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Incarnation as a theological form of thought

Belief in the plural of secular and religious experiences*

Ulrich Engel OP

1. “*San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne*”

I have brought along the reproduction of a painting by Italian painter *Sandra Brunetti*. The original is located at Santa Maria Novella in Florence. It dates back to 1992 and is titled “*San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne*” (St. Dominic – Preacher of the Incarnate Word).

Illustration 1: Sandra Brunetti, *San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne*, 1992, Florence, S. Maria Novella

The figure of a man – filling the painting in front of a bookshelf – can be seen in the centre of the portrayal. He is slender and looks relatively young: a handsome man with well-proportioned facial traits, slender hands and a muscular neck, with strawberry blond hair and stylish three-day beard. The white habit and black cloak clearly mark him as a Dominican. He faces the viewers frontally in upright posture — but without looking at them.

* Lecture on 6 Nov. 2009 within the framework of the international CENOC symposium “What does Europe believe in?” in Madrid (4-8 Nov. 2009).

His eyes are open, the gaze concentrated. The title of the painting indicates that the Preaching Brother depicted concerns St. Dominic.

Carefully, almost endearingly, the Dominican figure presents a child to us. This child is also standing upright, directly facing the viewers. It is clothed in nothing but a white shirt. The child's eyes are open. But it does not look at us. No attributes whatsoever refer to the child's identity. Is it the Infant Jesus? Or any old human child?

Both figures are arranged on the same vertical image axis. As a result, the scenery looks quite static overall. The painting thus obtains the character of an icon. This effect is supported through the stringent vertical arrangement of the habit's folds as well as through the hyper-realistic manner of painting.

The child is holding a book in his hands. It is opened as if for presentation. The child is pointing to the text with his right forefinger. The following can be read: "*In principio erat Verbum – Et verbum caro factum est et...*" (In the beginning was the Word. – And the Word became flesh and...). Not visible is the (perhaps covered by the child's left hand) continuation of the sentence after the last "et": "*.....habitavit in nobis*" (...dwelt among us). The Vulgate translation from John 1:1 and 1:14 is cited here. Verse 14 represents the "hermeneutical key"¹ to all incarnation theology:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Incarnation literally means the '*divine Word becoming embodied in flesh*'. In the biblical context, "flesh" designates man's full reality and the sphere of finiteness, mortality. The "Word" biblically stands for the self-revealing God. The noun "incarnation" (σάρκωσις) appears for the first time with Irenaeus of Lyon (approx. 135 – 202 AD).² The term "*incarnatio*" has been common since the 3rd century as the Latin translation of "σάρκωσις". "Incarnation" and "becoming human" have been used synonymously since the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).³

¹ P. Hünemann, Art. Inkarnation. I. Begriffs- und Religionsgeschichte, in: LThK³ Bd. 5, Sp. 498-500, hier 499.

² Cf. Iren. Haer. III, 18,3; bezogen auf den Logos als Subjekt vgl. Iren. Haer. I, 9,3; weiterhin s. ibid. I, 10,1.

³ Cf. H. Denzinger / P. Hünemann, Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum / Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen, Freiburg/Br. u.a. ³⁸1999, Nr. 125.

2. Human-divine economy

Incarnation theology can be portrayed according to its basic approach as *Economy of Salvation*.⁴ While belief – as an act of God – is something supernatural on the one hand, on the other hand this belief – as theology – is practiced in the discursive reasoning of humans (together with their historical and consequently alterable social conditions). Accordingly, *Marie-Dominique Chenu OP* (1895-1990) speaks of a *human-divine economy* (“*économie humano-divine*”⁵) in his early essay *Position de la théologie*.

