

REVISITING THE FRANCISCAN DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

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[Franciscan theologians posit an integral relation between Incarnation and Creation whereby the Incarnation is grounded in the Trinity of love. The primacy of Christ as the fundamental reason for the Incarnation underscores a theocentric understanding of Incarnation that widens the meaning of salvation and places it in a cosmic context. The author explores the primacy of Christ both in its historical context and with a contemporary view toward ecology, world religions, and extraterrestrial life, emphasizing the fullness of the mystery of Christ.]

KARL RAHNER, in his remarkable essay “Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World,” noted that the Scotistic doctrine of Christ has never been objected to by the Church’s magisterium,¹ although one might add, it has never been embraced by the Church either. According to this doctrine, the basic motive for the Incarnation was, in Rahner’s words, “not the blotting-out of sin but was already the goal of divine freedom even apart from any divine fore-knowledge of freely incurred guilt.”² Although the doctrine came to full fruition in the writings of the late 13th-century philosopher/theologian John Duns Scotus, the origins of the doctrine in the West can be traced back at least to the 12th century and to the writings of Rupert of Deutz.

THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST TRADITION

The reason for the Incarnation occupied the minds of medieval thinkers, especially with the rise of Anselm of Canterbury and his satisfaction theory. While Bernard of Clairvaux had been a more powerful spokesman of medieval devotion to Christ and Thomas Aquinas a more balanced exponent of satisfaction theology, Anselm’s combination of deep devotion

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¹ Karl Rahner, “Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World,” *Theological Investigations*, 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 184.

² *Ibid.*

and theological innovation made him the special catalyst of the distinctive Latin view of the role of the God-man.³ In his *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm considered redemption as the remission of sins within the context of satisfaction. He defined sin as an affront to God's honor, that is God's transcendent being, so that divine justice demands recompense either by satisfaction or by punishment.⁴ The infinite magnitude of the offense of sin, Anselm claimed, requires a like satisfaction that can be achieved only by one who is both (and therefore can make such satisfaction) and also a human being (who is bound to make it).⁵ Following the satisfaction theory, Western Christology has focused on the sinfulness of the human person, the guilt incurred by sin, and the saving work of Christ. While this theory assumed prominence in the West, other medieval thinkers were discussing the Incarnation less in juridical terms and more in a cosmological context. The medieval theologian Boethius, for example, wrestled with the relationship between Creation and Incarnation, as did Rupert of Deutz who affirmed that Christ would have become human even if Adam had not sinned.⁶ On the whole, however, it is the Franciscan theologians who argued most convincingly in favor of the primacy of Christ against the Ansel-

³ Bernard McGinn, "Christ as Savior in the West," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* 16 (New York: Crossroad, 1987) 256. Although Anselm articulated the need for redemption in an exclusive way, it was Augustine who first drew a strict correlation between Incarnation and redemption. Comparing Jesus to a physician who had come to heal a sick man, he stated that had there been no illness, there would have been no need to send for a physician. See Augustine, "Sermo 174 ad populum, de verbis Apostoli," *Opera omnia* (Paris: Muguet, 1683) 5, col. 834. Michael Meilach claims that fallacy is inherent in Augustine's reasoning. Whereas it is true to say that God became human to redeem us, it does not follow that Christ did so *only*, or even *primarily*, to redeem us. The simply, affirmative proposition is transformed into an exclusive one. The former states a reason for the Incarnation and the latter makes that reason the unique or principal one (Michael D. Meilach, *The Primacy of Christ: Life and Doctrine* [Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1964] 7). Meilach provides a good historical view of the primacy of Christ tradition.

⁴ *Anselme de Cantorbéry: Pourquoi Dieu s'est fait homme*, trans. René Roques, *Sources chrétiennes* 91 (Paris: Cerf, 1963) 1.13, 19, and 22.

⁵ Anselm, *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946) 37–133; McGinn, "Christ as Savior in the West" 256.

⁶ Rupert of Deutz, *De gloria et honore Filii Hominis*, lib. 13 (PL 168.1624–29); Kenan B. Osborne, "Alexander of Hales: Precursor and Promoter of Franciscan Theology," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1994) 31. Honorius of Autun (d. 1150) agreed with Rupert, as did Albert the Great *pace* his revered student Thomas Aquinas. See Honorius of Autun, *Libellus octo quaestionum*, c. 2 (PL 172.1187–88); Albert the Great, *III Sentences* d. 20, a. 4, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 28, ed. Borgnet (Paris: Vives, 1894) 360–62. According to Aquinas, there would have been no need for an incar-

mian notion of satisfaction. The term “primacy of Christ” is based on the Pauline notion that Jesus Christ is the “the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature” (Colossians 1:15).⁷ While the term is unconventional in contemporary Christology, it is operative in Franciscan Christology to describe the predestination of Christ.⁸ Its basis is due in part to Francis of Assisi whose insight to the beauty of Creation as a gift from God centered on the preeminent gift of Jesus Christ.

Just as Francis grasped an integral connection between Christ and Creation, so too Franciscan Christology is marked by its cosmological context. The notion of cosmic Christology, rooted in Scripture, particularly in John’s Gospel as well as in Colossians 1:15–16; Ephesians 1:20–23, attained a flowering of thought in many of the Greek writers from Origen to Maximus the Confessor.⁹ One of the first theologians in the Franciscan tradition to expound the relationship between Christ and Creation was the re-

nation if there had been no sin to blot out. See Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 1, a. 3.

⁷ Meilach, *The Primacy of Christ* 5.

⁸ It is interesting to note that in translating Scotus’s text on the primacy of Christ, Allan Wolter uses the language of predestination wherein predestination *is* the primacy of Christ. See John Duns Scotus, III *Ordination* (Suppl.) S. 19 (Assisi com. 137, fol. 161 v); trans. Allan B. Wolter, “John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ,” in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1980) 153. To my knowledge no one has explained why the term “primacy of Christ” is favored in the Franciscan tradition other than it connotes the Pauline idea of “first born of creation,” which in turn relates to the cosmic Christ. While the term “predestination” might avert any Arian or subordinationist tendencies conceived by the notion of “primacy,” it is used by Scotus only to explain the reason(s) for the Incarnation. The term “primacy of Christ,” however, describes the doctrine of predestination and is used as the operative term by later theologians.

