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THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND THE LOGIC OF RELATIVE IDENTITY¹

The doctrine of the Trinity says that there is just one God and three distinct divine persons, each of whom is God. This would seem to imply that there are three divine persons, each a different person from the other persons but the same God as the other persons. If we accept what I believe is the most popular account of identity current among logicians then we must hold that this apparent consequence is contradictory. We see this as follows (it will suffice to consider just the relation of Father and Son): logicians generally treat relativized identity expressions of the form ‘is the same *A* as’ (here ‘*A*’ stands in for a term which relativizes the identity) as being analysable in terms of absolute (or unrelativized) identity according to the following equivalence schema, (E):

(E) *a* is the same *A* as *b* if and only if *a* is identical to *b* and *a* is an *A* and *b* is an *A*.

The view under consideration affirms the following three sentences:

- (1) The Father and the Son are persons.
- (2) The Father is not the same person as the Son.
- (3) The Father is the same God as the Son.

If we are given an instance of equivalence schema (E) by substituting ‘person’ for ‘*A*’ and ‘the Father’ and ‘the Son’ for ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’, then, by truth-functional logic, (1) and (2) imply ‘The Father is not identical to the Son’. On the other hand, if in (E) ‘*A*’ is replaced by ‘God’, and ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’ by ‘the Father’ and ‘the Son’, then from (3) we get ‘The Father is identical to the Son’. Thus we see that if (E) is accepted we end in the contradiction: ‘The Father is not identical to the Son and the Father is identical to the Son.’

There are at least two ways one might respond to this appearance of inconsistency. One might hold that while we can say there is one God, this should not be taken to imply that the divine persons are all the *same* God: oneness is to be taken as expressing some form of unity (perhaps to be found in such features of the divine persons as necessary harmony of will) but not as expressing identity.² We will not concern ourselves here with this line of response. Rather, we will consider the view that (a) holds that the three

¹ For comments on an earlier draft I wish to thank Saul Kripke, and for pointing me in the direction of certain relevant passages of Aquinas I thank Peter Geach.

² Thomas Morris appears to take a position along these lines in *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986). See the first and last chapters, esp. pp. 28–9 and 214.

divine persons are all the same God and (b) rejects the account of relative identity which tells us that every identity expression of the form ‘*a* is the same *A* as *b*’ is equivalent to ‘*a* is identical to *b* and *a* is an *A* and *b* is an *A*’. In recent years several philosophers, most notably Peter Geach, have developed theories of relative identity which reject schema (E) as giving an analysis of relative identity. In this paper we explore one way in which an account of relative identity developed along the lines of Geach’s theory might be applied to the way we speak of the Trinity.¹ At the end of the paper an alternative approach, still in terms of relative identity, will also be suggested.

We take as our starting point the following passage from an early writing of Geach on the philosophy of Aquinas:

A few remarks on the logic of ‘there is but one God’ and ‘the one and only God’. On Russell’s theory of descriptions ‘the one and only God is *X*’ would be construed as meaning:

‘For some *y*, *y* is God, and, for any *z*, if *z* is God, *z* is the same as *y*, and *y* is *X*’;
And this, shorn of the final clause ‘and *y* is *X*’, would also give the analysis of ‘there is but one God’. Aquinas would certainly have objected, on general grounds, to the clause ‘*z* is the same as *y*’; the sameness, as we saw, must for him be specified by some general term signifying a form or nature. Now the general term that we need to supply here is clearly ‘God’; so ‘there is but one God’ will come out as:

‘For some *y*, *y* is God, and, for any *z*, if *z* is God, *z* is the same God as *y*’.
It is important to notice that this would leave open the possibility of there being several Divine Persons; there would still be but one God, if we could truly say that any Divine Person was the same God as any other Divine Person.²

It is natural to wonder whether we can extend this account to arrive at an acceptable analysis of ‘The one and only God is *X*’ by relativizing the identity expression in its Russellian analysis. It looks, at first, as if the following should do: ‘The one and only God is *X*’ is true just in case the following holds:

For some *y*, *y* is God, and, for any *z*, if *z* is God, *z* is the same God as *y*, and *y* is *X*.

