

Chiara Lubich and the Theology of Jesus

The Trinity as Place, Method, and Object of Thinking

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Various significant consequences are drawn from this participation. Coda then turns to the basis for this knowledge, namely, the forsaken-ness of Christ upon the cross, to show how the crucified intellect goes beyond its natural limitations to share in the intellect, the mind (nous), of Christ. Coda concludes with implications of this way of knowing for theological practice and suggests possibilities for a fresh approach that respects contemporary needs.

1. Theology takes many forms. There is critical-scientific theology, symbolic and wisdom theology, and also mystical theology. These theologies have many faces: Augustine is not Thomas Aquinas, Maximus the Confessor is not Luther. Yet, there is something essential that defines theology as theology. We can say that it is *to know God in God, and all things in God, by participating in the being and existence of Jesus in the inspiration of his Spirit.*

I tend to avoid speaking of knowing God. I believe it risks thinking of God as merely an “object” outside of us. Instead we can refer to knowing *God in God*, in order to express the specific participation given to us in Jesus, through the gift of his Spirit, in the knowledge that God has *of Godself*, and *in Godself*, of all that exists. This, furthermore, emphasizes that theology is most of all about “being” or “dwelling” in God, which naturally leads to and expresses itself in a knowledge corresponding to that condition.

As the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* of the Second Vatican Council (*Dei Verbum*) explains, the Church receives in Christ Jesus the full and definitive Word of God about God. It is precisely for this reason that “as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete

This article begins by outlining the variety of forms theology takes to illustrate that the key to theological knowledge is knowing God through participation in Jesus’ knowledge of God. This participation is apparent in scripture and theological tradition, and the author argues that the modern theological method, for all of its advances, must regain awareness of this participating, through Christ, in God’s self-knowledge. At the same time Coda presents the different gifts of the Spirit throughout history, namely, the charisms, and among these gives particular attention to Chiara Lubich’s charism of unity. Coda explains how this charism, via the experience of humans united in God, provides a participatory knowledge of God in which knowing and loving coincide.

Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture, Vol. 3, No. 2 (October 2014)
22–32 © 2014

fulfillment in her” (n. 8). It is in this unceasing journey in the light of the truth given us in Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit guides the Church “toward the whole truth” (Jn 16:13). *Dei Verbum* teaches that this occurs:

through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things [the words of God] in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. (Ibid.)

As Hans Urs von Balthasar explains, great experiences of God in Jesus, like those of Augustine, Francis of Assisi, and Ignatius of Loyola, can give rise to glimpses, provided by the Spirit, into the center of revelation, glimpses that enrich the Church in unexpected ways and with permanent meaning.¹

The charism of unity, I am convinced, is one of these charisms of the Holy Spirit that open our gaze toward the center of revelation and thus allow for the “deposit of faith,” of which the Church is custodian and dispenser, to be understood and lived with incisiveness and new light. In fact, a particular characteristic that, according to von Balthasar, is typical of the action of the Spirit is found also in this charism: “He infuses the divine fullness of the infinite, but only always so as to unify it again and again and always more.”² According to Chiara Lubich, unity and Jesus Forsaken, both central to her charism, are two sides of the same coin. They contain the gift of light and life of the charism of unity, and they

illustrate the universalizing and unifying dynamic of the Spirit of Truth in a manner that is both unprecedented and faithful to the tradition of the church. In this way, Chiara says that the Word of revelation becomes ever more “one” and ever more “three.”

2. It is significant that Chiara Lubich, when describing Christian existence in the experience manifested by the charism of unity, speaks of being already “in the bosom of the Father.” This is so by virtue of the living presence of the Risen Lord among those who are united in his name (Mt 18:20). And she speaks of a new way of knowing on the basis of this particular kind of existence.

The Christian faith is concentrated in this promise of knowing God in God: “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). In fact, this is the greatest tension within human knowledge: the awareness, on the one hand, of our inability to attain such knowledge on our own; and the yearning, on the other hand, to realize ourselves beyond ourselves, in God. All religious traditions and all the great seekers of God bear witness to this tension.

