

A Maximum Understanding of the Body of Christ A Catholic Perspective

Revised edition with NDE supplement

This book explores the maximum interpretation of many existing ideas, and offers new ideas concerning the large topic of the body of Christ. These new ideas are offered within the framework of a traditional study of the body of Christ. It is not a book of *new dogma*, but of new or revisited *possibilities*.

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Christ, that is the entire body of Christ, was intended by God to be the fulfilled whole of creation. Angels, humanity, even the lion that lies down with the lamb were all intended to have a final form as Christ. We need not even wait until Heaven to begin our evolution into Christ, and all of this is supported by scripture, doctrine and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

With this destiny in mind, many teachings take on a new maximized form. Perhaps not so new, as the saints have spoken of our destiny as Christ, even the divine Christ for two thousand years. St. John of the Cross, the desert fathers, the mystics and others all speak of us as the ongoing Christ, and even of our final divinization.

Christ — who is our intended destiny — was revealed progressively, first as the Trinitarian Son of God, then as the human Jesus Christ. We shall examine (among many other topics in Christology), this pattern by which God creates then unites his creation into himself. The spiritual angels found their intended destiny in the *spiritual* Son of God. God's human creation finds its destiny in and as the *human* Christ, who we know as Jesus.

This communion is an original intention and not only a redemption from sin. God's communion with creation proceeds not because of sin, but in spite of it. The "mechanics" of spirit, sin, virtue, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory and more will all be examined. We begin the study of Christ with a brief examination of God.

God

God is all that is absolute existence. As absolute existence, God is necessarily uncreated. God's existence is not conditional upon any person, thing or act. As absolute existence, there are no conditions under which God cannot exist. Absolute existence does not preclude God from having other attributes, and we shall see that our own attributes of awareness, intellect, and free will existed first

in the principle of our creation — God. This article examines God incrementally, beginning with God as pure existence.

It is impossible that God not exist. If anything exists, it is either unconditional existence (God), or a creation of God, since there could be no other source. Either way God exists. God is not the world or ourselves, because both of these were brought into being, and are not unconditional existence.

God is both the cause and the effect of his own being. We observe that God's essence (to be), is the same as his existence (to be). This is quite different from the essence of a human (rational, physical being), or the existence of a human, (to be created from others). If we trace back the traits of essence and existence of all things to their source, we arrive at God.

It is impossible that something arise from nothing.¹ All creation depends upon the previous step of creation, but an endless chain of cause and effect could not include an absolute and uncreated being. Absolute being must therefore be outside of any creation chain. Scientific investigation into creation supports the idea of our finite universe arising from an infinite source. Regressing back to the point of creation shows that our many dimensions (spatial, logical, mathematical, spiritual, physical) existed once as a single super dimension. This super dimension is traced back to an infinite single point of being, which has no prior cause.

The key element of God is eternal or absolute being. *Eternity is the unified existence of cause and effect, God is the cause, and God is the effect.* Internal to God this absolute being may be *revealed* as distinct ways, and even divine persons.

¹ Nothing is the complete absence of any being, (being is anything that exists: matter, energy, ideas, virtues, emotions). Nothing has no quality or quantity; no spirit, matter or idea; it cannot be measured or even thought of. The vastness of outer space is not nothing, because it can be measured, observed and described — it has qualities. From this we see that something cannot arise from nothing; existence cannot be derived from non-existence.

CCC 297 speaks of creation from nothing. This is understood to mean that God creates upon a foundation of nothing, but nothing remains nothing. When God first created, God alone existed. God could not take preexisting matter or spirit (other than himself) to form into creation. God 'donates' his attributes to creation, forming creation in his own image around its own core of nothing. Creation is the detached attributes of Christ. Scripture often states that without God, man is nothing.

Among the many attributes we observe in creation are awareness, intellect, and free will. All these necessarily had their origin directly or indirectly, in the principle of creation. Therefore the Principle of creation (God), is an aware and intelligent being of free will. God is not an unaware force of nature. God is a free, aware, and intelligent being — a divine person.

God cannot increase in ability or virtue, nor be corrupted or lessened in any way. Sin and evil are corruption of God's perfect and complete design in creation. Sin is the lacking of goodness, which was once present. Sin is the perfect made imperfect.

We necessarily have our origin, (via direct or extended means) in God. We shall see that God made all of creation for its own benefit and for God's joy, with the intended goal of full union with God. It was to have been that simple, but sin entered into creation, and with it came new alternate possibilities.

Spirit

The topic of spirit should be dealt with before most other topics, since spirit is the "mechanism" as created by God by which creation operates. Events in creation are not a consequence of God pulling strings from Heaven, they are a consequence of humanity pushing levers on earth. These interconnecting levers are spirit: respect, moderation, reverence, love, hate. Just like matter, spirit is a creation of God. God is not a creation of the spirit world; rather, God creates and what he creates is first of all, spirit.

Spirit is intangible but as real as matter; and it has real effect. Spirit is immaterial being. Being is anything that exists: a rock, an idea, energy, emotion, logic, a person. Patience, respect, hate, reverence, morality, memory, free will are all spirit, and all have real effect in our world. Spirit is the underlying framework of all creation, and corruption of the willed moral virtues degrades the operation of all creation.

Spirit forms matter, spirit forms spirit, spirit forms events. Consider that anything that can be described in terms of logic, will, virtue, act, emotion, mathematics or physical law has these same immaterial spirits or qualities as its foundation. It is commonly

known that energy and matter are the same substance in different configurations. Spirit, matter and events, likewise have an equivalence. Gospel accounts of this equivalence are the episodes in which Jesus makes bread, arms, legs (Mt 15:31), from nothing but his will; even events may be formed, the many biblical prophecies by Jesus and others link moral action to distant future events. Immaterial acts are real, and have real effect in our world, beginning with ourselves. "Spiritual efficacy" is the principle of the real effect of spirit.²

Spirit by definition has no finite boundaries, will is the boundary for spirit—God’s will, man’s will. Because of moral free will, virtue may be corrupted into vice. ***God is not the origin of evil; abuse of virtue by moral beings is the origin of evil.*** Deviation from the original perfection of God’s moral design necessarily causes disorder in our world. Any deviation from perfection can only be degradation.

We might observe that the material world is the real and normal order of creation, but before our material world existed, spirit alone was the medium of existence, (as with the community of the angels). This spiritual universe was no less real, and cause and effect were real within this spiritual realm. Indeed the world of matter is more like an overlay for the world of spirit. Spirit is the unseen framework of the entire universe, and was created as such by God. The practical consequences of this are that acts of patience, moderation, justice, generosity, chastity are real with real effects. The vices of these virtues are also real with real effect in our world. Spirit forms matter; spirit forms spirit; spirit forms events.

The idea that everything has a spirit is a necessary truth because everything has some immaterial qualities: logical or mathematical descriptions, willed moral virtues, time, emotion. Hundreds of years ago, St. Thomas Aquinas spoke of any *thing*

² At a human societal level, most legal systems include the idea of moral infractions, (which are increasingly less enforced). The idea is that a person's character is the core from which his actions derive, it is his own personal spiritual framework, and no less real than body or property. Therefore an attempt to corrupt a person's morals is a type of assault on the real character, will and soul of that person. Harming the character of a person will result in harmful acts in the future. Ancient Israel took severe steps to remove such immaterial threats to their society, as commanded in the Law of Moses.

having an underlying spirit that is mineral, vegetable or animal in nature. Disorder in our world is actually virtue which has become (partially) corrupted due to a lacking or misproportion. This corruption by misproportion comes about by willed mischoice by humanity.

We must give correct attention to God, ourselves and others in all our actions. If we fail in this, the resultant act is usually weighted towards self, at the expense of God or others. Sin is a misproportion of virtue, leaving a relative lacking of some virtue.

To take the quality of respect for example; we observe that when we give undue effort to self, dignity is corrupted into arrogance. If we fail to give proper moral effort to God, then irreverence results. If we fail to give others their due, then disrespect results.

In this example, if the student increased awareness of his own dignity, he would do well. But if he fails to also increase his efforts toward God's virtue of humility, then a relative lacking and resulting arrogance might result.

From this we see that moral corruption is a matter of lacking or deficit of what should be present. A lack of effort toward God leaves a relative predominance of self. The results are not theoretical, but take the forms of war, poverty, famine and disease.

Spirit interacts directly with spirit according to common elements. The biblical ideas of a family or a nation sharing in the effects of virtue or vice are examples. If a virtue is corrupted by a person of ancient Israel (to take a common biblical example), then all who share common virtues will suffer to some degree. Persons who are of the same: family, tribe, nation, world will all feel the effects of another's good or bad action.

This is the basis for the Biblical belief that children benefit or suffer from their parent's virtue or sin. It was true for Adam and Eve, and it is still true today. *This communal nature of spirit was created by God to benefit humanity*, but with the advent of the disorder of sin, disorder was shared in addition to goodness.³

³ A model showing the communal nature of spirit might be as follows. God is love (love is commitment), and all of creation is necessarily derived from love. Outside of God, this love is created love and may be corrupted by sin.

All of creation is derived from God's created and perfect love, but having this common and sustaining origin of created love, the parts affect the whole, which then affect the parts.

God's good judgment is also a factor by which spirit affects other spirit, matter or events. God is incapable of creating evil, but as our parent he does assign the evil of our sin to creation, according to his good judgment. In assigning the evil created by humanity, its disorder must be felt, but God could not assign evil with only an evil outcome possible.

A criticism of monotheism is that God seems to punish people by directing disorder (war, famine) upon them. In reality the evil of sin generated by humanity *must be effected within creation* (absolute divinity cannot be corrupted), God simply assigns our evil. God as our parent directs our evil according to his good judgment, for the highest goal — the salvation of souls. It is not a matter of God punishing our bad behavior, but of God assigning our disorder. This assignment may be made directly, or by extension, by the workings of nature for example. 1Cor 5:5 describes our evil being effected in this life, sparing condemnation in the next.

Just as goodness may be mediated into evil, evil may be mediated into goodness. It is a matter of anger being morally mediated into patience, greed mediated into moderation and trust, indifference into piety.⁴

The human soul is a spirit; the soul is a "form", which gives function and purpose to one's body and actions. A human person might be thought of as a soul to which the property of physicality had been added. ***One's soul is the totality of one's immaterial attributes, and the operating principle of one's being.***

Animals are considered to have a soul (though not immortal as in humans), which governs their operations. The human soul has traditionally been partitioned into that part which governs moral

⁴ The matter/energy equivalence is common science, with matter being a particular configuration of energy. Energy (gravity, light, etc.) is immaterial and considered spirit, but not all spirit has a direct equivalence with matter. Moral spirit has an equivalence with virtue, action and events, not matter. Patience or anger has no direct physical form, but modifies the action of moral being (anything that has existence is being, and moral being is simply willed action). Moral being may also affect non-moral being. Irreverence may equate to drought, which is the degraded action of proper rain.

activities (superior partition or spiritual soul), and that part which governs non-moral activities and the body, (inferior partition or material soul).

It is thought that the human soul is created by God using both direct and indirect means. Those faculties of the soul which govern the body are created at conception by biological means. Those faculties of the soul having a moral dimension are thought to be created directly by God.⁵

The human soul is not static, but has the ability to “grow”, and change. We may know our soul by observing our will, which in turn governs our thoughts and actions. Intellect, will and memory are properties of our soul.

Injustice and suffering in our world may only be truly eradicated by restoring its damaged spiritual foundation, which is the cause of evil. To give assistance after the fact is good, but even better is to prevent the disorder by avoiding those moral acts that degrade the spiritual foundations of our world and its people. This prevention is difficult to observe, because we are attempting to observe that which is prevented.

There is not a lack of good ideas in our world, but these do not take root in hearts because of moral disorder (sin) which corrupts will, faith, brotherhood and reasoning. War, hatred, greed and even disease, catastrophe and natural disasters are caused by the ongoing damage to the spiritual foundation of our world.

Christology

God the Trinity

We cannot speak of God creating any part of himself, but God does progressively reveal himself, to humanity and even to his own self. The Trinity is three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not three Gods, but three divine persons, the three of which

⁵ We mention multi-path metaphysics here. Metaphysics concerns itself with spiritual cause and effect. In proposing or defining the metaphysical path to an end, we too often assume only one path. For example we may say that God created Adam and Eve directly, or that God created Adam and Eve by way of evolution. The unlikely possibility exists that God used one method to create Adam and another to create Eve. It is possible that God will fulfill every good possibility during his eternal career, using every possible way, then create more projects.

constitute the one God. The Trinity of God is a mystery—not fully understood, and incapable of full understanding by any human.

Godhead is undifferentiated, unexpressed, absolute and singular being. Godhead is the simple, essential, unified, core God. Godhead is the necessarily first and fundamental revelation of God. Every movement of God — every act of thought, will and love further reveals and defines God. “When” Godhead acts in such a way as to reveal the divine Son, Godhead reveals himself to be God the Father. God makes revelation simply by thinking or willing. When God thinks of himself, his image the Son of God is revealed.

The Trinity is eternal, but far from static. In the Nicene creed, we read that Christ was begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. “Before” God was revealed as the Trinity, God was revealed as undifferentiated Godhead. Even today Christ adds members to himself as the body of Christ grows.

The revelation of Godhead as the three distinct persons of the Trinity is thought to be non-optional. “When” Godhead thinks, he “first” thinks of himself, (what else, no creation yet). In doing so, Godhead reveals the trait of intellect, beyond the trait of pure being of the Godhead. When Godhead thinks of himself, he generates the complete image of himself who is the Son of God; and Godhead is now God the Father. The Son of God is the fullest expression of God. The Son of God himself is not yet *fully* revealed; the human children of God are called to be yet more expression of the Son of God, as the body of Christ.

