

THE CREATURE BEFORE GOD

Companion Essay

In Defense of the Particular

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1 Under Pontius Pilate

The Christian creed contains the name of a Roman governor. It passes from the eternal generation of the Son, through the creation of all things, to a young woman of Israel and then to Pontius Pilate. The name is not there because Pilate understood what happened before him. It is there because something happened before him. The creed says that the Son “came down from heaven” and “became man.” It then says, “For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.” Christian confession refuses to let the event dissolve into an instructive myth or a timeless symbol.¹

That refusal can feel almost indecorous. An ultimate principle is allowed to be universal. A God who chooses Abraham, speaks through Israel, is born in Bethlehem, and gives himself under signs of water, bread, and wine can seem embarrassingly local. The more definite the claim becomes, the more it appears to some minds to have fallen beneath divine dignity. “The transcendent” sounds spacious; Jesus of Nazareth sounds narrow. An impersonal ultimacy makes no provincial demands and bears no marks of one people’s history.

There are serious religious and philosophical traditions that use impersonal or apophatic language, and they deserve to be understood in their own terms. Nirvana, for example, is not a convenient synonym for an impersonal God, and the several Buddhist traditions cannot be reduced to a Christian polemical category. The concern here is narrower. It is the temptation, often found within a culture still borrowing Christian words, to welcome the sacred so long as it remains sacredness in general: incapable of choosing, speaking, commanding, becoming flesh, or standing before us as someone.²

The difficulty is sometimes described as resistance to a “particular God.” The phrase points toward something real, but taken literally it is false. God is not one member of a class called gods, as this tree is one member of a species. Nor is Christianity defending one local deity against larger rivals. What must be defended is not a particular specimen of divinity, but the freedom of the universal cause to produce particular effects, the freedom of the living God to address particular persons, and the possibility that his universal purpose should enter history by one actual road.

The creed’s Roman name therefore poses a sharper question than it first appears to do. Does universality require indeterminacy? Or have we confused the living source of all things with the thinness of our most general ideas?

2 The Universal Cause Is Not an Abstraction

Our minds reach a universal concept by leaving particulars behind. We encounter this oak and that oak, attend to what belongs to both, and think *tree* without thinking either trunk. The concept becomes more general as it includes more instances and says less about each. If God is imagined as the widest concept of all—being with every contour removed—then concrete action will look like a descent from purity. The safest god will be the one of whom almost nothing can be said because he does almost nothing in particular.

But a universal concept and a universal cause are nearly opposites. The concept *tree* does not grow a leaf. It has no knowledge of oaks and gives them no existence. A cause, precisely as cause, is known through the actuality it gives. To say that God is the universal cause is not to say that he is a very inclusive thought. It is to say that every creature’s act of being depends upon him.³ The universality lies in the reach of his causality, not in a lack of reality.

Aquinas therefore denies that God belongs to a genus. Whatever belongs to a genus receives the genus under a limiting difference: animal becomes rational animal, color becomes red. God does not receive being under a contracted mode as creatures do; he is not one case of a more comprehensive reality. The same Aquinas who insists upon this transcendence also insists that God knows singular things. God causes not merely what creatures share but the whole actuality by which each exists as this creature. Divine knowledge is not forced to choose between the universal and the singular as ours often is.⁴

Transcendence is consequently not divine vagueness. Apophatic theology is right to deny that any created concept comprehends the divine essence. Every true likeness between Creator and creature is exceeded by an even greater unlikeness. Yet incomprehensibility does not mean that God is indeterminate in himself, and it does not revoke his freedom to make himself known. The failure to contain God in a concept is not permission to replace him with an abstraction.⁵

Nor does particular providence turn the world into a sequence of arbitrary interruptions. Christian teaching joins God’s “concrete and immediate” care for all things to the genuine causality of creatures. Rain still falls through

weather, bread through earth and labor, healing through the body and medicine, and human deeds through free agents. God gives creatures not only existence but the dignity of acting. Some evils are permitted rather than positively willed; suffering is not thereby decoded as a private sentence imposed upon its victim.⁶

The universal cause is therefore not kept universal by remaining idle. He is universal because nothing real falls outside the dependence by which it is, while each created nature and each secondary cause remains genuinely its own. If such a God speaks, his word need not become less divine by being addressed. An address that is nowhere, in no language, to no one, is not a more universal address. It is no address at all.

