

The Mystery of Christ in You: Christology, Anthropology,
and Participation in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology
in the Divinity School of Duke University

2022

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The subject of Christological approaches to theological anthropology has been a renewed area of study for biblical and theological scholarship in recent years. While Marc Cortez (Wheaton College) has been leading much of the contemporary dialogue, the subject is not necessarily new. In some ways, this renewed approach takes its cue from Karl Barth, who responded to the problem of modernist visions of anthropology that were primarily concerned with the human person and their faculties apart from doctrines of God and Christ. Much of this Christological emphasis appears in Barth's constructive views, examining the human person in reference to Christ as the fullest depiction and example of the human person. Thinking about theological anthropology from the lens of Christology, however, is not a modern invention; examples of thinkers who develop their reflections on what it means to be human in relationship to Christ's humanity are extensive. In this thesis, I will argue that John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas provide a systematically coherent and mutually beneficial theology of the *imago Dei* that thoughtfully addresses the believer's creation in the image of the Trinity and their growing participation in the image through their graced pursuit of Christ, who is their exemplar and their end. Together, Wesley and Aquinas demonstrate a Christ-centered vision of theological anthropology that would be intelligible to one another and should be intelligible and applicable to contemporary audiences. The goal of this thesis

will be to demonstrate the relationship between anthropology and Christology in the theological writings of John Wesley and St. Thomas Aquinas, to explore avenues of further ecumenical dialogue on personhood, and to investigate how these two thinkers imagine the mystery of Christ in the believer who bears the image of God.

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1. Introduction

The subject of Christological approaches to theological anthropology has been a renewed area of study for biblical and theological scholarship in recent years. While Marc Cortez (Wheaton College) has been leading much of the contemporary dialogue, the subject is not necessarily new. In some ways, this renewed approach takes its cue from Karl Barth, who responded to the problem of modernist visions of anthropology that were primarily concerned with the human person and their faculties apart from doctrines of God and Christ. Much of this Christological emphasis appears in Barth's constructive views, examining the human person in reference to Christ as the fullest depiction and example of the human person. Thinking about theological anthropology from the lens of Christology, however, is not a modern invention; examples of thinkers who develop their reflections on what it means to be human in relationship to Christ's humanity are extensive.

The goal of this thesis will be to examine the relationship between anthropology and Christology in the theological writings of John Wesley and St. Thomas Aquinas to explore avenues of further ecumenical dialogue on personhood and chiefly to investigate how these two thinkers imagine the mystery of Christ in the believer who bears the image of God. Preceding this study is the work of Edgardo Colón-Emeric on *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, as well as such theologians as D. Stephen Long and Kenneth Loyer, who engage John Wesley in dialogue with Thomas Aquinas.

Naturally, the nature of the subject matter in Colón-Emeric's valuable study of the two figures establishes the significant groundwork for the particular emphasis on Christological anthropology in this thesis since the subject of Christian perfection closely correlates with the Christian's maturity in the image. With new sources on the subject matter and a renewed resurgence in the present, the current study seems like a fitting one to bring these two theologians into constructive conversation once again. Given that not much work has been produced on Wesley in this popular regard, and with more research adding to the legitimacy and intelligibility of his thought, the opportunity seems ripe. Wesley and Aquinas share a great deal in their writings on Christian perfection, and it now appears that Wesley and Aquinas may share much in the discussion of Christological anthropology.

In this thesis, I will argue that John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas provide a systematically coherent and mutually beneficial theology of the *imago Dei* that thoughtfully addresses the believer's creation in the image of the Trinity and their growing participation in the image through their graced pursuit of Christ, who is their exemplar and their end. Together, Wesley and Aquinas demonstrate a Christ-centered vision of theological anthropology that would be intelligible to one another and should be intelligible and applicable to contemporary audiences.

1.1 A Tale of Two Theologians

The goal of this thesis was to examine the relationship between anthropology and Christology in the theological writings of John Wesley and St. Thomas Aquinas to explore avenues of further ecumenical dialogue on personhood and chiefly to investigate how these two thinkers imagine the mystery of Christ in the believer who bears the image of God. Preceding this study is the work of Edgardo Colón-Emeric on *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, as well as such theologians as D. Stephen Long and Kenneth Loyer, who engage John Wesley in dialogue with Thomas Aquinas. Naturally, the nature of the subject matter in Colón-Emeric's valuable study of the two figures sets a significant amount of groundwork for the particular emphasis on Christological anthropology in this thesis. With Christological approaches to thinking about theological anthropology well established in 20th-century theology and a renewed resurgence in the present, the current study seems like a fitting one to bring these two into constructive conversation. Given that not much work has been produced on Wesley in this popular regard, and with more research adding to the legitimacy and intelligibility of his thought, the opportunity seemed ripe. Wesley and Aquinas share a great deal in their writings on Christian perfection, and it now appears that Wesley and Aquinas may share much in the discussion of Christological anthropology.

1.1.1 John Wesley: Practical Theologian and Spiritual Mentor

Known for starting the Methodist movement, John Wesley is often regarded as a practical theologian who was mostly concerned with the oversight and equipping of pastors. Wesley was also known as an author, editor, and publisher, bearing the responsibility to communicate mindfully and effectively to his audiences. Nevertheless, Wesley was also a man on a mission: his calling led him away from the study halls of Oxford to the American frontiers and Methodist houses. Much of Wesley's thought and theology, thus, takes the shape of a practical theology: he meant for his works to be applicable to his ministry settings. His concern with practicality does not mean that Wesley did not engage critically or intelligibly, but that he engaged in the work of translating truths to identify their applicability. His ability to examine these core Christian truths—and, in some cases, demonstrate thoughts before his time—makes him a compelling individual to study.

1.1.2 Saint Thomas Aquinas: Systematic Synthesizer and Spiritual Master

While the grand narratives of Saint Thomas Aquinas situate him among those in the ivory towers of theology, depicting him as a rational theologian and one who synthesizes Aristotelian thought with Christian truth, these popular depictions may be missing the mark in thinking about Aquinas' core commitments. Marie-Dominique Chenu, for instance, depicts Aquinas as a master *in sacra pagina*, where the title "master" denotes a commitment to "the entire effort of bearing witness to the Word of God"

through “reading (a text as foundation), arguing (a question or a problem), and preaching.”¹ In part, this profile of Thomas stems from the new evangelical movement of Dominican friars in young Thomas’ world, focusing on capturing the ways of Jesus — especially as it relates to poverty.² Seeing Aquinas as a spiritual master, Chenu highlights the centrality of Scripture as “the living Word” in Thomas’ writings. Of the *Summa*, Chenu avers, “despite its technical methodology, can only be understood properly as a living emanation from the *pagina sacra* (the sacred page of the Bible).”³ Throughout, Aquinas appears as a theologian of the Word.

1.1.3 Pursuing Dialogue

Comparing Thomas’ theology of Christian perfection to John Wesley’s Methodist House metaphor, Colón-Emeric suggests his readers think about Thomas’ thought as a cathedral.⁴ This figurative cue comes from Wesley’s depiction of the core Methodist doctrines — repentance, faith, and holiness — represented through his metaphor of a house: “The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door;

1 Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, trans. Paul Philbert, O.P. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 21. On the reading of Aquinas as a spiritual master, and the opportunities for this reading of Aquinas in ecumenical dialogues, see Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 70.

2 Cp. *ST* III.40. The musings Aquinas puts forth concerning Christ’s way of life in the articles of Question 40 – “Whether Christ should have associated with men, or led a solitary life?” “Whether it was becoming that Christ should lead an austere life in this world?” “Whether Christ should have led a life of poverty in this world?” “Whether Christ conformed his conduct to the law?” – appears to have a practical aim based on the friars’ mode of ministry.

3 Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, p. 21.

4 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 5.

the third, religion itself.”⁵ Colón-Emeric avers, “The image captures both a sense of movement, a Wesleyan way of theology, and the sense of discrete structural elements, specific doctrines.”⁶ The simplicity of Wesley’s house and the ornate qualities of Aquinas’ cathedral present different architectural elements; yet, the two seem to share a theological vision that takes the role of Christian perfection seriously.

Chesterton captures a similar contrast when he examines the relationship between St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thomas Aquinas. Attempting to draw out the commitments and beliefs of each figure, Chesterton avers, “You can make a sketch of St. Francis: you could only make a plan of St. Thomas, like the plan of a labyrinthine city.”⁷ The profiles that Chesterton accentuates of the two saints’ work and the character descriptions he brings forward in his paradigmatic chapter on the two draw out similar points of contrast between John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas in this study. While the two differ much in personality and legacy, Chesterton draws attention to a similar impulse that brings the two saints into meaningful dialogue and an impulse that directs the ecumenical approach of this study. Showcasing the immediately noticeable differences between St. Francis and St. Thomas, Chesterton pivots to attend to their remarkable, though paradoxical, unity: “the great fact of medieval history is that these two great men were doing the same great work; one in the study and the other in the

5 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 5. Quoting WJW 9:227, “The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained.”

6 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 5.

7 G. K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Image Books, 2014), p. 1.

street.”⁸ The essential point of unity that Chesterton insists on drawing out for his readers is the motif that Aquinas, like Francis, is concerned with vital spiritual matters but functioning in a different register and a different context. On the essential points of unity, Chesterton avers, “The Thomist movement in metaphysics, like the Franciscan movement in morals and manners, was an enlargement and a liberation, it was emphatically a growth of Christian theology from within; it was emphatically *not* a shrinking of Christian theology under heathen or even human influences.”⁹ A similar remark may suffice in bringing Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley into dialogue; the two represent a similar vision in their approach to the task of theology but vary in the way each articulates this task, their personalities, and their audiences. Yet, Long notes that Wesley and Aquinas share a similar vocation: they both express their interest in forming preachers.¹⁰ Their joint attention to an elevation of Scripture, too, captures the theocentric and formative spirit of their work, and each figure’s contribution to the church’s flourishing is without a doubt. While Aquinas and Wesley speak in different registers, there is room for the two seemingly different theologians to engage in fruitful conversation as they engage in the vital matters of the Christian faith.

8 G. K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 10.

9 G. K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, p. 20-21.

10 D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley’s Moral Theology*, p. 173. Long adds, “Their theology was done toward that end,” and posits, “If theology is contextual, then Aquinas and Wesley shared much more of a practical context within which theology was given shape than either one of them share with us.”

Moreover, D. Stephen Long recognizes another dimension that suits bringing Wesley and Aquinas into helpful dialogue. According to Long, Wesley's moral theology is something before his time: the intricacies of Wesley's thought could stand alongside other critical thinkers. Kenneth Loyer demonstrates as much as he engages Wesley and Aquinas in dialogue around special topics in pneumatology in his work, *God's Love Through the Spirit*. While Loyer's focus insists on capturing a rich pneumatology from the Angelic Doctor's writings, he critically draws out the inner logic of Wesley's thought and pairs these insights with careful readings from Aquinas' *Summa*—one of the reasons for a rich engagement between the two authors. Nevertheless, as Loyer notes, and in good company, Wesley's focus as a practical theologian does inhibit him from exploring the intricacies of the Christian faith to the extent that Aquinas exhibits. As much is apparent in Wesley's conception of liberty as he writes about the image of God, where his free and somewhat uncritical reception of philosophical literature seems to cause problems with his anthropology.¹¹ Nevertheless, the disposition of these thinkers and their similarities in seeking to educate ministers might suggest more commonalities than their popular differences might suggest.

11 See Chapter Two: John Wesley's Theological Anthropology. On Wesley's concept of liberty in his sermon, "What is Man?" Wesley writes with a Pascalian inflection—and one that Outler notes as likely coming from Wesley's reading of Joseph Addison. The concept of liberty in Wesley could also emerge from his familiarity with John Milton, bearing similar resonances with the English poet. Concerning the problem presented in the text, Edgardo Colón-Emeric draws attention to Wesley's "antinomian" approach to liberty, where the human's "indifference" before God in this passage creates a palpable tension with Wesley's otherwise commitment to the human's proper desire for God. The essential point for the present discussion is to note that Wesley's awareness of the myriad implications of philosophical positions is less extensive, so a slippage of language is understandable.

1.2 Review of the Literature

In recent years, Marc Cortez has been a notable advocate for a Christological turn in discussing theological anthropology. In brief, Jesus Christ ought to be our model for considering what it means to be human.¹² His position is well-stated, mindful of historical patterns and Scriptural approaches for speaking about the image of God in human beings, and appears profitable to the larger conversation on theological anthropology as he offers a constructive approach to the discipline. However, it may help to add three preliminary comments on the *Christological* approach for the sake of framing its possible difficulties: (1) articulating the life of Christ has been an ongoing challenge in the Christian tradition, especially in considering how we ought to think of Christ's divinity united his humanity and the implications of those views; (2) inviting theologians to consider a Christological turn *could* imply a lack of coherence between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Christ as if the two *topoi* clash;¹³ and (3) there is a noticeable difference between the life of Christ and the lives we live, especially in terms of communion and participation with the Holy Spirit.

¹² John Behr has noted a similar disposition, adding that several conversations on theological anthropology focus on the body-soul analogy and, perhaps inadvertently, underemphasize the contributions that might emerge from examining what Christ teaches us about being human. This approach will be part of the heart behind his presentation at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary later this week at the "Exploring Personhood" Conference (Feb. 10-11, 2022).

¹³ The impulse behind this concern comes from Karl Rahner, who had criticized persons like Thomas Aquinas for divorcing their Christology from their Trinitarian theology. Dominic Legge argues that this claim was uncharacteristic of Thomas' theology in his work, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Considering some of these reservations, Dominic Legge's work, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, may provide a helpful backdrop in expanding the conversation that Cortez wishes to continue. Legge argues that "For St Thomas, Christology is intrinsically Trinitarian."¹⁴ He then explores the depth of Aquinas' Christology—and expels myths related to some misreadings of Aquinas' Christology—by examining how Aquinas thought is consistently rooted in the "divine missions" (i.e., divine processions) in Trinitarian theology. Legge concludes his study by inviting further scholarship on how Aquinas' Trinitarian Christology permeates other areas of inquiry that exceed the scope of his current project. One of these avenues, which may hold value for this study, includes the extent to which Aquinas' Trinitarian Christology informs his teachings on grace, virtue, and participation in the *Summa Theologiae*. It would appear that Thomas's Trinitarian Christology offers a depth and richness that would benefit a Wesleyan understanding of the Christian life¹⁵ and ongoing discussions concerning theological anthropology.

Another author of notable mention is Edgardo Colón-Emeric, whose work, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, places the two theologians in conversation to serve the larger purpose of engaging in the ecumenical dialogue

¹⁴ Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Here, I am thinking of Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic of *traditioning*. While Wesley writes extensively on the Christian life guided by God's grace, his systematic theology—especially related to Christology and Trinity—can be lacking. Edgardo Colón-Emeric uses the two buildings to describe the two: Wesley's theology is like a house, whereas Aquinas' theology is like a cathedral. Still, essential lessons can flow from both sides. *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 5.

between the Catholic and Methodist traditions. Naturally, his treatment of Christian perfection deals thoroughly with matters of the Christian life in both authors—including their anthropological and Christological convictions. For these contributions alone, his work is well worth engaging. Moreover, Colón-Emeric's argument improves upon some unsettled nuances that appear in earlier interpreters of Wesley and imagines what a well-suited dialogue between two different-mannered theologians entails. This thesis will aim to be distinct by exploring questions in systematics with particular attention to what it looks like to bear the image of God and its relationship to Christology. One of the acknowledgments in Wesleyan scholarship is that John Wesley is concerned with offering a practical theology for practical purposes. On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas is concerned with addressing systematic matters that also serve a practical end. By focusing on select anthropological interests in conjunction with the Christologies of Aquinas and Wesley, this thesis aims to expand on some of these existing conversations with a unique vantage point. Nevertheless, this text is integral to the project at hand as it shares several similar underlying aims. In speaking about the creature's *telos*, the subject of Christian perfection is close at hand for Wesley and Aquinas.

Aside from Colón-Emeric's ecumenical dialogue, D. Stephen Long and Kenneth Loyer engage Wesley and Aquinas in meaningful conversation. In *John Wesley's Moral Theology*, Long situates Wesley as an inheritor of medieval moral theology. Kenneth Loyer adds his contribution to conversations between Wesley and Aquinas. Loyer

acknowledges a “pneumatological deficit” in contemporary Methodist theology where, if unaided by an outside source (such as Thomas Aquinas), the Wesleyan tradition will be “imperiled.”¹⁶ Specifically, Loyer is concerned with two trends: his first concern pertains to the grammar of grace, and the second regards an ill understanding of the Spirit’s work in the world. On the first, Loyer acknowledges a pattern whereby contemporary Methodists do not reference Trinity or Holy Spirit in speaking about the work of grace. Accordingly, Loyer sees a potential Trinitarian anchor point in Thomas’ theology. An implicit Trinitarian theology seems to exist in Wesley, according to Loyer, but the paradigm is one that needs elucidation.¹⁷ The second aspect of this pneumatological deficit is a lack of awareness of the Spirit’s work in the life of the believer. Loyer sees popular notions of the Spirit’s work as being concerned with what happens in the ordering of politics, etc. His book, *God’s Love through the Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley*, attempts to recover a rich pneumatology that is latent in Wesley’s theology by inviting Aquinas to draw more explicit connections for Wesleyans to draw upon moving forward.

16 Henry H. Knight III, “God’s Love through the Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley, by Kenneth M. Loyer,” in *Pneuma* 40, 1-2 (2018): 240-242.

17 Henry H. Knight III, “God’s Love through the Holy Spirit,” 241. Essentially, the framework is present, but the explication is not.

1.3 Methodology

Concerning methodology, this thesis will focus on primary source literature, including selections from Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley. Of course, with a surplus of literature concerning these two figures and the remarkable extent of their thoughts, it will also be pertinent to engage with notable commentators who provide helpful paradigms and insights for interpreting Wesley and Aquinas well. To say something completely new about Wesley and Aquinas and their respective theologies would be challenging to undertake, would risk missing the point, and might harm the integrity due to these thinkers. Thus, the methodology seeks to identify critical points in their thought that will be helpful for grounding and—in some cases—advancing their views concerning the relationship between Christology and anthropology. The study is meant to be dialogical by design. Engaging with Thomas Aquinas, this section of the discussion will examine the matter of grace, virtue, and participation in the *Summa Theologiae* with references to the life of Christ in the *Tertia Pars*. Moreover, examining Thomas' anthropology requires attuning to the structural nuances already displayed in the *Prima Pars* since these constitute recurring design patterns and establish significant motifs that Aquinas revisits throughout the *Summa*. In Wesley, the intent will be to examine focal texts on bearing the image of God—including *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, selections from Wesley's works, and some documents available through the Rubenstein Library concerning Wesley's theological anthropology.

To bring out the pertinent dimensions of their theologies, this thesis will engage with contemporary sources on Wesley, Aquinas, and theological anthropology to provide focus and fair representation. Some of these recent studies have been important for stimulating new reflections on the well-trod subject matter. From a brief literature survey, persons like Dominic Legge and Joseph Wawrykow offer significant insights on thinking theologically with Aquinas. Likewise, Randy Maddox and Kenneth Collins continue to be notable figures for exploring the theology of John Wesley. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, D. Stephen Long, and Kenneth Loyer are beneficial figures in putting Wesley and Aquinas in conversation, offering helpful clarifications about the theologies of each that preceding scholars may have overlooked. Additionally, some contemporary discussions on theological anthropology are helpful to bear in mind and may offer valuable discussion points in some scenarios; however, a thorough treatment of current conversations in theological anthropology may exceed this project's scope. In initiating the conversation, Marc Cortez's recent works on Christian anthropology may provide a helpful point of departure for embarking on a tour of Aquinas and Wesley's thoughts—especially since Cortez is interested in the approach to Christological anthropology. Joshua Farris also offers valuable considerations for thinking about theological anthropology across traditions, adding clarity of language in producing an ecumenical dialogue on Christian anthropology through his “introductory” text.

1.4 Overview of Argument

Considering the relationship between anthropology and Christology between Wesley and Aquinas raises the complicated question of structure: what is the best way to proceed? In the following chapters, this thesis begins with a chapter on theological anthropology for each author, followed by a chapter putting the two thinkers in dialogue. The same applies to Wesley and Aquinas' insights regarding Christology: a chapter will be devoted to Wesley's practical Christology, Aquinas' Trinitarian Christology, and a synthesis of their insights. A final chapter will offer a conclusion based on the discussion, highlighting key themes and advances. The intent to begin with anthropology is purposeful insofar as commentators on Wesley often address his anthropology before engaging in his Christology; meanwhile, Aquinas himself situates his anthropology prior to his Christology for pedagogical reasons. Additionally, it will prove helpful to allow the anthropologies of these theologians to guide the conversation since it is the subject at hand. Finally, each discussion category will begin with Wesley's reflections since he generally offers a simple and pragmatic approach in contrast to Aquinas' magisterial systematic theology, whose nuances can sometimes be challenging to bridge comparisons in Wesley.

1.5 Study Design

Simply put, this study seeks to examine the relationship between Christology and Anthropology. To account for a flourishing and responsible theological anthropology, this study will also attempt to uncover a robust account of God's grace in the writings of Wesley and Aquinas. For this study, grace appears to be a vital link for two reasons. First, grace appears as a significant unifying theme in the works of Aquinas and Wesley in general. Second, grace bridges the conversation between Christology and anthropology. Regarding grace, we may speak about the work that makes our reception of grace possible, and we may also speak of how persons experience grace in contrast to how Christ experiences grace. Thus, a careful examination of the gift of grace will be essential for this project. The Christian's participation in the image, as it will appear, is grounded in one's reception of and growth in grace.

2. John Wesley's Theological Anthropology

2.1 Introduction

Approaching the subject of theological anthropology is a difficult task. Different theologians come to different conclusions about what it means to be human, how to work with philosophical frameworks and categories, and how to square one's contemplative musings with the witness of Scripture. In Wesley, the difficulty does appear. Nevertheless, Wesley provides a picture of what it means to be a human who bears the image of God, though some of his reflections require some finer tuning. Altogether, Wesley offers a practical approach to thinking about theological anthropology through a Trinitarian and Christological lens.¹ The Trinitarian dimensions come to the surface as Wesley considers the three-fold image of God in humans: these include the natural image, the moral image, and the political image. The Christological aspects of the image especially emerge as Wesley considers the perfection of the moral

1 In speaking about Wesley's "practical approach," it may help to note that Wesley will speak about "practical divinity" as characteristic of his theology. While Colón-Emeric notes that Wesley does not define what he means by "practical divinity," Wesley does offer a description that might add clarity. The standing definition, then, is that practical divinity is "all agreeable to the oracles of God; as is all practical, unmixed with controversy of any kind, and all intelligible to plain men; such as is not superficial, but going down to the depth, and describing the height, of Christianity; and yet not mystical, not obscure to any of those who are experienced in the ways of God. I have also particularly endeavored to preserve a consistency throughout, that no part might contradict any other; but all conspire together to make 'the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.'" Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 4, footnote 20, quoting WW 14:222. Colón-Emeric also points to Frank Baker, "Practical Divinity—John Wesley's Doctrinal Agenda for Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (1987): 7-16; Randy Maddox, "John Wesley: Practical Theologian?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23, no. 1-2 (1988): 122-47.

image, where the Christian puts on Christ's character. More will follow in the space below. Like others, Wesley employs a classic "two-dimensional anthropology" that depicts the human as an embodied soul.² The significance of embodiment in eternal perspective is present in Wesley's thought, especially as it pertains to the persistence of a person after their earthly death and the resurrection of the glorified body. However, as Colón-Emeric avers, "as important as the body is for Wesley, it is the soul as a spiritual reality that is capable of bearing the image of God who is Spirit."³ This emphasis on the soul and other related matters grounds Wesley's anthropology as a practical anthropology that locates the human person within the grand Scriptural narrative of creation, fall, and redemption; these correspond to the broader categories of Adamic image, the corrupted image, and the renewed image in Wesley's thought. Finally, this chapter considers Christian affectivity as a potential means of knowledge that the believer inherits through their participation in the Holy Spirit.