The first and non-optional act of the newly revealed God the Father and God the Son is to love each other. The Father and the Son directing their wills toward each other generates the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may be thought of as the bond of love (commitment) between the Father and the Son.

In example, think of two people having a common pursuit; this might be marriage or a business perhaps. As this pursuit is cultivated it becomes a real separate entity, this third entity becomes more than words. A marriage or a corporation is given a certain legal status and rights of its own. The efforts of the two people give real form to the third entity.

This example is necessarily inadequate. When God thinks and wills however; it is as real as it gets. The love of the Father and the Son toward each other is divine, selfless, full, intense, real, and permanent. Included in these thoughts is the possibility of creation outside of God. The Holy Spirit who results is divine, independent, full, intense and permanent.

The Holy Spirit is the acting agent of creation, sent by the Father and the Son, and is a real and complete divine person. The Holy Spirit is the result of the mutual willing of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not necessarily God's *proportional* will. It is possible, even likely that the Holy Spirit is God's compete, but weighted will, with favoritism toward mercy, joy and peace.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the created human nature of the Trinitarian Son of God. Jesus is the Son of God extended into creation. The doctrine concerning the divine and human natures of Jesus is summarized in the Catechism, CCC 464-483. Existing dogma of this hypostatic (underlying) union limits itself to declaring that in the single divine person of Jesus Christ there existed a complete man, and complete God. Jesus had a human body, soul, intellect and will; and every faculty of God was part of Jesus, including the divine intellect and will. These existed in the one divine person of Jesus Christ; distinctly and functionally, without confusion or opposition.⁶

The *distinct* faculties of soul of Jesus and the Son of God — will, awareness, intellect — are shown by the many instances of Jesus exhibiting will, knowledge and consciousness distinct from God, (Mt.26:39, Jn.6:38, Jn.5:30, Mt.24:36).⁷

⁶ The early Christian Council of Chalcedon (AD451), declared that the two natures Jesus Christ — the human nature of Jesus, and the divine nature of the Son of God — each retains its own properties and are united in one person of Christ. "Christ" is a title, which has become a name for the entire body of Christ, which now consists of Jesus and many others.

⁷ Definitions must be understood when speaking of the person of Christ:

— "Person" is the title given to a moral being. A person is considered human or divine according to his highest mode of existence. Jesus was a complete human man, and completely God. Since Jesus' highest mode of existence is divine, he is considered a divine person.

We have likely never considered the idea of one man having two intellects and two wills, (human and divine no less!) which operate seamlessly. There is no dogma as to this operation, but we may feel out an explanation.

We routinely think multiple thoughts. We might be cooking, ironing or even driving while our thoughts are fixed on our family, job or monthly budget. Likewise for our will; we routinely exert our will in two areas simultaneously. We may now envision two minds and two wills working seamlessly within the single person of Christ who had both human and divine natures.

One way to envision this arrangement is to recall the Trinitarian Son of God (who we call Christ), as having a will that was absolute in its principles. The Son of God then extends himself into creation as the human Jesus. Along with the human body, is given a human mind and will. *The human will of Jesus was a subset of the divine will.* Jesus was free to use his human free will within the bounds of the perfect divine will of the Son of God.

The human free will of Jesus was absolute in its core principles. It was not his human body or reasoning that made Jesus

– “The Son of God” is the second person of the Trinity of God, also called the Trinitarian Christ. The Son of God may include others into his person, and does just this in enlarging the body of Christ. Jesus was not included into the Son of God, but originated from the Son of God.

– “Christ” is all who share in the life of the Son of God. Firstly, the Son of God, then angels, human Jesus and the faithful. Christ is a royal title for all children of God starting with his own Son, and ultimately including all things: Eucharist, the lion who lies down with the lamb, all else. Christ is the beginning and the end of all creation.

– “Jesus” is the man Jesus, who is now the pre-eminent individual of the person Christ. “Jesus of Nazareth” describes the human nature of Jesus. “Jesus Christ” describes the divine nature of Jesus. When Christ incarnates directly, Jesus results. When Christ incarnates indirectly, using his attributes to form nothing into something, humanity and all creation results.

– “God” is all that has absolute existence and being. It is impossible to become God, because God cannot be brought into being. However, God is free to include others into his person, and does this via Jesus who is the human nature of God.

– “Divine” refers to all who are fully included into the absolute being of God, via the body of Christ. This idea of divinization has been spoken of by the apostles and saints for 2000 years. The idea of our divinization is supported in catechism and scripture, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 398, 460, 795, 1988), St. John of the Cross also spoke of this idea. The book “Mystical Evolution” by Fr. John Arintero, is an extensive study of spiritual advancement from humanity to divinity and is still in print.

divine, but his (divine) will which was contained within the absolute will of God.

Jesus can be thought of as the absolute will of God, enveloped with created human attributes. Around his absolute core is non-absolute flesh, emotions, awareness and reason. His human free will was free within the bounds of the divine will. Jesus is the human nature of the Son of God.⁸

Under the control of the divine will of Jesus, was a human mind, body, emotions and reasoning. All these operated under the divine will, and without the distortion of sin. It will be seen that the sacrifice of Jesus was to enter into the sin of humanity and remediate it into his own virtue. This sin corrupted all except the divine will of Jesus, allowing him to morally reform sin in all the varieties that it was presented under.

The divine will of Jesus did not micromanage his human actions, rather he used his human will, which operated within the larger bounds of the divine will. Jesus' human will was used for human actions, while he had recourse to his divine, all powerful will in supernatural acts, to perform miracles for example. Likewise, the divine intellect of Jesus was used in prophetic knowledge, rather than in his work as a carpenter.

Christ is now the entire body of Christ. It is no longer a matter of one divine intellect and one human intellect. The entire body of Christ has millions of human minds and wills, not to mention its angelic members. We begin our participation in the body of Christ as a member of the human Christ. The human Christ is now the many fallible members who constitute the **ongoing Christ** on earth. We work toward perfection, in hope of one day sharing in the divine nature of God, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 460, 795, 1988).⁹

⁸ The will of Jesus was divine and incorruptible. The human body and soul of Jesus was created like Adam, in that it was fully human but had no contact with sin and its corrupting effects. At the last supper, Jesus enlarged his person into the body of Christ, by including the apostles along with their sin. At this point the humanity of Jesus was corrupted and ended in death. His divine will remained incorruptible and mediated the apostle's sin into virtue, allowing their inclusion into his larger body of Christ.

⁹ The destiny of every member of the body of Christ is divinization, (CCC 398). The human Jesus is no exception. Jesus (who is the human nature of God), is now fully

Our participation in the body of Christ is first in the human nature of Christ (which explains why we are not divine in this life), then finally in the divine person of Jesus Christ in Heaven. It is Catholic doctrine that the faithful are the literal person and body of Christ, (CCC 795, 789; 1Cor 12:27, Rm 12:5, 1Cor 1:2, 1Cor 6:15). The Catholic Church uses the term “mystical body of Christ”, with mystical meaning mysterious, but not symbolic. The single person Christ is now all who are members of the body of Christ. The faithful on earth constitute the human nature of Christ, and those in the fullness of Heaven are the divine nature of Christ. The single divine person of Christ is constituted of many, many human and angelic members.

Jesus did not require salvation—that is membership in the body of Christ—because he was a member of the body of Christ at his creation. We in comparison, are *adopted* into the body of Christ.

In summary:

- The body of Christ is no longer Jesus alone, but all who constitute Christ, as the body of Christ.
- The human nature of Jesus was divinized, and the task of remediation of sin now falls on the ongoing human Christ on earth, that us. This enlarged body of Christ has perfected and divinized members in Heaven, while the ongoing human Christ on earth works toward this goal.

divine. Jesus is now fully divine and has no contact with sin. The human nature of the Son of God is now the ongoing Christ on earth—that’s us. God relies on the ongoing Christ to continue the redemptive mediation of sin into virtue, so that new members may be incorporated into the body of Christ. The one person of Christ is made of many individual members. Members each have a particular function, Jesus is the head directing the work of the members who now remediate sin into virtue. When the person of Christ (body of Christ) makes someone’s sin into his virtue, that person now exists within Christ.

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross has a timeless element, and its remediation of sin into virtue is still effected. Jesus and all those in Heaven may not take on additional sin, but the sacrifice and remediation of all members of the body of Christ is propagated through time, within creation. In this life we mistakenly assume time to be the core of an act, but in reality virtue is its core. Time is an outlying attribute, and the virtue of an act is not limited by time. The underlying spiritual framework of our created world is more affected by an act than by its particular time of occurrence.

- Our initial membership in Christ is in this ongoing human Christ on earth. Jesus now awaits us in Heaven where we will be incorporated into his divine nature.

Pre-sin, Post-sin

Christianity is often examined starting with original sin, but it is better examined starting from its ideal form prior to original sin. Sin, death and disorder were never a part of God's plan. Even salvation was never intended, because sin and Hell were never part of the plan. What was planned was our inclusion into the divine life of Christ in this life (CCC 398, 2Pet 1:4).

This book will examine elements of the Christian faith from the perspectives of both original perfection and subsequent original sin. The current form of salvation, Eucharist, body of Christ and more were all modified by the advent of sin. Today we assume such imperfection in our world, but it was never intended. Sin and death were never part of the plan, but our reunion with Christ our creator was planned, (CCC 398). With no death planned, we were to have made divine communion with Christ in this life.

Likewise Hell was never intended by God, and Hell was not a punishment designed by God in response to sin. Hell is failed final communion, Christ attempts communion with humans (and angels). All that cannot make the personal, then general communion is left behind, that's Hell, and it did not exist until the onset of sin.

What we call the two judgments are actually the two intended communions, which were corrupted by sin and now have Hell as a possibility. The **personal communion** planned by God is now corrupted by sin into the personal judgement, and now with Hell as a possibility. The **general communion** is now the general judgement with Hell as a possibility. This general communion was Christ's desire to reunite and fulfill all of creation. Everything comes from Christ, (Jn 1:3), and all is intended to rejoin Christ, so that "God may be all in all" (1Cor 15:28), even the lion who lies down with the lamb in Heaven.

Original sin even affected the Eucharist. With no sin or death intended, the Eucharist was to have been our inclusion into the full divine nature of Christ, in this life. We were to have communed with the divinity of Christ and the virtue of the entire body of Christ. As planned we still share in Christ, but now Christ

and the entire body of Christ takes on both the virtue and sin of humanity during the Eucharist.¹⁰ This idea has consequences which are discussed in the follow sections.

Adam and Eve were to have attained perfection of human spiritual growth, and then entered into divine union with Christ, (CCC 398, 2Pet 1:4). Now with the onset of sin, we first share in the human nature of Christ, then later in the full divinity of Christ in Heaven...but what was intended was our simultaneous inclusion into the whole Christ, both his human and divine natures, and we were to do it in this life on earth. ***This divine inclusion may still occur in this life***; the divine marriage or union spoken of by the saints is this divine inclusion and it may be made in this life.

Christ was never intended as a sacrifice for sin, (because no sin was planned). We were to have communicated with Christ in this life. Jesus Christ was never intended as our sacrifice, but as our God, parent and guide in this life. Jesus Christ incarnated not because of sin, but in spite of sin. Sin became an obstacle that Jesus Christ overcame in order to make his intended communion with humanity.

The first persons intended for divine inclusion into Christ were not Adam and Eve, but the angels. The angels were not and are not helpful outsiders. ***Those who were able to make communion with Christ, did so and are now full divine members of the body of Christ.*** This divine communion was made by the Son of God directly, since the human Jesus did not then exist.

These topics and more are presented here as the standard for Catholicism; these ideas have existed for as long as the faith, but are too often not included in Catholic teaching.

The life purpose for any human was not to live it in our human natures. The ultimate purpose of each life is divinization and union with the divine person of Jesus Christ. We were not to live our lives on earth, we were to live as Christ (who is the entire body of Christ) on earth. The resurrection was never intended because death was never intended. We were to have entered into the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ simultaneously. Heaven is the person of Christ, and we would have lived Heaven on earth. Let

¹⁰ The human nature of Christ (who is now the faithful on earth) takes on sin and remediates it. The divine nature of Christ (all those in Heaven) have no contact with sin, and positive hope and prayer are their efforts.

us use this higher standard of intended divine inclusion as our basis for all other elements of the Catholic faith.¹¹

Eucharistic Christ

Just as Jesus is the Son of God in the form of man, the Eucharist is the Son of God in the form of bread and wine. Just as Jesus had created and divine natures, so does the Eucharist have the limitations of its created form, while sharing in the unlimited Divinity. The Eucharist is not the single person of Jesus, but one member of the entire body of Christ.

To understand the Eucharist one must understand that Christ is now the entire body of Christ. Christ is a title, become a name for the many who are now the entire body of Christ. Christ is not Jesus alone, but includes angelic members, bread and wine, and in the final consummation, when God will be All in all (1Cor 15:28), Christ will even be the lion who lies down with the lamb. When all this is considered, it becomes easier to envision that part of the divine body of Christ exists in the forms of bread and wine.

The Eucharistic host alone is simply non-divine bread, but the Eucharistic host does not exist alone, any more than the human Jesus was limited to non-divinity. The Eucharistic host is a non-human member of the body of Christ. It is this particular member which we receive in communion. Short of a miracle, we do not receive human flesh, because the Eucharist is divinized bread and wine, not divinized flesh.

