CHRISTOLOGY NOTES 2021

Your face, Lord, do I seek. (Ps 27:8)

The desire to see Jesus dwells deep in the heart of each man and each woman.
...allow Jesus to gaze into your eyes so that the desire to see the Light, and
to experience the splendour of the Truth, may grow within you.
Whether we are aware of it or not, God has created us because he loves
us and so that we in turn may love him. This is the reason for the unquenchable
nostalgia for God that man preserves in his heart:
"Your face, Lord, do I seek.
Do not hide your face from me" (Ps 27: 8-9).
That Face - we know - was revealed to us by God in Jesus Christ. (St John Paul II)[1]

Figure 1. Cover: *Jesus Christ Pantocrator*, 13th c. Hagia Sophia, Istanbul.

[1] John Paul II, *Message to the Youth of The World*.

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ANF	Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.)
CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*
DS	Denzinger-Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum,* (1965).
NPNF	Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1997).
PL	J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina*, (Paris: 1841-1855).
PG	J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca*, (Paris, 1857-1866).
STh	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948).

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Introduction

> Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.[2]

As Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Incarnation of Christ and His mission to redeem us are an essential part of the Good News, and a reason for Christian joy. We come to know and love Jesus Christ, first through being evangelized, receiving the Good News from Christians carrying out the Church's mission to make Christ known to everyone and bring them into the Church through the Baptism, often initially from our parents. We grow in faith through encountering Christ personally: in prayer, in the liturgy and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, in reading of the Scriptures, guided by the Holy Spirit in the Church; and in the poor.

What is Christology?

Christology is the theological study of the person and mission of Jesus Christ. The term 'Christology' is made up of the words 'Christ' and 'logos' (treatise), meaning treatise, or study of Christ.[3] It helps us answer the question: Who is Jesus Christ?

As a theological study, Christology uses reason enlightened by faith. We will return to this point later.

Sources for the study of Christology:

1. *Divine Revelation*

    a. *Sacred Scripture*, 'the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit'.[4]

        i. There is a church saying that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.[5] We look at the Old Testament as it looks forward to Christ, reading it in light of God's Revelation in the New Testament, and in the person of Christ.

        ii. The New Testament contains the apostles' testimony and teachings as written down by some of them. It testifies directly to what Christ said and did and also to what the apostles and first Christians taught and believed. The Gospels are the

[2] Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Encyclical Letter, 25.12.2005, n. 1, cited in Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation, 24.11.2013, n. 7.

[3] F. Ocáriz, L.F. Mateo Seco, & J.A. Riestra, *The Mystery of Jesus Christ: A Christology and Soteriology Textbook*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 1, n. 2.

[4] *CCC*, n. 81.

[5] *CCC*, n. 129; St Augustine, "Questions on the Heptateuch" 2.73, in, John Rotelle, ed. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Writings on the Old Testament*, vol. I/14 (New York: New City Press, 1994).

> heart of the Scriptures 'for they are the principal witness for the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our Savior'.[6]

b. *Sacred Tradition.* The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament. Sacred Tradition testifies to and transmits what was believed and taught by the apostles as they received it from Christ, taught it and passed it on to their successors.[7] An important source of Sacred Tradition is the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

The Church does not derive certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone, but from both Scripture and Tradition.[8]

2. *Magisterium (teaching office) of the Church*

The Magisterium is not a source of Divine Revelation. Rather, the sacred 'deposit' of Divine Revelation has been entrusted to the Church. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit it safeguards, studies, interprets and applies it.[9]

> [The] Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it … All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.[10]

Of particular importance here are the early Ecumenical Councils. They examined early questions about Jesus Christ in response to early heresies, and their teachings are still repeated today in the Creed we recite at Sunday Mass, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The most important teachings of the Magisterium in relation to Jesus Christ are set out in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

3. *The Saints & Doctors of the Church*

Some of the saints and doctors of the Church have left us a great gift in the depth and clarity of their explanations of the faith. The Church has consistently recommended the study of the works of St Thomas Aquinas.[11] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* frequently draws on the writings of the saints to elucidate the teachings of the faith.

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[6] Second Vatican Council, "*Dei Verbum*: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation", 18.11.1965, n. 18; *CCC,* n. 125.

[7] *CCC*, nn. 81-83. 'Sacred Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.' *CCC,* n. 83.

[8] *CCC*, n. 83.

[9] *CCC*, nn. 84-87.

[10] *CCC,* n. 86.

[11] *Code of Canon Law*, Can. 252, 3. See also Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, *Aeterni Patris*, 4.8.1879; Paul VI, Apostolic Letter, *Lumen Ecclesiae*, 20.11.1974.

To understand Jesus Christ, we need to understand His mission.[12] So before moving into the following chapters, it is useful to briefly outline the context for Christ's work of salvation, and His role as the expected Messiah.

Figure 2. *The Temptation of Adam and Eve*, Michelangelo, 1512.

Background and Context: Jesus, The Expected Messiah

> God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

Jesus is the son of God. He is the promised Messiah, the Saviour. The mystery of Jesus the Messiah is wrapped up with the history of humankind, especially its sinfulness and our need for salvation. Announcing the coming of Jesus, the angel tells St Joseph that Mary will bear a son, and to 'call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' (Mt 1:21).

To understand Jesus Christ we need to understand sin, because the son of God became man in order to redeem us from sin.

Human beings thirst for happiness, a desire that is planted in our hearts by God, and which can only be truly satisfied by the infinite God Himself. At the same time,

> Examining his heart, man finds that he has inclinations toward evil too, and is engulfed by manifold ills which cannot come from his good Creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal as well as his whole relationship toward himself and others and all created things.[13]

[12] The following section is based on Ocáriz, Mateo Seco, & Riestra, *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 23-48.

[13] Second Vatican Council, "*Gaudium et Spes:* Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", 7.12.1965, n. 13.

The experience of evil, including the struggle between good and evil within, goes back to original sin, reinforced by our own personal sins.

Alone, human beings are unable to attain the happiness for which we yearn. In Jesus our dignity and destiny are made clear to us; we understand who we are and to what we are called; and through Him it is made possible for us to attain it. 'The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.'[14] Jesus reminds us that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and through Him we become His sons.

A. *Genesis*

The drama begins in the first chapters of *Genesis* with Creation, the temptation of Adam and Eve, and the Fall. Although the People of God in the Old Testament tried to understand the human condition in the light of the history of the fall narrated in *Genesis*, they could not grasp this story's ultimate meaning, which is revealed only in the light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam as the source of sin.[15]

Genesis reveals that:

- *We are made in the image and likeness of God*. We are persons, endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and with free will. We see the mystery of God's love, that He has wanted to make us free, able to know and love Him, and be on intimate terms with Him.

- *Our end is supernatural.* We are ordered to God from our very conception and destined for eternal beatitude.[16] Our end is 'supernatural' as it surpasses our nature and natural capacities. God allows us to love Him not only with human energy but also with grace, raising us above our nature to share in his divine life and blessings, which we could never attain on our own.[17] 'No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him' (1 Cor 2:9). We are made for communion with God, the Beatific Vision, seeing and loving God as He is. We become children of God. 'See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are' (1 Jn 3:1). The supernatural life of grace makes God present in man.

The Destruction of God's Image Through Sin: We started out in God's grace in state of justice and holiness, with supernatural and preternatural gifts which were not strictly part of human nature. At the beginning of history, humankind, tempted by the Evil One, set themselves against God and sought to attain happiness for themselves apart from God. As a consequence of this original sin Adam and Eve lost the supernatural and preternatural gifts. They cut themselves off from God, destroying their supernatural likeness to God and wounding the perfection of their natural likeness to the creator.

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[14] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.
[15] *CCC,* n. 388.
[16] *CCC,* n. 1711.
[17] 2 Pet 1:4.

Christ is the Redeemer. He restores to us the image of God obscured in us by, and the supernatural life lost to us, by original sin.

> The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the 'reverse side' of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ… [W]e cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.[18]

The state of original sin, a loss of the supernatural life and a wounded human nature, was the state inherited by all humankind. While human nature was wounded, left weak and inclined to sin, it was not corrupted, nor was free will destroyed.[19]

Man cannot redeem himself: Having lost these gifts, human beings could not re-acquire grace, the supernatural life or to attain by themselves the supernatural destiny for which God had created them. Only God could restore what was lost by original sin.[20] We are *capable* of being redeemed by God, but not of redeeming ourselves. What we can do is, with the help of God's grace, repent and open ourselves to receive it.[21]

Promise of the Redeemer: The 'Protogospel': After the Fall, God did not abandon humankind. In the aftermath of original sin, God promised a Saviour. The first announcement of the Redeemer is made in God's words to the serpent: 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel' (Gn 3:15).

This passage is referred to as the 'Protogospel', the first announcement of the Good News of salvation to come. In light of the New Testament the text is understood in two complementary ways. The woman is traditionally seen as Eve directly and Mary fully, and the offspring as the human race, and as Christ.[22]

God, in fact, constantly exercised his providence and care for humankind. In his own time He formed the People of Israel, and progressively revealed Himself to them. He taught them to look for the promised Saviour and prepared them to receive the Gospel.

B. The Preparation of Israel

God chose the People of Israel. He entered into a special relationship with them, in which He gradually revealed Himself to them and entered into a series of covenants with them. The People of Israel learned how to live according to God's will. Over time they were prepared for the new and perfect Covenant to be made in Christ, and the fuller revelation of God that came when the Word of God became flesh. As St Paul put it:

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[18] *CCC,* n. 389.

[19] Luther claimed that human nature was corrupted by original sin and that it was no longer possible for man to do good. The Council of Trent condemned this as false. Council of Trent: DS 1528.

[20] See Israel's awareness of this in the Old Testament. (Ps 32:1, Rom 4:7, Ps 65:4). In the New Testament Christ's power to forgive sins is seen as a sign of his divinity (Mk 2:5-12).

[21] St Augustine speaks of free cooperation with divine grace. It is not a purely 'passive justification' like that taught by Luther where the only thing one had to do was 'believe' that one was saved by Christ. Richard Rex, *The Making of Martin Luther*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 85.

[22] On interpretations of this text, see *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 33-34.

> In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Hb 1:1-2).

Covenants in the Old Testament: The formation of the people of Israel begins with God's call to Abraham and his promise to make him into a great nation. 'And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing' (Gn 12:2).[23]

The Covenants God establishes with his Abraham and his descendants were alliances, or pacts, that established special bonds between the parties. They gave rise to rights and duties - blessings promised by God, and obligations assumed by the people, and were usually ratified with a sacrifice. The biblical scholar Scott Hahn explains the series of covenants in the history of our salvation as covenants by which God builds up his people in preparation for our Redemption by Christ.

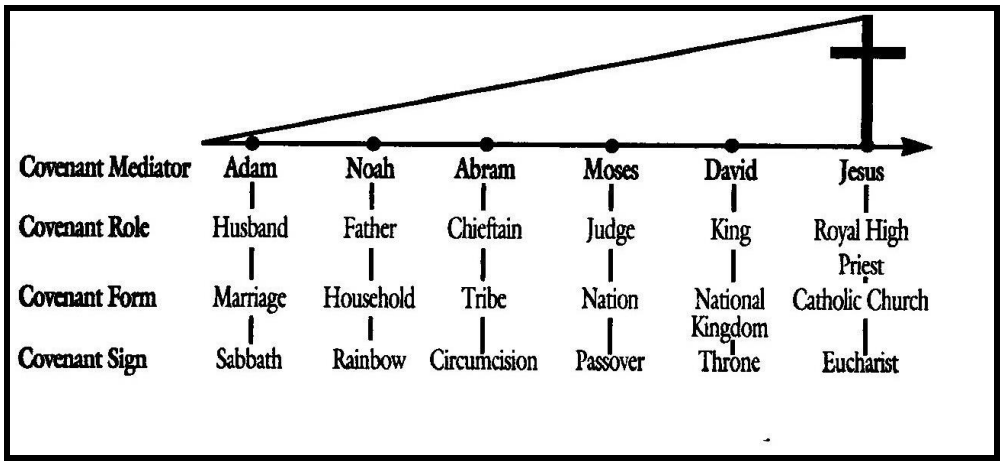

Figure 3. *Covenants in Sacred Scripture*. Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Love in Covenant Scripture*, (Ann Arbour: Servant Books, 1998), 12.

Hahn notes five features of Biblical covenants:

1. **Covenant Mediator**: the person God covenants with
2. **Covenant Role**: who the mediator represents
3. **Covenant Form**: form of God's People
4. **Covenant Sign**: sign by which the covenant will be celebrated & remembered.
5. **Promises & Conditions**: blessings God promises, conditions the people agree to, & consequences for infidelity

God established a covenant with Noah and his household after the Flood (Gn 9-10), promising never to destroy the world again. The sign of the covenant was the rainbow.

God called Abraham to leave his home and his people, and Abraham, the model of faith, obeyed. God established a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gn 12: 1-3, 15-17,22: 16-18, 26, 28, 35), promising to make Abraham a great nation and through them to bless all the nations of the earth.

[23] The notes in this section are based on Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture*, (Ann Arbour: Servant Books, 1998).

> In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house, and makes him Abraham, that is, 'the father of a multitude of nations'. 'In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.'[24]

The descendants of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob formed the twelve tribes of Israel. During four hundred years in Egypt, they multiplied and, with the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the Covenant in the desert, God formed them into a nation and made them His Chosen People (Ex 6:2-8; 19-34). The sign of the Covenant was the Passover. St Paul called the Ten Commandments, supplemented by the Mosaic Law, 'our custodian until Christ came' (Gal 3:24).

Later, God established a covenant with King David as representative of the kingdom of Israel. (2 Sam 7), promising to establish David's kingdom forever through one of his descendants. Through this descendant of David God promises to give wisdom to all the nations. It is revealed that the Messiah will be a descendant of David and rule, not only over Israel, but over all nations.

The Covenants prepared the way for the Redemption by establishing a people from whom the Redeemer would come; and announced that this Messiah-Redeemer would be the son of David (therefore a man), and also God, 'God with Us' (Is 7:14).

The prophets, especially Jeremiah and Isaiah, confirmed and added to knowledge about the Messiah: he will be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:1); he will belong to the house of King David (Is 11:1); he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and 'shall execute justice and righteousness in the land' (Jer 23:5); a young woman 'shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel', God with us. (Is 7:14). They taught Israel to hope for a Messiah who would bring 'a new covenant', through which God's law would be written on men's and women's hearts.[25] The prophets maintained the spirit of the people during their time of exile and domination by the Assyrians and Babylonians, encouraging them to turn their hearts back to God, and to expect the Messiah. This was sustained through the domination of Israel by a succession of foreign powers including the Persians, Greeks and Romans. By the time of the Incarnation of Christ there was a climate of expectation of the Messiah among the Jewish people.

C. The New Covenant

The Covenants were a preparation for and announcement of Christ, and Jesus fulfilled all the promises God made in the Covenants.[26] In Christ God established a New Covenant (Mt 26:28; 16:17-19*)*, bringing about a new relationship between God and humankind. Through our redemption in Christ and Baptism, we are readmitted to the supernatural life to become adopted children of God (Ex 4:22, Hos 11:1).

The New Covenant extends to all humankind. The Catholic (universal) Church is the People of God. The sign of the New Covenant is the Eucharist, as the Passover was sign of the Covenant with Moses. In Christ the most perfect and definitive covenant is established between God and man: true God and true Man in the personal union, Christ establishing in his blood the new and permanent covenant between God and all mankind (Mt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25).

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[24] *CCC,* n. 59.

[25] See Jer 31:31-34; Hb 8:8-12.

[26] This section is based on Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*.

D. The Mission of the Messiah

The prophet Isaiah described the mission of the Messiah, whom he calls the Servant of Yahweh (Is 42:1-7, 49:1-9, 50: 4-9, Is 52:13-53:12). This Servant is the chosen one of God, in whom God takes delight. These words are recalled by God at the Baptism and Transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 3:17, 17:5). The Servant is a suffering and meek prophet, filled with the spirit of God, who will bring holiness to all nations. At one point in *Isaiah*, the Servant Himself speaks, identifying Himself with the People, but also identifying Himself as an individual destined to gather all the people around God. Isaiah describes the opposition and persecution the Servant will undergo, and the Servant's innocence.

When the Old Testament is read on its own the Servant is not obviously identified with Jesus. Read in light of the New Testament we see in this prophecy the Passion and Death of Christ and his sacrifice for our Redemption. He is the Messiah who comes into the world to bear testimony to the truth and is rejected, and his death is the cause of the justification of many. The Servant is the King-Messiah, Jesus Christ.[27]

There are many other passages in the Old Testament that point to Christ. We will look at some of these in the following chapters.

E. Preparation of the Gentiles

God prepared the way for the coming of the Redeemer through forming the people of Israel, and progressively revealing Himself to them, but also had in mind the other nations, the Gentiles. (Acts 14:16-17). God promised Abraham that through his descendants 'all the nations of the earth shall be blessed' (Gn 12:3). King Solomon, son of David, prayed at the dedication of the Temple, that through the People of Israel the Gentiles would also come to know the true God (1 Kgs 8: 41-43, 60).

Even in state of original sin, man did find ways to recognize the creator, and in their hearts find the desire for and inclination towards good. Religion is something universal; man has a religious sense. Every religion is in some way a religion of salvation, about freeing man from evil and suffering. Awareness of the need for redemption. This vague sense of the need for redemption gave them an openness of hearing the true salvation in time.

Faith & Reason

> Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.[28]

Christology is a part of Theology.. Theology is a branch of knowledge that deals with God viewed in light of Divine Revlation. St Anselm explained theology as 'faith seeking understanding'.[29] Faith is essential for the study of theology. As St John Paul II explained, theology is

[27] See, for example, Mt 27:29-31, Jn 12:38; Acts 8:32-33.

[28] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, Encyclical Letter, 14.9.1998, Introduction.

> a task which belongs exclusively to the believer … a task inspired and sustained by faith at every single moment and by that unlimited questioning and searching.[30]

The study of theology uses reason enlightened by faith. In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace.[31] Pope John Paul II dedicated his great encyclical *Fides et Ratio* to exploring the relationship between faith and reason.

> Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is philosophy, which is directly concerned with asking the question of life's meaning and sketching an answer to it. … The term philosophy means 'love of wisdom'. Born and nurtured when the human being first asked questions about the reason for things and their purpose, philosophy shows in different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It is an innate property of human reason to ask why things are as they are, even though the answers which gradually emerge are set within a horizon which reveals how the different human cultures are complementary.[32]

Today, philosophy

> clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man. From this starting-point, human reason with its many questions has developed further its yearning to know more and to know it ever more deeply. … Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. It has happened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned. …
>
> While, on the one hand, philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and its forms of expression, it has also tended to pursue issues … which ignore the radical question of the truth about personal existence, about being and about God. Hence we see … attitudes of widespread distrust of the human being's great capacity for knowledge. … People rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence.

