

“In his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas wrote ‘it is better to illumine than merely to shine.’ Throughout his career, Professor Joseph Wawrykow worked to return the historical study of theology to its sapiential orientation and to pass on this ordered vision to others. This volume testifies to the way that Wawrykow successfully illumined many students and fellow scholars to recover wisdom in the writings of St. Thomas. The essays gathered here each consider some aspect of theological wisdom and will illumine readers to a fuller recovery of the sapiential unity and truth of theology.”

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“This book comprises elements *nova et vetera*—things current and things perennial. The historical form and textual matter traced throughout these essays exemplify the methodological emphases of contemporary academia. Moreover, the volume’s unified focus on wisdom throughout the whole of Aquinas’s thought represents the best of recent engagement with classical themes. Hence, for readers who desire a current sampling of premiere Aquinas scholarship, it would be difficult to think of a better collection of essays than this. This book will instruct, challenge, and edify all those seriously engaged in the academic study of Aquinas’s historical person, medieval context, literary legacy, and contemplative priorities.”

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“Festschrifts are not always memorable, but this one will be. The cast of contributors is a veritable all-star team, evidence of the extraordinary fruitfulness of Joseph Wawrykow’s years of service to students and colleagues. And each author—no doubt desirous to please this master scholar, friend, and mentor—has brought to the table a superlative essay. The gems that consistently dot this volume make it a worthy celebration not only of Professor Wawrykow but also of the great medieval masters treated herein.”

MATTHEW LEVERING
Mundelein Seminary

“‘Wisdom has built herself a house; she has mixed her wine, she has laid her table, alleluia’ (Thomas Aquinas, Office of Corpus Christi; cf. Prov 9:1–2). Through his writing, teaching, and mentoring, Joseph Wawrykow has helped a generation of scholars to savor the works of Thomas Aquinas in their historical and cultural context. *Christ the Wisdom of God in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas* draws together essays by Wawrykow’s former students and colleagues, offering a rich and varied banquet of scholarly and spiritual insight into Thomas’s sources and legacy.”

INNOCENT SMITH, O.P.
University of Notre Dame

CHRIST THE
WISDOM OF GOD

IN THE THOUGHT OF THOMAS AQUINAS

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WISDOM OF GOD
IN THE THOUGHT OF THOMAS AQUINAS



Essays in Honor of
JOSEPH WAWRYKOW

Edited by
Boyd Taylor Coolman
& Daria Spezzano



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PREFACE

As Joseph Wawrykow's students will attest, to be a "Wawrykowian" is to be formed in the practice of a well-ordered and in-depth reading of the texts of Thomas Aquinas, with careful attention to their structure, intellectual milieu, and pedagogical intent. It is to be thoroughly formed not in the image of Wawrykow but in the teaching of Aquinas, who himself sought in all things to praise and be conformed to the wisdom of the Incarnate Word. In this volume we hope not only to honor and thank Joseph Wawrykow, but with him to speak well of Christ the Wisdom of God, who continues to illuminate all who teach and study the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

Although Joseph Wawrykow was hired at the University of Notre Dame in 1986, one might plausibly mark 1995 as the beginning of his long and distinguished career as a leading interpreter and teacher of the theology of Thomas Aquinas. 1995 saw the publication of Wawrykow's first book, *God's Grace and Human Action: 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (University of Notre Dame Press), a revision of his Yale University dissertation under the direction of George Lindbeck. It quickly established itself as the definitive work on the topic and its author as a leading interpreter of Thomas Aquinas. Over the next thirty years, he would continue to write with insight on the theology of Thomas Aquinas, publishing, for example, in addition to numerous articles, the *Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), an indispensable reference work for scholars and students of Aquinas, and an edited volume (with Rik Van Nieuwenhove), *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), a stellar collection of essays by leading scholars on central topics in Aquinas.

In the fall of 1995, at the University of Notre Dame, Wawrykow, along with his Notre Dame colleague Kent Emery, hosted a large conference, international in scope and star-studded with presenters, entitled “Christ Among the Medieval Dominicans.” Three years later, a handsome edition of the proceedings was published by the university press as *Christ Among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers* (University of Notre Dame, 1998). The title of Wawrykow’s own essay at this conference, “Wisdom in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas,” was prescient. As anyone who attended his seminars quickly realized, Wawrykow was exquisitely attentive to what might aptly be called the sapiential dimensions of Aquinas’s theology, as they emerged across his vast corpus. Wawrykow certainly attended to the *explicit* presence of this theme in Aquinas—for example, in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, or in the first question of the *Summa theologiae*, or in his discussion of divine providence, or in the presentation of Thomas’s Christology in the *Tertia Pars*. But perhaps just as important was his attention to the *implicit* presence of wisdom in the organizational structure and literary strategies of Aquinas’s writings. Wawrykow’s students learned to appreciate not only *what* Aquinas wrote but *how* he did so. They thus acquired a sense of the wisdom of Aquinas not only as a thinker but also as a writer.

But Thomas wrote wisely in order to teach wisely and well. And so, Wawrykow’s attention to these sapiential dimensions led naturally to the theme of wise pedagogy, certainly in Aquinas, but perhaps, as a by-product, this spilled over into Wawrykow’s own teaching. In 1995, Wawrykow began directing his first doctoral student’s dissertation on Aquinas. Soon others came under his direction, and before the end of the century, his excellence as a teacher and scholarly guide was evident. In 1999, he was designated a “Master Mentor” by the Notre Dame Graduate School for his work with doctoral students, and his department asked him to serve lengthy stints as Director of Undergraduate Studies and Director of Graduate Studies (PhD). One of his colleagues describes him as “an excellent administrator, someone with a fine prudential judgment with respect to program design, and, above all, someone who cared

deeply about the graduate students committed to his care.” In 2020, he was awarded by the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame the James A. Burns, C.S.C., Award for outstanding faculty mentorship. During those years, Wawrykow taught a wide variety of graduate and undergraduate courses in theology, his doctoral seminars famously and consistently focusing on the topics with which he himself began, namely, grace and Christology. Over three decades, he has directed twenty-six dissertations, mostly projects focused on Aquinas but also including other important writers from the High Middle Ages.

Beneath—or within—his somewhat laconic personality and dry sense of humor, students consistently found him to be a solicitous, attentive, encouraging, if also demanding mentor whose own high standards and scholarly rigor they were more drawn than compelled to imitate. They also found him to be eagerly devoted, loyal, compassionate, and supportive, willing to write careful, compelling letters of recommendation and provide attentive, close reading of written work, well beyond the completion of a doctorate. For those who have gone on to teach themselves, Wawrykow’s own dedication to his students and love of teaching has itself been the best of pedagogical exemplars.

Glancing back over the past three decades of this illustrious and influential career, it was obvious to the editors and contributors that the title of a volume devoted to this beloved teacher, colleague, and friend should be the Apostle Paul’s famous phrase, *Christ the Wisdom of God*, which succinctly captures so much of what Thomas Aquinas and Joseph Wawrykow cherished in their own thinking, writing, and teaching.

THE PREDESTINATION OF CHRIST AND WISDOM

JOSEPH WAWRYKOW

Questions 23 and 24 in the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa theologiae* are most deserving of careful study. The former considers whether adoption befits Christ (*an de adoptione Christo conveniat*), while the latter investigates the predestination of Christ himself (*de praedestinatione Christi*).¹ These two questions together constitute the second concerted investigation of predestination in the *Summa theologiae*, complementing and extending that found much earlier in the *Prima Pars*.² In their unfolding, these questions in the *Tertia Pars* highlight the centrality of Christ in Aquinas's theology of salvation and bring to fine expression the ways in which wisdom, including Christ as Wisdom, informs Aquinas's teaching on salvation. God has a plan for humans and their flourishing; God carries out the plan; Christ, incarnationally and sapientially construed, is integral to both the plan and its carrying out.

This essay falls into three sections. In the first, I discuss the teaching on predestination in the *Prima Pars*, limning the basic features of predestination. This will prepare for the second section in which I offer a close reading of questions 23 and 24 in the *Tertia Pars*. Those questions pick up the thread from question 23 in the *Prima Pars* (that is, the

¹ For the Latin of the *Summa*, I use Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, cura et studio Instituti Studiorum Medievalium Ottaviensis (Ottawa: Studii Generalis O.Pr., 1941–1945). English translations in this essay are taken from *Summa Theologica*, complete English ed. in 5 vols., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981).

² Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23.

teaching in the *Tertia Pars* on predestination is in harmony with that in the *Prima Pars*) while nuancing and adding considerable depth to that teaching. The third main section of the essay is a postscript, in which I move from the direct engagement with questions 23 and 24 and shift perspective, turning from God's predestining of and in Christ to Christ's knowledge of predestination according to Aquinas. The postscript too will underscore the centrality of Christ sapientially construed in Aquinas's account of salvation.

ST I, Q. 23: Predestination: Love and Wisdom

Question 23 might fairly be said to be definitional, as Aquinas describes the main features of predestination and shows both how predestination comports with what Christians hold of God and what predestination means for humans. Predestination is considered in tandem with providence, which is discussed in the question immediately preceding.³ Both providence and predestination speak to God's intellect and will, to God's knowing and loving, and what is said of providence and of predestination assumes and reflects the earlier discussions of God's knowing⁴ and willing⁵ and loving.⁶ Providence and predestination are operations, *ad extra*, of the God who knows and wills perfectly. In defining providence and predestination, Aquinas distinguishes between what is primary and what is secondary. What is primary is God ordering, ordaining, directing to. Providence is of global or universal extent; it has to do with all creatures. It is the ordering by God of all creatures, whether rational or non-rational, to their appropriate ends, to what any creature can attain by virtue of its God-given nature.⁷ Thus, there is an end for, say, the squirrel, which lies within the natural powers of a squirrel; there is an end appropriate to a human *qua* human; such is set for creatures by God, the God who has brought them into existence.

³ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 22.

⁴ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 14.

⁵ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 19.

⁶ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 20.

⁷ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 22, a. 2. For the natural end of human beings, see *ST I*, q. 23, a. 1, corp.

Predestination, says Aquinas, is a part of providence. It has to do with *some* rational creatures whom God has ordered or ordained or destined to an end that surpasses the natural capacities of the human *qua* human (and so to a supernatural end).⁸ This end is the beatitude that is proper to God (and so natural to God), the knowing and loving of God by God in which God is eternally engaged.⁹ In God's eternity, God has ordained or ordered or destined some rational creatures to a share in God's beatitude; that will involve a creature's direct knowing and loving of God as God is. And so predestination is the promise to some of eternal life, of coming to participate in the life proper to God. And, God's promise is certain. Those whom God elects to eternal life will attain eternal life (after their sojourn in this world); God's effects are certain and infallible.¹⁰

While primarily concerned with ends, there is a secondary aspect to providence, and so, too, to predestination, having to do with God's carrying out of such ordering and so the achievement of what God intends. The carrying out involves secondary causes. The execution of providence is government, which is treated briefly in the *Prima Pars*, question 22, article 3, and discussed at great length toward the end of the *Prima Pars*.¹¹ The carrying out of predestination is by God's grace, termed the effect of predestination,¹² and the graced good acts of the elect.¹³ There is an especially insightful discussion of grace in the *corpus* of the fifth article of *ST I*, q. 23; this anticipates much of importance in the long treatise on grace with which the *Prima Secundae* concludes,¹⁴ although the treatise goes into much greater detail. Thus, in *ST I*, q. 23, a. 5, corp., Aquinas denies that a person can prepare, of himself, for grace; grace is simply given, in accordance with predestination, and it works the conversion of the human to God as end. Aquinas adds that grace provides the capacity

⁸ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 1, corp.

⁹ On God's beatitude, see Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 26.

¹⁰ Aquinas affirms the "certainty" of predestination in *ST I*, q. 23, aa. 6–7: in article 6, that those chosen by God for eternal life will attain that end; and in article 7, that the number of the predestined is certain both formally and materially.

¹¹ Aquinas, *ST I*, qq. 103–19.

¹² At, e.g., *ST I*, q. 23, a. 2, ad 4.

¹³ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 5, corp.

¹⁴ See Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 5; and *ST I-II*, qq. 109–14.

for a person to do the good that is meritorious of eternal life—that is, the eternal life which God, in eternity, has decided to give as a gift to the elect. Thus, the person in grace can merit, and that merit brings that person to the end set for the elect by God. Eternal life, then, is principally gift, but can also be viewed as reward (due for graced acts).

Aquinas's ideas about the good and about love, announced previously in the *Prima Pars*, weave through the teaching on predestination. God is good—indeed, goodness itself.¹⁵ It is proper to the good to seek to share itself, to share its goodness.¹⁶ The communication of God's goodness is put by Aquinas in terms of love, which is to will the good with respect to another. That holds for human loving as for divine. But there is a crucial difference. The love of a human is elicited by a good that is real or at least apparent. God's loving is not elicited but is causal, causal of the good that exists outside of God. Whatever creaturely good that there is, is due to God's loving.¹⁷ Aquinas is alert to this, here and elsewhere in the *Summa*, and refers to God's loving in the creation of and providing for things.¹⁸ God creates out of love and provides for them in love. And, Aquinas refers to God's loving too in the account of the predestination of some to eternal life and its execution. To these God wills in love not only their being and their ordering to the end that is appropriate to humans qua humans, but also the ordering to the supernatural end of eternal life and the granting of the grace by which reaching God as end is rendered feasible and achieved.¹⁹ In question 20, on the love of God, there is an intriguing exercise,²⁰ in which Aquinas explains what it means for God to “love the better” more. It is not that what has more good is, for that

¹⁵ “Good” and “wise” are concrete terms; “goodness” and “wisdom” are abstract terms. For a brief explanation why both concrete and abstract terms are used of God—due to God's utter simplicity, and his substance and perfection—see, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 13, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁶ This is an insight from Pseudo-Dionysius (*Divine Names* 4) that is taken up by Aquinas and invoked at numerous points in the *Summa*, in a variety of settings. For an example of Aquinas's use, see the treatise on Christ in *ST III*, q. 1, a. 1, corp., where Aquinas asserts that it is suitable to God, given the divine goodness, to become incarnate and to manifest God's goodness in that way.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 20, a. 2, corp.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁹ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 4, corp.

²⁰ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 20, a. 4.

reason, loved more by God. To say that would be to forget that God's love is not elicited. Rather, God loves the better more by willing more good to them, causing a greater good in them. This stress on God's causal, not elicited, love also underscores (not incidentally) divine initiative, which is occasioned only by God's goodness and free decision, in love, to bring things into existence, provide for them, and to elect some to eternal life, to which they will most certainly come by God's grace and their graced acts.²¹

Wisdom too is important. God is wise, is Wisdom itself. The communication of God's goodness is not haphazard, nor is it necessitated, as if some sort of necessary emanation spewing forth good from God. A classical definition of wisdom is helpful here: Wisdom is the contemplation of the highest cause and the ordering of all else in this light.²² God's communication of goodness is intentional, purposeful, and in accordance

²¹ Aquinas picks up the thread of God's predestining love in the *Prima Secundae*. See *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 1, whose topic is whether grace puts something in the soul. In the *corpus* of that article, Aquinas notes three meanings of "grace." The first refers to someone showing favor to another, that other standing in the former's grace; the second is a gratuitous gift; the third, the gratitude that is shown for that gift. In the third sense, grace does not put something in the soul. In the second sense, grace does; Aquinas is thinking here of habitual grace and the like, which is granted by God to someone to make that one pleasing to God and to make possible the operations of knowing and loving that bring that person closer to God. As for the first sense, that does not put something in the soul. It has to do with God showing favor to someone who then stands in God's good graces, as it were. In the description of grace in this first sense, Aquinas recalls, explicitly, the discussion of God's love in the *Prima Pars*, including how his loving differs from human loving (the latter of which is elicited by some good already existing or apparently existing in another). Crucially, in the present article, Aquinas names this love of God the eternal love that God has for some: This is, he says, the "grace of predestination," citing Ephesians 1:5 to confirm that identification. Because of that grace of predestination, grace in its second sense will follow; the gratuitous gift of grace in the soul is given to those whom God so loves.

