

THE CATHOLIC THING
COURSES



Christology

by Michael Dauphinais, Ph.D.

Christology

by Michael Dauphinais, Ph.D.

ABOUT THE COURSE

This course addresses basic Christological issues as articulated by Aquinas in the *Summa* and *Summa contra Gentiles*. These include, but are not limited to: one divine Person with two natures, the hypostatic union and inferences from it, the prerogatives of Christ's human nature, issues of redemption, and the three offices of Christ. Scripture and the writings of John Paul II and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger are used.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR



Michael Dauphinais, Ph.D. is the Dean of Faculty at Ave Maria University. He received his doctorate in Systematic Theology from the University of Notre Dame and is a member of the American Academy of Religion. He is the author of several books, including: *The Common Good and the Body of Christ: St. Thomas and the Catholic Worker*, and *Knowing the Love of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*.

LESSON I: CHRIST PREFIGURED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are many levels of Christ's prefigurement in the Old Testament. It is not simply a matter of specific prophetic texts, although these are important. Rather, the entire historical narrative of the Old Testament depicts the Messiah who is to bring about the restoration of Israel. (Note that the term "messiah" is the Hebrew word for the "anointed one", rendered as "Christ" in Greek.) In this lesson, we will examine central types of Christ. The language of "types" here refers to the typological meaning of the Bible. Types are persons, events, or things from the narrative of Scripture that point to Christ.

The Kingdom of God

At the heart of the Old Testament narrative is God's sustained plan to bring about his holy kingdom. As all kingdoms require land and people, so God's holy kingdom requires a holy land and a holy people. What does this mean? Holy people describes a people without stain or impurity, full of righteousness and justice (the Greek word *dikaiosune* can be translated as both), who can stand before God without shame. Holy land refers to the place made holy because God himself dwells there. Thus, as we will see later, the concept of holy land is not merely geographical. This can be seen in the first chapters of Genesis in which Adam and Eve were originally holy people in a holy land, a land in which God himself dwelt. As a result of the fall, the human race lost both its own righteousness (holy people) and the indwelling of God (holy land). Through the succeeding covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, God begins the process of restoring the holiness that was lost through sin. It is only in Christ, however, that the kingdom of God is fully proclaimed and initially realized, and its final realization awaits the second coming of Christ.

Types of Christ

Isaac and the Lamb of God

The Old Testament has countless types of Christ. This lesson only highlights a few that depict this central theme of holy people, holy land.

In Genesis 22, there is the famous story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Isaac is the faithful son who carries the wood for his own sacrifice to the top of Mount Moriah. Isaac asks his father, Abraham, "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Gen 22:7). Abraham answers, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (22:8). God sends his angel to stop Abraham after seeing Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son (see 22:16) and thus the only possible realization of God's promise of countless descendants to the already old Abraham. Abraham then offered the ram in place of his son, and also in place of the lamb. He named the place "The Lord will provide" or *YHWH jireh*, the latter half of which is the root *jeru* for what will later be called

Jerusalem. God then pronounces a universal (in Greek, catholic) blessing upon Abraham, “by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:18).

Abraham’s descendants continue to await the time when God will himself provide the lamb for sacrifice. The first time this appears to be fulfilled is at the defining event of Israel’s exodus from slavery in Egypt. Before embarking on the exodus, all the families of Israel must celebrate the Passover and sacrifice the Passover lamb. The blood of the lamb, spread on the doorposts, protects them as the angel of death slays the first-born of Egypt. Then Israel escapes from Egypt and celebrates the Passover annually as its highest feast. Israel was saved through the blood of a lamb, but Israel had to provide the lamb. God himself had not yet done so.



The Sacrifice of Isaac by Philippe de Champagne, ca. 17th Century

In the Second Book of Chronicles, we are told that “Solomon began to build the house of the Lord [the Temple] in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah” (2 Chr 3:1). The Temple and all its sacrifices were constructed on the very place where Abraham has said that God would provide the lamb for the sacrifice. The sacrifice of the lambs, especially the Passover lambs, sustained Israel in God’s covenant, yet these lambs were not yet provided by God himself. Israel awaited the time that God would send forth his lamb. Isaiah’s great prophecy of the Suffering Servant (Is 52-53) employs the image of the lamb being led to slaughter.

In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist summarizes the hopes of Israel and proclaims that God is now fulfilling them when he sees Jesus and announces, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). God himself has finally provided the lamb that will take away all sins and bring about the universal blessing upon all nations, embracing Jews and Gentiles, as he had sworn to Abraham in Genesis 22.

Jacob’s Ladder

As Jacob fled from his brother Esau, he spent the night out in the open and slept with his head upon a stone. “He dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to

heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!” (Gen 28:12). Jacob’s vision tells of the meeting between heaven and earth. Through him, who is soon renamed Israel and thus personifies the people and vocation of Israel, heaven will dwell on earth and earth will dwell in heaven. When he awoke, he said, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it. . . . How awesome is this place! It is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” He renames the place Bethel, which means the “house of God”. Here we see the promise of the holy land begun to be fulfilled, a land in which God himself dwells. The Temple will later be called the house of God. The land in Palestine is called holy because God’s name dwells in the Temple (cf. Deut. 12).

In the beginning of the Gospel of John, Jesus encounters a faithful Israelite named Nathanael who recognizes Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel. Claiming the image of Jacob’s ladder for himself, Jesus replies, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (Jn 1:51). Jesus is now the new Bethel, the new house of God, the new Temple. He himself is the holy land, the indwelling of God.

God’s Presence through the King

God did not originally desire to have a human king in Israel and says that Israel’s demand for a human king like the other nations is a rejection of himself as King of Israel (see 1 Sam 8). Yet, in the wonder of God’s mercy and wisdom, he reclaimed the human king and made the king, his anointed one, a visible sign of his presence among men.

God establishes a covenant with David, promising that the Son of David will build the Temple, “a house for my name,” and receive a perpetual throne. Moreover, the Son of David will enjoy a father-son relationship with God: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sam 7:13-16). Psalm 2, a coronation Psalm, declares the king to be God’s son, “You are my son, today I have begotten you” (2:7). As God’s son and his anointed, the king mediates God’s presence. The king stands with the Lord against those in rebellion against God’s rule. In Psalm 2:2, “the Lord and his anointed” stand together in contrast to the kings and rulers of the earth.

In addition to mediating God’s presence (holy land), the king is to establish righteousness and justice within his kingdom (holy people).

Psalm 23 depicts the Lord as the shepherd of Israel. The Davidic kings were also called shepherds of God’s people. King David is said to have been an actual shepherd (like Moses) before becoming shepherd, or king, over the United Kingdom of Israel. The kings, however, often did not shepherd in accord with the true interests of the sheep. The prophet Ezekiel denounces the kings of Israel: “Thus says the Lord God: Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep?” (Ezek 34:2). This infidelity cuts at the heart of the covenant. The anointed kings were meant to be a sign of God’s presence among men, but instead they became obstacles and even enemies of God. Ezekiel continues, “Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds” (Ezek 34:10). God then promises, “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed” (Ezek 34:15-16).

It is in this context of the Old Testament that we must understand Jesus words, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). Jesus simultaneously claims the role of the Old Testament kings and the role of the Lord who had promised one day to shepherd the people himself. The sinfulness of the Old Testament kings prevented them from acting in accord with God, rendering them unable to fulfill their role as the Lord’s anointed. The Word of God solves this problem by taking on a human nature. As the Word of God, the Son of God, he was intimately united with God the Father: “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30). As a human being, he could stand among human beings fulfilling the role of the lord’s anointed to mediate God’s presence. Only God could shepherd us well; yet we could only see a human shepherd. Jesus Christ in his divine and human natures fulfills both needs. As the Book of Revelation echoing Psalm 2:2 says, “there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of our world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ’” (Rev 11:15). Or as St. John and St. Paul put it: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14), and “In [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 2:9).

If the Incarnation of the Word accomplishes what was necessary, what happens after Jesus’ Ascension when his human nature is no longer visibly present on earth? Christ does not leave his Church alone, but sends her the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to guide her. The Church, as the mystical body of Christ, acts as the *ongoing incarnation* of our lord Jesus Christ. This becomes more apparent when we return to the shepherd theme in the Gospel of John. Jesus does not stop after he claims to be the good shepherd. After his resurrection, Jesus established Simon Peter as the shepherd of his flock. Three times Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me more than these?” Three times Peter says, “Yes, Lord.” Three times, Jesus says to Peter, “Feed my sheep” (cf. Jn 21:15-17). Just as Jesus mediates the presence of the Father, so Peter, and the Petrine office as it develops, mediate the presence of Jesus.

Below are suggested assignments for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Gen 22, 2 Sam 7, Ezek 34, Ps 23, CCC 128-133

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you describe the Church’s understanding of typology and how this unites the Old and New Testaments. Include specific examples of types of Christ.

Suggested Reading

Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*. Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Press, 1998.

LESSON 2: THE NEW TESTAMENT: CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS

In the previous lesson, we examined central types of Christ in the Old Testament that showed how God was making his people holy so that they could dwell with him. Here we will examine the four Gospels to see how they present Christ as the fulfillment of the story of the Old Testament.

The Gospel of John

The prologue of John (1:1-18) is a cornerstone of the Church's meditation on Christ. John's Gospel does not begin in Bethlehem, but before the creation of the world with the preexistent Word (*Logos* in Greek). Echoing the first lines of Genesis, it announces a new creation story of the universe, one centered on the role played by the Word of God who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything that was made" (Jn 1:1-2). Creation forms the pattern for the redemption, or re-creation. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (Jn 1:14). (Later Christians will argue over whether "became flesh" means that the Word merely had a human body or both a soul and body.) This prologue shows that in Christ, the eternal Word, the Son, brings the glory of the Father to dwell among men. Those who receive this glory share in the life of the Son and are given power to become "children of God" (Jn 1:12).

In Lesson 1, we have already seen how John presents Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Temple (Jacob's Ladder), and the good shepherd. Jesus shepherds the people of God, taking away their sins by his sacrifice on the cross so that they can enter God's dwelling of the Temple, which he reveals to be his very body. John above all reveals Jesus as the mystery of the indwelling of God. From the prologue, in which he writes "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (lit. tabernacled among us), John reiterates this mystery. At the center of the Eucharistic discourse of John 6, Jesus speaks the language of abiding, a remaining with, or an indwelling. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56).

The mystery of the indwelling of the Trinity is most clearly depicted in the long upper room scene in John 13-17. This begins with the foot-washing scene in which Jesus gives an example and commands his disciples to follow. The disciples are to imitate his service and thus mediate his presence. "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (Jn 13:17,20). The pattern evolves: God's presence mediated through Jesus; Jesus presence mediated through the apostles. (The word apostle means "one who is sent".) In terms of our encounter with God, the pattern reverses: the Apostles mediate Jesus; and Jesus mediates the Father.

God - Jesus - the Apostles - believers - or - believers - the Apostles - Jesus - God

By way of intensifying the mystery, in John 14, Jesus shifts from the language of receiving the Father, to that of seeing the Father. Just before Jesus' death and resurrection, Phillip asked Jesus,



Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet by Garofalo Ferrarese, c. 1520/1525

“Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied” (Jn 14:8). Jesus answered him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). To have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father.

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to carry on this mediated vision of the Father in a succession of passages about the coming Counselor (Paraclete), or Spirit of Truth. “I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16-17). “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, who the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (Jn 14:25). “When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me” (Jn 15:26). “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but when I go, I will send him to you” (Jn 16:7). “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16:13-14). The Spirit is sent from the Father and the Son into the world to continue the presence of God in the world. We see here that the mission of the Spirit extends the mission of the Son. They are distinct but inseparable.