3 Chosen for All

Every address has an addressee. Revelation might therefore begin anywhere, but it cannot begin nowhere. The biblical claim is more unsettling: it begins with choices. God calls Abram from his country, binds himself by covenant, frees one enslaved people, gives them a law, and causes his name to dwell among them. These are not illustrations subsequently attached to a universal religious theory. They are the history in which God makes himself known.

The universal purpose, however, is present in the first narrowing. The call of Abram contains the promise, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Israel is summoned to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The prophetic vocation widens into “a light to the nations,” so that God’s salvation may reach “to the end of the earth.” Election is particular, but its inner direction is outward.⁷

That movement prevents election from becoming a theory of divine favoritism. Deuteronomy does not tell Israel that it was chosen for being larger or more impressive. It says, “It was because the Lord loved you.”⁸ The gift creates a vocation, not a warrant to boast. A priestly people is set apart not so that blessing may stop there, but so that it may be borne. The prophets can therefore judge the elected people by the very covenant that distinguishes them. Scripture’s unsparing record of Israel’s sins makes little sense as national self-congratulation.

It would be equally false to make Israel a temporary delivery system, honored only until Christianity can discard it. Jesus does not emerge from a generic humanity. He is “born of a woman, born under the law”; the woman is a daughter of Israel, and the law is Israel’s covenantal law. When Jesus says, “salvation is from the Jews,” the historical grammar of salvation is not an embarrassment he intends later universality to erase.⁹

The Church accordingly discovers her bond with the Jewish people when she examines her own mystery. To Israel belong the covenants, worship, promises, and patriarchs; from Israel according to the flesh comes the Christ. Paul will not allow Gentile Christians to turn their reception into contempt: “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.” The mystery of Israel’s relation to Christ is not solved by pretending that the root has ceased to matter.¹⁰

Particular election and universal purpose are thus not two stages between which God changes his mind. The one is the chosen means of the other. This does not answer every question about why this people, this time, or this road was chosen. Gratuitous love is not a theorem from which all its concrete gifts can be deduced in advance. It does show why the charge of mere provincialism is too quick. A road is not opposed to a destination because it begins somewhere.

The same pattern will reach its limit in a single Israelite. He will not offer one more local account of the divine beside many others. The Christian claim is that the one through whom all things were made has entered the history prepared for him.

4 The Whole in the Part

Christianity could have been easier to universalize if Christ had brought only propositions. His teaching might then be detached from his person, cleansed of the accidents of first-century Palestine, and retained as a superior wisdom. But the Gospel does not say merely that the Word delivered a message through human circumstances. It says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”¹¹

This is why time has more than incidental importance in Christianity. Revelation occurs through words and deeds bound together: promise and fulfillment, healing and proclamation, supper and command, death and resurrection. The eternal Word does not cease to be eternal when he assumes a human nature. Neither does that nature become an

appearance. Jesus works with human hands, thinks with a human mind, chooses with a human will, and loves with a human heart. John Paul II compresses the paradox: the Eternal enters time, and the Whole lies hidden in the part.¹²

The doctrinal claim is exact. The things Jesus says and does are finite human realities: this sentence rather than every sentence, this touch, this journey, this death. But the personal subject who speaks, touches, travels, and suffers is the eternal Son. His humanity neither contains the divine essence nor offers one detachable fragment of a revelation completed somewhere above him. The mystery of God remains inexhaustible, while God the Son truly reveals the Father in and through his human life.

The declaration *Dominus Iesus* makes this point with unusual directness. The historical words and deeds of Jesus are limited as human realities, yet they have the divine Person of the incarnate Word as their subject. Their finitude therefore does not make Christ one incomplete manifestation awaiting completion by a more universal synthesis. The one who acts in them is the Son.¹³

This is the Christian answer to the supposed contest between the local and the universal. Jesus is not universal because the details of his life can be discarded. His life bears universal significance because this particular human life belongs to the Person of the universal Word. “There is one God,” Paul writes, and “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” The mediation is one; its scope is all.¹⁴

One mediation does not mean that every person has already received salvation, that every religious claim is interchangeable, or that grace reaches only those with explicit historical knowledge of Jesus. The Church holds these claims together rather than resolving one into another. She confesses Christ’s unique mediation; she reveres what is true and holy in other religions; and she teaches that, because Christ died for all, the Holy Spirit offers every person, in a manner known to God, the possibility of being associated with the Paschal mystery.¹⁵

The Cross brings the paradox to its sharpest point. A death outside Jerusalem, “once for all,” is proclaimed as an act “for all.” Its universality is not the generality of a maxim. It is the reach of a personal act. Love can be offered to many only by being actually offered by someone.¹⁶

If the Incarnation is true, the particular is no longer an obstacle reluctantly tolerated by universal truth. In the humanity of Christ, the particular has become the chosen place where the universal Lord gives himself.

