity. Christ has come on earth to leave a share of this with His followers, with the mission entrusted to them of bringing this to the far ends of the globe.

Jesus is the incarnation of the Father's mercy: therefore, not only His words, but His entire mysterious conduct needs to be fathomed by those who would follow Him. The constant reminder afforded in the OUR FATHER is also a repeated invitation to ponder these realities that are so vital at the dawn of a new millennium that is witnessing such overwhelming change taking place.

(4) No one really "merits" being pardoned by God - it is His free gift. It is simply extended, a kind of outpouring of the divine nature toward the lowly sinner. While in the Trinity there is a perfect exchange of love, the usual form this take towards humanity is mercy. This is the challenge placed before those who would indeed follow after Jesus Christ.

While He does lay down the stipulation of faith and confession before the sinner receives pardon - sinners cannot impose these conditions on one another. Even in the ability to make the confession, to accept the faith, God has already been working deep within the sinner. The sinners who are pardoned, and who deeply desire to follow Christ, are invited to follow His example, in taking the initiative in pardoning. We are to be forgiven, as we forgive: we have been forgiven by God taking the initiative - he lays this challenge before us now.



**(NB: for these pages 83 - 122, cf. Santos Sabugal, ABBA! La oración del Señor. Madrid: BAC 1985, pp. 620-692, *passim*).**

#### IV. A Spirituality – Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, OSB

##### CONSECRATION TO THE TRINITY

Eternal Father, prostrate in humble adoration at Your feet, we consecrate our whole being to the glory of Your Son, Jesus, the Word Incarnate. You have established Him King of our souls; submit to Him our souls, our hearts, our bodies, and may nothing within us move without His order, without His inspiration. Grant that united to Him we may be borne to Your bosom and consumed in the unity of Your love.

O Jesus, unite us to You, in Your life all holy, entirely consecrated to Your Father and to souls. Be our justice, our holiness, our redemption, our all. Sanctify us in truth!

O Holy Spirit, love of the Father and the Son, dwell like a burning furnace of love in the center of our hearts, Bear our thoughts, affections and actions, like ardent flames, continually heavenwards into the bosom of the Father. May our whole life be a *Gloria Patri, et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*.

O Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of holy love, fashion us yourself, according to the heart of your Son.

Louvain - Christmas 1908



## FILIATION: DIVINE - MARIOLOGICAL- ECCLESIASTICAL

### Presentation<sup>297</sup>

[1] One could indeed make an extended study on the contributing elements which formed the spiritual theology of Blessed Dom Columba Marmion. To some interpreters, this might be like even distractedly traipsing through a library - or, an art museum - noting certain works of genius that have left their mark on tradition. What will be the effort here, though, will be more that of trying to penetrate theologically to see what made the old Master of Souls tick - what inspired his great effect on generations of believers. While he greatly emphasized the theological life, with its pertinent virtues - the effort here will be to 'zero' in on his message of hope.

[2] As would be clear, Marmion was a 'Roman' - a Thomist - a Benedictine - a Liturgist - a contemplative monk - imbued with Trinitarian, Eucharistic prayer - a Son of the Church, of Mary; he was one who was much inspired by the clarity of the Roman manualists - and much in love with the Angelic Doctor, who taught that all spirituality, all theology of necessity has to be from the ideal ***contemplata aliis tradere***: if his lectures, letters, conversations, spiritual direction did not come out of his Eucharistic contemplation, they could not produce the spiritual effect that this man did. He was much imbued with the Benedictine ***ora et labora***, the entire Church Mission flows from her Trinitarian contemplation. His life was a fulfillment in outstanding terms that in him there was much in vogue: ***lex credendi, lex orandi*** - and the reverse: ***lex orandi, lex credendi***: the Church believes what she prays, and her prayer is steeped in the revealed Word of God. He was convinced, long before Vatican II that faith can only grow through ***contemplation... study... heeding the Magisterium ... an 'experience', translating into one's life what one studies, prays.*** [cf. DV 8],

[3] While Blessed Marmion was deeply interested in, and imbued with the virtues, he was not a moralist: the theological interest that sustained his reflection was always the yearning for nourishment of the spiritual life. All was contemplated personally, studied profoundly, lived daily, and constantly submitted to the teaching Church. He was able to understand the virtues as 'operative habits', that moved to good actions in and for the Church - while, Grace elevated the entire human being to the divine level, as a participation in the divine nature. While some marvelous mystics in the Church would develop **Spiritual Marriage** [e.g., with Poverty, St. Francis; with the soul: Carmelite, Dominican Tradition; with the Church: the Society of Jesus], it seems that Marmion - perhaps not unlike the Little Flower in some ways

---

<sup>297</sup> For these reflections, cf. Paolo Maria Gionta, ***Le virtù teologali nei pensieri di Dom Columba Marmion***. Dissertationes Series Theologica - VI. Roma: Ed. Universita' della Santa Croce 2001, cf. pp. 119-179, *passim*.



- was profoundly inspired by **Divine Filiation**. Grace gives us a share in the very Filiation of Jesus Himself. Beginning with the life of the trinity, Marmion had an uncanny ability of making one understand the mystery of suffering, for example, as a share in Christ's Filiation.

[4] The **Person of Jesus Christ** remained central to this great spiritual Master - in order to live His life, the 'Thomistic' Abbot came to understand more and more that sanctifying grace was totally necessary. In this sense, with a poor theology of Divine Grace, one could never pretend to follow, imitate Christ, or to put on His mind. As a Benedictine Master, Marmion was much in love with praying the divine word - and this might summarize his entire spiritual message: his is supremely **a theological message, profoundly contemplated, and tirelessly handed on**. As a loyal son of the Church, all spirituality is 'ecclesial' - as a devout son of Mary, all spirituality must have its Mariological emphasis: Jesus Christ came to us through Mary, and she is our *life, sweetness and our hope*, pointing out the way to her Divine Son.

+++

## 1. The Economy of the Divine Plan:

*Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens! God chose us in Him before the world began to be holy and blameless in His sight, to be full of love; He likewise predestined us through Christ to be His Adopted Sons - such was His will and pleasure - that all might praise the glorious favor He has bestowed on us in His Beloved. It is in Christ and through his Blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God's favor to us. God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fullness of time: namely to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship...[cf. Ep 1:3-10].*

a. What Blessed Marmion did in the course of his writings would do, was to offer **a specific theological argument** regarding the value of the Liturgy of the Hours, for example - or, for the priestly ministry, religious consecration. In doing this, the great teacher would invariably begin with **the intra-Trinitarian life of God** - then, would consider the **Incarnate Word** - ponder the intervention of **the Holy Spirit** - and then would reach humanity - by bringing out the **sublime dignity of the Christian vocation**. The Christian challenge is to walk in the manner of whatever vocation we have received [cf. Ep 4:1]. While emphasizing the sublimity of the divine intervention in the Christian life, Marmion develops minutely and carefully the commitment of the believer needed to work out the divine life that is infused within.

b. He was nourished sublimely from the teachings of St. Paul - who permeated Marmion's Thomistic development of thought. From his dogmatic emphasis, he would eventually get to the moral and **spiritual encouragement**, that makes up such a central part of his marvelous instruction. From these reflections, Marmion became convinced of the real necessity of coming to know the will of God in our regard. This economy of our salvation has been hidden as a mystery for centuries in Jesus Christ cf. Ep 3:9]. This is the Plan of God, and our adapting ourselves to it all through life is the very essence of Christian holiness.

c. To seek to understand the Divine Plan on the part of the committed believer, and the quest to conform oneself to it, represents the practical attestation of the divine Lordship. God has indeed called us all freely into existence - as Creator, He is already 'Lord' in that He has every right to establish the conditions of salvation and to fix the laws of holiness. On this profound conviction of the need to bring oneself into harmony with the divine will could have influenced the great Abbot's own Benedictine formation - and in particular, his great esteem for obedience and humility. These simply flow from his sense of radical creaturely dependence on the exclusive will of the Creator God. Both the realization of the supernatural end to which God destines us, as well as His sovereign dominion over his creatures - these convictions provide the basis of offering to Him our obedient submission. This is the source of the great Abbot's giving such importance to the will of God, knowing it, and then carrying it out in one's life.

d. In addition to these motives, the Abbot was graced by a profound knowledge of souls. It would disappoint him keenly when one would want to go by his/her own way. Others would have clear insights into particular matters, but would like the over-all perspective. Some would thrash about frantically, hardly ever moving forward from their *status quo*. Marmion was much inspired by the text above [cf. Ep 1:4, ff.] - and he offers a marvelous commentary on it in his *Christ the Life of the Soul* <sup>298</sup> - in three stages:

- the divine vocation to **holiness**, extended to **all**: we need to be conscious of this, so much reiterated by Vatican II, in the "Universal Call to Holiness". For all this is the gift and the communication that God wishes to make of us of His very own intimate, interior life. He calls all human beings to participate in His intra-Trinitarian life.

- predestination on the part of God to **adoptive filiation**: He does this in the marvelous manner of adopting us all as His own children. He has predestined us as His 'own' [Ep 1:5]. God does not do this with any intent to enrich His own being - but, rather **to extend, to share His Paternity, Filiation and Spiration**. This is

---

<sup>298</sup> cf. London/Glasgow: Sands & Co, 11th edition 1925. Chapter 1, pp. 21,ff.

not just the multiplication of titles here - this is **a real participation** in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4]. This is the elevation of a human being to the shared level of the divinity

- its realization through **Jesus Christ**. Marmion's central idea, of course, is Jesus Christ the Son of God - but, a close second is his great lived ideal that God has adopted us as His own children. We find herein the entire secret of Blessed Dom Marmion.

e. Our predestination to the adoptive Filiation in Jesus Christ represents this greatest gift that God could give us. This represents the realization in time of the divine thought which He had nourished with regard to each and every human being. This grace, adoption, is the compendium of all the other celestial favors. This filial adoption contains in itself all the other celestial favors that come our way. All the graces and all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in us are the effect of our predestination as sons/daughters of God..

f. Once this unique favor is 'realized' - achieved and accepted - the Christian is challenged to live daily this special grace. One's moral commitment - the whole spiritual life - is nothing other than the human, believing response to the divine call. **Every Christian life, all holiness, may be reduced to this principle: to become by grace that which Jesus is by nature: the Son of God**. This is Marmion's fundamental axiom. Our entire spiritual life must find its support on this fundamental truth - and our every fatigue to achieve perfection means to keep faithfully intact our Filiation with Jesus Christ - and to have this blossom forth in the most abundant measure possible **our participation in the divine Filiation**. The Christian vocation is the commitment to translate into practice the vocation of being more and more children of the heavenly Father. This basic gift in our lives should radiate outward in every vital environment in which we find ourselves - and permeate our human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic life. In this sense, our prayer is no longer a *colloquium* of a human being with his/her Creator - but, much more **a conversation of a Child of God with his/her heavenly Father**.

g. This is the core of every Christian vocation - this principle of faith accompanies, supports the entire human existence of the committed Child of God. To share in this Divine Adoption of Children of God is that reality, which in achieving its final complement, represents the eternal inheritance of the faithful believer: the Beatific Vision for all eternity will be the final consummation of divine adoption - this is the 'essence of Christianity.' Dom Marmion has been called the Doctor of Divine Adoption. This was his Church Mission almost a century ago that proved so effective.

h. As is clear throughout, the **Person of Jesus Christ and His Work** is not some kind of an addition ,or after-thought. Reference to Jesus Christ permeates the entire revealed Word of God, as is learned in the special document of Vatican II on Divine revelation. As the Apostle made abundantly clear, this work of Divine Adoption is only accomplished by Jesus Christ. Our participation in the divine life is a reality which represents our holiness in the divine plan. This happens only through the Lord Jesus: divine adoption comes to us in and through Jesus Christ. The Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world - and pre-destined us to be His adoptive sons/daughters through Jesus Christ.

i. The intra-Trinitarian mystery is constituted by the incessant circulation of life among the divine Persons, one that is realized in a manner corresponding to the personal relationships of the Divine Persons. Since the Second Person of the Trinity has assumed in time a human nature, His Divine Person communicates to this the fullness of the divine life - which in its turn receives continuously from the Father so that in Jesus Christ there dwells corporally all the fullness of the divinity [cf. Col 2:9]. Thus, this Divine Communion flows into the human nature. However, this Gift is not destined to remain confined within the humanity of the unique Savior of the world. It is destined to diffuse itself as supreme goodness - and by means of this it reaches all who are open to it in the faith. We all share in His fullness [cf. Col 2:10]. From this Divine Word we have all received His fullness, grace upon grace [cf. Jn 1:16] **Holiness, therefore, is a mystery of a divine life communicated and received.** Within God this is communicated by the Father, by means of an inexpressible 'generation' - outside of God, then, all must pass through the unique Divine Mediator, Jesus Christ -who came to us through Mary.. The Father has pre-destined this one Son of his as the First-born of many brothers and sisters [cf. Rm 8:29]. Those who adhere to him through faith and baptism become His brothers/sisters - and become participants in His Filial Condition. They are the adoptive children of God.

j. Marmion developed beautifully the Thomistic principle that the humanity of Jesus Christ is an *instrumentum coniunctum* to the Divinity, and not only through His Paschal Mystery. Every communication of grace is bestowed upon us and is presented to us, through Him. Jesus is truly the life of the Christian soul. The Christian life is inconceivable without a continuous and vital contact with Jesus Christ. All are called to live in the most intimate communion with Him possible - eventually, gradually, He becomes through His Holy Spirit and Grace, the principal Inspirer of our thoughts and activities, almost the principal subject of our actions: *And the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me...* [cf. Ga 2:20]. The vital relationship that Jesus inaugurates with His disciples unfolds in a three-fold role expressed in the Thomistic categories of **Causality: exemplary, meritorious and satisfactory.** This multiple role unfolds through the initiation of the Head of the