The following example, however, shows us that this analysis will not do. Take the set of propositions:

Jesus is God.

For any *z*, if *z* is God, *z* is the same God as Jesus.

Jesus underwent change.

¹ There are two aspects to Geach’s theory of relative identity. One is negative: the rejection as incoherent of the unrelativized notion of identity. The second is a positive account of how relative identity concepts function. These are, to some extent, independent. For example, even if Geach were wrong in denying the coherence of absolute identity, he might be right in holding that there are relative identities that cannot be given the standard analysis in terms of absolute identity. None of our considerations will turn on an acceptance of the negative thesis.

² ‘Aquinas’ in G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 118.

These entail:

(4) For some y , y is God, and, for any z , if z is God, z is the same God as y , and y underwent change

but they do not entail without qualification:

(4') The one and only God underwent change

even though (4) would, on the view under consideration, give an analysis of (4'). If the analysis were correct, (4') would be entailed without qualification.

But then, by a similar deduction, we should get:

The one and only God has never undergone change

from:

The Father is God.

For any z , if z is God, z is the same God as the Father.

The Father has never undergone change.

So we cannot simply relativize the identity predicate in the Russellian analysis of 'The one and only God is X '.

It looks as if the problem with the relativized Russellian analysis is that we do not want to treat 'The one and only God is X ' as tantamount to:

Something is God, is the same God as any God, and is X

otherwise Jesus' having undergone change leads us to say 'The one and only God underwent change'. The proposal we will consider is that we treat the unqualified statement 'The one and only God is X ' as meaning something along the lines of:

As individuated as God, something is the same God as any God and is X , i.e. something, singled out under the criterion of identity for being the same God, is the same God as any God and is X .

This way of looking at things fits in well with Geach's account of restricted quantification in *Reference and Generality*. Where ' A ' represents a substantival term (e.g. 'river', 'dog', 'star') under which we individuate objects (and so ' A ' provides a criterion of identity), Geach argues that there is a use of the restricted quantifier 'some A ' which does not yield the equivalence of 'Some A is X ' and 'Something is an A and is X ',¹ rather 'Some A is X ' is said to be true if and only if ' a is X ' comes out true under some way of reading ' a ' as a proper name *for* an A – that is, as a proper name which serves to single out an item under the criterion of identity expressed by 'same A '.²

It is worth pausing to look at this feature of the theory of relative identity under consideration. Here we might want to say that we cannot look at a predication formed by attaching a predicate to a proper name as simply being a type of proposition in which the predicate is purported to hold true on the *one thing* referred to by the name. We need to relativize the ascription

¹ *Reference and Generality: An Examination of Some Medieval and Modern Theories*, third edition (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 173–6.

² *Ibid.* p. 206.

of cardinality in the last sentence. Generally, where a proposition consists of a predicate attached to a proper name, the predicate is purported to hold true of the *so-and-so* that is referred to by the name. (Here 'so-and-so' stands in for a term providing a suitable criterion of identity under which the name picks out its referent.) The predicate, I should like to say, is then applied to the object *as so picked out*.¹ Geach maintains that each proper name is associated with a criterion of identity as a part of its sense.² This claim that a proper name conveys a criterion of identity and the account of restricted quantification in terms of such proper names is central to Geach's theory of relative identity and will play an important part in our account of language used to describe the Trinity.

Given Geach's account of restricted quantification, we can offer the following analysis of 'The one and only God is *X*':

(5) Some God is such that for any *z*, if *z* is God then *z* is the same God as it, and it is *X*.

(5) will, in turn, hold true just in case there is a reading of 'a' as a proper name conveying the criterion of identity for being the same God under which (6) is true:

(6) For any *z*, if *z* is God, then *z* is the same God as *a*, and *a* is *X*.