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[29] St. Anselm, *Proslogion*, trans. S.N. Deane, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1926), 1.

[30] John Paul II, *Address to Teachers of Theology*, 1.11.1982.

[31] *CCC*, n. 155.

[32] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 3.

> In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers to these questions has dwindled.[33]

John Paul II explains that the relationship between theology and philosophy is 'best construed as a circle.'[34] Theology's starting-point must always be the word of God, while its final goal will be a deeper understanding of that word. The human search for truth, philosophy, helps us understand God's word better.

> What matters most is that the believer's reason use its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the word of God towards a better understanding of it. It is as if, moving between the twin poles of God's word and a better understanding of it, reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple. Instead, reason is stirred to explore paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take. This circular relationship with the word of God leaves philosophy enriched, because reason discovers new and unsuspected horizons.[35]

The Knowledge of Faith

> Besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known. Based upon God's testimony and enjoying the supernatural assistance of grace, faith is of an order other than philosophical knowledge which depends upon sense perception and experience and which advances by the light of the intellect alone. Philosophy and the sciences function within the order of natural reason; while faith, enlightened and guided by the Spirit, recognizes in the message of salvation the 'fullness of grace and truth' which God has willed to reveal.[36]

> The knowledge of faith expresses a truth based upon the very fact of God who reveals himself, a truth which is most certain, since God neither deceives nor wishes to deceive.[37]

> Through this Revelation, men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history. … 'Only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light'. Seen in any other terms, the mystery of personal existence remains an insoluble riddle. Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection?[38]

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains,

[33] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 5.
[34] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 73.
[35] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 73.
[36] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 9.
[37] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 8.
[38] *Fides et Ratio*, n. 10.

Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. the humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are.[39]

[39] *CCC*, n. 159.

Figure 4. *The Trinity*, Holy Sepulchre Basilica, Jerusalem, 19th c.

Chapter 1: Jesus Christ's Humanity

Figure 5. *Jesus Christ Pantocrator*, 13th c. Hagia Sophia, Istanbul.

Chapter 1: Jesus Christ's Humanity

1.1 The Historical Existence of Jesus

Our Lord Jesus Christ lived in a definite moment in history, a *true man*, born of the Virgin Mary.[40] The historical existence of Jesus Christ is *a truth of faith*, an essential Christian belief contained in the Symbols of Faith (Creeds) and dogmatic definitions of the Church.

We have four accounts of Jesus' life. These are the Gospels written by St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke, and St John. Non-Christian writings also attest to the historical existence of Jesus. Flavius Joseph, a Jewish historian from the first century, referred to Jesus in his *Jewish Antiquities*.[41]

Tacitus, a Roman historian, mentioned Jesus Christ in his *Annals of Imperial Rome*, while recounting the persecution of the Christians under the Emperor Nero following the burning of Rome in 64 AD specifically that Christ was executed by order of the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius.

> Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.[42]

Jesus lived at a concrete time and in a concrete place. The Gospels do not tell us the year of Jesus' birth, but working from events mentioned in the gospels, it seems to have been around 4 - 6BC. The gospels tell us that Jesus was born during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus (27BC - 14AD), when Herod was the king in Judea (37BC – 4BC).[43]

St Luke tells us that St John the Baptist began baptizing

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[40] The material in these chapters is adapted from José María Pujol Bertrán, "*God Made Man: Jesus Christ the Incarnate and Redeeming Word*", *in* Charles Belmonte (ed.), Faith Seeking Understanding, vol. 1, (Manila: Studium Theologiae Foundation, 2006), 251-310. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* takes up the subject of Jesus Christ as Man in nn. 456-483.

[41] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chapter 3, 3. The principal reference in the text may have been interpolated by a later Christian writer, however a later reference to 'the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James' appears genuine.

[42] Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 15, XV, 1, 4. Suetonius, in his *Life of Claudius*, c. 120, recorded that the Emperor Claudius had expelled Jews from Rome who 'were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus'. Suetonius, *Vita Claudii*, XXV, 4, quoted in *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 50. In the early second century, Roman Governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, wrote to Emperor Trajan that a large number of people were gathering 'on a designated day, before dawn, to sing hymns to Christ as to a god'. Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* X.96.

[43] The current calendar dates are based on calculations made in the 5th and 6th which used the birth of Jesus to divide history into two periods, BC & AD. The references they used to date this were a little imprecise, and it is now suggested that Jesus was actually born earlier than originally calculated, in the 'BC' period.

> in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene (Lk 3:1).

Tiberius was the Roman Emperor from 14 - 37AD, so the fifteenth year would have been around 29AD. Jesus' public life would have begun around that time. We know that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea (26 - 36AD) during the reign I Judea of Herod the Tetrach (4BC - 39AD),[44] at the instigation of the high priest Caiaphas (high priest 18AD - 36AD).[45] Allowing for three Passovers during Our Lord's public life, scholars have tried to calculate the year of the Passion with reference to the Passovers that fell on Fridays between 29 and 36 AD, settling on 30 - 33AD, probably the later date.

Figure 6. ***Judea in the First Century.***

[44] *The Navarre Bible: The Gospel of Saint Luke*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1987), 63, n. 1.

[45] *The Navarre Bible: The Gospel of Saint Luke*, 63, n. 2.

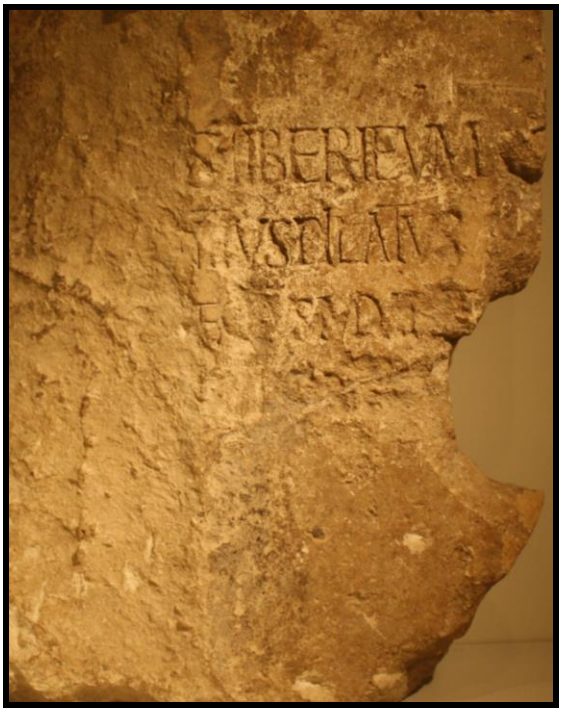

Figure 7. *The Pilate Stone*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

This partial inscription in stone refers to Pontius Pilate, Governor/Prefect of Judea during the life of Christ. It reads:

[*DIS AUGUSTI*]S TIBERIÉUM	*To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum*
[*...PONTI*]US PILATUS	… *Pontius Pilate*
[*...PRAEF*]ECTUS IUDA[*EA*]E	… *prefect of Judea*
[*...FECIT D*]E[*DICAVIT*]	… *has dedicated [this]*

1.2 Jesus' Human Nature

Jesus is true Man with a human body and a human spiritual soul.

a) Jesus' Human Body

> I believe in Jesus Christ, who was *conceived* by the power of the Holy Spirit, *born* of the Virgin Mary, *suffered* under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, *died*, and was buried.

In the Creed the Church professes that Jesus Christ is a true man, born of a woman, and capable of suffering and dying. Divine Revelation teaches that Jesus Christ was a true man, who had a real body. Being newly born, he was wrapped in swaddling clothes. During his life, he would eat and drink (Mt 4:2, 11:19, Jn 4:7, 19:28), get tired, and sleep (Mt 8:24).

One of the earliest heresies against the Christian faith concerned Christ's human nature, specifically, whether or not He really had a human body. This heresy was called Docetism. It appeared in the first century and, taking various forms (eg Gnosticism, dualism and Manichaeanism), lasted several

centuries.[46] The Docetists refused to believe that Christ had a real human body, and therefore that he suffered or died. Christ's body was only apparent (*dokein* = to appear).[47] The Incarnation was just a manifestation of God in the apparent form of a man.[48]

The Docetists held that Jesus Christ did not have a true body, but used an *apparent* body, like the angels when they appeared to men. They said that Jesus' death on the Cross was impossible and unworthy of the Son of God. Essentially this heresy grew out of a dualist notion that regarded matter and, more specifically the human body, as evil and therefore totally inappropriate for God to assume.[49]

St John the Apostle, who lived to see this heresy, testified to the bodily existence of Jesus:

> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands. (1 Jn 1:1).

He opposed the docetist heresy, writing:

> Many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 Jn 7),

and affirmed that 'every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God' (1 Jn 4:2).

The Church Fathers, following St John, also fought this heresy, especially because of its consequences for our Redemption. If Christ was not true Man, if he did not have a human body then he did not die or rise again to Redeem us. As St Paul taught, if Christ did not die and rise again, our faith is in vain (cf 1 Cor 15:14).[50] Furthermore, if Jesus did not have a real body, we would not have His Real Presence in the Eucharist, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

b) Jesus' Rational (Spiritual) Soul

Jesus had a human soul that, like ours, was rational and spiritual. We see references to Jesus soul in the accounts of the Passion. Jesus prayed '"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"' (Lk 23:46), and 'he bowed his head and gave up his spirit' (Jn 19:30).

The human soul possesses the spiritual faculties of Intellect and free will. Both of these are seen operating in the life of Christ. For example, Our Lord's human will is seen in the garden of Olives when he showed a natural repugnance towards the Passion and prayed '"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"' (Mt 26:39).

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[46] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 55.

[47] Alternatively, Christ had a body but it was a heavenly one, not earthly; he was not incarnate from the Virgin Mary but 'passed through' her without being formed from her flesh and blood; or he appeared in Judea without having to be born at all. *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 55-6.

[48] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 5, n. 18.

[49] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 56.

[50] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 5, n. 18. 'The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son 'come in the flesh'. *CCC,* n. 465.

Origen, an early Christian writer, commented 'one cannot doubt about the nature of his [Jesus'] soul, which is that of all souls.'[51] In the early Church Councils the Church responded to Christological heresies, confirming that Christ had a complete human nature like ours. Christ is 'perfect ... in his humanity, ... truly man composed of body and rational soul... consubstantial with us in his humanity.'[52]

Two early heresies about Christ's human soul came from Arius and Apollinaris. They denied that the Word assumed a human soul.[53] Many Fathers and early Church Councils condemned this teaching, saying that Christ assumed our nature, body and soul, in order to redeem us, body and soul.[54]

c) Jesus Christ Was Conceived and Born of the Virgin Mary.

> By His incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united Himself with each man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, 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.[55]

The Incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary was a key event in salvation history, part of the Good News, directly related to His salvific mission.[56] 'When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal 4:4-5). St Matthew's gospel account emphasizes that the conception of Jesus took place in a miraculous way, without the involvement of a man. He relates the event to the prophecy of Isaiah (Is 7:14) concerning the Immanuel, saying that the prophesy is fulfilled in Christ.

> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Is 7:14).
>
> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). (Mt 1:18-23)

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[51] Origen, *De Principiis*, 2, 6, 5 (*ANF* 4).

[52] The *Council of Chalcedon* (AD 451). DS 301; see also *CCC,* nn. 471-475.

[53] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 58.

[54] Mystery of Jesus Christ, 59-60. 'If Jesus Christ did not have a soul, the Word of God would have had to substitute for it (as Arius and Apollinaris claimed), and therefore would have had to carry out its functions. Now as the soul is the substantial form of the body, the Word would have been the substantial form of the body of Jesus Christ. But this is absurd, because God cannot enter into composition with any creature. Moreover, if Christ did not have a soul, he would not have been a true man, and therefore could not be the Mediator and Redeemer of men.' Pujol Bertrán, "*God Made Man*", 259.

[55] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

[56] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 52-3.

St Luke also recounts the virginal conception of Jesus.

> The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35).

He concludes with the angel's words '"With God nothing will be impossible"' (Lk 1:37), indicating the miraculous nature of Jesus' conception.

Jesus was truly the son of Mary: 'Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit' (Mt 1:18); "Do not be afraid, Mary, … behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (Lk 1:30-31). As we pray in the Creed, Jesus became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man.

Jesus could have been conceived in the normal human way, without the miracle of virginity, but theologians have suggested that the virgin birth was fitting for the following reasons:

- It was appropriate that Jesus, being one Person, should be the son of the Father in his humanity as well as his divinity, rather than also having an earthly father.
- The virginal conception makes it clear that Christ is an exclusive gift from God the Father to humankind and, in the first instance, to Mary.[57]

Finally, the miraculous manner of his conception does not detract from the reality of Jesus' human nature. As St Leo the Great wrote,

> this marvellously unique and uniquely marvellous generation must not be understood as if by the new mode of creation some property of the (human) race were removed.[58]

d) Jesus, a member of the human race.

Born of the virgin Mary, Jesus is truly one of us, not only because he has a body and soul like ours, but also because he belongs to the human family, a descendant of Adam and Eve, through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and over the course of generations, 'descended from David according to the flesh' (Rom 1:3; cf Lk 1:27).[59] St Matthew's genealogy of Jesus traces his membership of the family of Abraham, in the Chosen People of Israel, while St Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam, indicating His connection to the whole human race.[60]

St Paul speaks of Jesus as the 'new Adam' (Rom 5). Like us, He is part of the human race, descended from Adam. The Second Vatican Council draws out the significance for us:

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[57] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 55.

[58] St Leo the Great, *Letter to Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople* (*NPNF* 2/12) DS 292, quoted in *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 55.

[59] The Church condemned errors that suggested that Jesus' body descended from heaven or was immediately created by God from the earth See DS 301; *CCC*, nn. 484-486.

[60] On the genealogies of Jesus Christ in the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke, see Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012) 4-13.

> Only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear… For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man.[61]

The close union which exists (due to the Incarnation) between Christ and each man and woman explains how our redemption is brought about. The very reason Christ became man was to share our human nature so as to redeem us. A deep understanding of the reality of the Incarnation is important for understanding the mystery of our redemption. We will look at this further in Part 2.

Since the beginning, the Church has never doubted the human origin of Jesus. St Ignatius of Antioch who lived during the first century, for example, wrote: 'Jesus is truly a member of the family of David according to the flesh ... truly born of the Virgin.'[62]

It was because Jesus had our very same nature that he could redeem human nature from original sin. Man, having been defeated by the devil in the tree of Paradise, should in turn defeat the devil in the tree of the Cross.[63]

Pope John Paul II has written that the Church

> knows with all the certainty of faith that the Redemption that took place through the Cross has definitively restored to man his dignity and has given back meaning to his life in the world, a meaning that was lost to a considerable extent because of sin.[64]

[61] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

[62] Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 11; *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 18, 2 (*ANF* 1).

[63] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 260.

[64] John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, Encyclical Letter, 4.3.1979, n. 10.

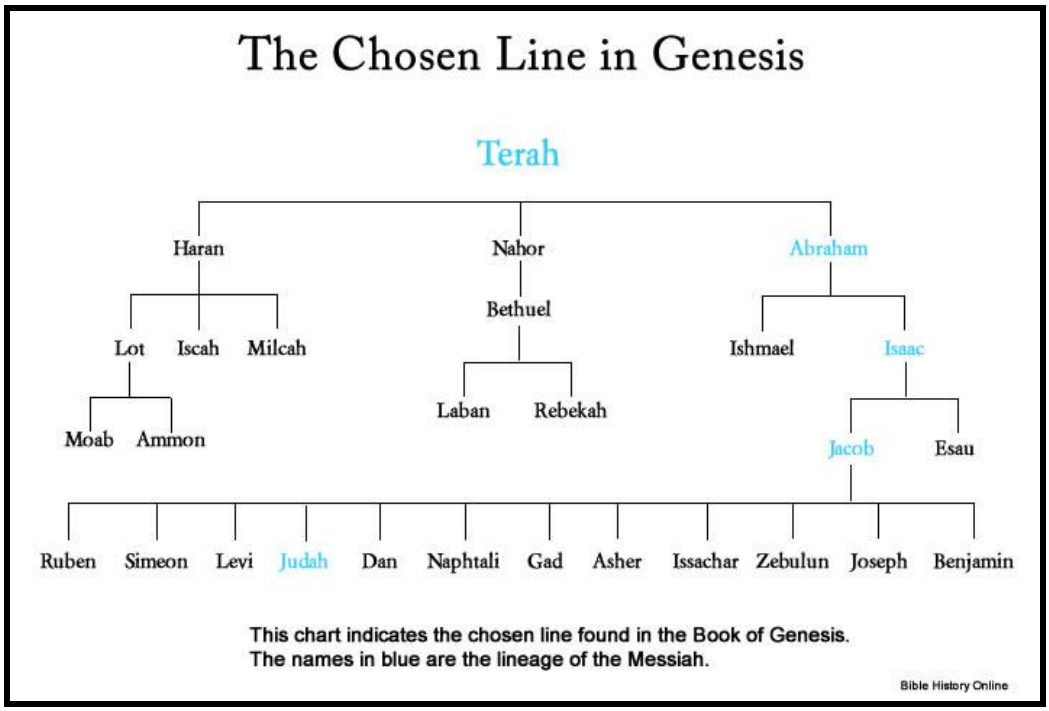

Figure 8. ***The Chosen Line in Genesis***.

e) Human features of Jesus in the Gospels

Being human like us, Christ has definite human features of his own which were easily recognized by his disciples even after he had risen from the dead (Lk 24: 30-35).[65] The Gospels do not tell us anything directly about Jesus' physical appearance, but we can deduce that he was physically strong, able to fast for long periods, travel long distances on foot, and to endure the rigours of the Passion.

Some Fathers of the Church, drawing on Psalm 45:2 'You are the fairest of the sons of men', thought that Jesus, being perfect man, would have had a perfect physique, as it was fitting that the New Adam be physically perfect, and the dignity of the Son of God seemed to demand it. Other Fathers, however, held the opposite, focusing on the disfigured appearance of the Servant of Yahweh.

The Gospels have plenty to tell us about Jesus' spiritual features. It is up to each Christian to discover them for ourselves by contemplating the Gospel in light of the teachings of the Church, to discover the humanity of Christ, always remembering that this is the human face of God.

This human face of God has been described to us as one full of understanding and mercy. Jesus is depicted in the Gospels as a man with a perfectly balanced personality, who never loses his self-control, even when he expresses his anger or reveals that his soul is sorrowful unto death. His replies to the Pharisees when they try to catch him in his words are quick, intelligent, and direct. Self-forgetfulness is one of the marked characteristics of Jesus: his only desire is to bear witness to the Father and do his will saving the lost sheep.

[65] This section taken from *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 62-63.

Outstanding among the virtues which reveal Jesus' holiness is His immense love of the Father and for humankind. This immense, strong love does not distort the magnificent harmony of his personality, yet it even expresses itself in his feelings, which are strong, deep and visible to all, as when he cries for Lazarus and Jerusalem, is moved to pity for the widow of Naim, and candidly expresses his sadness, joy, compassion, closeness to the weak, and his capacity for friendship, and for suffering.