5 This Water, This Bread, This Person

An event in history ordinarily recedes. It remains available to memory and consequence, but it cannot simply occur again. Christian worship makes a more careful claim about the Paschal mystery. Christ died and rose once; the event is neither repeated nor dragged back from the past. Yet because all that Christ did and suffered belongs to the incarnate Son, his Paschal act participates in divine eternity and is made present sacramentally across times and places.¹⁷

The means are almost offensively concrete. Water is poured. Words are spoken. Oil touches skin. Bread and wine are taken, blessed, broken, and given. A particular person receives at a particular moment within the visible communion of the Church. This is not an unfortunate material shell around a spiritual gift. Sacramental signs are accessible to embodied human nature precisely as words and actions. Christ acts through them to communicate the grace they signify.¹⁸

There is no magic here. Magic would make the rite a technique by which a creature acquires control over hidden power. A sacrament rests instead upon Christ’s institution and promise; its efficacy is his action before it is ours. The required matter and form protect the received act from private invention. At the same time, sacramental efficacy does not make attention, repentance, faith, or charity irrelevant. Grace is gift, not mechanism, and a gift can be resisted or received fruitlessly. Nor do the sacraments imprison God within visible boundaries: the Church is bound to the means Christ gave her, while God is not reduced to a creaturely instrument.¹⁹

The Eucharist gives the logic its center. At the consecration, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of Christ’s Body and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his Blood—what the Church calls *transubstantiation*—so that the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially present under the remaining species. The same Christ who offered himself once gives himself to his Church.²⁰ We do not graduate from the particular by becoming spiritual enough to need only an inward idea of communion. The desire for union becomes more, not less, sacramental. The universal Word does not save us from creaturely form; he makes creaturely form capable of communicating his gift.

The pattern reaches beyond the liturgy without making every encounter a sacrament. It is easy to love humanity as an idea. Humanity does not interrupt dinner, require forgiveness, or expose the limits of our patience. The neighbor does. The First Letter of John therefore refuses a love of the invisible God that bypasses the visible brother: “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.” Christ makes the test still more concrete: “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”²¹

Particularity prevents universal love from becoming an alibi. God does not love a statistical humanity while overlooking persons. Christ offers redemption not to an abstraction called humanity but to persons who share human nature. The Church is called a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, yet that catholic communion exists in actual persons, local churches, professions of faith, sacraments, and acts of charity.²²

The particular can of course be idolized. A nation can mistake election for innocence; a community can treat possession of true signs as possession of God; a person can defend exact ritual while refusing the neighbor standing beside the altar. The cure is not a flight into vagueness. It is conversion within the concrete gifts: Israel judged by covenant, the Church judged by the Gospel she received, the communicant called to discern the body, and love of God tested in love of this neighbor.

The same God who cannot be contained by heaven addresses persons by name, uses material signs, and asks for acts performed here. His universality is not threatened by attention to the least. It is displayed in a care that loses no one in the crowd.

6 Who Do You Say That I Am?

The flight into abstraction promises a courteous peace. Ultimate reality may remain beyond dispute because it never quite says anything definite. It cannot contradict us, but neither can it forgive. It cannot become provincial, but neither can it come near. It cannot suffer scandal, but neither can it give itself.

Christianity makes the dangerous claim that the distance between universality and particularity is not overcome by thinning the particular until nothing remains. It is overcome personally. The universal cause creates singulars without becoming one being among them. He chooses one people for the sake of all without ceasing to love all. The eternal Son assumes one human nature and performs one Paschal act whose saving scope is universal. He communicates that act through this water, this bread and wine, this ecclesial body, and calls forth love of this person.

