

**Jesus the God Man** Bible Exploration and Appreciation Incarnation and Transformation Part 2 Adult Formation/Spiritual Life May 15, 2003 7:30 p.m.

Let's pray. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the many blessings you give us, especially we thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, through which you give us inspiration and insight and knowledge that can only come from you. And we ask that you help us to be open to your Spirit during this evening and days to follow so that we can drink deeply from the font of this knowledge and truth and grow richer each day in the wealth of our Christian tradition. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Tonight we need to start understanding something about the Word of God. **What is meant by the Word of God?** It is not so easy to understand what is meant. On page one, I give you some notes.

First of all, Words. **Words are human inventions** by which we refer, ordinarily, to objects outside of ourselves, but sometimes more abstract realities. I think you know the difference between connoting and denoting. When you denote, you point. When you connote, you are qualifying. Now **"a concept" is a mental word**; therefore a concept would not be different in different languages. If you say "cat" or *Katze* or *chat*, you are talking about the same concept. Sometimes concepts are **concrete** and sometimes they are **abstract**. Soul, which is going to be a very prominent concept when we discuss the nature of Christ and our own natures, is an abstract concept. An **idea** is something more complex. It's **made up of many different concepts**. It also is a form or pattern. An **idea is a pattern**; in fact, "idea"—*idea* is actually the Greek word for "pattern" or "form," therefore, the essence of something. When we think of why certain things are similar, it's because they share a certain form or a certain idea or a certain pattern. Now when you talk about an idea as opposed to a concept, you could also say that "collie" is a concept, but "dog" is more. "Dog" is an idea because there are many different kinds of dogs. There are collies, German shepherds, poodles, bichons, malamutes. They all have the same idea. They all have the same basic form. But they are distinct. So that's the difference between an idea and a concept. Sometimes concrete ideas, even if they are complex, are easier to understand than simple concepts. Why? Well, because we know dogs. We get to experience dogs so we can form a concept from our experience. But a **concept like "soul" lies outside of our actual experience**. So keep that in mind as we go on.

Now, Word of God. **What does the Word of God mean?** Word of God is not exactly a concept. It's not really a word. It's not a word like a human word. It's not a concept. It's not really an idea, but it's like an idea. It's a pattern, but it's a **unique pattern**, which is seemingly a contradiction because a pattern is something repeated. The whole idea of pattern is the shared universal property. Well, **the Word of God is a complete, eternal, infinite knowledge that God has of God**. So if we go to the ideas that we have of dogs, you know, through our ideas of dogs we carry in our minds some knowledge. It's derived from our experience. They may be pleasant experiences of

wonderful, favored pets or they may be terrifying experiences of vicious hounds, but nonetheless, they all relate to the same idea. But you can see that **an idea is an abstraction in your mind of something concrete.**

Now when it comes to the Word of God, you think about **what God knows about God**, well, of course, **it's not an abstraction** at all. God's knowledge of God is **perfectly self-conscious**. God's knowledge of God is **perfectly personal**. It is not abstract in any way. So we have to start thinking now about how **it is different when we know a person versus knowing a thing**, or knowing about something. So we know a lot about animals or we know a lot about gardens. That's abstract, but it's impersonal. But then when you know your friends, you know your mother, you know your father, there's a personal element involved. **The knowledge of God is always going to be personal. It's God's knowing God. So it's utterly personal. It's utterly concrete.** It's not abstract, but **it's totally spiritual because there is nothing material in God.** But God is not really pure form like an angel. An angel is a pure idea; that's what Aquinas says. But God is not a pure idea. **God is infinite Being. The essence of God is to exist** and so the knowledge of God is the knowledge—**the knowledge of God must also be infinite and eternal** otherwise it wouldn't truly be knowledge of God. It would be knowledge, perhaps, about God. And even we may have some knowledge about God, but those are ideas that we happen to have. And those ideas may be more or less personal depending upon our own personal prayer life, how deeply we've communicated with God, how deeply we've related to God. But they are still ideas. But within God that's something else now. God's idea of God is none of that. **It's a perfect, self-conscious, infinite, eternal awareness.**

And **this awareness is called a "Word" because it can communicate.** When we talk about the Word of God, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God," we're talking about this infinite Being which of its nature communicates itself. If it were not communicating, then we couldn't call it the "Word" of God. We would have to call it something else. We could call it the "mystery of God," but we couldn't call it the "Word." The very word, "Word" means that **God's knowledge of himself communicates itself in self-revelation, in self-disclosure.** And this marks out the biblical understanding of God from all other understandings.

For example, if you go to Indian literature and you read the Upanishads, you will read these Upanishads that say that the eternal one is ineffable. The eternal one is silent. I'm not quoting, but that's the idea you get. The eternal one doesn't speak. The eternal one doesn't say anything. So we live in perpetual wonder about what is the eternal one all about.

But not the God who created a people who created the Bible. That God is a God who communicates himself. And **the self-communication is what we call "revelation," and that abides fundamentally in the people. And they then recorded this relationship they had with God and their response to God in the Bible.** The Bible is a record of their response to the self-disclosure of the Word of God. So from the beginning in the formation of the people of God, the Word of God was doing the revealing through the

agency of the Holy Spirit. It isn't as if the Word of God only had a job once Jesus became incarnate. That would be a wrong understanding. The Word of God was communicating God from the beginning. And we need not say that God only communicated himself to the people that he chose to be his witnesses. **God is perfectly capable of communicating himself to any people, at any time, in any manner that he deems acceptable.** And we have no idea what the true, you might say, limit, if you want to use that word, or the true scope of this revelation really is. We do not know, but we do know one thing, that **wherever God reveals himself, the revelation must be self-consistent.**