Such an economic theology led to two consequences:

- 1) For one thing, the Economy of Salvation in connection with the principle of incarnation describes one method of the divinisation of man (“*divinisation de l’homme*”⁶) in history. “Time” becomes a theological category because it is the “human way of eternity”⁷.
- 2) For another thing, from the notions of economy Chenu is able to develop a dynamic concept of revelation which does not comprehend secularised modernity as a danger, but rather a chance. In one homily within the framework of a congress on the five-year anniversary of the journal “*Concilium*”, he said:

“The Revelation is the act in which God has revealed himself throughout the course of history and in which he continually revealed himself over the course of centuries by expanding his complete self-disclosure in Christ in the fullness of the times (...). Viewed in this light, ‘secularisation’, which makes human beings aware of their responsibility and independence, offers theologians a convenient opportunity to gain a deeper insight in the new civilisation, even if it is association with great risks.”⁸

An economic theology such as that outlined here in its fundamentals does not have to have any fear of secular matters – as it also does not have to fear modernity or even postmodernism. Because as a faithful “follower” of Thomas Aquinas Chenu does not understand

⁴ In the following, cf. M. Quisinsky, „Heilsökonomie“ bei Marie-Dominique Chenu OP. Kreative Rezeption ostkirchlicher Theologie im Vorfeld und Verlauf des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils, in: *Catholica* 59 (2005) 128-153.

⁵ M.-D. Chenu, *La Parole de Dieu. I: La Foi dans l’intelligence*, Paris 1964, 116f. [cited in the following as “PD I”].

⁶ Id., *La Parole de Dieu. II: L’Évangile dans les temps*, Paris 1964, 114 [cited in the following as “PD II”].

⁷ Id., *Das Werk des Hl. Thomas von Aquin. Aus dem Französischen von O.M. Pesch* (Deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe Erg.-Bd. 2), Graz – Wien – Köln ²1982, (9).

⁸ Id., Homilie während der Eucharistiefeyer, in: *Die Zukunft der Kirche. Berichtband des Concilium-Kongresses 1970*, Zürich – Mainz 1971, 41-44, hier 42f.

faith and reason as two worlds separated from each other or even contradictory.⁹ He oftentimes finds the missing *link* between *fides* and *ratio* in incarnation.

3. Continued incarnation as a theological form of thought¹⁰

For Marie-Dominique Chenu (whom I follow in the further course of my deliberations), incarnation does not primarily designate a specific content of the theological message; on the contrary, he understands incarnation as a “theological form of thought”¹¹:

“Christianity is undoubtedly the enigma of the dying and resurrecting Christ living in me; but how has this enigma taken place? In an incarnation, i.e. in an arrival of God in time and in history”¹².

Because the incarnated Word of God has become temporalised in history, it can and must repeatedly be incarnated in exactly this history. A theological reflection which is rooted in this incarnation event can only be a thought that emanates from historical, social and culturally concrete aspects and finds new, adequate forms of expressions for the Word of God. And: “Insofar as the Church is entrusted with this divine Word (*Parole de Dieu*), it shares in the claim to any new incarnation.”¹³

That is to say, according to Chenu’s firm belief, the incarnation of God did not come about for once and for all 2,000 years ago in Judea, but it continues in the course of history.¹⁴ Accordingly, with *Christophe F. Potworowski* one can speak of a “process of continued incarnation”¹⁵. Incidentally, similar formulations can also be found with *Johann Adam*

⁹ On this basic relation cf. G. Vergauwen, *Die Freimütigkeit des Glaubens und die Kühnheit der Vernunft*, in: M. Delgado / G. Vergauwen (Hrsg.), *Glaube und Vernunft – Theologie und Philosophie. Aspekte ihrer Wechselwirkung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Ökumenische Beihefte zur Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie Bd. 44), Fribourg 2003, 9-21.

¹⁰ On the following cf. U. Engel, *Theologische Mystik im Konflikt. Marie-Dominique Chenu OP und die Grundintuitionen seiner Theologie*, in: M. Delgado / G. Fuchs (Hrsg.), *Die Kirchenkritik der Mystiker – Prophetie aus Gotteserfahrung. Bd. 3: Moderne* (Studien zur christlichen Religions- und Kulturgeschichte Bd. 4), Fribourg – Stuttgart 2005, 351-369.

