The Humanity of Christ, an Example for Authentic Christian Living in Thomas Aquinas

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael’s College and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College

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Abstract

If Godhead is to be revealed in the created order, it will be revealed most adequately in manhood, since man was created in the image of God. It is fitting, then that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Word who became flesh, should in His one person be both altogether God and altogether man- not something betwixt and between as so many, from Arius (and before Arius) to Jehovah’s witnesses, have supposed. The more then our Lord’s real humanity is emphasized the more justice is done to His true nature. This is because, it is in that real humanity that we see the Godhead shine.

The humanity of Christ plays a vital role in this study, since it is a perfect example for an authentic Christian living. This study acknowledges the biblical teaching about Christ’s humanity in the light of Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest Theologians of all times. I have learned through the teachings of Aquinas that the Incarnation is most fitting for the salvation of mankind, the genuineness of our Lord’s humanity brought about the gospel of our salvation and that Christ’s humanity is an example worthy of emulation.
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

For Christians, the importance of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is obviously thought and reiterated as a significant norm in their lives. Being a disciple, in the most simple way means modeling one’s way of life after the Master whose disciple one is. Jesus is the source of life and salvation for Christians. Many Scriptural passages make allusion to this very point. For example, there is a passage in the Scriptures where Peter says of Jesus, ‘Salvation is found in no one else, [but Christ] for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be save.’ (Acts 4: 12) Christians believe that Christ is the model for all humanity, and that offers a profound and illuminating response to the question of why Christians should be imitators and followers of Christ.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as presented in the Scripture. Adherents of the Christian faith known as Christians generally believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God having become human and the Saviour of humanity. Because of this belief, Christians commonly refer to Jesus as the Christ or Messiah. Jesus’ ministry, sacrificial death and eventual resurrection are commonly referred to as the Gospel message- the good news. On account of this, Christianity believes that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Bible referred to as the Old Testament. The foundation of the Christian theology is expressed in the early Christian ecumenical creeds which hand on those judgments predominantly accepted by followers of the Christian faith. Christianity considers Jesus Christ as the model of a virtuous life and both the revealer and physical Incarnation of God, through whom salvation came to humanity.

The Second Vatican Council, one of the important events in the life of the Church reminds Christians that Jesus Christ wrought the Salvation of humanity. The
Council taught that, ‘Jesus won Salvation for all by the blood which he freely shed.’¹ Jesus Christ who wrought the salvation of mankind left a command for His disciples to follow. He sent His apostles into the world, commanding them to ‘go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ (Matthew 28:19) Every Christian who has become a disciple of Christ and member of the Church through baptism is called to play a part in the saving mission of Christ and the Church.

Beyond these familiar truths about baptized Christians (members of the Church being called to be Disciples of Christ) the position of the Second Vatican Council gives a new ground to our understanding of discipleship, introducing us to the engaging idea of Jesus as the model for all humanity. It is not only baptized Christians who are to find meaning in embracing Christ as a model: the rest of the human family are also invited to see Christ as one who will invest humanity with great meaning and dignity. This is what is implied when the Council says; ‘having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church[…] not only to the Sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity.’² On account of this, the Christian faith teaches that the entirety of humanity are called to participate in and play a part in the mission of Christ and the Church, following the command of the Master to make disciples of all nations.

According to the Christian faith, the meaning and goal of humanity can be realized only in Christ and also in seeing Christ as the model for authentic human living. This is the reason the Council sums up its teaching on Christ as the key to understanding the meaning and destiny of humanity in these words: ‘the Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the

¹ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, (December 7, 1965), 22.
² Gaudium et Spes, 2.
centre of humanity, the joy of all hearts and the fulfillment of all aspirations.\(^3\) Jesus Christ who is the key to understanding the meaning and destiny of humanity became human in solidarity with mankind. Christ in His humanity taught the people with spoken words of mouth and also with deeds experienced in His daily living as a human being. Christians who are called to be Disciples of Christ are therefore charged with the duty of living and loving well as Christ did, emulating not only Christ’s teaching by proclamation, but also His deeds, bearing in mind the command of their Master which says, ‘learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart.’ (Matthew 11:29) One of the central themes in the New Testament is that a Christian is a follower, a disciple of Jesus Christ, who lives His life over again in our flesh by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This idea is observed in Paul’s expression when he said, ‘It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’ (Galatians 2:20)

The life and teachings of Jesus found in the Scriptures offers Christians the profound teaching that Jesus Christ is the one perfect example for mankind to follow. To every human He commands absolutely ‘follow me’. ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.’ ‘I am the door; he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way is a thief and a robber.’ Again, ‘if any man enters through me, he shall be saved.’ (Matt 16:24, Matt 11:29) Going by these examples, Jesus is seen by Christians as the only One who met perfectly, in the fullest measure every requirement of the perfect law of God. He was made flesh. Jesus meets all the demands of authentic human living not by experiencing every possible temptation but by experiencing those temptations that are most fitting for remedying and overcoming

\(^3\) Gaudium et Spes, 45.
all temptations. He met all the demands of the perfect law of God. This is why for Christians the life of Christ is a perfect example to follow in all respects. In this regard, Peter writes, ‘for to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His step.’(1 Peter 2:21) We are to think like Him, (Philippians 2:5) imitate Him, (1 Corinthians 11:1) and follow His example in every detail of our lives (1 John 2:6).

The humanity of Christ as an example for authentic Christian living offers a deeper understanding for Christians on the need to respond to the invitation to follow Jesus. But Christ’s humanity first and foremost, highlights the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. The Incarnation of the Word of God is the mystery of God becoming man for the salvation of the entire human race. ‘From the standpoint of faith, Jesus as the Christ is the Revealer of God and the Redeemer of humanity.’

The mystery of the Incarnation which implies the doctrine of the humanity of Christ is one of the basic doctrines of the Church: it is based on revelation from the Scripture as it has been authoritatively interpreted in the historical tradition of the Church. According to this teaching, the Second Person of the Trinity, because of His eternal relation to the First Person (God the Father), is the Son of God. He is coequal with the Father. He is truly God and truly human; the Son of God as to His divine nature, while as to His human nature, He is human like us in every way but sin.

Christians firmly believe that the mission of Jesus Christ on earth, as the Scripture reveals was to save the world that is, the whole human race. Scripture makes allusion to this very point when it quotes Jesus as saying, ‘I have come, that they may have life and have it to the full.’(John 10:10) His mission in becoming human was to lead and reconcile all creatures with the Creator. Jesus’ mission according to the

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Scripture was to enable people to know God as their Father, and to show people the way to God by teaching them the principle values of life which Christians believe is the essence of eternal life. The essence of every teaching should be realized in the prospering of the one who is being taught; therefore the realization of the mission of Christ is enhanced when Christians live according to the teaching and deeds of Christ.

The emphasis of my thesis is that the humanity of Christ is a perfect example for Christians to live an authentic life, which they are called to by virtue of their vocation. The high point in this statement is the need for Christians to learn from Christ. Considering the perfection of the life Christ lived, as the Scriptures attest, this could be seen as generating a number of research questions and debates, since walking in the footsteps of Christ is not popular, as it might appear to be a difficult task. Questions such as; do we possess the ability to follow in the footsteps of Christ who is God-and-Man: is the grace we receive which acts on our nature and thereby helps us to attain virtuous living the same as the grace of Christ which he receives as an individual human being? These questions arise from the fact that we are expected to follow the examples of one who is both God-and-Man; the examples of one who was never seen to make a single mistake in the way He lived; who has done every thing so well, even to the amazement of the people around Him. These laudable qualities exhibited by Christ could prove to be unsurmountable challenges to the one who is expected to learn from and emulate the way Christ lived.

The method of this thesis consists of a close textual reading of the Christology of St Thomas Aquinas to address these concerns and to show that the humanity of Christ is a perfect example for an authentic Christian living. The thesis through an interpretation and appropriation of teachings of Aquinas, will demonstrate our commonness with Christ in human nature, showing that the human nature that Christ
assumed is the same with our human nature (except sin). For Aquinas says, ‘The term ‘man’ applies to Christ and to other men; being born in the likeness of men[...], the contrary would be to attack the genuineness of Christ’s being human.’ It is in this light that the thesis will present Jesus’ humanity as perfect example for Christians who are called to be Disciples of Christ. Thus it will prepare members of the Christian fold to deepen their understanding of the identity of Jesus as well as awareness of other truths about Jesus in their lives. By their emulation of Christ’s life and obedience to the Father (God as Father), Christians would be exemplary signs in the living communion in the Church and in the world today. This implies that Christians must live by the standard of the gospel of Christ (His words and deeds), striving vigorously to make the Christian value of love, honesty, forgiveness, tolerance, justice, self-sacrifice, solidarity and compassion present within the human society, promoting unity in diversity among all in the world.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This thesis in its method will be basically expository, involving word study and a close interpretative reading of the text. Key concepts relating to the topic of this thesis will be presented. The teaching of the Second Vatican council and other Church documents will be largely put to use in explaining the meaning of these concepts and reiterating the position of the Church on them. The work of Thomas Aquinas on Jesus Christ, in the Summa Theologiae will be basically employed as a guide throughout the entire research to show how the humanity of Christ is a perfect example for authentic Christian living. This thesis is not a complete study of Aquinas on the

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5 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 2, 5
humanity of Jesus Christ. However, it is meant to promote understanding and to stimulate further insight and studies in this direction.

The thesis is divided into four major sections with an introduction and conclusion. The first chapter will offer a background study looking into the concept of the mystery of the Incarnation. This study will basically derive its main idea from the teaching of the Church, looking at what the Second Vatican Council says on the Incarnation. The development of this exposition will connect to the understanding of Incarnation as God’s self revelation in human flesh. In this chapter also, the thesis will look at some problematic assumptions on the Incarnation, from Arius and Arianism to the Jehovah’s Witness in modern times. This Chapter will show how these assumptions negate what the Second Vatican Council teaches.

The second chapter will be based on the work of Thomas Aquinas. This chapter will look into the identity of Jesus, presenting Aquinas’s teaching on the Incarnation. It will expose what it means to say that there are two natures in the one Person of Christ, human and divine. This doctrine of the union in two natures implies that the Word of God united flesh to Himself. This chapter will present according to Aquinas that Christ subsists in one Person with a divine and a human nature. In the light of this interpretation, this chapter will talk about Christ as perfect human, thus giving an insight into the understanding of the real humanity of Jesus. The concluding part of this chapter will discuss Christ the perfect human as the cause of grace in us (humans).

Chapter three presents Thomas’s teaching on the fittingness of the Incarnation, which proposes ways of understanding why it is appropriate for God to become human. This answers the question; how can God, the Eternal and Spiritual, condescends to assume the nature of mortal man? This chapter will show that it was
fitting for God to become human. In this chapter also, I will show (in light of Aquinas’s teaching) that the Salvation of human race is the reason for the Incarnation, which implies that the mission of Christ on earth was to lead all (humanity) to the Father. This means that Incarnation was necessary for Salvation. This chapter will also present the teaching that, in the created order, it was fitting that God assumed human nature, thereby answering the question; why man and not any other being? This chapter will also show that the humanity of Christ was a complete and real humanity. This chapter in the light of Aquinas’ teaching will present the fact that Christ in His human nature is one in solidarity with humankind.

Chapter four of this thesis will deal with the implications of the doctrine (following Aquinas and in agreement with the Church’s teaching) that Christ in His human condition had the complete features of a human and experienced certain human weaknesses. This development will connect to the understanding of Christ as a model for Christians and human race at large. Christ had to be really human in order to perform the task of reconciling and leading humanity back to the Father. In conclusion, this chapter will talk about the need to live the Christian faith.

The last part of this Work is the general conclusion. In this part I will summarize my position following the teaching of the Church and in light of Aquinas that Jesus Christ is basic to everything about Christian faith; because of this, Jesus provides Christians with a sound moral standard through the examples of His life and teachings as a human Person on earth. Thus the acknowledgement of the towering moral stature of Jesus by every Christian should go hand in hand with the appropriation of these values in concrete living. Christ’s life is emulatable and showing how this is so will have the pastoral consequence of enhancing the effort of every Christian to strive towards emulating Christ
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND STUDY

1.1 THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

Speaking about Christianity, one must not only examine or understand what Jesus Christ did, but also who He was and is. For just as a belief in the historical events in Christ’s life is necessary, so is a belief in the Person of Christ. The Saviour showed the central importance of His own Person when He asked the disciples, ‘who do people say I, the Son of Man, am’ (Mt 16: 13)? Given the importance of who Christ is for an understanding of the gospel and our own salvation, it is important to begin this chapter by turning our attention first and foremost to the Incarnation.