⁹ The formulation of cosmic Christology is rooted in Scripture and tradition. The letters to the Colossians 1:13–20 and Ephesians 1:3–10 affirm the primacy of Christ and provide a basis for this doctrine. Among the early Fathers of the Church, Irenaeus (d. 202) insisted on the primacy of the incarnate Word in God’s creative plan. Salvation for Irenaeus is not restricted to redemption from sin but is a more extensive process by which all are led from a state of “infancy” to that of maturity, or perfection. See Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 5, 38, 1 (PG 7.1105). Recapitulation is the summing up of the entire cosmos in Christ as its head (3, 16, 6 [PG 7.925–26]). Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) also insisted that the Incarnation would have taken place even without a fall. Although the Incarnation in its proper and historical sense is directly related to the constitution and meaning of the cosmos, it also restores fallen humanity to its proper relationship to God. The Incarnation therefore provides both redemption and completion of the cosmos. See Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1985) 55, 76–80. See also George A. Maloney, *The Cosmic Christ: From Paul to Teilhard* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968); Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001) 97–140; De-

nowned Alexander of Hales who was Bonaventure's principal mentor. Alexander's theological foundations of Christology began not with the person of Jesus Christ but with the question of God and the possibility of a divine nature united to a human nature. In the early Church, the question of Incarnation in view of monotheism posed a problem for early Christians. The formulation of a trinitarian understanding of God was a response by the early Christian community to the question of whether the divine nature could unite itself to human nature. In the same way, Alexander realized that incarnation was possible only in light of a trinitarian theology. As Kenan Osborne has observed: "Both in the earliest formulations of Christology and in Alexander's opening statements on the Incarnation, the question of God is basic, that is, what kind of God is being presented when one speaks of incarnation, and whether such a doctrine of God is a credible doctrine or not."¹⁰ For Alexander, one must consider the doctrine of God prior to the doctrine of Incarnation; or conversely stated, the Incarnation is a central entryway to faith in a credible God. Christocentrism and theocentrism are two sides of one and the same coin.¹¹ If the doctrine of God fundamentally relates to the question of Incarnation, such a possibility can be considered only within the context of Creation itself. Franciscan theology has consistently held together the twin poles of creational theology and incarnational theology in such a way that one without the other is theologically inconceivable.¹²

Examining the nature of the Trinity and the possibility of Incarnation, Alexander explored the question whether God is a Trinity in God's own self, or because of a Creation or an Incarnation. He concluded that there is no necessity in God for either Creation or Incarnation. Rather, the power to create and the power to be incarnate focuses on the divine nature as such, rather than on a person of the Trinity. Since nature refers to action, Creation and Incarnation find their sources in the divine nature understood as a principle of action rather than in the divine essence.¹³ This position, which underscores the absolute freedom of God and the contingency of created reality, is the basis for Scotus's formulation of the primacy of Christ. As Osborne has indicated, Alexander's position not only leads to a clear relationship between Creation and Incarnation but the person of

nis Edwards, *Jesus, The Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 69–87.

¹⁰ Osborne, "Alexander of Hales" 30; Walter H. Principe, *Alexander of Hales' Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967) 72–96.

¹¹ Osborne, "Alexander of Hales" 31.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Alexander of Hales, *Quaestiones disputatae: "Antequam esset frater,"* (Quarachi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1960) 197.

Jesus becomes more revelatory of a credible God than of human nature itself.¹⁴

Alexander's position can be traced through subsequent writers in the Franciscan tradition. Matthew of Aquasparta (1282) held that the Incarnation was supposed for the perfection of the natural order, and Raymond Lull (1289) asserted that the primary aim of the Incarnation was to show forth the love of God.¹⁵ In his *Libre de Sancta Maria* Lull wrote: "The nature of Jesus Christ is the most eminent and most noble of all creatures, because it is the end, the beginning and the crown of all other things since all things that God made, he created to be clothed with this human nature, born of our Blessed Lady."¹⁶ In addition, Roger of Marston and William of Ware, both at Oxford, held that the Incarnation would have taken place "apart from sin."¹⁷ In the 17th century Lawrence of Brindisi also proclaimed the primacy of Christ: "For this reason the humanity of Christ, the first creature conceived in the mind of God, was to be the archetype for human nature, not only in his natural being but also in his supernatural being of grace and glory."¹⁸ However, it is in the writings of Bonaventure (d. 1274) and Duns Scotus (d. 1308) that the primacy of Christ attains a level of theological achievement that provides a powerful alternative to Anselm's satisfaction theory. While Scotus articulated an explicit doctrine of the primacy of Christ, Bonaventure offers insight to the relationship between Creation and Incarnation that points to the primacy of Christ, albeit without explicitly formulating a doctrine. Both writers, however, provided a rich understanding of the centrality of Christ that merits our attention today.

SCOTUS AND THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST

Scotus's doctrine on the primacy of Christ centers around divine freedom and self-revelation. According to him, God is absolutely free and chose to create this world precisely as it is to reveal divine love. Scotus considered not what God would have done had the fall not occurred (that is, the question, "would Christ have come if Adam did not sin?") but rather what was God's original intent relative to the Incarnation: "Utrum Christus

¹⁴ Osborne, "Alexander of Hales" 32.

¹⁵ Mary Beth Ingham, "John Duns Scotus: An Integrated Vision," in *The History of Franciscan Theology* 220; Robert North, "The Scotist Cosmic Christ," in *De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti* (Rome: Ercolano, 1968) 197 n. 90.

¹⁶ Raymond Lull, *Obras de Ramon Lull* (Palma, 1915) 63.

¹⁷ North, "The Scotist Cosmic Christ" 198 n. 92.

¹⁸ Lawrence of Brindisi *Santorale, Opera omnia* 9 (Padua, 1928) 115.

praedestinatus fuerit esse Filium Dei.”¹⁹ In other words, what kind of God would become incarnate? The possibility for Incarnation, according to Scotus, is grounded in the nature of God as ultimate goodness or love. God’s love is ordered, free and holy and in which God loves God’s own self forever, even in others, and this love is unselfish since God is the cause of all creatures. On this point Scotus stated that “the predestination of anyone to glory is prior by nature to the prevision of the sin or damnation of anyone.”²⁰

According to Scotus, the divine initiative of love has as its primary object that creature capable of receiving the fullest measure of God’s goodness and glory, and who in turn could respond in the fullest measure. He wrote: “First, God wills good for himself as the end of all things; second, he wills that another be good for him. This is the moment of predestination.”²¹ God wills ordinately and thus intends the end, and that which is closer to the end. In Scotus’s terms, God is perfect love and wills according to the perfection of that love. Since perfect love cannot will anything less than the perfection of love,²² Christ would have come in the highest glory in Creation even if there was no sin and thus no need for redemption. Although Jesus Christ is God’s supreme masterpiece, subject to no other, dependent on no one and independent of all contingencies, he does not exist in isolation. Rather, he is the center and summit of all God’s creative and redemptive works; all of Creation is ordered to him. God, therefore, intended the highest glory as the ultimate and final end, and then the Incarnation as leading to that end.²³ In his *Ordinatio*, Scotus indicated that the fall of Adam was not *sine qua non* for the Incarnation. Jesus Christ holds the center place in the universe as one freely created and redeemed by God. He writes:

Predestination consists in foreordaining someone first of all to glory and then to other things which are ordered to glory. Now the human nature in Christ was

¹⁹ John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniensis (Oxon.)* 3, d. 7, a. 3. vol. 14 (Paris: Vives, 1894) 348–60.