The response of the believer to Jesus' invitation in John unites faith and works. To believe in Jesus cannot be separated from keeping his commandments, especially his new commandment to love one another as he has loved them (Jn 14:34). But keeping the commandments is not an end in itself, but rather the mode of the indwelling of God (holy land). "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (Jn 14:21).

Finally, in the great high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17, this indwelling of God is manifested through the concepts of God's glory, God's name, and his unity. The glory that the Son shared with the Father from the beginning, he now shares with all believers (Jn 17:5,22). The Father's name, given to the Son, is now given to the disciples (Jn 17:6,22). Also, the believers are now brought up into the unity of the Father and the Son (Jn 17:22-23). In the Old Testament, Israel was meant to have access to God's name and glory which dwelt in the one Temple. Now in the New Testament, the Church as the new Israel has access to God's name and glory in the one Jesus Christ. Because the glory, unity, and name of God have come down through the Words dwelling among us, man now can rise up, be born from above (Jn 3), and participate in the eternal glory, unity, and name of God.

God's Name, God's Glory, and God's Unity

The Father - The Son - Humanity | Humanity - The Son - The Father

John's Christology cannot be separated from his ecclesiology nor vice versa. Both depict the wonderful indwelling of God in Christ and through Christ in the Church.

It is crucial to recognize, before we proceed, that the speculative analysis involved in understanding the Incarnation -- that is, the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the Person of the Son -- is simply away of articulating what is meant by Jesus' declaration that whoever has seen him has seen the Father.

Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke

The Synoptic Gospels are an inexhaustible source for the Church's contemplation of her Bridegroom. Every detail manifests the mystery of Christ. Overall, however, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all present Jesus chiefly as the long awaited son of David through whom God will fulfill his covenantal promises.

From the very beginning, in the annunciations to Joseph (Matt 1) and Mary (Lk 1), Jesus is shown to be the Son of David who will inherit the eternal throne promised to David's heirs in 2 Samuel 7. At Jesus' baptism, he is anointed king by John the Baptist just as King Saul and King David were anointed by Samuel. The Father's words, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Lk 3:22; and parallels in Matthew and Mark), are taken from Psalm 2, a coronation Psalm for the Davidic King, and Isaiah 42:1, the servant God will choose to lead his people. The baptism also reveals Jesus as the great prophet and miracle worker. In the Old Testament, at the river Jordan the prophet Elijah passed on a double portion of his spirit to Elisha who went on to perform even mightier acts. So in the New Testament, at the river Jordan, John the Baptist passes the mantle to one who is much greater than he. Jesus stands as the awaited Davidic King, the anointed one, the

Messiah, the Christ who establishes the peace and righteousness that the Old Testament kings proved unable to do.

Jesus establishes righteousness, thus forming a holy people, by giving a law. All kingdoms are defined by the rule of law that exists within them. Christ announces the Kingdom of God and promulgates his New Law, the Law summarized in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7; Lk 6). St. Augustine called the Sermon on the Mount “the perfect pattern of the Christian life.” The New Law exceeds the Mosaic Law not only because it is more intensive -- “but I say to you whoever looks at a woman lustfully is guilty of adultery” -- but because it calls its hearers to receive God’s own beatitude or happiness by becoming his children. “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Christ is the new Moses giving the new law from the mountain. Even more, he is the new David who gives the law for a new kingdom.

In the Old Testament, the vocation of the Davidic king was to establish a holy kingdom, that is, a kingdom of holy people dwelling in a holy land. Jesus thus not only gives the new law, but he also must build the new temple. He will not build a physical temple, as did the earlier son of David, King Solomon, but the spiritual temple of the Church. After Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, Jesus says that he will build his Church on the rock of Peter. The Church will be the new temple in which God’s name will dwell.

Through the theme of Jesus as the Davidic King, the synoptic Gospels present in their distinctive language the same theme present in John, namely, the indwelling of God in man through Christ. Through his announcement of the kingdom and the giving of the new law, Jesus establishes his followers in righteousness. Through his establishment of the new temple (note the common strand of his language about the destruction of the physical temple, Mk 13, Mt 24, Lk 21), Jesus allows his followers to enter into the holy land, no longer physical, the Church, made holy by indwelling of God by his Spirit.

Below are suggested assignments for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

John 1-6, 13-17, 21; Mt 1-2, 5-7, 16, 24

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two page essay in which you show how one Gospel presents the theme of God’s indwelling of man in Jesus Christ. Choose either John or one of the synoptics.

Suggested Reading

N. T. Wright. *Jesus and the Victory of Our God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996.

LESSON 3: THE NEW TESTAMENT: ST. PAUL'S HYMNS OF CHRIST

St. Paul has at least two central motifs in his letters: the justification of the sinner in Christ and the Church as the Body of Christ. By speaking of justification (especially in Romans and Galatians), he teaches that sinners have been made righteous by Christ's death and resurrection. Thus we have the establishment of a holy people. The reality of the Body of Christ shows that the same Spirit indwelling Jesus now indwells the Church. Thus we see the establishment of a holy land. Taking together the twin themes of holy people - holy land, St. Paul depicts Jesus as the Messiah through whom God has established the universal kingdom of the Church.

The Christological Hymns

Among all of the central texts for the development of the theology of the person of Christ, certain sections of St. Paul take prominence. Because these passages are so carefully written and concisely expressed, and because they often bring in peculiar vocabulary, many scholars believe that these passages may have been hymns about Christ already used by the early Church. Whether that is the case, or whether Paul composed them while writing his letters, they give a wonderful testimony to Christ.

Colossians 1:15-20: Creation and Redemption

The greatest teaching of this passage comes across through the strict parallel between the order of creation and the order of redemption, both accomplished in and through Christ.

See the following chiasm structure. A chiasm is a literary structure that moves from A to B and then from B' to A' in order to hold two ideas in juxtaposition. President John F. Kennedy's famous challenge, "Ask not what your country can do for you; but what you can do for your country," can be diagrammed as follows:

A Ask not what your country
B can do for you;
B' but what you
A' can do for your country.

A similar pattern can be seen in Colossians 1:15-20.

"He is the image of the invisible God,
A the first-born of all creation;

for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities -- all things were created through him and for him.

B He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

B' He is the head of the body, the church;
A' he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent.

For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Important parallels:

Christ holds together all creation -- He holds together the new creation, the Church.

Christ was the first-born of creation (not being literally created or else all things would not be created through him, but first-born as the pattern of all things created) -- He is the first-born from the dead, i.e. the first born of the resurrection.

All things created through him -- all things reconciled through him.

Philippians 2:5-11

- 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, though he was in the form of God (*morphetheou*), did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied himself (*kenosen*), taking the form of a servant (*morphe doulou*), being born in the likeness of men.
- 8 And being found in human form (*anthropos*) he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.
- 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,
- 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, God the Father.

Key Themes

“A thing to be grasped”: This passage has been interpreted in many different ways. “Grasped” can be read as “robbed”. St. Augustine said that it meant that equality with God was not a thing to be robbed because Christ was already equal to God. Others have seen in this same line that equality with God was not a thing to be robbed because Christ who was unequal to God did not fall prey to Adam’s sin of wanting to be like God. These interpretations both see that the text is primarily about whether Jesus Christ is equal or unequal to God. But this does not seem to fit with the context of the passage. The interpretation that fits best, I would argue, is to interpret “grasped” not as “robbed” but

as “exploited” (see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*). Thus it would read, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be exploited. Namely, Jesus did not exploit his power as God to avoid suffering. This presumes that Jesus was equal to God, but tells us more than this -- Jesus did not exploit his equality. This is the moral example we are to follow. This leads quite appropriately into the next part describing Jesus becoming man and suffering death.

“Emptied himself”: The Greek word here is *kenosis*. This has given rise to the so-called *kenotic* theories of Christology. These tend to say that Jesus literally emptied himself of his divinity to become a man. The Word, according to this view, no longer was present in the governance of the universe while he walked among men. But the emptying himself does not need to be interpreted this way. *Kenosis* does mean “to empty oneself”, but it also can mean “to stoop down” or “to humble oneself”. And this fits again with the overall context of the passage. Paul introduces this hymn of Christ as a way of exhorting his Christians to humility. Look at *Philippians 2:3-4*: “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus. . . .” If “emptied himself” meant literally to give up his divinity, then the parallel would be that Paul’s listeners should literally give up their humanity or something. But this parallel fails. If we interpret it as “humbled himself”, then the parallel works. Jesus, though God, humbled himself. So also, Paul’s listeners, however great they might think they are, can also humble themselves in imitation of Christ.

“The Name of Jesus”: The significance of Jesus’ name cannot be overemphasized. The Old Testament is full of references to the name of God which is uniquely given to the people Israel. When Jacob wrestles with God in the wilderness and asks to know God’s name, he personifies Israel’s destiny to be the bearer of God’s name. Later in when God appears to Moses in the burning bush, he reveals his name to Moses as “I am who am”. In *Deuteronomy 12*, the central sanctuary / temple is the place where God will choose to make his name dwell, “the



Moses and the Burning Bush by Gerard Hoet, c. 1648–1733

place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, thither shall you bring burnt offerings and your sacrifices . . .” (Dt 12:11). When King Solomon dedicates the Temple in 1 Kings 8, he prays to God, “O Lord my God, the place of which thou has said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that thou mayest hearken to the prayer which thy servant offers toward this place” (1 Kgs 8:29). As can be seen from this brief sketch, the entire Old Testament is the ongoing manifestation of God’s name to man. To know God’s name is shorthand for being in right relationship with him. Paul clearly has this in mind when he writes in this hymn, “the name which is above every name”. But the shock to Jewish ears is that this name, the name above every other name, has now been bestowed on Jesus. Paul as an excellently trained Pharisee under Rabbi Gamaliel would have known just what this meant. Jesus was divine. If Jesus was not divine, to give him God’s name would be idolatry. In fact, many Jews thought and continue to think of Christians as idolaters for worshiping as God the man Jesus. Paul’s hymn explains how it is that Jesus can have God’s name precisely because he was in the “form of God” from the beginning. “That at that name of Jesus every knee should bow.” Jesus is to be worshiped as God.

“Jesus Christ is Lord”: This also is an explicit claim of Christ’s divinity. Jews do not pronounce the tetragrammaton (YHWH) in the Hebrew and thus simply translated God’s name as “kyrios” “Lord” in the Greek translation, the Septuagint. The story of Israel until the time of Jesus was a constant reminder that there is but one Lord, “kyrios”. The word “kyrios” was also used in the first century as a title of polite address, such as “sir”. But this is clearly not the context of this hymn. Paul is deliberately transferring the title given only to the one God to Jesus Christ. The person of the Father has not become Jesus, but rather Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. This is the seismic shift in Jewish monotheism that Paul’s theology begins to articulate. There is one God, the Father and Christ Jesus.

Below are suggested assignments for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Philippians 2; Colossians 1; Ephesians 1; CCC 205-209, 430-455

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay on one of the following:

The relation of creation and redemption in Col 1 (the whole chapter);

The role of humility and the imitation of Christ in Phil 2 (the whole chapter).

Suggested Reading

N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*.

LESSON 4: CONTROVERSIES AND CREEDS: THE APOSTOLIC AGE TO ARIANISM

“Who do you say that I am?”

I. Brief Introduction

From the New Testament forward, there exists a desire on the part of the Church, as the bride of Christ, to express to herself and to the world more and more adequately who Christ is.

Various divergent doctrines on Christ’s identity arose. Need for the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to sort out which were accurate, authentic and which were not so and why. This is already seen in the Letters of St. John in which he says that anyone who denies that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is an antichrist.

