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Colman E. O'Neill O.P.

Excerpt

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 16

De his quæ consequuntur unionem

Deinde considerandum est de his quæ consequuntur unionem.

- Et primo, quantum ad ea quæ conveniunt Christo secundum se;
secundo, de his quæ conveniunt Christo per comparisonem ad Deum Patrem;
tertio, de his quæ conveniunt Christum quantum ad nos.
Circa primum duplex consideratio occurrit:
primo quidem, de his quæ conveniunt Christo secundum esse et fieri;
secundo, de his quæ conveniunt Christo secundum rationem unitatis.

Quæstio 16. de his quæ conveniunt Christo secundum esse et fieri

Circa primum quærentur duodecim:

1. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Deus est homo';
2. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Homo est Deus';
3. utrum Christus possit dici 'homo dominicus';
4. utrum ea quæ conveniunt Filio Hominis, possint prædicari de Filio Dei, et e converso;
5. utrum ea quæ conveniunt Filio Hominis, possint prædicari de divina natura, et de humana ea quæ conveniunt Filio Dei;
6. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Filius Dei factus est homo';
7. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Homo factus est Deus';
8. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Christus est creatura';
9. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Iste homo', demonstrato Christo, 'inceptit esse', vel, 'fuerit semper';
10. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Christus, secundum quod homo, est creatura';
11. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Christus, secundum quod homo, est Deus';
12. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Christus, secundum quod homo, est hypostasis vel persona'.

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STATEMENTS RELATING TO CHRIST AS EXISTING

The implications of the hypostatic union

We now turn our attention to the implications of the union:^a those affecting,

- firstly, Christ himself (16–19);
- secondly, his relations with his Father (20–24);
- thirdly, his relations with ourselves (25–26).

Regarding the first of these topics two questions are raised.

- The first concerns statements relating to Christ as existing and as coming into existence (16);^b
- the second concerns Christ's unity (17–19).

Question 16. statements relating to Christ as existing and as coming into existence

Under the first of these questions there are twelve points of inquiry:

1. is this statement true, 'God is a man'?
2. is this statement true, 'A man is God'?
3. may Christ be termed 'a man of the Lord'?
4. may we predicate of the Son of God what affects the Son of man, and vice versa?
5. may we predicate of the divine nature what affects the Son of man, and of the human nature what affects the Son of God?
6. is this statement true, 'The Son of God was made a man'?
7. is this statement true, 'A man was made the Son of God'?
8. is this statement true, 'Christ is a creature'?
9. are these statements true, 'This man'—namely Christ—'began to be' or 'existed always'?
10. is this statement true, 'Christ, as man, is a creature'?
11. is this statement true, 'Christ, as man, is God'?
12. is this statement true, 'Christ, as man, is an independent subject or person'?

^a3a. 1, Introduction.

^bThis Question may be compared to that on the names of God, 1a. 13 (Vol. 3 of this series) and more particularly related to that on using essential and personal terms about the Trinity, 1a. 39, (Vol. 7).

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 16, 1

articulus 1. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Deus est homo'

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:¹ I. Videtur quod hæc sit falsa, 'Deus est homo'. Omnis enim propositio affirmativa in materia aliqua remota est falsa. Sed hæc propositio, 'Deus est homo', est in materia remota; quia formæ significatæ per subiectum et prædicatum sunt maxime distantes. Cum ergo prædicta propositio sit affirmativa, videtur quod sit falsa.

2. Præterea, magis conveniunt tres personæ ad invicem quam humana natura et divina. Sed in mysterio Trinitatis una persona non prædicatur de alia; non enim dicimus quod Pater est Filius, vele converso. Ergo videtur quod nec humana natura possit prædicari de Deo, ut dicatur quod Deus est homo.

3. Præterea, Athanasius dicit quod, *sicut anima et caro unus est homo, ita Deus et homo unus est Christus*.² Sed hæc est falsa, 'Anima est corpus'. Ergo et hæc est falsa, 'Deus est homo'.

