Summa Theologiae, IIIa, q.1, Blackfriars edn

Thomas Aquinas

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Fittingness of the Incarnation

Question 1. the fittingness of the Incarnation

The first of these topics involves six points of inquiry:

1. whether it was right for God to become man;
2. was this necessary for the restoration of the human race?
3. would the Incarnation have occurred had man not sinned?
4. did God become incarnate to remove original sin more than to take away actual sin?
5. would it have been fitting had his incarnation taken place at the beginning of the world?
6. should it have been postponed until the end of the world?

The First Point: 1 It does not seem right for God to have taken flesh. Since, after all, he is eternally and essentially good, the best for him is to remain as he has always been. From eternity he existed without flesh. Thus it is altogether proper that he should so remain. Hence God's incarnation was inappropriate.

2. Moreover, it is improper to join together things that are infinitely apart, e.g. it would be an odd combination for a painting to portray the neck of a horse joined to the head of a man. Now God and flesh are infinitely apart; God is entirely without parts, while flesh, and especially human flesh, is composite. Their union was therefore incongruous.

3. Further, body is as far away from supreme spirit as wickedness is from supreme goodness. Since, then, it is quite incompatible for God, the supreme good, to take evil to himself, so also is it for him, supreme uncreated spirit, to take to himself a body.

4. Furthermore, whoever surpasses even great things cannot rightly be confined in the smallest; neither can one on whom the care of great issues rests involve himself with the insignificant. Now the universe itself is not enough to contain God, whose care extends over the whole world. Therefore it seems unfitting that he whose majesty dwarfs the universe should be hidden in the small body of a puling infant, that this ruler should quit his throne for so long and transfer the governance of the whole world to a baby-body, so Volusian wrote to Augustine. 

On the Other Hand, it is most fitting to manifest the unseen things of God through things that are seen, for this is the purpose of the whole world, as

1cf III Sent. I, 1, 2. CG IV, 40, 49, 53, 54, & 55. Compend. Theol. 200 & 201
2Horace, De arte poética, 1, 1

5Epist. cxxv. PL 33, 513
illud Apostoli, *Invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspicuantur*.\(^4\)

Sed, sicut Damascenus dicit, per incarnationis mysterium monstratur simul bonitas et sapientia et justitia et potentia Dei, vel virtus: bonitas quidem, quoniam non despectit proprii plasmatis infirmitatem; justitia vero,\(^5\) quoniam non aliquam facti vincere tyrannum, neque vi eripit ex morte hominem; sapientia vero, quoniam inventi difficultiim pretii decentissimam solutionem; potentia vero, sive virtus, infinita, quia nihil est majus quam Deum fieri hominem.\(^6\)

Ergo conveniens fuit Deum incarnari.

**RESPONSO:** Dicendum quod unicuique rei conveniens est illud quod competit sibi secundum rationem propriae naturae; sicut homini conveniens est ratiocinarium quia hoc convenit sibi inquantum est rationalis secundum suam naturam. Ipsi autem natura Dei est bonitas, ut patet per Dionysium.\(^7\)

Unde quidquid pertinent ad rationem boni, conveniens est Deo. Pertinet autem ad rationem boni ut se aliis communicet, ut patent per Dionysium.\(^8\) Unde ad rationem summi boni pertinent quod summo modo se creature communicet. Quod quidem maximae fit per hoc quod conformabatur Dei naturam creatam sic sibi conjungit ut una persona fiat ex tribus, Verbo, anima et carne, sicut dictus Augustinus.\(^9\) Unde manifestum est quod conveniens fuit Deum incarnari.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod incarnationis mysterium non est impetrum per hoc quod Deus sit aliquo modo a suo statu immutatus in quo ab aeterno non fuit, sed per hoc quod novo modo creature se univit, vel potius eam sibi. Est autem conveniens ut creature, qua secundum rationem sui mutabilis est, non semper codem modo se habeat. Et ideo, sicut creature, cum prius non esset, in esse producta est, conveniencier, cum prius non esset unita Deo, postmodum fuit ei unita.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod uniri Deo in unitate personae non fuit conveniens carni humanae secundum conditionem suae naturae, quia hoc erat

\(^{14}\) *Plana:* *justitia vero quoniam, homine victo, non alio quam homine facit vinci tyrannum*, justice because, since a man had been conquered, he made the tyrant be conquered by none other than a man

\(^{15}\) *Romans* 1, 20

\(^{16}\) *De Fide Orthodoxa* III, 1. PG 94, 984, St John of Damascus or Damascene (d. 749), last of the Greek Fathers; the work is cited in the medievals c. 1150 in the translation by Richard Burgundio of Pisa. It is a major source for St Thomas’s Christology.

\(^{17}\) *De Diversi Nominatione* 1, PG 3, 593. Dionysius or Denys the Areopagite, pseudo-nymn; the Pseudo-Dionysius is an unknown author, probably from Syria, of four theological and liturgical treatises and of a series of letters, c. 500, purporting to be the work of the Athenian convert of St Paul (*Acts* 17, 34). Giving the works a quasi-apostolic authority, this attribution was generally accepted up to the 16th century; see Vol. 1, ed. T. C. O’Brien, Appendix 3. A further complication was his identification with St Denis, 3rd century, Bp. of Paris.

\(^{18}\) *De Trinitate* XIII, 17, PL 42, 1031

\(^{19}\) *Goodness implies self-communication*. The principle expresses, first of all, the final causality of the good as attracting things towards a share in it. Secondly, it applies to the communication by an agent or efficient cause of its own good or perfection, the manner and meaning of the communication corresponds to the kind of agent in question: a natural, i.e. non-volitional agent, acts by the fixed exigency of its nature; communication by a volitional agent is free, generous, but in keeping with the goodness possessed. The argument here is that, given the revealed fact of the Incarnation, it is to be seen not as a necessary emanation, but as a communication befitting and manifesting sheerly divine goodness.
supra dignitatem ipsius. Conveniens tamen fuit Deo secundum infinitam excellentiam bonitatis ejus ut sibi eam uniret pro salute humana.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod quidlibet alia conditio secundum quam quaecumque creatura differt a creatore a Dei sapientia est instituta et ad Dei bonitatem ordinata. Deus enim propter suam bonitatem, cum sit in creatu, immobili, incorporeus, produxit creaturas mobiles et corporeas; et similiter malum prae Dee justitiae est introductum propter gloriam Dei. Malum vero culpae commititur per recessum ab arte divini sapientiae et ab ordine divinae bonitatis. Et ideo conveniens esse potuit assumere naturam creatam, mutabilem, corpoream et penalitati subjectam; non autem fuit conveniens ei assumere malum culpae.