The fact is that precisely because the human person, in one way or another, perceives him or herself as a creature that is willed and loved by Someone who is infinitely Other, humans are aware of being known by this Someone in the core of their being and in the hidden meaning of their existence. In turn they therefore desire to know that Someone just as they themselves are known: to know the One who knows them and to know themselves just as they are known by that One. Augustine writes in the *Confessions*: “I shall know thee, O my Knower; I shall know thee even as I am known (1 Cor 13:12).”³ There is an urge toward reciprocity in the desire a

3. *Confessions*, X, 1.1: “*Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum.*”

1. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-logica*, vol. 3 (Milan: Jaca Book, 1992), 22.

2. Ibid.

human has to know God. Likewise, there is a deep desire to love just as one is loved.

In Jesus, the object of this desire becomes a reality: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt 11:27). Jesus exclaims this in the Gospel of Matthew and in the parallel passage in Luke, while the whole Gospel of John seems to revolve around this truth. Jesus knows the Father just as he is known by Him and wants to communicate *this* knowledge to us. This is because Jesus, according to the Christian faith, is the Son, the God-Son, the Word made flesh. As Son and Word of the Father, he lives in full communion with the Father in every moment of his existence. This does not mean that Jesus, while truly human in all things except sin (Heb 4:15), was exempt from “growing” and “learning” to know the Father and, through the Father, persons, events, and even the dramatic unfolding of the plan of salvation. Luke, in fact, notes that “Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace” (2:52), and the letter to the Hebrews says that “Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (5:8).

Jesus, as a man, grows in his knowledge of the Father and paradoxically comes to know him in the form and with the measure by which he is known by him: as totally and only *agape*. The Father knows Jesus as a free and total gift of self only through the abandonment and death he suffered on the cross. The paradox is that the Father knows Jesus *in full measure* when Jesus entrusts himself to the One who knows him in the moment in which, humanly, he no longer knows anything about him: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46). Jesus’ knowledge brought about through the wound of being forsaken is made manifest in the resurrection. In his being human, the Risen Lord,

thanks to the Holy Spirit, is the event of perfect union with the Father. This reciprocity is expressed in the “face to face” knowledge (1 Cor 13:12) that the Father has of the Son, and that the Son, even as a human being, has of the Father. Glorified by the Spirit, Jesus appears to the disciples gathered together on the first day after the Sabbath (Jn 20:19), attesting to and infusing with grace this knowledge that humanity may share in.

This dynamic is, for Chiara, *the theo-logy “of” Jesus*; it is the knowledge of God lived by Jesus two thousand years ago, today, and always, inasmuch as Jesus has risen, with his humanity, to the bosom of the Father, from where he embraces and contains all time and space. This is the knowledge of God that Jesus offers us and transmits to us in faith: “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal 4:6). This knowledge is simultaneously *already* and *not yet*. *Already*, because human existence—through faith, baptism, and the Eucharist—is truly and once and for all grafted into the event of the crucified and risen Christ, who introduces us into the bosom of the Abba. Thus, we can participate in the knowledge of God in God, which is the Risen Christ. At the same time it is *not yet* because humanity, whose existence unfolds in time and space, is subject both to growth and to limits and must await our freely given fulfillment from God in Jesus, who will come at the end of times.

If we take seriously what the incarnation and death/resurrection of the Son of God, his ascension to the Father, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit have ontologically introduced into creation, then we cannot underestimate the importance of this event for the knowledge we can now have of God-in-Christ, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit “without measure” (Jn 3:34). Here is how Paul describes this new possibility:

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. . . . “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind [*nous*] of Christ. (1 Cor 2:9-12,16).

3. “We have the mind of Christ.” Christian theology has always recognized this extraordinary reality. Thomas Aquinas says, “Faith is assimilation to divine knowledge, in that by faith infused in us we are united to the first truth itself, and thus immersed in divine knowledge we know everything as if with the eye of God.”⁴ When it comes to defining theology, Aquinas affirms that “God is the Subject of this science” because “in sacred science, all things are treated of *sub ratione Dei* [which we could translate: “in the light of God,” “according to what belongs to God as God”] either because they are God himself or because they refer to God as their beginning and end.”⁵ It is in this sense that the object of theology in and of Jesus is God in himself and God “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28): in other words, all reality as seen by God and in God.

4. *In Boetium de Trinitate*, q. III, a 1.

5. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. I, a 7.

