

## **Christ as Composite According to Aquinas**

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### **Introduction**

In this paper I explain Thomas Aquinas's view that Christ is a composite person, and then I explain the role of Christ's compositeness in Thomas's solutions to a range of Christological problems. On the topics I will be discussing, Thomas's views did not change significantly over the course of his career; for the sake of simplicity, then, I will focus on texts from the *Summa theologiae*, citing parallels in the notes.

Before doing this, I will make three preliminary points. First, Thomas's approach to Christology presupposes that the Chalcedonian teaching is correct. Chalcedon insisted on both the unity of Christ's person and the integrity of his two natures, so it is helpful to think of Thomas's theory of the hypostatic union as an attempt to reconcile principles that we can for the sake of convenience call the "unity principle" and the "integrity principle." The unity principle states that an adequate theory of Christ has to understand him as one person, and the integrity principle states that an adequate theory of Christ has to understand him as existing in the integrity or fullness of both his natures, divinity and humanity. This is important because it isn't easy to see how to maintain all these points at once. For example, certain aspects of Christ's divinity—e.g., his immutability—might seem incompatible with his becoming human. Or, for another example, his unity might appear incompatible with the integrity of his humanity. Insisting on his unity means insisting that his humanity does not establish its own person, which appears prejudicial to its integrity; insisting on the integrity of his humanity seems to require that he be two persons, one divine and one human. Understanding these points makes it easier to understand what Thomas is doing in his Christology. When we read what he says, it is often useful to ask, "Which principle is threatened here?" and "How is Thomas's solution intended to save the threatened principle?"

The second preliminary point is a brief account of Thomas's basic theory of the hypostatic union. It begins with a distinction between "union in person" and "union in nature." Two things are united in person if the resulting unity is one person, not more than one. A friendship is a union, but not a union in person; the union of Socrates and his color, on the other hand, is a union in person, because the result is just one person. A union in nature, by contrast, is a particular kind of union in person. Two things are united in nature when together they go to make up one nature. Animality and rationality are united in nature in Socrates because together they go to make up his nature, namely, humanity. Rationality and whiteness, by contrast, are not united in nature, because there is no one nature to the constitution of which they both contribute. Using this distinction, Thomas holds that Christ's humanity is joined to the Word in person, but not in nature. Since it is joined to the Word in person, Christ is just one person, and the unity principle is preserved. Since it is not joined to the word in nature, however, the two natures remain distinct, and the integrity principle is preserved.<sup>1</sup>

The third and final preliminary point is that the basic theory does not settle every Christological issue. In particular, it does not fully protect the unity and integrity principles. Thomas must add to his account to make it accomplish all that it needs to. In this essay, I show how he uses the idea of Christ as a composite person as part of this project.

### **Christ as composite**

At first glance, it might appear best to think of Christ as wholly incomposite, or simple. Every divine person is simple, as Thomas makes clear in ST I, q. 3, and Christ is divine. The integrity of Christ's divinity seems, therefore, to imply that Christ is simple. At the same time, insisting on this point would seem prejudicial to the integrity of his humanity. For one thing, if Christ is simply divine, then he can't include a human nature, in which case he cannot be human. For another, if Christ is simple, without parts in any way, then again he cannot be human, for humans are necessarily composed of a multiplicity of parts.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas protects divine and human integrity in the person of Christ by giving a careful account of how Christ is composite. In ST III, q. 2, a. 4, he states:

The person or hypostasis of Christ can be considered in two ways. The first way is according to the way it exists in itself. And in this way it is completely simple,

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as is the nature of the Word. The second way is according to the way it exists as a person or hypostasis that subsists in some nature. In this way, the person of Christ subsists in two natures. Whence, although there is only one subsisting thing in this case, there is nonetheless a plurality of manners of subsistence. And thus he can be called a composite person, in so far as he is one thing subsisting in two ways.<sup>3</sup>

We can look at a supposit in two ways. In the first way, we consider it simply as something subsisting, without regard to the nature or natures in which it subsists. For example, we can think of Christ as something that subsists, without attending to the fact that he exists as God and human. In the second way, we consider a supposit as existing in its substantial nature. For example, we can think of Christ as something that exists as divine and human. When we look at Christ in the second way, that is, with regard to the manners of his subsistence, we must say that he is composite. He counts among his constituents not only divinity but also humanity.