4. Præterea, sicut in *Prima Parte* habitum est, quod prædicatur de Deo non relative sed absolute convenit toti Trinitati et singulis personis.³ Sed hoc nomen 'homo' non est relativum, sed absolutum. Si ergo vere prædicatur de Deo, sequitur quod tota Trinitas et quælibet persona sit homo. Quod patet esse falsum.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur *Philipp.*, *Qui, cum in forma Dei esset, exinanivit semetipsum, formam servi accipiens, in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo*.⁴ Et sic ille qui est in forma Dei, est homo. Sed ille qui est in forma Dei est Deus. Ergo Deus est homo.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod ista propositio, 'Deus est homo', ab omnibus Christianis conceditur: non tamen ab omnibus secundum eamdem rationem. Quidam enim hanc propositionem concedunt non secundum propriam acceptionem horum terminorum.

Nam Manichæi Verbum Dei dicunt esse hominem, non quidem verum, sed similitudinarium, inquantum dicunt Filium Dei corpus phantasticum assumpsisse: ut sic dicatur Deus esse homo sicut cuprum figuratum dicitur homo, quia habet similitudinem hominis.

Similiter etiam illi qui posuerunt quod in Christo anima et corpus non fuerunt unita non posuerunt quod Deus sit verus homo, sed quod dicatur

¹cf *In III Sent.* 7, 1, 1. *Contra errores Græc.* 1, 18–21. *De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos, etc.* 6

²*Quicumque* Creed, attrib. to Athanasius; see Denz.-S., 75–6, with note

³Ia. 39, 3 ad 4; cf Ia. 29, 4

⁴*Philippians* 2, 6–7

*The Subject and Predicate of a statement, considered as related one to the other, are known as the *matter* of the statement. According as the Predicate is to be affirmed of the Subject necessarily, contingently or not at all, the matter is said to be *natural* (necessary), *contingent* or *remote*.

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STATEMENTS RELATING TO CHRIST AS EXISTING

article 1. is this statement true, 'God is a man'?

THE FIRST POINT:¹ 1. The statement, 'God is a man', seems to be false. For every affirmative statement in remote matter is false.^a And the statement, 'God is a man', is in remote matter since the natures signified by the Subject and the Predicate are infinitely diverse. Since the statement is affirmative, it seems, therefore, that it is false.

2. Moreover, there is more in common to the three divine persons than there is to human and divine nature. Yet in our statements about the mystery of the Trinity one person is not predicated of another; we do not say that the Father is the Son, or vice versa. Consequently it seems that neither may we predicate human nature of God, saying that God is a man.

3. Moreover, Athanasius says, *As soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ.*² Now it is false to say, 'The soul is the body'. It is equally false, then, to say, 'God is a man'.

4. Moreover, it has already been shown that in statements about God terms signifying absolute perfections, not relations, are to be predicated of the whole Trinity and hence of each person.³ But the term 'a man' signifies something absolute. If then it may be truly predicated of God, it follows that the whole Trinity and each person is a man. And this is patently false.

ON THE OTHER HAND we read, *Who being in the form of God, emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man.*⁴ That is to say, he who is in the form or nature of God is a man. But he who is in the nature of God is God. God is therefore a man.

REPLY: The truth of the statement, 'God is a man',^b is admitted by all Christians; not all, however, understand it in the same way. As some admit it the terms no longer stand for what they signify literally.^c

So the Manichees affirm that the Word of God is a man, not, however, a true man but an apparent one; for they hold that the Son of God assumed only what seemed to be a body. From this it would follow that God is said to be a man in the same way as a bronze casting is so termed simply because it bears the likeness of a man.

Similarly, those for whom soul and body in Christ were not united did not hold that God is a true man, but rather that he is called a man

^bThat this, rather than the theologically non-committal, *God is man*, is the translation of *Deus est homo* is one of the conclusions concerning language which emerges from the present question. *Homo* is to be taken as standing for (cf Appendix 1, §3) a person possessing a human nature, and not for the human race in a general sense. See especially art. 1, end of reply; art. 7, second interpretation.