¹¹ M. Heimbach-Steins, „Erschütterung durch das Ereignis“ (M.-D. Chenu). *Die Entdeckung der Geschichte als Ort des Glaubens und der Theologie*, in: G. Fuchs / A. Lienkamp (Hrsg.), *Visionen des Konzils. 30 Jahre Pastoralkonstitution „Die Kirche in der Welt von heute“* (ICS-Schriften Bd. 36), Münster 1997, 103-121, hier 109.

¹² PD II, 114.

¹³ M. Heimbach-Steins, „Erschütterung durch das Ereignis“, a.a.O., 109.

¹⁴ Cf. z.B. PD II, 89: „Car l’Incarnation de Dieu, dont elle [chrétienté nouvelle; U.E.] est le signe et le mystère à la fois, ne s’est pas faite une fois pour toutes dans un coin de Judée; elle dure toujours, elle vaut toujours, elle vaut partout.“

¹⁵ Ch.F. Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation. The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (McGill-Queen’s Studies in the History of Ideas Bd. 33), Montreal u.a. 2001, XV.

Möhler (1796-1838): “continual incarnation”¹⁶, and – of recent date – with *Thomas O’Meara OP*: “The continuing incarnation”¹⁷.

In the theological reflection, incarnation is realised in a double manner:

- 1) As incarnation *in concepts* of the Word of God (“*incarnation dans des concepts de la parole de Dieu*”¹⁸); e.g. in dogmatic principles...
- 2) ...as well as incarnation of the Word of God *in the theologians* who perceive their beliefs in terms of the historical, social and economic circumstances.

The hermeneutics of incarnation firmly believe in the – certainly oftentimes concealed – presence of God in the historically concrete, frequently secular circumstances of the world. In the countenance of the others it seeks to perceive this as the other entity, and thereby as Man with the dignity specific to him. In this respect, the descent of God in history is “not the fall into nothingness, but a responsibility for others”¹⁹. The countenance of the humiliated Son of God lights up in him, above all in the poor. Only if one acknowledges the historical evidence of this world in its secularity and believes in it can they repeatedly catch sight of God and Christ from their innermost perception. In this sense, the Judeo-Christian history of salvation is “the history of an incarnation and not the history of angelic creatures”²⁰.

4. Kenotic transformation and irreligious Christianity

The double movement of the descent of God in history and – consequentially – the responsibility for others developed by Chenu corresponds in essential aspects with a (not uncontroverial) thesis of the Italian philosopher *Gianni Vattimo* (* 1936).

¹⁶ J.A. Möhler, *Symbolik, oder Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten, nach ihren öffentlichen Bekenntnißschriften*, hrsg. von J.R. Geiselman, Bd. 1, Köln – Olten 1958, 389.

¹⁷ Th.F. O’Meara, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian*, Notre Dame 1997, 136.

¹⁸ PD I, 251; Hervorhebung U.E.

¹⁹ J.-B. Madragule Badi, *Inkarnation in der Perspektive des jüdisch-christlichen Dialogs*. Mit einem Vorwort von M. Wyschogrod (*Studien zum Judentum und Christentum*), Paderborn 2006, 268.

²⁰ M.-D. Chenu, *Leiblichkeit und Zeitlichkeit. Eine anthropologische Stellungnahme*. Aus dem Französischen von O.H. Pesch und M. Lauble. Mit einer werkbiographischen Skizze von A. Duval und einer Einführung von Ch. Bauer, Th. Eggenesperger und U. Engel (*Collection Chenu Bd. 1*), Berlin 2001, 56.

Vattimo is of the opinion that secularisation is already founded in the principle of incarnation. He understands the figure of *kenosis* as a pivotal characteristic of Christianity and explicitly refers to the New Testament hymn of the Philippians in this connection²¹:

“He [Christ] was equal to God, but did not adhere to being God. But instead he divested himself and became the same as a slave and mankind. His life was that of a human; he humbled himself and was obedient to the point of death, death on the cross.” (Phil 2: 5-8)

Vattimo understands kenotic divestiture as the beginning of a secularisation process, namely because a restriction of great metaphysical principles is announced in God’s self-humiliation evidenced in the New Testament. Even more: nothing less than the end of the metaphysical God himself follows from the Christian *kenosis*. Vattimo therefore reads the history of Christianity in irreligious terms: as a history of continuing secularisation. Secularisation is ergo not simply a “quantitative dwindling”²² to him, but rather – to cite a conceptual differentiation by *Hans Blumenberg* (1920-1996) – a process of “qualitative transformations”²³.