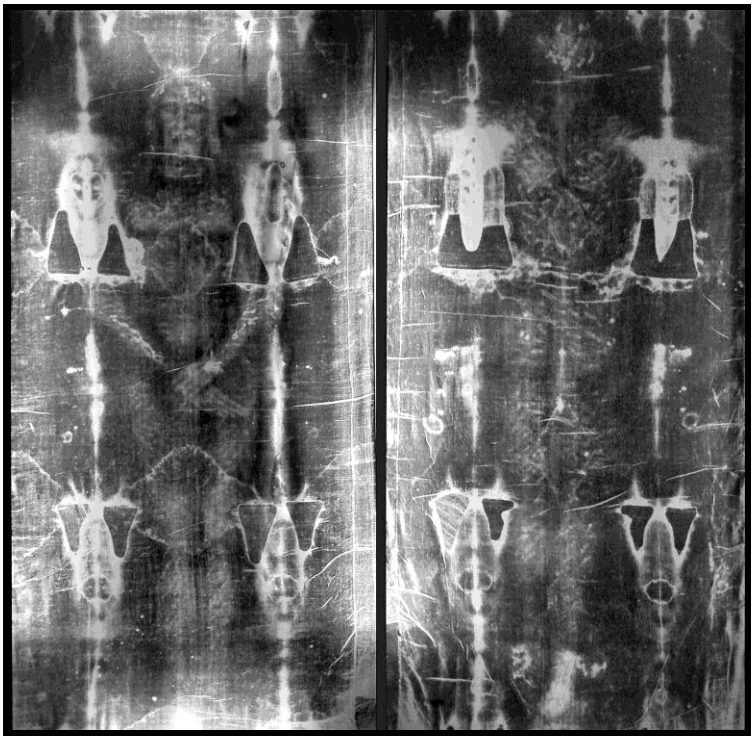

Figure 9. *Full length negative of the shroud*, venerated at Turin, Italy.

Venerated as the burial shroud of Christ although not declared such by the Church. Pope John Paul II called the Shroud 'a mirror of the Gospel',

> a precious Linen that can help us better to understand the mystery of the love of God's Son for us. Since it is not a matter of faith, the Church … entrusts to scientists the task of continuing to investigate… For the believer, what counts above all is that the Shroud is a mirror of the Gospel … an image of God's love as well as of human sin. It invites us to rediscover the ultimate reason for Jesus' redeeming death. In the incomparable suffering that it documents, the love of the One who 'so loved the world that he gave his only Son' (Jn 3: 6) is made almost tangible and reveals its astonishing dimensions. In its presence believers can only exclaim in all truth: 'Lord, you could not love me more![66]

[66] John Paul II, *Address at Turin*, 24.5.1998.

Chapter 2: Jesus Christ's Divinity

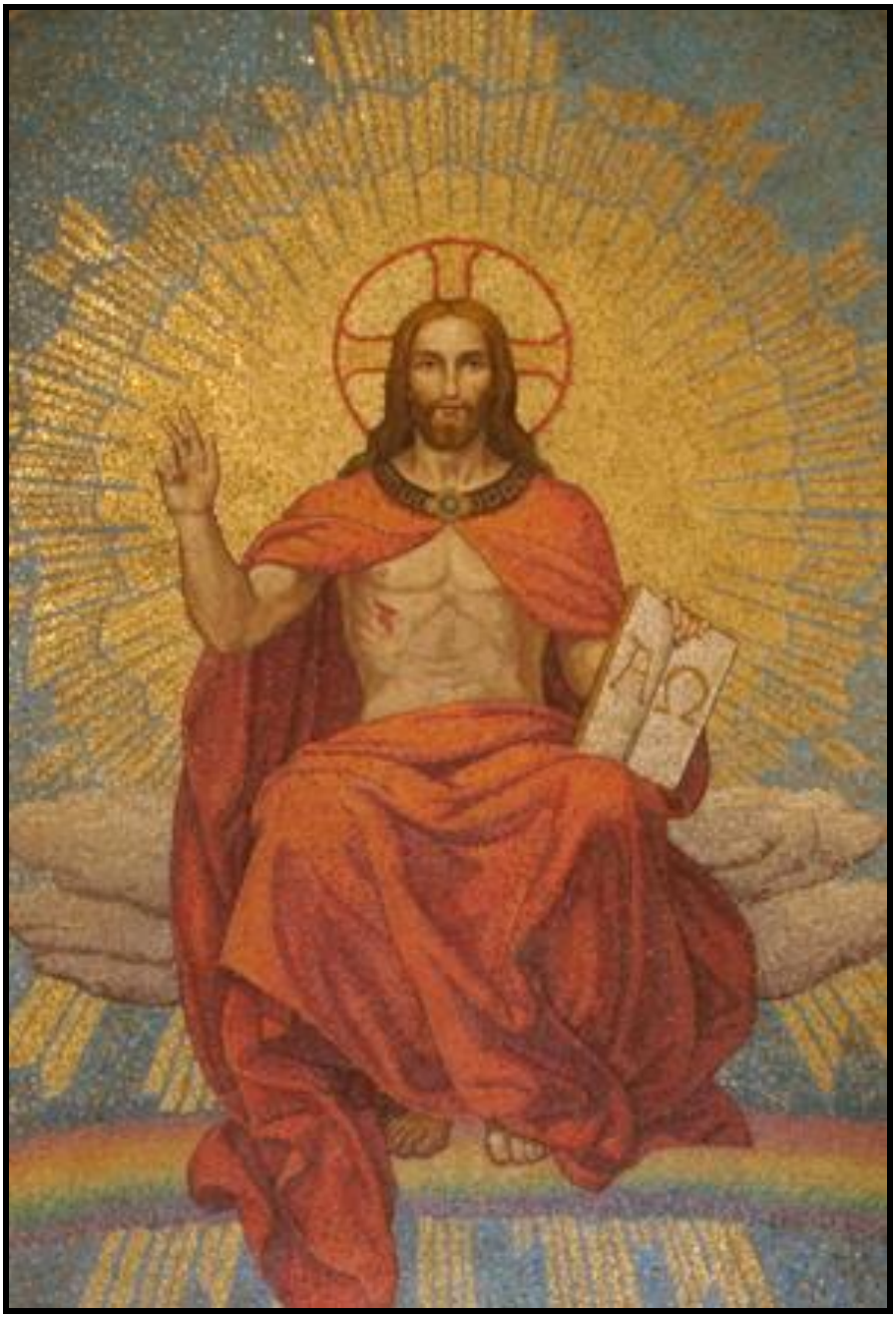

Figure 10. *Jesus, the Alpha and Omega*.

Jesus Christ is true man, but not merely a man. He is truly the Son of God, God Himself.[67]

[67] The Catechism of the Catholic Church deals with the Divinity of Jesus Christ in numbers 456-469.

Chapter 2: Jesus Christ's Divinity

2.1 What the Church Teaches About Jesus' Divinity

The belief of the Church regarding the divinity of Christ was set out in the early Church Councils and Symbols of the Faith (Creeds). These proclaim faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ possesses the divine nature because he is true God, the Second Person of the Trinity. The Apostles' Creed affirms: 'I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, his Only-Begotten Son.'[68] The Council of Nicea in 325 stated:

> We believe in only one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten born of the Father ... God from God; light from light; true God from true God; begotten, not created, consubstantial with the Father.[69]

The second ecumenical Council, the Council of Constantinople (381) also proclaimed this belief in the Creed that Catholics recite at Mass today,

> One Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all time; light from light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.[70]

Later, the Councils of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451) and the Second and Third Councils of Constantinople (553 and 680) proclaimed faith in the divinity of Christ.

The term 'consubstantial' used since the Council of Nicea means that Jesus, in his divinity, is 'of the same substance of the Father', meaning that his divine nature was the divine nature of the Father. They are equal in divinity, but, being of the same substance, there is only one God.[71]

2.2 Jesus' Divinity in the Old Testament

The Old Testament prepares the ground for the New Testament. It acquires its full meaning when read in light of the New Testament and should be interpreted in this light. In the Old Testament there is no explicit revelation of the divinity of the promised Messiah; what we have are elements that, containing the truth in more or less veiled form, prepared the way for the full revelation of God in Christ.[72]

a) The Divinity of the Messiah in the Messianic prophecies.

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[68] DS 2; see also *CCC,* nn. 422-445.
[69] DS 125.
[70] DS 150.
[71] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 66, n. 60.
[72] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 68.

- *Divine names are attributed to the Messiah:* for instance, 'Emmanuel', meaning 'God with us' (Is 7:14).[73] St Matthew applies this name to Christ (Mt 1:22-23). Isaiah also says of the Messiah, 'for to us a child is born, to us a son is given … and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"' (Is 9:6).

- *Texts calling the Messiah the Son of God*. The term 'son of God' was used not only for the Messiah but also for the angels, the just, Israel, and kings. However some texts use this name for the Messiah in a way that indicates his being the Son of God in a pre-eminent way. Read in light of the New Testament, it becomes clear that the title means divinity. *Psalm 2*, for instance, God speaks to the Messiah, 'the Lord said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you"' (Ps 2:7). St Paul applies the text to Christ in the *Hebrews* 1:5. St Matthew interprets Psalm 2 as announcing the divinity of the Messiah and applies it to Christ (Mt 22:42-45).[74] As we will see in the next section, Jesus also applied the Messianic prophecies to Himself.

- The Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament set out the divine characteristics of the Messiah:

    - He will be the Son of God (Ps 2:8).
    - He is generated from all eternity (Mic 5:2; Ps 2:7).
    - His power is eternal and universal like that of God (Dan 7:13-14).

b) The Divine Wisdom

We can also see a pre-figuring of the divinity of Christ in Old Testament texts that refer to God descending among humankind, in particular, texts that refer to the divine Wisdom, who is distinct from the God (the Father) yet is divine and proceeds from God. 'Wisdom' in the Old Testament is God in his relationship with, and action in, the world.

- St Paul draws on this to call Christ the 'wisdom of God' (1 Cor 1:24-30). Some of the terms St Paul applies to Christ are drawn from expressions of the Old Testament about divine wisdom: the 'image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15; cf Wis 7:26), 'the first-born of all creation' (Col 1:15; cf Prov 8:22; Sir 1:1, 4) as well as references to creating and conserving the world.[75]

- The *Book of Wisdom* identifies Wisdom with the Word of God, and with God himself. Wisdom,

    > Is a breath of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God, and therefore no defiled thing comes into her. For she is the brightness of eternal life, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of his goodness. (Wis 7:25-26).

'

The expressions 'pure emanation', 'no defiled thing comes into her', and 'unspotted mirror' indicate that the Word is in not inferior to God in any way. The expression 'light from light', used in the Creeds, comes from this text.

[73] He repeated the same idea in other places: "Because God is with us" (Is 8:10).

[74] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 69.

[75] See 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:17; Wis 8:1, 9:1.

- Jesus Is the Divine Wisdom. The divine wisdom 'appeared upon earth and lived among men' (Bar 3:38; Prov 8:22-31). Texts in the Old Testament that refer to the 'Divine Wisdom' are interpreted as referring to the Son, the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity who is co-eternal with the Father.

  > The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning. I was anointed from eternity ... the depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived ... when he balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with him forming all things ... and my delight was to be with the children of men (Prov 8:22-31).

- Wisdom is eternal like God and takes part in creation. This is taken up in the Gospel of St John. Writing about the Incarnation of Christ, John draws a connection between Wisdom and the Word.

  > In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God, and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life, and the light was the life of men… And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:1-4,14).[76]

  St Paul applied this text to Jesus, 'the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For in him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created by him and in him. And he is before all, and by him all things endure.' (Col 1:15-17).

Jesus Christ also allowed himself to be called 'Lamb of God' by the Baptist (Jn 1:36). When John the Baptist's disciples asked "are you the One who is to come or shall we wait for another?" Jesus answered with a prophecy of Isaiah: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them" (Mt 11:3). Drawing on Psalm 2, he calls Himself the 'Son of David, and, referring to the prophet Daniel, he claims for Himself the power to judge at the end of time (Dan 7:13-14).[77]

The ancient prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ: He is the Messiah and Son of God, heir to the eternal throne of David through the foundation of his kingdom which is not of this world, in which everyone can be admitted. This kingdom is the Church.

2.3 Christ's Divinity in the New Testament

[76] See Prov. 8:22; Wis 7:22, 25-30; 8:1; Sir 24:6-8.

[77] Lk 20:41-44; Mt 24:29-31; 25:31-46. See also *CCC,* nn. 439-440.

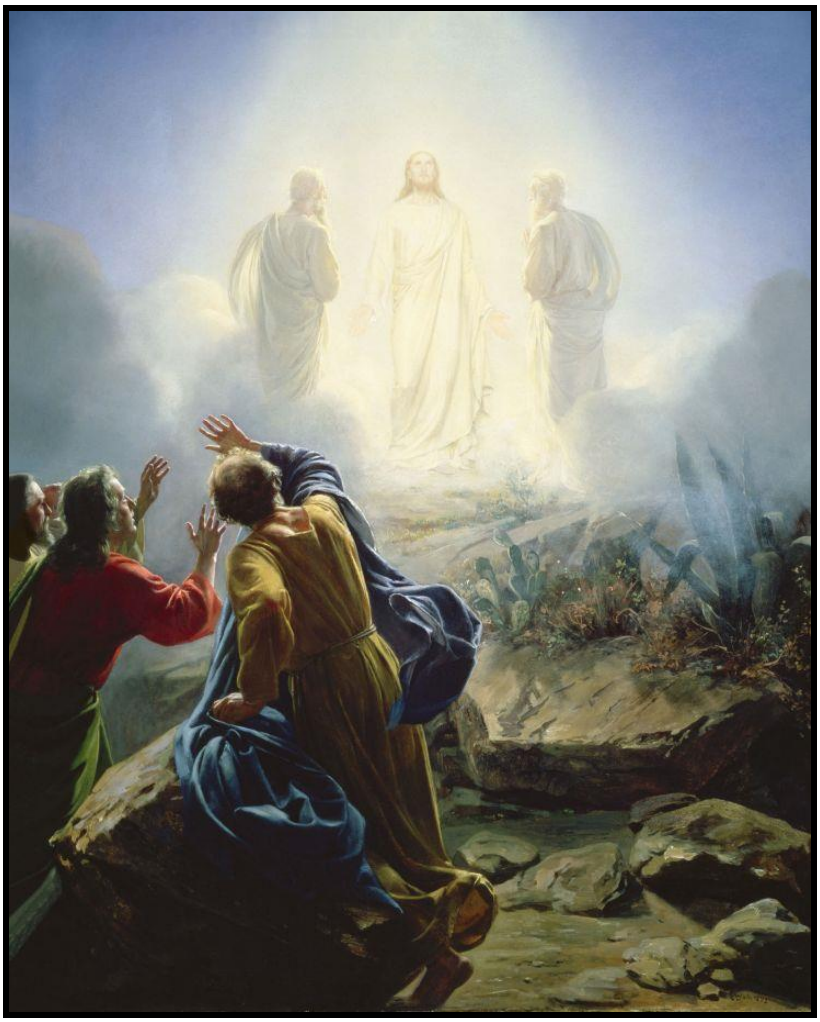

Figure 11. *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, Carl Bloch, 1872.

The New Testament reveals the divinity of Jesus, especially in the Gospels, as well as in the writings of St John and St Paul.[78] The Jewish people were monotheists, and the mystery of the Trinity was revealed to them only gradually.

a) The Divinity of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)

i) Jesus claimed to be the Son of Man

In the Gospels we often see Jesus describe himself as the 'son of man' when claiming divine dignity and power. As we have seen, it was a Messianic title from the Old Testament. As the Son of Man, Jesus claimed the power to forgive sins, something only God can do. When a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus by his friends, Jesus said: '"Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven"'. The scribes were shocked, and

> said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say,

[78] See *CCC,* nn. 441-445.

> ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins” - he then said to the paralytic - “Rise, take up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home (Mt 9:2-7).

Jesus does not disagree with the scribes that only God can forgive sins; he shows his divinity by miraculously curing the paralytic man.

As the Son of Man, Jesus claimed equality with God in his trial before the Sanhedrin. The high priest commanded Jesus, ‘“tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven”’ (Mt 26:63-64). Here Jesus identifies himself with the Son of Man of the book of *Daniel* (Dan 7:13)[79] which, for the Jews, clearly meant that Jesus was claiming to be divine. They rent their garments as the Jews did when they heard blasphemy, and condemned Jesus to death as a blasphemer.

The equality of Jesus, the Son of Man, with God, is also seen when Jesus says that the Son of Man will come as judge at the end of time, in the glory of his father (Mt 16:27; 25:31). Jesus claimed that he would judge the world, a right reserved for God himself: “the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then will he render to every man according to his works” (Mt 16:27).

ii) *Jesus claimed a special dignity*

He is greater than the temple (Mt 12:6), kings (Lk 10:24), David (Mt 22:43-45; Mt 17:3), the prophets (Mt 11:11), the Law (Mt 5:21-22), and the Sabbath (Mt 12:8).[80] “A greater than Jonah is here ... a greater than Solomon is here” (Mt 12:41-43).

iii) *Jesus claimed authority over God’s Law.*

Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Old Law, the Law given to the chosen People by God in the Old Testament. He claimed authority over the Law and the ability to bring it to fullness and perfection: In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said that he had not come to ‘abolish the law and the prophets’ but to ‘fulfil them’ (Mt 5:17). He called Himself ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ (Mt 12:8). When He taught, Jesus said, “You have heard it said ... but I say to you” (Mt 5:21), and the people ‘were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes’ (Mt 5: 28-29).

[79] ‘Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed’ (Dan 7:13-14).

[80] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 71.

Figure 12. *Jesus Unrolls the Book in the Synagogue*, James Tissot, c. 1886.

'And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes' (Mt 7:28-29).

iv) *Jesus asked for the faith and love due only to God*

Jesus asked his disciples and followers for what was due only to God. He asked them to have faith in Him (Mt 11:6), and to love Him as God should be loved, 'with your whole heart, your whole soul, with your whole strength' (Dt 6:5). He asked them to love Him more than their parents and children, (Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26). Jesus also allowed himself to be adored. He let people to prostrate themselves at his feet including the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:25), a leper he healed (Mt 8:2), a father whose daughter was raised from the dead (Mt 9:18), the disciples when He walked over the water and calmed the winds (Mt 14:33); and the holy women and the disciples after the Resurrection (Mt 28:9,17).[81]

v) Jesus claimed to be the Son of God

Another feature of these gospels is the use of the title Son of God, and attributions of divine sonship to Christ.[82] The term 'Son of God' in the Old Testament could be used more generally to refer to angels, the just, etc, and it is used in this way in some places in the gospels. In other passages, however, the title 'Son of God', or 'the Son' refers to divine sonship in the proper sense, to acknowledge the full

[81] In Jewish and Christian tradition, prostration is an act of adoration rendered to God alone.