^cSee Appendix 1, §4, (a).

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homo figurative, ratione partium.—Sed utraque harum opinionum supra improbata est.⁵

Alii vero e converso ponunt veritatem ex parte hominis, sed negant veritatem ex parte Dei. Dicunt enim Christum, qui est Deus homo, esse Deum, non naturaliter sed participative, scilicet per gratiam, sicut et omnes sancti viri dicuntur dii;⁶ excellentius tamen Christus præ aliis propter gratiam abundantiore. Et secundum hoc, cum dicitur, 'Deus est homo', *ly*^{aa} 'Deus' non supponit verum et naturalem Deum. Et hæc est hæresis Photini, quæ supra, improbata est.⁷

Alii vero concedunt hanc propositionem cum veritate utriusque termini, ponentes Christum et verum Deum esse et verum hominem; sed tamen veritatem prædicationis non salvant. Dicunt enim quod 'homo' prædicatur de 'Deo' per quamdam conjunctionem, vel dignitatis vel auctoritatis, vel etiam affectionis aut inhabitationis. Et sic posuit Nestorius Deum esse hominem: ut per hoc nihil aliud significetur quam quod Deus est homini conjunctus tali conjunctione quod homo inhabitetur a Deo, et uniatur ei secundum affectum, et secundum participationem auctoritatis et honoris divini.

Et in similem errorem incidunt qui ponunt duas hypostases vel duo supposita in Christo. Quia non est possibile intelligi quod duorum quæ sunt secundum suppositum vel hypostasim distincta unum proprie prædicetur de alio, sed solum secundum quandam figurativam locutionem, inquantum in aliquo conjunguntur; puta si dicamus Petrum esse Ioannem, quia habent aliquam conjunctionem ad invicem.—Et hæc etiam opiniones supra reprobatæ sunt.⁸

Unde, supponendo, secundum veritatem Catholicæ fidei, quod vera natura divina unita est cum vera natura humana non solum in persona, sed etiam in supposito vel hypostasi, dicimus esse veram hanc propositionem et propriam, 'Deus est homo', non solum propter veritatem terminorum, quia scilicet Christus est verus Deus et verus homo, sed etiam propter veritatem prædicationis. Nomen enim significans naturam communem in

^{aa}*ly*, a medieval transcription of the Arabic article *el*, used like the Greek *τό* to point a term.

⁵2, 5 & 6; 5, 1 & 2 ⁶*Psalm* 81, 6; *John* 10, 34 f. ⁷2, 10 & 11 ⁸2, 3 & 6

^aThe opinion of the School of Abelard, condemned by Alexander III, 1177 (Denz.-S. 750).

^ePhotinus, bishop of Sirmium, d. 376; condemned for heresy (345, 347) and deposed (351). St Thomas connects with this name the approach to the Incarnation which sees it as the perfecting of a man—the *assumptus homo* theory. St Thomas insists that the mystery should be seen as a *descent* of the Word, rather than an *ascent* of man; cf 33, 3 ad 3.

^fSee Glossary, *person*, *ontological subject*, *hypostasis*. The distinction implied here

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metaphorically, being in possession of these parts.^d—The falsity of both these opinions has already been demonstrated.⁵

At the other extreme there are those who preserve the literal meaning of the term 'man' but not that of the term 'God'. In this view Christ, the God-man, is God, not by nature, but by participation. It is by reason of grace, therefore, that he and all other holy men are said to be gods;⁶ he, however, excels the others because of his fullness of grace. According to this opinion, in the statement, 'God is a man', the term 'God' does not stand for the true God by nature. This is the heresy of Photinus^e which has already been shown to be false.⁷

Others again admit this statement with both terms standing for what they signify literally; they affirm that Christ is both true God and true man; yet they do not preserve the truth of the predication. For they maintain that 'a man' is predicated of 'God' on the grounds of some form of association, whether it be one of dignity, or authority, or simply of affection or indwelling. It was in this fashion that Nestorius granted that God is a man; by this he meant nothing more than that God is united to a man in such wise that the man has God dwelling in him and that he is united to God by affection and by participation in divine authority and honour.