2.2 The Image in Wesley's Writings

What is the significance of the image of God in Wesley's imagination? Colón-Emeric asserts that Wesley's teaching on the image of God is central to Wesley's anthropology and soteriology and that the soul holds the utmost dignity in Wesley's

² Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 18. Cf. Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 71.

³ Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 18.

imagination as “a spiritual reality that is capable of bearing the image of God who is Spirit.”⁴ Additionally, Wesley affirms that to be made in the image of God is to be made in the image of the Trinity.⁵ If the human bears a Trinitarian image, how does this unfold in Wesley’s thinking and teaching? In Wesley’s writings, he speaks of the image of God in terms of the natural image, the moral image, and the political image. Speaking of the image in God’s creating work, Wesley writes,

“And God,” the three-one God, “said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality, a spiritual being endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having “dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth”; but chiefly in his *moral image*, which according to the Apostle, is “righteousness and true holiness.”⁶

In the original created state (Adamic perfection), humans possess this three-fold image in its fullness. To speak of the image in Wesley’s thought is to talk about “an incorruptible picture of the God of glory” who possesses “infinitely more value than the sun, moon, and stars put together.”⁷ Additionally, Wesley speaks of the human image in analogical terms; he recognizes the difference between “Christian perfection” and

4 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 18.

5 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 18.

6 John Wesley, WJW 2:188, “The New Birth,” emphasis in original; in Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 19.

7 John Wesley, WJW 3:460, “What is Man?” Quoted in Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 18.

“divine perfection.” Nevertheless, the original image was intact. However, the first humans’ rebellion shattered the perfect Adamic image—though this act of disobedience did not *destroy* the image. The teaching of total depravity rings true for Wesley in that humans are utterly dead to God and dead to sin apart from divine grace, and the extent of this fallen image goes far in Wesley’s imagination. Unlike some renditions of “total depravity,” however, the fall does not obliterate the image in Wesley’s estimation.⁸ The image is corrupted but not destroyed. Before turning to the fallen image, it will help to examine the three-fold image in its original created capacity.

2.2.1 The Natural Image

The natural image accounts for the functionality of the individual and includes the person’s intellectual capacity. With this expression of the image, Wesley highlights three corresponding faculties: understanding, will, and liberty.⁹ First, Colón-Emeric summarizes Adam’s understanding, noting that “His intellect did not err in distinguishing truth from falsehood or in drawing the right inferences from given

8 Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 82. In Maddox’s contrast, he notes how the intent of Reformed theologians meant “to affirm that the corruption of sin decisively affects every faculty of the human person, leaving us incapable of living in God’s likeness—or even truly desiring to—through our debilitated powers alone.” Maddox continues, noting that this definition tended to be rejected outside of Protestant audiences though Wesley would adhere to this sort of understanding. Maddox writes, “While not always using the specific term, he repeatedly affirmed the point that Inbeing Sin’s corruption pervades every human faculty and power, leaving us utterly unable to save ourselves.” Cf. Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 29; Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 26.

9 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 19.

premises.”¹⁰ It was a “perfection in its kind;”¹¹ however, Adam was able to be deceived despite his perfect understanding. The perfection of the will, then, describes a perfection of love that “filled [Adam’s] inmost being and was the principle of all his actions.”¹² Here, Colón-Emeric notes how Wesley uses the language of tempers and affections to describe the orientation of the will, noting that Adam was simply guided by love in his created state. Finally, Wesley speaks about the perfection of liberty in the natural image. Here, an apparent problem persists in Wesley’s thought: he describes Adam’s liberty as being guided by understanding and truth, but he also describes this liberty as “an entire indifference, either to keep or change his first estate: it was left to himself what he would do.”¹³ Colón-Emeric draws attention to the nominalist slippage in Wesley’s thought and the problems it creates for his anthropology.¹⁴ The focus passage in Wesley reads as such:

I have not only what is termed a “liberty of contradiction,” a power to do or not to do, but what is termed a “liberty of contrariety,” a power to act one way or the contrary. To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind... And although I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because

10 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 19.

11 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 19. Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 27. Concerning this act of deception, Collins notes that “the nature of human sin” in the minds of many theologians can be reduced to pride. In Wesley, however, Collins identifies the “irreducible essence” of sin as unbelief. Thus, Collins avers, “A lack of faith in God, then, the desire to be independent, is the true foundation for the subsequent evils of pride and self-will.

12 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 20.

13 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 20.

14 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 20-21.

of the corruption of my nature, yet through the grace of God assisting me I have a power to choose and do good as well as evil.¹⁵

According to Wesley's exposition in his essay, "What is Man?" the believer's freedom is an "indifference" before God; the indifference suggests that the believer is on their own.

So, what is at stake in the question of "liberty" or freedom in Wesley's anthropology?

One of the critical elements at stake is Wesley's theology of grace. To say that the believer is "indifferent" undermines the belief that God works in the heart of the believer, reorienting their desires to Him.

In theological studies, Farris notes that "freedom" usually appears in two conversational registers. There is the freedom that a person entertains in sin and accompanies discussions of theodicy, and there is a freedom that characterizes a person who has been redeemed that appears in the context of salvation and holiness.¹⁶ Part of the question to Wesley, then, is the extent of his rootedness in modernity and the nominalist philosophies that often accompany this period? Albert Outler's introductory note to Wesley's "What is Man?" (Sermon 103) notes Wesley's interest in an essay by Joseph Addison on Psalm 8:3-4, which discusses figures such as Huygens and Pascal and matters of being and space.¹⁷ According to Outler, several of these resonances

15 WJW 4:24, "What is Man?" in Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 20.

16 Joshua Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, p. 124. Farris claims that most speak in the latter in speaking about freedom, and that this mode of discussing freedom leans into conversing about the believer's participation with God.

17 John Wesley, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, vol. III, *Sermons* III 71-114, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 454. Outler draws attention to another sermon titled "What is

appear in Wesley's sermon. Recognizing the shortcomings in Wesley's reflections on liberty in this sermon, D. Stephen Long avers:

In fact, Wesley adopted a variety of positions from these various schools that appear from our vantage point at the end of modernity as contradictory. He did not seem aware of these thinkers' significant differences. I think there are three reasons for this. First, Wesley lived through these debates, which began in the seventeenth and continued into the eighteenth century. The positions may not have been as clearly discernible in the midst of the discussion as they may appear to be now, although even now it is difficult if not impossible to trace clear lines of similarity and difference among the competing schools. Second, Wesley would not have had access to the materials we do in order to sort through these various positions. Third, despite his counsel to others, Wesley was not an attentive philosopher. He did not examine his sources carefully. And this does not make him a pragmatist, it makes him on occasion careless in the use of his sources.¹⁸

In all, Wesley's perception of liberty in his sermon is problematic; however, it is not irreparable. Colón-Emeric posits, "Wesley would surely want to say that perfect liberty is found not in a state of indifference before God and the devil but beyond such indifference in actually choosing God over the devil."¹⁹

Altogether, these faculties of the natural image are not simply descriptive of the person's operations but also serve a preparatory function in Wesley's imagination; the

Man?" that Wesley authors a year later; however, it may be worth noting that neither sermon appears in Wesley's oral preaching. Of note, the contrast between finitude and infinitude and the language of "contrariety" that Wesley explores would appear to be common features of Pascal's anthropology. Of additional passing interest is that Wesley apparently held a long-time interest in theological anthropology; however, many of his written reflections do not appear until his later life.

18 D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology*, p. 45

19 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21.

faculties of the natural image order the person's capacity for receiving God. Wesley writes, "The crown of all perfections of the natural image and the whole purpose of their institution is to render the human capable of God, capable of attaining the likeness of God, or as Wesley calls it, capable of attaining God's moral image."²⁰

The motif of the believer's capacity for God (*capax Dei*) becomes an essential tenet in Wesley's thought in distinguishing humans from other created beings—since God specially designs humans to receive His grace in a manner distinct from other creatures.²¹ Moreover, this personal capacity is not a static but dynamic quality. As Colón-Emeric avers, "This capacity for God is not a static endowment; rather, it is a vocation that if fulfilled truly makes us temporal transcripts of the eternal Trinity, but if forsaken leads to eternal death."²² As such, the dynamic life that takes place as the believer responds to God aptly describes the doctrine of Christian *participation*. Through this dynamic activity, the person exercises the moral image.

2.2.2 The Moral Image

If the natural image serves the purpose of making the human being capable of God, then the moral image describes the human being participating in that image.

According to Wesley, the moral image is the image of holiness. In the paradisaical state,

20 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21.

21 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21

22 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21.

Adam exemplifies the perfect moral image through his knowledge, love, obedience, and enjoyment of God, and his experience of “God’s indwelling in a profound way.”²³

Speaking of the capacity for God, Colón-Emeric draws attention to how the activity of the moral image elicits the capacity for believers to serve as “temporal transcripts of the eternal Trinity” through participation in the image.²⁴ This capacity, in scriptural terms, refers to the law written on a person’s heart—and this is “the law of love.”²⁵ Colón-Emeric avers,

The doctrine of the law is central to John Wesley’s understanding of the moral image. The moral law, as Collins avers, ‘highlights the *similarities* between the nature of God and the nature of humanity as originally created.’ The law that was written on human and angelic nature *participates* in the law of God.²⁶

Likewise, Wesley writes,

The law of God (speaking after the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature; yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High. It is the delight and wonder of the cherubim and seraphim and all the company of heaven, and the glory and joy of every wise believer, every well-instructed child upon earth.²⁷

23 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21.

24 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21.

25 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21; see footnote 67; cp. with von Balthasar on the word inscribed upon the heart of man in *A Theological Anthropology*. Colón-Emeric notes that Wesley’s explanation is a Christological one.

26 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21. Emphasis mine. Cp. to *analogia* in St. Thomas.

27 WJW 2:10, “Original Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” quoted in *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 21. At a later point in this essay, I will return to the motif of God’s eternal mind in thinking about Aquinas’ anthropology. Aquinas’ model of the Trinity pulls from Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, as a unity

For Wesley, there are significant anthropological implications for how he speaks of the divine law in human beings, and—in the example above—Wesley demonstrates this in a Christological register.²⁸ Adding clarification, Colón-Emeric adds that the relationship between the law and its Christological end are not “identical” but “strongly related.” The discussion to follow in subsequent chapters will likewise address the role of analogy in theological anthropology. As Colón-Emeric notes of Wesley and Christian tradition, for instance, “the relation between divine perfection and human perfection is analogical; Christian perfection is both like and unlike divine perfection. [...] Human perfection, of which Christian perfection is a subset, is always a relative perfection and is dependent upon God’s.”²⁹ Nevertheless, the most immediate implication concerning Adam’s perfection in the moral image is that he fully loved God and was fully perfect in holy love before God. In brief, to experience the moral image is to participate in the capacity for God present in human beings, which leads to the moral life with the Spirit.

2.2.3 The Political Image

Finally, the political image highlights the human’s role in caring for relationships and exercising dominion. For clarification, Wesley’s use of the term “political” in

of mind, intellect, and will. One essayist in Aquinas the Augustinian, John O’Callaghan, claims that Aquinas “loses his mind” (referring to Augustine’s analogy) in re-thinking key aspects of his thought.

28 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 22.

29 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 15.

describing the third aspect of the *imago Dei* differs from its current semantic use.³⁰ When Wesley uses “political” in reference to the image, he is referring to the human being’s exercise of stewardship and dominion. In the original state of creation, “Humans were a kind of sacrament for creation that allowed the cosmos to fulfill its *telos* of serving and loving the creator through the human.”³¹ Wesley writes, “Man was God’s vice-regent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world; and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator and the whole brute creation.”³² According to Wesley scholars, the political image is one of the most underdeveloped aspects of Wesley’s theology. As Colón-Emeric writes, there is room for reflection in contemporary dialogue on the opportunities for thinking about the political image based on Wesley’s framework. Maddox posits the possibility of thinking about the political image in ecological ethics, while Weber considers the potential for this expression of the image in political engagement. Likewise, there is still room to advance the conversation on this expression of the image.

30 Wesley is not using the term “political” to describe governmental structures, or the persons engagement in civic life. Wesley is alluding to the believer’s participation with God as co-rulers, who mirror God’s rule by exercising stewardship over the lower orders of creation. See more below.

31 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 23.

32 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 22; quoting WJW 2:440, “The General Deliverance.”

To this point, much of the conversation has focused on speaking about the image in its original created capacities in Adamic perfection. Through the fall, however, Wesley acknowledges a corruption of the image.

2.3 The Corrupted Image and Its Renewal

Just as Wesley reflects on the dimensions of the *imago Dei* in Adam's perfection, he also provides a picture of the three-fold image through the lens of its corruption through the fall. This expression of the image examines how Christians may practically think about the image of God in this life. On the natural image, Collins notes how the image is "greatly marred" but not "utterly obliterated" in Wesley's thought.³³ Under the corrupted image, humans experience error, ignorance in understanding, passions overcoming the will, and prideful vices distorting liberty.³⁴ As Collins then notes, the political image is "greatly obscured." With the first humans being mediatory figures of God's blessing to creation, the fall resulted in the humans' original gift of dominion and stewardship as being received as a "curse." Creation is affected by Adam's transgression. Wesley writes, "when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off."³⁵ Finally, Wesley believed that the moral image was completely lost through the effects of the fall; Adam lost his

33 Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 29.

34 Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 29-30.

35 Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 30. See Outler, *Sermons 2:442*, "The General Deliverance"

righteousness and holiness. Collins avers, “whereas Wesley taught that the natural and political images were polluted or lost in part, he affirmed, on the other hand, that the moral image was *totally* lost.”³⁶ The tempers and affections once characterized by love were now depraved ones. This corruption of the moral image was the “chief consequence of the fall.”³⁷ In all, the human’s natural condition of total depravity forms a *triplex concupiscentia*: the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life.³⁸ Thus, the perfections that once characterized Adam’s perfect existence in relationship with God are not fully attainable by the believer; however, some aspects of this image are restored in this life. “In this life,” Colón-Emeric avers, “Christian perfection cannot mean Adamic perfection:” these aspects of the image of God will not be fully restored until glorification.³⁹

So, what does Wesley mean when he speaks of Christian perfection? And what aspects of the image of God can be renewed in this life? “To be made perfect, to be saved to the uttermost,” Colón-Emeric summarizes, “means to be holy as God is holy,” and this renewal in holiness is a renewal of the moral image.⁴⁰ This restoration, the experience of freedom from sin, entails a freedom from “evil tempers, evils thoughts,

36 Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 30.

37 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 26.

38 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 26-27.

39 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 24.

40 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 25.

and even from wanderings in prayer.”⁴¹ Essentially, the perfection of the Christian is simply a perfection in love. This perfection in love consists of loving God, loving neighbor, and walking in obedience.⁴²

2.4 An Augustinian Psychology

Speaking of the pivotal developments in Wesley’s anthropological thought, Colón-Emeric draws attention to how Wesley’s adoption of an Augustinian psychology in his treatment of the holy tempers “prompted a radical shift in Wesley’s theology and practice.”⁴³ The radical shift was a transition from Wesley’s moral psychology of “habituated rational control” to an Augustinian framework that focused on the centrality of love: “humans are created to love God with a love of enjoyment (*frui*) and to love creatures with a love of use (*uti*),” where the first is the goal and the second is the means to the goal.⁴⁴ Under this Augustinian understanding, the problem chiefly arises through the disorder of a person’s loves – and the solution is the “infusion of God’s own love.” Examining the extent of this shift in Wesley’s thought, Colón-Emeric notices a reversal in how Wesley approaches his pursuit of growth in holiness: “whereas his earlier piety had sought for certainty of his love for God, he now sought evidence of

41 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 27.

42 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 30-39.

43 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 37.

44 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 37.

God's love for him."⁴⁵ Such a change accordingly aligns with a shift from a Platonic psychology, where humans are moved to action by reason, to an empiricist psychology, where humans are moved through being "experientially affected."⁴⁶ Altogether, Wesley's transition to focus on the tempers is vital for understanding how Wesley imagines the believer's renewal in the moral image in this life — that is, through Christian perfection. As Wesley adopts a different framework for thinking about holiness, Wesley moves to consider how the believer appears before God.

Expanding upon these notions of Wesley's empiricist moral psychology, Loyer offers some important notes concerning Wesley's distinct inclinations within this camp of thought. Loyer adds,

While Wesley readily asserted that knowledge must come through the senses, he differed from the empiricists of his era on the specific issue of the knowledge of God. The prevailing opinion among Wesley's contemporaries was that human beings could only attain knowledge of God by inference from their experience of the world or by assent to the external testimony of Scripture, as expressed by Peter Browne in his *Limits of Human Understanding*.⁴⁷

What results from this picture is Wesley's allowance for an indirect knowledge of the Holy Spirit in his moral psychology — "or, technically, knowledge that was *supra* nature." In his attempts to navigate how the human being can know God, Wesley

45 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 37.

46 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 37. On the allusion to experiential affectivity in Wesley's thought, Colón-Emeric is drawing upon Randy Maddox, "A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's Heart Religion," in *Heart Religion in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*, ed. Richard Steele (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001), pp. 3-31.

47 Kenneth Loyer, *God's Love Through the Spirit*, pp. 36-37.

makes use of the “special spiritual senses” to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and in the world.⁴⁸ If the physical senses are perceivable through the five senses, then the spiritual sense are perceivable through the soul. Having probed the Wesley brothers’ articulation of the spiritual senses, Loyer summarizes how the Christian experiences the knowledge of God:

Human beings come to know God through the vibrant, heartfelt faith acquired in their experience of the God whose saving actions are recounted in Scripture and summarized in creedal form. Knowledge of God is therefore gained through direct experience of the living God by means of the spiritual senses, to the end that the Christian life— as participation in God— expresses something of God’s own holiness and love.⁴⁹

Christians directly and dynamically know and participate in God’s holiness and love through the spiritual senses at work in the soul. As Loyer continues, he connects Wesley’s teaching of perfect love to human knowledge, where perfect love is essentially grounded one’s engagement in the spiritual senses.⁵⁰

With Wesley’s theology of the heart, he maps out well the experiential dimensions of the Christian who grows in grace. In Wesley’s *A Plain Account of Christian*

48 Kenneth Loyer, *God’s Love Through the Spirit*, pp. 37. For further reference, Loyer appeals to Wesley’s description of the spiritual senses in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*: “It is necessary that you have the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, emphatically so called; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to be “the evidence of things not seen” [Heb 11:1] as your bodily senses are of visible things; to be the avenues to the invisible world, to discern spiritual objects, and to furnish you with ideas of what the outward “eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard” [1 Cor 2:9, Is 64:4].” Commenting, Loyer draws attention to how Wesley speaks of the spiritual senses analogically in relation to the physical senses.

49 Kenneth Loyer, *God’s Love Through the Spirit*, p. 44.

50 Kenneth Loyer, *God’s Love Through the Spirit*, p. 45.

Perfection, he not only expresses what the perfection of love looks like in a believer but Wesley maps out how to identify this love taking root in one's life. This phenomenological dimension of grace—in the spiritual senses—is worth noting. Maddox summarizes Wesley's vision of the Christian life where love is its essence. He recalls Wesley's definition of Christian Perfection as "the humble, gentle, patient, love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers, words, and actions."⁵¹ Maddox summarizes Wesley's teaching of the love of God in the Christian life as such:

God's love is shed abroad in the lives of all Christians, awakening their responsive love for God and others. But this love is weak, sporadic, and offset by contrary affections in new believers. In the lives of the entirely sanctified Wesley maintained that it rules "to the point that there is no mixture of any contrary affections—all is peace and harmony."⁵²

As the Christian grows in God's grace, the "responsive love" in the believer takes on an ordering quality. To Wesley, this love begins as something that is present but unsteady; however, as the love takes root in the believer's life, it is *ruling*.⁵³ As mentioned above, the restoration of the image of God for Wesley consists of restoring the believer's

51 John Wesley. Quoted in Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 187.

52 Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 187. Maddox is quoting from Sermon 83, "On Patience," §10, *Works* 3:176.

53 Randy Maddox emphasizes the point that "love is not only said to be present, it is ruling." *Responsible Grace*, p. 187. A similar emphasis appears in Clapper's "Orthokardia" in his conclusion. Cp. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, Book XII, where Augustine speaks about the fragmentary nature of time and reality as a marker of sin's presence.

capacity for God. The question, sure enough, returns in considering the extent to which the Christian can expect to participate in this capacity apart from heavenly perfection.⁵⁴

One of the matters up for debate, says Maddox, is the extent to which a person receives the Spirit's witness of entire sanctification (analogous to the Spirit's witness in the Christian's justification). On this note, Maddox contends, "Importantly, the parallel between the Spirit's Witness to justification and entire sanctification carries over even to Wesley's eventual concession that psychological certainty is not a prerequisite to the Spirit's work in sanctification."⁵⁵

2.5 "Orthokardia"

Perhaps Gregory Clapper's abbreviated treatise on John Wesley's heart religion may help elucidate what is at stake within the tension Maddox addresses and add additional substance to Loyer's reflections on the spiritual senses. Considering the various opinions, Maddox sees the Spirit's witness as a logical extension of Wesley's teaching on assurance, which implicitly counters the possibility of a person claiming Christian perfection for themselves in their own imaginative capacities. In Clapper's

54 To risk skipping ahead, cp. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 108: "The more one has the virtue of charity, the more one participates in the light of glory. The more one participates in the light of glory, the more this light elevates our intellect and the more perfectly we see God. The reason for this correspondence between charity and vision is that charity increases desire for the thing known, in this case God, and the more we desire union with God, the more we are in some way (*quodammodo*) rendered able and fit (*aptum et paratum*) for this union."

55 Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 189.

assessment, the “affections” of the Christian—so long as their object is Christ and their life bears good fruits—can serve as legitimate means of knowing.

Recovering the logic of Wesley’s “heart religion,” Clapper presents the case that John Wesley’s *orthokardia* (i.e., knowledge and witness from the heart) is not merely a set of feelings but an authentic way of knowing.⁵⁶ With Wesley’s voluminous references to the heart, Clapper insists, “Wesley cannot make rational and theological sense of Christianity without using the vocabulary of the heart.”⁵⁷ Wesley’s theological vision, writes Clapper, “is irreducibly tied to his vision of a renewed heart and the expressions of such a heart—the religious ‘affections.’”⁵⁸ Continuing his assessment of Wesley’s heart religion, Clapper draws attention to the issue Maddox raises above concerning the believer’s ability to receive the Spirit’s witness of Christian perfection in their heart: while the heart justified by faith receives the Spirit’s witness in the word of Scripture, no explicit mention is made concerning the Spirit’s witness of Christian perfection.