These errors, then, served a useful purpose. They pushed the Church in her meditation and thinking on Christ to ever deeper, richer penetration in her understanding; to ever more refined ways of expressing to herself and others the mystery of the treasure hidden in Jesus.

Use of Greek philosophical terms only to assist her to manifest better or point to Jesus, the God-man. This was actually consciously intended and stated by the Council Fathers at the Council of Nicaea (325), for example.

Difference between being *in error* and *heresy* (from a Greek word meaning “to choose- out”). The advancing of a heresy means really electing-out certain aspects of the faith to the exclusion of or distortion of others and holding to one’s position tenaciously, even in the face of entreaties, etc., from the Church. To be a heretic is hard work!

II. The Major Christological Heresies and the Orthodox Responses

A. Jesus not really human

1. Gnosticism (Docetism, Manicheanism) (Firstcentury)

These heresies all share in common that Jesus Christ was not fully human. The Eternal God *appears* (Docetism comes from the Greek *docere* meaning to appear, to seem) to be in a human body. This view of Christ has two main sources. First, advocates of this view would refer to passages in the New Testament that could suggest Jesus only seemed human if interpreted in a strictly literal fashion: John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me,” and Phil 2:7, “. . . [Christ Jesus was] born in the likeness of men.” Second, it is rooted in dualism or the doctrine of two principles of all things: one is good; the other evil. Material creation usually stems from an assault of the evil principle against the good with the result that matter is evil and goodness is trying to escape matter and return to the spirit. Hence, a true *in-carne-tion* (*carne* being the Greek work for material flesh) is utterly unfitting for the Good God. This same dualistic worldview arises in the Middle Ages in the Cathars and the Albigensians.

Catholic Response:

Christ is the Eternal Son come in a *true human body and soul*. St. Ignatius of Antioch(d. 107) insisted on the reports of Christ's earthly life as *aleithos*, that is, as *truly* narrating the acts of the Messiah in the flesh. St. Irenaeus, in the second century, is a great defender of the faith against Gnosticism. He connects the reality of the fleshly human nature of Christ to the real presence of the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist. He accepts both as belonging to the faith and therefore affirms that matter must be good since Christ assumed matter in his incarnation and continues to be materially present in the Eucharist. See the following passages.

Luke 24:39, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have. And when he had said this he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them."

John 6:53-56, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood."

II Peter 1:16, "It was not by way of cleverly concocted myths that we taught you about the coming in power of our lord Jesus Christ, for we were eye-witnesses of His sovereign majesty."

2. Valentinianism (early 2nd century)

Similar to the gnostic or docetic Christ, here Christ lacks a fully human body. Instead, the Son takes on a heavenly body. The Son has not assumed our human flesh, but a heavenly prototype. Although there is a heavenly body, there is no soul.

Supporting passages:

I Cor 15:47, "The first man was of the earth, formed from dust, the second is from heaven."

John 3:13, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."

Similar Catholic response as to Gnosticism.

B. Jesus not really God, the Eternal Son

1. Ebionism

A Jewish view that accepted Christ as the Messiah, but as an exalted human being along the lines of the Old Testament prophets and kings.

2. Sabellianism (Modalism)

There are not three distinct divine persons, but three modes in which God reveals himself to man -- first, as Father; second, as Son; and third, as Holy Spirit. The word for person, *prosopon*, originally was used for the mask worn by actors in the theatre. No real Trinity, just three masks of the One God. So for Christ, God the Father becomes the Son as he becomes a man. Many criticized this view as

implying that the Father suffered on the Cross -- *paterpassionists*. Referred to passages such as John 14:9-10, “He who has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me.”

Catholic Response:

There are three distinct persons and the second person was incarnate in Christ. The Catholics insist upon the oneness and the threeness of God: one essence / nature (*substantia*) and three persons (*personas*). St. Clement of Alexandria (d.220) uses the Greek word, *trias*, meaning triad. Tertullian, Cyprian and others use the Latin *trinitas* meaning the same. God the Son becomes a man without ceasing to be God. Here we see the development of the central insight to Trinitarian theology and Christology. In the Trinity, there is one nature and three persons. In Christ, there are two natures, divine and human, and one person. Passages such as John 1:1,14 indicate that the Word and the Father are distinct and only the Word became incarnate, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

3. Adoptionism

This heresy has roots in the Old Testament adoption of kings as sons of God (see 2 Sam 7, Ps 2) and the truth in the New Testament that all who receive Jesus can become children of God (John 1:12, Gal 4:4-6). Jesus merits divine adoption because of his great worthiness. As we are adopted sons of God by grace, Jesus is also the adopted Son of God by grace. He is not the Son of God by nature. The great biblical scene supporting this view is the Baptism of Jesus in which God declares, “This is my son”, after Jesus has passed through the testing in the wilderness. A more developed and sophisticated form of the first century Ebionites. Referred to passages such as Mt 28:18, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,” and Acts 2:32, “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.” This view has especially resurfaced in modern theology and contemporary biblical scholarship.

Catholic Response:

Christ is truly divine. The Logos is preexistent as John 1:1,14 show. Philippians 2:6 also shows this preexistence since it says that he was in the “form of God” (*morphe theou*). Also, John 8:58, “. . . before Abraham was, I AM.”

Below are suggested assignments for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*,156-190 (Part II Historical Christology, Intro, Ch.1, Ch.2 (first part))

CCC 461-465

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you summarize briefly the early Christological heresies discussed in this lesson. Be sure to analyze the two divergent trends of denying the humanity or the divinity of Christ. What is the orthodox response.

Suggested Reading

William C. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).



The Holy Trinity with crown by Max Fürst, ca. 1917

LESSON 5: CONTROVERSIES AND CREEDS: NICAEA TO EPHESUS

Arianism

The Word that became incarnate is a semi-divine super-creature. The Word is the first of created realities and all other creatures were created through him. When he became enfleshed as a man, he merely assumed a human body, without a rational soul. The Word replaced the rational soul in Christ. Later heresies will develop this idea by denying a truly human will, which is part of the rational soul, to Christ. Arius held so strongly to the impassibility and utter transcendence of God, that it seemed impossible that the true God could have become incarnate, joined to creation. The Word as a semi-divine super-creature bridges the infinite gap between the Creator and creation. There are many individual passages from the New Testament that could support this view.

John 13:3, “. . . the Father had given all things into his hands.” Col 1:15, “He is the first-born of all creation.”

John 1:3, “All things were created through him.”

John 14:28, “. . . for the Father is greater than I.”

“. . . the Father who sent me . . .” (I Jn 4:14; Mk 5:37, 8:16, 12:49, 14:24, Jn 6:57)

Arianism perhaps was the most successful heresy in the early Church. St. Jerome quipped that he “woke up to discover that the whole world was Arian.” Arianism held that the Son was *homoiousios* (of a similar nature), but not *homoousios* (of the same nature) with the Father since the Word, or the Son, was not the eternal God. The main slogan for Arianism was, “There was when He was not,” indicated that the Son was a creature and not the Creator.

The Catholic Response to Arianism: St. Athanasius *contramundum* (against the world)

Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. taught that the Son was *homoousios* (of the same nature) as the Father. Read over the creed from the council here.

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [*ek tes ousias*] of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father [*homoousion to patri*], through whom all things were made both in heaven and earth; who for us men and our salvation descended, was incarnate, and was made man, suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven and cometh to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. Those who say: There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten; and that He was made out of nothing [*exoukonton*]; or who maintain that He is of another hypostasis or another substance [than the Father] or that the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change, [them] the Catholic Church anathematizes.

This is very similar to the so-called Nicene Creed professed as part of the Sunday Liturgy of the Mass. The Creed we now profess is actually the Nicene- Constantinopolitan Creed that came from the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D, which added the fuller statement declaring the full divinity of the Holy Spirit against Macedonius who denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. We now profess to believe in the Holy Spirit who is worshiped with the Father and the Son (*qui simul adoratur*).

Why did the Catholic Church find it necessary to condemn Arius's views so strongly? Athanasius argued for the full divinity of the Word in his magisterial, *On the Incarnation of the Word*. He looks back at the creation of man from nothing (*ex nihilo*) and in the image of God (*imago Dei*). Thus when we turn from God, in whose image we are made, in sinning, we begin falling back into the nothingness from which we were created. The only one who could restore us in the image of God is the true Image of God, the Word of God. The true Image of God fully shares in the nature of God. If he did not, he would not be the true image and thus would not be able to restore man in the image of God. The true Image of God cannot be a creature made from nothing or else he would not have the power to bring man back from falling into nothingness. Man's salvation as communicated in the Gospel depends upon the fact that the Word who became incarnate in Jesus Christ is the eternal God who created man. Simply put, if the Word was a creature (made from nothing) made in the image of God, the Word would be nothing more than man and as such would not have the power necessary to re-create man. Christ is "one in being" with the Father and so shares in full identity as the eternal Creator.

St. Athanasius here articulates what can be called the first axiom of orthodoxy: "Only God can save." St. Gregory Nazianzen provides the second one later in his debate with Apollinarianism.

Athanasius used even simple examples to show how Christ could have two natures, divine and human, yet remain one without either nature being obscured or compromised by the other. One example: an iron bar placed in fire. It retains the solidity of iron proper to the nature as iron and also now has the heat and fire inducing capacity proper to the nature of fire.

St. Augustine devotes much of his *On the Trinity* (c.421) to defending the full divinity of Christ against Arianism.

III. Jesus: Not really the God-man

Many of the subsequent heresies accept the full divinity of Christ but in different ways deny Christ as one Person in two natures.

Apollinarianism:

God is the Eternal Word who becomes incarnate by assuming a human body, but replacing a human rational soul with the Word itself. A favorite text was John 1:14, "The Word became flesh," in which they interpreted "became flesh" to mean that the Word only became the flesh of man and not the soul of man. As the soul is the form of the body, the Word here became the form of the body of Jesus. Views Christ as a *Logos-sarx* (Word-flesh), instead of the *Logos-anthropos* (Word-man). Here we have a Jesus who is fully divine, but not fully human. Apollinarianism was hesitant to recognize a fully human personality to Jesus with human passions and a human will. The Apollinarian Jesus is psychologically simple because the Word replaces all of this. The unity of Christ is defended at the

price of the integrity of the human nature. This heretical tendency to deny the full human activity to Christ has a long life in Monophysitism, Monergism, and Monotheletism which we will study in the next lesson.



The Holy Trinity by Hendrick van Balen the Elder, 1620s

then that aspect has not been redeemed. Gregory and many other orthodox theologians insisted that the flesh in John 1:14 meant the whole human person including soul and body. They pointed to passages such as Psalm 65:2 which reads, “To thee [God] shall all flesh come on account of sins.” “All flesh” here stands for all human beings who will come to God, not to all bodies without souls.

St. Gregory provided an early form of the basic distinctions that will guide all theology of Christ and the Trinity. He said that in the Savior we have *allo kai allo* (this and that), but not *allos kai allos* (this one and that one). This is reversed for the Trinity. There we have *allos kai allos* (this one and that one), but not *allo kai allo* (this and that). Later this will be rendered as in Christ there is one person (*hypostasis*) and two natures (*ousia*) and in the Trinity there are three persons and one nature.