Note that (5) does not follow from:

(7) Jesus is God, and, for any *z*, if *z* is God, then *z* is the same God as Jesus, and Jesus is *X*

for 'Jesus' is not a name *for* a God (i.e. a name which singles out its referent under the criterion of identity for being the same God), even though (to use Geach's terminology) it is a name *of* a God. 'Jesus' singles out its referent under the criterion of identity for being the same human;³ the human so named is a God. Thus our current account avoids the problem which arose for the relativized Russellian analysis of 'The one and only God is *X*': we are not now committed to saying without qualification that the one and only God underwent change given that Jesus underwent change, is divine, and is the same God as any God. Nor would (5) follow from (7) were 'Jesus' replaced by 'the Son', for the latter is associated with the criterion of identity for being the same divine person, not for being the same God.

Next we turn to a line of objection which has been raised by David Wiggins against the application of the theory of relative identity to the doctrine of the Trinity.⁴ The theory of relative identity we have been looking at is a non-

¹ I am not sure whether Geach is explicitly committed to this last sentence. In any case, it is a natural way in which to develop the theory of relative identity.

² *Ibid.* pp. 68–71.

³ We might instead want to say here that 'Jesus' is associated with the criterion of identity for being the same person. More will be said later on this alternative.

⁴ *Sameness and Substance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 29 and 37–42.

Leibnizian theory of relative identity: it does not allow us to accept the validity of the following schema:

For all x and y , if x is the same A as y and x is X , then y is X .¹

It is clear, however, that we often do rely upon identities to justify substitution. For example, if we are told that Cicero is the same man as Tully and Cicero denounced Catiline, we may conclude that Tully denounced Catiline. More generally, we seem willing to accept arguments of this form:

Cicero is the same man as Tully.

Cicero is X .

Thus, Tully is X .

Leibnizian theories of relative identity easily account for such substitutions, but how can we account for substitution with a non-Leibnizian theory of identity? Wiggins contends that any theory of identity which does not account for substitution is woefully inadequate, *and* he contends that no non-Leibnizian theory of relative identity succeeds in accounting for substitution.

Furthermore, as Wiggins points out, the problem of substitution becomes more complicated when we bring in the Trinity. A theory of relative identity must somehow allow us to pass from 'Cicero denounced Catiline' and 'Cicero is the same man as Tully' to 'Tully denounced Catiline', but it must not – if the doctrine of the Trinity holds – allow a similar passage from 'Jesus was crucified' and 'Jesus is the same God as the Father' to 'The Father was crucified'.² Our account of substitution should explain this apparent asymmetry.

We must agree with Wiggins that a satisfactory and fairly complete theory of relative identity should give an account of substitution. While this is an area of the theory that needs further development, I believe we can set out enough of such an account to handle much of our talk of the Trinity and to answer the last objection.

Before we can spell out our substitution principle it will be necessary to say a little about the linguistic contexts in which we are interested. Consider the sentence:

Frederick believed that Hesperus is visible only in the evening, and Phosphorus, only in the morning.

While this could be true, we would get a falsehood were 'Phosphorus' substituted for 'Hesperus' in the context 'Frederick believed that ____ is

¹ This schema is the law of substitutivity of identity, $(x)(y)(x = y \ \& \ Fx) \supset Fy$, with the identity predicate relativized. Thus we might call it the substitutivity of relative identity.

² Wiggins uses 'the Son' rather than 'Jesus' in his example. But to do so brings in a further complication, for one may wish to say that only if it is taken as short for, say, 'As a man the Son was crucified' can 'The Son was crucified' be regarded as true. (Cf. one may both say 'The Son was not created' and 'The Son as a man was created'.) When we say 'Jesus was crucified' there is no need to qualify the predicate '...was crucified' with the phrase 'as a man'.

visible only in the evening, and Phosphorus, only in the morning' – despite the fact that Phosphorus (the morning star) is the same heavenly body as Hesperus (the evening star). Hereafter, we shall only be interested in linguistic contexts which provide predicates which can be said to apply or not apply to an object picked out under a given criterion of identity no matter how that object is named (so long as it is named by a name which refers under that criterion of identity).