Now the Holy Spirit speaks through the prophets, inspires the inspired authors and their communities in process of God's self-disclosure, which was fragmented in times past, which is referred to in the Letter to the Hebrews: "God spoke in many ways in times past, fragmented ways, partial ways." And I think it's rather evident that God spoke also to the Persians, I mean, there's clear evidence of that in the restoration of the temple and the work that Cyrus did in the restoration of the people from their Babylonian Exile, so we do not limit God to anything. **We don't limit God.** Whether God limits himself is God's business. The Holy Spirit speaks through these authors, however; and the authors really are not the beginning of anything, because before there were authors, before anyone knew how to write, **God was already speaking and the people were remembering.** So the community is a community of people who remember, and the primary role of the priest in the Old Testament was not temple sacrifices; that was not primary. The primary role of the **priest was to remember**, to remember the stories that told of the works of God and the covenant, and so on. And then, of course, because the nature of the covenant was a matter of moral obligation, out of which stemmed a whole legal system, the role of the priest was also to remember how people had solved questions relating to moral issues and legal problems. So, long before there were any rabbis, the priests were responsible for this. It is only later that they got involved in other roles, you might say.

The Christian people believe that in Christ the revelation of God, the self-disclosure of God, is **complete and total** to the point that, although it continues until the end of time, it **cannot be augmented.** We cannot increase or add to the revelation because it is total. And if we were to add to the revelation of Christ, we would be saying that someone prior to this point lacked something. So the Church teaches without doubt, this is *De fide definita* that with the death of the last apostle, there can be no new revelation. And you have to keep that in mind when talking about such things as apparitions. The Church adamantly insists that no new revelation can take place no matter who says it, not from the Blessed Mother or from any other source. It is impossible because then that would mean that someone before that point did not have something essential, because it's assumed that **everything that is publicly revealed is essential**, that God is in that way economical. He doesn't waste revelation.

Now the **communities and authors use their own words to express the divine idea**, the divine communication. This is an area where, of course, Roman Catholics will differ from Evangelical Christians. Evangelical Christians have a tradition of verbal

inspiration. Verbal inspiration means that they believe the Holy Spirit chooses the actual words on the page of the Bible. Now the problem with this is—well, there are several problems—the problem is that there are no original texts. So even if that were true, it would do us no good because we have no original texts. Secondly, we have many old manuscripts and they are not exactly the same. Well, if it were true that the Holy Spirit chose every word, then we would have to try to find out which is the correct and all the rest would be wrong. But we don't do that because it is not the Church's understanding that the individual words are chosen by the Holy Spirit, but rather that the individual words are chosen by the author or authors according to his or their own culture, language, and understanding.

So when Pius XII, who wrote one of the most important works on divine inspiration, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1942, says that the literal meaning for a Catholic has always been the meaning that the author originally intended. That does not mean that is the only possible meaning, because even in the earliest days of the Church there was awareness that meanings grow and develop and that **the Spirit teaches people as they apply the word of God to their own lives**. But **the literal meaning is the original meaning that the author intended**. So then the divine inspiration has to do with the capacity of the Holy Spirit to convey a message effectively. And that was already stated by Leo XIII in his work on divine inspiration. So we avoid some of the great problems that people have with picking on words and wondering what does this mean and so on. We say that **the actual purpose of the inspiration is that the message actually is transferred from the mind of God to the mind of the people**.

Now one of the basic concepts that is found in Scripture and in the writings of the Fathers is the **concept of light**. Now the concept of light is really very simple. It's based on our experience of the sun and the moon and stars and candles and for us: florescent bulbs, incandescent bulbs, and so on. It's used by inspired authors to speak to us about the nature of God; **Christ is "Light from Light."** What does that mean? Think about it for a minute. It means that **as Christ reveals, he is revealing something of the very nature of God**. It's not something in addition to the nature of God. It is not something about the nature of God, but the nature of God itself—"Light from Light." Also John in the very beginning of the Prologue says, "The Light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world." Cf. "light of reason" So you see right here there is an acknowledgment that the Light, which is the Word of God, Light from Light, was enlightening, has **enlightened everyone from the beginning**. So this is not the idea that without the Incarnation you would be in the dark. Not necessarily. You're in the dark only through sin, through turning away from God. You're not in the dark because you by happenstance lack the revelation in Scripture. The Light is a revelation of a sort. What nature is it? This I cannot answer. And this will be probably discussed for a long time.

It is one of the big issues today in the Church: **What is the nature of the enlightenment of non-Christians?** The Church acknowledges it exists, but what is its nature? If you recall, there was a document, rather poorly received, not too long ago on this topic. And Cardinal Ratzinger, who was the major author of this document, insisted that whenever the Light of God enlightens anyone—and I'm using my words, not his, but

this is his idea—it **always relates back to the Word of God** and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Some crazy theologians were trying to say that the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, only applied to Christians and that non-Christians only related to God through the Holy Spirit. Well, that is so bizarre! I don't know how they ever arrived at that kind of goofy idea, but apparently they did.

Now **image of God**. Human beings are created in God's image. It says so in the Book of Genesis. What does this refer to? Well, it surely refers to our **freedom**, the fact that we have **free will**. It surely refers to the fact that we have **understanding and probably memory**. What else? What else is the image of God? (Life itself) (**Consciousness**) Would you say all life is the image of God? (No) Okay, okay. (**Self-consciousness**) **Self-reflection**. Okay. Those are surely part of it.