Mystical Body through all his members. Christ becomes ‘all’ for the committed believer - and in the life-long quest for perfection, He is the only Means to be sought. With St. Paul, the Abbot will say: God has made Christ Jesus our Wisdom, and also our Justice, our Sanctification and our Redemption...[cf. 1 Co 1:30]. Thus Christ lives the central role in the economy of salvation and in the spiritual life: the Father projected and then activated this unique Plan of His, which includes our participation in His life and our Filial Adoption, in and through His Most Beloved Son. The **Centrality of Christ** represents , after the **Divine Adoption**, the second fulcrum of the Abbot’s teaching - and in it, these are inseparable.

m. The ultimate end of the centrality of Christ and the Divine Adoption is the **Glory of God**. This is the supreme scope of all the divine activity. This is found in the beautiful Hymn from Ephesians 1:3-14, noted above. The motive of the “**Praise of God’s Glory**” constitutes there almost a type of refrain, appearing at least three times in these few verses [cf. vv. 6, 12, 14], and His manifestation in the work of the Church [cf. 3:10]. These verses make clear that the entire Work of God which foresees the re-capitulation of all things in Christ [cf. 1:10], has to return to its Maker under the form of Praise [cf. 3:20, f.]. It seems that the Abbot was motivated here by the solemn declaration of Vatican I that the creation of the entire universe was done for the Glory of God [cf. *Dei Filius* - DS 3002]. This theme was a favorite of his, and was often in his mind and heart. His main thrust throughout, of course, is always spiritual, and not speculative. . He does not insist so much on the so-called “objective” glory of God, received from Him The Abbot’s thrust is always that all that God does on behalf of creatures [creation, redemption, sanctification] for his own glory, can become in the human heart a conscious, “subjective” glorification of God, dictated by love. The believer is called to give Glory to God in recognizing His plan in our regard. We come to see it precisely in this sense. To give glory to God in practical terms, means to receive His Son in Faith, Hope and Love - to believe that he is all for us. Furthermore we give glory to God when we recognize our weakness, because in this manner we exalt His infinite mercy and His power, which is so fully revealed in weakness [cf. 2 Co 12:9], and we show that we accept the fact that all good has its origin in Him.

1.] Marmion always begins his reflections from the **Divine Plan** as revealed in the Scriptures - he begins with the Divine Mystery, from those profound insights that the faith offers the believer regarding the nature of the Divine Being and His Will. He then comes, little by little, to reflections on moral and spiritual anthropology. In a particular manner, treating of the salvation and sanctification of humanity, the Abbot begins with the presupposition that every person is already somewhat tending toward the achieving of holiness. It is as though he was speaking always, writing to an audience that was awaiting a response to the question:” What is the shortest cut to perfection?”

This may not be the approach today, even among practicing Catholics. The first point might be to establish clearly that humanity is open to God, ‘the human soul is naturally capable of God’ - that with St. Augustine, it is true that ‘the human heart is restless until it rests in God’. Therefore, God is the true goal of human desires and consequently, their commitment ought to be that of **living in intimacy with Him**. So much of modern thought would try to close the quest of human happiness solidly within the confines of this world, and time. It is necessary to take into consideration that rather optimistic ideal that human beings with their inherent human capacities can reach all their goals - at least, with the help of human society. Atheism is not some negligible minority - people dressed in dark clothing, as in the Russian novels of a century and a half ago, who come out only after mid-night! There is deep disappointment in the Church, through the counter-witness of so many of its ordained, consecrated members, too. Huge numbers explicitly refute the existence of any Supreme Being - or, that if there is One, He [She/It] has little interest in the daily unfolding of events - for so many, He is aloof in disinterest - or, on an eternal sabbatical. In earlier times, God served as a reality for those seeking the meaning of life. There is more emphasis on the greatness of human beings, rather than on their inherent impotency, incapacity. The achievements of the modern epoch alone can give ‘sense’ to so many lives.

The Second Vatican Council offers some approaches that might be considered:

- **LG 2-4**-places the Mission of the Church, as based in divine Revelation, and shows the Plan of Salvation of the human race to be sublimely **Trinitarian**. For its part, **GS** seems to take another emphasis: regarding the important themes such as the vocation of humanity, the human community and activities, the Document on the Church in the modern world offers a rather detailed examination of the terrestrial realities taken into consideration. There is offered this pastoral, panoramic view of lights and shadows, opportunities and formidable obstacles, but offers its own response to the faith of human beings, based on the Word of God entrusted to the Church.

- there is this usual approach, which may be thought of as *apologetical*, through which the Christian message must be proposed placing itself on the level of the cultural and religious conditions of its listeners, as St. Paul did long ago. He used different approaches when dealing with his fellow Jews [cf. Ac 13:16-41], than when he was treating with those of a Greek background [cf. Ac 14:15, ff; 17:22, ff.]. In addition to this - but not separated from it - there is another, which might be called ‘cultural’. This view recognizes the value of human and temporal values, and these earthly realities should not be neglected. However, these are never more important than the faith itself, nor its source, divine revelation and the sacraments. Here

Marmion would be more at his ease, perhaps - as he would capitalize on this intervention of God, achieved through human cooperation. While this would make great head way among those already committed to seeking perfection - but, there might seem to be required a step prior to the one that seems evident in the style that Marmion offered decades ago.

2.] Another observation is sometimes made - this time not pertaining so much to the exposition of the Economy of Salvation, but more its content, and in particular, **the role of Jesus Christ**. Marmion presents Him as the **Restorer** of the Divine Plan, including the elevation of human beings to the supernatural order, beginning with Creation itself. Certainly, all has been made through Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 1:3] - in the Word of God there is already the Exemplar of all creatures - we are all the result of an eternal thought contained in the Word. There is evident, for Marmion, the intimate relationship with the Word set in us by creation.

However, the Incarnation of the Word in the writings of Marmion, is a reality that comes later - after all the above events, with the specific purpose of restoring the Divine Plan compromised by sin. From the fact that humanity sinned and wandered from the divine Plan, God sends His Son to ransom him, and to restore to all the gift of Filial Adoption. This seems to be the traditional Thomistic view, not shared by many theologians through the centuries - beginning perhaps with the Subtle Doctor, Scotus and the Franciscan scholars through the centuries.

The argument runs: if the Divine Word did indeed enjoy a constitutive and originating role with humanity from and in creation, this rapport does not seem to come to the fore until the Word is made flesh, at a given moment in what some think is the 'middle of history'. The NT, though, seems to make very clear that from the outset Jesus Christ is always at the **center** of the Father's Salvific Plan and does not assume this role solely because of human sin. The theology of St. Paul makes very clear that Jesus Christ is the **Mystery** hidden for centuries in God [cf. Ep 3:9]. Eternally, God has decided to constitute Him as the **First-born** of many brothers and sisters [cf. Rm 8:29] - and that everything would be **re-capitulated** in him [cf. Ep 1:10]. Marmion fully accepted the principle that from all eternity the divine thought was fixed on the **Incarnation**. The great Abbot also presented the principle of the Angelic Doctor [cf. III, q. 24, a. 4]: with one and the same act God **predestined** Him, and us.

Some interpreters of the Benedictine Master believe they see in him a struggle with these eternal truths - a certain tension between the affirmation of these biblical and theological data and the explanation of Salvation History according to which the Person of Christ acquires His centrality, only in the light of

His Redemptive Incarnation. This was a raging debate in the theology of his time - [and Marmion's position might still held by some of the classical Thomists].

Of course, there is in this old debate: whether Christ would have been incarnate, had there been no sin? - a real theological difficulty. This springs from the courageous attempt to bring this sublime mystery [which surpasses all our human capacity to express it], that of **the eternity of the Divine Decree with the historical intervention of human sin**. For the Thomists the Incarnation is 'finalized' primarily toward the Redemption - while, for the Scotists this cannot be, because the Incarnation has its own primary value and a purpose that surpasses the deliverance from sin. Marmion remains throughout a faithful Thomist - while St. Thomas was 'open' to both views, he was convinced that as **Jesus** means **Savior** -hence, it is more biblical, under the present divine decree as we know it, that He came to forgive sin. This is the way chosen by God to manifest His glory - the Infant in the Crib, the Savior washing the feet of His own Apostles.

3.] In the decades following the death and the broad acceptance of Marmion's works, numerous theologians offered their efforts at an explanation - and these views went in three directions:

[a] this first view takes its inspiration from the NT, as read by the Fathers of the Church - Christ is considered the **Second Adam** [cf. 1 Co 15:45, f.; Rm 5:14] which indeed He was, in the Father's Plan for Creation. It was in His image that the First Adam was created, and according to Whom we have all been chosen, thought over and created. Tertullian had a magnificent phrase in this regard: In all that was shaped as **mud**, it was of **Christ** that the Creator thought: **the Future Man**. Already at that time, that mud, being inspired with the Image of Christ, Who would eventually come in the flesh, was not only a work of God, but also a Pledge from Him.

[b] the second line of thought took up the classic controversy between the Scotists and the Thomists regarding the purpose of the Incarnation. The attempt was made to integrate the two positions and to ponder how the Risen Lord of Easter could also be the One in Whom, in view of Whom and through Whom humanity had been not only redeemed, but also created;

[c] a third line of research sought to show how the Jesus of Nazareth invested a universal worth for the understanding we have of the world, of ourselves, and of history. This is the theme of **Objective Christology**, according to which the centrality of Christ does not pass simply into the affirmation of His Primacy, but He is the basis, from Whom reality is comprehended. On the basis of these Premises, Christ cannot be thought of after Creation, but He is First, the One Who gives meaning, finality and a foundation to all creation.



## 2. The Road to Holiness:

The reflection on the Plan of God, of which Jesus Christ and our adoption in Him constitute the heart, suggests to us to make a few more considerations regarding the concept of the achievement of holiness. These thoughts will prove to be all the more useful for the purpose of this present research, in so far as the exercise of the theological virtues - particularly Hope, Trust - is a vital part of the dynamism of the Christian life, which is essentially 'a road to holiness'. One great idea dominates in the thought of the Abbot: our holiness is of the essentially supernatural order. There are various levels of signification of this principle:

- First of all, this means that human beings may not fabricate a concept of holiness on the basis of one's own personal ideas. To be 'holy' is possible as **applying that plan laid down for us by God**, as a response to a Divine Vocation given to us by Him.

- In addition to this formal acceptance, the supernatural character of holiness derives from the very content of the salvific plan, which implies **the gratuitous participation in the life of God and the adoption as His sons and daughters**. This participation surpasses the needs and demands of created nature, whether angelic, or human, and this is why the term *supra-natural* is used. From the instant that Jesus is the *Alfa* and the *Omega* of the economy of this mystery, holiness can be defined as **configuration unto Him**. Let us adapt ourselves to this divine thought, that wills that we find our salvation in our **conformity** to Jesus Christ. There is no other way. We can be pleasing to the Eternal Father only to the extent that He will be able to recognize in us the characteristics of His Own Son: wounded as He, with hands, feet and heart pierced. Through grace and the exercise of our virtues, we need to be so identified with Jesus Christ that the Father, penetrating into our souls, that He comes to recognize us as His own sons and daughters. He is to take pleasure in us, as He did contemplating His only Son on earth. However, in addition to being our **Model, Exemplary Cause**, Jesus Christ is also the architect of our holiness, in so far as He communicates to us - as an **Efficient Cause**, through faith and the sacraments, divine grace. He has merited this for us at a dear price: this is Him serving as our **Meritorious, Satisfactory Cause**. From all this it follows that not only is He the totality of our spiritual life, but He is also the holiness to which God invites us. This is 'supernatural' in its end: **conformity to the Beloved Son**, as well as in its means: **the Gift of Grace**.

If this is the way it is, then also the entire undertaking of our sanctification, by means of which there is realized our vocation to holiness, ought to have a supernatural character. The Benedictine Abbot sustains this view with much vigor: he sees beyond any doubt that our progress does not depend above all on us, but is fundamentally the action of God. The human cooperation is reduced - and yet, how

essential as well as difficult is it to do this! - to the elimination of those obstacles which can slow down the divine action. There is at play here that effort, sustained by God's grace, of distancing ourselves from sin and from bad habits, the work of mortification of all tendencies to evil, to selfishness, to pride and to the other vices, the detachment in order not to reserve in our hearts any place, no matter how insignificant for any creature loved in itself, and to free us from any and all disordered love of self. The entire enterprise of Christian asceticism ought to aim at **giving free sway to the divine life and activity.**

Therefore, God alone is the first and principal Author of our sanctification, as of our salvation. Jesus Christ is the Efficient cause, the Source of our sanctification, from the moment that His vivifying humanity, hypostatically united to the word, communicates to us His treasures of Grace, strength and light. This happens thanks to the contact that is inaugurated between us and Him through the sacraments and faith. According to St. Thomas<sup>299</sup>, from the moment that grace has a supernatural effect, in that it renders anyone open to it a participant in the divine nature. This Principal Cause can only be the His Divinity, while the humanity of Christ is His *Conjoined Instrument*. Those actions of God, exterior to His essence, i.e., *ad extra*, according to the traditional theological opinion in the West, are common to all three Divine Persons. However, the work of our sanctification is attributed to the Holy Spirit. - because all that is the work of fulfillment, perfection, all that is the work of love, of union, and consequently, of holiness - since our holiness is measured by our level of union with God - is attributed to the Holy Spirit. This Divine Person, however, in the Economy of salvation, is relative to Jesus Christ and to His work [cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13, ff.]. Therefore, the role that Marmion confers on Him is that of forming Jesus Christ within us, the supreme Model of Holiness. The Holy Spirit is the '**Finger of God**', Who designs within our depths the outlines of the Divine Son, so that we, too, might be the object of the Father's good pleasure, as Jesus Himself is [cf. Mt 3:17; 17:5]. The Paraclete **is the Architect of our Sanctification** - so, our every spiritual progress for Marmion is nothing more than a further outpouring of the Spirit, a new taking over, of possession, of our souls, by Him. The activity of this Sweet Guest of our soul is efficacious, **in the liturgical celebrations.**

The comprehension of this last statement is tied to two presuppositions:

- First, that sanctification is, as is often repeated, of an essentially supernatural character, being simply **the expansion of Christ's life in us**, and therefore, is intrinsically bound to the influence exercised by him in the souls of believers;

---

<sup>299</sup> cf. I-II, q. 112, a. 1.

