

UNIT 5

The Incarnation in the Thought of St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274)

The mediaeval period (which is usually thought to begin around 600AD and come to an end with the advent of the modern world around 1500AD) sees some fascinating developments in Christology. The key questions suddenly changed and much of the ground leading to the Reformation was prepared.

As we have seen in previous units, the debate in the early Church tended to revolve around the identity of Christ. Was Christ human? Was Christ divine? If he was both, how did his two natures relate to each other? In the aftermath of Chalcedon there was something of a consensus on these matters (although debates concerning Christ's will(s) raged on). The questions therefore began to change. Now, theologians were concerned more particularly with the question of salvation. How does Christ bring salvation? To whom? Most crucially, theologians began to ask, 'Did God *have* to save us by the incarnation, or could God have saved us by some other means?'

There are two mediaeval theologians whose work is crucial to this and countless other debates: Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274). In particular, Anselm's short text *Cur Deus Homo?* (literally, 'Why the God-Man?', but more usually translated 'Why did God become man?') is thought to reflect the core elements of Chalcedon while also setting the debate on its path towards the Reformation concern with substitution. Aquinas was deeply influenced by Anselm, but in the end modulated Anselm's position in some very subtle ways. So, what are the issues?

As an entry point, you should read the excerpts of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?* that are printed below. This is often not a good way to read texts at Masters' level because inevitably the selection of excerpts will take those passages out of their immediate context and foreclose certain readings of Anselm's work. So take this as a pragmatic exercise and be aware that you can read Anselm's work in its entirety if you wish. *Cur Deus Homo?* is not particularly long and is available in many editions. In the excerpt below, Anselm's 'contents page' is included so that you can see his themes, while the key points have been underlined. The work is in the form of a dialogue between Anselm and a character named Boso (For the full text see: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works)

FROM ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *CUR DEUS HOMO?*

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 - XVIIIa. How with God there is neither necessity nor impossibility
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 - XXI. How it is impossible for the devil to be reconciled
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BOOK I

CHAPTER I.

The question on which the whole work rests.

I HAVE been often and most earnestly requested by many, both personally and by letter, that I would hand down in writing the proofs of a certain doctrine of our faith, which I am accustomed to give to inquirers; for they say that these proofs gratify them, and are considered sufficient. This they ask, not for the sake of attaining to faith by means of reason, but that they may be

gladdened by understanding and meditating on those things which they believe; and that, as far as possible, they may be always ready to convince any one who demands of them a reason of that hope which is in us. And this question, both infidels are accustomed to bring up against us, ridiculing Christian simplicity as absurd; and many believers ponder it in their hearts; for what cause or necessity, in sooth, God became man, and by his own death, as we believe and affirm, restored life to the world; when he might have done this, by means of some other being, angelic or human, or merely by his will. [...]

CHAPTER II.

How those things which are to be said should be received.

Boso. As the right order requires us to believe the deep things of Christian faith before we undertake to discuss them by reason; so to my mind it appears a neglect if, after we are established in the faith, we do not seek to understand what we believe. Therefore, since I thus consider myself to hold the faith of our redemption, by the prevenient grace of God, so that, even were I unable in any way to understand what I believe, still nothing could shake my constancy; I desire that you I should discover to me, what, as you know, many besides myself ask, for what necessity and cause God, who is omnipotent, should have assumed the littleness and weakness of human nature for the sake of its renewal? [...]

CHAPTER III.

Objections of infidels and replies of believers.

Boso. Infidels ridiculing our simplicity charge upon us that we do injustice and dishonour to God when we affirm that he descended into the womb of a virgin, that he was born of woman, that he grew on the nourishment of milk and the food of men; and, passing over many other things which seem incompatible with Deity, that he endured fatigue, hunger, thirst, stripes and crucifixion among thieves.

Anselm.. We do no injustice or dishonour to God, but give him thanks with all the heart, praising and proclaiming the ineffable height of his compassion. For the more astonishing a thing it is and beyond expectation, that he has restored us from so great and deserved ills in which we were, to so great and unmerited blessings which we had forfeited; by so much the more has he shown his more exceeding love and tenderness towards us. For did they but carefully consider how fitly in this way human redemption is secured, they

would not ridicule our simplicity, but would rather join with us in praising the wise beneficence of God. For, as death came upon the human race by the disobedience of man, it was **fitting** that by man's obedience life should be restored. And, as sin, the cause of our condemnation, had its origin from a woman, so ought the author of our righteousness and salvation to be born of a woman. And so also was it proper that the devil, who, being man's tempter, had conquered him in eating of the tree, should be vanquished by man in the suffering of the tree which man bore. Many other things also, if we carefully examine them, give a certain indescribable beauty to our redemption as thus procured. [Note: the notion of the 'fittingness' or 'appropriateness' of the incarnation will become central to Aquinas' Christology.]

CHAPTER V.

How the redemption of man could not be effected by any other being but God.

Boso. If this deliverance were said to be effected somehow by any other being than God (whether it were an angelic or a human being), the mind of man would receive it far more patiently. For God could have made some man without sin, not of a sinful substance, and not a descendant of any man, but just as he made Adam, and by this man it should seem that the work we speak of could have been done.

Anselm.. Do you not perceive that, if any other being should rescue man from eternal death, man would rightly be adjudged as the servant of that being? Now if this be so, he would in no wise be restored to that dignity which would have been his had he never sinned. For he, who was to be through eternity only the servant of God and an equal with the holy angels, would now be the servant of a being who was not God, and whom the angels did not serve. [That is, we would owe our salvation to, and worship, that which is less than God].

CHAPTER VI.

How infidels find fault with us for saying that God has redeemed us by his death, and thus has shown his love towards us, and that he came to overcome the devil for us.

Boso. This they greatly wonder at, because we call this redemption a release. For, say they, in what custody or imprisonment, or under whose power were you held, that God could not free you from it, without purchasing your redemption by so many sufferings, and finally by his own blood? And when

we tell them that he freed us from our sins, and from his own wrath, and from hell, and from the power of the devil, whom he came to vanquish for us, because we were unable to do it, and that he purchased for us the kingdom of heaven; and that, by doing all these things, he manifested the greatness of his love towards us; they answer: If you say that God, who, as you believe, created the universe by a word, could not do all these things by a simple command, you contradict yourselves, for you make him powerless. Or, if you grant that he could have done these things in some other way, but did not wish to, how can you vindicate his wisdom, when you assert that he desired, without any reason, to suffer things so unbecoming? [...] As to your statement that God has shown in this way how much he loved you, there is no argument to support this, unless it be proved that he could not otherwise have saved man. For, if he could not have done it otherwise, then it was, indeed, necessary for him to manifest his love in this way. But now, when he could have saved man differently, why is it that, for the sake of displaying his love, he does and suffers the things which you enumerate? For does he not show good angels how much he loves them, though he suffer no such things as these for them? As to what you say of his coming to vanquish the devil for you, with what meaning dare you allege this? Is not the omnipotence of God everywhere enthroned? How is it, then, that God must needs come down from heaven to vanquish the devil? These are the objections with which infidels think they can withstand us [...]

CHAPTER VIII.

How, although the acts of Christ's condescension which we speak of do not belong to his divinity, it yet seems improper to infidels that these things should be said of him even as a man; and why it appears to them that this man did not suffer death of his own will.

Anselm.. The will of God ought to be a sufficient reason for us, when he does anything, though we cannot see why he does it. For the will of God is never irrational.

Boso. That is very true, if it be granted that God does wish the thing in question; but many will never allow that God does wish anything if it be inconsistent with reason.

Anselm.. What do you find inconsistent with reason, in our confessing that God desired those things which make up our belief with regard to his incarnation?

Boso. This in brief: that the Most High should stoop to things so lowly, that the Almighty should do a thing with such toil.

Anselm.. They who speak thus do not understand our belief. For we affirm that the Divine nature is beyond doubt impassible, and that God cannot at all be brought down from his exaltation, nor toil in anything which he wishes to effect. But we say that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God and very man, one person in two natures, and two natures in one person. When, therefore, we speak of God as enduring any humiliation or infirmity, we do not refer to the majesty of that nature, which cannot suffer; but to the feebleness of the human constitution which he assumed. And so there remains no ground of objection against our faith. For in this way we intend no debasement of the Divine nature, but we teach that one person is both Divine and human. In the incarnation of God there is no lowering of the Deity; but the nature of man we believe to be exalted.

Boso. Be it so; let nothing be referred to the Divine nature, which is spoken of Christ after the manner of human weakness; but how will it ever be made out a just or reasonable thing that God should treat or suffer to be treated in such a manner, that man whom the Father called his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased, and whom the Son made himself? For what justice is there in his suffering death for the sinner, who was the most just of all men? What man, if he condemned the innocent to free the guilty, would not himself be judged worthy of condemnation? And so the matter seems to return to the same incongruity which is mentioned above. For if he could not save sinners in any other way than by condemning the just, where is his omnipotence? If, however, he could, but did not wish to, how shall we sustain his wisdom and justice?