Building to this point, Clapper begins his essay by providing an overview of Wesley’s

56 Clapper coins the term *orthokardia* as an expression to use for Wesley’s approach, as distinct from orthodoxy (right teaching) and orthopraxis (right practice) yet belonging in conversation with these two categories. “*Orthokardia*,” p. 259. Cp. Loyer’s argument above.

57 Gregory Clapper, “*Orthokardia*,” in *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition*, p. 259. The language Clapper has in mind refers to the heart, the affections, and the tempers. Cp. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theological Anthropology* (chapter nine, “Man as the Language of God; chapter ten, “Christ as the Language of God”). Von Balthasar speaks about a lowercase “word” written on lives of human beings as an imprint of the divine image and as a means of having a knowledge of God. While Clapper is not using “vocabulary” in the sense that von Balthasar is thinking about language, there seems to be a similar approach of an inbred knowledge (or quality) that enables the Christian’s genuine knowledge and witness of the divine. Still to be explored is how Wesley and Aquinas think about spiritual “vision.” Clapper’s “*Orthokardia*” provides a basis for thinking about the believer’s knowledge of God as a legitimate means of knowing.

58 Gregory Clapper, “*Orthokardia*,” p. 259.

heart religion, moves to explore Wesley's language of "affections" in distinction from the modern speech of the "emotions" and the connotation of each, and concludes by addressing the current dialogues on emotional theory.

In speaking of Wesley's language in modern dialogue, from speaking of affections of the heart to the emotions of the heart, Clapper points to the work of Thomas Dixon, who argues that "the 'emotions' came into being as a distinct psychological category in the nineteenth century, replacing such terms as appetites, passions, sentiments, and affections;" thus, "it is clear that the typical modern psychological understanding of 'emotion' can distort what we might think Wesley meant by the 'affections.'"⁵⁹ The change, according to Dixon, enters into conversation with Hume, who reduces affection—and the classical paradigm of will and reason—as mere impulses that appear alongside "learned associations" and "impressions" from past experiences.⁶⁰ Clapper continues to describe the challenge of presenting Wesley's theology of the heart with present dialogue as such:

The difference in terminology between "emotion" talk and "affections and passions" talk, then, was more than a mere verbal difference, more than an updating of quaint language. The realities that these words seek to identify are quite different from one another. As Dixon puts it, the verbal difference led to "a

59 The quoted material is Clapper's summary. "Orthokardia," p. 263. Clapper's summary of Dixon's analysis also covers Augustine and Aquinas on the "affections" (pp. 263-264), summarizing their positions as follows: "these foundationally influential Western theologians made a critical distinction between sinful movements of the soul (which would target the wrong objects and grow passions) and the virtuous and potentially godly movements" (p. 264).

60 Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," pp. 264-265.

difference in doctrine." "Emotions" from the nineteenth century on came to be associated with positivist and reductionist theories, where they are seen as involuntary—" mini-agents in their own right, rather than movements or actions of a will or self[,] ... non-cognitive states ... to be contrasted with intellectual judgments and thoughts[,] ... aggregates reducible to physical feelings: they were "worked up" from bodily sensations." At its most extreme, this view sees all "emotions" as epiphenomena, pseudorealities that have no significance in themselves.⁶¹

As a result of the change in terminology and so forth, understanding the intended meaning of Wesley's religion of the heart requires some intentional excavation from the rubble of modern psychological understandings. However, Clapper also notes that the current field of psychology is revisiting these pre-scientific understandings of emotion that dialogue well with Wesley's understanding of the "affections."⁶²

Drawing on the work of Martha Nussbaum as an example of the field's trajectory, Clapper notes how Wesley's theology can be intelligible to contemporary audiences. According to Nussbaum, emotions are "essential elements of intelligence," and these emotions serve as means for helping human beings discern what is valuable.⁶³ Essentially, Nussbaum seeks to elucidate how emotions are intelligible—that emotions can serve as a legitimate means of knowing. Clapper focuses on Nussbaum's estimation that "emotions are cognitive evaluations."⁶⁴ In sum, emotions are "*about something*" (i.e., it has an object), "the object is an intentional object," "emotions embody beliefs

61 Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," p. 265; editing marks and ellipses belong to the author.

62 Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," pp. 265.

63 Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," p. 266.

64 Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," p. 266.

about the object—often very complex beliefs,” and finally, “the object of the emotion is seen as *important* for some role it plays in the person’s own life.”⁶⁵ Altogether, Nussbaum’s analysis aims to demonstrate how emotions are intelligible in contrast to the Humean view, where emotions are illogical and unreliable.⁶⁶ Essentially, it is fitting to speak of affectivity as a positive means of knowing. With these grounds established, Clapper turns to John Wesley’s teachings on Christian assurance as it relates to justification and Christian perfection.

Noted by Maddox above, one point of contention in Wesleyan theological conversation concerns whether the Christian may receive the witness of the Spirit regarding Christian Perfection in the same sense that the Spirit attests to the work of Justification in the believer’s life. Put more directly, does the Spirit offer assurance to the believer in Christian perfection in a similar fashion to how the Spirit supplies assurance to the new believer in justification? Wesley’s attention to the role of the heart in discerning one’s assurance as a child of God, as Clapper notes, appears especially in Wesley’s sermons on assurance (e.g., “Witness of the Spirit I,” “Witness of the Spirit II,” and “Witness of our Own Spirit”): all of which address persons who have convinced themselves that they possess assurance when they do not.⁶⁷ Essentially, Wesley affirms

65 Gregory Clapper, “Orthokardia,” pp. 267-268.

66 The capacity for the emotions to receive and process information adds to Nussbaum to the “cognitive” view of the emotions. Gregory Clapper, “Orthokardia,” p. 268.

67 Gregory Clapper, “Orthokardia,” pp. 269.

that a direct witness of the Spirit is evident in assurance; however, the Spirit's witness necessarily accompanies the fruit of the Spirit in a person's life (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

We are then simple of heart when the eye of our mind is singly fixed on God; when in all things we aim at God alone, as our God, our portion, our strength, our happiness, our exceeding great reward, our all in time and eternity. This is simplicity: when a steady view, a single intention of promoting his glory, of doing and suffering his blessed will, runs through our whole soul, fills all our heart, and is the constant spring of all our thoughts, desires, and purposes.⁶⁸

In speaking about Christian perfection, Wesley talks about the uniqueness of the doctrine to the Methodist tradition. In his sermon, "On Perfection" (Sermon 76), Wesley equates the experience of receiving Christian perfection with receiving the mind of Christ: "the whole disposition of his mind, all his affections, all his tempers, both towards God and man. Now, it is certain that as there was no evil affection in him, so no good affection was wanting."⁶⁹ While Clapper does not explicitly address Maddox's question about the legitimacy of Wesley's view, being unsubstantiated by Scripture, his acute attention to the validity of the emotions may suggest the affirmative—the workings in the soul might suggest a similar expression of assurance. While this subjective "experience" may not appeal to non-empirical audiences as necessarily authoritative, the evidence of the witness in the discernment of its object and the accompanying fruit of the witness provides some substantial grounds for thinking

68 Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," p. 271, quoting John Wesley, Sermon 12, p. 307.

69 Sermon #76, "On Perfection," quoted in Gregory Clapper, "Orthokardia," p. 272.

analogically about the witness of the Spirit to Christian Perfection in the life of the believer.

Clapper's work demonstrates how reimagining "emotion" can deepen one's appreciation of Wesley's views on the Christian assurance in the doctrines of Justification and Christian Perfection and establish grounds for the intellectual integrity of *orthokardia* in John Wesley's teaching. The work put forth by Clapper expands the notion of the spiritual senses in the soul, while also bringing Wesley's thought into contemporary dialogue. With the growing legitimacy of heart knowledge as a genuine form of knowing, John Wesley's attempt to understand the believer's participation in the Spirit appears to have a greater audience and may provide a basis for theological dialogue on legitimate forms of spiritual knowledge moving forward.

2.6 Conclusion

Noted in the introduction above, Wesley provides a Christo-centric theological anthropology that bears the three-fold imprint of the Triune God through a pragmatic lens. Surveying his writings on the "image of God" in human beings, Wesley's anthropology takes special note of the theological and scriptural nuances of what it means to bear the image and participate in the image. Humans naturally bear the image of God by virtue of being human, and this image persists in the threefold functions of understanding, will, and liberty. Together, these qualities of the natural image make possible the *capax Dei*—the capacity to receive God—in the moral image. Through

participation in the moral image, Christians participate in the likeness of Christ as they embrace the call to become holy (1 Pet. 1:16). The final aspect of the threefold image, according to Wesley, is the political image. This function describes the believers' participation with God in exercising dominion and stewardship over the lower orders of creation. In some cases, Wesley's reflections on the image are not as balanced as a formal theological treatise would require, and some minor issues appear in his incorporation of philosophical texts; however, Wesley's suppositions in his sermons and works demonstrate a depth of insight that flows out of a mature well of theological reflection.

Additionally, Wesley's anthropology shows some indication of being worthwhile for contemporary discussion. In his work, Clapper recognizes significant areas to advance Wesley's notion of a "heart religion" by taking seriously the language of "emotions," where affectivity is a legitimate source of knowledge. Clapper's insights speak to the more extensive discussion of what it means to participate with God—especially considering the effects of the fall, where human understanding cannot know in its fullness until glorification. If the person can know in part, then how might this knowledge appear in the Christian life? This turn emerges through Wesley's encounter with the Moravians, who introduce an "Augustinian psychology" that captures the inner workings of love—a pivotal shift from his previous approach to Christian piety. Likewise, Loyer's exploration of the spiritual senses that emerge out of Wesley's

awakening to an Augustinian moral psychology provide a solid theological framework for considering one's participation in the Spirit and growth in love. The Christian's pursuit of holiness is a crucial feature that essentially defines Wesley's systematic thought regarding the human person.

3. Thomas Aquinas' Anthropology

3.1 Focusing on the Summa

We now turn to the theological anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas. For the scope of this chapter, I will primarily focus on St. Thomas' views of the human person as they appear in his *Summa Theologiae* for three reasons. First, an exhaustive exploration of Thomas' ideas on the person would exceed the scope of this thesis. Thomas is a prolific writer; to track all the iterations of Thomas' anthropology would be fitting for a larger project than the one at hand. With this limitation comes an advantage: Aquinas' mature stream of thought in the *Summa* provides a fitting case study for how Aquinas is thinking about the human person. Secondly, by focusing on the *Summa* and attuning to the design patterns within the text, the reader may be better disposed to observe how Thomas strategically places his understanding of the person within the architectural framework of his more extensive systematic thought.¹ Like other vital matters Aquinas addresses in the *Summa*, his thoughts perpetually unfold throughout his argument, often over a series of questions. He seldom returns to the focused distinctions he parses in previous questions, thus keeping redundancy to a minimum. A crucial conceptual

¹ Here, I am speaking of the *exitus-reditus* structure that characterizes the *Summa* as well as the way Thomas builds his treatment of the human person from starting with God in his beatitude to our capacity for beatitude to our participation in the beatitudes. On the *exitus-reditus* see Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20), pp. 12-13, 16, 33-36, etc. On the juxtaposition of psycho-philosophical definitions of the person and Thomas' theological reflections in the structure of the *Prima Pars*, see Denys Turner, "The Human Person," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae*, ed. Philip McCoster and Denys Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 168-180.

framework that Thomas employs in his overarching order of the *Summa* is an *exitus-reditus* metaphysic describing the procession of the created order from God and return to God.² The structural placement of the human being within this *exitus-reditus* schema of his theological text likewise carries significance for how Aquinas imagines the human being proceeding from God (*exitus*) and returning to God (*reditus*) through Christ.³ Several Aquinas scholars recognize the significance of the *exitus-reditus* pattern as an interpretive key and logical thread for reading the whole of Aquinas' project. Third, the *Summa* provides a mature exposition on Thomas' understanding of the human person.⁴ In many cases, the *Summa* represents the most mature rendition of Thomas' thoughts. For these reasons, a careful examination of the *Summa* should suffice for the clarity, consistency, and the service of bringing Aquinas into conversation with Wesley.

2 This is a philosophical one, but it becomes a key theological concept in Aquinas' imagination.

3 This approach to reading the *Summa* has become more conventional in recent Aquinas scholarship. Jean Porter recognizes this mark of the structure in reference to how Aquinas' develops his moral theology in the middle portions of the *Summa*. In Dominic Legge's published dissertation, he sees the internal *exitus-reditus* structure working alongside—and integral to understanding—Thomas' theology of the divine missions in the Godhead. Additionally, Dauphinas notes the importance of situating the human person within the discussion of *exitus-reditus* as it relates to the believer's reception of grace and their growth in grace. In these ways, seeing the human person within the larger context of God's grand narrative (creation, fall, and recreation) helps situate the present conversation on the human person. Several other scholars now recognize the significance of the *exitus-reditus* pattern as an interpretive key and logical thread for reading the whole of Aquinas' project.

4 John P. O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*: A Test Case for St. Thomas's Augustinianism," in *Aquinas the Augustinian* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), pp. 100-144. His essay examines three texts representing key movements within Aquinas' career: his Commentary on the Sentences during his education, his early career work in *De veritate*, and his mature work in the *Summa*. See also Michael A. Dauphinais, "*Imago Dei* in Aquinas" (*The Thomist*, Catholic University of America Press, 1999, pp. 241-267). To better turn to the systematic points of inquiry and the ecumenical implications of thinking with Thomas Aquinas, I will be focusing on Aquinas' mature reflections in the *Summa* (as noted in the introduction) with some reference to the Augustinian elements in his thought.

So, what can we expect to find in the *Summa*? Borrowing Colón-Emeric's metaphor, if the last chapter offers a tour of Wesley's Methodist house of theology, then this chapter examines Aquinas' ornate cathedral.⁵ While Wesley offers a condensed anthropology in the limited scope of his writing and the simplicity of his reflection, Aquinas offers an anthropology whose dense subject matter and implications reappear throughout the *Summa*. Because Thomas' account of the human persons is so dense and expansive, this chapter will offer a selective analysis of Thomas' anthropology in the *Summa* in the key points of his argument. In identifying how Aquinas perceives the image of God in the human person, this chapter will also examine how the rhetorical structure of Aquinas' argument helps bring his teachings on the *imago Dei* into focus. As it will soon become apparent, Aquinas addresses some important front matters leading up to his teaching on the image and likeness of God in the human person in Question 93 of the *Prima Pars*. These structural matters help situate how Aquinas imagines the human person in their relationship to God and will help avoid a misreading or faulty representation of Aquinas's thought. The key motifs that will appear in this chapter include the *exitus-reditus* schema that orders Thomas' *Summa*, the significance of analogy (*analogia*) in speaking about this relationship, and the orders of knowing and loving as paradigmatic realities for speaking about the human as a unique creature in God's image. In addition to these motifs, this section will also bring forward a picture of

⁵ Edgardo Colón Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 5-6.

Thomas that reframes the stereotypical view of Aquinas as an Aristotelian synthesizer; rather, we will consider Aquinas as a scriptural theologian who freely plays with the boundaries of philosophy in favor of theology and works within the bounds of Christian tradition to bring vitality to historic truths.

3.2 Discerning Thomas' Trajectory in the *Prima Pars*

Engaging in a tour of Aquinas' ornate cathedral, Thomas provides an intricate way of thinking about the human person that exceeds the scope of Wesley's "practical divinity" approach. So intricate, Thomas' discussion of the image of God in the *Prima Pars* appears within a much larger discussion about creaturehood in Question 75 to 102 where Thomas describes "the human creature as processing forth from God."⁶ Leading up to Aquinas' reflections on creaturely perfection, moreover, Thomas explores the aspects of God's perfection and the perfection of the universe. Thomas puts forward his most noteworthy position on the perfection of the human person in the maxim, *duplex est perfectio*, referring to the perfections of *form* and *operation*. Within this formulation, the perfection of form points towards the perfection of nature, while the perfection of operation demonstrates how the perfection of the image is "perfected by the twin

⁶ Michael A. Dauphinais, "Imago Dei in Aquinas," p. 245; see footnote 15. Dauphinais observes that "Aquinas's placement of the discussion of the image of God is closer to that employed by John Damascene in *De fide orthodoxa*, in which the treatment of the human creature follows that of God Three and One." Thomas' placement of anthropology within his discussion of Trinity appears to be a deliberate rhetorical choice.

operations of knowing and loving.”⁷ In all, Colón-Emeric summarizes Aquinas’ argument in the *Summa* by noting how “The perfection of God, the universe, and the first perfection of the image correspond to the *Prima Pars*, the second perfection to the *Secunda Pars*, and the way of perfection, Jesus Christ, to the *Tertia Pars*.”⁸ From examining the collective form of Aquinas’ work and its motifs concerning the believer’s spiritual formation, Jean-Pierre Torrell posits that Aquinas’ demonstrates his prowess as a “spiritual master” in addition to being an academic theologian.⁹

One of the larger strands of thought in the background for Aquinas is his *exitus-reditus* cosmology. In this framework that characterizes the flow of the *Summa*, all things from God in the Word’s creative work and all things returning to Holy Trinity through the Son. Thus, the structure of Aquinas’ *Summa* is integral and correlative to his overarching theological commitments. The Christology of Thomas *Summa* is not an afterthought but a pervasive current in his theological work that reaches its culmination in the final movements of his intentional meditations. The *Prima Pars* outline the procession from God in creation. The middle sections (*Prima Secunda* and *Secunda Secundae*) include references to life in the Spirit and practical allusions to what it looks like to participate in Christ’s life. These are embedded in Thomas’ answers to questions

7 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 70.

8 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 70.

9 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 70. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master*, vol. 2, translated by Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

on the moral life and elsewhere. And the *Tertia Pars* examines the return through Christ—a theme that emerges from the pages of Scripture. Most of Aquinas’ discussion on the human person is considered in Question 93 of the *Prima Pars*, following a lengthy discussion on God and then divine perfection. Aquinas guides his students through created angelic beings to the creation of human beings. Then, Aquinas will consider the problem of sin in the human person.¹⁰ The *exitus-reditus*, or proceeding and returning, unites the whole of Thomas’ thought and serves as an interpretive key for thinking about Thomas’ anthropology at different points of the *Summa*.¹¹

In his discussion on the perfections of being in the *Prima Pars*, Thomas covers considerable ground concerning creaturely being—and addresses such a broad field of terrain that some believe the theologian is basing his anthropology on “psycho-

10 This progression of meditating on the nature of angelic creatures prior to the nature of human creatures generally follows the pattern of Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*. The obvious differences consist in Augustine’s dialogical style and the more explicit conclusions that Augustine draws on the *imago Dei* in human beings at the end of Book XII. On the image, Augustine also concludes his discussion on the creation of human beings by speaking of the social character of humans as bearing the image of God. In the authors discussed above, this seems to be glossed over in their assessment of Aquinas though the seeds for this thought are tacitly present in Aquinas’ thought. This social image is less present in the metaphysical sections they discuss; nevertheless, the sociality of the person and the relationship between sociality and spiritual growth become increasingly present in Thomas’ discussion of the believer’s formation through the infused virtues—especially, the virtue of charity. Charity, in Thomas’ estimation, takes on a social dynamic in the sense that Charity is simply described as friendship with God (*ST* II-II.26). Later, friendship with God (primarily; cf. *ST* II-II.23.1) leads us into rightly ordered friendships with our neighbors (secondarily; cf. *ST* II.25.1r). To this point, the Christian’s pursuit of God, and thus the pursuit of holiness, happens in a community. As Aquinas expands on his notion of charity’s cultivation in the believer, it expands through opportunities of encounter. Moreover, in Aquinas’ estimation, briefly considering the exemplar motif of Christ in what it means to bear the image of God, it would not have been fitting for Christ to live a solitary life. It was, however, fitting to live and have fellowship in a Christian community. On this point, I digress for the time being in order not to subtract from this discussion at hand.

11 See D. Juvenall Merriell, C.O., “Trinitarian Anthropology,” in *The Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2005), pp. 123-142.

philosophical” maxims and molding theology to fit those principles. As Denys Turner contends, however, to say that Aquinas is molding his theology around philosophy would neglect the larger context of Aquinas’ discussion. The objection typically comes into question as readers examine Thomas’ account of the human, especially the human soul, in Questions 75 to 89 in the *Prima Pars*. The first objection observes, and understandably so, that Aquinas does not include a single theological reference for eighty-nine articles—fifteen questions total—in his discussion on anthropology in Questions 75 to 89. Outlining the trajectory of Thomas’ discussion of the human person in the *Prima Pars*, Turner notes with surprise, “There is not a single theological reference to be found within the fifty-six thousand words of his discussion of these topics.”¹² The discussion in these sections, Turner avers, largely “rehearses” Aristotle’s *De anima*. Accordingly, then, Turner questions, “how is [this] any business of the theologian with feet on theological *terra firma*?”¹³ While Aquinas appears to begin with intentions similar to Wesley’s approach of “practical divinity” in equipping his students in the *Summa*, these intentions appear farfetched in Aquinas’ anthropological musings on these questions. However, Turner claims, “the philosophical discussion *does* matter to Thomas, and not just philosophically. It matters theologically.”¹⁴ On the importance of sorting out the philosophical nuances in Thomas’ anthropology, Turner avers,

12 Denys Turner, “The Human Person,” p. 169.

13 Denys Turner, “The Human Person,” p. 169.

14 Denys Turner, “The Human Person,” p. 169.

Thomas' point—the point, that is, of composing fifty-six thousand words of philosophical psychology (as we would now call it) within a work of theology — is not that you have to know all that Aristotelian argument in order to believe what you should: you can be a person of the fullest and firmest faith without being a philosopher at all. The point is that if you do the philosophy and get it wrong and then mediate your theology through it, you will either get your theology wrong as a result or else end up with an inconsistent conceptual muddle, as one finds in Bonaventure from time to time. In short, there is no call on Christian believers to be philosophers at all. But there is a call on Christian theologians where they play to their own theological standards not to find themselves in philosophical positions that are plainly muddled or wrong-headed and indefensible. A theological opinion is *theologically* indefensible if it entails philosophical positions that are demonstrably false.¹⁵

The central matter of importance for these sections is to underscore Thomas' theological commitment to the doctrine of bodily resurrection that articulates the hope for the soul's survival after death. While some would emphasize the teaching of the soul's persistence after death in Platonic fashion, Aquinas takes the stance that "the survival of my soul after death depends logically on the resurrection of my body and without that bodily resurrection there would be no I to survive."¹⁶ Likewise, Turner captures the idea that Aquinas' is not neglecting the survival of the soul in its theological importance but highlighting the order—a reversed order—for thinking about the persistence of the soul: the soul's persistence is fundamentally grounded in the hope of the bodily resurrection that logically anticipates the soul's immortality.¹⁷ The question is essentially a question

15 Denys Turner, "The Human Person," p. 170.

16 Denys Turner, "The Human Person," p. 170.

17 Denys Turner, "The Human Person," p. 170-171.

of emphasis in this section between Questions 75 and 89.¹⁸ Addressing theological motifs through philosophical nuances, Aquinas essentially captures the theological significance of embodiment. If the soul's persistence after death is going to be a fitting one, then it will need the resurrected body. Turner summarizes, "The human person's natural condition is embodied and though my soul may be naturally immortal and its survival a necessary condition of my survival, it is not, for Thomas, a sufficient condition; only my bodily resurrection can guarantee that, and no philosophical anthropology, but only faith, can provide that guarantee."¹⁹ In short, philosophical definitions and theological aims are both important in Aquinas' approach to studying the human being in the *Prima Pars*.