Nestorianism:

If Apollinarianism falsely insisted on the extreme unity of Jesus (i.e. no rational soul competing with the Word), Nestorianism erred in the direction of falsely insisting on the distinction of the natures at the price of the unity of Christ. Nestorius taught that Christ is a real human person, soul and body,

Catholic Response:

Christ is the Eternal Son is pure spirit and cannot be changed to be the form of the human matter. As human, Christ is a composite of soul and body. *Logos-anthropos*, not *Logos-sarx*.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen attacked this heresy since it turned the human nature of Christ into a sub-human animal lacking a rational soul that was inhabited by God. He provides what can be called the second axiom of orthodoxy: “What has not been assumed has not been healed.” If there is any aspect of humanity that has not been included in Christ’s becoming human,

indwelt by God as in a temple. The human person of Christ is united to the divine person of the Word by the unity of each will for the other -- a bond of affection, not a bond in one person. This allowed Nestorius to divide the actions of Christ in the Gospels into two sets: those of the human person and those of the divine person. Since the persons are distinct, Nestorius denied that Mary was the Mother of God or God-bearer (*theotokos*), and insisted that she should only be called the Mother of Christ (*Christotokos*). She was the Mother of the human person, but not the divine person. According to this view, we cannot really say that the eternal Son was born, suffered, died, etc. Note that the fact that Nestorius is forced to deny Mary as the Mother of God because there is already a long-standing liturgical practice of invoking the intercession of Mary as the Mother of God.

Catholic Response:

Christ is one Person with two natures. St. Cyril of Alexandria, Nestorius' chief foe, wrote: “. . . the same Person is both God and man.” The Council of Ephesus (431) re-affirmed Mary as the Mother of God (following as well such New Testament passages as Mt 1:16; Lk 1:31, 43; Gal 4:4). You give birth to a person not to a nature. Mary thus gives birth to the eternal Son who now has assumed a human nature. The Council also declared anathema anyone who held that “one of the Trinity did not suffer on the Cross.” It is thus proper to say that the eternal Son suffered and died and rose again for the salvation of man. Nestorius' two-person Christology puts our salvation in jeopardy since God would not have suffered for us and as the first axiom holds, “Only God can save.”

Affirmed a *communicatio idiomata* -- a communication of properties. This means that whatever is predicated of the one nature can be attributed to the other nature since both share the same divine person. Thus the Church says that “God was born of Mary” and “the Word died on the cross.”

Below are suggested assignments for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 190-201 (Part II Historical Christology, Ch.2 (middle part))

CCC 465-466

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you analyze how Arianism, Appollinarianism, and Nestorianism all miss the mark regarding the true person of Christ. Include the orthodox response.

Suggested Reading

Norris, *Trinitarian Controversies*. Norris, *Christological Controversies*.

LESSON 6: CONTROVERSIES AND CREEDS: CHALCEDON AND BEYOND

Monophysitism:

Almost as an overreaction to Nestorianism, Eutyches and others began to speak of one nature in Christ after the Incarnation. Christ is *of* or *from* two natures with the human nature being absorbed into the divine, therefore losing its full integrity. Monophysitism = *Mono* (one) + *physis* (nature).

Like Arianism, Monophysitism follows the Hellenistic tendency to try to place Christ as a middle term between the transcendent God and man. He no longer shares our nature, yet his divine nature is different from the Father's because now it has absorbed a human nature.

Catholic Response:

The Church insisted that when the Word assumed a human nature the human nature retained its integrity throughout. St. Ignatius (d.107): "Christ was a 'perfect man'" (meaning complete, fully human).

The Council of Chalcedon led by Pope St. Leo the Great in 451 A.D. affirmed that Christ has not only *homoousios* (of one nature) with the Father, but also *homoousios* with us. To avoid false interpretations of how the two natures, divine and human, are united in Christ, Chalcedon declares: "We confess that the one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the other was preserved as they came together in one person and one hypostasis."

The "four adverbs" teach much -- without confusion, change, division, or separation. Against monophysitism, the two natures are not confused or changed into one another. Against Nestorianism, the two natures are not divided or separated. The two natures are distinct but united. And they are united in "one person and one hypostasis." This is the origin of the term hypostatic union. It is a personal union -- the union of the two natures in the one person as



San José y el Niño Jesús by Alonso Miguel de Tovarca, ca. 1600-1700

opposed to the affective union held by Nestorius.

Chalcedon does not explain *how* it is possible that the two natures exist in the one person; it simply says that this truth must be held or the Gospel itself would be changed.

Monothelitism/Monergism:

The same tendency revealed in Apollinarianism and Monophysitism -- a distrust of giving too much weight to the human nature in itself. In the case of the Monothelites, Christ has two natures, but only one will, the divine will. Monothelitism = *Mono* (one) + *thelema* (will). In the case of the Monergites, Christ has two natures, but only one activity, the divine activity. Monergism = *Mono* (one) + *ergos* (activity / energy). These heresies attempt to follow the letter of Chalcedon and yet neglect its spirit. They spoke of the actions of Christ as the andric = *theos* (God) + *andriios* (man). The divine and the human were so much one that Christ's actions were *divino-human* in character. This heresy pushed this unity too far over on the side of the divine, making Christ's humanity to be a mere *dumb instrument* for the divine to operate through.

Catholic Response:

There is a true human will and a true human activity in Christ. Christ's full humanity freely cooperates as a rational instrument of the Word. In other words, his human will perfectly conforms to his divine will and yet retains its integrity as a human will.

Otherwise, sanctity, or conformity to God's will, would mean the loss of humanity for all human beings. St. Maximus the Confessor was the great defender of the two wills in Christ. Among many arguments, he pointed to the Garden of Gethsemane in which Jesus prayed, "not my will but thine be done." Here the human will of Jesus shows its full integrity by freely conforming its will to the divine will. The Third Council of Constantinople in 681 A.D. affirmed St. Maximus's doctrine and taught that Christ's human will does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will. This council extends the four adverbs from Chalcedon to the two wills of Christ and to the two actions of the natures.

Pope Martin I and St. Maximus were both exiled by the Emperor for their resistance to the Monothelite doctrine. Maximus truly deepens the Chalcedonian insights and those of St. Cyril. He teaches that Christ is of (from) two natures, as St. Cyril says, and that he is in two natures, as St. Leo says; and that the two natures is Christ. More precisely, he says that in Jesus we see the two natures "from which, in which, and which is the Christ" (*Epistle 15*, PG 91, 573A). Maximus extends the Athanasius fire-iron example with the example of a burning sword: it is fire and iron and each acts as itself within and as the one sword. The one sword both burns and cuts.

Maximus' doctrine on the mystery of the person of Christ has immense spiritual fruit. As the proponent of orthodoxy he maintains the full sense of Christ as our example precisely as the Eternal Son who has assumed a human nature. Instead of making him more human in order to be easier to follow or tilting the scale to his divinity to assure his worth in following, he shows how the fullest expression of human nature occurs in the Person of Christ when the human nature is most perfectly

conformed to the divine nature. In Christ, this conformity occurs through the union in the person of Christ, the hypostatic union. Christians do not have the hypostatic union, but they do have the moral union of love, or the bond of affection (spoken of by Nestorius, but which he falsely applied to Christ and not only to us). This is how the Church speaks of the deification or divinization (*theosis* in the Greek) of man. 2 Pet. 1:4 says that “we have been made partakers of the divine nature.”

Some Theological Reflections:

Most of the Christological heresies show an inability to grasp the utter distinction between the human and the divine natures in Christ. In other words, most view the two natures in competition with each other (a “turf battle”) and thus try to settle it by separating the two natures altogether as in Nestorius or denying the integrity of one of the natures. But this envisions the divine and human natures as sharing the same level of existence -- totally contrary to the doctrine of creation. God is perfect existence itself, the pure act of being, who freely chooses out of love and wisdom to bring the world into existence out of nothing. So there is an utter distinction between the divine nature existing as pure being itself and any created nature existing in its limited mode of existence -- i.e. as an apple, as a man, etc. Simply put, the divine and human natures of Christ -- as well as God and man in general -- exist in a non-competitive relationship. Thus Christ can be fully God and fully man (*perfectus Deus et perfectus homo*) yet be one.

* Some parts of Lessons 4-6 are borrowed verbatim from notes from my friend and mentor Dr. William Riordan, who teaches at Ave Maria College in Ypsilanti, MI.

Below are suggested assignments for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 201-210 (Part II Historical Christology, Ch.2 (last part))

CCC 467-483

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you analyze the shifts from Nestorianism and Monophysitism to Chalcedon and from Monothelitism to St. Maximus the Confessor. Include a separate two-page reflection on how your knowledge of Christology as covered in the first six lessons shapes your understanding of the Christian life.

Suggested Reading

Christoph von Schonborn, *God's Human Face: The Christ Icon* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994).

Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996). Includes a thorough introduction to Maximus' theology and a plentiful selection of Maximus' own writings.

LESSON 7: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS'S CHRISTOLOGY

Influence of Greek Christology: translations into Latin were made first available to Thomas in the early 1260s. He was the first among the medieval western theologians to drink deeply of this Greek font. He composed the *Catena Aurea*, or *The Golden Chain*, a collection of patristic sayings, both eastern and western, corresponding to each passage from the four Gospels. His passion for the Gospels and the life of Christ is shown by his decision to include an extensive treatment of the mysteries of the Life of Christ in his *Summa theologiae*. Thomas devotes the Questions 1-26 of the Third Part of his *Summa* to the hypostatic union of Christ and then Questions 27-59 to the words and deeds of Christ. He is unique among medieval theologians to include such a commentary on the life of Christ in a systematic work of theology.

Christ's Place in the *Summa theologiae*

Some theologians object to Christ's place in St. Thomas' *Summa*. The *Summa* has three parts. The first part treats God and creatures coming forth from him. The second part treats man's return

to God through the moral life. The third part treats Christ who as man is our way of returning to God (*qui secundum quo domo via est nobis tendendi ad Deum*) (prologue, Third Part). There is a great *exitus-reditus* (emanation and return) scheme that was first described as such by the Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu in the 1940s. Chenu himself was unsure of how the third part on Christ fit into the neoplatonic theme of emanation and return. But as Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., and others have argued, Christ is the fulfillment of the return. St. Thomas does not merely accept a neoplatonic theme, but Christianizes it. He shows that the return of creatures, specifically man, only occurs in Christ. Christ is not superfluous in St. Thomas's consideration, but instead is fulcrum around which God and his creatures turn. Thomas himself says in his Christology that Christ is the consummation, or fulfillment, of the study of the theology.



St. Thomas Aquinas by Sandro Botticelli, ca. 1444-1510

One must also recognize also that St. Thomas does not begin his *Summa* with Christology. We enter the Christian faith through faith in Christ. Thomas knows that basic theological catechesis works with the stories of Christ and Israel from the Scriptures and as summarized in the Creeds which Thomas considered summaries of the whole of Scripture. But a speculative or, better, contemplative approach to theology does not simply consider the reality of God, man and Christ as it appears to us.

Speculative theology seeks to consider reality as it is in itself, in other words as it appears to God. Thus, God and man are treated separately before Christ. Although the revelation of Christ is the basis for much of our knowledge of God and man, by treating God and man separately first, we will more adequately be able to approach the mystery of Christ. Another way of putting it is that from our perspective Christ is the center. But from God's perspective, the true perspective, the Trinity is the center. Christ reveals the Trinity to us. We learn *sacra doctrina* (sacred doctrine or holy teaching) from him.

Thomas's theology thus begins with the Triune God as revealed in Christ before considering the God-man.

Thomas distinguishes between the order of discovery and the order of speculative knowledge (Aristotle's *scientia*). The order of discovery moves from effects to causes. The order of speculative knowledge from knowledge of the causes to explain the effects.