Those also who postulate two hypostases or two ontological subjects in Christ fall into a like error. For it is impossible to conceive, given two which are distinct as hypostases or as ontological subjects, that one should be literally predicated of the other. The only form of predication admissible here involves some type of metaphor based on something common to the two. So we might, for example, say that Peter is John because the two have a common interest.—These opinions too have already been shown to be false.⁸

Consequently, assuming, as the Catholic faith requires, that the true divine nature is united with a true human nature, not simply in the person but also in the ontological subject or hypostasis,^f we affirm that the statement, 'God is a man', is both true and literal. This is not only because the terms stand for what they signify literally, Christ being both true God and true man, but also because of the truth of the predication.^g For a concrete

between *person*, on the one hand, and *ontological subject* and *hypostasis*, on the other, normally has no significance for St Thomas. But here he has the opinion of Nestorius in mind, which he sees reflected in the Abelard-inspired 'assumed-man' theory, current in the twelfth century (see Appendix 2 (1): First opinion). According to this opinion, union in person does not imply substantial union; cf 2, 2 where St Thomas also extends *union in person* to the union with substance of an accidental nature.

^gSee Appendix 1, §4, (a). Notice, for what follows, that *abstract* and *concrete* forms of a term (e.g. *human nature* and *man*) both *signify* the same nature, but differently: the abstract term signifies the nature alone, the concrete term signifies the nature as possessed by a subject. As a consequence, in a statement an abstract term *stands for* the nature, while a concrete term *stands for* the subject having the nature.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 16, 1

concreto potest supponere pro quolibet contentorum in natura communi; sicut hoc nomen 'homo' potest supponere pro quolibet homine singulari. Et ita hoc nomen 'Deus', ex ipso modo suae significationis, potest supponere pro persona Filii Dei; ut in *Prima Parte* habitum est.⁹ De quolibet autem supposito alicujus naturae potest vere et proprie praedicari nomen significans illam naturam in concreto, sicut de Socrate et Platone proprie et vere praedicatur 'homo'. Quia ergo persona Filii Dei, pro qua supponit hoc nomen 'Deus', est suppositum naturae humanae, vere et proprie hoc nomen 'homo' potest praedicari de hoc nomine 'Deus' secundum quod supponit pro persona Filii Dei.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, quando formae diversae non possunt convenire in unum suppositum, tunc oportet quod propositio sit in materia remota cujus subjectum significat unam illarum formarum et praedicatum aliam. Sed quando duae formae possunt convenire in unum suppositum, non est materia remota, sed naturalis vel contingens, sicut cum dico, 'Album est musicum'. Natura enim divina et humana, quamvis sint maxime distantes, tamen conveniunt per incarnationis mysterium in uno supposito, cui neutra illarum inest per accidens, sed secundum se. Et ideo haec propositio, 'Deus est homo', non est neque in materia remota neque in materia contingenti, sed in materia naturali. Et praedicatur 'homo' de Deo, non per accidens sed per se, sicut de sua hypostasi; non quidem ratione formae significatae per hoc nomen 'Deus', sed ratione suppositi, quod est hypostasis humanae naturae.

2. Ad secundum quod tres personae divinae conveniunt in natura, distinguuntur tamen in supposito; et ideo non praedicantur de invicem. In mysterio autem Incarnationis naturae quidem, quia distinctae sunt, de invicem non praedicantur secundum quod significantur in abstracto; non enim natura divina est humana: sed quia conveniunt in supposito praedicantur de se invicem in concreto.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod 'anima' et 'caro' significantur ut in abstracto, sicut 'divinitas' et 'humanitas'. In concreto vero dicuntur 'animatum' et 'carneum' sive 'corporeum': sicut ex alia parte 'Deus' et 'homo'.