It would be instructive to go through the history of theology to see how this awareness has been expressed, albeit with different words and emphases. And it would be interesting to outline the paths of its development, its crises, and its coming to maturity. But suffice it to say that for all the great theologians, in every period, it is clear that if we are grafted onto Jesus as branches onto the vine (Jn 15:5), we participate in the knowledge that he has of the Father through faith, baptism, the Eucharist, the gifts of the Spirit, and the life of love. And yet, even though the Fathers of the Church—from Irenaeus to John Damascene—and the great Scholastics—from Anselm to Duns Scotus—have no problem subscribing to Aquinas’s definition, albeit in different words, things seem to change greatly in modern times. The rift between reason and faith, on the one hand, and between speculative theology and mystical theology, on the other, has led in the West to a preference for theology in either its rational-doctrinal form or in its historical-critical and scientific-critical form.

There is something positive in this modern approach to doing theology. It is in conformity with the very dynamism of the incarnation of the divine in the human that occurred once and for all in Jesus Christ and that progressively penetrates into the consciousness and praxis of humanity. Attention has been drawn to historicity, to the human subject, to social and cultural perspectives and issues, to contemporary science, and to critical and philosophical modes of thought. While all of these approaches to theology are positive, some have been treated as absolute and thus are destined to lead us into a blind alley.

Beginning in the late 1800s and developing especially in the last century, the need to return to the great theology of tradition, while accounting for the positive perspectives of modern times so

as to avoid seeking refuge in the past, became urgent. Many of the “new theologies” take as their inspiration following Jesus in that unprecedented “dark night and trial of faith” (as John Paul II called it) that is also expressed as “the death of God.” It is fascinating to reread the pages of these prophets of the “new theology”: Anthony Rosmini and John Henry Newman, Pavel Florenskij and Sergej Bulgakov, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Maurice Blondel and Karl Rahner, Henri De Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar, along with such witnesses of life and thought as Thérèse of Lisieux, Edith Stein, and Simone Weil. Collaborations with the great religious traditions of Asia, especially in the last decades, also require being open to new horizons. And it is against this background of historic change that the theological contribution of the charism of unity is situated.

4. The event inaugurated by this charism of unity is the experience of our being one in Jesus Christ, actualized in the here and now of history according to the prayer of Jesus to the Father: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (Jn 17:21). Since the beginning of her Christian journey, and in a foundational way during the period of intense mystical light she lived in 1949, Chiara together with her first companions experienced that being one in Jesus, and by extension being one in the Father, can become a tangible reality that transforms and clarifies one’s knowledge of all existence. How? The intentional commitment to live Jesus’s new commandment of mutual love (Jn 13:34), to be ready to give all of one’s self as Jesus did in his forsakenness, making a Pact of Unity in Jesus-Eucharist, and in him among us, so that he may accomplish all that he offers, allows us to be one *in* him and *through* him, and thereby we can become one *in* the Father. In this way Chiara experienced

and understood—by a special grace from God—a reality that is at the same time both simple and crucial. She describes it with these words:

We understood that being consumed in one and having put *unity* at the basis of our journey in life, we were Jesus who journeyed. He who is the Way became in us the Wayfarer. We were no longer us, but Him in us.

Let us reflect for a moment upon the intellectual meaning of this reality, that is, upon its implications in terms of knowledge *in* God for theology. What happens when we live our knowledge of God in faith based on our being one *in* Jesus? Knowledge becomes permeated by love and becomes one with love in two ways.

First, our knowledge *becomes all listening and reception*. We listen to God, who reaches us through his Word, but we also listen to our brothers and sisters. Christ is present in our neighbor so that their hearts and minds, each in its particular and original way, resound with the Word of God. In this loving receptivity before God and neighbor, I “lose” my thought, I “set it aside,” I “silence” it in order to receive in me the thought of Jesus.

Second, my knowledge *becomes a gift and self-communication* to others. By formulating and expressing the thought that takes shape in me based on Jesus who dwells in unity, I act out of love. I act in order to communicate Jesus in me (what I have understood *in* Jesus) to Jesus in my brother or sister. And this happens in reciprocity, because if there is unity, my brother or sister is also approaching me in the same manner.

The event of unity lived at the level of knowledge makes us, by the grace of God that is actualized in reciprocal love, *one with Jesus in each of us, one with Jesus in the other, and one with Jesus among us*.