None of this proves the historical claims merely by showing their coherence. A particular event must be investigated as an event; testimony can be true or false. Nor does the argument make every claim to revelation equally credible. It removes one prior veto: the assumption that God would be more divine if he never did anything definite.

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus first asks what others say about “the Son of man.” The answers are honorable and safely familiar: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. Then the general survey ends. The question turns to the disciples: from reports about him to personal address, and from inherited identifications to confession.²³

“But who do you say that I am?”

Notes

¹The historical specificity belongs to the Church's confession, not merely to later apologetic embellishment. The short phrases use the current official U.S.-English Nicene Creed published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 422–426, especially 423, which identifies Jesus of Nazareth as a Jew born of a daughter of Israel, locates his birth under Herod and Augustus, and his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius; official English.

²The comparison is deliberately bounded. Vatican II speaks of Buddhism “in its various forms,” recognizes its perception of the radical insufficiency of the changeable world, and insists that the Church reject nothing true and holy in other religions: Second Vatican Council, declaration *Nostra aetate* (28 October 1965), no. 2; official English. This article neither defines nirvana nor treats Buddhism as covert theism.

³Aquinas, ST I, q. 44, a. 1, treats God as the first cause of the being of things; ST I, q. 104, a. 1, treats every creature's present conservation in being. CCC 301 gives the authoritative catechetical synthesis that God upholds and sustains creation “at every moment”; official English.

⁴Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (ST) I, q. 3, a. 5, argues that God is not in a genus; ST I, q. 14, a. 11, argues that God knows singulars because the perfections divided among lower knowers exist simply and unitedly in God. Latin loci were checked through the Corpus Thomisticum; the ST I, q. 3 and ST I, q. 14 pages served as working public English aids. Work, question, article, and reply govern over either site's phrasing.

⁵See CCC 39–43 on analogical knowledge, the purification of language, and the Creator's transcendence beyond every creaturely likeness; official English. This article supports natural theology and apophatic discipline. It opposes only the inference that transcendence makes personal or historical revelation intrinsically unworthy of God.

⁶CCC 302–308 treats providence, secondary causality, free cooperation, and the permission of evil; official English. Aquinas, ST I, q. 22, aa. 2–3, supplies the adopted account of providence extending to all things and governing through created causes. The present claim neither assigns a special divine message to each event nor denies the ordinary work of natural, personal, medical, and social causes.

⁷See Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19:3–6; Isa 49:1–6; and CCC 59–64 on Abraham, Israel, and the prophetic promise of a salvation including all nations; official English. Scriptural phrases are brief working-English renderings; Scripture retains its independent rights status.

⁸Deut 7:6–8 places election in God's love and fidelity rather than Israel's numerical greatness. The article draws the vocation-not-boast conclusion as source-grounded synthesis rather than as a quotation from the passage.

⁹Gal 4:4–5; John 4:19–24; and CCC 422–423. The claim concerns the permanent historical grammar of the Incarnation, not ethnic ownership of salvation.

¹⁰See Rom 9:4–5; 11:16–29; CCC 839–840, official English; and *Nostra aetate*, no. 4. The article affirms Christian fulfillment in Christ without treating the Jewish people as a rejected or merely archaeological remainder. It does not attempt to settle every disputed account of covenant, mission, and the present relation of Israel and the Church.

¹¹John 1:1–18, especially v. 14. The incarnational claim governs the paragraph; it is not inferred from the preceding rhetorical contrast.

¹²Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), nos. 2–4, teaches that revelation is realized through deeds and words with an inner unity and culminates in Christ, mediator and fullness; official English. Second Vatican Council, pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965), no. 22, governs the confession of Christ's integral human action. John Paul II, encyclical *Fides et ratio* (14 September 1998), nos. 7, 11–12, treats revelation as immersed in time and history and the Incarnation as the enduring synthesis of eternal and temporal; official English. The brief “Whole” formulation is quoted from no. 12; official wording retains its own status.

¹³Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000), no. 6; nos. 13–15 govern the related claim of Christ's unique and universal salvific mediation; official English. John Paul II ratified and confirmed the declaration “with sure knowledge and by his apostolic authority.” Its direct use here is bounded to the historical Incarnation and universal mediation, and it is read together with *Dei Verbum*, *Fides et ratio*, *Gaudium et spes*, and *Nostra aetate*; it is not adopted as a general rhetoric for comparative religion.