This shows that Christ is composite in the sense that he is not divine only. It doesn't directly show that he is composite in the sense of having a multiplicity of human parts, but that poses no special difficulty. If Christ were utterly simple, then indeed we couldn't say that he has a multiplicity of human parts, but once it is allowed that he is a composite of divinity and humanity, there is no reason to doubt that he is composite in this other way as well.<sup>4</sup>

The idea that Christ is composite is not fully understood until it is understood together with its counterpart, namely, Christ's incompositeness. Thomas says that Christ is simple in so far as he exists in himself, and near the end of the passage he clarifies this by referring to "one subsisting thing." We should understand this as follows. Christ subsists, and it is because he is the Word that he does so. He has his absolute subsistence—his subsistence understood apart from any nature—not from being human but instead from being the divine Word (otherwise he wouldn't have existed before becoming human). But the divine Word as such is indeed simple. Therefore, Christ in himself is simple. This simplicity is consistent with the composition already discussed. Christ is a supposit in virtue of only one of his natures, but this doesn't prevent him from having a second one.

So Thomas holds that Christ is composite, and this enables him to respond to a certain objection, an objection that appeals to the integrity of Christ's divinity. Christ is composite in that he has two natures, which allows him to have a human nature and the parts that come with it; this protects the integrity of Christ's humanity. Further, since this composition is a composition of natures within the whole person, and not a composition within the divine nature, the integrity of Christ's divinity is protected as well. By stating that the hypostatic union results in a composite person, therefore, Thomas adds to his basic theory in a way that makes it more adequate. That Thomas holds Christ to be composite is worth noting not only for its own sake, however, but also because it is a crucial element of other ways in which Thomas goes beyond the basic theory. Let us turn to some of these.

### **Compositeness and the possibility of the incarnation**

There is another way of appealing to the integrity principle to create problems for Christology. Thomas holds that God is both impassible and immutable.<sup>5</sup> Something is impassible if it cannot receive from anything or be subject to or modified by anything, and something is immutable if it cannot change. These two are closely related, and yet they are not the same. Immutability contains explicit reference to passage from one state to another, whereas impassibility does not. Both pose problems for the incarnation. First, the incarnation seems to require that the Word be as it is in virtue of something else, i.e., that it have its being-as-human from its assumed humanity, but impassibility seems to make this impossible. Second, the incarnation seems to require change from a non-incarnate and non-human state to an incarnate and human state, but immutability seems to make this impossible. So it appears either that the Word is divine and the incarnation impossible, or else that the incarnation is possible and the Word not divine. The incarnation and the integrity of Christ's divinity seem mutually exclusive.

To handle these problems, Thomas needs to show how divine impassibility and immutability are preserved, and he also has to show how there is, nonetheless, something akin to passibility and mutability in Christ. He does so by going farther beyond the basic theory, making the relation between the Word and its humanity parallel, in one respect, to the relation between God and creatures. So let us consider what he says about the relation of creation, and then how he understands the incarnation.

On Thomas's way of thinking, a real relation is an accident that inheres in some subject and has a term, i.e., that to which the subject is (by the accident) related. Helen is Michael's daughter because there is in Helen (the subject) some accident (daughterhood) that relates her to Michael (the term). However, it can happen that something is truly said to be related to something else without being the subject of such an accident. For example, if it is true of Helen that Michael is thinking of her, this is not because Helen is the subject of some relational accident "being thought of" that has Michael as its term, but only because Michael is the subject of some relational accident "thinking of" that has Helen as its term.

Thomas exploits this possibility to talk about God and creation. He wants to say that there is a relation between God and creation, and he does this by placing all the metaphysical equipment of the relation on the creature's side, saying that the relation between God and creatures is one-sided (often called "mixed"): the creature is related to God, i.e., is the subject of the relation "created" whose term is God, and this is sufficient for the truth of the statement that God creates; there is no need to say that God is related to the creature by virtue of a relational accident (e.g., "creator of").