²⁰ Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus: Four Questions on Mary* [intro., text, and trans.] (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Old Mission Santa Barbara, 1988) 29.

²¹ This quotation is found in the *Reportationes Parisiensis* III, d. 32, q. ii; XXIII, 508 a: “Vult enim Deus ex caritate primo bene esse sibi tanquam fini omnium; secundo vult alium velle sibi bonum esse. In isto instanti potest poni praedestinatio.” Cited in Giovanni Iammarrone, “The Timeliness and Limitations of the Christology of John Duns Scotus for the Development of a Contemporary Theology of Christ,” [trans. Ignatius McCormick], *Greyfriars Review* 7.2 (1993) 233 n. 13.

²² Duns Scotus, *Oxon.* 3, d. 7, q. 3 “Tertio vult se diligere ab alio, qui protest eum summe diligere” cited in Iammarrone, “The Timeliness and Limitations of the Christology of John Duns Scotus” 234 n. 17.

²³ Ingham, “John Duns Scotus” 221.

predestined to be glorified, and in order to be glorified, it was predestined to be united to the Word, in as much as such glory as it was granted would never have been conferred on this nature had it not been so united. Now if it would not be fitting to ordain one to such glory if certain merits were absent, whereas it would be fitting if they were present, then such merits are included in the predestination. And so it would seem that this union by way of fitness is ordered to this glory, although it is not exactly as merit that it falls under this predestination. And just as it is foreordained that this nature be united to the Word, so it is predestined that the Word be man and that this man be the Word.²⁴

For Scotus, therefore, the Incarnation takes place in light of God's glory and not in light of any sin which might be committed prior to the Incarnation. The Incarnation represents not a divine response to a human need for salvation but instead the divine intention from all eternity to raise human nature to the highest point of glory by uniting it with divine nature.²⁵ Scotus does not neglect sin and the need for redemption; however, he simply does not view sin as the reason for the Incarnation.²⁶ Rather, the mutuality between God and human persons realized in the Incarnation is grounded in the very nature of God as love. As Allan Wolter has noted: "[the primacy of Christ] makes the human nature of Christ the *motif* the Divine Architect was to carry out in the rest of Creation . . . after his body the visible world was sculptured. The whole universe is full of Christ."²⁷ Christ, therefore, is the meaning and model of Creation and every creature is made in the image of Christ. Another way of expressing this idea is that the "body" of the universe is the body of Christ. Since Incarnation is the perfect mutuality between divine and human nature, Scotus views the summit of Creation as the communion of all persons with one another and with God.

BONAVENTURE AND THE CHRISTIC UNIVERSE

Although Scotus defines primacy as the absolute predestination of Christ in view of God as love, it is with Bonaventure that the notion of primacy assumes an element of dynamism in light of a Christ-centered or Christic universe. Some scholars contend that Bonaventure opted for the tradi-

²⁴ Wolter, *Four Questions on Mary* 29.

²⁵ Ingham, "John Duns Scotus" 222.

²⁶ Iammarone, "Christology of John Duns Scotus" 236. According to Iammarone, Scotus grants sin the fourth place in the reasons for the Incarnation. God the Creator, foreseeing sin and the fall of humankind structured the Incarnation with a view to redemption. Thus, the Word-made-flesh, the God-man, was entrusted with the task of restoring the human family and all creation to their original purpose, a share in the life and glory of God.

²⁷ Wolter, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ" 141.

tional solution of Anselm.²⁸ However, a thorough perusal of his writings shows a development in his Christology. While in his *Breviloquium* (1255) he clearly adopts the Anselmian position with regard to the Incarnation, his thought later shifts toward Christ as the noble perfection of the universe in his *De reductione artium ad theologiam* (1257). Even in his “Sermon on the Nativity,” composed after the *De reductione artium*, one finds no mention of satisfaction but rather an emphasis on the Incarnation as the perfection of the created order and an act of cosmic completion. As Bonaventure wrote:

It is in the Word that we discover the perfection of that greatness of heart which brings all reality to its consummation and completion, since the figure of the circle attests to the perfection of bodies both in the macrocosm and in the microcosm. . . . But this figure is not complete in the universe. Now, if this figure is to be as perfect as possible, the line of the universe must be curved into a circle. Indeed, God is simply the first. And the last among the works of the world is man. Therefore, when God became man, the works of God were brought to perfection. This is why Christ, the God-man, is called the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.²⁹

While the emphasis in this passage is clearly on cosmic completion, he states elsewhere in this Sermon that the Incarnation of the Word “took place for the sake of the flesh in view of its final salvation.”³⁰ This twofold emphasis on completion and redemption marks Bonaventure’s doctrine. His writings are complex and nuanced as he tried to hold together the reality of sin, redemption, and cosmic completion. He clearly viewed sin as embedded in historical reality. However, he did not limit the mystery of Christ to sin. Unlike other thinkers of his time, Bonaventure did not ask whether the Word would have become incarnate had Adam not sinned.³¹

²⁸ See, e.g., Ingham who states “only Bonaventure appears as a major Franciscan thinker who, while affirming either position to be orthodox, opted for the traditional solution of Anselm” (“John Duns Scotus” 220). Similarly, Iammarrone maintains that Bonaventure held to Anselm’s satisfaction theory in accordance with piety and tradition (“Christology of John Duns Scotus” 231).

²⁹ Bonaventure, *Sermo II in nat. Dom.* (IX, 107); trans. “Sermon II on the Nativity of the Lord,” in *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St. Bonaventure*, 2nd ed., trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1989) 73–74. The critical edition of Bonaventure’s works is the *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, ed. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902). Citations from the Latin are indicated by volume and page number in parentheses.

³⁰ Bonaventure, “Sermon II on the Nativity” 67.