Where Vattimo discerns the end of the metaphysical God applied in the Christian doctrine of incarnation, the step to *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1906-1945) and his discourse of a “religious Christianity”²⁴ is not far away.

Bonhoeffer’s Christology also takes its starting point in the moment of incarnation: insofar as God irrevocably arrived in this world as Man, the transcendental also always confronts us in the Other.²⁵ According to the thesis of Protestant theologians, God can only be ‘reached’ in the consummation of Christian responsibility, i.e. is not to be contemplated extra-contextually. Because “what is ‘always’ true is not exactly true ‘today’. God is ‘always’ exactly God to us ‘today’”.²⁶

A church which takes this insight seriously has to be unconditionally there for others, without quashing – also secularly – its otherness. Irreligion or irreligious existence (also

²¹ Cf. G. Vattimo, *Glauben – Philosophieren*. Aus dem Italienischen von Ch. Schultz, Stuttgart 1997, 34.

²² H. Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Erneuerte Ausgabe, Frankfurt/M. ⁶2001, 12.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ D. Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft, hrsg. von E. Bethge. Neuausgabe, München ²1977, 306.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 414.

²⁶ Id., *Ökumene*. Briefe, Aufsätze, Dokumente. 1928-1942 (Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 1), München ²1965, 145.

the Church!) then signifies “that we must live in the world – ‘*etsi deus non daretur*’”²⁷ – as if there was no God!

However, this irreligious Church is not yet evident. On the contrary, it is still something pending. Bonhoeffer notes: “We are approaching an entirely irreligious time”²⁸.

Therefore the irreligion of which Bonhoeffer speaks in his notes from the Nazi imprisonment has a practical character: namely as profoundly secularised this-worldliness. The non-religious interpretation [is] the associated form of reflection and speech “²⁹. Bonhoeffer formulates his vision (in “*Thoughts on the Baptism of D.W.R. Bethge*”) in view of the future Church as follows:

“The day will come on which men will once again be called to pronounce the Word of God such that the world changes and renews itself. There will be a new language, perhaps entirely irreligious, but liberating and redeeming, like the language of Jesus that the people will be shocked at and yet will be overcome by its power, the language of a new righteousness and truth, the language which promulgates God’s peace with mankind and the approach of his Kingdom.”³⁰

A theology of irreligious Christianity spells out the Christian faith in the plural of secular and religious experiences. The Chalcedonian reference to “unseparated and absolute” consequently characterises Christ’s relationship with the world. This involves neither a one-dimensional *profanation*³¹ of the relationship between divine and secular nor its sublation to the mere *spiritual* – merely accessible to the pious and initiated.³²

5. Question: Whom does incarnation help? What is it good for?

The understanding of incarnation has – according to the quintessence with Bonhoeffer – consequences for ecclesiastical action. In his letter to the 2001 General Chapter assembled

²⁷ Id., *Widerstand und Ergebung*, a.a.O., 394.

²⁸ Ibid., 305.

²⁹ E. Feil, *die Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers. Hermeneutik – Christologie – Weltverständnis*, München – Mainz ²1971.

³⁰ D. Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, a.a.O., 328.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 312.

³² Cf. insgesamt dazu T.R. Peters, *Universales Heil im Plural der Hoffnungen*, in: *id.*, *Mystik, Mythos, Metaphysik. Die Spur des vermißten Gottes* (GT.FPT Bd. 10), Mainz – München 1992, 140-164, bes. 148.

in Providence, Rhode Island (USA), *Pope John Paul II* postulated the thesis that a denial of the incarnation fosters a culture of death:

“Ours is an age which denies the Incarnation in a multitude of practical ways, and the consequences of this denial are clear and disturbing. (...) Life is not valued and loved; and hence the advance of a certain culture of death is the consequence.”³³

With that said, John Paul II built on a fundamental concept of the Second Vatican Council, above all “*Lumen gentium*” and “*Gaudium et Spes*”. So the Council Fathers derived the sacramental structure from the incarnation events. But beyond this internal Church aspect the Council also reflected the significance of the human nature of Jesus Christ for the entire understanding of the world and mankind.³⁴

Questions arise from this point of view —banal perhaps, but nevertheless basal: Is it really true that the incarnation events correspond to an all-embracing significance, whether its universal claim also encompasses the secularised world?