- second, that this spiritual influence Christ fulfills primarily through the Liturgy of the Church. This is the principal font of the Christian spirit, as St. Pius Xth had noted in the mature years of the Benedictine Abbot, in his *Motu Proprio*, ***Musica Sacra*** Nov. 22, 1903] - and not so much private 'devotions', or ascetical exercises.

In the generations preceding the great Abbot, many spiritual masters attributed to special devotions and ascetical practices the heart of holiness. This was the flowering of a piety that was excessively methodical and individualist. This had the secret of spiritual progress reside in the level of commitment and fidelity of following a given system of prayers and penances. From this kind of understanding of the spiritual life, so very often those characteristics of a kind of crudity, of sterility and subjectivism that permeated so many instructions regarding the spiritual life. Contrary to this, the Benedictine Abbot proposed the **Liturgy** of the Church, available to all. This efficaciously, and of its very nature, had nourished the faith and spiritual life of so many generations of believers down through the long ages of Church life. This was the concern, the conviction that moved Marmion to encourage the **Liturgical Movement** that had its start and impetus in his time, and which thoroughly inspired Marmion, once he was Prior.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to mention a dispute that arose in these times when a monk of Mardesous, Dom Festugiere, published an article maintaining that Primacy of the Liturgy as the ultimate source of the spiritual life., with regard to every other method. The reactions in theological circles was harsh - and a number of Jesuits saw this as an attack on the spirituality of St. Ignatius. For his part, Dom Marmion did not want to enter into polemics with any other spirituality - but, was simply building on the encouragement of St. Pius Xth to give ever greater encouragement to the Liturgy of the Church, also as a spiritual source. For Marmion, the spiritual life is the expansion of Christ's life within us - the entire spiritual life is Jesus Christ living in us, Christ being our spiritual life. The role of the believer in all this is to struggle against the obstacles that would impede this divine life expanding within, and of handing oneself over to Jesus Christ, We can do nothing of ourselves, and Christ alone is able to help us - and Christ may be reached at the altar, during Mass especially, in the sacraments, in prayer, in the Sacred Liturgy which fills the soul with grace and fills one's life with Jesus Christ.

For Dom Marmion, the Liturgy enabled him to understand better the nature and the laws of the spiritual life, particularly of divine grace. He always defended the central position that to Divine Grace there must always be given the primacy in the study of holiness. It enjoys the principal role in the mystery of human sanctification. In this, St. Ignatius plays a unique role: one prays as though the entire enterprise depended on God alone; and each one is invited to cooperate, to work, as though holiness depended on him/her. Marmion was personally most convinced

of this saying of Jesus Christ: *...without Me, you can do nothing!* [cf. Jn 15:5]. Marmion gave much sway to the virtue of **theological hope**.

The great Abbot was endowed with a most profound conviction of the efficacy of the merits acquired by Jesus Christ, and placed at our disposal in the Liturgical life. All the faithful are called, in the strength of the Sacraments of Christian initiation, to holiness. With Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, Blessed José Maria Escrivá, and many others, he never believed that heroic holiness was indeed a privilege that was exclusive to a certain few with special vocations with particular characteristics - **it is the vocation of all** [cf. LG 11;32; 39-42]. The key is this central invitation, addressed to all ***Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect!*** [cf. Mt 5:48]

### 3. Grace:

This is not a ‘univocal’ term, but assumes various meanings, in relationship with the context and the intention of the one who speaks about it, or writes about it:

- in particular here it has already been used to indicate those divine motions, influences on human activity, i.e., that assistance which God grants to human beings with a view to his/her willing, or of doing what is good, right [**actual grace**];
- in another sense, it is that **gratuitous and merciful love of God**, which is the moving power in the eternal predestination of Jesus Christ, and the intimate sense of that doctrine, according to which God creates all for His ‘glory’;
- in third sense, grace is that **gift of the Holy Spirit** [**uncreated grace**];
- in a fourth sense, that will be utilized often here, it is that habitual disposition of the human soul [**sanctifying grace**].

**a. Participation in the Divine Nature: pinnacle of the Thomistic Tradition:** the divine Plan of our holiness and sanctification is a reality for every Christian in virtue of the Gift of Sanctifying Grace. It is high among the benefits planned for us by God in His Decree of Predestination and realized historically by His Son, Jesus Christ. These gifts are available for use in every moment of the Church’s history. In order to realize His Plan, God bestows generously and mercifully His grace, a mysterious participation in His nature, by which we become in and through His Son, Who has merited it, the authentic **adopted children of God**. In this rich description of grace there are condensed those aspects which the great Abbot emphasized concerning this teaching. A good part of this pertain already to the common theological patrimony - while, in other ways, Marmion presents his own particular doctrinal and spiritual perspective. Some of these points follow here:

1.] Basing himself on Ep 1:3, ff., Marmion ponders the Divine Plan and the decision to share with His favorite creature **that life which is proper to God**. We are indeed *sharers in the divine nature* [cf. 2 P 1:4]. In a certain sense, the infinite abyss existing between the Creator and the creature, is totally unfathomable, since grace does not destroy nature - and yet, in another manner, the gulf is filled, because grace does elevate nature. This gulf is breached through the idea of **similarity**: grace renders us conform to God. In Thomistic terms, grace is a *participata similitudo divinae naturae*<sup>300</sup>. There may be noted here, along with the precision of a Scholastic definition, a theme that was very dear to the Greek tradition: **the divinization of human beings** - through which human beings have as their end **the participation in the divine nature through communion in the Mystery of the Holy Trinity**<sup>301</sup>. This is possible uniquely through the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, Who assumed human flesh, nature, in order to realize this endeavor, plan of the Father.

Already, St. Irenaeus, at the end of the 2nd century, spoke of the *marvelous exchange*, by which the Eternal Word became man, and the Son of God was indeed the Son of Man: thus, any human being, by being united to the Incarnate Word receives **filial adoption**, and becomes a **child of God**. The Cappadocian Fathers develop particularly the theme of the **deification** of a human being. The Word of God became a man so that human beings might become children of God. St. Maximus, Confessor, ponders the Christological data according to which the divinity does not destroy, nor alter the human nature of Jesus Christ, but, on the contrary, **reinforces, perfects** it. This shows that *deification* is no lessening, or restricting a human being, but rather is his./her **full realization**.

In the West, Alexander of Hales was the first to speak explicitly of the idea of **created grace**, that disposition which renders us like to God. Traditional theology then confers on grace the attribute *deiform*, Marmion developed this idea - often down-graded in recent times - due to his thoroughly supernatural concept of the spiritual life. This **participation, divinization** is not merely metaphorical, but is something real. This reality of the elevation of the human nature, is brought forward by Marmion by means of his definition, description, that he makes of **habitual grace: an interior quality, produced in us by God, inhering in the soul, which embellishes the soul and renders each pleasing to God**. This phrase seeks to describe the very consistency of grace itself - while, the classical definition [*participata similitudo divinae naturae*] - as well as other descriptions that may follow here - describes rather the effects of grace. For Marmion, Grace remains an **interior quality that inheres**. this vocabulary seeks to reinforce the real elevation

<sup>300</sup> cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, III. q. 62, a. 1.

<sup>301</sup> cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Orientale Lumen*, May 2, 1995

granted by God to human beings in virtue of the Gift of grace. This connotes, qualifies interiorally the human being. The adjective **inhering**, is an adjective of a certain theological density that is quite notable. Cardinal Newman was able to see right here the clear difference between the Protestant conception and the Catholic teaching: the Protestant thesis is that grace is a mere external approval, or acceptance on the part of God - whereas, Catholics have traditionally taught, from the Scriptures and the fathers, that grace is an **interior condition**, or a **real quality of the soul**. The Lutheran emphasis is the imputation to human beings of justification, thanks to the merits of Jesus Christ. This 'imputation' remains exterior since Luther maintained that humanity, even after having obtained grace, remains intrinsically a sinner. If to be 'just' implies on the part of God a shift from the Divine Wrath, to Divine Mercy, this does not include a **real transformation** of the human being. In the rather pessimistic idea of Luther, the 'graced' person is a mere spectator of his/her own salvation. There is required of each a sentiment of '**fiducial faith**' in God's Justice, and in Christ. The doctrinal response on the part of the Catholic Church was verbalized through the Council of Trent [cf. DS 1529; 1547; 1561] - which maintained firmly that Justification is indeed a gift bestowed by God in virtue of the merits of Christ's Paschal Mystery, and in this human beings are truly rendered 'just' - grace and charity are infused by work of the Holy Spirit and 'inhere' in the soul. Therefore, 'justice' is applied most importantly of God - but it also pertains to the **justifying, merciful intervention of God**, which **inheres** then in the human soul.

Marmion knew well the Protestant teachings - and he also knew quite well the teachings of Trent, which he often cited in his writings. As he defined grace as inhering into the soul, he had in mind the Council doctrine, and surely understood the theological problems behind these. As he strove to inculcate the reality of the gift of Sanctifying Grace, Marmion also showed his profound familiarity with Thomism, according to which grace is a **quality**, a metaphysical category which characterizes of itself, which 'impregnates' of itself the being in which it inheres, acting in the manner of a **formal cause**<sup>302</sup>. At the same time, of the various species of *quality*, he made clear that grace would be presented as a kind of **habit**<sup>303</sup>, i.e. a certain disposition that tends to produce acts in conformity with its nature. Furthermore, this *habit* also communicates an effective **similarity** with God, as grace is also placed in the context of *quality*, it would surprisingly enough be listed as an **accident**, something added on to human nature, elevating and perfecting it. Thus, *grace* would not determine the fundamental, metaphysical constitution of a person, since grace [sadly!] can be lost, and the person remains a human being, even though a lesser one. This category also helps to avoid any danger of confusing

<sup>302</sup> cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 110, a. 2, c and ad 1 um.

<sup>303</sup> Id., II Sent., d. 26, q. 1, a. 4.

the limits between Creator and creature, of ever placing these realities on the same level. Hence, the participation in the divine nature that is infused into the human soul does not imply the total substantial change [*transubstantial*] of the human being, that would make a man divine. The abyss between the ‘graced’ human being remains ontologically unsurpassable [cf. 1 Tm 6:15, f.]: ... *He is the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality and Who dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no human being has ever seen, or can see...* This abyss can only be bridged by the gratuitous Mercy of God, and no one may glory before him [cf. Rm 3:27; 1 Co 1:29, 31; 3:21; Ep 2:9].

2.] The Abbot’s description of Grace as an **interior quality, inhering in the soul, as a *participata similitudo divinae naturae***, is clearly Thomistic.<sup>304</sup> This was the central presentation throughout the 19th, and much of the 20th centuries. However, biblical, patristic and liturgical studies - as well as a greater sensibility for the historical evolution of doctrines, as well as ecumenism, have exerted a great influence also on the manner of presenting the mystery of grace. Witnesses to this development have noted one part that might be termed *destruens*, as well as the part rightfully called *construens*. Some heavy and at times, ruthless criticism has been leveled at the entire Scholastic presentation that would eliminate it entirely as *passé*. But, there have been many constructive, moderate criticisms that have tended to present **some authentic acquisitions for the concept of grace**, and have brought to the fore a greater fidelity to the Biblical and Patristic categories, as well as supplying a more adequate correspondence to the contemporary mentality and culture. We will analyze some of these here:

- **Grace as a Quality, Habit of the Soul:** if it is like other habits, it would place it under our disposition - it would *reify* the mystery. Some would see in this classical approach a kind of dualism between this created ‘gift’, and that one infinite Gift, *par excellence*. The biblical idea is the God takes up His dwelling within us. It can be readily admitted that some of the Scholastic language does bear within itself something of a danger when applied to matters of the faith, to lead some to misunderstanding. So, one effort is to make the effort to penetrate beyond the language, to grasp rather that which these Scholastic theologians truly wished to imply. We have to admit that a certain number of theologians has indeed considered grace as a ‘thing’, a *supernatural being*, a substance interposed between God and the human soul.