4. Ad quartum dicendum quod, sicut Augustinus respondet, non habet hoc Christiana doctrina, quod ita sit Deus infinus carni humana ut curam gubernandae universitatis vel deserviit vel amiserit vel ad illud corpusculum quasi contractam transluderit. Hominem est iste sensus nihil nisi corpus valentium cogitare. Deus autem non mole, sed virtute per se potest reparationem humani generis. Deus enim perfectus, ut in Primo habitum est, nihil virtutis per carnem assumptam accevit. Si ergo Verbum Dei incarnatur naturam reparavit, etiam absumptam carnem assumptione eam potuit reparare.

2. Præterea, ad reparationem humanæ naturæ, quæ per peccatum colapsa erat, nihil aliud requirit videbatur quam quod hominés satisfacere pro peccato. Non enim Deus ab homine requirit plus quod potest; et, cum prænior sit ad miserendum quam ad puniendum, sicut hominés imputat actum peccati, ita etiam videtur quod ei imputet ad delectionem

article 2. utrum fuerit necessarium ad reparationem humani generis Verbum Dei incarnari

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur: 1. Videtur quod non fuerit necessarium ad reparationem humani generis Verbum Dei incarnari. Verbo enim Dei, cum sit Deus perfectus, ut in Primo habitum est, nihil virtutis per carnem assumptam accevit. Si ergo Verbum Dei incarnatur naturam reparavit, etiam absumptam carnem assumptione eam potuit reparare.

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Yet God's boundless and surpassing goodness gives reason why it was appropriate for him to unite himself for man's salvation.

3. Since God, who is uncreated, unchanging, incorporeal, brought changing and bodily creatures into being out of his goodness, all those characteristics whereby they differ from the creator are established by his wisdom and ordained for his goodness. Likewise the evil of penalty is brought in by his justice because of his grandeur. But the evil of fault is committed by a turning aside from the path of God's wisdom and the order set by his goodness. Accordingly God could rightly take to himself a nature created, changeable, bodily, and liable to penalty, but not one subject to moral fault.

4. As Augustine replies, Christian doctrine does not teach that God was so joined to human flesh as to lose or resign control over the universe as though constricted by a baby. These are notions of those incapable of thinking of anything beyond the corporeal. But God is great, not in mass, but in power, and no constraint narrows his might. If the fleeting word of a human being is heard at once by many and constantly by each, should it be difficult to believe that the abiding Word of God is at once everywhere and whole? The Incarnation, therefore, involved nothing unlikely.
peccati actum contrarium. Non ergo fuit necessarium ad reparacionem humane naturae Verbum Dei incarnari.

3. Prima quidem, cum salutem hominis precepetur pertinet ut Deum reveretur, unde dicitur Malach., Si ego Dominus, ubi timor meus? Si Pater, ubi honor meus? Sed ex hoc ipso homines Deum magis reverentur quod eum considerant super omnia elevatum, et ab hominum sensibus remorum, unde in Ps. dicitur, Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus, et super caelos gloria ejus; et postea subditur, Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster? quod ad reverentiam pertinet. Ergo videtur non convenire humanae salutis quod Deus nobis similis fieret per carnem assumptionem.

Sed contra, illud quod humanum genus liberatur a perditione est necessarium ad humanam salutem. Sed mysterium divine incarnationis est hujusmodi secundum illud Joann., Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum unigenitum daret, ut omnis qui credit in ipsum non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam. Ergo necesse fuit ad humanam salutem Deum incarnari.

RESPONSUM: Dicendum quod ad finem aliquem dicitur aliquid esse necessarium dupliciter: uno modo, sine quo aliquid esse non potest, e.g. food for sustaining human life. Second, when it is required for a better and more expeditious attainment of the goal, e.g. a horse for a journey. In the first sense the Incarnation was not necessary for the restoration of human nature, since by his infinite power God had many other ways to accomplish this end. In the second sense, however, it was needed for the restoration of human nature.

ON THE OTHER HAND that which frees the human race from perishing is necessary for its salvation. But the mystery of divine incarnation does this, as John teaches, For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son so that those who believe in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Therefore God's incarnation was necessary for human salvation.

REPLY: We refer to something as necessary for an end in two senses. First, when the goal is simply unattainable without it, e.g. food for sustaining human life. Second, when it is required for a better and more expeditious attainment of the goal, e.g. a horse for a journey. In the first sense the Incarnation was not necessary for the restoration of human nature, since by his infinite power God had many other ways to accomplish this end. In the second sense, however, it was needed for the restoration of human nature.

Accordingly Augustine writes, Let us point out that other ways were not wanting to God, whose power rules everything without exception, yet that there was no other course more fitting for healing our wretchedness.

Let us consider this, beginning with man's furtherance in good.

Therefore the incarnation of the Word of God was not necessary for the restoration of the human race.

3. Besides, to attain salvation man must be especially concerned to show reverence to God, as the text from Malachi teaches, If I am a master, where is my respect; if I am a father, where is my honour? But men revere God more when they think of him as exalted over all things and surpassing their senses. Thus, after the Psalmist writes, High above all nations is the Lord; above the heavens is his glory, he continues, Who is like the Lord our God? All this relates to reverence. Hence it does not seem fitting for human salvation that God become like us by taking flesh.

Therefore the incarnation of the Word of God was not necessary for the restoration of the human race.

*Psalm 112* [113], 4

*Psalm 112* [113], 5

*Malachi 1*, 6

*De Trin. XIII*, 10. PL 42, 1024

*De Civ. Dei xi*, 2. PL 41, 318

*De Trin. XIII*, 10. PL 42, 1024
SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 1, 2

Tertio, quantum ad caritatem, quot maximum per hoc excitatur. Unde Augustinus dicit, Quae major causa est adventus Domini, nisi ut ostenderet Deus dilectionem suam in nobis? Et postea subdit, Si amare pigebat, saltem reamare non pigebat. 16

Quarto, quantum ad rectam operationem, in qua nobis exemplum se praebuit. Unde Augustinus dicit, Homo sequens non erat, qui videri poterat; Deus sequens erat, qui videri non poterat. Ut ergo exiberebatur hominum et qui ab homine videretur, et quem hominum sequeretur, Deus factus est homo. 11

Quinto, quantum ad plenam participationem divinitatis, quae vere est hominis beatitudo, et finis humanae vitae. Et hoc collatum est nobis per Christum humanitatem; dicit enim Augustinus, Factus est Deus homo, ut homo fieret Deus. 12

Similiter etiam hoc utile fuit ad remotionem mali.