Let '*Aa*' schematically represent a proper name which singles out its referent under the criterion of identity given by 'the same *A*'. We may represent the attachment of a predicate, *f*, to *Aa* by writing '*f(Aa)*'.¹ Consider any argument of the following form:

(P1) *f(Aa)*
Aa is the same *A* as *Ab*

Thus, *f(Ab)*

It should be apparent that if an argument is of this form and its premises are true, then its conclusion must also be true given that *f* is a predicate of the sort we have restricted our attention to. We may reason as follows: If both names pick out the same *A* and pick it out under the criterion of identity for being the same *A* and the application of the predicate is independent of how a given *A* is named (so long as it is named by a name *for* an *A*), then if a truth results from attaching the predicate to the first name, a truth must also result from attaching the predicate to the second name. Of course for this principle, (P1), to be useful we need to be able to recognize when a linguistic context provides a predicate of the sort to which we have confined our attention. Normally I think this presents no problem, though we should expect the usual philosophical difficulties that fall under the heading of 'opaqueness' to arise here.

We can now account for the asymmetry between Wiggins's Cicero/Tully example and the Jesus/Father example. The argument:

Cicero denounced Catiline.

Cicero is the same man as Tully.

Thus, Tully denounced Catiline.

will be an instance of (P1) provided 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are names *for* humans – a plausible assumption given the sort of theory we have been looking at. Now consider the argument:

Jesus was crucified.

Jesus is the same God as the Father.

Thus, the Father was crucified.

If 'Jesus' and 'the Father' were names referring under the criterion of identity for being the same God, then the argument would be an instance of (P1). However, 'Jesus' corresponds to the criterion of identity for being the

¹ *Reference and Generality*, p. 71.

same human, and 'the Father' corresponds to that for being the same Divine person. Thus, we do not get an instance of (P1).¹

We now turn to an area in which the theory of identity we have been looking at shows some promise of yielding fruitful results, namely, in giving us an understanding of the logic of theological uses of the 'as'-construction.

Let us introduce one more substitution principle which could be useful in Trinitarian discussions. Here we will let '*b*' and '*c*' represent any proper names (we will not prefix these letters by schematic letters representing the name's associated criterion of identity, for the principle will hold no matter what criterion of identity is associated with the name) and let '*A*' represent a substantival term such that 'same *A*' gives a criterion of identity suitable for individuating objects.

(P2) If *b* is the same *A* as *c*, then as an *Af(b)* if and only if as an *Af(c)*.²

The 'as'-construction may be used in several different senses, so it is important for us to set out the sense we have in mind. Our 'as'-construction is used to generate one predicate from another. To take an example, consider the proposition:

Jesus as God is changeless.

This proposition results from attaching the predicate:

_____ as God is changeless

to the proper name 'Jesus'. This predicate in turn may be spelled out as:

Some God is such that _____ is the same God as it and it is changeless.

In other words – remembering our earlier remarks on restricted quantification – 'Jesus as God is changeless' will hold just in case there is a possible reading of '*a*' as a name *for* a God (i.e. '*a*' singles out its referent under the criterion of identity for being the same God) under which the following holds:

Jesus is the same God as *a* and *a* is changeless.

And this may hold despite the fact that the name 'Jesus' is a name *for* a human and not a name *for* a God (though 'Jesus' is a name *of* a God). In general, 'As an *Af(b)*' means:

There is an *A* which is the same *A* as *b* and *f*(that *A*).

Given this definition for the 'as'-construction (P2) is a logical truth, for it spells out as:

If *b* is the same *A* as *c*, then there is an *A* which is the same *A* as *b* and *f*(that *A*) if and only if there is an *A* which is the same *A* as *c* and *f*(that *A*).

¹ As pointed out earlier, Wiggins's example uses 'the Son' rather than 'Jesus'. Note that 'the Son', like 'the Father', corresponds to the criterion of identity for being the same divine person, not for being the same God, and so we would still not have an instance of (P1) even if we replaced 'Jesus' by 'the Son'.

