II

THEOLOGICAL TURN
I. The Filiation of Christ: An Introductory Test Case

As a preface to the body of this essay, which focuses on the debate among Thomists over Christ's esse, brief consideration will be given to Aquinas's treatment of Christ's adoption.

In the narrative of the tertia pars of the Summa theologiae, St. Thomas situates the questions treating Christ's esse (17) and adoption (23) within the larger section (questions 16–26) devoted to "those things which follow upon the union." As effects or consequences of the hypostatic union, the topics of Christ's esse and adoption shed reciprocal light on each other; indeed, it is difficult to imagine maintaining consistency in Christological doctrine without taking a similar position on both issues. In the four articles of Question 23 on Christ's adoption, Aquinas proceeds in a fashion that is unique in this section of the Summa. The first three articles do not, in fact, pertain to Christ directly, but ask whether or not it is fitting for God to adopt sons, whether this adoption is done by the whole Trinity, and whether adoption of the rational creature is especially appropriate.

1. Summa theologiae (ST) III, q. 16, praefacio: "de his quae consequuntur unionem." All English citations from the Summa theologiae, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province originally published in 1911 and reprinted in five volumes as The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas (Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1981). All Latin texts, unless otherwise noted, are taken from E. Alarcón's posting of the corpus thomisticum at www.corpusthomisticum.org.
After this richly Pauline mini-treatise on adoption by grace, Thomas then asks in the fourth article the specifically Christological question: namely, "Whether Christ, secundum quod homo, is an adopted son of God"—the secundum quod homo being an important qualifier relative to the question of Christ's esse. In light of the fact that Aquinas has already affirmed, earlier in the tertia pars, that Christ, as man, enjoyed grace to a superabundant degree, the answer would seem logically to be yes—Christ, as man, having received grace in his human nature, is an adopted son of God. Thomas' answer, however, runs to the contrary: "Sonship," he reasons, "belongs properly to the hypostasis or person, not to the nature.... Now in Christ there is no other than the uncreated person or hypostasis, to Whom it belongs by nature to be the Son." Because adoptive sonship in grace is participatory of natural sonship or likeness, Aquinas concludes that "Christ, Who is the natural Son of God, can in nowise be called an adopted son."

In the fourth book of Summa contra gentiles, Aquinas articulates his position against those who deny the eternal and natural sonship of Christ even more sharply and with appeal to the order of being: "It goes without saying," Aquinas declares, "that the son generated by God did not take up a beginning of being from Mary."

The distinction between person or hypostasis and nature thus plays out even in Aquinas's understanding of Christ's singular mode of filiation as the Eternal Son of God. What makes Aquinas's discussion of Christ's adoption a "test case" for the esse question is, precisely, that if Christ's human nature did indeed contribute a human esse to Christ, the human esse of the human nature would, it seems, by virtue of Christ's superabundant grace, be adopted. Aquinas, however, manifestly denies that such an adoption took place. Given Aquinas's position following the Christology of Chalcedon that in Christ there is but a single person and subsistence, the grace
received by Christ’s human nature was not adoptive, but merely perfective of that nature. Hence, the adoption question provides a kind of test case for thinking through the esse question with consistency.

The remaining sections of this essay examine the acuity of the interpretation of Aquinas on Christ’s esse by Herman Diepen and Jacques Maritain. Special emphasis will be devoted to the diverse interpretations of the disputed question, De unione verbi incarnati, by Maritain and Diepen, on the one hand, and the advocates of the so-called “ecstasy of being theory,” on the other.

II. Aquinas’s Single-Esse Position

St. Thomas consistently articulated a single-esse understanding of the reality of the union of the two natures in the one Person of the Word. In the Compendium of Theology, St. Thomas offers a concise explanation of his position: “Since there are in Christ one person and two natures we have to examine the relationship between them to determine what is to be spoken of as one, and what is to be spoken of as multiple in Him.”

David Tamisiea explains that the sense of esse that Aquinas uses in the context of his Christology “means that which causes a thing to exist in reality, and is only attributed to real things contained within the categories of being identified by Aristotle.” See David Tamisiea, “St. Thomas on the One Esse of Christ,” Angelicum 88, no. 2 (2011): 383-402, 385.