Anselm.. God the Father did not treat that man as you seem to suppose, nor put to death the innocent for the guilty. For the Father did not compel him to suffer death, or even allow him to be slain, against his will, but of his own accord he endured death for the salvation of men.

Boso. Though it were not against his will, since he agreed to the will of the Father; yet the Father seems to have bound him, as it were, by his injunction. For it is said that Christ "humbled himself, being made obedient to the Father even unto death, and that the death of the cross. For which cause God also has highly exalted him;" and that "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered;" and that God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." And likewise the Son says: "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." And when about to suffer, he says; "As the Father has given me commandment, so I do." Again: "The cup which the Father has given me, shall

I not drink it? " And, at another time : "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will ." And again: "Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, your will be done." In all these passages it would rather appear that Christ endured death by the constraint of obedience, than by the inclination of his own free will.

CHAPTER IX.

How it was of his own accord that he died, and what this means: "he was made obedient even unto death; " and: "for which cause God has highly exalted him;" and: "I came not to do my own will; " and: "he spared not his own Son;" and: "not as I will, but as you will ."

Anselm.. It seems to me that you do not rightly understand the difference between what he did at the demand of obedience, and what he suffered, not demanded by obedience, but inflicted on him, because he kept his obedience perfect.

Boso. I need to have you explain it more clearly.

Anselm.. Why did the Jews persecute him even unto death?

Boso. For nothing else, but that, in word and in life, he invariably maintained truth and justice.

Anselm.. I believe that God demands this of every rational being, and every being owes this in obedience to God.

Boso. We ought to acknowledge this.

Anselm.. That man, therefore, owed this obedience to God the Father, humanity to Deity; and the Father claimed it from him.

Boso. There is no doubt of this.

Anselm. Now you see what he did, under the demand of obedience.

Boso. Very true, and I see also what infliction he endured, because he stood firm in obedience. For death was inflicted on him for his perseverance in obedience and he endured it; but I do not understand how it is that obedience did not demand this.

Anselm.. Ought man to suffer death, if he had never sinned, or should God demand this of him?

Boso. It is on this account that we believe that man would not have been subject to death, and that God would not have exacted this of him; but I should like to hear the reason of the thing from you.

Anselm.. You acknowledge that the intelligent creature was made holy, and for this purpose, viz., to be happy in the enjoyment of God.

Boso. Yes.

Anselm.. You surely will not think it proper for God to make his creature miserable without fault, when he had created him holy that he might enjoy a state of blessedness. For it would be a miserable thing for man to die against his will.

Boso. It is plain that, if man had not sinned, God ought not to compel him to die.

Anselm.. God did not, therefore, compel Christ to die; but he suffered death of his own will, not yielding up his life as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining holiness; for he held out so firmly in this obedience that he met death on account of it. It may, indeed be said, that the Father commanded him to die, when he enjoined that upon him on account of which he met death. It was in this sense, then, that "as the Father gave him the commandment, so he did, and the cup which He gave to him, he drank; and he was made obedient to the Father, even unto death;" and thus "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered," that is, how far obedience should be maintained. Now the word "didicit," which is used, can be understood in two ways. For either "didicit" is written for this: he caused others to learn; or it is used, because he did learn by experience what he had an understanding of before. Again, when the Apostle had said: "he humbled himself, being made obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross," he added: "wherefore God also has exalted him and given him a name, which is above every name." And this is similar to what David said: "he drank of the brook in the way, therefore did he lift up the head." For it is not meant that he could not have attained his exaltation in any other way but by obedience unto death; nor is it meant that his exaltation was conferred on him, only as a reward of his obedience (for he himself said before he suffered, that all things had been committed to him by the Father, and that all things belonging to the Father were his); but the expression is used because he had agreed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, that there was no other way to

reveal to the world the height of his omnipotence, than by his death. For if a thing do not take place, except on condition of something else, it is not improperly said to occur by reason of that thing. For if we intend to do a thing, but mean to do something else first by means of which it may be done; when the first thing which we wish to do is done, if the result is such as we intended, it is properly said to be on account of the other; since that is now done which caused the delay; for it had been determined that the first thing should not be done without the other. If, for instance, I propose to cross a river only in a boat, though I can cross it in a boat or on horseback, and suppose that I delay crossing because the boat is gone; but if afterwards I cross, when the boat has returned, it may be properly said of me: the boat was ready, and therefore he crossed. And we not only use this form of expression, when it is by means of a thing which we desire should take place first, but also when we intend to do something else, not by means of that thing, but only after it. For if one delays taking food because he has not to-day attended the celebration of mass; when that has been done which he wished to do first, it is not improper to say to him: now take food, for you have now done that for which you delayed taking food. Far less, therefore, is the language strange, when Christ is said to be exalted on this account, because he endured death; for it was through this, and after this, that he determined to accomplish his exaltation. [...] For he was exalted after his death, *as if* it were really on account of that. Moreover, that saying of his: "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me," is precisely like that other saying: "My doctrine is not mine ;" for what one does not have of himself, but of God, he ought not to call his own, but God's. Now no one has the truth which he teaches, or a holy will, of himself, but of God. Christ, therefore, came not to do his own will, but that of the Father; for his holy will was not derived from his humanity, but from his divinity. For that sentence: "God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all," means nothing more than that he did not rescue him. For there are found in the Bible many things like this. Again, when he says: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as you will ;" and "If this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, your will be done;" he signifies by his own will the natural desire of safety, in accordance with which human nature shrank from the anguish of death. But he speaks of the will of the Father, not because the Father preferred the death of the Son to his life; but because the Father was not willing to rescue the human race, unless man were to do even as great a thing as was signified in the death of Christ. Since reason did not demand of another what he could not do, therefore, the Son says that he desires his own death. For he preferred to suffer, rather than that the human race should be lost; as if he were to say to the Father: "Since you do not desire the reconciliation of the world to take place in any other way, in this respect, I see that you desirest

my death; let your will, therefore, be done, that is, let my death take place, so that the world may be reconciled to you." [...]

CHAPTER X

[...]

Boso. The question which still troubles us is, how the death of the Son can be proved reasonable and necessary. For otherwise, it does not seem that the Son ought to desire it, or the Father compel or permit it. For the question is, why God could not save man in some other way, and if so, why he wished to do it in this way? For it both seems unbecoming for God to have saved man in this way; and it is not clear how the death of the Son avails for the salvation of man. For it is a strange thing if God so delights in, or requires, the blood of the innocent, that he neither chooses, nor is able, to spare the guilty without the sacrifice of the innocent.

Anselm.. Since, in this inquiry, you take the place of those who are unwilling to believe anything not previously proved by reason, I wish to have it understood between us that we do not admit anything in the least unbecoming to be ascribed to the Deity, and that we do not reject the smallest reason if it be not opposed by a greater. For as it is impossible to attribute anything in the least unbecoming to God; so any reason, however small, if not overbalanced by a greater, has the force of necessity.

Boso. In this matter, I accept nothing more willingly than that this agreement should be preserved between us in common.

Anselm.. The question concerns only the incarnation of God, and those things which we believe with regard to his taking human nature.

Boso. It is so.

Anselm.. Let us suppose, then, that the incarnation of God, and the things that we affirm of him as man, had never taken place; and be it agreed between us that man was made for happiness, which cannot be attained in this life, and that no being can ever arrive at happiness, save by freedom from sin, and that no man passes this life without sin. Let us take for granted, also, the other things, the belief of which is necessary for eternal salvation.

Boso. I grant it; for in these there is nothing which seems unbecoming or impossible for God.

Anselm.. Therefore, in order that man may attain happiness, remission of sin is necessary.

Boso. We all hold this.

CHAPTER XI.

What it is to sin, and to make satisfaction for sin.

Anselm.. We must needs inquire, therefore, in what manner God puts away men's sins; and, in order to do this more plainly, let us first consider what it is to sin, and what it is to make satisfaction for sin.

Boso. It is yours to explain and mine to listen.

Anselm.. If man or angel always rendered to God his due, he would never sin.

Boso. I cannot deny that.

Anselm.. Therefore to sin is nothing else than not to render to God his due.

Boso. What is the debt which we owe to God?

Anselm.. Every wish of a rational creature should be subject to the will of God.

Boso. Nothing is more true.