In this way, our being becomes totally love, totally concentrated—to use an image dear to mystics—in that Still Point, that Center, in which it receives itself as love from God and gives itself back as love to God and to our brothers and sisters. This occurs *in* Jesus in whom we are “one” (Gal 3:28) by the gift of the Holy Spirit. We then become in *praxis* what we already are in essence by grace in Jesus. We each become another Jesus while remaining ourselves because we are “clothed” with him. Living this unity makes our being, as individuals and as a community, an event *in Christ Jesus*.

Therefore, we can say, with Paul, “We have the mind of Christ.” That is, we can know God *in* Jesus because in unity we are born together with and in him by the Father in the Holy Spirit as sons and daughters in the Son. About us in Jesus, the Father can say: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you” (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5). Obviously, this state of being in Jesus depends on us and on others, on the transparency and the truth of our doing our part so that God—through the grace of being grafted in Jesus through faith, the Eucharist, and mutual love—may grant us the grace of unity that makes us fully Jesus.

Theology rediscovers its true “home” in this experience of unity lived in knowledge. In theology, we traditionally speak of “theological sources” (*loci theologici*) from which the truth of revelation can be drawn. The event of unity focuses upon and realizes the “theological source” (*locus theologicus*) par excellence: Jesus himself, alive and in our midst, who leads us to the bosom of the Abba where he is and dwells. It is just as he promised: “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (Jn 14:20).

It is significant that to express the originality of this theology, we must define it as theology “in” or “of” Jesus. Not of the

historical Jesus, of course, but of the Risen Lord who lives today in the Christian community, who actuates unity, and as a result who also lives in everyone vitally participating in this event. It is a reality given in our unity in Jesus that allows for and urges toward this definition. There is nothing presumptuous or overenthusiastic about it, because to say “theology of/in Jesus” does not equate with wanting fundamentally to possess Jesus or to reduce him to our measure. Rather, it means emphasizing that in unity we tend with all our being toward a total emptying of ourselves, even in our thoughts, in order to receive and exercise together, as Paul says, “the mind of Christ.”

In the event of unity, therefore, theology can rediscover its most profound identity and vocation to be a theology “of” and “in” Jesus with the clarity and equilibrium that springs from the center of revelation. Such a theology is in line with the great tradition of the church’s spiritual and intellectual journey while speaking to the fundamental dimensions of historicity and intersubjectivity brought to light in modern times.

5. I feel at this point compelled to underscore that the event of unity outlines a specific theological methodology. It can be summarized as a rediscovery of Jesus himself, of the “dwelling” in him through unity, that provides the *mēth-odos* as the “living way” (Heb 10:20) *to know God in God*. Allow me to mention some of the resulting implications.

First, living unity enables us to be church, which is the only basis for a theology of and in Jesus that draws out its potential. To be church as a Catholic theologian does not mean simply to live the faith, to know the scripture and tradition, to be faithful to the magisterium, and to account for the charisms and the sense of the

faithful (*sensus fidelium*). It means also to receive, through one's own being crucified with Christ and living mutual love, the grace of unity that is the church in act. Through this grace of unity, all aspects find their place and their authentic meaning as "bearers of the Word of God" in the relation of reciprocity.

Second, by living unity, being in Jesus, and "putting on" Christ, our person becomes unified in itself. It becomes unified not only in the sense that it achieves a vital bond between existence and knowledge and therefore between spirituality and theology but also in the sense that knowledge imbibes love and love becomes contemplation. It is the depth of my being, my true "self" already "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3) that is progressively made capable of knowing by loving and of loving by knowing.

Third, knowledge of God, by living unity in Jesus, does not draw me out of the world but places me through my relationship with others at the heart of the world where the Word of God took its place in the incarnation. It brings me to the wounds and to the most radical questions of humanity today with which Jesus identified himself in his forsakenness. It is true that to know God in Jesus one must go beyond this world to "enter" the bosom of the Father. Yet that does not mean to forsake the world but to know the world in God and God in the world. In other words, the theology of and in Jesus pushes me outside any enclosure toward God, bearing the reproach he bore, as the letter to the Hebrews (13:13) invites us to do. Thus, we leave behind us all that is sheltered and confined in order to visit the existential peripheries of the world, just as Pope Francis has recently encouraged us to do.

