



A Suggestive Note on the *Esse* of the Eucharist

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Abstract

This article investigates the *esse* of the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, attempting to fill a lacuna in eucharistic theology. It proceeds from the questions on Christ's *esse* in the *Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word* and the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, with a short synthesis arguing that Christ exists by one *esse*. Then, it argues that the eucharist exists by this same *esse* by answering two possible objections, taken from the many instances of the eucharist across the globe and Christ's unique mode of sacramental presence, to the eucharist only having this one *esse*.

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This article takes up the question of what the sacrament of the eucharist is, from the standpoint of its *esse*—that is, its principle of actual being or existence. It should not be surprising that one may wonder about the character of the *esse* of the eucharist in reflecting upon the eucharistic mystery and its dogmas, especially the Catholic Church's dogma of the real presence in the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist.¹ Indeed, in the beginning of his *Physics*, Aristotle focuses on the fundamental principles of things and says, "[W]e do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with

¹ For the importance of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics for the eucharistic dogmas, though focusing on the more common categories of substance and accidents in the context of the composition of essence and existence, see Édouard-Henri Wéber, "L'incidence de traité de l'eucharistie sur la métaphysique de S. Thomas d'Aquin", *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 77, no. 2 (April 1993): 195–218. While mentioning the importance of the metaphysical understanding of the composition of essence and existence, for example at 202, Wéber does not focus on the principle of existence within the eucharist. Moreover, this current article sets aside the *res tantum* and *sacramentum tantum*, since these are, respectively, the 1) effects of receiving sanctifying grace through the eucharistic host and the 2) species of bread and wine, which stand as accidents to the substance of this sacrament—which are Christ's body and blood. Instead, this article will focus on the substantial thing that sacramentally persists—the substance of which is the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist, Christ himself. See *STh*, III, q. 73, a6, co.; *STh*, III, q. 71, a. 1, ad 3.

its primary causes or first principles, and have carried our analysis as far as its elements".² The Catholic Church's Council of Trent taught, "in the eucharist the author of holiness himself is present".³ This would already seem to suggest an answer to this investigation, namely that the act of existence of the eucharist is whatever Christ Jesus's principle of actual existence is. As such, it will be argued the *esse* of the eucharist is simply the *esse* of Christ, and it will be suggested that Christ's *esse* is numerically one in Aquinas's thought.

However, statements of the identity of this sacrament with Christ—where one would say "Christ is the eucharist" and "the eucharist is Christ"—are less common in theological writing. Instead, the language used when speaking of the real presence often only uses local terms (e.g., "in", "under", "contains", etc.), instead of ontological terms, to describe the Incarnate Word's personal presence under the appearances of bread and wine.⁴ Thomas Aquinas, while using the same kind of language, suggests something stronger. In showing that the eucharist is the greatest of the sacraments, he says:⁵

Absolutely speaking, the sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments . . . because it contains Christ himself substantially (*substantialiter*): whereas the other sacraments contain a certain instrumental power derived from Christ (*participata a Christo*) . . . Now that which is essentially such (*quod est per essentiam*) is always of more account than that which is such by participation.

He retains the language of presence when saying that Christ is substantially contained within this sacrament, yet also suggest that the eucharist is the greatest sacrament

² Aristotle, R. P. Hardie, and R. K. Gaye, "Physics", in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translations. Volume One*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Bollingen Series (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 315–446, 184a12–15.

³ Norman P. Tanner, ed., "Council of Trent: 1545–1563", in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils. Volume Two: Trent to Vatican II* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 657–799, 694. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2022), CCC 1374; CCC 1378–81.

⁴ For examples, both for Christ Jesus's real and substantial presence in the eucharist and for the lack of further ontological language on the matter, see Tanner, "Council of Trent: 1545–1563", 693; Tanner, "Council of Trent: 1545–1563", 695; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2022), CCC 1374–81. This is not to say that this identity is denied in Catholic theological writing. For example, Johannes Betz, Josef Andreas Jungmann, and Leo Scheffczyk, "Eucharist", in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1968), 257. "[I]t is the salvific reality placed therein by Christ, which is Christ himself with his being and work".

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 65, a. 3, co. [S]impliciter loquendo, sacramentum Eucharistiae est potissimum inter alia sacramenta. . . . quidem, ex eo quod in eo continetur ipse Christus substantialiter: in aliis autem sacramentis continetur quaedam virtus instrumentalis participata a Christo . . . Semper autem quod est per essentiam, potius est eo quod est per participationem. English translations of the *Summa Theologiae* are taken from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981) with only minor changes as needed. The Latin original of the *Summa Theologiae* is taken from the Leonine Edition of Aquinas's *opera omnia*.

because it is essentially Christ. Thus there would be a closer relationship of the eucharist and the incarnate Word than the language of “presence” or “contained” may necessarily imply. Indeed, Aquinas knows that he is not alone in recognizing the special ontological link between this sacrament and Christ, for example, when he quotes from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in making this argument.⁶ In the present context, it therefore seems that ontological questions about this sacrament’s *esse* should relate to Christ’s own principle of existence. Thus, this line of questioning illumines this dogma of the Council of Trent and, therefore, the ontological makeup of the eucharist adored and received by the faithful.

Specifically, this brief exploratory article will seek to clarify what the *esse* of the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist is, presuming the Christology and eucharistic thought of Aquinas. First, Aquinas’ own teachings on Christ’s *esse* and the controversy surrounding his diverse accounts in the *Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word* and the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* are recalled. This will conclude with a brief argument that Christ has one single principle of actual existence. Then the real presence of Christ in the eucharist will be considered. To show that his own *esse* must be the *esse* of the eucharist, two short objections will be considered, namely the numerical diversity of the eucharist found throughout the world and the merely sacramental presence of Christ in the eucharist as opposed to his natural mode of presence. In the end, it will be suggested that the eucharist exists by the single act of existence which is Christ’s own *esse*.