However, this was not the intention, nor the meaning, of the great Scholastic Masters, even if their manner of expression might lead some to this impression. These theologians of another time sought to shed some light on the fact that Grace

<sup>304</sup> cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 62, a. 1; I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2 um.

is not some third ‘object’ between the soul and God. This gift does not separate one from God, but rather bonds one to Him, renders one close to Him and permits the encounter with him. For St. Bonaventure, grace is comparable to that influence flowing from supreme light, which always maintains contact with its origin, as the light with the sun. As far as Marmion is concerned, he did not spend much time in abstract questions: his constant emphasis was his quest for that personal contact with God: through grace, faith and the sacraments, we enter into a real communion with the Lord. But, there are other problems:

**- Grace, defined as participation in the divine nature, seems totally outside of human history:** the risk in an over-emphasis of this aspect would be to prescind from the History of salvation. Grace pertains already to the theology of creation - the grace ‘merited’ by Christ then re-established the disturbed original order. This led to the distinction, and separation of ‘nature’ and ‘super-nature.’ Many modern theologians<sup>305</sup> defend the position that the great theologians of the Middle Ages - like Sts. Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas - maintained the Historico-Salvific message of Sacred Scripture. Some have criticized St. Thomas [I-II, qq. 109-114] for studying ‘Grace’ before Christology [Pars III]. The usual response is that Thomas has Christ permeating the entire work.

There is no doubt that the great Benedictine Abbot was a staunch Thomist: with the rest of the Catholic tradition, believed that Adam was created in grace and in original justice<sup>306</sup> - and he considered this grace to be a participation in the divine nature. After original sin, Jesus Christ was destined by His Father to intervene in order to restore the divine plan, compromised by sin, and to re-establish friendship with God. There are many theologians, as was noted above, who might follow the Scotist view in this matter: that would indicate that Jesus Christ was not called upon solely to restore the supernatural life. In this view, the essence of grace is Christ Himself - and He is not to be reduced solely as its Meritorious, or Efficient Cause. The authentic point of departure for every valid consideration concerning grace is Jesus Christ. Marmion was able to present grace as a **participation in the filial life of Jesus Christ**.

**- Grace unilaterally seen as a participation of the Divine Nature, might tend to neglect the Divine Personalities, relationships within God:** in the context of the Reformation struggles, there was much emphasis given to justification inhering within the human soul. Thus, the manuals rather unilaterally emphasized the ‘created’ grace, understood as an effect produced by God, which was conceived as an Efficient Cause. This brought to the extreme would almost annul every personal

---

<sup>305</sup> cf. Walter KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*.

<sup>306</sup> cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 95, a. 1; DS 1511; CCC ## 374-376



relationship between God and the human being. Such a relationship would not be comprehended as a personal relationship of Word and of Faith. There would only be a 'material relationship' between a divine being, which is the cause and a created being which is the 'effect.' By developing the insights of the Greek Fathers in particular, even Petavius taught the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a way that shed more light on the ideal of the 'uncreated' grace. The great theologian Scheeben in the last century, came to understand grace as a participation in the divine nature brought about by means of grace as a participation in the divine nature such as is found in the Holy Spirit.

Some of the Scholastic theologians were already very close to these insights. St. Bonaventure, for example, developed the specific relationships made possible through grace with the divine Persons. Thus, for him, sanctifying grace is a gift by means of which the soul is rendered perfect and the Spouse of Christ, Daughter of the Eternal Father, and Temple of the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas had also noted that there is a difference between the traces that God leaves of Himself in created reality - and then His image which He imprints in created rational beings - and that which is conferred through the supernatural gifts. If the divine essence is considered the Efficient Cause of these gifts, as to what pertains to the Exemplary Cause this includes a similarity which takes its example and origin in the very character of one of the divine relationships<sup>307</sup>. Thus, the disposed human being receives the Gift of **Wisdom**, which implies a relationship with the Eternal Word, and that of Love, tied intimately to the Holy Spirit.

While Marmion's own formation was that of the 'manual' theology [in vogue, perhaps, up until Vatican II], he placed in bolds relief the relationships that grace implies toward each one of the Divine Persons. Classical theology shows how this makes us all children of the Father; brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Even though these interesting insights can remain in the abstract, Dom Marmion was able to base an authentic and profound spirituality on these realities. One of his clear contributions to the History of Spirituality was his almost 'natural' ability to base all spirituality solidly on dogma. For him, Scholastic Theology provided an ideal vehicle for the Christian Mystery - and in a particular manner, it served the Dogma of Grace quite well. By the same token, as with every human endeavor, the Scholastic system is unable to contain the richness of the dogma of Divine Grace - it also might have the tendency to render grace less dynamic. Nonetheless, a careful reading [and praying!] over of Marmion's thought will provide many good and extraordinary insights - he was indeed an original thinker, applying a classical system of thought. His indeed is an authentic personal witness of a lively faith, guided by the Holy Spirit. His contribution indeed represents an

---

<sup>307</sup> id., I Sent., d. 15, q. 4, a. 1; CG IV, 21, 2.

increase in the comprehension of Divine Revelation, as noted by Vatican II - that can only result from **contemplation, study, lived experience** and **fidelity to the Magisterium** [DV 8]. As do many classical spiritual writers, Marmion has a significant contribution to make to a 'Spirituality of Hope'.

**b. A Share in Divine Filiation, proper to Jesus Christ:** in classical terms, Marmion develops a theology of predestination to be the children of God, flowing directly from the theology of "vocation" to grace. These are two inseparable aspects of the traditional theology based on the Word of God. Since the participation in the divine nature comes to us through the divine infusion of God's grace, **divine adoption** is established in us through grace. This is the characteristic 'quality' of the children of God. In the consideration of the bestowal of grace as the means of obtaining Divine Adoption, the Benedictine Abbot almost 'automatically' brings a **Christological** aspect to the **participation in the divine nature** which grace supplies. In simple terms, we receive divine adoption from Jesus Christ and by means of Jesus Christ. Marmion refers often to the **Capital Grace** of Christ. In this sense, Christ has not only 'merited' grace for us - but, gives us a share in His own. In this sense, grace is not totally consumed in the philosophical understanding of 'participation' - but, this immediately becomes **a share in the Filial Relationship within the Trinity, proper to Jesus Christ**. The Divine Life that is received through the infusion of grace is that divine life lived by Jesus Christ. This is uniquely communicated to us through the Human Nature of Jesus, that **conjoined Instrument of His Divinity**, unique to Him. Jesus Christ is traditionally thought of as the **Exemplary, Meritorious, and Efficient Cause** of our sanctification:

- Jesus is the **Model**, the **Paradigm**, of our Divine Filiation;
- He has also **merited** that this be bestowed on us;
- and He has established, instituted the **Means** by which this can be shared.

In the application of these insights, Marmion closely followed St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>308</sup>: in Jesus Christ, there is a two-fold grace: the **Grace of Union**, and **Sanctifying Grace**. The first of these two effects of God's Grace, i.e., **the Grace of Union**, brings it about that a determined human nature [the one 'assumed' by Christ] is united in a **hypostatic** manner to the Person of the Word, and this renders that unique human nature is that 'of God'. This grace is unique, exclusively proper to Jesus Christ. The second aspect, **Sanctifying Grace**, is 'necessary' due to the fact that His human nature assumed by the Incarnate Word was indeed 'integral', in its essence, as well as in its faculties. Therefore, it proved fitting that

---

<sup>308</sup> III, q. 7, a. 13: *Gratia habitualis Christi intelligitur ut consequens unionem hypostaticam sicut splendor solem.*

this human nature would be rendered *adroit*, capable of acting in a supernatural manner, and thus placed in that situation of its Hypostatic Union with the Word. This **Sanctifying Grace** flows immediately from the fundamental **Grace of Union**, but with this difference: the **Grace of Union** is unique to Jesus Christ, whereas His **Sanctifying Grace** is share with us. There are also other distinctions to be noted: Christ had **Habitual, Sanctifying Grace** in His earthly sojourn so that His human nature might act in a unique supernatural manner - and also so that He might be able to communicate this to others who would be open to him. Furthermore, Christ received this Grace in fullness [cf. 1n 1:14], precisely so that He could communicate this to others. It is shared with us in the measure of the Gift of Christ Himself [cf. Ep 4:7]

**1.] Jesus Christ as the Exemplary Cause of our Grace:** the Son of God made man is the Exemplary Cause of our **Sanctification**, in particular: of our **filial adoption** by means of Grace. What may be more interesting is that this **fundamental similarity** that we have with him is only achieved through Grace. This similitude, achieved through the workings of Grace within us relates above all to the Divine Filiation: for indeed, by grace we do become the adoptive children of God. The Incarnate Word, throughout the course of His human existence, realized various ‘states’, ‘conditions’, while never abandoning His fundamental reality, that of being the only-begotten, most beloved **Son of God**. In His glorified humanity, He presently remains this for all eternity. He remains “in the **bosom of the Father**” in His Incarnation; up through His sense of ‘abandonment’ in His painful death - and this is His situation in eternal Glory.. Being **the Son of God**, therefore, is the fundamental state of Jesus Christ. Since the Incarnate Word is characterized by Personal Unity, what is **proper** to the Second Person of the Trinity, is His **Divine Filiation**. This redounds also in the human nature which He assumed, from the very first instant of His conception in His Mother’s womb, remaining the **Son of God**.

This is what we are called to **imitate, to follow, to put on His mind**: what we are called to imitate first of all, is His Divine Filiation. This is the principal, radical element that we receive through grace, and which we are called to intensify through life-long cooperation with it. This is the core of Marmion’s thought: the divinity of Jesus Christ represents the fundamental point of the Abbot’s Christology - this is that point that sheds light on all the other aspects of the Mystery of Christ and of every aspect of our relationship with him. This is why Marmion has been called **the Doctor of Divine Adoption**.

**2.] Jesus Christ is the Meritorious Cause of all Grace:** in classical theological terms, our **imitation, following, of Christ, the putting on of His mind** have two aspects: one called **ontological**, and the other is more properly known as **moral**. For both, Sanctifying Grace plays a supreme role. The state into which we

are introduced through the possession of grace is a participation in the Filiation of the Divine Word, and all that this Filiation brings about within the Mystery of the Trinity. All this is activated in the human soul by grace. In other words, grace is a participation in the generation of the Divine Son on the part of the Father - hence, **the possession of grace is the first imitation of Jesus Christ**. Through grace, we have a part in all that is essential and what is the most unique in the Person of Jesus: His Divine Filiation, and all this, by virtue of Grace. Perhaps in no other case is it so true that this is indeed a 'Grace', a gift flowing out of the Benevolence of God, a gratuitous gift that surpasses not only all that we could ever merit, but goes far beyond our most sublime expectations. To support his view here, Dom Marmion calls upon the great traditions of the Church: St. Leo the Great orientates the doctrinal data toward the moral sphere: 'Being endowed with a participation in the generation of Jesus Christ, we are able to renounce the works of the flesh.' Yet, it is most often to St. Thomas Aquinas that Marmion returns with this lapidary formula: **'Adoptive Filiation is a certain similitude in the Eternal Filiation'**<sup>309</sup>.

**3.] Jesus Christ is the Efficient Cause of all Grace:** one of the 'functions' of the Word, as described in Marmion's language, is that of being the **Image, ICON of the Father**. Other 'functions' noted by the Abbot are also that of recognizing on the part of Jesus, in so far as He is the Divine Son, that the Father is His Principle and that all derives to Him as Son by His **being totally turned toward, united with, tending toward the Father**, and that in the end of His earthly Mission, He will **return to the Father**. Thus, our imitation of the Word Incarnate reaches even to this sublime level- through the efficiency of grace, we are able to imitate this Intra-Trinitarian function and we can do this in virtue of the Grace that renders us **Deiform**, participants in the divine nature. Thus, in a certain more sublime sense than at creation, we become the **Images, ICONS of God**, just as Eternal Wisdom is in Himself.

In this simple manner, Marmion brings together two sublime understandings of Grace: it is a **Participation in the Divine Nature**, and a **Participation in the Divine Filiation**. For many interpreters, the Benedictine Abbot is able to avoid any 'impersonal' or 'abstract' conception of Divine Grace, that is latent in some of the scholastic jargon.

Once we are rendered 'Children of God', for the imitation of Jesus Christ, by means of grace, we are likewise called to this in the living out of our sublime dignity. The fundamental axiom of this spiritual theologian is: we are **called to be through grace what Jesus Christ is by nature**, i.e., the sons and daughters] of God - we are all indeed the Children of God. There is in this reality a definite moral

---

<sup>309</sup> III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3um.; CG IV, 21, 1.

implication: if Christ has risen, let our thoughts be above! We are called to live by grace, as God's very loved Children. Grace becomes in us the principle of a New Life, a **Filial Life**. This is the dynamic aspect of Grace, in a Christological dimension. The Gift of grace implies a certain union with Jesus Christ- He is indeed the **Vine**, and we are the branches, and we need to draw continuously on that life-giving sap that flows from His Person through His Divine Nature; he is the **Living Stone** who energizes us; we are living members of His **Risen Body**, His **Spouses** - we are called to be **Vested** in Christ Jesus, dressed in **Battle Gear**, with swords, helmets and breast-plates for the Spiritual Combat. Thus grace is not some treasure locked away in the strong-box of the soul - but it is a **Life, a vital, vibrant thrust** toward the Trinity and the Church. This is the challenge to **remain in Christ** [cf. Jn 15: 1. ff.].

By these relatively easily grasped principles, Dom Marmion has been able to open up very vast perspectives for our spiritual lives: this union with Christ is achieved through Divine Grace. In order for this to reach maturity, we need to allow Christ to live in us, that He indeed be the Principal Subject of all our actions, and that all we do should gush forth from a supernatural motivation. Our **exemplar, Model, Paradigm**, is the Incarnate word Himself: by going back, on the one hand, to **Johannine Christology**, we become convinced that Jesus cannot do anything of Himself [cf. Jn 5:19; 8: 28], but that it is the Father Who accomplishes in and through Him His Plan [cf. Jn 14:10] - and yet, He does communicate His own teaching [cf. Jn 7:16], but uses only the Father's Word [cf. Jn 3:34; 8:26]. The reason for all this is because the Divine Son and the Father are **One** [cf. Jn 10:30]. Marmion is able to make a practical application of the **Chalcedonian Definition** according to which in Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, there is one sole Person, who is Divine. Thus, all of Christ's actions flow out from His divinity and His entire human activity is *theandric*, i.e., **in continual, ontological dependence on the Person of the Word**.