Anselm.. This is the debt which man and angel owe to God, and no one who pays this debt commits sin; but every one who does not pay it sins. This is justice, or uprightness of will, which makes a being just or upright in heart, that is, in will; and this is the sole and complete debt of honour which we owe to God, and which God requires of us. For it is such a will only, when it can be exercised, that does works pleasing to God; and when this will cannot be exercised, it is pleasing of itself alone, since without it no work is acceptable. He who does not render this honour which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonours him; and this is sin. Moreover, so long as he does not restore what he has taken away, he remains in fault; and it will not suffice merely to restore what has been taken away, but, considering the contempt offered, he ought to restore more than he took away. For as one who imperils another's safety does not enough by merely restoring his safety, without making some compensation for the anguish incurred; so he who violates another's honour does not enough by merely rendering honour again, but

must, according to the extent of the injury done, make restoration in some way satisfactory to the person whom he has dishonoured. We must also observe that when any one pays what he has unjustly taken away, he ought to give something which could not have been demanded of him, had he not stolen what belonged to another. So then, every one who sins ought to pay back the honour of which he has robbed God; and this is the satisfaction which every sinner owes to God.

Boso. Since we have determined to follow reason in all these things, I am unable to bring any objection against them, although you somewhat startle me.

CHAPTER XII.

Whether it were proper for God to put away sins by compassion alone, without any payment of debt.

Anselm.. Let us return and consider whether it were proper for God to put away sins by compassion alone, without any payment of the honour taken from him.

Boso. I do not see why it is not proper.

Anselm.. To remit sin in this manner is nothing else than not to punish; and since it is not right to cancel sin without compensation or punishment; if it be not punished, then is it passed by undischarged.

Boso. What you say is reasonable.

Anselm.. It is not fitting for God to pass over anything in his kingdom undischarged.

Boso. If I wish to oppose this, I fear to sin.

Anselm.. It is, therefore, not proper for God thus to pass over sin unpunished.

Boso. Thus it follows.

Anselm.. There is also another thing which follows if sin be passed by unpunished, viz., that with God there will be no difference between the guilty and the not guilty; and this is unbecoming to God.

Boso. I cannot deny it.

Anselm.. Observe this also. Every one knows that justice to man is regulated by law, so that, according to the requirements of law, the measure of award is bestowed by God.

Boso. This is our belief.

Anselm.. But if sin is neither paid for nor punished, it is subject to no law.

Boso. I cannot conceive it to be otherwise.

Anselm.. Injustice, therefore, if it is cancelled by compassion alone, is more free than justice, which seems very inconsistent. And to these is also added a further incongruity, viz., that it makes injustice like God. For as God is subject to no law, so neither is injustice.

Boso. I cannot withstand your reasoning. But when God commands us in every case to forgive those who trespass against us, it seems inconsistent to enjoin a thing upon us which it is not proper for him to do himself.

Anselm.. There is no inconsistency in God's commanding us not to take upon ourselves what belongs to Him alone. For to execute vengeance belongs to none but Him who is Lord of all; for when the powers of the world rightly accomplish this end, God himself does it who appointed them for the purpose.

Boso. You have obviated the difficulty which I thought to exist; but there is another to which I would like to have your answer. For since God is so free as to be subject to no law, and to the judgment of no one, and is so merciful as that nothing more merciful can be conceived; and nothing is right or fit save as he wills; it seems a strange thing for us to say that he is wholly unwilling or unable to put away an injury done to himself, when we are wont to apply to him for indulgence with regard to those offences which we commit against others.

Anselm.. What you say of God's liberty and choice and compassion is true; but we ought so to interpret these things as that they may not seem to interfere with His dignity. For there is no liberty except as regards what is best or fitting; nor should that be called mercy which does anything improper for the Divine character. Moreover, when it is said that what God wishes is just, and that what He does not wish is unjust, we must not understand that if God wished anything improper it would be just, simply because he wished it. For if God wishes to lie, we must not conclude that it is right to lie, but rather

that he is not God. For no will can ever wish to lie, unless truth in it is impaired, nay, unless the will itself be impaired by forsaking truth. When, then, it is said: "If God wishes to lie," the meaning is simply this: "If the nature of God is such as that he wishes to lie;" and, therefore, it does not follow that falsehood is right, except it be understood in the same manner as when we speak of two impossible things: "If this be true, then that follows; because neither this nor that is true;" as if a man should say: "Supposing water to be dry, and fire to be moist;" for neither is the case. Therefore, with regard to these things, to speak the whole truth: If God desires a thing, it is right that he should desire that which involves no unfitness. For if God chooses that it should rain, it is right that it should rain; and if he desires that any man should die, then is it right that he should die. Wherefore, if it be not fitting for God to do anything unjustly, or out of course, it does not belong to his liberty or compassion or will to let the sinner go unpunished who makes no return to God of what the sinner has defrauded him.

Boso. You remove from me every possible objection which I had thought of bringing against you.

Anselm.. Yet observe why it is not fitting for God to do this.

Boso. I listen readily to whatever you say.

CHAPTER XIII.

How nothing less was to be endured, in the order of things, than that the creature should take away the honour due the Creator and not restore what he takes away.

Anselm.. In the order of things, there is nothing less to be endured than that the creature should take away the honour due the Creator, and not restore what he has taken away.

Boso. Nothing is more plain than this.

Anselm.. But there is no greater injustice suffered than that by which so great an evil must be endured.

Boso. This, also, is plain.

Anselm.. I think, therefore, that you will not say that God ought to endure a thing than which no greater injustice is suffered, viz., that the creature should not restore to God what he has taken away.

Boso. No; I think it should be wholly denied.

Anselm.. Again, if there is nothing greater or better than God, there is nothing more just than supreme justice, which maintains God's honour in the arrangement of things, and which is nothing else but God himself.

Boso. There is nothing clearer than this.

Anselm.. Therefore God maintains nothing with more justice than the honour of his own dignity.

Boso. I must agree with you.

Anselm.. Does it seem to you that he wholly preserves it, if he allows himself to be so defrauded of it as that he should neither receive satisfaction nor punish the one defrauding him.

Boso. I dare not say so.

Anselm. Therefore the honour taken away must be repaid, or punishment must follow; otherwise, either God will not be just to himself, or he will be weak in respect to both parties; and this it is impious even to think of.

Boso. I think that nothing more reasonable can be said.

CHAPTER XIV.

How the honour of God exists in the punishment of the wicked.

Boso. But I wish to hear from you whether the punishment of the sinner is an honour to God, or how it is an honour. For if the punishment of the sinner is not for God's honour when the sinner does not pay what he took away, but is punished, God loses his honour so that he cannot recover it. And this seems in contradiction to the things which have been said.

Anselm.. It is impossible for God to lose his honour; for either the sinner pays his debt of his own accord, or, if he refuse, God takes it from him. For either man renders due submission to God of his own will, by avoiding sin or making payment, or else God subjects him to himself by torments, even

against man's will, and thus shows that he is the Lord of man, though man refuses to acknowledge it of his own accord. And here we must observe that as man in sinning takes away what belongs to God, so God in punishing gets in return what pertains to man. For not only does that belong to a man which he has in present possession, but also that which it is in his power to have. Therefore, since man was so made as to be able to attain happiness by avoiding sin; if, on account of his sin, he is deprived of happiness and every good, he repays from his own inheritance what he has stolen, though he repay it against his will. For although God does not apply what he takes away to any object of his own, as man transfers the money which he has taken from another to his own use; yet what he takes away serves the purpose of his own honour, for this very reason, that it is taken away. For by this act he shows that the sinner and all that pertains to him are under his subjection.

CHAPTER XV.

Whether God suffers his honour to be violated even in the least degree.

Boso. What you say satisfies me. But there is still another point which I should like to have you answer. For if, as you make out, God ought to sustain his own honour, why does he allow it to be violated even in the least degree? For what is in any way made liable to injury is not entirely and perfectly preserved.

Anselm.. Nothing can be added to or taken from the honour of God. For this honour which belongs to him is in no way subject to injury or change. But as the individual creature preserves, naturally or by reason, the condition belonging, and, as it were, allotted to him, he is said to obey and honour God; and to this, rational nature, which possesses intelligence, is especially bound. And when the being chooses what he ought, he honours God; not by bestowing anything upon him, but because he brings himself freely under God's will and disposal, and maintains his own condition in the universe, and the beauty of the universe itself, as far as in him lies. But when he does not choose what he ought, he dishonours God, as far as the being himself is concerned, because he does not submit himself freely to God's disposal. And he disturbs the order and beauty of the universe, as relates to himself, although he cannot injure nor tarnish the power and majesty of God. For if those things which are held together in the circuit of the heavens desire to be elsewhere than under the heavens, or to be further removed from the heavens, there is no place where they can be but under the heavens, nor can they fly from the heavens without also approaching them. For both whence and whither and in what way they go, they are still under the heavens; and if they are at a greater distance from one part of them, they are only so much

nearer to the opposite part. And so, though man or evil angel refuse to submit to the Divine will and appointment, yet he cannot escape it; for if he wishes to fly from a will that commands, he falls into the power of a will that punishes. And if you ask whither he goes, it is only under the permission of that will; and even this wayward choice or action of his becomes subservient, under infinite wisdom, to the order and beauty of the universe before spoken of. For when it is understood that God brings good out of many forms of evil, then the satisfaction for sin freely given, or if this be not given, the exaction of punishment, hold their own place and orderly beauty in the same universe. For if Divine wisdom were not to insist upon things, when wickedness tries to disturb the right appointment, there would be, in the very universe which God ought to control, an unseemliness springing from the violation of the beauty of arrangement, and God would appear to be deficient in his management. And these two things are not only unfitting, but consequently impossible; so that satisfaction or punishment must needs follow every sin.