The Incarnation in traditional Christianity is the belief that Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, who is God the Son (the Logos) became human when He took flesh by being conceived in the womb of a woman, the Virgin Mary. The Incarnation is a fundamental theological teaching of Christianity which is based on revelation from the Scripture as understood in Sacred Tradition. This belief is fundamental to Christian faith. According to the Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, the term ‘Incarnation’ is explained thus;

The Incarnation represents the belief that Jesus who is the non-created Second hypostasis of the Triune God took a human body and nature and became both man and God. In the Bible, its clearest teaching is in John 1: 14: ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.’ It is interesting to observe that, in the Incarnation, as traditionally explained, the divine nature of the Son of God was joined but not mixed with human nature in one divine Person. This central doctrine of the Christian faith affirms that God took

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human form. To confirm the position that the Incarnation represents the belief that God became human, it is important to turn our focus on the Church’s teaching on this topic.

In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word of God is expressed through an analogy that describes the divine condescension by which God deigns to speak to us in humanly understandable words. The document had this to say;

In Sacred Scripture therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous condescension of eternal wisdom is clearly shown, ‘that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words can not express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature’. For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself, the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.  

Here, one observes that the document refers to the Scripture as divine revelation, in which God’s words is spoken in human language; the document offers insight to the mystery of the Incarnation where God took to Himself, the flesh of human weakness. With these words, Vatican II claims that the mystery of dual authorship- divine and human can be best understood by the equally ineffable but equally true mystery of the Incarnation. In the Incarnation, the eternal Word of God ‘became flesh and dwelt amongst us’ (John 1: 14), fully human yet fully divine. In the Incarnation, the document teaches that God became human.

This Christian belief is considered a mystery. It is because the Incarnation which is the union of the divine with a human nature is a thing so remote from human experience, so beyond the compass of human intellect, that one is unable to grasp completely its accomplishment even after it has been revealed through Scripture and

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7 Dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, (November 18, 1965), 13.
8 Catechism of the Catholic Church; On the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation, 456
authoritatively interpreted in the Sacred Tradition. Since the human intellect is not the measure of all truth, the human power is not the only criterion of what is possible or impossible with God. In other words, at this point one must recognize the limitations of human reasoning.

Confirming that the Incarnation of the Word remains a mystery, Vatican II also explains the mystery of the Incarnation as raising the dignity of man as it states;

In reality, it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear[...] Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the Father and of His love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high callings[...]. Human nature by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in Him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For by His incarnation, He, the Son of God has in a certain way united Himself with each man.\(^9\) The Council confirms that the Incarnation is considered by Christianity as the greatest glory of human race. This is because the Incarnation puts God’s seal upon human dignity. Human nature itself (the whole human race) is, in a sense, deified by God’s graceful condescension. More so, in the Incarnation, God became human freely; He was not compelled to become incarnate. This is why this act of God has always been regarded as His greatest grace to us (humans). The Church Fathers also maintained that God’s wisdom, goodness and will are shown in the Incarnation.

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (Eph 1:9) by which through Christ the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature [...]. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of men shines out for our sake in Christ who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.\(^{10}\) According to the teaching of the Church, the mystery of the Incarnation is understood from the fact that God who created the world in His wisdom willed also to restore it through His wisdom. In other words, the creation that came from God through the

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\(^9\) Gaudium et Spes, 22.
\(^{10}\) Dei Verbum, 2.
Word fittingly returns to Him through the Word as well. ‘The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins: the Father has sent His Son as the Saviour of the world, and he was revealed to take away sins.’\(^{11}\) Following this teaching by the Church, one notices that it was appropriate for the Second Person of the Trinity to be sent into the world. It makes sense that the Son, who is begotten of the Father, is sent into the world by the Father, who Himself could not have been sent by anyone else.

The truth offered by the Church about the Incarnation of the Word leaves one with an insight into mystery of God becoming man so as to raise humanity to share in the divine life of God.

The Word became flesh to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature’, for this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine Sonship, might a son of God. For the Son of god became man so that we might God. The only begotten Son of God wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man might make men gods.\(^{12}\) However, it means that through the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, humanity was granted the privilege of sharing in the divine nature; as such, humans could be referred to as sons and daughters of God. Thus, the Incarnation of the Word, properly understood opens one’s mind to the importance of the need for mediation between God and human, the mediation of God’s essence to the human flesh. This is also why Jesus Christ is called the mediator between God and humankind when He was conceived as the Word incarnate. The mediation between God who is spiritual, abstract and immortal and human being who is mortal and weak in nature was made possible by the Incarnation of the Son of God. Thus, it brings forward the idea of the relationship between the Creator and His creature in Christ as the culminating point.

\(^{11}\) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 457.
\(^{12}\) Ibid, 460.
Belief in the Incarnation of the Word of God who became human is taught by the Church as the fundamental basis of the Christian faith and also is at the center of the reality of the Christian life. The Incarnation means that God has authentically become human.

Belief in the true incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: By this you know the spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning whenever she sings ‘the mystery of our religion’: He [Christ] was manifested in the flesh.\(^\text{13}\) On this account, we can understand that the human nature was not merely a vessel for the divine nature; rather the eternal Word of God in reality became human. Thus this reveals Christ as a symbol of perfection of anthropology. ‘For God’s Word by whom all things were made was Himself made flesh so that as perfect man He might save all men and sum up all things in Himself[…].\(^\text{14}\) Following this teaching by Vatican II, one recognizes the inconceivable greatness of God in His condescension to assume human nature and therefore become fully human. Thus the fact that God could willingly become human actually shows the truly infinite nature of God.

1.2 INCARNATION AS GOD’S SELF IN HUMAN

Christian theology teaches that we come to know God through an act of God. Revelation consists of an act in which God reveals Himself to humankind; therefore, in the Incarnation, God the Son took on human flesh in God’s supreme mission and act of self revelation in human. The process of incarnation suggests that, God not only

\(^{13}\) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 463.

\(^{14}\) Gaudium et Spes, 45.
revealed His nature to His creation, but His self sacrifice made way for humanity, creation and God to be reconciled. God revealing Himself in human form considers the Incarnation of the Word as an act of supreme humility. This supreme humility is expressed by a baby born in a stable, a teacher who taught his disciples so well in words and deeds and ultimately in the death on the cross which marked the human activities of Christ.

According to Vatican II, in the Incarnation, God revealed Himself in the man Jesus Christ so as to speak and teach humanity the way to salvation. This is why the Council had this to say:

> Then after speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, 'now at last in those days, God has spoken to us in His Son.' (Heb 1:1-2) For He sent His Son, the eternal Word who enlightens all men so that He might dwell among men and tell them of the innermost being of God, (John 1:1-18). Jesus Christ, therefore the Word made flesh, was sent as 'a man to men' [...].

The expression by the Council that Jesus Christ was sent as a man to men confirms the teaching that, the Incarnation of the Word is God’s self revelation in human. ‘He [Christ] speaks the words of God (John 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which His Father gave Him to do, (John 5:36; John 17:4). To see Jesus is to see His father (John 14:9).’ However, this shows that the work which Christ did was not His, but belonged to His Father. Thus it is the belief of Christians that God manifested Himself in Christ by becoming human.

It is interesting to note following the teaching of the Council that, God in revealing Himself, took on human form; this is not to say that God merely wore it like a disguise, rather God became identical with it, and that brings out the theological significance of God’s manifestation of Himself in human form. This self-revelation

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15 Dei Verbum, 4
16 Ibid
of God to humanity in Christ provides the immediate ground in human existence and history where God may be known as He is; hence the Council remarked:

In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generation. Therefore [it is] Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (Cor 1:20; 3:13; 4:6).\(^\text{17}\)

This means that God’s self-revelation in Christ who is Himself both God and human is the one revelation of God of which God is the actual content; all authentic knowledge of God is derived and understood in accordance with the incarnate reality of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ. This idea is contained in the teaching that Christ reveals the eternal God to humanity as Father; that the Son in Himself manifested the Father and made Him known. Thus the Christian faith is characterized by the belief that, in Jesus Christ, God has revealed Himself and given Himself to humanity unreservedly in the fullness of His divine reality, in such a way that what He reveals and gives to humankind is grounded in His ultimate being.

The Second Vatican Council also explains the Incarnation of the Word as God’s self-revelation in human form when it teaches that Christ is the ‘perfect man’ in the human nature He assumed. Thus the Council teaches that Christ reveals God in revealing humanity.

He who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation, the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.\(^\text{18}\)

This description by Vatican II presents Christ as assuming true and complete humanity and thus God was revealed in human form. God’s self-revelation is of

\(^\text{17}\) Dei Verbum, 7.
\(^\text{18}\) Gaudium et Spes, 22.
primary importance to Christian theology because the doctrine of God’s revelation is part of the essence of Christianity. According to the teaching of the Church, although God revealed Himself in the history of Israel (His Chosen people) and the Law, God revealed Himself in a general way in the universe, but in a special form in Jesus Christ - the Logos through whom all things came into being and through Him alone that humans can perceive a proper knowledge of God. Thus, in the Incarnation, God performed a self disclosure of His person and purpose to humankind.

God, who through the Word creates all things (John 1:3) and keeps them in existence, gives men an enduring witness to Himself in created realities, (Rom. 1:19-20). Planning to make known the way of heavenly salvation, He went further and from the start manifested Himself to our first parents. Then after their fall His promise of redemption aroused in them the hope of being saved (Gen. 3:15) and from that time on he ceaselessly kept the human race in his care […]. 19

In the Incarnation, God revealed Himself through Himself, through the Incarnation of His Son among humans as Saviour of the universe. At this point, one notices the fact that the Christian doctrine of God is inescapably and essentially Christocentric, for it pivots upon God’s self revelation and self communication in the Incarnation, in an objective manifestation which is identical with the very Being of God.

For this reason, Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through His whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and resurrection from the dead […]. Moreover, He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to life eternal. 20

All humans are mortals, death and the possibility of death is inevitable for every human; the fact that Jesus Christ could be put to death is a confirmation that Christ took real human body in the Incarnation. God manifested Himself incarnationally
through human language, human thought and human actions as ultimately demonstrated in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Thus God dwelt in and revealed Himself in human (Christ) with His undiminished character, nature, power and authority.

On account of the teaching of Vatican II on the Incarnation of the Son of God, there is a necessary and important link to the fact that humans share in the divine life. Thus, granted that Incarnation is God’s self revelation in human-Christ, God is believed by Christians to dwell in others who believe in the Christian faith. The Christian doctrine presents Christ as telling His disciples, ‘whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my father, and I too will love him and show myself to him’.

(John 14:21) These words spoken by Christ underscore the fact that through the Incarnation of the Word, God seeks to unite humans to Himself in a profound relationship of love- the love the Father and Son share. This means that God is revealed and manifested in those in whom that love works. On the part of humans in whom God dwells and reveals himself the Council advises; ‘The obedience of faith […] is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals.’

21 Thus, God’s self revelation requires obedience and total self submission on the part of the recipient. No wonder Jesus maintained in the Scriptures, ‘if anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching, my Father will love him and we will come and dwell in him’ (John 14:23-24). According to Christian doctrine, it has always been in God’s will and purpose to reveal and manifest Himself to humanity and thereby reconciling humanity back to Himself.

21 Dei Verbum, 5
In careful planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race, the God of infinite love by a special dispensation chose for Himself a people to whom He would entrust His promises [...] To this people He had acquired for Himself, He so manifested Himself through words and deeds as the one true and living God.\(^{22}\)

However, this means that God also reveals and lives in those who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ and who commit themselves to live in allegiance to Him. This position is further confirmed by Paul’s speech, ‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’ (Galatians 2:20).

Christian theology teaches that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is a perfect self-gift of goodness and loving kindness of God. Jesus Christ is the Word that comes from the Father, He is the Word through whom the Father reveals Himself, and therefore all that is human in Christ is a revelation of God and speaks of God to mankind. Incarnation is God’s self revelation in human form.

1.3 PROBLEMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

Over the centuries, there have been several problematic assumptions made by some groups and movements regarding the Incarnation and the humanity of Jesus Christ. These groups have difficulty accounting for the Identity of Jesus Christ. These groups were found in a formal denial or doubt of the teaching of the Catholic faith on the Incarnation. They made flawed attempts to understand the nature of the Person of

\(^{22}\) Dei Verbum, 14
Christ. The humanity of Christ has been misconceived by these groups either as not being real human nature or as being superhuman nature. Some even totally denied one nature and accepted the other. I have selected a few of these problematic assumptions which this part of this chapter will present and also show how these assumptions negate the teachings of Vatican II which we have read earlier in this chapter.

1.3.1 ARIANISM

This is an erroneous assumption on the nature of the Person of Christ which was pronounced as heresy. The movement was founded by Arius (250-336 AD), a Greek Christian in the 4th century. It totally denied the divinity of Christ.

[Arianism is] the principal heresy which denied the full Divinity of Jesus Christ, so called after its author, Arius. Arius appears to have held that the Son of God was not eternal but created before the ages by the father from nothing as an instrument for the creation of the world; He was therefore not God by nature, but a creature, and so susceptible of change, even though different from all other creatures in being the one direct creation of God.23 This assumption by Arius and his followers is erroneous, because it basically denies that Jesus Christ was of the same substance as God; that practically denies the full Divinity of Christ. Following this, they maintained that Christ was only the highest of created beings, the noblest of human beings and was not the Son of God by nature. ‘His dignity as the Son of God was bestowed on Him by the Father on account of his foreseen abiding righteousness.’24 This means that this group declared that Christ is not truly divine but a created being. For them, God (the Father) alone is immutable and self-existent and the Son of God is not God but a creature with a beginning.