[82] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 71.

divinity of Christ. In addition to the passages mentioned where the Son of Man says he is the Son of God, we can identify other places where it is used. The most important ones are those where Jesus prays, addressing God as 'Father', or 'my Father', using the Aramaic word 'abba.'[83] The Jews did not use this word in their prayers. It reveals Jesus' intimacy with God, beyond that of the relationship between creature and creator.

The unique intimacy between Jesus and the Father is revealed when Jesus says

> "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27).[84]

Jesus always distinguished between the divine filiation of the disciples and his own divine Sonship. He spoke of God as 'my Father' and, when speaking to the disciples, called God 'your Father'. He never used the expression 'our Father,' which could imply that God was Jesus' Father in the same way that he was the Father of all people, except in the Lord's prayer, when He taught the disciples how *they* should pray.

We see Jesus' awareness of his divine filiation when he remained in the Temple when he was twelve years old. When Mary asked Him why he had done this, He answered "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk 2:48-49). As the Son of his heavenly Father, Jesus had higher duties than those that came from being the son of Mary and Joseph.

Jesus also allowed people to address Him as 'Son of God.' When he asked his disciples '"But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven"' (Mt 16:15-17). Jesus accepts being called Son of the Living God and says it is a mystery that has been revealed by the Father. It is something more than the general kind of divine sonship known in the Old Testament. He also accepts St Thomas' profession of faith in his divinity after the Resurrection, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28

The Father bears witness to His Son at His baptism (Mk 1:11), and at the Transfiguration (Mk 9:7), calling him 'my beloved Son'. Jesus 'saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit as a dove descending, and remaining on him. And there came a voice from heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased"' (Mk 1:10-11).

When Jesus was transfigured on Mount Tabor, the Apostles Peter, James and John heard the Father's voice saying '"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"' (Mt 17:5). The Church has seen in these words a testimony to Jesus' divine filiation.

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[83] Mt 11:25-26; 26:39, 42; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42; 23:34, 46.

[84] 'Jesus received the power to carry out his mission from the Father. By affirming that no one knows the Father but the Son and the Son but the Father, he revealed his divinity, because only God the Father is capable of knowing his divine nature. For the same reason, only the Son can know the Father. The fact that the Father and Son know each other necessarily presupposes that both possess the same divine nature.' Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 266.

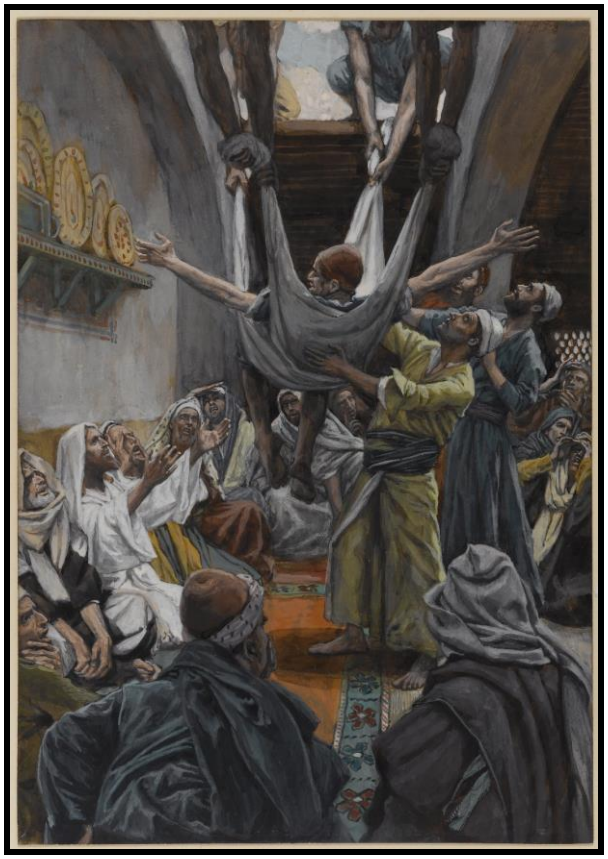

Figure 13. ***The Palsied Man Let Down Through the Roof,*** **James Tissot, 1886-1896.**

'They brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he then said to the paralytic - "Rise, take up your bed and go home."' (Mt 9:2-7)

vi) Jesus was aware of His divine power and used it

Jesus said "to me has been given all power in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18), and he exercised it by performing miracles. He also gave his disciples the power to perform miracles in his name. 'Jesus, calling to himself the Twelve, gave them power over the unclean spirits.... Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out the devils" (Mt 10:1,8). The disciples, upon returning, bore witness to his divinity: "Lord, the devils also are subject to us in your name"' (Lk 10:17).

b) Jesus' Divinity in the Gospel of St John

The Apostle St John wrote his Gospel many years after the others were completed, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. St John records that he wrote his Gospel 'so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (Jn 20:31). His Gospel emphasizes Jesus' divinity.

St John focuses on Jesus' divinity by pointing to the following:

i) *The eternal pre-existence of Christ as the Word of God*

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:1-5).

St John calls Jesus the Word (*Logos* in Greek), a Person who co-exists with God, who *is* God. The Word is the Son of God, the 'Only-begotten of the Father' and 'Only-begotten Son' (see also Jn 3:16; 3:18). The Word 'was made flesh' in order to bring grace and truth to men. Jesus is the Word made flesh (Jn 1:1-18). Sent 'from Heaven' by the Father (Jn 5:23,37; 6:38ff; 3:13; 6:38; 8:42; 16:27ff), Jesus, the Word, existed from all eternity.

The Word is the only Son from the Father (Jn 1:14). The Word of God became man (Jn 1:14); He is the one the disciples beheld and to whom John the Baptist bore witness (Jn 1:15). Jesus of Nazareth is the Word of God made Man.

Jesus refers to his own pre-existence, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58). The expression 'I am' had a powerful meaning for the Jews because it was the name God revealed to Moses, a name the Jews avoided using out of reverence. 'With this expression Jesus indicates that He is the true God'.[85]

Before the Incarnation, the Word was the 'light and life of men' (cf. Jn 1:4-5). Jesus the Word Incarnate proclaims that he is 'the light of the world' (Jn 8:12) and that he is life (Jn14:6) and the source of life: (Jn 5:21).

ii) *Jesus' Divine Filiation*

Like the other evangelists, St John records that Jesus called God 'his Father', and himself 'the Son', and that He distinguished his divine filiation from that of the disciples. Remembering the Resurrection, John records how Jesus told Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brothers and tell them, I am going to *my* Father and to *your* Father, to *my* God and to *your* God" (Jn 20:17).[86]

iii) *Jesus Is Equal in Nature to the Father*

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[85] John Paul II, *Address*, 26.8.1987, n. 7.

[86] St John repeats other things testifying to the divinity of Jesus that the other evangelists had already recorded: eg, that Jesus claimed divine attributes and operations; that He affirmed his eternity: "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58); that Jesus knew the Father perfectly: "But I know him. And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him and do keep his word" (Jn 8:55); that His power and activity were equal to the Father's: "My Father works until now, and I work" (Jn 5:17); and that Jesus had power to forgive sins: "Go, and sin no more" (Jn 8:11). He records that Jesus claimed to be, besides, judge, worthy of adoration, light of the world, "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6); that Jesus imposed divine precepts: "You believe in God, believe also in me"; and that He promised that the Father and he will dwell in the souls of those who believe in him: "And we will come to him, and make our abode in him" (Jn 14:1,23). He asked for prayers in his name and in that of the Father, and assured us of their efficacy: "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you" (Jn 16:21).

After Jesus cured the paralysed man at the pool of Bethzatha, the Jews criticized Him for having done this on the Sabbath, a day on which no unnecessary work was to be done. Jesus replied,

> "My Father is working still, and I am working." This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God. (Jn 5: 16-18)

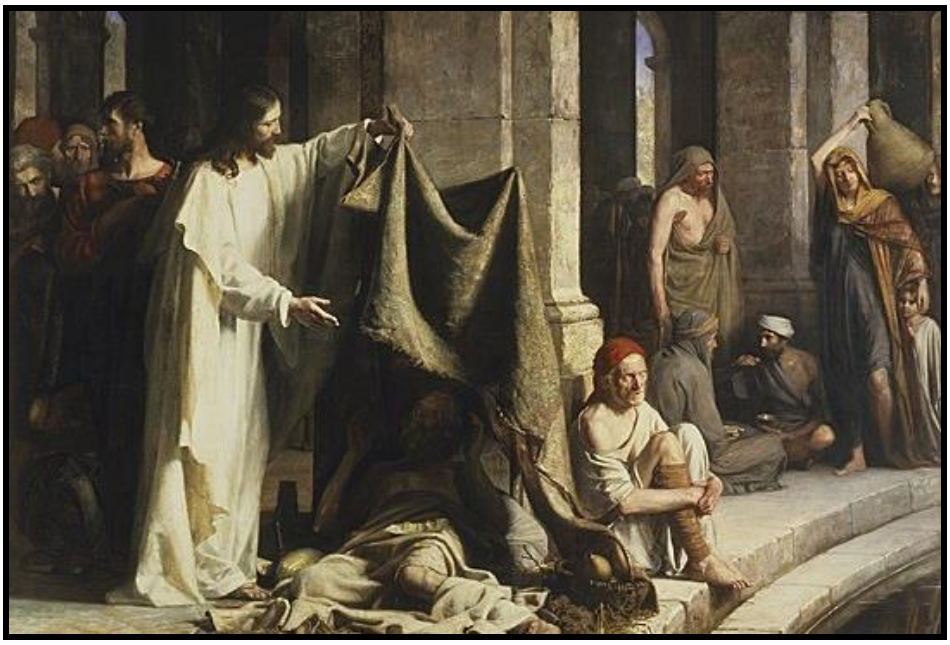

Figure 14. *Christ Healing the Sick at Bethesda*, Carl Bloch, 1883.

'The Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working." This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.' (Jn 5: 16-18)

Jesus claimed that his works were equal to the works of his Father God and He claimed the same powers. St John recalls Jesus saying that "whatever the Father does, the Son also does in like manner" (Jn 5:19). He records that one day some Jews came to dispute with Jesus when he was walking about the portico of the Temple.

> The Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me". (Jn 10:24-26).

He concludes, "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30). Then the Jews tried to stone him and Jesus answered them "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" The Jews answered him, "We stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God" (Jn 10:23-33).

As would occur at the trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jews understood that Jesus was saying He was the Son of God, and wanted to stone Him for blasphemy. Jesus answered,

> "Do you say of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world: 'you blaspheme,' because I said 'I am the Son of God?" He asked them to believe in the testimony of the Father, shown in the miracles that he did: "Believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (Jn 10:36-39).

Jesus' miracles were signs that confirmed His divinity: "The works that I do in my Father's name, these give testimony of me" (Jn 10:25).

At the Last Supper, Jesus explained to his beloved disciples the intimate and mutual relationship between Him and the Father.

> Philip begged "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us." Jesus replied: "Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known me? Philip, he who sees me sees also the Father; how canst thou say, 'Show us the Father?' Dost thou not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I speak not on my own authority. But the Father dwelling in me, it is he who does the works. Do you believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? Otherwise believe because of the works themselves" (Jn 14:8-12).

During the Last Supper, Jesus prayed for the unity of the Apostles and of all the faithful, and offered as a model his substantial unity with the Father: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one as we also are." He added:

> "Not only for them do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me. That they all may be one in us, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one with us; that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one" (Jn 17:11, 20-22).

c) The Divinity of Jesus in the Epistles of St Paul

St Paul testified to the divinity of Jesus in his letters to the early Christian communities.

i) *St Paul calls Jesus Lord*

St Paul calls Jesus Lord (*Dominus* in Latin, *Kyrios* in Greek).[87] The Jews never uttered God's name and, in St Paul's time, used the term *Kyrios*, or Lord instead. By calling Jesus Christ *Kyrios*, St Paul reveals that Jesus Christ is God, for example, 'Let him who takes pride, take pride in the *Lord*' (1 Cor 1:31). 'For whosoever calls upon the name of the *Lord* shall be saved' (Rom 10:13).

For St Paul, the name of Jesus is above all names. It is the name of God and therefore worthy of adoration: 'At the name of Jesus, every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth' (Phil 2:10).

ii) *St Paul calls Jesus God*

[87] See *CCC,* nn. 446-451.

St Paul's letter to the Philippians is a magnificent summary of Christology:

> Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who though he was by nature God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a Cross. Therefore God has also exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth, and under earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:5-11).

This text refers to the eternal pre-existence of the Word, which St Paul also teaches in his letter to the Colossians (Col 1: 15-17).

iii) *St Paul calls Jesus the Son of God*

St Paul attributed divine filiation to Jesus[88] and called him *Son of God*: 'God sent his Son' (Rom 8:3); 'The Father ... has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son' (Col 1:13). Jesus Christ, as the Son of God the Father, is 'the brightness of his glory and the image of his substance' (Heb 1:3).

St Paul professes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God *by nature*, while redeemed men are sons of God by an *adoption* produced by grace: 'When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son ... that he may redeem those who were under the Law, that we may receive the adoption of sons' (Gal 4:4-5).

d) Other Testimonies about the Divinity of Jesus

The other apostles and disciples also gave witness to their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. For instance, on the day he was given the keys to the kingdom, St Peter made his declaration of faith "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). Later, in his preaching, Peter continued to testify to the divinity of Christ. At Pentecost, in his first address to the people, he told those listening to him, "You disowned the Holy and Just One ... you gave death to the author of life" (Acts 3:14; 13:16 ff). In his letters, St Peter called Jesus God and Savior (2 Pet 1:1).

St James the apostle proclaimed himself 'Servant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ' (Jas 1:1), while St Stephen exclaimed just before being martyred, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

2.4 The Divinity of Jesus Christ in Tradition

From the earliest times the Church, faithful to the teachings of the Apostles, affirmed the divinity of Jesus Christ. St Clement of Rome, the third Pope, wrote in a letter to the Corinthians around 96 A.D., 'Christ is the scepter of the majesty of God… His majesty is so much greater than angels.'[89] St Ignatius of

[88] See *CCC,* nn. 441-445.

[89] St Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians,* 16.2, 36.2 (*ANF* 1).

Antioch, martyred early in the second century., bore witness to Jesus as 'God our Lord', 'God humanly manifested', and 'the only Son of the Most High Father ... our God.'[90]

2.5 Heresies Denying the Divinity of Christ

Heresies about the divinity of Jesus arose early on from people who denied or misunderstood the divinity of Christ. Some early heresies taught that Jesus was one of the following:

- *A simple, very holy man* (Ebionites, first century). The Ebionites were 'Judaizing' Christians, who maintained that Christians must continue to observe the precepts of the Jewish Law. Underlying their rejection of the divinity of Christ was what St Paul called 'the stumbling block of the Cross' (Gal 5:11): rejection of the idea that a divine Person could die on a Cross. More importantly, they found it difficult to really accept the mystery of the Trinity.

- *An adopted son of God* (Adoptionists, second century) This arose out of a misunderstanding of the Trinity. The Adoptionists said there was only one Person in God. Jesus was a man in whom the Word dwelt, but the Word was just a power of God. Later Adoptionists (fourth century) said that Jesus was a man who did not exist before the Virgin Mary. His life and death were so holy that he merited the glory of divinity. He could be called God not by nature but by adoption. This heresy was condemned in 190 and again in 268, by the first Council of Constantinople in 381, and again in the Council of Rome in 382. It reappeared again in the sixteenth century and was again condemned, by Pope Paul IV.[91]

- *Neither true God nor true man*. The widespread Arian heresy (fourth century) held that the Word was not a divine Person. The Word was the first and most perfect creature made by God.[92] The heresy was condemned at the Council of Nicea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381), and faith in the divinity of Christ was professed at the Councils of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and the Second and Third Councils of Constantinople (553 and 680).

The 'Historical Jesus' and the 'Christ of Faith'

More recent heresies regarding the divinity of Jesus are Rationalism and Modernism. They argue that Jesus was not the Son of God, and that when we say He is divine, we are merely projecting our own desires and aspirations on to him. In the twentieth century, Modernists argued that there was

- a 'historical Jesus' who lived in Palestine and is written about in the Scriptures, and
- a 'Christ of Faith', the Jesus in whom we believe,

and that the two were not the same.

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[90] St Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 36:2-4; *Epistle to the Ephesians,* 18:2; 19:3, and *Epistles to the Romans*, Intr. (*ANF* 1).
[91] Paul IV, *Cum quorundam*, Constitution, 7.8.1555. DS 1880; *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 67.
[92] See *CCC,* nn. 464-469.

This heresy has been developed in various ways, but always begins with an assumption that the supernatural mystery of God made man is impossible and therefore must be unhistorical. The historical Jesus just cannot have been God. He was a humble rabbi of Nazareth, perhaps a failed political messiah, and the reality of his life had little to do with that presented by the Apostles. The Apostles created someone quite different, by taking Jesus and projecting all their Messianic expectations on to him, building up a mythical figure, the 'Christ of Faith', and events like the Resurrection. The Christ we worship, the object of our faith, the Son of God, never existed.[93]

When they speak of the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith, the modernists are not describing two ways of approaching one reality, Jesus Christ, (getting to know his humanity, the way he lived and died when he was on earth, and the divinity that the disciples' faith 'discovered' in Jesus); they are talking about two separate, incompatible concepts.[94] This was condemned in 1907 in the decree *Lamentabili.*[95]

The heresy is opposed to Divine Revelation. The testimony of Sacred Scripture is clear that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. From the moment of His conception, Jesus Christ is always God and Man. In the end, these modern heresies arise from a philosophical position that rejects supernatural faith and denies the possibility of any mystery that exceeds human reason.

[93] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 8.

[94] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 9.

[95] Pius X, Decree, *Lamentabili*, 3.7.1907. Modernist propositions condemned, included the following: 'The divinity of Jesus Christ is not proven from the Gospels; but it is a dogma that the Christian consciousness deduced from the notion of the Messiah'; the Christ who appears in the light of history is far inferior to the Christ who is the object of faith'; and 'The Christology taught by Paul, John, and the Councils of Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon is not the doctrine that Jesus taught, but one that the Christian consciousness formed about Jesus'. DS 3427; 3429; 3431.

Chapter 3: The Hypostatic Union

Figure 15. *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, c. 1675.

Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures, human and divine. The name given to the union of Christ's two natures in one divine Person (the Word), is the hypostatic union. '*Hypostasis*' is Greek for 'person'. In this chapter we will study:

- How the hypostatic union (two natures in one Person) came about
- How human nature (body and soul) was assumed, or taken on, by the Person of the Word[96]
- How Christ's two natures worked together

[96] See *CCC,* nn. 470-474.

