

## QUESTION 10

### The Beatific Knowledge that Belongs to Christ's Soul

Next we have to consider each sort of knowledge just mentioned [in question 9]. And since God's knowledge was discussed in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 14), it now remains for us to look into the others: first, beatific knowledge (question 10); second, infused knowledge (question 11); and, third, acquired knowledge (question 12).

Again, since many things were said in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12) about beatific knowledge, which consists in the vision of God, here we have to discuss only those things that pertain to Christ's soul. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Did Christ's soul comprehend the Word, i.e., the divine essence? (2) Did Christ's soul have cognition of all things in the Word? (3) Did Christ's soul have cognition of infinitely many things in the Word? (4) Did Christ's soul see the Word or the divine essence more clearly than any other creature?

#### Article 1

##### Did Christ's soul comprehend, or does it comprehend, the Word, i.e., the divine essence?

It seems that Christ's soul comprehended and comprehends the Word, i.e., the divine essence (*anima Christi comprehenderit et comprehendat verbum sive divinam essentiam*):

**Objection 1:** Irenaeus says, "The Trinity is known to itself alone and to the assumed man." Therefore, the assumed man shares with the Holy Trinity in that knowledge which is peculiar to the Holy Trinity. But this is the knowledge of comprehension. Therefore, Christ's soul comprehends the divine essence.

**Objection 2:** Being united to God by personal *esse* is greater than being united to God by a vision. But as Damascene says in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3, "The whole divine nature is, in one of its persons, united to the human nature in Christ." Therefore, *a fortiori*, the whole divine nature is seen by the soul of Christ. And so it seems that Christ's soul comprehends the divine essence.

**Objection 3:** As Augustine says in *De Trinitate*, "What belongs to the Son of God by nature belongs to the Son of Man by grace." But comprehending the divine essence belongs to the Son of God by nature. Therefore, it belongs to the Son of Man by grace. And so it seems that Christ's soul comprehends the Word by grace.

**But contrary to this:** In 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, "What comprehends itself is finite to itself." But God's essence is not finite relative to Christ's soul, since it infinitely exceeds that soul. Therefore, Christ's soul does not comprehend the Word.

**I respond:** As is clear from what was said above (q. 2, a. 1), the union of the natures was effected in the person of Christ in such a way that the properties of both natures remain unconfused, with the result that, as Damascene puts it in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3, "The uncreated remained uncreated and the created remained within the limits of a creature." Now as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 7), it is impossible for any creature to comprehend the divine essence, since the infinite is not comprehended by the finite (cf. *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 7, ad 1). And so one should reply that Christ's soul in no way comprehends the divine essence.

**Reply to objection 1:** The assumed man is counted along with the divine Trinity in His cognition not by reason of comprehension, but by reason of a most excellent cognition beyond all other creatures.

**Reply to objection 2:** The human nature does not comprehend the Word of God, i.e., the divine nature, even in a union that exists according to personal *esse*. For even though the divine nature as a whole was united to the human nature in the single person of the Son, it was nonetheless not the case that the whole power of the divine nature was, as it were, encompassed by the human nature (*non tamen fuit tota virtus divinitatis ab human natura quasi circumscripta*). Hence, in *Epistola ad Volusianum*

Augustine says, “I want you to know that Christian doctrine does not hold that God was infused into the flesh in such a way that He either deserted or lost the role of governing the universe, or in such a way that He transferred that role, now, as it were, contracted to and concentrated in that little body.” And, similarly, Christ’s soul saw the whole essence of God but did not comprehend it, since, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 7), the soul did not see God’s essence *totally*, i.e., it did not see it as perfectly as it can be seen (*non ita perfecte sicut visibilis est*).

**Reply to objection 3:** This passage from Augustine should be understood as having to do with the grace of union, according to which all the things that are said of the Son of God with respect to His divine nature are said of the Son of Man, because of the oneness of the *suppositum*. And on this score it can be truly claimed that the Son of Man comprehends the divine essence—not, to be sure, because of His soul, but because of His divine nature. In this manner it can likewise be said that the Son of Man is the creator.

