

QUESTION 17

Christ's Oneness With Respect To *Esse*

We next have to consider those things that pertain to the oneness in Christ in general. For what pertains to his oneness or plurality in specific cases has to be determined in their own proper places. For instance, it was determined above (q. 9) that in Christ there is not just one sort of knowledge, and it will be determined below (q. 35, a. 2) that in Christ there is not just one nativity.

The first thing to consider, then, is Christ's oneness with respect to *esse* (question 17); second, His oneness with respect to willing (question 18); and, third, His oneness with respect to acting.

On the first topic there are two questions: (1) Is Christ one thing or two things (*unum vel duo*)? (2) Is there just one *esse* in Christ?

Article 1

Is Christ one thing or two things?

It seems that Christ is two things and not one thing (*Christus non sit unum, sed duo*):

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 1 Augustine says, "Because the form of God received the form of a servant, both of them are God because of the receiving God, and both of them are man because of the received man." But one cannot say 'both of them' (*utrumque*) when there are not two things (*duo*). Therefore, Christ is two things.

Objection 2: Whenever there is one thing and another thing (*aliud et aliud*), there are two things. But Christ is one thing and another thing (*aliud et aliud*). For in *Enchiridion* Augustine says, "Even though He was in the form of God, He received the form of a servant; both of them are one, but other because of the Word and other because of the man (*utrumque unus, sed aliud propter verbum, aliud propter hominem*)." Therefore, Christ is two things.

Objection 3: Christ is not only a man, since if He were a mere man, He would not be God. Therefore, He is something other than a man (*aliquid aliud quam homo*). And so in Christ there is one thing and another thing (*aliud et aliud*). Therefore, Christ is two things.

Objection 4: Christ is something that is the Father and something that is not the Father. Therefore, Christ is something plus something (*aliquid et aliquid*). Therefore, Christ is two things.

Objection 5: Just as in the mystery of the Trinity there are three persons in one nature, so in the mystery of the Incarnation there are two natures in one person. But because of the oneness of the nature, and despite the distinction among the persons, the Father and the Son are one thing (*unum*)—this according to John 10:30 ("The Father and I are one"). Therefore, because of the duality of the natures, and despite the oneness of the person, Christ is two things.

Objection 6: In *Physics* 3 the Philosopher says that 'one' and 'two' are predicated denominatively. But Christ has a duality of natures. Therefore, Christ is two things.

Objection 7: As Porphyry says, just as it is an accidental form that makes something to be different (*alterum*), so it is a substantial form that makes something to be other (*aliud*). But in Christ there are two substantial natures (*duae naturae substantiales*). Therefore, Christ is one thing and another thing (*aliud et aliud*). Therefore, Christ is two things.

But contrary to this: In *De Duabus Naturis* Boethius says, "Everything that exists, insofar as it exists, is one." But we confess that Christ exists. Therefore, Christ is one thing.

I respond: A nature considered in its own right, i.e., as signified in the abstract (*prout in abstracto significatur*), cannot be truly predicated of a suppositum or a person—except in the case of God, in whom, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 24, a. 4), *that which exists* does not differ from *that*

by which it exists.

Now given that there are two natures in Christ, viz., the divine nature and the human nature, one of them, viz., the divine nature, can be predicated of Him both in the abstract and in the concrete. For we say *The Son of God*—for whom the name ‘Christ’ suppositis—is *the divine nature*, and *The Son of God is God*. By contrast, *human nature* cannot in its own right be predicated of Christ in the abstract; rather, it can be predicated of Him only in the concrete, viz., insofar as it is signified as being in a suppositum. For one cannot truly say *Christ is human nature*, since *human nature* is not correctly predicated of its suppositum (*non est nata predicare de suo supposito*); instead, one says *Christ is a man*, just as one likewise says *Christ is God*.