⁹Ia. 39, 4^bSee note a, above.^ccf 2, 6 ad 2; ad 3.^dIs in necessary matter, i.e. taking 'God' as standing for the Son of God in virtue, not of his divine nature (though this is signified by the term), but of his person as subsisting in human nature. Thus, presupposing the mystery of the Incarnation, the statement is in necessary matter; cf art. 2, reply, beginning. Cajetan notes the logical legitimacy of taking 'God' in this way; for the 'supposition' of the Subject of a statement is such as is required by the Predicate (see Appendix 1, §3). 'God',

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term signifying a common nature can stand for every individual contained in that common nature. Thus the term 'man' can stand for every individual man; and the term 'God', already by reason of its mode of signification, can stand for the person of the Son, as has been explained.⁹ Now a concrete term signifying a nature may truly and literally be predicated of any subject subsisting in that nature; so, for example, 'a man' may be literally and truly predicated of Socrates and of Plato. Since, therefore, the person of the Son of God, for whom the term 'God' here stands, is a subject subsisting in human nature, the term 'a man' may truly and literally be predicated of the term 'God' when the latter stands for the person of the Son of God.

Hence: 1. When it is impossible that diverse natures should belong to one ontological subject then a statement, the Subject of which signifies one of these natures and the Predicate of which signifies the other, is necessarily a statement in remote matter. When, on the contrary, two natures can belong to one ontological subject it is no longer a question of remote matter, but of matter which is either necessary or—as when I say, 'The white man is a musician'—contingent.^h Now divine and human nature, though infinitely diverse, are nevertheless brought together in the mystery of the Incarnation in one ontological subject; and neither of them pertains to this subject in an accidental way, but rather substantially.^l Consequently, the statement, 'God is a man', is neither in diverse nor in contingent matter, but in necessary matter.^j And 'a man' is predicated of God, not in the fashion of an accident but substantially, since it is question of its own ontological subject. The justification for such predication is not, of course, the nature signified by the term 'God', but the ontological subject which is the subject subsisting in the human nature.

2. The three divine Persons have in common their nature but are distinct as subjects subsisting in that nature. This latter forbids their being predicated one of the other. In the mystery of the Incarnation, on the contrary, the natures are distinct and so, when signified by abstract terms, are not predicated of each other; the divine nature is not the human nature. But because they have a common ontological subject they are predicated of each other when signified by concrete terms.

3. The terms 'soul' and 'flesh' signify in abstract fashion, as do the terms 'divinity' and 'humanity'. The corresponding concrete terms are 'an animated being' and 'fleshy' or 'corporeal being'; or, in our other case,

in the present statement, stands for an individual human person, the Word incarnate (cf Cajetan, Commentary on this art., n. VIII). That is to say, the divine person of the Word is a human person precisely in so far as it is subsisting in a human nature; this evidently does not in any way prejudice the divinity of Christ.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 16, 2

Unde utrobique abstractum non prædicatur de abstracto, sed solum concretum de concreto.

4. Ad quartum dicendum quod hoc nomen 'homo' prædicatur de Deo ratione unionis in persona, quæ quidem unio relationem importat; et ideo non sequitur regulam eorum nominum quæ absolute prædicantur de Deo ab æterno.

articulus 2. utrum hæc sit vera, 'Homo est Deus'

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod hæc sit falsa, 'Homo est Deus'. 'Deus' enim est nomen incommunicabile. Sed reprehunduntur idololatræ de hoc quod *istud nomen Deus, quod est incommunicabile, lignis et lapidibus imposuerunt.*² Ergo, pari ratione, videtur esse inconueniens quod hoc nomen 'Deus' prædicetur de homine.