## Article 2

### Does Christ’s soul have cognition of all things in the Word?

It seems that Christ’s soul does not have cognition of all things in the Word (*anima Christi in verbo non cognoscat omnia*):

**Objection 1:** Mark 13:32 says, “No one knows about that day, either the angels in heaven or the Son, except for the Father.” Therefore, Christ’s soul does not have cognition of all things in the Word.

**Objection 2:** The more perfect an individual’s cognition of some principle is, the more things he has cognition of in that principle. But God sees His own essence more perfectly than Christ’s soul does. Therefore, He has cognition of more things in the Word than Christ’s soul does. Therefore, Christ’s soul does not have cognition of all things in the Word.

**Objection 3:** The quantity of knowledge has to do with the quantity of knowable things. Therefore, if Christ’s soul knew in the Word everything that the Word knows, it would follow that the knowledge which belongs to Christ’s soul is equal to God’s knowledge, i.e., something created is equal to something uncreated—which is impossible.

**But contrary to this:** A Gloss on Apocalypse 5:12 (“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive divinity and knowledge”) says, “That is, knowledge of all things.”

**I respond:** When one is asked whether Christ has cognition of all things in the Word, he should reply that there are two ways in which ‘all things’ can be taken:

In one way, *properly speaking*, so that it covers all things which in any way exist, will exist, or have existed, or which are or will be or have been anyone’s thoughts, words, or deeds at any time.

And on this score one should reply that Christ’s soul knows all things in the Word. For each created intellect has cognition in the Word—not, to be sure, of all things absolutely speaking, but of more things the more perfectly it sees the Word. But no *beatified* intellect fails to have cognition in the Word of all the things that have to do with itself. Now in some sense all things have to do with Christ and with His dignity, since “all things are subject to Him” (1 Corinthians 15:27). Again, as John 5:27 says, “He has been established by God as the judge of all things, since He is the Son of Man.” And so Christ’s soul has cognition in the Word of all things existing at any time and also of the thoughts of men, of which He is the judge, so that John 2:25 says of Him, “For He Himself knew what was in man.” And this can be understood not only with respect to His knowledge as God, but also with respect to the knowledge that His soul has in the Word.

In the second way, ‘all things’ can be taken in a broader sense, so that it extends not only to all the things which are *actual* in some way, but also to all things which exist *in potentiality* but which are never

actualized (*sunt in potentia numquam reducta ad actum*).

Now some of these things are in God's power alone. And Christ's soul does not have cognition in the Word of all things of this sort, since that would be to comprehend all the things that God is able to do, which would be to comprehend God's power and, as a result, God's essence. For the cognition of any power consists in the cognition of those things which that power is capable of.

On the other hand, some of the things in question lie not only within God's power, but also within a creature's power. And Christ's soul has cognition in the Word of all things of this sort. For Christ's soul comprehends in the Word the essence of each creature and, as a result, that creature's power and strength, along with all the things that are within its power.

**Reply to objection 1:** Arius and Eunomius understood this passage not with respect to the knowledge that belonged to the soul, since, as was explained above (q. 5, a. 3), they did not posit a soul in Christ, but instead with respect to the Son's cognition as God (*quantum ad divinam cognitionem filii*), which they claimed to be lesser than the Father's with respect to knowledge.

But this position cannot stand. For as John 1:3 says, "Through the Word of God all things were made," and, among other things, all times were likewise made through Him. But there is nothing made through Him that is not known by Him.

Therefore, He is said not to know the day and hour of judgment because He does not make it known. For when asked about this by the apostles in Acts 1:6-7, He did not wish to reveal it to them—just as, contrariwise, in Genesis 22:12 we read, "Now I have come to know that you fear God," i.e., "Now I have made you know." On the other hand, the Father is said to know because He has handed cognition of this sort to the Son. Hence, the fact that in this very passage it says, "... except the Father," one is given to understand that the Son knows, not only because of His knowledge as God, but because of His human knowledge. For as Chrysostom argues, "If it was granted to the man Christ to know *how* He was to judge, which was greater, then *a fortiori* what was lesser, viz., *when* He was to judge, was given Him to know."