As a priest in Alexandria, Arius taught (318) that God created before all things a Son who was the first creature, but who was neither equal to nor coeternal with the Father. According to Arius,

24 Ibid.
Jesus was a supernatural creature, not quite human and not quite Divine.\(^{25}\)

Going by the date of its appearance, this heresy is an ancient theological error. The position which this group took implies that God did not become human in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Having said that Christ is not God, but an essence different from the Father, this means that, for Arianism, there has been a time when the Son was not in existence since it taught that Christ was the highest of created beings.

As this movement led by Arius was not ready to recant this position, the Council of Nicaea which was called, focused on maintaining the Divinity of Christ wasted no time in condemning Arius and thus, this heresy was condemned in 325 AD.

The teaching of Arius, though condemned by his Bishop, Alexander at a synod at Alexandria (320), continued to spread and to agitate the masses, until the Emperor, Constantine, anxious for the peace of the newly unified Empire, called a General Council at Nicaea, which met in 325. There the opponents of Arianism, largely under the spiritual leadership of St Athanasius, then a deacon of Alexandria, defined the Catholic faith in the coeternity and coequality of the Father and the Son, using the famous ‘homoousios’ to express their consubstantiality, while Arius and some Bishops who supported him […] were banished.\(^{26}\)

The basic position taken by Arianism is opposed to the teaching of the Church. This is strongly against the teaching of Vatican II on the Incarnation of the Word of God who became man for the salvation of the entire human race.

Since Arianism denies the Divinity of Christ, it implies that it was not God who became human. In conformity with the Council of Nicaea, the Church teaches, ‘With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: for us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, He became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made man.’\(^{27}\) Thus, the mystery of the Incarnation is the


\(^{26}\) The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 99.

\(^{27}\) Catechism of the Catholic Church. 456.
teaching that God became human for the salvation of humankind. ‘Taking up St John’s expression, ‘the Word became flesh’, the Church calls ‘Incarnation’ the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it.’

1.3.2 DOCETISM

Docetism is a heresy with several variations concerning the nature of Christ. Basically this group believed and taught that Jesus Christ only appeared to have a fully human existence; that Jesus only appeared to be human though He was in fact not human in the real sense. Docetism basically denies the humanity of Christ

Docetism: In the early Church, a tendency, rather than a formulated and unified doctrine, which considered the humanity and sufferings of the earthly Christ as apparent rather than real.[…], but it reached its zenith in the next generation, especially among the Gnostics.29 Docetism taught that Jesus Christ was fully divine, but Christ’s human body was only illusory. The error developed from the belief or philosophy that all matter is inherently evil and so God must not be identified with anything evil. Thus they could not imagine how the perfect and infinite God could suffer. This problematic assumption by the Docetists was interested in sparing God from suffering, especially the suffering and eventual death of the Son of God on the cross. Since Docetism came in various forms, they also believed that Christ did not actually die.

In some forms, it [Docetism] held that Christ miraculously escaped the ignominy of death, e.g. by Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene changing places with Him just before the Crucifixion. […] Among those especially charged with Docetism was

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28 Catechism of the Catholic Church. 461.
29 The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 493.
Cerinthus.\textsuperscript{30} Thus, it means that the holders of this very error believed that there was one eternal Father who was eternally transcendent and thus can not experience any sort of human emotion and activity, especially the emotion of suffering. The teaching by the Church that Jesus Christ became human in the Incarnation (took human flesh), (John 1:14) and experienced life as a human among other humans was unimaginable and offensive to their belief.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), with its affirmation of the real divinity and real humanity of Christ flatly rejected and condemned Docetism. ‘Docetic doctrines were vigorously attacked by St Ignatius and all the leading anti- Gnostic writers.’\textsuperscript{31} The assumptions of Docetism negate the teaching of Vatican II on the Incarnation of the Word of God in various ways. First, the assumption by Docetists that Christ only appeared to have human body but did not have a real body already opposes the teaching of Vatican II on the real humanity of Christ, for the Church taught: ‘For He sent His Son Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men […]’. Jesus Christ therefore, the Word made flesh was sent as a man to men.\textsuperscript{32} The expression by the Church that Christ was sent as ‘a man to men’ and ‘dwelt among men’ means real human existence, breathing, eating, talking and living among others.

Secondly, having held that Christ did not actually die, Docetism negates the Second Vatican Council’s teaching that human salvation was wrought by His death on the cross. According to Vatican II:

\begin{quote}
Christ established the Kingdom of God on earth, manifested His Father and Himself by deeds and words, and completed His work by His death, resurrection and glorious Ascension and by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Having been lifted up
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Dei Verbum, 4
from the earth, He draws all men to Himself (John 12:32). The Third point follows from the second; since Docetism held that Christ did not actually die, it led to another form of Docetism which believed that there was no resurrection. But from the teaching of the Church, the response to this position is also contained in the same quotation which affirmed the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and so brought salvation to mankind.

The fourth and final point is that Docetism negates the teaching of Vatican II on God’s condescension to assume human flesh in the Incarnation of the Word of God. As we saw earlier, Docetism held that matter (the human body- flesh as matter) is inherently evil, and so God must not be associated with something weak and evil. This is opposed to the teaching of Vatican II about God’s condescension in the Incarnation; for the Council taught that, ‘while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous condescension of the eternal Wisdom is show […] when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.’ Thus, this teaching by the Council brings out the height of humility and condescension in the Incarnation.

1.3.3 EBIONITES

Ebionites were another sect that sprung up within the early Christian Church in the early centuries of the Christian era that had erroneous belief on the identity of Jesus Christ. The movement is believed to have arisen among Jewish Christian groups some time in the fifth century.

From the time of Irenaeus, ‘Ebionites’ was the term used for Jewish Christians in the list of heretics drawn by the Church Fathers. […] the Hebrew word was taken to refer to a supposed founder of the sect called Ebion. […] Ebionites could be found

33 Dei Verbum, 17.
34 Dei Verbum, 13.
up to the fifth century in Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, and the east of Jordan. 35

According to the belief of the Ebionites, Jesus Christ is not fully divine and He is not the Son of God; rather Jesus Christ is understood to be a true prophet just like Moses. It seems clear, however, that the sect flourished especially in the east of the Jordan and that two of their principal tenets were (1) a ‘reduced’ doctrine of the Person of Christ, to the effect that, e.g., that Jesus was the human son of Joseph and Mary and that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove lighted on Him at His baptism, and (2) over-emphasis on the binding character of the Mosaic Law. 36

The position taken by the Ebionites maintained that Jesus Christ was the biological son of Joseph and Mary. This means that they denied Christ’s pre-existence maintaining that, ‘by virtue of His righteousness, [Christ] was chosen by God to be the messianic prophet like Moses’ 37 Ebionites continued to follow the law of Moses and believed that every Christian should do the same in order to attain communion with God.

The Ebionites confessed […] and emphasized observance of the Mosaic law, especially the sanctifying of the Sabbath, the rules of cultic cleanness, and the feasts. A related feature was their stress on the Lord’s brother- James […] and their rejection of Paul and his epistles. 38

The assumptions of this movement are theologically problematic and go against the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in the following ways:

The basic teaching of Vatican II on the full divinity of Christ is opposed by the belief of the Ebionites since they held that Christ was merely the human son (biological son) of Joseph and Mary. On the contrary, the Church teaches that Christ is truly God and truly human; that in the Incarnation, ‘the Son of God united human

36 The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. 535.
37 Ibid.
38 The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Volume 2, 8.
nature to Himself\textsuperscript{39} and also Christ is the ‘image of the invisible God.’\textsuperscript{40} The Church calls Incarnation the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it.\textsuperscript{41}

Secondly, since the Ebionite movement upheld that Christ was merely the human (biological) son of Joseph and Mary, their belief is opposed to the teaching of the Church on the Virgin birth of Christ. The Church taught that, ‘Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the whole fullness of deity would dwell bodily. The divine response to her question, ‘how can this be, since I know not man?’ was given by the power of the Spirit: The Holy Spirit will come upon you.’\textsuperscript{42} However, following the teaching of the church, Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God and was not just a prophet in the likes of Moses as the Ebonite movement held.

1.3.4 JEHOVAH’S WITNESS

The Jehovah’s Witness is a more recent movement than the other groups with problematic assumptions that have been considered so far. This group has problem accounting for the real identity of Jesus Christ. Followers of this movement do not recognize the Divinity of Christ; they do not believe that Jesus Christ is God. Rather they claim that Jesus Christ was an ordinary man.

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society […] traces its origin in the 1870s to the Adventist doctrines of the American lay preacher C. T. Russell. His main claim was that Jesus Christ, a perfect man had returned invisibly to earth in 1878 in order to prepare for the Kingdom of God which was expected to materialize after the Battle of Armageddon in 1914.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Dei Verbum, 4
\textsuperscript{40} Gaudium et Spes, 22
\textsuperscript{41} Catechism of the Catholic Church, 461.
\textsuperscript{42} Catechism of the Catholic Church, 484.
\textsuperscript{43} The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 865.
Jehovah’s Witness religion places more emphasis on God and the Kingdom than on Christ. According to their belief, Jesus is God’s only direct creation. The movement believes that their members are charged with the duty of going about preaching that Kingdom in the form of conversation and publications. The Jehovah’s Witness hold and teach doctrines that are quite different from the general belief of Christianity. For them, ‘only a small flock of 144 000 people drawn from the whole human history were to expect eternal life in heaven.’\(^4\) This is against the general belief by Christianity that eternal life in heaven is the reward for all who live according to the commands of God.

Jehovah’s Witnesses do not want an organized religion with a name, church buildings, ceremonies, or congregational life. They prove their loyalty to Jehovah God and his earthly fellowship by voluntary missionary service […], lay Bible study on the basis of a strict fundamentalism and an attitude of exclusive obedience.\(^4\)

The Church teaches that Christ is fully divine and fully human as reiterated in the preceding arguments from *Dei Verbum*; so the belief by the Jehovah’s Witness that Christ is not God but only a direct creation of God negates the teachings of the Church.

Secondly, this movement’s denial of the divinity of Christ also negates the teaching of Vatican II that God became came human in the Incarnation. This is because for the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christ, ‘a perfect man had returned invisibly to earth in 1878,’\(^4\) which means that he was a man that returned and not God that became human; this is an erroneous teaching on the identity of Christ. The third and last point is that the belief by the Jehovah’s Witness that only 144, 000 people drawn from the whole human race will inherit eternal life in heaven negates the teaching of

\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Volume 3, 13.

\(^{46}\) As quoted earlier regarding the belief of the Jehovah’s Witness that Christ is a perfect man and not God.
the Church that the Incarnation of the Son of God was for the salvation of the whole human race.

Having done an exposition of the Church’s teaching on the mystery of the Incarnation in the light of Vatican II, one sees how clearly these problematic assumptions by the different groups (Arianism, Docetism, Ebionites and Jehovah’s Witness) considered in this chapter negate the teachings of the Church. The next chapter launches the reader into the teaching of Thomas Aquinas on the identity of Jesus Christ.
CHAPTER TWO
THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

2.1 AQUINAS ON THE INCARNATION

The *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas is an enterprise of systematically organized theology in which the doctrines of the Church are taught and interpreted in a way that enhances understanding, fostering unity between mystical theology and concrete living and a connection between spirituality and intellectual work. ‘To grasp the pedagogy of the *Summa* as spiritual, we must be attentive precisely to these rhetorical elements, and remember that they seek to affect memory, understanding, and judgment as activities of the person.’47

Mongeau explained that Aquinas uses (as one can find in the Summa) the techniques of logic in a method of communal research which throws the group into a debate. In his (Aquinas) method, sets of inquiries offer analogies that appeal to the mind of the reader thereby discovering and revealing the truth contained in the subject of discussion.

Aquinas devoted the first segment of the *tertia pars* (third part) of the Summa to the Incarnation and to Christology; through his method, he gave an interpretation of the position of the Church on the Incarnation. In the prologue to the third part, Aquinas announced a double consideration of the mystery of Incarnation; the Incarnation in itself whereby God was made human for the salvation of humankind; and the things that were done and suffered by the Saviour- the God incarnate.

In his consideration of the mystery of the Incarnation, Aquinas proposes the Chalcedonian formula of one person in two natures as a starting point of

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understanding the mystery of the Incarnation. This means that the Incarnation was not a question of one nature replacing the other.