In the rest of the treatise on grace in the *Prima Secundae*, Aquinas is mostly concerned with grace in the second sense, grace as habitual, grace as God's *auxilium* in a technical sense (moving a person to acts pleasing to God). In the *Tertia Pars*, Aquinas discusses Christ's grace at length, focusing on the gratuitous effect (grace in the second sense). That has to do with habitual grace, to be sure, which is put in the soul. He also brings in a "grace of union," which has to do with Incarnation, which also is a gratuitous effect, a gift. That technically does not put something "in the soul," but only because it has to do with the whole human nature taken up in Incarnation; on this, see *ST* III, q. 2, a. 10, ad 2. Yet there is even, in the *Tertia Pars*, mention of grace in the first sense described in *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 1, *corp.*, to show favor to another. See *ST* III, q. 2, a. 10, *corp.*

²² There is a glimpse of that understanding of wisdom in *ST* I, q. 1, a. 6, *corp.*, on sacred doctrine as wisdom.

with wisdom. Thus, in terms of creation, that there are different types of creatures, each of which manifests (in its particular way) the goodness of God, is due to God's wisdom.²³ That creatures are ordered to their end and provided the means to attain the end is due to God in wisdom. The discussion of predestination itself gives plenty of witness to the role of God's wisdom in salvation. Question 23 of the *Prima Pars* is rife with wisdom language—*ordo*, *ordinatio*, *dispositio*, *destinatio* (and others) are wisdom terms. God in sapiential love orders, destines, directs, and ordains some rational creatures to God's own beatitude²⁴ to manifest through them God's goodness in this way. And, in wisdom, God ordains what is involved in the carrying out of predestination. Thus, in article 8, Aquinas speaks about the contribution of prayer—not to occasion election in the first place (recall, of course, divine initiative and God's causal love) but, as God wisely wills, to maintain correct orientation to God and to move closer to the God who is our end.²⁵ And in article 5, Aquinas invokes wisdom to explain how merit contributes to the attainment of salvation.²⁶ One, of course, cannot merit being elect. Predestination to eternal life is due to God; the initiative rests with the God who loves and loves wisely. And merit cannot explain the movement into grace in the first place that is due to God's effective grace. But, the elect do merit, and that merit is part of the salvific process, for God has ordained one part of the salvific process—the graced acts of the elect—as meritorious of another part of the salvific process, the end of eternal life.²⁷ In the *ex professo* treatment of merit at the end of the *Prima Secundae*, Aquinas retains this talk of ordination as ground of merit.²⁸ And, there he quite plausibly states that the meriting of the elect proclaims the glory of God.²⁹

²³ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 15, a. 2, corp.; and *ST I*, q. 44, a. 3, corp.

²⁴ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 2, corp.: "Predestination is a kind of type of the ordering of some person towards eternal salvation, existing in the divine mind" (*Praedestinatio est quaedam ratio ordinis aliquorum in salutem aeternam, in mente divina existens*).

²⁵ See Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 8.

²⁶ See Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 5.

²⁷ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 5, corp.: "God preordained to give glory on account of merit" (*Deus praeordinavit se daturum alicui gloriam ex meritis*).

²⁸ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 114, a. 1, corp.

²⁹ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 114, a. 1, ad 2: "We merit from God, not that by our works anything

There is great good in what God has ordained, that the elect come to their supernatural end by the graced use of their reason and will to know and love, capacities instilled in them by the Creator.³⁰

With an eye to what is to come in *ST* III, qq. 23 and 24, the following observations seem in order: The later discussion of predestination is incessantly scriptural, with certain scriptural passages (taken especially from Paul) shaping these later questions. The meditation on, say, Romans 1:4, Ephesians 1:5, and select verses from Romans 8 leaves beyond doubt the Christological and Trinitarian dimensions of predestination according to Aquinas: The triune God adopts, predestination is in Christ, and to attain eternal life is to come into the inheritance of the Son by conformity to the Son.³¹ These dimensions are at best muted in the first discussion of predestination in the *Summa*.³² Scripture is invoked in the earlier discussion, but mostly in different passages than in the *Tertia Pars*, and even when the passages overlap with those in the later treatment, their use seems quite different. Thus, Romans 8:30 is cited in the *Prima Pars* simply to hammer home that predestination is in God, and that God has a plan for some humans which God carries out.³³ Here, it is “God” who predestines to the end of eternal life, to share with the elect the beatitude that he enjoys eternally as God. There is undoubtedly a difference in tenor and detail between the *Prima* and the *Tertia Pars*, and that should be noted. But, the noting should be for understanding what each contributes to the overall teaching of predestination, not to put the different questions at odds with each other or to imagine, say, that Aquinas offers first a deficient account of predestination, which fortunately is amended in the *Tertia Pars*. The words of the general prologue to the *Summa* are to be taken seriously: He will proceed in the *Summa* in the unfolding and investigation of Christian truth, to meet the needs of his target audience,

accrues to Him, but inasmuch as we work for His glory” (Meremur aliquid a Deo, non quasi ex nostris operibus aliquid ei accrescat, sed in quantum propter eius gloriam operamur).

³⁰ For Aquinas’s entire teaching on merit, see my *God’s Grace and Human Action: ‘Merit’ in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

³¹ All of this, and more, will be discussed in detail in the next section of this essay.

³² Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 23.

³³ See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 23, a. 2, corp.

according to the order of the discipline.³⁴ This involves handling theological topics in their proper order, and building on what comes before in addressing subsequent topics. The Christian faith is not abandoned but re-presented in a fitting order, to cast new light.

In terms of predestination, Aquinas begins with the basics: This is what predestination is, and this is something that God can do, and would want to do, and will do in the way that God does. At this point in the presentation, it is enough to refer to “God” and what pertains to the divine nature (which is common to the Trinity of persons), to the perfections of God, to the essential attributes of God. Aquinas will pick up the discussion of predestination in the *Tertia Pars* and rephrase the teaching, making Christ and the Trinity explicit. By the time he gets to that, a lot will have been added, in accordance with the order of the discipline, to make the rephrasing meaningful: namely, the investigation in the *Prima Pars* of the Trinity of persons,³⁵ including the import of their personal names (in the case of the Second Person, Son-Word-Image),³⁶ as well as of the logic of appropriation;³⁷ and, the spelling out of the grammar of the Incarnation and the salvific significance of the Word made flesh, in the earlier questions of the *Tertia Pars*.³⁸ All of that is factored into the second discussion of predestination and gives resonance to the completed teaching.

To leave the Christological and Trinitarian muted in the *Prima Pars* definitely does not mean that, at that point, Aquinas was oblivious to Christ or to Trinity, unaware of their importance in predestination as a plan and the execution of the plan, as if in need of remembering that later. He will talk about Christ and Trinity in predestination, but in its

³⁴ In the prologue to the entire *Summa*, Aquinas says he is writing for “beginners,” in such a way as to lead to their instruction in what belongs to the Christian religion. That involves, unlike existing writings, following the order of the discipline in teaching them what they need to know. The exact identity of the “beginners” is a matter of some dispute.

³⁵ See Aquinas, *ST I*, qq. 27–43.

³⁶ See Aquinas, *ST I*, qq. 34–35, which are on Word and Image, respectively, as well as q. 33, which is on the Father and therefore also on the Son.

³⁷ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 39, aa. 7–8.

³⁸ Some comments on the structure and content of the opening questions in the *Tertia Pars* are offered at the beginning of the next section of this essay.

proper place. Yet, while he leaves the limning of the Trinitarian and Christological dimensions of predestination to the *Tertia Pars*, even in the *Prima Pars* Aquinas makes clear how important he deems Christ, deems the Trinity; and so the eventual explicit statement of predestination in Christological and Trinitarian terms really should not come as a surprise. Thus, in the prologue to question 2 of the *Prima Pars*, Aquinas announces the structure of the *Summa* (which will follow the order of the discipline). The *Prima Pars* will look at God and the procession of creatures from God; the *Secunda Pars*, at the movement of the rational creature to the end that is the beatifying God; and the *Tertia Pars*, at Christ, who, as human, (*secundum quod homo*) is the way to God as beatifying end. So, too, there is *ST I*, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3, cited frequently by recent Thomists with favor to show that the Trinity is not incidental for Aquinas. The revelation of the Trinity is important, he says there, for the correct understanding of creation and of salvation:

There are two reasons why the knowledge of the divine persons was necessary for us. It was necessary for the right idea of creation. The fact of saying that God made all things by His Word excludes the error of those who say that God produced things by necessity. When we say that in Him there is a procession of love, we show that God produced creatures not because He needed them, nor because of any other extrinsic reason, but on account of the love of His own goodness. So Moses, when he had said, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," subjoined, "God said, Let there be light," to manifest the divine Word; and then said, "God saw the light that it was good" to show proof of the divine love. The same is also found in the other works of creation. In another way, and chiefly, that we may think rightly concerning the salvation of the human race, accomplished by the Incarnate Son, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹

³⁹ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3.

The passage nicely gestures at the proper causality of the persons. It also secures the point about divine initiative and the sapiential communication of goodness (here put in personal terms of the Second Person) central too to the full teaching of predestination. This is a nice anticipation of the *Tertia Pars*.

And, as a final indication of the consciousness of the importance—indeed, the centrality—of Christ, even for the Aquinas of the *Prima Pars*, one can return to *ST I*, q. 20, on the love of God, a question which is, as we have seen, foundational for the initial account of predestination. Christ comes up in the article⁴⁰ in which Aquinas shows what “God loving the better more” means. The objections mention various candidates for the “better” (that is, having more good), and the logic of the objections seems to be to drive a wedge between being better and being loved more by God. Something, it is alleged, can have more good than something else but not be loved as much as the other. The first objection notes the case of Christ and grants the goodness of Christ—indeed, it allows that Christ is better than the whole human race, being God and man. But, it continues, God loved the human race more than Christ; for, as Romans 8:32 states, God “did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.” The response to the objection is worth quoting in full:

God loves Christ not only more than He loves the whole human race but more than He loves the entire created universe: because He willed for Him the greater good in giving Him “a name that is above all names,” in so far as He was true God. Nor did anything of His excellence diminish when God delivered Him up to death for the salvation of the human race; rather did He become thereby a glorious conqueror: “The government was placed upon His shoulder,” according to Isaiah 9:6.⁴¹

The response is nifty. The Incarnation (the Word taking up human nature) is added to the list of what is willed by God in love, expressive

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 20, a. 4.

⁴¹ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 20, a. 4, ad 1.

of God's goodness, joining creation and predestination. And, the link between the Incarnation and salvation (in its working out) is underscored. Both points will be made repeatedly and at length in the *Tertia Pars*, including in the consideration of what Aquinas will call the "singular predestination" of Christ himself.⁴² For the time being, it is enough to allow Aquinas to prove God's causal love, and so set the stage for the treatment of predestination appropriate to the *Prima Pars*.⁴³

It might, finally, be suggested that, nonetheless, there is for all that a decisive difference between the predestination of the *Tertia Pars* and that described in the *Prima*. Does not Aquinas define predestination differently in the *Tertia Pars* and so is writing about something other than what was presented in the *Prima Pars*?⁴⁴ And, in the process, does not the temporal-eternal pairing come to predominate in the treatment of predestination in the *Tertia Pars*?⁴⁵ In *ST* III, q. 24, a. 1, corp., Aquinas

⁴² Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 1, ad 1.

⁴³ See too Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 20, a. 4, ad 2: "God loves the human nature assumed by the Word of God in the person of Christ more than He loves all the angels; for that nature is better, especially on the ground of the union with the Godhead." Also worth mentioning here is the teaching about Christ found in *ST* I, 25, on God's power. Can God make something better than what God has created? The purpose of the inquiry is to underscore that God's power is infinite, and that no (merely) creaturely effect, nor all creaturely effects together, can equal—be identical with—the divine goodness; the effect is inferior to its cause. The answer is layered to reflect different ways in which "make something better" can be taken. Yes, God could make something better that is actual, not by changing its essence but by granting some accident. (I would think that habitual grace, an accident—see *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 2—is an example of making its possessor better, having more good than the human who lacks grace). And God could make something better than what he has made: a creature that would be better, have more good in its substance, than what has been made. For our purposes, what is important here are the exceptions that Aquinas notes when it comes to what has been made. See *ST* I, q. 25, a. 6, ad 4: There cannot be anything better, having more good, than "the humanity of Christ, from the fact that it is united to the Godhead; and created happiness from the fact that it is the fruition of God; and the Blessed Virgin from the fact that she is the mother of God; [they] have all a certain infinite dignity from the infinite good, which is God. And on this account there cannot be anything better than these; just as there cannot be anything better than God." There is an ontological bent to this passage; in *ST* III, q. 24, a. 1, discussed in the second section of this essay, the predestination of Christ is interpreted in terms of the Incarnation. Late in the next section of the essay, I will turn to the accidental perfection that is grace in considering the "fullness of grace," expressive of God's love in wisdom, ascribed by Scripture in differing ways to Christ, to Mary, and to others.

⁴⁴ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24; and *ST* I, q. 23, respectively.

⁴⁵ See Michał Paluch, *La profondeur de l'amour divin: La prédestination dans l'oeuvre de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2004), 242–43, 242n5, who seems

defines predestination as in its proper sense, as “a certain Divine preordination from eternity of those things which are to be done in time by the grace of God.” That does, at first glance, seem different from the definition offered in *ST I*, q. 23, a. 1, with its talk of the arrow and the archer:

The end towards which created things are directed by God is twofold; one which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature; and this end is life eternal, that consists in seeing God which is above the nature of every creature, as shown above. The other end, however, is proportionate to created nature, to which end created being can attain according to the power of its nature. Now if a thing cannot attain to something by the power of its nature, it must be directed thereto by another; thus, an arrow is directed by the archer towards a mark. Hence, properly speaking, a rational creature, capable of eternal life, is led towards it, directed, as it were, by God. The reason of that direction pre-exists in God; as in Him is the type of the order of all things towards an end, which we proved above to be providence. Now the type in the mind of the doer of something to be done, is a kind of pre-existence in him of the thing to be done. Hence the type of the aforesaid direction of a rational creature towards the end of life eternal is called predestination.⁴⁶

But, Aquinas himself does not seem to think that the definition offered in the *Tertia Pars* rests on a different understanding of predestination. In introducing this definition there, he in fact makes a cross-reference to the *Prima Pars*, to the effect that “as was shown there, so we understand predestination as follows . . .” And, the use of “preordination” language is not exclusive to *ST III*, q. 24. It is found also in *ST I*, q. 23, in the course of reflecting on a range of acceptable definitions of predestination.⁴⁷

inclined to distinguish sharply the teachings on predestination in the *Prima* and the *Tertia Pars* on this basis.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 1, corp.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3: “God from all eternity prepared by predestination,

And, the definition offered in the *Tertia Pars* does conform to the basic pattern articulated in the *Prima Pars*:⁴⁸ There is a plan, an ordering to, and that plan is carried out. Grace, which is given in accordance with predestination, is ordered to glory.⁴⁹ And, finally, the *Prima Pars* has its own talk of “eternal/temporal,” and what is said about graced actions (in this life) leading to the end as meritorious of it,⁵⁰ as well as what is said of the need for prayer (in this life) in the carrying out of predestination,⁵¹ which surely testify to an awareness of the temporal and the eternal at that earlier stage. In short, while there are distinctive notes in the *Summa*’s second handling of predestination (to be explored in the next section of this essay), there is consistency and continuity in the two treatments of predestination in the *Summa*.⁵²

ST III, QQ. 23 and 24: The Predestination of Christ and Adoptive Sonship

The treatise on Christ in the *Tertia Pars* is divided into two main parts: questions 1–26 and 27–59. The first main part is “on the mystery of the Incarnation itself, whereby God was made human for our salvation”; the second is on “such things that were done and suffered by our Savior,

conceiving the idea of the order of some towards salvation” (Deus ab aeterno praeparavit praedestinando, concipiens rationem ordinis aliquorum in salutem). See also *ST I*, q. 23, a. 2, obj. 4 and ad 4, for the observation that predestination has to do with eternity, while grace is temporal.