So the doctrine of mixed relations explains how there can be a relation between God and creation without there being a relational accident in God that violates divine impassibility. It can also be made to account for the more specific problem of immutability. Certain names that we give to God, says Thomas, have a temporal significance, because they refer to God insofar as he is the creator. This is legitimate, even though God is not temporal, because the creature is related to God, and the creature changes; this allows us to predicate temporal names of God without meaning thereby that he has really changed. The creature changes, and the creature is related to God, so therefore we have a change in how things stand between God and the creature, but this doesn't mean that anything on God's side has changed or become different.<sup>6</sup>

If that is the theory of mixed relations as used to deal with the problems posed by God's being the creator, how does it work in the case of the incarnation? Thomas holds that the hypostatic union is a mixed relation, with the real relation establishing the union residing in the assumed humanity (a creature). The union of humanity and divinity in Christ doesn't require Christ's divinity to bear a relation to the humanity, and divine impassibility is thus preserved. Since all the metaphysical equipment of the relation is on the side of the human nature, the

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divine Word in itself is not metaphysically affected by the fact of the incarnation. In the hypostatic union, the human nature receives, from the relation, the property of being related to the Word, while the Word itself receives nothing from anything; the first of these facts is sufficient for there being a union between them, and the second is sufficient for this union's not violating divine impassibility. As for immutability, parallel reasoning applies. When the incarnation takes place, change occurs on the side of the assumed nature, not on the side of the Word. There truly is, then, a change in relation between the Word and its humanity, but this is so in such a way that the Word's immutability is not compromised.<sup>7</sup>

The question now arises: how is the relation between the Word and its humanity any different from the relation between God and creation at large? If there is no difference, then to say that God is incarnate is only to say that some created nature exists. The answer is that, in the incarnation, the real relation of the human nature to the Word is such as to constitute just one person, while the real relation of the creature to God in the normal case is not such as to constitute just one person. In other words, creation and the hypostatic union are both mixed relations, but the latter is a union in person, while the former is an inter-hypostatic relation.<sup>8</sup>

So Thomas uses his theory of mixed relations to understand how Christ's being God is consistent with his being and becoming human. One could object, however, that a humanity joined by a mixed relation does not in fact constitute Christ as human, and also that anyone who "becomes" human without undergoing change is not in fact becoming anything. To speak somewhat figuratively, constituting principles ought to *do* something, but Thomas's use of mixed relations seems designed to ensure that Christ's humanity does nothing. He seems to have set things up in such a way that in the incarnation nothing happens. Another way of putting the objection is as follows. It is good to say that Christ's divinity isn't affected or changed, but we should also want to say that, in some other way, Christ is passible and mutable. If he can't be human in virtue of his humanity, and if he can't pass from not being human to being human, then we can't say that he is human or that he became human.

Thomas's account can be defended against this objection, and the defense rests on his view of Christ's compositeness. To begin with, let us note that Thomas does, in a certain way, acknowledge passibility in Christ:

Although the Word was not constituted by his human nature so that he would

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exist absolutely, he was constituted by his human nature so as to exist as human.<sup>9</sup>

What the Son of God possesses in virtue of his human nature is not his absolute existence, ... but only his existence as human.<sup>10</sup>

These passages show that, for Thomas, Christ is in some sense passible with respect to his humanity: he receives from it his existence as human.<sup>11</sup> The case of mutability<sup>12</sup> is much the same:

It is false to say, “the human being, Christ, began to be,” but it is true to say, “Christ began to be a human being.”<sup>13</sup>

In virtue of the incarnation, Christ comes to be something he was not before.

So Thomas does not say that Christ is in every way impassible and immutable. The point can be clarified by the following example. Suppose that a certain computer has a central processor but lacks a printer port; call this computer non-printer-ready. Suppose also that someone later adds a port for the printer. The computer is now printer-ready in virtue of that port—it receives printer-readiness from its port. Further, the computer has gone from being non-printer-ready to being printer-ready. But this does nothing to the central processor. The processor does not become other than it was, nor is it now printer-ready; it is the whole computer, not the processor, that became, and now is, printer-ready. So if something has more than one part, then the composition of the whole can come to differ while at least one of the parts remains the same.

The case of Christ is somewhat similar.<sup>14</sup> Let us keep firmly in mind that the hypostatic union requires no passion or change on the part of Christ’s divine nature; this is taken care of by the theory of mixed relations. Our problems are, first, to see how Christ’s human nature can be a principle in virtue of which Christ is human, and, second, how Christ can legitimately be said to have become human.

Let us start with passibility. Given that the Word in itself cannot be anything in virtue of anything other than itself, how can Thomas say that Christ is human in virtue of his humanity? To begin with, let us consider his view on what is necessary for something to be human.

‘[M]an’ signifies something having humanity.<sup>15</sup>

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All that is necessary for a supposit to be human is for humanity to be one of its constituents. If Christ has humanity, which he does, then he is human. Note that this implies nothing about anything happening to the divinity. It is perfectly consistent with nothing happening to it at all.