The decree of the Council of Chalcedon (451) reads as follows: “One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person (prosopon/personam) and a single subsistent being (hypostasin/subsistentiam); he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Creed of the fathers handed it down to us.” Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vol. 1, Nicaea I–Lateran V, edited by Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 86–87. Emphasis added.


considered two or multiple “in accord with the diversity” of his natures. While, Thomas continues, “whatever belongs to the suppositum or hypostasis must be declared to be one in Christ.” This unity includes Christ’s existence: “if existence is taken in the sense that one suppositum has one existence, we are forced, it appears, to assert that there is but one existence in Christ…. [I]f we look upon Christ as an integral suppositum having two natures, His existence will be but one, just as the suppositum, too, is one.”

In ST III, q. 17, a. 2, Aquinas again advocates a single-esse understanding of the Incarnate Word. “Since the human nature,” Aquinas explains, is joined to the Son of God hypostatically or personally, as was said above [in question 2 on the union], and not accidentally, it follows that no new personal being came to the Son of God, but only a new relation of pre-existing personal being to the human nature [came to of the Son of God]: namely, such that the Person of the Son is now said to subsist not only according to the divine nature, but also according to the human [nature].

There is, on this account, one personal being or esse in Christ, that of the eternal suppositum of the Word subsisting in two natures.

III. Cajetan, Maritain, and the Ecstasy-of-Being Theory

This articulation of Christ’s esse is usually associated with the likes of Cardinal Cajetan and, more recently, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. It is called the “ecstasy-of-being” theory because (according to Adrian Hastings’s summary of Cajetan’s position): “[Christ’s] human nature possesses

9. Ibid., pp. 249–50, n. 212. “Ea vero quae ad suppositum sive hypostasim pertinent, unum tantum in Christo confiteri oportet: unde si esse accipiatur secundum quod unum esse est unius suppositi, videtur dicendum quod in Christo sit tantum unum esse. Manifestum est enim quod partes diviseae singulae proprium esse habent, secundum autem quod in toto considerantur, non habent suum esse, sed omnes sunt per esse totius. Si ergo consideremus ipsum Christum ut quoddam integrum suppositum duarum naturarum, eius erit unum tantum esse, sicut et unum suppositum.”

10. ST III, q. 17, a. 2: “Sic igitur, cum humana natura coniungatur filio Dei hypostaticce vel personaliter, ut supra dictum est, et non accidentaliter, consequens est quod secundum humanam naturam non adveniat sibi novum esse personale, sed solum nova habitudo esse personalis praexistentis ad naturam humanam, ut scilicet persona illa iam dicatur subsistere, non solum secundum naturam divinam, sed etiam humanam.”

no 'esse proprium,' but instead it can be said to have—not only an ecstasy of knowledge and love through the beatific vision—but also a very 'ecstasy of being,' of existence itself, for an ecstasy is literally a being out of oneself."12

In his commentary on ST III, q. 17, a. 2, Cajetan defends the superiority of the single-esse position by means of the distinction between nature and person or "quo est" and "quod est." "Nature," Cajetan explains, "is the principle by which"13 of a thing's esse while person is to esse "as the subject, or that which has being, or that which is."14 The distinction between quo est and quod est leads Cajetan to "two important conclusions" about the esse of the Incarnate Word.15 "First, this lack of personality," in the words of Shawn Colberg, "implies that the human nature can bring no additional esse to the person of the Word. Second, the potential humanity of Christ (only in the order of logic) can have no esse of its own because it has no person of its own."16

Cajetan's position (in his commentary) is developed not only with an eye to Aquinas's text, but also with an awareness of the criticisms against Aquinas's single-esse doctrine made by Duns Scotus. A central component of Scotus' critique is that each nature in Christ must have an esse. Cajetan explains Scotus' position as follows: "In Christ living was two-fold as is obvious from the fact that he lost one of the living things through death. Therefore, in Christ there was a two-fold esse."17

Scotus' criticisms of Aquinas and his two-fold esse position provide an important context for understanding the impatience that the great com-

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14. Cajetan, Comm. on Tertia Pars : "Persona enim est cui primo convenit esse ut subiecto, seu quod habet esse, seu quod est." In De Christo Salvatore (Turin: Case Editrice Marietti, 1949), Garrigou-Lagrange explains his view as follows: "Haecc thesis sancti Thomae est alta conceptio secundum quam humanitatis Christi habet non solum extasis cognitionis et amoris per visionem beatam, sed extasis ipsius esse, prout existit per ipsum esse aeternum Verbi." (314)