⁴⁸ See Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 24, a. 1; and *ST I*, q. 23, respectively.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 2 corp.: “Predestination is a kind of type of the ordering of some person towards eternal salvation, existing in the divine mind” (Praedestinatio est quaedam ratio ordinis aliquorum in salutem aeternam, in mente divina existens); and *ST I*, q. 23, a. 3 corp.: “Predestination is a part of providence, in regard to those ordained to eternal salvation. . . . Predestination includes the will to confer grace and glory” (Praedestinatio est pars providentiae respectu eorum qui divinitus ordinantur in salutem aeternam salutem. . . . Praedestinatio includit voluntatem conferendi gratiam et gloriam.)

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 5 corp.

⁵¹ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 23, a. 8.

⁵² In Joshua Lim’s “Thomas Aquinas on the Predestination of Christ,” *Modern Theology* 41, no. 4 (March 2025): 684–705, Lim too perceives the continuity on predestination between the *Prima* and *Tertia Pars*, and is unwilling to second Paluch in drawing a contrast (703n72). I am grateful to Professor Lim for sharing with me the proofs of this article, which nicely sets Aquinas’s treatment of Christ’s predestination in its thirteenth-century context.

that is, by God incarnate.⁵³ The *Summa*'s second concerted discussion of predestination is found toward the end of the first main part, at questions 23–24. The first main part of the treatise on Christ falls into three unequal sections. Question 1 stands on its own. Here Aquinas considers the fittingness of the Incarnation and repeatedly asserts the link between the Incarnation and salvation. Aquinas can even invoke the formula of exchange: God became human so that humans might become God.⁵⁴ The next section runs from question 2 through question 15 and is on the mode of union. Question 2 gives a general account of the Incarnation, of the hypostatic union of the two natures in the person of the Son/Word. Aquinas's treatment is genuinely a single-subject Christology: The Word, without loss to itself, as fully divine, has taken up and expressed a second nature and is thereby, as incarnate, (also) truly human. Question 3 then reflects on the person in whom the natures are united, while questions 4–6 think through the human nature that is assumed in the act of incarnation. Questions 7–15 discuss what is co-assumed with the human nature: the perfections,⁵⁵ and, the imperfections of soul and body,⁵⁶ all of which are pertinent to an account of the Savior.

The third and final section of the first main part of the treatise on Christ has to do with the “consequences of the union”: what follows on the union, and what might truly be said of the Word incarnate. Some consequences have to do with Christ in himself,⁵⁷ for example, his unity of being and operation; others have to do with us in relation to him.⁵⁸ Questions 20–24 have to do with the Father, with Christ in relation to the Father in his subjection and prayer and priesthood,⁵⁹ and with the Father in relation to Christ.⁶⁰ It is with regards to this last category, in questions

⁵³ From the introductory comments in the prologue to the *Tertia Pars*.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 1, a. 2, corp.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *ST III*, qq. 7–13: grace, knowledge, power.

⁵⁶ Aquinas, *ST III*, qq. 14–15.

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *ST III*, qq. 16–19.

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *ST III*, qq. 25–26, on the adoration owed Christ and his role as Mediator.

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *ST III*, qq. 20–22.

⁶⁰ The basic division of *ST III*, qq. 16–26 is given in the transitional paragraph at the head of q. 16: “We must now consider the consequences of the union; and first as to what belongs to Christ in Himself; secondly, as to what belongs to Christ in relation with His Father;

23–24 on the Father in relation to Christ, that Aquinas discusses adoption and predestination.

These grouping indicates that these two questions might well be considered together; and they indeed form a coherent unit. To suggest the arc of these questions before getting into the details, question 23 is concerned with adoptive sonship, noting its main characteristics and identifying who are adopted children of God, and, who might be adopted. In essence, adoptive sonship is the predestination which we have met in the *Prima Pars*. It has to do with the elect, with those, that is, who are (mere) creatures destined and called to God's own beatitude, and who reach that through grace and their graced acts. In this discussion, Aquinas refuses adoptive sonship to Christ: Christ is not an adopted son.⁶¹ This is to clear the field for the treatment in question 24 of Christ's own predestination and how that is to be understood as differing from the predestination with implementation that is adoption. His predestination, as Aquinas puts it, is proper to Christ; his predestination is singular.⁶² And yet, there is a connection between adoption and Christ and Christ's predestination that Aquinas, in both questions, is eager to explore. The connection is deep: Adoptive sonship is a similitude of natural Sonship,⁶³ a "participated likeness" in natural Sonship;⁶⁴ Christ's predestination is the exemplar and cause of the predestination of others.⁶⁵

To teach the adoption by God of humans that is proclaimed in Scripture, Aquinas draws a comparison with human adoption, that is, the

thirdly, as to what belongs to Christ in relation to us." (Deinde considerandum est de his quae consequuntur unionem. Et primo, quantum ad ea quae conveniunt Christo secundum se; secundo, de his quae conveniunt Christo per comparisonem ad Deum patrem; tertio, de his quae conveniunt Christo quantum ad nos.) The further division of the "with respect to the Father" and "of the Father's relation to Him" is taken from the transitional paragraph at the head of *ST* III, q. 20: "secundum ipsius ad patrem," and "secundum habitudinem patris ad ipsum."

⁶¹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 4.

⁶² Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 1, ad 1.

⁶³ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2.

⁶⁴ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 4, corp.: "Filiatio adoptionis est participata similitudo filiationis naturalis."

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, aa. 3–4.

adopting by one human of another.⁶⁶ In each kind of adoption (human and divine), the adopting, he says, is done out of goodness, and in each adoption the one who is adopted is designated as heir to the estate of the one who adopts. And yet there are significant differences between the two adoptions. God's goodness is infinite, not limited; and, the estate that is the end of adoption is spiritual, not material—is, with respect to humans, supernatural. An additional difference has to do with the worthiness of the one adopted. In human adoption, the one who is chosen is already worthy of adoption, is someone who elicits the favor of the one who adopts. The worthiness precedes the adoption, is independent of it. In the adoption of the sons of God, in contrast, worthiness follows the adoption, is due to the adoption. Aquinas refers here to the grace that is infused in the one adopted by God, the grace by which one is pleasing to God and is able to act in a way pleasing to God that brings that one closer to the end (the entry into the inheritance).⁶⁷ Aquinas, in short, is maintaining the sequence, anchored in divine initiative and God's causal love, that he has charted in the teaching of this predestination in the *Prima Pars*.

The second objection, with response, in *ST* III, q. 23, a. 1, deserves mention here. The article is asking whether it befits God to adopt, and the objections argue that one way or another it does not. The second objection claims that there is adoption only when there are no natural children. But such is not the case in God; for the Father has a Son, a natural Son; and so God does not adopt. In the response, Aquinas contrasts humans and God. Humans act (*operari*) to supply for a want, to get something they do not have (in this case, to state the obvious, to come to have a child by adoption when one had not previously had one). Not

⁶⁶ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 1. For a fine study of Aquinas on adoption, see Luc-Thomas Somme, *Fils adoptifs de Dieu par Jésus Christ: la filiation divine par adoption dans la théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1997).

⁶⁷ In Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 1, corp., grace supplies the worthiness. In a. 3 of this question, Aquinas will also refer to the charity that is poured forth by the Holy Spirit in those who are adopted to sonship. For Aquinas, grace and charity are intimately related, the former perfecting the soul in its essence, the latter, the power of will. See, e.g., *ST* I-II, q. 110, aa. 3–4. In *ST* III, q. 7, a. 2, corp. (which is on the virtues of Christ), Aquinas repeats that grace perfects the essence of soul, the virtues, the powers, and notes that the infused virtues flow from grace. He adds, in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 5, that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, also understood as infused habits, perfect the powers of the soul too.

so with God. God does not work (*operari*) to meet a need or fill a gap. Rather, Aquinas notes, God works in order to communicate to others the abundance of his perfection. “Wherefore, as by the work of creation the divine goodness is communicated to all creatures in a certain likeness (*similitudo*), so by the work of adoption the likeness (*similitudo*) is communicated to men, according to Romans 8:29 ‘Whom He foreknew . . . to be made conformable to the image of His Son.’”⁶⁸ The natural Son of God is nicely introduced here; and Aquinas for the rest of this question and the next will return repeatedly to natural Sonship and how the natural Son and other sons of God differ. He will also return anew to the similitude mentioned here, to how adopted children of God look like and participate in the natural Son with whom they are not identical.

The response, with this quote from Romans, also marks a nice segue to the next article: God foreknows and makes conformable. What is the referent of “God”? The article heading puts the matter this way: Is it befitting to the Trinity to adopt? Is adoption (this way of putting predestination) an act of the triune God? The objections in this article opt instead for the Father, that is, God the Father. That is the one, in their telling, who adopts. The first objection observes that having a son pertains to someone who begets. In God, it is the Father alone who begets, and so it is the Father who adopts.⁶⁹ The second objection refers to two different Scripture passages to argue for God the Father. Christ is said to be the firstborn of “many brethren” (Romans 8:29) and brethren have the same father. And, Christ says to the disciples that he is ascending to “my Father and your Father” (John 20:17); in other words, he and they have the same Father.⁷⁰ The third objection revolves around a different Scripture passage, this time from Galatians (4:4–6): “God sent forth his Son . . . that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: ‘Abba! Father!’” It belongs then to him to adopt who has the Son and the Holy Spirit to send; and that is God the Father alone.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2.

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, obj. 1.

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, obj. 2.

⁷¹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, obj. 3.

Yet, Aquinas asserts, it belongs to the whole Trinity to adopt, not the (person of the) Father alone. In the *corpus* of the article, Aquinas reminds us of the difference between what is so *in divinis* and what can be said *in creaturis*. There is a begetting in God, which is personal: The Second Person is the natural Son of God, the natural Son of the (person of the) Father who begets. There is no making here; as the Nicene Creed puts it, the Second Person is “begotten not made.” Adopting is, in contrast, a work of God *ad extra*; as John 1:12 puts it, adopting is a making (not a begetting as in natural Sonship), and the making here is voluntary on the part of God, a voluntary making of some rational creatures into sons of God, adoptive sons. But, to produce any effect in creatures is common to the whole Trinity by reason of the oneness of their nature: since where there is one nature (which the persons share and are identical with), there is one power and one operation. And so it is the Trinity, not the (person of the) Father alone, that adopts.⁷²

Pertinent here is the further observation found in the *sed contra* that names such as “God,” as said in relation to creatures, are said of the whole Trinity (because of the oneness of nature and oneness of operation *ad extra*); and so when we refer to “our Father,” it is the whole Trinity that is meant, the triune God who adopts rational creatures to be adoptive sons.⁷³ And so “Father” can play out in two ways: at times, as used of that divine person; at others, as referring to the Trinity who operates *ad extra*, in this case in adopting.

In light of the *corpus*, the basic error of the objections has been to forget the distinction between *in divinis* and *in creaturis*, and to conflate natural and adoptive sonship. It might have been enough in the responses to simply observe that and move on. Yet, Aquinas takes the opportunity of the responses to add significant detail to his account of adoption, both to consolidate the distinction from natural Sonship and to assert the connection. Thus, in ad 2 he parses the “my Father” and “your Father” of John 20. Both refer to the same Father (and so Father is taken at this point personally) but refer in different ways. For the Father is Christ’s

⁷² Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, corp.

⁷³ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, sc.

Father by natural generation, which is proper to him; whereas he is our Father by a voluntary operation, which is common to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ This acknowledgment of the person of the Father, even with regards to the adopted, seems good to make, a nice rejoinder perhaps to those who might muse that for all the talk of Trinity, when the rubber hits the road, Aquinas's God is a single-person God. Christ is the Son of the Father, not of the Trinity; adopted sons are sons of the Trinity, not of the Father alone; but the person of Father, too, is involved, as are the persons of the Son and Spirit, in the adoption. The act *ad extra* is that of the three persons who are one in nature and operation.

The response to the third objection pursues the point—that is, that the three are involved in the operation *ad extra*—in handling the verses from Galatians 4. The response opens by recalling what was claimed in the first article of this question, in ad 2. Just as all that takes place in time is a certain likeness of what has been from eternity, adoptive sonship is a likeness of the eternal (natural) Sonship. Aquinas then brings in appropriation, first with regards to the Holy Spirit, and then of all three persons. Adopted sons are assimilated to the eternal Son by reason of the light of grace which is attributed to the Holy Spirit. And so, “adoption, though common to the whole Trinity, is appropriated to the Father as its author, to the Son, as its exemplar, [and] to the Holy Spirit, as imprinting on us the likeness of this exemplar.”⁷⁵ As a reminder, in appropriation an essential term or attribute is appropriated to a person, to make that person better known.⁷⁶ There is something about that person, as that person, that warrants the attribution. These particular attributions are warranted in turn by the Father as unbegotten Principle, the Son as natural Son, and the Holy Spirit as personal Love and Gift. In the next article of this question,⁷⁷ Aquinas will have more to say about the Holy Spirit in adoption; in the next question,⁷⁸ Aquinas will discuss in greater detail the exemplarity of the Son.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 2.

⁷⁵ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3.

⁷⁶ Appropriation is discussed in Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 39, aa. 7–8.

⁷⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3.

⁷⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3.

In *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, Aquinas turns to the one who might be adopted. The rational creature, made in the image of God, is capable of being adopted (a point already observed in a. 1, corp.). That one has, by nature, the capacity to know and love, and when elevated and further capacitated by grace, that one can know and love God in the way appropriate to life in the world; and in the next life, as further capacitated by the light of glory, that one can enter into the beatitude possessed eternally by God, knowing and loving God directly. Having a capacity does not mean, however, that someone with the capacity will be elevated—supernaturally endowed—to reach that end. Adoption is very much a gift, due to God’s decision to communicate goodness in this way to those whom God chooses.⁷⁹

Adopted sons are likened to, assimilated to, the natural Son. In the *corpus* of article 3, Aquinas reflects on the adopted and the likening that occurs in adoption. In what does the likening in adoption consist? The language of this *corpus* is intriguing. For one thing, Aquinas names the Second Divine Person differently than previously in this question. In *ST* III, q. 23, Aquinas has been referring throughout to the natural “Son”; “Son” is the name of this person that is favored, understandably, in a question on adoptive sonship. In this *corpus*, however, Aquinas shifts to another name for the Second Divine Person: Word. As he puts it early in the *corpus*, referring to the Second Person in relation to the First: “Now the Son of God proceeds naturally from the Father as Intellectual Word, in oneness of nature with the Father.”⁸⁰ The Word is eternally spoken by the Father in the perfect knowing of God; the Word and Father are distinct persons in God, one in nature. The statement sets up the rest of the *corpus* nicely. Implied here is the difference between the Word and those who would be likened to the Word. The Second Person proceeds naturally; the adoptive son proceeds by will, by God’s creative willing. The Second Person and the First are one in nature; the creature is not one in nature with the triune God. There will be likening, not identity.