This makes sense only if Christ is composite. If Christ is simple, if he is simply divine, then whatever is true of him has to be true of his divine nature; on that supposition, if Christ is human, then his divinity is human. In fact, however, Christ is a composite of humanity and divinity. By virtue of possessing his humanity as a constituent, he, the whole composite person, is human. The divine nature can and does remain untouched by all this.

Now let us consider immutability. It has already been established, by means of the doctrine of mixed relations, that Christ's divinity does not come to be anything it was not before. How, consistent with that, can Christ become human? The answer is that the human nature gets joined to the Word in person. This makes no difference to the Word as such; it brings about no modification in the divine nature. The whole person of Christ, however, now includes humanity, in virtue of which it, that whole person, is human. Christ's list of constituents, so to speak, is now different, even though there is no difference in divinity, one of the constituents on that list.

This too makes sense only in light of Christ's compositeness. Compositeness is not presupposed by the incarnation, to be sure, because it is established by it. Its role is nonetheless crucial. One way for something to become such-and-such is for it to have one of its original constituents modified; another way is for it to gain a constituent without any of those original constituents being modified. Christ's becoming human is like this. Before the incarnation, he was the Word alone. He became human not by any modification in the Word in itself but by a human nature being added to him through a mixed relation. If it appears impossible for the immutable Word to have become human, this is only because we are failing to see that Christ is now composite. If Christ is now simple, if he is simply divine, then indeed he cannot have come to be other than he is except by his divine nature having come to be other than it is; on that supposition, if Christ became human, his divinity became human. In fact, however, Christ is a composite of humanity and divinity. He became human by coming to possess the humanity as a constituent, and because its coming to be a constituent was the coming-to-be of a mixed relation, the divine nature remained untouched.



At this point we can note something concerning the difference between the God-creation relation and the Word-humanity relation. When it is a question of the creator-creation relation, God is utterly unaffected by what happens in the world. But when it is a question of the incarnation, we cannot quite rest content with this. The creator of the hills is not a hill, but Christ really is human. The difference comes from the fact that the incarnation is a union in person. Although the Word in itself remains unaffected by the union, the whole Christ does not; indeed, the whole Christ as he actually exists after the incarnation exists as human only because of the union. This is the point of the traditional doctrine of the communication of idioms, which is not just a linguistic convention but meant as literal metaphysical truth.<sup>16</sup>

### **Compositeness and Christ's human life**

We have looked at whether divine immutability and impassibility make it impossible for the incarnation to occur. Let us consider different problems having to do with these two divine attributes, problems having to do with what happens after the incarnation occurs. If every divine person is impassible and immutable, then how can Christ, a divine person, live out an ordinary human life, which certainly involves being subject to accidents and going through processes of change?<sup>17</sup>

One commentator who has discussed this problem is Christopher Hughes. He argues that since Christ is the Word, and the Word is immutable, then Christ too should be immutable—but clearly he is not. On Hughes's account, Thomas's attempted solution to this problem is to make use of reduplicative propositions. Christ in himself is not mutable, but Christ *qua* human is, which means that while Christ (the Word) is not mutable, his humanity is. The problem with this, says Hughes, is that the humanity is external to Christ, and therefore things that are true of it cannot make statements about Christ true. In other words, it may well be the case that Christ's humanity is walking through the streets of Jerusalem, but this doesn't justify our saying that Christ is walking through the streets of Jerusalem, because Christ's humanity is separate from Christ.<sup>18</sup>

There are at least two problems with Hughes's interpretation. First, Thomas wouldn't say that Christ's humanity walks through the streets, because natures do not act—only supposita do. Second, the idea that Christ's humanity is external to him, thereby making what it does irrelevant

to Christ, is based on a false understanding of Christ's simplicity. As we have seen, Christ for Thomas is simple, but not in a way that implies that his humanity is external to him; his simplicity is consistent with his compositeness, with his humanity's being joined to him in person. His humanity, therefore, is not external to him but rather is one of his constituents, which means that he, the whole Christ, possesses the potentialities for action and passion that humanity brings. "Christ walked down the street" doesn't mean that the Word in itself walked down the street, nor does it mean that Christ's humanity walked down the street. It means that Christ, who is God and man, walked down the street, by virtue of his human nature.