¹⁴1 Tim 2:1–6, especially vv. 4–6. The text joins God's will that all be saved to the one mediator; the article neither detaches the two claims nor infers that the divine will is fulfilled in every person irrespective of response.

¹⁵*Nostra aetate*, no. 2, supplies the respect owed to truth and holiness in other religions. Second Vatican Council, pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965), no. 22, joins Christ's death for all to the Spirit's universally offered possibility of association with the Paschal mystery; official English. *Dominus Iesus*, nos. 13–15, governs the claim that this universal offer is accomplished through the one Christ. None of these sources teaches that all persons are in fact saved.

¹⁶Heb 9:23–28, especially v. 26; 2 Cor 5:14–15. “For all” states the scope of Christ's death in the Pauline verse; it does not settle each person's reception of its saving fruit.

¹⁷CCC 1084–1085 distinguishes the unique event of the Paschal mystery from ordinary events swallowed by the past: Christ now acts through the sacraments, and the event abides while being made present; official English. “Made present” does not mean historically repeated.

¹⁸CCC 1145–1155 treats signs drawn from creation, human culture, covenant history, and Christ’s own actions; official English. CCC 1127–1129 identifies Christ as the principal actor in the sacraments and distinguishes their efficacy from the personal holiness of the minister while preserving the recipient’s disposition; official English.

¹⁹For the last distinction in relation to Baptism, see CCC 1257: God has bound salvation to the sacrament, but is not himself bound by the sacraments; official English. The point neither makes the instituted sacraments optional nor presumes an extraordinary economy in a particular case.

²⁰CCC 1374–1377 states the mode and permanence of Christ’s Eucharistic presence and receives the Council of Trent’s term *transubstantiation*; official English. The article states the defined Catholic claim because sacramental particularity is at issue; it does not attempt a complete Eucharistic treatise.

²¹See 1 John 4:19–21 and Matt 25:31–46. These passages do not identify the neighbor with God by nature; they make love of the visible person an indispensable test and Christological object of Christian charity. Scriptural wording remains outside the project’s CC BY 4.0 grant.

²²Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964), nos. 1 and 9, describes the Church in Christ as sacrament of union with God and of human unity, and the messianic people as a visible instrument sent to the whole world; official English. The article does not infer that visible ecclesial incorporation is the only mode in which Christ’s grace can reach a person.

²³Matt 16:13–17. The passage’s confession and Christ’s response belong to the succeeding verses; this essay ends at the question because its argument removes a metaphysical and religious evasion rather than supplying the act of faith in the reader’s place.

A Scope, Method, and Qualifications

A.1 Reader, question, and document identity

This is a discursive philosophical- and dogmatic-theological companion essay in *The Creature Before God*. It is not a fourth movement added to the trilogy's progression from presence through due return to union. It addresses a distinct objection at the threshold between natural theology and received revelation: whether a universal God and universally significant truth can act and become known through determinate persons, events, words, and sacramental signs.

The intended reader is an intellectually serious Christian, or a reader considering the Christian claim, who can follow a metaphysical distinction but is not presumed to know scholastic terminology. The governing claim is that the recoil from historical and sacramental particularity often rests upon a confusion between an abstract universal and a universal cause. God is neither a general concept nor one member of a class. In the Christian account, the universal cause knows and sustains singular creatures, elects for mission, assumes a particular human nature in the Person of the eternal Son, and communicates the one Paschal mystery through determinate signs. The argument establishes the coherence and theological necessity of this pattern; it does not by itself prove that a reported historical event occurred.

The article is independently intelligible. Within the larger series, it develops the passage from the universal source and present dependence treated by *Ontological Vertigo* to the revealed, ecclesial, and sacramental forms presupposed by *The Due Return*.

A.2 Terms and source functions

In the article, *particular* means concrete, singular, determinate, or historically located: this person, people, act, word, or sign. It never means that God is one specimen of divinity. An *abstract universal* is a concept considered apart from individuating features; a *universal cause* is a cause whose power extends to all the effects within its order. *Election* means a gratuitous divine choice that gives a vocation and mission; it is not treated as proof of the recipient's antecedent superiority. *Universal salvific scope* means that Christ's one mediation and the offer of salvation are ordered to all; it does not mean that all are in fact saved.