The bread and wine however are not isolated from Jesus, and because of the communion of the entire body of Christ, we receive Jesus and all members when we receive the Eucharist.¹²

¹¹ In a nutshell, Protestant theology has Jesus being incarnated for the purpose of saving us from sin, so that we may live our lives in Heaven. Catholic theology teaches that our divine union with Christ was intended from eternity (CCC 398), and we were to reunite with Jesus Christ and live Heaven (who is the person of Christ) on earth. Sin modified the details of this plan, but not the core plan. There is a strong element of agency in Protestant theology, (angels and even humans are agents, but not the person of Christ). There is a strong element of personality in Catholicism, (angels and humans actually become the person of Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ). See the following topics in this book for details of these ideas.

¹² The physical member of Christ consumed is bread, not Jesus. Therefore the answer to the oft asked question "Is the Eucharist cannibalism?", is 'no'. We eat Eucharistic

During a Eucharistic miracle, the body of Christ may be manifested as the flesh of Jesus, and not bread. During a Eucharistic miracle, the member of Christ physically received is Jesus.

The Eucharist has its localized limitations. The Eucharist for instance has no powers of perception, yet the larger body of Christ does, and it is aware of all its members. The Catholic Church recognizes prayer to the Eucharist as legitimate, because the Eucharist does not exist alone as bread and wine, but as a member of the divine body of Christ. We may address our prayer to the Eucharist, or a saint, but we necessarily pray to the single person of Christ, who is the entire body of Christ.

The bread and wine are not *created* into Christ, but become Christ by inclusion into Christ, who is God. Even God cannot create more God, and any thing or any person becoming part of the divine body of Christ does so by inclusion or adoption. Sanctifying grace is the means of including anyone or anything into the body of Christ.

When the priest says the words of consecration over the bread and wine, it is not so much that the bread is created into Christ, but Christ includes the bread into his own person, who is now the entire body of Christ. This application of sanctifying grace occurs to the faithful at baptism, when we too are included into the body of Christ; because we are not yet perfected, we share first in the human nature of Christ, then later in Heaven in the divine nature of Christ. Bread and wine offer no moral opposition to immediate inclusion into the divine body of Christ.

The Eucharist was intended only as a sharing of the person of Christ with his children. But with the advent of sin, it too was shared. ***The death of Jesus was a consequence of his entering into the sin of the apostles via the Eucharist.***

When incorporating the apostles into his own person, Jesus had to remediate their sin into virtue. Every part of the human Jesus except his will suffered the effects of sin — “he became sin”, (2Cor 5:21). The human will of Jesus was a subset of the divine will. It was

bread (which is a member of the body of Christ); not the human flesh of Jesus.

When considering new ideas which stretch our current understanding, consider how mystical our standard dogma is: God became a man; we are called to share in the very divinity of God (CCC 398); matter, spirit and time exist in whatever form God chooses; etc.

absolute in its principles and could not be corrupted, all else: emotions, body, reasoning were subject to corruption by the sin of humanity, which Jesus took on. This incorruptible will of Jesus remediated his now corrupted human senses, emotions, even reasoning into virtue. Jesus was presented with our sin, by communion with humanity. He did not (could not) incorporate it into his will. He suffered it passively, and also remediated it by active moral effort of his will.

It was the communion cup pouring into his soul, its sin and his battle against it that made him sweat blood, and beg “let this cup pass from me”. He appealed to the apostles in communion with him to share in his fight, but they slept on. Note that before his participation in original sin, Christ could not be killed (Lk 4:29-30), just hours after his participation in sin however, he could not avoid death.

Clearly, the communion event of the last supper was Christ’s entry into sin for the purpose of redemption, it was the cause of his death just hours later. For the prior three years, attempts to kill or imprison him had repeatedly failed. All this points to the communion event as more than mere symbolism.¹³

The primary reason for the Eucharist is communion with Christ. The mediation of sin into virtue was of course never intended (sin was never a part of God’s plan), but with the advent of sin, it must first be remediated into virtue before our inclusion into the body of Christ. The sin that Jesus took on at Gethsemane and the cross never really existed as sin within Jesus, it affected his entire created nature, but not his divine will. Hence the sacrifice of Jesus lives on as virtue eternally, unlike sin which will one day have no existence within the body of Christ. This is the propagation of the Eucharistic sacrifice through eternity.

¹³ As to the idea that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was made “once and for all”, thus allowing no sacrificial quality in the Eucharist: The fullness of any act includes all causes and all effects, even extended in time before or after the “act” itself. The Eucharistic sacrifice and communion includes all who have and who will partake in it. The Eucharistic sacrifice includes the redemptive mediation of the entire body of Christ, past, current and future.

It is a Catholic understanding that this sacrificial remediation of Christ (Gethsemane and the cross), is ongoing and propagated for all those desiring union with Christ.

To understand this timeless propagation, consider that all of Christ's virtues are eternal, the virtues (patience, justice, charity, etc.) we share in now, are an eternal part of Christ. So too are the virtues that Christ made on the cross. These virtues were made by remediating the moral suffering of Gethsemane and the horrors of the cross. The Eucharist does not so much propagate the suffering of the cross as it does the virtues made from the cross. Since these virtues are now eternal virtues of Christ, we may share in them without regard to time. This remediation of sin into virtue clears the way for the core action of the Eucharist which is union with God.¹⁴

We observe that our salvation is to become a member of Christ, the body of Christ, and two sacraments accomplish this: baptism and Eucharist. But why two? If we reflect on the principle of "original intended divinization", and the sacraments themselves we arrive at the answer.

Baptism provides forgiveness of sin and inclusion into Christ, but sin was never intended. What was intended was our human development culminating in our divinization in this life. Eucharist was the intended sacrament for our membership into Christ, and our final divinization. With the onset of sin, baptism (sacramental or desired) is now also a necessary sacrament for our salvation.

In baptism, we are forgiven by Christ making our sin into his very virtue, we become part of Christ. In Eucharist we become part of Christ, and in doing so, Christ reforms any sin into his very virtue.

¹⁴ As created by God, all creation had both individual and communal attributes. Goodness was to be shared by all, but with the advent of sin, now corruption was also shared by all. This sharing of corruption had a timeless aspect within creation, and original sin was shared by all, and for all time (within creation only; the escape from this was entry into the sinless and eternal Christ, who is the entire body of Christ). In illustration, if a person sins by adultery, the physical act is soon no more, but the damage to the spiritual framework of creation remains, regardless of time, and affects all creation, but only creation. The Eucharist and the entire body of Christ is a bridge of remediation between creation and Christ.

The Eucharistic remediation of sin into virtue takes this timeless sin (even today) and remediates it into the eternal virtue of Christ. We become a member of Christ, when Christ makes our sin, into his virtue.

Pre - incarnate Christ

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”, (Jer 1:5).

Jeremiah 1:5 is enormous in the information which may be extracted from it. Prior to our human incarnation we had existence; we were a dimension of Christ. We were not a human person, we were not the divine person of Christ — but we were a dimension of him. We had existence and life in some manner. We also each had a unique purpose or task for our lives. We will examine these ideas and propose a third idea: that our consent was obtained for our incarnation.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...”, let us take this as the absolute for each individual. Each person was and remains an ideal in the mind of God. We may be revealed to some or another degree internal to God. External to God, we may be spiritually developed to some level under the direction of our own free will. We may be on earth, in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory, but we exist always as an eternal ideal within God. Our eternal existence is our one life — our eternal life — which may be lived as part of the body of Christ, or as a human person.¹⁵

The God we are internal to is Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. All of creation comes forth from Christ and all creation returns to Christ.

Our existence (our one life), is first as a dimension of Christ — a thought of God. Recall that a thought of God has much more effect than our own thought. When God thinks it’s as real and consequential as it gets. God thinks and wills creation into existence. The Son of God is a thought of God the Father.

God’s first idea of us may not include reasoning, speech or free will. God’s first ideal for a person may be broader — love,

¹⁵ In example, Elijah and John the Baptist were two incarnations of the one life of a particular human prophetic ideal. (Mt 11:13-14). John was not aware of this (Jn 1:21), but Jesus was, and we acknowledge Jesus as the more competent authority. Elijah seems to have been an incarnation by adoption, of the Holy Spirit and returned to the Holy Spirit rather than experience death.

justice, brotherhood, faith, generosity. These major dimensions specify into dimensions such as free will, reason, physicality, speech, as our existence progresses from internal thought to external creation.

A person's existence may be under the moral stewardship of Christ or of human free will. The personhood of our eternal ideal may be as a dimension of the divine Christ, or as a human person on earth. Our morality may be absolute as a dimension of God, or non-absolute under our human free will.

As an individual proceeds from an internal dimension of Christ to incarnation as a human person, that person is given a mission for his life (see Jer 1:5). Furthermore, out of justice God obtains our consent to be incarnated. Our human free will begins with our consent to become free humans.¹⁶ A person's life purpose and his consent is a covenant or contract with God.

The idea of life mission is attested to by Christ to Jeramiah. The idea of consent is largely new, but it fits the human model much better than the unsupported idea that we are incarnated without any consent. ***God's own ideal of human free will demands our consent.*** The idea of non-consensual incarnation is a prevailing, vague, unstudied and unsupported teaching, and it must go.

Apparent Christ

Jesus was the first (and only) human incarnation of Christ, but not the first human appearance of Christ. Trinitarian Christ (not Jesus) appeared as Melchizedek in the Old Testament. Melchizedek was "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life...", (Hebrews 7:3).

Melchizedek was, and remained eternal, he only took on a temporary human appearance, unlike Jesus Christ who was fully human. Christ again took on a human appearance and appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18.

¹⁶ This is essentially Christ asking one of his dimensions if it wants to enter into the realm of creation. Can a dimension of Christ even give a meaningful free answer? Consider that Jesus was a dimension of Christ, extended into creation. The divine will of Jesus was a subset of the divine will of Christ, the Son of God; yet this subset of will, was truly free will. The Son of God asked Jesus to drink the cup of suffering, and Jesus was free to do so, or to do not.

We observe that the many instances of angels taking on a human appearance does not make them human, they remain angels and not humans. Likewise, Trinitarian Christ may take on a human appearance, but this is not the same as a human incarnation.

Angelic Christ

Just as Christ (the Son of God), planned divine communion with his human children (CCC 398), so too did Christ plan and make communion with his angelic children.

Sin was never a part of God's plan, and this communion was to have proceeded without sin. No one (human or angelic) was to have failed this communion, Hell was not part of the original plan. Yet we know that some angels did fail this communion, and we now know them as the devils. We know that this communion occurred because we know of those angels who failed. We now call this originally planned communion, "judgement".

Those angels who did make their communion with Christ are now members of Christ (who is now the entire body of Christ). The first created members of Christ were the angels. This communion with the angels was made by the Son of God directly, since Jesus, who is the human nature of the Son of God, did not then exist.

The communion event of Christ with the angels, makes Christianity thousands of years older than is currently thought. The core of Christianity is communion with Christ — a participation in the very person of Christ (2Pet 1:4) — and this is exactly what occurred with Christ and the good angels, thousands of years before Jesus Christ made communion with humanity.

We observe the difference between the human and angelic communions: Christ's communion with humanity involved the remediation of sin into virtue, prior to communion. Christ's communion with the angels does not seem to have involved remediation of sin, and those angels sinning simply did not make the communion.

The most commonly proposed idea for this lack of remediation is that because of their intimate knowledge of Christ, the angels were fully committed to rebellion. The limited abilities

and perception of humanity provide a forgivable excuse to some degree.

What we now call the personal and general judgments are in fact Christ's originally planned divine communion (CCC 398), first with the angels, then humanity. In this communion, Christ makes union with every soul that is free of sin and selfishness. All that cannot make this communion remains behind, devoid of God and goodness, this is what we call Hell. God does not assign humans or angels to Hell; Hell is an unintended consequence of failed final communion. The "Anglic Advent of Christianity" idea places St. Michael the Archangel as first Pope. See also the articles on Purgatory and Hell in this book.

Christ in the NDE

The light tunnel of the near death experience (NDE) is part of our common culture, and is no real challenge for any theology. A casual reader of NDE accounts may not be aware of NDE elements of reincarnation, previous lives and the contract. ***These are mislabeled and are all within the bounds of Catholic theology.***

NDE's are really valuable post-Biblical revelations by Christ, and should be studied for their information and inspiration. Because of bad labels they are currently assumed to be at odds with Catholicism.

NDE reincarnation and previous lives is really the ongoing, and repeated incarnation of dimensions of Christ (via nothing).¹⁷ These dimensions of Christ become individual human persons at their creation. At death, a person may rejoin the body of Christ, to become again a dimension of Christ. This dimension of Christ may (at Christ's decision) be given creation again. This is not a human soul reincarnating, but Christ repeatedly incarnating. The

¹⁷ **When Christ incarnates directly, Jesus results. When Christ incarnates indirectly by giving form to nothing, creation results.** Creation results when Christ donates his attributes to give form to a core of nothing. This nothing is given attribute and virtue by Christ's own virtue which now operates under our free will, with a core of nothing rather than its previous absolute core.

“contract” is our mission and consent as we are brought into the realm of creation, (Jer 1:5).

Each NDE account is unique, and a few speak of ideas which can in no way be included within Catholic theology. ***However, all the major and repeating NDE elements are within the bounds of Catholic theology.*** NDE accounts are properly seen as individual post-Biblical revelations, each to be judged on its unique merit. This is just an application of the Catholic idea that it denies nothing that is true or holy wherever it is found. See also the NDE supplement at the end of this book.

We must now ask and answer the question, “Why does Christ continue creating?”. He could have shut down the whole operation after sin damaged it, but Christ continues to incarnate as individual humans into a fallen world.

Our incarnation fulfills not only God’s desire for children, but God’s desire to grow in love. The Absolute cannot grow, but God has found a way. Christ incarnates dimensions of himself into human persons, which then triumph in a fallen world, and return to Christ to become the body of Christ, thus giving God more and deeper dimensions of love.