2. What is *Esse*?

Esse, in the language of Aquinas, is the principle of actual existence, or the “*actus essendi*,” which operates on creatures’ “essential constituent principles”.⁷ In the unique case of God in his simplicity, however, *esse* is not merely a principle external to essence

⁶ See *STh*, I, q. 65, a. 3, *co*. “Nam fere omnia sacramenta in Eucharistia consummantur, ut dicit Dionysius, III cap. Eccles. Hier”. Also, see *STh*, I, q. 65, a. 3, *sc*. and *STh*, I, q. 75, a. 1, *co*. Presumably, Aquinas here refers to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, “The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy”, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 193–259, especially 404D. Note that Father Andrew Hofer, O.P., singles this matter out as profitable for investigation. See Andrew Hofer, “Dionysian Elements in Thomas Aquinas’s Christology: A Case of the Authority and Ambiguity of Pseudo-Dionysius”, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review of Theology and Philosophy* 72, no. 3 (July 2008): 409–42, 429–30. “For example, Aquinas appeals to *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 3 for Dionysius’s authority that the sacrament of the Eucharist contains Christ himself . . . It would be interesting to compare the link between Christ and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, found both in Dionysius and Aquinas”.

⁷ *STh*, I, q. 3, a. 4, *co*. “. . . principiis essentialibus rei . . .”. For “*actus essendi*”, see *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2, *co*.; *STh*, I, q. 4, a. 1, *ad* 3; *De potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, *ad* 9. It should be noted that this article prescinds from the secondary uses of the term *esse* in the *Corpus Thomisticum*, such as when *esse* also signifies essence, depending upon the modes of being, signifying, and predication in use. See Gregory T. Doolan, “Aquinas on the Distinction Between *Esse* and *Esse*: How the Name ‘*Esse*’ Can Signify Essence”, *New Blackfriars: A Review Edited by the Dominicans of the English Province* 104, no. 1114 (November 2023): 628–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12873>.

but is really identical to the divine essence.⁸ Thus, the divine *esse* is simply one and not differentiated amongst the persons of the Trinity, just as the divine essence is not.⁹ Hence the divine Word is identical with divine *esse*, save for the personal relation of sonship. In the economy of salvation, the person of the Word can then be considered according to his visible and invisible missions,¹⁰ the visible mission of his incarnation being the consideration of this article. However, for complex humanity, the *esse* of an individual man is the principle whereby human nature is actualized as *this* man—for which reason *esse* is a distinct principle from human nature and is numerically distinct.¹¹ Thus Socrates has his own distinct *esse*, while Plato has another.

3. *Utrum in Christo sit tantum unum esse?*

Given that the primary visible mission of the Word is his incarnation, Christ's own *esse* should be discussed first before arguing that this principle of actual existence accounts for the *esse* of the eucharist. Aquinas asks whether there is one existence due to Christ's unity in personhood as the person of the Word or two existences due to his duality in nature, while trying to maintain the convertibility of being and unity. Aquinas did so due to the Council of Chalcedon defining that Christ is one person and the Second Council of Constantinople, alongside Chalcedon, defining that Christ is one in subsistence.¹² Due to the constraints of space, however, a full textual and speculative presentation of Aquinas' Christological treatment on the subject of the *esse* of the incarnate Word cannot be offered.¹³ However, a short overview of the relevant

⁸ See *STh*, I, q. 3, a. 4, *co*.

⁹ See *STh*, I, q. 28, a. 1-2.

¹⁰ See *STh*, I, q. 43.

¹¹ See *STh*, I, q. 76, a. 1, *ad* 5; *STh*, I, q. 90, a. 2 on the human soul.

¹² See *STh*, III, q. 17, a. 2; Thomas Aquinas, *De unione Verbi incarnati*, trans. Roger W. Nutt, of *Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations* (Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2015), a. 4. For the Council of Chalcedon, see Norman P. Tanner, ed., "Council of Chalcedon: 451", in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 75–103, 86. "[O]ne and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures . . . but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person (*prosōpon*) and a single subsistent being (*hupostasin/subsistentiam*)". For the Second Council of Constantinople, see the Fourth and Fifth Anathemas directed at the "Three Chapters", Norman P. Tanner, ed., "Second Council of Constantinople: 553", in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 104–22, 115–16. In the Fourth Anathema, "The holy church of God . . . states her belief in a union between the Word of God and human flesh which is by synthesis, that is by a union of subsistence (*hupostasin/subsistentiam*)". In the Fifth Anathema, "If anyone understands by the single subsistence (*hupostasin/subsistentiam*) of our lord Jesus Christ that it covers the meaning of many subsistences, and by this argument tries to introduce into the mystery of Christ two subsistences or two persons, and having brought in two persons then talks of one person only in respect of dignity, honour, or adoration, as both Theodore and Nestorius . . . let him be anathema".

¹³ Positions vary concerning how to understand Aquinas on Christ's existence. Some claim, as taken up in this article, that Aquinas always thought that Christ has one *esse* even if Aquinas' treatment in the *Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word* is complicated; others that the disputed question does teach that Christ has two *esse*, but that Aquinas always defends the unity of Christ's *esse* elsewhere; and still others that Aquinas thought Christ has two *esse* in the disputed question and the *Summa Theologiae*, though admitting

sections from two mature works, the *Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word* and the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* is necessary—within which the position that Christ has one *esse* is preferred.

3.1. *Questio Disputata de unione Verbi incarnati*

Aquinas, in article four of his Christological disputed question, distinguishes between the *esse* that is proper to the accidents of individual substances and that which is proper to substantial natures (which themselves are principles to independent supposits).¹⁴ It is this latter kind of existence that Aquinas focuses on. In doing so, he points out that the person of the Word is the one who assumes the individuated human nature. Because of this, no actuality or perfection is added to the Word himself in the incarnation. Aquinas says the humanity of Christ “does not make the Son of Man to be simply...but only to be man”.¹⁵ Therefore, he “has one being *simpliciter* on account of the one eternal being of the eternal *suppositum*”.¹⁶ Remember that *esse* is *actus essendi*.¹⁷ The Word is already absolute being, so that no *actus* can be added to him, as if he had previously lacked it.¹⁸ However, since this humanity is brought into real relation with the eternal Word, another mode of being is present in the hypostatic

that he held to one *esse* in Christ elsewhere. For an example of someone who, while admitting where Aquinas argues for Christ only having one *esse*, proceeds from a duality of *esse* in the disputed question, see Richard Cross, “Aquinas on Nature, Hypostasis, and the Metaphysics of the Incarnation”, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 60, no. 2 (1996): 171-202. Dominic Ryan, O.P., is an example of the last option, claiming that Aquinas defends a duality of *esse* in Christ in the *Summa Theologiae*, as well as in the disputed question. See Dominic Ryan, “Christ’s Being and Summa Theologiae 3A Q17 Art. 2”, *New Blackfriars: A Review Edited by the Dominicans of the English Province* 104, no. 1109 (2023): 57–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12799>.