In the rest of the *corpus* of the third article, Aquinas plays off “Word” in considering different likenings, different candidates for the likeness

⁷⁹ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, ad 3, for all of this.

⁸⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp.

of adoption. In presenting these, the language continues to be striking, demanding. Aquinas notes three ways in which creatures might resemble the Word, listed in what I will call here an ascending order. The first takes account of the creative activity of the Word and how what is created is patterned on God. “[In what is created there is a likeness] on the part of the form but not on the part of its intelligibility: thus the form of a house already built is like the mental word of the builder in its specific form, but not in intelligibility, because the material form of a house is not intelligible, as it was in the mind of the builder. In this way every creature is like the Eternal Word; since it was made through the Word.”⁸¹ All creatures are made according to the Word, begotten Wisdom, to reflect the goodness of God each in its own, designated way. This likening to the Word holds for all creatures, whatever their nature (rational or not). Neither capacity for thought nor thinking itself is pertinent to, involved in, this likeness. This is not the likening of adoption.

The second likening applies only to rational creatures. Here “intelligibility” is pertinent and present. Rational creatures can know, can come to know, and that is due to the Word (according to whom they have been made) and mimics the Word who is God’s perfect knowing of God, the Word spoken eternally by the Father: “The creature is likened to the Word, not only as to its form, but also as to its intelligibility: thus the knowledge which is begotten in the disciple’s mind is likened to the word in the mind of the master. In this way the rational creature, even in its nature, is likened to the Word of God.”⁸² This is the capability to which Aquinas refers in ad 3, and itself, as a matter of nature, is not adoption but is presupposed for adoption on the side of the one adopted.

And, finally, there is the likening that provides for the union of those who are not God, with God. This is not a union in nature, as is the case for the divine persons. Rather, it is a union that “is by reason of grace and charity: wherefore our Lord prays (John 17:21–22): ‘That they may be one in Us . . . as We also are one.’” Echoing what is said in the first *corpus* in this question about adoption and worthiness, Aquinas states here that

⁸¹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp.

⁸² Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp.

this is the “likeness [that] perfects the adoption: for to those who are thus like Him the eternal inheritance is due.” It is God who grounds this likening, acting purposefully. Charity is “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5), for which reason the Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of adoption of sons” (Romans 8:15, DR). Adopted children of God act out of this grace and charity, growing in likeness as they move toward their end and final union with the beatifying God.⁸³

This passage on the adopted, on those who are likened to the Word by grace and charity (and, eventually, final beatitude), is reminiscent of others in the *Summa*, without thereby being merely repetitive or redundant. Two such passages might be mentioned here. *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, focuses on the person assuming in the Incarnation.⁸⁴ Running throughout the third question is the distinction between principle and term, useful for putting the act of incarnation. The principle of the Incarnation is the Trinity, the triune God, by the power of God that is common to the Trinity of persons. In the actual order, the term of the Incarnation is the Second Divine Person. In the act of incarnation, the triune God, as principle, takes up human nature to the person of the Son (or Word) as term, who, as term, actualizes the possibility provided by that creaturely nature for a human form of being. The Word, who from eternity is the Second Divine Person, fully God and one and the same God as the Father and the Holy Spirit, is also by incarnation truly human. As question 3 proceeds, Aquinas queries about the necessity of the actual order. Can one of the other divine persons be/have been the term of the assumption of human nature?⁸⁵ Can two or all three of the divine persons be the term of the assumption of human nature?⁸⁶ Can more than one human nature

⁸³ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp.

⁸⁴ For a study of *ST* III, q. 3, see my “Wisdom in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas,” in *Christ Among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers*, ed. Kent Emery Jr. and Joseph P. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 175–96. Daria Spezzano offers comments, with her usual insight, about *ST* III, q. 23, read in conjunction with *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, in her *The Glory of God’s Grace: Deification According to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2015), 197–207.

⁸⁵ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 5.

⁸⁶ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 6.

be assumed to a divine person as term?⁸⁷ The answer to all three inquiries is yes. The principle of the act of incarnation would always be the same, whether in the actual order or in these hypothetical scenarios. It lies in the divine power possessed equally by the three persons to take up human nature to the Father or the Holy Spirit as term, and not necessarily to the Second Divine Person;⁸⁸ or to take up human nature to two or all three divine persons as term, not just to one person as term;⁸⁹ or to take up two or more human natures to a divine person as term.⁹⁰ Articles 5–7 are striking testimony to divine power, what God can do. The final article of *ST* III, q. 3, however, returns to the actual order, to what the triune God, by the divine power, has actually done, as revealed in Scripture—that is, take up human nature to, precisely, the Second Divine Person: That is the person who is incarnate, who is the subject of the humanity because of the act of incarnation.

God does not act by necessity, is not restricted to a single possible course of action. God is free in God's power. But God acts wisely in all that God does, whatever God does. This includes in the Incarnation. It is, Aquinas argues in *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, more fitting, indeed, most fitting,⁹¹ that the Second Divine Person be the term of the taking up of human nature, that the divine power be exercised in precisely this way. The *corpus* is extensive, offering three main reasons for this divine person as term. In this passage, Aquinas does not stick to one of the names of the Second Divine Person (as he had in *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp.). In the first main reason of *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp., “Word” is employed; in the second, another proper name, “Son,” is highlighted; and in the third, he returns to “Word.”

Why, then, is the Second Divine Person the fitting term of the assumption of human nature in the Incarnation? The first main argument

⁸⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 7.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 5, corp.

⁸⁹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 6, corp.

⁹⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 7, corp.

⁹¹ In the heading to a. 8, Aquinas asks whether it is more fitting (*magis conveniens*) that the person of the Son assume human nature; in the first sentence of the *corpus*, the claim is made that that is most fitting (*convenientissimum*).

considers the union, asserting that such that are similar are fittingly united. This argument comes in two stages. In the first stage, Aquinas notes the similarity between all creatures and the Word. All things are created by God in accordance with the Word, the intelligible form of the craftsman. Created things, whatever their nature, look like the Word; the Word is here called their exemplar likeness (*similitudo exemplaris*). Thus, when things in the creation go askew (as Aquinas puts it here, “falls into ruin”⁹² by sin), it makes eminent sense for the craftsman to restore things⁹³ by the intelligible form active in their creating. Aquinas continues this first main argument by moving from the general (what holds of all creation) to the particular of what holds with regards to the rational creature (and so the human nature that is taken up in the Incarnation). The Word “has a particular agreement with human nature, since the Word is a concept of the eternal Wisdom, from Whom all man’s wisdom is derived. And hence man is perfected in wisdom (which is his proper perfection, as he is rational) by participating the Word of God, as the disciple is instructed by receiving the word of his master.”⁹⁴ Even in its phrasing, this first main argument anticipates well *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp.: “intelligible form” and the parallel drawn between the creating and the planning of the *artifex* in the building of a house; the receiving by the disciple of “the word of his master.” In effect, with this first main argument, Aquinas is complementing the first two points in *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp., on the likening to the Word ascribed to all because of creation according to the Word, and, to the rational nature because of rational capacity.

The next main argument of *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp., on the end of the union, is even more blatant in its connection with *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp. The end of the union is the fulfilling of predestination, of those who are preordained to the heavenly inheritance. Here, predestination is put in terms of adoption, explicated by phrases taken from Romans 8. The

⁹² See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp.: “si collapsum fuerit.”

⁹³ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp.: “restaurat.” In ad 2 of this article, Aquinas puts this as a *recreatio*.

⁹⁴ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp.

heavenly inheritance is bestowed only on sons (Romans 8:17, DR: “if sons, heirs also”). “Hence it was fitting that by Him Who is the natural Son, men should share this likeness of sonship by adoption, as the Apostle says in the same chapter (Romans 8:29): ‘For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son.’”⁹⁵ Aquinas might have explicitly noted in the present passage, again on the basis of Romans 8, that it is by the Holy Spirit that such conformity is attained. But, that we are meeting in this second main argument the likening of adoption as taught in *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp., is clear enough.⁹⁶

A second passage, this time from the *Prima Pars*, matches up even more exactly with *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp. (while preparing as well for *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, discussed earlier in this section of the essay, on the “Father” who adopts sons).⁹⁷ As in the *Tertia Pars*, *ST* I, q. 33, a. 3, corp., too is much concerned with likeness, similarity. Question 33 is a discussion of the First Divine Person, the Father; through the question, one learns

⁹⁵ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp.

⁹⁶ Would there still be “adoption” if one of the other Christological scenarios outlined in *ST* III, q. 3, aa. 5–7, had been enacted by God? That there could not be is the worry of one of the objections in article 5. Aquinas’s response in ad 2 is informative:

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

This passage might be read with profit in conjunction with *ST* III, q. 23, a. 2, ad 3, mentioned earlier in this section of the essay, which also invokes appropriation. The same move would answer the alternative Christology of *ST* III, q. 3, a. 6 (where two or even all three persons as term of the assumption of human nature is imagined). Things may be different when it comes to the Christology of *ST* III, q. 3, a. 7. That Christology, it would seem, reappears in the next question, in *ST* III, q. 4, a. 5, but as taken to the extreme. Should not the Word have taken up all human natures? In the *corpus* of that article, Aquinas gives three arguments why that would be “unfitting.” The second argument is interesting: “because this would have been derogatory to the dignity of the incarnate Son of God, as He is the First-born of many brethren, according to the human nature, even as He is the First-born of all creatures according to the Divine, for then all men would be of equal dignity.” In sum, there is an echo of adoption language here (“First-born of many brethren”) without trying to affirm adoption even in this alternative Christology. Adoption might be excluded in this scenario.

⁹⁷ I am not discussing the third argument advanced in *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp.

more as well about the Second Divine Person, the Son.⁹⁸ In article 3, Aquinas asks whether the name “Father” is applied in God, first of all, as a personal name or as an essential name. The *corpus* opens with the observation that a name is applied first to that which perfectly contains its whole signification before it is applied to that which only partially contains it. The latter, Aquinas adds, bears the name by reason of a kind of similitude to that which answers perfectly to the signification of the name. Thus, when it comes to the names “Father” and “Son,” the perfect idea of paternity and filiation is to be found in God the Father and in God the Son, for one is the nature and the glory of the Father and of the Son eternally begotten of the Father. “Father” and “Son” are, first of all, personal names in God.

For the rest of the *corpus* of *ST* I, q. 33, a. 3, Aquinas then shifts to the kinds of filiation which only partially contain the signification. Such filiation has to do with creatures, with those who are not one in nature with the Father (and the Father’s Son), but who in some respect can be termed “sons” of the “Father” (and have been so designated in Scripture). There is a certain likeness in each case which will be greater the nearer we approach to the true idea of filiation. In limning these “sons,” Aquinas proceeds in ascending order, starting with the likeness by reason only of a trace, through the likenesses by reason of image, then by grace, and, finally, by glory:

For God is called the Father of some creatures, by reason only of a trace, for instance of irrational creatures, according to Job 38:28: “Who is the father of the rain? or who begot the drops of dew?”⁹⁹ Of some, namely, the rational creature (He is the Father), by reason of the likeness of His image, according to Deuteronomy 32:6: “Is He not thy Father, who possessed, and made, and created thee?” And of others He is the Father by

⁹⁸ After the single question on the First Divine Person, Aquinas considers the Second Person. Individual questions are devoted to the “Word” and “Image” (*ST* I, qq. 34–35). “Son,” too, is a proper name of the Second Divine Person; it does not receive its own question because, as Aquinas puts it, what can be said of the Son can be gathered from q. 33 on the Father.

⁹⁹ The same verse is cited in *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, obj. 1.

similitude of grace, and these are also called adoptive sons, as ordained to the heritage of eternal glory by the gift of grace which they have received, according to Romans 8:16–17: “The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also.” Lastly, He is the Father of others by similitude of glory, forasmuch as they have obtained possession of the heritage of glory, according to Romans 5:2: “We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.”¹⁰⁰

The correspondence with *ST* III, q. 23, a. 3, corp., is, then, evident enough. The two passages proceed in the same order, dealing first with the creation in general, and then with the creature that is rational, and then settling on those rational creatures that are adopted to grace and glory. In this life, true filiation is most nearly approximated by those who are not one in nature with God by the similitude of grace, to be succeeded in the next life by that of glory.

Question 23 concludes its examination of adoption with an article on Christ. Is Christ an adopted son? By the time we get to the fourth article, the answer will be clear enough. As Aquinas puts it in the *corpus*, in Christ the person is the Son of God to whom it belongs by nature to be Son. Adoptive sonship is a participated likeness in natural Sonship. What is essentially so does not “participate” in. Thus, Christ as natural Son (made incarnate) cannot be termed an adoptive son. In sum, that cannot be said in a one-subject Christology where the subject is the Second Divine Person. But, Aquinas adds at the end of the *corpus*, it would be different in a two-subject Christology (such as that of Nestorius). In that, there would be a divine subject and a human subject; and that human subject might be said to be adopted, with all that entails. For Aquinas, however, a two-subject Christology cannot be held; as he puts it earlier in the treatise, that Christology is heretical, inadequate to the scriptural witness to Christ, long ago condemned by the Church meeting in council.¹⁰¹

But, does not the tradition think that Christ is, indeed, an adopted

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 33, a. 3, corp.

¹⁰¹ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 2, a. 6, corp.

son? Sayings of Hilary and Augustine are cited in the first two objections of *ST III*, q. 23, a. 4, seemingly insinuating Christ's adoptive sonship. The saying from Augustine (in obj. 2) is the more interesting, as he draws a parallel between the Christian and Christ: "By the same grace that man is Christ, as from the birth of faith a man is a Christian."¹⁰² But a man is a Christian by adoption; and so Christ too, someone might think, is an adopted son. In his response, Aquinas argues that the "same grace" has to do with the principle: Just as one becomes a Christian without meriting it (recall here God's initiative), so that man is Christ without meriting it (again, God's initiative). But, there is a difference, Aquinas adds, when it comes to the term. A man is an adopted son by habitual grace; Christ is the natural Son by the grace of union.¹⁰³ The grace of union is new to question 23 but has received some attention previously in the treatise on Christ.¹⁰⁴ It is not a habitual grace, and it is peculiar to Christ, the incarnate Son. In its proper sense, it is tied to hypostatic union, with the emphasis on the union as gratuitous in the sense of gift freely willed by God. God gratuitously wills the union of human nature to the divine in the person of the Son; that union is the gratuitous effect.¹⁰⁵ The grace of union in its proper sense will be prominent in the next question (*ST III*, q. 24), on the predestination of Christ himself.¹⁰⁶

ST III, q. 24, is devoted to the predestination of Christ himself. That Christ is predestinated is attested to by Scripture. As Paul states (Romans 1:4), Christ was "predestinated to be the Son of God in power."¹⁰⁷ The first two articles are concerned with articulating that predestination, which is

¹⁰² The quote is taken from Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 15.

¹⁰³ There is more to the answer in *ST III*, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2. I will turn to the rest of that answer, ascribing habitual grace to Christ, later in this section of the essay, when considering *ST III*, q. 24, a. 3.

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 6, a. 6, corp.; and q. 2, aa. 10, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 6, a. 6, corp.: "The grace of union is the personal being that is given gratis from above to the human nature in the Person of the Word, and is the term of the assumption."