Some charge that in his section on Christology St. Thomas deduces everything from the fact of the hypostatic union. This is not the case at all. Thomas is simply proceeding in a second-order pedagogical manner that moves from the cause -- the hypostatic union -- to the effects -- Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Christ the Teacher

The theme of Christ as the teacher is a unique motif that unites all the various parts of the *Summa theologiae*. This is important to understand since it shows that reflection on the mystery of the Person of Christ informs our entire understanding of theology. The moral life (considered in the second part) is also centered on Christ as the teacher.

Thomas's consideration of the moral life begins with our vocation to beatitude in the vision of God. He then examines moral action, the passions, virtues and vices, law and grace. This culminates in the New Law of Christ that actually enables man to achieve his supernatural happiness. Christ is the teacher who gives the New Law. But as a divine and human teacher, he gives the New Law primarily as the divine gift of the Holy Spirit and secondarily as teachings about the sacraments and the moral preaching of the Sermon on the Mount. In Thomas's treatment of the virtue of faith he says that faith is accepted from the divine teacher -- Christ. Although Thomas's moral theology relies upon an understanding of human nature and the natural law, his moral theology puts Christ as the origin our strength and the goal of the moral life.

Christ as Example

Throughout Thomas's discussion of Christological issues, he frequently makes reference to the example of Christ. For example, he says that Christ suffered physical ailments such as hunger and thirst to give us an example of patient endurance of suffering. Christ is a moral example for us to follow. But Thomas's theology goes one step beyond this moral exemplarity to include what is best described as ontological exemplarity -- not only acting like Christ, but being like him. To *be* like Christ means to share in his identity as the Son of God. Thomas knows there is only one Son of God, but affirms that all Christians possess adoptive filiation. We become other sons of God.

The Mystery of the Hypostatic Union

Thomas provides an excellent synthesis of the patristic and early medieval theology. But it is more than a synthesis. It is an ordered presentation of the mystery of the hypostatic union. Thomas treats most of the patristic heresies and shows why they contradict the faith. He also shows how a popular twelfth century Christological view -- that there are two supposites in Christ -- is really just another form of the Nestorian heresy. Thomas achieves remarkable clarity in his presentation of the hypostatic union because throughout his theology he is extremely precise about the distinction between God and creation. Thus he recognizes that a fully human nature is completely compatible with a fully divine nature. One instance of this is that unlike many other medieval theologians, Thomas argued that Christ possessed acquired human knowledge.

Below is a suggested assignment for universities and those looking to further their study.

Reading Assignment

Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, *Knowing the Love of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) Ch. 4-5, pp. 61-89.

Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you analyze the connection between the mystery of the Person of Jesus Christ as defined by St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Thomas's presentation of Christ as teacher and example.

Suggested Reading

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part III, Qq, 1-4, 7-8, 16, 23, 42. Available on the web. Just type Summa Theologica into a search engine.

LESSON 8: MODERN TRENDS IN CHRISTOLOGY, PART 1

The Enlightenment: Jesus, the exemplary moral teacher Gotthold Lessing

Christ appears as the great moral teacher. Christianity is God's education of the human race. Christ teaches us truths which we were too ignorant to know. Christianity is like an introductory book on English grammar: It is necessary when learning how to write, but afterwards one can dispense with it. So too Christianity was necessary to lead man into moral truths, but now that we know them Christianity is no longer necessary. The myth of historical progress: sophisticated modern man no longer needs Christianity. Here there is clearly a naturalization of Christianity. Christ is a man and Christianity merely improves us as men.

“Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason. That, then, is the ugly, broad ditch which I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap.”

-- Gotthold Lessing, *On the Proof of the Spirit and Power*

Soren Kierkegaard

In his book, *Philosophical Fragments*, Soren Kierkegaard challenges this whole Enlightenment trajectory. He affirms the paradoxical character of the Christian faith, but attempts to show how paradox is not any less rational. Paradox fits many of our understandings better. He begins with the Socratic image of the teacher who helps the learner remember what the learner already knew. Kierkegaard then contrasts this with a teacher who teaches the learner a truth that the learner could not have otherwise known. The teacher he is presenting here is the teacher who is both divine and human, Jesus Christ. He is not basing his argument on the Christian faith, but he presents it as a thought experiment of sorts. What if a teacher were to teach us the truth that we could not have otherwise known? This argument does not demonstrate the necessity of Christianity, but it shows the fallacious character of those who say that Christianity is irrational. Contrary to Lessing, Kant, and other Enlightenment thinker, it is not rational to say that one will only admits truths knowable by reason. If other truths appear in history -- for instance, divine revelation in Jesus Christ -- then the rational thing to do is to examine this supra-rational truth to see if it fits with what reason already knows. Christians thus do not reject reason. Instead they reject limiting reason to what reason can know by itself.

*“If the Teacher serves as an occasion by means of which the learner is reminded, he cannot help the learner to recall that he really knows the Truth; for the learner is in a state of Error.
. . .*

Now if the learner is to acquire the Truth, the Teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it. For if the learner were in his own person the condition for understanding the Truth, he need only recall it. The condition for understanding the Truth is like the capacity to inquire for it: the condition contains the conditioned, and the question implies the answer. . . .

But one who gives the learner not only the Truth, but also the condition for understanding it, is more than teacher. All instruction depends upon the presence, in the last analysis, of the requisite condition; if this is lacking no teacher can do anything. For otherwise he would find it necessary not only to transform the learner, but to recreate him before beginning to teach him. But this is something that no human being can do; if it is to be done, it must be done by the God himself.” pp.17-17

Immanuel Kant

His famous book, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, tries to see what can be left of orthodox Christianity when it is submitted to the demands of reason. Christ becomes the moral teacher who teaches us what we should have already known by human reason alone. Christ is not the prototype upon which all of us are made, but merely the archetype, the first of many to come.

“Now if it were indeed a fact that such a truly godly-minded man at some particular time had descended, as it were, from heaven to earth and had given men in his own person, through his teachings, his conduct, and his sufferings, as perfect an *example* of a man well-pleasing to God as one can expect to find in external experience (for be it remembered that the *archetype* of such a person is to be sought nowhere but in our own reason), and if he had, through all this, produced immeasurably great moral good upon earth by effecting a revolution in the human race -- even then we should have no cause for supposing him other than a man naturally begotten. (Indeed, the naturally begotten man feels himself under obligation to furnish just such an example in himself.) This is not, to be sure, absolutely to deny that he might be a man supernaturally begotten. But to suppose the latter can in no way benefit us practically, inasmuch as the archetype which we find embodied in this manifestation must, after all, be sought in ourselves (even though we are but natural men). And the presence of this archetype in the human soul is in itself sufficiently incomprehensible without our adding to its supernatural origin the assumption that it is hypostasized in a particular individual. The elevation of such a holy person above all the frailties of human nature would rather, so far as we can see, hinder the adoption of the idea of such a person for our imitation. For let the nature of this individual pleasing to God be regarded as human in the sense of being encumbered with the very same needs as ourselves, hence the same sorrows, with the very same inclinations, hence with the same temptations to transgress; let it, however, be regarded as superhuman to the degree that his unchanging purity of will, not achieved with effort but innate, makes all transgression on his part utterly impossible: his distance from the natural man would then be so infinitely great that such a divine person could no longer be held up as an *example* to him. Man would say: If I too had a perfectly holy will, all temptations to evil would of themselves be thwarted in me; if I too had the most complete inner assurance that, after a short life on earth, I should (by virtue of this holiness) become at once a partaker in all the eternal glory of the kingdom of heaven. . . . Similarly the idea of a demeanor in accordance with so perfect a standard of morality would no doubt be valid for us, as a model for us to copy. Yet he himself could *not* be represented to us as an *example* for our imitation, nor, consequently, as a proof of the feasibility and attainability *for us* of so pure and exalted a moral goodness.”

-- Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, pp. 57-58.

Friedrich Schleiermacher

The father of liberal protestant theology. Schleiermacher (whose name literally means fog-maker) turned to the subjective experience of man in order to find God. There were no objective ways to God, but each man was aware of a feeling of absolute dependence upon something. This Feeling was both the proof of God's existence and the location of religion. In liberal protestant form, religion is located primarily in subjective experience and not mediated through external forms including the written form of creeds or the Bible, or the matter of the Sacraments. Christ is the man whose self-consciousness was supremely "God-consciousness," that is, supremely possessed by the Feeling of Absolute Dependence in its purest form and His coming awakens in all who experience the influence of Christ's supreme "God-consciousness" this subjective form of religion.

There is no need for him to be God to save us since Schleiermacher has defined salvation as subjective experience.

Transcendentalist Theology: Karl Rahner

Christology as Anthropology. When the human being acts in the world, he or she becomes aware of the infinite possibilities realizable in action. This experience of freedom leads to a recognition of the capacity for the transcendent. Christ is the man most fully aware of the capacity of the divine and as such can be said to be the Incarnate Word. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Rahner reduces Christology to anthropology since nothing ultimately is said about Christ that could not be said about man. Rahner thus continues the liberal protestant trajectory for Christology of Schleiermacher and Kant and places this liberal construction in the heart of much contemporary Catholic Christology as it has been taught in seminaries and Catholic colleges and universities over the past 35 years since Vatican II. Rahner still confesses Jesus as God and man, but the nature of man is exhaustive. Almost a reverse monophysitism -- from two natures, we are left with the one human nature of Christ. An overreaction against what Rahner and others thought was a traditional monophysitism in Catholic doctrine, spirituality, and piety, in the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II. (Vatican II was held from 1962-1965.)

"This, then, is what is supposed to be expressed by the Christian dogma of the Incarnation: Jesus is truly man with everything which this implies, with his finiteness, his materiality, his being in the world and his participation in the history of cosmos in the dimension of spirit and freedom, in the history which leads through the narrow passageway of death. . . .

But when God brings about man's self-transcendence into God through his absolute self-communication to all men in such a way that both elements constitute a promise to all men which is irrevocable and which has already reached fulfillment in one man, then we have precisely what is signified by hypostatic union."

-- Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, pp. 197, 201.

The Priority of Experience: Edward Schillebeeckx

Christology as the experience of the Lord Jesus. Cannot be confined to dogmas as linguistic

formulations. Not Christ as one Person in two natures divine and human, but the experience of tremendous suffering that is overcome. This begins in a “contrast experience” in which the sufferings and hardships of life jump out to the sensitive observer as wrong, as violations of some order. Yet, the human spirit is not satisfied with negation and seeks meaning and triumph through this. Thus Jesus’ death expresses utter failure -- the “contrast experience” -- but the disciples regain confidence through their experience of Jesus in the midst of each other. It is not clear whether a physical resurrection is necessary. Such resurrection experiences are independent of the Christian Gospel and could be found amidst oppressed peoples anywhere.

“The death of every individual puts radically in question the concept of human experience which is salvation *from man*. It seems to make complete and universal salvation impossible. From our point of view, any human salvation breaks off at death, which is the disintegration of every man. What ought to signify integration, unity and wholeness as the conclusion of human life is in reality the dissolution of a particular man in history. As a human event death is, to all appearances, the reduction of the individual to an element of society or history. But at the same time that marks the birth of human protest against the absurdity or the scandal of death, above all and in particular with men who for justifiable reasons refuse to understand themselves, with name and surname, as a fleeting, personally insignificant and replaceable element in a history of meaning and meaninglessness. Nevertheless, the death of man is the exponent of his temporal corporeality.

The fact that Jesus became reconciled to his radical finitude, that in death he became reconciled with himself and with God, already makes it clear to us that within the limits of our history redemption can never be achieved by some heroic transcending of our finitude, but only in a readiness to refuse within our own limits, which can never be fulfilled in history, to accord evil the same rights as good. Therefore from a human point of view *redemption essentially implies: reconciliation with one’s own finitude, coupled with radical love, even when one sees that it is in vain, in terms of visible success, and is even an occasion for torture and execution.*”

-- Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Experience of Jesus as Lord*, pp. 793-794.