¹⁴ *De unione*, a. 4, co. “Esse enim proprie et vere dicitur de supposito subsistente. Accidentia enim et formae non subsistentes dicuntur esse, inquantum eis aliquid est: sicut albedo dicitur ens, inquantum ea est aliquid album. – Considerandum est autem, quod aliquae formae sunt, quibus est aliquid ens non simpliciter, sed secundum quid, sicut sunt omnes formae accidentals. Aliquae autem formae sunt, quibus res subsistens simpliciter habet esse, quia videlicet constituent esse substantiale rei subsistentis”. The *Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word* is here covered first in an attempt to follow Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P.’s chronology of Aquinas’ life. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Robert Royal, Revised, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 329. However, it should be recalled how close together this work and the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* were written, perhaps even contemporaneously. See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 205-07; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 336-37. For further comments on the dating of this text, see Roger W. Nutt, introduction to *De unione Verbi incarnati*, by Thomas Aquinas, of Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations (Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2015), 1–78, 6-9.

¹⁵ *STh*, III, q. 3, a. 1, ad 3. “Non enim ex natura humana habet filius Dei quod sit simpliciter . . . sed solum quod sit homo”. See *STh*, III, q. 3, a. 1, ad 1; *De unione*, a. 4, co.

¹⁶ *De unione*, a. 4, co. “. . . habet unum esse simpliciter propter unum esse aeternum aeterni suppositi . . .” Note the relation between supposits and persons, following Aquinas and Nutt, “This means that not every *suppositum* is a person, but every really existing person is a *suppositum*”. Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 12.

¹⁷ See *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2, resp; *STh*, I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3; *De potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9.

¹⁸ See *STh*, III, q. 3, a.1, ad 1.

union through which the Word became man.¹⁹ “That is: although it is not accidental being—because man is not accidentally predicated of the Son of God...it is nevertheless not the principle being of its *suppositum*, but a subordinate being [*sed secundarium*]”.²⁰ Therefore, there is an ordered twofold being in Christ that transcends the categories of accidental beings previously ruled out at the beginning of the disputed question’s article—where the *esse secundarium* of the supposit of Christ’s humanity is a resultant from the *esse* of the Word.²¹ This twofold being, however, does not constitute two distinctly separate *esse*, one divine and one properly human, but posits a principal divine *esse* with a subordinately dependent human *esse*.²² This subordinate and dependent human *esse* is not a second principle of existence in Christ. Rather, it is the “specification” or limitation²³ of the divine *esse* to the humanity of Christ, so that his humanity exists according to an activity adequated to it.²⁴

¹⁹ For the humanity’s real relation to the Person of the Word but relation of reason of the Word to the created humanity, see Aquinas, *STh*, III, q. 2, a. 7, co. For the other mode of being which “sustains” the “eternal *suppositum*”, see Aquinas, *De unione*, a. 4, co.

²⁰ Aquinas, *De unione*, a. 4, co. “Quod est, si non sit esse accidentale – quia homo non praedicatur accidentaliter de Filio Dei . . . non tamen est esse principale sui suppositi, sed secundarium” For an explanation of the translation of “*secundarium*” as “subordinate”, see Roger W. Nutt, “*Christus est unum simpliciter*: On Why the *Secundarium* of the Fourth Article of Thomas Aquinas’s *De unione Verbi incarnati* Is Not a Numerically Second *esse*”, in *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology*, ed. Michael A. Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer, and Roger W. Nutt (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2021), 70–88, 85–87; Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 58–59. Nutt’s article, “*Christus est unum simpliciter*”, originally was published as “Thomas Aquinas on Christ’s Unity: Revisiting the *De unione* Debate”, *Harvard Theological Review* 114, no. 4 (2021): 491–507.

²¹ See Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 58–59; Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 70; Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 73–74.

²² See Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 59.

²³ “Limit” here should not be considered a limitation in the divine *esse* itself, but that the humanity of Christ can only accept a limited degree of *esse* from the second person of the Trinity.

²⁴ Some commentators emphasize the duality of *esse* in Christ so that there are two properly distinct *esse*, though only analogously so. E.g., “Christ does have a human life and principle of his assumed created nature that is not the divine *esse*. There is a secondary, or subordinate, *esse* of the human nature of Christ that is other than the divine *esse* and not the divine *esse*, that is, the act by which Christ is human. It is *esse* not in the suppositional sense, but in a legitimate analogical use of the word”. John Froula, “*Esse secundarium*: An Analogical Term Meaning That by Which Christ Is Human”, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (October 2014): 557–80, 580. Cf., Nutt, “*Christus est unum simpliciter*”, 84. It is not clear that this view, in which there are two distinct *esse* in Christ, where the human *esse* is subordinate and, therefore, analogously *esse*, is actually distinct from the view that there is not a distinct human *esse* in Christ, but that *esse secundarium* refers to the new limitation (or *habitus*) of divine *esse* by the humanity of Christ. A fuller treatment of this controversy, compared to what can be presented in this short “suggestive note”, would be necessary to exhaustively prove that Christ has one *esse* and the relation that the eucharist has to it. However, the well-defended traditional position of Nutt and Steven Long, found in section 3.3, is adequate to the present limited argument.

3. 2. *Summa Theologiae*

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas forwards a different position denying the twofold being in Christ—whence endless debate as to whether or not he revised his Christology from the disputed question has occurred.²⁵ Here, Aquinas distinguishes between the “*hypostasis*” or “person,” which has existence (“*habet esse*”), and “nature,” which is that-by-which-something-has-existence (“...*ad naturam autem sicut ad id quo aliquid habet esse; natura enim significatur per modum formae, quae dicitur ens ex eo quod ea aliquid est...*”).²⁶ Then, he distinguishes between natures that immediately belong to the subsisting *hypostasis* or person and other kinds of natures that do not, the most common of which are the natures belonging to accidents.²⁷ However, the two natures of Christ do not coexist by an accidental union but by a hypostatic union.²⁸ Since the two natures exist together in the *hypostasis*, the fact that both natures call out for being does not duplicate the *esse* that the single divine person, Christ Jesus, has. Instead, the call for *esse* that his individual human nature has is satisfied by the divine *Esse*, wherefore Aquinas says:²⁹

And thus, since the human nature is united to the Son of God, hypostatically or personally (...), and not accidentally, it follows that by the human nature there accrued to him no new personal being, but only a new relation (*habitus*) of the pre-existing personal being to the human nature, in such a way that the Person is said to subsist not merely in the Divine, but also in the human nature.