Now ‘God’ signifies (*importat*) one who has the divine nature (*habentem deitatem*), and ‘man’ signifies one who has a human nature (*habentem humanitatem*). However, one who has a human nature is signified (*significatur*) by the name ‘man’ in a way different from that in which it is signified by the name ‘Jesus’ or ‘Peter’. For it is in an *indistinct* way that the name ‘man’ signifies (*importat*) one who has a human nature, just as the name ‘God’ signifies in an *indistinct* way one who has the divine nature. By contrast, it is in a *distinct* way that the name ‘Peter’ or ‘Jesus’ signifies one who has a human nature; that is, it signifies him under determinate individual properties, just as the name ‘Son of God’ signifies one who has the divine nature under a determinate personal property.

Now the number *two* (*numerus dualitatis*) is posited in Christ with respect to the natures themselves. And so if both of the natures were predicated of Christ in the abstract, then it would follow that Christ is two things (*duo*). But because the two natures are predicated of Christ only insofar as they are signified as being in a suppositum, ‘one thing’ (*unum*) or ‘two things’ (*duo*) has to be predicated of Christ with respect to the notion of a suppositum (*secundum rationem suppositi*).

Now some have claimed that in Christ there are two supposita but one person, where in their opinion a person seems to be a ‘fully complete’ suppositum (*suppositum completum ultima completionem*). And so because they posited two supposita in Christ, they claimed that Christ is two things in the neuter gender (*duo neutraliter*), but because they posited one person, they claimed that Christ is one in the masculine gender (*unus masculine*). For the neuter gender designates something unformed and incomplete (*quiddam informe et imperfectum*), whereas the masculine gender designates something formed and complete (*quiddam formatum et perfectum*). On the other hand, the Nestorians, who posited two persons in Christ, claimed that Christ is not only two things in the neuter, but also two things in the masculine.

However, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 2, aa. 2-3), we ourselves posit one person and one suppositum in Christ, we claim as a consequence that Christ is not only one thing in the masculine (*unus masculine*) but also one thing in the neuter (*unum neutraliter*).

Reply to objection 1: This passage from Augustine should not be understood in such a way that ‘both of them’ (*utrumque*) stands in the predicate position, as if he were saying that Christ is both of them. Instead, it stands in the subject position. And in such a case ‘both of them’ is being posited not for two supposita, but for two names that signify the two natures in the concrete. For I can say *Both of them*—viz., God and the man—are *God*, because of the receiving God, and *Both of them*—viz., God and the man—are *man*, because of the received man.

Reply to objection 2: When one says *Christ is one thing and another thing* (*Christus est aliud et aliud*), the sentence should be explained as having this sense: *Christ has one nature and another nature* (*habens aliam et aliam naturam*). This is the way Augustine explains it in *Contra Felicianum*, where, after he has said, “In the mediator between God and men, the Son of God is one thing (*aliud*) and the Son of Man another thing (*aliud*),” he adds, “I say *aliud* [in the neuter], because of the distinction between the substances, but I refrain from saying *alius* [in the masculine], because of the oneness of the person.” Again, in *Epistola ad Chelidonium* Gregory Nazianzus says, “If one must speak briefly, what the Savior

is composed of is, to be sure, *aliud et aliud* [in the neuter], since what is invisible is not the same as what is visible, and what is outside of time (*absque tempore*) is not the same as what is in time (*sub tempore*). Still, He is not *alius et alius* [in the masculine], since these two are one (*haec enim ambo unum*).”

Reply to objection 3: *Christ is only a man* is false, since it excludes not another suppositum, but another nature; for terms in the predicate position are taken for the forms (*tenentur formaliter*). However, if something were added that drew the predicate toward the suppositum, then the sentence would be true—e.g., *Christ is only that which is a man*.

Still, [from the fact that *Christ is only a man* is false] it would not follow that He is something other than a man (*non tamen sequeretur quod aliquid aliud quam homo*); for since ‘other’ (*aliud*) is a relative term involving a diversity of substances, it is properly referred back to the suppositum, just like all the relative terms that make for personal relations [in the Trinity]. Instead, what does follow is this: *Therefore, He has another nature*.