³¹ Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1992) 187. As Hayes points out, this question became very common in Scholastic circles. See J. M. Bissen, “De motivo incarnationis,” *Antonianum* 7 (1932) 314–36; J. Kaup, “Cur Deus Homo?” *Franziskanische Studien* 21 (1934) 232–42; Dominic Unger, “Franciscan Christol-

He did ask, however, what the *ratio praecipua* of the Incarnation might be and in his answer he tried to avoid anything external to God necessitating the divine in any way.³² While he viewed the Incarnation within the present historical order, he did not consider the Incarnation to be a sort of after-thought on the part of God. As Zachary Hayes has observed: “Christ cannot be willed by God *occasionaliter*, that is, simply because of sin.”³³ Rather, from eternity, God included the possibility of a fall of the human race³⁴ and therefore structured the human person with a view to redemption. God predestined Christ, he noted, not only *principaliter* but *principalius*.³⁵ God does not predestine Christ because humankind sinned, for as the most noble of God’s works, the Incarnation is willed for its own sake and not for the sake of any lesser good. However, the redemptive function is not simply added to the Incarnation; for the actual Incarnation is shaped by its redemptive function. Hayes has stated:

While the Incarnation bears its own *ratio*, the soteriological dimension appears as the *ratio inducens*, a term which points to the actuality of a fallen history, and holds open the possibility that an Incarnation willed for its own sake as the highest revelation of the love of God can, in fact, enter into history as a redemptive act. Thus while the Incarnation is a redemptive mystery, it fulfills the functions in the world as well, particularly the perfection of the universe.³⁶

ogy—Absolute and Universal Primacy of Christ,” *Franciscan Studies* 23 (1942) 428–30.

³² Bonaventure, III *Sentences* (*Sent.*) d. 1, a. 2, q. 2, resp. (III, 23). The entire second article deals with the congruity of the Incarnation of the Word. Here Bonaventure indicates that God is always free in relation to the world, and since nothing outside God can move God to act, whatever we find in history is characterized by a profound contingency.

³³ Zachary Hayes, “Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity,” *Cord* 46.1 (1996) 6.

³⁴ Bonaventure, III *Sent.* d. 1, a. 2, q. 2, ad 2 (III, 26); see Hayes, *Hidden Center* 189 who states that “the incarnation is not to be seen as a sort of after-thought on the part of God. From eternity, God knew the course that history would take, including the fall of the human race. From the very beginning, therefore, God has acted in view of his intention of restoring what he knew would in fact become a fallen creation.” This position seems to be that of Scotus as well (see n. 24). Rahner (“Christology Within an Evolutionary View” 185–86) offers a similar solution to the question of sin in light of the primacy of Christ. He writes: “The world and its history are from the outset based on the absolute will of God to communicate himself radically to the world. In this self-communication and in its climax (i.e. in the Incarnation), the world becomes the history of God himself. And so if and in so far as it is found in the world, sin is from the outset embraced by the will to forgive and the offer of divine self-communication becomes necessary.”

³⁵ Bonaventure, III *Sent.* d. 1, a. 2, q. 2, ad 5 (III, 26–27); Hayes, *Hidden Center* 189.

³⁶ Hayes, *Hidden Center* 190.

To understand *why* the Incarnation brings about cosmic completion is to understand it in the context of Creation and, in turn, Creation's relationship to the Trinity. The Trinity according to Bonaventure, is marked by dynamic self-diffusive goodness, a goodness which is communicative and expressive. Bonaventure described Creation as sharing in the mystery of generation of the Word from the Father; it is a limited expression of the infinite and dynamic love between the Father and Son, emerging out of this relationship and exploding into "a thousand forms" in the universe.³⁷ He used the term "emanation" (*emanatio*)³⁸ to describe the emergence of Creation from the triune God of love. Although the Platonic use of this term means that Creation necessarily flows out of the infinite, transcendent One, Bonaventure uses the term "emanation" in a Christian context. Creation, he wrote, is like a beautiful song that flows in the most excellent of harmonies but it is a song that God freely desires to sing into the vast spaces of the universe.³⁹ Creation is simply the loving outflow of a loving God whose infinite dynamic goodness is shared in a limited dynamic way. God does not have to create since God is infinitely fecund and self-communicative within God's self. God simply desires to create because God is love, and perfect love can never be self-contained but must be shared freely with another. The world exists, Bonaventure indicated, by virtue of the free creative power of divine love.

According to Bonaventure, the possibility of Creation, is grounded in divine transcendent fecundity. His doctrine of exemplarism is a doctrine of relationships between God and Creation whereby the fecundity of divine ideas, centered on the Word of God, is the basis of all that exists. The source of fecundity in the Trinity is the Father who is a coincidence of unbegottenness (*innascibilitas*) and fountain fullness (*fontalis plenitudo*). Because the Father is without origin, he is the infinite source of everything, including the Son and Spirit.⁴⁰ As fountain fullness of the good, the Father

³⁷ Alexander Gerken, *La théologie du Verbe: La relation entre l'Incarnation et la Création selon S. Bonaventure*, trans. Jacqueline Gréal (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 1970) 132; Zachary Hayes, "Incarnation and Creation in St. Bonaventure," in *Studies Honoring Ignatius Brady, Friar Minor*, ed. Roman Stephen Almagno and Conrad L. Harkins (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1976) 314.

³⁸ Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron (Hex.)* 12.3 (V, 385).

³⁹ See Bonaventure, *I Sent.* d. 44, q. 1, a. 3, concl. (I, 786a). "Optime ordinatae sunt res in finem, salvo ordine universi, quia universum est tamquam pulcherrimum carmen, quod decurrit secundum optimas consonantias."

⁴⁰ Bonaventure, *I Sent.* d. 27, p. 1, a. u., a. 2, ad 3 (I, 469–470); Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1978) 102–3. The idea that the Father is innascible and fecund underlies the dialectical style of Bonaventure's thought. It also provides the basis of Bonaventure's metaphysics as a *coincidentia oppositorum*. The Father's innascibility and fecundity are

is infinitely expressive and expresses [him] self in the Word/Son.⁴¹ Expressionism is at the heart of trinitarian life and thus at the center of reality. The eternal expressionism within the Trinity is the basis for exemplarism in Creation. In generating the Word, the Father produces in the Word all that can be created. Thus, all creatures are the expression of the Word and lead back to the Word, and through the Word to the Father.⁴²

The “logic” of Bonaventure’s divine language of exemplarity is the coincidence of opposites. The Father is expressed in the Word, and is united to the Word in the Spirit. These dynamic opposites in the Trinity issue in Creation which as finite expresses the opposite of the divine, but which coincides with the infinite in the exemplarity of the Word.⁴³ The entire created world, therefore, is an objectification of that one inner Word; it is like an external Word that gives public expression to the inner Word of God’s self-awareness.⁴⁴

The idea that Christ “perfects” Creation is related to the idea that the whole Creation is in some sense incarnational. The very existence of Creation reflects a potency within it for union with the divine because of its exemplary nature. While everything in Creation—from stars to protons to humans—bears an expressed relationship to God, there is a tendency in matter toward spirit. Bonaventure does not speak in evolutionary terms; however he considers the idea that matter itself is “spiritualized” and “cries out for perfection.”⁴⁵ The union of matter and spirit or the full spiritualization of matter is the basis of perfection. Christ is the one in whom matter

mutually complimentary opposites which cannot be formally reduced to one or the other; the Father is generative precisely because he is unbegotten. See Zachary Hayes, introduction to *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, vol. 3, *Works of Saint Bonaventure* 3, ed. George Marcil (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1979) 42 n. 51.