Primo enim per hoc homo instruitur ne sibi diabolum præferat et eum veneretur, qui est auctor peccati. Unde Augustinus, Quando sic Deo conjungi potuit humana natura ut fieret una persona, superbi illi maligni spiritus non ideo se audeant homini præponere quia non habent carnem. 13

Secundo, quia per hoc instruimur quanta sit dignitas humanæ naturæ, ne eam inquinemus peccando. Unde Augustinus, Demonstravit nobis Deus quam excellum locum inter creaturas habeat humana natura, in hoc quod hominibus in vero homine apparuit. 14 Et Leo Papa dicit, Agnoece, o Christiane, dignitatem tuam et divinum consors factus nolite, nisi in veterem vilitatem degeneremus et temporis redire. 15

Tertio, quia ad præsumptionem hominis tollendam, gratia Dei, nullis meritis præcedentibus, in homine Christo nobis commendatur, ut dicitur in De Trinitate. 10

Quarto, quia superbia hominis, quae maximum impedimentum est ne inhæreditur Deus, per tantam Dei humilitatem redarguï potest atque sanari, ut Augustinus dicit. 17

Quinto, ad liberandum hominem a servitute. Quod quidem, ut Augustinus dicit, fieri debutit sic ut diabolus justitiam hominis Jesu Christi superaretur. 18

Qui factum est est Christo satisfaciente pro nobis. Homo autem purus satisfacere non poterat pro toto humano genere; Deus autem satisfacere non debebat. Unde oportet Deum et hominem esse Jesum Christum. Unde

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Third, as to charity, which is most greatly enkindled by the Incarnation for, as Augustine asks, what greater cause is there for the coming of the Lord than to show God's love for us? He goes on, If we have been slow to love, let us not be slow to love in return. 10

Fourth, as to right living, we are set an example. Augustine says, in a Christmas sermon, Not man, who should be followed, but God, who cannot be seen. So then, that we might be shown one who would be both seen and followed, God became man. 11

Fifth, as to the full sharing in divinity, which is true happiness and the purpose of human life. This comes to us through the humanity of Christ, for, in Augustine's phrase, God was made man that man might become God. 13a

Moreover, the Incarnation was effective in delivering man from evil.

First, for our instruction, lest we put the devil above ourselves and go in awe of him who is the author of sin. And so Augustine writes, When human nature is so joined to God as to become one with him in person, these proud and evil spirits no longer dare to vaunt themselves over man because they are without flesh. 13

Second, we are taught how great is the dignity of human nature, lest we sully it by sin. To the point Augustine writes, God showed us the exalted place that human nature holds in creation by appearing to men as a true man. 14

So also Pope Leo, O Christian, acknowledge your dignity; having been made a sharer of the divine nature, refuse to fall back into your precious worthlessness by your conduct. 15

Third, to do away with human presumption the grace of God, with no preceding merits on our part, is shown to us in the man Christ, so Augustine writes. 18

Fourth, as he adds, the pride of man, which is the greatest obstacle to our union with God, can be rebutted and cured by such great humility on the part of God. 17

Fifth, to rescue man from thraldom; this, as Augustine writes, should be done in such a way that the devil is overcome by the justice of a man, Jesus Christ, which was accomplished by Christ making satisfaction for us. One who was merely a man could not make satisfaction for the entire human race, and how could God? It was fitting, then, for Jesus Christ to be both God and man. On which Pope Leo says, Weakness is received by power,

10 De Catechizandis rudibus 4. PL 40, 374
11 Serm. cclxxi. 2. PL 39, 1660
13 De Trin. XIII. 17. PL 42, 1031
14 Ibid.
15 Op cit XIII. 14. PL 42, 1027-8
16 This is a favourite theme with the Fathers of the Church and can be traced back at least as far as Irenæus (d. 202), Adversus haereses iv. 28
17 Satisfaction and Redemption, see 3a. 45, 3 & 4.
et Leo Papa dicit, Suscipitur a virtute infirmitas, a majestate humilitas, ut, quod nostris remedii congruabat, unus atque idem Dei et hominum mediator et morte ex uno et resurgere posset ex altero. Nisi enim esset verus Deus, non affret remedium; nisi esset homo verus, non proferet exemplum. 19

Sunt autem et adie pluriae utilitates qua consecutae sunt, supra comprehensionem sensus humani.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod ratio illa procedit secundum primum modum necessarii, sine quo ad finem pervenire non potest.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod aliqua satisfactio potest dici sufficiens dupliciter. Uno modo, perfecte, quia est condigna per quandam adequationem ad recompensationem commissae culpae. Et sic hominim puri satisfactio sufficiens esse non potuit, quia tota natura humana etat per peccatum corrupta; nec bonum aliquid personae etiam plurium poterat per equiperantiam totius nature detrimentum recompensare. Tum etiam quia peccatum contra Deum commissum quandam infinitatem habet ex infinitate divinae majestatis; tanto enim offensa est gravior quanto major est illae in quem delinquitur. Unde oportuit, ad condignam satisfactionem, ut actio satisfacientis haberet efficaciam infinitum, utpura Dei et hominim existens.

Alio modo potest dici satisfactio sufficiens imperfecte, scilicet secundum acceptationem ejus qui est ea contentus, quamvis non sit condigna. Et hoc modo satisfactio puri hominis est sufficiens. Et quia omne imperfectum presupponit aliquid perfectum a quo sustentetur, inde est quod omnis puri hominis satisfactio efficaciam habet a satisfactione Christi.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod Deus assumendo carnem suam majestatem non minuit et per consequens non minuitur ratio reverentiae ad ipsum, quae augetur per augmentum cognitionis ipsius. Ex hoc autem quod nobis appropiauare voluit per carnis assumptionem, magis nos ad se cognoscendum attraxit.

articulos inter 3. utrum, si homo non peccasset, nihilominus Deus incarnatus fuisse

AD TERTIUM sic proceditur: 1 I. Vide tur quod, si homo non peccasset, nihilominus Deus incarnatus fuisse. Manente enim causa, manet effectus.

18) loc cit note 15
19) de 2 Sent. 1, 1, 3, De Veritate xxix, 4 ad 5. In 1 ad Tim. 1, lect. 4
20) St Anselm (d. 1109) is not quoted, but the argument echoes his study of the Atonement, the Cur Deus Homo? Note that there is here only the faintest echo of the Ransom Theory of Redemption, fathered by Origen and adopted by many of the Latin Fathers, among them St Hilary, St Augustine, and St Leo.
21) satisfactio, making redress by voluntarily undergoing something onerous in view of the injured rights of another person; 'expiation' or 'atonement' are equivalents,

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humility by majesty, that one and the same mediator between God and man might die from the one and rise from the other, and so were we fitly restored. Unless he were truly God, he could not provide a cure; unless he were man, he could not offer an example. 130

There were many other advantages resulting, which are beyond our present earth-bound comprehension.