15. Shawn Colberg, "Accrued Eyes and Sixth Digits," 76.

16. Ibid.

17. Cajetan, Comm. on Tertia Pars, sec. 10, p. 225: "In Christo fuit duplex vivere: ut patet ex hoc quod unum per mortem perdidit. Ergo ipso fuit duplex esse."
mentator has for two-fold esse readings of Aquinas's Christology. According to Cajetan, Aquinas's position on Christ's esse throughout his corpus can be spoken of as two-fold, if by duality one means "according to a duality of natures; in relation to those words a duality of esse is indeed less affirmed, though not totally negated."18

This Christological point of the Thomist tradition was clearly in the mind of Jacques Maritain, when he penned the fourth appendix of the first edition of The Degrees of Knowledge. In this appendix, Maritain explains the "notion of subsistence" in the following way: "We may say that its formal effect is to make the (substantial) nature or essence so possessive of existence that it cannot communicate in the act of existence with anything which is not itself, or which it is not already."19 This understanding of subsistence, Maritain argues, is superior to the account of subsistence as "that which renders a nature incommunicable to another suppositum" because subsistence pertains to "the setting up of the suppositum" and should thus not be used in defining it.20

The "mystery of the Incarnation" is one case to which Maritain appeals to defend this view of subsistence. "Because the subsistence of the Word is an infinite subsistence," Maritain argues, "It can receive in Itself the human nature of Christ, a created substantial quo (without a created personality) which subsists and exists by the Divine Subsistence and the Divine Existence themselves."21 How is it possible following Maritain's definition of subsistence that the divine and human "communicate" or are united in Christ? The divine subsistence of the Word, Maritain observes, can assume the human nature because "this is a privilege of the infinite subsistence of a Person whose nature is identical with His existence and is eminently all things."22 In short, the Person of the Word, following this account of Maritain, can assume a created nature into his subsistence and be personally united to that nature because of the fullness of existence that He (the Word) enjoys.

18. Ibid., sec. 4, p. 223. J. L. A. West in "Aquinas on the Metaphysics of Esse in Christ," The Thomist 66, no. 2 (2002): 231–50, rejects this position, arguing that there is no sense in which the esse secundarium of the De unione can be read without contradicting Aquinas's metaphysics and consistent arguments against the Christological heresies.
20. Ibid., 455–56.
21. Ibid., 456.
The same is not true, however, for created natures. “We must say” of created natures, Maritain explains, “—precisely because subsistence enables them in their very finitude to imitate in some manner the self-sufficiency of divine beings—that none of them, once sealed in its own subsistence, can exist in common with any other nature whatsoever.” A finite created nature, contrary to the full perfection of existence enjoyed by the Word, “excludes those others from the existence which actuates it, itself, and which properly belongs to it.”

IV. De unione article 4

The general position of Aquinas as read by Cajetan and Maritain was normative among Thomists until Aquinas’s famous disputed question De unione verbi incarnati was read under a new light. In the twentieth century, scholars began viewing the De unione as a later work, near to the date of the tertia pars. When the De unione began to viewed as a mature work, Jean-Pierre Torrell points to the “originality” of Herman-Michel Diepen, who argues that the ecstasy-of-being theory “could no longer claim to follow Thomas directly” because the De unione says, in his view, something to the contrary.

The content of the fourth article of the De unione is, as a result of these claims, one of the most controversial and commented upon aspects of Aquinas’s Christology. In this text Aquinas asks directly: “Whether in Christ there is only one being (esse)?” This point logically follows the argument of the previous article (a. 3) on Christ’s numeric unity, where Thomas concludes that because of the unity of the suppositum in Christ, Christ is one simpliciter, and two only secundum quid. Aquinas makes the connection between these two articles in the first line of the body of article four:

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. For a discussion and defense of the authenticity and date of the De unione, see F. Pelster, “La quæstio disputata de Saint Thomas De unione Verbi incarnati,” Archives de Philosophie 3, no. 2 (1925–26): 198–244. Pelster’s work is viewed as lying to rest the question of authenticity.
27. The parallel passages, as noted above, in which Aquinas also treats Christ’s esse are Quodlibet q. 9, a. 3; ST III, q. 17, a. 2; Scriptum in Sententias, III, d. 6, q. 2, a. 2; Compendium theologiae, chap. 212.
“It should be said that this question [on Christ’s esse] is, in a certain sense, the same argument [ratio] as the previous because something is said to be [esse] one and a being [ens] from the same thing.”  