The mystery of the Incarnation did not involve any sort of change in the state of God’s eternal existence. Instead it took place by His uniting Himself in a new fashion a creature, or, more precisely, by a creature becoming united to Him.\(^{48}\)

The teaching that a person is both altogether God and human at the same time is what constitutes the doctrine of the Incarnation as a mystery. Following Thomas’s teaching, the Incarnation was not completed through God being changed in any way from the state in which He had been from eternity. One would notice at this point that Aquinas does not see the Incarnation to be some kind of afterthought by God, rather the one eternal and unchangeable God willed (predestined) to become incarnate. Aquinas continues:

But, as Damascene remarks, through the mystery of the Incarnation the goodness, wisdom, justice, and power or strength of God are shown: goodness, for he did not disdain the weakness of his own handiwork; justice, because he vanquished the tyrant by none other than man and yet did not snatch man away by violence; wisdom, for he found the most apt payment for a most exacting debt; power or strength that is infinite, for what could be greater than for God to become man?\(^{49}\)

One can see in this series of arguments from fittingness the progression of Thomas’s thought to the position that the Incarnation is God’s remedy for a fallen human race. This expresses the significant fact about how Aquinas conceives of Christ and the achievement of the Incarnation.

Aquinas is known to conceive of theology as a science along Aristotelian lines. Aquinas acknowledged that the data of theology are most certainly empirical, but they require a different scientific method than physics or philosophy because they

\(^{48}\) Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q.1, 1.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
are data of human meaning and of grace. Aquinas believes that since the principles of theology are revealed through creaturely acts and teaching in human word, they are open to rational investigation and logical defense; which is why human reason serves theology. Aquinas’s treatment of the doctrine of the Incarnation is metaphysical, and as such one can talk about the metaphysics of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is explained by Aquinas through the concept of union in one supposit, maintaining that the Incarnation took place in one supposit or hypostasis.

Thomas’s use of the word ‘hypostasis’ is metaphysical but for clarity sake, he goes on to explain what the term hypostasis or supposit means and how the Incarnation took place in one hypostasis.

Hypostasis signifies a particular substance, particular not in just any fashion, but as rounded off and complete. A substantial reality, e.g. a hand or a foot, that enters into union with something more complete is not called hypostasis. Similarly, the human nature of Christ is not called a hypostasis or supposit. It is, to be sure, a particular substance, but it comes into union with something more complete, namely with the whole Christ as God and man: that complete reality to which it is joined is called the hypostasis or supposit. 50

In further explanation of the mystery of the Incarnation and also the manner in which the Incarnation took place, Aquinas taught that the Incarnation can only be understood as existing in ‘a person’. This distinction on person (and also on hypostasis) remains fundamental to his treatment of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Aquinas (quoting Chalcedon) taught that the Incarnation took place in one person.

On the other hand, the Council of Chalcedon teaches, We confess one and the only- begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ not divided or separated into two persons. Therefore, the union of the Word took place in his person. 51

50 Ibid.
51 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 2, 2.
In his discourse, Aquinas saw the concept of personhood as important point for the understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Thus, the focus on the person of the Son of God is implied. Utilizing the concept of person, Aquinas throws more light on the metaphysic of the Incarnation. In his argument, he logically analyzes how the Incarnation took place in one person (Christ) when he said:

Consequently, all that is present in any person, whether belonging to his nature or not, is united to him in person. If, then, the human nature is not united to the Word in person, it would not be united at all. To hold that would be to abolish belief in the Incarnation and to undermine the entire Christian faith. Since therefore, the Word has a human nature united to himself, [...] it follows that this union was effected in the person of the Word [...]\textsuperscript{52}

The process of reasoning in Thomas’s thought on the Incarnation leads to the logical conclusion that the Incarnation took place in the person of Christ. This intellectual activity by Thomas in the first part of the \textit{tertia pars} of the Summa is geared towards achieving the goal of understanding Christ as the Scripture presents Him through first principles. Thomas used his theory of the hypostatic union to explain the Incarnation, thus achieving a unity of principles in the person of Christ after making the distinction between person and nature; and showing that the union was in ‘person’.

On the other hand, Aquinas in his teaching maintained (with the Council of Chalcedon) an integrity principle which understands Christ as existing in the integrity or fullness of two natures- human nature and divine nature. Thus, the Church teaches and professes that Christ is true God and true man meaning that Christ has both divine and human nature; Aquinas made a logical presentation of this position in his teaching on the Incarnation.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
2.2 DIVINE NATURE

Thomas Aquinas in his teaching in the Summa presents Christ as having two natures- divine nature and human nature. Both natures retain their integrity and the essential qualities of each nature are left undisturbed. He talks about the existence of the Incarnate Word in two natures.

On the other hand we have the words of the Council of Chalcedon, We confess that in these last days the only-begotten Son of God should be acknowledged [in two natures] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures in no way being annulled by the union. Therefore the union was not wrought in a nature. 

Aquinas gave an ontological interpretation of the meaning of the term ‘nature’. He believes that nature refers to the substance, the form, which is the principle of acting; the specie which gives each thing form. Thomas said: ‘Here, therefore, we are discussing nature as meaning essence, or the ‘what-it-is’ or ‘whatness’ of a species.’ This particular definition of nature by Thomas draws one to the understanding that each nature retained its own characteristic in the Incarnation.

In his teaching on the divine nature of Christ, Thomas believes that the resurrection of Christ from the dead confirms faith in Christ’s divinity. The main interest here is not in the process of the resurrection; rather it is in the fact that Christ’s rising from the dead confirmed the Lordship of Christ:

For our faith is confirmed with regards to Christ’s divinity, as it is written, He was crucified through weakness, and still he lives now through the power of God. For if Christ had not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless. […] For if I do not immediately rise again, or should my body become corrupt, I will proclaim nothing to anyone; I will be of no use whatsoever.

53 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 2, 1.
54 Ibid.
55 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 53, 1.
On another note, basing one’s argument not only on the event of the resurrection, but from the point of view of Christ as the uncreated and eternal Word of God, one sees in the thoughts of Aquinas the existence of divine nature in Christ:

Christ is truly God, both in his person and in his divine nature. […] Christ is indeed, entitled to the eternal inheritance, being the natural Son of God. The inheritance, which is uncreated happiness, is enjoyed by an uncreated act of knowing and loving God - the same act by which the Father knows and loves himself.\(^\text{56}\)

I acknowledge the logical presentation of the existence of Christ’s divinity in the Summa; I will not go into all that discussion rather I will focus more on what relates to the inquiry of the thesis.

2.3 HUMAN NATURE

The primary meaning of the doctrine of the Incarnation is that God became human; the Son of God assumed human nature. Human nature in Christ for Thomas means that Christ had a real body of the same nature like ours and a true rational soul. Thomas showed this when he considered the human conditions of Christ’s human nature:

It was fitting that the body assumed by the Son of God should have been liable to human weakness and disabilities, […]. Firstly, because the Son of God took flesh and came into the world to make reparation for the sins of the human race, […] Secondly, it builds up faith in the Incarnation. Since human nature is unknown to us except as burthened by these bodily disabilities, if the Son of God had taken on a human nature without them it would seem as if he were not a real man, and that he had not real but imaginary flesh, […]. And Thomas [the Apostle] is recalled to faith by the sight of his wounds, in John.\(^\text{57}\)

\(^\text{56}\) Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 7, 2.
\(^\text{57}\) Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 14, 1.
One of the characteristic features of the human body is weakness or disabilities as was used in the Summa; it means that any human nature that is devoid of this feature is not real, it becomes something that is either super or something that does not measure up to human nature. Thus when Christ assumed a human body, He had to assume it in every way but sin. The progression of thought in Aquinas moves one to arrive at the knowledge that the famous doubt by Thomas the Apostle in the Scripture, until he was able to feel the wounds of Christ is an affirmation of the existence of human nature of Christ.

Aquinas taught that Christ came through the Virgin’s womb in such a way that He really took flesh from her; that Christ felt hunger, He ate (since humans need food to sustain them), that Christ suffered and had other experiences common to the nature of human flesh:

Since the soul is the form of the body it follows that the soul and body have but one existence. So, when the body is upset by some physical suffering, the soul has to be indirectly upset, that is, in so far as it has existence. Since therefore the body of Christ was vulnerable and mortal, as has been established already, his soul had to be liable to suffering in this way. 58

This explains why Aquinas taught that the body of Christ was vulnerable and mortal. Since Christ assumed a human nature that was complete, Christ’s body was capable of experiencing everything that is common to human nature. Aquinas continued:

Christ had these, as he had everything else that goes with the nature of man. Hence, Augustine writes, The Lord Himself, who was kind enough to live his life in the form of a slave, used these (emotions) in a human way when he judged they needed to be used. The one who had the true body of a man, and the true spirit of a man did not have counterfeit human feelings. 59

Christ thought, breathed, and slept, felt, spoke, listened, touched, and also walked with and in the midst of others.

58 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 15, 4.
59 Ibid.
2.4 CHRIST THE PERFECT HUMAN

Having established in the preceding parts of this second chapter the two natures in the Person of Christ following the teachings of Aquinas, consequently, we come to the position that Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human. The further enquiry into the humanity of Christ revealed the fact also that the human nature assumed by Christ was the same like ours (humans) except sin. Jesus is a Person in virtue of being God. He is of the same type of conscious being as humans, therefore it would be inappropriate for Jesus to become a non-person. However, it is interesting at this point to make some subtle distinction that presents Christ as the perfect human for Aquinas.

Since ‘nature’ defined as substance by Aquinas as we saw earlier possesses properties and remains identical to it, a human being is a personal substance that possesses essential properties of human nature and is embodied in its state of existence. By this analysis following the progression of thought in the teaching of Aquinas Jesus is fully human, with all that humanity was meant to be. But then, it has to be said, following Thomas’s position that the rest of the members of the human race are human in a manner that is limited by the influence of sin. That there was no sin or spark of sin in Christ’s human nature makes a difference.

It has been remarked already that Christ undertook our disabilities to make reparation for us, to prove the truth of his human nature and to become for us an example of virtue. On each of these counts it is clear that he ought not to have taken on sin.\(^{60}\) Thomas based his argument on the need for reparation and for an example of virtue; ‘because sin contributes nothing towards reparation; in fact it obstructs the ability to make reparation’,\(^{61}\) thus Thomas explained that it was for this reason that Christ took

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\(^{60}\) Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 15, 1

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
on human nature therefore, there is no way He would have taken on sin in His human nature.

Thomas believes that sin was not part of the human nature, for it was introduced later. This is why he said: ‘for sin forms no part of human nature [...] rather it is contrary to nature having been introduced, as Damascene puts it, from a seed sown by the devil.’

Furthermore, Christ is fittingly a perfect human because in the Incarnation, He becomes an example for the human race; ‘by sinning Christ could not give an example of virtue, because sin is the opposite of virtue.’ Thus, for Christ to be an example of virtue for the human race He became human in order to redeem; Christ had to be perfect human. On this Aquinas further opined; ‘Therefore in no sense did he [Christ] take on the disability of sin, neither original nor actual. This is what is said in 1 Peter, He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips.’ For the same reason, Christ as perfect human ought not have any tendency (in Christ) of the sense appetite towards things that are contrary to reason (what is known as ‘spark of sin’).

It follows then that as virtue becomes more perfect the power of this spark of sin is correspondingly weakened. Since, then, Christ had the highest possible degree of virtues it follows that there was no spark of sin in him. Anyhow this defect cannot be turned to advantage in making reparation, but rather works against reparation.

The perfect humanity of Christ extends to his possession of the beatific vision; that the soul of Christ knew everything in knowing the Word. Already it has been said earlier that assuming human nature implies that Christ is a composite of soul and body. With respect to the soul’s proper act, knowing is a sign of perfection. Aquinas makes a distinction by explaining the term ‘everything’.

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 15, 2.
The word ‘everything’ can be taken in two senses. Firstly it can be taken in the strict sense, to cover everything that is, was or will be, in any way whatever, be it deed, word or thought, by anyone, at any time. In this sense the soul of Christ knew all things through the Word.\(^{66}\) By this description, Aquinas puts before the reader the distinction by which Christ stands out as perfect human, the thing which cannot be said of any other human composite of soul and body. This perfection does not alienate Christ from us, rather makes him the source (as fully in act) of the grace of faith: Christ possesses this knowing because it makes of him the appropriate source of our faith knowing— if he really knows, then our faith judgment that we can trust what he tells us about God is a true judgment.

The second explanation about knowing ‘everything’ in a broader sense does not concern the particular topic under discussion (perfect human) because, it refers to something that lies within the power of God; ‘Some of these things exist only in the power of God.’\(^{67}\) However, Christ’s knowledge of everything, in the strict sense as Aquinas distinguished, presents Christ as perfect human.

The logical presentation of Christ as perfect human in the thoughts of Aquinas is a way of showing that God truly became human; that the human nature which Christ assumed was the same like ours except sin; that the term ‘perfect human’ cannot be referred to any other human person; that Christ remains the perfect human to salvage human race. In addition to being an example for us, Christ is the mediator of revelation.

\(^{66}\) Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 10, 2.  
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
2.5 CHRIST THE PERFECT HUMAN AS THE CAUSE OF GRACE IN US (HUMANS)

The Church teaches that grace is a free and underserved gift of God. This gift is given to us and it helps us to respond to God’s invitation to share in the Divine life of God. Grace then, is the character in humans by which they are related to God in knowledge and love. Being an effect of God upon the human, it means that grace is beyond what the human can naturally attain by itself.

