

'Did the Saviour see the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God' by Simon Francis Gaine, Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, London and New York, 2015, pp. viii + 221, £70.00, hbk

In this enjoyable and thought-provoking book, Simon Francis Gaine defends Aquinas' claim that, from the very first moment of the Incarnation, Christ's *human* mind possesses a beatific vision of God.

Aquinas had taught that Christ had infinite knowledge in his divine mind and various kinds of knowledge in his human mind (1) knowledge from the beatific vision (2) divinely infused knowledge (3) natural knowledge based on his human experiences (ST, 3a., q.9). While Gaine questions (2) by asking whether Christ's human mind required the kind of perfection divinely infused knowledge is meant to give (pp.154-5), Gaine accepts the motivation for (1). That is, since Christ's salvific goal was to bring redeemed humans to the beatific vision, which they shall experience in their future glorified state (Revelation 22:4; 1 Corinthians 13:10-12, etc.), it was necessary that he should have it himself; his beatific vision is the cause of theirs (ST, 3a., q.9 a.2). While most Catholic theologians agree that Christ's human mind experienced this vision in his post-resurrection glorified state, many think (contrary to Aquinas) that this was not the case pre-resurrection.

Gaine defends Aquinas' claim against a host of objections. For example, in response to the objection that Aquinas' claim has no basis in Scripture, Gaine cites Scriptural passages (e.g. Matthew 11:25-6, Luke 10:21-22, John 3:31-32, 6:46) which indicate that Christ communicated divine knowledge in a human way. Gaine argues that this implies that Christ's human mind had some mode of access to the divine mind, and this mode may well be Christ's beatific vision (p.40). In response to the objection that this account has scant patristic support, Gaine argues that the Church Fathers had to focus on other theological controversies, and that they did not actively advocate an alternative account (p.70). Gaine notes that alternative accounts utilizing psychological analogies have been proposed by myself and others. However, he claims (without argument) that such analogies are less illuminating, and he raises the concern that the application of some of them (e.g. Freudian divided minds) might encourage us to think of Christ's human and divine minds as isolated from each other (p.72).

In response, we first need to ask whether the distinction between Christ's divine mind and human mind involves Christ having two consciousness or one. I explain in Loke (2014) that postulating an extra consciousness implies Nestorianism, and that the Divine Preconscious Model (DPM) provides a coherent account of a one consciousness model which illuminates how Christ could access divine knowledge and communicate it in a human way. On DPM Christ's human and divine minds are distinct but not isolated; rather they are connected by one consciousness which has distinct divine and human aspects.

Gaine argues that either Christ had certain knowledge of God by seeing the divine essence for himself in his human mind, or he had knowledge of what he did not see there by accepting it on the authority of divine knowledge (i.e. by faith) (p.119). Gaine denies the latter, arguing that the Scriptures never said that Christ believed. However, Gaine seems to have neglected a third alternative proposed by DPM: Christ had certain knowledge of God by occasionally accessing his divine preconscious as the Father permitted and by occasionally choosing to

receive direct input from the Father, and that he communicated divine knowledge in a human way by utilizing his knowledge in his human preconscious.

The key difference between Gaine's account and DPM is that, on his account Christ was consciously aware of all things from the first moment of Incarnation (by seeing the beatific vision), which DPM denies. Gaine claims that the possession of beatific vision did not render Christ's natural knowledge superfluous, for the latter gave Christ the possibility of knowledge of a kind that the beatific vision does not give: 'of knowledge of things by finite means, properly expressed in human concepts and images, a knowledge naturally proportioned to the human mind and its perfection' (p.151). Gaine suggests that Christ's growth in wisdom (Luke 2:52) can be interpreted as growth in his articulation of knowledge in communicable terms, effected by his drawing on his experience of the world. With regards to Christ's apparent ignorance of the day of his coming (Mark 13:32), Gaine suggests Christ knew what the Father knew (which included that day) in the wordless beatific vision, but did not know it in any humanly worked out communicable fashion (pp.155-7). However, this suggestion does not seem to fit the sense of contrast between the Son's cognitive state and the Father's which is conveyed by Mark 13:32b 'but only the Father'. Additionally, the Gospels' portrayal that Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that the cup of suffering might be taken from him (Mark 14:35-6) indicates that Jesus was unaware that he would indeed be crucified the next day (see Loke 2014, 32-33, 119). This is inconsistent with the idea that Christ was aware of this through the beatific vision.

A better solution is offered by DPM, which proposes that Christ was omniscient but limited in his conscious awareness (see Loke 2014, chapter 7). The Greek word οἶδεν which is translated as 'know' in Mark 13:32 means 'to have realized, perceived, to know'; this word is often used in the New Testament in a general way, e.g. to know a person, to be able to understand/apprehend/recognize (TDNT vol.5, pp.116-119). Therefore, in view of its semantic range, in Mark 13:32 οἶδεν can be legitimately rendered as 'aware' instead of 'know'. A divine person can use his omnipotence to restrict the scope of his conscious awareness as well as the utilization of his omniscience, and in this state of self-restraint the Son (unlike the Father) was genuinely unaware of the day of his coming; it was not a sham. It was a limitation he freely accepted, just as he freely accepted the limitation of having a physical body. Christ's perfect humanity and happiness lies in his perfect human relationship with God the Father; this does not require always seeing the Father; rather, a constant state of obedience to the Father would be sufficient.

Gaine ends his book by defending the compatibility of Aquinas' claim with Christ's human freedom and passion. However, he fails to address difficulties concerning whether his denial of Christ's ability to sin would result in the denial of divine omnipotence (cf. Loke 2010).

Gaine's book contains precious insights on various theological issues (e.g. on what it means to see God) and on the views of many theologians concerning its topic. However, in my opinion his defence of Aquinas' claim that Christ's human mind possesses a beatific vision of God pre-resurrection is unsuccessful in view of the problems explained above.

REFERENCE

Loke, Andrew. 2010. 'Divine omnipotence and moral perfection.' *Religious Studies* 46: 525-538.

Loke, Andrew. 2014. *A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation*. London: Routledge.