If one of his human dimensions remains imperfect after some time on the proving ground of earth, he may incarnate it again. This takes on the appearance of previous lives and reincarnation, but it is actually the ongoing incarnation of dimensions of Christ.¹⁸ Human persons are not reincarnated, Christ is continually and even repeatedly incarnated, and it happens every day. The birth of an

¹⁸ John 3:13 (Jesus was the first to Heaven), does not preclude the repeated incarnation of a particular (human) dimension of Christ. It would restrict it to a time after Heaven was opened to all. Recall also that Jesus was speaking of humans of his era. Those angels obtaining Heaven before Jesus existed did so by inclusion into Christ, the Son of God directly. If parallel earthly type worlds exist, they would follow their own time system and would not be subject to the John 3:13 time line of our world.

NDE patients undergoing clinical death always return to life, and NDE visits themselves are neither reincarnation nor the ongoing incarnation of Christ. The earliest known NDE report is written by Plato, in the tenth book of “The Republic”. NDE’s are really visits to the afterlife, or the boundary of Heaven and they are recorded throughout Church history, the apostle Paul made such a visit, (2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

individual is just this. Catholic theology does permit Christ to incarnate particular dimensions of himself as often as he wishes.¹⁹

Finally in Rev 3:12 we read of perfection attained, “The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God [Heaven]. Never again will they go forth from it.”. See also the NDE supplement at the end of this book.

Prophetic Christ, Miraculous Christ

Jesus worked prophecy and miracles, and the ongoing body of Christ continues to do so. Miracles involving “impossible” events of time, physics and logic are recorded in the life of Jesus, the prophets and the saints.

Saints performing miracles do so because they are members of the body of Christ, with all the ability of Christ. Jesus is the head of the body of Christ and the decision to make the exception, that is the miracle, is his.

Miracles often operate in exception to the laws of our physical world. This may be a case of interaction between parallel systems. The Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano in example, is one in which the Eucharistic host became five pieces of human flesh, any combination of them always equaled the weight of any other single piece. This system of physical laws is different from our own parallel system of logic and physics, where the five pieces will outweigh a single piece.

Heaven, Hell and Purgatory are universes or worlds partially parallel to our own. Within these worlds are sub communities with partial interaction to itself and other worlds. It cannot be ruled out that our own world is one of several like worlds.

Theology textbooks often say that God cannot do the logically impossible such as creating a single ended stick. God could

¹⁹ Catholic teaching supports a literal re-incarnation or our soul at the resurrection. Our soul will again be incarnate with a body. Catholic teaching rejects the idea of transmigration of a soul, in which a human soul progresses from body to body. At our death, we join the body of Christ in Heaven, and we are again a dimension of Christ. Christ may again use this dimension of himself in his act of creating a human person. This operation is not a human soul progressing serially through bodies.

easily create a single ended stick, he would simply create a parallel universe with the needed physical and logical laws. The miracle of Lanciano shows that what is logically impossible in our own system may indeed become reality in its own appropriate parallel universe. Miracles are no challenge for God, and we may have confidence that if our miracle is not given, it is after considered thought by God.

God knows the future of our free will, and Jesus was often aware of this prophetic knowledge. Theories only exist as to how such prophecy is possible. It may be a case that before sin, the human will was an equal of sorts to God. It was free and unlimited. After sin the human will was limited and predictably driven by self desire. The human will could now not venture anywhere really new, because it was no longer a true image of God.

All the other factors were definitely known to God, who controlled the weather and the accidents of life. God even knows how best to assign the effects of our virtue and sin.

Body of Christ, Whole Christ

By his own generous act, Christ is irreversibly all who participate in him.²⁰ Early Church writers coined the term “Whole Christ” to designate this entire body of Christ. The Whole Christ includes non-human members as well — angels, and the Eucharist.

Christ is the origin and end of all creation, the alpha and the omega, (Rev 22:13). We have our beginning as thought and will internal to Christ. We are given creation and a non-absolute free will. We are to cultivate ourselves into mature children of God. Sin was never intended, but our divine inclusion into Christ was the plan “from the foundations of the world”, (CCC 398, Mt 25:34).

²⁰ The Catechism of the Catholic Church states explicitly that we become Christ in at least two paragraphs: (1) CCC 1213, “Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ.”; (2) CCC 795, “...Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself...he and we together are the whole man.”. The idea and term “Whole Christ”, occurs at least six times: CCC 795, 796, 797, 1136, 1187, 1188. Christ is now all who constitute the body of Christ: Jesus, Eucharist, humans, angels. This is not our presumptive desire, but God’s own will for us.

A literal understanding of our membership in the body of Christ, brings a new interpretation of the oft cited parable of the vineyard workers, (Mt 20: 1-16). This interpretation is not one of social justice, but the gift of divine participation. The same wage given to all is a sharing in the very life of God, which cannot be divided or given by degree. The same wage given to all workers is the absolute life of God which is not a matter of degree of greatness, but of absolute goodness.

The angels are members of the body of Christ, and not just helpful outsiders. We know that the angels underwent judgment. God intended communion with the angels just like his human children, (CCC 398).²¹ This communion was made, but not all angels made it. The angels were now of two groups, those who “participate in the divine nature”, (2Pet 1:4), and those who live in corruption. The human Jesus did not then exist, and communion with the angels would have been made by the Trinitarian Son of God.²²

Ongoing Christ

“Ongoing Christ” is a useful name for those members of Christ on earth. Jesus is now fully divine and can no longer provide

²¹ CCC 398, “...man was destined to be fully "divinized" by God in glory...”. Even without sin, we were destined to rejoin Christ. Redemption of sin was not the original reason for Christ (since sin was never intended), communion was the reason. Sin was an unintended obstacle that Jesus Christ overcame, before he could make his originally intended communion with humanity.

2Pet 1:4, “...he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature...”.

Mt 25:34, “Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”. As planned, God (Christ) intended us to go into creation and then return to his divine person.

Related verses for divinization: 2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 460, 795, 1988. Related verses for the faithful as the literal body of Christ: CCC 790, 795, 789; 963; 1Cor 12:27, Rm 12:5, 1Cor 1:2, 1Cor 6:15.

²² It is not God’s design that a human have the greater abilities of an angel. This gives reason to the Catholic teaching that genetic super enhancement, beyond human nature is not legitimate. Humans are not deficient because of their human limitations. Consider also that all the abilities of the divine body of Christ are part of God’s plan for our spiritual evolution, and will be had according to God’s plan.

remediation of sin, this must be done by those members of Christ still not divinized, that's us on earth.²³

Our intended destiny is nothing less than to share in the divine nature of God. The human nature of Jesus is no exception. The human nature of Jesus was divinized. *Jesus is now fully divinized and cannot internalize sin for its reformation, and now relies on the ongoing body of Christ on earth for this function.*²⁴

The primary task for Christ (the body of Christ) on earth is restorative mediation of sin into virtue. It is a matter of making anger into patience, excess into moderation, cynicism into faith. It is not Jesus Christ, but rather Paul Christ who urges this in Colossians 1:24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

A careful reading of Col 1:24 reveals in order: 1. Paul really turns sin and disorder into rejoicing faith. 2. This is his part in the larger body. 3. Since Jesus is no longer human but divine, he cannot take on sin, and other members must remediate affliction into virtue.

Jesus instituted the ongoing Christ and its remediative task in John 13:1-17, when he washed the feet of the apostles and told them to do the same to others. Jesus did not serve at table, he washed the apostles of sin saying, "Unless I wash you [of sin], you have no part in me."; he then told the apostles to do the same to others.

The ongoing Christ on earth is the current human nature of the Son of God, and is God's instrument for the remediation of sin. Our inclusion into Christ requires us to first be free of (mortal) sin.

²³ In Mt. 5:13, Jesus refers to his disciples as the ongoing body of Christ that gives God reason to keep the world in existence. More recently Christ has said this to St. Faustina, St. Gemma Galgani and others, using the term "victim soul".

²⁴ The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is propagated through creation without regard to time, nevertheless the faithful on earth are tasked with the remediation of sin into virtue, indifference into faith, and every action into hopeful joy.

This is the more difficult portion of salvation and it depends upon the ongoing Christ to do it.²⁵

Those fully divinized (Jesus, citizens of Heaven, angels, thrones, dominions, (Col 1:16)), give positive mediation only. Those in Heaven live the ideal only, and can have no contact with sin or suffering, and make positive acts of virtue and prayer rather than remediation of sin into virtue. The angels who may not make redemptive suffering, envy (if it were possible) those on earth who can. This restorative mediation is enactment of the fullest love of God, which is sacrificial love.

While the divinized human nature of Jesus may no longer contact sin, his sacrifice in the Eucharist on earth does have a timeless quality, and is still efficacious even today.

Those in Purgatory give evidence that they may pray and perhaps make good action according to their current state, but they may not gain in virtue or sin. Their efforts do have an effect on our world however, and many saints have called on them. Out of justice, they suffer in part their sins committed, and willingly so rather than propagate them on earth.

Priesthood of Christ

Christ mediates sin into virtue, and in doing so mediates human individuals into his own being. This is the priesthood of Christ, a priest being a mediator between God and humanity.

There exists one priesthood of Christ (CCC 783, 1544 - 1547). This one priesthood has its origin in the one priest, who is Christ. Within this priesthood there are two ministries, the common and the ordained. The common priesthood is participated in by the

²⁵ In Luke 5:23 Jesus says, "Which is easier to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you, or to say, get up and walk'?" The harder part is making this moral remediation of sin. The easier part is to say, "Get up and walk.", meaning "Moral effort by someone has reformed sin into virtue. Your disease is removed and your health restored, now get up and walk". We as the ongoing body of Christ make the reformation. Jesus, who is head of the body of Christ determines in what manner the reformation will be applied.

In the absence of remediation of sin by the ongoing Christ, the effects of sin (war, famine, disease, etc.) must be effected in the world. The sin is exerted, rather than remediated. 1Cor 5:5 is an example of this exertion; the book of Revelation speaks of this on a worldwide scale.

entire body of Christ: laypersons, priests, bishops, and Christ himself. Membership in this priesthood is a result of one's membership within the body of Christ, and therefore depends upon faith and morals. This priesthood is unsurpassed in its nobility, which is participation in the very person, life, and divine nature of Christ and the Trinity (CCC 260, 2Pet 1:4).

The common priesthood is the necessary and core priesthood, providing the ongoing redemptive mediation of the body of Christ.²⁶ The common priesthood is the source of Christ's forgiveness. This forgiveness is the mediation of the entire body of Christ—Jesus, ordained priests, and lay persons (CCC 1553).

From this common priesthood, some are ordained for sacramental tasks. The ordained priesthood, by special graces administer the sacraments. The core mission of the one priesthood of Christ is to carry on Christ's redemptive mediation, and apply it sacramentally, (Jn 4:35-38).

A better understanding and promotion of the common priesthood would result in stronger faith, the salvation of souls, more vocations to the ordained priesthood, and a better world.

No one is done an injustice by the restrictions placed on the ministerial priesthood. Sacramental duties and authority held, do not depend upon, or give personal merit. Our eternal fulfillment will be determined by personal effort toward, and attainment of, the virtues of Christ. A better understanding of the high office of the common priesthood would reduce dissent regarding the restrictions on the ministerial priesthood.

A story is told that illustrates this idea; it is of a wife who kissed the ring of a bishop, who then retained her hand and asked her why she kissed his ring. She replied, "Out of respect for your high office.". The bishop then kissed the ring of the wife. The

²⁶ The element in salvation that cannot be circumvented or substituted for is faith. Lack of physical sacraments will not prevent a person of faith from obtaining salvation, but if needed this faith must be provided by the reformative sacrifice of Christ. This sacrifice is the ongoing sacrificial remediation of the entire body of Christ, which is the common priesthood, (Col 1:24). St. Pio spoke of this saying, "If I had to give up hours praying or hearing confessions, I would shorten hours hearing confessions, but never prayer."

astonished woman stammered, “Why did you do that?”, to which the bishop replied, “Out of respect for your high office.”.

One explanation for these restrictions might be as follows. We observe that the Jewish dietary laws had no practical value, their value was a religious one. These dietary laws could have been reversed and still had their religious value. To follow these dietary laws was to act out of love of God alone, exercising the virtue of obedience to God. These laws were intentionally meant by God to be logically unreasonable, and obedience would be out of love of God alone.

The Jewish priesthood restrictions were similar to the dietary restrictions in that they were religious laws and not practical limitations. A non-Levite, was just as capable of being a priest, but was not allowed. The religious benefits were two fold; humility of self, and obedience to God was cultivated in accepting such a limitation. As any single person draws nearer to God by humility and denial of legitimate self-interest, he or she advances all humanity.

In this type of exclusive priesthood arrangement, the priests themselves must be on guard against unwarranted pride. Human failings of self and pride are possible at both ends. To demand the sacramental priesthood is simply self will transferred from the secular world to the religious world. Lay persons might give undue importance to the *unmerited* graces of ordination, and ordained priests may satisfy themselves with these accidental graces, and fail to fully develop their fundamental willed virtues.

Because of cultural restrictions, especially in the baptism of women, the early church ordained women to the office of deacon, (Rm 16:1). It is known that women were ordained as deaconesses in the mainstream Catholic Church at least until the year 800.

Deaconesses were ordained when their duties included sacramental baptism of women, as the entrant was usually baptized nude. It was considered an act of sexual immorality for a male priest to conduct baptism on an adult female.

The apostle Paul himself outlines his requirements for male and female deacons in 1Tim 3:8-12. The office of deaconess within the mainstream church is mentioned favorably by early Christian

writers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa. The context of these writings does not use the word “deaconess” symbolically for a charity giver, but literally as an ordained office.