Literally, the *esse* of God is the *esse* of the whole person of Christ, wherein his humanity exists by its relation to the supra-abundance of actuality in that *esse*.³⁰

²⁵ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 205-07.

²⁶ See *STh*, III, q. 17, a. 2, *co*. Aquinas’ full distinction runs, “*Esse autem pertinet ad hypostasim et ad naturam, ad hypostasim quidem sicut ad id quod habet esse; ad naturam autem sicut ad id quo aliquid habet esse; natura enim significatur per modum formae, quae dicitur ens ex eo quod ea aliquid est, sicut albedine est aliquid album, et humanitate est aliquis homo*”.

²⁷ See *STh*, III, q. 17, a. 2, *co*.

²⁸ See Anathemas 4–5 against the “Three Chapters” in Tanner, “Second Council of Constantinople: 553”, 114–116; *STh*, III, q. 2, a. 6.

²⁹ *STh*, III, q. 17, a. 2, *co*. “*Sic igitur, cum humana natura coniungatur Filio Dei hypostatice vel personaliter . . . et non accidentaliter, consequens est quod secundum humanam naturam non adveniat sibi novum esse personale, sed solum nova habitudo esse personalis praeexistentis ad naturam humanam, ut scilicet persona illa iam dicatur subsistere, non solum secundum naturam divinam, sed etiam humanam*”.

³⁰ See *STh*, III, q. 17, a. 2, *ad 2*. “[I]llud esse aeternum Filii Dei quod est divina natura, fit esse hominis, inquantum humana natura assumitur a Filio Dei in unitate personae”.

3.3. Synthesis

Esse secundarium and the relation, or *habitus*,³¹ of the human nature of Christ to the divine existence may verbally seem to be very different speculative ideas for how his humanity exists. Yet both turn on the transcendental relation that the individuated humanity of Christ has to the *esse* of the Word, without imputing any form of real relation or dependency of the second person of the Trinity to his creature. Moreover, while every human *suppositum* has human nature, merely having human nature is not identical to being a *suppositum*, since the “supposit” adds the notion that every principle and accident requisite for individuation and actuality is present for the person, as Roger Nutt has amply shown.³² In the hypostatic union, the second person of the Trinity assumes a human nature that “enjoys the status of individuality and singularity in the order of substance”³³ due to the obediential potency within this nature.³⁴ Yet this individual humanity cannot be a second *suppositum* because it lacks independent subsistence. If this humanity had independent subsistence, in order to be a real second supposit, then Christ would have two subsistences. However, the Second Council of Constantinople condemned the position that Christ had two subsistences, as mentioned above.³⁵ Therefore, the particular principle of existence that constitutes a supposit—a numerically distinct and independent *esse*—is missing from his human nature.³⁶

As such, this humanity must have a real relation of dependency to the divine person whereby it derives its existence. This created, though transcendental, relation of the creaturely nature’s aptitude for existence toward the divine *esse* is what Aquinas either regards as constitutive of the “subordinate being” of Christ’s humanity in the disputed question or as a new existential *habitus* between the divine Word and its assumed humanity in the *Summa Theologiae*.³⁷ As a relation transcending the

³¹ Note the substantial noun used instead of the more common participle, “*habitus*”. See *STh*, III, q. 17, a. 2, *co*.

³² See Nutt, introduction to *De unione*, 11-12; Nutt, “*Christus est unum simpliciter*”, 79-85.

³³ Nutt, “*Christus est unum simpliciter*”, 81.

³⁴ See Steven A. Long, “The Subsistence of Christ’s Human Nature with the *esse personale* of the Eternal Word”, in *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology*, ed. Michael A. Dauphinais, Andrew Hofer, and Roger W. Nutt (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2021), 89–98, 94–98.

³⁵ See Nutt, “*Christus est unum simpliciter*”, 81; Tanner, ed., “Second Council of Constantinople: 553”, 115–16.

³⁶ The definitional requirement of individual existence for subsistence has been metaphysically argued for by Long, “Subsistence of Christ’s Human”, 91. Msgr. Wippel clarifies that the notion of *suppositum* in and of itself does not include *esse*. The full understanding of the *suppositum*, however, must always include its act of being. See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, of *Monographs of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 251.

³⁷ The speculative explanation of Long to explain this difference in the texts of Aquinas should be mentioned here. See Long, “Subsistence of Christ’s Human”, 98. “Rather, *De unione* simply acknowledges that human nature terminates in the existence of the Word in a way different than does the divine nature because the Word is eternal, whereas the human nature receives union with the Word temporally. This is the second *esse* only *secundum quid* (and in *De unione*, Thomas affirms that Christ has one being ‘simpliciter’ and two only *secundum quid*)”. Long here references *De unione*, a. 2, *ad* 10.

Aristotelian categories of being,³⁸ it neither constitutes a numerically second *actus essendi* within the hypostatic union nor institutes a created accident of being within this personal union.³⁹ It also does not impugn the divine simplicity since this transcendental relation belongs to the humanity hypostatically united to the person of the Word, without implying a real relation in the divinity to a creature, as Aquinas explains.⁴⁰ Therefore, Christ only has one *esse*, though the relations to this *esse* within his incarnation are complex, as Steven Long explains. “The creature obeys God by receiving into itself whatever God wills, and if God wills that a nature terminates not in a created but in an uncreated *esse*, the *esse personale* of the Person of Christ, then the nature receives the grace of union with the Eternal Word”.⁴¹

Here it should be remembered, with Long, that “*Esse* is the form of forms, the act of acts, the perfection of perfections, and God Who is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens Per Se* possesses infinite power. Communicating the personal existence of the Word is not impossible for God”, for which reason his humanity may be granted existence by the *esse* of God.⁴² Thus, “*esse secundarium*” seems to refer to the new relationship of the assumed humanity to the divine *esse*, where the humanity of Christ can only receive a limited degree of *esse* from the divine existence—so the humanity of Christ “limits” the divine *esse* by an added *habitus*. As such, Christ has only one principle of existence, despite the complex relationship that his humanity has to this principle of existence. Of course, the divine *esse* of the person of the Word is not separated from the simple being of the Trinity. Rather, the Word is the divine *esse* as proceeding from the Father according to generation. Thus, Christ’s *esse* is this same divine *esse* proceeding via eternal generation and, then, temporally entered into the world with an assumed *habitus* from his individual human nature.