¹⁰⁶ On rare occasion, Aquinas can refer to "grace of union" in a different, broader or looser sense—as another way of stating the personal grace of Christ, his habitual grace that follows on the union. See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 8, a. 5, ad 3. Later in this section of the essay, I will look at what Aquinas has to say about Christ's habitual grace, as distinguished from the "grace of union" in its proper sense.

¹⁰⁷ The opening phrase of Romans 1:4 is quoted in *ST III*, q. 24, a. 1, sc.

“singular,” as different in important ways from the predestination that is adoption. The singularity follows on the person of Christ: Christ is the natural Son, not an adopted son. As defined in the *corpus* of article 1, predestination is “a certain Divine preordination from eternity of those things which are to be done in time by the grace of God.” As a later article puts it,¹⁰⁸ in predestination there is antecedence and a gratuitous effect. In the predestination of Christ, the Incarnation itself is prominent, the act of incarnation in which human nature is taken up to the eternal Son of God, who expresses that nature, individuates it (without loss to itself as the fully divine Second Person). Grace is here involved—not habitual grace but the grace of union. The being human by incarnation is thus the gratuitous effect. And, the antecedence is God preordaining, in eternity, the Incarnation of the natural Son of God. The predestination that is adoption too conforms to the definition offered in this article. But, the grace there is habitual grace not the grace of union; and God’s preordination is that the elect are made sons of God, adopted sons, worthy of the inheritance of eternal life by that grace.

In the second article, Aquinas continues the discussion of this singular predestination by considering a statement: “Christ as human (*secundum quod homo*) was predestinated to be the Son of God.” Is this statement false? The use of statements to teach Christ is hardly peculiar to this article. *ST* III, q. 16, the first of the questions on the “consequences of union,” for example, considers a series of Christological statements, asking whether they are true or false. What is advanced there on Christological grammar is incorporated into the present investigation. If the *secundum quod homo* were taken materially, the statement would be false, as misconstruing the Incarnation. In that reading, it would mean that a man was predestinated to be Son of God, to become Son of God; that would be to confuse this predestination with that of adoption. But, in the reduplication, the concrete term *homo* is taken formally as of the nature, and so the statement is true. It is with regards to the human nature (taken up in the Incarnation) that the Son of God was predestinated to be Christ,

¹⁰⁸ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 2, corp.

Son of God in power. What about an adjacent statement, mentioned in ad 3 of this article? “Christ, as Son of God, is predestinated to be Son of Man.” Is that false? Predestination does involve persons, here the Second Divine Person, and so that statement too is true. But, Aquinas adds, the grace of union has to do with the nature assumed to the Son, not with the person of the Son, and so the main statement considered in this article—“Christ as human was predestinated to be the Son of God”—is preferable.¹⁰⁹

While the first two articles highlight the singularity of Christ’s predestination, the remaining two articles of question 24 return to an important theme in the preceding question: the connection between adopted sons and the natural Son, the connection between adoption as predestination and Christ’s own predestination. Is Christ’s predestination the “exemplar” of that of others (*exemplar nostrae praedestinationis*)?¹¹⁰ Is it the “cause” of that of others (*causa nostrae praedestinationis*)?¹¹¹ In both articles, Aquinas calls upon the distinction between act and term, between what is so antecedently (eternally) and what is the gratuitous effect in time. When it comes to the act, to God gratuitously predestining, the predestination of Christ is neither the exemplar nor the cause of that of others. In predestining, God does not look to the model of the predestination of Christ in predestining others; God is not caused to predestine others by the predestination of Christ. God’s predestining is a simple, eternal act (that has its effects, is realized, in time), and Christ and adopted sons are predestined by that one and the same act.

More can be said of exemplarity with regards to the act than Aquinas says in *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, and in fact should be said, given the repeated mention in this essay of creating and providing according to the Word, and the characterization, recently noted,¹¹² of the Word as the “exemplar similitude” of all created things, all created effects. For Aquinas, exemplarity does not entail the existence of exemplars, ideas, that are prior to

¹⁰⁹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 2, ad 3.

¹¹⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3.

¹¹¹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 4.

¹¹² Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, corp.

or apart from God.¹¹³ Rather, it is *God* who is the exemplar of all things, as Aquinas strikingly puts it.¹¹⁴ God eternally and perfectly knows God, knows the divine essence comprehensively, and knows thereby what is virtually contained in God—that is, all the ways in which what is not God might proceed from God, imitate God, and participate in God, all for the manifestation of the divine goodness outside of God. It is in this context that Aquinas speaks of ideas, identical with the divine essence (not apart or prior to it), as indicating the myriad ways in which creaturely effects might follow on, imitate, and proclaim God. Not all these ideas are actualized. What God wills into (temporal) existence in accordance with ideas can be said to be known by God with the knowledge of vision. What is not so willed into existence can be said to be known by the knowledge of simple intelligence.¹¹⁵ God’s knowing of God and the dependence on God for creatures proclaiming in specified ways the goodness of God can be and is also put in Trinitarian terms; there is no conflict with this talk of ideas as identical with the divine essence. The Father eternally speaks the Word, the perfect knowing of God, of God in Godself, including what is virtually contained in God. Thus, Aquinas can also say that all are made and provided for according to the Word, the “exemplar similitude,” of whatever exists outside of God.¹¹⁶ What holds of ideas imagined as not identical with the divine essence holds of the temporal effect (which, clearly, is not identical with the divine essence): such too does not, cannot, serve as exemplar. And so in *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, in light of what he does hold of divine, personal exemplarity, Aquinas states with plausibility what he does in response to the query announced in the article heading (“Is the predestination of Christ the exemplar of

¹¹³ That might be the worry of the first objection in *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3.

¹¹⁴ See Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 44, a. 3, corp.

¹¹⁵ For the two knowledges, see, e.g., Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 14, a. 9, corp.

¹¹⁶ In a Christological setting, Aquinas can put together talk of ideas, of the “reasons of things,” and of the Word. See the *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, chap. 42, which is a passage that stands in parallel with *ST* III, q. 3, a. 8, concerned too with the fittingness of the Word as the term of the assumption of human nature in the Incarnation. See the third reason for that fittingness offered in that chapter. I have used S. *Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Liber de veritate Catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium, qui dicitur Summa contra Gentiles*, ed. P. Marc with C. Pera and P. Caramello, 3 vols. (Turin: Marietti, 1961).

that of others?"): "On the part of the act of predestination . . . Christ's predestination cannot be said to be the exemplar of ours: for in the same way and by the same eternal act God predestinated us and Christ."¹¹⁷

There is, however, more to Aquinas's analysis in this article. He does not stop with the act. The Augustine quoted in the *sed contra* asserts exemplarity even in talk of predestination. "The Savior Himself, the Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus is the most splendid light of predestination and grace."¹¹⁸ As Aquinas states in the *sed contra*, it pertains to the nature of an exemplar to make something manifest, to cast light on that something. In the *corpus* of article 3, Aquinas explains the exemplarity of the predestination of Christ in the sense of making manifest by turning to what God brings about in time, the term and effect of predestination. The article in the *Prima Pars* on God as exemplar in fact sets the stage for this further claim of exemplarity in the sense that Aquinas will allow. At the very end of that *corpus*, having insisted on God as the first exemplar of all things, Aquinas concludes by adding, "In things created one may be called the exemplar of another by the reason of its likeness thereto, either in species, or by the analogy of some kind of imitation."¹¹⁹ And so, for Aquinas, in *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, corp., when it comes to the term and effect, Christ's predestination is the exemplar of that of others in two ways, having to do with the good to which there is predestination, and, the grace by which that good is obtained. With regards to the good, citing Romans 8:29 ("For those whom he foreknew he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"), Aquinas repeats that Christ was predestined to be the natural Son of God, whereas others are predestined to the adoption of sons, which is "a participated likeness of natural sonship." All of this, not least the "participated likeness" observation, is familiar enough from these questions. And second, with respect to the manner of obtaining this good: for both Christ and others, that is by grace. "This is most manifest in Christ; because human nature in Him, without any antecedent merits, was united to the Son of

¹¹⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, corp.

¹¹⁸ This is also taken from Augustine, *De predestinatione sanctorum* 15.

¹¹⁹ Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 44, a. 3, corp.

God: and of the fulness of His grace we all have received, as it is written (John 1:16).¹²⁰ That Christ is natural Son in power, and that others are adoptive sons, is gratuitous due to God's free decision in love; no merits precede, nor can merits precede, in either case.¹²¹ And it is by grace—the grace of union for Christ, habitual grace for others—by which the good is attained. The case for exemplarity has been made.

Yet, with the citing of John 1:16 more has in fact been delivered. In questions 23–24, it is important for Aquinas to play up habitual grace in describing adoption. That provides worthiness, dignity, to those lovingly adopted into sonship, making it possible for them to grow in their likeness to the Word and toward their eternal inheritance. Correspondingly, Aquinas has been playing up the grace of union when it comes to Christ. Habitual grace does not account for his dignity. He is natural Son, not adoptive son, and is natural Son by the grace of union. Yet, Aquinas is not, in these questions, thereby denying habitual grace to Christ. Gestures to Christ's habitual grace are restrained yet real. Christ's habitual grace is affirmed explicitly in *ST* III, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2. The second objection in article 4 thinks that Christ too must be an adopted son, quoting in this regard another saying of Augustine: "By the same grace that Man is Christ, as from the birth of faith every man is a Christian."¹²² In his response, Aquinas makes clear that Augustine had been misread in the objection. Employing the distinction, found too in *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3 (and *ST* III, q. 24, a. 4, as we will see), between principle (the act) and the term, Aquinas states that the Augustine is to be taken of the principle, not the term. In this regard, as Augustine teaches, what holds of the natural Son holds of the adopted son: "Just as it is granted to any man without meriting it to be Christian, so did it happen that this man without meriting it was Christ."¹²³ Turning to the term, the response continues with the typical (in these questions) contrasting of the grace of union

¹²⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, corp.

¹²¹ Recall the brief discussion of *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 1, where the "grace of predestination" is identified in 5n21, in the first section of this essay.

¹²² See Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 15.

¹²³ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2.

with the habitual grace so central to adoption, but then acknowledges that Christ too has habitual grace and indicates why. “Habitual grace in Christ does not make one who was not a son to be an adopted son, but is a certain effect of Filiation in the soul of Christ, according to John 1:14: ‘We saw His glory . . . as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth.’”¹²⁴ Christ too has habitual grace. *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, corp., is in its turn making that same claim by citing a different, yet related, John (1:16).¹²⁵

The story of the grace of Christ as told by Aquinas in the *Tertia Pars* is indeed rich, underscoring the importance of the Word’s assumed humanity. While not constitutive of his Sonship, this grace, understood as at once personal and capital, is pertinent to Christ’s salvific mission. Much earlier in the treatise on Christ, Aquinas engages in a concerted study of Christ’s grace. In *ST* III, q. 7, he reflects on Christ’s personal grace (along with what is infused with that grace—the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that perfect the graced in their operations).¹²⁶ In the next question,¹²⁷ he comments on capital grace, by which Christ is Head of the Church, understood as the Pauline mystical body; this is the same grace, distinguished only by reason, as his personal grace.¹²⁸ Aquinas is

¹²⁴ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 23, a. 4, ad 2.

¹²⁵ Consulting Aquinas’s *Commentary on John* is worthwhile. In the unpacking of “full of grace and truth,” “from his fullness we have all received,” Aquinas makes clear that “grace,” as affirmed by John, is of wide extent, covering the grace of union, Christ’s personal grace, and, capital grace. Christ has these graces to their fullest. As for the “truth,” this covers, Aquinas says, all truth, human and divine, which Christ knew from the moment of his conception. See *Super Ioan.* 1, lec. 8 (Marietti, nos. 188–90). I have accessed the Marietti edition at <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Ioan>.

¹²⁶ For a discussion of *ST* III, q. 7, see my “Jesus in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas,” *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2012): 13–33. Along with the grace that is *gratum faciens*, Aquinas also discusses in q. 7 the “gratuitous graces” (*gratiae gratis datae*), first in general (a. 7), and then the *gratia gratis data* of prophecy in particular (a. 8). I leave the gratuitous graces to the side in this essay. “Christ as prophet” is discussed at some length by Michael Hahn in “Thomas Aquinas’s Presentation of Christ as Teacher,” *The Thomist* 83, no. 1 (2019): 57–89.

¹²⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 8.

¹²⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 8, a. 5. Interest in capital grace among scholastic theologians reached its peak in the thirteenth century. For an astute study, see Matthew J. Messer, “Capital Grace in the Thirteenth Century: Christ’s Mediation of Grace in Aquinas and His Contemporaries” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2023).

vigorous in his depiction of this grace in questions 7 and 8. Christ has grace;¹²⁹ he has grace to its fullness;¹³⁰ and, indeed, his grace can even be said to be infinite, on the basis of John 3:34 (where he is said to be given the Spirit without measure).¹³¹ By this grace, Christ is fully just,¹³² fully holy,¹³³ having grace for all the operations and effects of grace;¹³⁴ and from his fullness others receive. In this teaching on Christ's grace, Aquinas's distinctive teaching on the humanity of Christ is prominent. The humanity of Christ stands to the divinity as a proper, conjoined, and animate instrument.¹³⁵ "Proper" because the taken-up humanity is the Word's; "conjoined," as joined to the divine nature in the person of the Word; and, "animate," as thus capacitated for human sorts of things (of undergoing, willing, doing). Habitual grace and infused virtues and the habits that are the gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect this human: grace perfecting the soul in its essence, the virtues and gifts, the powers of soul.¹³⁶ And the graced undergoing, willing, and doing of the Word as

¹²⁹ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 7, a. 1.

¹³⁰ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 7, a. 9.

¹³¹ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 7, a. 11. In *ST III*, q. 7, a. 11, ad 1, Aquinas gives a multilayered exposition of John 3:34.

¹³² Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 7, a. 9, ad 2.

¹³³ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 6, a. 6, corp.

¹³⁴ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 7, a. 9, corp.

¹³⁵ For the humanity of Christ as proper, conjoined, animate instrument, see, e.g., Aquinas, *SCG IV*, chap. 41. For some instances in the *Summa theologiae* of the description of the humanity of Christ as instrument of the divinity, pertinent in the (efficient) causing of grace, salvation, see, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 112, a. 1, ad 1; *ST III*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 3; *ST III*, q. 7, a. 7, ad 1; *ST III*, q. 8, a. 6, corp.; and *ST III*, q. 19, a. 1. The scholarly literature is vast. For some examples, see Theophil Tschipke, *L'humanité du Christ comme instrument de salut de la humanité*, trans. Philibert Secrétan (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003); Corey L. Barnes, *Christ's Two Wills in Scholastic Thought: The Christology of Aquinas and Its Historical Contexts* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012), chap. 5; Austin Dominic Litke, "Christological Ressourcement: The Development of St. Thomas's Doctrine of Instrumentality," *Angelicum* 91 (2014): 149–65; J. David Moser, "The Flesh of the Logos, *Instrumentum divinitatis*: Retrieving an Ancient Christological Doctrine," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 23 (2021): 313–32; and J. David Moser's book, *The Humanity of Christ as Instrument of Salvation: A Study in Thomistic Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025). Aquinas's position on the status of Christ's humanity in the conveying of grace underwent development. In the *Scriptum*, he leaves the causing of grace to God; Christ's humanity in its acts is but dispositive and meritorious of grace. The teaching reported in the text is in place by the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

¹³⁶ See 16n67 for select texts.

incarnate, as human, is instrumentally efficient. Aquinas is keenly aware that God is the source of grace and salvation, that God alone can “cause” grace.¹³⁷ Yet, the graced humanity in its passion and action is efficient too. Aquinas summarizes that part of the teaching in striking fashion: God causes grace authoritatively, and by the graced humanity causes grace, confers salvation, instrumentally, by the humanity as efficient instrumental cause.¹³⁸ And so full force is given to the Johannine proclamation: The Word was made flesh (1:14); the Word incarnate as human is full of grace and truth (1:14); and from his grace all have received (1:16), for God—the cause of grace—causes grace and grants grace to others through this graced human.¹³⁹

The final article of *ST* III, q. 24, asks about Christ as cause: Is Christ’s predestination the cause of that of others? With regard to the basic move, the resemblance to the third article of this question is strong. To present the teaching, Aquinas again distinguishes between the act of predestination and the term and effect of predestination. Christ’s predestination is not the cause of that of others with regards to the act: Christ and others are predestinated by the same eternal act of God; predestination is due to the simple will of God (the same point made in the previous article, on exemplarity).¹⁴⁰ When Scripture proclaims that God has “predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5, quoted in the *sed contra*), that has to do with the term, to what God has preordained in eternity and carries out in time. Aquinas teases this out in the *corpus*. Eternal predestination, he states there, covers not only what is to be accomplished in time but also the mode and order in which it is to be accomplished; and God, by predestinating from eternity, so preordained our salvation that it should be achieved through Jesus Christ.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 1.