Chapter 3: The Hypostatic Union

3.1. The 'Hypostatic Union'

As we saw in the last chapter, Jesus Christ is a *divine* Person, the Word, the second Person of the Trinity. He is *one* Person, with a divine nature, who, with the Incarnation, also assumed a human nature. The human nature is united to the divine nature in the divine Person of the Word.[97]

The early Church defined this dogmatically in the early Ecumenical Councils, mostly in response to heresies about Christ. In the fifth century the heretic Nestorius taught that Jesus was two persons and that Mary was only the mother of the human person of Jesus but not the mother of the divine Person, and therefore not the mother of God. In response, at the Council of Ephesus in 431, the Church declared that Christ had two natures, divine and human, united in one divine Person: 'Christ ... is both God and man'. The Virgin Mary gave birth to the Person, the Word of God made flesh, and therefore was the Mother of God.[98]

Figure 16. *The Council of Ephesus*, mosaic, Basilica of Notre Dame de Fouverière, Lyon, 19th c.

Twenty years later, the Council of Chalcedon (451), stated,

> Our Lord Jesus Christ. … is perfect both in his divinity and in his humanity, truly God, and truly man.... The one selfsame Christ, only-begotten Son and Lord, must be acknowledged in two natures without any commingling or change or division or separation; that the distinction between

[97] 'All human natures that exist are, at the same time, human persons. Theology tries to explain why the human nature of Jesus Christ was not an independent human person. The reason that is commonly given in theology is that the human nature of Jesus Christ exists by virtue of the act of being of the divine Person. Jesus' human nature does not have an act of being of its own; it exists through the act of being of the divine Person. Only the divine Person exists in Jesus, as being is an essential property of his divine nature. There is no human person in Jesus because his human nature, as it lacks its own act of being, is not subsistent; it exists in the divine Person'. Pujol Bertrán, "*God Made Man*", 281.

[98] DS 253, 257; DS 252.

> the natures is in no way removed by their union but rather … the specific character of each nature is preserved and they are united in one person and one hypostasis.... Not split or divided into two persons, … there is one … only-begotten Son, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.[99]

This is the hypostatic union. It is is real, physical and subsistent, not accidental.[100]

We see the hypostatic union in the Gospels where St John says that 'the Word was made flesh' (Jn 1:14), indicating that God was made man without ceasing to be God.

3.2 Some Errors Regarding the Hypostatic Union

Jesus was two Persons: Nestorius' contention that there were two persons in Jesus Christ: the divine Person, the Son of God, and the human person, the Son of Mary, meant that Mary was not the Mother of God, but only Mother of Christ as man. It also meant that the Redemption (Passion and Death of Jesus) was only proper of the human person of Christ. This was critically important because, in the Redemption, Jesus as true God and true Man died for us. As a Man He was one of us; but only as God could He atone with an infinite sacrifice for the infinite offence of sin, something that no human being could do. If Nestorius was right, then it was only a human being, not a divine Person, who died for us. If there were two persons in Christ, the Incarnation would not have taken place, the Word would not have become flesh, but rather simply come to dwell in a man. Nestorius' teachings were condemned in the Council of Ephesus in 431, where the Fathers of the Church affirmed that Jesus Christ was only one Person.[101]

Jesus was one Person with one nature: At the other extreme, Eutyches and his followers, the Monophysites, held that Jesus Christ was one Person with only one nature (*monophysis* means one person and one nature). They said that Christ's human nature was transformed or absorbed into His divine nature. This error was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon (451).

> The Monophysites affirmed that the human nature had ceased to exist as such in Christ when the divine person of God's Son assumed it. Faced with this heresy, the fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon in 451, confessed:
>
> 'Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and

[99] DS 301.

[100] Paul VI reaffirmed this in the *Creed of the People of God*: "We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. He is the Eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, and one in substance with the Father, *homoousios* to Patri, and through Him all things were made. He was incarnate of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was made man: equal therefore to the Father according to His divinity, and inferior to the Father according to His humanity; and Himself one, not by some impossible confusion of His natures, but by the unity of His person." Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God*, Motu Proprio, 30.6.1968, n. 11.

[101] *CCC*, n. 466. 'The cause of many misunderstandings and disputes about the one Person of Christ was actually a matter of terminology, since some of the Greek words that the Fathers of the Church employed were interpreted in several ways. Some early Fathers referred to "person" as *physis*, while others referred to it as *hypostasis*. "Nature," on the other hand, was always called *physis*. In saying that there are two *physeis* in Jesus Christ, some mistakenly thought that there were two persons in Jesus instead of two natures. Use of these terms became better defined in the course of time; *hypostasis* came to refer always to person, and *physis* to nature.' Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 273.

> truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; "like us in all things but sin". He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.'
>
> 'We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division or separation. the distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis.'[102]

Jesus was one Person with three natures: Some believed that a fusion or confusion of the two natures gave rise to a third nature.[103]

Jesus was a man adopted by God: The Adoptionist heresy proposed the adoptive filiation of a man, Jesus Christ, meaning that Jesus was not truly the Son. This was condemned by the Church.[104] St Augustine responded, saying, 'read the Scriptures. In no place does it say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God by adoption.'[105]

Filiation is proper of persons, not of natures. Since in Jesus Christ there is only one Person, the divine one, he is, for this reason, the natural Son of God. Besides, it would be contradictory to affirm that he is by his human nature an adopted Son, while asserting, at the same time, that he is the natural Son due to his divine nature. If this were true, Jesus Christ would be the Son of God in two distinct ways.

3.3 How the Hypostatic Union Came About

Only the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word, Became Man.[106] We can say, however, that the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity was the work of the whole Trinity. Everything that God does in the world is common to the three Divine Persons. For instance, while we speak of God the Father as the Creator, and the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier, Creation and our Sanctification is the work of the whole Trinity.[107] This was also the case with the Incarnation. The three Persons took part in the Incarnation, but only the Second Person was incarnated. 'The Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, [was] made incarnate by a common action of the Holy Trinity.'[108]

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[102] *CCC*, n. 467.

[103] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 274.

[104] DS 610-611.

[105] St Augustine, *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus, Called Fundamental*, 5 (*NPNF* 1/4).

[106] 'Reason enlightened by faith can see why it was fitting for the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word, to be the one incarnated. God created the world through his Word, which is the model (exemplary cause) of the entire universe. Original Sin introduced disorder into the world, and God promised a Redeemer. Now when an artist's work is destroyed, the artist will restore it according to the original model he or she worked from. Therefore, it was most fitting that the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity and model of creation, be the Redeemer who would restore the human race to that original harmony destroyed by the sin of Adam'. Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 274.

[107] *CCC*, nn. 258, 267.

[108] Fourth Lateran Council, DS 801.

Divine Revelation testifies to this, attributing the Incarnation variously to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit (Phil 2:7; Lk 1:35). Tradition attests to the same teaching; for instance, St Augustine wrote, 'the fact that Mary conceives and gives birth is the work of the Trinity, by whose creative ability are all things made.'[109]

3.4 The Person of the Word Assumed Human Nature

In the Hypostatic Union, the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, assumed human nature, entire, body and soul. It is because He assumed a human body that the divine Person was able to shed His blood for our Redemption. It is because the divine Person assumed human nature, that His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity can be contained under the sacramental species of the Eucharist.[110]

a) Beginning of the Hypostatic Union

The Second Person of the Trinity assumed human nature at the moment of the Incarnation, Christ's conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. At this moment, 'the Word become flesh and dwelt amongst us'. From this moment, as at the moment of our conception, the Second Person of the Trinity truly had a human body and a human, spiritual soul.

b) *Duration of the Hypostatic Union*

The hypostatic union has continued uninterrupted from the moment of the Incarnation. The Council of Chalcedon stated 'Christ, only-begotten Son and Lord, must be acknowledged in two natures without any commingling or change or division or separation.'[111] As we pray in the Creed, the Son of God suffered, died, and was buried; descended into hell, and rose again. Jesus Christ was always God and man, never losing the union of His two natures in the one divine Person.

On the Cross Jesus cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 22:46). This does not mean that His divine nature had departed or that He had ceased to be God. It referred to his vulnerability to those who persecuted Him. It could also have been a way of showing that the messianic prophecies of Psalm 21 were being fulfilled. The psalm begins with those words and describes many details of the Passion:

> "They have pierced my hands and my feet ... they divide my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots ... my tongue cleaves to my jaws" (Ps 21).

We will look in detail at what happened to Christ's human and divine natures when Christ died, in a later section, but for the moment suffice to say that at every moment Jesus remained both God and man, with a human and divine nature.

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[109] St Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 2, 5, 9 (*NPNF* 1/3). This truth is frequently depicted in images of the Annunciation, for instance those by Pietro Perugino and Fra Angelico (Figure 24).

[110] Council of Trent, DS 1640-41.

[111] DS 301.

The hypostatic union will never cease. After His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, Jesus Christ remains true God and true Man. Sacred Scripture says 'He will reign in the house of Jacob forever, and his Kingdom will have no end' (Lk 1:33); and 'He has an everlasting priesthood' (Heb 7:24). His Reign will have no end.[112]

c) A Consequence of the Hypostatic Union: Adoration is due to Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, God and man is to be adored (*latria*), something due only to God.[113] The apostles preached the Gospel so "that all men may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (Jn 5:23); 'so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend' (Phil 2:10). The writer of the *Martyrdom of St Polycarp* (c. 157) distinguished between the adoration rendered to Jesus Christ and veneration of the martyrs: 'Him we adore because he is the Son of God; but the martyrs we love as it is fitting to the disciples and friends of the Lord'.[114]

Adoration is rendered to the divine Person of Jesus Christ; this includes his human nature which belongs to him. Worship of his Most Precious Blood, of the Sacred Heart, of the Five Wounds, etc., is derived from this. When we adore the parts we are adoring the whole divine Person.

The cult of *relative latria* is owed to the true Cross due to its union with the Person of Christ.[115]

[112] DS 86.
[113] See DS 431; *CCC*, nn. 333, 448, 528, 971.
[114] *Martyrdom of St Polycarp*, 17, 3 (*ANF* 1).
[115] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 132-134.

Figure 17. *The Baptism of Christ*, Pietro Perugino, c. 1482.

3.5 The Two Natures of Christ Worked Together

a) The Two Natures Remained Distinct and Unchanged.

The two natures of Jesus Christ, human and divine, were not affected or changed by being united in the one Person of the Word. Each nature remained *unaltered* and continued to operate in its own way. Divine operations are performed through the divine nature, and human acts through the human nature. All these acts or operations belong to the Divine Person of Jesus Christ. The two natures, united in Jesus Christ, remain *distinct* from each other. They are not mingled, nor does one absorb or change the other, as the Monophysites, among others, suggested.[116] In Jesus Christ, there are

> two natures, without confusion or change, without division, without separation, without their differences being lost in any way due to their union, but rather each nature conserving its properties and both coming together in a single person and in a single hypostasis.[117]

When St John says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that 'the Word was made flesh' (Jn 1:14), we see that Jesus Christ really has two different natures: the divine, proper to the Word, and the human (the term 'flesh' in Sacred Scripture frequently means human nature as a whole), which He assumed.

[116] *CCC*, n. 467.
[117] DS 302.

The early Christian writer, Tertullian, summarized the doctrine of the Church when he wrote that 'the distinction of each nature was conserved ... both natures, each one in its state, acted in distinct ways.'[118]

b). 'Theandric' or Divine-Human Operations of Christ

The word 'theandric' is derived from the Greek words *theós* (god) and *andrós* (man). It refers to the actions and operations of Christ in relation to his human and divine natures.

Christ has two distinct natures, human and divine, and two sets of operations or acts corresponding to those natures:

- Divine acts (eg performing miracles, forgiving sins, and rising from the dead), and
- Human acts (eg growing, dying, speaking, walking, being weary (Jn 4:6))

Acts are performed by *persons*, not natures, so while the actions of each nature are distinct, they are all attributable to the one Person, Jesus Christ.[119] Christ's human operations should also be considered divine, because they are actions of one divine Person, the Word, carried out by means of his human nature. Considered from this point of view, all the human actions of Christ can be regarded as *theandric* (divine-human).

Nevertheless, the term *theandric operations* is normally reserved in theology for operations which, though human, are instruments of the divinity to produce effects which completely surpass human nature and which manifest the divinity of Christ, for example when, with the clay made from his saliva, Jesus Christ cured the man blind from birth. There are two distinct aspects in this act: the human, which is putting clay in the man's eyes, and the effect produced by the divinity, which is the curing of the blindness.

[118] Tertullian, *Against. Praxeas,* 27 (*ANF* 3).

[119] 'The attribution of all the human and the divine properties to the Person of Jesus Christ is called *communicatio idiomatum*. Without denying the distinction between the two natures and their respective properties, the *communicatio idiomatum* is the *mutual* attribution of the properties of each nature; it is not done in a direct manner, but only through the sole Person–the Word Incarnate–true God and true man. Thus it can be said that, "God became man", but not that "the divinity is the humanity."' Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 282.

Figure 18. *Jesus Opens the Eyes of a Man Born Blind*, Duccio di Buoninsegna, 1308-11.

'He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing' (Jn 9: 5-7).

c). The Two Wills of Christ

Christ possessed two wills, the divine will, and the human will that comes with human nature. Christ 'has two wills, without division or change, without partition or commingling. And the two natural wills are not opposed (by no means!) as the godless heretics have said.'[120]

We see the two wills of Christ in the agony in the garden where He prays "not my will, but yours be done" (Mt 26:39). Commenting on this text, St Athanasius said 'He shows here two wills, one human, which is of the flesh, and the other divine, which is of God'.[121]

Some heretics (*Monotheletism*: 'only one will', the divine will) maintained that, Jesus Christ had only one will (ie, he made decisions insofar as he was God), because it seemed that if Jesus had a human will, it could have contradicted his divine will, meaning that Jesus could have willed contradictory things.[122]

[120] Third Council of Constantinople, DS 556. See also *CCC*, n. 475.
[121] Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 21 (*NPNF* 1/4).
[122] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 99-102.

The Church condemned this view[123] and explained that Jesus' two wills did not oppose each other. In Jesus Christ 'the human will is compliant, and not opposing or contrary; as a matter of fact, it is even obedient to his divine and omnipotent will'.[124] We see this in Scripture, where Jesus said "I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me." (Jn 5:30). In the agony in the garden (Lk 22:39-44), Jesus, moved by a natural human resistance, wished to avoid suffering, but accepted fully carrying out the will of the Father. Moved by his free human will, Christ felt the anguish of death before his Passion, but at the same time, his freely submitted his human will to his divine will and accepted death on the Cross.

The human will of Jesus Christ also belonged to the Divine Person and was therefore infallibly subject to its influence, and thus always obeyed the Person of the Word.

d). Christ's Freedom

The human will of Jesus Christ is free, a property of his perfect human nature. If Jesus were not free, he would not have been the meritorious cause of our Redemption.

Sacred Scripture shows Jesus' freedom in several passages, for instance, 'Jesus went about in Galilee, for he did not wish to go about in Judaea' (Jn 7:1). Jesus was free to do or not to do things, and to choose between different actions which were good. The freedom to choose evil, however, is an imperfection, and so incompatible with the hypostatic union.

Some people were afraid to say that Christ was free as they thought that had to include a capacity to sin.[125]

[123] DS 556. 'Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but co-operate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation Christ's human will "does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will."' *CCC*, n. 475.

[124] *Third Council of Constantinople* (680-681), DS 556.

[125] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 149-50.

Chapter 4: The Supernatural Prerogatives of Jesus Christ as Man

Figure 19. *The Transfiguration*, Raphael, 1520.

God sanctifies human beings by grace and gives them virtues and gifts which form their interior life. In this chapter we will consider three supernatural gifts or graces God gave to Jesus Christ to enrich his interior life as true man, which depend on his union with the divinity: immunity from all sin, fullness of grace, and knowledge and love of God.

Chapter 4: The Supernatural Prerogatives of Jesus Christ as Man

4.1 Jesus Christ: Free from Sin

a) Jesus Christ neither inherited original sin nor committed any personal sins.

Jesus was conceived without original sin, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. '"The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the Most High will overshadow thee, and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God"' (Lk 1:35).

Scripture tells us that Jesus never sinned: 'He, in whom there was no sin and in whose lips there was no sin' (2 Cor 5:21); He 'was tempted in all things like as we are, but without sin' (Heb 4:15); and Jesus Himself asked, '"Who among you can accuse me of sin?"' (Jn 8:46).

This was also the teaching of the earliest Christian writers, like Origen, who said 'He did not know sin, nor was there malice in his lips, because he did not know sin'.[126]

b) Incapable of sinning.

To sin is to separate oneself from God, something impossible for Jesus who was true God and true Man. Every action of Jesus was the action of a divine Person. Furthermore, the human will of Jesus Christ moved in harmony with his divine will, which could not sin. Jesus Christ could not sin because he already enjoyed the Beatific Vision.

c) Jesus Christ was free of disordered concupiscence.

Disorder in the concupiscence is an effect of original sin. Jesus, conceived without original sin, did not experience this disorder.

4.2 Christ's Grace

Jesus' human nature is holy because it was assumed by the divine Person and perfectly united to God. Union with God is precisely what sanctity is about.

Jesus' soul was sanctified by grace. He was 'full of grace' (Jn 1:14). Since Jesus enjoyed the Beatific Vision, the grace that he received was infinite and could no longer increase. [127]

[126] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 28, 18 (*ANF* 9).

[127] DS 2288. 'Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church' *CCC*, 1997.

Together with grace, "God anointed him with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:28). Pope Pius XII taught that 'the Holy Spirit dwells in him in such fullness of grace that it is impossible to imagine any increase in it.'[128]

Jesus also received the virtues that accompany grace, excluding, of course, any aspects that might contradict his perfection. Thus, due to the fact that he enjoyed the Beatific Vision, he could not receive faith or hope, inasmuch as they imply believing in God whom one does not see and hoping in God whom one does not yet possess. He received them, however, as far as their secondary objects were concerned. He had hope, for example, in the glorification of his body. Jesus also enjoyed the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus

> did not only grow physically, but … 'there was also a spiritual growth in Jesus', because 'the fullness of grace in Jesus was in proportion to his age: there was always a fullness, but a fullness which increased as he grew in age'.[129]

4.3 Jesus' Knowledge and Love of God

Figure 20. *The Child Jesus in the Temple*, detail, Carl Bloch, 1874.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers (Lk 2: 46-47).

[128] Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, Encyclical Letter, 29.6.1943, n. 48. DS 2288.

[129] Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 25.3.2019, n. 26, citing John Paul II, *Catechesis,* 27.6.1990, nn. 2-3.