Reply to objection 4: When one says *Christ is something that is the Father*, the term ‘something’ (*aliquid*) stands for the divine nature, which is predicated even in the abstract of the Father and the Son. However, when one says *Christ is something that is not the Father*, the term ‘something’ is taken not for the human nature insofar as it is signified in the abstract, but for the human nature insofar as it is signified in the concrete—and not with respect to a distinct suppositum, but with respect to an indistinct suppositum, i.e., insofar as it is the subject of the nature, but not insofar as it is the subject of the individuating properties. And so it does not follow that Christ is one thing and another thing (*aliud et aliud*), or that He is two things (*duo*), since the suppositum of the human nature in Christ, i.e., the person of the Son of God, does not constitute a number when taken together with the divine nature (*non ponit in numerum cum natura divina*) that is predicated of the Father and the Son.

Reply to objection 5: In the mystery of the divine Trinity, the divine nature is predicated of the three persons in the abstract, and one can say without qualification that the three persons are one thing (*unum*). However, in the mystery of the Incarnation, it is not the case that the two natures are predicated of Christ in the abstract, and so it cannot be said without qualification that Christ is two things (*duo*).

Reply to objection 6: ‘Two’ means, as it were, ‘something having duality’ (*habens dualitatem*)—not, to be sure, a duality in some other thing but a duality in that of which ‘two’ is predicated. Now the predication is made with respect to the suppositum that is imported by the name ‘Christ’. Therefore, even though Christ has a duality of natures, nonetheless, because He does not have a duality of supposita, He cannot be said to be two things.

Reply to objection 7: ‘Different’ (*alterum*) implies a diversity of *accidents*, and so a diversity of accidents is sufficient for its being the case that something is said to be different without qualification (*simpliciter alterum*).

By contrast, ‘other’ (*aliud*) implies a diversity of *substances*. Now as *Metaphysics 5* explains, ‘substance’ means not only the nature but also the suppositum. And so a diversity of natures is not sufficient for something to be called ‘other’ without qualification (*simpliciter aliud*), unless there is a diversity with respect to supposita. On the other hand, a diversity of natures makes something to be other in a qualified way, viz., with respect to a nature, if no diversity of supposita is present.

Article 2

Is there just one *esse* in Christ, or two?

It seems that there is not just one *esse* in Christ, but two (*in Christo non sit tantum unum esse, sed duo*):

Objection 1: In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, “Those things that follow upon a nature are doubled in Christ.” But *esse* follows upon a nature, since *esse* comes from form. Therefore, in Christ there are two *esse*’s.

Objection 2: The *esse* of the Son of God is the divine nature itself, and it is eternal. By contrast, the *esse* of the man Christ is not the divine nature, but is temporal *esse*. Therefore, there is not just one *esse* in Christ.

Objection 3: Even though there are three persons in the Trinity, there is just one *esse* because of the oneness of the nature. But in Christ there are two natures, even though there is one person. Therefore, in Christ there is not just one *esse*, but two.

Objection 4: In Christ the soul gives some sort of *esse* or other to the body, since it is the form of the body. But it does not give the body the divine *esse*, since the divine *esse* is uncreated. Therefore, in Christ there is another *esse* besides the divine *esse*. And so in Christ there is not just one *esse*.

But contrary to this: Each thing, insofar as it is called a being (*ens*), is called one, since *one* and *being* are convertible. Therefore, if there were two *esse*’s in Christ and not just one, then Christ would be two things (*duo*) and not one thing (*unum*).

I respond: Since in Christ there are two natures and one *hypostasis*, the things pertaining to a nature in Christ must be two, whereas the things belonging to the *hypostasis* are just one. Now *esse* pertains both to the *hypostasis* and to a nature—to the *hypostasis* as *that which has esse*, and to a nature as *that by which* something has *esse*. For a nature is signified in the manner of a form, and a form is called a being from the fact that something is such-and-such *by* it; for instance, it is by whiteness (*albidine*) that something is white, and it is by human nature (*humanitate*) that someone is a man.