Below is a suggested assignment for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

CCC 26-73

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you describe 2-3 theological or philosophical views associated with certain thinkers in the Enlightenment and contemporary periods and show how these views are contrary to the Christian faith.

Suggested Reading

Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*.

LESSON 9: MODERN TRENDS IN CHRISTOLOGY, PART 2

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Eschewing the transcendental subjective approach, von Balthasar affirms that the transcendent mystery is only available through the concrete. Christ is the “concrete analogy”. The words and actions of Christ manifest the Being of God. Christ, this Being, is the both the icon of the Father (his divine nature) and in the image and likeness of God (his human nature). Von Balthasar develops a mission Christology: in Christ there is a full identity between the mission and the person. He is the one sent from the Father.

“In Jesus, the two [mission and person, or why someone is here and who someone is] are identical: this is what distinguishes him from other subjects who have thus been personalized by being given a mission (for example, the prophet). Jesus acts accordingly; he does not communicate a divine plan but speaks as the personal Word of God. *In Christo*, however, every man can cherish the hope of not remaining a merely individual conscious subject but of receiving personhood from God, becoming a person, with a mission that is likewise defined *in Christo*.”

-- Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Vol. III Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, p. 220.

Von Balthasar has another trajectory to his Christology that is more problematic. His Christology focuses on the event of Holy Saturday, the Descent into Hell. Von Balthasar emphasizes that Christ’s descent into hell is purely passive. Thus the creed’s language, “and descended into hell”, is wrong to make the verb active, in von Balthasar’s view.

Also, von Balthasar argues that Christ on the cross experiences the God-forsakenness of the damned. From this view of Christ on the cross, von Balthasar then posits negation and withholding of knowledge within the eternal Trinity. Von Balthasar’s writings on these topics are very lengthy and erudite, but at times he expresses himself by bringing too great a division within the life of the Triune God.

Pope John Paul II, in his recent letter *Novo Millennio Inuente*, states that Jesus had hope on the cross -- thus that he did not experience the God-forsakenness of the damned.

Also, when Jesus cries, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” this is the first line of Psalm 22. Psalm 22 begins with this lament but concludes with God’s deliverance. Christ knows that God will deliver him from death, but only after he has finished his sacrifice on the cross. God’s deliverance is Christ’s resurrection. This way of reading Jesus’ words on the cross makes better sense of what the passage means as well as how the Church has interpreted it over the ages.

Christ the Redeemer of Man: Pope John Paul II

Christ, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation (*Gaudium et spes* 22). This is perhaps

the passage most often quoted by the Pope in his official writings. Apart from Christ, man will misunderstand his deep vocation. Conversely, modern man has deep longings and desires which can only be filled by Christ. As the Pope writes in *Veritatis splendor*, Christ is the answer to all of man's questions.

“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer ‘fully reveals man to himself.’ If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the redemption. In this dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity. In the mystery of redemption man becomes newly ‘expressed’ and, in a way, is newly created.

He is newly created! ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:28). . . .

Jesus Christ is the stable principle and fixed center of the mission that God Himself has entrusted to man. We must all share in this mission and concentrate all our forces on it, since it is more necessary than ever for modern mankind. If this mission seems to encounter greater opposition nowadays than ever before, this shows that today it is more necessary than ever and, in spite of the opposition, more awaited than ever. . . .

The human person's dignity itself becomes part of the content of that proclamation, being included not necessarily in words but by an attitude towards it. This attitude seems to fit the special needs of our times. Since man's true freedom is not found in everything that the various systems and individuals see and propagate as freedom, the Church, because of her divine mission, becomes all the more the guardian of this freedom, which is the condition and basis for the human person's true dignity.”

-- Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis (The Redeemer of Man)*, nos. 10-12.

A Fully Orthodox Christology: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The Catechism begins its section on Jesus Christ by reflecting on the words of the Apostles Creed, “and in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord.” In each case, the full divinity of Christ is emphasized.

“Jesus” means “God saves”. Paragraph 432, “The name ‘Jesus’ signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins.”

“Christ” means “the anointed one”. The Catechism shows how this title belongs to the Davidic king as well as to other prophets and priests from the Old Testament. As Psalm 2 indicates, the Davidic king as the Lord's anointed was closely associated with God and was meant to mediate God's presence. Psalm 2 describes the kings of the earth gathering together to fight against “the Lord and his anointed”. In the Old Testament the priests or prophets anoint the king; in the New Testament at his baptism, Jesus is anointed directly by God the Father who sends the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Jesus thus is shown to be in continuity with the Old Testament anointing, but also to have

surpassed them.

“Lord” in the Jewish usage of Jesus’ time was used in place of the divine name which was considered too holy to be pronounced. Some people who encountered Jesus may have simply used the title “Lord” as a title of respectful address, in the manner of “Sir”. But others clearly mean to say more when they confess Jesus as “Lord”. Here it is a confession of his divinity as when Thomas the Apostle in the upper room says, “My Lord and my God” (John 20).

“Son of God” first is a designation for the Davidic kings in the Old Testament as well as sometimes angels, prophets, and others. When Jesus is acclaimed the Son of God he is clearly being placed in the tradition of the Davidic king. But the Catechism says that there is more to the title than simply that Jesus is a son of David. In Matthew 16 when Peter confesses Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God”, Jesus responds that “flesh and blood have not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven.” In this way Jesus indicates that Peter is saying more than that Jesus is a human descendent of David who is claiming the throne of David. Peter’s confession includes a meaning that Jesus is most perfectly the Son of God in a transcendent way: He is not only a son of God by grace, but the Son of God by nature.

Mysteries of Jesus’ Public Life (CCC 535-570). Following in the tradition of St. Thomas’s theological analysis of the life of Christ (*vita Christi*), the Catechism includes a sustained reflection on the mysteries of Jesus’ public life. All that Jesus does is a mystery because present in every finite human action is the transcendent Person of the Son. These mysteries of the public life lay the foundation for the mystery of all mysteries, the Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Pope John Paul II has drawn upon this insight from the Catechism in his addition to the Rosary of the five new Luminous Mysteries.

Below is a suggested assignment for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

CCC 430-455, 512-570

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you describe how both von Balthasar and Pope John Paul II defend and explicate the orthodox teaching on Christ.

Suggested Reading

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000.

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. Available from the Daughters of St. Paul or at www.vatican.va

LESSON 10: CHRIST AS THE FULL REVELATION OF GOD

A Contemporary Thesis: Jesus as the Limited Revelation of God

Building on the work of Karl Rahner, many contemporary Catholic theologians have emphasized the limited character of Jesus' revelation of God. The argument can be simplified as follows. Being finite, limited, and conditioned historically, linguistically, and culturally are part of what it means to be human. Jesus was fully human. Therefore, Jesus' humanity must also be finite, limited and conditioned historically, linguistically, and culturally. One further step is required: since Jesus' humanity is thus limited, it can only communicate a limited truth about God.

Some examples. John Macquarrie speaks of Jesus' sinfulness and gives as an example his calling the Canaanite woman a dog who should not receive the bread of the children (Mt 15:22-28). According to this view, Jesus here evidences the racism that was common among Jews of the first century.

Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., has argued that Jesus' maleness means that he cannot fully reveal the God who is neither male nor female. Again, the fact that Jesus' humanity is finite entails that he can only reveal a finite truth about God.

Roger Haight, S.J., in his recent book, *Jesus: Symbol of God*, extensively argues that all religious language must be understood in symbolic terms and not metaphysical (p. 297). He claims that the language of Nicaea and Chalcedon must be reinterpreted in our current cultural context. The early creeds, according to him, ignore the historical Jesus in favor of an abstracted metaphysical consideration of the person of Christ relying too much on the Johannine vision of Jesus. "The following propositions or statements can be taken as paraphrases of the content of the doctrine of Nicaea: the meaning of Nicaea is that no less than God was and is present and at work in Jesus. This means that the God encountered in Jesus for our salvation is truly God. And this statement of the divinity of Jesus implies a second statement about God: God is immanent in and personally present to human existence. This is how God is revealed to be in Jesus" (284).

These views of Christology fit neatly within Enlightenment trends. Christians can continue to speak of Jesus' divinity as long as they understand that this does not mean in any way that Jesus is identified as the Second Person of the Trinity, but simply that God is present in Jesus. This is largely 18th century deism -- the view that God cannot act in the world or be present in the world in any concrete, definite manner. God's action and presence are limited to a universal immanence, but the world as we know it exists as a closed system, cut off from God's direct action. To say that God is present in Jesus -- as Roger Haight explicitly says -- is simply to say that God is present to humanity.

As we have seen, however, what they deny here is exactly what was affirmed by the early creeds. Namely, Jesus is identified as the Second Person of the Trinity. The whole thrust to these authors fits the general thrust of liberal Christianity in modernity -- reinterpret Christian beliefs and practices so that they do not offend the prevailing beliefs of the age. Those who argue for this perspective will say in the first several centuries the Church inculturated the faith according to the presupposition of the

prevailing Greek and Roman cultures. This, however, ignores the actual history in which at almost every point the heresies rejected by the orthodox Church fit more neatly with the prevailing cultural ethos. Orthodoxy insisted on the fundamental unity of the Person of Christ in two natures divine and human against every attempt to situate this mystery into current philosophical views about God and man.

The Person of Jesus is the Person of the Word

The cornerstone of the creedal teaching is that in the midst of the duality of natures, the Person of Jesus is one. The Second Person of the Trinity is the Person of Jesus Christ. The divine Person of the Word in the midst of history assumed a human nature and now subsists both as God and as man. As articulated by St. Cyril, taught by Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), there is one Person in Jesus Christ and that one Person is the divine Person. As a consequence, there is no human person in Jesus. This does not deny any part of the full human nature possessed by Jesus Christ and encountered by his disciples and the Church after them. It is simply the affirmation that there cannot be a duality of persons as held by the Nestorian heresy.

Consider the difference between person and nature. Nature answers the question “What is it?”. Person answers the question “Who is it?”. If Jesus was walking down the road and asked Peter “What am I?”, Peter would have had to say “you are God and man” in order to answer correctly. When Jesus asked Peter, “Who am I?”, Peter answered “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Mt 16:16). There is only one subject who can act in both natures.

Jesus Christ: the Full Revelation of God

Orthodox Christology does not affirm the view that the finite Jesus is the infinite God, although this is precisely the view that modern liberal theologians criticize. Orthodox Christology always maintains with great care the utter distinction between the infinite and the finite. The creeds are exactly the means for maintaining this distinction and almost every heresy tries to confuse and mix together the infinite and the finite. Even the contemporary views that pride themselves on being philosophically sophisticated deny the distinction by basically reducing the infinite to the finite by overemphasizing the immanence of the infinite in the finite. The creeds distinguish between the infinite character of the divine nature and the finite character of Jesus’ human nature, but they also affirm that through the finite human nature of Jesus, one comes to know the divine Person of the Word. The infinite is revealed through the finite because in the one unique instance of Jesus Christ the infinite is united with the finite in the one Person. The Church has sufficient philosophical and theological sophistication to know that this is a miracle and that the conjunction of the divine and human in Christ cannot be explained in human language and concepts since all of our language and concepts are derived from our experience of earthly existence. Although human language can express truths about God in an analogical fashion, God’s manner of existence (how he is exists) is beyond our comprehension. This means that the creeds affirm that when I come to know the man Jesus, I come to know the Person of the Word. There is no one else whom I can come to know in Jesus.