Because Jesus Christ had two perfect natures, divine and human, he had two modes of knowledge, divine (common to the three Persons of the Trinity), and human (senses and intellect). Jesus had a genuine mind corresponding to his rational soul.[130]

St Luke tells us that 'Jesus grew in wisdom, age, and grace before God and before men' (Lk 2:52), and Vatican II reminds us that the Son of God 'worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, he acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved'.[131]

Theologians speak of three modes of knowledge in Jesus Christ:

- Acquired knowledge (natural human knowledge)
- Infused knowledge
- The Beatific Vision (direct vision of God)

a) Acquired Knowledge

This is the knowledge human beings acquire through their own efforts and experience, beginning with the senses. It is this sort of knowledge that St Luke refers to when he says Jesus 'grew in wisdom' (Lk 2:52). It follows from the truth of the Incarnation and that Jesus assumed a true human nature. Jesus Christ, 'perfect man, subsistent with a rational soul',[132] possessed all the operations proper to all rational creatures, and among them, human science. Jesus possessed senses and the intellect, the faculties of knowledge, like other human beings, so we conclude that He used them to acquire knowledge in a natural way.

This can be difficult to understand, and initially, even the great doctor of the Church St Thomas Aquinas denied that Jesus genuinely acquired human knowledge as it seemed to be beneath the dignity of the Word made Flesh not to have had all knowledge infused from the beginning. Human beings are born *tabula rasa*, like blank slates, having to learn everything, and this did not seem suitable for the Word. But towards the end of his life, he acknowledged the radicalness of the Incarnation, including the fact that Jesus acquired knowledge gradually.

> There was a time when I thought differently, but it must be said that in Christ there was acquired knowledge, which is properly knowledge in a human fashion, as regards both the subject receiving and the active cause; for such knowledge springs from Christ's active intellect, which is natural to the human soul.[133]

b) Infused knowledge.

Infused knowledge is knowledge which is not acquired directly by using reason, but which is infused into the mind directly by God. Prophetic knowledge of the future is an example. It is the way angels know.

[130] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 149-64.
[131] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.
[132] DS 76. See also *CCC*, nn. 472-474.
[133] Thomas Aquinas, *STh*, III, Q.9, art.4, quoted in *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 151.

Sacred Scripture does not provide any definitive texts to demonstrate that Christ had infused knowledge, however many theologians have argued that He must have. The argument goes that Christ's nature was perfected, that is, there was no capacity or potential that would have been left unfulfilled or imperfect. If Christ's intellect had a capacity to receive infused knowledge, then He must have received it.[134]

This aside, there are some texts in Scripture that point to Jesus having supernatural knowledge, for instance prophetic knowledge of things that Jesus could not have known simply by human reason. We see that Jesus knew the hearts of people (for instance Nathaniel (Jn 1:47-49), and of present and future events (the background of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 17-18), what the disciples were discussing behind his back (Mk 9:33-35); that Lazarus had died (Jn 11:14)). He predicted Peter's denial and the disciples' desertion, and his own death and resurrection, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem. These Gospel passages emphasise Jesus' supernatural knowledge: he speaks with certainty and authority; the source of his knowledge transcends the human capacity to know.

The dignity of Christ's humanity in the hypostatic union makes it fitting that he should have grace in the highest degree, including gifts and charisms given by the Holy Spirit. Therefore there is no reason to deny that Christ had infused knowledge, and it seems appropriate that he should receive this gift.

c) Christ's knowledge was free from ignorance and error.

Jesus was 'full of truth' (Jn 1:14) and 'full of wisdom' (Lk 2:40). The Church, with St Gregory the Great, teaches that 'any limitation of the knowledge of the soul of Christ is inadmissible.'[135]

The reason why it is impossible for Jesus to suffer from ignorance or error is the hypostatic union. Jesus Christ enjoyed the Beatific Vision and knew God with all his perfections. Moreover, he possessed infused knowledge of all natural truths and of the truths God revealed to humankind.

Infallibility?
Jesus was not subject to error (regarding something false as true), or ignorance (not knowing something one ought to know), which would be a lack of due perfections. In this way we can say that Christ is infallible. There might have been things that Christ did not know that he did not need to know. The mind is not omniscient.

d) The Beatific Vision.
This is the knowledge that St Paul refers to as 'to see God face to face' (1 Cor 13:12), and that St John refers to when he says that we shall know God 'as He is' (1 Jn 3:3).[136] Jesus Christ had the Beatific Vision from the very moment of his conception in the womb of the Mother of God. He possessed it

> with such clarity and comprehensiveness that it surpasses similar celestial knowledge found in all the saints of heaven. So full of grace and truth is He that of His inexhaustible fullness we have all received.[137]

[134] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 152.
[135] DS 3467
[136] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 153.
[137] Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, n. 48. DS 2289

Jesus said to his disciples: “you do not know him [the Father], but I know him. And if I say that I do not know him, I shall be like you, a liar. But I know him, and I keep his word” (Jn 8:55).

This is not something revealed to Jesus, but his direct knowledge of God. Jesus did not need supernatural faith, or to believe, because He saw directly.[138]

4.4 The Power of Jesus Christ

The human will of Jesus Christ by itself, was not capable of performing miracles. United to the divine Person of the Word, however, it could, as an instrument of the divine. As seen above, the miracles narrated in the gospels are ‘theandric’ or divine-human operations.[139]

[138] On the coexistence of Jesus’ human knowledge and the Beatific Vision, see *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 156-60. On the faith of Jesus, 160-61.

[139] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 145-6.

Chapter 5: Did Christ Have Passions?

Figure 21. *Woman at the Well*, Carl Bloch, c. 1870.

'Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well' (Jn 4:6).

Chapter 5: Did Christ Have Passions?

Passions such as love, joy, and sorrow are proper to human nature. As a human being like us, Jesus had human passions; although without any of the disorder that we experience in our passions as a consequence of original sin. In Jesus, the passions were always in harmony with reason.

5.1 Jesus Christ Suffered

'The Word of God suffered in his flesh and was crucified in his flesh and experienced death in the flesh.'[140] We read in Sacred Scripture that Jesus felt hunger, was tired; he was maltreated, suffered and died. These experiences were real, something that the Docetists denied.[141]

The 'defects' or limitations that come with our human nature, like the ability to be tired, to suffer or to die, were freely accepted by Christ, deriving from his human nature. They were not punishments, as Jesus did not have original sin. He freely accepted them in order to atone for our sins, to manifest his true human nature, and to set us an example.[142] Such human limitations are not contrary to his human perfection, since he freely assumed them out of love for us, and in accord with the purpose of the Incarnation. He did not have any defects such as ignorance, inclination toward evil, or difficulty in doing good, which would have been opposed to the perfection of his knowledge and grace.

5.2 Jesus' Feelings

We see in Scripture that Jesus had a fully human and rich emotional life. We see this at different moments in the Gospels, for instance, in his conversation with the rich young man, 'Jesus, looking at him, loved him' (Lk 10:21); during the agony in the garden, 'He began to be distressed and to be dismayed' (Mt 26:37), when he experienced indignation, and anger at the hardheartedness and insincerity of the Pharisees, 'He looked around upon them with anger' (Mk 3:5, Jn 2:15-17, Mk 8:12),; and in moments of joy, '"I rejoice for your sakes"' (Jn 11:15). Jesus cried at the tomb of his friend Lazarus, and wept over the Jerusalem he loved.

The connection between body and soul means that it makes sense that Jesus experienced in his soul the consequences of what happened to his Body. The emotions are an important perfection of our human nature. Far from not experiencing emotion, Jesus Christ, as perfect man, possessed them in their most perfect form. The great value of his true sufferings during the Passion was derived from this. The Fathers of the Church called the passions of Christ *protopassions*, since the passions of Christ were never disordered but were always perfectly governed by reason and inclined towards the good in harmony with his human and divine wills.

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[140] DS 263. See also *CCC*, nn. 554, 555, 572, 601, 609, 618, 649.

[141] See 1.2: Jesus' Human Nature; *CCC*, n. 465.

[142] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 290.

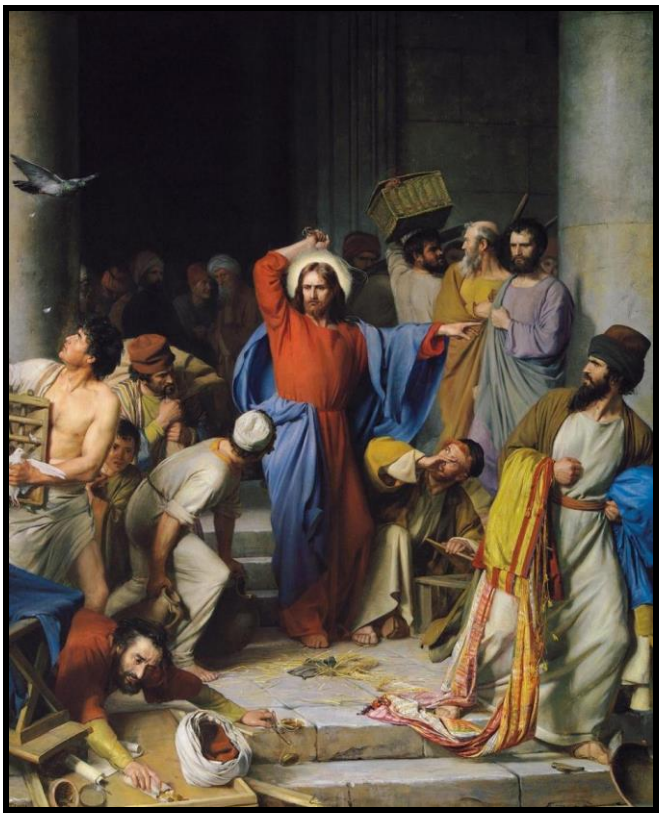

Figure 22. *Jesus Casting Out the Moneychangers at the Temple*, Carl Bloch, 1874.

'Making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me"' (Jn 2: 15-17).

Part Two: The Work of Redemption

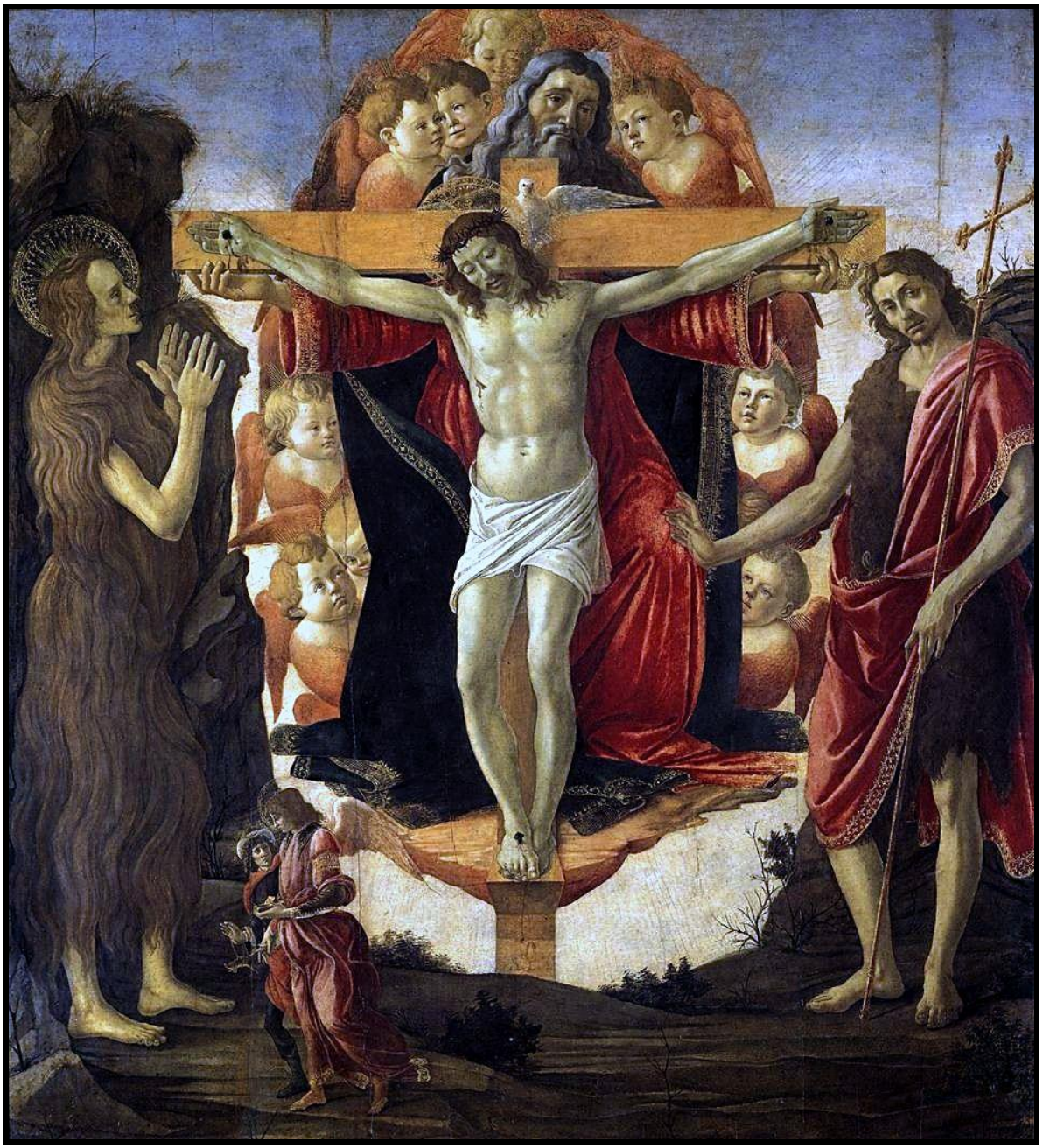

Figure 23. *Palla delle Convertite (Holy Trinity)*, Sandro Botticelli, c. 1491-3.

Knowing Jesus Christ includes understanding His mission,[143] so, after studying the Person of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord, we now examine the work of Redemption, also called *Soteriology*, or the Science of Salvation.

[143] *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 23.

Chapter 6: The Mystery of Redemption

Figure 24. *The Holy Trinity*, Friedrich Pacher, detail, c. 1483.

Chapter 6: The Mystery of Redemption

God created our first parents and elevated them to the supernatural order by means of grace. But due to original sin, humankind lost this original state of sanctity; our nature was wounded, and we were placed under the dominion of death and of the devil. God promised Adam and Eve a Savior who would free them from the dominion of sin.[144]

6.1 Redemption and the Redeeming Mediation of Jesus

'The Redemption' is the forgiveness of the sins of the human race granted by God through Jesus Christ.

The fact that Jesus was True God and True Man made Him capable of mediating between God and men, since he participates in the Divinity as well as in the Humanity. He was the sole and perfect mediator between us.[145] The Word became flesh to reconcile the human race with God. The Word, as God, is equal to the Father. But He is also man, which allowed him to suffer and atone for our sins.

> There is only one God and Mediator between God and men, himself man, Jesus Christ, who gave himself up as a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:5-6).

Christ is mediator according to his human nature, though not independently from the Divinity. The Redemption is mediation of Christ in act. All of Jesus' actions and passions are endowed with a redemptive value insofar as they belong to the Word.

6.2 Redemption: A Free Gift of God, Necessary for Salvation

One of the fundamental dogmas of the faith is the incapacity of the fallen human race to attain its own salvation. Only God can restore the supernatural order lost through sin. Redemption is God's free gift, necessary for our salvation.

a) Fallen man cannot redeem himself.

Man cannot redeem himself from his sins by his own power. We need the help of God. The Council of Trent declared,

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[144] See *CCC*, nn. 410, 430.

[145] 'The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men". But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men. He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow (him)", for "Christ also suffered for (us), leaving (us) an example so that (we) should follow in his steps." In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering. Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.' *CCC*, n. 618.

> If anyone says that, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, man can be justified before God by his own works … let him be anathema.[146]

As St Paul says, 'They are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus' (Rom 3:24). Only God's grace justifies us, that is, enables us to abandon sin and enter into friendship with God. Grace is a gift of God. Thus, it is the saving work of Jesus Christ which frees men from their sins, and not our own efforts, 'for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not from yourselves, for it is the gift of God' (Eph 2:8-9).

St Irenaeus reminded the early Christians that we need God's help to be saved: 'It was God himself who saved them because, by themselves, they could not have been saved'.[147]

Alone, we could never atone for our sins. Sin is an infinite offense committed against God. Though it may be finite considered as an act of man, it contains an infinite malice in so far as it offends God, who is infinite, through one's rejection of him and one's preference for creatures. Since a mere creature cannot make up for such a sin, it was necessary for God either to renounce this just satisfaction or to atone himself on our behalf.

Since there was no proportion between our natural capabilities and the supernatural life, it was impossible for man to be saved through his own efforts, knowing that only Divine Mercy can restore supernatural life to fallen man.[148]

b) A Free Gift of God

Just as the original state of justice of Adam and Eve was a free gift from God, so, too, the restoration of this original justice is also a free act of God.

> God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his very great love wherewith he has loved us, even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ: by grace you have been saved (Eph 2:4-5).
>
> This truth, more than just something to be taught, is a reality which Christ has made present to us. To make the Father present in his love and mercy is, in the conscience of Christ himself, the proof of his mission as Messiah. ... Christ, in revealing the merciful love of God, demanded from men at the same time to allow themselves to be guided by love and mercy in their lives. In a fuller way, Christ makes present and reveals the Father, the God rich in mercy, upon being converted in the incarnation of love, which is manifested with a peculiar strength to those who suffer, to the unhappy, and to the sinners.[149]

[146] DS 1551. '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"' *CCC*, n. 457.

[147] St Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 3, 21, 2 (*ANF* 1).

[148] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 295.

[149] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 3. See also *CCC*, nn. 456-460.

God could have excluded the entire human race from the Kingdom of Heaven without committing any injustice whatsoever.[150] God is not indebted to human beings in any way. Humankind did not have any right to receive grace. God gave it to them gratuitously in the original state of justice. He again showed his freedom, afterwards, in restoring man to the state of grace, lost through original sin. Neither did God owe himself anything; his glory cannot possibly be increased. God therefore redeemed man with absolute freedom on his part in order to show his goodness and love.

Theologians have proposed some reasons why it makes sense that God would decide to save us:

1) God, who is just, is also merciful, and the Redemption manifests this.

2) Fallen man, while he is still a wayfarer, can change and be purified, and it is fitting for the perfection of the universe that man, spiritual and material creature that he is, may not perish.[151]

[150] See St Augustine, *A Treatise on Nature and Grace*, 5, 5 (*NPNF* 1/5).

[151] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 296-7.

Chapter 7: God's Plan of Salvation

Figure 25. ***The Annunciation*****, Fra Angelico, 1430.**

Chapter 7: God's Plan of Salvation

7.1 The Eternal Decree of God

God freely decreed the Redemption of the human race from all eternity and carried it out in time through our Lord Jesus Christ. God knew about original sin before Creation, and from all eternity decreed to redeem men. After the fall of Adam and Eve, he promised them a Redeemer. God's eternal plan to redeem men is revealed, among other places, in these words of St Paul: 'He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity' (Eph 1:4).