So once again we see Christ's compositeness at work. It allows Thomas to explain Christ's post-incarnation human life. In fact, he is able to take care of immutability and impassibility at the same time. If Christ were simple, then he would have only divine properties, and the arguments that Hughes brings forward would have force. Once we accept that Christ is composite, however, we can say that there are things that are true of him by virtue of his human nature.<sup>19</sup> For example, in virtue of his humanity, Christ has a passible body, and because he has a passible body, he is able to suffer. This follows from the fact that he has such a body; any supposit that does can suffer. As Thomas says,

It must be said that the Lord of Glory is said to be crucified—not however in so far as he is the Lord of Glory, but in so far as he was a passible human being.<sup>20</sup>

This makes sense only in light of a correct understanding of Christ's compositeness.<sup>21</sup>

### **Compositeness and the integrity of Christ's humanity**

Up until now, we have considered objections to Thomas's view of Christ that appeal to the integrity of Christ's divinity, and we have seen how Thomas's account of Christ as composite allows him to go beyond the basic theory in ways that reply to these objections. Now let us consider objections that derive from the side of Christ's humanity.

It is clear why Thomas says that the hypostatic union is a union in person that is not a union in nature, but a difficulty arises from the fact that one of the united items is a human nature. A human nature is a substantial nature. Because it is a substantial nature, it ought to give rise to a substance, more particularly, to a human person. This poses a dilemma. Either we allow that the human nature gives rise to a person, or we do not. If we do allow it, then there are

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two persons in Christ, the pre-existing person of the Word and a second, human person. If we do not allow it, something seems to be lacking to the human nature: a human nature that does not give rise to a human person seems to be incomplete and perhaps no different from an accident. According to this dilemma, either the unity principle or the integrity principle is going to have to be abandoned.

Thomas does not raise the problem in these terms, but we can figure out how he would solve it. The key point is that natures perform two functions for the suppositis whose natures they are. Consider again Thomas's statement of Christ's compositeness and simplicity:

The person or hypostasis of Christ can be considered in two ways. The first way is according to the way it exists in itself. And in this way it is completely simple, as is the nature of the Word. The second way is according to the way it exists as a person or hypostasis that subsists in some nature. In this way, the person of Christ subsists in two natures. Whence, although there is only one subsisting thing in this case, there is nonetheless a plurality of modes of subsistence. And thus he can be called a composite person, in so far as he is one thing subsisting in two ways.

We can look at Christ in two ways; in one way, he is simple, and in another way, he is composite. Here let us focus only on the different ways of looking. We can consider a supposit simply as something subsisting, without regard to the nature or natures in which it subsists. In other words, we can think of Christ, or Socrates, as something that subsists, without attending to the fact that Christ exists as God and human, or that Socrates exists as human only. Or, we can attend to such things and consider a supposit as existing in its substantial nature or natures.

Corresponding to this distinction is a difference between two functions that a substantial nature has. One function is to be that in virtue of which a supposit exists simply as a supposit.<sup>22</sup> The other function is to be that in virtue of which a supposit is a particular kind of thing.<sup>23</sup> These two can be brought out more clearly by contrast with the functions of an accident. An accident does not constitute its subject as a supposit—indeed, it presupposes that its subject already subsists. Further, an accident does not establish its subject in a substantial species, but only in an accidental one. An accident, in short, is related to its subject in a far more superficial way than a

nature is. Accidents do not constitute the all-or-nothing subsistence that belongs to their subjects as wholes, nor do they constitute the subsistence-in-a-nature that belongs to their subjects.<sup>24</sup>

We can say, then, that substantial natures have two “functions” and that they “do” two different things for their supposit; of course one should not take these formulations too literally, as natures are not efficient causes. Ordinarily, a substantial nature performs both of these functions for its supposit. It is by virtue of his humanity that Socrates both subsists and subsists-as-human.<sup>25</sup> And accidents, as we saw, perform neither of these functions. But then we might ask: could something be joined to a supposit so as to perform only one of them? This is the proper way to understand Christ’s human nature. Before explaining this, however, I should note that it is difficult to discuss these matters without saying things such as the following: “Christ’s human nature causes the Word to exist humanly.” This sort of language is, at least from Thomas’s perspective, misleading: as we have already seen, Thomas wouldn’t say that a creature gives being to God. On the other hand, more precise formulations are usually quite unwieldy. In what follows, I will simply proceed without regard to this issue, using whatever language seems most convenient for discussing the functions of Christ’s humanity; this should pose no difficulties, as long as this language is interpreted with the point about divine impassibility in mind.