Jesus: Human Knowledge and the Beatific Vision

Since Jesus’ natures and the activities of those natures are distinct, there are two intellects in Jesus. His divine intellect operates in a divine manner. His human intellect operates in a human manner. Nonetheless this does not mean that his human intellect operates just as do our human

intellects. In virtue of the sinless character of Jesus and his personal union in the Word, his intellect has greater perfection. We can distinguish three levels to Jesus' human knowledge.

First, Jesus possessed acquired human knowledge. His intellect learned through the mediation of the senses. He would have learned Aramaic from his mother Mary and his guardian father Joseph. He did not spring forth from the womb speaking Chinese and modern English. He would have learned the ways of his people and brought this knowledge to bear in his formulation of parables. See the Catechism of the Catholic Church on this.

Second, Jesus possessed infused human knowledge. His human intellect was enlightened by the divine Word so that he had miraculous knowledge. For instance, he knew what his disciples and his enemies were thinking. He also knew that Nathanael was sitting under the fig tree without physically seeing him there. His infused knowledge would have included a knowledge of the Scriptures. Moreover, everything pertaining to his mission was given to him. Perfect knowledge of the Mosaic Law, its completion in the New Law, knowledge of the Father, knowledge of the future destruction of Jerusalem (accomplished one generation, roughly forty years, after his crucifixion).

Third, Jesus possessed the vision of God. His human intellect was perfected by the attainment of the purpose of every human being -- to see God and to love him. This vision is often described as the beatific vision since the intellectual vision of God overflows into the love of God which bring the human creature into ultimate happiness, or beatitude.



The Exhortation to the Apostles by James Tissot, ca. 1886-1894

Many contemporary theologians criticize this view of Jesus possessing the beatific vision. They will say that this is a naive view of Jesus as knowing the plans for the atomic bomb as a toddler. The vision of God, however, is nonconceptual. Since it is the vision of the divine essence which is one, it cannot be broken down into individual concepts such as plans for the A-bomb or the internet. The vision of the divine essence includes every individual concept, but not in the manner of individual concepts as is the human manner of knowledge. Jesus' possession of the vision of God thus would not lead to the view of Jesus walking around like an infinite encyclopedia. In fact, as we just noted, the vision of God is on a different level -- a divine level -- than our conceptual knowledge. Thus, although Jesus possessed the vision of God, his human intellect still required infused knowledge. This infused knowledge was conceptual, that is, broken down into distinct concepts about his mission and his encounters in the world. In other words, to express what he knew by beatific vision in a manner accessible to the human mode of knowing, Christ needed both acquired knowledge and infused conceptual knowledge.

As the conformity of his human intellect with his divine intellect, Christ's vision of God enables his words and deeds to express the divine wisdom for all creatures. Just as St. Teresa of Avila's experience of moments of contemplative union shaped her words and deeds, so also, in a higher way, Christ's experiential knowledge of his Father in beatific vision illumined and governed his mission.

Below is a suggested assignment for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dominus Iesus" available at www.vatican.va.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you respond to the following questions. How can the finite man Jesus be the fullness of divine revelation? How can the finite Roman Catholic Church transmit the fullness of divine revelation. Include reference to the way in which "Dominus Iesus" shows the interdependence of claims for the uniqueness of Christ and claims for the uniqueness of the Church?

Suggested Reading

Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

LESSON 11: SALVATION: THEORIES OF ATONEMENT

The doctrine of the atonement expresses the truth that man's reconciliation with God has occurred through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This reconciliation encompasses both the forgiveness of our sins (Lk 24:47) and adoption as children of God (Jn 1:12). After the Fall, our relationship with God was destroyed in such a way that no man could restore it. What no man could do, God has done in Jesus Christ. The central message of the New Testament: by Jesus' crucifixion we have been saved and made sons of God.

This fundamental truth is the atonement. The atonement explains *what* happened; theories of the atonement explain *how* it happened. So although there is only one truth of the atonement, there are a plurality of theories explaining the manner in which Christ accomplished our atonement. In this lesson, we will examine three classical theories of the atonement. In the next lesson, we will examine another theory of atonement that includes more specifically the atonement in the context of Christ's fulfillment of the covenants with Israel.

Christus Victor (Christ the Victor)

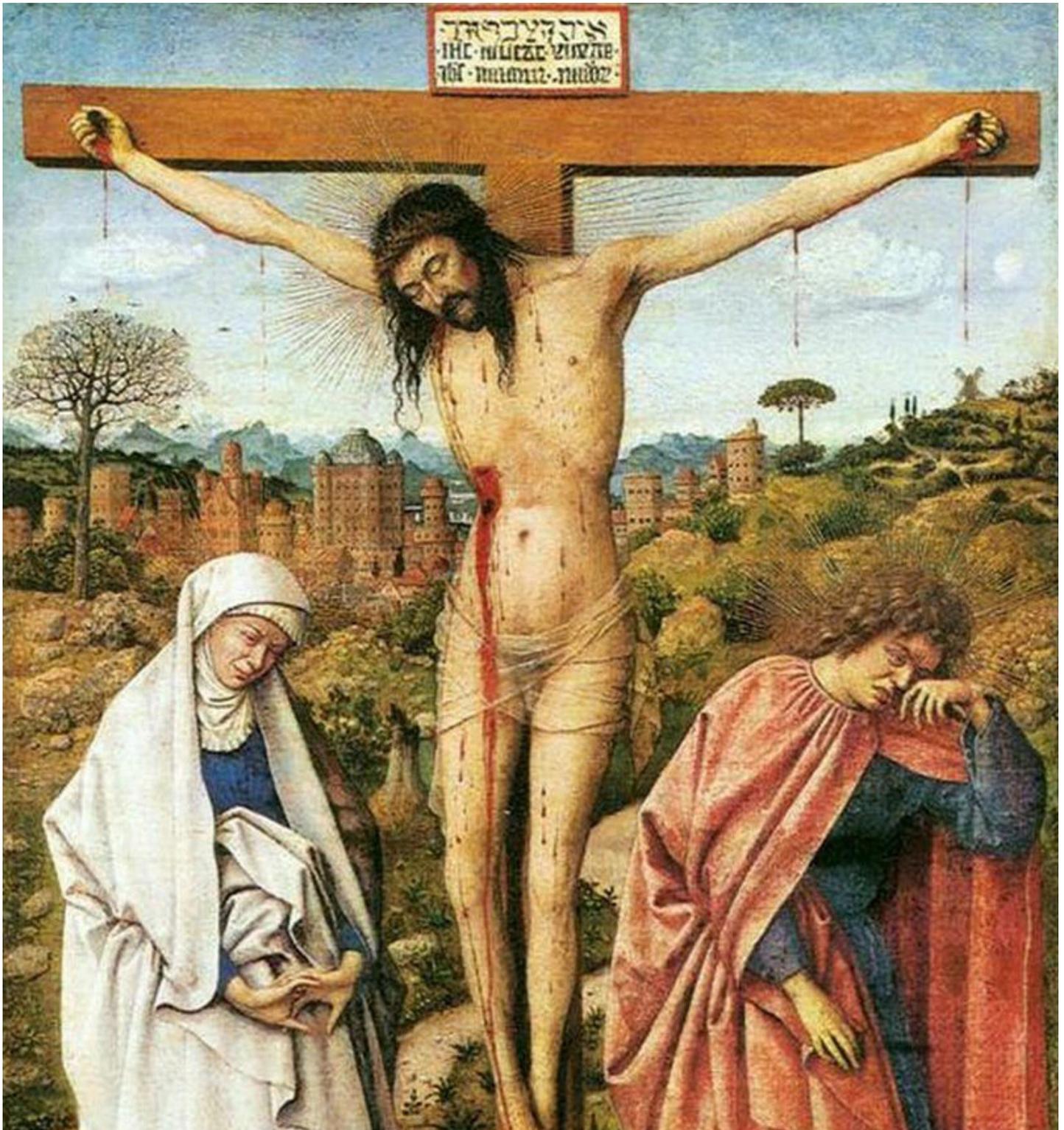
Held by almost all of patristic authors from St. Augustine to St. Athanasius. Focused on Christ's victory over the devil and death. The devil had been given dominion over man once man had rebelled against God. But Christ came into the world as a sinless, innocent man and therefore was not subject to the just penalty of death. When the devil coordinating with Pontius Pilate, the Romans, Judas Iscariot, and the Jewish authorities, put Jesus to death, the devil thought that he had triumphed over the messiah. Yet, when the devil put Jesus unjustly to death, the devil lost all his authority over the rest of human beings which he had until then held justly under the power of death. The devil's plan collapses with the resurrection of Jesus -- God definitively shows that the devil has lost his power to hold human beings under death. Christ's victory over the devil and death allows all of us to be victorious over the devil and death. Hebrews 2:14-15, *Since therefore the children share in the flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.*

St. Augustine used the example of the mousetrap. Jesus on the cross was the bait. A sinless man. The devil took the bait by killing Christ, but then the trap fell and the devil was mortally wounded.

Satisfaction

St. Anselm in the 11th century A.D. proposed the famous satisfaction theory of the atonement in his work *Why Did God Become Man? (Cur Deus Homo?)*. This theory drew upon the juridical, political, and cultural ethos of the early middle ages. The theory worked as follows. If a man struck another man, the greatness of the offense depended upon the status of the man struck. For a peasant to strike another peasant was bad, but it was much more serious if a peasant struck his lord or his king. It would take more to make up for -- to satisfy -- for the offense. Even today in the United States, it is a legal offense to hit another man in a crowd, but if that man is the President of the United States, it is much more serious and carries great legal penalties. What would happen if someone struck someone

of infinite dignity? What would it take to satisfy for such an offense? When man offended God by disobeying his commandments, he offended against the infinite dignity of God. Thus it would take an infinite amount to satisfy for this infinite offense. After sin, man owes God an infinite amount of satisfaction, but man being finite cannot pay such an amount. And because man has already disobeyed God, he cannot even give to God everything that he could have given to God; he can no longer give sinless life. Only an infinite God could provide the infinite satisfaction. Only a man can satisfy since



Crucifixion by Jean van Eyck, ca. 1435

he caused the offense. The only solution therefore is a God-man who as God can provide infinite satisfaction and as man can satisfy for man's offense.

Such theories can be called objective theories of the atonement.

Later St. Thomas clarifies two elements of Anselm's satisfaction theory. First, God could have forgiven man without due satisfaction, but God forgave man in the most fitting fashion. Second, it was not only the infinite dignity of the God-man, but the love of Christ, that was the direct principle of satisfaction.

Christ Wounded for Us

This theory focuses on the image of Christ Crucified for us. Because of original sin, man no longer has the capacity to love God. No exhortations can awaken the movement of love in us. Yet, when we contemplate that God became a man and died for us on the Cross, when we see God's incredible love incarnate in the willingness to suffer for us, we are moved to love back the God who has loved us so much. This theory was first fully proposed in the twelfth century by Peter Abelard. In general, these are subjective theories of atonement. Limitation: leaving aside the debt owed to God, God's justice, etc. Abelard went so far as to reject the idea of sacrifice. The demand for sacrifice and satisfaction, for Abelard, was not fitting for God's goodness.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux reacted strongly against Abelard's theory and maintained the orthodox position that Christ's cross had a sacrificial character before God the Father. Nonetheless, Bernard took from Abelard the emphasis on Christ's love and the awakening of love in the believer -- an emphasis that Anselm had largely ignored.

Bernard brings together Anselm's overly objective theory and Abelard's overly subjective theory and shows that Christ's charity is at the heart of the sacrifice. St. Thomas Aquinas continues this balance in his expression of the atonement.