Boso. You have relieved my objection.

Anselm.. It is then plain that no one can honour or dishonour God, as he is in himself; but the creature, as far as he is concerned, appears to do this when he submits or opposes his will to the will of God [...].

BOOK II

CHAPTER I.

How man was made holy by God, so as to be happy in the enjoyment of God.

Anselm.. It ought not to be disputed that rational nature was made holy by God, in order to be happy in enjoying Him. For to this end is it rational, in order to discern justice and injustice, good and evil, and between the greater and the lesser good. Otherwise it was made rational in vain. But God made it not rational in vain. Wherefore, doubtless, it was made rational for this end. In like manner is it proved that the intelligent creature received the power of discernment for this purpose, that he might hate and shun evil, and love and choose good, and especially the greater good. For else in vain would God have given him that power of discernment, since man's discretion would be useless unless he loved and avoided according to it. But it does not befit God to give such power in vain. It is, therefore, established that rational nature was created for this end, viz., to love and choose the highest good supremely, for its own sake and nothing else; for if the highest good were chosen for any other reason, then something else and not itself would be the thing loved. But

intelligent nature cannot fulfil this purpose without being holy. Therefore that it might not in vain be made rational, it was made, in order to fulfil this purpose, both rational and holy. Now, if it was made holy in order to choose and love the highest good, then it was made such in order to follow sometimes what it loved and chose, or else it was not. But if it were not made holy for this end, that it might follow what it loves and chooses, then in vain was it made to love and choose holiness; and there can be no reason why it should be ever bound to follow holiness. Therefore, as long as it will be holy in loving and choosing the supreme good, for which it was made, it will be miserable; because it will be impotent despite of its will, inasmuch as it does not have what it desires. But this is utterly absurd. Wherefore rational nature was made holy, in order to be happy in enjoying the supreme good, which is God. Therefore man, whose nature is rational, was made holy for this end, that he might be happy in enjoying God.

CHAPTER II.

How man would never have died, unless he had sinned.

Anselm.. Moreover, it is easily proved that man was so made as not to be necessarily subject to death; for, as we have already said, it is inconsistent with God's wisdom and justice to compel man to suffer death without fault, when he made him holy to enjoy eternal blessedness. It therefore follows that had man never sinned he never would have died.

CHAPTER V.

How, although the thing may be necessary, God may not do it by a compulsory necessity; and what is the nature of that necessity which removes or lessens gratitude, and what necessity increases it.

Boso. But if it be so, then God seems as it were compelled, for the sake of avoiding what is unbecoming, to secure the salvation of man. How, then, can it be denied that he does it more on his own account than on ours? But if it be so, what thanks do we owe him for what he does for himself? How shall we attribute our salvation to his grace, if he saves us from necessity?

Anselm.. There is a necessity which takes away or lessens our gratitude to a benefactor, and there is also a necessity by which the favour deserves still greater thanks. For when one does a benefit from a necessity to which he is unwillingly subjected, less thanks are due him, or none at all. But when he freely places himself under the necessity of benefiting another, and sustains that necessity without reluctance, then he certainly deserves greater thanks

for the favour. For this should not be called necessity but grace, inasmuch as he undertook or maintains it, not with any constraint, but freely. For if that which to-day you promise of your own accord you will give to-morrow, you do give to-morrow with the same willingness; though it be necessary for you, if possible, to redeem your promise, or make yourself a liar; notwithstanding, the recipient of your favour is as much indebted for your precious gift as if you had not promised it, for you were not obliged to make yourself his debtor before the time of giving it: just so is it when one undertakes, by a vow, a design of holy living. For though after his vow he ought necessarily to perform, lest he suffer the judgment of an apostate, and, although he may be compelled to keep it even unwillingly, yet, if he keep his vow cheerfully, he is not less but more pleasing to God than if he had not vowed. For he has not only given up the life of the world, but also his personal liberty, for the sake of God; and he cannot be said to live a holy life of necessity, but with the same freedom with which he took the vow. Much more, therefore, do we owe all thanks to God for completing his intended favour to man; though, indeed, it would not be proper for him to fail in his good design, because wanting nothing in himself he begun it for our sake and not his own. For what man was about to do was not hidden from God at his creation; and yet by freely creating man, God as it were bound himself to complete the good which he had begun. In fine, God does nothing by necessity, since he is not compelled or restrained in anything. And when we say that God does anything to avoid dishonour, which he certainly does not fear, we must mean that God does this from the necessity of maintaining his honour; which necessity is after all no more than this, viz., the immutability of his honour, which belongs to him in himself, and is not derived from another; and therefore it is not properly called necessity. Yet we may say, although the whole work which God does for man is of grace, that it is necessary for God, on account of his unchangeable goodness, to complete the work which he has begun.

Boso. I grant it.

CHAPTER VI.

How no being, except the God-man, can make the atonement by which man is saved.

Anselm.. But this cannot be effected, except the price paid to God for the sin of man be something greater than all the universe besides God.

Boso. So it appears.

Anselm.. Moreover, it is necessary that he who can give God anything of his own which is more valuable than all things in the possession of God, must be greater than all else but God himself.

Boso. I cannot deny it.

Anselm.. Therefore none but God can make this satisfaction.

Boso. So it appears.

Anselm.. But none but a man ought to do this, other wise man does not make the satisfaction.

Boso. Nothing seems more just.

Anselm.. If it be necessary, therefore, as it appears, that the heavenly kingdom be made up of men, and this cannot be effected unless the aforesaid satisfaction be made, which none but God can make and none but man ought to make, it is necessary for the God-man to make it.

Boso. Now blessed be God! we have made a great discovery with regard to our question. Go on, therefore, as you have begun. For I hope that God will assist you.

Anselm.. Now must we inquire how God can become man.

CHAPTER VII.

How necessary it is for the same being to be perfect God and perfect man.

Anselm.. The Divine and human natures cannot alternate, so that the Divine should become human or the human Divine; nor can they be so commingled as that a third should be produced from the two which is neither wholly Divine nor wholly human. For, granting that it were possible for either to be changed into the other, it would in that case be only God and not man, or man only and not God. Or, if they were so commingled that a third nature sprung from the combination of the two (as from two animals, a male and a female of different species, a third is produced, which does not preserve entire the species of either parent, but has a mixed nature derived from both), it would neither be God nor man. Therefore the God-man, whom we require to be of a nature both human and Divine, cannot be produced by a change from one into the other, nor by an imperfect commingling of both in a third; since these things cannot be, or, if they could be, would avail nothing to our

purpose. Moreover, if these two complete natures are said to be joined somehow, in such a way that one may be Divine while the other is human, and yet that which is God not be the same with that which is man, it is impossible for both to do the work necessary to be accomplished. For God will not do it, because he has no debt to pay; and man will not do it, because he cannot. Therefore, in order that the God-man may perform this, it is necessary that the same being should perfect God and perfect man, in order to make this atonement. For he cannot and ought not to do it, unless he be very God and very man. Since, then, it is necessary that the God-man preserve the completeness of each nature, it is no less necessary that these two natures be united entire in one person, just as a body and a reasonable soul exist together in every human being; for otherwise it is impossible that the same being should be very God and very man.

Boso. All that you say is satisfactory to me.

[...]

Source.

St. Anselm: Proslogium; Monologium: An Appendix In Behalf Of The Fool By Gaunilo; And Cur Deus Homo, Translated From The Latin By Sidney Norton Deane, B. A. With An Introduction, Bibliography, And Reprints Of The Opinions Of Leading Philosophers And Writers On The Ontological Argument, (Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Company,, 1903, reprinted 1926)

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These excerpts from *Cur Deus Homo?* should indicate the central areas of debate in the mediaeval period:

- Was it necessary that God bring salvation by the incarnation?
- What are the roles of justice and honour in Christ's redemptive work?
- Did God will Christ's suffering?
- Was Christ punished for our sins?

One further question is not explicitly addressed in Anselm's text, but his thought provoked the issue as the Reformation approached:

- Is Christ a substitute for humanity, or humanity's representative?