Source class	Function in the article	Governing boundary
Sacred Scripture	Supplies the pattern of Abrahamic promise, Israel's priestly and prophetic mission, the Incarnation, Christ's one mediation, material signs, the visible neighbor, and Christ's concluding question.	Brief quoted phrases remain in their canonical contexts; no verse is made to yield a later metaphysical distinction by itself.
Conciliar and catechetical teaching	Governs revelation through deeds and words, the historical Incarnation, Israel and the Church, respect for other religions, providence, universal salvific offer, and sacramental efficacy.	Distinct documents are read together; uniqueness does not become contempt, and universality does not become a claim that all are saved.
Authoritative doctrinal declaration	<i>Dominus Iesus</i> supplies the bounded claim that Christ's finite human acts have the divine Person of the Word as their subject and that his mediation is unique and universal.	Its use is limited to nos. 6 and 13–15 and paired with <i>Dei Verbum</i> , <i>Fides et ratio</i> , <i>Gaudium et spes</i> , and <i>Nostra aetate</i> ; its rhetoric is not made the article's comparative method.
Thomistic theology	Distinguishes God from a member of a genus or an abstract universal and accounts for divine knowledge of singulars.	The metaphysical distinction supports coherence; it neither demonstrates the Incarnation nor binds every permissible Catholic school to all Thomistic formulations.

Source class	Function in the article	Governing boundary
Project synthesis	Names the “flight into abstraction,” orders election, Incarnation, sacrament, and neighbor under one argumentative problem, and supplies the literary contrasts.	These formulations are editorial synthesis, not formal ecclesial classifications or attributed definitions.

A.3 Included and excluded scope

Included are the difference between an abstract universal and universal cause; divine knowledge and providence of singulars; the outward purpose of Abraham’s and Israel’s election; the continuing Christian bond with the Jewish people; the Incarnation as a historical and personal event; the relation between Christ’s particular human acts and universal salvific mediation; sacramental signs as embodied communication of grace; and the visible neighbor as the test of universal love.

Excluded are a complete proof of God, a historical defense of the Resurrection, a treatise on revelation or inspiration, a comprehensive theology of Israel and the Church, a comparative account of Buddhist or other non-Christian traditions, a full theology of religions, a treatise on sacramental validity and fruitfulness, and adjudication of individual salvation. The article does not classify its target as canonical or theological heresy. It does not defend philosophical nominalism, political particularism, nationalism, religious tribalism, or the claim that every alleged divine intervention is credible.

A.4 Material qualifications

1. God is not “particular” as a member of a genus. Particularity in this article concerns divine effects, address, the assumed human nature, historical acts, and sacramental means.
2. A universal concept and a universal cause are not competing theories of the same thing. The distinction prevents conceptual generality from being mistaken for ontological transcendence.
3. Apophatic theology and analogical predication remain necessary. God’s self-revelation does not make the divine essence comprehensible or contained by created language.
4. Concrete providence neither eliminates secondary causality nor identifies every evil, illness, or suffering as a direct punishment or private divine message. Permission, natural processes, human agency, and moral responsibility remain real.
5. Election is gratuitous and vocational. The biblical movement from Abraham and Israel toward all nations does not make historical Israel dispensable, justify contempt, or settle every contemporary theological question about covenant and mission.
6. The article confesses Christian fulfillment in Christ while preserving Paul’s prohibition against Gentile boasting and the Church’s teaching that God’s gifts and call to Israel are irrevocable.
7. Christ’s human words and deeds are finite without being a merely partial divine appearance because their personal subject is the eternal Son. The divine mystery remains transcendent and inexhaustible.
8. Christ’s unique and universal mediation does not imply that all persons are saved, that explicit historical knowledge is the only possible mode of receiving grace, or that truth and holiness are absent from other religions.
9. The Paschal mystery occurred once and is not historically repeated. Its sacramental presence follows the Church’s account of Christ’s abiding act, not a reversal of time.
10. Sacraments are neither magical techniques nor optional illustrations. Christ is their principal actor; the Church is bound to the received signs; proper disposition remains relevant to their fruit; God is not reduced to the visible instrument. In the Eucharist, the article confesses transubstantiation and Christ’s true, real, and substantial presence without attempting a complete Eucharistic treatise.
11. Sacramental logic does not make every material event a sacrament in the strict sense or every encounter an immediate revelation.