Now when you look in the **Hebrew Scriptures**, you see that human beings are understood as a composite of flesh and soul and spirit. And I talked about that last week; it's on that sheet you got today. The flesh is physical. The **Soul refers to feelings and experiences**. The soul is also—you can add this—**identity**. So if you remember, I said that in death the nephesh—the soul is the nephesh—the soul and the spirit and the body, flesh, disintegrate. That is, what is one thing becomes separated. That's what disintegration means. And the disintegration follows this basic pattern: the body goes into the grave, is buried, and then rots. And then the nephesh goes to Sheol, which is pictured as a pit in the center of the earth and is really a waiting room. And then the third is the spirit, which really belongs to God. The spirit that gives me life isn't mine. And life isn't mine, according to the Bible. It's not "my life." You hear people say, "Well, it's my life!" That's a very unbiblical way of thinking. **Life is all God's**—all of it! The life of a dandelion belongs to God. Human beings are given dominion over the earth, but not possession. There's a difference. Dominion implies **responsibility and accountability**. Possession doesn't. So we have to be clear about that. One of the major things about the nephesh is that the **nephesh contains the memory of who you are**, in other words, **your identity**. If it weren't for that, then at the reintegration, we call the "resurrection of the body"—and that's what we believe in, you know, as a Church; we believe in "the resurrection of the body and life everlasting; we don't believe in the immortality of the soul as an article of faith. The article of faith is "the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." The connection is the soul makes sure, you might say, that you're you! See, otherwise, you are going to have a body that doesn't look like your body now—most of you hope that way, right? According to St. Paul, the body is refashioned according to Christ, according to the pattern of his glorified body. See? So how is it going to be you? Jesus was not recognized, not by Mary Magdalene, not by the disciples on the road to Emmaus, not by a lot of them. Even by the disciples who were fishing, they weren't sure. So the identity is transferred not by any human likeness, but by the soul; the soul is your likeness, your identity, your connection with your life on earth.

Now **Aquinas** did not use those particular three terms. Aquinas talked about the body, the corpus, which is physical and also contains feelings. And we can say that's probably true because, after all, your feelings are in your body—are they not? When

you're really angry, don't you feel it throughout your body? When you're afraid, when you're anxious, doesn't it affect your stomach? Your stomach, all parts of your body, are affected by feelings. So to think of feelings as something different from your body, is not totally correct. So I think you could say **feelings and body go together. Memory, I think, also goes there** because if you have a stroke and your brain is affected in a certain spot or if you get certain diseases like Alzheimer's, you lose your memory. So it's a physical thing.

But he does talk about a soul, but a different kind of soul, not just the Hebrew idea of nephesh. **For Aquinas the soul is the essence, the pattern, the form, the idea, the nature.** Her chief feature—and “her” because “anima” in Latin is always female, feminine, so we refer to the soul as a “she.” The pattern, form, idea, nature, her chief features are the faculties of intellect and will. Now **John of the Cross wants to add memory to this, but I think it's a different memory.** I think if you talk about memory in the normal sense of “I remember,” that is a physical thing stored in your brain.

But our memories are very flawed. And the flawed memories we have are responsible for some of our deepest discomforts and deepest sufferings, actually. Now Teresa of Avila, if I'm not mistaken, talks about how God gives us new memories. Yes, but what she is talking about is this: let's say that as you grew up, you felt that your mother really didn't care about you. You felt your mother had much more important things on her mind than you, and so you grew up thinking that you were not very important to her and therefore not very worthwhile. Well, children growing up in that mentality, in that sort of perception, grow up with usually a very poor self-esteem and often worse! Let's say in addition to that or instead of that let's say you grew up and you were traumatized while you were a child. And let's say the trauma came from someone you were supposed to trust, in other words, a responsible adult: a parent or guardian. This would cause **serious trauma. Now where is God in all this?** This is a very important question. Where is God in all of this? Well, the answer is God is in the midst of it. God is suffering with you. **That's the whole point of the Incarnation, that God enters totally into every aspect of human life including trauma, including suffering, including abuse, and so on.** Now when Teresa of Avila was talking about God giving **new memories** she means that **God teaches us how he was with us.** So the new memory isn't really and truly a memory; it's something else. **It's a different view of life that engenders a new sense of the divine presence and allows for the healing of the trauma.** And in our modern Church we talk about the “**healing of memories,**” and it's related to this, where **we have to pray that God reaches back in time and touches the person during their hour of vulnerability, during their moment of being wounded.** And some people have had a sense, you might say, that indeed they were being watched over by angels, even though at the time they had no sense of it. But later on they come to realize that they really were being protected and that their survival was really due to the fact that they were protected, and that now once they realized that they weren't abandoned, they can actually, you know, let go of a lot of that and move on in a relationship with God. So that's healing of memories.

But John of the Cross likes to talk about memory all the time with the soul, but I think it's because he is very aware of this role. It's not just my memories, which are very infallible anyway, and very subjective. If you have siblings, get them together and start talking about Mom and Dad. You will find out that they don't agree with you at all. They have different perceptions altogether. So what good are our memories? They are very partial; they are very subjective. But then, this other kind of memory that comes from God is actually already the development of a sort of mystical awareness—mystical awareness of the spiritual reality that permeates everything and always has. **The presence of God permeates everything and always has, so that's really the kind of memory I think John of the Cross talked about in regard to the soul.**

Now the third thing Aquinas talks about is the **act of existence**, because for Aquinas a soul in itself is merely a potential, a possibility, but it has to be given act. Then it becomes actual. That's what the word "actual" comes from; it comes from the idea of act. Act is being real. So Thomas talks about the act of existence, **the creative act of God bringing essence into actual reality; this makes a potential pattern a real existing being.** Now why do I go over this? Well, we have to go over this in order to understand what the Church believes about Christ and how he shares our human nature.