² This, in our notation, is a version of a principle that Wiggins suggests (*Sameness and Substance*, p. 40), only to discard later. He complains that though the 'as'-construction has several different uses there is none with the universal applicability needed to make (P2) a general substitution principle. We will define our 'as'-construction in a way that solves this problem.

On this reading of the ‘as’-construction arguments such as the following will be valid:

The Father as God is changeless.

Jesus is the same God as the Father.

Thus, Jesus as God is changeless.

and the following will also be valid, but not sound, since its first premise is false:

Jesus as God underwent change.

The Father is the same God as Jesus.

Thus, the Father as God underwent change.

We should also mention a second way of construing the ‘as’-construction. We could render ‘As an $Af(a)$ ’ as ‘There is an A which is the same B as a and $f(\text{that } A)$ ’, where the context or the speaker’s intentions supply the interpretation for ‘ B ’. (Our first construal of the ‘as’-construction will thus be a special case of the second in which ‘ A ’ and ‘ B ’ are given the same reading.) Consider, for example, ‘As a man the Son lived in Galilee’; there may be reason to prefer the rendering:

(8) It was the case that: there is a *man* who is the same *divine person* as the Son and that *man* lives in Galilee

to:

(9) It was the case that: there is a *man* who is the same *man* as the Son and that *man* lives in Galilee

even though (9) exhibits our earlier sense of the ‘as’-construction. One might prefer the reading given by (8) if he wanted to use ‘as a man the Son is f ’ to express that the predicate f holds of an incarnation of the Son as a human and he did not think it *logically* impossible that the Son be at once incarnate in two different humans.¹ (Our first definition of the ‘as’-construction would rule this out, for ‘As an $Af(a)$ ’ would then be equivalent to ‘ a is the same A as just one A and $f(\text{that } A)$ ’.²) More generally, where ‘same A ’ expresses a criterion of identity suitable only for individuating created objects, we might express what we mean in saying that an incarnation of the Son as an A is f by using the locution ‘As an A the Son is f ’, where this is spelled out explicitly as:

There is an A which is the same divine person as the Son and that A is f .

It might be helpful at this point to consider how our first account of the ‘as’-construction could be applied to a non-theological example. Suppose

¹ For example, one might think we could write a *consistent* story, along the lines of C. S. Lewis’s *Narnia* series, in which the Son is both incarnate as a talking lion in Narnia and as a human on earth. We might say in the story, ‘The son as an animal lived in Narnia’.

² We see this as follows: nothing can be the same A as different A ’s, for if x is the same A as y and the same A as z then, by the transitivity and symmetry of identity, y is the same A as z . So if there is an A which is the same A as x and $f(\text{that } A)$, then there is just one A which is the same A as x and $f(\text{that } A)$. The converse of this last statement also clearly holds, so we have the equivalence mentioned in the text.

that before us is a piece of clay that has been shaped into a statue. No other clay piece or statue is present. One holding this account of identity might describe things as follows:

Before us we have one statue and one clay piece. The statue is a clay piece and the clay piece is a statue. The statue is the same clay piece as itself and the clay piece is the same statue as itself. In other words, the statue falls under the identity relation given by 'same clay piece' as well as under that given by 'same statue'. The same holds of the clay piece. We have something before us that is both a statue and a clay piece and which we may single out either individuated as a statue or individuated as a clay piece. If you ask 'What is this "something" that may be individuated in either way?', then I may answer equally correctly by saying either 'the statue' or 'the clay piece'. Let's name the clay piece 'Squishy' (that is, we associate the criterion of identity for being the same clay piece with the name 'Squishy'¹) and name the statue 'David' (associate with 'David' the criterion of identity for being the same statue). Then for any predicate 'is *F*', 'David is *F*' and 'As a statue David is *F*' will have the same truth value; likewise 'Squishy is *F*' and 'As a clay piece Squishy is *F*' will have the same truth value. We have already seen that, whether we individuate this thing as a statue or as a clay piece, it will fall under any of these predicates: 'is a statue', 'is the same statue as any statue before us', 'is a clay piece', and 'is the same clay piece as any clay piece before us'. There are other predicates that will hold or fail to hold depending on how we individuate the object. For example, suppose the clay piece had previously existed for months, whereas the statue David was only formed today. Then the following will be true:

David did not exist yesterday.