Finally, this theology in Jesus is one and yet multiple, just as God is One and Three. It is true that there are as many theologies as there are theologians; but it is just as true that Christian

theology is one because Jesus is one. And this becomes especially clear in a unity that embraces diversity. True theological pluralism does not clash with the identity of a single theology. In every theology forged by unity, we should be able to hear the one and only Word pronounced—as Chiara would say—"in infinite tones." This is because it is the one and only Christ who has "clothed" each one of us in different ways and who expresses through us the one/multiple knowledge of God *in* God. In this way, we can all say, like Peter, James, and John on Mount Tabor: "It is good for us to be here!" (Mk 9:2-5).

6. We have thus far touched on only one side of the coin that describes the charism of unity and its mark on the theology that emerges from it. But this discussion of unity leads us to the second side, which is in fact the key to the first side. The second side, that of *Jesus Forsaken*, is necessary for the first to be understood and lived. In Chiara's innovative lexicon, this expression refers to Jesus who pushes his obedience to the Father and his love for humanity to the point of suffering on the cross the tragic absence of God to whom he entrusts himself with his whole being.

In the spiritual experience and the theological perspective that emerge from the charism of unity, Jesus Forsaken is not just an aspect of Jesus alongside others. Rather, it expresses the ultimate meaning of his life, and therefore the meaning of the revelation that he is of God and of creation. I would like here to draw from one of Chiara's texts that is like a flash of light illuminating unexpected scenery:

Jesus is Jesus Forsaken. Because Jesus is the Savior, the Redeemer. And he redeems when he pours out the Divine

upon humanity through the Wound of his Forsakenness, which is the pupil of God's Eye upon the world: an infinite Void through which God looks at us: the window of God opened upon the world, and the window of humanity through which we see God.

God's Eye upon the world is the Heart of Christ, but the pupil is that Wound.

The eye is the heart because even though the eye is the organ made to see (in the Trinity the eye of God is the Word) God who is Love cannot see except through the Heart. In God Love and Light make unity.

The image of the eye is symbolic both of being known by God and of knowing him as we are known by him. This imagery is typical of the mystical tradition, where it is said that the human person, enraptured to know God in God, becomes "all eye." It is a striking expression for communicating what it means to know oneself and all other things *in* God just as one is known *by* God. Even Aquinas, who is usually so moderate in his language, affirms that faith is knowing "as if with the eye of God." And Catherine of Siena even more boldly defines faith as "the pupil of the eye of intelligence."⁶

Chiara's imagery goes further. First, it reiterates the reciprocity that is constitutive of knowing God. We know God because God knows us first. If the Word is indeed the "Eye" through which God knows, then Jesus Forsaken, the incarnate Word in his being and mission laid completely bare, is "the pupil of God's Eye upon the world." God therefore knows the world with a knowledge that is completely one with love in Jesus Forsaken. And only because

6. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue*, c. 45.

God, who in the "fullness of time" reaches every time and gathers all time to himself, knows us in Jesus Forsaken, we, on our side and as a reply, can know God as he knows us "in" Jesus Forsaken.

Yet, Chiara emphasizes another aspect. It is evident that to know God in the manner of God's knowing, to know *in* God, it is necessary to go beyond the merely human way of knowing. It is necessary to lose God and enter the forsakenness of God in order to find God anew and be transfigured by God. Only God as God knows God. This is what the mystics know and what the greatest theologians say when they put the "theology of the cross" at the center of doing theology. When they speak of the importance of apophatic theology, they mean not simply negating with one's own intellect one's merely partial and provisory knowledge so far gained about God but rather negating intelligence itself so as to know God not "in a human way" but "in a divine way." This is done with one's own intelligence, obviously, but an intelligence "lost" and "found" anew in Christ.

Bonaventure, for example, in the last phase of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, teaches that at the peak of the journey to know God, it is necessary to pass, on an exodus from this world to the Father, through Christ crucified.⁷ He wrote these pages on Mount La Verna, where he contemplated what happened to Saint Francis when he received the gift of the stigmata to be truly crucified with Christ. The same is taught by John of the Cross.