Now **Galias** is a priest and he has a little book, and I thought I would give you his view just to show you that we're dealing with words and ideas and concepts that are not always identical. It's not like, well, this is it and if anybody ever tells you different, don't believe them! No, **there are different ways of dealing with these ideas.** So Galias says that spirit means the faculties of intellect and will. Supposedly, occasionally, Aquinas used the term "spirit" in this way. But in my understanding, he didn't make it a separate category. Galias lists it this way: soul—the internal senses: common sense, instinct; memory, and imagination. Now I don't know how memory works there. He is attributing memory to the soul. I don't know how that works—in his mind, that is. By imagination he means really the capacity, and this is what the soul does: it is the capacity we have of making images, and I don't simply mean daydreaming, but the very capacity we have of experiencing—that's imagination. Imagination involves bringing together all the senses, but it's more than just that. It brings together the feelings and consciousness; everything is all blended together in our experience. That's what Aquinas calls phantasm; here Galias calls it imagination. Now in between the sensitive soul and the body are found the **sensitive appetites**. Do you know why he calls it sensitive soul? He means the soul that is capable of feeling and experience; that's what that means as opposed to the immortal or rational soul. So some make a distinction; some don't. So in between the sensitive soul and the body are found the sensitive appetites or passions that are called by modern psychology "emotions".

Now when you get to **concupiscence**, what do you notice? You have like—dislike, attraction—repulsion, pleasure—displeasure, love—hate, desire—aversion, joy—sadness. What do you notice about that? They are opposites, yes, but they are dualistic. There are only two choices, two possibilities. Now if you look at plants, they are all like this. In other words, whatever makes living things live, are like this. Some plants move toward the sun, and other plants move away from the sun. **But all living things react**

**toward or away.** Attraction—repulsion; love—hate. It's all the same basic energy, and it's the energy of life and it belongs everywhere in life.

Now in the Middle Ages they used to say that the human being had every soul that existed; in other words, plants had a plant soul, so human beings must too. And animals had an animal soul, and so did human beings. And then human beings also have a rational soul. It was Aquinas who said that wasn't necessary. He said, no, the rational soul can do all the work of the others. But not everybody agreed with him. It doesn't really matter. But the point is these are ways of looking at ourselves, **recognizing the complexity that is within us**, and also recognizing that this kind of love is not a very high level of love. When we get to the Bible we talk about "agape," unconditional love. That's very different from this love. For this love the opposite is hate. This is not only just an emotion; it's really just a reaction.

Then we have the **irascible appetites**. Courage and fear, which, again, is the same bipolar energy. **The energy of life is bipolar.** Now when you hear somebody say, "Well, she is bipolar." You can say, "You know what? Every living thing is bipolar." It really is. It's just that some people have less order in this part of their soul, which today is almost universally called the "mind," so they have less control or order in this part of their mind and therefore they tend to go to one extreme and then the other. And then the body is all the physical stuff.

It is important that one does not think of soul or spirit as a thing. You are going to have to really work on this. Naturally we think that words refer to objects. **But the soul is not a thing!** It's better if we don't even say "a soul." It's better to talk about "soul," the reality of soul. What is the nature of soul? What is the essence of soul? Let's not talk about "a soul," because then we are starting to count. "A" is another word for "one." And when we start counting, we are materializing it; we're making it some thing. It is not a thing. It is more like a quality that inhabits a place, like the nature of home. A house is not a home. You can sell your house; its value is determined by the market. You cannot sell your home. Only you know its value. Science and scientists do not study homes; they study houses. A home can be warm and inviting or cold and indifferent; these qualities have nothing to do with the house, which may be beautiful, spacious, mean, shabby, etc.

When we claim that human beings have souls we are not talking about something in them. A human person may be a temple of the Holy Spirit, or a prison, or a large place where others are welcome, or a small place where no one else can fit. These are **different qualities of soul**: holy, unholy, diabolical, possessed, self-possessed, free, obsessed. Those are different qualities of soul. In Africa, India, and elsewhere some believe souls inhabit rocks and hills. This is an entirely different idea. We don't want to talk about that idea at all. These "souls" are something living in the rock. And sometimes Westerners have this idea as well, as if "a soul" is something residing, perhaps passively, within a person, a ghost in the machine. We don't want that kind of idea. That does not respond to what we are talking about. It's not a spiritual idea at all. That's a material idea. A ghost, you know, is a material thing. A ghost is a thing. Do you know

what a ghost is? It's some residue, some energy residue. It's a thing. And that's why people can see them, sometimes.

**Question:** What is a spirit?

**Answer:** Well, it depends upon what you want to call it. We're not using the word here.

**Question:** No, I mean is it a thing?

**Answer:** No. No, but if you want to use the word "**spirit**" in the sense of an angel, then it would be a form, an idea, that exists because it would be an essence and then it would have an act of existence, but it would not have a body. It could not act in the material world as we know the material world. But **it can act in the world of mind**. See? It can contact mind. That's why the devil is called the "father of lies." Well, lying has to do with the mind. And we call him the "tempter." Tempting has to do with mind, desire, and so on—not the physical world.

We cannot understand what life is, how it started, or how it continues. We study its results. We see its functioning. We see it evolved, but our observations are not explanations. **All faculties, appetites, senses, and emotions are produced in and by the brain.** That, however, explains nothing. See, now for a long time we've lived in a culture where the leading intellectual people want to tell us that the world is a product of pure chance; that the universe is a random universe; that life is simply a mechanical process, a meaningless, unconscious, mechanical process. And when they use the word "evolution," they mean this. And then people take a broad view of evolution and say, "Oh, I know there are fossils and I know there are extinct species," and they think they mean that. But that's not what they mean **when they talk about evolution. They mean a world driven by a blind mechanism ruled by chance.** And they believe, they say, that the order we see in the universe is an accident of this chance. In my personal judgment, **randomness will never produce order.** But they seem to think, and this has been their view for over a century now, that if you wait long enough, randomness will eventually produce order.