Hence: 1. This argument holds for 'necessary' in the first sense, i.e. that without which a goal is attainable.

2. Satisfaction can be termed sufficient in two ways: completely or incompletely. In the first way satisfaction is condign, i.e. a recompense equalling the fault committed. 124 So understood, sufficient satisfaction is beyond the power of anyone merely human, since all human nature is corrupted by sin, with the result that the goodness of any one individual or even of many would not make adequate recompense for a disability affecting the whole nature. 125 Further, a sin against God has a kind of infinity about it, because of God's infinite majesty; the seriousness of an offence is in proportion to the dignity of the one offended. 126 Thus for condign satisfaction the act of the one atoning should be infinite in worth, an act, that is, of one who is both God and man.

In a second way satisfaction is termed sufficient, but incompletely so, i.e. sufficient because of the willingness of the one accepting it, even though it does not equal the offence. So understood the satisfaction of one who is purely human is sufficient. Yet since whatever is incomplete presupposes something complete which supports it, every expiatory work of one who is merely human derives its value from the atoning work of Christ. 127

3. God did not diminish his own dignity by taking flesh, and so did not lessen the reason for reverencing; in fact this grows with our knowledge of him. And his willing to come nearer to us by taking flesh has drawn us to know him all the better

article 3. if man had not sinned, would God nevertheless have become incarnate?

THE THIRD POINT: 1 I. It seems that if man had not sinned, God would nevertheless have become incarnate. If the cause remains, so also does the
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Effect. Yet, as Augustine says, *there are many other things to be considered in the incarnation of Christ* besides the forgiveness of sin, as we noted above.

2. Moreover, it belongs to omnipotence that God should complete his work and so manifest his power through some infinite effect. But no mere creature can be called an infinite effect, since it is limited by its very nature. The infinite effect of God's power seems to be clearly shown only in the Incarnation, wherein things infinitely distant are joined together: it brought about that a man is God. In this work too the universe seems to be brought to completion, since the final creature, man, is united to the first principle, God. Therefore, even if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate.

3. In addition, human nature is not made more capable of grace through sin. Yet after sin it is capable of the grace of union, the supreme gift. Hence even if man had not sinned, human nature would have been capable of this grace. Now God does not deny nature a good within its capacities. Therefore, if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate.

4. Furthermore, God's predestination is eternal. But we read in Romans that Christ was predestined Son of God in power. Thus even before sin the Son of God was bound to become incarnate that God's predestination should be fulfilled.

5. Again, the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to the first man, as is clear from the words, *She now is bone of my bone,* which St Paul says that *this is a great mystery, I mean in reference to Christ and the Church.* But man could not have foreknowledge of his fall for the same reason that the angels could not, as Augustine shows. Therefore, even if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate.

On the Other Hand, Augustine, explaining the text in Luke, *The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost,* writes, *If man had not sinned, the Son of man would not have come.* Furthermore, on the words, *Christ came into the world to save sinners,* the Gloss comments, *There is no cause for the coming of Christ the Lord except to save sinners. Take away the disease, take away the wounds and no reason remains for the medicine.*

1Glossa ordinaria; cf Augustine, Serm. clxxv. PL 38, 945. In this series 'the Gloss' refers to the Glossa ordinaria; the interlinearis and Lombardi, are meant by 'a gloss'. The Glossa ordinaria and interlinearis, once attributed to Walafridus Strabo (d. 849), in finished form are in fact from the school of Anselm of Laon (d. 1109); on the biblical glosses used in the Middle Ages, see B. Smalley, Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1964), pp. 56-66.

2See 18. 7. 2 ad 1.

3Man is described as the culminating work of creation, cf Gen. 1, 26-31; Lateran Council IV. Denz 860.
RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod alii circa hoc diversimode opinantur. Quidam enim dicunt quod, etiamsi homo non peccasset, Dei Filius fuisset incarnatus. Alii vero contrarium asserunt. Quorum assertiones magis assentendum videtur. Ea enim quae ex solo Dei voluntate proferunt supra omne debeatum creaturae nobis innotescere non possum quin etiam in sacra Scriptura tradantur, qua quid divina voluntas innotescit. Unde, cum in sacra Scriptura ubique incarnationis ratio ex peccato derivatur, sic in Deum sicut in finem. Quidam potius Dei ad hoc non limitetur, potiusse enim, etiam peccato non existente, Deus incarnari.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod omnes aliae causae quae sunt assignatae pertinent ad remedium peccati. Si enim homo non peccasset, per fusus fuisset lumine divinae sapientiae et justitiae rectitudine perfectus a Deo ad omnia necessaria cognoscenda. Sed quia homo, deserto Deo, ad corporalia collapsus est, conveniens fuit ut Deus, carnis assumpta, etiam per corporalia ei salutis remedium exhaeret. Unde dicit Augustinus, super illud Joann., Verbum caro factum est, Caro te obceaverat, caro te sanat, quomiam sic venit Christus ut de carne vitia carnis exugeter.


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REPLY: There is a difference of opinion on this matter. Some say that even if man had not sinned, the Son of God would have become incarnate. Others assert the contrary, and agreement with them seems preferable. These things that flow from the will of God alone beyond all that is due to creatures can come to be known by us only to the extent that they are handed down in sacred Scripture, which makes God's will known.6 Everywhere in sacred Scripture, however, the sin of the first man is given as the reason for the Incarnation; thus it is preferable to hold that the work of the Incarnation is ordered by God as a remedy for sin, in such a way that if there had been no sin, there would have been no Incarnation. Divine power, of course, is not limited to this, for God could have become incarnate even if there had been no sin.

Hence: 1. Every other reason adduced is related to the remedying of sin. For if man had not sinned he would have been filled with the light of divine wisdom and made perfect by God with moral uprightness so that he would know everything needful. But since man, abandoning God, stooped to corporeal things, how right it was that God by taking flesh, should offer him the saving remedy also through corporeal things. Thus on the text, The Word became flesh,14 Augustine writes, Flesh blinded you, flesh heals you, for such is the coming of Christ that by flesh are the vices of flesh overcome.15

2. Infinite divine power is shown in the very manner in which things are produced from nothing. Further, for the perfection of the universe it is enough for a creature to be ordered in a natural way to God as to its goal. For a creature to be united in person to God surpasses the limits of its natural perfection.