Still, Origen interprets this passage to be about Christ in His body, i.e., the Church, which does not know the time in question, whereas others claim that this passage is to be understood as being about the *adoptive* Son of God and not about the *natural* Son of God.

**Reply to objection 2:** God has a more perfect cognition of His own essence than Christ's soul does, since He comprehends His own essence. And so, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 14, a. 9), He has cognition not only of the things that are actual at any given time, which He is said to have cognition of by His *knowledge of vision*, but also of all things whatsoever that He is able to do, which He is said to have cognition of by His *simple understanding* (*per simplicem intelligentiam*).

Therefore, Christ's soul knows all the things that God has cognition of in Himself through the knowledge of vision, but not all the things that God has cognition of in Himself through His simple understanding. And so God knows more things in Himself than Christ's soul does.

**Reply to objection 3:** The quantity of knowledge has to do not only with the number of knowable things, but also with the clarity of the cognition. Therefore, even though the knowledge that Christ's soul has in the Word is on a par with the knowledge of vision that God has within Himself as regards the number of knowable things, God's knowledge nonetheless infinitely exceeds the knowledge belonging to Christ's soul as regards clarity of cognition. For the uncreated light of God's intellect infinitely exceeds anything created that is received in Christ's soul, not only as regards its mode of cognition, but also, in the way that has been explained, as regards the number of knowable things.

### Article 3

#### Can Christ's soul have cognition of infinitely many things in the Word?

It seems that Christ's soul cannot have cognition of infinitely many things in the Word (*anima Christi non possit cognoscere infinita in verbo*):

**Objection 1:** Having cognition of the infinite is incompatible with the definition of the infinite. For as *Physics* 3 explains, that the infinite is such that “for those who take a quantity of it, there is always something more to take.” But it is impossible for the definition to be denied of what is being defined, since this would be for contradictories to exist simultaneously. Therefore, it is impossible for Christ's soul to know infinitely many things.

**Objection 2:** The knowledge of infinitely many things is infinite. But the knowledge that belongs to Christ's soul cannot be infinite; for its capacity is finite, because it is a creature. Therefore, Christ's soul cannot have cognition of infinitely many things.

**Objection 3:** There cannot be anything greater than the infinite. But as has been explained (a. 2), more things are contained in God's knowledge, absolutely speaking, than in the knowledge that belongs to Christ's soul. Therefore, Christ's soul does not have cognition of infinitely many things.

**But contrary to this:** Christ's soul has cognition of its full potential and of all the things of which it is capable. But it is capable of cleansing infinitely many sins—this according to John 2:2 (“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world”). Therefore, Christ's soul has cognition of infinitely many things.

**I respond:** Knowledge is only of *being*, because *being* and *true* are convertible (*scientia non est nisi entis, eo quod ens et verum convertuntur*). Now there are two ways in which something is called a being: (a) *absolutely speaking (simpliciter)*, viz., that which is a being *in actuality*; and (b) *in a certain respect (secundum quid)*, viz., that which is a being *in potentiality*. And since, as *Metaphysics* 9 explains, each thing is known insofar as it exists in *actuality* and not insofar as it exists *in potentiality*, knowledge has to do *primarily and principally* with *being in actuality*, whereas it has to do *secondarily* with *being in potentiality*, which is knowable not in its own right (*non secundum seipsum*), but insofar as one knows a thing in whose power it exists.

Therefore, as far as the *primary* mode of knowledge is concerned, Christ's soul does not know infinitely many things, since it is not the case that infinitely many things exist in actuality, even if everything whatsoever that exists in actuality at any given time is taken into account. For the state of generation and corruption does not endure unto infinity. Hence, there is a fixed number not only of those things which exist without generation and corruption, but of generable and corruptible things as well.