Like Sir Arthur Eddington, who was actually a pretty good physicist, once said that if you put a bunch of monkeys by some typewriters and you waited long enough—I think he said "infinite time," whatever that would be!—he said they would eventually produce Shakespeare. Well, that is completely ridiculous! They might eventually produce a word by chance; they might hit the letters and they might go together and form an actual word, but that's about it! They would never produce Shakespeare—never! But we have people today, and they are supposedly smart, and they think this way! And that magazine I brought in last week, that man thought that way. He talked about infinite space. And he said that whatever can happen, will. That is really bizarre thinking. And that's where we are as a culture.

Anyway, talking about the brain does not explain anything. Where does the brain come from? Even the idea of evolution—I **do believe in evolution in the sense that I do think a lot of change has taken place in the history of organic life, lots of changes.** A lot of species have died, disappeared. **But I don't believe it is purely a matter of chance.** Some scientists seem to imply the brain arrived at its present size and capacity, as it were, randomly or by chance.

On the other hand, as I mentioned, mathematicians believe that mathematical formulae have some kind of objective existence outside the human mind. This to me is a blatant contradiction of the idea that order just came about randomly. **How could order come about randomly if indeed already there exists outside the human mind a real order of mathematical measurement?** That math is not really made up by us, but merely discovered by us? Well, how could that be if there isn't a mind behind mathematics? Perhaps we might eventually see that matter is arranged in an intelligent and mathematically negotiable way. This does not imply that it cannot change or improve. It does not eliminate all randomness, nor does it leave everything to chance.

Of great interest today is the study of the brain. Some writers stress the brain as a collection of components like a stereo system; others stress the holistic functioning of all its parts together. One of the interesting points made by some is that the human brain has three relatively separate brains: one derived intact from the reptile form of life, one from the mammals, the third distinctly human. Like so many paradigms, this too is in threes. Now here is the question: Does the division of human nature into spirit, soul, flesh; or body, mind, feeling; or body, soul, act; or instinctive, emotional, intellectual betray a **basic threeness in our nature made in the image and likeness of God who is one God subsisting in three divine relations?** Alternatively, is it part of the nature of the brain to look at the human person this way? And if so, why?

So now we are getting into, really, the nature of who we are. **What does it mean to be the image and likeness of God? Does this threeness—is that part of the image of God?** So those are questions that you can mull over.

One thing evolutionists and scientists will not deny is that the human species recapitulates in itself the entire history of life on this planet. In Medieval philosophy, writers said, *Ut supra, ita infra*, “as above, so below”. By this, they meant that human beings were a **microcosm of the universe**. This is not too far from the idea that human beings are a **macrocosm of all life on earth**. And I think that's a very helpful idea to think about **God incarnating himself in that very being that itself is a total summation of all life. This goes beyond thinking of God's incarnation simply as redemptive or necessary to redeem us.** It's much more than that. At any rate, it is this human nature that God chooses to unite with in the mystery of the Incarnation. Everyone now agrees that **the locus of the interpenetration of the physical and spiritual is the brain**, which of course no one understands. But you know why? Because if the brain were so simple we could understand it, we would be so simple we couldn't! I'm quoting somebody, but I don't remember who.

Okay, now, **Jesus: God and Man—INCARNATION**. We can now look at the free mystery. Now the “free mystery”—that’s a term **Aquinas** uses. He said that there are two mysteries that are at the very core of Catholic Faith. **He said the necessary mystery: Trinity; the free mystery: Incarnation**. What does he mean by that? He means that **God is by necessity triune**. See, God doesn’t choose to be triune; God is triune. But **he chose to incarnate the Second Person, the Word, the knowledge of God, in the human nature**. So it’s called the “free mystery.” The doctrine states that **Jesus is fully divine and fully human, one person with two natures**. **Aquinas’s explanation looks like this: Jesus had a human body and Jesus had a human soul, therefore a complete human essence and nature with all the faculties, appetites, passions, emotions, and senses listed above. The act of existence, however, is not a created act. For Jesus, his act of existence, what made him real, is the divine, uncreated pure act that is God. There’s no created “act” in Jesus, therefore there is no duality of person. God’s essence is identical with his existence because his essence is “to be.” The divine existence supplies the divine nature, which is simple and indivisible. Jesus is fully human but not really a human being or a human person because then there would be two persons.** Now are you following this?

**Comment:** So one person and two natures.

**Response:** In Jesus—right. But only one person. Why is there only one person? Because, go back to page one, look under Aquinas. He says that a human being has a body, which is physical; a soul, by which he means the essence or pattern—and it’s not a thing, but it’s the pattern of the body. And **the pattern is also thought of as a final goal. It’s like the goal of the being is the soul. It draws everything toward some finality, some purpose. So another way of thinking of the soul is the purpose. The purpose of each life form is the soul.**

**Act of existence—every human being has a created act of God that brings that person into reality.** Now we don’t know how that really occurs. This is extremely perplexing. You see, this comes up in reproduction. How do you understand the reproduction of people, of human beings? You talk about ovum and sperm. They come together; they form a zygote. All right. Now what is that? Well, that’s a physical thing. All right. But everyone knows that every single human being is unique. A human being looks like the parents in various ways. Maybe has the nose of a father and the eyes of a mother or maybe even some other relative. You know how that works. It’s genetics. It’s physical. But you know very well that the child is individual from the beginning, an individual, distinct pattern, and has a distinct vocation, a distinct purpose—that’s what the soul is. **Now where did it come from?** Let’s say we don’t know; it’s better to say that. **It’s not a physical thing.** It’s somehow, you can say this, you might say **it descends from a different dimension.** It does not come from the parents; the parents don’t supply the essence of a child. You understand this? Do you have a question?