2. Præterea, quidquid prædicatur de prædicato prædicatur de subjecto. Sed hæc est vera, 'Deus est Pater,' vel, 'Deus est Trinitas'. Si ergo hæc sit vera, 'Homo est Deus', videtur etiam quod hæc sit vera, 'Homo est Pater', vel 'Homo est Trinitas'. Quas quidem patet esse falsas. Ergo et primam.

3. Præterea, in *Psalmo* dicitur, *Non erit in te deus recens.*³ Sed homo est quiddam recens: non enim Christus semper fuit homo. Ergo hæc est falsa, 'Homo est Deus'.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur *Rom.*, *Ex quibus est Christus secundum carnem, qui est super omnia Deus benedictus in sæcula.*⁴ Sed Christus secundum carnem est homo. Ergo hæc est vera, 'Homo est Deus'.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, supposita veritate utriusque naturæ, divinæ scilicet et humanæ, et unione in persona et hypostasi, hæc est vera et propria, 'Homo est Deus', sicut et ista, 'Deus est homo': hoc enim nomen 'homo' potest supponere pro qualibet hypostasi humanæ naturæ; et ita potest supponere pro persona Filii Dei, quam dicimus esse hypostasim humanæ naturæ: manifestum est autem quod de persona Filii Dei vere et proprie prædicatur hoc nomen 'Deus', ut in *Prima Parte* habitum est;⁵ unde relinquitur quod hæc sit vera et propria: 'Homo est Deus'.

¹cf *In III Sent.* 7, 1, 2. *Contra errores Græc.* 1, 21. *In Rom.* 1, lect. 2

²*Wisdom* 14, 21

³*Psalms* 80, 10

⁴*Romans* 9, 5

⁵*Ia.* 39, 4

⁶If this were to be understood of a divine (inter-Trinitarian) relation, the reply would offer no special difficulty. The sense would then be that the hypostatic union concerns only the Son of God who is distinguished from the other persons by opposition

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'God' and 'a man'. As regards both pairs, an abstract is not predicated of an abstract term, but only a concrete term of a concrete term.

4. The term 'a man' is predicated of God on the basis of union in person. Now such union connotes a relation.^k Consequently, this term does not follow the rule governing use of those terms which are predicated of God absolutely and eternally.

article 2. is this statement true, 'A man is God'?

THE SECOND POINT:¹ I. It seems that the statement, 'A man is God', is false. For the name 'God' is incommunicable.² Idolators are reproved because they *gave the incommunicable name of God to stones and wood*.² For a like reason, then, it appears illegitimate to predicate the term *God* of a man.

2. Moreover, whatever may be predicated of the Predicate may also be predicated of the Subject. Now the following are true statements, 'God is the Father', and 'God is the Trinity'. If, then, the statement, 'A man is God', were true, it would seem to follow that the following statements would also be true, 'A man is the Father', and 'A man is the Trinity'. But it is evident that these are false; so too, consequently, is the first.

3. Moreover, we read, *There shall be no new god in thee*.³ But the man we are talking about is something new; for Christ was not always a man. Consequently, the statement, 'A man is God', is false.

ON THE OTHER HAND *Romans* states, *of whom is Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all things, God blessed for ever*.⁴ Now Christ, according to the flesh, is a man. Therefore the statement, 'A man is God', is true.

REPLY: Assuming the reality of each nature, the divine and the human, and assuming their union in person and ontological subject, the statement, 'A man is God', is both true and literal, just as much as the statement, 'God is a man'. For the term 'a man' can stand for every subject subsisting in human nature; consequently it can stand for the person of the Son which we hold to be a subject subsisting in human nature. And it is of course evident that the term 'God' is predicated truly and literally of the person of the Son of God.⁵ From this it results that the statement, 'A man is God', is both true and literal.

of relation (cf Ia. 28, 3). However, the commentators understand the relation spoken of as that which results in the human nature of Christ as a consequence of the union.

²cf Ia. 13, 9 (Vol. 3 of this series), on whether the name 'God' is peculiar to God alone.