We can divide the history of salvation into two stages:

1) BC ('before Christ'): The time before the coming of Christ, during which God prepared the people of Israel.
2) AD (*anno domini,* 'Year of the Lord'): The period from when Christ carried out the Redemption of the fallen human race.[152]

7.2 The Incarnation

a) Jesus Christ, 'for us men and for our salvation ... came down, was made flesh, and became man.'[153]

The Council of Trent said 'when the glorious fullness of time had come, the heavenly Father ... sent Jesus Christ his Son to men. Christ had been announced and promised to many holy Fathers before the Law and during the time of the Law. He was sent that the Jews ... might be redeemed, and the Gentiles ... might secure justice, and that all might receive the adoption of sons.'[154]

Holy Scripture teaches this great truth of faith: 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who were lost' (Lk 19:10); 'For God did not send his Beloved Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him' (Jn 3:17); 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners' (1 Tim 1:15). The Son of God was incarnated for the remission of the sins of men.

b) God could have redeemed us by another way.

To say otherwise would be to limit the omnipotence, wisdom, and justice of God, limiting Him to the one possibility. God could have saved us, for example, without receiving any satisfaction whatsoever from sinful mankind. But if God wanted an adequate satisfaction, the Incarnation of a divine Person was necessary, since the infinite offense against God demanded such an infinite satisfaction that it could only be offered by God himself.

[152] All of Christ's life was Redemptive.
[153] DS 125.
[154] DS 1522. See also *CCC*, nn. 456-457, 607.

c) *Would the Incarnation have taken place if Adam had not sinned?*

The most probable opinion, based on Scripture, affirms that God decreed the Incarnation only for the salvation of men. Therefore, according to the actual divine decree, if Adam had not sinned, the Son of God would not have been incarnated. Thus St Irenaeus taught: 'If there had not been flesh to be saved, in no way would the Word of God have been made flesh'. St Augustine, similarly, wrote: 'If man had not perished, the Son of Man would not have come'.[155]

7.3 Preparing for the Redemption in the Old Testament

God prepared humankind for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer. He carried out this preparation by choosing the People of Israel and revealing himself to it through the patriarchs and the prophets. The entire content of the Old Testament is a preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

Among the very first teachings of Scripture, we find the promise of a Redeemer that God made to our first parents after their fall, in his words to the tempter. A descendant of Eve will vanquish the devil: '"I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. She shall crush your head while you shall lie in wait for her heel"' (Gen 3:15).

God established a Covenant with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and renewed it with his Chosen People through Moses.

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, God gradually revealed the traits of the promised Messiah: he would be king, priest, suffering servant, and son of David; He would be born of a Virgin and be 'God with us'.[156]

Sacred Scripture also points out that God 'has not left himself without testimony' (Acts 14:16) to those outside the People of Israel. The other peoples of the earth received a different, remote preparation, for the coming of the Messiah.[157]

7.4 The Timing of the Incarnation

The time and place of the Incarnation have been covered in Chapter 1. The time and place were freely determined by God.

Divine justice makes it appropriate for the Incarnation not to occur immediately after original sin was committed, but rather only after a long period of preparation and waiting.[158] On the other hand, it would not seem proper for the Redemption to be postponed to the end of time, since the ignorance and

[155] St Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 14, 1; St Augustine, "Sermon 174", in John Rotelle, ed. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Sermons 148-183*, vol. III/5 (New York: New City Press, 1992).

[156] See Introduction.

[157] See Introduction.

[158] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 298.

concupiscence engendered by original sin would have then caused such great harm that only few would be able to know Jesus Christ.[159]

[159] Pujol Bertrán, “God Made Man”, 298.

Chapter 8: The Work of Redemption and the Triple Ministry of Jesus

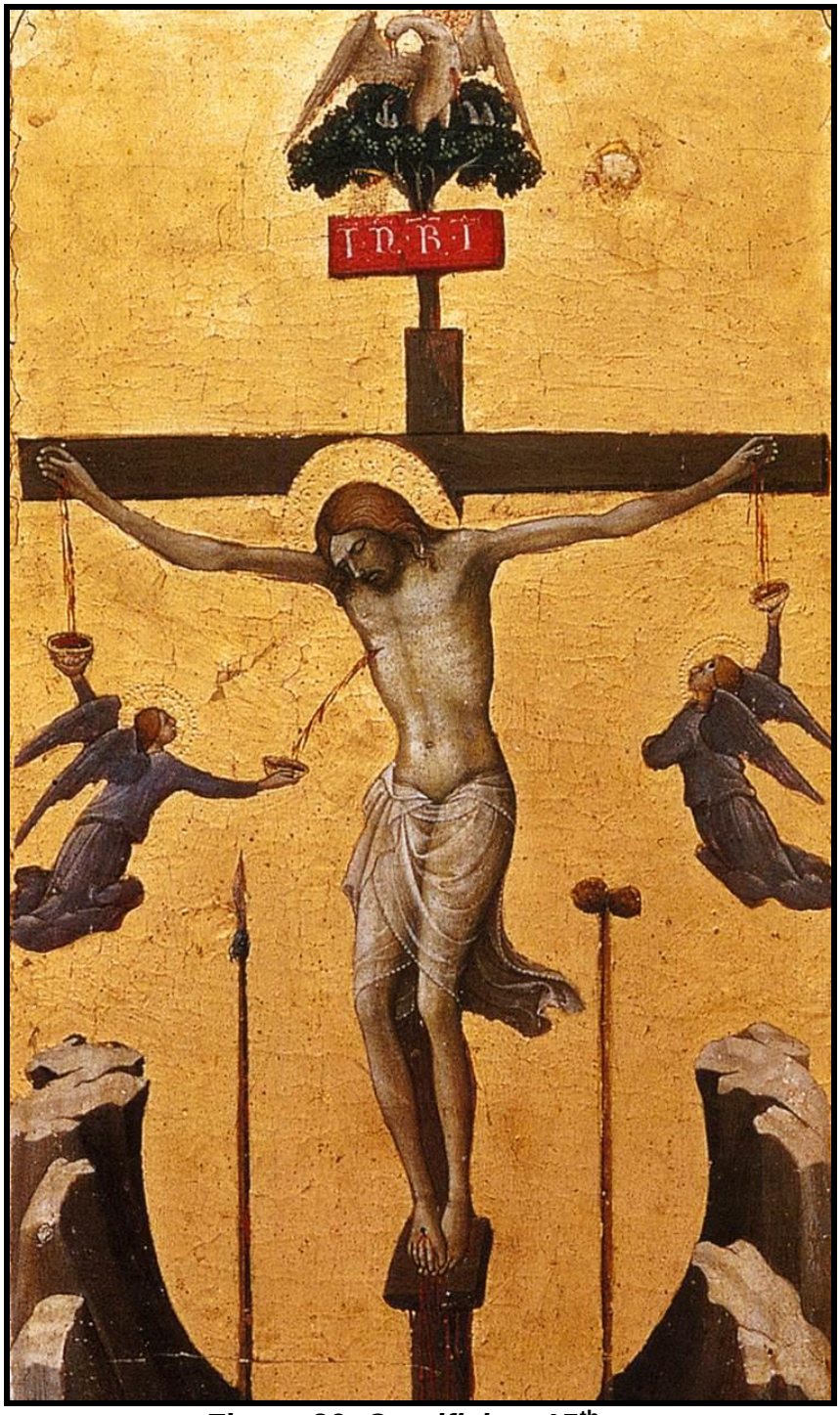

Figure 26. *Crucifixion*, 15th c.

Chapter 8: The Work of Redemption and the Triple Ministry of Christ

How did Jesus Redeem us?
Jesus Christ carried out his saving mission through his triple ministry as Teacher, Pastor, and Priest, as he Himself taught: "'I am the way [pastoral ministry], the truth [teaching ministry], and the life [priestly ministry]"' (Jn 14:6).

Jesus, as teacher, exercised his doctrinal ministry by aiming at men's understanding and by teaching them the truth. Through his pastoral ministry, he aimed at the will, and obedience to God's commandments. This pastoral ministry includes legislative, judicial, and governing powers. All the moments of Jesus' life may be considered acts of redemption, but Jesus reconciled man with God most especially through his priestly ministry. The supreme redeeming act of Christ's Priesthood is the sacrifice of his death on the cross.

8.1 Jesus Christ's Doctrinal or Prophetic Ministry

Figure 27. *Sermon on the Mount*, Fra Angelico, 1437.

a) Jesus as Teacher

Jesus is the teacher of men.[160] He came 'to destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8), including ignorance and error which are consequences of sin caused by the devil, the 'father of lies' (Jn 8:44). '"The truth"', Jesus said '"shall make you free"' (Jn 8:32).

b) Jesus as Prophet

Moses prophesied the coming of a new teacher of Israel in the Old Testament: '"God will raise from you, from among your brothers, a prophet like me: him you shall hear"' (Deut 18:15).[161] Jesus is this prophet who teaches the truth. He allows himself to be called 'Master and Lord' (Jn 13:13) and, indeed, he is the only teacher: 'one only is your Master, the Christ' (Mt 23:10). Jesus' teaching power encompasses all people of all times (cf Mt 28:19). His contemporaries, amazed at his doctrine and authority, exclaimed: '"Never has any man spoken as this man"' (Jn 7:46).

St Paul summarized Jesus' magisterial and prophetic aspect with these words:

> God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son (Heb 1:1).

The Fathers of the Church regarded Christ as the Master of the truth. St Ignatius of Antioch called him 'the infallible mouth by which the Father has spoken the truth'.[162]

The Church in her solemn Magisterium, the Second Vatican Council, for example, teaches that Jesus Christ, in so far as he is the Word of God, is the sole source of Revelation.[163] Reason enlightened by faith makes us realize why Jesus is necessarily the Master and Prophet who teaches the truth to men: he is the divine Word Incarnate, i.e., the Wisdom of God itself made man.

8.2 Jesus Christ's Pastoral or Royal Ministry: Jesus is Pastor, King, Legislator, and Judge.[164]

[160] See *CCC*, nn. 459, 520, 581-582, 888.

[161] CCC 64 Through the Old Testament prophets God prepared the People of Israel to hope for salvation, in expectation of the New Covenant. *CCC*, n. 64. Through the prophets they understand that God chose them, pardons them and saves them out of His sheer gratuitous love. *CCC*, n. 218.

[162] Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, (*ANF* 1).

[163] *Dei Verbum*, nn. 1,3.

[164] See *CCC*, nn. 553, 764, 894-896.

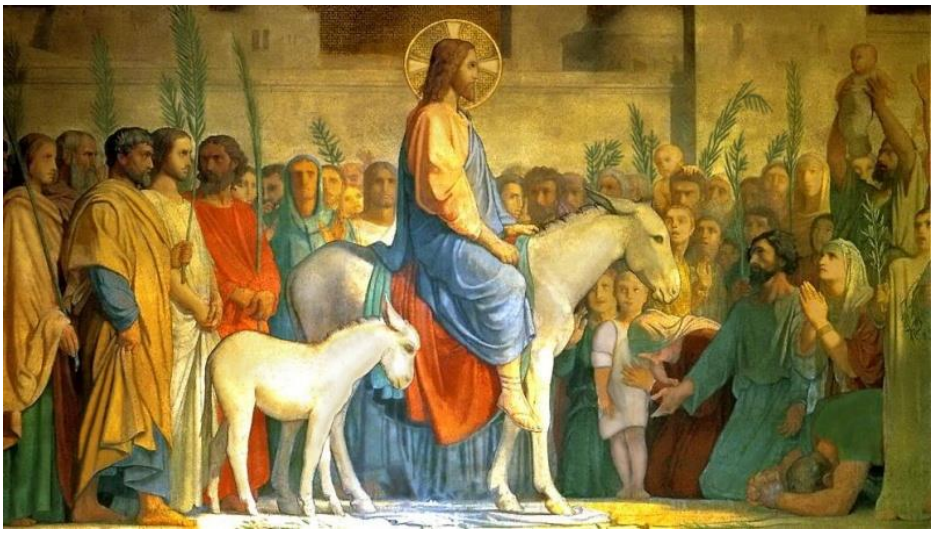

Figure 28. *Entry into Jerusalem*, Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin, 1846.

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, or *Pastor*, leads men to salvation. He exercises his pastoral ministry by issuing laws, judging, and governing men. The mission of issuing laws, judging, and ruling as King of the universe belongs to Jesus Christ.

The Fathers of the Church applied the title of *King* to Jesus Christ. St Justin, for example, spoke of the Lord 'reigning' from the wood of the Cross.[165]

The Church teaches that Jesus Christ is *Legislator*.[166] He exercises his legislative power mainly through his preaching. The Sermon on the Mount is an example since it is a summary of the New Law (cf Mt 5:6). Aside from this, Jesus also promulgated the New Commandment of Love (Jn 13:34).

Jesus is also *Judge*. In the Creed we confess that Jesus will come 'to judge the living and the dead.'[167] Sacred Scripture says that 'the Father does not judge anyone, but has given the Son the power of judging' (Jn 5:22). The sentence pronounced by Jesus as Judge is inexorably fulfilled: 'and these shall go to the eternal punishment, and the just to eternal life' (Mt 25:41).

8.3 Jesus Christ's Priestly Ministry

a) The Priestly Ministry

[165] St Justin, *Apology,* 1, 14 (*ANF* 1). In the Encyclical *Quas Primas*, 11.12.1925, Pope Pius XI instituted the feast of Christ the King. He taught that the royalty of Jesus Christ is based on the hypostatic union and that he exercises a direct dominion over the entire universe. DS 3679.

[166] DS 1571. Luther, by contrast, believed that Jesus Christ made promises but did not impose precepts Rex, *Making of Martin Luther*, 152-4, 186-9.

[167] DS 11-36.

The priests of the Old Covenant were 'appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins'.[168] The priests proclaimed the word of God and offered sacrifices and prayers, but were powerless to bring about salvation. Only the sacrifice of Christ could bring about our salvation and definitive sanctification.[169] Jesus Christ is priest. He carried out the Redemption of the human race by means of his priestly office, consummated with his death on the Cross. The death of Christ on the Cross is the sacrifice of the New Covenant which reconciles men with God.

b) Jesus is High Priest

Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is High Priest. The Magisterium defines the priesthood of Christ as a matter of faith. In the fifth century the Council of Ephesus stated that 'the Word of God himself ... was born to be our High Priest ... when he was made flesh and a man like us.'[170]

The priesthood of Christ was announced in the Old Testament: 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek' (Ps 109:4). These words are applied to Jesus in the New Testament in St Paul's Letter to the Hebrews which is a treatise on the excellence of the eternal priesthood of Christ, as superior to that of the Law (cf Heb 3-7).

Christ's priesthood began with the Incarnation, since the capacity to mediate between God and man is proper to the human nature assumed by the Word. Since the priesthood of Christ shares the eternity of its eternal cause, the hypostatic union, the effects of the priestly mediation of Jesus are also perpetual and eternal. Thus, the sentiments (of adoration, praise, petition, propitiation, and thanksgiving) which led Jesus to his immolation on the Cross are eternally present and continually exert their influence on men.[171]

8.4 Christ's Priestly Sacrifice

[168] *CCC*, n. 1539. See also Hb 5:1; Ex 29:1-30, and Lev 8.

[169] *CCC*, n. 1540.

[170] DS 261. The Council of Trent also dwelt extensively on the priesthood of Christ. See also DS 1740; *CCC*, nn. 662, 1137, 1545.

[171] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 302.

Figure 29. *The Last Supper*, Juan de Juanes, 1562.

In quest of a deeper understanding of the faith of the Church, which recognizes that the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was a true sacrifice, we will study first what a sacrifice is. We will afterwards see that the death of Jesus on the Cross fulfills all the requirements of a sacrifice and, finally, how the Redemption of the human race was carried out through Jesus' sacrifice.

a) What is a Sacrifice

There are five elements necessary for a true sacrifice. A sacrifice is the

1. *offering* (oblation), and
2. *destruction* (immolation)
3. of a *sensible thing* (a physical thing that can be seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelled)
4. carried out by a *legitimate minister*
5. in order to *confess the supreme dominion of God* above all things.[172]

b) Jesus' Death on the Cross Was a True Sacrifice

Jesus' death on the Cross was a true sacrifice, because it contained all the essential elements:

1, 3: *Offering of a sensible thing*: Christ the man offered himself to God.
2: *Destruction*: Jesus died, shedding his blood.

[172] Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 302-3.

4: *Minister*: Jesus in his Humanity is the mediator between God and men. He offers the sacrifice.
5: *Confessing the dominion of God*: Jesus gave himself out of obedience to the will of the Father, to whom "he was obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8).

Jesus died on the Cross in order to placate the divine justice and to wash away the sins of men. All the prerequisites of a true sacrifice were fulfilled. The Magisterium of the Church is very clear in teaching the sacrificial character of Christ's death on the Cross. The Council of Trent stated:

> Our Lord and God was once and for all to offer himself by his death on the altar of the Cross to God the Father to accomplish for them [men] an everlasting redemption.[173]

Many passages of Sacred Scripture show the sacrificial character of the death of Christ. In Chapters 9 and 10 of *Hebrews*, for example, the superiority of Christ's sacrifice with respect to those of the Old Testament is described.

Figure 30. *The Lamb of God*, Francisco de Zurbarán, 1635-40.

'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth'. (Isaiah 53:7)

c) Jesus Christ rescued us and reconciled us with God by means of the sacrifice of his death.

Although the entire life of Christ has a salvific value,[174] his death on the Cross sums up and is the culmination of his work of redemption; the forgiveness of sins was accomplished through it. The Council of Trent stated that Jesus Christ 'reconciled us to God in his blood', and that the purpose of the sacrifice

[173] DS 1740. See also *CCC*, nn. 613-614, 1330, 1366, 2100.

[174] 'The Son of God, who came down "from heaven, not to do (his) own will, but the will of him who sent (him)", said on coming into the world, "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God." "and by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work." The sacrifice of Jesus "for the sins of the whole world" expresses his loving communion with the Father. "The Father loves me, because I lay down my life", said the Lord, "(for) I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father"' *CCC*, n. 606.

of his death on the Cross is 'to accomplish for them [all who were to be sanctified] an everlasting redemption.'[175]

Sacred Scripture says that the Lord gave up his life as a 'ransom for many' (Mt 20:28). While instituting the Eucharist, Jesus himself pointed out the redeeming power of his death: '"This is my Blood of the new Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins"' (Mt 26:28). St Paul attributed the reconciliation of sinful man to the death of Christ: 'When we were enemies, we were reconciled with God by the death of his Son' (Rom 5:7).

8.5.Jesus Christ's Vicarious Satisfaction

As outlined above, in order to forgive sins, God willed that an adequate satisfaction be offered by humanity.[176] Only a satisfaction of infinite value could make up for the infinite offense committed against God through sin. Only Jesus Christ, a divine Person, true God and true man, could provide this satisfaction.

Jesus Christ, however, is innocent of our sins. How could he satisfy for the sins of men, of which he was not guilty?