Moving to speak about the "image of God" as it appears in the *Prima Pars* in Question 93, Colón-Emeric posits that the *imago Dei* is one of the "master motifs" in Aquinas' thought. He writes, "The *Prima Pars* presents the procession of the image from the exemplar; the *Secunda Pars* the movement of the image toward the exemplar; the *Tertia Pars* the union of the image with the exemplar in the person of Christ."²⁰ As such,

18 Properly speaking, Questions 75 to 88 concern the soul pre-mortem whereas Question 89 is concerned explicitly with the soul post-mortem. Together, though, these form a unit of Aquinas' argument. Turner avers, "tactically, they show just why a Platonist account of the soul's immortality will not do whether pre- or post-mortem;" the soul is "hardly recognizable as a person at all" in the Platonic account and ultimately presents a "dismal anticlimax" in what persons would commonly expect to find through such a philosophical teaching ("The Human Person," p. 173). The parsing of philosophical nuances is ordered towards making clear what Christians ought to hope for—and Aquinas insists that this hope ought to be grounded in the hope of the resurrection, thus altering the emphases.

19 Denys Turner, "The Human Person," p. 179.

20 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 84.

D. Juvenal Merriell posits that Aquinas “looks at man in terms of this dynamic of movement from and to God, and not simply in terms of the constant, unchanging nature of man.”²¹ In the structure of Thomas’ *Summa*, he places his discussion of the image of God (ST I.93) in the larger section of God’s creation of man (ST I.90-102).

3.3 St. Thomas’ Trinitarian Anthropology

Theological anthropology takes a distinctly Trinitarian shape in Aquinas’ thought. As Merriell avers, “In the *Summa* Aquinas teaches about man *sub ratione Dei*: man as ordered to God as his beginning and end.”²² This claim comes to fruition as Thomas puts forth a framework for what it looks like for humans to be made in the image of the Trinity. Setting the trajectory, Merriell avers, “The key to the image of the Trinity is the imitation of the processions of the Word and Love in God. These processions only occur when the intellectual nature is engaged actively in knowing and willing.”²³ While Merriell underscores that imaging is born out of activity, he notes that “The human mind always has the potential for these two processions and therefore always possesses the image of the Trinity.”²⁴ Thus, Aquinas sees passive and active resemblances of the image in the person: “analogy” and “conformation” are two modes of importance in Aquinas’ imagination.²⁵ While the mind represents an analogical

21 D. Juvenal Merriell, C.O., “Trinitarian Anthropology,” p. 123.

22 D. Juvenal Merriell, C.O., “Trinitarian Anthropology,” p. 123.

23 D. Juvenal Merriell, C.O., “Trinitarian Anthropology,” p. 130.

24 D. Juvenal Merriell, C.O., “Trinitarian Anthropology,” p. 131.

25 D. Juvenal Merriell, C.O., “Trinitarian Anthropology,” p. 133.

likeness to the Trinity, conformation occurs as the believer participates in the divine life through the processions of word and love.²⁶ So much is a graced participation that share in the divine life.

3.4 Aquinas and the Christian Tradition

3.4.1 Augustinian and Damascene Synthesis in Speaking about the Trinitarian Image

In a previous section, we examined the cosmological scope of Aquinas' thought that provide a context for thinking about the image of God, and we have examined his careful integration of philosophical language to comprehend the embodiment of the human person. Now, turning to the matter at hand, the question is before us. Where does the image of God discussion appear in Aquinas' train of thought? And more importantly, what does it mean to be created in the image of God, according to Aquinas? To begin, the most notable discussion of the *imago Dei* appears in Question 93 of the *Prima Pars*. Here, Aquinas addresses "the end or term of man's production, inasmuch as he is said to be made *to the image and likeness of God*," and follows with nine points of inquiry. Over the course of Question 93, the insights of two key thinkers inspire the direction that Aquinas takes—Augustine of Hippo and John of Damascus.

26 D. Juvenal Merriell, C.O., "Trinitarian Anthropology," p. 138.

3.4.2 Augustinian Influences in Aquinas' Articulation of the Image of God

The first figure to consider who informs Aquinas' theological anthropology is St. Augustine of Hippo. Particularly, Aquinas is drawing upon Augustine's *De Trinitate* where he presents different models (in a dialogical fashion) to imagine how Christians might think about the image of God being made manifest in human beings according to Genesis 1:26. Throughout *De Trinitate*, Augustine offers different analogies for his reader that probe what this image might look like in terms of the human being. For Augustine, "*Imago Dei* is linked to the mind (*mens*) because the "'mind' is said absolutely like God."²⁷ Notably, his contemplation of the *imago Dei* in human beings emanates from his attempt to find a fitting analogy for thinking about the Trinity.²⁸ O'Callaghan describes Augustine's interest in the image of God as such:

St. Augustine's procedure is not to discover features of creation that can be applied to God, but, rather, starting with what he believes about the Trinity as

27 John P. O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*: A Test Case for St. Thomas's Augustinianism," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, p. 105. See the preceding argument on p. 104: O'Callaghan observes that identifying the *imago Dei* in humans is a difficult task when thinking about the life of the "outer man" that refers to sensation, seeing "a deep fissure in the unity of human nature" between the internal and the external. The division is one of outward "sensation" on the one hand and inward "mental attention" on the other. If not clear already, Augustine needs to reliably account for the divine unity of Persons in how the human images the Trinity. See page 106 on how "remembering" corresponds to *the imago Dei* that Augustine seeks to work out—this bears the mutually intertwined acts of loving and knowing through the act of remembering, and the first two acts will reappear later.

28 On this point, Giles Emery provides a helpful summative note: "One must note first that the study of the image of God does not occupy first place in St. Augustine's thought. First place goes rather to the unity of action of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, that is, to their common operation. [...] The analysis of the image of God occurs in a second step in order to manifest to our understanding how we can conceive this common action of the three Persons, within the frame of God's simplicity, immutability, and incomprehensibility." Giles Emery, "Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise" in *Aquinas the Augustinian* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), p. 5. In *De Trinitate*, Emery's point is correct. This is not to say, however, that the image of God question is not a concern for Augustine. In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine is keen to address the question of the image of God in human beings: it practically bookends his extended discussion of the heavenly city in books XI-XXII. Rhetorically, then, the image of God is not a "primary" concern in *De Trinitate*, but it still appears to be a legitimate and meaningful concern for Augustine.

his guide, to find vestiges or likenesses of God in creation and then the image proper in the human mind.²⁹

After considering different iterations of the image, such as the model where God represents a relationship of love or a functionality of the mind, Augustine continues his inquiry and arrives at a more fitting example at the end of *De Trinitate*. Augustine posits that the *imago Dei* exists in human beings akin to mind's unity in the diversity of its memory, intellect, and will.³⁰ Augustine presents a means for imagining the Trinitarian mystery in a comprehensible analogy to the human person, knowing that a perfect expression of this mystery cannot be grasped by one's imagination nor perfectly expressed in the human being.

When Aquinas begins Question 93, O'Callaghan avers, he imports Augustine's mature musings, and those corresponding arguments, into the *Summa*. The purpose for Aquinas' Augustinian discussion, here, as O'Callaghan notes, "is driven by the twelfth- and thirteenth-century influx of Aristotelian themes into the discussion of the human soul."³¹ Sticking close to Augustine, Aquinas does see a place for some Aristotelian elements. O'Callaghan avers,

29 John P. O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*," p. 102.

30 John P. O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*," p. 106-107.

31 John P. O'Callaghan, "*Imago Dei*," p. 107. Providing some examples of Aristotelian questions, he adds, "While Augustinian elements are always in the background of these particular discussions, for the most part they are driven by distinctive features of the broad Aristotelian account of the soul and cognition." In some cases, O'Callaghan observes that the converse is also true (cf. p. 108).

Still, St. Thomas agrees with St. Augustine that the perfect *imago Dei* cannot be found in the mind knowing material things, but only its knowing itself, and even more so in its knowing God. Thus with St. Augustine, the task of understanding the *imago Dei* requires a turning within of the soul to understand itself. But in opposition to St. Augustine, such a turning within cannot involve a turning away from what is outside and beyond the soul.³²

The difference, then, persists in that while Augustine sees a separation between the “inner” and the “outer” man, Aquinas does not believe it is proper to make this sort of clean distinction about the person: “Thomas does not think that in one’s knowledge of the mind one can engage in a fundamental separation from one’s knowledge of the material things to apprehend the mind in a kind of pristine clarity.”³³ One of the logical consequences of Aquinas’ direction in speaking about the *imago Dei* in human beings is that he moves to consider an additional dimension of the image in the human person. This is a dimension that finds its place at the end of Question 93 in Aquinas’ appropriation of John Damascene, who examines the moral dimension of the image as they practically appear in the human who bears the divine image. It appears from this distinction, needing to account for the outer and the inner that leads Aquinas to a broader consideration of the *imago Dei* that goes beyond Augustine’s emphasis on visualizing the image through contemplation. Aquinas retains the contemplation of the image, but he also expands his understanding.

32 John P. O’Callaghan, “*Imago Dei*,” p. 110. See *De veritate* q. 10, a. 8; q. 10, a. 8, ad 8. Cf. Denys Turner, “The Human Person,” pp. 179-180. Turner expresses a similar concern.

33 John P. O’Callaghan, “*Imago Dei*,” p. 110.

Of final significance, it is helpful to discern how Aquinas imagines the imperfect and perfect expressions of the *imago Dei* in the human being. The perfect expression of the image is recognizable through *activity* “with regard to actually remembering, knowing, and loving” that corresponds to the activity of the Trinity—especially the dual, mutually intertwined processions of loving and knowing. The imperfect expression of the image refers to “the powers simply.”³⁴ Colón-Emeric acknowledges this much, observing that Aquinas’ distinction between the two perfections—one general and applicable to all humans (*vestigia trinitatis*), and one special through cooperation with God’s grace (*imago trinitatis*)—are essential to understanding Aquinas’ teaching on the human’s perfection.³⁵ Putting in more recognizable terms, he explores the difference between “image” and “likeness.” Here, Colón-Emeric draws attention to Aquinas’ citation of Augustine, where the theologian from Hippo writes, “where an image exists, there forthwith is likeness; but where there is likeness, there is not necessarily an image.”³⁶ Highlighting the importance of this difference, Colón-Emeric posits, “one could say that the chief goal of Question 93 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* is

34 John P. O’Callaghan, “*Imago Dei*,” p. 114.

35 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 85. Colón-Emeric also draws attention to how these two types of human perfection are well-suited for ecumenical dialogue with Wesley’s view of perfection.

36 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 85. ST I.93.1

the clarification of the scope and applicability of these terms to the creature in relation to God."³⁷

Exploring Aquinas' views concerning image and likeness further, Colón-Emeric draws attention to the two modes of likeness that Aquinas puts forth in Article 9. In the first sense, "likeness may be considered in the light of a preamble to image, inasmuch as it is something more general than the image."³⁸ Colón-Emeric clarifies this sense of likeness persists so long as the creature exists or has life; there is a sense of likeness in all creatures. This is the likeness, says Aquinas, that is transcendental [*transcendentibus*] or "common to all."³⁹ In the second sense, "likeness may be considered in another way, as signifying the expression and perfection of the image."⁴⁰ On this expression of likeness, Colón-Emeric draws attention to how this articulation appears in Christian tradition:

This way of understanding likeness corresponds to patristic usage, which reserved the term *homoiosis* for what Aquinas calls "the likeness of glory." This mode is not an intensification of the former, a greater generic likeness, but a likeness of a different kind, a similitude of species. Thus, whereas the image may become perfected by participating in its exemplar to a degree, the vestige cannot participate in its cause in such a way that it becomes an image of anything other than of its exemplar type.⁴¹

37 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 85.

38 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 85. ST I.93.9

39 ST I.93.9

40 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 86. ST I.93.9

41 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 86.

In other words, likeness captures the general sense where creatures may be considered in relationship to God as existing beings, and image captures the specific sense where creatures reflect God as intellectual subjects.⁴²

Elaborating on Aquinas' doctrinal formulations on the image of God, Colón-Emeric points to Aquinas' foundations in scripture. Drawing upon the creation narrative in Genesis 1:26, Thomas takes at face value that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God. What he encounters in his interpretation, though, Colón-Emeric posits, is the "interpretive challenge" of properly recognizing "the natural dignity of the intellectual creature while respecting the Creator-creature distinction."⁴³ The challenge hangs upon the grammatical nuance in the Latin preposition "*ad*," which distinguishes between *imago* and *ad imaginem*.⁴⁴ First, the use of this preposition "signifies a certain approach," resulting in a slightly different reading of Genesis 1:26—"let us make man in such a way that our image may be in him."⁴⁵ Additionally, Colón-Emeric identifies that "*ad* points to the exemplar cause, the source of the *finis operantis*," which describes the intended "end" of the creature's creation (i.e., beatitude).⁴⁶ In other

42 For further clarification on the latter, Aquinas writes, quoting Damascene, "the image implies an intelligent being, endowed with free-will and self-movement, whereas likeness implies a likeness of power, as far as this may be possible in man." (ST I.93.9). Cf. ST I.35.2ad3

43 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 86.

44 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 86-87.

45 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 87. Cp. John Behr, "The Human Being: God's Project and Our Response," Paper Presentation, Wake Forest, NC, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Feb 2022. Behr captures a similar reading of Genesis 1:26 in the writings of the ante-Nicene fathers, who posit a reading of creating humans in the image of God.

46 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 87, 84.

words, the creature is made for God, and the creature is meant to journey towards God; the image takes on a dynamic quality. Dauphinais recognizes this dynamic aspect of the image as he works to recover the Augustinian and Damascene influences on Aquinas' teaching on the image, where Damascene's contributions on the image bring this element of activity into Aquinas' theological anthropology.

In the latter section of his essay, Dauphinais draws out the importance of Aquinas' retrieval of Damascene in his reflections on the image of God in the *Summa*. In short, Dauphinais argues

that by including John Damascene's authority alongside that of Augustine, Aquinas transforms the teaching of the image of God so that it serves both as an entrance into the mystery of the Triune God and as a figure for the human progression in the moral life toward friendship with God.⁴⁷

The first part of Dauphinais' essay outlines Aquinas' Augustinian treatment of the *imago Dei* and its development, then turns to how this treatment appears in the *Prima Pars*, Question 93. In examining Thomas' views on the image, Dauphinais draws attention to how Aquinas invokes John Damascene to "widen the scope of the doctrine of the image of God to include a greater explication of the moral life of the human creature."⁴⁸

Similar to Wesley's depiction of the image in the previous chapter, Aquinas accentuates the moral dimension of the image in addition to the functional dimensions of the image.

47 Michael A. Dauphinais, "Loving the Lord Your God: The *Imago Dei* in Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *The Thomist* 62, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 244.

48 Michael A. Dauphinais, "*Imago Dei* in Aquinas," pp. 244-245.

Considering the whole, Dauphinais avers, "Aquinas, instead, presents us with a thoroughly theological view of the human person made to the image and likeness of God, whereby the moral life presupposes, as well as perfects, the knowing and loving of God."⁴⁹ Augustine illumines contemplative aspects of the image, while Damascene illumines active aspects of the image, and both are integral to Aquinas' vision of the human person. Attempting to elucidate the practical dimensions of Aquinas' teaching on the image, then, Dauphinais avers,

The comparison of the processions of intellect and will in the human creature to the eternal processions within the Godhead does not relegate Trinitarian theology to abstraction. Instead, Aquinas elaborates on the human relation to God in terms of the characteristically human activity of knowing and loving. It is in the graced activity of the New Law through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that the human orientation to God is fully awakened, opening the human creature to the mystery of divine friendship.⁵⁰

More will be said about Aquinas' theology of the divine processions in a later section.

At present, it is important to note that Aquinas' anthropology fuses the active and contemplative to create a practical theological anthropology, where his Trinitarian theology is applicable and pertinent to the formation of the Christian into the image of God. As Dauphinais alludes at the beginning of his article, patristic authors often cited references to the *imago Dei* with the intent of revealing something of God and his

49 Michael A. Dauphinais, "Imago Dei in Aquinas," pp. 245.

50 Michael A. Dauphinais, "Imago Dei in Aquinas," p. 267.

character.⁵¹ Depiction demonstrates the pursuit of revelation as well as the implications for Christian formation in the moral life.

Edgardo Colón-Emeric draws out the significance of the “renewing image” in his treatment of Aquinas’ theological anthropology, a point that appears to receive less emphasis in Dauphinais’ assessment of how Aquinas is blending streams within the Christian tradition. According to Colón-Emeric, the human person who is being renewed in the image of God—that is, participating in God’s divine life through intentional responses to His grace—will be disposed to being a part of humanity’s larger cosmological reconciliation with God.⁵²

3.5 Speaking Analogically of the Image

In speaking about Thomas’ theological anthropology and anticipating how his theological anthropology interacts with his Christology, it will help to speak about the role of analogy (*analogia*) in Aquinas’ thought. The *imago Dei* in Aquinas’ thought draws from a well of tradition surrounding ancient and Christian discourse on images and our participation in those images. Thinking about the perfection of the human in the likeness of God, Colón-Emeric avers,

51 Michael A. Dauphinais, “*Imago Dei* in Aquinas,” p. 241.

52 In Colón-Emeric’s exposition, Aquinas’ *exitus-reditus* cosmology does not fall out of discussion as he advances through various theological topoi. By noting this underlying commitment, the concern for speaking of Christian perfection and the imperative for participating in the divine image becomes much more pronounced. Not only are humans created with a vestige of the divine image and a capacity for God, but humans have the potential to bear a certain kind of image. Essentially, the cosmological link is an important one for this discussion.

Talk of similitude of the human to God is an exhilarating but dangerous idea, so Thomas offers us a word of caution: the perfection of the creature is not achieved through pantheistic assimilation into God's essence. On the other hand, the perception of the creature, its similitude to the Creator, cannot be understood univocally; the creature is not and can never be *simpliciter*. On the other hand, when we say that the creature can be perfect, we are not simply speaking nonsense. The term can be applied to God and creatures analogically. Whatever is found to be good or true or otherwise perfect in the creature is found in God in an eminent way.⁵³

He continues,

Aquinas believes that it is indeed possible to speak of the creature as perfect, to be like God not by assimilation into the divine essence but by the similitude of the creature to its Creator, the effect to its First Cause.⁵⁴

As such, to speak more about the ways a person bears the image of God will benefit from an understanding of the image qua image in Aquinas' thought. Aquinas' approach to images, in general, is the category of *analogia* where a person does not experience *directly* in the thing's being but *in a way* that is similar to the thing that its communicability allows. In other words, the concept of analogy helps to elucidate how persons can know and participate in a thing through various degrees. In Aquinas' writings, the *analogia* in reference to "being" is a grounding concept appearing the Angelic Doctor's synthetic writings, drawing upon the wisdom of earlier Greek and

53 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 73. Cp. p. 74. "[T]his similarity between divine and creaturely perfection is absurd; such perfection would entail a sharing in God's incommunicable essence. On the contrary, all created things are like God in that they exist and have God as the primal and universal principle of their being (*primum et universalis principium totius esse*). However, this similarity between divine and creaturely perfection is founded upon a greater dissimilarity: God's existence is by essence (*per essentiam*), whereas creaturely existence is by participation (*per participationem*)."

54 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 73-74.

Byzantine traditions on the image.⁵⁵ In discussing how an image is presented to us and our participation in the image, Pfau notes of Aquinas,

For Aquinas, the overarching objective is to “consider not only the emanation of a particular being from a particular agent, but also the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God, ... which we designate by the name of creation.” To succeed in this endeavor does not mean to behold the divine source of particular being per se, which human cognition cannot do. Rather, it is to participate in the “perfection” (Vollendung) of visible being by witnessing how it achieves its inner telos over time: “Changes receive species and dignity, not from the term ‘wherefrom,’ but from the term ‘whereto.’⁵⁶

Essentially, Aquinas’ implementation of *analogia* permits him to speak about change and transformation as a “meaningful sequence” as opposed to “random and unintelligible mutation.”⁵⁷ As such, the *analogia* fits well into Aquinas’ *exitus-reditus* schema that imagines the human journeying into Christ, their exemplar, by putting on holiness.

Additionally, speaking about the image in analogical terms allows Aquinas to navigate nuances in his Christological grammar. In von Balthasar’s Christological discourse in *Theo-Drama (III)*, he notes a distinct and crucial turn in Aquinas’ Christology that avoids the pitfalls of other interpretive streams, but one that also needs to be renewed considering Aquinas’ reception history. For von Balthasar, the *analogia entis* is not only helpful for retrieving Aquinas well but duly useful for meditating on the

55 Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty: Metaphysics and Hermeneutics of the Image* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022).

56 Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, p. 447.

57 Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, p. 447.

implications of Christology for theological anthropology.⁵⁸ Aquinas brings a renewed attention to the significance of thinking analogically about the relationship between Christ's being as "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and the being of creatures.⁵⁹

3.6 Conclusion

At the end of this section, some concluding remarks on Aquinas' theological anthropology may be offered for discussion. First, Aquinas' anthropology takes its philosophical and theological dimensions seriously. Thomas demonstrates a necessity to correctly employ philosophical language, especially an Aristotelian understanding of the soul, in order to properly account for a theology of embodiment that takes the scriptural promise of bodily resurrection seriously. Second, Thomas' definition of the person in theological terms locates the person in their metaphysical status before God, not only in the sense of finitude and infinitude, but in their procession from (*exitus*) and return to God (*reditus*) through Christ. The *exitus-reditus* schema serves as an interpretive key for understanding Thomas' mature thought in the *Summa*, especially his mature anthropology. Examining Thomas' anthropology along different points of the *Summa*—beginning, middle, and end—yields unique reflections on Thomas' unique reflections on the image of God in the human person. Third, much of Aquinas'

58 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, vol. III, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 220.

⁵⁹ For more on this expression of the image, see Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 72ff, 86.

theological reflection on the image of God relies upon speaking analogically about image and likeness. After all, “there is a great difference between the trinity within ourselves and the Divine Trinity” (ST I.93.5.ad 3). Through the metaphysical approach Thomas supplies, God and creatures differ significantly due to the categories of God’s infinitude and the creature’s finitude. Nevertheless, theologians *can* talk about an actual likeness: this is a likeness to God’s holiness or a likeness by participation. Fourth, it is helpful to read Aquinas first and foremost as a Christian theologian who is sensitive to matters of faith. As Michael Dauphinais avers, “Aquinas’s teaching is only obscured if read through the textbook caricature that sees him as orchestrating a synthesis between Aristotelianism and Christian faith.”⁶⁰ Based on the rhetorical and theological digging provided above, this much seems to be true. To say that Aquinas is merely adapting theology to philosophy would undercut the rhetorical strategy in his prose and would bypass the strategic decisions he makes in constructively teaching Christian truth. When these misunderstandings of Thomas’ thought are brought into the light, readers receive a much clearer picture of the value of his rhetorical brilliance, his synthesis of Christian truths across traditions, and –especially for this discussion–his distinct Trinitarian and Christo-centric anthropology.