Thomas Aquinas presents this teaching in the Summa. Earlier in the Prima Secunda (112, 1), he also explained that the gift of grace exceeds all natural created capabilities since it is nothing short of a partaking of the divine nature which exceeds every other nature and it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. But then, it does not deny the fact that Christ’s humanity can be the source of grace be in the same way that the power of the Holy Spirit working in the Sacraments can be the source of grace in a certain sense. Further on whether Christ (in His humanity) can cause grace in humans, Aquinas explains that Christ’s humanity is an ‘organ of His Godhead’ (Prima Secunda, 112, 1), so he maintained that the principal agent was the Divine nature joined to His humanity; thus Christ’s humanity is the cause of grace by virtue of His divine nature and the actions of Christ’s humanity are saving actions.

However, one notices a connection between the analogy he gave in the Prima secunda and that of the Tertia pars where he considered the grace of Christ as an individual and also His grace as the head of the Church. Thomas made the same assertion that Christ’s humanity can cause grace in us by virtue of His divine nature. In his teaching, Thomas showed how Christ the perfect human could be the cause of grace in us (humans) when he said:

Christ as God can give grace (or the Holy Spirit) in his
own right. As man he can also give it, but instrumentally. For his humanity was the instrument of his divinity. And so, his actions brought salvation to us through the power of the divinity. They cause grace in us both by meriting it and by some kind of efficient causality.  

Here, Thomas makes a point about the category of causality that is explained concerning the vital connection that Christ the head has with the members of His body. In Christ, the human nature is a unique instrument conjoined to the divinity. The human nature as an instrument of the divinity imparts its own character on the action of the agent. Christ’s passion is also an efficient cause of our salvation; the suffering humanity of Christ is the instrument by which the divinity causes grace in us. Aquinas taught that Christ has the power to cause grace in us, who are members of His body, the Church. Thomas said: ‘He [Christ] has the power to infuse grace into every member of the Church, as we read in John, from his fulness we have all received.’  

Since there is the fulness of grace in Christ, He is able to impart grace in us (humans) as members of His body. The same applies to knowing; there is fulness of knowledge in Christ.

There is also a connection to the preceding thought of Aquinas crediting Christ with the fullness of grace being the only begotten Son of the Father. Christ is presented by Aquinas as the only one in whom absolute fulness of grace dwells. For him, Christ had all the perfection that grace was designed to give its subject. Thomas explained that Christ possesses this grace by virtue of His nearness to God. Explaining this fulness of grace, Aquinas said:

Grace itself is said to be full when someone reaches the supreme degree of grace, both in quality and performance: when he has, that is, a grace that is as good as grace ever can be, and one that comprises all possible achievements of grace. And this kind of fulness of grace belongs to Christ alone. 

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68 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 8, 1.
69 Ibid.
70 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 7, 10.
Following this analysis by Thomas, it means therefore that whatever grace Christ had, was obviously the fulness of grace. What this implies is that Christ’s grace could not be increased and also that no other person but Christ could reach this fulness of grace. This progression led Thomas to the distinction between absolute fulness and relative fulness. Thomas taught that absolute fulness belong to Christ alone; he made the distinction that Mary who was said to be full of grace in the visitation by the Angel Gabriel refers to relative fulness; and this does not refer to fulness of grace in the sense that is spoken of Christ.

The blessed Virgin is said to be full of grace, but not in terms of grace itself. Her grace was not as supremely finished as grace could ever be, nor did it have the full potential of grace. She is said to be full of grace according to the requirements of her own person. She had enough grace to fill the position for which she had been chosen by God, […] Stephen, likewise is said to have been full of grace, because he had enough to be a fitting minister and witness of God, which was his vocation. And the same can be said of others. However, in these cases one fulness can be greater than another, depending on whether the person in question has been marked out by God to fill a higher or lower rank.  

In a sense that is explained here by Thomas, the fulness of grace that the Virgin Mary and the other saints had was also lesser than the fulness of grace in Christ, although it made them what they were meant to be. This practically means that grace reached its absolute fulness in Christ; absolute both in its intensity and extent. Christ has it in the greatest excellence with all its effects. This distinction by Aquinas presents Christ alone (as human) as having the perfect fulness of grace.

Thomas’s logical presentation of Christ as having the fulness of grace opens one’s mind to the fact that the grace of the soul of Christ was to overflow upon others. This teaching is derived from the words of the Scripture which says: ‘Of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace.’ (John 1:16). This therefore, bears

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Ibid.
witness to the teaching that Christ is the cause of grace in us. Aquinas teaches that the human soul of Christ was united to the Word of God and as such was dignified above all human souls. Thus the soul of Christ knows and loves God more perfectly than any other soul.

Because of the dignity of Christ’s soul, he had to know and love God in the most intimate possible way. For activity of this sort a human nature has to be raised above itself by grace. [...] Christ as man is, in the words of 1 timothy, mediator of God and men. Therefore, he must have had grace to such an extent that it would overflow to others. 72

It is important to notice the various distinctions that were pointed out in this concluding section of this chapter. As were taught in questions seven and eight of the Tertia pars, they highlight the absolute perfection in the Man-Christ; the absolute fulness of grace in Him since He is also our source for the grace that helps us heal, live and grow into the self- aware divinely happy beings that we are meant to become; thus, Christ (as human) is the cause of grace in us (humans).

72 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 7, 1.
CHAPTER THREE

FITTINGNESS OF THE INCARNATION

The teaching about the fittingness of the Incarnation was constructed by Aquinas to show that it was most suitable for the Son of God to become human in the Incarnation. As I discussed earlier at the beginning of chapter two, the Incarnation means that God became human; but the task of this section is to show through the teachings of Aquinas how it was suitable and fitting that God became human; the appropriateness of God becoming human; whether it was right for God to become human.

The Latin term *conveniens* is used by Aquinas to signify not only ‘fittingness’ but also ‘coherence’. This effort by Aquinas was not geared towards mere show of intellectual brilliance; rather the argument on the fittingness of the Incarnation as constructed by Aquinas promotes clearer understanding of the belief in the Scripture that God became human. Thomas’s work on the fittingness of the Incarnation is in line with the view of theology as ‘faith seeking understanding’; it is geared towards the understanding of the faith that is basically held by Christians. Having believed already, one seeks to understand what the Scripture revealed about the Incarnation through the sets of principles that Aquinas uses in teaching on the fittingness of the Incarnation.

In his consideration of the fittingness of the Incarnation, Aquinas gives prominence to the Scripture. He teaches that the Scripture is the revealed will of God, meaning that the will of God can be known to us through the Scripture. He believes that the Scripture remains the surest guide to God’s actions and motives. This position is observed when he said:

Those things that flow from the will of God alone beyond
all that is due to creatures can come to be known by us only to the extent that they are handed down in sacred Scripture, which makes God’s will known.\textsuperscript{73}

Having established that the will of God can be known to us as handed down in sacred Scripture thereby giving pride of place to the Scripture in his consideration, Aquinas’s argument is primarily based on the revealed fact of the Incarnation. He delves into presenting how it was most fitting and suitable for God to become man in the Incarnation. In his reply to the objections made in article one of question one in the Tertia pars, Thomas first and foremost made an important explanation on suitability. He said:

Whatever is truly suited to a thing is so by reason of its distinctive nature; for example, distinctive reasoning befits man who is by nature rational. But the very nature of God is goodness, as Dionysius makes clear. Therefore whatever forms part of the meaning of the good befits God.\textsuperscript{74}

This argument is presented from the point of view of goodness being God’s distinctive nature. Thus, it was fitting for God to become man for the reason of goodness as God’s distinct nature. Thomas taught that, because of God’s goodness, the invisible things of God are revealed in the things that are visible. He said: ‘It is most fitting to manifest the unseen things of God through things that are seen, for this is the purpose of the whole world as the Apostle teaches, […].’\textsuperscript{75} This means that goodness understood as the distinctive nature of God involves self-communication. This principle therefore affirms the fact that God is the First and Final cause of the good; and that the Incarnation is the height of manifestation of goodness. Based on this, Aquinas said:

But goodness implies self-communication, as Dionysius shows. Therefore, it is appropriate for the highest good to communicate itself to the creature in the highest way possible. But, as Augustine teaches, this takes place above

\textsuperscript{73} Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q.1, 3.
\textsuperscript{74} Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 1, 1.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
all when he so perfectly joins human nature to himself that
one person is constituted from these three: Word, soul, flesh.
Clearly then, it was right for God to be incarnate.\textsuperscript{76}

In response to the argument posited by one of the objections that God has
existed from eternity without flesh and therefore that it was inappropriate for God to
have taken on flesh in the incarnation, Aquinas answered that God’s eternal existence
did not change in the process of the Incarnation. He said:

The mystery of the Incarnation did not involve any sort
of change in the state of God’s eternal existence. Instead
it took place by his uniting himself in a new fashion to a
creature, or, more precisely, by a creature becoming united
to him. Now for a creature to change is altogether appropriate
since mutability marks its very nature. Accordingly, just as
the creature which previously did not exist was brought into
existence, so too, though previously not conjoined to God,
subsequently it rightly became so.\textsuperscript{77}

This logical argument of Thomas shows that God can ‘become’ human and still
remain immutable and unchangeable in His divine essence. Consequently, since the
state of God’s eternal existence remains unchanged, it means then that the mystery of
the Incarnation does not suggest in any sense a change in the divine essence of God.

Moreover, another argument was presented in the objections as to the suitability of
the Incarnation, asking how God, the supreme good takes to Himself a body which is
seen to be changing and corrupt; to this Thomas explained that this difference in
characteristics of each of them establishes and points to the goodness of God.

Since God, who is uncreated, unchanging, incorporeal,
brought changing and bodily creatures into being out of
his goodness, all those characteristics whereby they differ
from the creator are established by his wisdom and ordained
for his goodness. Likewise the evil of penalty is brought in
by his justice because of his grandeur. But the evil of fault is
committed by a turning aside from the plan of God’s wisdom
and the order set by his goodness. Accordingly God could
rightly take to himself a nature created, changeable, bodily
and liable to penalty, but not one subject to moral fault.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
This progression of thoughts in Thomas about the fittingness of the Incarnation leads one to the understanding that the Incarnation reveals much about the goodness and love of God. It also reveals much about the dignity of human nature, given that God chose to express Himself, making Himself visible as human. This reflection by Thomas guides one to the knowledge that God becoming human in the Incarnation was appropriate.

3.1 INCARNATION NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

The teaching by Thomas Aquinas that the Incarnation was necessary for the Salvation of human race is to be understood in the context that Thomas presented it. It does not in any way imply that apart from the Incarnation, there was no other way God could bring the effects of the Incarnation which is the restoration of humanity. For Aquinas, it was not absolutely necessary, for God is almighty and could have restored fallen man in other ways, rather it was relatively necessary. Thomas is even noticed in the Summa as countering the position that leaves the Incarnation as the only option for the Salvation of mankind. But what the teachings of Aquinas point out is the fact that God could have wrought the Salvation of humanity through another means if He so desired, but also that the Incarnation was the most fitting means to restore humanity. This position is observe when Thomas made certain distinctions about the meaning of the term ‘necessity’ which helps one to understand the point he tries to underscore. Thomas said:

We refer to something as necessary for an end in two senses. First, when the goal is simply unattainable without it, e.g. food for sustaining human life. Second, when it is required for a better and more expeditious attainment of the goal, e.g. a horse for a journey. In the first sense, the Incarnation was not necessary for the restoration of human nature, since by his infinite power God had many other ways to accomplish this end. In the second sense, however, it was needed for the
restoration of human nature. Analyzing this distinction made by Aquinas, one notices that in the first sense, something cannot be accomplished unless by that particular means. The example he gave with food as necessity for sustaining human life is perfect. Another example one can think about is breathing as necessity for being alive. Thomas maintained that the Incarnation is not said to be necessary for restoring humanity in this sense. This is because the infinite power of God can create so many other means to salvage humanity. But in the second sense which Thomas described, the achievement of a particular thing does not absolutely depend on a particular means. Looking at the example he gave; a horse for a journey, it really portrays the message because apart from the use of horses, a journey can also be accomplished through several other means. Thomas teaches that the Incarnation was necessary in the second sense. Necessity in this second sense brings out the will and choice of God to become human in order to restore human nature. It means that among other choices that are available for the restoration of humanity, God deemed it most fitting to restore human race through the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Establishing the sense of the term ‘necessary’ in his argument, Thomas showed why the Incarnation was necessary for the restoration of the human race citing Augustine in the process of his argument. Thomas said; ‘Accordingly Augustine writes, let us point out that other ways were not wanting to God, whose power rules everything without exception, yet that there was no other course more fitting for healing our wretchedness [than the Incarnation].’ Following Thomas’s teaching, he identified two groups of reasons why the Incarnation was necessary for salvation. The first group of reasons concern our

79 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q.1, 2.
80 Ibid.
furtherance in good, while the second group of reasons concern delivering us from evil. Thomas mentioned five different points in each of the groups. On the first group of reasons which is on our furtherance in good, Thomas sees human life as a journey that must be viewed in terms of God and God’s plan for humans. He began with the reason of faith as why the Incarnation was necessary for restoring humanity when he said:

First, with regard to faith, greater assurance is guaranteed when the belief rests on God himself speaking. Thus Augustine writes, Truth itself, the Son of God made man established and confirmed faith that men more confidently might journey to it.81

Here Thomas talks about belief that God is the one speaking; faith is seen as the Truth revealed in Christ. Thus Aquinas believes that, in becoming incarnate God was able to establish faith by proclaiming what must be believed.