**Question:** Don’t we always say that God creates the soul at that point?

**Answer:** Well, we do say that, but we don't know what point that point is. Aquinas did believe that God created the soul; of course, he did not know about reproduction! But he did see women being pregnant, and he did wonder when the soul entered into the pregnancy, and he imagined that perhaps it started with the more simple souls: vegetative and then animal and then later on rational; but he didn't know exactly at what point. And he admitted he didn't know. And we don't know at what point either. Now you might be thinking of Pope John Paul, who wants to always assure that we protect life from the beginning. But it's really a little bit begging the question to say we know that God does this at that point or how God does this, because if you talk about an act of God, can our actions force God? **Is God forced to create a soul because of human intercourse, or is each human being a free determination of God?** If you say God wills that every time certain conditions are fulfilled, then a soul will come into existence, the result is due to law, and not an individual act of God. I mean it's a very difficult situation to think about. See? Besides that, the real issue—well, there are two issues—one is **the soul—where does it come from?** The real answer, I think, is **the soul comes from the mind of God in the sense that all potentials come from the mind of God.** But then the other question is: **when does the soul actually come into existence?** And that I don't know.

**Question:** How about the word “anima”? We speak of the inanimate, the corpse.

**Answer:** Right, the anima is the soul. But I was saying before that **Aquinas thought there were different levels of anima, that eventually the human, rational soul took over the work of all the others; but he wasn't sure how this took place.** So that's still a doubt. We don't know. I don't think we ever will. It's not something we can study. We just don't know. So for that reason in terms of treating the human person, **we treat the human person as a complete person from the moment of conception.** But that's another issue. The issue I'm bringing up is **how does God enter into this?** Do we force God to create a soul? If we have artificial insemination, does God freely create something there? I don't know.

**Comment:** About lineage, fingerprint of a person, DNA, heredity.

**Response:** But I don't see how that applies to this question of how God acts in these matters. I'm talking about how the soul arrives and how God creates, because this may be a special creation. Or it may be just an act of nature according to law.

**Question:** You say the soul has some sort of memory of us, right? I would call it the “fingerprint.” Everybody has a different one.

**Answer:** But the point is how does that “fingerprint” get into the child because it doesn't come from the parents? DNA comes from the parents, but not the soul. That's the question. I don't think there's an answer. You can say God creates it. That's very nice to say, but how does that actually take place? And precisely when and all that? That's the question. We don't know, and we won't. I'm just bringing it up.

But with Christ—you have to understand that with Christ the act of existence is God. There is no human act of existence. He is not a human person. That's the point. He has a complete human nature because he has a human soul, which is a human essence and a human body—perfect. But on page one we have the three terms. The third term: act of existence, in Jesus that is the divine Word of God. That's how Thomas explains the Incarnation, and why Jesus is one person, one single person, who is fully human and fully divine, who shares our nature completely and God's nature completely. And why? Well, because the human being already has these three different components. One component gives him a nature; another component makes him real; a third component is physical. You understand? Now only one of those is actually physical. One of those alone can be studied and looked at and probed. The other two cannot be.

**Question:** How could he experience anxiety and pain and also be God?

**Answer:** Because he—that's a good question—because he had a human soul, and the human soul is the subject of all those experiences. It's through the soul we experience it. The God part is the fact that he was not—his reality is not created. **His Being is divine.** If I may use this word, **his "is-ness," his existence, is divine!** And he assumes the human essence, which, of course, is ordained toward a body and therefore it involves a body. So he has complete human experience save for one thing. What makes him real is not a created act of existence, and therefore he could not sin, really, because his very act of Being, his very Being, is divine. You see? At the same time **his human will still has to struggle to conform to the will of God, because it's human and created.**

**Question:** If God knows everything, why would he be anxious about things if he knows everything God knows?

**Answer:** Well, I don't know. See, when Aquinas talks about knowledge he says the way God knows things is not the way we know them. But perhaps God is anxious like a parent concerned about children. In German, *Sorge* sometimes means concern and sometimes anxiety. They are related. Surely God is concerned.

**Comment:** I was thinking of **his suffering before he died.**

**Response:** Oh, well, now in regard to suffering before he died, Thomas says that he was deprived of his knowledge of God. **He was deprived of the beatific vision,** which means his sense of the Father, his knowledge of the Father. He was deprived of that.

**Question:** When did that happen?

**Answer:** Well, some time during his—

**Question:** Last Supper?

**Answer:** Well, not necessarily during his Last Supper, but perhaps in the Agony in the Garden. But the other thing I want to say is that his capacity to appreciate the Father—in his humanity now—here—[Drawing on the flip chart] we have Jesus' body. It begins like every other body, tiny—right? And then it grows bigger and bigger—right? **His soul—it begins like every other soul, except it does not know alienation from God. Why? Because it is not rooted in a separate act of existence.** There is no separate act of existence. The act is the Word of God itself. See? Another way of saying the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. That is the act that makes this soul not merely a potential soul, but a real soul, an actual soul. You understand?

So now he is going to live a complete human life, but in his human soul he is also going to have something unusual, which is usually called in the Bible “knowledge of the Father.” He talks about, “I know the Father.” Okay? What is that knowledge of the Father? **It's the Word of God that gives him actuality that is the knowledge of God. See? He calls it “knowledge of the Father.”** So he has this. This, however, is **apportioned to his soul**, which also grows and develops. So when he is four years old he only has a four-year-old's knowledge of the Father. And when he is eight years old he only has an eight-year-old's knowledge of the Father. When he is thirty years old he only has a thirty-year-old's knowledge of the Father. **He can't have a knowledge of the Father in his human soul, in his human understanding, that exceeds what it is—then it wouldn't be human!**

**Question:** So he grows into this?

**Answer:** He has to grow in age and wisdom; he “grows in age and wisdom before God and men.” Then when it comes to the passion, Aquinas says anyway, that God deprives him of his knowledge. It's almost like there's a blackout. It must have been the greatest torment of all possibilities. If you study John of the Cross, you get the idea of the **dark night of the soul**. It isn't depression as we know depression. It's the **absence of something supernatural that was given and then taken back**. And this absence of this magnificent consolation causes this terrible pain. It's like withdrawal. You know, if you are on heroin and you withdraw, you're in misery. Well, Jesus went through withdrawal from the beatific vision.