3. Note a twofold capacity in human nature. One is according to the range of a power within the nature; this is always fulfilled by God, who gives to each thing according to its natural capability. The other is according to the range of God's power, to which every creature is totally subject. This is the capability in question here. God does not always bring it to realization, for otherwise he would be able to cause only those effects in creatures that he actually accomplishes; the falsity of this is clear from the Prima Pars.16

Nothing, however, stands in the way of human nature's being lifted to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil that he might draw forth some greater good. Thus the text in Romans reads, Where wicked-
gratia.17 Unde et in benedictione Cerei Paschalis dicitur, O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!18
4. Ad quartum dicendum quod praedestinatio prae supponit praesciantiam futurorum. Et ideo, sicut Deus prae destinat salutem alium hominis per orationem aliorum impellam, ita etiam prae destinavit opus incarnationis in remedium humani peccati.
5. Ad quintum dicendum quod nihil prohibit alciue revelari effectus cui non revelatur causa. Potuit ergo primo homini revelari incarnationis mysterium sine hoc quod esset prae sius casus; non enim quicunque cognoscit effectum cognoscit et causam.

articulus 4. utrum Deus principalius incarnatus fuerit in remedium actualium peccatorum quam in remedium originalis peccati

AD QUARTUM sic proceditur: 1 I. Videtur quod Deus principalius incarnatus fuerit in remedium actualium peccatorum quam in remedium originalis peccati. Quanto enim peccatum est gravius, tanto magis humana salutis adversatur, propter quom Deus est incarnatus. Sed peccatum actuale est gravius quam originale peccatum; minima enim pena debetur alciui peccato, ut Augustinus dicit. Ergo principalius incarnatio Christi ordinatur ad deletionem actualium peccatorum.

2. Praeterea, peccato originali non debetur pena sensus, sed solum pena damni, ut in Secundo habetur est. Sed Christus venit pro satisfactione peccatorum peenam sensus pati in cruce, non autem damni, quia nullum defectum habuit divinæ visionis aut fruitionis. Ergo principalius venit ad deletionem peccatorum actualium quam originalis.

3. Praeterea, sicut Chrysostomus dicit, hic est affectus servi fidelis, ut beneficiæ domini sui quae communiter omnibus data sunt, quasi sibi soli præstita repperit; quasi enim de se solo loquens Paulus ita scribit ad Galat., Dilexi me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me. Sed propria peccata nostra sunt actualia; originale enim est commune peccatum. Ergo hunc affectum debemus habere, ut estimemus eum principaliter propter actualia peccata venisse.

1Romana 5, 20
15Missale Rom., Easter Vigil
"cf III Sent. 1, 1, 2 ad 6. Responsio de articulis XLII, 28. Responsio de articulis XXXVI
23Contra Julianum V, 11. PL 44, 809
122ae. 87, 5 obj. 2. See II Sent. 33, 2, 1. Augustine, Enchiridion 93. PL 40, 275

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ness abounded, grace abounded yet more;19 and in the blessing of the Paschal Candle, O happy fault that merited so great a redeemer.18
4. Predestination presupposes a knowledge of the future. And therefore as God predestines that the salvation of one person should be accomplished through the prayers of others,6 so also he predestines that the work of the Incarnation should be a remedy for human sin.

5. There is nothing to prevent some fact from being revealed, even though its cause is not revealed. Thus the mystery of the Incarnation could be revealed to the first man without his fall being revealed; for not everyone who knows a given effect knows its cause.

article 4. did God become incarnate more to remedy actual sins than original sin?

THE FOURTH POINT: 1 I. It seems that God became incarnate chiefly to remedy actual sins, not original sin. The more grievous the sin, the more it is opposed to man's salvation, for which God became incarnate. Actual sin is graver than original sin: the mildest punishment is due to original sin, as Augustine notes. Therefore Christ's incarnation has as its chief purpose the removal of actual sin.

2. Moreover, the pain of sense is not due to original sin, but only the pain of loss, as noted in the Secunda Pars. Now Christ came to suffer the pain of sense on the cross to atone for sins, but not to suffer the pain of loss, since he lost nothing of the divine vision or bliss. Thus he came chiefly for the removal of actual sin rather than original sin.

3. Further, as Chrysostom teaches, this should be the attitude of the faithful servant: to consider those gifts of his master which are given to all alike as if they were given to him alone. St Paul writes to the Galatians as if he were speaking only of himself, He loved me and gave himself up for me.5 But our own sins are actual sins; original sin is the sin we have in common. Consequently our attitude should be of reckoning that he came chiefly because of our actual sins.

1De Compunctione Cordis 11, 6. PG 47, 420. St John Chrysostom (d. 407), Bp. of Constantinople, Father of the Church, renowned preacher, moral expositor of the Gospels
2Galatians 2, 20
3Glossa ordinaria
4See ta. 23, 8. Christ's predestination, 3a. 24, 1-4.
5Actual sins, those for which we are personally responsible. Original sin, the inherent deprivation of the grace with which human nature was originally endowed; to be distinguished from the first actual sin of our first parents. See 122ae. 82, 1.
ON THE OTHER HAND there is the text in John, Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sin of the world.

REPLY: Christ without any doubt came into the world to take away, not only that sin passed on through birth to posterity, but also all the sins added subsequently. This does not mean, however, that all of them are in fact wiped out—some people fail to hold fast to Christ, as John notes, The light came into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light; but that Christ himself made the offering that suffices to blot out all sin. Accordingly we read in Romans, But the offence and the gift differ. After one fall came judgement with the verdict of condemnation; now after many falls comes grace with its verdict of acquittal.

Notice further that the greater the sin the more it was the purpose of Christ's coming to wipe it out. Greatness, however, is used in two senses. The first refers to intensity, e.g. the purer the whiteness the greater it is. In this way actual sin is greater than original sin because, as determined in the Secunda Pars, it bears with it more voluntariness. The second sense refers to extent, e.g. the wider its spread the greater the whiteness. In this way original sin, through which the entire human race has been infected, is greater than any actual sin, proper to an individual person. From this standpoint the intent in Christ's coming was chiefly to take away original sin, since the good of a whole people is more godlike than the good of a single person.

Hence: 1. This argument holds with respect to the greatness of the sin considered intensively.

2. The pain of sense is not meted out for original sin as retribution in the after-life; yet the sensory penalties of the present life, such as hunger, thirst, death, and the like, come from original sin. And thus Christ, that he might fully satisfy for original sin, willed to suffer sensible pain that he might take completely to himself death and the like.

3. As Chrysostom himself notes, the Apostle says these words not as if he wishes to lessen the gifts of Christ, which are so abundant and spread through all the world; but that he might account himself alone the occasion of them all. For what does it matter that they are also given to others if they are given so completely and so perfectly as though nothing

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*Piana adds: quod exponens Beda dicit, Peccatum mundi dictur originale peccatum quod est commune totius mundi, on which Bede comments, Original sin, which is common to all, is called the sin of the world.