60 Michael A. Dauphinais, “Loving the Lord Your God: The *Imago Dei* in Saint Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Thomist* 62, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 245.

4. A Synthesis of Anthropologies

4.1 Introduction

To borrow a helpful analogy from Edgardo Colón-Emeric, comparing John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas is like comparing a simple Methodist meeting house to an ornate Catholic cathedral.¹ The essential structural elements are present in both; however, the amount of detail (and other factors) differs for each environment. These differences come to light when speaking about Wesley and Aquinas on the human person. On the difference, the *differences* are not merely abstract conclusions about personhood but reflections that arise out of Wesley and Aquinas' respective ministry contexts. One of the advantages of combining Wesley's and Aquinas' reflections on theological anthropology is the blending of their approaches: Wesley approaches the topic through its contribution to the Christian's "practical divinity;" Aquinas approaches the subject through a synthesis of theological traditions that not only seeks to uncover the structural imprint of the Trinity in the human person but embarks on a journey into the image through the person's imaging of Christ through the moral life. Neither engages in speculation of the image for the sake of speculation. Both Aquinas and Wesley believe the image of God is a teaching that bears practical significance for the believer. The conversation that follows, then, does not attempt to locate a mean between

¹ Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 5-6.

the extremes but dialogue between two theologians who share a common interest.

Wesley approaches the teaching on the image as a spiritual mentor; Aquinas approaches the image as a spiritual master. Significant differences between Wesley and Aquinas appear to emerge from the worlds of interpretative modes and their respective ministry contexts. This chapter will analyze the distinctions between Wesley and Aquinas' teachings on the image and highlight points of similarity for constructive dialogue.

4.1.1 Matters of Approach

There appear to be different starting points for engaging in the discipline of theological anthropology and speaking about the person's formation in the image of God that follows. Wesley and Aquinas, as noted above, retained a practical end for their discussions on the image in addition to their systematic inquiry. If the mix of pragmatic and dogmatic constitutes the first approach, then the second and third approaches tend to highlight either extreme. For instance, Hegel wanted to accomplish a similar set of goals in his early lecture (namely, spiritual transformation); however, he saw the intellectual side of faith as something remote from practical faith in its implications. As such, he puts aside important teachings within the Christian tradition to make an argument from below. He believed that "subjective religion" contained the real experience that "objective religion" could not provide.² The third trend takes the

² H. G. F. Hegel, "Religion is One of Our Greatest Concerns in Life," in *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of*

opposite approach from Hegel, remaining in the world of *theoria*. This can include Hegel's "objective religion" (dogmatics, etc.), but it generally encompasses the approach to theology *from above*. This approach circumvents typically the phenomenological (or experiential) dimensions of faith in favor of the logical and metaphysical dimensions. The first approach from above, likewise, consists of a blend. This would mean that experience and doctrine, phenomenological truths and metaphysical truths, are not at odds but complement one another. G. K. Chesterton makes similar comments showing the overlapping commitments of St. Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, with St. Francis of Assisi, the pious desert monk. Essentially, Thomas is a brilliant theologian but also a pastoral theologian. Meanwhile, a similar critique exists of Wesley — that Wesley was a practical theologian.³ It will remain for the reader, but it would appear as if one's approach to the discipline yields different sorts of outcomes. Nevertheless, key distinctions persist in the theologies of Aquinas and Wesley.

the Spirit, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, *The Making of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p. 43ff.

³ Kenneth Loyer accentuates this observation in his book, *God's Love Through the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), drawing on the theology of Thomas Aquinas to provide a backdrop for infusing a helpful pneumatology into the Methodist tradition that has a weak vocabulary of the Spirit's work. One of the potential criticisms might be an equal exploration of where Methodists might recover John Wesley's pneumatology — a subject that receives less attention in his work. On the other hand, Stephen Long, notes that Wesley *was* a critical thinker whose thoughts were 'before his time.' See *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Kingswood Books, 2005). Given Wesley's writings on assurance and his longstanding interest in theological anthropology from this section, and his well-thought convictions elsewhere, this is perhaps less of a surprise. Nevertheless, it appears that both thinkers operate in this *blended* space with Wesley's writings leaning towards the pastoral and Aquinas' writings leaning towards the academic.

4.1.2 Distinctives of Wesley

Most notably, Wesley's theological anthropology includes an examination of the three-fold image of God in human beings, including the natural image, the moral image, and the political image. The relationship of these images, according to Wesley, is to make possible the capacity for God (*capax Dei*) in the human being on their journey to Christian perfection. Wesley's approach is at once practical while also intelligible. Another noteworthy element of Wesley's anthropology is what Clapper calls "orthokardia," or the legitimate knowledge of the Christian rooted in the heart.

4.1.3 Distinctives of Aquinas

For Aquinas' mature formulations in the *Summa*, the theologian strategically imagines the human person within his larger account of creation and the perfections of the *Prima Pars*. Aquinas engages with the best definitions philosophy has to offer to describe the significance of embodiment, and he advances from this subject matter to give special attention to the image of God in the human person. Additionally, Aquinas provides a robust metaphysical framework for thinking about the human person—that is, God's creatures will return to Him, and they will make this return *through* Christ. In this light, Aquinas is working with a hermeneutical picture that takes seriously the narrative of salvation as a key principle for thinking about the human person and organizing his *exitus-reditus* cosmology in the *Summa*. In articulating his picture,

Aquinas also invokes his use of *analogia* to describe the relationship between the human to its creator.

4.2 Points of Similarity

4.2.1 Wesley and Aquinas on Grace

Core to speaking about theological anthropology is to speak of the role of grace. Grace is central for Aquinas, Colón-Emeric writes. Aquinas uses grace, among other things, to describe how God becomes present in a new way. In all, there are three forms of *habitus* in Aquinas' thought: (1) theological virtues perfect intellect and will, (2) infused moral virtues perfecting intellect and will, and (3) "the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Is. 11:1-2) render the intellect and will pliable to the guidance of the Holy Spirit."⁴ The third mode is appropriate to Christians, and this is how God works through the Holy Spirit.

Another point of comparison under this heading is the believer's perception of grace. While Aquinas will reiterate that the believer does not need knowledge of sanctifying grace, he allows three possibilities for those who might know; these include revelation, knowledge, and conjecture.⁵ In the first and third senses, the Christian can have some knowledge of this grace; in the second, it is impossible to know apart from

⁴ Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 93.

⁵ Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 170-171; Kenneth Loyer, *God's Love Through the Spirit*, p.188.

heavenly perfection. As Loyer notes, comparing Wesley and Aquinas on Christian assurance, there are significant differences in their terms.⁶ On this difference, Colón-Emeric avers, “If there is one place in the comparison between Otto Hermann Pesch’s distinction between sapiential and existential modes of theology, the doctrine of assurance is that place.”⁷ Essentially, Wesley is concerned with the believer’s status before God, whereas Aquinas addresses the subject of assurance by means of necessity. Nevertheless, both do affirm some sense of the believer’s ability to know in this life.

4.2.2 The Centrality of the “Image of God” to Adjacent Theological Topoi

At this point in the analysis of Wesley and Aquinas’ theological anthropology, it may be apparent that each’s teaching on the *imago Dei* hardly stays within one field of theological study. Briefly noting this phenomenon, Dauphinais posits that the “image of God, if properly understood, defies categorization into either what is now classified as moral theology or systematic theology.”⁸ In short, the image of God is a dynamic quality of personhood that exceeds speaking about a static imprint. In Wesley’s anthropology, he reflects on the reality that the in-tact-ness of the natural image makes the Christian’s participation in the moral image—that is, participating in the image and

6 Kenneth Loyer, *God’s Love Through the Spirit*, p.188.

7 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 171-172.

8 Michael A. Dauphinais, “Loving the Lord Your God: The *Imago Dei* in Saint Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Thomist* 62, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 245.

likeness of God—possible. In other words, the functionality of the natural image makes possible the capacity for the person to experience God’s renewing grace in the moral image. The dimension of image that describes the person’s understanding, will, and liberty interacts strongly with the dimension of the person’s image that reflects God’s holiness. The contemplative life and the active life go hand-in-hand in speaking about a dynamic and “properly understood” definition of the image of God in the human person.

4.2.3 The Capacity for God

In their respective writings, Aquinas and Wesley both acknowledge a capacity for God in the human person. Aquinas’ expresses this distinction through his incorporation of the preposition, *ad*, in order to distinguish a sense of distance between a thing and the end that it approaches. Additionally, Aquinas’ reception of Augustine brings him to recognize how humans are made in the image of God “insofar as their soul has the capacity ‘to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God.’”⁹ The description that Dauphinais provides concerning Aquinas’ reception of Augustine is strikingly similar to the language that appears in Wesley on the believer’s capacity for God through the retained functions of will, understanding, and liberty in the natural image. Both recognize the significance of speaking about the

⁹ Michael A. Dauphinais, “*Imago Dei* in Aquinas,” p. 247.

image's imprint on the mind. However, Dauphinais notes a point of obscurity that exists in some interpretations of Aquinas' view. One of these readings imagines a division in Aquinas' thought based on roles of faith and reason that seem to be at odds in such an image. Jaroslav Pelikan posits, according to Dauphinais, that Aquinas divides his discussion of the image between natural theology and revelation, leading to Pelikan's belief that "the image of God [for Aquinas] is split between reason, which belongs to natural theology, and love, which belongs to revelation."¹⁰ Finding the fault of anachronism in Pelikan's understanding, Dauphinais contrastingly points to Aquinas' view that "in the natural state the image exists as the capacity for both knowing and loving God; so also in the graced state the image consists in both knowing and loving God" (see *ST I.93.4*).¹¹ In this life the image of God in the individual has the *capacity* for knowledge and love of God (*en potentia*), whereas in the life to come the image of God in the individual will operate through the knowledge and love of God (*en actio*). The difference also corresponds to Wesley's view of the person's capacity: the person experiences the capacity for God in this life and the fullness of the image in eternity. Together, these theologians recognize the importance of speaking about the believer's

10 Michael A. Dauphinais, "Imago Dei in Aquinas," p. 252, footnote 47; see Jaroslav Pelikan, "Imago Dei," pp. 38-39.

11 Michael A. Dauphinais, "Imago Dei in Aquinas," p. 252, footnote 47. The importance of knowledge and love in cooperation will reappear in Dominic Legge's depiction of the "divine missions" in Aquinas' Christology.

capacity; it is the believer's created capacity that makes possible their experience of moral likeness through the gift of participation in God's grace.

4.3 Conclusion

From our exploration of the theological anthropologies of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas, the two theologians offer distinct yet overlapping views on the human person. They are singing a similar song in a slightly different key, with different instruments taking the lead at different points within the orchestration. Wesley offers a viable theological anthropology despite his underdeveloped teachings on the political image and some erroneous assumptions concerning the role of *liberty* in the natural image. Where Wesley's theological anthropology seems lacking in these areas, his account advances in its consideration of the Christian life from a boots-on-the-ground perspective where reflection on the image points the believer towards the renewal of the image in the moral life. As noted from the figures above, Wesley's insights appear to be intelligible and, in some cases, ahead of his time. A key example is how Wesley imagines the role of the heart as a serious source of knowledge. Put into conversation, Aquinas' mature meditations on Christian anthropology in the *Summa* reflect his capacity as a teacher and expositor of Christian doctrine and his influence as a spiritual

master.¹² While the context of Aquinas' reflections emerges from the medieval university in Paris, his musings on the image of God are surprisingly pragmatic. Based on close readings of Aquinas on the image of God, Aquinas takes interpretative liberties in order to synthesize eastern and western traditions by advancing upon Augustine's depiction of the image in *De Trinitate*, testing the limits of Plato and Aristotle's notion of embodiment, and probing the benefits of a fusion between the active and contemplative life through an integration of Damascene's moral sensibilities. Together, Wesley and Aquinas attempt to align their meditations on the human person with Scripture and to adapt these truths to their contexts. In their differences, Thomas approaches the *imago Dei* from above through the medium of metaphysics and Trinitarian discourse in Christian tradition, and Wesley approaches the image of God from below as a practice in practical theology that takes seriously the task of identifying the image and its effects in the common life. Both paradigmatic approaches, theology *from above* and theology *from below*, inform one another and produce a greater sense of responsibility and accountability in constructive ecumenical dialogue.

¹² Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 70. Thomas *not* as a strict intellectual, but as a spiritual master. This figures into *how* we are reading Aquinas—not just the content but considering the journey on which he takes us. Here, the author draws partly upon J.P. Torrell.

5. John Wesley’s Christology

Providing a preview of Wesley’s Christology and Pneumatology, Randy Maddox’s survey of John Wesley’s theology highlights how the human’s two-fold need for *forgiveness* and *healing* in their fallenness sets the stage for the redemptive work of the Son and the Spirit. For Wesley, writes Maddox, “it is through the Incarnate God that we are graciously reconciled, and through the Indwelling God that we are graciously empowered for our healing.”¹ An integral feature of bringing Wesley’s Christology and anthropology together for conversation is the extent that Wesley imagines the redemptive effects of Christ’s work in the life of the believer — chiefly through Christ’s forgiveness of sins. In providing a practical Christology, Wesley appears to emphasize the *work* of Christ over the “the Jesus of history” throughout his literature.² Wesley frequently expresses and develops his Christology through a soteriological lens. Nevertheless, there are some obstacles to thinking about Wesley’s Christology. The chief obstacle persists in the various interpretations surrounding Wesley’s Christology. Before considering the benefits of Christ’s work for the human being, it will help to clarify Wesley’s core Christological convictions. Without a sound basis, it may be difficult to accept Wesley’s key takeaways concerning the relationship between Christology and anthropology.

1 Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 94.

2 Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 94-95. On the phrase, “the Jesus of history,” it may help to note that this designation often appears alongside authors who consider Jesus as an example apart from his redemptive work or consider his redemptive work as an afterthought. Thus, Maddox is making a claim about Wesley’s starting point for doing Christology.

5.1 What is Wesley's Christology?

The difficulty in assessing Wesley's Christological convictions may stem from his lack of deliberate and formal literature on the subject matter. In the texts where Wesley's Christology is on display, the reader faces the interpretive challenge of attempting to situate where Wesley's Christological commitments settle. Of these commitments, John Wesley scholarship has partially tried to examine Wesley's alignment with the Council of Chalcedon, with several critiques assessing whether or to what extent John Wesley was Chalcedonian.¹⁶¹ The first challenge with this assessment, writes Riss, is that there are about as many "Wesleys" as Wesley scholars.¹⁶² Each person who approaches Wesley tends to see Wesley in a different light. Secondly, there is the challenge of categorization. Problems inevitably arise whenever a scholar attempts to categorize a thinker based on their views, Riss avers.¹⁶³ As a result, it is perhaps best to allow Wesley the benefit of the doubt unless it becomes evident that he does not possess an orthodox Christology. Finally, scholars appear to judge Wesley's Chalcedonian tendencies based upon Wesley's rhetorical alignment with the Chalcedonian definition, not on the spirit of his writings. Recent scholarship regarding the Council of Chalcedon throws some ambiguity into this simple approach to assigning Wesley to any category of theological thought. The work of Alois Grillmeier preceding Vatican II, and the more recent work of Brian Daley, S.J., and

161 Here, I say *partially* since it does not appear as if scholars have attempted to measure the totality of Wesley's writings against the more extensive events and literature surrounding the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD); these scholars are essentially examining whether Wesley's verbiage appears to line-up with the letter of the Chalcedon definition.

162 Richard M. Riss, "John Wesley's Christology in Recent Literature," in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, 1, (2010): p. 108.

163 Richard M. Riss, "John Wesley's Christology in Recent Literature," pp. 128-129.

Christopher Beeley, demonstrate that interpreting the Council of Chalcedon in Christian history is a complicated task and some ambiguities arise in attempting to work with the philosophical components of the definition.¹⁶⁴ This problem persists in the minds of brilliant thinkers into the present day. For instance, Maddox’s criticism of Wesley is that Wesley appears to display Monophysite tendencies¹⁶⁵ in his *NT Notes* and elsewhere, where Wesley appears to exhibit some degree of discomfort with Scriptures that highlight Jesus’ humanity in his interpretations and goes so far as to edit phrases from the *39 Articles* and other theological works.¹⁶⁶ In isolation, this tendency in Wesley’s writings would seem like an appropriate teaching to caution against; however, Wesley’s rhetorical expression also comes comparably close to Cyril’s Christological writings. Perhaps it will suffice to say that *if* Wesley demonstrates Monophysite tendencies, these tendencies—while limited in number—appear to align with Cyril’s rhetorical

164 For a Christological survey on these matters, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1-2; Brian E. Daley, S.J., *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); and Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). Maddox notes of Wesley: “He agreed with Peter Browne that much of the historical debate over Christ’s nature was simply unwarranted imposition of philosophical conceptions on the simply-expressed teachings of Scripture and the earliest church” (*Responsible Grace*, pp. 94-95). This sort of outlook would possibly find an audience, or an interesting dialogue, with more contemporary voices such as Robert W. Jenson and Johannes Zachhuber. Cf. Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 127, cf. p. 131-132; and Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

165 When Maddox writes “Monophysite” it appears as if they are thinking about the Monophysite controversies that arise after the Council of Chalcedon under Severus of Antioch and other, not to the standard-bearing Monophysite writings of Cyril of Alexandria in his writings against the Nestorians.

166 Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 115-117. Added to Maddox’s suspicion is the notion that Wesley only outright rejects some heresies in writing and, as Deschner contends, Wesley’s appeal the *communicatio idiomatum* (which would help set Wesley straight) receives “inconsistent” and “one-sided” use in Wesley’s writing. These are good cautions, however, there appears to be more to the picture that Wesley scholars are not quite capturing (e.g., Wesley’s theological context, the possibility of drawing on tradition differently from popular modern interpretations, or possible innovations in Wesley’s thought that surpass the often-used East-West distinctions). The problems are much less pronounced, too, in capturing Wesley’s Christological spirit opposed to what he literally notes on paper.

inflection as well as his emphasis on the work of Christ in bringing about the renewal of the believer.¹⁶⁷

5.1.1 Graham on Wesley's Christology

Responding to Riss' call for a reevaluation of Wesley's Christology, David Graham explores the claims historically levied against Wesley in his reception by Wesley scholars. Contrary to suspicious claims, Graham contends that Wesley *does* abide by a "Chalcedonian grammar" in his Christological writings and that the points of tension in Wesley's writing and editing are justifiable based on his 18th-century ministerial and theological context.¹⁶⁸ Graham avers, "What seems, at first glance, like an inordinate preoccupation with the supernatural turns out, upon closer inspection, to derive from pastorally responsible and theologically justifiable concerns."¹⁶⁹ Specifically, Graham's study surveys three elements of Wesley's Christology: Wesley's emphasis on Christ's divinity, his "Chalcedonian grammar" in speaking about the hypostatic union that employs an implicit logic of the *communicatio idiomatum*, and the cultural and theological landscape that influences Wesley's rhetorical and stylistic approach.

The goal of Wesley's editing and emphases seems ordered toward helping persons think of Christ as the Eternal Son of God instead of the notion that Christ was merely a great human. Kierkegaard carefully presents a similar distinction in his writing as well, where the theologian

¹⁶⁷ A further study of the subject might take into consideration the guiding metaphysical principles Wesley employs and his hermeneutical outlook to better examine where Wesley might land on these matters.

¹⁶⁸ David A. Graham, "The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley's Christology," p. 99, cf. p. 84. Graham also posits that Wesley's Christology would pair well with a historic Alexandrian approach to Christology (recognizing the limits of reducing the multifaceted expressions of thought among different thinkers to a particular "school" of interpretation) that also pairs well with Luther's Christological approach.

¹⁶⁹ David A. Graham, "The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley's Christology," p. 85.

begins his *Practice in Christianity* by drawing attention to the distinction between Christ as a man in history and Christ as the Son of God and elucidating what is at stake in *how* persons approach their Christ-talk and not just in reiterating key statements.¹⁷⁰

Graham avers, “Not only does he explicitly intend to swim in the ‘ecumenical stream of Christological tradition,’ but his biblical interpretation and preaching exhibit an orthodox commitment to the hypostatic union, including a consistent inhabitation of the grammar of the *communicatio idiomatum*.” Graham continues, “This becomes more evident when one interprets Wesley’s Christology in light of his deistic context and soteriology.”¹⁷¹ The key emphasis in Wesley’s imagination pertains to the saving power of Christ’s work as the Incarnate Son of God, “the ‘amazing union’ through which God and sinners are reconciled.”¹⁷²

So, what is the significance of Wesley’s Christology being a practical Christology? The significance of these practical dimensions of Wesley’s Christology is Wesley’s concern in demonstrating how dogmatic theology extends meaning to the life of the believer. Much of this meaning appears in how Wesley talks about Christ’s salvific work and how this work extends to the believer through their justification. As Graham notes in his defense of Wesley’s orthodox Christology, “Wesley steadfastly preached that ‘the Most High does not simply remain in the

170 Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, p. 23ff. See also Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, p. 5. In the introduction to speaking about his project in general and Aquinas’ Christology in particular, Williams avers, “The effect of Jesus’ life, death, and rising certainly includes historical matters—the existence of the Church, obviously, and all that goes with that. But the reconciliation of the world to God cannot be described as an episode in history among others; it is a change in what historical agents may hope for, think about and pray about. As such it is emphatically a ‘supernatural’ act, bringing about what no particular agency within creation could have done in virtue of its own immanent finite capacity.” Williams, like Kierkegaard, aims to capture the impact of the Incarnation from a similar starting point—that is, starting with God as the subject of the Incarnation instead of the particular events of Christ’s life.

171 David A. Graham, “The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley’s Christology,” p. 103.

172 David A. Graham, “The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley’s Christology,” p. 103.

starry heavens;’ in Christ, God personally enters into history to effect salvation.”¹⁷³ This overarching emphasis on Christ’s deity, Graham contends, is a rhetorical decision that Wesley employs through his pastoral discernment; Wesley wants to convey that Christ is not merely “a moral teacher” —as the Deists in his context would argue—but “the God who alone redeems and who alone deserves our worship.”¹⁷⁴ While Graham sees a need for further reflection on the relationship between Christ’s person and work following the logic of John Wesley’s orthodox “Chalcedonian grammar,” Graham does offer some helpful insights that highlight the pragmatic ends of Wesley’s thought. Paramount to Graham is Wesley’s focus on the atonement:

Wesley was keenly aware that only God himself can save sinners, and thus all three of Christ’s offices—the priestly, prophetic and royal—in one way or another depend upon his consubstantiality with the Father. As sinners we stand in need of a perfect mediator intrinsically related to God himself (priest), a revealer who can enlighten with supreme authority (prophet), and a monarch with the power to reign over all, including our unruly hearts (king).¹⁷⁵

Essentially, Graham recognizes how Christ’s incarnate impacts Wesley’s soteriology. Giving an example of how Wesley treats the priestly office, Graham highlights the centrality of the hypostatic union’s integrity in order to communicate *how* Christ was able to offer himself as a living sacrifice.¹⁷⁶ Another ready comparison might be Wesley’s admonition to his preachers to

173 David Graham, “The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley’s Christology,” p. 99; Graham partly quotes Kenneth Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, p. 93.