**Question:** Why did that happen?

**Answer:** Because **otherwise he would not have really known what it is to be in sin**. And, you see, Paul says, “He became sin.” He entered into the darkness. Well, if he didn't do that, he would have never known sin; he would have never entered truly into darkness.

**Question:** The soul then is something that is a manifestation of the human body?

**Answer:** It's not a manifestation. The soul is the pattern behind the manifestation of the body.

**Question:** This essence, this “is-ness” of God, does it have a soul?

**Answer:** No, the soul is a component of any created organism; but, no, God doesn't have a soul. **God is pure Being, pure spirit. God's essence is to exist.**

You just have to think about it for awhile and let it sink in.

**Question:** Mystics with a sense of loss—of what? Communication between their soul and essence, that is-ness, whatever it is. When they did apparently have the communication there was a feeling of wonder and peace that our soul always seems to be striving for.

**Answer:** Right. We're created for it. We are created for that.

**Question:** How do we come to that peace? **How do we get closer to that essence, to that peace?**

**Answer:** **Number one, this is God's work in us. Number two, what do we do?** Well, according to John of the Cross, he would say we **work on detaching ourselves from everything that is an obstacle.** And what is that? Well, God will have to show us. It's not like there is a “how to” book on this.

**Question:** **How do you open yourself to receiving that essence?**

**Answer:** It is a very serious question, and the answer is that it would be the same today as always. **That is really the real meaning of the sacramental life of the Church. That is the real meaning of liturgy.** It's to open ourselves to this life. **That's the real meaning of prayer in all of its four goals.** But it's not something we accomplish quickly.

**Comment:** God may be speaking to us, but we don't see it; we don't hear it; we don't understand it or recognize it. It may be years later that you will remember something that happened to you fifteen, twenty years ago, and today you recognize it.

**Response:** Right.

**Comment:** I didn't hear God or I didn't allow myself to hear him or to feel the closeness. We have to be so aware all the time. We have to be more open to accept those passions or appetites of the soul.

**Response:** We have to accept them and strive to bring them into communion with God so that they serve God's purposes. They all have to be good, or God wouldn't have created them. So there is a good purpose to all of it. We just have to make sure they are doing the right thing and not creating an obsession or some sort of compulsion within us. **Anything good can create some sort of compulsion; we get out of balance.**

**Question:** About a clone and creation of the act of existence.

**Answer:** Well, now if there were such a thing as a clone—I don't know if there ever will be, but don't you think a clone would have to have a soul? If it's a human being, it would have to have a soul. That goes back to my question. Does the coming together of an ovum and a sperm force God to create? You're saying just a clone—I don't think there could be just a clone. A clone would be a human person that has the exact same DNA as some other human person.

**Question:** About memory from the womb.

**Answer:** I don't know.

**Question:** About the subconscious mind.

**Answer:** Well, we do have a subconscious mind. We don't remember everything. That's all stored in the subconscious. These are questions that are a little bit beyond—

**Comment:** If we say it is a law of nature, we're not forcing God to create the soul.

**Response:** Well, as I understand it, Aquinas didn't like that point of view. As I understand it, he didn't think it was a law of nature. But then maybe he was wrong. Maybe he didn't understand how this works. I don't know. I'm saying I don't know.

**Comment:** Well, maybe God designed it that way.

**Response:** Yes, but that's not answering the question of what really happens and when. But I don't want to spend anymore time on this. I just brought it up, and you think about it. It gets back to the issue, is every child a miracle? Is a child a miracle in the true sense of the word? Or is the child the result of something else?

**Comment:** About a child being a miracle.

**Response:** Well, if it's not a miracle, it's a product of nature. When something is a product of nature, that's not a miracle. So is a child a miracle or is a child a product of nature? That's the question. Think about it! You're not going to answer it today.

**Comment:** I vote for every child is a miracle!

**Response:** Okay, we'll have a vote next week!

Now the **Christological Heresies:**

I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that the Church's teachings have been maligned and misunderstood and rejected for centuries, and here are some notable ones. First of all, what is a heresy? It's a **denial of what the Church affirms**. The original meaning is

“sect.” Heretics set themselves against the beliefs of the whole for various reasons. It could be conviction or pride or moral superiority—very often it’s moral superiority—or political ambitions. Notable are the following :

**Arianism:** denied Jesus was either God or man. Arius believed Jesus was an angel in human form. At one time Arianism was the majority position in the Church including emperors, whole tribes of Goths, and of course most of Egypt. It was also a political movement of independence against the emperor in the beginning, but then some of the emperors joined them. I mean, it was goofy. This doctrine survives today in the sect called “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” where Christ is the incarnation of St. Michael the Archangel. This doctrine was condemned in 325 at the Council of Nicea.

**Docetism:** Never as important as Arianism, it is nonetheless, prior—existing even during the formation of the New Testament. Docetists rejected the doctrine that the God-Man died on the cross. The God part ascended to heaven prior to Jesus’ ordeal. This doctrine still influences other religions, especially Islam, which regards Jesus as the Messiah who ascended to heaven before the death of his appearance on the cross. In addition, many Eastern mystics regard Jesus as an Avatar who ascended into heaven before dying. The problem here is what St. Paul called the “scandal of the cross.”