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*On this absolute statement of the universality of original sin in relation to the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, see 3a. 27, 2, Vol. 51, ed. T. R. Heath, notes 2 & Appendix 3; cf Expositio super salutationem angelicam; T. U. Mullaney, Mary Immaculate in the Writings of St Thomas', The Thomist 17 (1954) pp. 433–468.

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SEDA CONTRA EST QUOD Ioann. DICTITUR, ECCE AGNUS DEI, ECCE QUI TOLLIT PECCATA MUNDI.

RESPONSO: DICENDUM QUOD CERTUM EST CHRISTUM VENISSE IN HUNC MUNDUM NON SOLEM AD DELENDUM ILLUD PECCATUM QUOD TRADUCTUM EST ORIGINALITER IN PESTEROS, SED ETIAM AD DELETONEM OMMNIMI PECCATORUM QUAE POSTMODUM SUPERADDITA SUNT. NON QUOD OMNIA DELEANTUR—QUOD EST PROPER DEFECTUM HOMINUM QUI CHRISTO NON INHABENT, SECUNDUM ILLUD IOANN., VENIT LUX IN MUNDUM ET DILEXERUNT HOMINES MAGIS TENEBRAS QUAM LUCEM, sed quia ipsa exhibuit quod sufficiens fuit ad omnium peccatorum deleotionem. Unde dicitur Rom., NON SICUT DELICTUM SIC EST DONUM; NAM JUDICIA EX UNO IN CONDAMNATIONEM, GRATIA AUTEM EX MULTI DELICITIS IN JUSTIFICATIONEM.

TANTO AETUM PRINCIPALIUS AD ALICUIUS PECCATI DELEOTIONEM CHRISTUS VNIT QUANTO ILLUD PECCATUM MAJUS EST. DICTUR AUTEM MAJUS ALIQUID DUPLICITER. UNO MODO INTENSIVE, SICUT MAJOR ALBEDO QUE EST INTENSIO. ET PER HUNC MODUM MAJUS EST PECCATUM ACTUALE QUAM ORIGINALE, QUA PLUS HABET DE RATIONE VOLUNTARI, UT IN SECUANDO DICTUM EST. ALIO MODO DICTUR ALIQUID MAJUS, SECUNDUM ILLUM MAJOR ALBEDO QUE EST IN MAJORI SUPERFICIE. ET HOC MODO PECCATUM ORIGINALE PER QUOD TOTUM GENUS HUMANUM INFICITUR EST MAJUS QUILIBET PECCATO ACTUALI, QUOD EST PROPRIUM SINGULARIS PERSONAE. ET QUANTUM AD HOC CHRISTUS PRINCIPALIUS VENIT AD TOLLENDUM ORIGINALE PECCATUM, INQUANTUM MAJUS DEBETUR SENSIUM, NON QUAM DIMINUERE VOLENS AMPLISSIMA ET MAGNITUDINE PECCATI.

PECCATUM, INQUANTUM EST MAJOR QUUBELI PECCATO ACTUALI, QUOD EST PROPRIUM SINGULARIS PERSONAE. ET QUANTUM AD HOC CHRISTUS PRINCIPALIUS VENIT AD TOLLENDUM ORIGINALE PECCATUM, INQUANTUM BONUM GENITIS DIVINUS EST QUAM BONUM UNIUS, UT DICTUR IN I ETHIC.

1. AD PRIMUM ERGO DICENDUM QUOD RATIO ILLA PROCEDIT DE INTENSIVITE MAGNITUDINE PECCATI.

2. AD SECUNDUM DICENDUM QUOD PECCATO ORIGINALE IN FUTURA RETRIBUTIONE NON DEBETUR PENA SENSUS. PENALITATES TAMEN QUAS SENSIBILITER IN HAC VITA PATIMUR, SICUT FAMEM, SITUM, MORTEM ET ALIA HUJUSMODI, EX PECCATI ORIGINALE PROCEDUNT. ET IDEO CHRISTO, UT PIENE PRO PECCATO ORIGINALE SATISFACTERIC, VOLUIT SENSIBILEM DOLOR EM PATI, UT MORTEM ET ALIA HUJUSMODI IN SEIPSO CONSUMMARET.

3. AD TERTIUM DICENDUM QUOD, SICUT CHRYSTOMUS IBI INDUCIT, THE LAMB OF GOD, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD.
SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 32. 1, 5

fuerit praestitum? Ex hoc ergo quod aliquis debet sibi reputare beneficia Christi prae crita esse non debet existimare quod non sint prae sita alis. Et ideo non excludit quin principalius veniret abolere peccatum totius nature quam peccatum unius personae. Sed illud peccatum commune ita perfecte curatum est in unoquoque aci in eo solo esset curatum. Et praefera propter unionem caritatis totum quod omnibus est impensum unusquisque debet sibi adscribere.

articulus 5. utrum conveniens fuisse Deum incarnari a principio humani generis

AD QUINTUM sic proceditur: 1. Videtur quod conveniens fuisse Deum incarnari a principio humani generis. Incarnationis enim opus ex immensus divinae caritatis processit, secundum illud Eph., Deus, qui dives est in misericordia, propter nimiam caritatem suam qua dilexit nos, cum esset mortui peccatis, convivialavit nos in Christo. 2. Sed caritas non tardat subvenire amico necessitatem patienti, secundum illud Prov., Ne dicas amico tuo, Vade et revertere, cras dabo tibi, cum statim possis dare. 3. Ergo Deus incarnationis opus differre non debuit, sed statim a principio per suam incarnationem humanae generi subvenire.

2. Preterea, 1 Tim. dicitur, Christus venit in hunc mundum peccatores salvos facere. 4. Sed pluris salvati fuissent si a principio humani generis Deus incarnatus fuisse; plurimi enim, ignorantem Deum, in suo peccato perierunt in diversis seculari. Ergo convenientius fuisse quod a principio humani generis Deus incarnatus fuisse.

3. Preterea, opus gratiae non est minus ordinatum quam opus nature. Sed natura initium sumit a perfectis, ut dicit Boethius. 5. Ergo opus gratiae debuit a principio esse perfectum. Sed in opere incarnationis consideratur perfectio gratiae, secundum illud, Verbum caro factum est; et postea subditur, plenum gratiae et veritatis. 6. Ergo Christus a principio humani generis debuit incarnari.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur Gal., At ubi venit plenitudi temporis, misit Deus Filium suum, factum ex muliere, 7 ubi dicit glossa quod plenitudi temporis est quod praefinitum fuit a Deo Patre quando mitteret Filium suum. 8 Sed

1 cf. III Sent. 1, 1, 4. CG IV, 53 & 55. In Isa. 2. In Gal. 4, lect. 2.
2 Ephesians 2, 4-5
3 Proverbs 3, 28
4 I Timothy 1, 15
5 De Compositio Philosophia III. 10. PL 63, 765. Ancius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius (c. 480-c. 524), statesman in the late Roman Empire; his Latin translations of Aristotle formed the logica vetus on which early Scholasticism relied; his theological treatises helped determine Latin Trinitarian and Christological terminology

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of them were given to another? Therefore, when someone recognizes that Christ's gifts are given to him, he should not conclude from this that they are not given to others. And thus we do not rule out that he came chiefly to remove the sin of human nature entire, rather than the sin of one person. Yet that common sin is so fully healed in each one as if it were healed in him alone. Furthermore, because of the bond of charity, the whole gift given for all ought to be accounted by each as his own. 6

article 5. should God have become incarnate from the beginning of the human race?