What you may detect is the beginnings of an attempt to delineate a doctrine of the atonement, namely a view of how and why Christ brings about our reconciliation with God.¹ This is something which the early Church sought not to address, and for very good reason. The Bible uses many different images to describe how and why Christ brings salvation. In the end, the patristic theologians seem to have concluded that it was neither necessary nor expedient to try to condense these 'pictures' into a single 'theory'. Theories tend to exclude other theories by necessity. Images, like metaphors, can be mutually enhancing and overlapping. For this reason, none of the Church's creeds gives a doctrine of the atonement; the issue is left open quite deliberately.

It is often noted that the language of debt, justice and honour pervades Anselm's discussion in a way that is quite new. As O'Collins points out very succinctly, this has much to do with Anselm's social milieu and his intended audience.² Within the hierarchical feudal and monastic structures in which Anselm lived, the honour due to abbots and feudal lords from their monks and subjects helped to guarantee the right order and peace of the ecclesial and social bodies. This 'right order' depended very much on the obedient performance of duty in accordance with one's place in the monastery or wider society. The discussion is in some senses strange and unbalanced. Why? Because Anselm discusses Christ's obedience to God at some length, and one might think that this would lead him towards a discussion of sin as disobedience and the fracturing of an intimate relationship with God by humanity. Instead, Anselm seems to talk of sin in rather legalistic terms as an

¹ Atonement can be distinguished from soteriology. The former is particularly concerned with *how* Christ reconciles us to God (or, in some versions of atonement, how Christ reconciles God to us). The latter is a much broader examination of salvation as it links with other areas of Christian doctrine such as creation and ecclesiology.

² Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.135-6.

infinite dishonour to God for which God must exact an infinite recompense in order to maintain justice.

Anselm has been interpreted as holding a view of atonement which focuses on the recompense or satisfaction which God is duty-bound to exact from sinful humanity by the demands of justice. What are the problems with this view? It seems to suggest that God is compelled by a criterion or standard of justice which somehow lies outside God himself (and is thus sometimes labelled 'extrinsicist'). Moreover, the idea of justice with which Anselm is working does not seem to be particularly Biblical and theological. It may have more to do with the notion of justice, recompense and honour which happened to be operative in the monasteries and feudal fiefdoms of his day.

However, Anselm's discussion does set the agenda for later Christologies and soteriologies in a rather simple but important way. He points out that, because of the infinite goodness of God, humanity's sin has established an infinite separation of humanity from God. Because it is humanity which has sinned, it is only humanity which should offer the sacrifice (we will return to this term in a moment) which inaugurates humanity's reconciliation to God. On the other hand, because the nature of that separation is infinite, there is nothing which finite humanity can do of itself to overcome its separation from God. Only God can overcome that separation. Joining up both sides of the equation, it seems that only a divine-humanity – the God-man or *Deus Homo* – can bring about humanity's reconciliation to God and, concomitantly, our salvation. It is for this reason that Anselm concludes that God brings about our salvation by the incarnation of *necessity*. As we will see shortly, Aquinas nuances Anselm's notion of necessity in respect of the incarnation.

Anselm's Christology and the doctrine of atonement have also been seen as precursors of a very controversial view known as penal substitutionary atonement. The debate concerning penal substitution has been particularly heated amongst protestant evangelical theologians. Put simply, according to this view of the atonement Christ is our substitute – Christ stands where we ought to stand – and bears the consequences of our sin. In other words, Christ pays the penalty and settles the account for our wrong doing. By force of his justice, God extracts due recompense for the dishonour done to his name, but he extracts that recompense from himself in the crucified Christ. He pays the price. The image of debt and account is to fore in this understanding of the atonement.

For some evangelicals, penal substitution is simply Biblical orthodoxy. Others take a very different view. The Baptist leader Steve Chalk wrote a populist book in which he described penal substitution as akin to 'cosmic child abuse'

(i.e. the Father venting his wrath on the Son).³ I do not wish to enter the ins and outs of the debate amongst evangelical theologians on this issue, but make some general comments and point out why Anselm cannot be read in any straightforward fashion as a precursor to modern penal substitutionary theories of the atonement.

The first point to be made is highlighted consistently by the patristic and mediaeval theologians: whatever atonement and salvation mean, they do not mean the placating of a vengeful God. The Bible speaks of God's 'righteous anger', but St. Paul is also clear that 'God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself' (2 Corinthians 5.19). In other words, God is eternally reconciled to us; we have become estranged from God and we are reconciled to Him. If some theories of the atonement imply that God is persuaded to love us by Christ's suffering sacrifice, or that God's anger is assuaged so that he loves us again, this is contrary to the patristic and mediaeval witness to the Biblical description of Christ's saving work. God never stopped loving his creation.

Secondly, a careful reading of Book I.8-9 of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?* reveals his views concerning the suffering of Christ as a consequence of Christ's obedience. Anselm makes it clear that what God demands of his creation is faithful obedience. The Church comes to believe that, in Christ, we find a life lived in full and perfect obedience to the love of God. Now, the question is this: is it therefore God's will that Christ suffer? Anselm's answer to this question is 'yes' and 'no'. His answer is 'yes' in the sense that God demands faithful obedience, and if the consequence of this is death then God responds to that obedience with the promise of life in all its fullness. But does God desire Christ's suffering simply for its own sake? The answer to that question is 'no' because God does not desire the suffering *qua* suffering of any creature or his only-begotten Son. The point of this line of reasoning is that the suffering endured by Christ is not inflicted by God (that, indeed, would be 'cosmic child abuse'): it is inflicted by humanity. More particularly, Christ's suffering is a consequence of humanity's sin, frustration, blindness, idolatry, and so on. It seems to me that too many 'theories' of the atonement have implied – more or less clearly – that it is God who beats and crucifies Christ. Others have suggested that, because God allows it to happen, it is God's will, or even God's act. This, again, is very odd indeed. In Book I.9, Anselm writes the following:

God did not, therefore, compel Christ to die; but he suffered death of his [i.e. Christ's] own will, not yielding up his life as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining

³ Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Zondervan Publishing House, 2003).

holiness; for he held out so firmly in this obedience that he met death on account of it.

There is a subtle distinction here. Anselm is saying that Christ's obedience is not constituted or proved by his death. Rather, *because* of Christ's obedience to his Father's will (because of who Christ was and is), he was put to death. Anselm goes on to say that Christ is not exalted because he successfully endured the cross (i.e. the resurrection is a reward). Christ is exalted because he is the one whose obedience has been eternally perfect. He was exalted before the foundation of the world. This is an important point: Christ is not made good because he obeyed his Father's will and went to his death; Christ is good and obedient to his heavenly Father, and as a consequence of this faithful goodness the world rejected Christ and crucified him.

Here is another way of thinking about Christ's sacrifice which you may find helpful and which, I think, is in the same 'key' as Anselm. God has loved the world since its foundation. That love has never waived or diminished. God was not 'put off' loving us by our sin and that love has always flowed.⁴ However, our sin is the rejection of that love. The Bible is the story of humanity's attempt to do without God's gift of love, or to stem the flow of that love (Romans 8.37-39). The cross of Christ now represents the love of God which has flowed from eternity but which now, in the context of human sin, *takes the form of a crucified man*. What Anselm wants to maintain more than anything is the sense that God in Christ is not doing anything that he has not done eternally: love. Moreover, Christ is God's way of 'keeping that love flowing' to his creation. In other words, in the face of sin's pretence that the love of God can be stopped or refused, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ demonstrate otherwise. As the New Testament scholar and Bishop of Durham, N. T. Wright, has put it, in the cross Christ endures and exhausts the power of evil, and transforms and returns that gesture with nothing less than an infinite love. That being said, what Christ offers in the crucifixion and resurrection is not simply our restoration to a pre-lapsarian state, but

⁴ One rather trite response to this view is that 'God hates the sin but loves the sinner'. This betrays a tendency to think of who or what we are as really distinct from what we do. However, the Christian tradition has tended to see sin as a state and our actions as flowing from who and what we are. Our actions and our being are inextricably intertwined. The difficulty lies, I think, in the use of rather anthropomorphic and metaphorical imagery concerning God's 'wrath' or 'righteous anger'. God's wrath is at once God's love: they cannot be separate. God's wrath is simply the rejection of that which is contrary to his love. We do not have to assume that God's anger is expressed in the same way as my anger is expressed towards my children. Neither is God's love expressed in the same way as my love for my children. God's love is perfect, mysterious and eternal; mine is not. Moreover, as many in the tradition have pointed out, there is an innocence to God's love which we often fail to see.

something which, from our historical point of view, is entirely new: eternal life in the presence of God.