The Council of Chalcedon of 451 decreed that women should be 40 years of age before ordination as a deaconess. The oldest ordination rite for deaconesses is found in the 5th-century Apostolic Constitutions. It describes the laying on of hands on the woman by the bishop with the calling down of the Holy Spirit for the ministry of the diaconate.

A fuller version of the rite, as used by Bishop Barberini to ordain women to the diaconate is found in the Barberini Codex of 780 AD. Several similar ordination rites used by bishops exist. If in the future a precedent is needed for the ordination of women, the Church has a rich heritage in its deaconesses.

Alien Salvation, Alien Christ

In the next fifty years it is virtually certain that an alien moral species will be encountered. This species will likely be manufactured on earth, not discovered in space. To date little has been done to prepare for this inevitable event. To declare the manufacture of a moral species, of like or alien nature to be sinful is quite correct, but does not prevent it from occurring.

A moral being brought to life even outside of the sacrament of marriage, has the protected status of personhood, and the Catholic Church assumes a certain responsibility for it. Future editions of the Catholic catechism, may require a section titled “Alien Moral Beings”. This article does not deal with the even more certain event of the cloning of a same species human.

The first task to be completed by humanity upon encountering alien life is to determine if the alien species has an immortal soul. It must be *assumed* that a being exhibiting a moral sense has an immortal soul. A sense of right and wrong, even an objective sense, may or may not include an idea of God, and may be based on what are believed to be impersonal eternal principles, the

Stoics of Jesus' time did this. Morality may reference the "Good", or gods, or God. People using each of these moralities, are moral beings with immortal souls.

It may be repulsive, but a gorilla altered to have moral reasoning would be assumed to have an immortal soul and presumed to be potentially eligible for the sacraments.²⁷ This idea must not be repulsed but considered, as it will likely happen at some point; perhaps by a high schooler monkeying with genetic engineering, who then promptly abandons the project. The Catholic Church may not abandon a morally inclined gorilla, but is rather required at a minimum to spiritually nurture it. ***Any being making a moral decision will either advance or deter God's design for our world, and for this reason must be spiritually cultivated.***

We must not adopt a repulsion towards a less capable moral species; this is exactly what the angels did. They rejected a human incarnation of Christ. Humans were acceptable as underlings, but they did not have the level of awareness, intellect or ability that the angels had. Further, the humans required a never ending supply of soap, toothpaste and toilet paper and even then they were always smudged and smelly.

By the evolutionary chain (which the Church says is plausible), Christ has once before made apes into men. Jesus reminds us that God can even make stones into moral beings, (Mt 3:9). *The point of this article is to ask beforehand questions, that will soon need to be answered on short notice.*

²⁷ This is a necessary presumption. A dying moral being (moral being = person), must be given baptism even by lay persons. The rule for baptism is "When certain, do or don't; when uncertain, give the sacrament.". A manufactured alien moral species could appear at any time, anywhere and priests and lay people would then have to determine if that being is a person (a moral being), or a non person. Could an escaped moral ape be euthanized? The owner of a moral service ape might rightfully seek to enroll the moral ape into RCIA classes.

Soon this sort of decision will need to be made, yet no moral guidelines are available. Any being making moral decisions (even an ape with only a mortal soul), either promotes God's plan or thwarts it by its good or evil acts, and therefore at a minimum must receive moral instruction, which references God's moral design. The idea of human evolution is accepted as plausible by the Church, and this is essentially the God directed process of making an ape into a moral man.

God wished to expand his being into human persons, who were essentially moral animals, and may wish to further expand in the future, even by making a failed genetic experiment into a profitable project. Indeed, God often favors those despised, and makes them into saints. More creation by God, of any type is encouraged by the faithful, because it can only be good, and for the benefit of all other creation.

Christ may enlarge his body by assuming any nature and form that he wishes. If moral aliens do exist, or are manufactured, Christ would certainly reveal himself to their conscience, and expect moral behavior, and could even incorporate them into his body of Christ. Christ continually takes on an alien nature to us (bread and wine) in the daily Eucharist.

Future Christ

God has no retirement age, and he loves projects. Is yet another incarnation a possibility for Christ? The pattern exists; God makes a moral species (angels, humans) then populates their world, then provides a Christ for their communion with God—the spiritual Son of God for the angels, and the human Jesus Christ for humanity.²⁸ Perhaps any such future project will not face the problems of sin.

Consider the time before the physical universe, it was just God and the angels. The rumor that God wanted to expand into new territory was nonsensical—there was no other territory...God made the new territory, and called it matter and earth. God then made a Christ from these same elements and called him Jesus. The angels thought this sort of thing was impossible...until it happened. We should not underestimate God or his motives for new creation.

²⁸ The angels were judged, that is communion was attempted. Those failing became the devils, and the good angels attained salvation which is inclusion into the body of Christ. The human Jesus was not then in existence, therefore the Trinitarian Son of God would have provided the necessary communion into himself.

The proof that the angels attained inclusion into the body of Christ, and now share in the divine nature is that Devils exist. These are simply those angels who could not attain communion with Christ. This inclusion was not made via human Jesus, who did not then exist.

It is not impossible that God produce another state of existence beyond spirit or matter, or another order of moral beings or a parallel world, and populate it; then provide a Christ of this same new species. Catholic teaching holds this to be possible, but unlikely, (CCC 66).

Virgin Mary

Mary, mother of Jesus holds an extraordinary and privileged place in the Christian faith, and in the body of Christ. Her involvement and assistance in our world, and her profound presence in Heaven is known to us in small part only. To date four Marian dogmas exist: 1. Divine Motherhood, 2. Perpetual Virginity, 3. Immaculate Conception, 4. Incorruptibility and Assumption. This book will expand on the idea of her incorruptibility, and outline a possible fifth dogma.

Being free from original sin, by a special grace from God, Mary was not subject to the effects of original sin—corruption of body and soul. She would have grown to her best form at some age, perhaps 33 years and retained this state, not being allowed to corrupt (to age) in any way. Mary never had a bodily death from aging or any other cause. The idea that Mary did not suffer degradation by aging is a consequence of the dogma of her incorruptibility and assumption, but not really taught in full.

Mary also attained divinization at her marriage to the Holy Spirit (the annunciation). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was total, and Mary is now the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

Divinization is the intended end for all people (CCC 398). Ours occurs after death, Mary could not die, and hers necessarily occurred during her life. The ideal for marriage, and the ideal that God can only pursue, is union of persons to the greatest possible extent. Human marriage has its limitations, and two persons can never fully become one in this life. When marriage is contracted by God however, it is an unlimited, total, perfect and permanent union of persons. *Mary is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit because of her unlimited, total, perfect and permanent union with the Holy Spirit.* This is a possible fifth Marian dogma which continues to be studied.

Catholic doctrine regarding Mary as the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit occurs in pieces:

- Mary, like all others has an intended destiny of divinization, hers occurred in this life.
- Mary is acknowledged as having overflowing fullness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- Divine marriage is the total, permanent, and divine union of beings. Mary offered no obstacles to this total divine union.

When these pieces are assembled, what is arrived at is Mary as the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

The theory that Mary, mother of Jesus is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit is accepted as a possibility, but not yet defined as dogma. St. Maximilian Kolbe wrote of this theory. The idea is that at the conception of Jesus, Mary was completely joined (matrimony) to the Holy Spirit as one flesh, (Mk 10:8, Gen 2:24), in a full and permanent union.

The further meaning of this is that not only is Jesus fully divine and fully human, but now so is the Holy Spirit. The difference is that the Holy Spirit is united only to sinless humanity in Mary, whereas Jesus is united to sinners. Currently the one God is fully divine and fully human via Christ, this simply says that the Holy Spirit likewise took on a human nature.

The idea that Mary is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit has precedent in principle in Christ's teachings. In Mt 11:14, Jesus teaches that the prophet John is Elijah come again; the same spirit of prophecy (of the Holy Spirit) who animates Elijah, now animates John. Elijah and John are both the prophetic incarnations of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Mary is thought to be total, and she is the total human incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

Progress to date in a declaration of Mary as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit is substantial, but not yet complete. The Catholic Church declares that Mary is the Incarnation of Divine Wisdom; this declaration was made by Pope Pius IX, (Bull Ineffabilis, 1854).

The biblical Book of Wisdom personifies Divine Wisdom as the Holy Spirit and speaks of the gender of Divine Wisdom as being female. Concerning Divine Wisdom: She is with God from eternity, the partner of God's throne, and the sharer of God's thoughts, (Ws 8:3; 9:4-9). Wisdom is one, and yet can do everything; although immutable, she makes all things new, (Ws 7:27). When God formed the world, Wisdom was present, (Ws 9:9). To Wisdom, A divine nature and divine operations are likewise ascribed, (Ws 1:5-7; 7:22-23; 9:17).

The development of Marian dogma is ongoing. The dogma of the immaculate conception was pronounced by Pope Pius IX in 1854, and declared infallible in the twentieth century. Likewise the dogma of the assumption of Mary was declared in 1950. Before these declarations, both of these ideas were debated proposals. The idea that Mary is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit is now being debated, and may at some point be declared dogma. To date, Mary is acknowledged as the partial incarnation (divine wisdom) of the Holy Spirit, and complete incarnation is recognized as a possibility.

This new Marian dogma might be called "The Immaculate Incarnation"; having the key points:

- 1. Mary is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit.***
- 2. The Holy Spirit is therefore (now) fully divine and fully human.²⁹***
- 3. Mary did not suffer from the effects of sin, including aging; she grew to perfection and remained as such.***
- 4. Mary maintains her immaculate status (willed by God) and never took on original sin via the Eucharist.³⁰***

²⁹ This theory in no way invalidates the idea of the Trinity. Just as Christ (Trinitarian Son of God), remains Christ before, after of even without (if possible) the human Jesus; so too does the Holy Spirit remain the Holy Spirit, with or without any human incarnation.

³⁰ It is presumed that in order to maintain her sinless status as desired by God, Mary never took the Eucharist. Such a communion with the virtuous and sinful body of Christ would have brought her into contact with sin. This happened to sinless Jesus at the last supper, when he made Eucharistic communion with the apostles, taking on their sin. *This is the reason that Mary did not attend the last supper.* In reality since Mary was divinized (earlier at the annunciation), she likely could not have been affected by sin within the body of Christ at the last supper, but it would have caused some sort of disunion with her divinized nature. The human nature of Jesus at the

Creation, Salvation, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory

Creator Christ

As created by God, humanity and all creation was perfect.³¹ Every attribute proper to a person was without flaw, even one's lifespan was perfect and was not subject to death. Angels, humans, and all creation participated in the virtues created by God.

Was God's purpose to simply let humanity live on as perfect humans? It may surprise the reader to learn that it is a matter of Catholic doctrine that God's original design was the divinization of each individual. The agent of this divine communion was Jesus

time of the last supper was perfect (like Adam), but not yet divinized. The human nature of Jesus was divinized at his resurrection.

Additionally, Mary and all those divinized are fully actualized and fully Christ, and may gain no benefit from the Eucharist. They also cannot make remediation of the sin contained in the body of Christ, (like human Jesus did), and no longer take it. Positive prayer and will is the mode of assistance for Mary and all those divinized in Heaven, who have no contact with sin.

Concerning the third point, that Mary did not suffer any effects of aging; this is just an application of the existing Marian dogma of her assumption, which states that she was free of original sin and its effects which include corruption and death. Aging is bodily corruption ending in death and would not have been suffered by Mary. She would have grown to perfection (age 33?) and retained this bodily perfection.

³¹ All of creation had its origin in the attributes (thought and will) of God. Creation was once a part of God. When God created, there existed no other thing besides God. God could not take external spirit or matter and fashion it into creation, because nothing else existed. The nothing that God created from remains nothing. Upon this foundation of nothing God uses his donated thought and will to form the universe. God's act of creation (from himself) removes the quality of absolute being from that which is created. That which is created has no eternal right to exist, and its core existence is nothing rather than absolute. Every created thing necessarily comes from God pristine and without flaw, even to this day. As it enters the realm of creation it must take on part of the burden of original sin.

God also sustains creation. There is a chain of operation in creation with principalities, thrones and dominions delegated by Christ to operate it. If Christ hands over some operation of the universe to nature, Christ must first make and sustain nature. There is no entity of operation above God, and where God sustains, God is present in some manner. Catholic terminology for this is 'Divine omnipresence'. Christ's detached attributes sustain creation under his direct or delegated will.

Christ who became man not because of sin, but in spite of sin, and fulfilled God's original plan, (CCC 398).

This idea says that Jesus Christ was intended as God's instrument of union with every person, and the cross was not part of the original plan, but a latter obstacle which Jesus overcame, (CCC 398, Ep 1:4, Mt 25:34). God's union with man proceeds as planned, not because of sin, but in spite of sin.

Our salvation is to become the body of Christ...but from eternity God planned our communion with him, not as our salvation, but simply as the final step in our growth as persons. The idea that God planned communion with humanity from eternity has support in scripture (Ep 1:4, Mt 25:34) and the Catholic catechism, (CCC 398). Jesus Christ came as planned to make this communion, but because of intervening original sin, he first had to make the necessary reformation of sin into virtue.

It is a worthwhile topic for meditation to examine how creation might have proceeded in the absence of sin. Humanity would have perfected community living and personal morality, and would be ready for communion when Jesus arrived. We might have skipped Heaven altogether and entered into the divine Christ here on earth via the Eucharist. "Resurrection" would not be part of our vocabulary, and we might speak of the "Perfection" instead.

But sin did enter into creation, and it is something that must be understood. Sin is a lacking in the wholeness of an act. Sin is often effected as proactive evil, but it has its beginning as deficiency.

The effects of sin, which is a lacking or privation of goodness proper to the act, may be effected as a positive evil. In giving any practical example of the propagation or effect of sin, it must first be said that the results of sin (famine, war, poverty, disease) are not dispersed only to the original sinner. Innocent people always seem to have a large sharing in the effects of sin.