5.1. A response by Thomas of Aquinas: ...regarding deliverance from sins

Before I elaborate on the Council’s pertinent texts, I am taking the liberty of a brief theological-historical preliminary remark: Subsequent to *Anselm von Canterbury’s* (1033-1109) “*Cur Deus homo*”³⁵, medieval theologians discussed whether the incarnation was God’s response to the sins of mankind or whether God’s incarnation had taken place independently of the Fall of Man.³⁶ Would God also have become Man if Man had not sinned “³⁷?

Duns Scotus (1266-1308) advocated the thesis that the prime motive of the incarnation was the revelation of God’s glory. Contrary to this position, *Thomas of Aquinas* (around

³³ Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Master General of the Order of Preachers (28th June 2001), at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20010711_order-preachers_en.html [Call: 15.9.2009]: “Ours is an age which denies the Incarnation in a multitude of practical ways, and the consequences of this denial are clear and disturbing. (...) Life is not valued and loved; and hence the advance of a certain culture of death.”

³⁴ Cf. U.F. Schmälzle, Art. Inkarnation. II. Praktisch-theologisch, in: LThK³ Bd. 5, Sp. 500f., bes. 501.

³⁵ Cf. Anselm von Canterbury, *Cur deus homo – Warum Gott Mensch geworden*, Darmstadt ⁵1993.

³⁶ Cf. dazu M.-D. Chenu, *Das Werk des hl. Thomas von Aquin*, a.a.O., 356.

³⁷ STh III 1,3.

1225-1274) and the Dominicans refer to the Scriptures. Because depending on the version, the Dominicans specify the deliverance from sin as the prime motive of the incarnation. “This is why they are of the opinion that it is more reasonable not to assume any incarnation with a Fall of Man. “³⁸

Even if the age-old question is no longer open to debate in this form today, I would nevertheless like to contemplate the theological topicality of the principle of incarnation in the line of Thomas. While doing so, I am not interested in the motive for sin, but rather its argumentation by people. Instead of speculation about the intrinsic divine psyche, Thomas asks (now formulated with my words): Whom does incarnation help? Who is its addressee? How does it alter the life of Church and World?

5.2. A response by Vatican II: ...regarding humanisation of Church and World

In four brief theses I would like to show how relevant a theology of incarnation can be in the midst of our modern secularised societies. For this purpose I read and interpret numbers 40 to 42 of the Pastoral Constitution “*Gaudium et Spes*” (GS):

1) *Anthropologically: following God Incarnate we will be more human.*

I start with GS 41, where in the last sentence of the first paragraph it says: “Whoever follows Christ, the perfect human being [*Hominem perfectum*] will also themselves become more human“³⁹ — i.e. whoever goes their way in the footsteps of Jesus Christ opens up a deeper meaning of their own existence. In personal terms, following God Incarnate signifies the “intensification of personal incarnation “⁴⁰.

2) *Ecclesiologically: the task of the entire Church is the humanisation of the world.*

However, this deepened sense of becoming human is not only applied to every single Christian. In GS 40 (3rd paragraph, last sentence), the humanisation of the world is described as a task of the entire Church. Through “its individual links and its

³⁸ O.M. Pesch, in: M.-D. Chenu, Das Werk des hl. Thomas von Aquin, a.a.O., 356, Anm. a.

³⁹ Here and further I cite the German translation of the Council texts according to: Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil. Bd. 1: Die Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Konstitutionen, Dekrete, Erklärungen. Lateinisch-deutsche Studienausgabe, hrsg. von P. Hünemann, Freiburg/Br. 2004.