The second reason was on hope. ‘[...] nothing is so needful to build up our hope than for us to be shown how much God loves us. And what is a better sign of this than the Son of God deigning to share our nature.’82 This means that for Aquinas, the Incarnation profoundly strengthens hope; God becoming human remains a strong proof of God’s great love for us humans. For Thomas, the Incarnation aroused love in response to God’s great love in taking up our nature and working for our redemption. Thomas taught that charity was the third reason in man’s furtherance in good, explaining that charity was most greatly enkindled by the Incarnation. It is interesting to note at this point that for Thomas, the theological virtues of the acts of faith, hope and charity help us to get closer to the end that is God and engages us in a training that prepares us for God; therefore good actions done in grace are like steps on the path to God.

81 Ibid
82 Ibid.
The fourth concerns right living, which means that God became human to be an example for us (humans). This teaching by Thomas shows that God’s act of creating and redeeming are closely linked together.

Fourth, as to right living, we are set an example. Augustine says, in a Christmas sermon, Not man, who can be seen, should be followed, but God, who cannot be seen. So then, that we might be shown one who would be both seen and followed, God became man.83 This very point emphasizes the humanity of Christ as model for humans. The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God made possible the ‘Human example’ for the rest of humanity to follow. This means that by becoming human, Christ provided the example for our own moral behaviour by teaching us through His life, how to live and be closer to God. However, the last of the reasons in this group is what Aquinas referred to as full sharing in divinity. Thomas taught that God became human so that we might participate in God’s divinity. ‘[…] as to the full sharing in divinity, which is true happiness and the purpose of human life. This comes to us through the humanity of Christ […]’, God was made man that man might become God.’84 However, these five points laid out by Aquinas on human’s furtherance in good implies that the Incarnation shows evidence of God’s wise communicating to humans of God’s good.

Having established five points which summarized the theological virtues and moral actions under the reason of human’s furtherance in good, as why the Incarnation was necessary for salvation; Thomas went further also to establish five other points under the reason of delivering us (humans) from evil. Although this second group is in continuity with the first group, the focus obviously shifted to humans who are the beneficiaries of God’s plan. He taught that the Incarnation was effective in delivering us from evil in the following ways:

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83 Ibid
84 Ibid.
First, for our instruction, lest we put the devil above ourselves and go in awe of him who is the author of sin. And so Augustine writes, when human nature is so joined to God as to become one with him in person, these proud and evil spirits no longer dare to vaunt themselves over man because they are without flesh.  

This means that the Incarnation gave humans the advantage over evil spirits given that God shared in our humanity when He took flesh. Evil spirits as explained by Aquinas have no flesh, humans have flesh and also share in the full divinity of God by virtue of the Incarnation, and therefore, humans have advantage over evil spirits.

Thomas based his second point on the dignity of human nature. ‘We are taught how great is the dignity of human nature, lest we sully it by sin. To the point Augustine writes, God showed us the exalted place that human nature holds in creation by appearing to men as a true man.’ Here Thomas explains the dignity of human nature and how human nature holds pride of place among all other created things. However this point would be further discussed when the next section talks about humanity as most fitting for the Incarnation. In the first two points, one sees in the thoughts of Aquinas, the Christian understanding of what it means to be human; the dignity of the human nature based on the knowledge that humans are made by God for God.

On the third point, Thomas taught that for the reason of avoiding human presumption, the Incarnation was effective in delivering man from evil. ‘Third, to do away with human presumption the grace of God, with no preceding merits on our part, is shown to us in the man Christ, […].’ Following Augustine, Thomas maintained that human nature never merited this favour on its own part; rather it was gratuitously given to human nature. This means that we are not the source of the dignity nor are we the cause of the elevation of human nature above other creatures.

85 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q.1, 2
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
rather; we received grace through Christ which makes the attainment of eternal life possible and all that we have from God. This was completely shown in the Incarnation when God became human in Christ.

Furthermore, Aquinas taught that pride was part of human nature, but the Incarnation was the height of humility when one who is God stooped low to assume human nature thereby providing remedy to pride. Thomas presented this as the fourth reason why the Incarnation was necessary in delivering us from evil when he said; ‘Fourth, as he adds, the pride of man, which is the greatest obstacle to our union with God, can be rebutted and cured by such great humility on the part of God.’

In the third and fourth points, one observes Thomas presenting specific sins (presumption and pride) as threatening our movement to God as end, in accordance with God’s plan. Thus, from the first to the fourth point in this group have to do with withdrawal from evil. On the basis of the Incarnation, Aquinas uses them to advise humans to be on the right path.

The Fifth and last point presented by Aquinas as why the Incarnation was necessary for salvation in terms of delivering us from evil hangs on ‘satisfaction’. This is the teaching that a mere human was not capable of atoning for the sins of the entire human race.

Fifth, to rescue man from thraldom; this, as Augustine writes, should be done in such a way that the devil is overcome by the justice of a man, Jesus Christ, which was accomplished by Christ making satisfaction for us. One who was merely a man could not make satisfaction for the entire human race, and how could God? It was fitting then for Jesus Christ to be both God and man.

Thus, having said that a mere human could not atone for the sins of the entire human race or restore humanity, there was the need of having one like us humans, but

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88 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q.1, 2.
89 Ibid.
capable of infinite love which humans are not capable. This is as a result of the fact that we refused the love of God through sin and therefore infinite punishment as a result of infinite offence became our lot; we owe a debt to God and since we were not capable of making it up to God infinitely, therefore God had to become human in Jesus Christ in the Incarnation to make satisfaction for the sins of the entire human race. This teaching on satisfaction by Thomas is one of his ways of accounting for the great importance of Christ’s work on the cross; his death on the cross which was voluntary.

One observes in each of the reasons on the fittingness that the humanity of Christ had to be perfect. This is shown in the fact that Christ’s humanity possesses what was lacking in us; His humanity was also free from whatever destroys human nature. On the reason of ‘satisfaction’ for example, we were not capable of atoning for sins of the entire humanity but Christ is; we were not capable of infinite response to God’s love, but Christ is.

However, having reached the knowledge that the Incarnation was relatively necessary for the salvation of the human race in the sense that the Incarnation was the most fitting and noble way to redeem humanity, the next question that bubbles within the mind of any critical thinker would be; why the choice of ‘human’ above every other thing? The answer to this very question is the concern of the next section of this chapter.

3.2 HUMANITY MOST FITTING FOR THE INCARNATION

As we have indicated in numerous places in the ongoing discussion in this thesis, the basic interpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation is expressed in the teaching that God truly became human in order to redeem humanity. The in-depth
analysis of Thomas Aquinas on the Incarnation confirms this fact that God became human. God becoming human- the Incarnation is considered as a favour done to us (humans) by God. But then, one could ask; why the choice of human nature; what is so spectacular about human nature; why did God become human since He has absolute power to bring about the effects of the Incarnation through other means?

For Aquinas, God fittingly assumed a human nature; a fully credible human nature. This teaching confirms the credibility of Christ’s humanity. Following his teaching on the fittingness of the Incarnation in the Tertia pars of the Summa, one notices a response to why humanity was most fitting for the Incarnation. Through his interpretations, I have come to understand at least two basic points that explain the fact that humanity was most fitting for the Incarnation. The first is the dignity of the human nature and secondly, his teaching on ‘satisfaction’.

Since God had many other ways to accomplish human salvation but chose to become human, therefore, God deemed human nature most fitting for the Incarnation. One notices in this argument that God’s choice to become human was the most appropriate way to accomplish the end. The first point why human nature was most fitting for the Incarnation is derived from the point of view of the dignity of human nature. Aquinas said:

We are taught how great is the dignity of human nature, lest we sully it by sin. To this point Augustine writes, God showed us the exalted place that human nature holds in creation by appearing to men as a true man. So also Pope Leo, O Christian, acknowledge your dignity; having been made a sharer of the divine nature,[…].

This argument as presented by Aquinas shows that human nature is exalted above every other creature. Thus prime of place is given to human nature in the order of

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90 Ibid.
creation. Aquinas citing the Fathers of the Church here explained the dignity of human nature as coming from the fact of being made in the image of God. Thus, human nature was dignified by virtue of being partaker in the divine life of God.

However, this teaching on the dignity of human nature by Aquinas in the Summa is an interpretation of the Christian belief that humanity is at the helm of creation. The Biblical knowledge of the creation account in Genesis where God made human the caretaker of all created things is also implied by Aquinas’s teaching on human dignity. Consequently, the dignity of human nature is one of the reasons why humanity was most fitting for the Incarnation.

The second point why humanity was most fitting for the Incarnation is seen in Aquinas’s teaching on ‘satisfaction’. He believes that there is the need for satisfaction; this is because man’s sin produced a kind of disharmony between humans and God which needs to be erased so that proper relationship with God is restored again. Although Aquinas taught that man should refrain from sin, he also maintained that man’s refraining from sin was not enough to heal and restore the relationship between humans and God. Here one notices a link to what Aquinas taught earlier in the Summa that when someone is parted from another, that person is not reunited to the other as soon as the movement ceases; rather there is need to return to the other by contrary movement (1a 2ae, Q.86, 2). Thomas believes that compensation must be done in order to meet the requirements for justice. Thus there was the need for ‘satisfaction in atonement’ so as to restore what was lost. Thomas further taught that this ‘satisfaction’ was to be made by human to God but then a mere human was not capable of making it up to God infinitely; therefore God became human to make satisfaction for sins. Thomas said:

[...] One who was merely a man could not make satisfaction for the entire human race, and how could God? It was fitting
then, for Jesus Christ to be both God and man. On which Pope Leo says, Weakness is received by power, humility by majesty, that one and the same mediator between God and man might die from the one and rise from the other, and so were we fitly restored. Unless he were truly God, he could not provide a cure; unless he were man, he could not offer an example.91

In his argument, Thomas explained why it was not possible for a mere human to make satisfaction for sins of the entire human race when he classified in two terms, how satisfaction can be sufficient. Thomas said:

Satisfaction can be termed sufficient in two ways: completely or incompletely. In the first way satisfaction is condign, i.e. a recompense equalling the fault committed. So understood, sufficient satisfaction is beyond the power of anyone merely human, since all human nature is corrupted by sin, with the result that the goodness of any one individual or even of many would not make adequate recompense for a disability affecting the whole nature.92

However, based on the fact of God’s infiniteness, it is believed by Thomas that the people’s (human race) sin against God had some infinity about it; for Thomas said: ‘[…] a sin against God has a kind of infinity about it, because of God’s infinite majesty; the seriousness of an offence is in proportion to the dignity of the one offended.’93 This explanation by Thomas highlights the justice aspect of satisfaction; for Thomas, satisfaction is a recompense for injury according to the measure of justice; thus sufficient satisfaction completely heals the injury to the one offended.

Having said that, it is obvious that a mere man is not capable of making a complete sufficient satisfaction to God; therefore God became man in order to accomplish it.

The second way that satisfaction is termed sufficient, i.e. incompletely as described by Aquinas is the one that a mere human is capable of doing; but that can not atone for the sins of the human race. But the existence of something that is

91 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 1, 2.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
incomplete points to the need of something complete. Thus, for a complete sufficient satisfaction in atonement for the sins of the entire human race, God became human.

Following Thomas’s analysis, it suffices to say that, in as much as the Incarnation was the best means (among various others) that God chose in order to redeem humanity; human nature therefore was most fitting for the Incarnation of the Son of God; for God could not have taken any other nature but human nature for the reason of making a complete sufficient satisfaction.

3.3 HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Thomas’s teaching on the Incarnation brings out the logical interpretation of the Church’s position on the humanity of Christ. His theological arguments support and explain the faith of the Church. In his teaching, Thomas highlights the genuineness of the humanity of Christ, although he also emphasized its distinctiveness as assumed into the person of the Word sent by the Father. Aquinas gave a traditional teaching on the human knowledge of Christ which implies the genuineness of Christ’s humanity. In his teaching, he basically posited the existence of immediate (beatific) vision, infused knowledge and acquired knowledge in the human soul of Christ. For Aquinas, these three modes of human knowing are each present in Christ and must be used for Christ to be truly human.