In correct moral functioning, we give due regard to self, others and God. If we give unjustified emphasis to self, or we choose to disregard God or others, our act is then lacking what should be part of it. The resultant act is (usually) weighted toward

self. A practical example might be the virtue of prudence, which when corrupted toward self, becomes hoarding or greed.

It is worth the time to study the virtue/sin transformation, since it may be reversed for spiritual advancement or salvation of others, and the betterment of our world. On the positive side, the overwhelming example is Jesus, and now the entire body of Christ. On the cross, the bodily suffering that Jesus underwent atoned for sin, thus allowing sinners to be incorporated into the body of Christ. Sin may also be reformed into virtue by moral trial and triumph. Jesus did this in the Garden of Gethsemane.³²

In a related case, in 1Cor 5:5 a man suffers his own sin in his body rather than his virtues or soul, so that he may still attain salvation. Here the suffering is not taken on voluntarily, nevertheless the effect is the same. The book of Revelation speaks of this involuntary reformatory suffering on a world wide scale. To take on suffering voluntarily like Jesus, would presumably produce a better quality of virtue.

A textbook example which really lays out sin for examination, its causes, effects, and interchangeability occurs in 1 Chronicles chapter 21. King David takes a census of Israel, which is an offense against God. The people of Israel belong to God (not David). When David counts them, he is implying that they are his to count. God offers him the choice of punishments: famine, war or plague. David chooses plague which kills 70,000.

The theology of the matter is that as God's particular people they are under God's greater protection, but as David's people, they do not enjoy the same degree of protection. A criticism of monotheism is that a good God would not deliberately send famine, war or plague. In reality, God cannot make evil of any sort, but as our parent, he does assign our evil generated from sin, so that the maximum good may come of it. This is what happened to David in this story. God may make this assignment directly or via natural

³² One theory of how exactly Jesus turns our sin into his virtue, and our self into his very person is as follows. Jesus (and now, the Ongoing Christ) accept rather than deflect or propagate another's sin, and willfully turn it into virtue: greed is made detachment, irreverence is made reverence, anger is made patience. In doing this, Christ makes our sin into his very virtue...union with God.

means. Finally, the original immaterial sin of King David is effected as disease.

As designed, all of creation had both individual and communal attributes, and virtues had by one were shared by all. With the advent of sin, disorder was now also shared within the community of creation, (Ex 20:5,6). Those owning the disorder retained a link to that disorder. In Luke 13:10-16 Jesus attributes a crippling illness to the Devil. In Luke 11:14 Jesus drives out a demon causing muteness.

Other examples are the many instances of demons protesting as they are removed by Jesus as he heals an illness, (Luke 4:40-41). The apostle Peter was surprised to learn that even disordered thought retains this link (Mt 16:23). St. Henry Suso observed the fallen angel who was once in charge of good speech, he now was headmaster of blasphemy.

Omni-present Christ

It may surprise the reader to know that Catholic theology has Christ everywhere...in Heaven, Hell, Purgatory...in an apple, an atom, an angle...inside our head, our will, our ideas. This principle is called divine omnipresence, and the Christ who creates is part of every creation.

This idea was written of by Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas, (Summa Theologica, first part, question 8, article 1); he went so far as to say God has a non-moral presence even in demons, (they were created as angels with the attribute of being, and as devils they retain this non-moral attribute of being), if not they would cease to exist.

Scripture also speaks of divine omnipresence (Hb 1:3 Col 1:17, 1Cor 8:6), and a good explanation of it appears in the online 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia under the heading "God, attributes of".

"...God is really present everywhere in creation, not merely in virtue of operation, but in virtue of essence. In other words God Himself, or the Divine nature, is in immediate contact with, or immanent in, every creature — conserving it in being and enabling it to act."

Everything has at least the attribute of being. God's attribute of being resides in creation, If a thing does not have being, it ceases to exist, and this being can only come into creation from God. God may use nature, or humans, or dominions and principalities, but these pass on God's attribute of being which he donates to creation. The divine omnipresence is non-moral being, and gives existence to everything regardless of its moral standing ³³

Divine omnipresence should not be mistaken for pantheism. Pantheism is the idea that God is everything. The doctrine of divine omnipresence states that God is present in everything and gives it being. Divine omnipresence also differs from Divine omniscience, which a matter of God knowing everything.

Salvific Christ

What we know as salvation—incorporation into the body of Christ — is simply God's pre-planned communion with humanity (CCC 398), with Christ taking on the additional task of remediation of sin.

God did not want Adam and Eve as sophisticated pets, he wanted them as free equals, and fully actualized, even to the point of their own divinity. This incorporation into God is no challenge for the abilities of God, but it does present an obstacle for any person contaminated by sin. Such sin must first be remediated into virtue before incorporation into Christ may occur. Just as virtue may be deformed into vice, vice may be reformed into virtue. Christ saves a person by making that person's sin into his own virtue, and in doing so makes that person a part of himself. Baptism is the usual entry event, (Mk 16:16, 1Pet 3:21, Acts 2:38). ³⁴

³³ Strictly speaking this is not so. We may make non-moral (unwilled) acts, like the beating of our heart. At God's level, everything is a willed (therefore moral) act.

³⁴ The sacraments are the Catholic way of spiritual advancement, especially salvation. It is acknowledged that non-sacramental salvation and advancement is possible and wide spread. Therefore what difference do the sacraments make? One theory is that sacraments of a valid lineage offer not just spiritual advancement in the human Christ, but they extend advancement into the divine Christ. The sustained supernatural, divine works of the Churches with valid sacraments offer evidence in the forms of miracles, prophecy and divine visitations.

Our initial entry into the body of Christ is participation in the human nature of Christ, (which explains why we do not walk around divine). We retain this status so long as no deadly sin is made (1Jn 5:16-17). The final form is our participation in the very *divine nature* of Christ, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 460, 795, 1988).

Faith is more than hope in, or acknowledgement of God, it is actual participation in God. St. Thomas Aquinas speaks of knowledge as the union or participation of that known with the knower. When one thinks of a tree for example, one becomes that tree to some degree. Unlimited participation in a tree is not a human ability, but to some degree the knower's spirit of mind shares in the spirit (immaterial attributes) of the tree.

Science demonstrates that at an atomic, but real level; that which is known is actually sampled, thereby altering both the known and the knower. Belief is the entry point of faith, in which we have knowledge of God. This knowledge affects both God and our self. This basic knowledge is an initial participation in God, (Mt 7:23). An accepting belief is required; even the Devil believes in God, but his is a rejecting belief.

Catholic theology does not so much speak of "salvation", as it does of "sanctifying grace". Sanctifying grace are all actions, spirit, and even matter which leads to our inclusion into Christ, that is the body of Christ.³⁵ Recall that sin was never intended, but our inclusion into the divine nature and person of Christ was intended, (CCC 398). We were never really meant to be saved, because the possibility of condemnation was never intended. Christ was not originally intended to redeem us from sin, because sin was never intended. What was intended was our ultimate inclusion into the

³⁵ A very precise definition of sanctifying grace might be, "All actions, substance and matter which is directed solely toward inclusion into the divine nature of Christ." We observe that the sacrament of baptism includes both actual graces and sanctifying graces. Actual graces increase our virtue, but this is still short of inclusion into Christ.

Sanctifying graces are directed to our ultimate inclusion into the divine nature and person of Christ (CCC 398). We begin our participation into the human nature of Christ because of original sin, which we must overcome and perfect, prior to our inclusion into the divine nature, which is completely free of sin, (recall that sin was never intended).

divine nature of Christ (Son of God), by sharing in the person Jesus Christ, (CCC 398).

Our salvation from Hell or even sin was never intended, sin was not part of the plan. Our sanctification (holiness) was intended, hence, God's gift of sanctifying grace.

Sanctifying grace is the means and the end of our salvation, which is inclusion into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the both the giver and a gift of sanctifying grace. This gift also includes Christ's will toward us. Sanctifying grace is habitual in this life, and permanent in our divine life of Heaven.

Sanctifying grace is the action and substance by which any person or even thing is included into the body of Christ. Even bread and wine may be included into the body of Christ by sanctifying grace in the Mass, just like the term says the bread and wine are made divine. The application of sanctifying grace is delegated to the priest, or in extreme circumstances (baptism) to the lay person, and of course Christ, the Holy Spirit and even God the Father retain their own rights to apply sanctifying grace according to their good judgment.

Sanctifying grace is the means by which the Eucharist host is made into the body of Christ. We observe that anyone or anything becoming the body of Christ, does so by inclusion...*even God cannot make more God.* Sanctifying grace is Christ's action of including bread and wine into his person. Nothing is lost, the physicality of bread remains, but now as a member of the body of Christ. The Eucharist offers no opposition to immediate inclusion into the divine nature of Christ, unlike us.

We observe that by faith we enter into a dimension of God, which is not available to a person by his own means, (Jn 15:16). This is why it is so difficult to explain faith or God to a person without faith. He does not have what you are trying to give him.

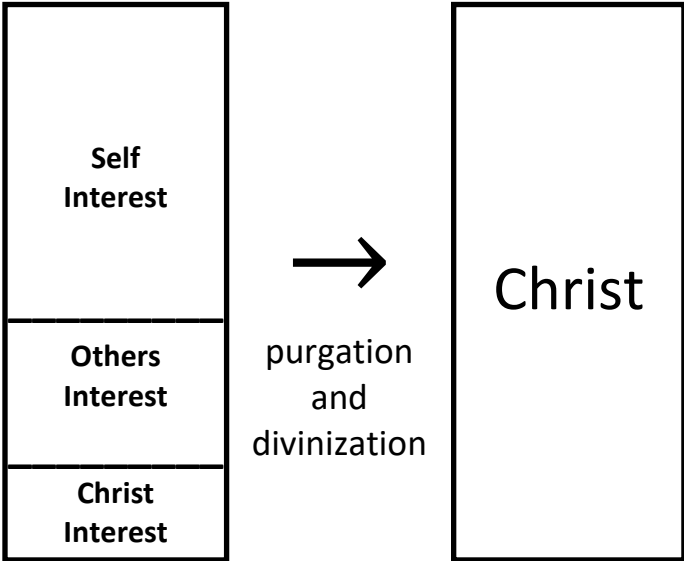
Purgative Christ

Purgatory is the state of existence as the body of Christ, which is short of full divine union. Our Purgatory begins now on earth, if necessary we may, (must) continue our purgation after the death of our body. We advance in the body of Christ as we rid our soul of self interest.

The Heavenly wedding feast that Christ speaks of is our full divine union, we shall participate in the divine nature, (2Pet1:4). This divine union as the fullness of Christ cannot occur until we are free of all traces of sin and self. **We cannot become Christ if we remain self.** From 1John 3:2-3 we read, "...we shall be like Him [God], for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He [God] is pure."

Because God offers to share his life with man (2Pet 1:4), anyone joining God in his life must be free of every imperfection. If Christ forgives our sins of impatience for example, we are not turned into a perfectly patient person. Forgiveness is more than a declaration, it is real reformation of soul.

It is a Catholic teaching that we may not advance in merit in Purgatory. Spiritual advancement does occur, and this is the entire point of Purgatory. In every case a student in Purgatory will advance from his current sharing in the human nature of Christ, to the divine union or marriage which is a permanent sharing in the divine nature of Christ.



1. We purge self interest and others interest, this is active purgation on our part.

2. Our remaining Christ interest (our will toward Christ), allows Christ to accept us into his own person. This is passive divinization, Christ makes the active part. Observe that Christ interest is all we bring to Heaven.

Looking at our model, we recall the teaching of Christ, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”, (Mt 22: 37-38).

Biblical accounts of purification between death and Heaven occur in 2Maccabees 12:38-46, where Judas Maccabeus offers expiatory sacrifice for his fallen soldiers. Prayer for the dead implies a state other than Heaven or Hell, since intercessory prayers for either of these populations is of no value. Jesus as a pious Jew would have prayed Qaddish — prayers for the dead.

The apostle Paul speaks in some detail about a state of purgation after death in 1Cor 3:10-15. Here Paul speaks of building upon an existing foundation of Christ, (salvation). If a quality structure (gold, silver, gems), having no impurity is constructed it will stand at judgment. If an imperfect structure is built, that will combust when subjected to the flames of the Holy Spirit, (wood, straw), then it and the builder (the student and instructor), will need purgation by this fire prior to Heaven. Here purgation due to erroneous teaching is discussed, but willful moral imperfection also requires reformation before the attainment of Heaven. may construct a general model of the purgation event.

If we were to advance to a human perfection in care toward others, we would do well. If we advance to become Christ we do even better. When we advance spiritually all creation advances. No one is deprived when we turn our will towards Christ, all else falls in line. Others gain, rather than lose. When we are Christ — the human nature of Christ on earth, or the divine nature of Christ in Heaven, we serve others with an even greater love.

Catholic teaching is of four afterlife states: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbo. 1Samuel 28:15 tells of the prophet Samuel in the afterlife of Limbo. With the coming of Christ, the holding area of Limbo was no longer needed, those able to entered Heaven, those

needing purgation entered Purgatory. Limbo no longer seems to be operational.

This system of active and passive events; purgation and divinization is discussed in more detail in the last section of this book, on spiritual advancement.

Christ our Heaven

There is frustratingly little description of Heaven in Catholic literature. St. Henry Suso was privileged with one such vision. Christ himself was his guide saying, “Look up to Heaven where you belong. On earth you are a stranger, and a homeless pilgrim. And just as a pilgrim quickly returns to his homeland, where his dear friends are waiting in longing, so should you also hurry to return to your homeland where people intensely long for your presence.³⁶ They will greet you lovingly, and unite you to their happy company forever. And if you knew how they want you to struggle bravely in suffering and conduct yourself with valor in all the adversity that they have overcome, all your suffering would be more endurable.”