So, then, what does Christ’s humanity do? Consider two passages that were discussed earlier:

Although the Word was not constituted by his human nature so that he would exist absolutely, he was constituted by his human nature so as to exist as human.

What the Son of God possesses in virtue of his human nature is not his absolute existence, ... but only his existence as human.

Christ’s humanity is, on the one hand, a principle constituting him as a human being. This means establishing him in a substantial species, humanity, and not in an accidental one. Christ’s humanity performs one of the functions that a nature normally performs, and in this way, it is quite different from an accident. On the other hand, Christ’s human nature is not a principle constituting him as a supposit. If it were, then his very existence would depend on his being human, which would contradict the Christian faith. Christ’s humanity does some, but not all, of

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what a humanity normally does. It concerns its possessor's personal existence, but it does not establish it. It affects it, but it does not effect it. The nature does not constitute Christ absolutely, but it does constitute him as human.<sup>26</sup>

To this it might be objected that the integrity principle has been violated. If Christ's humanity isn't fulfilling all of its functions, then it isn't really a full humanity. Thomas would reply that the function of making a supposit subsist is less crucial to a nature than its function of making the supposit be of a certain kind. Thomas does discuss the subsistence-granting function, as we have seen, but he is willing to downplay it in favor of the other function.<sup>27</sup> The case of Christ shows that the subsistence-granting function is a normal function of a nature but not an absolutely necessary one.

Now let us return to the objection raised at the outset of this section. The objection was this: either Christ's human nature really is a substantial nature, in which case it will give rise to a second person, or else it won't give rise to a second person, in which case it isn't really a substantial nature. The basic theory alone cannot handle this objection; hence the more refined version. According to it, Christ's humanity is joined to the Word in such a way that it constitutes Christ as a member of the substantial species humanity, but not in such a way that it constitutes Christ as a subsisting person. The latter is sufficient for protecting the unity principle; the former is sufficient for protecting the integrity principle.

Finally, compositeness is crucial once again. A nature that performs only the function of making its supposit belong to a certain species could not be that supposit's only nature. A supposit that had only that sort of nature would have no principle of absolute existence. Christ, therefore, must be composite if his human nature is to make him human in this way.

## **Summary**

We have seen how Thomas develops his theory of the incarnation well beyond the basic theory. The basic theory states that the hypostatic union is a union in person that is not a union in nature. In order to make this work, however, Thomas has to provide a series of refinements. The primary one is the specification that the hypostatic union result in a composite person; the other refinements discussed here depend on it. The hypostatic union, then, is a union in person (not in nature) that establishes Christ as a composite person; it is a mixed relation; it allows him,

in certain ways, to become other than he was and to be subject to accidents; it allows the human nature to constitute Christ as human without constituting him absolutely. All of this is put into play by Thomas in order to preserve the unity of Christ's person and the integrity of his two natures.<sup>28</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This account of the notions of union in person and union in nature, and how Thomas uses them in Christology, is quite compressed. I explain these matters in detail in my "Uses of the Person-Nature Distinction in Thomas's Christology," forthcoming in *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* LXVII (2000).

<sup>2</sup> The latter argument is raised as an objection to Thomas's Christology by Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 241-51. At pp. 250-51: "[I]n order to hold fast to divine incomposition, Aquinas will have to say that in at least one case, something is a man without (ever) having either a human body, or any of that body's parts, among its parts.... I don't, however, see how a being that never has any human bodily parts...could be a human being...."

<sup>3</sup> "[D]icendum quod persona sive hypostasis Christi dupliciter considerari potest. Uno modo, secundum id quod est in se. Et sic est omnino simplex: sicut et natura Verbi. Alio modo, secundum rationem personae vel hypostasis, ad quam pertinet subsistere in aliqua natura. Et secundum hoc, persona Christi subsistit in duabus naturis. Unde, licet sit ibi unum subsistens, est tamen ibi alia et alia ratio subsistendi. Et sic dicitur persona composita, in quantum unum duobus subsistit." *Summa theologiae* (henceforth cited as ST), ed. Petrus Caramello (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952-56), III, q. 2, a. 4, resp. Another discussion of Christ's compositeness is found in *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi III* (henceforth cited as 3S), ed. Maria Fabianus Moos (Paris: 1933), d. 6, q. 2, a. 3, which approaches the issue differently but is consistent with the text being considered here.