Chiara contemplates the depths of *this* crucified Jesus in Jesus Forsaken, who—as she explains—"loses God for God." He loses, in terms of the topic at hand, the knowledge that he has of the Father for love of him and us and thus makes himself an "absolute Void," as empty as the pupil of the eye. He comes to know fully

7. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* VII, 6.

the Father precisely as he is known by the Father, and also as man, in the shining Light of the Holy Spirit effused “without measure” in the resurrection. In this sense, Chiara affirms, Jesus Forsaken is not only the “window of God opened upon the world” but also “the window of humanity through which we see God.” Therefore, Jesus Forsaken, more than just a topic of theology, is theological knowledge itself brought to its roots and lived at its most dynamic. When Paul speaks of knowing nothing “except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2), I think he was referring to this decisive and unique dimension of knowledge by faith.

By concentrating on Jesus Forsaken, the charism of unity emphasizes that what is important is not so much the individual act of intellectual asceticism in “losing” even our own intelligence in order to know God in the way God knows. Rather, it is an act of love by which I become one with Jesus Forsaken in loving the Father and all brothers and sisters “as” Christ does (Jn 15:12-13). Only through this act, lived out in daily life, can my intelligence be resurrected as imbued with the Holy Spirit in the Risen Christ who lives in the bosom of the Father.

Earlier, in describing the experience of unity, we explored how intelligence and love might become one. This oneness constitutes and expresses the center of our being as it is received from God and given back to God. We now see that this oneness occurs in Jesus Forsaken when we make ourselves one with him because he has made himself and makes himself one with us. Then, in a single act, we know and we are born, born again, together, from his “wound,” as sons and daughters in the Son who knows the Father in the Spirit, just as they are known by the Father.

7. At this point, I would like to make an important clarification. Jesus Forsaken, as the identity and mission of Jesus completely

disclosed, is the full revelation of who God is and who humankind is. Chiara affirms this in an often quoted text that is rich in meaning: “Jesus Forsaken is because he is not. We are if we are not.”

What is meant by this affirmation? It signifies a new and profound interpretation of reality, a new ontology that emerges from Chiara’s vision of Jesus Forsaken, and thus “from the depths of revelation,” as Anthony Rosmini would say. Theologically, this is one of the most original points to spring from the charism of unity. Among other things, it builds a bridge in the light of revelation between the vision of being that is typical of Western classical philosophy and the intuition of nonbeing that is typical of the great wisdom traditions of the East. Precisely for this reason, it is a delicate point that requires proper understanding and expression in conformity with the vision of the charism. I will try to say only a few words about this.

First, this language of nonbeing/being as the inner rhythm of love in terms of Jesus Forsaken not only shows itself to be completely legitimate but also offers insight into expressing the nature of the divine Persons in the Holy Trinity. In fact, as the theological tradition (Augustine and Aquinas in particular) explains, the divine Persons subsist only *in* relation, or rather *as* relation, which, being love, means total and real self-giving to the Other.

Looking to Jesus Forsaken, we can go even further and say that in God, each Person is himself because he is not fixed and closed in self. The Father, for example, is Father because he generates the Son. In generating the Son, the Father communicates all that he is, sharing with him all the divine life that he has in himself. He does so—to use human language—by completely emptying himself of self; yet precisely in this way he is himself, Father.

This absolute rhythm of love, which at the same time “is” and “is not,” belongs to God and to God alone, because “God is love.”

Created persons in themselves cannot achieve this act of absolute love for the very reason that they are created. As creatures, they receive their being from God and do not enjoy the possibility of giving it away by emptying themselves of it ontologically. At most, they can give or offer themselves intentionally on the level of an act of knowledge, of will, and of love—but never to the point of totally emptying their own being. Only death permits such emptying into the hands of God one’s own being as creature.⁸

But Jesus Forsaken accomplishes a “new creation” that fulfills what the “first creation” was destined for by grace. He is the Word who became man and who lives a Trinitarian relationship with the Father by the Holy Spirit in his humanity. His humanity is so united to the Word that he can experience in being forsaken, and in death accepted out of love, that extreme annulment of self in love by which he is fully inserted in the Trinitarian life.

Therefore, it is only by being grafted into Jesus Forsaken, taken on and lived through grace by our own freedom, that the created person can participate in this reality. We recall what Paul says about “dying” and “rising” with Christ (Rom 6:4-5). This is not just a way of speaking, but a reality. This is so even if our conscious

minds can understand it only partially and even if its full ontological depth will be disclosed only in its eschatological completion.