The heart of Aquinas’s argument is as follows: first, “in Christ the subsisting suppositum is the person of the Son of God, who is sustained simpliciter by the divine nature.” Secondly, “the suppositum of person of the Son of God, however, is not sustained by the human nature.” “This is so,” Aquinas concludes, “because the person of the Son of God existed before he assumed the humanity, and [his] person was not in any way augmented or perfected by having assumed a human nature.” Aquinas points out, however, that “the eternal suppositum is sustained by the human nature in so far as it is ‘this man.’”

The central point in this sequence is that the subsisting suppositum “is sustained simpliciter by the divine nature.” This insight provides the governing principle for the last paragraph of the body of article four—which is at the heart of the interpretive controversy. First, Aquinas moves from Christ’s unity as one established in article 3 to his consequent unity in being: “Just as Christ is one simpliciter on account of the unity of the suppositum and two in a certain respect on account of the two natures, likewise he has one being [esse] simpliciter on account of the one eternal being of the eternal suppositum.” This is an important point in the interpretive debate: Aquinas declares there to be one esse simpliciter in Christ.

28. De unione, a. 4., c. “Dicendum, quod huius quaestionis est quodammodo eadem ratio et praemissae: quia eadem dicitur aliquid esse unum et ens.” All citations from the De unione are from my own translation, which is forthcoming in a volume on the De unione to be published by Peeters Press in the Dallas Medieval Text series. The translation is from the Latin text of Obenauer’s volume (see n. 11 above), which is vastly superior to the text of the Marietti edition.

29. The word “sustained” (sustentificatur) marks, perhaps, the most significant contribution of the critical Latin text of the Obenauer edition of the De unione. The manuscript tradition followed by the Marietti edition has subsistentificatur. The difference between the two is subtle but important. Subsistentificatur would inaccurately indicate that the Word is made a substance by the divine nature.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid. “In Christo autem suppositum subsistens est persona Filii Dei, quae simpliciter sustentificatur per naturam divinam, non autem simpliciter sustentificatur per naturam humanam: quia persona Filii Dei fuit ante humanitatem assumptam, nec in aliquo persona est augmentata seu perfectior per naturam humanam assumptam. Sustentificatur autem suppositum aeternum per naturam humanam, inquantum est hic homo.”

32. Ibid. “Et ideo, sicut Christus est unum simpliciter propter unitatem suppositor et duo secundum quid propter duas naturas, ita habet unum esse simpliciter propter unum esse aeternum aeterni suppositor.”
What, then, is to be made of the existence of Christ’s human nature? “There is also another being of this suppositum,” Aquinas adds, “not in so far as this other being is eternal, but in so far as the [eternal] suppositum was made man temporally.” Aquinas concludes this line of argument with the following hotly-debated formulation: “Although it [the created nature] is not accidental being—because ‘man’ is not accidentally predicated of the Son of God, as was said above in the first article—it is nevertheless not the principal being [esse] of its suppositum, but the subordinated [secundarium] being.”

V. Does the *De unione* Negate the Ecstasy—of-Being Theory?

The controversy sparked by article 4 stems from Aquinas’s use of the “esse ... secundarium” formulation. The introduction of the *esse secundarium* seems to contradict Aquinas’s treatment of Christ’s esse elsewhere in his opera because the *De unione* is the only work in which Aquinas speaks of any other esse in Christ than that of the Word.

