

EXEGETICAL AND SPECULATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TRINITY  
AS REVEALED BY THE TESTAMENT OF JESUS  
IN THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
PART ONE: EXEGESIS .....	1
John 14: I Am Going to the Father .....	2
John 15: I Am the Vine .....	4
John 16: The Eschatology of the Trinity.....	5
John 17: The High Priest's Prayer .....	7
PART TWO: SPECULATIVE ANALYSIS .....	9
The Son .....	10
The Holy Spirit .....	13
The Father .....	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	18

## **INTRODUCTION**

Perhaps no narrative in the New Testament makes explicit the mystery of the Trinity more than the Upper Room Discourse in John 14-17. Jesus's parting words to his disciples before his passion, death, and resurrection brook no ambiguity; Jesus is the Son of God the Father, and the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete who will empower the disciples to bear witness to the truth. As cryptic as it is illuminating, it has been the subject of much discussion and debate for 2000 years. This paper will offer both exegetical and speculative analyses of the Trinity as it is revealed in the Upper Room Discourse. In part one, I will offer an exegesis analysis of the text looking at each chapter individually and analyzing specific areas. In part two, I will move to a speculative analysis using Aquinas and Augustine as guides to penetrate the text revealing deeper truths. This will be followed by a brief conclusion.

### **PART 1: EXEGESIS**

Chapters 14 through 17 of John's Gospel, often referred to as the Upper Room Discourse, recount the words of Jesus on the night before his death. In these chapters, Jesus gives a passionate and almost urgent speech to the 11. No longer is he speaking in parables, no longer is he burying his words in metaphor or symbolism. Jesus has dropped all pretense and speaks to the disciples candidly, brooking no metaphor or allegory. Yet, as direct and pointed as it is, his message contains the most profound theology we have yet encountered in the Gospels. Here, he reveals to his disciples that he is not only the Son of God, God is unequivocally the Father, HIS Father. And there is yet another, the Paraclete who will descend upon them after Jesus is gone. Though it would not be called this for centuries, Jesus just revealed to them the mystery of the Trinity.

### **John 14: I Am Going to the Father**

In chapter 14, Jesus focuses on his departure and where he is going. In this part of his farewell discourse, he makes clear the one God existing in three distinct Persons. In John 14:10-11, we read Jesus's exasperated words to Phillip's earnest but uncomprehending exhortation, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied" (v. 8). In a way that reveals his frustration and exigency, Jesus replies, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own; the Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or else believe me because of the works themselves" (vv. 10-11). William Kelly observes that what Jesus is, in fact, saying is that the divine nature of the Father is the one speaking and that he does this through the humanity of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> His human nature is the one commonality between him and us and is the agent through which we are able to fathom, at least partially, his divinity. Kelly further points out that the works of the Son are in collaboration with the Father, "thus giving proof that [they] are one."<sup>2</sup> Inasmuch as they are Father and Son separately, there is a singularity that is the Divine Nature. John MacEvilly reasons that because Jesus's teachings and works are from the Father, they share a common nature thus signifying "[a] perfect and intimate union and indwelling of one Divine person in the other, and the converse."<sup>3</sup>

Speaking about the Holy Spirit, in v. 16, Jesus promises a Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who will come and be with the disciples forever. Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch tell

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<sup>1</sup> William Kelly, *An Exposition of the Gospel of John* (London: T. Weston, 1898), 284.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> John MacEvilly, *An Exposition of the Gospel of St. John* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1902), 277.