174 David A. Graham, “The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley’s Christology,” p. 100. Cf. 101. On the theological landscape of Wesley’s ministry context, Graham draws attention to a key insight in how the Wesley’s social world perceived Christ: “the humanity [of Christ] was a given but the divinity was increasingly questioned.” As he examines Sermon 123, Graham posits that Christ’s human nature would have been a “basic presupposition” based on the logic of Wesley’s sermon. See John Wesley, Sermon 123: On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” *Works*, pp. 103-104

175 David A. Graham, “The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley’s Christology,” p. 101.

176 David A. Graham, “The Chalcedonian Logic of John Wesley’s Christology,” p. 102.

preach Christ “in all of his offices,” which essentially meant that Wesley’s preachers should aim to embody the offices of Christ in their everyday life in order to *norm* “practical-theological activities” to form their “beliefs, affections, and practices.”¹⁷⁷

What is perhaps important to note from these introductory points is, first, that Wesley focuses on the practicality of his Christology.¹⁷⁸ Second, Wesley expresses that he does not intend to deviate from the core teachings of the Anglican Church put forth in the *39 Articles*, though his act of condensing and editing those articles could be considered suspect. Finally, the theologian *does* affirm an orthodox position in later writing. Likewise, Wesley’s Christology is concerned with the pragmatic dimensions of faith though he is also mindful of the intricacies of the doctrine.

5.1.2 Wesley’s Formal Christology

While much of Wesley’s teaching about Christ stems from a posture of translating Christian truths to suit his ministry and mission, Wesley does offer glimpses of his formal Christology. One of the works scholars jointly acknowledge is Wesley’s “A Letter to a Roman Catholic,” where Wesley engages in a sort of ecumenical dialogue with an anonymous but

¹⁷⁷ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 113.

¹⁷⁸ It is possible to probe how Wesley’s pragmatic approach might compare to Hegel’s emphasis on “subjective religion” (as opposed to the “objective religion” of the creeds, etc.) during his early lectures on Christian phenomenology. Hegel expresses, “my concern is with what needs to be done so that religion with all the force of its teaching might be blended into the fabric of human feelings, bonded with what moves us to act, and shown to be efficacious, thus enabling religion to become entirely subjective.” When subjective religion takes root in the person, “it reveals its presence not merely by hands clasped together, knees bent, and heart humbled before the holy, but by the way it suffuses the entire scope of human inclination (without the soul being directly conscious of it) and makes its presence felt everywhere—although although only mediately or, if I may so express it, negatively, in and through the cheerful enjoyment of human satisfactions.” See W. G. F. Hegel, “Religion is One of Our Greatest Concerns in Life” in *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit* (Making of Modern Theology), ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 45ff.

likely friendly Catholic in Ireland after Wesley’s visit to Dublin and encountering rioting in Cork.¹⁷⁹ The letter contains creedal language, both Nicaean and Apostles Creed, to establish a basis for speaking about commonalities in a shared Christian faith. The letter then advances to identify a Christian’s love as the defining mark of true faith.

Some have wondered about Wesley’s approach within the letter, especially the characterization of his Irish Catholic audience that appears throughout the letter. Of some of these extraneous comments, it is helpful—at least, now—to understand the historical characterization underlying the tropes that Wesley identifies: that his audience is easily on-edge and resistant to English Protestants. In *Britain in Revolution: 1625-1660*, Austin Woolrych surveys the long history of Irish-Catholic oppression by the English monarchy, where Irish Catholics had received religious autonomy and were disallowed these privileges depending on the rulership of the time.¹⁸⁰ The embattled characterization that Wesley identifies, thus, is not without due. Nevertheless, as Outler surmises, Wesley appears to be extending an “olive branch” concerning core theological beliefs coupled with an appeal to genuine Christian faith.¹⁸¹ In hindsight, however, what may be lacking from this address may be a recognition of the social distress levied upon Irish Catholics. Otherwise, the gesture appears to be of good faith with

179 Michael Hurley, S.J., “Introduction,” in *John Wesley’s Letter to a Roman Catholic*, ed. Michael Hurley, S.J., p. 36ff.

180 Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution: 1625-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 20-48. The tension the Woolrych describes precedes Wesley chronologically, but it seems as if the historical tensions persist based on others’ contextual analysis of Wesley’s sermon (e.g., Hurley, below).

181 Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 492ff. While it is possible to laud Wesley for embracing an ecumenical spirit in this letter, Colón-Emeric adds a word of reservation since this is an isolated instance of Wesley’s ecumenism: “Regarding this letter, which has been called an olive branch to the Catholics, David Chapman (In Search of the Catholic Spirit) rightly cautions us that ‘it would be misleading to place too much weight on a single letter, written when there was considerable pressure on Wesley to avoid further trouble. Certainly, the letter reveals Wesley at his most irenic and conciliatory, though it is unique in tone and content among his writings on Roman Catholicism’” (*Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 267, footnote 26; see Chapman, p. 33). In short, Wesley’s mode of ecumenism and his historical situation are incredibly complex. Nevertheless, the letter is helpful for clarifying Wesley’s Christological commitments at the very least.

helpful directives towards thinking about Christology with John Wesley. The ecumenical tone of Wesley’s *Letter*, as Michael Hurley, S.J., describes the letter as such:

The aim however is obviously identical in both [the *Address* and the *Letter*]: to dissipate misunderstanding and so not only put an end to the opposition which threatened the whole Methodist movement but also enable both sides to work together in the same cause, “to help each other on in whatever we are agreed leads to the kingdom”¹⁸²

This brief note on contextual matters offers a helpful introduction to Wesley’s Christology.

First, it nascently demonstrates that Wesley’s Christology is an orthodox Christology. Wesley is not positing a *new* Christology. Second, Wesley’s invocation of creedal references, and especially references to Christ, shows that Wesley’s Christology is ordered to a practical end. In ecumenical dialogue, these core truths unite Wesleyans and Catholics alike. Additionally, the structure of Wesley’s letter implicitly communicates that these core truths of the Christian faith ought to culminate towards a practical end—true faith.

Beyond the contextual situation that demonstrates Wesley’s ecumenical example and his practical aim for presenting Christology as a basis, the theologian offers a formal statement on his Christology within the letter that is beneficial to survey. Wesley writes,

“I believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world, the Messiah so long foretold; that, being anointed with the Holy Ghost, he was a *prophet*, revealing to us the whole will of God; that he was a *priest*, that gave himself a sacrifice for sin, and still

182 Michael Hurley, S.J., “Introduction,” in *John Wesley’s Letter to a Roman Catholic*, ed. Michael Hurley, S.J., p. 38. One of the objections to this reading is the possibility of anachronism, since “the authorities of the State and Establish Church” played a significant role in the oppression of early Methodism over and above the Irish Catholics. Notably, the objection overlooks local events in Cork as the cause for Wesley’s correspondence with Mr. Bailey, the rector of Kilcully. Hurley contends, “John Wesley’s Letter to a Roman Catholic may therefore, I suggest, still be seen as a companion to his Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland: as occasioned by some late occurrences’ in Cork and as attempting to neutralize opposition to the Methodist movement” (p. 39).

makes intercession for transgressors; that he is a *king*, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and will reign until he has subdued all things to himself.

“I believe he is *the proper, natural Son of God, God of God, very God of very God*; and that he is the Lord of all, having absolute, supreme, universal dominion over all things; but more peculiarly our Lord, who believe in him, both by conquest, purchase, and voluntary obligation.

“I believe that he was *made man, joining the human nature with the divine in one person*; being conceived by the singular operation of the Holy Ghost, and born of the blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as before she brought him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin.”¹⁸³

From this excerpt, Wesley focuses his Christological commitments by alluding to the three offices of Christ, the subject of Christ as the Eternal Son of God who is God, and that the Word was “made man” through the mystery of the Incarnation, where divinity and humanity are united in the “person” of Christ. The significance of Christ’s offices will appear below on Wesley’s practical Christology. In general, this is Wesley’s succinct way of distilling his core theological commitments—and it demonstrates, at least in part, that Wesley is not an outlier to these particular theological maxims.

183 John Wesley, *A Letter to a Roman Catholic*, ed. by Michael Hurley, p. 50; emphasis mine.

5.1.3 Wesley's Practical Christology

Perhaps paradigmatic of Wesley's theology and his Christian leadership is the practicality of his Christology. Wesley offers some formal reflections within his oeuvre, but much of his work examines how truth manifests in people's lives. So, what might constitute Wesley's practical Christology? How might vital Christological truths come to bear on the believer's life? Maddox recovers an interesting approach to thinking about Wesley's practical Christology in how the theologian speaks about the embodiment of Christ's three offices. Here, Maddox surveys Wesley's writings on Christ's offices — prophet, priest, and king — and recalls Wesley's admonition to his preachers to *live* the offices of Christ.¹⁸⁴ Maddox avers, "the doctrine of the Three Offices served for Wesley as a grammar for norming practical-theological activities aimed at forming the beliefs, affections, and practices of his people."¹⁸⁵ The end goal of the offices was not the infusion of theoretical knowledge about Christ's ministry but to emulate Christ's ministry in such a way that these principles took root in the life of the people. Accomplishing this goal required the preacher to speak through their actions. Nevertheless, the three offices of Christ demonstrate the *work* of Christ, which is characteristic of Wesley's emphasis.

¹⁸⁴ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁸⁵ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 113.

Important for considering Wesley’s Christology, following the insights on Wesley’s theology of the heart, is Wesley’s reflection on his conversion experience. In his journal entry (Wednesday, May 24, 1738), Wesley records:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.¹⁸⁶

The build-up or prelude to the notorious final paragraph is particularly striking in Wesley’s journal; however, most attend to the last movement of Wesley’s recollection, depicting his famous experience where his heart is strangely warmed. Wesley comments on the shift in his perception from a general “faith in God” to a “true faith in Christ,” and integral to his conversion account is the witness of living models of “true faith” who “earnestly and preservingly” pursued God’s grace—“a true living faith in Christ.” In the verses that Wesley recalls leading up to his Aldersgate Experience, he expresses being struck by one of the primary verses on *theosis* in Christian thought, and further acknowledges his amazement by the truth that the Kingdom of God is not far. Whether Wesley intended to draw out these metaphysically rich verses in his account or not, the focus is incredibly Christo-centric. The richly described human life receives vitality through the heartfelt encounter with Christ; passivity in faith is not a possibility for the Christian, according to Wesley’s experience.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Albert Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 69.

¹⁸⁷ Of note, a Wesley scholar will likely add that this is characteristic of the “middle” Wesley and thus open for comparison with his later views. To this I add from “Perceptibility of Grace” to potentially fill out the picture.

Along similar lines, Maddox draws upon the “Perceptibility of Grace” in Wesley’s writings. The capacity to *perceive* grace, Maddox avers, comes through *experiencing* God’s love. “For Wesley,” he continues, “the witness of the Holy Spirit is the divine communication of that experience.”¹⁸⁸ Maddox further summarizes this communication as “an inward awareness of merciful love that evidences our restored relationship to God. In essence, it is God sharing Godself with us to the point where we can sense Divine mercy and love in a manner *analogous* to our awareness of our own affections and tendencies.”¹⁸⁹ As such, via Wesley, Maddox describes a picture of faith where God’s grace draws the person into Godself through the experience of love, providing a sense of assurance and a spiritual intuition of sorts. This spiritual sensibility made possible through Christ’s work enables the person to grow in Christlikeness. Maddox avers,

The Spirit’s witness is precisely such a manifestation of God’s love in individual hearts, enabling them to respond and grow in Christ-likeness. For Wesley, any model of the Christian life which excludes this witness would suggest that humans grow in Christ-likeness through their own power!¹⁹⁰

Up until now, fragments of Wesley’s thought have been introduced for consideration. While these are helpful for understanding Wesley’s commitments and thoughts, one of the significant contributions of Wesley was along the lines of widespread teachings. The reflections Wesley puts forth in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* reveal the longstanding commitments of Wesley’s teachings on holiness—and participating in the image of God, by extension—that span the course of 38 years at the time of publication.

¹⁸⁸ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁹ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 129; cf. p. 129 for more distinctions on assurance *contra* “enthusiasm.”

¹⁹⁰ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 130.

5.1.2.1 Christlikeness in Wesley’s *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*

As Wesley writes *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, he reflects upon his early studies of Scripture in 1729 and the importance it occupies in his pursuit of truth and “pure religion.” From his time in these early considerations, he attests to seeing “the indispensable necessity of having the mind which was in Christ, and of walking as Christ also walked; even of having, not some part only, but *all the mind which was in him*; and of walking as he walked, not only in many or in most respects, but *in all things*.”¹⁹¹ Wesley admonishes his pastors and parishioners to abide by this twin command—to have the mind of Christ and to walk like Christ—at different points of Wesley’s long-taught treatise (§5, 13, 15, 27). The rhetoric Wesley employs to speak about the believer’s maturity in Christlikeness situates the pursuit of holiness in imitating Christ’s life and personhood (an *imitatio Christi*). His explicit reference to Christ as the believer’s Exemplar, moreover, locates the genuine Christian life in a strong sense of conformity to Christ, “a uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master.”¹⁹² Generally, to have Christ’s mind and to walk like Christ correspond to inward and outward conformity to Christ—and thus a holistic approach.

A point of note is that the *inward* and *outward* formation of the human persons in Wesley’s treatise corresponds to a larger pattern of Christian participation throughout the ages—the mutuality of the contemplative and active life in participating in the image.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Ed. Thomas Jackson (Peabody: Hendrikson Publishers, 2007), p. 7. From §5, emphasis mine. Of additional note, Wesley prefaces that his teaching on Christian perfection has not changed over his teaching experience: the central tenets remain the same.

¹⁹² John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, p. 7. From §5.

¹⁹³ Michael Dauphinais, “*Imago Dei*,” pp. 255-256, 266-267.

Through examining the inward and outward life of the Christian, rooted in Christ’s example, and giving equal weight to both modes of imitation, Wesley avoids the dangers of practical Gnosticism on the one hand and Moralism on the other. To insist singularly upon attaining the mind of Christ might result in a Gnostic impulse to the believer’s participation in the image, insisting upon a particular paradigm that accomplishes the work. To advocate solely for an imitation-based approach would bespeak a Moralistic impulse that risks missing the heart of the matter. Instead, subjecting these two modes of participation to the law of love highlights a fundamental orientation of Wesley’s vision of Christian Perfection, grounding the pursuit of holiness in the believer’s loving response to God’s love. Wesley avers,

The greatest gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than *the image of God* fresh stamped on our hearts. It is a ‘renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of him that created them.’ [...] Not that they have already attained all that they shall attain, either are already in this sense perfect. But they daily “go on from strength to strength; beholding” now, “as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are *changed into the same image*, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.”¹⁹⁴

The image, here, is restored through God’s gift of salvation and continues to grow within the believer. Wesley describes the initial act of renewal through justification and the gradual work of renewal through ongoing sanctification: the image of God in the believer is at once restored and being restored; the gift of salvation represents an “instantaneous” and a “gradual work of God.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, §13, p. 27, emphasis mine; cp. §9, p. 15, “change my nature into thine.”

¹⁹⁵ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, p. 29. From §13. This sentiment in Wesley’s description of the image is also reminiscent of John Behr on *making* man in the image of God in Genesis 1:26. According to Behr, the early church fathers interpret this creation passage as bearing the connotations of continuing action: the person is initially *made* in the image of God, and this image is continually being fashioned. The culmination, insists Behr, takes

5.2 Conclusion

Discerning Wesley's Christological commitments is no easy task. Scholars have wondered whether Wesley offers an orthodox Christology that takes seriously the dogmatic positions expressed through the Nicæan Creed and the Chalcedon Definition, avoiding the pitfalls of heterodox teachings that historically emphasize Christ's divinity at the expense of his humanity. At stake is the question concerning whether Wesley provides a trustworthy account of Christ. The lack of texts where Wesley critically engages in Christological discourse presents an interpretive obstacle. Responding to Riss' call for a reevaluation of Wesley's Christology, especially Wesley's theology of the Incarnation, Graham offers a beneficial study that provides theological and contextual depth of insight for discerning the rhetorical dynamics of Wesley's Christology. Wesley not only offers an orthodox Christology that abides by a "Chalcedonian grammar" but a Christology that carefully weaves features of eastern (Alexandrian) and more recent western (Lutheran) strands of Christological thought into a coherent whole. The benefit of Wesley's Christology, in Graham's estimation, is that it interprets the Word as the active agent who enters human history who makes salvation possible.

place in the church father's interpretation of John 19:5, where Pilate declares, "Behold the man!" [*Ecce homo*]. See John Behr lecture, SEBTS, Feb. 2022. A similar tendency appears in Thomas' grammatical exegesis concerning the preposition "*ad*" that clarifies that the human being is *being made* into the image.

6. Thomas Aquinas' Christology

6.1 Introduction

Returning to Thomas Aquinas' cathedral, the task of this chapter is to provide a glimpse into the specifically Christological dimensions of Aquinas' theology that illuminate paths of conversation with John Wesley on Christological approaches to Christian anthropology. Fundamental to thinking about Aquinas' Christology in the *Summa* is Christ's work in making salvation possible, and this work occurs significantly through the Incarnation, the salvific work of Christ, and how believers participate in the sacramental life. These three elements essentially describe the ordering of the *Tertia Pars*, where Aquinas' Christology comes to full display in the *Summa*. While the whole of the *Tertia Pars* is rich for plumbing, it will be helpful to provide a preparatory note concerning the topics that may exceed the bounds of this discussion. First, this chapter will not give a detailed account of the hypostatic union. Not only would a deep dive into this subject press the bounds of what Christians can expect by analogy, but it might obscure our categories of personhood in Thomas' thought. After all, Thomas uses "Person" primarily as a distinct metaphysical category to probe the mysteries of Trinity and Christ's Incarnation.¹⁹⁶ While these matters are important in Christian theology, the doctrine of the hypostatic union does not easily bear immediate impact on speaking about Christian

¹⁹⁶ Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 76ff. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. III, p. 217ff; Michael Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 15.

anthropology.¹⁹⁷ Second, this chapter will not examine Thomas’ sacramental theology that occupies his thought near the close of the *Tertia Pars*. Some motifs concerning the Christian’s participation may arise from this discussion, however a full examination would exceed the bounds of this study. Third, this chapter will not explore the full extent of Christ’s life as it appears in the *Tertia Pars*. To evaluate each expression by which the Christian imitates Christ’s life in some semblance would be too extensive—and those implications seem readily apparent. Rather, this chapter will focus on the extent to which human beings find their end (*terminus*) in Christ. Likewise, this chapter will discuss topics such as grace and the divine missions to discern how Christ’s life bears significance for the individual Christian life.

¹⁹⁷ As a brief note, the most immediate implication is the dignity given to human nature by virtue of the hypostatic union. For example, see Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 168.

6.2 The Structure of Aquinas’ Christology in the Summa

One of the matters of discussion that has been a point of prolegomena in speaking about Thomas Aquinas’ Christology is the placement of his meditations on Christ in his larger project.¹ Some scholars contend that Thomas’ choice to address Christology in the final movement of the *Summa* demonstrates that Christology is an afterthought, giving primacy to the ideas of God’s singularity deriving from philosophical metaphysics—especially his engagement with Aristotle. Those who make this argument tend to base their rationale on the broader outline of Thomas’ *Summa*, not necessarily in terms of the theological cohesiveness of the work nor considering why Thomas might have chosen to conclude his famous theological work with Christology. One of the consequences with this critique of Thomas, an especially characteristic critique in the 20th-century, is that Thomas supposedly divorces his Trinitarian theology from his Christology. In more recent times, however, scholars note that Thomas’ purpose in placing his more explicit reflections on Christology in the *Tertia Pars*, the final structural movement of the *Summa*, is not an afterthought or a point of negligence but a creative choice that communicates something about the subject matter itself and his creative theological endeavor in this project. On the former, Thomas introduces his reader to the *Tertia Pars*, writing, “it is necessary, in order to complete the work of

¹ Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 3ff.

theology, [...] there should follow the consideration of the Savior of all, and of the benefits bestowed by Him on the human race” (*ST IIIprol*). Rowan Williams describes Aquinas’ task in the beginning of the *Tertia Pars* as “a massive grammatical clearing of ground” that removes “any notion of incarnation as a heavenly individual ‘turning into’ an earthly one (and thus replacing some finite agency by a direct divine interruption).”² The focus for Aquinas, as he puts in the Preface to the *Tertia Pars*, is the work of Christ “in order to *save His people from their sins* (Matt. 1:21)” who demonstrates “the way of truth” through His life, and makes union with God possible through the hope of bodily resurrection as the end of the Christian life (*ST IIIprol*).³ To complete his synthetic project in the *Summa*, Thomas turns to “the Saviour of all” and “the benefits bestowed by Him on the human race” as a two necessary discussion components to show how his project culminates in Christ. Likewise, Sarah Coakley contends that “the incarnation is the heart of his whole theological endeavor” and plays a significant role in the overarching *exitus-reditus* design pattern that characterizes the *Summa* as a whole.⁴

On the contrary, it is intrinsic to the *exitus/reditus* scheme of the whole work that Christology be left thus till the last book of the *ST* – precisely as climax, and as the unique means and access of salvific ‘return’: for ‘Our Saviour, the Lord Jesus

2 Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), p. 12.

3 See also Mark D. Jordan, *Teaching Bodies: Moral Formation in the Summa of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), pp. 21-24.

4 Sarah Coakley, “Person of Christ,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae*, ed. Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 222. This approach is also characteristic of Marie-Dominique Chenu.

Christ . . . showed in his own person that path of truth, which, in rising again, we can follow to the blessedness of eternal life’ (III*prol*).⁵

Dominic Legge addresses a similar historical dilemma in speaking about the reception of Aquinas’ Christology, bringing attention to the significance of the *exitus-reditus* vision that Aquinas’ employs as well as arguing for the coherence of Thomas’ Trinitarian Christology as it appears throughout his works. Against the modern attempts to downplay the contributions of Aquinas,⁶ Legge argues that “For St. Thomas, Christology is intrinsically Trinitarian” and demonstrates the coherence of Thomas’ thought by carefully examining the angelic doctor’s teachings on “the divine missions” that provide a Trinitarian shape to the Incarnation.⁷ On the cohesiveness of Aquinas’ work, Legge argues that “Aquinas assumed that his Christology would be read in continuity with his treatment of the Trinitarian processions, of the divine missions, of grace, and so forth.”⁸

In other words, Aquinas presents his subjects intentionally in a manner that builds towards a culminating end—specifically through Christ’s person and work, bearing the

5 Sarah Coakley, “Person of Christ,” CC, p. 222.

6 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 2-3. Legge draws attention to theologians who have engaged in criticisms of Aquinas’ Christology, especially the modern claims that Thomas separates his Christology from his Trinitarian theology. Notable theologians include Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Walter Kasper, Thomas Weinandy, Robert Jenson, and Jürgen Moltmann. See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), p. 30; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), pp. 260, 263-263; Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green, pbk ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), pp. 184; 249-250; Thomas G. Weinandy, “Trinitarian Christology: The Eternal Son,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 392-394; Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 112-114; Jürgen Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972), pp. 226-228.