However, notice that if there is a form or nature that does not belong to the personal *esse* of a subsistent *hypostasis*, the *esse* in question is called the *esse* of that person not in an unqualified sense but in a qualified sense; for instance, white-*esse* is Socrates’ *esse* not insofar as he is Socrates, but insofar as he is white. And nothing prevents *esse* of this sort from being multiplied in a single *hypostasis* or person. For the *esse* by which Socrates is white is other than the *esse* by which Socrates is musical. But it is impossible for the *esse* that belongs to the very *hypostasis* or person in his own right (*secundum se*) to be multiplied in one *hypostasis* or person, since it is impossible for there not to be a single *esse* for a single entity (*impossible est quod unius rei non sit unum esse*).

Therefore, if the human nature came to the Son of God as an accident (*accidentaliter*), as some have claimed, and not hypostatically or personally (*non hypostatice vel personaliter*), it would be necessary to posit two *esse*’s in Christ, one with respect to His being God and the other with respect to His being a man—just as in Socrates one posits one *esse* with respect to his being white and another *esse* with respect to his being a man. For white-*esse* does not pertain to Socrates’ personal *esse* itself.

By contrast, the *esse* that pertains to his having a head (*esse capitatum*), and the *esse* that pertains to his being corporeal (*esse corporeum*), and the *esse* that pertains to his being alive (*esse animatum*) all pertain to the one person of Socrates, and so all of them make up just one *esse* in Socrates. And if, after the person of Socrates had been constituted, it happened that Socrates received hands or feet or eyes—as occurred in the case of the man born blind—then no further *esse* would accrue to Socrates from them; instead, what would accrue to him would be only a certain relation to things of the sort in question. For

esse would be said not only with respect to the things he had before, but also with respect to the things that come to him afterwards.

So, then, since, as was explained above (q. 2, a. 6), the human nature is joined to the Son of God hypostatically or personally and not as an accident, it follows that no new personal *esse* accrues to Him with respect to the human nature. Instead, what accrues to Him is merely a new relation to the personal *esse* that preexisted the human nature, so that this person is now said to subsist not only with respect to the divine nature, but also with respect to the human nature.

Reply to objection 1: *Esse* follows upon a nature not in the sense that the nature is that *which has esse*, but in the sense that the nature is that *by which* something exists. By contrast, *esse* follows upon a person or *hypostasis* in the sense that the person or *hypostasis* is that *which has esse*. And so the *esse* retains its oneness because of the oneness of the *hypostasis* (*secundum unitatem hypostasis*) rather than having duality because of the duality of natures (*secundum dualitatem naturae*).

Reply to objection 2: The eternal *esse* of the Son of God, which is the divine nature, becomes the *esse* of a man insofar as a human nature is assumed by the Son of God into the oneness of the person.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 50, a. 2 and q. 75, a. 5), since a divine person is the same as the [divine] nature, in the divine persons there is no *esse* besides the *esse* of the nature, and so the three persons have just one *esse*. However, there would be three *esse*'s if in the divine persons the *esse* of a person were other than the *esse* of the nature.

Reply to objection 4: In Christ the soul gives *esse* to the body insofar as it makes the body to be actually alive (*actu animatum*), i.e., insofar as it gives the body the completion of the nature and the species. However, if the body as completed by the soul is thought of without the *hypostasis* that has both the soul and the body, then the whole composed of the soul and body, insofar as it is signified by the name 'human nature' (*humanitas*), is signified not as *that which is* but as *that by which something is*. And so the *esse* itself belongs to the subsistent person insofar as that person has a relation to this nature, and a cause of this relation is the soul insofar as it completes the human nature by informing the body.