However, as regards the *secondary* mode of knowing, Christ's soul does know infinitely many things in the Word. For as has been explained (a. 2), Christ's soul knows everything that is within a creature's power. Hence, since there are infinitely many things within the power of a creature, in this sense Christ's soul knows infinitely many things by, as it were, a sort of knowledge of simple intelligence, though not by a knowledge of vision.

**Reply to objection 1:** As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 7, a. 1), ‘infinite’ is taken in two ways:

In the first way, with respect to the concept of the *form*, and on this score ‘infinite’ is used *negatively*. That is, it is used for a form or actuality that is not limited by matter or by a subject in which it is received. And this sort of infinity, taken in its own right (*quantum est de se*), is maximally knowable because of the perfection of the form, even though it is not comprehensible by the finite power of a creature; for this is the sense in which God is called infinite. And the soul of Christ has cognition of this sort of infinity, even though it does not comprehend it.

In the second way, ‘infinite’ is taken with respect to the *potentiality of matter*. ‘Infinite’ in this sense is predicated as a *privation*, because [the matter] does not have the form that it is apt to have. And

it is in this way that ‘infinite’ is applied in the case of *quantity*. Now this sort of infinity is unknown by its nature, since, as *Physics* 3 explains, it is, as it were, matter along with a privation of form. But every cognition is by means of form or actuality (*per formam vel actum*). So, then, if an infinity of this sort is supposed to be cognized in accord with the mode of the very thing that is cognized, it is impossible to have a cognition of it, since the mode of the thing itself, as *Physics* explains, is for a part of it to be taken after a part. And this is the sense in which it is true that “for those who take a quantity of it”—viz., with a part taken after a part—“there is always something more to take.” However, just as material things can be received by the intellect in an immaterial mode (*possunt accipi ab intellectu immaterialiter*), and many together, so, too, infinities can be received by the intellect not in the manner of the infinite but, as it were, in a finite mode (*sed quasi finite*), so that things that are in themselves infinitely many are finitely many to the intellect of the knower. And it is in this way that Christ’s soul knows infinitely many things, viz., insofar as it knows them not by running through each one individually, but in some one thing—that is, in some creature within whose power infinitely many things preexist, and principally in the Word Himself.

**Reply to objection 2:** Nothing prevents a thing from being infinite in one way and finite in another way—as, for instance, if we imagine among quantities a surface that is infinite in length but finite in width. So, then, if there were infinitely many men in number, they would have to be infinitely many things in a certain respect (*secundum aliquid*), viz., with respect to multitude, and yet they would not have infinity with respect to the concept of their essence, since every essence would be fixed under the concept of a single species. By contrast, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 7, a. 2), that which is infinite absolutely speaking (*simpliciter infinitum*) with respect to the concept of its essence is God, whereas the proper object of the intellect “is *what-ness*” (*est quod quid est*), as *De Anima* 3 puts it, and this involves the concept of a species.

So, then, because Christ’s soul has a finite capacity, He *attains to* what is infinite absolutely speaking in its essence, viz., God, but, as has been explained (a. 1), He does not *comprehend* it. By contrast, the sort of infinity that lies within the power of creatures can be comprehended by Christ’s soul, since it is related to His soul as the concept of an essence, and on this score it does not have infinity. For even our own intellect understands the universal, i.e., the nature of a genus or species, which has infinity in a certain sense because it is able to be predicated of infinitely many things.

**Reply to objection 3:** If something is infinite *in every way*, then there can only be one of it; hence, in *De Caelo et Mundo* 1 the Philosopher explains that since a body has dimensions with respect to all its parts, it is impossible for there to be more than one infinite body.

By contrast, if something were infinite *in just one way*, then nothing would prevent there being many such infinities—as, for instance, if we were to think of many infinitely long lines protracted over a surface that was finite in width. Therefore, since the infinite is not a substance but is instead, as *Physics* 3 explains, an accident of the things that are called infinitely many, it follows that as the infinite is multiplied in diverse subjects, so it is necessary for a property of the infinite to be multiplied, so that it belongs to each of the infinities with respect to their particular subjects.