Taking it as granted, therefore, that Christ Jesus has only one proper *esse*, though much more about this topic could be discussed, this article will turn to Christ as he has left himself in the world. This refers, as Aquinas summarizes, to the eucharist, “when Christ was going to leave his disciples in his proper species, he left himself with them under the sacramental species (*in sacramentali specie seipsum eis reliquit*)”.⁴³ As such, Christ’s stable presence in the eucharist—its *res et sacramentum*

³⁸ See Henri Grenier, *Thomistic Philosophy*, trans. J. P. E. O’Hanley, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Charlottetown, Canada: St. Dunstan’s University, 1948), 200.

³⁹ See Long, “Subsistence of Christ’s Human”, 93. The position here suggested is not to be identified with the claim that *esse secundarium* is a dependent created *esse*—for example, as argued for in Eric A. Mabry, “The Hypothesis of *esse secundarium*: Positions and Interpretation”, *The Lonergan Review: The Journal of the Bernard J. Lonergan Institute* 12 (2021): 79–102, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5840/lonerganreview2021124>; Eric A. Mabry, “*Mysterium esse Christi*: Thomas Aquinas & the Supernatural Being of Jesus Christ”, *New Blackfriars: A Review Edited by the Dominicans of the English Province* 104, no. 1109 (January 2023): 92–115, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12803>.

⁴⁰ See *STh*, III, q. 2, a. 6; *STh*, III, q. 2, a. 7; *STh*, I, q. 45, a. 3, ad 1.

⁴¹ See Long, “Subsistence of Christ’s Human”, 95.

⁴² Long, “Subsistence of Christ’s Human”, 96.

⁴³ *STh*, III, q. 73, a. 5, co. “Et ideo, quando ipse Christus in propria specie a discipulis discessurus erat, in sacramentali specie seipsum eis reliquit”.

which is Christ himself under the accidents of bread and wine — and how his presence accounts for this sacrament's principle of actual existence must now be considered.

4. Eucharistic Dogma of the Real Presence

In considering the eucharist, both in general and relative to its principle of actual existence, the dogma of the mystery of the real presence must always be kept in mind.⁴⁴ The Catholic Church's understanding of the eucharist had developed in the Middle Ages, building especially on the controversies surrounding the real presence in the Carolingian era, particularly between Paschasius Radbertus, Ratramnus of Corbie, and Rabanus Maurus in the early 9th century, and on the Church's response to the 11th-century Berengarian crisis, with the addition of other ecumenical councils, as well.⁴⁵ This development culminated in the dogmatic statements of the 16th-century Council of Trent. At its 13th session, the Council of Trent taught, "our lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is truly, really and substantially contained in the propitious sacrament of the holy eucharist under the appearance (*sub specie*) of those things which are perceptible to the senses".⁴⁶ The Council goes on to say that Christ's body is present under the appearances of the eucharistic bread and his blood under the appearances of the eucharistic wine through the power of the Words of Institution, while his body is only under the appearance of wine and his blood only under that of bread by natural concomitance.⁴⁷ His human soul too is everywhere concomitantly present in the eucharist by this natural concomitance and the divine Word is everywhere present by the hypostatic union.⁴⁸ Therefore, the whole person is present under the appearances

⁴⁴ In the interest of space, the dogma of transubstantiation will not be discussed, as such, in this article. However, these two dogmas should be considered together. E.g., Urban Hannon, "Real Presence, Ergo Transubstantiation: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharistic Conversion", in *The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist: A Historical-Analytical Survey of the Problems of the Sacrament*, ed. Gyula Klima, Historical-Analytical Studies on Nature, Mind and Action (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2023), 225–63.

⁴⁵ Sketching out the medieval development of the dogmas of the Eucharist—both the real presence and transubstantiation—would require more space than this current article can provide. However, for more about the history of the eucharistic dogmas prior to the Council of Trent, see James T. O'Connor, *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005). For a study specifically on the eucharistic accidents *since subiecto* from the time of Berengar of Tours to that of Thomas Aquinas, see Jörgen Vijgen, *The Status of Eucharistic Accidents "Sine Subiecto": An Historical Survey up to Thomas Aquinas and Selected Reactions*, of *Quellen Und Forschungen Zur Geschichte Des Dominikanerordens: Neue Folge* (Berlin, Germany: Akademie Verlag, 2013).

⁴⁶ Tanner, "Council of Trent: 1545–1563", 693. For an explanation of "substance" in the eucharistic context, see Reinhard Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation: The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist*, of *Thomistic Ressourcement Series* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 29–37.

⁴⁷ See Tanner, "Council of Trent: 1545–1563", 695; *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 1–4. Aquinas' doctrine of eucharistic concomitance is ably summarized in a few short lines by John T. Slotemaker, "Ontology, Theology and the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham", *The Saint Anselm Journal* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 1–20; Marilyn McCord Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 92.

⁴⁸ See Tanner, "Council of Trent: 1545–1563", 695. Cf., *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 1–4.

of bread and wine. This truth is taught under anathema.⁴⁹ As a corollary, this means that the substance of the eucharist is the person Christ Jesus.⁵⁰ This is why the eucharist is subject to worship by the faithful.⁵¹

Specifically, the real presence of Christ in the eucharist which is worshipped by the faithful refers to the *res et sacramentum* of this sacrament—the “thing and sacrament” which is Christ’s body and blood sacrificed for the sake of salvation—and that persists as a stable reality upon the altar, in the tabernacle, and presented in the monstrance.⁵² Indeed, focusing on the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist (as distinguished from its *res tantum*, which is sanctifying grace, and its *sacramentum tantum*, which are its elements of bread and wine) is why this article proceeds by only considering the *esse* of the eucharist as relating to the *esse* of the Word in his visible mission of the incarnation. This is not to imply that the Word is visibly sent on a new mission in each individual eucharistic host and chalice of wine, but that they each sacramentally participate in the one visible mission of the incarnation, given that transubstantiation specifically terminates in the body and blood of the one, risen Christ.⁵³ In contrast, either a consideration of the power to sacramentally confect the eucharist, or a consideration of the sacrament of the eucharist which included the *res tantum* would have had to metaphysically grapple with the Word’s and Holy Spirit’s invisible missions to priests confecting the sacrament and the faithful who are perfected in the sanctifying graces belonging to this sacrament.⁵⁴

Moreover, that the eucharist present upon the altar is Christ himself is why Aquinas is comfortable placing the sacrament of the eucharist at the head of the other six sacraments. Thus, he says, “the sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments . . . because it contains Christ himself substantially”, after which he further

⁴⁹ See Tanner, “Council of Trent: 1545–1563”, 697.