It is therefore justifiable, and even necessary, to use the language of *not being/being* to express the rhythm of love not only in reference to God the Trinity, but also, through Jesus Forsaken, in reference to human persons. As Klaus Hemmerle perceived and had begun to outline in his *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen ontologie*, this leads to an ontology radically considered in Christ that is charged with new implications for both Western thought and Eastern thought.

8. In our discussion of theology in the light of the charism of unity, we have touched upon two concepts: unity and Jesus Forsaken. We have seen how when considered as the pattern or *form* of theological knowledge prior to its being the *content* of that knowledge, these concepts correspond to the profound vocation of theology and have extremely contemporary implications. The horizons that this form of theology opens up for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as well as for dialogue with modern thought, are revealing this potential.

To use an image from Chiara, theology based on unity and Jesus Forsaken is like the blossoming of a tree that has grown for centuries. Such blossoming requires a remodeling of theological knowledge in how it is practiced. The history of theology has had many models and organizing patterns in the course of the centuries that extend from the biblical commentaries of the Church Fathers to the medieval *Summae* to treatises in the form of manuals. What form or pattern can be hypothesized for a theology inspired and nourished by the charism of unity? I would venture two words: *journeying* and *trinitizing*.

8. Hans Urs von Balthasar explains: “In creatural reality there cannot be such absolute surrender, because man cannot dispose of his own existence and, therefore, of his real self, and ‘he cannot give what is not at his own disposition to give’ (Emil Brunner, *Dreifaltigkeit* [Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1976], 24). But when it comes to the absolute being who has total possession of self, it is possible to arrive at the extreme concept that ‘the divine self-possession expresses itself in the perfect gift of self and reciprocal self-surrender, which at the same time includes the existence of self, that which is not at the creature’s disposition as creature’ (Ibid., 25). The self-surrender of the Father, who gives not only something of what he *has* but all that he *is* . . . passes on completely to the generated Son. . . . This total gift of self, that the Son and the Spirit repeat in reply, signifies a kind of a ‘death,’ a first radical ‘kenosis,’ if you will: a super-death.” (Author’s translation from *Teodrammatica*, vol. 5 [Milan: Jaca Book, 1986], 71–72).

Journeying. If theology is knowledge *in* God as we have described, then by nature it is an event. If it is a theology *of* Jesus that occurs *in* him, and *in* Jesus Forsaken as the way to the Father, then theology becomes a “*viam agre*,” a being “on the way,” a journeying. It becomes what the Fourth Gospel speaks of as “doing the truth” (Jn 3:21), and what the Paul refers to as “doing the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). A new, dynamic unity can thus be found between exegesis and systematic theology, dogmatic and moral theology, and the mystical approach and the critical-scientific approach, while allowing for each of them to remain distinct and necessary at their own level.

Trinitizing. If one is in Jesus, and if one is in him in the bosom of the Father, all things are known as God knows them. And God knows them in himself, in the One who is Three. And God knows them at the same time in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Word, in whom God and the human creature are united and distinct: “without confusion and without separation,” as defined by the Council of Chalcedon. God knows them from the eschatological point of view, when being “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28), everything in God will be everything else. Chiara uses a neologism to define this participation in the divine-human knowledge of the Risen Christ: “*Trinitizing.*” That is, *knowledge in the Trinitarian rhythm of the One who is Three.* This means that every reality can be known in truth only when it is known as containing within itself all other realities in a Trinitarian relation. Here is how Chiara describes it:

The mystery of God is in a way like that of a sacred host in that every tiny piece contains the whole of Christ. If you break apart the great mystery of Christian life you find the entire mystery in every detail. Why is this so? Because we,

all of us and all creation as well, are destined to become God. So every detail contains the whole. This is a new view of theology.

One can sense what fascinating and demanding methodological possibilities are disclosed by this vision. In such “a new view of theology,” one discovers in theology itself the necessary relation between theology and all the other disciplines that tend toward knowledge as the expression of love that makes us human. And theology can come to the knowledge that everything that matters and remains is contained already in every act of simple and true love because, by this action, God enters and dwells in our lives.

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