And the reason I’m bringing this up is that things don’t always change as much as we think. **These doctrines are still circulating.**

**Nestorians:** Not so much a heresy as a theological mistake—Nestorius, Archbishop-patriarch of Constantinople, did not deny Jesus’ humanity or his divinity but failed to see how they could be united in one “person.” Nestorianism gained ground outside the eastern border of the Roman Empire in modern Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and western China. It adapted to the concerns of Oriental people preaching freedom from samsara, that means reincarnation, and cancellation of karma as the salvific work of Christ. The chief attraction of the Nestorian formulations was that the Greeks hated them. The Greeks championed Mary as Theotokos, bearer of God. Nestorius said Mary was the mother of Jesus, not the mother of God; and that’s why they threw him out of the city and banished him as Archbishop. This teaching was condemned in 432 at the Council of Ephesus.

**Monophysitists:** Probably a misnomer and a misunderstanding since no one calls themselves by this name. Some Christians especially from Syria, Armenia, and Egypt so emphasized the divinity of Christ that it seemed to some that the human nature was swallowed up. Reconciliation between “Jacobites,” that’s what they called themselves, and also the “Oriental Orthodox” [not in union with Greeks and Russians] and the Pope in Rome has come quite far. Pope John Paul II declared they are not and never were heretics. This has made relations with the Greek-Slavic Orthodox very sour. They believe both the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholics are heretics. The Roman Catholic Church has never considered the Greek Orthodox Communion of Churches heretical. This doctrine was condemned at the Council of Calcedon in 451.

**Adoptionism:** This is the teaching that Christ was a human person adopted by God as his Son. This would destroy his uniqueness, since God adopts all of us. This doctrine existed in the early Church, but was not very influential. Today it is very prevalent among certain unorthodox people, especially those who consider themselves “liberal” or “modern.” Sad to say, if you gave a test to Christians throughout the U.S., I bet about eighty percent of them would probably be adoptionists—maybe seventy-five. Not because they viciously oppose the Church’s teaching, they just don’t know better. They would say, “Oh, yeah, Jesus is a man and that God took him in and he is special.” It’s just too thin.

**Monothelism:** That’s a doctrine that Jesus had no human will, only a divine will. That was condemned at the First Council of Constantinople in 481.

**Question:** About act of existence and Jesus.

**Answer:** The act of existence of Jesus is the divine nature. That’s the divine nature.

**Question:** And his soul, is that the human nature?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Can you say that and still have knowledge of the Father?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** In his human nature?

**Answer:** Oh, of course, they are conjoined.

**Question:** He had **knowledge of the Father in his human nature**?

**Answer:** Oh, he had to have it in his human nature, but it’s a human knowledge. It’s adapted. And that’s what we will take up next week: **what are the implications of this in his life? How does that explain not only his passion, his sacrifice? How does that explain the Mass? How does that explain the meaning of Calvary? How does that explain the meaning of the resurrection? How does that explain everything?** And really, it does! If you think about this through the week, **the human nature of Jesus, according to Aquinas, is the instrument of our redemption. Now every single thing we believe in really goes right through the human nature of Christ and his human experience of God.** His human experience of God in his unique way because he was not a human person, but he was the divine Word, and therefore **he experienced the Father in a way that God experiences the Father—but in a human way! That’s what is meant by the Incarnation.**

**Question:** About Jesus’ death.

**Answer:** No, the divinity cannot die because it is eternal. But death is always a separation between the act of existence and the soul. That's always what death is. But you can say God died on the cross because the act of God, which is eternal because that cannot die—but it's separated from the rest of it. And the unity of Jesus' life did disintegrate, not for very long, but it did disintegrate. It disintegrated for a very short period of time—what?—not even three days—two and a half?

**Question:** Did he receive the Spirit at his baptism or did he have it before that?

**Answer:** Well, you see, the Word of God cannot be separated from the Father and the Spirit. So actually he always had the Spirit. He could not have not had the Spirit. But when he was baptized, that was his human decision to enter into solidarity with sinners. You see, baptism was for repentance. Why would he receive a baptism of repentance? Because he wanted to enter into sin. So in a sense he willingly at that time already agreed to give up his beatific knowledge. But in the Agony of the Garden he asked the Father that the cup would pass from him, because in his humanity he had to experience the most excruciating fear, much more than we could because we don't have that much to lose. You see? Did you have a question?

**Comment:** It seems from the gospel of John that God wanted to save us when we were lost. God so loved the world he had to send his own divine Son.

**Response:** His own divine self! You see, it's really God—"one in Being with the Father"—so it's God coming. It's not somebody else. Sometimes the Protestants talk as if it is somebody else. You know, "Jesus is God's very favorite"—no, Jesus is God! The Second Person. It's God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who chooses this, but the choice is that the Second Person, and only the Second Person, would become human.

Now before you all leave, I want to give you something. Pass these out. These are a gift from Ben—the Athanasian Creed—it's really nice. I want you to read this at your leisure during the week. This will refresh your memory and maybe cause more questions. And this is just for your edification. This is something also from Ben.

**Question:** Who is Athanasius?

**Answer:** Well, he was one of the Fathers of the Church. I believe Athanasius opposed the heretic Apollonarius. Apollonarius said that the Word of God was the soul of Jesus. And Athanasius said, well, in that case, he didn't have a human soul. In that case he didn't redeem the human soul. In that case—I don't want to say what he said—it was not nice.

Next week come with some questions. There will be time next week for more questions. Next week it is really the spirituality of the teaching. **How does the spirituality enter now into our prayer life, into our imagination, into our liturgy?**

**How does it affect us?** So in a sense I'm hoping you are going to give the class next week.

*Hail Mary and Glory Be.*

Thank you and have a good night.