Thus, Jesus might be described as a ***being without His own Personality, other than the Divine*** - this radical aspect of the ***kenosis, self-emptying***, constitutes the exemplar of the Christian life. Through Baptism - and then, in whatever walk of life the Lord has asked us to follow, each believer is called to live in a continuous dependence on Jesus Christ, on His Spirit, and to bring always our motivations for all we do toward this reality. Of course, we will retain our own personalities: the reason is, of course, that grace places the recipient on the level of an **ontological accident** [something added, even for intrinsic elevation, after one's being is already completed]. Nonetheless, on the level of human activity, each 'graced' individual ought to be submitted as far as will be possible, to the assumed divine Personality that comes through grace. Thinking through the extraordinary mystery that the human nature assumed by Jesus in the Incarnation does not have its own subsistence in a human personality - thus, Christ's ***kenosis, despoilment***, provides a

model for **Christian self-emptying**. As Christ's humanity does not enjoy its own subsistence, thus every follower of Christ is progressively consistently called to renounce his/her own subsistence, in order that each will seek this in God. Imitating the traditional understanding of the **Hypostatic Union** the committed believer is invited to allow that God comes to live more within us, and to guide us all the more in life's choices and daily activities.

This provides good soil for the living of **Christian Poverty** - the demands of the spirit of this evangelical counsel goes beyond the realm of the material towards that sublime goal of **Poverty of Spirit** [cf. Mt 5:3], in its most authentic sense. This can only be achieved when one indeed despoils him/herself of all that is one's own, of all that to which nature is attached: this includes one's own judgments, outlook, mind-set, self-love, that human will constituted by the three vices of ownership. Self-emptying inspires in us thoughts, desires, and the will of God to act solely for those motives which He would inspire. In this situation, then indeed more and more within us will proceed from God alone. The challenge is to mortify all that is disordered within us, all that proceeds solely, or principally from our own self-love. The goal would be that our thoughts, sentiments, actions would proceed more from the grace of God remaining within us. In the strength of this demanding renunciation - upon which Marmion so often insisted - grace more and more becomes the immediate principle of Christian behavior. Thus, is realized that word of St. Paul: It is indeed Christ Who lives in me, and it is no longer I who live! [cf. Ga 2:20]. It is indeed Christ Who lives in me because the principle upon which one bases all his/her activity, all of the aspects of one's personal life, is the Grace of Christ.

In this manner Jesus is not only the **Model, Exemplar, Paradigm**, but He is also the **Architect, the Vivifier, the Prime Mover**, of one's Christian existence. To adhere, thus, in profundity to Jesus Christ and to make of Him one's own life in daily routine living, to conform oneself to the divine Model to the extent of **putting on Christ Jesus** [cf. Ga 3:27] - makes of the committed Christian the object of the Father's being well pleased in each one. In such a case, the heavenly Father would find in such a committed believer a special image of His own beloved Son, in Whose conformity He has predestined us [cf. Rm 8:29]. In his talks, Marmion often recalled the episode of the benediction given by the dying Isaac to Jacob: the latter was able to convince his father [deceitfully, however!] by being vested in the guise of the Beloved Son. The whole goal of Divine Filiation is to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. This is Marmion's great yearning - a desire, a hope, founded not only on his Thomistic theological reasoning, but above all on his own spiritual experience and efforts.

In the teaching of this spiritual master, there was much insistence on the fact that God with His grace becomes the Principle and Inspirer of our daily - even banal, routine - activities. This seems to have been the personal spiritual experience of the Benedictine Abbot. What is remarkable in his writing is its simplicity, coupled with extraordinary theological depth that embraces the three Divine Persons in their properties at work in the sanctification of the Church and her members. The Father is the **Principal**, of the Intra-Trinitarian life as well as of the Creation of the universe - thus, the believer is called to honor His primordial quality as Principal, placing before Him our entire being, all our plans, our desires and hopes - to the point of handing over to Him the initiative in us of all we are, and of all we are still trying to be. In this life-long yearning, we are supported and preceded by the example and the help of Jesus Christ Whose life-long thoughts and desires always had Him respond to the Heavenly Father in absolute dependence upon Him. It is particularly in the presence of the Son that Marmion experienced the most powerful attraction, grace, of submitting himself, his whole being and all he tried to do within the Church, to the Suffering Messiah, the Risen Lord. This manifests from another aspect **the very marked Christocentrism of Dom Marmion**. He often pondered the capital and multiple role that Jesus plays in the on-going salvation of the world - this all flows from the eternal fact that Jesus is “in the bosom of the Father, eternally turning toward Him”. Marmion often quoted insights from Paul’s Christology [cf. 1 Co 15:27-28; Ep 1:21, f.; Ph 3:21; Heb 2:8]. In succinct terms, Marmion worked so that Jesus would indeed live in him, as the result of the life-long effort on the part of the Abbot to be totally dependent on Him. His was the constant mind-set of submitting his whole day, every day, and all its challenges, to Jesus Christ - which is the same as being guided by the Holy Spirit [cf. Rm 8:14; Ga 5:18]. It is clear that this spiritual master handed over the reins of his own life to the Paraclete: an expression often heard from him.

The insistence on making Christ the absolute Lord of his daily life, to the point of striving daily to submit to Him his every activity, leads us to understand how the great Abbot was able to keep Him before his eyes as his Model. Marmion strove to imitate in Christ Jesus’ eternal dependence on His Father, and as the Architect and Subject of his own spiritual experience. This can begin in every spiritual life from the instant that any committed believer is able to subject him/herself to His Lordship and to His Spirit. Therefore, Jesus Christ is not only the **Exemplary Cause** of our divine adoption through grace, but He is also our **Meritorious** and **Efficient Cause**. This is so because, on the one hand, He has merited with His life and His Passion and Death reconciliation with God and the gift of our share in the divine life - and then, on the other hand, He is the One who, by being God in Person, infuses, in-grafts into us, this life through that humanity which He assumed, and which is now glorified. The great Abbot explained the

Efficient Causality of Jesus Christ in this area through the **Sacraments**, which prolong the salvific bearing of His human nature. Calling to mind the truly profound teachings of the Council of Trent, Marmion repeated the classical Catholic teaching according to which the sacrament is not only the **sign**, but also **the efficacious cause of grace**<sup>310</sup>. This is initiated primarily in the conferral of the sacrament of Baptism, which has one re-born to the divine life. In this sense, Baptism is the Sacrament of New Birth, the sacrament of Divine Adoption. Hence, sanctifying grace is also called **Baptismal, or Sacramental Grace**. The other Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, are the ordinary means for the increase of the divine life in the Christian.

Habitual, Sanctifying Grace, then, in this applied exposition, is not only a simple and impersonal interior quality - but, it is a dynamic gift that renders us the Children of God the Father, in the Image of God the Son, which He has merited for us, and which He communicates to us in an incessant manner. But even all this does not 'exhaust' the idea of grace:: for it also involves a singular relationship with the Holy Spirit. This relationship in the theology of the 19th century scholar Schebeen, according to whom Grace is the participation in the divine nature, in so far as this is possessed by the **Holy Spirit**: for Marmion, Grace is rather a participation in the **Filial Relationship of Jesus Christ**, the Incarnate Word to His Father. However, with the Abbot's Christological emphasis the role of the Holy Spirit is not lessened. For in the very first place the **infusion of grace is attributed to the Holy Spirit**, in accord with the Doctrine of Appropriations. Furthermore, the entire work of sanctification is attributed likewise to the Holy Spirit - it is He who communicates to us the **Grace of Adoption**. Grace, of course, has its Trinitarian dimension clearly preserved: it is a Gift which flows out of its basic Source, which is the Divine Love. With Sanctifying Grace, accorded to one in Baptism, the Paraclete then adorns the newly Baptized, the re-born believer in the water and the Holy Spirit. Marmion always saw in Jesus Christ our exemplar - and it is to the Holy Spirit that there are attributed both the union of the human nature with the Word, called the **Grace of Union**. It is the Holy Spirit Who communicates sanctifying grace to the human soul of Jesus - and this same Spirit has showered on the Messiah the fullness of the virtues and of His gifts.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of those responding to the Redemption by Jesus Christ is presented by recalling the theme of the **Spiritual Temple**. Thanks to the work achieved through Christ, this is a reality both on the ecclesial and community level - as well as on the personal, individual level. A further aspect of grace stems from the fact of its infusion: the soul indeed becomes the temple of the Most Trinity, in and through the Holy Spirit. Marmion was enthralled by the text from John: *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will*

---

<sup>310</sup> cf. DS # 1606 - Session VII, Canon 6.



*love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him* [Jn 14:23, f.]. There are variations on this mystery of just precisely how **God is in us**. It is clear that the **Indwelling** does not include only the Holy Spirit, but involves the entire Trinity, as does every divine work *ad extra*. . It is often attributed to the Holy Spirit, in that in the theological explanation of the terms of the Mystery of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is said to **proceed as love**, and it is He who unites the Father and the Son, as the **Bond of the Trinity**. Marmion also pondered the rich in-put provided by St. Paul: who clearly states that **Jesus dwells within us** [cf. Ga 2:20; Ep 3:17] - we are indeed Temples of the Holy Spirit, and He dwells within us [cf. 1 Co 3:16; 6:19; cf. also 2 Co 6:16; 2 Tm 1:14; Jas 4:5].

While not going any further in the many subtle distinctions brought forward by various minds pondering this sublime Mystery of the **Divine Indwelling**, Marmion was more interested in **the spiritual effects** that occur due to this. Knowing well the theology of the Appropriation to the Holy Spirit of this marvelous effect, the great Abbot was more interested in the concrete spiritual applications. He made very clear that this **Divine Guest** has come to dwell in the human spirit above all to bear witness to our **Filial Adoption** [cf. Rm 8:26, f.], to our being **sanctified**, that the Lord God Himself has become the **Inspirer** of all our supernatural activity, of bestowing on the soul open to Him of His most unique gifts - and lastly, basing himself on texts from John, this leads us to 'know, experience' Jesus Christ more in depth, of elevating our intelligence for a deep penetration of the Word of God and His Mysteries [cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:12-15], and of **trans-forming, trans-figuring** us more to the **Image, ICON, of Jesus Christ**.

Still regarding the **Divine Indwelling**, following a very ancient theological tradition<sup>311</sup>, well founded in the NT [cf. Ac 17:27, f.], there is affirmed the originality of the Divine Presence within to the infusion of Grace. God is already present in all things by means of His Essence and Power - in rational human beings, there is the further unique **Personal Divine Presence through Grace**. This is a **real ["ontological"] presence, and a presence through knowledge and love ["psychological"]**: through the operations of this Personal Divine Presence, the human soul directly reaches God. By means of Grace and the other Supernatural Gifts, the believer can 'enjoy', 'experience' God, by knowing and loving Him. The use of this interior spiritual apparatus, infused by God, has as its purpose that of possessing God, enjoying Him, **rejoicing in His Presence**. This is Augustine's theology of **usufruct**.

---

<sup>311</sup> cf. St. Augustine, Letter 187 [*De praesentia Dei* Liber]; St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 43, a. 3.

c. **The Dynamic Aspect of the Life of Grace:** bound intimately to the work of Christ, and to the action of the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit, Grace is intrinsically endowed with **a vibrant dynamism**. This is the principle of life, and precisely that supernatural life, the character of which has so permeated the teachings of Dom Marmion. Very similar to the presence of the soul in a living being, which is the condition of its vitality - thus, the presence of sanctifying grace is the guarantee of that supernatural life in a soul, and its possession initiates a level of existence that can indeed be compared to natural rational life, and yet surpasses this infinitely, since it is a **Participation in the very Life of God**. Like all life, the life of grace implies specific vital dynamism; it responds to various needs and laws; it has to be protected, guarded, made to increase, intensify, until the natural end of life. It never definitively 'accomplishes' full **Conformation to Christ**: it is no longer I who lives, but it is indeed Christ Who lives in me! [cf. Ga 2:20]. In so far as it is the principle of Divine Life within, grace is the point of departure of our every effort and act toward the supernatural life, and that life most fully pleasing to God. The relationship between **Grace and Charity** has led to a difference of view between Franciscan theology [which identifies them] and Thomistic theology, which clearly distinguishes them: **Grace is an entitative habit; Charity is an operative habit**. However one would resolve this discussion, they are co-extensive in the Christian life.

Marmion insisted much on the need to **remain in grace**, understood not only in the sense of being in the state of grace, avoiding mortal sins - but also, and above all, in that situation of acting out of a supernatural motive and purpose in all that we do. This means to live as Mary **full of grace, and through life, the capacity grows for a fuller, more intense grace**. The Abbot interprets in an ethical key this imperative, as the explicitation of a number of NT passages which show the remaining in Jesus Christ, as the branches remain in the vine in the Johannine image [cf. Jn 15:1-8] - and with the Pauline ideal of being **radicated, founded in** Charity, or in Christ Himself [cf. Ep 3:17; Col 2:7]. This is the only manner in which we can 'bear fruit' toward eternal life. The constant use of Sacred Scripture has enabled Dom Marion to avoid any excessive metaphysical explanation of these sublime truths, as these texts lead him constantly to refer to Jesus Christ. To live in grace means the same as being united, in one's being and actions, to the Risen Lord Himself.