¹³⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1.

¹³⁹ Aquinas supports his teaching on Christ’s grace in *ST* III, qq. 7–8, with a full range of scriptural citations. The verses from the opening chapter of the Gospel of John enjoy a special (but not exclusive) prominence, cited in no less than three articles in q. 7 (a. 9, sc; a. 10, sc; and a. 12, sc) and in no less than two articles in q. 8 (a. 1, corp. [bis]; and a. 5, sc).

¹⁴⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 19, a. 5, provides some further background for this teaching.

¹⁴¹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 24, a. 4, corp.

Thus, Christ's predestination "causes" that of others according to God's plan, in accordance with God's will.

The response to the third objection in article 4 confirms that teaching in an interesting way. The third objection observes that if a cause is removed, so too is its effect. But, if we take away Christ's predestination, the objection continues, that of others is not taken away; since even if the Son of God were not incarnate, salvation might yet have been achieved in a different manner, as Augustine observes.¹⁴² In the response to the objection, Aquinas does not quibble with Augustine's observation; he in fact agrees. Indeed, if Christ (that is, the Word) had not become incarnate, God would have preordained human salvation by other means. But, Aquinas adds, since God did preordain the Incarnation, God at the same time preordained that Christ should be the cause of the salvation of others.¹⁴³ Predestined in Christ, all come to their end through Christ, who causes grace and brings salvation, authoritatively and instrumentally.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² See Augustine, *De trinitate* 13. For what it is worth, the same Augustine is quoted in *ST III*, q. 1, a. 2, corp., to set up the discussion of the fittingness of the Incarnation, on soteriological grounds, in the actual dispensation.

¹⁴³ Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 24, a. 4, ad 3.

¹⁴⁴ In *ST III*, q. 24, a. 1, Aquinas makes much of the opening phrase of Romans 1:4. That entire verse reads, "Who was predestined the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead." Aquinas leaves the second and third phrases of the verse unremarked in q. 24. However, judging from his *Commentary on Romans*, he could easily have brought the rest of the verse into the account, especially in the teaching of the fourth article of the question. See Thomas Aquinas, *Super Rom.* 1, lec. 3 (Marietti, no. 58). I have used the Marietti edition accessible at <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Rom>, with an English translation by F. Larcher on the facing page. Of "according to the Spirit of sanctification," Aquinas thinks two interpretations are possible, and he does not choose one over the other. The first, having to do with the sanctifying Spirit, would be especially pertinent in q. 24. It belongs, Aquinas observes, to divine power to sanctify people through conferring the Holy Spirit. Christ has divine power because he gives the Holy Spirit (see John 15:26); it is in his name that we are sanctified (see 1 Corinthians 6:11, which too mentions the Holy Spirit). Thus, Aquinas continues, Paul in the present verse "says therefore that Christ is the 'Son of God in power' and appears 'according to the Spirit of sanctification,' i.e., inasmuch as he gives the sanctifying Spirit. This sanctification began 'by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead': 'for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:39). However, this does not mean that no one had received the sanctifying Spirit before Christ's resurrection, but that from the time he arose a more copious and general Spirit of sanctification began to be given." (As for the second possible interpretation, that would take the second and third phrases of Romans 1:4 as signs of "in power": the second phrase referring to Christ's conception in the Virgin's womb by the Holy Spirit, and the third to the raising of the dead.)

Incarnation and grace are linked. The Word incarnate has grace, and to its fullest. That grace can be said to follow on the Incarnation. But why? In the years after Aquinas, there was a lively scholastic debate about that connection, typically framed in terms of the question: Need the incarnate Son be graced, or is/was a graceless incarnate Son possible? In the same vein, need the incarnate Son enjoy the beatific vision? Is it a “metaphysical” necessity that the incarnate Son have grace, glory, simply by virtue of the Incarnation? Thus, apparently, Henry of Ghent. Or is the necessity of a different kind, one that might be termed “soteriological”? Thus, apparently, such as Giles of Rome and Duns Scotus, who could imagine an incarnate person without grace if God so willed (although that was not in fact the case), whose work-without-grace could be accepted by God as salvifically significant, if God so willed. In questions 7 and 8, Aquinas brings forward several reasons for the link between the Incarnation and the grace of Christ; and their range and tenor make it somewhat difficult to characterize simply where Aquinas would stand in that debate. Some of these reasons point to what Christ does, salvifically, and what he offers to others. In effect, he “needs” grace to be just and holy, to be the source of others’ grace, to be Head of the Church, and to do his mediatorial work.¹⁴⁵ There is a soteriological fittingness that he have grace.

Yet, some of the reasons brought forward by Aquinas do, at least at first glance, seem to involve a hard necessity, as if grace must follow, inevitably follow, on the Incarnation. Thus, in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, corp., Aquinas refers to the proximity of the assumed human nature to the source of grace: What is closer to the source receives more from the source, and so Christ has grace, indeed, grace to its fullest. The “proximity” reason is repeated

¹⁴⁵ For the notion that he as human needs grace to act rightly, see Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13, corp. (the third reason), and *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, corp. (the second reason); for his need to be graced to be the source of others’ grace, see *ST* III, q. 7, a. 9, corp. (the second reason), *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, corp., and *ST* III, q. 7, a. 11, corp.; for his grace as the Head who bestows grace on all the Church, see *ST* III, q. 8, a. 1, corp. (the third reason); for his having grace as Mediator that might overflow to others, see *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, corp. (the third reason). Several articles cite John 1:14, which refers to the Word incarnate as the “only-begotten Son from the Father,” “full of grace and truth.” See *ST* III, q. 7, a. 9, sc; a. 10, sc; a. 12, sc; and *ST* III, q. 8, a. 1, corp. (the second reason). The citation of John reinforces the main points made in those articles: that he is full of grace; that he has this fullness in a distinct way; that his grace is not subject to growth; and that he is Head of the Church.

in several articles in questions 7 and 8,¹⁴⁶ including in the final article of question 7¹⁴⁷ on the express topic of whether habitual grace follows on the union.¹⁴⁸

Another reason advanced in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13, corp., having to do with the missions, might also suggest a hard necessity, especially when that reason is connected to the teaching on the missions in the *Prima Pars*. The principle of the union is the Son of God assuming human nature, the Son who is sent into the world to assume human nature and to whom the human nature is joined as its term (recall *ST* III, q. 3). The principle of habitual grace, which is given with charity, is the Holy Spirit, who is said to be sent inasmuch as he dwells in the mind by charity. There is an order to the principles of both union and habitual grace, which mirrors the eternal processions: “The mission of the Son is prior, in the order of nature, to the mission of the Holy Spirit, even as in the order of nature the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, and love from wisdom.”¹⁴⁹ Thus, the order will be union and “then” habitual grace. In the discussion of the missions in *ST* I, q. 43, Aquinas makes an additional observation that the missions are inextricably linked, such that where there is the one, so too will there be the other.¹⁵⁰ And so, it would appear, the order between

¹⁴⁶ In addition to the two articles mentioned in the text, see *ST* III, q. 7, a. 9, corp. (the first reason); *ST* III, q. 7, a. 12, corp.; and *ST* III, q. 8, a. 1, corp. (the first reason). This last instance is worth quoting: “On account of His nearness to God His grace is the highest and first, though not in time, since all have received grace on account of His grace, according to Romans 8:29: ‘For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren.’” The passage is doubly interesting. Aquinas links the proximity to God with the giving of grace to others from his own grace; and, it is Romans 8:29, a verse that is prominent in Aquinas’s teaching of Christ’s predestination and its relation to that of others, that is cited in support of this claim.

¹⁴⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13, corp.

¹⁴⁸ It should be observed that when this reason is introduced in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, corp., Aquinas says it is necessary (*necesse*) that the incarnate Son be graced. However, after sketching the argument there, he refers to that reason as most fitting (*maxime conveniens*). As a reminder, in *ST* III, q. 1, a. 2, corp., he offers two meanings of “necessary,” one of which is as synonymous with fitting. It may well be that in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, corp., the mention of necessity is to be taken in that sense.

¹⁴⁹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13, corp.

¹⁵⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 3, seems to be pertinent here:

Since mission implies the origin of the person Who is sent, and His indwelling by grace . . . if we speak of mission according to origin, in this sense the Son’s mission is

the union of the natures in the person of the Word and habitual grace is necessary; habitual grace will necessarily follow on the union.¹⁵¹

All these ways of presenting the link between the Incarnation and Christ's own grace are, to be sure, insightful, helpful, and worthy of reflection. But, they, and their "necessity," must in the end be assessed in the light of *ST* III, q. 24, a. 4. What that article makes clear is the ultimate ground for the grace of the incarnate Son, the foundational reason for the link between the Incarnation and Christ's own grace. What matters at bottom is God's voluntary and wise plan, what God has in fact preordained in eternity and carries out in time: the predestination of Christ, as natural Son in power, to bring grace and salvation through what the incarnate Son, as graced in his humanity, undergoes and wills and does for others—for those who are joined to Christ as to their Head.¹⁵²

Given Aquinas's attentiveness in questions 23 and 24 to the bond between Christ and others, not least in the final two articles of question 24, it seems appropriate to end this section with a return to questions 7 and 8 and what is said there of predestination. In the relatively few passages in those earlier questions that mention predestination, there is a pronounced concern with Church, with the mystical body, understood to be a multitude ordained to a common end: the vision of God.¹⁵³ The

distinguished from the mission of the Holy Spirit, as generation is distinguished from procession. If we consider mission as regards the effect of grace, in this sense the two missions are united in the root which is grace, but are distinguished in the effects of grace, which consist in the illumination of the intellect and the kindling of the affection. Thus it is manifest that one mission cannot be without the other, because neither takes place without sanctifying grace, nor is one person separated from the other.

¹⁵¹ Dominic Legge draws our attention to the significance of *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13, for considering the link between the Incarnation and Christ's grace in his *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), at 145–53. For a brief assessment of Legge's reading, see Simon Francis Gaine, "Must an Incarnate Divine Person Enjoy the Beatific Vision?," in *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer, and Roger Nutt (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2021), 126–38, at 134–35.

¹⁵² Where exactly Aquinas would land in the subsequent debate seems somewhat uncertain. Much would depend on the understanding of grace itself and the character of the "need" for grace according to the different participants; the commitment to Christ's capital grace; the ways in which the wisdom of God's plan is unpacked by them; and, the import, if any, of Aquinas's distinctive take on the humanity of Christ as proper, conjoined, and animate instrument of the divinity.

¹⁵³ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 8, a. 4, corp. The exact definition of "body" in this article is "a multitude

Head of this body is Christ. In *ST* III, q. 8, a. 3, Aquinas is asking about the members of the mystical body. Who constitutes the Church; of whom is Christ the Head? The mystical body is not restricted to any particular locale; and it is of broad historical sweep, running from the beginning of the world to its end. Aquinas suggests that human beings are either actual members of the body, or potentially so. “Actual members” covers comprehensors (those presently enjoying the beatific vision) and the faithful, a group itself consisting of the justified—those who have formed faith (faith informed by charity)—and of those who have unformed faith (that is, lacking the charity needed for justification).¹⁵⁴ As for those who are potentially members of the Church, again there are two subsets. The potential in both subsets is provided by the power of Christ’s work and by free will.¹⁵⁵ It is predestination that accounts for the distinction between those in potential. There are those who are potentially members of the body who are predestined to eternal life, and so to coming to formed faith in the present life to qualify and prepare for attaining eternal life. Their potentiality will be actualized, in accordance with predestination. But, there are others in potential who are not predestined, and so their membership in the body will not be actualized; and so, Aquinas adds, at the end of their earthly life, their potential membership in the body will end and Christ will not be their Head even in that sense.¹⁵⁶

ordained to one end, with distinct acts and duties.”

¹⁵⁴ For unformed faith, see Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 4, a. 4; and *ST* II-II, q. 6, a. 2. For formed faith, see *ST* II-II, q. 4, a. 3.

¹⁵⁵ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁵⁶ As an observation, the discussion of predestination in this passage, important as it is, could have been extended to deal explicitly with what are here termed the actual members of the body: the comprehensors and the faithful. The comprehensors can safely be listed among the predestined; for Aquinas, only those predestined to eternal life attain that end, with the aid in this life of the grace and charity needed to prepare for the inheritance. As for the faithful, having faith, whether formed or unformed, at any given time does not mean that one has been predestined to eternal life. On the basis of the much earlier discussion of the “book of life” in the *Prima Pars* (see *ST* I, q. 24, a. 3), it is possible for God to choose someone for grace (and so moving someone to formed faith) without having predestined that one to eternal life. Having grace and charity now does not guarantee that one will end one’s earthly journey in grace; mortal sin might well remove the charity, disrupt the journey (and will, in the case of those not predestined to eternal life but chosen only to grace). See the discussion of the grace of perseverance, given to those predestined to eternal life, in the final articles of *ST* I-II, q. 109. So too those who have unformed faith: There is no guarantee that they are among

Predestination also figures in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10: Christ is full of grace.¹⁵⁷ Is that fullness of grace proper to Christ?¹⁵⁸ At first glance, no. Scripture can talk of others as full of grace: Mary and Stephen (the first martyr) are so described.¹⁵⁹ So too do comprehensors enjoy a fullness in the beatific vision (which assuredly is a “grace,” a great grace).¹⁶⁰ Mary, Stephen, the comprehensors—all, to state the obvious (for Aquinas), members of Christ from whom, as from their Head, they have received their grace, their full grace.¹⁶¹ There is, nonetheless, a difference between Christ and others when it comes to fullness of grace. The *corpus* explains that “fullness of grace” can be taken in two ways: on the part of grace itself, or on the part of the one who has grace. On the part of grace itself there is said to be the fullness of grace when the limit of grace is attained—as to essence and power—inasmuch as grace is possessed in its highest possible excellence and in its greatest possible extension to all its effects. This fullness of grace is proper to Christ. No one else has this fullness; only Christ is the only-begotten of the Father.¹⁶² On the part of the subject there is said to be the fullness of grace when anyone fully possesses grace according to his condition, whether according to its intensity or according to its power—when a human has the help of grace for all that belongs to his office or state. This fullness of grace is not proper to Christ but is had by others through Christ. “Fullness of grace” in this second way can thus be said to be relative, tailored to the individual. Christ has the fullness of grace that matches his status and purpose (i.e., as Head, Savior, and Mediator between God and humans); others have the fullness of grace that is apt to their condition.¹⁶³

the elect, that they are ordained to eternal life and so will, eventually, receive the grace and charity, transforming unformed into formed faith, which qualifies one for eternal life.