“The more bitterly you have suffered, the more worthily you will be received. How wonderful the honor feels, how joy races through heart and spirit when a soul receives honor, praise and glory from me in the sight of my Father and all the Heavenly hosts because it suffered so much on earth in its time of struggle.”

“Look there, above the ninth heaven, there is another heaven. This is the glorious court where the Heavenly host dwells. There, surrounded by ineffable splendor stand the eternal thrones from which the evil spirits were cast down and which now belong to the elect. Look how it glitters with hammered gold, how it glows with precious pearls, and is adorned with jewels and translucent crystal, alive with the sparkle of red roses and white lilies. Now look at the beautiful celestial fields, here is the valley of true joy.”

³⁶ This sentence is a remnant of Christ's original plan of proactive divinization of humanity. What we now know as salvation is really God's original plan for communion, but now with the obstacle of sin to be overcome. The original plan was not to rescue man from Hell, but to cultivate his life into full union with God. We do not wait for Heaven, but work now toward our intended divine fulfillment, (Ws 4:13-14).

“Here one sees lovers’ glances dart joyfully back and forth. Here are the strains of harps and violins; singing, dancing, and constant joy. Here all wishes are fulfilled, joy without sorrow and complete certainty that it will continue forever.”

“Move quietly forward and see how the sweet Queen of Heaven hovers above the entire heavenly host. Look how her wondrous beauty gives delight and joy to all. See how the Mother of Mercy has her eyes turned kindly toward you and all sinners, and how she powerfully protects them and reconciles them to her beloved child the Christ.”

“Now turn with the eyes of pure intellect and see also how the exalted Seraphim and the loving souls of this choir of angels flame up ardently toward me continually. How the bright Cherubim move in and out of my eternal light; look at the trinity of the second hierarchy, the Dominions, Virtues and Powers, how they in turn bring about the wonderful eternal order in the natural universe. See how the angelic spirits carry forth my messages and announcements. What a wondrous sight!”

Christ speaks of his own person as our resurrection (Jn 11:25), and so he is. It is then no surprise that the very person of Christ is our Heaven also, (CCC 260, 460, 1026; Mt 4:17, John 14:6). Heaven is an individual’s spiritual union with God, as the body of Christ. The resurrection is this union extended to the body.

Anti - Christ (Hell)

Catholic theology affirms the idea of Hell, just as Jesus spoke of it, but cannot say with certainty if anyone actually exists in eternal Hell. This article details the standard model of Hell, then the idea of universal salvation.

When the angels cast themselves away from God, they did so with full knowledge of their act. They may not have had perfect knowledge of all consequences, but they knew perfectly that their action was in opposition to God.

Acting against the will of God in itself did not cast the angels into Hell. Hell is an unintended by product of failed final communion. Just as humanity was created for the purpose of divine

inclusion into Christ (CCC 398), so too were the angels. In making this inclusion into the divine Christ, no sin could be allowed.

What we call judgment, was this communion of Christ and the angels. Trinitarian Christ (human Jesus did not yet exist), made the communion, taking all goodness into himself. All evil and those owning it were unable to make union into Christ, which now became the larger body of Christ.³⁷

Left behind was evil and those owning the evil...this was the formation of Hell. Those angels left behind had absolutely no goodness in them, they were unable to reach beyond self, and certainly could not reach out to God. They existed in a self-perpetuating cycle of evil. Even God's attempts to penetrate their existence of total selfishness were futile. They had truly condemned themselves to existence without God.

From this we see that Hell is a rejection of union with God, rather than God rejecting anyone. In fact Hell exists as a failure of final communion. God cannot make an act that has only an evil outcome, and condemning a person to Hell is an act with no possible final good.

Hell is produced by the condemned themselves and it occurs in two degrees. *The first degree of Hell* is internal to a soul, and occurs at judgment when that soul rejects and abandons God. The result of this willful separation is total *internal* corruption as goodness is abandoned. Catholic terminology for this first degree is the "particular judgment". These condemned now share creation with the living on earth, but have no virtue or goodness, and prowl the earth causing evil, (Mt 8:29).

³⁷ Christ's communion with the angels makes Christianity as old as this first communion. The date for Christianity is pushed back thousands of years prior to Jesus. We recall that Christianity at its core is communion into Christ. We are certain that the angels were judged, with some not making their intended union with the divine Christ. This judgment was actually their intended communion into Christ, just like humans are intended for divine communion from the beginning, (CCC 398). The necessary conclusion is that other angels did make their intended union with Christ; this dates the formation of the extended body of Christ to a time earlier than the last supper, with the first communicants being the angels, rather than the apostles. Was St. Michael the archangel the first Pope of Christianity? Such an idea is not impossible if Christ appointed a leader angel.

The second degree of Hell is yet to come. This is the general judgment when God unites with all goodness from creation. God will take with him all the goodness abandoned by the reprobate, what remains will exist undiluted with goodness, this will be the final Hell. This Hell is what remains after God reclaims all goodness abandoned by angels and humanity.

Again the ***personal communion*** planned by God is now corrupted by sin into the personal judgement, and now with Hell as a possibility. The ***general communion*** is now the general judgment with Hell as a possibility. This general communion was Christ's desire to reunite and fulfill all of creation. Everything comes from Christ, (Jn 1:3), and all is intended to rejoin Christ, even the lion who lies down with the lamb in divine Heaven.

We cannot speak of a "body of Antichrist", such as we speak of a "body of Christ". Those in Hell are entirely self. It is possible there are many, but there can be no community. Respect, organization, joy and fulfillment are virtues of Christ, and will not be found in the final assembly of the Antichrist. There is no master plan for Hell, and its inhabitants will be left to their own devices. From 1John 2:18, we learn that the Antichrist is not only a singular Devil in the end times, but all who share now in the corrupted spirit of the Antichrist.

As originally planned, all created goodness was to finally share in the very divinity of God. God would incorporate the goodness of creation into his own being. This plan has not changed, all goodness will have its final destiny in the divine life of God. Left behind will be all remaining evil, which will be physical Hell.

The preceding article makes a strong case for eternal damnation, yet the possibility of *universal salvation* does exist in the Catholic Church, in that we are just not certain that anyone is in eternal Hell. Pope, now saint John Paul II states in the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, August 4, 1999.

"Eternal damnation remains a real possibility, but we are not granted, without special divine revelation, the knowledge of whether or which human beings are effectively involved in it."

The possibility of universal salvation necessarily remains a possibility because Christ does not retain anyone in Hell. Eternal Hell is an evil with no possible good effects, and God may neither assign, nor retain anyone in eternal Hell.

Christ has the ability, even to force the salvation of a person, even upon a devil.³⁸ Christ has the authority to make any necessary exceptions. Christ has the desire to do this, (1Tm 2:4). In the end, evil is not stronger than good, and God retains authority over the Devil. Universal salvation necessarily remains a possibility. The Church encourages us to hope and pray for the salvation of all persons, and without regard to time of death.

It is possible that our prayers now, saved an angel prior, by making his Hell into a purgatory. St. Pio once explained that his prayers now for his deceased uncle were applied to his *salvation* prior. The science of relativity has time being unique for every entity, and theology understands God as omnipotent.

It is possible that the prayers and sacrifices of the faithful for the salvation of others are in fact completely successful, when joined to the sacrifice of Christ. In taking this positive view, we add that much more hope to our prayers, which has great power in salvation.

Hope is like a blueprint for a project. Without hope, the project cannot proceed. Hope in universal salvation is a worthy and commendable act, and should be made by all the faithful. If there is no hope in the ultimate salvation of all, then it will not happen. Christ is thankful for our prayers for the salvation of all.

Spiritual Advancement

Christ in Training

³⁸ This is usually done indirectly. The real life example of St. Monica praying for her son St. Augustine brought graces of good action (actual graces) upon Augustine. These were imposed upon Augustine without his consent, but they led to a change in his free will toward God and salvation. We observe that the devil acts within the willful boundaries allowed by God. Exorcism of devils is God's will enforced over the objections and will of demons. Catholic Bishop Robert Barron gives video lectures on the idea of uninhabited Hell and many other topics on YouTube.com.

Spiritual advancement is simply a deeper sharing in the life of God, who is Christ. This occurs as we eliminate self will, allowing a deeper indwelling of God's own spirit, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our likeness and union with God.

It sounds daunting and mystical, but it's no more mystical than living a just life as a first century carpenter. To deny one's self does not require abandoning family, food, sleep, or even the enjoyments of life, rather these are had according to God's will, not our own.

Personal spiritual advancement promotes social justice, and even salvation for others. We observe how original (and subsequent) sin introduced mistrust, greed, and hatred. These may be reformed by the mediation of spiritual advancement. When we suffer anger into patience, and greed into trust, individuals and nations are bettered, and the corruption is no longer suffered as social disorder.

The science of elimination of self is well developed; religious orders have for centuries molded their member's wills away from self, and toward God. These religious orders exist as practical aids to spiritual advancement, and their techniques may be used by anyone according to their circumstances. The seemingly pointless discipline they require has real results in mastering self will: uniforms, schedules, endless rules...there is little room for individual will. This selflessness becomes a habit, and over time a character of the soul. The sacraments they have received act with fuller effect, drawing them closer to God as self is mortified.

Conversely, our world is geared toward satisfaction, growth and indulgence of self...all to the detriment of our souls. We are told to eat richly, drink well, purchase, pleasure ourselves, get honor, find fault and demand our rights. Jesus had a different mindset. How would Jesus live if he were a reformed sinner, rich, bed ridden, a mother? Read the lives of the saints.

Purgative, Illuminative, Unitive ways

Jesus speaks, "The truest and most effective teaching that you can receive is this. Keep yourself apart from all men, if not in

body, then in spirit. Keep yourself free from all unneeded images and words. Free yourself from everything that is accidental, binding or that brings worry. Always direct your spirit to the intimate contemplation of God, keeping me constantly present before your eyes and never turning them away from me. Direct all other exercises, be it poverty, fasting, vigils and all other types of chastisement toward this goal and make use of them to the extent that they advance this end.”

“Do all this and you shall attain the summit of perfection that not one person in a thousand comprehends because they make these exercises their goal and therefore wander about for years.”

This teaching of the prior two paragraphs, is known as “brief rules for spiritual advancement”, given by Christ to St. Henry Suso. It is essentially a rephrasing of Christ’s teaching in Mt 22:37, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.”. This phrasing by Jesus seems more attractive than the phrasing of the same idea, given to St. Suso. Suso’s is perhaps more useful because of its detail.

Catholic teaching is of four afterlife states: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbo. 1Samuel 28:15 tells of the prophet Samuel in the afterlife of Limbo. With the coming of Christ, the holding area of Limbo was no longer needed, those able to entered Heaven, those needing purgation entered Purgatory. Limbo no longer seems to be operational.

To think of, and be Christ 24/7 sounds burdensome and impossible, but it’s not. We do not become a first century carpenter, but a present day member of Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ: a mother, worker, student, unemployed, reforming sinner. We do not really have to learn more, or do more, or even be more. The less we cling to the accidents of this life, the deeper our participation in Christ. On the proactive side, the sacraments are essential, as they are the agents of our incorporation into Christ, as we clear the way of selfishness.

Spiritual advancement typically proceeds in stages and in a generally predictable pattern. Our efforts to free our soul of its illegitimate attachments is termed the Purgative way. Cultivation of virtue is the Illuminative way, and elimination of self for the purpose

of union with Christ is the Unitive way. At any time our efforts are made predominantly, but not exclusively in one of these stages.

Our starting point depends on many factors, including the burden of original sin assigned to us; some have a greater burden to work through than others, (Luke 15:7). Most start their spiritual advancement in the Purgative way, and by repeated effort substantially eliminate sin from their lives.

The Illuminative stage is characterized by a virtuous and pious life, of legitimate undertakings in job, family, and all areas. The years of grinding perseverance have paid off for this person of virtue. Those courageously attaining the illuminative state, might expect a linear progression forward, but there is a necessary twist that occurs here, termed by St. John of the Cross “the dark night of the soul”. It is almost always misunderstood by those entering into the Unitive stage, and may be a pitfall if not properly understood.

Spiritual trials now occur, by consent or initiative of God with the goal of eliminating the legitimate self will of the student. These trials are misunderstood as punishments, given for reasons that cannot even be determined. These trials feel like anything other than the blessing they are. To participate fully in Christ, we cannot stop at virtuous self; self must go, that we may become Christ.

An extreme example may be found in the book of Job. Job was scrupulous and perfect in his obedience to the decrees of God, and was richly rewarded. God sought to advance Job’s soul by stripping him of his good fortune, leaving only faith in his life. He was to maintain faith and virtue, simply for the sake of God. Job had no part in sin, now he was tasked with eradicating even legitimate self interest. Job persevered and in the end he had no attachment, to this life, he fundamentally detached from it (Lk 14:26). His love of God was undiminished. Through this active and passive combination Job attained perfection...and his former joys were restored to him.

More commonly the casualty is not our material life as Job suffered, but our legitimate material and spiritual attachments. Until now the soul had attained conformity to God by degree, and now over an extended period may attain actual union with God—we become Christ.

Active and Passive Nights of the Soul

Another framework for this same process of spiritual advancement distinguishes sensual acts from spiritual acts, and active acts from passive acts. Overeating is a sensual act, while impure day dreams are spiritual acts. Active actions are undertakings of our own initiative. Passive actions originate from God, and are his act of deepening our inclusion into himself. St. John of the Cross first observed this four stage process of spiritual advancement. He wrote of it as literature, and not as a laid out system, because of this interpretations vary somewhat.