There arises here almost naturally the matter of **meritorious actions** - which has been a real challenge to theologians in the course of history. The Benedictine Abbot, in a manner in full conformity with his characteristic spiritual sensibility, translates above all this theological category with the quest of those conditions so that we, and all our actions, might be pleasing to God the Father: a meritorious act is in the first place that act which has value before God, and which draws the divine

good pleasure. In constantly making reference to the essential role of Jesus Christ in our lives, the Abbot would note: in the eyes of God nothing is great other than that which is accomplished for His glory and with the Grace of Christ because God can take pleasure in us only in the measure that we are in similarity with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This likeness is the fruit of Grace which draws within us the very outline of Jesus. It is, then, our Christian state of being Adoptive Children in Jesus Christ which is the indispensable condition in order to be pleasing to God, and for our actions to have value before Him, i.e., that they can become 'meritorious'. Marmion was much impressed by Rm 8:17: if we are sons, we are also heirs... Grace indeed renders us the Children of God, and establishes that necessary proportionality in order to obtain from the Father also the 'inheritance'. In union with Christ, we will not lose our reward [cf. Mt 1;42]. If our actions are not motivated by charity, they are indeed useless [cf. 1 Co 13:1, ff.].

In this case the 'juridical categories', adopted by Paul with his "redemption" language [cf. Rm; Ga], serve as the vehicle to express the new Christian condition, in relationship with God - are not much used by Marmion. His concepts and expressions were more 'personal': hence, at the center of this line of thought, there is not so much the idea of 'reward', 'merit'. And the like - but, much more **relationship with the Father, conformation to the Son, indwelt by the Spirit**. By 'conformation', 'transfiguration' in this spiritual sense means more than the **ontological-sacramental** realities, but the emphasis with Marmion was always with the **dynamic ethical-spiritual aspects**, through which we truly imitate Jesus Christ. In this manner, we 'imitate'/'follow'/'put on the mind' of Jesus Christ, also by relating all our being and acting toward the Father, out of love. This 'doing all' for the glory of God, in the strength of charity is, in addition to Grace, a further condition, or better a specification of the first condition, so that our actions might be pleasing to Him.

We have already seen how Marmion was impressed with Rm 8:17: he understood acting out of grace as that condition which allows the establishment of the proportionality between our acting and the inheritance, which pertains solely to the Children of God. But, he went a bit further: on the wings of another biblical passage [cf. 1 Jn 3:2]: this 'inheritance' serves as that state in which there will be brought to completion our filial adoption. Only in 'glory' will this be manifested fully and will the condition of the Children of God be brought to fulfillment. While present 'grace' is real, but it remains in what might be compared to what develops as the embryo, a germinal situation. This final fulfillment will depend not only on the Divine Mercy, but also on our collaboration.

This ultimate meaning of the doctrine of our meritorious actions: these are the **necessary mediation** with regard to ourselves, between our **adoption, through**

***the grace of the way,*** and its ***full maturation in the glory of the homeland.*** To sustain this, does not mean in any way that any believer is the architect of his/her own salvation, but affirms in a clear manner that each one's dignity and responsibility is that of serving as a ***partner with God in the Covenant of Mercy.*** Our adoption as the Children of God embraces, in Marmion's thought, all the Economy of Salvation: from the Eternal Decree of **God** deciding all this [cf. Ep 1:4-6], to its accomplishment in **Jesus Christ**, to the time of the Church in **the Holy Spirit**. This is generally realized in a sacramental form, up through the definitive realization of the Reign of God.

Our eternal beatitude, in accord with the entire Catholic tradition, will depend on the level of grace achieved at the moment of our deaths. This is not so much a 'quantitative' conception of grace, as though it were some kind of a treasure, investment, bank capital, that would increase as we added coins to it. What would be of interest is the fact itself that allows the possibility of an **increase, an intensification of grace.** This is not only the principle of those actions that would have value before God, but it is also a condition that is susceptible to increase. So, it is not so much a quantitative accumulation of merits, as it is as a **progressive, intensifying conformation to Jesus Christ, a deepening of our condition as Adoptive Children of God, a more copious and ever-renewed out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.** The diversity of the level of grace of each one depends on two factors: on the Gift of God since, in Pauline terminology, to each one is given the **grace** according to the measure of the gift of Christ [cf. Ep 4:7] - and then, our **cooperation.** The principal factor is the Gift of God, which is continuously being bestowed on us through the sacraments. Nevertheless, our part remains essential since the reception of the sacraments is fruitful in that measure in proportion to our collaboration.

This graced response on our part has its incisive influence on the spiritual progress and on our increase in the life of intensifying grace, especially through the good works and the exercise of the virtues, beginning with the theological virtues: **faith, hope and charity.** Fundamental in this entire journey is the being in friendship with God the Father, i.e., in the state of grace and of acting always under the impulse of divine charity. If these conditions are verified, then, every good work 'merits' an increase of grace<sup>312</sup>. While keeping uppermost in mind always the Primacy of the Grace of Jesus Christ in the glorification of the believer and the role of Faith, the Council of Trent refuted the unilaterality of the Reformist teachings, by re-affirming the value of **good works** - not only as the attestation of the **justification** that has been infused, but also as an important factor in its increase, progress, intensification. Marmion also had abundant good sense in his application

---

<sup>312</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 114, a. 8, ad 3um; cf. Trent, DS 1474.

of theology to the spiritual life, and he maintained the necessity of good works in proceeding along the **King's Highway to Holiness**. The Abbot did this particularly in his Commentary on Chapter IV of the Benedictine Rule, dedicated to the illustration of the 'instruments of good works'. Here, the monastic life is compared to a manufactured endeavor, as bringing to term a labor conducted by hand. To do this, it is necessary to have the proper tools - and so to proceed in the spiritual art it is necessary to employ 'day and night', an entire series of ascetical practices.

The entire spiritual enterprise of the Christian who lives in friendship with God procures for each not only an increase in the level of Grace, but also that of eternal glory: we will indeed enjoy God in proportion to the level of grace that we will have achieved at the moment of our departure from this world. Considering the value of grace, the various aspects come to mind:

- first, renders one pleasing to God, through our humble actions accomplished out of love for him.
- then secondly, this allows for the establishment of a certain proportionality between these actions and the eternal reward.
- and lastly, and above all, this renders us the Adoptive Children of God.

The great Abbot in his simplicity, could hardly restrain his enthusiasm and admiration for the precious value of this gift: sanctifying grace is the first source of our greatness, because it confers on our lives, no matter how ordinary and banal they may seem, our true nobility and splendor. Grace is the Principle of our authentic life, the seed of our future glory, the genuine embryo of a happy eternity. We understand, then, that inestimable jewel that sanctifying grace is for a soul. It is the precious pearl, the splendor of which is due totally to the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. In comparison, the most opulent of lives in human terms pales, in the light of the Lord's observation: what good would it be for a man to gain the whole world, and then lose his own soul? [cf. Mt 16:26].

If the life of grace, then, is indeed so precious - and if, from possession of it depends the eternal destiny of human beings: how important it is to keep it. Simply to retain it is not sufficient, as everyone knows: for, since grace is the principle of a new and supernatural life, it is necessary not only to restrain oneself to remain in the state of grace. But even further, it is most necessary to strengthen it and increase and intensify it. However, the danger of losing it is quite real for all of us. Dom Marmion spent much of his preaching zeal in encouraging believers not only to maintain the state of grace in its integrity, but gave much consideration to the manner of increasing it. The first means, of course, is the avoidance of sin, and especially mortal sin - which compromises in radical manner the state of grace,

interrupting in the human soul that circulation of the supernatural life and union with God. There remains, however, forever, that second table of salvation, constituted by recourse to the Sacrament of Penance.

Before taking up the evil of venial sin, it would be helpful to ponder two of Marmion's ideas regarding what happens by mortal sin in relationship to grace. The sinner still possesses within a certain 'presence' of God, deep within, but only in so far, as a creature and even more importantly, a rational creature redeemed by Jesus Christ. Within each person there remains that vestige of divine power and wisdom. The just person is in **personal communion with the Most Blessed Trinity and participates in His supernatural charity.**

A second consideration concerns the possibility of the sinner of making use of a certain 'grace': if, on the one hand, this person is dead to the divine life and cannot then have habitual, sanctifying grace, this person nonetheless can receive those actual supernatural graces granted by God, to inspire this individual **toward conversion** and to dispose one's soul for justification. This is a question of light for the intellect, of strength for the will, or those spiritual motions which inspire one to acts of Fear, of Hope and contrition. Similarly, for what pertains to actual graces, there remains nonetheless the case of the just person as contrasted with the sinner: in the first individual, the Holy Spirit moves him/her in the strength of the interior Divine Indwelling - while, in the second situation, the Holy Spirit 'moves' only from the outside.

As regards venial sin, which although it does not break union with God, is nonetheless something to be feared, especially those that are habitual. Marmion makes in this regard an important distinction: one reality would be those venial sins which come to the fore most unexpectedly, which are due to our weakness, temperament, but which do not impede the soul from finding itself on a high level of union with God. Another matter is that constituted by those venial sins which are deliberate, i.e., which even though they do constitute 'light matter; nonetheless imply an explicit denial of God's Will. The danger of these chosen failings is evident in the spiritual apparatus: while they do not of themselves constitute a diminution of grace, for if they were, grace would eventually disappear with the increase of venial sins. However, they do lessen the fervor of our charity. Then, the careless believer would find him/herself spiritually much impoverished, less vigilant, weaker in the face of temptation, and therefore, disposed the more to commit serious failures. It should be noted that Marmion's innate hesitancy is noted in his not saying the venial sins diminish grace. This flows from his sublime understanding of grace itself. It is not some metaphysical quantity, that would be measurable, as though it were an account in the bank. Rather, it is seen as a quality granted to one's disposed being that provides for each an adoptive filiation.

In addition to the constant effort of avoiding sin, Marmion was strong on pointing out the means necessary to protect grace, and to draw an increase from God. This would be **docility to the motions of the Holy Spirit**. The call of the Christian is to allow him/herself to be guided interiorally by God to the point that Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit are the Inspirers of all one's activity. So, to resist this leadership of the Holy Spirit means to place an obstacle before the progress in the spiritual life, and therefore, for the increase of grace. Two aspects come to the fore here:

- on the one hand, the reason why it is unfortunately so easy to remain deaf to the Holy Spirit. In fact the breath of the Paraclete is like a whisper, if one does not train him/herself to listen, the Spirit will remain unheeded; thus, the scope of bestowing these gifts stands precisely in disposing ourselves to further His inspirations;
- a second consideration treats of the real harm that is provoked by resistance to the voice of the divine Guest. The action of the Holy Spirit is quite delicate - so, when the soul resists it deliberately, this mentality offends the Spirit. It obliges Him bit by bit to remain silent - and then, one is blocked along the path and runs the serious risk of going out of that narrow path of salvation. Whatever on earth can such a soul do without its Master to offer guidance, being now without light which would illuminate it, without strength which would sustain it, without joy, that would transport it? [Marmion's question].

In the spiritual life there are indeed some apparent contradictions. One of these is that which strikes the attentive reader of 1 Jn: after having repeatedly admonished his readers and listeners not to sin, and not to be unfaithful to the interior inspirations, thus incites them vividly to recognize in their own minds and hearts, and before God, of their own wretchedness and their own weaknesses. To be ready and able to do this, in the judgment of the writer, is one of the more efficacious means in order to increase in the life of grace, since God resists the proud, but gives grace to the lowly [cf. 1 P 5:5; cf. Jas 4:6]. The author recalls to mind that there is no contradiction between this readiness in recognizing us as weak and in a serious struggle with sin: let us not confound our human infirmities, as our humble admission of them contributes so much to spiritual progress, with infidelities. These last mentioned rather than favor the supernatural life, hinder the divine action.

Regarding the enormous value of **humility**, understood as the frank recognition of one's own powerlessness with a view to making any progress in the spiritual life, Marmion insists especially in his monastic conferences. The entire edifice of **Benedictine Spirituality** has one of its hinges in the virtue of humility, to which St. Benedict has dedicated one of the longest Chapters of his entire Rule to it.

This fact certainly has contributed to configure, together with his own interior form, Marmion's basic thought. In fact, for Benedict, regarding the ladder that ideally leads to heaven, there has been noted: exaltation is the descent, while it is through humility that one ascends. Perhaps even more vivid for Marmion is the apostolic experience of St. Paul who recognizes at various times his own weaknesses, in order to avoid any boasting before the Lord of his own 'works of justice' [cf. Ph 3:4-11] - and because he is convinced that only in this manner would he be able to fully allow the power of Christ to have its effects in him [cf. 2 Co 12:9-10].

There certainly could not be missing from this ascetical-doctrinal summary put together by the great Abbot or Maredesous the question of the so-called '**actual**' **grace**. These may be described as a series of supernatural helps which God bestows on all so that every human being might reach eternal joy. While this theme is not at the fore-front of Marmion's thought, as it was for St. Augustine, as he actually used the word *grace* only in this regard. From an overall reflection on Marmion's teaching, and in particular from his constant references to the **Indwelling of the Trinity** and the **Divine Filiation**, the conclusion may be drawn concerning the existence of a permanent gift in the soul of every just person, which is referred to in classical theology as **Habitual Grace**. Scholastic Theology was more interested in this aspect of God's gifts - and only due to the deeply pondered reflection that flowed from this established gift that theology came to contemplate Justification in its constitutive and founding elements, that there gradually emerged into more evidence the infused habit which sanctifies the properly disposed human being. Post-Tridentine theology, in its 'apologetic' thrust, directed to oppose the thinking of many in the time of the reformation, who contested the long-standing Catholic teaching of the permanent state of 'justice', or 'grace', in the fully disposed Christian.

