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CHRIST'S BEATIFIC VISION, AND OURS

Simon Francis Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God* (London, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. £90.00. pp. 169. ISBN: 978-0-56766-442-6).

Was Christ blessed with the vision of God in his human mind during his earthly life? Dominican theologian Simon Gaine answers with a resounding and unfashionable 'yes!' In his book's first half he traces the beatific vision in Scripture and Tradition. In Revelation 22.4 the blessed, who have been released from mortality, behold God's face, as foretold in Matthew 5.8, 1 Corinthians 13.12 and 1 John 3.2. Moreover, John 6.46 suggests that Christ enjoyed the same vision in his human nature but during and indeed throughout his earthly life. Candidus and Augustine unfold such texts to build the case for the doctrine, and Gaine makes clear that it supposes a robust two natures Christology. Christ sees God in his human nature, not in his divine nature nor in some fusion of the two. Following earlier scholastics, Thomas Aquinas fully develops this doctrine: humans naturally desire the beatific vision, which is properly trinitarian, with the vision of the Father entailing the vision of the Son and Spirit too. This even applies to Christ, whose earthly beatific vision, Gaine convincingly argues, cannot be reduced to a Rahnerian self-consciousness. Indeed, Christ's vision, which he has through himself, causes the vision of the blessed, which is through intelligible forms and so brings a lesser degree of participation in the light of glory.

In the book's second part, responses are offered to possible objections in classic Thomist format. Christ did not have faith but is the source of faith, and so his beatific vision, which is incompatible with faith because it entails knowledge of the divine essence, is not excluded. If Christ possessed both beatific and acquired knowledge, the co-existence in Scripture of passages that suggest both full and limited knowledge is explicable. The beatific vision, like grace, does not destroy human freedom but perfects it, whether as merit, as with Christ, or as reward, as for all other humans. Lastly, unlike with humans in heaven, the effect of the beatific vision on the earthly Christ's sensory appetites was suspended so that he might experience suffering with the full intensity that his perfect human nature made possible. This study contains attentive exposition, careful argument and a bold thesis, and deserves to be widely read.

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