⁴⁰ H.-J. Sander, Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralconstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute „*Gaudium et Spes*“, in: Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil. Bd. 4: Kommentare (AA, DiH, AG, PO, GS), Freiburg/Br. 2005, 581-886, hier 759.

whole community [it can] contribute a great deal (...) towards making the family of man and its history more human”.

3) *Homiletically: the homily of the Word Incarnate strengthens the dignity of man.*

“*Deus humanissimus*”⁴¹ promulgates an ecclesiastical pastoral (care) which lives from the practical consummation of belief in the Incarnate God. The homily of the Word Incarnate has to be measured in word and deed as to whether and how the dignity of people – in personal as well as in societal terms – is strengthened. While doing so, our promulgation may not intend to compel anything.

4) *Politically: the Church has to refrain from all “potestas”.*

Conversely, the following also applies in the sense of the Council Fathers: A practice of promulgation which contributes towards more human configuration of humane living conditions is also a statement of human potential that is inherent in the Church. But according to GS 42 (3rd paragraph, last sentence), such a humane Church will refrain from “exerting any dominion by purely human means” — i.e. the Church also has to measure itself by the humanising message of the Gospel. It refrains from all *potestas*. With its *auctoritas* it seeks to serve the “welfare of all” (GS 42, 5th paragraph).⁴²

This complex “incarnational axiomatic method”⁴³ of the Second Vatican Council – only briefly outlined here in three numbers of the Pastoral Constitution – can liberate us from power & fear-characterised manners in the Church and towards the secular world. In addition, such a theology of incarnation enables us to experience-identity-establishing encounters with other cultures and religions in a pluralistic society. In this sense, our Western secularised context also applies to the word originally native to Latin American liberation theology: “The inculturation of the Gospel follows the path of the incarnate Son of God”⁴⁴.

⁴¹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende*, Brugge – Bloemendaal 1974, 544f.; vgl. auch Ph. Kennedy, *Deus humanissimus. The Knowability of God in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx* (Ökumenische Beihefte zur Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie Bd. 22), Fribourg 1993.

⁴² Cf. H.-J. Sander, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralconstitution*, a.a.O., 761.

⁴³ U.F. Schmälzle, *Art. Inkarnation. II*, a.a.O., 501.

⁴⁴ *Missionszentrale der Franziskaner und Misereor* (Hrsg.), *Für eine Kultur solidarischen Lebens. Die Stimme der lateinamerikanischen Kirche vor der IV. Konferenz in Santo Domingo 1992: Secunda Relatio* (Berichte und Dokumente Nr. 8), Aachen 1993, 170.

6. Conclusion: Infant Jesus or human child?

I conclude — and thus return once again to the painting by Sandra Brunetti.

The figure of the child refers us to the beginning of John 1:12: “And the Word became flesh and...”. The painting shows us this. But what is not visible is also interesting. Not visible is the (perhaps covered by the child’s left hand) continuation of the sentence after the last “et”: “...*habitavit in nobis et vidimus gloriam eius gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis*“ (...dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth).

Therefore the incarnation theology of John’s Prologue ultimately aims at the realisation of truth. Which conversely means: the question of truth in the figure of Jesus is decided within the framework of a theology of incarnation. Chenu has formulated this as follows:

“In this respect the question of truth ultimately converges with the epistemological question pertaining to the very own persona of Jesus (...). There-with the truth is a stringent Christological concept“.⁴⁵

In terms of the theological concept of a continued incarnation it is ultimately undecidable and irrelevant whom the Dominican figure of the painting is carrying here: the Infant Jesus or the human child. Because both equally represent the Word Incarnate in a world that has become secular! Both have to be worth our theological attention.

* * *

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⁴⁵ M.-D. Chenu, *Vérité évangélique et métaphysique wolffienne à Vatican II*, in: *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* (1973), 632-640, hier 639f.: „Ainsi finalement la question de la vérité se ramène-t-elle à celle de savoir qui est la personne même de Jésus. (...) La Vérité est donc un concept foncièrement christologique.“