Now it is a property of the infinite that there is nothing greater than the infinite. So, then, if we take any one of the infinitely long lines, there is nothing in that line greater than the infinite. Similarly, if we take any of the other infinitely long lines, it is clear that there are infinitely many parts of each of them. Therefore, it has to be the case that there is nothing greater in a given line than all those infinitely many parts; and yet in a second line and in a third line there are additional parts—indeed, infinitely many parts—besides these. And we likewise see this in the case of numbers. For the species of the even numbers are infinitely many, and likewise the species of the odd numbers, and yet there are more even numbers plus odd numbers than there are even numbers.

So, therefore, one should reply that nothing is greater than what is infinite absolutely speaking with respect to everything, whereas what is infinite in some determinate respect is such that nothing *in that order* is greater than it, even though something greater can be taken outside that order. It is in this way that infinitely many things are within the power of a creature, and yet there are more things within God’s

power than within a creature's power. Similarly, Christ's soul knows infinitely many things by a knowledge of simple understanding, and yet God knows more by this mode of understanding.

#### Article 4

##### Does Christ's soul see the Word more perfectly than any other creature?

It seems that Christ's soul does not see the Word more perfectly than any other creature (*anima Christi non perfectius videat verbum quam quaelibet alia creatura*):

**Objection 1:** The perfection of a cognition has to do with the medium of cognizing; for instance, a cognition that is had by means of a demonstrative syllogism is more perfect than a cognition that is had by means of a dialectical syllogism. But as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 2), all the blessed in heaven see the Word immediately through the divine essence itself. Therefore, it is not the case that Christ's soul sees the Word more perfectly than any other creature.

**Objection 2:** The perfection of a vision does not exceed the visual power. But as is clear from Dionysius in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 4, the power of a rational soul such as Christ's soul falls below an angel's intellective power. Therefore, Christ's soul does not see the Word more perfectly than the angels do.

**Objection 3:** God sees the Word infinitely more perfectly than a soul does. Therefore, there are infinitely many middle degrees in between the way in which God sees His own Word and the way in which Christ's soul sees it. Therefore, one should not claim that Christ's soul sees the Word, or the divine essence, more perfectly than any other creature does.

**But contrary to this:** In Ephesians 1:20-21 the Apostle says, "God set Christ in the heavens above every principality and power and virtue and dominion, and above every name that is named not only in this world but also in the world to come." But in the case of heavenly glory, one is higher to the extent that he has a more perfect cognition of God. Therefore, Christ's soul sees God more perfectly than any other creature whatsoever.

**I respond:** The vision of the divine essence belongs to all the blessed in heaven according to their participation in the light that flows to them from the fountain of the Word of God—this according to Ecclesiasticus 1:5 ("The Word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom"). But Christ's soul, which is one with the Word in person, is closer to this Word of God than any other creature whatsoever. And so Christ's soul receives more fully than any other creature the inflow of the light in which God is seen by the Word Himself. And so, beyond the rest of creatures, He sees more perfectly the first truth itself, which is God's essence. And this is why John 1:14 says, "We have seen His glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full" not only "of grace," but also "of truth."

**Reply to objection 1:** On the part of what the cognition is about, the perfection of a cognition has to do with the medium, but on the part of the one who has the cognition, the perfection of a cognition has to do with the knower's power or habit. And so it is that even among men using the same medium, one has a more perfect cognition of a given conclusion than another. And it is in this way that Christ's soul, which is filled with a more abundant light, has a more perfect cognition of the divine essence than the other blessed in heaven do, even though all of them see God's essence through itself.

**Reply to objection 2:** As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 4), the vision of the divine essence exceeds the natural power of *every* creature. And so its degree has to do more with the order of grace, in which Christ was the most excellent, than with the order of nature, according to which the angelic nature ranks higher than human nature.

**Reply to objection 3:** In the same way that it was explained above, concerning grace (q. 7, a. 12), there cannot be a greater grace than the grace of Christ as regards His union with the Word, the same thing has to be said about the perfection of the divine vision—even though, absolutely speaking, there could be an even more sublime degree, because God's power is infinite.