THE FIFTH POINT: 1. It seems that it would have been fitting for God to become incarnate from the beginning of the human race. For the work of the Incarnation flows from the immensity of divine love. But God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of the very great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ. 8 But love does not put off bringing aid to a friend suffering need; as we read, Say not to your neighbour, Go and come another time, tomorrow I will give to you, when you can give at once. 8 Therefore God ought not to have delayed, but from the beginning should have come to the aid of the human race through the Incarnation.

2. Again, it is written, Christ came into the world to save sinners. 4 But more would have been saved if God had become incarnate from the beginning of the human race, since through the centuries many, not knowing God, have perished in their sin. Better, then, for God to have become incarnate from the beginning of the human race.

3. Further, the work of grace is not less orderly than the work of nature. But nature takes its beginning from perfect things, as Boethius writes. 8 Thus the work of grace should have been perfect from the beginning. Yet, the perfection of grace is found in the work of the Incarnation, for where we read, And the Word was made flesh, the text continues, full of grace and truth. 6 Therefore Christ should have become incarnate from the beginning of the human race.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the text, But when the fulness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, 7 is glossed, The fulness of time is that prefixed by God the Father as the moment when he would send his Son. 8 God, however,
Deus sua sapientia omnia definit. Ergo conveniuntissimo tempore Deus est incarnatus. Et sic non fuit conveniens quod a principio humani generis Deus incarnaretur.

RESPONSO: Dicendum quod, cum opus incarnationis principaliter ordinetur ad reparationem nature humanae per peccati abominacionem, manifestum est quod non fuit conveniens a principio humani generis ante peccatum Deum incarnatumuisse; non enim datur medicina nisi jam infirmis. Unde ipse Dominus dicit, Matt., Non est opus valentibus medicus, sed male habentibus; non enim veni vocare justos, sed peccatores.9

Sed non etiam statim post peccatum conveniens fuit Deum incarnari. Primo quidem, propter conditionem humani peccati, quod ex superbia provenerat; unde eo modo erat homo liberandus ut humiliatus recognosceret se liberatore indigere. Unde super illud Gal., Ordinata per angelos in manu mediatrix;10 dicit glossa, Magno constilio factum est ut, post hominis casum non illico Dei Filius mitteretur. Reliqui enim Deus prius hominem in libertate arbitrii in lege naturali, ut sic vires naturae sue cognosceret. Ubique deficeret, Legem accepit. Qua data, involuit morbus, non Legis, sed naturae vitio, ut ita, cognita suae infirmitate, clamaret ad medicum, et gratia quaematus auxilium.11

Secundo, propter ordinem promotionis in bonum, secundum quem ab imperfecto ad perfectum proceditur. Unde Apostolus dicit, ad Cor., Non prius quod spiritualiter est, sed quod animale; deinde quod spiritualiter. Primus homo de terra, terrenus; secundus homo de Caelo, caelatus.12 Non prius quod spirituale est, sed quod animale; deinde quod spiritualiter.13

Tertio, propter dignitatem ipsius Verbi incarnati. Quia super illud Gal., Ubi venit plenitudo temporis,14 dicit glossa, Qua maxime judex veniebat, tanto preconcum seriis longior proceder debat.15

Quarto, ne fervor fidei temporis prolixitate tepesceret. Quia circa finem mundi requiescet caritas multorum;16 et Luc. dicitur, Cum Filius hominis veniet, potam insipientias fidei super terram.17

Hence: I. Love does not delay to aid a friend, yet with a care for the right timing and for personal conditions.b If a doctor were to give medicine at the very beginning of the sickness, it would be of less value, or even could do more harm than good. So also the Lord does not allow love to do so.

RESPONSE: Since the work of the Incarnation was directed chiefly to the restoration of the human race through the removal of sin, it is clear that it was not fitting that God become incarnate from the beginning of the human race before sin; medicine is given only to the sick. Therefore, as the Lord himself teaches, It is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners.9

Neither was it appropriate for God to become incarnate immediately after sin. First of all, the mark of human sin is that it flows from pride,a and thus man should be liberated in such a way that, having been humbled, he might recognize his need for a liberator. Commenting on the text, Being delivered to one who is ill at the very beginning of the sickness, it would be of less value, or even could do more harm than good. So also the Lord does not allow love to do so.
statim incarnationis remedium humano generi exhibuit, ne illud contemneret ex superbia, si prius suam infirmitatem non cognosceret.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod Augustinus ad hoc respondit, dicens quod tunc voluit Christus hominibus apparem, et apud eos praedicari sua doctrinam, quando et ubi scebat esse qui in eum fuerant crediuti. His enim tempusbus et in locis, tales homines in ejus predicatione futuros esse scebat, non quidem omnes, sed tamen multii in ejus corporali presencia fuerunt, qui nec in eum, suscitatis mortuis, credere voluerunt. 17

Sed hanc responsionem reprensob idem Augustinus dicit, Non nescit possumus dicere Tyrios aut Sidonios, talibus apud eos facta essent, suis miraculis credituros, quibus voluit subvenit, aliis, aut credituros non fuisse si fierent, cum ipse Dominus eis attestetur noluisse, aut credituros non fuisse si fierent, cum ipse Dominus eis attestetur. 20 Proinde, ut ipse solvens subdit, sicut Apostolus atit, 'non est volens neque currentis, sed misericordis Dei', qui his quos pravidit, si apud eos facta essent, suis miraculis creditero, quibus voluit subvenit, alius autem non subvenit, de quibus in sua praelectione, occulte quidem sed jucte, aliud judicavit. Ita misericordiam ejus in his qui liberantur, et veritatem in qui nec in eum, suscitatis mortuis, credere voluerunt. 17

In unione ad Deum.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod perfectum est prius imperfecto in diversis quidem tempore et natura, operet enim quod perfectum sit quod alia ad perfectionem adducit. Sed in uno et eodem imperfectum est prius tempore, et si posterius natura. Sic ergo imperfectionem naturae humanae duratione praeedit aeterna Dei perfectio, sed sequitur ipsum consummata perfectio in unione ad Deum.

articulus 6. utrum incarnationis opus differri usque in finem mundi


2. Praeterea, sicut dicturn est, perfectum in eodem tempore est posterius

1 Epist. cit. PL 33, 375-6; cf De Prædest. Sanct. 9. PL 44, 974
2 De Domino Person. 9. PL 45, 1006
3 ibid. 11, 25. PL 45, 1007-08, quoting Romans 9, 16
4 cf Ht Sent. 1, 1, 4
5 Interlinear. Lombard. PL 191, 859
6art. 5 ad 3
7The preceding passage was misused by some semi-Pelagians to bolster their notion of predestination and so Augustine clarifies his thought in a later work.

immediately provide the Incarnation to the human race as a remedy, lest it be spurned out of pride, before men had recognized their own weakness.