⁵⁰ See CCC 1374; Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 41; Daria Spezzano, “The Burning Coal: Thomas Aquinas on Loving and Eating Christ in the Eucharist”, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review of Theology and Philosophy* 87, no. 3 (July 2023): 355–413, 355; Betz, Jungmann, and Scheffczyk, “Eucharist”, 257. “[I]t is the salvific reality placed therein by Christ, which is Christ himself with his being and work”. Cf., Betz, Jungmann, and Scheffczyk, “Eucharist”, 262–63.

⁵¹ See Tanner, “Council of Trent: 1545–1563”, 695–96; Tanner, “Council of Trent: 1545–1563”, 698; CCC 1378–81; John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), 25; Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 57–65.

⁵² For the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist, see *STh*, III, q. 73, a6, co.; *STh*, III, q. 71, a. 1, ad 3; Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 59–63. For a general treatment of the historical development of the category of “*res et sacramentum*”, as well as its counterparts “*res tantum*” and “*sacramentum tantum*”, see Ronald F. King, “The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula: *Sacramentum Tantum*, *Res et Sacramentum*, *Res Tantum*”, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 31, no. 1 (1967): 21–82.

⁵³ For how transubstantiation terminates in the body and blood of Christ specifically, see *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 1; *STh*, I, q. 75, aa. 2–4, 7. For the visible mission of the incarnation and the real presence of Christ in the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist, see Joseph Dominic Vnuk, *Full of Grace and Truth: The Sacramental Economy According to Thomas Aquinas*, (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham, 2013), <https://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/13153/>, 210–71, especially 210–11 and 233–34.

⁵⁴ For how sanctifying grace is received by a person who is the recipient of the invisible missions, see *STh* I, q. 43, a. 6, ad 4; *STh* I, q. 43, a. 3, co. I would like to thank Zachary Naccash of Ave Maria University for his help in fleshing out ideas regarding the visible and invisible missions of the Word relative to the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist.

explains that the eucharist's being essentially ("*per essentiam*") the incarnate Word gives it precedence over the other sacraments which only operate by participating in the incarnate Word's power instrumentally.⁵⁵ Such harmonizes with the assertions of Joseph Ratzinger in reflecting on the real presence, "[T]he Lord himself is present, the Indivisible One, the risen Lord, with flesh and Blood, with Body and Soul, with Divinity and Humanity. The whole Christ is there".⁵⁶ Ratzinger goes on to say, "The only presence is the presence of the whole Christ. . . . there is person-to-person exchange, a coming of the one into the other. The living Lord gives himself to me, enters into me, and invites me to surrender myself to him, so that the Apostle's words come true: '[I]t is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal 2:20)".⁵⁷

5. The *Esse* of the Eucharist

As the actual subsistence of the eucharist is Christ Jesus, the eucharist must exist by the same act of existence as he does—and it has already been argued that this act of existence of Christ's is one. However, there are problems that obscure this fact. First, the eucharist is numerically diverse and scattered across the globe, so numerically diverse *esse* seem needed. Second, the sacramental mode whereby Christ is present under the eucharistic accidents of bread and wine is an equivocal mode of presence where he does not seem to be personally, that is, existentially present. Addressing these problems will help clarify how the *esse* of the eucharist remains the principle of existence of Christ himself.

To the first, as there are many eucharists across the globe, many distinct *esse* seem necessary. This problem rests upon whether or not Christ is present in the *res et sacramentum* of this sacrament in a local mode.⁵⁸ However, Aquinas is clear that Christ is not contained in a place under the eucharistic accidents. He says, Christ's body is not in this sacrament definitively, because then it would be only on the particular altar where this sacrament is performed: whereas it is in heaven under its own species, and on many other altars under the sacramental species. Likewise it is evident that it is not in this sacrament circumscriptively, because it is not there according to the commensuration of its own quantity.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *STh*, III, q. 65, a. 3, co. "[S]impliciter loquendo, sacramentum Eucharistiae est potissimum inter alia sacramenta. . . . Primo quidem, ex eo quod in eo continetur ipse Christus substantialiter: in aliis autem sacramentis continetur quaedam virtus instrumentalis participata a Christo, ut ex supra dictis patet. Semper autem quod est per essentiam, potius est eo quod est per participationem".

⁵⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), 88.

⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 88-89.

⁵⁸ For an explanation of Aristotelian place with reference to eucharistic doctrine and the diverse Scholastic theologians who discussed it, see Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 19-28.

⁵⁹ *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 5, ad 1. "[C]orpus Christi non est in hoc sacramento definitive: quia sic non esset alibi quam in hoc altari ubi conficitur hoc sacramentum; cum tamen sit et in caelo in propria specie, et in multis aliis altaribus sub specie sacramenti. Similiter etiam patet quod non est in hoc sacramento circumscriptive: quia non est ibi secundum commensurationem propriae quantitates".

For Aquinas, proceeding from Aristotelian principles,⁶⁰ place and location require the subject to be quantitatively contained by the place.⁶¹ Thus, Christ's body and blood would have to be quantitatively contained by the eucharistic accidents for him to be contained in one given spot, such that he could not be contained by any other place across the globe or in heaven. However, since his body and blood are the substances that succeed the substances of bread and wine by the words of institution, they are present following a merely substantial mode.⁶² The accidents naturally proper to body and blood, such as their physical size or dimensive quantity, are only present concomitantly.⁶³ Since his physical form is not present according to its natural quantitative mode, he is not contained by any place when the sacrament is multiplied around the world.⁶⁴

Moreover, the eucharistic accidents do not adhere to Christ's body and blood. If they did, then the accidents of bread and wine, which phenomenally act like bread and wine when consumed, would actually have become the proper accidents of his own human body and human blood. Instead, the eucharistic accidents adhere in the