<sup>4</sup> That Christ has a multiplicity of human parts is presupposed in ST III, q. 2, a. 5, on whether Christ's body and soul are united, as well as in many other places.

<sup>5</sup> For impassibility, see *Summa contra gentiles* (henceforth cited as SCG), ed. Leon., manual edition (Rome, 1934), I.16; ST I, q. 3; ST I-II, q. 22, a. 2, ad 1; for immutability, see ST I, q. 9.

<sup>6</sup> For the theory of mixed relations and this application, see ST I, q. 13, a. 7. For some complications, see Mark Henninger, *Relations: Medieval Theories 1250-1325* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 31-39. For Henninger, the most important issue for Thomas in developing the mixed relations theory is divine transcendence, not immutability; as the quotations from Thomas given here show, however, Thomas does use the mixed relations theory, at least in Christology, to handle the problems of impassibility and immutability.

<sup>7</sup> “[D]icendum quod unio de qua loquimur est relatio quaedam quae consideratur inter divinam naturam et humanam, secundum quod conveniunt in una persona Filii Dei. Sicut autem in Prima Parte dictum est, omnis relatio quae consideratur inter Deum et creaturam, realiter quidem est in creatura, per cuius mutationem talis relatio innascitur: non autem est realiter in Deo, sed secundum rationem tantum, quia non nascitur secundum mutationem Dei. Sic igitur dicendum est quod haec unio de qua loquimur, non est in Deo realiter, sed secundum rationem tantum: in humana autem natura, quae creatura quaedam est, est realiter” (ST III, q. 2, a. 7, resp.); “Esse autem hominem convenit Deo ratione unionis, quae est relatio quaedam. Et ideo esse hominem predicatur de novo de Deo absque eius mutatione per mutationem humanae naturae, quae assumitur in divinam personam. Et ideo, cum dicitur: Deus factus est homo, non intelligitur aliqua mutatio ex parte Dei, sed solum ex parte humanae naturae” (ST III, q. 16, a. 6, ad 2); see also 3S d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; 3S d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1-3. For a useful discussion of an ambiguity in Thomas's presentation, see Thomas Weinandy, “Aquinas and the Incarnation as Act: ‘Become’ as a Mixed Relation,” *Doctor Communis* 32 (1979): 15-31. Weinandy argues that although Thomas will sometimes say that God is only conceptually related to creatures or that the Word is only conceptually related to its humanity, he does not mean that these relations hold

only because of some judgment on our part, despite the fact that Thomas explains “conceptual relation” in this way. As Bearsley puts it, although the Word is not “really” related to the humanity, it is “truly” related to it; see P. J. Bearsley, “Jesus the Son of Mary according to St. Thomas Aquinas,” *Angelicum* 55 (1978): 104-5, 113, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Whether one wishes to call such an inter-hypostatic relation a “union” or not depends upon whether one thinks that unions can be inter-hypostatic; see my “Uses of the Person-Nature Distinction,” p. xxxxxxxx. Note, in any case, that if the creator-creature relation were a union in person, there would be no created supposita, which would upset the orders of creation and salvation; see Thomas, ST III, q. 4, a. 5.

<sup>9</sup> “[Q]uamvis Verbum non sit constitutum per naturam humanam ut sit simpliciter, tamen per naturam humanam constituitur quod sit homo” (3S d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 4, ad 1).

<sup>10</sup> “Non enim ex natura humana habet Filius Dei quod sit simpliciter...sed solum quod sit homo” (ST III, q. 3, a. 1, ad 3).

<sup>11</sup> DU 1, ad 15, in the Marietti edition, appears to contradict this: “Unde non oportet quod natura [sc. humana] sit simplicior et formalior illo homine qui est Verbum caro factum, et constituens ipsum in quantum est homo.” The provisional Leonine text of this passage, however, reads differently. “Unde non oportet quod natura sit simplicior et formalior Verbo secundum se, sed est simplicior et formalior illo homine qui est Verbum caro factum et constituens ipsum in quantum est homo.” Although the Word in itself is not constituted as human by Christ’s human nature, the man who is the Word made flesh is so constituted. I would like to thank Fr. Adriano Oliva, O.P., Propresident of the Leonine Commission, for allowing me to quote this unpublished text.