In my discussion in this section of my thesis, it would not be of much importance to say much about immediate (beatific) vision in Christ since it concerns divine knowledge; rather I will dwell more on Thomas’s teaching on infused knowledge and acquired knowledge in Christ’s human soul. On account of the fact that Christ took a human nature with its essential parts (body and soul), Aquinas
showed that the human soul of Christ had knowledge other than the divine. Thomas
taught that Christ assumed a complete human nature in the flesh. He said:

God assumed the perfection of human nature in the flesh; he
took on human perception, though not the puffed-up perception
of the flesh. But created knowledge is part of human perception.
Hence Christ had knowledge other than the divine. […] the Son
of God assumed not only a body but a soul; a soul capable not
only of sense knowledge but of thought.94

This step taken by Aquinas proves the point that Christ experienced things in a human
way. Thus Aquinas presents Christ in genuinely human modes of being; for him,
Christ loved, chose and thought in a human way. ‘[…] there had to be something
other than divine knowledge in Christ. Otherwise the soul of Christ would be less
perfect than the souls of other men.’95

It is interesting to note that Thomas’s teaching on the knowledge of Christ
affirms the truth of Christ’s humanity. We recall that according to Aquinas in question
nine, article one, Christ did have knowledge other than divine basically for three
reasons: Firstly, for the soul’s perfection. For Thomas, the Son of God had to assume
a perfect human nature to bring the human race back to perfection. Secondly,
everything exists in order to operate; that is to say that nothing can be futile in Christ.
Thirdly, Christ was perfectly human, and humans use created knowledge. Thus Christ
was the perfect human. Following these three reason by Thomas, one truly notices
that Christ had to have knowledge other than the divine for Him to be perfectly
human.

Thomas posited the presents of endowed or infused knowledge in the human
soul of Christ. This was to show Christ’s true humanness. For Aquinas, Christ in His
human soul had infused knowledge, but he maintained that knowledge infused into

94 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 9, 1.
95 Ibid.
Christ’s soul by God encompassed all things known to human knowledge. Thomas said:

Christ, therefore, has to be credited with infused knowledge: intelligible species covering everything to which the passive intellect is in potency have been imprinted by the Word of God on the soul of Christ which is personally united to him, [...] Christ, apart altogether from his divine, uncreated knowledge, has beatific knowledge by which he knows the Word and other things in the Word; and he has infused or endowed knowledge by which he knows things in terms of their own particular natures, through the medium of intelligible species which are adapted to the capacity of the human mind.96

Infused knowledge for Aquinas means intelligible forms implanted in the mind. This means that infused knowledge comes from God, who alone can act directly on the mind; who implants intelligible forms in the passive intellect. It is interesting to note how Aquinas uses metaphysical principles to analyze and explain the existence of infused or endowed knowledge in Christ’s soul which points to the genuineness of Christ’s humanity. Thomas recalls the principle of perfection to assert Christ’s infused knowledge. Thus, the soul of Christ is capable of every activity that is to the nature of the human soul. This explanation by Thomas brings one to the knowledge that the natural endowment of the soul was not wanting in the soul of Christ; the soul of Christ had the capability of the operations of any human soul within the body. It shows that Christ took to Himself a complete human nature composite of body and a soul that is not less perfect than the souls of others (humans).

Aquinas also taught that Christ had beatific knowledge which means the immediate knowledge of God as He is in Himself, and of all things in God. Thomas taught that beatific knowledge, by which the very essence of God is seen, belongs to and is connatural only to God. This as we know is also called divine knowledge. For

96 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 9, 3.
Aquinas, infused knowledge is compatible with beatific knowledge in Christ, not as a stage leading towards beatitude but being confirmed as it were, by beatitude.

 [...] For someone who knows the cause of something is better able to understand the probable indication of it, from which a dialectical syllogism argues. In the same way infused knowledge remains along with beatific knowledge in Christ, not as a stage leading towards beatitude but being confirmed, as it were, by beatitude.  

However, what Thomas means by this is that lower knowledge is not rendered useless by higher knowledge; rather lower knowledge finds confirmation and security in higher knowledge.

Furthermore, Aquinas taught that Christ’s soul had acquired or experiential knowledge. For Aquinas, acquired knowledge means intelligible forms distilled by the active intellect from sensory data. This is knowledge gained through the senses in the normal human manner. Thomas, in his theory of knowledge for humans taught that there are two cognitive powers of the soul: senses which are naturally determined to apprehend particulars and intellect which apprehends universal concepts. But Thomas taught that Christ had acquired knowledge by virtue of the enlightenment provided by the active intellect when he stated:

It must be now stated that Christ had acquired knowledge
This is distinctively human knowledge, both in the way it is received and in the way it is produced. For it is found in Christ because of the enlightenment provided by the active intellect, which is something quite in accord with man’s nature.

Thomas established also that Christ as human knew things by experimental or acquired knowledge. His aim by this argument is to affirm the humanness of Christ not just by positing the existence of acquired knowledge in Christ, but also to show that Christ knew things by acquired knowledge. He made some distinctions to support his argument as he said:

97 Ibid.
98 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 9, 4.
Knowledge of things can be acquired, not only by direct experience we have of them but also by the experience we have of other things. Under the power of active intellect one can proceed to knowing effects from causes, causes from effects, things that are alike from their likeness, opposites from their opposites. Therefore, although did not experience everything, he was able to come to know everything as a result of what he did experience. 99

In his progression of thought, Thomas also taught that Christ did advance and progress in the acquisition of experiential knowledge. When Thomas taught that Christ did grow or advance in knowledge, it is important to note that for Thomas, Christ's active intellect could not have abstracted any new ideas from his sense experience, rather in using the ideas he already had, Christ would have harnessed his imagination.

Christ grew in knowledge and grace [...] as he grew in age. For with his growth in years he did more significant things, things which revealed greater wisdom and grace. As regards the habit of knowledge itself it is clear that his habit of infused knowledge did not increase, because he had all knowledge fully infused from the beginning. 100

Following Thomas’s teaching, one comes to the understanding that Christ did certify and confirm by sense experience what he already knew through infused knowledge; that is what it means according to Thomas to say that Christ grew in knowledge.

However, Thomas pointed out that while infused knowledge and beatific knowledge are effects of an infinitely powerful agent, acquired knowledge is the effect of the active intellect.

Both the infused knowledge of Christ and his beatific knowledge were effects of an infinitely powerful agent, who could do everything all at once. And thus Christ did not make progress in either of these knowledges; he had perfectly from the beginning. But acquired knowledge is caused by the active intellect, which does not do everything all at once but step by step. And thus, with this knowledge, Christ did not know everything from the beginning but gradually in good time— that is, when he was grown up. 101

99 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 12, 1
100 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 12, 2.
101 Ibid.
Thus, Aquinas’s teaching on the existence of beatific knowledge, infused knowledge and acquired knowledge in the human knowledge of Christ truly affirms the real humanity of Christ.

3.4 CHRIST: ONE IN SOLIDARITY WITH HUMANKIND

Christ’s humanity- the Son of God assuming human nature symbolizes in the highest way possible, solidarity with humankind. Christ is seen in the teaching of Aquinas as being in solidarity with mankind. Christ, laying aside His attributes as God became human and became the representative of humankind so as to raise a fallen human race. Christ became one like us (humans) in everything but sin. For this reason, Christ is also referred to as the Second Adam.

In the thoughts of Aquinas, Christ’s solidarity with mankind is shown in the fact that the Son of God took a human nature that is liable to human weakness and disabilities. Thomas began with citing the Scripture in the *sed contra* to support his argument when he said:

> Hebrew says, for because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. Now the very reason he came was to help us. As David says, I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains from whence help shall come to me. Therefore it was appropriate that the Son of God should take on a flesh that was liable to human ailments, so that he could suffer in that flesh, be tempted in it, and so bring us help.\(^{102}\)

Through his argument, Thomas is interested in showing that, in the context of God’s plan for human salvation, it was right for Christ to have had certain bodily disabilities. By accepting Christ’s bodily disabilities, Thomas seeks to highlight the human credibility in Christ’s role for the salvation of mankind. He projects the principle of credibility in the economy of salvation.

\(^{102}\) *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, Q.14, 1.
Thomas established three reasons why it was fitting for the body assumed by the Son of God to have been liable to human weakness and disabilities. He said:

Firstly, because the Son of God took flesh and came into the world to make reparation for the sin of the human race. Now one person atones for the sin of another by talking on himself the punishment due to the sin of the other. These bodily disabilities- death, hunger and thirst and the like- are punishments due to sin that was brought into the world by Adam, according to Romans, ‘therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin’. Hence it was fitting given the purpose of the Incarnation, that he should take these penalties on in the flesh, in place of us. As Isaiah says, surely he hath born our infirmities.\footnote{Ibid.}

For Thomas, Christ’s body had to be liable to suffering so that He would not lack the material for reparation. On account of this first reason, one notices that Aquinas is interested in insuring that our conception of Christ’s humanity allows Him to experience the sufferings which make up our salvation. Thus, it means that Christ’s suffering in bringing human salvation, was real suffering being one in solidarity with humankind. This point is also linked to the ‘satisfaction’ Christ made, expressing the highest love and enduring the greatest suffering in the salvation of humankind.

Thomas in his argument presented a second point why it was fitting for the Son of God to have assumed a body that was liable to disabilities. He points to the fact that Christ’s body was not imaginary but real body. This position confirms that the narratives of the Evangelists in the Scripture about the suffering and death of Christ really happened. Aquinas stated:

Secondly, it builds up faith in the Incarnation. Since human nature is unknown to us except as burdened by these bodily disabilities, if the Son of God had taken on a human nature without them it would seem as if he were not a real man, and that he had not real but imaginary flesh, […]. This is why, as Philippians says, ‘he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form…’ And Thomas is recalled to faith by the sight wound, in John.\footnote{Ibid.}
The explanation by Thomas confirms the fact that what the Son of God assumed was a true human body. He took into account the physical weakness Christ suffered as part of His redemptive mission. The instance of Thomas the Apostle cited here further proves the point that Christ had a true human body that was capable of sustaining wounds and injuries as a result of suffering. Human nature that is known to us is characterized with bodily disabilities, therefore if Christ had taken a human nature that was not liable to disabilities, it would seem as if he took a flesh that was imaginary. Christ ought to have taken a human nature that was liable to disabilities.

The third and final reason given by Thomas why it was fitting for the body assumed by the Son of God to have been liable to human weakness and disabilities is based on being a model of patience for the entire human race. Aquinas said:

Thirdly, because of the example of patience which he gave us in bearing human sufferings and disabilities courageously. As it is put in Hebrew, ‘consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.’

Now, one is able to offer example with himself in a particular thing when he goes through the experience; Christ is said to show an example of patience in suffering by actually going through real suffering in His human body and enduring suffering; if therefore the human body assumed by the Son of God was not liable to real suffering, the Son of God would not have been able to experience real suffering so as to show perseverance in suffering. Following the three reasons, one comes to the understanding that it was fitting for the body assumed by Christ in the Incarnation to be liable to disabilities.

104 Ibid.
105 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 14, 1.
Thomas also taught that disabilities assumed by Christ in His human body as one in solidarity with mankind in no way obstructed the purpose of the incarnation but enhanced it. He said:

The disabilities undertaken by Christ did not obstruct the purpose of the Incarnation but forwarded it in the best possible way, as has been explained. And although his divinity was hidden by these disabilities, they reveal his humanity, which is the way of reaching divinity; the point is made in Romans, We have access to God through Jesus Christ.106

It is important to note that although Thomas explained that it was fitting for the body assumed by the Son of God to be liable to disabilities, Christ did not inherit these defects or disabilities as we all inherited from Adam, rather Christ voluntarily undertook them. Thomas made this distinction through his explanation of the term ‘inherit’ in relation to cause and effect. Thomas explained that while the rest of the human race inherited death and disabilities as the effect caused by the sin of the first man (Adam), Christ did not inherit these disabilities because there was no debt due to sin in Christ’s human nature but He voluntarily undertook these defects or disabilities.

He [Christ] took on human nature without sin, with all the purity it had in the state of innocence. He could, correspondingly, have taken a human nature without any disabilities. Hence it is clear that Christ did not inherit these defects as if he were taking on a debt due to sin; he undertook them voluntarily.107

We recall that earlier in question four, Thomas taught that Christ did not inherit original sin from the first man Adam. ‘[…] , he who came to take away sin had to be removed from sinners as to their sin. Now Adam was subject to that sin and Christ led him out from his sin.’108 Thomas explained that although Christ took human nature that is like ours, the active principle of His conception was not the seed of Adam and that Christ took His material body from the Virgin Mary. This point also imply that

106 Ibid.
107 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 14, 3.
108 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 4, 6.
Christ did not inherit bodily disabilities (which in other humans is the effect of original sin), rather Christ willingly undertook them.