7 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 2, 4.

8 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 4.

shape and witness of the Trinity. This also means that Aquinas seldom repeats himself as he continues to build upon previous topics in the *Summa*. On the culminating end that Aquinas envisions in the *Tertia Pars*, Coakley avers,

It is not insignificant, then, that Thomas opens his discussion of [C]hristology in the *Summa* (III.1), not with any ambition rationally to *demonstrate* the ‘manner of union’, but in *pedagogical* vein, with a section on the incarnation’s ‘fittingness.’ This strategy reminds his readers at the outset that *convenientia* (theological ‘appropriateness:’ the ‘fittingness’ of divine salvific condescension in Christ) is what governs this topic overall, more than abstract philosophical speculation; and this is a *trope* that is re-expressed sporadically throughout Thomas’ [C]hristological exposition.⁹

Aquinas’ rhetorical strategy in the *Tertia Pars* and the whole *Summa* conveys a manner of guiding the believer through the text with pastoral concerns in mind; the focus in Aquinas’ treatment of the hypostatic union addresses the *fittingness* for the purpose of salvation. Such a strategy is consistent with a reading of Aquinas as a spiritual master, carefully guiding his reader in contemplation of the Incarnate Christ. Jordan adds, Aquinas aims “to show the *convenientia* of the incarnation down to its details as recorded in the scriptures—to display for the reader’s admiration the fittingness of how God took flesh for the sake of that same reader’s moral formation.”¹⁰ With these matters established, we may turn to Aquinas’ posture towards Christ-talk in the *Tertia Pars*.

⁹ Sarah Coakley, “Person of Christ,” CC, p. 224. Cp. Mark D. Jordan, *Teaching Bodies*, p. 18.

¹⁰ Mark D. Jordan, *Teaching Bodies*, p. 21.

6.3 The Trajectory for “Christ-talk” in the Tertia Pars

For the sake of sticking close to the thesis at-hand, namely how Christology informs anthropology, this section will provide less attention to the panoply of important Christological discussions that Aquinas entertains throughout his oeuvre. The aim will be to stick close to the implications that Aquinas explores on Christ as the “image” of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). But why not speak about Christ’s life in comparison with our life? The deficiency of comparing the lived experience of the Christian with Christ’s experience is chiefly that while Christ was truly human, the human person does not, and cannot, experience Christ’s life in the same way.¹¹ One of the essential differences, as Colón-Emeric notes, is that “Christ had both beatific knowledge and infused knowledge” along with his divine knowledge¹² whereas humans possess “intellectual weakness.”¹³ This is not altogether new, and not altogether particular, of Aquinas. On methodology in speaking about Christ, for example, Kierkegaard notes that it would be deficient (to put it more lightly) to begin speaking

11 The broader question I address here pertains to a mode of interpretation whereby thinkers seek to make univocal predications of Christ’s life and the person’s life. Essentially, it is a neglect to incorporate the *analogia entis* into Christian thought: we are left to suppose that our lives can amount to the quality of Christ’s life (making religion a matter of Moralism) that subtly embraces transcendental experience as a means to describe how the Christians and Christ relate to one another. Similarly, thinkers observe a similar pattern by beginning the task of Christology with the “Jesus of history.”

12 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 116. Christ was *viator* and *comprehensor*, writes Colón-Emeric

13 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 119.

about Christ from his humanity.¹⁴ To speak rightly, we must consider Christ as God. Otherwise, it would be all too easy to consider the greatness of Christ’s human actions without considering the unfathomable *mystery* of Christ being God in the flesh.¹⁵ While Aquinas does not rhetorically approach his conversation in the same way, his intricate theological musings demonstrate as much. A space exists for speaking about imitation, and some analogical implications follow how Aquinas speaks about grace.¹⁶ But the fullness of Christ’s work in Aquinas’ Christology points to Christ as the fountainhead of grace who points to the Father in the mystery and paradox of his life.¹⁷

14 Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, Kierkegaard’s Writings, vol. 20, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 24ff.

15 Kierkegaard posits two starting points for Christology: (1) “the assumption that Christ was a human being” that accounts for the demonstrations of Christ’s divinity from history or (2) “the assumption (of faith) that he was God” that considers Christ in his abasement through the mystery of the Incarnation. *Practice in Christianity*, pp. 26-27, cf. pp. 29-35. Joseph Wawrykow describes the converse approach that modern theological anthropology tends to posit, resulting in a “self-conscious distancing from the more classical, incarnational approach to Christ favored by theologians such as Aquinas.” The example that Wawrykow identifies in modern times is Karl Rahner who takes the anthropological starting point to speak of the possibility of self-realization in Christ as the driving metaphor. Joseph Wawrykow, “Grace,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2005), p. 210.

16 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 115ff. While Aquinas’ anthropology is thoroughly Trinitarian, Colón-Emeric does acknowledge helpful examples of Christ’s exemplarity in Aquinas’ thought. Colón-Emeric even posits that “the angelic doctor emphasizes the humanity of Christ with a vigor that is unusual among other scholastic or even patristic theologians” (p. 117). Thus, there is room for speaking about theologies of experience in Aquinas’ thought. In the current section, my emphasis has not been so much to downplay theologies of experience but to highlight the starting point for Aquinas’ —Christ as the Word of God Incarnate, not Christ as a historical person.

17 In Legge’s argument, much of the anthropological and soteriological implications come to the fore in pages 160-171. In speaking of the divine missions as a key feature of Thomas Aquinas’ Christology, Legge does not go so far as to say that these divine missions correspond analogically to the human person. Elsewhere, we can speak about the processions of love and wisdom in the human person but drawing this connection is not as strong a feature of Legge’s argument. More on mystery and paradox to follow. See also Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 128; Sarah Coakley, “Person of Christ,” pp. 230-232; Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 87, 108; Jean Porter,

6.4 On Grace and Participation

Speaking of the gift of grace, Colón-Emeric observes the central role of this doctrine in Aquinas’ soteriology: “By grace, God becomes present to us in a new way.”¹⁸ Moving from Aquinas initial cosmological depiction in the *Prima Pars*, where God is in all according to the first type of perfection, Aquinas’ doctrine of grace examines the second mode of perfection where “God is at home in the rational creature like he is in his very temple (*sicut in templo suo*).”¹⁹ He writes, “Summarizing further, Colón-Emeric adds, “This grace is a *habitus*, a sort of ‘second nature’ that raises and perfects the natural powers of the human so that we might ‘become participants of the divine nature’ (2 Pet. 1:4).”²⁰ Discussing Aquinas’ mature reflections on “merit,” Wawrykow discusses what it would entail for God to set up his temple in the creature. “God’s call issues in grace,” Wawrykow writes, “which for Thomas elevates (*gratia elevans*) the person to the supernatural level of existence, to the level of God’s own activity. For Thomas, grace is the participation in God’s own nature, which makes it possible to act like God.”²¹ According to Wawrykow, the elevating work of grace serve the purpose of guiding individuals towards the beatific vision—the vision of God. Continuing, Wawrykow adds to the elevating quality of grace by highlighting the cleansing and ordering work of grace. In addition to *gratia elevans*, Aquinas points to *gratia sanans*. Wawrykow writes,

In light of this analysis of the disruption caused by sin, when he speaks of habitual grace Thomas adds that this grace is designed by God to restore the

“Right Reason and the Love of God,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 187; et al.

18 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 93.

19 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 93.

20 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 93.

21 Joseph Wawrykow, *God’s Grace and Human Action: ‘Merit’ in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 166-167.

rectitude lost by sin. Not only does habitual grace re-orient the person to God and raise the person to the supernatural level, it also heals the person of the disorder caused by sin, restoring in the soul the proper subordination of the lower parts of the soul to the reason and thus making possible the consistent pursuit of the good.²²

The gift of grace performs multiple functions in the believer, from elevating nature to better participate in God’s divine life to even more fundamental Christian necessities as healing the disorderliness of the self. In speaking about how humans are perfect by participation: “It is in our nature to know and love God, but only as the intellect and the will are perfected by the infused virtues and gifts of the Spirit is the soul rendered pliable to the Spirit’s immediate guidance, so that all its powers operate perfectly and thereby attain the human’s final perception—beatitude.”²³ Participating in the processions of love and knowledge of God, humans are brought into a greater sense of experience of God’s life and bear the image to a great extent than before. In the Incarnation, Christ not only accomplishes the work of salvation but provides a “model for moral emulation.”²⁴ Speaking of Thomas’ theology of the divine processions (or *divine missions*), Legge notes that “it is only according to sanctifying grace that the divine persons are in a human being according to a new and special mode” (*ST I. 43.3*). Thus, once again, to speak about the formation of the believer into the image and likeness of Christ requires speaking about the “divine missions.”

22 Joseph Wawrykow, *God’s Grace and Human Action: ‘Merit’ in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 171.

23 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 98.

24 Joseph Wawrykow, “Grace,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 212.

An occasional misreading of article 43, writes Legge, is one in which the reader interprets Thomas as insisting that “God indwells the soul only insofar as one actually knows and loves God.”²⁵ However, such an interpretation would not generally accord with Aquinas’ thought since he commonly insists that God takes the first initiative.²⁶ Additionally, as Legge aptly acknowledges, Thomas believes that God dwells in the soul of those who do not know and love Him.²⁷ To say that God dwells in creatures, in general, follows the *first perfection* in Aquinas’ thought—as noted earlier. Nevertheless, what Legge attempts to uncover is Thomas’ Trinitarian understanding of how God works through grace in the life of the believer in the *second perfection*. Examining this mystery, Legge points to the divine missions to add clarity:

A full accounting of an invisible mission requires Aquinas to identify not only habitual grace in general, but the distinct gift within habitual grace by which the human being is “assimilated to the divine person who is sent” — which is to say, by which a likeness to the divine person’s mode of procession is impressed on the soul. In the gift of charity, which flows from habitual grace and perfects the human power of loving, the soul is “assimilated” to the Holy Spirit himself, receiving a likeness to the Spirit who is love in person — and it is thus that the Spirit is “in” the soul. Likewise, the gift of wisdom also flows from habitual grace and perfects the human power of knowing thereby assimilating the soul to the person of the Word.²⁸

25 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 29. The dual procession of love and knowledge, in some sense, is said to mirror the processions of Word and Spirit in the Trinity—thus highlighting an aspect of the imprinted image.

26 Colón-Emeric evokes a similar sentiment, arguing that Aquinas does not adopt Pelagian tendencies. See *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 172ff.

27 Legge is drawing upon *In I Epist. ad Cor.* c. 3, lect. 3 (no. 173) for his example.

28 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 31.

This grace takes shape—a Trinitarian shape—in the life of the believer, modelling the divine processions in God’s Triune life where love and knowledge jointly inform the life of the believer. Adding to his examination of this mystery, Legge continues by observing the intelligibility of the incarnation and Christ’s unique role in the dispensation of salvation based on Aquinas’ recognition of the divine processions.

Probing further, Legge writes,

As we have seen, St Thomas probes the rich intelligibility of the incarnation by considering it as the Son’s visible mission by which man (and, in man, the whole universe), which proceeded from God as caused by and patterned upon the divine processions, is repaired after sin and is brought to his final perfection by returning to God according to the same pattern of the personal processions. St Thomas’s Christology is thus Trinitarian in a deep and thoroughgoing way. More than making occasional mention of some point of Trinitarian doctrine, St Thomas evidences a grasp of the whole mystery of Christ that emerges from a strikingly fecund understanding of the divine processions in the heart of the Trinity—an understanding of the way that those processions are the *ratio*, cause, and exemplar of creatures and also of the whole *dispensatio* of salvation (via the divine missions). Aquinas thus accounts for how the personal properties of the second person of the Trinity give him a unique and distinctive place at the center of that *dispensatio*—which is why *the Son* was the divine person who became incarnate.²⁹

At the present, this model is helpful for thinking about the broader movements of Aquinas’ thought: the motifs of mystery and paradox have an important place in Aquinas’ thought, and the logic of the divine missions occupies space in Thomas’ anthropology as well as his Christology. Much of Legge’s discussion focuses on the

29 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 127-128.

dense Christological implications of what it looks like for Christ to be the unique Personal subject in the Incarnation and Aquinas’ special view concerning Christ receiving habitual grace (*habitus*) in the Spirit.³⁰ The implications of what these truths mean for the human person appear in doses in Legge’s work.

In speaking of Christ’s life in the Spirit, for instance, Legge asks, “Is there a difference between the way that Jesus receives the Spirit’s mission, and the way that the Spirit is sent to the faithful? Since the Holy Spirit, as a divine person, is himself infinite, can there be differences in ‘how much’ of the Spirit one receives?”³¹ The question itself stems from the recognition that several others have received a mission from the Spirit in Scripture’s revelation.³² Drawing upon texts from John’s Gospel (John 1:14, 16; 3:34), Aquinas answers that “God gives the Spirit to men by measure, but to the Son without measure; ... He gives his entire Spirit to the incarnate Son not in a particular fashion, nor by subdivision, but universally and generally.”³³ Notably, this does not mean that believers receive only part of the Spirit. Rather, Aquinas means to say that the Spirit’s presence is “given partially, not with respect to his essence and power (in this sense, he is infinite), but with respect to the gifts which are given by measure” — namely, by the

30 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 61-128 and 131-159, respectively.

31 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 160.

32 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 160.

33 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 161. See *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 3.

“created effect” of God’s grace.³⁴ The difference between Christ’s participation in the Spirit and other human’s participation in the Spirit appears in three senses: Christ “receives the full *extent* of the Spirit’s gifts,” “Christ *always* has this fullness,” and “Christ has the infinite capacity to pour out the Spirit’s gifts.”³⁵ Through the fullness of grace that Christ experiences through union with the Holy Spirit, Christ become the fountainhead of grace; the grace that humans receive comes through Christ.

While Christ as the fountainhead of grace serves as a key motif, Legge helpfully illuminates how the visible missions—especially the Spirit’s descent at Christ’s baptism—bears significance for thinking about the Christian’s participation in grace. When the Holy Spirit appears in his visible missions, his appearance is for the sake of Christians. In the first sense, the Spirit’s visible mission demonstrates that Christ is the source of grace.³⁶ In the second sense, the visible missions reveal the Trinitarian form of salvation and that “salvation has the whole Trinity as its end and its fruit.”³⁷ In Aquinas’ Christology, Christ not only bears the imprint of the Trinity but experiences the full presence and activity of the Godhead in his Incarnate life. Reflecting on the pragmatic dimensions of this mystery in Aquinas’ thought, Legge poetically puts,

34 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 161. Quoting *In Ioan.* c. 3, lect. 6 (no. 542).

35 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 162-163.

36 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 170-171.

37 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 171.

As Christ received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at his baptism, so our baptism, a work of the whole Trinity, gives us a share in the same Spirit, who renews our innocence and makes us as “simple as doves.” And as Christ’s humanity shone with the glory of the Holy Spirit at his transfiguration, so the Holy Spirit will conform us to Christ in his passion and death, so that we will also share in the glory of his resurrection.³⁸

To participate in the mystery of Christ made possible through grace, the believer is drawn into the life of the Trinity. Aquinas’ recognition of the divine missions helps him speak about the relationship between Christology and Trinitarian theology in a way that communicates the significance of Christ’s saving work to the believer and draws the individual into participation in this mystery.

So, what does the perfection of Christ mean for the Christian’s journey towards perfection? In addition to the motifs of participation above, Colón-Emeric posits three practical means through which the believer may benefit from Christ’s Incarnate life. Because of Christ’s work, the Christian may journey into perfection through the contemplation of Christ, the imitation of Christ, and the believer’s participation in Christ.³⁹ It bears remembering that “Christ is not perfect for his sake but for ours.”⁴⁰ Christ’s visible reception of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and the grace Christ willingly receives in his hypostatic union are salvific and exemplary in their scope: “As the incarnate image, Christ is both the principle and exemplar of all creatures in their

38 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 171.

39 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 118-121.

40 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 121.

procession from God (first perfection) and in their return to God (second perfection).”⁴¹

The participation in grace leads to the participation through vision, according to Aquinas. To the vision we must now turn.

6.5 “Vision” in Aquinas’ Christological Anthropology

Beyond the insights Legge brings forth concerning the believer’s participation in the mystery, Wawrykow offers an additional vantage point concerning the motif of participation in Aquinas’ *Summa*. On the grace in Christ, Wawrykow avers, “The savior, the one sent by God to effect human salvation, need not be—indeed, should not be—identical in every circumstance with those who are to be saved. But, in terms of revealing the correct relationship of humans to God, Aquinas’ Jesus would seem to offer a most appropriate model.” As such, Wawrykow sees an opening for thinking about the imitation of Christ and participating in Christ’s divine life to an extent.⁴² Speaking of Christ’s actions, and drawing upon Richard Schenk’s study of Christ’s revelatory actions in his Incarnate life, Legge duly avers, “Christ’s actions are indeed examples for us to imitate, but [...] Aquinas means more than this: Christ’s actions teach us by revealing

41 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 119.

42 Behind Wawrykow’s interpretation is the argument that “too much has been made of a single word”—that is, faith—and insufficient attention has been given to the main thrust of Aquinas’ analysis.” He continues that “faith” appears to be used equivocally in Aquinas’ work. Joseph Wawrykow, “Grace,” p. 217.

the truth about God.”⁴³ The power of Christ’s humanity in shaping believers in the present stems from the belief that Christ’s whole life as man is revelatory — “at least for those who have ‘eyes to see’ and ‘ears to hear.’”⁴⁴ This thought on revelation follows the belief that Christ’s humanity makes “the invisible visible.” Thus, we can think of Christ’s life as having value for the Christian beyond mere imitation — that Christ’s life is revealing the invisible mysteries of God.⁴⁵ Legge avers, “Christ’s humanity and his human actions not only reveal, but in revealing also lead us to the Father — which is another way of speaking about the incarnation as the visible mission of the Son.”⁴⁶

One of the benefits of Aquinas’ contemplative Christology is readily available in Joshua Farris’ contemporary critique on theological anthropology. Farris writes,

Thankfully, some contemporary theologians have reignited the discussion about the beatific vision as an important theological item to retrieve from the past. The importance of the beatific vision is felt when we consider the theocentric focus of it in contrast to the contemporary model that highlights the physical resurrection alone apart from the vision. Having a theocentric focus is important for our anthropology because our anthropology is teleologically directed to God and made sense of in light of divine action. *Contrastively, a model of physical*

43 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 118. See Richard Schenk, O.P., “Omnis Christi Actio Nostra est Instructio: The Deeds and Sayings of Jesus as Revelation in the View of Thomas Aquinas,” in *La doctrine de la revelation divine de saint Thomas d’Aquin, Studi Tomistici*, no. 37, ed. Leo Elders (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), pp. 113-117.

44 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 118.

45 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 120-121. Legge goes on to speak about several instances where Aquinas points to the “mystery” of faith that the Christian is drawn into through the mediation of the Son, enabling a “way for us to travel unto God” in this life which results in a “vision” of the Father in the next life. This emphasis on participating in the mystery of faith and being drawn to God in final vision fits well within Aquinas’ *exitus-reditus* schema where human beings are meant to return to God through Christ. This much Aquinas’ theological vision seems to do well.

46 Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 119.

*resurrection (i.e., new creation) apart from the vision has shaped contemporary evangelical discussions and is, arguably, characterized by an excessive anthropomorphism.*⁴⁷

This is an important note in considering sources that seek to amplify the importance of person’s substantial constitution, as these arguments tend to be more anthropocentrically concerned. Conversely, the classic approach that Farris recognizes—that which recognizes the importance of *vision* that points back to God as the primary focus of theological anthropology — “is focused not solely on the most obvious immanent activity of humans but rather on the transcendent activities of the divine as that which grounds human activity and points humans beyond the earthly processes to God’s life as a trinitarian being.”⁴⁸ This much seems to occupy St. Thomas’ concern in the *Summa*.

The formulation is at home in other writers as well. Thomas Pfau, for instance, discusses Aquinas’ iterations on sight in his work on “images” in the Christian tradition. In the broad view, Pfau is addressing the metaphysical, phenomenological, and hermeneutical dimensions of the “image,” but some Christological implications come to the fore. Looking to Aquinas’s thoughts on the capacity for vision, Pfau examines the requirements for “vision” in the angelic doctor’s thought: “Two things are required for both sensible and for intellectual vision — *viz.*, the power of sight and the union of the

⁴⁷ Joshua Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, pp. 16-17; emphasis mine.

⁴⁸ Joshua Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, p. 17. Here, Farris draws from M. Allen’s “Visibility of the Invisible God” where Allen connects God’s invisibility and transcendence to the beatific vision.

thing seen with the sight. For vision is made actual only when the thing seen is in a certain way in the seer [*unio rei visae cum visu, non enim fit visio in actu, nisi per hoc quod res visa quodammodo est in vidente*].⁴⁹ The implications of vision are heightened, however, in considering the relationship between being (*esse*) and the intelligibility of a thing through analogy. Here, Pfau avers,

It bears stressing that this ultimate predicate of ‘being’ has not in turn been abstracted *from* particular existents. What analogy points *to*—God as containing all possible perfections *simpliciter*—is not simply another distinct entity or genus. On the contrary, the reality of each particular thing becomes itself intelligible only insofar as its specific degree of perfection is traced back, *per analogiam*, to the transcendent being that is its source. As Aquinas puts it, “Our intellect, since it knows God from creatures, in order to understand God, forms conceptions proportional to the perfections flowing from God to creatures, which perfections pre-exist in God unitedly and simply, whereas in creatures they are received and divided and multiplied (*ST I.13.4*).”⁵⁰

In sum, seeing and knowing God requires some perceptible semblance to God in the human intellect and this takes place in the context of a special bond between God and the creature. Moreover, the use of analogy to describe this relationship transcends the difference in genus between God and creatures since analogy posits a relationship between the thing and its source. Because creatures proceed from God, Aquinas can make full use of analogy to describe this relationship.

49 Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, p. 448.

50 Thomas Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, p. 352. See also p. 351 for the technical dimensions of using analogical predication (e.g., navigating between apophatic and kataphatic, how to speak about relation, the relationship of the creature to its cause, and the general use of “analogy” in language). Cp. Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 90-92.

Returning to an argument from Chapter Three, this contemplation of Christ’s life may also correspond with the paradigm of the “mixed” life that Dauphinais notes in examining Aquinas’ teaching on the image and likeness of God in *Prima Pars*, Question 93. To reiterate, Aquinas’ blending of reflections on the *imago Dei* from Augustine and Damascene leads Aquinas to posit a fusion of the contemplative and the active life in bearing God’s image. The inability to completely know (from Augustine’s thought) is helped by active participation (from Damascene’s thought). Summarizing his argument, Dauphinais avers,

Aquinas leads the reader on a rhetorical path of give-and-take between our complete inability to comprehend God in this life and the understanding we can have of him from created reality, above all *from the Word made flesh—a path that would be impossible to traverse without the incarnation, death, and resurrection.*⁵¹

One of the important considerations in Christological anthropology is the significance of Christ’s work in making possible the believer’s partial vision of God in this life through *knowing* and *loving* God through faith. What Dauphinais seeks to articulate, which receives substantially more help through Aquinas’ integration of John Damascene, is the fusion of the contemplative life with the active life that emerges from discussing the image of God in the human being.⁵² The person cannot completely know God in this life, but this gap is substantially helped through one’s participation in the image—

⁵¹ Michael Dauphinais, “*Imago Dei* in Aquinas,” p. 250; emphasis mine.