⁴¹ Ewert H. Cousins, “Language as Metaphysics in Bonaventure,” in *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan P. Beckmann, Ludger Honnefelder et al., *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 2, ed. Albert Zimmerman (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981) 949.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Cousins, “Language as Metaphysics” 950; “The Coincidence of Opposites in the Christology of Saint Bonaventure,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 40 (1971) 185–201; “Bonaventure and Contemporary Thought,” *Cord* 25 (1975) 68–78; *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 110–14.

⁴⁴ Hayes, *Hidden Center* 132, 146.

⁴⁵ Bonaventure, II *Sent.* d. 12, a. 1, q. 2, concl. (II, 297a). “Sic cum posset statim perficere materiam, maluit tamen ipsam sub quadam informitate et imperfectione facere, ut ex sua imperfectione quasi materia ad Deum clamaret, ut ipsam perficeret. Et hoc idem voluit per senarium dierum differre, ut in perfectione numeri simul ostenderetur perfectio universi.” See Kent Emery, “Reading the Word Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure’s Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues,” *Traditio* 39 (1983) 195.

is fully spiritualized in union with God. Christ, therefore, is the noble perfection of the universe. As Bonaventure stated:

Again, the natural tendency in matter is so ordered to the intellectual principles that generation would not be perfect without the union of the rational soul with the material body. By similar reasoning, therefore, we come to the conclusion that the highest and noblest perfection cannot exist in this world unless that nature in which the seminal principles are present, and that nature in which the intellectual principles are present, and that nature in which the ideal principles are present are simultaneously brought together in the unity of one person, as was done in the Incarnation of the Son of God.⁴⁶

For Bonaventure, all of Creation points to this ultimate expression of the Word in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fullest realization of the most noble potency of Creation which brings the created order to its completion.⁴⁷ As he asserted in his “Sermon on the Nativity”: “The perfection of the entire order is realized, for in that one being the unity of all reality is brought to consummation.”⁴⁸ What Bonaventure highlighted is the congruent relationship between the Word of God in whom the divine transcendent fecundity of divine ideas is expressed and the finite expression of the Word in Creation. Jesus in his humanity is the fullest expression of the Word in Creation, the one in whom the Word itself is revealed. It is precisely in his human existence, according to Bonaventure, as Word become flesh, in his life, death and Resurrection, that Jesus Christ perfects the universe because in his humanity he unites the opposites of divine and temporal, eternity and time, beginning and end.⁴⁹ In Christ, the coincidence of opposites, he stated, our humanity (and by virtue of our humanity all of Creation) reaches its perfection.⁵⁰

In the context of medieval theology, this is a rejection of the idea that God first created a world that had no relation to the figure of Christ, and that only after the fall of humanity did a “second decree” of God direct itself to the figure of a savior in the form of Christ.⁵¹ For Bonaventure, as for Scotus, a world without Christ is an incomplete world. The whole Creation is made for Christ.⁵² In short, the primary reason for the Incar-

⁴⁶ Bonaventure, *De reductione artium ad theologiam* 20 (V, 324b).

⁴⁷ Bonaventure, “Sermon II on the Nativity” 74; Hayes, *Hidden Center* 162.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum (Itin.)* 6.5 (V, 310).

⁵⁰ Bonaventure, *Itin.* 6.7 (V, 312).

⁵¹ Zachary Hayes, “Christology—Cosmology,” in *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism*, vol. 7, *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry: Foundations in History, Theology, and Spirituality*, ed. Anthony Carrozzo, Vincent Cushing, and Kenneth Himes (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1997) 48.

⁵² Although Bonaventure did not explicitly profess a doctrine of absolute predestination, he clearly viewed Christ as preeminent when he wrote: “Humanum

nation is related not to the “forgiveness of sin” but to the completion of Creation in its relationship to God.⁵³

PRIMACY AND SALVATION

The primacy of Christ as the fundamental reason for the Incarnation underscores a theocentric understanding of Incarnation that widens the meaning of salvation and places it in a cosmic context based on the *fullness* of the mystery of Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that this doctrine, although accepted within the Church’s theological tradition, is not included within the Church’s ecclesiocentric doctrine of salvation. The difference between a theocentric versus an ecclesiocentric understanding of salvation corresponds, I believe, to the fundamental understanding of Incarnation. While the Church clearly desires to safeguard “the mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God” and invites theologians to explore “how the positive elements of other religions may fall with the divine plan of salvation”⁵⁴ it is careful to protect the doctrine of Incarnation from theological speculation beyond the notion of sin and the saving work of Christ. The difficulty of the Church’s current position lies not in the formulation of Christ *per se* as the unique mediator and Redeemer but in its strict anthropocentrism which confines the mystery of Incarnation to sin and justification. John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor hominis* reflects this position when he states:

We do not forget even for a moment that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,

vero genus respectu incarnationis et nativitatis Christi non fuit ratio finaliter movens, sed quodam modo inducens. Non enim Christus ad nos finaliter ordinatur, sed nos finaliter ordinamur ad ipsum” (Bonaventure, III *Sent.* d. 32, q. 5, and 3 [III, 706]).

⁵³ It is important to distinguish in Bonaventure the *ratio* of incarnation and the significance of this event. It is clear from his writings that forgiveness of sins is integral to the work of Christ, and he devotes considerable importance to the cross of Christ as that which restores us to God. In the first *collatio* of his *Hexaëmeron* (*Hex.* 1, 13–38) he points out that Christ is the center of the universe but this center is the crucified Christ. One could interpret Bonaventure’s notion of primacy in terms of the crucified Christ, where suffering, death and transformation are integral to the completion of the universe. A contemporary understanding of the centrality of Christ crucified is offered by Holmes Rolston who writes: “There is a great divine ‘yes’ hidden behind and within every ‘no’ of crushing nature. . . . Long before humans arrived, the way of nature was already a *via dolorosa*. In that sense, the aura of the cross is cast backward across the whole global story, and it forever outlines the future” (“Kenosis and Nature,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001] 59–61).