The debate concerning the atonement is intricate and the Bible most certainly does speak of Christ as our substitute who endures the consequences of our sin. In particular, much revolves around the interpretation of the so-called 'suffering servant' passages in Isaiah 53, and texts such as Matthew 20.28. Overall, atonement theology, and soteriology more generally, is an attempt to come to terms with the teaching that 'Christ died for our sins' (1 Corinthians 15.3), and to understand what this means. Some kind of substitutionary understanding of the atonement may be quite appropriate, and penal substitution is just one version of a much broader tradition. Furthermore, there is a question concerning the nature of Christ as substitute or representative, for some theologians imply that, because Christ accepts the penalty due to us, we do not, or should not, suffer. Yet as C.S. Lewis put it, 'Christ did not die that we might not suffer, but that our suffering should be like his'; that is, born of obedience to God. The interpretation of the Biblical verses pertaining to these themes must be undertaken with the greatest of care and always in the knowledge that we are apt to impose upon the Biblical text notions of fairness, justice and recompense which are more ours than God's. What many now recognise is that the Bible and the patristic theologians invariably use multiple images to describe the mystery of God's saving work in Christ. For the moment, I only intend to point to the need to read Anselm with due care and not impose onto his text certain themes and tendencies which belong to later theology. Rather, *Cur Deus Homo?* should be taken on its own merits as a reflection on God's saving work in Christ that belongs to a particular context and social milieu.

St. Thomas Aquinas

Of particular concern in considering Aquinas's understanding of the incarnation and salvation is his elucidation of 'necessity'. Did God have to save us by means of the incarnation? The following text explains his view. If you are new to reading Aquinas, please refer to Appendix II of this study pack.

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE 3 Q.1
OF THE FITNESS OF THE INCARNATION

Under this first head there are six points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether it is fitting for God to become incarnate?
- (2) Whether it was necessary for the restoration of the human race?
- (3) Whether if there had been no sin God would have become incarnate?
- (4) Whether He became incarnate to take away original sin rather than actual?
- (5) Whether it was fitting for God to become incarnate from the beginning of the world?
- (6) Whether His Incarnation ought to have been deferred to the end of the world?

Article One

Whether it was fitting that God should become incarnate?

Objection 1: It would seem that it was not fitting for God to become incarnate. Since God from all eternity is the very essence of goodness, it was best for Him to be as He had been from all eternity. But from all eternity He had been without flesh. Therefore it was most fitting for Him not to be united to flesh. Therefore it was not fitting for God to become incarnate.

Objection 2: Further, it is not fitting to unite things that are infinitely apart, even as it would not be a fitting union if one were "to paint a figure in which the neck of a horse was joined to the head of a man" [*Horace, *Ars. Poet.*, line 1]. But God and flesh are infinitely apart; since God is most simple, and flesh is most composite---especially human flesh. Therefore it was not fitting that God should be united to human flesh.

Objection 3: Further, a body is as distant from the highest spirit as evil is from the highest good. But it was wholly unfitting that God, Who is the highest good, should assume evil. Therefore it was not fitting that the highest uncreated spirit should assume a body.

Objection 4: Further, it is not becoming that He Who surpassed the greatest things should be contained in the least, and He upon Whom rests the care of great things should leave them for lesser things. But God---Who takes care of the whole world---the whole universe of things cannot contain. Therefore it would seem unfitting that "He should be hid under the frail body of a babe in

swathing bands, in comparison with Whom the whole universe is accounted as little; and that this Prince should quit His throne for so long, and transfer the government of the whole world to so frail a body," as Volusianus writes to Augustine (Ep. cxxxv).

On the contrary, It would seem most fitting that by visible things the invisible things of God should be made known; for to this end was the whole world made, as is clear from the word of the Apostle (Rom. 1:20): "For the invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." But, as Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii, 1), by the mystery of the Incarnation are made known at once the goodness, the wisdom, the justice, and the power or might of God---"His goodness, for He did not despise the weakness of His own handiwork; His justice, since, on man's defeat, He caused the tyrant to be overcome by none other than man, and yet He did not snatch men forcibly from death; His wisdom, for He found a suitable discharge for a most heavy debt; His power, or infinite might, for there is nothing greater than for God to become incarnate . . ."

I answer that, To each things, that is befitting which belongs to it by reason of its very nature; thus, to reason befits man, since this belongs to him because he is of a rational nature. But the very nature of God is goodness, as is clear from Dionysius (Div. Nom. i). Hence, what belongs to the essence of goodness befits God. But it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others, as is plain from Dionysius (Div. Nom. iv). Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature, and this is brought about chiefly by "His so joining created nature to Himself that one Person is made up of these three---the Word, a soul and flesh," as Augustine says (De Trin. xiii). Hence it is manifest that it was fitting that God should become incarnate.

Reply to Objection 1: The mystery of the Incarnation was not completed through God being changed in any way from the state in which He had been from eternity, but through His having united Himself to the creature in a new way, or rather through having united it to Himself. But it is fitting that a creature which by nature is mutable, should not always be in one way. And therefore, as the creature began to be, although it had not been before, so likewise, not having been previously united to God in Person, it was afterwards united to Him.

Reply to Objection 2: To be united to God in unity of person was not fitting to human flesh, according to its natural endowments, since it was above its dignity; nevertheless, it was fitting that God, by reason of His infinite goodness, should unite it to Himself for man's salvation.

Reply to Objection 3: Every mode of being wherein any creature whatsoever differs from the Creator has been established by God's wisdom, and is ordained to God's goodness. For God, Who is uncreated, immutable, and incorporeal, produced mutable and corporeal creatures for His own goodness. And so also the evil of punishment was established by God's justice for God's glory. But evil of fault is committed by withdrawing from the art of the Divine wisdom and from the order of the Divine goodness. And therefore it could be fitting to God to assume a nature created, mutable, corporeal, and subject to penalty, but it did not become Him to assume the evil of fault.

Reply to Objection 4: As Augustine replies (Ep. ad Volusian. cxxxvii): "The Christian doctrine nowhere holds that God was so joined to human flesh as either to desert or lose, or to transfer and as it were, contract within this frail body, the care of governing the universe. This is the thought of men unable to see anything but corporeal things . . . God is great not in mass, but in might. Hence the greatness of His might feels no straits in narrow surroundings. Nor, if the passing word of a man is heard at once by many, and wholly by each, is it incredible that the abiding Word of God should be everywhere at once?" Hence nothing unfitting arises from God becoming incarnate.

Article 2

Whether it was necessary for the restoration of the human race that the Word of God should become incarnate?

Objection 1: It would seem that it was not necessary for the reparation of the human race that the Word of God should become incarnate. For since the Word of God is perfect God, as has been said (FP, Q[4], AA[1],2), no power was added to Him by the assumption of flesh. Therefore, if the incarnate Word of God restored human nature. He could also have restored it without assuming flesh.

Objection 2: Further, for the restoration of human nature, which had fallen through sin, nothing more is required than that man should satisfy for sin. Now man can satisfy, as it would seem, for sin; for God cannot require from man more than man can do, and since He is more inclined to be merciful than to punish, as He lays the act of sin to man's charge, so He ought to credit him with the contrary act. Therefore it was not necessary for the restoration of human nature that the Word of God should become incarnate.

Objection 3: Further, to revere God pertains especially to man's salvation; hence it is written (Mal. 1:6): "If, then, I be a father, where is my honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" But men revere God the more by considering

Him as elevated above all, and far beyond man's senses, hence (Ps. 112:4) it is written: "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens"; and farther on: "Who is as the Lord our God?" which pertains to reverence. Therefore it would seem unfitting to man's salvation that God should be made like unto us by assuming flesh.

On the contrary, What frees the human race from perdition is necessary for the salvation of man. But the mystery of the Incarnation is such; according to Jn. 3:16: "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." Therefore it was necessary for man's salvation that God should become incarnate.

I answer that, A thing is said to be necessary for a certain end in two ways. First, when the end cannot be without it; as food is necessary for the preservation of human life. Secondly, when the end is attained better and more conveniently, as a horse is necessary for a journey. In the first way it was not necessary that God should become incarnate for the restoration of human nature. For God with His omnipotent power could have restored human nature in many other ways. But in the second way it was necessary that God should become incarnate for the restoration of human nature. Hence Augustine says (De Trin. xii, 10): "We shall also show that other ways were not wanting to God, to Whose power all things are equally subject; but that there was not a more fitting way of healing our misery." Now this may be viewed with respect to our "furtherance in good." First, with regard to faith, which is made more certain by believing God Himself Who speaks; hence Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xi, 2): "In order that man might journey more trustfully toward the truth, the Truth itself, the Son of God, having assumed human nature, established and founded faith." Secondly, with regard to hope, which is thereby greatly strengthened; hence Augustine says (De Trin. xiii): "Nothing was so necessary for raising our hope as to show us how deeply God loved us. And what could afford us a stronger proof of this than that the Son of God should become a partner with us of human nature?" Thirdly, with regard to charity, which is greatly enkindled by this; hence Augustine says (De Catech. Rudib. iv): "What greater cause is there of the Lord's coming than to show God's love for us?" And he afterwards adds: "If we have been slow to love, at least let us hasten to love in return." Fourthly, with regard to well-doing, in which He set us an example; hence Augustine says in a sermon (xxii de Temp.): "Man who might be seen was not to be followed; but God was to be followed, Who could not be seen. And therefore God was made man, that He Who might be seen by man, and Whom man might follow, might be shown to man." Fifthly, with regard to the full participation of the Divinity, which is the true bliss of man and end of human life; and this is bestowed