us that the Greek παράκλητος refers here to the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> W. A. O’Conor wryly notes that Jesus does not mean to imply that he will supplant natural law and employ an independent deity. Rather, God himself is Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Christ will petition the Father who will give those who pray to him and who abide by his commandments this Spirit to aid them.<sup>6</sup> However, the role of the Spirit extends beyond merely dwelling within the disciples. In 14:26, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will “teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” Francis Martin and William M. Wright tell us that this does not involve simply recalling the events of the past, the Holy Spirit will engender in the disciples a fuller understanding of the Truth that is Jesus Christ empowering them to become his witnesses.<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, in this part of the discourse, Jesus seems to indicate that he and the Father will come to those who love him and keep his word and he will dwell within them (v. 23). He makes no mention of the Spirit which some have taken to suggest that it is only the Father and the Son who live within us. Thomas Aquinas counters that the Persons of the Trinity are distinct yet they have a unity of essence. “[O]ne could say that since the Holy Spirit is nothing other than the love of the Father and the Son, when the Father and Son are mentioned, the Spirit is implied.”<sup>8</sup>

In vv. 28-29, Jesus explains that he is both “going away from” and “coming to” the disciples. It would appear as if Jesus is being intentionally cryptic here. However,

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<sup>4</sup> Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), Kindle Edition, loc. 11916-11921.

<sup>5</sup> W. A. O’Conor, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1874), 267.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Martin, and William M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), Kindle edition, 251-252.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 1-21*, trans. by Fabien Larcher and James A. Weisheipl (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 83.

using a Trinitarian context, we may be able to unpack this statement. Martin and Wright posit that, after his resurrection but before the Parousia, Jesus will come to them through the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> While the disciples may have difficulty understanding this, it is a joyful thing that Christ is leaving them to join the Father. Presently, the Father is greater than the humanity of Jesus; but, after the resurrection, the glorified Son will be one with the Father.<sup>10</sup>

### Chapter 15: I am the Vine

The second part of the farewell discourse focuses on the Church as Jesus exhorts the disciples to remain steadfast in their witness of love even in the face of the world's hatred.<sup>11</sup> Two verses in this chapter that reveal, in an especial way, the Trinitarian mystery. In 15:1, Jesus names himself as the vine and his Father the vinegrower. Aquinas explains that Christ's human nature is more like us and less like the Father, and his divine nature is the same as the Father's and is above us.<sup>12</sup> Because of his humanity, Christ is the vine. If his vine-ness was divine, that would mean the Father also would be the vine, which is untrue. The Father, divinity itself, is related to the Son as the vinegrower. Yet, because Christ, too, is divinity, he is also the vinegrower illustrating the mystery of divine oneness and personhood.<sup>13</sup>

In v. 26, Jesus reveals that he will send a Counselor to the disciples, "the Spirit of truth to come from the Father." These words reveal something fundamental about the Trinity—the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. However, Aquinas is quick to point

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<sup>9</sup> Martin and Wright, *The Gospel of John*, 252.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 97.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

out that the Spirit is not actually changing place “since [he] fills the entire universe, as we read in Wisdom, but because, by grace, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in a new way in those he makes a temple of God ...”<sup>14</sup> He also confirms the filioque, the Spirit proceeds not just from the Father but also from the Son, pointing out that at some points in John’s Gospel Jesus says that he himself sends the Holy Spirit, but not without the Father, and at other times he mentions the Father sending the Spirit, but not without the Son.<sup>15</sup>

Aquinas continues to elucidate this verse, explaining that the Holy Spirit is eternally processing from the Father and the Son and that the Spirit is related to both. He is related to the Son when he speaks about the Spirit of truth because the Son is also truth (cf. John 14:6).<sup>16</sup> He is related to the Father because he “comes from the Father.”<sup>17</sup> The claim that the Spirit only proceeds from the Father is impossible as it would not be possible to distinguish the two from each other unless the Spirit either proceeds from the Son or that the Son proceeds from him.<sup>18</sup>

Thus begins the unfolding mystery of the triune God as these conclusions can only be drawn if each Person of the Trinity is in relation to the other. The Son reveals the Father, the Father sends the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit reveals the truth which is the Son. The love between these persons binds them together into the one God, the Alpha and the Omega, who existed before all things were made.