⁵⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Declaration: ‘*Dominus Iesus*’ on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church” no. 9.

became our reconciliation with the Father. He it was, and he alone, who *satisfied* the Father's eternal love, that fatherhood that from the beginning found expression in creating the world, giving man all the riches of Creation, and making him "little less than God," in that he was created "in the image and after the likeness of God." He and he alone also *satisfied* that fatherhood of God and that love which man in a way rejected by breaking the first Covenant and the later covenants that God "again and again offered to man." The redemption of the world—this tremendous mystery of love in which Creation is renewed—is, at its deepest root, the fullness of *justice* in a human Heart—the Heart of the First-born Son—in order that it may become *justice* in the hearts of many human beings, predestined from eternity in the Firstborn Son to be children of God.⁵⁵

While the pope alludes to the primacy of Christ in this passage ("the Heart of the First-born Son"), the language of satisfaction and justice ultimately reveals his conviction that the Incarnation reflects a sin-centered and thus anthropocentric universe. Such an emphasis places the weight of Incarnation on fallen humanity rather than on God, highlighting the human need for God to become incarnate. The emphasis on a sin-centered universe, however, is at odds today with the new science. Evolutionary cosmologists point out that our universe is approximately 14 billion years old, and evolutionary biologists indicate that the human species is one of the most recent developments within the history of the universe. Although paleontologists continue to find new evidence of our earliest hominid ancestors, scientists believe that the first humans are no more than a few million years old and our nearest ancestors much less than that. In this respect, the insights of the new science have impelled scholars to seek a new understanding of original sin within an evolutionary universe.⁵⁶ As

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* no. 8 (emphasis added).

⁵⁶ In light of the new science, particularly evolutionary biology and cosmology, the concept of original sin is under revision. Theologians such as Zachary Hayes and John Haught describe sin within the context of an unfinished universe. Hayes, for example, writes: "Sin is not a mere infringement of a law extrinsic to our nature. It is a failure to realize the potentiality of our nature itself. If our nature is fundamentally a potentiality to expand, sin is a contraction." (Zachary Hayes, *A Window to the Divine: A Study of Christian Creation Theology* [Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan, 1997] 59-75, 93); John F. Haught, *God Beyond Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2000) 137-143. Marjorie Suchocki describes sin as "the unnecessary violation of the well-being of any aspect of creation . . . sin can be called a "rebellion against creation" (*The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* [New York: Continuum, 1994] 48). On the other hand, some scientists claim that evolutionary biology dispels the myth of Adam and Eve, since the genetic diversity of the present human population could not possibly have been funneled through a single couple. Daryl Dooming claims that "there is virtually no known human behavior that we call 'sin' that is not also found among nonhuman animals." Sin, therefore, in evolutionary terms is behavior that is directed to self-perpetuation in a world of finite resources; natural selection enforces selfish behavior as the price of survival and self-perpetuation in all living things. See Daryl

John Haught has noted: “an evolutionary understanding of life cannot be reconciled in a literal sense with the story of a primordial couple, Adam and Eve, rebelling against God in the Garden of Eden and passing down the consequences of their disobedience through our genetic history.”⁵⁷ Although the origin of sin is still highly speculative, scholars such as Haught view original sin as integral to an unfinished, imperfect universe where forces lead us away from participating in God’s creative cosmic aim of maximizing beauty in the universe.⁵⁸ This new view of sin corresponds to a new understanding of God at work in an evolutionary universe. For if sin is the reason for the Incarnation, as the Church maintains, is it possible that fourteen billion years of evolving life are totally unrelated to the mystery of Christ? Such a position, it seems to me, strips the theological search for a credible God today, a God who is the Creator of this evolutionary universe and possibly the Creator of life on other planets and other universes as well.

The doctrine of the primacy of Christ, as it is articulated within the Franciscan tradition, provides the basis for a Christology that is ecological, global and evolutionary. Because the doctrine locates the possibility of Incarnation within the Trinity of love, the *primacy* of Christ rests primarily on belief in God as self-communicative love. The relationship between Incarnation and Creation is the perfection of that divine self-communication in one other than God. As Hayes explains: “God creates so that Christ may come into existence. So that Christ may exist, there must be a human race. But a human race needs a place in which to live. So it is that, for both Bonaventure and Scotus, though for each in a distinctive way, a cosmos without Christ is a cosmos without its head. . . . It simply does not hold together.”⁵⁹

While Franciscan theologians such as Bonaventure and Scotus do not deny the redemptive work of the Incarnation, redemption is not the primary reason for the Incarnation. Bonaventure’s emphasis on the crucified Christ throughout his writings clearly indicates that redemption is integral to the completion of the world. However, such redemption is cosmic. In the cross, God reaches down to what is furthest from him and reconciles all things in his love.⁶⁰ For Bonaventure, the salvation of the cosmos, the process by which God brings to completion the world which God creates,

Dooming, “Evolution, Evil and Original Sin,” *America* 185 (November 12, 2001) 14–21; Patricia A. Williams, *Doing Without Adam and Eve: Sociobiology and Original Sin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

⁵⁷ Haught, *God Beyond Darwin* 137.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 138.

⁵⁹ Hayes, “Christ, Word of God and Exemplar” 13.

⁶⁰ Bonaventure, *Hex. 1, 22* (V, 333); Ilia Delio, *Crucified Love: Bonaventure’s Mysticism of the Crucified Christ* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan, 1998) 112–17.

is mediated through the salvation of humanity. However, salvation is larger than humanity alone. The issue for believers, as Hayes has stated, is not whether they can see the cosmos through the categories of sin and still believe in God. Rather, the issue is what kind of God they believe in.⁶¹ This idea points to a salvation of inclusion by which all things are summed up in the unity of Christ's love. Hayes observed:

What Jesus is about is more than helping us get rid of sin. In the final analysis, the issue of overcoming sin is a matter of overcoming all obstacles that stand in the way of the accomplishment of God's creative aim. And that aim is the fullest possible sharing of life and love between God and Creation. . . . This is what happened in Christ. . . . While redemption is the overcoming of sin, salvation is the completion of what God initiates in creating. Both of these are what we discover in the mystery of Christ.⁶²

For Bonaventure, as for Scotus, Christ's redemptive work relates to the overcoming of sin, but it does so in a way that brings God's creative action in the world to completion. This notion of redemption-completion, underscoring the primacy of Christ, allows for a broader view of salvation, one focused not on sin but on the primacy of love. In this respect, redemption is creative; it is that healing of the brokenness within humanity and Creation that enables the cosmic process to be completed, in which completion itself is a dynamic process of continuous Creation that is oriented toward the new Creation. Redemption, therefore, is not being "saved from" but rather being made "whole for" the healing and wholeness of God's Creation, and this wholeness is ultimately the transformation of created reality through the unitive power of God's creative love.⁶³

While it is the task of the Christian to bring to conscious awareness the reality of God's love and to live according to this love, the mystery of Christ is larger than the task of the Christian. The primacy of Christ, as formulated in the writings of Bonaventure and Scotus, implies that the world we know cannot contain the fullness of the mystery of Christ. For this mystery in its fullness is a mystery of the utter fecundity of divine goodness, the fullness of which embraces the whole Creation beyond what our human minds can grasp. The primacy of Christ, therefore, especially in light of the new science, demands our attention in light of the fullness of the mystery of Christ.