The interpretive debate over *De unione* article 4 thus stands as a fault-line dividing Thomists, like Cajetan and his followers, including the early-Maritain, from the school of Diepen and the later-Maritain who read the *De unione* as affirming a second esse relative to the human nature. Cajetan’s reading of the *esse secundarium* in article 4 of the *De unione* in relation to Aquinas’s other treatments of Christ’s esse boils down [in the words of Shawn Colberg] to the distinction between *quod est* and *quod est*; specifically, *esse* can be considered in a dual manner *insofar as it relates to the two natures* whereby it exists. This is a necessary flexibility that stems from affirming that a nature gives a thing its quiddity or that it is related to *esse quod est*. As a positive insight, then, Cajetan allows the possibility that *De unione* (and also ST III, q. 17, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 3) can be taken as speaking to the way in which Christ’s natures relate to his *esse*, as *quod est*.  

Because, however, of his awareness of the Scotist two-fold esse position, Colberg notes that “if a reader refuses to interpret Thomas’s position in this

33. Ibid. “… est autem et alius esse huius suppositi, non inquantum est aeternum, sed inquantum est temporaliter homo factum. Quod est, si non sit esse accidentale—quia homo non praedicatur accidentaliter de Filio Dei, ut supra habitum est—, non tamen est esse principale sui suppositi, sed secundarium.”

more supple and generous manner and insists that he posits of Christ's humanity a second esse quod est, then the De unione should be abandoned as misleading." As a result, Colberg concludes that according to Cajetan, "if one cannot see a way of harmonizing the De unione text ... then it cannot be regarded as authoritative against the weight of Thomas's other writings on this issue."

The originality of the opposing view, that of Diepen and Maritain, stems from their quest to integrate the consistent unum esse doctrine with a reading of the esse secundarium of the De unione that affirms something unique in Aquinas corpus. In the words of Helen-Marie Deloffre, Diepen's position, against that of Cajetan's, works "by the integration and not the elimination of the created existence." Article 4 of the De unione is thus central to Diepen's theory, in so far as he holds that this text represents Thomas' most complete formulation of the esse question. With traditional Thomists, Diepen maintains Aquinas's real distinction between essence and existence, person and nature, and stands with Cajetan against the duplex esse position of Scotus.

However, against Cajetan's rejection of any talk of a human or created esse, Diepen maintains (a) that the esse secundarium of De unione 4 does indeed refer to a created esse and (b) this created esse does not violate the unity of the esse of the Word. How so? The two-fold esse "is realized by participation and exemplarity, by subordination and integration." The two esses, then, do not stand in relation to the person of the Word "ex aequo."

"There is an essential subordination," Diepen explains, "of the esse humatum (which is a non-personalized act of a nature) to the esse divinum." Diepen holds that the affirmation of a two-fold esse in Christ along the lines of his reading of Aquinas better renders the revealed mystery of "the

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 82.
37. From 1949–1960, Diepen composed a series of influential articles in which he worked out his theory. The fruit of this effort is brought together in his book La Théologie de l'Emmanuel: Les lignes maîtrées d'une Christologie (Desclée de Brouwer, 1960); see especially 51–158.
38. Deloffre, Question disputée L'union du verbe incarné, 19. For a formidable criticism of Diepen's "integration" theory, see Obenauer, ed., De unione, 402–417. Also, ibid., 418ff, has a helpful section on the "conceptual divergences" between De unione 4 and ST III, q. 17, a. 2. The use, for example, of esse personale in ST III, q. 17, a. 2 is not followed in De unione 4. It does not have to be held that such differences result in speculative contradictions between the texts, but they do make the integration thesis difficult to maintain.
39. Diepen, La Théologie de l'Emmanuel, 155.
40. Ibid.
natural Son of God in *utraque natura*" than does the "too facile and simplistic" ecstasy-of-being theory.\textsuperscript{41}

This examination of Diepen's argument brings this paper back to Jacques Maritain. Maritain famously abandoned the ecstasy-of-being theory which he had supported in the first edition of *The Degrees of Knowledge*. Maritain adopted the position defended by Diepen, as a result of Diepen's criticisms, in a series of "Further Elucidations" appended to the 1954 edition of the same volume. Maritain articulates his position, following the work of Diepen, according to several primary tenets:

1. As the "great Commentators" taught, there is "only one single subsistence" and "personal existence" in Christ.
2. Following the *De unione* and Fr. Diepen's argument: "there is ... a created esse, by which the human nature is actuated" in Christ.
3. The created esse "is only received by the human nature, it is not exercised by it."
4. "The created and human esse does not at all concur in the constitution of the esse personale of Christ."
5. This means that the created esse is "integrated ... to the ens personale, to the subsistent whole."
6. The created esse does not compromise the hypostatic unity of Christ because the eternal person and suppositum subsists "henceforth according to this nature also, and no longer only according to the divine nature."
7. The created "esse" "is received by a human nature without human subsistence, it is exercised by an uncreated supposit which pre-exists it and for whose existing as supposit, or personally (for its existing simpliciter), it in no way contributes."