⁶⁰ Aquinas's Aristotelianism has received a great deal of attention over the years. For two recent contributions to this debate, focusing on the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, see Corey L. Barnes, "Aristotle in the *Summa Theologiae*'s Christology", in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 186–204; John P. Yocum, "Aristotle in Aquinas's Sacramental Theology" in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 205–31. For both Barnes and Yocum, Aquinas's Aristotelianism is a serious, principled development upon Aristotle's own works, in the light of faith, and, at times, a correction of Aristotle's views—especially in how Aquinas extends Aristotelian categories analogously in order to investigate revealed truths. It must be noted that this does not make Aquinas's philosophy, implicit to his theology, into something other than an Aristotelianism, since Aquinas still accepts and proceeds upon markedly Aristotelian principles and uses Aristotelian logical and philosophical concepts, though he extends them to fields of knowledge and faith that Aristotle did not know of. Aquinas did, however, distinguish himself from the Radical Aristotelians of the Scholastic era. For a short treatment of this latter topic, see Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980). For short treatments of the degree to which Aquinas is comfortable as an Aristotelian in explicitly theological contexts, including Christology and sacramental theology, see Vijgen, *The Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, especially 9–29 and 173–59; Jörgen Vijgen, "Aquinas's Use of Aristotle in the Sacramental Theology of the *Summa Theologiae* III, qq. 60–90", *Divinitas: Rivista Internazionale Di Ricerca e Di Critica Teologica*, n.s., 57, no. 2 (2014): 187–241; Jörgen Vijgen, "The Use of Aristotle in Aquinas's Biblical Commentaries" in *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas. Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives*, ed. Piotr Roszak and Jörgen Vijgen, *Textes et Études Du Moyen Âge* 80 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 287–346; Jörgen Vijgen, "In Defense of Aristotle: Thomas Aquinas on the Identity of the Living Body and the Corpse of Christ", *European Journal for the Study of Thomas Aquinas* 37, no. 1 (June 26, 2019): 65–76, <https://doi.org/10.2478/ejsta-2019-0005>.

⁶¹ See *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 5, co. For a consideration of "quantity" in the eucharistic context and the relation that "place" has to quantity, see Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 37–39.

⁶² See *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 5, co.

⁶³ For a Thomistic consideration of "concomitance", see Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 39–46. For the presence of Christ's dimensive quantities according to the mode of substance, see Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 43–45. Also, see Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 93–96.

⁶⁴ See Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 42–43; Wéber, "L'incidence de traité de l'eucharistie sur la métaphysique de S. Thomas d'Aquin", 205–06; Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 96–97; Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 115.

dimensive quantity that had belonged to the original substances of bread and wine prior to transubstantiation, as Aquinas explains in question 77 of the *tertia pars* of his *Summa Theologiae*.⁶⁵ This means that Christ's body and blood could not be bound by the eucharistic accidents' adherence in his body and blood; he is not in the place of those accidents.⁶⁶ Christ is, therefore, "in place on the altar only *per accidens*, by being present in the mode of substance to alien quantitative dimensions", namely the accidents of bread and wine, "that are in place *per se*".⁶⁷ Instead, his presence is *sacramental*, that is, according to the mysterious power of God who vivifies the sacraments of the church.⁶⁸ As such, there is no natural container of place acting upon Christ keeping his infinite divine power from making him present wherever the sacrament is.⁶⁹ Moreover, since he is not determined to any single place, his *esse* is not determined to any single eucharistic host.

Not only is he present under the eucharistic accidents, but he is also acting upon them. Aquinas says, "the accidents are preserved by divine power when the substance is withdrawn" meaning that the eucharistic accidents exist by the presence of the Word acting upon them.⁷⁰ This is analogous to how spiritual beings are present insofar as they "contain those things in which they are"⁷¹ because they apply their power in that place,⁷² whence the infinite spiritual being—God—contains all things and is present to all things.⁷³ Christ is sacramentally present in each sacrament of the eucharist by application of his infinite divine power. He is present according to the mode of his choosing wherever he applies this power. Therefore, there need not be a multiplicity

⁶⁵ See *STh*, III, q. 77, a. 2; Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 246-258. Particular attention should be given to Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 252. Comparison to Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 183-86 is beneficial for a clearer understanding of how the eucharistic accidents exist *sine subiecto* by divine power.

⁶⁶ Note that the place of the sacrament is filled by the eucharistic accidents themselves. See *STh*, q. 76, a. 5, *ad* 2.

⁶⁷ Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 94.

⁶⁸ See *STh*, III, q. 75, a. 1, *ad* 3.

⁶⁹ See Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 42-43.

⁷⁰ *STh*, III, q. 77, a. 2, *ad* 3. "... subtracta substantia, divina virtute conservantur alia accidentia . . .". For an explanation of the eucharistic accidents' preservation without a subject, see Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 183-86; Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 246-258. Particular attention should be given to Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 251. Also, see Wéber, "L'incidence de traité de l'eucharistie sur la métaphysique de S. Thomas d'Aquin", 209-10. Cf., Long, "Subsistence of Christ's Human", 96.

⁷¹ *STh*, I, q. 8, a. 1, *ad* 2. "... continent ea in quibus sunt . . .".

⁷² See *STh*, I, q. 52, a. 1, *co*.

⁷³ See *STh*, I, q. 8, a. 1; *STh*, I, q. 52, a. 2, *co*. For an explanation and defense of the *analogia entis* for theology, philosophy, and Aquinas, see Steven A. Long, *Analogia Entis: On the Analogy of Being, Metaphysics, and the Act of Faith* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011). The importance of this doctrine cannot be underestimated in speaking of the diverse things of creation, the ways creation relates to God, and of God himself. See Thomas De Vio (Cajetan), *The Analogy of Names and the Concept of Being*, trans. Edward A. Bushinski and Henry J. Koren, 2nd ed., of *Duquesne Studies: Philosophical Series* (Louvain, Belgium: Editions E. Nauwelaerts, 1959), 28. For example, Cajetan says, "By means of analogy of proportionality we know indeed the intrinsic entity, goodness, truth, etc. of things, which are not known from the preceding analogy. For this reason, metaphysical speculation without knowledge of this analogy must be said to be unskilled". Similarly, Cajetan, "Analogy of Names and the Concept of Being", 40-43.

of *esse* to account for the sacrament across the globe beyond Christ's *esse* concomitantly and sacramentally present in the eucharist. Indeed, as the eucharistic accidents are preserved in actual being by divine power, the only *actus essendi* needed to account for both the real presence of Christ in the sacrament and the preservation of the appearances of bread and wine is the divine *esse*.⁷⁴