The voluntary undertaking of human nature with the disabilities of the body by Christ in the Incarnation projects Christ as one in solidarity with humankind. This means that Christ assumed human nature in its completeness; a human nature that was real; a human nature that was the same like ours in every way (but sin). Thomas’s teaching on the disabilities of the human nature as undertaken by Christ shows the credibility of Christ’s humanity in the redemptive work of Christ which made ‘satisfaction’ for the salvation of the human race.
CHAPTER FOUR

INPLICATIONS

4.1 CHRIST: MODEL FOR CHRISTIANS

Our consideration of Christ in the theology of Aquinas as one who assumed a true human nature in the Incarnation is inevitable following the progression of thoughts in the ongoing discussion. Christ’s humanity in the thoughts of Aquinas is the same with the human nature that Christians received as humans. In the light of Aquinas, one discovers the fact that Jesus Christ is the perfect model for Christians and that the life of Jesus becomes the norm for all humanity. Christ is a moral example for us (Christians) to follow; but Thomas goes more beyond this moral exemplarity to include what could be termed as ontological exemplarity - which implies, not only acting like Christ, but also being like Him. Christ is an example for us also through how He responds to weakness and suffering; His vulnerability, not just His perfection is a source of grace. For Aquinas, being like Christ means sharing in His identity as the Son of God. Although he recognized that Christ is the only Son of God, Aquinas believes that all Christians possess adoptive filiation - adopted sons and daughters of God.

Throughout Aquinas’s discussion on Christological issues, he often makes reference to the example of Christ. We recall that in the discussion on the fittingness of the Incarnation, Aquinas taught that one of the reasons why the Incarnation was necessary for the restoration of the human race was that Christ in the Incarnation offers example to humanity. Thus, for the reason of being a model for humans, God became human. This was observed in the statement Aquinas made that:

[…] as to right living, we are set an example. Augustine says, in a Christmas sermon, Not man who can be seen, should be followed, but God, who can not be seen. So then, that we
might be shown one who would be both seen and followed, God became man.\textsuperscript{109}

Right living here for Aquinas implies authentic living; the need for one to live a good and true life; acting and living well as a way of communing with God. Analyzing the statement by Aquinas who quoted Augustine, God is to be followed if right living is to be attained; since God who is to be followed can not be seen, therefore God was revealed in Jesus in the human form in the Incarnation- that is to say that God became One who could be seen. ‘To have seen me is to have seen the Father’, (John 14: 9).

We recall that in Chapter one of this thesis, the mystery of the Incarnation was explained as God’s self- revelation in human. Hence in Christ’s humanity, the divinity of God is revealed. On account of this, the mystery of the Incarnation made possible the fact that Christians and human race at large are shown, one who could be seen and followed as model.

We recall that in the second part of the Summa, Thomas’s teaching on moral life which begins with our vocation to beatitude (beatific vision of God) centered on Christ as teacher. It puts Christ as our origin, strength and goal of the moral life. The Teacher is to be followed; thereby He becomes Model or Example. For Aquinas, Christ set an example for humanity (and Christians as religious group). Thomas’s teaching on the mystery of the Person of Christ informs our understanding of his theology of Christ as teacher. We also recall that Aquinas sees Christ as teacher and exemplar of humanity in the sense that the whole life and suffering of Christ serve this end. Aquinas taught this when he proved that it was fitting that Christ led a life of poverty in his human life in this world, (3a, Q. 40, 3). In other words, the life of Christ was in accordance with the message He taught. Both Christ’s life and preaching formed example for Christians to follow.

\textsuperscript{109} Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q.1, 2.
Christ taught and showed example to humanity through his earthly life; the example of love is shown in Christ’s passion on the cross, ‘No greater love than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends,’ (John 15: 13). Aquinas taught that Christ suffered physical ailments such as hunger and thirst to give us (humans) an example of patient endurance of suffering. This is true when he said: ‘because of the example of patience which he [Christ] gave us in bearing human suffering and disabilities courageously, […] so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.’

Thus, for Thomas, Christ serves as perfect example for humanity both in the words Christ said and in all He passed through in His human life. We also recall that according to Thomas, Christ offers us (Christians) an example in our faith even through His temptation.

Christ is set forth to all as an example through faith: We look on Jesus, who is the source of faith and who brings it to perfection. […] And therefore, in order that Christ’s temptation might be an example to us, [Christians] it was not necessary for men to see it, but it was sufficient for to hear it related.

Thomas’s Christology draws one to the understanding that, the life, teaching and work of Christ in the redemption of humanity exemplify every virtue that Christians need in order to live and act rightly according to their vocation to the beatific life.

The teaching of the Second Vatican council also confirms Aquinas’s interpretation presenting Jesus as perfect model and example for Christians of all ages to emulate in order to achieve eternal life. The Church taught that, in the course of Christ’s message, (His life and preaching) Jesus enjoined all Christians without distinction to strive towards perfection and live out their belief as people who follow Him. This is contained in the Council’s teaching that:

The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all

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110 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 14, 1.
111 Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 41, 2.
perfection preached holiness of life to each and everyone. He himself stands as the author and consummator of this holiness of life. ‘Be you therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’.  

The Council agrees with Aquinas’s Christology that Jesus in His Incarnation offers humanity an example; a new model to imitate in our earthly journey as pilgrims. Jesus is interpreted by Aquinas as both Pilgrim and Beholder.

4.2 LIVING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The Christian faith is said to be lived when belief is translated into life; when faith is concretized in daily living; when what is professed is lived; therefore it involves practical living of what is believed. Jesus Christ is basic to the understanding of Christian faith which means that belief in the Person and teaching of Christ is the basis of Christianity. Thus, living the Christian faith implies that Christians must live by the standards of the Gospel of Christ (His words and deeds), striving vigorously to make the Christian values of love, justice, forgiveness, honesty, solidarity, compassion and self-sacrifice present within the human society.

Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged the great work that Aquinas did in explaining the mystery of the Incarnation which reveals the identity of Christ as true God and true human. In his thought, Christ’s mystery reveals the way and truth through which Christians fulfill their goal of attaining beatitude which is their vocation. In the general audience, the Pope said:

In the third part of the Summa, St Thomas studies the mystery of Christ, the way and the truth through which we [Christians] can reach God the Father. In this section he writes almost unparalleled pages on the mystery of Jesus’ Incarnation and passion. […], for our [Christians] journey of faith towards God and eternal life.  

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112 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, (November 21, 1964), 40.
The Pope’s statement on the Christians’ journey of faith towards God and eternal life implies the living out of the Christian faith. Thus, living out the Christian faith should be done emulating Christ who is the perfect model for Christians.

It is interesting to note that Thomas Aquinas devoted the entire question forty in the third part of the Summa on Christ’s manner of life. Since living the Christian faith implies following the example of Christ in His earthly life, Aquinas draws our attention to the way Christ lived His life on earth. Thomas began his teaching on the manner of Christ’s life by establishing the fact that it was fitting that Christ associated with others during His earthly life. The Angelic Doctor stated:

Christ manner of life had to be in keeping with the end of the Incarnation, according to which end he came into the world. Now he came into the world, first, in order to manifest the truth, as he himself says, I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth. And therefore he should not have hidden himself by leading a solitary life, but have moved about openly by preaching in public.\textsuperscript{114}

Through this argument, Thomas taught that Christ did not lead an isolated life; rather Christ associated and interacted with people. For Thomas, Christ had to associate with others also for the reason of giving humans [Christians] access to God. He said:

[...], he came so that through him we might have access to God, as it is written. And thus, it was fitting for him to give men confidence in approaching him by associating familiarly with them. [...] Christ wished to manifest his divinity through his humanity. And therefore, by associating with men, as is proper to man, he manifested to all his divinity by preaching and working miracles and by leading among men a blameless and righteous life.\textsuperscript{115}

On account of Thomas’s teaching that it was fitting for Christ to have associated with others (humans) in Christ’s manner of life, there are some important lessons Christians must learn in order to live the Christian faith;

\textsuperscript{113} Benedict XVI, General Audience, Paul VI Hall, Wednesday, 23 June 2010.  
\url{www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audience/2010/document/hf_ben-xvi_aud_2010063_en.html}  

\textsuperscript{114} Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 40, 1.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
First, bearing witness to the truth always; Christians in their daily living must learn to
be like Christ bearing witness to the truth. This means that Christians should live
transparent life; being always truthful in their dealings with fellow humans and saying
the truth always; bearing in mind that truth is justice done.

Secondly, maintaining good human relation with others. Like Christ, every Christian
is expected to live in harmony with each other, imbibing the spirit of tolerance and
appreciating the life of each other for the common good of the society.

Thirdly, humility; we recall that Aquinas taught that Christ wished to manifest his
divinity through his humanity by associating with humans. Now, Christ’s association
with humans is regarded as the height of humility; that Christ in whom the divine is
reveal could stoop low to associate with men. In the same way, following Christ,
Christians are expected to live a life of humility in their daily living, knowing that
Christ came not to be served but to serve.

On Christ’s manner of life, Aquinas through his argument also established the
fact that Christ abided by the Law. Thomas taught this when he said:

Christ abided by all the precepts of the Law. In token of
this he wished even to be circumcised; for circumcision
is a kind of protestation of one’s intent to keep the law: I
testify to every man who accepts circumcision, that he is
obliged to keep the whole Law.\footnote{Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 40, 4.}

Here, Thomas showed through his argument that Christ abided by the Law. Thomas
gave reasons for this; ‘first, certainly to show his [Christ’s] approval of the Old Law.
Secondly, so that by observing it he [Christ] might perfect it and bring it to an end in
himself, showing that it was ordained to him.’\footnote{Ibid.} Although Thomas gave two other
reasons to support his argument, the above mentioned reasons already prove the point
that Christ abided by the Law.

\footnote{Summa Theologiae, 3a, Q. 40, 4.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
Given that living the Christian faith involves living like Christ and being like Christ, Thomas’s teaching that Christ abided by the Law also provides Christians with some lessons to learn from the life of Christ; therefore, in living the Christian faith, Christians are expected to abide by the Law in these ways:

First, obedience to God’s Law; it is already part of the Christian calling to obey God’s Law which leads to eternal beatitude as the goal of Christian life. Following the teaching of Aquinas, Christ as perfect example for Christians taught God’s law to His audience (humans) and in obedience to the Father abided by it. Therefore Christians are obliged to abide by God’s Law.

Second, obedience to the Law of the society; since the human Law is derived from the divine law and according to Aquinas, the human law is promulgated for the common good of the society; Christians looking up to Christ their Model should always abide by the Law of the society for in doing so, they are also living the Christian faith.

### 4.3 GENERAL CONCLUSION

Many Christians today have an honest longing to learn how to experience a deeper and authentic Christian life despite the difficulties they face in the modern times as a result of the pluralism of the modern era. Nevertheless, faced with this phenomenon, many still seek for an understanding of the doctrinal teaching of the Church on the identity of Christ as a sure guide to understanding the Christian life. No doubt, there is no demonstration of real Christianity than Christ himself; in other words, the authentic Christian life in its purest and most consistent form is revealed in the life of Christ.

On the other hand, some had problem understanding, applying and identifying with the example of Jesus because they think that Christ as the Son of God has
advantage over the rest of us humans. This may be as a result of the fact that they understand Christ to have drawn supernatural power to resist evil during His human life on earth, and achieved great things in a manner that humans may not be able to do. Consequently, they may ask how one can possible pattern his life after the life of a perfect Person who was God in the flesh.

Following our discussion so far in this thesis, in the light of Aquinas, we come to the understanding that Jesus was fully God and at the same time He was fully human, with all the limitations that go with humanity. By implication, it therefore means that we (Christians) can live our lives as Christ lived; we can base our lives on the model Christ did set before us. The fact that Christ’s life is livable is a practical truth that the Scriptures attest to. ‘For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin’ (Hebrew 4: 15). Again, ‘because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted’ (Hebrew 2: 18). Thus, the encouragement for Christians to strive towards living like Christ and being like Christ is contained in the part of the Scripture that said: ‘To this you [Christians] were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps’ (1 Peter 2: 21).

Thomas Aquinas as we saw throughout this thesis gave a logical interpretation of the genuineness of Christ’s humanity and also established His divinity; as such, there were two natures in the Person of Christ. Thus, he also established the fittingness of the Incarnation and showed that the Incarnation was the best way for the salvation of the human race. Thomas guided us to the understanding that the human nature assumed by Christ in the Incarnation was the same with ours (humans) except sin. Following Thomas’s teaching, it means that Christ lived the same kind of life;
facing temptation, suffering pain and sorrow and enduring frustration. He (Christ) approached life the same way we (Christians) are expected to approach life.

From the teaching of Thomas, we draw the inference that Jesus also lived in dependence on God the Father, seeking guidance and strength through continual prayer, trusting God and listening to His leading and also being humbly obedient.- ‘Not my will but your will be done’ (Matthew 26:39). Jesus was observed by the Disciples as saying that He (Christ) came to do the will of the Father who sent Him. Jesus had and practiced the Christian virtue of obedience

However, to live an authentic Christian life is to pattern one’s life after the examples of Christ; since Christ was like us in every way but sin, Christians can also live as Christ did. Thus, Christians are called to live by the standard of the Gospel of Christ (His life and preaching), striving to make the Christian values (which were present in the life of Christ) visible within the human society. Authentic Christianity therefore consists in being an imitator of Christ.
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