Two immediate observations must be made in light of the position advocated by Diepen and adopted by Maritain. First, more reflection is needed on the meaning of the term *secundarium*. *Secundarium* does not mean "second," as if there were one being of the Word and a second esse in Christ of the human nature. Why not? Aquinas is not contrasting that which is numerically first with that which is second, but rather that which is "principale"

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 464–66.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
with what is "secundarium." Aquinas's use of the word secundarium elsewhere clearly indicates an order of dependency in which what is secundarium depends on what is "principale." For these reasons secundarium is translated in this essay as "subordinate." "Secondary" can be misleading in English if it is read as indicating a "second" (numeric) esse along with that of the Word, while a subordinate esse does not posit a second created actuation.

Secondly, Diepen's attempt to integrate and synthesize article 4 of the De unione with Aquinas's other works by viewing it as a fuller articulation, which offers a new insight (esse secundarium) through which the other texts can be read, fails to discern precisely what Aquinas was seeking to accomplish in the De unione. Aquinas's language in the De unione more clearly betrays an attempt to modify (and mollify) the position of others, than to introduce something new into his own position.

Sr. Delotfre catalogs the different ways in which the major authors of the thirteenth century, following Lombard's second opinion, the Subsistence Theory, speak of one esse in Christ. Reading the De unione in light of these attempts is helpful in pinpointing Aquinas's intentions. These formulations include, inter alia: esse simpliciter and esse personale (used by Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, and Bonaventure) and esse hypostasis (Albert and Alexander of Hales). Conversely, many of these same authors, especially the Franciscans, use the phrase esse humanum to speak of Christ's human nature.

A problem arose for these authors, however, regarding Christ's unity. How can the unity of Christ be articulated in terms of esse simpliciter

44. For example, addressing the order of ends, Aquinas says the following: "just as there is an order in agent causes, so too there is an order in final causes: as, namely, a secondary end [secundarius finis] depends on a principal one [a principali dependent], just as a secondary agent depends on a principal one." SCG III, chap. 109, no. 5. The primary and secondary ends are two-fold, but the finis secundarium does not contribute finis to the primary end and the secondary end exists as an end in a relation of dependency on the primary end. The same is true with Christ: there is a genuine secundarium of the human nature, but because it depends on the primary esse it does not contribute esse to the one reality of Christ.

45. Of course, given that the esse in question is the created esse of Christ's humanity there is no question of Christological subordination.

46. It is also the case, in defense of translating secundarium as subordinate, that A Latin-English Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas, edited by Roy J. Deferrari (Fitzwilliam: Loreto Publications, 2004), offers the following English choices for secundarius, a, um: "coming in second place, subordinate, secondary, the opposite of principalis."

47. See Deloffre, Question disputée L'union du verbe incarné, 45–50.

48. Ibid., 45.
“without eliminating the reality of the human nature?” To address this problem, Bonaventure spoke of Christ's human nature in relation to the divine esse of the Word as “inclining toward an accident” (vergit in accidentes). Bonaventure offered this position because it has the advantage of safeguarding the substantial and hypostatic unity of Christ, for when a person or suppositum accrues new accidents to itself, the person remains one simpliciter.

Albert the Great, on the other hand, rejects the position of those who speak of Christ's human nature as vergit in accidentes. In so doing, although he speaks clearly of a single esse simpliciter in Christ, at times Albert speaks of Christ's human nature in terms of a two-fold esse or even hypostasis:

It should be said that human nature is properly and per se assumed, and also united by a certain mode: but it was assumed first and per se, and it was united in its hypostasis. The esse according to this or that nature, however, is the esse taken in comparison to the nature making the esse in the hypostasis, and from that part the esse in Christ is doubled. For, the esse of the nature of humanity is in that one, as well as the esse of the nature of deity. If we wish to speak properly, then we would say that according to this consideration [the hypostasis] would not have two esses but rather one twofold, constitutive esse [unum duplex in constitutente esse].