As a result of these difficult debates, the question of **actual grace** was not much discussed in the contemporary theological writings - but, it was present particularly under the heading of the **De Auxiliis**. It was, of course, in this background that Marmion undertook this discussion. He did not treat of it, as would be expected, so much in the academic mode, but more in that of the level of **existential daily life**. He remained profoundly convinced from **life's experience** of the inherent human weakness for the spiritual life in accomplishing good. He understood compassionately human misery, beginning with his own. He understood deeply the word of God in this regard: of ourselves we can neither will anything in a supernatural manner, nor even have an uplifting thought, nor perform anything for God, nor settle in to pray seriously, as we can simply do nothing in this way: *Without Me, you can do nothing!* [Jn 15:5]. Conscious as he was of human fragility, the great Abbot was blessed with **much trust in God**, and this was all in virtue of the redemption acquired for us through Jesus Christ: should we therefore, bemoan our



fate? The text noted above asks this question. And the answer is a resounding 'no!' St. Paul, once he specified our weakness, adds: I can do all in Him Who comforts me! [cf. Ph 4:13]. There simply is no obstacle, or difficulty, that cannot be overcome with the help of grace - this translates the revealed fact that there simply is no temptation that cannot be conquered, by means of that grace which Jesus Christ has merited for all. In Him, and through Him, I can do all! This confidence so often expressed by Marmion is one rooted in the Grace of God, and it permeates the entire output of the great Benedictine Abbot.

In addition to this 'existential' manner of speaking of Actual Grace, there are not lacking in his writings also a 'theological' approach, but only very rarely. In the first place, with the intention of having comprehended easily the necessity of Actual Grace, he makes a comparison with the natural order, making actual grace the **Divine Concourse**, which God grants to creatures for the sake of sustaining them in existence, and in the exercise of their activity. In other words, just as the Christian conception of **Creation** requires a constant intervention of **Providence** on the part of God - so, too, the correct interpretation of the Christian life, that would avoid every sort of Pelagianism, as well as a certain spiritual mechanical approach to the spiritual life, Marmion furthers the continuous presence and activity of the Lord. This is so that the pathway of the believer can be understood as a *synergia* in which both God and the human being are co-involved, even though on levels that are different in accord with different modalities.

More precisely, though, this supernatural help can be concretized by distinguishing an ordinary divine concourse on the one hand, and a special assistance on the other. The necessity of this is due to the present state of humanity, continuously besieged by sin and by concupiscence. In this second understanding, Actual Grace particularly assumes the form of light for the understanding and strength, fortitude, for the will. The bestowal of these Gifts is absolutely not to be understood in any automatic manner, as if God would necessarily and indistinctly distribute them. Yet, the fact remains true that God always takes the initiative to reach out to humanity, and also in the case that should human beings lie prostrate in a state of hostility with Him, He is always ready to move those disposed toward Him interiorally in order to accomplish deeds of faith, hope and contrition. Marmion is quite clear in saying that this divine assistance is all the more abundant in proportion to the level of how we reach out to Him in prayer - and the more we live in a **Filial Relationship** with Him. **To be and to act as the Children of God!** This is the central theme of Marmion - with his constant reference to the role of Jesus Christ in our daily living of Christianity. This is the *leitmotiv* of the Abbot's thought.

To draw this present reflection on the **Dynamic Nature of Grace** to some conclusion, Actual Grace pertains to the supernatural apparatus - as do **sanctifying grace**, the **infused Virtues** and the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**.

**4. Those Virtues Typical of the Adoptive Children of God:** this leads us to the theme of the theological virtues - a reflection on the infused virtues in particular. This sublime matter is seen in connection with the entire supernatural order to which they pertain, by their very nature.

a. These virtues are infused **simultaneously** with Sanctifying Grace: they are the 'court' accompanying Grace. This is the common teaching of classical theology which received its authoritative sanction at Trent with regard to the teachings regarding the **Inherence of Justification**<sup>313</sup>. In his presentation, Marmion remains a careful Thomist. Together with Sanctifying Grace the Christian receives a series of gifts which can be called virtues because they are attitudes of actions, of principles of operation, energies, which reside in us in the state of stable habits. Being exercised at the chosen moment, they enable the recipient to fulfill promptly, easily, joyously, those works that are pleasing to God - clearly the teaching of Aquinas concerning 'virtues as operative habits'<sup>314</sup>. This doctrine was employed by classical theology in its quest to translate with Aristoteleian categories and concepts the typically Christian experience. These principles of Christian action have a solid application in the expression of the general concept of 'virtue' - and then, within this category, it was relatively easy to add on the Christian idea of 'infused' virtues. This simply means that these infused, supernatural habits of good deeds do not find their source within us, and they lead us to perform activities that surpass the customary demands of our human nature. In simple terms, these dispositions are placed deep within us by God Himself. Within the infused, supernatural virtues are clearly distinguished by the **theological virtues** which have God as their immediate object, and also because by their very nature, they can be granted only by God and have no absolute parallel among the human virtues. We know of them only through Divine Revelation<sup>315</sup>.

b. While there can be no doubt concerning the specific consistence of these three fundamental dispositions of the Christian response, their interpretation in the category of 'virtue', which is Aristoteleian, dates only from the 13th century. However, these infused habits of the other non-theological virtues, do have precise parallels on the natural level, with regard to the acquired virtues<sup>316</sup>. The impression received by many from this 'duplication' is that the ordinary student would find

---

<sup>313</sup> DS 1530; cf. also LG 64; AA 3.

<sup>314</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 55.

<sup>315</sup> ib., I-II, q. 62, a. 1.

<sup>316</sup> ib., I-II, q. 63, a. 3; q. 51, a. 4.

him/herself before a system of virtues, that are quite complicated, and - in the views of many - superfluous. It needs to be kept in mind that this entire 'system' has been developed through the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Magisterium of the Church has not confirmed it in an authoritative manner. Furthermore, there is indeed asked whether through his emphasis on the intellectual aspects, St. Thomas Aquinas has actually to restrict the data of divine revelation, by forcing its expression into the terms of an Aristoteleian system of thought.

However, in questions of this type, which seem at first sight to be resolved in favor of the apparently simpler hypothesis, it is good above all to try to come to grips with the intention of the author. St. Thomas came to the principle that in admitting **infused habits** seems to be, on the one hand, that of affirming that the Grace of Christ elevates the entire human activity, and therefore guarantees therefore, the fundamental unity of the person acting dependently upon the Holy Spirit, both in relationship to God, as well as in the more immediate and earthly environs<sup>317</sup>. In modern terms, St. Thomas came to the conclusion that there can be no separation between the transcendental context of the profound intentions, and that category of the manifold activities of human life. On the other hand, and in full harmony with what has just been concluded, the theory under discussion succeeds in placing in evidence the concord which then results, on the very ontological level, between the supernatural and the natural<sup>318</sup>: the infused virtues are infused into the natural faculties, which have been raised up to a superior order.

To bring this to some kind of a conclusion, while the present discussion remains open, it is necessary to recognize, developing on its profound motivations, the validity of the Thomistic proposal and the fact that also here Aristotle is subjected to the Gospel, and the process is not the other way around!. Marmion was enthralled with the Thomistic system with regard to the infused moral virtues, and he places this much in evidence, with brief but pregnant expressions, the differences between faith, hope and charity: the theological virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit transport us to a very special area, one which does not need the help of the natural virtues - while the infused moral virtues require, for their full development, the assistance of the corresponding natural moral virtues, an assistance which elevates them in their being used.

c. Zeroing in on the theological virtues, it is worthy of note first of all that these dispositions indeed qualify for the name 'virtues' - and this phenomenon only came to 'full citizenship' in the 13th century. The use of this

---

<sup>317</sup> ib., I-II, q. 63, a. 3, ad 3um.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Henri DeLubac, SJ, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*. With an Introduction by David L. Schindler. NY: Crossroad 1998.

term means to indicate only the fact that these are certain **capacities of action**, principles of those activities addressed by them in a very well determined direction. In the Thomistic anthropology in fact, 'virtue' constitutes a kind of mediation between one human faculty and the acts, in the sense that this faculty is 'informed' - which means that it is of itself undetermined and in a certain sense, genuinely malleable - and the virtue then orients it to produce a certain type of actions. Defining the principal attitudes of the Christian in terms of virtue, Thomistic theology wishes to bring some evidence to their incidence in faith-filled activities, and their determinedly ethical bearing. At this point there arises the question that we direct to the texts of the Abbot - and also to the thought of Thomas which Marmion re-proposed: from the fact that the Abbot of Maredsous repeats often that Sanctifying Grace is destined to become in the properly disposed believer the source of supernatural operations, the principal of activities: is there not created thereby a certain concurrence, or at least a bit of confusion between all these various 'principles' of activity, of grace and virtue? Is this a matter of juxtaposing these various movements one on top of the other, and does there exist any order, relationship among these?

d. Surely, the Gift of Grace, if all this is rendered excessively metaphysical, one would not note its powerfully dynamic nature. From the moment that this would be conceived as the participation on the part of the rational creature in the very life of God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ - this would seem to be the un-desired effect. In so far as **Grace** is a **participation** in the **Trinitarian Life**, in a decidedly **filial** perspective, it is of itself tending toward of being realized, expressed in acts of supernatural knowledge and love. From this perspective, Grace is indeed a principle of activity. Nonetheless, this is not its immediate effect - which is that of elevating the entity of the soul. By means of the metaphysical constitution of humanity, at least in so far as this is presented by Thomism, grace is **entitative**" and virtue is **'operative'** - and they mutually impact each other.

St. Thomas long maintained that **Grace** is an **accidental quality**, but it is not a habit immediately ordained to activity. However, it is indeed a certain *habitude*, much like health in the body <sup>319</sup>. In his work, *De Veritate*, the Dominican Doctor states that Grace resides in the essence of the soul, and not in its potencies. The reason is that the human faculties are ordered by their very nature to action, and they are perfected for this purpose by virtues <sup>320</sup>. Even admitting that in his earlier works, beginning with his Commentary on the Sentences, the Angelic Doctor had emphasized the more the entitative aspect of Grace, nonetheless, concerning this

<sup>319</sup> cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, II Sent., d. 26, q. 1, a. 4.

<sup>320</sup> ib., De Ver., q. 27, a. 6.

point we can retain that the thought contained in his more mature writings has not substantially changed. He does make very clear **that Grace is the Principle of supernatural acts through the virtues**<sup>321</sup>. Therefore, Grace is the source of activity, in an indirect manner, in the sense that the individual acts ought to proceed in conformity with Thomistic anthropology, from the potencies of the soul, which are then perfected by specific virtues. Furthermore, the dynamic character of Grace results from the doctrine according to which that it is the **principle and root** of the theological virtues<sup>322</sup>.

e. The Thomistic conception of the relationship of Grace and the Theological Virtues acquires even greater clarity when it is seen in its analogy between the human soul and its faculties. This parallelism has remained always in the background of our exposition here. Marmion pointed out how well it was known that in human nature, certain faculties: such as intelligence, will, sensibility, imagination - all flow forth from its depths. These are in us principles of action, of potencies and operation, which permit us to act fully as men and women. Without these, a human being is not perfect in his concrete human reality.

An analogous situation is seen in the supernatural life. Sanctifying Grace informs our souls, and giving us, as it were, a new being, a new creature, renders us the Children of God. However, God, Who has made all with wisdom and bestows His gifts on this being with munificence, has provided faculties, which, in proportion to its new condition, confers upon it the capacity of acting according to the supernatural end to be attained, i.e., as a Child of God awaiting the inheritance of Jesus Christ, in eternal beatitude. These faculties are the infused supernatural virtues.

f. The supernatural anthropological structure is therefore conceived in distinct parallelism with that which is the natural ontological structure: as from the essence of the human soul, by the fact that the perfection of the creature is achieved only by acts, these flow as from their principle, from the different potencies, orientated each one of them, to determined operations<sup>323</sup>. Thus, Habitual Grace is accompanied by the apparatus of theological virtues, which, in distinction from them, as we have said, are orientated directly to action. This comparison with the ontological constitution of each person, presupposes that Sanctifying Grace is compared, *mutatis mutandis*, to an essence - therefore, to a metaphysical element which confers on a being the characteristic properties which distinguish it. In each case, this is Marmion's perception, received from Thomistic philosophy, and in the Pauline expression, according to which that the 'graced'

---

<sup>321</sup> ib., I-II, q. 110, a. 4, ad 1 um.

<sup>322</sup> ib., I-II, q. 110, a. 3, ad 3 um.

<sup>323</sup> ib., I, q. 77, a. 2; 6.

Christian is a **New Creature** [2 Co 5:17; Ga 6:15]. However, the relationship between the ‘supernatural organism’ and the ontological structure is not only a question of analogy, which would be limited to a bringing together of parallel functions which, precisely because they are parallel, it would never be achieved. Instead there is in the Thomistic anthropological conception a real connection between the natural structures and gifts of God. In fact, in this conception each of the theological virtues is inserted in a human faculty.