⁵² Michael A. Dauphinais, “*Imago Dei* in Aquinas,” pp. 255-256, 266-267. Cf. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 98, 118.

especially the image of Christ. After all, Christ is the perfect image of God (cf. Col. 1:15).⁵³

6.6 Conclusion

As mentioned in the Introduction earlier, there is a tacit tension in thinking about Marc Cortez’s invitation to anchor anthropology in Christology — namely, that we should explore what Christ’s humanity means for our humanity. This is not to say that Christ’s life is completely other, or that Christ’s life cannot teach us about *who* we are and *how* we ought to live (among other questions). Rather, the question becomes one that asks: in *what* way ought Christians think about the significance of Christ’s life informing a theological anthropology? If we are to accept the task of the 20th-century thinkers in approaching the doctrine of anthropology through a Christological lens, as opposed to the majority’s anthropocentric approach in the 19th-century that examined the human *qua* human,⁵⁴ then what is constitutive of this approach? To be sure, the purpose of these questions is not to insist upon a strict apophaticism but to probe *what* makes anthropology Christologically grounded in a helpful way. In Thomas Aquinas’ theological imagination, the “analogy of being” (*analogia entis*) provides a key framework for thinking about *how* Christ’s “being” (*esse*) as God relates to the creaturely

⁵³ Michael A. Dauphinais, “*Imago Dei* in Aquinas,” p. 251.

⁵⁴ Joshua Farris identifies the tension between an anthropocentric approach to theological anthropology, as described here, in contrast with a theocentric approach. Cortez prefers the language of Christocentric approaches, specifically pointing to Christ.

being of humans. From the discussion on Aquinas’ metaphysics in Chapter Three, Aquinas locates creaturely being (*esse*) in the larger scope of God’s being—not in a pantheistic sense, but in acknowledgement that all of creation proceeds from God and bears God’s likeness. As such, this discussion on the *analogia entis* begets Aquinas’ reflections in the *Tertia Pars* on Christ as the “image” and how creatures participate in the image. On participation, Edgardo Colón-Emeric notes two means by which a reader might imagine this participation: participation in the image corresponds to the first and second perfections of the believer.⁵⁵ Grace opens the pathway for the human to participate in the second mode of perfection, journeying towards God in the moral life that has Christ as its end. As the end, Christ is not only the fountainhead of grace that enables believers to live a holy life, but he also opens the possibility for Christians to participate in the divine life through their response to the Spirit. Participation in Christ means sharing in the mystery of the Trinity to some extent—not becoming *simpliciter* but participating in the Trinitarian form of salvation and its fruits. Finally, Aquinas’ Christology—like his anthropology—points to the interplay between the contemplative and active practices that form the person. In the context of Aquinas’ Christology, this mixed life occurs through the Christian’s contemplation of Christ and their active imitation of Christ through participation in God’s grace. Altogether, Aquinas offers

55 To explain in the body paragraph: the first perfection corresponds to the perfection of form, while the second perfection corresponds to the perfection of holiness/sanctification/character. The former perfection belongs to all humans, Colón-Emeric avers. The second perfection, however, is a grace that some experience in this life. See *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 150ff.

Scripturally minded Christological considerations that provoke his students to meditate on the “fittingness” of Christ’s incarnation as the image of the invisible God, who makes redemption possible through his saving work, and models the return to God as the Christian’s exemplar.

7. A Synthesis of Christologies

As it appears in their respective works, Aquinas and Wesley articulate a Trinity-minded Christology that takes seriously the work of Christ in reordering the Christians nature in order for the Christian to journey into Christlikeness. Throughout their respective chapters, Wesley and Aquinas demonstrate the significance of Christ’s salvific work in their theological visions. Consistent with a motif of this paper, however, is that while Aquinas and Wesley do share much in common — whether in thought or disposition—the way they articulate the truth of Christ’s work differs. Such is the case in attempting to locate Wesley’s Christological convictions; his reflections on Christ’s incarnation are not altogether available, which requires considerable reconstruction. Likewise, a historical concern is whether Wesley’s Christology could be trustworthy. Graham demonstrates that Wesley does incorporate a “Chalcedonian grammar” into his work alongside features of orthodox Alexandrian and Lutheran Christologies. In a different way, Aquinas receives criticism regarding the structuring of his *Summa*, supposing the text imagines Christology as an afterthought in the angelic doctor’s writings. In the end, the criticisms levied against Wesley and Aquinas do not compromise their orthodox Christologies. Moreover, Wesley and Aquinas produce Christological accounts that demonstrate a Trinitarian sensibility that are pneumatologically dense. A difference continues to persist, though: Wesley seldom addresses the systematic minutia that Aquinas sets out to observe. The difference

between Wesley, an existential theologian, and Aquinas, a sapiential theologian, continues to be a key motif. The difference is especially apparent in Wesley’s admonition for his preachers to *live* the offices of Christ whereas Aquinas’ steep himself in the divine mysteries that he can discern.

7.1 Holiness and Merit

Dialoging between Wesley and Aquinas on the doctrine of Christian Perfection, Colón-Emeric draws attention to the role of “merit” in Aquinas thought. Essentially, the question of merit gets to the heart of the matter of Colón-Emeric’s study since it addresses “the relationship between divine action and human action” that occupies much of his focus on Christian perfection. Within this discussion on modes of activity, the work of grace also comes into focus: how does grace take shape in the believer, and how do Christians think about initiative in participating in this grace? On the use of “merit” in Wesley’s theological vocabulary, Colón-Emeric points to Wesley’s core conviction on the “proper sense” of merit—namely, that humans cannot merit salvation—and his allowance concerning how Christians can talk about merit in the “looser sense.”¹ The looser sense, according to Wesley, is “nearly equivalent with rewardable,” and while Wesley does not use this “improper sense” he claims not to

¹ On the “proper sense,” or the “strict sense,” of merit, Colón-Emeric summarizes: “For Wesley, ‘in a strict sense,’ no work merits but the work of Christ. Even works after justification, acts that are empowered by grace do not, ‘strictly speaking,’ deserve any kind of reward.” This is what Wesley usually means when he speaks about merit. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 173

condemn its use or its appearances in Scripture.² To Wesley’s historic and contemporary critics, Wesley’s concessions regarding the role of merit received the backlash of being suspiciously inclined towards “moralism” and “works’ righteousness” — especially considering how Wesley approaches the different possible interpretations of Matthew 16:28 in the “1770 Minutes.”³ Within the difficulties of interpreting Wesley on these matters of merit, Colón-Emeric draws a connection between Wesley’s loose sense and Aquinas’ depiction of merit in the *Summa*.⁴ Essentially, “Aquinas secures Wesley’s ‘orienting concern’” since merit and the second mode of perfection are closely connected, where merit is assumed under divine causality in God’s act of initiative.⁵ Wawrykow captures the potential for misunderstanding in his comparison between Aquinas and Paul. Wawrykow contends that Aquinas’ notices a key Pauline impulse: “Both Paul and Aquinas perceive the need for good Christian action in conformity with God’s will” and “both grant the religious significance of this action, Thomas by speaking of the Christian’s meriting of the reward of eternal life, Paul by insisting on Christian

2 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 173. Quoting John Wesley, *Wesley’s Works* 10:434. For more on Aquinas perception of “merit,” see Joseph Wawrykow, *God’s Grace and Human Action: “Merit” in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1995).

3 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 172-173.

4 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 173-174. Cp. ST I-II.114.1. Making this comparison, Colón-Emeric draws upon Collins’ description of Wesley’s loose sense of merit. Wesley’s understanding “does not underscore autonomous human achievement; on the contrary, it doubly highlights the graciousness of divine activity: once in the giving of grace; the other in the rewarding of its fruit” (p. 173; see Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, p. 203).

5 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 174-175.

obedience as the condition of entry into the kingdom.”⁶ At all times, salvation is the gift of God; nevertheless, growth in holiness remains the essential response for those who have been saved.

7.2 Speaking of Analogy

Similar to how Dominic Legge speaks of Aquinas’ Christology as a Trinitarian Christology, we may refer to Aquinas’ anthropology as a Christo-centric Trinitarian anthropology. It is apparent that the person is made in the image of the Trinity in Thomas’ imagination and that the human person finds their return to God through Christ. Scattered throughout the middle portions of the *Summa*, though, is a dense depiction of the believer’s participation in the Holy Spirit in bearing the life of Christ who points us to the Father. Counter the claims that Aquinas divorces his Trinitarian theology from his Christology, Legge demonstrates that the two are mutually intertwined in Thomas’ thought throughout the *Summa*. This logic is especially apparent in Legge’s model of how Christ’s participation in the divine life models how Christians might think of their participation in God’s life. Of course, one of Legge’s key contributions is how he speaks about the “divine missions” of the Word and Spirit—that is, the processions of knowledge and love in Trinitarian theology—in Aquinas’ *Summa* as creating a systematically dense picture of Trinitarian Christology. As others note in

⁶ Joseph Wawrykow, *God’s Grace and Human Action*, p. 284.

speaking about matters of holiness, the role of knowledge and love that inform the believer’s graced pursuit of God are fundamental features to Aquinas’ teaching on Christian perfection.

Highlighting the same tenets in a different key, Wesley considers the value of the spiritual senses as a means of knowledge that describe the Spirit’s work in the soul of the believer. Moreover, Wesley simply puts that the perfection of the Christian is essentially a perfection in love. The means by which Wesley and Aquinas articulate their theological visions differs in the paradigms they portray. Nevertheless, they cooperatively capture what it looks like for human beings to participate in the divine life. Persons do not participate in the divine life to the extent that the Trinity enjoys; however, Christians do participate in an analogous sense.

7.3 Contemplation and Vision

One of the points of dialogue between Wesley and Aquinas on Christology, may be the believer’s act of contemplating Christ. For both theologians, noted in their respective works above, Christology is not merely an abstract doctrine of the Christian faith but one that bears practical significance for the believer, and special significance the believer’s imaging of its creator. Attending to this motif of contemplation in Wesley’s thought, Colón-Emeric avers, “For Wesley, as for Augustine, we are made for God, and the contemplation of the divine attributes inflames our hearts with a desire to seek him and rest in him. In other words, pious knowledge of God’s perfections perfects the

person.”⁷ The practice of contemplating God’s awakens the heart’s desire, leading to further spiritual renewal. Thus, contemplating the mysteries of faith—the two other modes of perfection that belong to the Trinity and the Incarnate Word, respectively, in Aquinas’ imagination—has a formative effect on the believer in their participatory pursuit of holiness. To contemplate God’s goodness and fix oneself on the image of this goodness (i.e., Christ) yields the benefit of better bearing the image of God. The relationship between contemplation and activity is a mixed relationship resulting in a “mixed life.” Wesley recognizes as much through the interplay between *inward* and *outward* approaches to imitating Christ: to have the mind of Christ, and to walk as Christ walked. These authors demonstrate that contemplation of God’s perfection impacts the human creature’s perfection through participation, bringing about the believer’s growth in Christlikeness—a greater likeness to its image.

7.4 Conclusion

On points of Christology, Wesley and Aquinas portray differences in thought; however, their convictions are perhaps not that far apart. Both retain a Christo-centric focus that takes Christ’s saving work seriously. Participation in Christ means sharing in the mystery of the Trinity to some extent, especially as it pertains to participating in the Trinitarian form of salvation (i.e., the divine missions of knowledge and love) and its

⁷ Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 14.

fruits (i.e., grace and virtue). Through this participation, the Christologies of Aquinas and Wesley—like their anthropologies—point to the interplay between the contemplative and active practices that form the person. In short, the importance of Christology in conversation with anthropology is its ability to highlight *how* the believer is participating in God’s divine life. This approach seems to orient Wesley’s concern in speaking about the unique Trinitarian blueprint in the believer in addition to how Wesley imagines the person’s ability to participate with the Holy Spirit through the spiritual senses. For Aquinas, his articulation of grace as a *habitus* has far-reaching implications for how he imagines the Christian’s call to be holy.

8. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to examine the relationship between anthropology and Christology in the theological writings of John Wesley and St. Thomas Aquinas to explore avenues of further ecumenical dialogue on personhood and chiefly to investigate how these two thinkers imagine the mystery of Christ in the believer who bears the image of God. Preceding this study is the work of Edgardo Colón-Emeric on *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, as well as such theologians as D. Stephen Long and Kenneth Loyer who engage John Wesley in dialogue with Thomas Aquinas. Naturally, the nature of the subject matter in Colón-Emeric’s valuable study of the two figures sets a significant amount of groundwork for the particular emphasis on Christological anthropology in this thesis. With Christological approaches to thinking about theological anthropology well established in 20th-century theology and a renewed resurgence in the present, the current study seems like a fitting one to bring these two into constructive conversation. Given that not much work has been produced on Wesley in this popular regard, and with more research adding to the legitimacy and intelligibility of his thought, the opportunity seemed ripe. Wesley and Aquinas share a great deal in their writings on Christian perfection, and it now appears that Wesley and Aquinas may share much in the discussion of Christological anthropology.

8.1 Advances

Wesley scholarship is mindful of a particular lack in Wesley’s anthropology, which stems primarily from how little Wesley speaks about what he refers to as the political image of the human person. The political image, according to Wesley, describes what it means to have dominion and exercise proper stewardship. In the early exposition of this thesis, we noted the difficulty in speaking about the political image in John Wesley’s anthropology as a twofold problem: first, Wesley does not write as often about the political image as he does the natural and moral image; second, the implications for the political image today may appear a bit ambiguous. On the latter, Maddox has opened the conversation by speaking about the political image in its relationship to environmental concerns, and Weber has proposed Wesley’s political image speak to political engagement. My observation is perhaps more fundamental to the believer’s posture than a contemporary concern in specific – though the posture itself may speak to many practical problems. Properly speaking, the believer’s renewed love of God and neighbor through justification in Christ by faith belongs to the restored *moral* image. Turning to Aquinas, his dialogue on what constitutes the just image in the believer is also deficient. Dialoguing with St. Thomas on this point, seeing what is at stake when the believer participates in Christ’s life (and the language of full

participation in Christ is already present in Wesley),¹ we realize that participation in Christ reveals a posture of self-giving love through the infused virtue of charity (*ST II-II.24*). This self-giving love is present in Thomas’ ongoing discussion on the theological virtue of charity in the *Secunda Pars* and especially in speaking about Christ’s salvific economy in the *Tertia Pars*. Taking the general posture of self-giving love and applying this to Wesley’s category of the political image, such a posture may serve as a fundamental approach to several different modern-day concerns where believers might participate in God’s image by caring for His creation. As such, the focus moves from a question of *what* type of stewardship believers pursue through this restored image toward a question of *how* believers approach stewardship. The question of content is certainly important; however, this posture provides a practical hermeneutic for stepping into a myriad of conversations. After all, “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:7). The approaches to solving complex problems—and there are many—are multilayered and continue to proliferate. However, the enduring posture of love that extends towards creation is of fundamental and unitive importance to Christians and may fundamentally ground the attempts that Christians pursue in acting justly.

Secondly, this thesis attempts to highlight a feature in Wesley’s theology that is intelligible and valuable for contemporary consideration: “the vocabulary of the heart.”²

1 John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, pp. 7, 27, 35, 121; §5, 13, 15, 27.

2 Gregory C. Clapper, “Orthokardia,” p. 259.

Clapper demonstrates how Wesley’s “Orthokardia,” or the affective knowledge of the heart, is valuable for thinking about how one knows through what Aquinas might call the “outer” man. As Clapper notes, psychologists find that affectivity is a legitimate form of knowledge and that the field of literature is continuing to grow. Such a dialogue opens up conversations for thinking about how theologians speak about the role of knowledge and the degree to which persons can perceive in thinking about how Christian’s experience God in this life. Additionally, the question pairs with Pfau’s discussion on the *intuition* that follows the “image,” thus adding to the conversation on the intersection of metaphysics, phenomenology, and hermeneutics.

Finally, Dominic Legge’s contribution in elucidating the Trinitarian dimensions of Aquinas’ Christology serves a helpful purpose in thinking with Thomas about his Trinitarian Christology in general and the possible implications for Thomas’ anthropology in particular. Aquinas scholars note how the two processions of wisdom and love in the believer, mirroring the visible “divine missions” of the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity, reflect the image of the Trinity in the believer for Aquinas. This observation adds to Aquinas’ big-picture observations of the first and second perfections of the human person, as well as the two-fold dimensions of what it means to bear the image of God—to participate in the “mixed life” of contemplation and action in journeying towards the person’s ultimate end in Christ. The unique picture that Legge supplies is a grammar of how Christ’s salvific work through the Incarnation bears a

Trinitarian mark with and benefits for the believer. The “visible missions” offer a way of articulating the “invisible missions,” thus adding some clarification to how the Spirit works in the believer and directs the person to the Father through Christ.³

8.2 Points of Dialogue Between Wesley and Aquinas

Through the Enlightenment idealists like Hegel, a tendency in theological discourse amplifies a separation between a dogmatic theology that grasps the teachings passed down through Christian tradition and a practical theology, or “subjective theology” to borrow Hegel’s phrase. However, examining theologians like Wesley and Aquinas in detail reveals how a scholar and an evangelist can have an intelligible conversation that fuses timeless Christian truths with real-life implications. Their work also illuminates another matter of discussion: both Wesley and Aquinas operate in the *via media* between these extreme tropes. Neither is wholly academic or wholly pragmatic in their exposition of the Scripture, and the work that portrays Aquinas as a spiritual master and Wesley as a critical thinker who can converse with other intellectual figures helps situate these two for a friendly dialogue ripe with ecumenical opportunity. One might say that the two are compatible figures who minister to different contexts — Wesley to the Methodists societies and Aquinas to the academics and friars in Paris. Both display a pastoral heart, and both have the capacity to speak to these important

³ Dominic Legge, O.P., *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, p. 45ff.

matters of faith, and they do so by showing how the dogmatic truths bear practical significance for the believer. The means by which they discuss the significance of *imago Dei* as bearing importance for faith is a key example.

The theological anthropologies of Wesley and Aquinas are not merely abstract reflections on personhood with little bearing on the individual's life. Rather, the *imago Dei* has important implications for who the person is, who they are created to be, and how this dialogical participation unfolds. In Aquinas, the shift occurs as the angelic doctor adapts Augustine's conclusive articulation of the image of God in *De Trinitate* to include the experiential dimensions of the “outer” man represented in Damascene's articulation, linking the contemplative importance of the one with the active importance of the other. In Wesley's thought, too, his teachings on the *imago Dei* survey a movement from the three-fold faculties of the person in the natural image that makes possible the capacity for experiencing God and bearing his character in the moral image with the overflow of this character taking place in the political image. Likewise, these teachers demonstrate that the human person can know they bear the Trinitarian image and the special sense of dignity that arises from this image. Additionally, the human person has the special opportunity to participate in the image with the help of God's grace through the Spirit, where Christ is the fountainhead as *the* image who points believers back to the Father.

From more consideration, this study highlights that Christian anthropology speaks best through analogy. Neither Wesley nor Aquinas believes that we can experience the likeness of Christ through imitation alone, and this sense of *likeness* would ultimately fall short because Christ’s life is different from our life in significant ways.⁴ Nevertheless, the Christian can speak in terms of analogy to describe the likeness of the Incarnate Word to the individual human being. The person does not experience vision, for example, *in the way* of Christ but experiences a sort of vision *in a way* that might be analogous to Christ’s vision. Also, one might readily point to the case of Christian perfection: Christ experiences the fullness of perfection in his Incarnate life, and the believer looks forward to Christian perfection as something to attain. So, too, the *imago Dei* bears the resemblance of the Trinity in the human person, but it is not the Trinity; it is an analogy, and it is an analogy that showcases the mystery of Christ in the human person. More implications concerning analogy follow as one continues to probe the implications of Christ’s life for the church.

4 Thomas Aquinas, ST I.4-5; Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 72-75, 118-120. Colón-Emeric, for example, brings out the notion that the imitation of Christ accompanies the contemplation of Christ and the participation in Christ (pp. 118-120). Additionally, speaking about likeness between God and creature requires speaking analogically. Colón-Emeric notes, “the analogy of God’s perfection and creaturely perfection is based on the analogy of esse” (p. 74). The technical terminology is sometimes called *analogia entis*, or the “analogy of being.” On the difference between Creator and creature, Colón-Emeric summarizes: “Christian perfection is both like and unlike divine perfection. There is a similarity—God’s perfection is communicable and imitable here below—within a greater dissimilarity—we do not become God simpliciter here or above. Human perfection, of which Christian perfection is a subset, is always a relative perfection and is dependent upon God’s” (p. 15).

Moreover, Christian participation in Christ occurs most fully through the moral life of the believer. For Wesley, the image is most fully realized in the believer who possesses the mind of Christ and walks as Christ walks. In Aquinas’ imagination, the theologian outlines two perfections of the Christian: the first perfection refers to the perfection of the *form* (the perfection of the creature as creature); the second perfection refers to the perfection of *holiness*. In general, human beings bear the image of God by virtue of being a human being, but Wesley and Aquinas cooperatively note that persons are made for more. Humans are meant to participate with the Holy Spirit, going on to perfection. Colón-Emeric captures as much in drawing upon Aquinas’ maxim, *Duplex est perfectio*:⁵ “the perfection of the form and the perfection of the operation.”⁶

Finally, similar to how Dominic Legge speaks of Aquinas’ Christology as a Trinitarian Christology, we may refer to Aquinas’ anthropology as Christo-centric Trinitarian anthropology. It is apparent that the person is made in the image of the Trinity in Thomas’ imagination and that the human person finds their return to God through Christ.⁷ Scattered throughout the middle portions of the *Summa*, though, is a dense depiction of the believer’s participation in the Holy Spirit in bearing the life of Christ, who points us to the Father. Counter the claims that Aquinas divorces his Trinitarian theology from his Christology made by Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von

5 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, pp. 69, 201. See ST I.73.1; De veritate 1.10.ad.s.c.3.

6 Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 69.

7 Cf. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, p. 115.

Balthasar, and others,⁸ Legge demonstrates that the two are mutually intertwined in Thomas’ thought throughout the *Summa*. Building upon this helpful reading of Aquinas, the implications follow that Thomas’ Trinitarian Christology highlights how the Incarnation is redemptive for human beings in the sense of being the source for life in the Spirit. While the dense doctrinal distinctions exceed the scope of Wesley’s writings, the essential message is the same: the paradox of Christ’s life brings to human beings. Altogether, “the mystery of Christ in you” (Col. 1:27) is a mystery, but it is one full of meaning and dignity and promises a journey into holiness with the Triune God.

8 Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 2-3. Legge draws attention to other theologians who have engaged in this criticism, such as Walter Kasper, Thomas Weinandy, Robert Jenson, and Jürgen Moltmann. These persons levy criticisms against Aquinas’ Christology for its supposed disassociation from Trinitarian theology. See Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green, pbk ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), pp. 184; 249-250; Thomas G. Weinandy, “Trinitarian Christology: The Eternal Son,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 392-394; Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 112-114; Jürgen Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1972), pp. 226-228.

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