12. Love of the visible neighbor tests claimed love of God without identifying creature and Creator by nature or reducing salvation to philanthropy.
13. Coherence is not historical proof. The article removes an antecedent objection to divine action in history; it does not exempt Christian claims from historical inquiry or the obedience of faith.
14. The final question is scriptural address, not a claim that the reader’s response has been inferred, emotionally produced, or supplied by the article.

A.5 Translations, rights, currentness, and review

Scriptural language is limited to short traditional or working-English phrases checked at the identified loci. Official conciliar, catechetical, and doctrinal English witnesses are cited at exact numbered sections. Thomas is cited by work, question, and article; the governing Latin corpus was checked through Corpus Thomisticum, with New Advent used as a public working-English aid. Scripture, creeds, official texts, source wording, and third-party translations retain their own rights status and are not relicensed by the project’s CC BY 4.0 grant. The surrounding argument and editorial synthesis are project-created.

The identified online witnesses were checked through 23 July 2026. No mutable canon law, civil law, liturgical edition, territorial discipline, or jurisdiction-specific conclusion governs the article. Internal claim-to-source and rights review has been completed. Production and artifact evidence for the current source is recorded in the repository research scope. The installed snapshot remains on hold pending exact-snapshot authorization. Independent philosophical, biblical, Jewish–Christian, dogmatic, sacramental, interreligious, literary, and ecclesiastical review remains outstanding; no release clearance, imprimatur, nihil obstat, or other ecclesiastical approval is claimed.

B References

Sacred Scripture and the Creed

- Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19:3–6; Deut 7:6–8; Isa 49:1–6; Matt 16:13–17 and 25:31–46; John 1:1–18 and 4:19–24; Rom 9:4–5 and 11:16–29; 2 Cor 5:14–15; Gal 4:4–5; 1 Tim 2:1–6; Heb 9:23–28; and 1 John 4:19–21.
- Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: the eternal Son’s Incarnation and crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. The brief English phrases use the current official U.S. text published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; the creed, Scripture, and official English wording remain outside the project’s license.

Conciliar and authoritative Catholic witnesses

- Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), nos. 2–4, on revelation through deeds and words, the Abrahamic preparation, and Christ as mediator and fullness; official English.
- Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964), nos. 1 and 9, on the Church as sign and instrument of union with God and human unity and as a visible people sent to all; official English.
- Second Vatican Council, declaration *Nostra aetate* (28 October 1965), nos. 2 and 4, on truth and holiness in other religions, the several forms of Buddhism, and the Church’s spiritual bond with Abraham’s stock; official English.
- Second Vatican Council, pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965), no. 22, on the incarnate Word, Christ’s solidarity with humanity, his death for all, and the Spirit’s universally offered possibility of association with the Paschal mystery; official English.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000), nos. 6 and 13–15, on the finite human acts of the divine Person and Christ’s unique and universal salvific mediation; official English. The article uses these loci under the qualifications recorded in the Notes and scope appendix.
- John Paul II, encyclical *Fides et ratio* (14 September 1998), nos. 7, 11–12, on revelation within time and history and the Incarnation’s union of eternal and temporal; official English.

Catechetical synthesis

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 39–43 (analogy and apophatic qualification); 54–64 (Abraham, Israel, and all nations); 301–308 (conservation, providence, and secondary causes); 422–426 (Jesus’s historical identity); and 839–845 (the Jewish people and non-Christian religions).
- CCC 1084–1085 and 1127–1129 (Christ acting through the sacraments and their efficacy); 1145–1155 (signs, words, actions, and embodied human nature); 1257 (the necessity of Baptism and the distinction between God’s institution and divine freedom); and 1374–1377 (Christ’s Eucharistic presence and transubstantiation). Exact official-English links are supplied in the Notes.

Thomistic framework

- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 3, a. 5, on why God is not in a genus; q. 14, a. 11, on divine knowledge of singulars; q. 22, aa. 2–3, on providence and secondary causality; q. 44, a. 1, on the first cause of creaturely being; and q. 104, a. 1, on present conservation.

- Latin loci checked in the Corpus Thomisticum; the New Advent Summa served as a working public English index. Work, question, article, and reply take precedence over either site's wording.

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