### **Chapter 16: The Eschatology of the Trinity**

Chapter 16 takes on an eschatological tone. After Jesus finishes speaking about

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., The latter is never claimed in the gospel.

the Holy Spirit in vv. 4b-15, he moves toward future hopes when the disciples will rejoice once more when they see Jesus again at the end of the age. Until then, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, will guide them in the truth; “for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare to you. All that the Father has is mine ...” (vv.13b-15a). This illumines the truth that the Holy Spirit does not act on his own but in communion with the Father and the Son because he is from the Father and the Son.<sup>19</sup> In the same way that Jesus does not speak on his own, but only what he hears from the Father, the Spirit will speak only what he hears, declaring to the disciples the things that are to come.<sup>20</sup>

The reciprocity of the Trinity is evinced in v. 15, “All that the Father has is mine ...” Because of the self giving nature of the love between the Father and the Son, the Father gifts to the Son everything, and the Son gifts to the Father his life on the cross, so gifting everything back.<sup>21</sup> Aquinas explains it thusly, “Although the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father, yet because all that the Father has is mine (and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father), the Spirit receives from me.”<sup>22</sup> In this verse, the verb “has” takes as its predicate the trait of goodness, as a blade of grass ‘has’ the quality of greenness. Yet, because the essence of the Father is goodness and truth, that which he has is also that which he is. Therefore, the Son, having been gifted with all that the Father has, is, in his

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>20</sup> Martin and Wright, *The Gospel of John*, 268.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 145.

divine nature, goodness and truth.<sup>23</sup> The circle is made complete as it is from the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, that these gifts proceed.

Vv. 25-28 reveal some of the highest Christological language in the New Testament, taking on an eschatological tenor as Jesus, in plain language, says that the time is coming when he will no longer speak to them figuratively, he will no longer be an intermediary between them and the Father. “... [F]or the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and I am going to the Father” (27-28). The Greek ἐξέλιθον θεός, in v. 27, is more literally translated “I came from out of God ...” and again in v. 28, ἐξέλιθον πατρός is “I came from out of the Father.” As both verbs are in the aorist tense, Jesus’s words take on a perpetuity—“I was/am coming from out of God forever.” The relational nature of the Father and the Son is an infinite one. Aquinas affirms this logic: “The Son proceeds or comes from the Father in two ways: one is eternal, the other temporal. He refers to the eternal procession when he says, I came (came forth) from the Father, eternally begotten from him.”<sup>24</sup>

We now turn to Jesus’s final words of the farewell discourse as he prays for the disciples to God, the Father.

### **Chapter 17: The High Priest’s Prayer**

In this chapter, we see just how intimate the relationship between the first two Persons of the Trinity is. Commenting on 17:1b, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,” Henry Downing points out that the it is Jesus’s human nature that will be glorified because his divine nature could not be any more

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 160.

glorified.<sup>25</sup> Martin and Wright concur affirming that the glory of Jesus will be made manifest when the Father confirms the identity of the Son through the resurrection “and sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in his disciples.”<sup>26</sup>

In v. 3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,” Downing says that faith consists not only in a true belief in God and Christ, but also the Holy Spirit since, “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>27</sup> He defends the Godhead in vv. 4-5 pointing out that the way Jesus is speaking demonstrates his equality with God. No other teacher sent by God, neither Moses nor Paul nor Elijah, claims this equality.<sup>28</sup>

Aquinas explains that the phrase “the only true God” in v. 3 does not exclude the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Arians claimed. Citing Hilary, he says, “[Jesus] says *you are the only true God* in a way that does not exclude another. He does not say without qualification, *you the only*, but adds *and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* to be the one and only true God.”<sup>29</sup> He adds that although no mention is made of the Holy Spirit, it is implied because whenever the first two Persons are mentioned, and especially in matters of the awesomeness of divinity, the Holy Spirit must be present as he is the bond between Father and Son.<sup>30</sup>

In his final words before his arrest, Jesus prayed to the Father that although the world does not know him, the Son does and has made known his name. He will continue to make it known so that the love between them may also be in the disciples. For

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Downing, *Short Notes on St. John's Gospel* (Oxford: J. H. and Jas. Parker, 1861), 169.