¹⁵⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 9.

¹⁵⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10.

¹⁵⁹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, obj. 1.

¹⁶⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, obj. 2.

¹⁶¹ See Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, corp.

¹⁶² John 1:14, quoted in Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, sc.

¹⁶³ This teaching is found much earlier in the *Summa*, in the discussion of merit in the *Prima Secundae*. Two articles in *ST* I-II, q. 114, are relevant. In a. 3, Aquinas explains why the morally good act of a person in grace is meritorious of eternal life not only congruently (as

The responses to the objections unpack the “fullness of grace” on the part of the subject, tying grace to predestination, election, and preordination. The language of *ST* III, q. 24, a. 4, resonates here; God’s plan, preordination, explains the fullness, the range of fullness. Thus, in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, ad 1, Mary is said to have the fullness of grace inasmuch as she had sufficient grace for the state to which God had chosen (*electa*) her.¹⁶⁴ So too Stephen had sufficient grace to be a fit minister and witness to God, to which office he had been called (*electus*). And, Aquinas continues in ad 1, the same must be said of others. One fullness will be

the act of the person) but also condignly. The condignity is due to the grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of Holy Spirit. See *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 3, corp.:

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

See too *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 3, ad 3: “The grace of the Holy Spirit which we have at present, although unequal to glory in act, is equal to it virtually as the seed of a tree, wherein the whole tree is virtually. So likewise by grace, the Holy Spirit dwells in man; and He is a sufficient cause of life everlasting; hence, 2 Corinthians 1:22, He is called the ‘pledge’ of our inheritance.”

A few articles later (a. 6), Aquinas asks about meriting for another: Can someone merit grace for another? Can someone merit grace for another both congruently and condignly? For all (with one exception) the answer is that meriting for another is restricted to congruent merit (and that only if the acting of the one is in conformity with the will of God for the other and the other poses no impediment to grace). The exception is Christ, who can and does merit grace condignly for others. As Aquinas puts it in the *corpus*:

Our works are meritorious from two causes: first, by virtue of the Divine motion; and thus we merit condignly; secondly, according as they proceed from free-will in so far as we do them willingly, and thus they have congruous merit, since it is congruous that when a man makes good use of his power God should by His super-excellent power work still higher things. And therefore it is clear that no one can merit condignly for another his first grace, save Christ alone; since each one of us is moved by God to reach life everlasting through the gift of grace; hence condign merit does not reach beyond this motion. But Christ’s soul is moved by God through grace, not only so as to reach the glory of life everlasting, but so as to lead others to it, inasmuch as He is the Head of the Church, and the Author of human salvation, according to Hebrews 2:10: “Who hath brought many children into glory [to perfect] the Author of their salvation.”

¹⁶⁴ See too *ST* III, q. 2, a. 11, ad 3, for a further comment about the grace that was given Mary, by which she merited that grade of purity and holiness that was congruous with her role as Mother of God.

greater than another, according as one is preordained (*praeordinatus*) to a higher or lower state.¹⁶⁵

Ad 2 and ad 3 continue in the same vein, turning to the “saints” (*sancti*), which, judging from the contents of the two responses, refers to those who have been predestined to eternal life and who reach that end with the aid of grace. When compared, what holds of Mary and Stephen holds too for the “saints”: There is a range among the saints with regards to fullness, a range that is appropriate to different subjects, individuals. In both ad 2 and ad 3, Aquinas finds useful a distinction between what is common and what is special. What is common is held by all saints, in this life and in the next. Thus, all saints have grace enough to merit eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of God.¹⁶⁶ And, all saints in heaven have in common the same gifts: “vision, possession, fruition and the like.”¹⁶⁷ As for what is special, that concerns the special preeminence of some;¹⁶⁸ there are certain prerogatives, gifts, of the saints, both in heaven and on earth, that are not possessed by all,¹⁶⁹ which account for their preeminence.¹⁷⁰ Here, it is hard not to think of what Aquinas teaches about God’s causal love and God loving the better more (discussed early in this essay). God wills more good to some. That holds even among the saints; God wills more supernatural good to some saints than to others. And, to invoke a passage from much earlier in the *Summa*, the diversity in fullness among those who constitute the body of Christ, the graced faithful and beatified alike, itself speaks to the

¹⁶⁵ *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, ad 2, also can refer to someone as “preordained,” doing so twice in the unfolding of its analysis.

¹⁶⁶ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, ad 2.

¹⁶⁷ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, ad 3.

¹⁶⁸ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, ad 2.

¹⁶⁹ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 7, a. 10, ad 3.

¹⁷⁰ It might be helpful here to recall *ST* I, q. 12, a. 6, which asks whether someone will see God in heaven more than will another of the blessed—that is, have a fuller, more intense, beatific knowing. The answer is yes; for one will receive a greater light of glory needed to see God. Aquinas also notes that one will receive a greater light of glory in heaven because one will have loved more in this life. To what Aquinas says there, it can be added that one will have loved more, because one will have received greater grace, greater charity, making possible that greater loving.

beauty and perfection of the Church (*pulchritudo et perfectio Ecclesiae*) as intended by God.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 112. a. 4, corp.:

The first cause of this diversity is to be sought on the part of the God Who dispenses His gifts of grace variously, in order that the beauty and perfection of the Church may result from these various degrees; even as He instituted the various conditions of things, that the universe might be perfect. Hence after the Apostle had said (Ephesians 4:7): "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ," having enumerated the various graces, he adds (Ephesians 4:12): "For the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ."

In his *Le Christ et l'Église: théologie du mystère* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2005; first published in 1963), Marie-Joseph Le Guillou displays a lively interest in wisdom. Drawing on the *Tertia Pars*, the Pauline commentaries, and select other writings, Le Guillou strives to limn God's saving plan in Christ according to Aquinas, rightly highlighting Aquinas's concern for the wisdom of what God plans and accomplishes in Christ, as revealed in Scripture. While there is much that is appealing in this book, the presentation nonetheless in the end falls appreciably short of Aquinas's own teaching. For whatever reason, Le Guillou basically ignores predestination, whether that of Christ or of those who belong to Christ as to their Head, as discussed in this essay, thus missing what is at the heart of this wisdom Christology (and ecclesiology). What few mentions of "predestination" that there are in the book (e.g., 39, 81, 159, 218, 227) treat "predestination" as simply synonymous with "design" and "plan." God plans in advance (in eternity), "predestines" in that sense, the dispensation of salvation, and that plan is revealed in time, carried out in Christ and the Church, to be accepted in faith and love.

There is an oddity in the book that might be tied to this neglect of predestination in causal terms in rendering Aquinas, whether the incarnation of the Word or the adoption of those who are Christ's. Prior to the lengthy discussion of Aquinas on wisdom and mystery, Le Guillou reviews wisdom and mystery as in Scripture and in numerous of the Fathers, including St. Augustine. Augustine in this litany conforms to the general consensus, about God's wisdom, and about the Word as Wisdom and Christ as Wisdom, and about the manifestation of this wisdom, and the Church as the continuation of Christ's work of manifestation and restoration. (Aquinas, in turn, too shares in this consensus.) But, Augustine's own interest in predestination in causal terms has been bracketed, as it is for Aquinas. Augustine's concern with predestination, of Christ and of those who make up Church, is not, however, incidental; it is indeed crucial by the late writings, which exercised considerable influence on Aquinas. To return to a text that has been mentioned more than a few times in this essay, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 15 is emblematic of what Augustine thinks about wisdom and mystery, and that text undergirds *ST III*, qq. 23–24, on Christ's predestination and the link between his predestination and that of those who constitute Church. The continuity of Aquinas with Augustine is real and deep. Actually, although *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 15 seems to make an explicit appearance only once in those earlier questions (and then only with regards to a point that will be made at length in qq. 23–24; see *ST III*, q. 7, a. 13, obj. 1, ad 1), Aquinas is probably thinking of Augustine as well in qq. 7 and 8, on Christ's personal and capital grace, and could easily have cited that text. Along with Romans 1:4 (quoted here in full), Augustine echoes in chap. 15 the Johannine sequence (John 1:14, 16), referring to what Aquinas terms Christ's personal and capital grace. Thus, Augustine notes the "admirable gifts" granted to this man through the Holy Spirit—for example, that he never was with sin, and, was preserved from sin through the Spirit of holiness (the grace of perseverance,

Postscript: Christ's Knowledge of Predestination

What did Christ know about predestination, of his own and that of others?

Aquinas does not raise the question in *ST* III, q. 24. But, it comes up elsewhere in the Thomistic corpus, including elsewhere in the *Tertia Pars*. What Aquinas has to say is interesting and ultimately innovative, and it comports well with the rest of the teaching on the predestination of Christ and of others and the wisdom of that.

In the relatively early disputed question *De veritate*, in the treatment of predestination (in q. 6), Aquinas asks about certainty in a succession of articles: Is predestination certain (a. 3)? Is the number of the predestined certain (a. 4)? And, can one know with certainty that one is predestined (a. 5)?¹⁷² The reply in article 5 is intriguing. It opens with an affirmation: Yes, some can know that they are predestined, and would know this by revelation, which here should be taken for a personal or particular revelation—manifestation—to such people by God who predestines. Aquinas has no interest in the present passage in explaining why the predestined are dependent on such revelation and are not able to figure out by their own reason that they are among the elect. That is left unsaid here, and for that we would have to look at the explanation offered in the other passages examined in this postscript. Rather, Aquinas is intent on stressing that such revelation would be exceptional, and that it would be inconsistent, for two reasons, with God's general law if God revealed to all the predestined that they are predestined. Aquinas then spends the remainder of the reply spelling out those two reasons. That firm knowledge of being predestined would be exceptional—that most do not know whether they are predestined—is a wise arrangement by God (*a divina providentia salubriter est ordinatum*). If all the predestined were certain

then, as adapted to this sinless human) without detriment to free will. This man is so "good and great," Augustine stresses, by the grace of God. And, Augustine continues, he has been predestined to be Head and others to be his members; and, grace is passed on by the "fount of grace," the Spirit—to each of Christ's members, according to the measure of each. In sum, whatever good that they have is due also to the grace of the Holy Spirit (in accordance with their predestination).

¹⁷² The Leonine edition of *De veritate*, with the English translation on the facing page, by R. Mulligan et al., has been accessed at <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~QDeVer>.

of their predestination, those who have not been predestined would know that they were not because they would lack that personal revelation of predestination; and that would be conducive to their despair. As for the predestined, knowing that they are among the elect would provide a security that might well lead to negligence, a failure to avoid evil (and pursue the good). Aquinas, incidentally, does not name names here of those to whom God has revealed their election. This basic teaching about knowing one's predestination—that the knowing that one is predestined is exceptional and due to a personal revelation—will, it seems safe to say, be retained by Aquinas for the rest of his career.¹⁷³

Article 4 in *De veritate*, question 20, warrants mention here. Christ enjoyed the beatific vision throughout his earthly sojourn.¹⁷⁴ Beatific vision is to know “in the Word.” How then does knowing “in the Word” compare with what the Word knows? Does the beatified Christ know all that the Word knows? The simple answer is no. God's knowledge of God is “comprehensive.” It involves the knowing of the divine essence and all that is “contained” virtually in God, all the ways in which the divine essence is susceptible to imitation, participation in, or (as Aquinas puts it here) how creatures might proceed from and return to God, whether in the order of nature or in the order of grace. God's power is infinite. God knows what God has willed, has brought about, is bringing about, or will

¹⁷³ In the discussion of predestination in the *Prima Pars*, Aquinas examines in successive articles the certainty of predestination itself and of its number (both formal and material); but there is no article in *ST I*, q. 23, that corresponds to *De veritate* q. 6, a. 5. Rather, he slips in the point about a making known of one's predestination as exceptional and for good reason in the first article on predestination in the *Summa*. See *ST I*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 4: “Even if by a special privilege their predestination were revealed to some, it is not fitting that it should be revealed to everyone; because, if so, those who were not predestined would despair; and security would beget negligence in the predestined.” See too the cognate discussion in *ST I-II*, q. 112, a. 5, about the knowledge of having grace, of being in grace. The analysis parallels that of knowledge of predestination in *De veritate*. Apart from a personal revelation, a person will not know for sure that he is in grace. There can be conjecture about that, arguing from signs to the purported presence of grace; but conjecture is just that. There would be firm knowledge only if one could know in itself the principle of an effect; and one does not, cannot, by one's natural resources know God in Godself, the principle of the effect that is grace, or what God so wills.

¹⁷⁴ To be clear, this has to do with a human beatific vision; in the case of Christ this is in addition to the beatifying knowing of God that the Word, who becomes incarnate, has as God.

bring about. God also knows what God could bring about but does not.¹⁷⁵ In contrast, the beatific knowledge of no human is comprehensive in this sense. That holds for the beatified Christ too. The beatified Christ does not know the infinite range of the divine power. His beatific knowledge is restricted, when it comes to procession and return, to what God in fact wills, has brought about, or will bring about in the order of nature and in the order of grace.

Yet, even as restricted, what the soul of Christ knows “in the Word” is nonetheless impressive and marks his preeminence compared to any other human who is blessed. “The soul of Christ knows all creatures not only according to their natural properties . . . but even in so far as they are subject to divine providence and are ordered to the end of human salvation and the gifts of grace. Therefore, He knows all individual things and every single act of all things, even the secret thoughts of men’s hearts. This can be said of no other creature.”¹⁷⁶ The “ordering to the end of human salvation and the gifts of grace” is familiar enough, in line with Aquinas’s overall teaching about predestination and wisdom. The other claim—about his knowledge through the beatific vision (enjoyed from the moment of his conception) reaching to the secret thoughts of men’s hearts—is new (to this essay); and eventually, in the *Summa*, that penetrating knowledge will be explicitly linked to Christ’s work as Judge, performed as Head of the Church.

There is an advance in the next passage to be considered, from the disputed question *De potentia*, composed 1265–1266 (and so prior to the *Prima Pars*).¹⁷⁷ *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 6, asks whether anyone can know when the heavens will cease in their movement, which seems to be tantamount to the end of the world.¹⁷⁸ The putting into motion and

¹⁷⁵ Recall the mention in the second section of the essay about knowledge of simple intelligence and the knowledge of vision.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 20, a. 4, corp.

¹⁷⁷ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, 3rd ed., trans. Matthew K. Miner and Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2023), 392.

¹⁷⁸ There is mention of the *finis mundi* in *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 6, obj. 9–10, and in the *respondeo* (which is discussed in the following text). For the Latin, I have used the Marietti edition,

withdrawing of motion is due to God, to the willing of God. And so, God of course knows when the motion of the heavens will cease. But, humans cannot of themselves know when the movement will end. That is not predictable on the basis, say, of observation of the natural world. Such knowledge simply exceeds human capacity. If the time of the end of the world is known by any human, that will be because of a revelation (*per revelationem*), a making manifest of that truth, to that human. And, that has in fact occurred, but in only a single case. The time of the ceasing of the heavenly motions, he states here, is known by God and “by the man Christ” (*ab homine Christo*).