upon us by Christ's humanity; for Augustine says in a sermon (xiii de Temp.): "Go was made man, that man might be made God." So also was this useful for our "withdrawal from evil." First, because man is taught by it not to prefer the devil to himself, nor to honor him who is the author of sin; hence Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, 17): "Since human nature is so united to God as to become one person, let not these proud spirits dare to prefer themselves to man, because they have no bodies." Secondly, because we are thereby taught how great is man's dignity, lest we should sully it with sin; hence Augustine says (De Vera Relig. xvi): "God has proved to us how high a place human nature holds amongst creatures, inasmuch as He appeared to men as a true man." And Pope Leo says in a sermon on the Nativity (xxi): "Learn, O Christian, thy worth; and being made a partner of the Divine nature, refuse to return by evil deeds to your former worthlessness." Thirdly, because, "in order to do away with man's presumption, the grace of God is commended in Jesus Christ, though no merits of ours went before," as Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, 17). Fourthly, because "man's pride, which is the greatest stumbling-block to our clinging to God, can be convinced and cured by humility so great," as Augustine says in the same place. Fifthly, in order to free man from the thralldom of sin, which, as Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, 13), "ought to be done in such a way that the devil should be overcome by the justice of the man Jesus Christ," and this was done by Christ satisfying for us. Now a mere man could not have satisfied for the whole human race, and God was not bound to satisfy; hence it behooved Jesus Christ to be both God and man. Hence Pope Leo says in the same sermon: "Weakness is assumed by strength, lowliness by majesty, mortality by eternity, in order that one and the same Mediator of God and men might die in one and rise in the other---for this was our fitting remedy. Unless He was God, He would not have brought a remedy; and unless He was man, He would not have set an example." And there are very many other advantages which accrued, above man's apprehension.

Reply to Objection 1: This reason has to do with the first kind of necessity, without which we cannot attain to the end.

Reply to Objection 2: Satisfaction may be said to be sufficient in two ways---first, perfectly, inasmuch as it is condign, being adequate to make good the fault committed, and in this way the satisfaction of a mere man cannot be sufficient for sin, both because the whole of human nature has been corrupted by sin, whereas the goodness of any person or persons could not be made up adequately for the harm done to the whole of the nature; and also because a sin committed against God has a kind of infinity from the infinity of the Divine majesty, because the greater the person we offend, the more grievous the offense. Hence for condign satisfaction it was necessary that the act of the one satisfying should have an infinite efficiency, as being of God and man.

Secondly, man's satisfaction may be termed sufficient, imperfectly---i.e. in the acceptation of him who is content with it, even though it is not condign, and in this way the satisfaction of a mere man is sufficient. And forasmuch as every imperfect presupposes some perfect thing, by which it is sustained, hence it is that satisfaction of every mere man has its efficiency from the satisfaction of Christ.

Reply to Objection 3: By taking flesh, God did not lessen His majesty; and in consequence did not lessen the reason for reverencing Him, which is increased by the increase of knowledge of Him. But, on the contrary, inasmuch as He wished to draw nigh to us by taking flesh, He greatly drew us to know Him.

Article 3

Whether, if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate?

Objection 1: It would seem that if man had not sinned, God would still have become incarnate. For the cause remaining, the effect also remains. But as Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, 17): "Many other things are to be considered in the Incarnation of Christ besides absolution from sin"; and these were discussed above (A[2]). Therefore if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate.

Objection 2: Further, it belongs to the omnipotence of the Divine power to perfect His works, and to manifest Himself by some infinite effect. But no mere creature can be called an infinite effect, since it is finite of its very essence. Now, seemingly, in the work of the Incarnation alone is an infinite effect of the Divine power manifested in a special manner by which power things infinitely distant are united, inasmuch as it has been brought about that man is God. And in this work especially the universe would seem to be perfected, inasmuch as the last creature---viz. man---is united to the first principle---viz. God. Therefore, even if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate.

Objection 3: Further, human nature has not been made more capable of grace by sin. But after sin it is capable of the grace of union, which is the greatest grace. Therefore, if man had not sinned, human nature would have been capable of this grace; nor would God have withheld from human nature any good it was capable of. Therefore, if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate.

Objection 4: Further, God's predestination is eternal. But it is said of Christ (Rom. 1:4): "Who was predestined the Son of God in power." Therefore, even

before sin, it was necessary that the Son of God should become incarnate, in order to fulfil God's predestination.

Objection 5: Further, the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to the first man, as is plain from Gn. 2:23. "This now is bone of my bones," etc. which the Apostle says is "a great sacrament. . . in Christ and in the Church," as is plain from Eph. 5:32. But man could not be fore-conscious of his fall, for the same reason that the angels could not, as Augustine proves (*Gen. ad lit.* xi, 18). Therefore, even if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate. On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Verb. Apost.* viii, 2), expounding what is set down in Lk. 19:10, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"; "Therefore, if man had not sinned, the Son of Man would not have come." And on 1 Tim. 1:15, "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners," a gloss says, "There was no cause of Christ's coming into the world, except to save sinners. Take away diseases, take away wounds, and there is no need of medicine."

I answer that, There are different opinions about this question. For some say that even if man had not sinned, the Son of Man would have become incarnate. Others assert the contrary, and seemingly our assent ought rather to be given to this opinion. For such things as spring from God's will, and beyond the creature's due, can be made known to us only through being revealed in the Sacred Scripture, in which the Divine Will is made known to us. Hence, since everywhere in the Sacred Scripture the sin of the first man is assigned as the reason of the Incarnation, it is more in accordance with this to say that the work of the Incarnation was ordained by God as a remedy for sin; so that, had sin not existed, the Incarnation would not have been. And yet the power of God is not limited to this; even had sin not existed, God could have become incarnate.

Reply to Objection 1: All the other causes which are assigned in the preceding article have to do with a remedy for sin. For if man had not sinned, he would have been endowed with the light of Divine wisdom, and would have been perfected by God with the righteousness of justice in order to know and carry out everything needful. But because man, on deserting God, had stooped to corporeal things, it was necessary that God should take flesh, and by corporeal things should afford him the remedy of salvation. Hence, on Jn. 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh," St. Augustine says (*Tract. ii*): "Flesh had blinded thee, flesh heals thee; for Christ came and overthrew the vices of the flesh."

Reply to Objection 2: The infinity of Divine power is shown in the mode of production of things from nothing. Again, it suffices for the perfection of the

universe that the creature be ordained in a natural manner to God as to an end. But that a creature should be united to God in person exceeds the limits of the perfection of nature.

Reply to Objection 3: A double capability may be remarked in human nature: one, in respect of the order of natural power, and this is always fulfilled by God, Who apportions to each according to its natural capability; the other in respect to the order of the Divine power, which all creatures implicitly obey; and the capability we speak of pertains to this. But God does not fulfil all such capabilities, otherwise God could do only what He has done in creatures, and this is false, as stated above (FP, Q[105], A[6]). But there is no reason why human nature should not have been raised to something greater after sin. For God allows evils to happen in order to bring a greater good therefrom; hence it is written (Rom. 5:20): "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound." Hence, too, in the blessing of the Paschal candle, we say: "O happy fault, that merited such and so great a Redeemer!"

Reply to Objection 4: Predestination presupposes the foreknowledge of future things; and hence, as God predestines the salvation of anyone to be brought about by the prayers of others, so also He predestined the work of the Incarnation to be the remedy of human sin.

Reply to Objection 5: Nothing prevents an effect from being revealed to one to whom the cause is not revealed. Hence, the mystery of the Incarnation could be revealed to the first man without his being fore-conscious of his fall. For not everyone who knows the effect knows the cause.

Article 4

Whether God became incarnate in order to take away actual sin, rather than to take away original sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that God became incarnate as a remedy for actual sins rather than for original sin. For the more grievous the sin, the more it runs counter to man's salvation, for which God became incarnate. But actual sin is more grievous than original sin; for the lightest punishment is due to original sin, as Augustine says (Contra Julian. v, 11). Therefore the Incarnation of Christ is chiefly directed to taking away actual sins.

Objection 2: Further, pain of sense is not due to original sin, but merely pain of loss, as has been shown (FS, Q[87], A[5]). But Christ came to suffer the pain of sense on the Cross in satisfaction for sins---and not the pain of loss, for He had no defect of either the beatific vision or fruition. Therefore He came in order to take away actual sin rather than original sin.