<sup>26</sup> Martin and Wright, 277.

<sup>27</sup> Downing, *Short Notes on St. John's Gospel*, 170.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 171.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Aquinas, all members of the Godhead are present in these verses. He explains that because the Father loves the Son, he loves all those in whom the Son dwells. “So the meaning is this: I will make your name known to them; and by the fact that they know you, I, your Word, will be and them; and by the fact that I am in them, *the love with which you have loved me may be in them.*”<sup>31</sup> This love, *the love with which you have loved me*,<sup>32</sup> may dwell in others by sharing in the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup>

Now that we have examined several passages in the upper room discourse that reveal the mystery of the Godhead, I will now attempt a speculative analysis of several of the passages examined in part one.

## PART 2: SPECULATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to make the distinction between the divine persons, there must be a distinguishing factor, some way that they are opposed, otherwise they do not “diversify a supposit.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must have some opposing properties in order to singularize them. Aquinas acknowledges two distinguishing factors of the Father, he is the Father of the Son and he is unoriginate.<sup>35</sup> For Augustine, the Son is image, Word, and Son—he is the exact image and likeness of the Father, he is the Word of the Father, and he is eternally begotten.<sup>36</sup> The Holy Spirit is *spiration*, he is the procession of love breathed by the Father and the Son.<sup>37</sup> It is important to point out that God, who is perfectly simple, is free from things such as subject and essence which are

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>32</sup> Said another way, “the gift with which you have gifted me may be gifted to them.”

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>35</sup> Giles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 152.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 177.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 222-223.

indicative of creaturehood.<sup>38</sup> The Father's person *is* the Father's nature, likewise the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, there is a reciprocity of relation between the three Persons and a complete equality.<sup>39</sup> "Because of their consubstantiality, the persons are 'intrinsically at one'."<sup>40</sup> In light of this, we will now look at how the three Persons of the Trinity are revealed in select passages in the Upper Room Discourse.

### **The Son**

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me the sake of the works themselves. (John 14:10-11)

The logic of Aquinas makes clear that the Son is of the same substance as the Father. As the Father is unoriginate, he is an uncreated substance. So, too, the Son, although he is begotten of the Father, is uncreated. For, we cannot see something that is uncreated by seeing something that is, "just as by knowing a substance of one genus, one cannot know the substance of another genus."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, because they are of the same substance, they share the same divinity. Aquinas further points out that divine personhood is unlike human personhood. He explains that our essence is composite—we are parts of a whole. However, because they are entirely in act, the essence of the Father and the essence of the Son are ontologically intrinsic and singular, the Father is the Father and the Son is the Son.<sup>42</sup> Hilary drives home the mystery of this:

The unchangeable God follows, so to speak, His own nature, by begetting unchangeable God. Nor does the perfect birth of unchangeable God from unchangeable God forsake His own nature. We understand then here the

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<sup>38</sup> Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 303.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 62.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

nature of God subsisting in Him, since God is in God, nor besides Him who is God, can any other be God.<sup>43</sup>

Hilary makes this even more explicit pointing out that nothing can be born from God except God.<sup>44</sup> There can be no higher Christology than this.

Aquinas tells us that if the Son was subordinate to the Father, he would not have said, “or else believe because of the works themselves” (14:11) implying that the works themselves should be enough to confirm his divinity.<sup>45</sup> Chrysostom, too, weighs in on this pointing out that the works of the Son—the remission of sins, the restoration of life—are works that only the Father can do.<sup>46</sup>

Another verse that illustrates the mysterious relation between the first two persons of the Trinity falls at the end of chapter 14. “If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I” (14:28). It is easy to see why this verse was a favorite of Arius. It would seem that Jesus is saying that the Father is greater than he is. However, Augustine explains that the Son never leaves the Father, he is with him always in the Godhead. Because of his equality with God, he emptied himself taking on the form of a servant. It is because of this that he is *greater* than Himself, “the form of God which is not lost, is greater than the form of a servant what was put on.”<sup>47</sup> He acknowledges that the human part of the Son was inferior not only to the Father, but also to the Holy Spirit, even to his parents. Yet, because of his twofold substance, his

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers: St. John*, edited by John Henry Newman, vol. 4 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845), 457-458.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>45</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 64.