While God could reveal the time of the ceasing of the movement of the heavens to more humans—indeed, even to all—it is not fitting (*congruum*) that it should be revealed except to the man Christ (*nisi homini Christo*), and this for three reasons, to which Aquinas devotes the remainder of the reply. The first reason offers an explanation of why this has been revealed to this human.¹⁷⁹

First, because the world will not come to an end until the number of the elect is complete, which completion is, as it were, a sort of execution of the whole of divine predestination; therefore, it is not fitting that the end of the world should be revealed except to him who has received the revelation of the whole of divine predestination, that is, to Christ the man, through whom the whole predestination of the human race is in a manner fulfilled. Therefore, it is said: *The Father loves the Son and shows him all things which he does* (John 5:20).¹⁸⁰

accessed at <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~QDePot>; English quotations are taken from the translation, by Laurence Shapcote, on the facing page at that site.

¹⁷⁹ I am grateful to Joshua Lim for drawing my attention to this passage. I have benefitted from our conversations about Aquinas's complex, and disputed, teaching about Christ's human knowledges.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 6, corp. “Primo quidem, quia finis mundi non erit nisi completo numero electorum; cuius completio est quasi quaedam executio totius divinae praedestinationis; unde non competit revelationem fieri de fine mundi nisi ei cui fit revelatio de tota praedestinatione divina, scilicet homini Christo, per quem tota divina praedestinatio

The “through whom the whole predestination of the human race is in a manner fulfilled” is suggestive. Might it be implying the predestination in Christ, to which Ephesians refers? Nor is the passage explicit that Christ himself is predestined (to be the natural Son in power). But, what the passage does explicitly state is rich enough. The “whole of divine predestination,” including when the number of the elect is complete, has been revealed, for good reason, to the man Christ, through whom the whole predestination of the elect is in a manner fulfilled.¹⁸¹

The other two reasons recounted in the reply in article 5 have to do with others, not Christ—that is, those to whom the revelation of the time of the end of the world has not been made. They are aware that there will be a judgment at the end of time and that the good will receive their due, and the wicked theirs, all as revealed in Scripture. But, they are ignorant of the when. Why? Why is that fitting? The second reason in the reply seems to be pointing to the inculcation of an appropriate attitude: Through not knowing how long the present stage of the world will last, whether for a short time or a long, people are to look upon the things of this world as though they were soon to pass away, having dealings “with the world as though they had no dealings with it” (1 Cor 7:31)—that is, to not be attached to things of this world or to seek one’s end in them. The third reason for fittingness in the reply is in the same vein. People are left to their ignorance of the exact time of the judgment they, by Scripture,

humani generis quodammodo adimpletur. Unde dicitur Ioan. V, 20: Pater diligit Filium, et omnia demonstrat ei quae ipse facit.”

¹⁸¹ The language of the passage is indeed that of “revelation,” of what is “revealed”: This man knows predestination as revealed to him. From the thread of this postscript, it is clear that I am perceiving Christ’s knowledge of predestination as due to his beatific vision in his earthly sojourn; and I am content to stick with that for this essay. It would be a worthy endeavor to investigate whether speaking of beatific vision in terms of “revelation” is something eccentric, restricted to talk of Christ’s knowledge of predestination. And, if there are others who know during their earthly lives that they are predestined, they would do so on the basis of a revelation to them; and since Christ is alone in enjoying the beatific vision during his earthly sojourn, that “revelation” to the others would take a different form, would not be due to their beatitude. As for Christ, Aquinas posits three sorts of “human knowledge” of him: his beatific vision as elevated human; an acquired knowledge; and, an infused knowledge (of all things). Christ (likely) does not “acquire” knowledge of his own predestination or that of others. But, might that knowledge be infused—that is, also infused—received too in another way by Christ?

know is coming so that they may ever be prepared to look forward to God's judgment, keeping alert and vigilant in their striving to do what God seeks. With an eye to the teaching that Aquinas will advance in the *Summa* (in the passages recounted below in the text), it should be noted that neither of these two reasons contains a link to predestination; that link is found only in the first reason in the reply. And, crucially, while the Last Judgment is referred to in the article, the focus is not on the Judge but on those who will be judged and receive their due.¹⁸²

The focus on the Judge comes in the two passages from the *Tertia Pars* with which this postscript concludes. The first of these, *ST* III, q. 10, a. 2, is reminiscent of *De veritate*, q. 20, a. 4. The two articles address the same topic: Does the beatified Christ know "all things in the Word"? And, in the first, Aquinas repeats the basic move, parsing "all things in the Word" to assess the scope of the beatified Christ's knowledge, distinguishing between what is actual, realized, at some time by God and what is merely in potential, never realized. But, the teaching in the *Tertia Pars* adds in significant ways to what is taught in *De veritate*. Thus, with regard to the second member of the pair (what is in potential and never realized), Aquinas layers the account of "in potential," referring to two sorts of things (not just one) in this category: things never actualized that are in the divine power alone, and, things never actualized that are not only in the divine power but also in the power of the creature. Christ's beatific knowledge does not extend to what is (solely) in the divine power, which is infinite, or at least not to all of that; and so, as in the *De veritate*, Christ's beatific knowledge is by no means comprehensive. But the soul of Christ knows in the Word all that is in the divine power and that of the creature, for "it comprehends in the Word the essence of every creature, and, consequently, its power and virtue, and all things that are in the power of the creature."¹⁸³

ST III, q. 10, a. 2, corp., also goes beyond *De veritate* when it comes to the first member of the pair, where the "all things" "stand for all that in any

¹⁸² The phrasing even of Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 6, ad 7, where the second coming and rewards are mentioned, supports this assessment.

¹⁸³ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 10, a. 2, corp.

way whatsoever is, will be, or was done, said, or thought, by whomsoever and at any time.”¹⁸⁴ As in *De veritate*, Aquinas here affirms that the soul of Christ as beatified knows all such things in the Word. He then offers a comparison with other beatified souls, to underscore the scope of that knowing, and concludes the analysis by tying Christ’s beatific knowledge to his judging and to his function as Judge. The passage deserves to be quoted in full:

It must be said that the soul of Christ knows all [such] things in the Word. For every created intellect knows in the Word, not all simply, but so many more things the more perfectly it sees the Word. Yet no beatified intellect fails to know in the Word whatever pertains to itself. Now to Christ and to His dignity all things to some extent belong, inasmuch as all things are subject to Him. Moreover, He has been appointed Judge of all by God, “because He is the Son of Man,” as is said (John 5:27); and therefore the soul of Christ knows in the Word all things existing in whatever time, and the thoughts of men of which He is the Judge, so that what is said of Him (John 2:25), “For He knew what was in man,” can be understood not merely of the Divine knowledge, but also of His soul’s knowledge which it had in the Word.¹⁸⁵

There is a lot here. The comparison is suggestive. Whatever else a beatified intellect knows in the Word, it without fail knows in the Word whatever pertains to itself. That would include, I would think, knowing one’s relation to God—to the God who has freely and in love predestined the beatified knower to eternal life, and who aids in the attainment of that end through Christ and the grace of Christ: a knowing of oneself in God that surely engenders gratitude. The same would hold of Christ with regard to himself: By beatific knowledge, he would know that he

¹⁸⁴ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 10, a. 2, corp.: “Ut distribuat pro omnibus quae quocumque modo sunt vel erunt vel fuerunt, vel facta vel dicta vel cogitata a quocumque, secundum quodcumque tempus.”

¹⁸⁵ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 10, a. 2, corp.

is the natural Son in power, full of grace and truth, made incarnate to bring others to their God-appointed end in accordance with God's saving plan. Aquinas, however, does not pause to state that truth, to complete the comparison in that way. Instead, in turning to Christ in his beatific knowledge, Aquinas wants to stress how much more pertains to him: "To Christ and to His dignity all things to some extent belong, inasmuch as all things are subject to Him." Aquinas does not explain here what he means by "all things to some extent belong to Him" inasmuch as "all things are subject to Him." Given the placement of this article in the treatise on Christ, Aquinas may well be thinking of what he has taught about Christ's Headship, a Headship that is over all humans,¹⁸⁶ but, again, that is not explicitly stated. What matters for Aquinas in the present passage is that Christ in his beatific knowledge in the Word knows "all that in any way whatsoever is, will be, or was done, said, or thought, by whomsoever and at any time."

And then Aquinas relates Christ's beatific knowledge to Christ's judging, as that knowledge figures into Christ's judging. The two verses from John that are here quoted are significant. The first (John 5:27) refers to eschatological judgment. Christ has been appointed Judge of all by God, "because he is the Son of man."¹⁸⁷ Christ's beatific knowing will inform the judging of all humans at the end, both the good and the bad. The assertion of the reason for that appointment is simply that, an assertion; Aquinas makes no attempt to parse that why ("because he is the Son of man"), or what "Son of man" should be taken to mean. The other verse from John (John 2:25) has to do with the "now," with Christ's interaction with others during his earthly sojourn.¹⁸⁸ He assesses them, knows their thoughts and intentions, doing so by the beatific knowledge that he enjoys from the moment of his conception.

The final article considered here, *ST* III, q. 59, a. 2, is of a piece with

¹⁸⁶ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 8, a. 3.

¹⁸⁷ While no reference to Acts 10:42 is made here, that verse, as quoted in *ST* III, q. 59, a. 1, sc, does use the language of "appointing."

¹⁸⁸ John 2:23–25 reads, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man."

ST III, q. 10, a. 2, with a concentration on the judiciary power that will be exercised in the last judgment: It echoes that earlier article, while making the teaching even more precise.

The first article of question 59 takes for granted that judiciary power, the judging of all humans and enforcing that judgment by giving to each what each deserves, pertains to God as God. The triune God judges all that is subject to God.¹⁸⁹ The first article is concerned to make the case for the appropriation of judiciary power to the Second Person of God. Much is needed to judge, to be a judge: the ability to enforce judgment; an upright zeal for justice; and, not least, wisdom, upon which the “very rule of judgment is based, because the standard of judgment is the law of wisdom or truth, according to which the judgment is passed.” And so, “because the Son is Wisdom begotten, and Truth proceeding from the Father, and His perfect Image, consequently, judiciary power is properly attributed to the Son of God.”¹⁹⁰

The next article (the one with which we are here concerned) goes on to ask whether judiciary power belongs to Christ with regards to his human nature.¹⁹¹ John 5:27 (“He has granted him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man”) is prominent in this analysis. It is quoted in the *sed contra* of article 2. The *corpus* opens with a lengthy review of how Chrysostom had taken that verse, followed by Aquinas’s rejection of that interpretation and then his presentation of his own take on that verse. Chrysostom is convinced that judiciary power is exclusive to God. The “Son of man” in John thus needs nuancing. It cannot be referring to a human, pinpointing the humanity as the locus of judicial authority, as if Christ were appointed judge because he is human, on the condition of his humanity. If that were how John had to be taken, then John would in effect be saying that it pertains to humans, all humans, to exercise judicial power because they are human—which is incorrect. And so, Chrysostom notes that the Son of Man is the Son of God, and it is the latter that is the

¹⁸⁹ Aquinas, ST III, q. 59, a. 1, ad 1.

¹⁹⁰ Aquinas, ST III, q. 59, a. 1, corp.

¹⁹¹ The article heading of ST III, q. 59, a. 2, puts it, “Secundum quod est homo” (insofar as he is man); the first objection, “Secundum quod homo.”

implicit referent of the verse. In short, the verse is making a Trinitarian point: The Son of God has received (eternally receives) judicial power from the Father; Christ exercises judicial power as God.

Aquinas too knows that the primary authority of judging lies with God. But, he continues in the *corpus*, the power to judge is committed to men with regard to those subject to their jurisdiction. Now, as has been shown in *ST* III, q. 8, Christ is Head of the entire Church even in his human nature, and all things have been put under his feet, are subject to his jurisdiction. Consequently, it belongs to him even according to his human nature to exercise judiciary power. And since he is Head by grace, Aquinas offers a rather different gloss on John 5:27 (“because he is the Son of man”) than had Chrysostom. God gave him power to do judgment not on account of the condition of his nature (that is, because he is human) but because this belongs to the grace of the Head, which Christ received in his human nature. Because he is Head by grace, he is judge—an argument, it would seem, that is original with Aquinas.¹⁹² One can then add, as I will do here, that those who attain God as their end receive from the Head in two ways: the grace that the elect need to attain that end, and, the beatitude that the elect deserve for their graced acts.

¹⁹² I asked Matt Messer how typical this connection of Christ’s Headship and work as Judge is in thirteenth-century theology. In personal correspondence (dated July 23, 2025), Messer wrote:

To your question: as far as I can tell, Aquinas’s rooting of Christ’s judgment at the Second Coming in his role as head (and specifically his capital grace) is something new in the thirteenth-century discussions. I don’t recall any mention of this in the main “treatises” on headship among the leading theologians (Aquinas makes the connection in *ST* III, q. 59, a. 2, as you note), and (after a cursory look) I don’t see any mention of headship in the main discussions of the Second Coming either (usually in *IV Sent.*, d. 48) apart from Aquinas’s *ST*—not in the *Scriptum*, or Bonaventure, or Albert, or the *Summa halensis*. There is some occasional mention of headship in connection with the general resurrection, by way of explaining/arguing for our resurrection (e.g., Bonaventure argues for our resurrection on the ground that the members should be conformed to the head, and that—as head—Christ’s resurrection is exemplar and cause of ours; and Albert uses the head-members distinction to organize his treatise *De resurrectione*). But that doesn’t really touch on what Christ *does* at the End, e.g., the exercise of his judiciary power. Interestingly, although they don’t even connect it with headship, Albert and Bonaventure do ask according to what nature he will judge, and in response they do the same kind of both-natures move they do in assigning the locus of headship, whereas Aquinas in *ST* III, q. 59, really stresses the humanity, just as he does in his mature account of headship.

The power to judge is committed to many humans, not just Christ. But, in every significant way Christ excels, to be sure, among those to whom judicial power is committed. Christ's jurisdiction is not restricted in time or place; it covers all humans, whenever or wherever they were or are. His judging, and its enforcement, has eternal consequences. The person of Christ is the Word, the fully divine Word who became flesh. The humanity of Christ stands to the divinity as proper, conjoined, and animate instrument; other judges, through whom God may be said to judge, are, rather, "separate and not united instruments."¹⁹³ And, crucially, the assumed humanity of the Word is perfected by God, in accordance with God's plan for human salvation through Christ, perfected utterly, fully, by grace and in truth. It is by capital grace that Christ is Head of all and so Judge of all. Truth, knowing the truth, is central to the exercise of judiciary power. Truth is the standard for judgment; knowing the truth matters greatly for judging, for judging well. Christ excels in the truth because he is beatified in his soul. The point about this importance of Christ's beatific knowledge had been first made in *ST* III, q. 10, a. 2. Aquinas is not shy about returning to it in the present article, where it figures in two of the three responses to objections. Thus, in ad 1 he quotes John 1:14, with an eye to the "and truth" (of the phrase, "full of grace and truth"), linking that to judging according to the standard of truth and adhering to truth and being imbued with truth.¹⁹⁴ And, in ad 3 he expressly invokes *ST* III, q. 10, a. 2, reminding us that Christ's beatific knowledge—put here in rather distinctive terms—reaches even to the secrets of the heart, surely not unimportant in the perfect doing of judgment at the End.¹⁹⁵ By knowing "all things in the Word," Christ's judgment—God's judgment through him—is assuredly most wise and just.

¹⁹³ As Aquinas can put the general point, in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 7, ad 1.

¹⁹⁴ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 59, a. 2, ad 1.

¹⁹⁵ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 59, a. 2, ad 3: "To know and judge the secrets of hearts, of itself belongs to God alone; but from the overflow of the Godhead into Christ's soul it belongs to Him also to know and to judge the secrets of hearts, as we stated above (III, q. 10, a. 2), when dealing with the knowledge of Christ. Hence it is written (Romans 2:16): 'In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.'"