Augustine answers this difficulty, saying in one work, Chritn willd to appear among men and to preach his doctrine to them when and where he knew those who were prepared to believe in him. His foreknow that in those times and places there would be some, not all, of the kind who, when he would be present to them in the flesh, would not want to believe in him even after he had died to life. 17

But Augustine himself rejects this answer in another work: But can we say that those of Tyre and Sidon would have refused to believe such mighty works done among them, or would not have believed them if they had been done, when the Lord himself bears witness to them that they would have repented with great humility if those signs of divine power had been done among them? 22

Answering the question himself, Augustine adds, Accordingly, as the Apostle writes, 'There is question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God showing mercy,' for he wills to come to the aid of those whom he foresees will believe in his miracles if they should be done among them, and not to come to the aid of others since in his predestination, secretly indeed but justly, he has determined otherwise concerning them. Let us, then, believe in his mercy with those to whom he is merciful, and in his fairness with those who are punished. 22

3. Among various realities, the perfect is prior to the imperfect, in time and in nature; for that which brings other things to perfection must be perfect. In one and the same reality, however, the imperfect is prior in time, even though derivative in nature and meaning. And thus God's eternal perfection precedes in duration the perfection of human nature, yet upon this initial imperfection follows its final perfection in union with God.

article 6. should the Incarnation have been postponed until the end of the world?

THE SIXTH POINT: 1. The work of the Incarnation, it seems, should have been put off until the end of the world. The Psalm, My old age is plentiful mercy, is glossed so that old age means in the last days. But the epoch of the Incarnation ought to be especially one of mercy; The time has come to show mercy. Therefore the Incarnation ought to have been delayed till the end of the world.

2. Further, as shown above, in the same being the perfect comes later

St Thomas, in light of subsequent theological discussion and his own reflection, clarifies Augustinian thought on predestination, especially with his greater precision on the universality of God’s saving will, on the different causality in predestination and reprobation, and on personal human culpability as the cause of positive reprobation. See 1a. 23, 3 & 5.

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The Incarnation is the supreme perfection for human nature is its union with the Word, for it has pleased the Father that all his fulness should dwell in Christ. Therefore the Incarnation should have been deferred until the last.

ON THE OTHER HAND is the text, In the midst of the years thou shalt make it known. Thus the mystery of the Incarnation, whereby God has made himself known to the world, ought not to have been delayed till the end of the world.

REPLY: Just as it was not fitting for God to become incarnate at the beginning of the world, neither would it be right for the Incarnation to be postponed until the end of the world. One reason for this becomes clear from the very union of divine and human nature. As was noted above, in one sense the perfect precedes the imperfect in time, in that the imperfect becomes perfect, and so comes before the perfect in time; yet in that the perfect is the efficient cause of perfection it precedes the imperfect in time. Now in the work of the Incarnation both aspects come together. Human nature is raised by the Incarnation to its highest perfection, and so it was not fitting that the Incarnation take place from the beginning of the human race. Nevertheless, the incarnate Word is the efficient cause of human fulfilment, according to John, Of his fulness we have all received; accordingly the Incarnation ought not to be delayed until the end of the world. Yet the achievement of glory, to which human nature is finally brought by the incarnate Word, will come at the end of the world.

A second reason is the effect, human salvation. The following text is pertinent, It is in the power of the giver to show mercy when and to the extent that he chooses. He came, indeed, when he knew that aid should be given and that his gift would be welcome. When, therefore, by a kind of illness of the human race, man's knowledge of him became dim and morals weakened, God deigned to choose Abraham in whom there would be a model of renewed knowledge and conduct. And when reverence again weakened, he gave the written Law through Moses. Still the Gentiles despised it and would not subject themselves to it, nor did those who received it observe it; but the Lord, moved by mercy, sent his Son who, after giving to all the remission of their sins,
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might offer those made righteous to God the Father. But if this remedy had been postponed until the end of the world, knowledge of God and reverence and moral decency would have been totally removed from the earth.

A third reason is clear from this: this postponement would not have suitably shown divine power. This power saved men in different ways, through faith not only in a future reality, but also in a present and in a past reality.

Hence: 1. The comment of that gloss refers to the mercy that leads to glory. If, however, we do apply it to the mercy shown to the human race through the Incarnation, we note with Augustine that the time of the Incarnation can be likened to the youth of the human race because of the strength and fervor of faith which acts through love. It can also be compared to old age, which is the sixth age, because of the number of years that elapsed before Christ came in the sixth age. Although in a body youth and old age cannot be found together, they can exist at the same time in the soul: youth because of quickness, old age because of seriousness.

And thus Augustine says in one place that it was not fitting that the Master, in imitation of whom the human race is formed to the loftiest standards of conduct, should come from heaven except at the time of youth; but in another he writes that Christ came in the sixth age, i.e., in the old age of the human race.

2. The fact of the Incarnation should be considered not only as the term of a change from imperfect to perfect, but also as the source of perfection in human nature, as was noted above.

3. Chrysostom, commenting on the text, God did not send his Son into the world that he should judge the world, writes, Christ comes twice: first, to remit sins, secondly, to judge. If he had not done so, all things would have perished together: all, indeed, have sinned and need the glory of God. Therefore it is clear that the coming of mercy should not be postponed until the end of the world.

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10 Ambrosiaster, Questiones Veteri et Noi Testamenti 83. PL 35, 2276. Pseudo-Ambrose, unknown 4th-century Latin commentator; the name was coined by Erasmus.
11Retractiones I, 26. PL 32, 626
12PLXXXIII Quaest. 44. PL 40, 28
13De Gen. contra Manich. I, 23. PL 34, 192
14In the Reply
15John 3, 17
16Jer 23, 11
17In Joann. XXVIII, I. PG 59, 1621 and Romans 3, 23
18See De Gen. contra Manich. 1, 23. PL 34, 192.