The esse of the nature is the esse that the nature has in itself: for every thing has its own esse. The esse of the human nature in Christ is not the esse of God's nature, but the esses are not by that way two as the natures.

Albert is not embracing Nestorianism with this language. He is reacting to the accidental language of Bonaventure and the first and third opinions of Lombard by affirming “the substantial reality of the human nature assumed by noting that the esse of Christ's human nature is not the esse of the divine nature.” Albert does this, as Corey Barnes explains, out of a desire to subordinate

49. Ibid., 46.
50. Ibid., 47. Bonaventure forwards this position in the commentary on Lombard's Sentences, III, d. 6, a. 1, q. 3.
51. This text is from Albert's commentary on Lombard's Sentences, In III Sent, d. 5, a. 10.
52. The second and third of these passages are from Albert's commentary on Lombard's Sentences, In III Sent, d. 6, a. 5. The citation and translation are from Barnes, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas,” 131.
this duality to the greater unity of Christ in terms of esse simpliciter, which is one as the hypostasis in Christ is one. Stressing the unity of esse simpliciter in Christ while noting the duality of natural esse according as the hypostasis subsists in human nature is an attempt to strike a proper balance between the reality of Christ's singular human nature and the ultimate unity of hypostasis.54

In the end, as Barnes points out, "Albert inherited ambiguous terminology with which to address Christological questions along a fluid spectrum of opinions." "His great triumph," Barnes continues, "was to recast pressing questions and concerns in terms of Christ's esse, a maneuver that allowed affirmation of Christ's personal unity without undermining the integrity of his two natures."55

Aquinas stands in the immediate context of these various attempts to maintain Christ's unity simpliciter and the reality of his human nature. As Barnes notes, "Aquinas preserves many of Albert's insights while simultaneously tidying the ambiguous terminology that Albert inherited."56

VI. Conclusion

This essay began with a brief consideration of Aquinas's argument against Christ, as man, being an adopted son of God. Maritain, following Diepen, asserts that Christ's human nature possess an esse which actuates it. Is it possible to maintain, however, that the created, actuating esse of Christ's human nature would not be adopted by the superabundant grace enjoyed by Christ's human nature?

In light of these considerations the following conclusion seems most consistent with both Aquinas's argument and the context in which it was developed: the uniqueness of the De unione on the metaphysical status of Christ's human nature is to be explained primarily by Aquinas's attempt to situate his own position on the reality and integrality of Christ's human nature against the esse accidentale tendency in Bonaventure and the ambiguities entailed in Albert's position. Esse secundarium is therefore not introduced to indicate a second esse in Christ according to the human nature, but rather to articulate how Christ's human nature is full, integral, and real without being predicated an accident of the Word or a second hypostasis.

The assessment of Victor Salas on this point seems correct: "Simply

54. Ibid., 132—33. 55. Ibid., 133. 56. Ibid.
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put, the human esse introduced in De Unione seems to be none other than the divine esse when considered from the point of view of its subsisting in a human nature.”57 This means that the “De unione highlights,” Barnes argues, “the esse of the Word as determined by the form of human nature. While Thomas’s other treatments more narrowly highlight the one esse of the Word, this is not to the exclusion of the nature’s role in forming that esse.”58

The move by Diepen and, following him, Maritain, to read the De unione as affirming a second, received and created esse misplaces Aquinas’s actual intention. Aquinas was not seeking a new way, nor does he indicate that he ever sensed a need to do so, to affirm the reality of Christ’s human nature in the order of esse. Rather, by esse secundarium Aquinas intends to affirm the real, integral, though subordinate and derivative, existence of the human nature of Christ.

The esse secundarium of article 4 must be read in light of the qualification that Thomas makes in the concluding sentence of the previous paragraph, “the eternal suppositum is sustained by the human nature in so far as it is ‘this man.’” Had Aquinas wished to say something more, to indicate a second esse of the human nature, he could have adopted one of Albert the Great’s formulations or selected a word other than secundarium, such as secundum, to indicate such an intention with much greater clarity.

From the perspective of its relation to the works of his contemporaries, the De unione is, in the end, less, not more original, than his treatments of the issue in his other writings.