Below is a suggested assignment for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 211-224 (Part II Historical Christology, Ch. 3)

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two-page essay in which you answer the question why did Jesus die on the cross. Include the significant patristic and medieval answers to this question.

Suggested Reading

Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

LESSON 12: SALVATION: ISRAEL AND CHRIST

The three classical theories of the atonement each express part of the mystery of the atonement. Each builds upon certain aspects of the New Testament message about Jesus Christ. Yet, none of them centers the atonement in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. The history of Israel, the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, the Temple and the exile all fall to the background. Thus there is also needed, not to supplant the classical theories, but to complement them, theories of the atonement that root Christ's salvation in the midst of God's providential history with Israel.

Already in the second century, St. Irenaeus of Lyons in his *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* places the atonement in the history of God's covenants. He begins with the covenant of creation, includes the covenant with Noah, Abraham, David, to show how the new covenant of Christ fulfills all of these covenants.

Israel in Exile

Although Jews were living in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus, they largely considered themselves still to be living in exile. The exile refers to the exile of the Jews from Jerusalem in Judea to Babylon in 587 B.C. Roughly 70 years later, the exile ended when King Cyrus of Persia allowed his conquered peoples to return to their homeland. He sent the Jews back to Jerusalem and helped them rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587. This rebuilt temple is known as the Second Temple to distinguish it from Solomon's Temple built around 950 B.C. Yet even though the Jews had returned to the Jerusalem and rebuilt their temple, there was no Davidic King to rule on the throne as God has sworn to David that his sons would receive a perpetual throne. The exile thus could not end until a son of David, a King, also known as the anointed one (Christ in Greek, or Messiah in Hebrew) would return. The fact that the exile had not ended with the return to Jerusalem soil was all the more true in Jesus' time since Jerusalem was an occupied city, ruled by the Roman governor and the Roman soldiers under him.

Faithful Jews during Jesus' time awaited the time when God would come as he had promised. The prophets frequently spoke of "the Day of the Lord" when God would come in his Messiah to restore Israel and judge the Gentiles. Jews had many different views of *how* this would happen -- a military uprising, an eschatological end of the world, etc. -- but most of the faithful Jews were agreed that it *would* happen. Before Jesus appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus (Acts 9), Paul, then referred to as Saul, had been a zealous member of the Pharisees. The Pharisees eagerly awaited the Day of the Lord. They reasoned that since the exile was caused by Israel's infidelity to the Law of Moses, the end of the exile would only come when a faithful remnant observed the Law in complete fidelity. Through his conversion to the way of Christ, Paul did not set aside this view of Israel's history; he simply saw that it had already begun in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ himself was the faithful remnant who completely observed the true Law. In his death and resurrection, God had judged the Gentiles and restored Israel. Christ personifies Israel. The resurrected Christ is the restored nation of Israel. Christ now brings Jews and Gentiles into his Body and thus manifests the restoration of Israel to the world. What Paul the Pharisee had expected to happen at the end of time through his own obedience of the Law, he came to see that it had happened in the middle of history through the

obedience of Christ. The end of history had already begun with Christ's resurrection and the period of the Church was the time in between Christ's First and Second Coming. This whole period of history is a continual Day of the Lord in which the judgment of the unrighteous and the restoration of the righteous in continually occurring.

The Covenant Logic of the Cross

But why did Christ have to die on the cross? The resurrected Jesus answered this question when he spoke to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lk 24:26-27). When Jesus uses the language of "all the scriptures" here it is not limited to a handful of proof-texts, but instead includes the whole of the scripture, the whole story to which his death and resurrection are the last act.

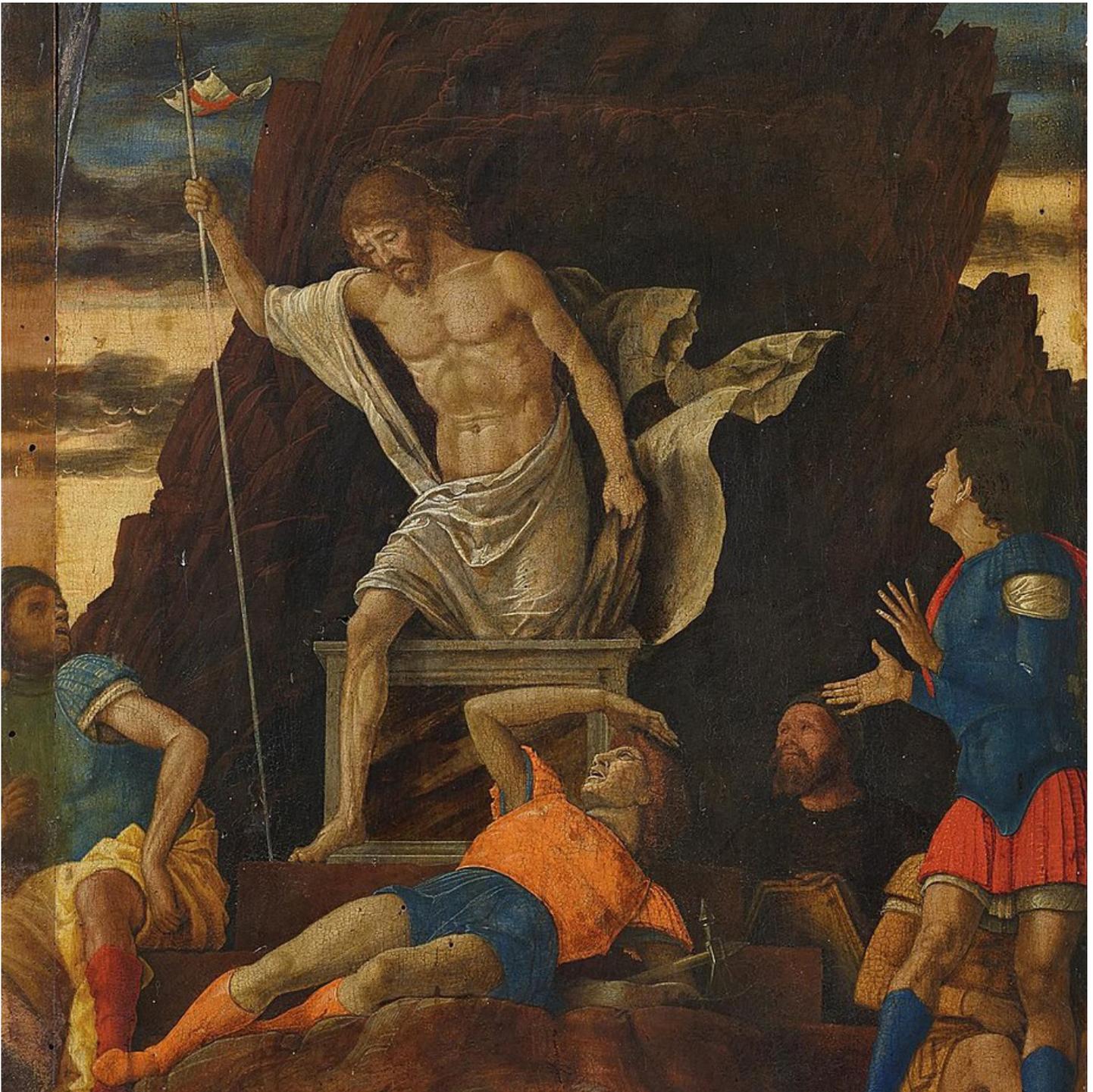
Back in Deuteronomy 28, blessings and curses are set before Israel. If they keep the covenant, as expressed in the book of Deuteronomy, then they will enjoy peace and security in the land. If they disobey the covenant, they will be crushed by Gentile nations, they will be naked and thirsty, until they are eventually destroyed. All covenants will either result in blessing or curse. There is no way back to where life was before.

Consider a marriage covenant. If faithfully kept, blessings of joy result; if transgressed and broken, great suffering. Now Israel had suffered many of the curses from Deuteronomy, exile, etc. But they were not wholly destroyed. Thus Israel still lived under the curse. Jesus Christ suffers at the hands of the Gentiles. As was the curse for Israel, Jesus is exiled from Jerusalem to be stripped naked, to be thirsty, until eventually put to death at the hands of the Gentiles, in this case the Romans. He suffers the Deuteronomic curses standing in as the person of Israel and thus frees Israel from all the curses of disobedience. Colossians 2:13-14, "And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross." Even more explicitly, Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree' -- that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Once the curses due to the disobedience of the law were borne by Christ, then the original promise of blessing for all nations (to Abraham) could be released in the gift of the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost.

Those outside Israel did not suffer from the Deuteronomic curses having never been part of the covenant. Nonetheless all Gentiles suffered under the curse of death initiated by Adam's disobedience. Christ's obedience and death on the cross thus bears away the curse upon all human beings. Romans 5:18-19, "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience man were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."

Christ and the Law of Moses

Yet, Christ's fulfillment of the Law of Moses does not end with the bearing of the curses. He



The Resurrection of Christ by Andrea Mantegna, ca. 1492-1493

also fulfills the positive aspects of the Law as well -- above all that Israel would be holy and that God would dwell with her. The short summary of the covenant: “you shall be my people and I shall be your God.” Traditionally, we distinguish three parts of the Mosaic Law: the moral law, the ceremonial law, and the juridical law. The moral law expresses what is true to human nature and is succinctly summarized in the Decalogue (the 10 commandments). The moral law therefore is binding on all human beings. The ceremonial law concerns all the instructions concerning worship and purity that gave Israel unique access to God in the Temple above all. As such it was only for Israel. The juridical law concerns the governance of the people of Israel under the Davidic King.

The King was to establish righteousness in the land. The land was to be holy because it was indwelt by God. The people were to be holy because they were righteous. St.

Thomas Aquinas spoke of the connection between Christ's salvation and his fulfillment of the three parts of the Law of Moses in his *Summa theologiae*.

Christ comes as the priest, prophet and king. As priest, he fulfills the ceremonial laws because he is the perfect sacrifice to which all of the other sacrifices pointed. As prophet he fulfills the moral law since he is the just man who teaches the true law. As king, he fulfills the judicial law by establishing a people who were made righteous by him. Thus to speak of the Old Law being fulfilled does not mean that the Old Law is revoked. Instead, the Old Law is completed, because all of its aims are fulfilled in Christ who continues to reign as priest, prophet and king. The New Law with its new ceremonies, the sacraments, is the perfection of the Old Law. As Jesus himself says, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). Also, when Paul says, "Christ is the *telos* of the law" (Rom 10:4), he is using the term *telos* here as the consummation and fulfillment, and not as the cessation.

Below is a suggested assignment for universities and those looking to further their study.

Suggested Reading Assignment

CCC 599-618, 456-460

Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, *Knowing the Love of Christ*, Chs. 6-7, pp. 91-118

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a three-page essay in which you show how Jesus' sacrifice fulfills the Mosaic covenant and how this fulfillment is related to the sacraments of the New Covenant.

Suggested Reading

Timothy Gray, *Mission of the Messiah: On the Gospel of Luke*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, Inc., 1998. Available at www.emmausroad.org.

N. T. Wright, *What Did St. Paul Really Say: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* Eerdmans Publishing, Inc., 1997.

Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

Christology was recorded in 2003 as part of the *International Catholic University Classics Collection*. TCT Courses proudly has received the rights to offer this timeless course by Michael Dauphinais, Ph.D. to a wider audience.

THE CATHOLIC THING COURSES



© 2023 The Catholic Thing Courses

For more courses and
learning opportunities visit us at
www.TCTCOURSES.ORG

THE CATHOLIC THING
COURSES