<sup>12</sup> “Mutability” is a somewhat misleading term here; for Thomas, change involves imperfection, which means that the incarnation cannot be a “change,” even though it is a case of “becoming” (cf. ST III, q. 16, a. 6, ad 2; 3S d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1). Nonetheless, I will continue to speak of “mutability” to avoid overuse of cumbersome expressions such as “ability to become other than one is.”



<sup>13</sup> “[H]aec est falsa: Homo Christus esse incoepit; sed haec est vera: Christus incoepit esse homo” (ST III, q. 16, a. 9, ad 3). See also 3S d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4: “Quamvis enim suppositum illud semper fuerit, non tamen semper fuit suppositum humanae naturae.”

<sup>14</sup> In what follows, I will speak of Christ’s divinity and humanity as his “constituents,” not as his “parts.” For reasons why Thomas would not want to speak of “parts” in this case, see 3S d. 6, q. 2, a. 3, ad 4, and ST III, q. 2, a. 4, obj. 2 & ad 2. For a good discussion of the notions of part and whole in Thomas’s Christology, see Bernard Bro, “La notion métaphysique de tout et son application au problème théologique de l’union hypostatique,” *Revue Thomiste* 68 (1968): 181-97, 357-80.

<sup>15</sup> “Homo significat habentem humanitatem” (ST III, q. 17, a. 1, resp.).

<sup>16</sup> See ST III, q. 16, aa. 1, 4.

<sup>17</sup> It will be noted that here I am using the word “change.” The human modifications that Christ undergoes in his human life are in fact changes in Thomas’s sense.

<sup>18</sup> Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God*, pp. 253-64.

<sup>19</sup> If someone wants to say, “The Word walks down the street,” this will be true, but it must be understood correctly. For Thomas, the subject term here is to be taken materially, as referring to the whole supposit of Christ, without regard to what formality is at work. See ST III, q. 16, a. 7, ad 4.

<sup>20</sup> “Dicendum quod Dominus gloriae dicitur crucifixus, non secundum quod Dominus est gloriae, sed secundum quod erat homo passibilis” (ST III, q. 46, a. 12, ad 1). For the general point about passibility, see ST III, q. 14, a. 1, and q. 16, a. 4. Even more generally, Thomas holds that Christ has accidents by the mediation of his humanity; see 3S d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 3, ad 3.

<sup>21</sup> The discussion in this and the previous section raises the following problem. If Thomas, appealing to Christ’s compositeness, holds that Christ is both divine and human, and then goes on to claim that Christ *qua* divine is impassible and immutable and that Christ *qua* human is passible and mutable, isn’t he (Thomas) committed to the self-contradictory view that

Christ is impassible and passible, immutable and mutable? At present, all I can say about this problem is that I am not trying to solve it here. Many metaphysical and logical issues would have to be examined, issues that would lead us far afield.

<sup>22</sup> “Considerandum est autem, quod aliquae formae sunt quibus est aliquid ens non simpliciter, sed secundum quid; sicut sunt omnes formae accidentales. Aliquae autem formae sunt quibus res subsistens simpliciter habet esse; quia videlicet constituunt esse substantiale rei subsistentis.” *Quaestio disputata de unione Verbi incarnati*, in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 2, ed. M. Calcaterra and T. S. Centi (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1953), a. 4, resp. See also SCG IV, c. 49.

<sup>23</sup> “Hoc est etiam quod Philosophus frequenter nominat quod quid erat esse, id est hoc per quod aliquid habet esse quid.” *De ente et essentia* (henceforth cited as DEE), ed. Leon. vol. 43, c. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. DEE c. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Sententia Libri De Anima*, ed. Leon. vol. 45/1, lect. 1, no. 225.

<sup>26</sup> For other texts that support the idea that Christ's humanity performs one function but not the other, see the following: 3S d. 10, q. 6, a. 2, qa. 1, ad 1-2; 3S d. 12, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; ST III, q. 2, a. 3, ad 3; ST III, q. 16, a. 6, ad 1; ST III, q. 16, a. 12, c, ad 1.

<sup>27</sup> “[N]ec Petrus, inquantum homo, est persona, sed inquantum iste homo” (3S d. 10, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 1, ad 2); see also 3S d. 10, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 2, ad 1; ST III, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>28</sup> In developing the ideas in this paper, I have benefited from conversations with Richard Cross, Anne-Marie Gorman, Matthew Lamb, Robert Pasnau, Kevin White, and John Wippel.