Furthermore, there is the fact already noted that St. Thomas places alongside each moral virtue another infused virtue which would correspond to it. This manifests his will to demonstrate the profound harmony between the natural environment and that gratuitous sphere of God’s Personal communications. Each one of the theological virtues, then, interests its own activity of a capacity of human activity: if faith pertains to the intellect, hope and charity inhere into the will, but according to different relationships. In the human appetite, there may be considered two realities, according to the teaching of Aquinas: the **intentional** motion toward the end - and the union, or **conformity** to it. Hope pertains to the intention of the end, and charity is conformation to it.

g. Bringing together some statements already noted in this paragraph, there may be noted the enormous importance that Marmion, faithful to St. Thomas, and tradition, attributes to the theological virtues. For all practical purposes, we should recall two series of data:

- on the one hand, the fact that these virtues are the immediate principles of action - and the Thomistic teaching is that it is precisely through his/her activities that the rational creature reaches God <sup>324</sup>;

- as the second element, we keep before us that these virtues perfect the intellect and the will, or those faculties which confer on a person the predisposition to know and to love God <sup>325</sup>.

There emerges from this that **the immediate relationship with God is guaranteed precisely by the exercise of the faith, hope and charity**. These confirm thus their centrality in the field of Christian ethics. Here we encounter once more the statement that God is present in a special manner in the just person as what is known is in the one knowing, and as the beloved is in the lover.

---

<sup>324</sup> cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 62, a. 3.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. I Sent., d.37, q. 1, a.2; I, q.43, a. 3.

### Summary

There are a few central points here: Faith, Hope and Charity are intimately connected with the theme of Grace - and in some way, they flow from it. Marmion emphasized basically the **Christological character of our vocation to Adoptive Filiation**. We are called as He is, to honor the father through the inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

+++

[NB: these last 31 pages of Notes are based upon: Paolo Maria Gionta, *Le virtù teologali nel pensiero di Dom Columba Marmion*. Roma: Edizioni Università della Santa Croce 1998, pp.119-179, *passim*].



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**AUGUSTINE, St. *The Trinity*.** Introduction, Translation and Notes. Edmund Hill, OP. Editor John E. Rotelle, OSA. Brooklyn NY: New City Press 1991.

**CONGAR, OP, Yves, *The Mystery of the Temple*.** Westminster: Newman 1962.

**DUPONT, OSB, Jaques, *L'union avec Le Christ suivant Saint Paul*.**

Bruges/Paris: Editions de l'Abbaye de Saint André/ Desclée 1952.

**JOURNET, Cardinal Charles, *Theology of the Church*.** [*Théologies de l'Eglise*. Desclée 1958; 1987. San Francisco: Ignatius 2004.

**LADARIA, SJ. Luis, *Antropologia teologica*.** Roma: PUB 1995.

***La Trinidad Misterio De Comunión*.** Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario 2002.

**SCHEEBEN, Fr. Matthias J., *The Glories of Divine Grace*.** [Re-print: St. Meinrad's Abbey 1946-1950]. Rockford IL: TAN 2000

†

## ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

**Opera Omnia S. Thomae Aquinatis**

**Some English Translations:**

**Catena Aurea. Commentary on the Four Gospels. Collected out of the**

***Works of the Fathers*** [8 volumes] Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock 1845, 2005.

***St. Thomas. Selected Writings*.** Penguin Classics 1958

***St. Thomas' Summa. Welcome to the Catholic Church*.** CD Rom. Harmony Media, Inc.

**Aquinas' Shorter Summa. Saint Thomas's Own Concise Version of His Summa *Theologica*.** Manchester NH: Sophia Institute Press 1993, 2007.

***Summa Contra Gentiles*** [5 Volumes]. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, etc. University of Notre Dame Press 1958, 2001.

***The Three Greatest Prayers. Commentaries on: The Lord's Prayer – The Hail Mary – The Apostles' Creed*.** Manchester NH: Sophia 1990.

***Meditations for Lent*.** Presented by Fr. Philip Hughes. [re-printed] Fort Collins CO: Roman Catholic Books 1937.



***The Sermon-Conferences of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Apostles' Creed.*** Translated from the Leonine edition and edited, Introduced by Nicholas Ayo, CSC. Eugene OT: Wipf & Stock 1988.

***De Magistro. The Philosophy of Teaching.*** Mary Helen Meyer. Harrison NY; Roman Catholic Books 1928.

***De Regno. St. Thomas Aquinas on Kingship to the King of Cyprus.*** Translated by Gerald B. Phelan. Revised with Introduction and Notes by I. Th. Eschmann, OP. Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 1949.

***The Literal Exposition on Job. A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence. The American Academy of Religion. Classics in Religious Studies.*** Anthony Damico, Translator. Martin D. Yaffe, Interpretative Essay and Notes. Atlanta: GA: Scholars Press 1989.

***Commentary on Colossians.*** Translated by Fabian Larcher, OP. Naples FL: Ave Maria Univ. Sapientia Press 2006.

***Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.*** Translated by Fabian Larcher, OP. Aquinas Scripture Commentaries. Vol. I., Albany: Magi 1966.

***Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.*** Translation by Matthew L. Lamb, OCSO. Aquinas Scripture Series Vol. 2. Albany: Magi 1966.

***Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.*** Translated by Chrysostom Baer, O. Praem. Preface by Ralph McInerny. South Bend IN: St. Augustine's Press 2006.

***Commentary on the Gospel of St. John. Part I.*** Aquinas Scripture Series. Vol. 4. James A. Weisheipl, OP & Fabian Larcher, OP. Albany NY Magi Books, Inc. 1980.

#### **Some Commentaries:**

Aa. Vv., ***Ordo sapientiae et amoris. Image et Message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin à travers les récentes études historiques, herméneutiques et doctrinales.*** Hommage au Professeur Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP a' l'occasion de son 65 e anniversaire. Edite' per Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira, OP. Studia Friburgensia Nouvelle Série 78. Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse 1993.

***Aa. Vv., Aquinas on Doctrine. A Critical Introduction.*** Edited by Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating and John Yocum. London/NY: T. & T. Clark 2004.

***Aa.Vv., Aquinas on Scripture. An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries.*** Edited by Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating and John P. Yocum. London/NY: T. & T. Clark 2005.

***Aa. Vv., Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas. Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology.*** Edited by Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering. Washington DC: CUA 2005.

**AUMANN, OP, Jordan. *Spiritual Theology.*** London Sheed & Ward 1980.

**BARRON, Robert, *Thomas Aquinas. Spiritual Master*.** NY: Crossroad 1996.

**BIAGI,OP, Ruggero. *Cristo Profeta, Sacerdote e Re. Dottrina di S. Tommaso e sviluppi della teologia moderna*.** Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano 1988.

**BIFFI, Inos, *I misteri di Cristo in Tommaso d'Aquino*.** Tomo Uno. Prefazio di M.-D. Chenu. *La costruzione della Teologia*. Volume Uno. Milano: Jaca 1994.

- ***Alla Scuola di Tommaso. La Costruzione della Teologia Medievale*.** Milano: Jaca 2007.

**CHARDONENS, OCD, Denis. 'L'esperance de la resurrection selon Thomas d' Aquin, commentateur du Livre de Job.'** in: *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris. Image et message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin a' travers les recentes etudes historiques, hermeneutiques et doctrinales*. Homage au Professeur Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, a' l'occasion de son 65<sup>e</sup> anniversaire. Edite' par Carlos-Josaphat PINTO DE OLIVEIRA, OP. Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse 1993, pp. 65-83.

**CHENU, M.-D., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*.** Collegeville: Liturgical 1959/2002.

**CHESTERTON, G. K., *Saint Thomas Aquinas. 'The Dumb Ox'*.** NY: Doubleday: Image 1956

**DAVIES, Brian, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*.** Clarendon Paperbacks Oxford 1992.

**de PAILLERETS, OP Michel, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin. Frère prêcheur, théologien*.** Paris: duCerf 1992.

**DONDAINE, OP, H. F., *Saint Thomas d'Aquin – Somme Théologique. La Trinite'*** 2 Volumes Paris: du Cerf 1997

**ECO, Umberto. *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*.** [tr. By Hugh Bredin]. Cambridge: Harvard 1988.

**FLORES, Daniel E., *The Perfective Word. The Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Prologue Super Psalms on the Character of Scriptural Discourse and its Proper Exposition*.** Roma: Angelicum 2000.

**FROGET, OP, Barthelemy, *The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*.** Translated from the Third French Edition by Rev. Sydney E. Raemers MA. Westminster MD: Newman 1952

**GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, OP, Reginald:**

- ***Christian Perfection and Contemplation. According to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross*.** [1923]. Rockford IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. 2003.
- ***The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus*.** [1929]. Translated by Sister Jeanne Marie, MM. St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co. Volume I [1951] & II [1959].

- ***Our Savior and His Love for Us. Catholic Doctrine on the Interior Life of Christ as it relates to our own Interior Life*** [1933]. Rockford IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. 1998.
- ***The Three Ages of the Interior Life. Prelude of Eternal Life.*** Translated by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, OP [1938]. Rockford IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. 1989.
- ***The Priest in Union with Christ.*** [1948]. Rockford IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. 2002.

**GIARDINI, OP, Fabio**, “La inhabitation de la Santissima Trinidad”. In: ***Vida Sobrenatural*** 61 [1960] 173-185.

**GILLON, OP. L.-B.** ‘Foi et adoption divine’, in: ***ANGELICUM*** 39 [1962] 395-402.

**HUERGA, OP, A.** ‘Limites del amore deificante’, in: ***Atti del Congresso***

***internazionale***, 500-510 [Roma/Napoli 17/24 Aprile 1974]. Tommaso

D’quino nel suo Settimo Centenario. Tommaso d’Aquino nella storia del pensiero. IV: ‘Problemi di Teologia’, Napoli: Edizioni Domenicane Italiane 1976

**GONZALEZ FUENTE, OP, Fr. Antolin.** ***Il carisma della vita domenicana.***

Roma: Millennium 1998.

**AUGUSTINE, St.** ***The Trinity.*** Introduction, Translation and Notes. Edmund Hill, OP. Editor John E. Rotelle, OSA. Brooklyn NY: New City Press 1991.

**MARLIANGEAS, B.-D.,** ***Clés pour une théologie du ministère. ‘In persona Christ/ In persona Ecclesiae.’*** Théologie Historique 51. Paris: Beauchesne 1978

**NICHOLS, OP, Aidan.** ***Discovering Aquinas. An Introduction to His Life,***

***Work and Influence.*** Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans 2002.

**O’MEARA, OP, Thomas F.,** ***Thomas Aquinas. Theologian.*** Notre Dame Press 1997.

**PIEPER, Josef,** ***Guide to Thomas Aquinas.*** San Francisco: Ignatius 1962.1991

**ROYO MARIN, OP, Antonio,** ***Teología de la perfección cristiana.*** Madrid: BAC 2002

***“The Theology of Christian Perfection.”*** NY: The Foundation for a Christian Civilization, Inc. 1962 1987.

**MARLIANGEAS, B.-D.,** ***Clés pour une théologie du ministère. ‘In persona Christ/ In persona Ecclesiae.’*** Théologie Historique 51. Paris: Beauchesne 1978.

**SOMME, Luc-Thomas.** *Fils adoptifs de Dieu par Jésus Christ : la filiation divine par doption dans la théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin* Paris : J. Vrin, 1997.

**TERRIEN, J.-B.,** *La grâce et la gloire: ou la filiation adoptive des enfants de Dieu étudiée dans sa réalité, ses principes, son perfectionnement et Son couronnement final.* Paris: P. Lenthleux 1901.

**TORRELL, OP, Jean-Pierre**

- *Initiation a' saint Thomas d'Aquin. Sa personne et son œuvre.* Paris/Fribourg: Cerf/ Editions Universitaires 1993

- *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maître spirituel. Initiation 2.* Paris/ Fribourg: du Cerf/ Editions Universitaires 1996.

- *Le Christ en ses mystères. La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin.* Tome 1. Jésus et Jésus-Christ 78. Paris: Desclée 1999.

- *Le Christ en ses mystères. La vie et l'œuvre de Jésus selon Saint Thomas d'Aquin.* Tome 1. Jésus et Jésus-Christ 79. Paris: Desclee 1999.

†

#### **MARMION**

[cf. Paolo Maria Gionta, *Le virtù teologali nel pensiero di Dom Columba Marmion.* Edizioni Università' Santa Croce 2001, pp.409- 427 – extensive bibliography].

**MARMION, OSB, Dom Columba**

- *Le Christ vie de l'âme.* Mardesous 1917.
- *Christ, the Life of the Soul.* Translated by Alan Bancroft. Bethesda: Zacchaeus 2005.
- *Le Christ dans ses Mystères.* Tamines 1919.
- *Le Christ idéal du moine.* Mardesous 1922.
- *Sponsa Verbi. La vierge consacrée au Christ.* Lenthleux. Paris 1923.
- *Le Christ idéal du prêtre.* Mardesous 1951.
- *Christ, The Ideal of the Priest.* S. Francisco: Ignatius 1957 re-print..

**THBAULT, Dom Raymond,** *Union with God according to the Letters of Direction of Dom Marmion.* St. Louis MO: Herder 1934. 4th impression 1960.

- *Words of Life on the Margin of the Missal.* St. Louis MO 1939.

- ***Abbot Columba Marmion. A Master of the Spiritual Life.*** 1858-1923. London/St. Louis: Sands/ Herder 1949.
- ***Suffering with Christ. An Anthology of the Writings of Dom Columba Marmion, OSB.*** Westminster MD: Newman 1952.
- ***The Trinity in Our Spiritual Life. An Anthology of the Writings of Dom Columba Marmion, OSB.*** Westminster MD: Newman 1953.

**TIERNEY, OSB, Mark, *Blessed Columba Marmion. A Short Biography.*** Collegeville: Liturgical 2000.