<sup>46</sup> Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, 458.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 474.

divinity is equal to the Father. But, Augustine continues, this twofold substance exists in the singularity of Christ, “else the Godhead is a quaternity, not a Trinity.”<sup>48</sup>

Citing Hilary, Aquinas explains that the divine nature of the Father is in fact greater than the Son, but the Son is equal to the Father. Because the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, he receives his nature from the Father, therefore the Father is greater. However, because the Son receives all that the Father has, he is equal to the Father. “For the one to hold a single act of existence (esse) is given, is not inferior to the giver.”<sup>49</sup>

To see how the Holy Spirit completes the equation, we now turn to 14:15-17 and 15:26.

### **The Holy Spirit**

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me. (John 15:26)

A key word here is “another.” There is clearly a distinction of *three, equal* Persons—the asker (Son), the asked (Father), the one being sent (Holy Spirit). Let us examine the evidence: 1) Jesus says that he will ask the Father to send another counselor (Paraclete). “Another” implies there is a first counselor. It would appear that Jesus is referring to himself as a Counselor. Aquinas agrees, “ ... The Holy Spirit is a counselor

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 474

<sup>49</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 92.

and advocate, and so is the Son.”<sup>50</sup> He quotes 1 John 2:1 as proof, “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”<sup>51</sup> 2) The Father, the one being asked, is the sovereign Lord, the one eternally unoriginate. Although it seems as if he is above the other two Persons as he is the one doing the sending, we have already proven that the Son shares equality with him. As eternally begotten, the Son receives everything that the Father has, including his sovereignty and perpetuity. 3) In the *Summa*, Aquinas tells us that there are two processions from the Father, one of intellect which is the Word (Son) and one of will (Love or Holy Spirit). He explains that for thing to be understood there must be an “understander”, the one receiving the thing that is being understood. In the same way, love must be directed at something, there must be a reciprocity between the one loving and the one being loved. For how can love exist without something to love? Insofar as it applies to the Godhead, because God is himself existence and has no potentialities but is only in act, the love that he emits is itself the essence of love which Aquinas grudgingly names” as the third person of the Trinity. (I say grudgingly because he admits our impoverished vocabulary is insufficient to describe the true spiration of love.)<sup>52</sup>

Yet, how does this “another” Jesus speaks of come to be the third person of the Trinity? As noted earlier, Jesus is not introducing a new deity into the equation. So, how is this other counselor distinguishable from the first counselor, the Son? What are the opposing factors? They cannot function the way opposites do, in either a negating or affirming way, as the opposite of divinity, of being, is nonbeing. This would violate the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.37.1.

law of non-contradiction. Nor can their differences be in order of magnitude—one cannot be more or less perfect than the other. Therefore, Aquinas concludes, the Son and the Holy Spirit “are distinguished only by the order of origin, that is to say, insofar as the birth of the Son is a principal of the procession of the Holy Spirit. And so, if the Holy Spirit were not from the Son, the Spirit would not be distinguished from the Son and procession would not be distinguished from birth.”<sup>53</sup> And, because God the Father gifts to the Son everything he has, they both must breathe the Holy Spirit or neither of them do.

The Holy Spirit must share equality with the Father and the Son. Aquinas reasons it thusly: the notion of “greater” or “lesser” are quantitative concepts that involve either mass or level of perfection. God has no corporeal form, no mass, therefore the first effect is irrelevant. Yet, a thing cannot be more or less perfect. This is an absurdity. Either thing is perfect or it is not. The eternal essence, which we call God, is entirely in act all the time and forever. It is perfection because he is perfect forever.<sup>54</sup> He cannot send out anything that is imperfect. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father, and as we have shown, the Father and the Son share equality.