Squishy existed yesterday.

David as a clay piece existed yesterday.

Squishy as a statue did not exist yesterday.²

The theological case, according to the theory of identity in question, is to be handled similarly.³ 'The Son is *F*' and 'As a divine person the Son is *F*' will have the same truth value. Similarly 'Jesus is *F*' and 'As a man Jesus is *F*' will have the same truth value. Independently of whether we refer to

¹ Or perhaps we should say that we associate the name with a criterion of identity along the lines of: being the same mass of stuff, for we probably would not want our identification of Squishy to depend on our having correctly identified the kind of stuff out of which it is made. But I do not want to bog down our example in considerations of such details.

² Actually, on our theory more than one reading could be given to this sentence, depending on the relative scopes of the negation, the 'as'-construction (which will admit of scope ambiguity similar to Russellian definite descriptions), and tense; e.g. (1) 'There is a statue which is the same statue as Squishy and it did not exist yesterday' (true), and (2) 'It was not the case yesterday that: there is a statue which is the same statue as Squishy and it exists' (perhaps false, depending on Squishy's history). (1) gives the intended reading for this example.

³ One must be careful in making this comparison. I do not want to rest the adequacy of the account of language used to describe the Trinity on the adequacy of this treatment of the statue/clay piece example. We certainly have intuitions (e.g. that the statue is a clay piece) that lend themselves to this treatment in terms of the theory of relative identity. It might be the case, however, that other intuitions could be found supporting an analysis in terms of absolute identity. Here it could turn out that our use of language dictates one semantic account (the relativist's or the absolutist's) to the exclusion of the other, or it might be the case that neither is *the* correct account and our use of language leaves open which account is applicable. In any case, it seems that there could be a language very similar to English in which people do talk in the way suggested in the statue/clay piece example. We may then compare our use of language to speak about the Trinity to this usage of language.

Christ as 'Jesus' or as 'the Son', any of the following predicates may be applied truthfully: 'is a man', 'is the same man as the central character in the Gospels', 'is a divine person', 'is the same divine person as the second person of the Trinity'. However, other predicates will apply or not apply depending on the mode of individuation. Thus on this account the following will be true:

Jesus is mutable (suffered, did not exist before Moses, etc.).

The Son is immutable (has not suffered, has existed before Moses, etc.).

Jesus as a divine person is immutable (has not suffered, has existed before Moses, etc.).

The Son as a man is mutable (has suffered, did not exist before Moses, etc.).

Having said this I add the following qualifications. (1) Consider any sentence of the form 'Christ is *F*'. It may not seem clear whether 'Christ' should be taken as picking out its referent under the identity given by 'same human' or rather that given by 'same divine person'. We have that Christ falls under the identity relation for being the same human as well as that for being the same divine person. It should not be necessary to choose one as *the* criterion of identity associated with 'Christ' provided one is willing to recognize that whenever a predicate such as 'is immutable', 'was created', etc., is attached to the word 'Christ' a qualifying phrase (e.g. 'as a man', 'as a divine person') must be added or such a qualification must be implicitly understood.

(2) In speaking of the need to qualify a statement (explicitly or implicitly) by using the 'as'-construction (or some equivalent device), I have in mind qualifications we need to recognize as a part of the sense of the statement. Of course one can often omit qualifying expressions and still be understood satisfactorily. A different way in which we might talk of a need to qualify our statements is in terms of qualifications we need to express in order to avoid misunderstanding. It seems to be in this latter sense that Aquinas speaks of a need to qualify our assertions when he says:

As Jerome says, *words spoken amiss lead to heresy*; hence with us and heretics the very words ought not to be in common, lest we seem to countenance their error. Now the Arian heretics say that Christ was a creature and less than the Father, not only in his human nature, but even in his Divine Person. And hence we must not say absolutely that Christ is a *creature* or *less than the Father*; but with qualification, viz. *in His human nature*. But such things as could not be considered to belong to the Divine Person in Itself may be predicated simply of Christ by reason of his human nature; thus we may say simply that Christ suffered, died and was buried...¹