Satisfaction is the reparation of an offense; it may be offered by the offender himself or his representative. In the latter case, it is called 'vicarious' satisfaction. Jesus Christ himself did not have anything to atone for, since he had not committed any sin. He offered a vicarious satisfaction for the sins of men.[177]

a) Objective and Subjective Redemption

Two aspects can be distinguished in the satisfaction of men's sins carried out by Jesus Christ:

- *Objective redemption*: the way in which the death of Christ redeemed sin; and
- *Subjective redemption*: the manner in which each individual benefits from that redemption.

We will study now these two aspects of the vicarious satisfaction of Jesus Christ.

Objective Redemption

i) Adequacy and Superabundance

[175] DS 1513; DS 1740. See also *CCC*, nn. 613, 617.

[176] *CCC*, nn. 478, 519, 616-617.

[177] '"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who "makes himself an offering for sin", when "he bore the sin of many", and who "shall make many to be accounted righteous", for "he shall bear their iniquities". Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father"' *CCC*, n. 615

Satisfaction is *adequate* (*de condigno)*, equivalent, when it perfectly makes up for the seriousness of an offense, according to strict justice. It is called *inadequate* satisfaction (*de congruo)* when it does not totally make up for the injustice but is nevertheless accepted benevolently by the offended party.

The vicarious satisfaction of Christ was *adequate* since the sacrifice of his death had an infinite value. Being the death of the Son of God, it totally made up for the guilt of all the sins of men. Jesus 'gave himself up as a ransom for all' (1 Tim 2:6). The vicarious satisfaction of Christ is also *superabundant*; its merits and effects infinitely exceed all the injustices provoked by sins.

The sacrifice of the death of Jesus *adequately* and *superabundantly* satisfied for the sins of men. It is a vicarious satisfaction as he himself says: '"I give my life for my sheep"' (Jn 10:15). Sacred Scripture says that 'where sin abounded, grace abounded still more', and St Cyril of Jerusalem wrote: 'The injustice of sinners was not as great as the justice of him who died for us.'[178]

ii) Universality

The Objective Redemption is universal. Jesus Christ satisfied for the sins of all people without exception, and not only for the predestined. Jesus died for the sins of everyone.[179] The universality of the Redemption is clearly taught in Sacred Scripture. Jesus is the 'propitiation for our sins, and not only for our sins, but also for those of everyone" (1 Jn 2:2). God "wants all men to be saved' (1 Tim 2:40).

Subjective Redemption

Only the objective redemption of Jesus is universally effective. For the sufficient and superabundant vicarious satisfaction of Christ to take effect in each person, it is necessary for each one to make those merits his or her own. That is to say, the objective redemption (death of Christ) is universally effective, but the subjective redemption (the salvation of each person) is particular and may sometimes not be attained.

The Council of Trent taught that Baptism is necessary for salvation: 'After the promulgation of the Gospel, this passing [from sin to justification] cannot take place without the water of regeneration or the desire for it'.[180]

> Though Christ did die for all, still all do not receive the benefit of his death, but only those with whom the merit of his Passion is shared. ... They would never have been justified except through rebirth in Christ.[181]

[178] Rom 5:20; St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses Mystagogicae,* 15 (*NPNF* 2/7).

[179] Council of Trent, DS 1522. See also *CCC*, n. 616. 'In 1653, Pope Innocent X condemned as heretical a proposition stating that Jesus Christ died only for the predestined, and Alexander VIII in 1690 rejected the proposition that Jesus died only in favor of the faithful'. Pujol Bertrán, "God Made Man", 304.

[180] DS 1524

[181] Council of Trent, DS 1523. 'The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men". But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men. He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow (him)", for "Christ also suffered for (us), leaving (us) an example so that (we) should follow in his steps." In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering. Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven"' *CCC*, n. 618.

The salvation of each person also depends on their faith and good works. Each must strive to attain his or her personal salvation. Sacred Scripture links justification to faith in Jesus Christ and to the fulfillment of the commandments and counsels given by the Lord. The Apostle St James clearly says that 'it is through works, and not faith only, that man is justified' (James 2:24).

8.6 How the Passion of Jesus Brought About Our Salvation

Jesus Christ 'merited justification for us by his own most holy Passion on the wood of the Cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father.' Knowing that through its fall due to sin, the human race was subject to the devil and separated from God, we may say that Jesus Christ caused our salvation through His death for the following reasons:

i) He ransomed us from the dominion of the devil and of sin. Thus, Jesus Christ accomplished the satisfaction for our sins by way of redemption or ransom paid to satisfy the divine justice.

ii) Jesus Christ's satisfaction gives us the sanctifying grace necessary for salvation.

In short, our justification is carried out through the forgiveness of sins and, at the same time, through our elevation to the supernatural order through grace. The Passion of Jesus erases sin and sanctifies.

Chapter 9: The Conclusion of the Redemption: Jesus Christ's Glorification

Figure 31. *The Last Judgment*, Fra Angelico, 1425-1430.

Chapter 9: The Conclusion of the Redemption: Jesus Christ's Glorification

We should call to mind that although the sacrifice of Christ's death is the culminating moment of the work of salvation, his entire life is redemptive. Thus, the events that follow the death of Christ on the Cross also have a redemptive value.

9.1 Jesus Christ's Descent into Hell

Figure 32. *Harrowing of Hell*, Jacquelin de Montlucon, 1496-98.

As we pray in the Creed, after Jesus' death, 'he descended into hell'. He descended in His Soul, that is, without His Body.[182] Sacred Scripture tells us: 'Jesus also descended to the lower, earthly regions. He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens' (Eph 4:9-10).

[182] The Fourth Lateran Council clarifies: "He descended into hell … but he descended with his soul.DS 11-36; DS 801. See also *CCC*, n. 631-637.

> Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, 'hell' – *Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek - because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God. Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into 'Abraham's bosom': 'It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham's bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell.' Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him.[183]

Jesus did this by applying the fruits of the Redemption to them and making them share in the beatific vision of God in heaven.[184]

The Fathers of the Church offer a unanimous testimony to the descent of Christ's soul. St Ignatius of Antioch wrote that Jesus Christ went down to *sheol* and 'resurrected from the dead all those prophets who had been his disciples in spirit and who have waited for him as their master.'[185]

9.2 The Resurrection

[183] *CCC*, n. 633. See also DS 1011, 1077. St Thomas Aquinas distinguished between 'hell' or *Gehenna*, and 'Abraham's Bosom', or the 'Limbo of the Fathers'. *Gehenna* was hell in the strict sense, the place of punishment for the damned. The 'Bosom of Abraham' or 'Limbo of the Fathers' was where the souls of those who died before Christ and were not in hell awaited admission to heaven. *STh* Supp. Q. 69, aa. 1-7.

[184] Roman Catechism 1. 6. 6.

[185] St Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians* (*ANF* 1).

Figure 33. *The Resurrection*, Andrea Mantegna, 1457-1459.

> 'We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.' The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross.[186]

On the third day after his death, Jesus Christ gloriously rose from the dead. Sacred Scripture tells us: 'We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus' (Acts 13:32-33). The Resurrection of Christ is a fundamental truth on which our faith is based since, as St Paul says, 'If Christ did not resurrect, vain is our preaching. Vain is our faith' (1 Cor 15:14).

> The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: 'I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve ...' The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus.[187]

The truth of the divinity of Jesus is confirmed by his Resurrection: '"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am"' (Jn 8:28). The Church teaches the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus in all the Symbols of the faith and in her most solemn Magisterium.[188]

The Resurrection of the Messiah was foretold in the Old Testament: 'You will not leave my soul in hell, nor will you let your Holy One see corruption' (Ps 15:10). Christ's Resurrection fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus categorically announces that he will resurrect three days after his death (Mt 12:40, Jn 2:19).

> The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise. Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter. The disciple 'whom Jesus loved' affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered 'the linen cloths lying there', 'he saw and believed'. This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus.[189]

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[186] *CCC*, n. 638.
[187] *CCC*, n. 639.
[188] *CCC*, nn. 638-658.
[189] *CCC*, n. 640.

The historical reality of Jesus Christ's Resurrection is evidenced by the empty sepulcher, the apparition to Mary Magdalene and the holy women who were the first to announce Christ's resurrection to the apostles; the numerous apparitions to his disciples, the conversations he had with them, and the encounters in which he even ate or allowed them to touch him.[190] Jesus appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve (1 Cor 15:5). Peter, called to confirm his brethren in the faith, saw the Risen Christ before the rest of the apostles; upon Peter's testimony the community exclaimed: '"It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon"' (Lk 24:34).

The Resurrection of Jesus is the central theme of the Apostles' preaching, who 'gave testimony of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power' (Heb 4:33). St Paul speaks of Jesus Christ once appearing to more than five hundred persons (1 Cor 15:4-8). Considering the weight of these testimonies, it is impossible to interpret the Resurrection of Christ outside the physical and historical realm. Neither was the apostles' testimony the result of a mystical exaltation; the Scripture presents them 'with their faces downcast' (Lk 24:17), and 'scared' (Jn 20:19).

> Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold. The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ('looking sad') and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an 'idle tale'. When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, 'he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.'[191]
>
> Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. 'In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering.' Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee 'some doubted'. Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.[192]

The condition of Christ's risen humanity

[190] See Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24; Jn 20-21; *CCC,* n. 641.
[191] *CCC*, n. 643.
[192] *CCC*, n. 644.

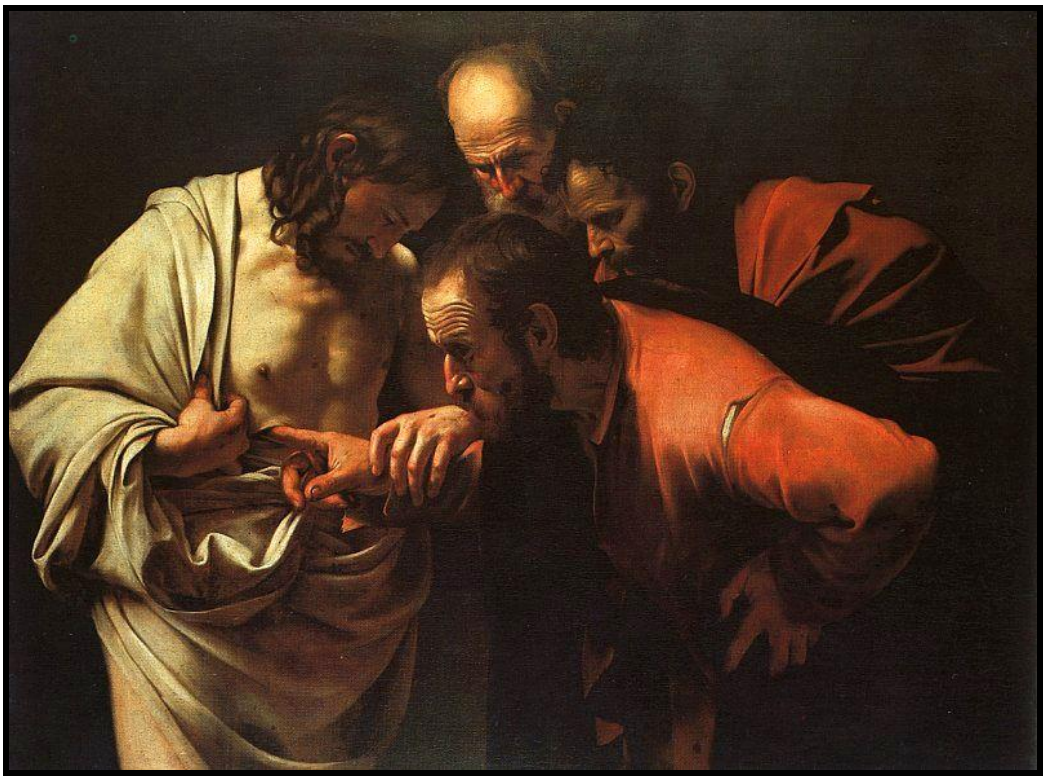

Figure 34. *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, Caravaggio, 1601.

By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion. Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm. For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith.[193]

Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is ‘the man of heaven’.[194]

[193] CCC, n. 645.
[194] *CCC*, n. 646.

Jesus Christ resurrected in a glorious state and, from then on, his glorious body is not subject to the limitations of time and space, but it is not merely 'a spirit'. The glorious body of Jesus retained the wounds and the signs of the Passion as a manifestation of his triumph over death and as effective signs of his perpetual priestly mediation in heaven: '"Bring hither your finger, and look at my hands, bring hither your hand and place it in my side, and be not unbelieving, but believing"' (Jn 20:27). The Resurrection of Jesus was not like the resurrection of Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, or the young man at Naim; they returned to their ordinary, earthly, lives. The risen body of Christ was full of the Holy Spirit, and shared the glorious divine life, never to die again.

Through his death, Christ liberates us from sin; through his Resurrection, he gives us access to a new life. The Resurrection of Jesus brings the redemption of the human race to its fullness, because it is the figure of our own spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, and the foretaste of our physical resurrection at the end of the world. It accomplishes our *adoption as children of God*: '"Go and tell my brothers"' (Mt 28:10).

Christ's Resurrection is also the source and beginning of *our future resurrection*: 'Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive' (1 Cor 15:20-22).

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest of his miracles and, since it is the fulfillment of his prophecies, it is the most decisive apologetic argument of the truth of his teaching.

9.3 Jesus Christ's Ascension into Heaven

> 'So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.' Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys. But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity. Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand. Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul 'as to one untimely born', in a last apparition that established him as an apostle.[195]

Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.[196] Sacred Scripture points out the historic fact of his Ascension, a scene witnessed by many: 'The Lord Jesus, after having talked with them, was elevated into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God' (Mk 16:19).[197] To say Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father means that He who existed as the Son of God before all centuries, true God consubstantial with the Father, is now seated with his body, after it was incarnated,

[195] *CCC*, n. 659.

[196] DS 11-36. See also *CCC*, nn. 659-667.

[197] See also Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9; Eph 4:8; Heb 4:14. Jesus Christ went up to heaven by his own power. As God, he did so by his divine power. As man, he accomplished it through the power of his glorified soul, which is able to bring the body wherever it wills. With respect to our salvation, it is the definitive consummation of his work of Redemption.

and glorified.[198] He is in heaven in body and soul. The Ascension into heaven is the definitive glorification of Jesus' human nature.

> Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: 'To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.' After this event the apostles became witnesses of the 'kingdom [that] will have no end'.[199]

Jesus Christ, God and man, entered into glory with the souls of the just who had died before the Redemption. From heaven, he prepares a place for us, intercedes for us (Jn 14:2ff; Heb 7:25), is the only mediator of grace, which he merited through the Redemption, and sends the Holy Spirit.

9.4 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ or *Parousia*

[198] See St John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 4.2 (*NPNF* 2/9); *CCC*, n. 663.

[199] *CCC*, n. 664.

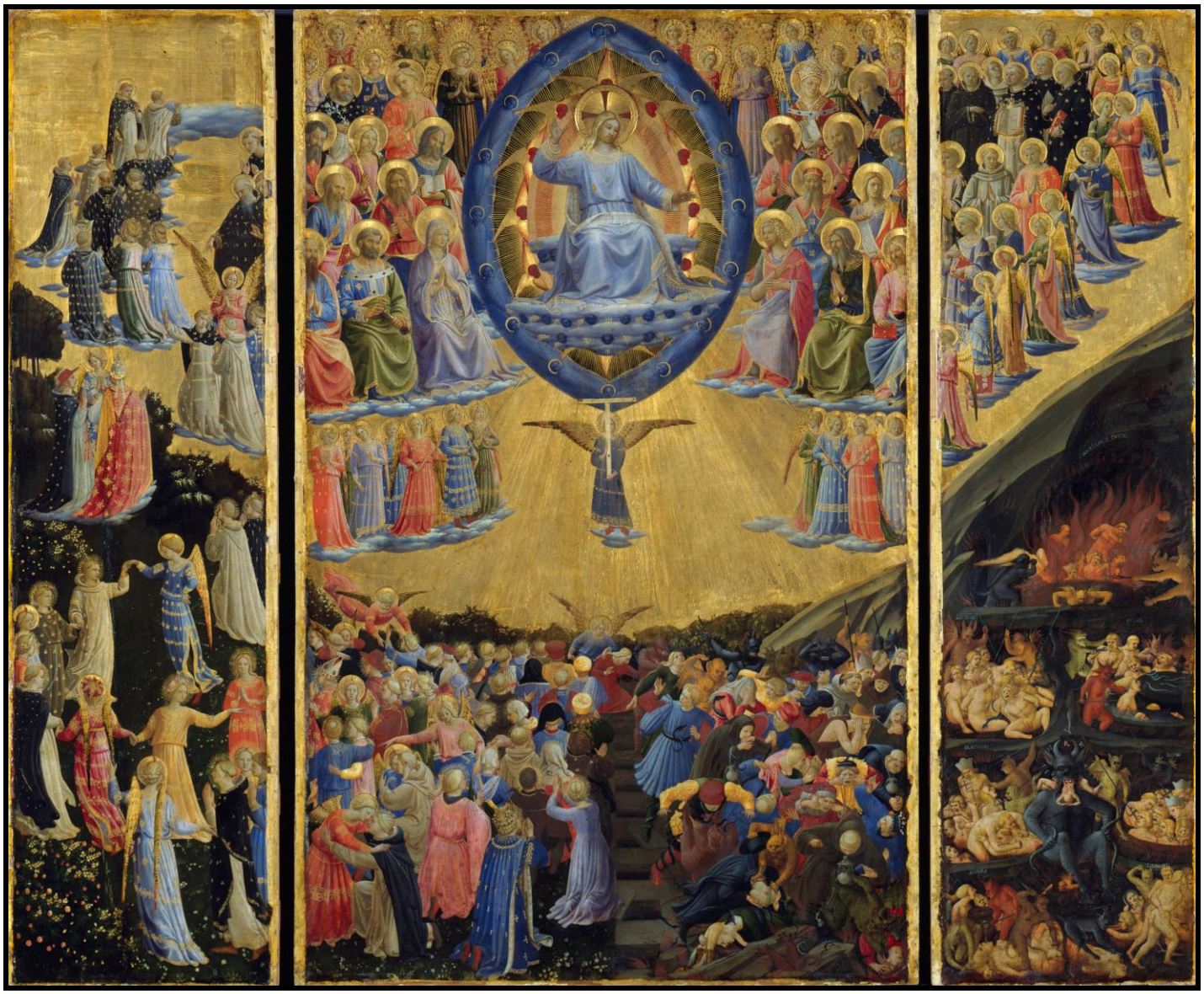

Figure 35. *The Last Judgment*, Fra Angelico, 1435-50.

Jesus Christ will come with glory and majesty 'to judge the living and the dead" at the end of time'.[200] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that Christ, the Lord, reigns through the Church; but the things of this world are not yet subjected to him. The forces of evil will continue their attacks. On the Day of Judgment, at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to accomplish the definitive triumph of good over evil. He will reveal the secret dispositions of men's hearts and reward each one according to their deeds and acceptance or rejection of God's grace.

[200] DS 11-36. *CCC*, nn. 668-682.

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