While much work is needed on this theme, I wish to offer some ways that the primacy of Christ can speak to a global and evolutionary world. First, the doctrine highlights a much broader relationship between humanity and the created world. Christ *is* the totality of all that exists. For Scotus and

⁶¹ Hayes, "Christology—Cosmology" 54.

⁶² Hayes, "Christ, Word of God and Exemplar" 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 12.

Bonaventure, the universe is the external embodiment of the inner Word of God. When Jesus comes as the Incarnation of God, there is a “perfect fit” because everything has been made to resemble Christ. Bonaventure described a “fittingness” between the divine Word and Creation, particularly the human person, in such a way that there is a congruency between Christ and Creation.⁶⁴ Everything in the created world—stars, trees, clouds—all are “christological” and express what the body of Christ is like because Christ is the Word through whom all things are made (see John 1:1).⁶⁵ Scotus’s idea that all of Creation is “christoform,” within his doctrine of *haecceitas*,⁶⁶ finds a parallel in Bonaventure’s “Sermon on the Resurrection.” Bonaventure writes that in his transfiguration Christ shares existence with all things: with the stones he shares existence; with plants he shares life; with animals he shares sensation; and with angels he shares intelligence. “In his human nature,” he stated, “Christ embraces something of every creature in himself.”⁶⁷ Bonaventure, like Scotus, therefore, sees the whole of Creation related to the mystery of Christ. Christ is not an abstract concept. Rather, Christ is the Word incarnate, crucified and glorified, and the body of this incarnate Word embraces the whole of Creation.⁶⁸ The primacy of Christ, therefore, allows us to speak of the entire Creation as “christoform” and points to the fact that the mystery of Christ

⁶⁴ On the notion of congruency in Bonaventure’s doctrine see Zachary Hayes, “The Meaning of *Convenientia* in the Metaphysics of St. Bonaventure,” *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974) 74–100; “Incarnation and Creation in St. Bonaventure” 309–29.

⁶⁵ *Resource Manual for the Study of Franciscan Christology*, ed. Kathleen Moffatt and Christa Marie Thompson (Washington: Franciscan Federation, 1998) 266.

⁶⁶ Scotus’s notion of essential “thisness” is known as the doctrine of *haecceitas* and relates to essential individuation. On the use of the term *haecceitas*, see Allan Wolter, “Scotus’s Individuation Theory,” in *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1990) 76 n. 26; Marilyn McCord Adams, *Duns Scotus’ Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Old Mission, 1992).

⁶⁷ Bonaventure, *Sermo I Dom. II in Quad.* (IX, 215–219); trans. Zachary Hayes, “Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity” 13.

⁶⁸ This notion is alluded to but never explicitly stated in the writings of Bonaventure and Scotus. However, it acquires a more explicit description in later writers such as Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Barth, although the latter did not pursue this idea. Both scholars speak of a “third nature” of Christ, pointing to a cosmological nature integral to the Christ mystery. For Teilhard, the third nature of Christ is integral to the cosmic Christ. According to this nature, the cosmic Christ is neither a principle of divinity nor a vague construct of humanity but the truly divine, God, united to the flesh and thus to the cosmos in the resurrected Jesus Christ. See James A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin* (London: Oxford University, 1982) 183–86. On Barth’s position see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1990) 279.

is essentially ecological. The hope of salvation is held out for the *entire* cosmos, without which the fullness of Christ would be incomplete.

Secondly, the primacy of Christ can help us come to a fuller understanding of the mystery of Christ in light of world religions. The reality of the other world religions remains a stumbling block for true unity beyond dialogue because of the particularity of Jesus Christ. For Bonaventure, the mystery of Christ is really a mystery of the coincidence of opposites. Christ is the one in whom all opposites coincide. In his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* he describes the ground of all being—God—as ultimate self-diffusive goodness which in its self-communication gives rise to a coincidence of opposites in the Trinity. He posits a dialectical structure within the Trinity that eventually manifests itself in the mystery of the person of Christ. He describes the Trinity of opposites as one whose “center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.”⁶⁹ He then proceeds to show how this divine coincidence of opposites is expressed in the unity of the person of Christ who is the center of the soul and center of the universe—the true metaphysical center.⁷⁰ Christ is the one in whom all opposites coincide so that in Christ our humanity reaches its perfection. As Bonaventure wrote:

For if an image is an expressed likeness, when our mind contemplates in Christ the Son of God, who is the image of the invisible God by nature, our humanity so wonderfully exalted, so ineffably united, when at the same time it sees united the first and the last, the highest and the lowest, the circumference and the center, the Alpha and the Omega, the caused and the cause, the Creator and the creature, that is, the book written within and without, it now reaches something perfect.⁷¹

To speak of Christ as the coincidence of opposites, that is, the Christ to whom all Creation is related, is to speak of the mystery of Christ in every person, religion, and culture—in their opposition. In order for Christ to exist, according to Bonaventure, there must be opposites. The fullness of the Christ mystery is the unity of opposites. Can we interpret this idea in

⁶⁹ Bonaventure, *Itin.* 5.8 (V, 310); trans. Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Major Life of Saint Francis* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 100.

⁷⁰ The description of Christ as the “metaphysical center” is described by Bonaventure in the first *collatio* of his *Hexaëmeron* (1.17 [V, 332]) where he writes: “For this reason he [Christ] is the tree of life, because through this center we return and are given life in the fountain of life . . . this is the metaphysical center that leads back and this is the sum total of our metaphysics: emanation, exemplarity, and consummation, to be illumined by spiritual rays and to return to the Most High.” Engl. trans. Jose de Vinck, *On the Six Days of Creation*, vol. 6, *Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild, 1966) 9; Zachary Hayes, “Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure,” *Journal of Religion* 58 (Supplement, 1978) 87–88.