(3) There are of course other uses of the 'as'-construction. One must determine from the context how an 'as'-construction is to be construed. For instance, one might use 'As a so-and-so *a* is *F*' to mean that *a*'s being *F* is a

¹ *Summa Theologica*, Pt. III, Q. 16, Art. 8 (New York: Benziger Brothers Inc., 1947).

result of *a*'s being a so-and-so. In this sense as a human you may have a right to life and liberty, but not a right to drive a car. However, in the sense of the 'as'-construction that we are primarily concerned with, if you have a right to drive then in fact you have the right as a human.

Finally, it may be instructive to look at an example where the proposed account diverges from Aquinas.¹ Consider whether we should say 'This man', pointing to Christ, 'began to be.' On our account since the referent is presented *as* individuated as a man it looks as if the answer should that this statement is true. More generally, (1) and (2) below would be true and (3) false:

- (1) This man began to be.
- (2) This man as a man began to be.
- (3) This man as a divine person began to be.

Aquinas finds (1) problematic on two grounds. First, even if it were true, we ought not to assert it in the unqualified form to avoid any confusion with the Arian heresy which held that 'the person of the Son of God is a creature'. Second, we must reject (1) as false and not merely potentially misleading, for:

...in Christ there is one suppositum and one hypostasis, as also one Person. For according to this, when we say *this man*, pointing to Christ, the eternal suppositum is necessarily meant, with Whose eternity a beginning in time is incompatible. Hence this is false; *This man began to be*. Nor does it matter that to begin to be refers to the human nature, which is signified by this word *man*; because the term placed in the subject is not taken formally so as to signify the nature, but is taken materially so as to signify the suppositum....

I think it fair to say the disagreement here is of a linguistic nature and is not a religious disagreement. For, on the theory I have presented, the expression 'this man' does refer to the Son of God who has existed eternally, but, unlike Aquinas, this theory takes its role to be that of picking out its referent *as* individuated as a man. Returning to the clay piece/statue example, we might say (pointing to the clay piece/statue), 'This has existed more than a day', but until we specify the way we are individuating 'this' the truth conditions for the sentence are indeterminate. In the case at hand, when we say 'This man began to be' we individuate the referent in such a way that the predicate becomes applicable.

This ends the proposed account for treating language used to speak of the Trinity. It is offered as a tentative theory in the hope that some aspects of it may be useful in formulating a better account. I end with a suggestion of an alternative way one might wish to develop the account in this paper. Rather than treat names given to humans as names *for* humans, the alternative would treat them as names *for persons*. 'Jesus', then, would be associated with 'same person'. On this treatment we might want to go along with

¹ *Ibid.* Pt. III, Q. 16, Art. 9.

Aquinas in saying that 'This Man' (pointing to Christ) 'began to be' is false, for the person in question did not begin to exist, though He began to be a human. In *some* respects this statement would parallel 'this kitten will live for another ten years'. Though 'same kitten' is a relative identity expression, the object spoken of is individuated as a cat and the truth of the statement requires that for the next ten years the same cat be alive, though it need not remain a kitten (and thus the same kitten) over that time span. (The statement will be true as long as *this*, individuated as a cat, satisfies '____ is a kitten' and '____ will live another ten years'.) How far this parallel goes I am not prepared to say. On this alternative account, the substitution schemata for relative identity offered in the paper will still hold, though we *might* want to say 'same person', but not 'same human', provides an individuating identity and so only the former could be suitably substituted for 'A' in the schemata. The main difference I see arising on this account is the following: we can no longer simply assign different truth values to, say, 'Jesus is mutable' and 'the Son is mutable' on the grounds that these involve reference under different modes of individuation – in both cases the referent is individuated as a person. It looks then as if we will need an alternative account of the application of predicates to Christ as a human and as a divine person or as God.

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