To the second problem, that sacramental presence seems insufficient for positing Christ's being present in the full meaning of his personhood, one should point out the degree of importance that the mystery of real concomitance has in explaining the doctrine of the real presence in the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist.⁷⁵ According to Aquinas, the divine Word's concomitance with the body of Christ is the reason why the divinity himself is present in the eucharist.⁷⁶ Due to the divine simplicity, the *actus essendi* proper to the divinity is, therefore, in this sacrament by the same concomitance. Concomitant presence does mean that the Word and his *esse* are not present in the eucharist according to the mode of presence proper to the divine person, which is a "lack" shared by everything merely concomitantly present in the eucharist. Thus, Christ's personhood is not present in a wholly personal and substantial fashion. However, this means that only the natural modes of presence of concomitant aspects of Christ's person are lacking in the eucharist—his accidents, soul, and divinity are really and wholly there upon the altar through his divine power.⁷⁷ As such, his principle of existence is truly there as well. Therefore, his one *esse* is present in this sacrament, and, as mentioned above, the single divine *esse* of the Word is sufficient to account for the *esse* of the eucharist.

It should be noted that the eucharistic accidents' relation to the Word's power, which is the power of existence keeping them in existence after transubstantiation, does add another created relation toward the divine *esse*. This is similar to how Christ's humanity adds a relation to the Word's existence as Aquinas explained in the *Summa Theologiae* or how the *Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word* discusses the dependent "subsequent existence" of Christ's humanity.⁷⁸ It should be

⁷⁴ The question of the accidental being of the eucharistic accidents is not the focus of this article. However, whether the accidental being is distinct from these accidental forms of the appearances of bread and wine would open up a possible discussion on the multiplicity of relative being (*esse aliquid*) in this sacrament. For the notion of "*esse aliquid*" see Thomas Aquinas, *De principiis naturae*, c. 1; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 256. For a broader discussion on accidental being, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 253-65. For this current article, it is enough to note that the accidental being (*esse*) of the appearances of bread and wine—howsoever one describes them—must be in some way derivative from God's power in upholding these accidents. Thus, the remaining dimensive quantity exists by an accidental *esse* miraculously received from God's power as opposed to how this accidental being normally is an extension from the substantial being in which it adheres. See *STh*, III, q. 77, a. 2, ad 1; *STh*, III, q. 77, a. 2, ad 3.

⁷⁵ See Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 39-46; Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 96-97.

⁷⁶ See *STh*, III, q. 76, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷⁷ See Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation*, 39-46.

⁷⁸ Cf., Wéber, "L'incidence de traité de l'eucharistie sur la métaphysique de S. Thomas d'Aquin", 212. Wéber, however, ascribes to the duality of *esse* in Christ in his interpretation of *De unione*, and sees the duplication

recalled that this does not impute a real relation in the divine Word toward the eucharistic accidents. Moreover, the eucharistic accidents are in no way united to Christ Jesus, but exist independently over him by adhering to the dimensive quantity of the species of bread and wine.⁷⁹ Therefore, *esse* is not multiplied in the eucharist, though another transcendental relation of external dependence is added within it.

6. Conclusion

Augustine of Hippo once described the exploratory attitude of the theologian, saying, “[W]e are still looking, and no one can fairly find fault with someone who is looking for such things as this, provided that in looking for something so difficult either to know or to express, he remains absolutely firm in faith”.⁸⁰ This suggestive reflection on the *esse* of the eucharist, in its dependence upon Christology, has adopted this same attitude of searching in the firmness of faith, specifically through the theology of Thomas Aquinas. This article has explored part of the ontology of the mystery of the eucharist by focusing on the principle of actual being, or *esse*, belonging to it. Due to the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist’s truly being the incarnate Word, this required an account of the classical debate as to the *esse* of Christ Jesus himself.

This conclusion was argued for by briefly discussing whether Christ Jesus has one or two *esse* by turning to Aquinas’ *Disputed Question on the Incarnation of the Word* and the *tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. In recounting his two positions—that there is both the personal *esse* of the divine Word and the *esse secundarium* or that there is only the one divine *esse* belonging to the Word—it has been provisionally proposed that both positions of Aquinas actually posit a numerically single *esse* in Christ. His humanity relates to the person of the Word by a transcendental relation, which real relation is considered as a subsequent mode of existence in Aquinas’ disputed question and is considered merely as the relation itself in the *Summa*. In either case, this article adopted the position that there is only one distinct *esse* of Christ—the divine *esse*.

The relation of the foregoing Christology and the eucharist is a factor of the mystery of the whole Christ, in which he has left himself with the Church under the sacramental species.⁸¹ As such, after discussing the *esse* of Christ, this argument turned to the dogma of the real presence and how the eucharist exists by his own principle of

of Christ’s substantial being in the real presence of the eucharist and the eucharistic accidents as a reflection of *esse secundarium*.

⁷⁹ See Vijgen, *Status of Eucharistic Accidents*, 252.

⁸⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. I/5, of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), bk. IX, prol. § 1.

⁸¹ *STh*, III, q. 73, a. 5, *resp.* “[C]onvenienter hoc sacramentum institutum fuit in Cena, in qua scilicet Christus ultimo cum discipulis suis fuit conversatus. Primo quidem, ratione continentiae huius sacramenti. Continentur enim ipse Christus in Eucharistia sicut in sacramento. Et ideo, quando ipse Christus in propria specie a discipulis discessurus erat, in sacramentali specie seipsum eis reliquit: sicut in absentia imperatoris exhibetur veneranda eius imago”.

existence. Thus, since the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist is Christ Jesus, though he is hidden by the accidents of bread and wine, this article has suggested that Christ's own single *esse* is also present in the eucharist. The numerical diversity of the sacrament does not require Christ's *esse* to be multiplied according to the number of eucharistic hosts and wine across the globe, since he is not bound by place when he is sacramentally present upon the altar. Instead, his sacramental presence contains the *res et sacramentum* of the eucharist by his divine power wheresoever it is found. As such, his divinity is the power whereby the eucharist exists—both because Christ exists by the divine *esse* concomitantly present in the sacrament and because the Word is the one who preserves the eucharistic accidents in existence. As such, the eucharist exists by Christ's one principle of existence—the divine *esse* as it proceeds in the Word. Indeed, more generally, this article has illustrated why the *esse* of the eucharist is the *esse* of Christ, howsoever his act of existence is explained.