### **The Father**

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do; and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made. (John 17:1-5)

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<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Aquinas, *Sum* 1.42.1, obj. 1.

These words reveal not only the intimacy and love between Father and Son, but also the complete submission of Jesus to the Father. Acknowledging the Father as unoriginate and eternal, he seeks to be gifted with the glory which the Son shared with him before creation. Aquinas, speaking about the person of the Father, tells us that God is a “father” in four ways; 1) he is the father only nominally two things of irrational nature;<sup>55</sup> 2) he is a father based on likeness of his image;<sup>56</sup> 3) he is a father by grace;<sup>57</sup> and, 4) he is the Father by “similitude of glory.”<sup>58</sup> Jesus, as the Son, seeks the glory of the Son which has been perpetually gifted to him by the Father, who is all glorious.

Here, we can also see how the concept of relation is critical to the identity of not only the Father, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit. For without a Son, there can be no Father, and without either, there can be no procession of love. Yet, the Father is the principal, the origin. Thomas makes it clear that although he is the principal, this does not mean that he is greater than the Son or the Spirit. “Although this word principal, as regards its derivation, seems to be taken from priority, still it does not signify priority, but origin.”<sup>59</sup> But, although he is the origin, he is known by what he manifests. “For the action of a principal which proceeds from another principal manifests this principle.”<sup>60</sup> The Son reveals the Father because he is the principal that comes from him.

The other way in which we know the Father is by what he is not, that is to say he is not from another; he has the property of innascibility.<sup>61</sup> When Christ says, “glorify me

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<sup>55</sup> He uses Job 38:20 as an example: “Who is the father of the rain? Or who begot the drops of dew?”

<sup>56</sup> Deut 32:6 “Is he not thy father, who possessed, and made, and created thee?”

<sup>57</sup> Rom 8:16-17 “The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our Spirit that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also.”

<sup>58</sup> Aquinas, *Sum* 1.33.3.

<sup>59</sup> *Sum* 1.33.1, obj. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 169.

<sup>61</sup> *Sum* 1.33.4

in your presence” he is asking the Father to show the world that he is the begotten Son of the one who has no origin.

Aquinas tells us that the eternal life we are to receive is related to the glory of, specifically, the Father.<sup>62</sup> “This is eternal life” (in other words, “this is what eternal life means”) “that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ...” To have eternal life is to know the Father is the one true God. However, Hilary is quick to point out, acknowledging one thing does not exclude another. Because Jesus adds and Jesus Christ whom you have sent he is including him in the acknowledgment of the one true God. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine defends the divinity of the Trinity by referencing St. Paul, “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24). Clearly one cannot be God unless he has divine power and wisdom; without the Son, who is wisdom, the Father would not be God.<sup>63</sup>

This paper argues that Christ who is the Son, reveals to his disciples the mystery of the Trinity in the upper room discourse. Through his Sonship he reveals the Father. By his love for the Father and the Father’s love for him, he reveals the Holy Spirit. It is only through relation that we can identify each Person. And, it is through those relationships we can see the equality and symmetry of the Trinity. As Aquinas tells us, an accidental relation presupposes distinction, but when it is subsistent it actually *brings about* distinction. Therefore, because they are related to each other subsistently, they are “simultaneous in the order of nature.”<sup>64</sup> They are equal and they are dependent on each other for one cannot be the Son without having the Father, one cannot be the Father

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<sup>62</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 171.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>64</sup> Sum 1.40.2, obj. 4.

without the Son, there can be no love without both. While they may not have understood the theological implications in Jesus's words, they accepted on faith that Jesus was the Son of God and he was returning to God the Father. They accepted that he would be with them always when the Spirit descended upon them and lived in them. They accepted eternal life because they believed. And because they believed, eternal life was granted them.

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