The pattern is: we rid our soul of sin and imperfection by our active moral efforts in both sensual and spiritual acts. As this is done we then advance in Christ passively, that is Christ takes the lead. This advancement is a deeper participation in his will and his very person, (CCC 789), and it's done by Christ, our part is simply to clear the way.

The sacraments are essential. Sacraments are Christ's instruments by which we advance, but sacraments cannot do their job unless they are allowed to.

In the active night of the senses the student takes the initiative in properly forming habits involving physical acts, drives and emotions. Habit is the key to one's character or one's soul, and reforming existing lesser habits involves repeated trial, error, and finally triumph. Not only must the illegitimate rule of the emotions be eliminated, but even legitimate emotions must be made subservient to the moral will.

The passive night of the senses occurs in parallel to the active night of the senses. As we actively free ourselves of sin, bad moral habits, pride and worry, we also advance in Christ in a passive manner. We see these former things as the chains that they are. We now share in Christ's own will and values. The sacraments bring this sharing in Christ, our part is making the moral effort. We clear a space for Christ in our soul.

Our emotions might be thought of as sense organs for our virtues. They react accordingly to virtue or corruption, proactively, or after the fact as in remorse. The proper place for emotions is

under control of our will. Such control will not diminish joy, but help perfect it. Emotions are the primary driving force in many people, but the goal of Christian spiritual advancement is to attune our will to the perfect moral principles of Christ, rather than emotions.

In the active night of the spirit, the student takes the initiative in the proper formation of the moral will, and of faith. Our actions here are all actions with no material component: faith, love, patience, joy, imagination. These have little or no sensory component, but they are real acts with real effects, and there is a right way, a wrong way, and God's way to do each.

To this point, self (self is separation from God), has been presented disguised and as our own particular failings. In the advanced stages, the saints report unexpected feelings of abandonment, and dissatisfaction against God, (St. Faustina's diary, entry 77).

Sin is now presented to the student in its core form — rebellion against God. This undisguised rebellion may be presented alongside incomplete work from the previous stages, and our guide (in part) is our own imperfect soul, which we are trying to correct. Doing this cold turkey in a convent is easiest, but most people must take the home study curriculum.

We must forge ourselves into the Christ, and we do it on the cross. In the depths of the night of the spirit, the student feels abandoned, rejected, useless, sinful, purposeless, stupid. All this is unsatisfied self seeking, which must be mediated into good form and faith.

The turning point often occurs when the student finally sees the plan for him, and submits. All along has been the unfelt passive night of the spirit, but now it predominates. The trials are no longer meaningless, but purposeful, and the student finally joins in and rapid progress may be made. Near the end, God takes command. The student has largely gone as far as he can. God proceeds to strip away the last remnants of self, for the purpose of divine union.

The Divine union is the final stage of our existence within the body of Christ. This is the wedding feast that Jesus spoke of. It is the spiritual marriage that the saints participate in. It is our divinization and it was intended to occur in this life on earth.

Miracles, prophecy, ecstatic contemplation are all common in the divine union. The divinized student now has the unlimited ability of the divine Christ, the student is the divine Christ.

The divine union may be achieved in this life. It occurs when every attribute under willful control is free of disorder, this allows the willful whole to be incorporated into the divine Christ. The body, which is not fully under our willful control undergoes death. The Divine doctor himself conducts this soul transplant as the final stage of the passive night of the spirit.

This divine union on earth was the original plan for humanity, and everyone was to have attained it in this life. No afterlife was even planned; just a perfected, divine continuation of our current existence. Day trips to Heaven to visit the angels would be allowed, but Jesus would not have died on the cross, and we would all know him here on earth. Our world would have been a sort of spiritual utopia, with perfected, divinized elders (no wrinkles or arthritis) leading the upcoming generations to their intended divinization.

For our spiritual advancement, we might construct a three stage program, which we repeat until holy:

(1.) We identify and examine the problem and our foolish attachment to it. We do this in both structured meditation and on our feet as we encounter problems. We hold the temptation at arm's length to break the emotional cycle which feeds itself. This emotional cycle usually proceeds away from perfection and towards self: pity, indulgence, destruction.

We recall our goal (incorporation into Christ) and our reasons. We compare our proposed action to the person Christ, and not only the first century Christ, but the present day Christ: the mother, the worker, the person at leisure, danger or trouble. We think of our past failings in which we fail at the peak of temptation, only to kick ourselves later.

(2.) We ride out the peak and steamroll to virtue on the downside. We do not worry about the consequences, God will arrange those. We maintain focus on the only thing that lasts or has value, our participation in Christ.

(3.) Cultivation of peace is the next (and necessary) event. We must not eliminate vice, pride and worry, only to complain of boredom. Our calling is to express ourselves as Christ in the many ways open to us. Christ seeks to express himself in every legitimate art or enterprise, and “non-religious” acts are not less than religious acts. Indeed, to carve out a part of life for religion, implies that the other part does not seek inclusion into God. In ancient Israel there was no divide (in theory) between God, government, business, family. They were all God’s enterprises under our stewardship. With the advent of Christianity, we are not stewards for Christ, but Christ himself, and this life is our productive training ground.

Spiritual advancement is not so different from quitting: smoking, overeating, addiction, pornography, depression, and other imperfections.³⁹ In fact conquering any of these things or others is spiritual advancement. In redirecting our will from one self centered habit to another ideal derived habit we break the hump and cultivate the habit. Again, we repeat until holy. This is what every saint has done, and we are called to divine perfection in this life.

Not just temptation to sin, but decisions also should be given this program of scrutiny. A good decision may be made better by it, and we advance as Christ. Idle thoughts are not so idle, (Mt 5:28). We can and should practice the best possible thought. This is the core value of prayer, it is proactive good thought and will which has great meaning for eternity.

The ten commandments are in order of importance. God comes first; separation from God only brings a corresponding separation from God’s good design for our world. Praise of God implies an association of wills with God. Positive prayer joined to acts of selflessness advance our incorporation into God, and our families and the world benefit. Lack of external resources does not prohibit great influence in our world.

³⁹ In the case of genetic or chemical predisposition to any imperfection, we cannot (short of miraculous intervention), stop the disposition, because our chemistry is not really under our willful control. However, our will may be developed stronger than our imperfections. The imperfection is controlled, rather it controlling us. The saints have conquered every sort and degree of imperfection, and so can we. As the body of Christ, we need not rely only on our mere human strength, we have the entirety of Christ to help us.

Spiritual advancement is not primarily a matter of reading or study, but of doing and not doing. Most who have made the effort (and were literate) used only the Gospel and the Holy Spirit as guides. Confirmation is the sacrament for spiritual advancement, and adult evening classes are available.

Finally, an ancient story of virtue and perfection.⁴⁰ The desert monk Paphnitiu s excelled in the life of the spirit and thought to himself, "Which of the saints am I like?". Christ answered him, telling him to seek out four specific others, and to know that they were his equal in holiness. Paphnitiu s first encountered a thief turned beggar/singer. The beggar revealed that as a thief he had saved a virgin from defilement, and later given his own profits for the release of strangers from debtors prison.

Paphnitiu s next encountered a rich merchant who made many acts of charity and piety.

Paphnitiu s was then sent to a wealthy village leader, who revealed, "It is now thirty years since a bond of continence was agreed between me and my wife and no man knows of it. I have had by her three sons; for them only have I known my wife, nor have I known any other but her, nor herself now at all."

⁴⁰ Paraphrased from, "The Desert Fathers", by Helen Waddell. It is the story of five persons, each of no lesser virtue than the great desert monk St. Paphnitiu s, who was ordered by Christ to seek out the other four. The desert monk Paphnitiu s excelled in the life of the spirit, about the year 400, and thought to himself, "Which of the saints am I like?". Christ answered him, telling him to seek out four specific others, and to know that they were his equal in holiness. Paphnitiu s first encountered a thief turned beggar/singer. The beggar revealed that as a thief he had saved a virgin from defilement, and later given his own profits for the release of strangers from debtors prison, then he gave up the life of banditry. Paphnitiu s then met a village leader and his wife. Finally he encountered a rich and pious merchant who gave much to charity and lived in pious humility.

If they are all equal in holiness (if different in form), then the proposal is that they have equally strong love of God. The beggar/thief makes as much moral effort as Paphnitiu s, even if his accomplishment may appear less than the venerable monk St. Paphnitiu s. The thief likely started his journey from a great disadvantage.

Concerning the 30 year celibacy, the sex they had was completely whole, it had no self seeking. For whatever reason, they decided to stop child bearing after two children, and therefore had no more conjugal relations. Some saintly couples have many children and others none, or few. They may sense God's individual calling for them. To those perfected, sex would not be viewed as more spectacular than breathing, or any other function.

“I have never ceased to entertain strangers and in such fashion that I let no one go to meet the coming guest before myself. I have never sent a guest from my house without provision for his journey. I have despised no man that was poor, but have supplied him with the things he needed. If I sat in judgment, I have not respected the person of my own son, in detriment of justice. The fruit of another man’s toil has never come into my house unjustly.”

“If I saw a quarrel, I have never passed by until I brought those who were at odds to peace. No one ever caught my servants in a fault. Never have my herds injured another man’s crops. Never did I forbid any man to sow in my fields, nor did I choose the richer field for myself, and leave the more barren to another. As such as in me lay, I never suffered the stronger to oppress the weak. Early in my life I sought that no one should be sad because of me. If I were judge in a suit, I condemned no one, but sought to bring the dissidents to peace. And this, as God gave it, has been my way of living until now.”

_____))) END (((_____

N D E S u p p l e m e n t

The NDE light tunnel is part of common culture, and is no real problem for any theology, but further study of the subject reveals NDE elements which seem to be at odds with Catholic theology. What near death experiencers describe as reincarnation, previous lives and a contract have been examined. Other elements will be briefly examined here. The goal for doing so is to increase Catholic acceptance of the major elements of NDE’s, leading to a harvesting of information and inspiration from the thousands of accounts. It is impossible to disregard the thousands of NDE reports as false and unwise to ignore them, as they are a wealth of contemporary, first person knowledge of our most important task.

Approximately five percent of persons worldwide have had an NDE. Most never see a tunnel of light and even fewer meet the light as a person, or experience other components of the NDE. NDE's occur in the hospital where one is declared dead, but also at accident and trauma scenes with no medical staff.

If the body fails to a sufficient degree, the soul loses the services of the body including its limited physical perception. The soul may then observe the world of the spirit: Heaven, Hell and Purgatory which is always present, but rarely observed.

Cardiologist Dr. Pim van Lommel studied 344 cardiac arrest patients who died in hospital and were revived. Twelve percent of those returning to life recall a basic NDE, that is an NDE having elements of: out of body, approaching a light, profound peace or love, meeting another person, encountering a boundary of no return.

Commonly occurring elements of NDE's which conform to Catholic teaching are:

- *Out of body experience*: St. Pio had hundreds
- *Light and tunnel*: a light (Jesus or another member of the body of Christ) at the end of a tunnel
- *Light being(s)*: Jesus is the most frequent, but also deceased family members. Can be any member of the body of Christ: Moses, a saint, guardian angel, Buddha.
- *Unconditional love*: Christ's repeated request in an NDE
- *Boundary of Heaven*: no automatic entry; no early entry
- *Jesus*: most commonly encountered person in an NDE; loving, but no pushover
- *Union with God*: Heaven is the person of Christ, those in Heaven all participate in the divine nature of Christ, (2Pet 1:4)
- *Life review*: we judge ourselves referenced to justice and love; mercy is given, but correction must be made
- *Life contract*: See pages 17-19 for details
- *Previous lives*: of these three NDE elements.
- *Reincarnation*:
- *Salvation*: many NDE's have Jesus saving them from Hell
- *Purgatory*: not uncommon in NDE accounts
- *Religion*: expected to be used to better ones soul, not in itself the determining factor in afterlife condition

- *Prayer*: effective
- *Spiritual level (vibration of spirit)*: A discernable aspect of virtue. Frequencies of virtues combine into a unique wave. All are based on the master frequency of Jesus' virtue. Science teaches that we have both matter and wave natures.
- *Spiritual efficacy*: our immaterial actions have effect
- *Omnipresence of God*: God actively sustains all
- *Multiple worlds*: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, all with sublevels
- *Purgatory*: ranges from mild to severe
- *Hell*: it appears, devils are held there by their own will
- *Evil spirits*: they are encountered, but only interact with others of a like spiritual level
- *Distressing NDE*: addiction, arrogance, etc. all must be dealt with

Objections to NDEs are:

- ***Ketamine induced NDE's***; this prescription drug induces real and complete NDE's, but so may brain seizure, extreme stress, even orgasm. None of these things produce an NDE, they chemically reconfigure the brain to perceive spiritual worlds.
- ***Political, subjective, or extra-gospel NDE reports***. These occur, which is why each must be judged, rather than dismiss all NDE's as false.
- ***"It's a trick of the Devil."*** This is the standard reply when something is not understood. If we judge NDE's on criteria established by Jesus, "Judge a tree by its fruit.", then it is a work of God and not the Devil. Persons having religious elements in an NDE overwhelmingly make positive changes in their lives. Theology must catch up with the NDE, rather than exclude it due to a lagging theology. *Catholic ethics are updated as new developments need attention, so should Catholic doctrinal theology.*

The reader is advised to visit two major NDE websites:

- www.nderf.org, which has collected over 4000 first hand NDE accounts. Start with the "exceptional NDE" category.

These are NDE's which progress past the tunnel to include other NDE elements such as Jesus, and deceased family.

- www.near-death.com, fewer accounts, but more features
- The NDE is examined further in the authors book, "A Catholic Understanding of the Near Death Experience", by M. C. Ingraham.

Consider giving this book to your parish priest