⁷¹ Bonaventure, *Itin.* 6.7 (V, 312); trans. Cousins, *Bonaventure* 108–9.

view of world religions as expressions of the fullness of the mystery of Christ? Ewert Cousins claims that the speculative roots of this Christ mystery is the awareness of God's fecundity and the expression of fecundity in Creation. This fecundity is rooted in the mystery of the Father as *fontalis plenitudo* and is manifested in Christ who is the fullest expression of the Father in Creation. For Bonaventure, the divine fecundity achieves an unsurpassable expression in the Incarnation, since in Christ the eternal is expressed in time, the highest in the lowest, the beginning and the end. The notion of fullness and expression, according to Cousins, are linked with the logic of the coincidence of opposites and the concept of Christ the center. As he has shown:

The norm for fullness is the expression by way of the union of opposites through perfect centering. This norm is realized in an unsurpassable way in Christ, in whom opposites are joined as in a universal center. Hence, we can speak of the mystery of Christ expressing in an unsurpassable way the unsurpassable *fontalis plenitudo* of the Father. This means, then, that in its fullness the mystery of Christ touches all levels of the universe, all dimensions of human experience and the entire sweep of history. In Christ, the greatest *coincidentia oppositorum*, all things are drawn together as to their center.⁷²

Cousins is aware that the doctrine of Christ particularizes and differentiates. "In our current Christology," he noted, "it is Christ who separates Christianity from other religions."⁷³ Bonaventure's Christology, however, is both universalized and particularized. The cosmic significance of Christ is always related to the way in which the awareness of this principle has emerged in human experience, namely, through the history of Jesus, the preeminent, historical embodiment of the eternal, creative, and revelatory Word of God.⁷⁴ Jesus is the Christ. However, the fullness of this mystery must be expressed in the entire body of Christ. In Bonaventure's view, the fullness of Christ will not be totalizing sameness but the greatest coincidence of opposites in the unity of God's love.

Finally, the primacy of Christ enables us to consider the Incarnation in extraterrestrial terms. That is, we can begin to consider the mystery of Christ as a truly cosmic mystery by considering it as an intergalactic mystery. The Franciscan formulation of the primacy of Christ clearly has implications for a cosmic Christology that is much broader than what has been conceived in the past. The congruent relationship between Christ and

⁷² Ewert H. Cousins, "Bonaventure's Christology and Contemporary Ecumenism," in *Maestro di vita francescana e di sapienza cristiana*, ed. A. Pompei, vol. II (Rome: Pontificia Facoltà Teologica San Bonaventura, 1976) 349.

⁷³ Cousins, "Bonaventure and World Religions," in *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. III, ed. Commissio Internationalis Bonaventuriana (Grottaferrata: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1973) 704.

⁷⁴ Hayes, "Christology—Cosmology" 50.

Creation points to a relationship that is fundamentally grounded in the infinite self-communication of God as triune. Exploring this idea on an extraterrestrial scale means that Christ is first in God's intention to create wherever there is Creation since the Word, as the divine exemplar, is the basis for everything created. In this respect, Incarnation may not be limited to the planet earth and the mishaps of an intelligible species. The Franciscan theologians remind us that Incarnation is much more profound than sin in its relationship to God and Creation. Rather, Incarnation is a possibility wherever there is Creation and within that Creation, a fitting congruency between the Word of God and the species most able to express that Word of God in an intelligible way. Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarism in which the divine Word is the *ars Patris* or center of divine ideas suggests that any finite expression of these ideas in any possible world order (e.g., extraterrestrial life) will ultimately lead to Incarnation within that world order. The expression of the Word must come to perfect expression in one other than God if it is to manifest and express a perfect relationship to God. Similarly, Bonaventure's metaphysical structure of the coincidence of opposites means that the total Christ mystery may not only be realized on the terrestrial level but the fullness of this mystery may include every possible Incarnation in every world order. The totality of opposites, held in union as opposites by the power of God's love, underscores the fullness of the mystery of Christ.

As long as one confines the mystery of Christ to the sinful condition of humanity, one thwarts the *fullness* of this mystery in its relationship to other religions, to the cosmos, and to the possibility of extraterrestrial life. Jesus Christ is indeed the way, the truth, and the life but this life is grounded in the source of all life, the God of self-communicative love. Until one recognizes that Incarnation and Creation are integrally bound, one remains indebted to the myth of Adam and Eve as the reason for the Incarnation. The gift of Darwin to theology, as Haught states, is that we can envision God acting in a new way in Creation, a way that allows Creation to unfold slowly and unpredictably. If God is indeed the ground of this universe and God is love, then it is love and not sin that is the center of the universe. Love, according to Bonaventure and Scotus, is the reason for the Incarnation, and it is the fullness of love that underscores the mystery of Christ. In an evolutionary universe, love knows no time or limits, it simply grows and attracts until all things are united in a common center, the center named Christ. It is not unreasonable to say that the development of the fullness of love in Christ the center may take millions of years to come.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine of the primacy of Christ is one of the oldest doctrines in the Christian tradition, with its New Testament foundation in the Pauline let-

ters and its cosmic setting in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Although many Eastern writers viewed the Incarnation through a cosmic lens, the development of Christology in the West focused more on the juridical and moral implications of the Incarnation due to the masterful formulation of the satisfaction theory by Anselm and support of this theory by Thomas Aquinas. As a result, Western Christology, which marks the official teaching of the Church, maintains a strict correlation between the Incarnation, sin, and redemption. Despite the fact that satisfaction theology rose to prominence in the Middle Ages, it was not entirely accepted, particularly among Franciscan theologians who viewed the Incarnation as a theocentric possibility rather than an anthropocentric need. As a result, scholars such as Bonaventure and Scotus articulated a much more profound understanding of the Incarnation that provided a framework for understanding the significance of humanity and Creation in relation to a God who is essentially love (1 John 3:8). Although it is Scotus who provided a clear and explicit articulation of the primacy of Christ, Bonaventure described a theology of primacy that underscores the mystery of the fullness of Christ. Together, these theologians provided an understanding of the Incarnation that is broad, dynamic, and inclusive.

As we face a radically new understanding of the universe today, one that is ancient, evolutionary, and expanding, it is apparent that our Christology is no longer reasonable in light of our experience of the world. As Hayes has written: "Christian theology no longer has an effective cosmology that enables believers to relate to the world in its physical character in a way that is consistent with their religious symbols."⁷⁵ My present study has attempted to retrieve the doctrine of the primacy of Christ within the Franciscan tradition, a doctrine that is rich in depth and profound in scope, one that is utterly significant for a world that is global, ecological, and evolutionary. I have suggested that retrieval of this doctrine can shed new light on the mystery of Christ in view of world religions, and the meaning of Christ in view of extra-terrestrial life. A retrieval of this doctrine could, with further examination, impart new light on the mystery of Christ as absolute Savior without necessitating the need for an exclusive Christology or for relativizing Jesus Christ. In short, the primacy of Christ tradition underscores a positive relationship between Creation and Incarnation in such a way that love and not sin is the reason for Christ, a love which binds together all things in the unity of God.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 42.