Objection 3: Further, as Chrysostom says (*De Compunctione Cordis* ii, 3): "This must be the mind of the faithful servant, to account the benefits of his Lord, which have been bestowed on all alike, as though they were bestowed on himself alone. For as if speaking of himself alone, Paul writes to the Galatians 2:20: 'Christ . . . loved me and delivered Himself for me.'" But our individual sins are actual sins; for original sin is the common sin. Therefore we ought to have this conviction, so as to believe that He has come chiefly for actual sins.

On the contrary, It is written (Jn. 1:29): "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins [Vulg.: 'sin'] of the world."

I answer that, It is certain that Christ came into this world not only to take away that sin which is handed on originally to posterity, but also in order to take away all sins subsequently added to it; not that all are taken away (and this is from men's fault, inasmuch as they do not adhere to Christ, according to Jn. 3:19: "The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light"), but because He offered what was sufficient for blotting out all sins. Hence it is written (Rom. 5:15-16): "But not as the offense, so also the gift . . . For judgment indeed was by one unto condemnation, but grace is of many offenses unto justification." Moreover, the more grievous the sin, the more particularly did Christ come to blot it out. But "greater" is said in two ways: in one way "intensively," as a more intense whiteness is said to be greater, and in this way actual sin is greater than original sin; for it has more of the nature of voluntary, as has been shown (FS, Q[81], A[1]). In another way a thing is said to be greater "extensively," as whiteness on a greater superficies is said to be greater; and in this way original sin, whereby the whole human race is infected, is greater than any actual sin, which is proper to one person. And in this respect Christ came principally to take away original sin, inasmuch as "the good of the race is a more Divine thing than the good of an individual," as is said *Ethic.* i, 2.

Reply to Objection 1: This reason looks to the intensive greatness of sin.

Reply to Objection 2: In the future award the pain of sense will not be meted out to original sin. Yet the penalties, such as hunger, thirst, death, and the like, which we suffer sensibly in this life flow from original sin. And hence Christ, in order to satisfy fully for original sin, wished to suffer sensible pain, that He might consume death and the like in Himself.

Reply to Objection 3: Chrysostom says (*De Compunctione Cordis* ii, 6): "The Apostle used these words, not as if wishing to diminish Christ's gifts, ample

as they are, and spreading throughout the whole world, but that he might account himself alone the occasion of them. For what does it matter that they are given to others, if what are given to you are as complete and perfect as if none of them were given to another than yourself?" And hence, although a man ought to account Christ's gifts as given to himself, yet he ought not to consider them not to be given to others. And thus we do not exclude that He came to wipe away the sin of the whole nature rather than the sin of one person. But the sin of the nature is as perfectly healed in each one as if it were healed in him alone. Hence, on account of the union of charity, what is vouchsafed to all ought to be accounted his own by each one.

Article 5

Whether it was fitting that God should become incarnate in the beginning of the human race?

Objection 1: It would seem that it was fitting that God should become incarnate in the beginning of the human race. For the work of the Incarnation sprang from the immensity of Divine charity, according to Eph. 2:4,5: "But God (Who is rich in mercy), for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ." But charity does not tarry in bringing assistance to a friend who is suffering need, according to Prov. 3:28: "Say not to thy friend: Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give to thee, when thou canst give at present." Therefore God ought not to have put off the work of the Incarnation, but ought thereby to have brought relief to the human race from the beginning.

Objection 2: Further, it is written (1 Tim. 1:15): "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners." But more would have been saved had God become incarnate at the beginning of the human race; for in the various centuries very many, through not knowing God, perished in their sin. Therefore it was fitting that God should become incarnate at the beginning of the human race.

Objection 3: Further, the work of grace is not less orderly than the work of nature. But nature takes its rise with the more perfect, as Boethius says (*De Consol.* iii). Therefore the work of Christ ought to have been perfect from the beginning. But in the work of the Incarnation we see the perfection of grace, according to Jn. 1:14: "The Word was made flesh"; and afterwards it is added: "Full of grace and truth." Therefore Christ ought to have become incarnate at the beginning of the human race.

On the contrary, It is written (Gal. 4:4): "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law": upon which a gloss says that "the fullness of the time is when it was decreed by God the

Father to send His Son." But God decreed everything by His wisdom. Therefore God became incarnate at the most fitting time; and it was not fitting that God should become incarnate at the beginning of the human race.

I answer that, Since the work of the Incarnation is principally ordained to the restoration of the human race by blotting out sin, it is manifest that it was not fitting for God to become incarnate at the beginning of the human race before sin. For medicine is given only to the sick. Hence our Lord Himself says (Mat. 9:12,13): "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill . . . For I am not come to call the just, but sinners." Nor was it fitting that God should become incarnate immediately after sin. First, on account of the manner of man's sin, which had come of pride; hence man was to be liberated in such a manner that he might be humbled, and see how he stood in need of a deliverer. Hence on the words in Gal. 3:19, "Being ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," a gloss says: "With great wisdom was it so ordered that the Son of Man should not be sent immediately after man's fall. For first of all God left man under the natural law, with the freedom of his will, in order that he might know his natural strength; and when he failed in it, he received the law; whereupon, by the fault, not of the law, but of his nature, the disease gained strength; so that having recognized his infirmity he might cry out for a physician, and beseech the aid of grace." Secondly, on account of the order of furtherance in good, whereby we proceed from imperfection to perfection. Hence the Apostle says (1 Cor. 15:46,47): "Yet that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual . . . The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man from heaven, heavenly." Thirdly, on account of the dignity of the incarnate Word, for on the words (Gal. 4:4), "But when the fulness of the time was come," a gloss says: "The greater the judge who was coming, the more numerous was the band of heralds who ought to have preceded him." Fourthly, lest the fervour of faith should cool by the length of time, for the charity of many will grow cold at the end of the world. Hence (Lk. 18:8) it is written: "But yet the Son of Man, when He cometh, shall He find think you, faith on earth?"

Reply to Objection 1: Charity does not put off bringing assistance to a friend: always bearing in mind the circumstances as well as the state of the persons. For if the physician were to give the medicine at the very outset of the ailment, it would do less good, and would hurt rather than benefit. And hence the Lord did not bestow upon the human race the remedy of the Incarnation in the beginning, lest they should despise it through pride, if they did not already recognize their disease.

Reply to Objection 2: Augustine replies to this (*De Sex Quest. Pagan.*, Ep. cii), saying (Q[2]) that "Christ wished to appear to man and to have His doctrine

preached to them when and where He knew those were who would believe in Him. But in such times and places as His Gospel was not preached He foresaw that not all, indeed, but many would so bear themselves towards His preaching as not to believe in His corporeal presence, even were He to raise the dead." But the same Augustine, taking exception to this reply in his book (*De Perseverantia* ix), says: "How can we say the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would not believe when such great wonders were wrought in their midst, or would not have believed had they been wrought, when God Himself bears witness that they would have done penance with great humility if these signs of Divine power had been wrought in their midst?" And he adds in answer (*De Perseverantia* xi): "Hence, as the Apostle says (Rom. 9:16), 'it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy'; Who (succours whom He will of) those who, as He foresaw, would believe in His miracles if wrought amongst them, (while others) He succors not, having judged them in His predestination secretly yet justly. Therefore let us unshrinkingly believe His mercy to be with those who are set free, and His truth with those who are condemned." [*The words in brackets are not in the text of St. Augustine].

Reply to Objection 3: Perfection is prior to imperfection, both in time and nature, in things that are different (for what brings others to perfection must itself be perfect); but in one and the same, imperfection is prior in time though posterior in nature. And thus the eternal perfection of God precedes in duration the imperfection of human nature; but the latter's ultimate perfection in union with God follows.

Article Six

Whether the Incarnation ought to have been put off till the end of the world?

Objection 1: It would seem that the work of the Incarnation ought to have been put off till the end of the world. For it is written (Ps. 91:11): "My old age in plentiful mercy"---i.e. "in the last days," as a gloss says. But the time of the Incarnation is especially the time of mercy, according to Ps. 101:14: "For it is time to have mercy on it." Therefore the Incarnation ought to have been put off till the end of the world.

Objection 2: Further, as has been said (*A[5]*, ad 3), in the same subject, perfection is subsequent in time to imperfection. Therefore, what is most perfect ought to be the very last in time. But the highest perfection of human nature is in the union with the Word, because "in Christ it hath pleased the Father that all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell," as the Apostle says (Col. 1:19, and 2:9). Therefore the Incarnation ought to have been put off till the end of the world.

Objection 3: Further, what can be done by one ought not to be done by two. But the one coming of Christ at the end of the world was sufficient for the salvation of human nature. Therefore it was not necessary for Him to come beforehand in His Incarnation; and hence the Incarnation ought to have been put off till the end of the world.

On the contrary, It is written (Hab. 3:2): "In the midst of the years Thou shalt make it known." Therefore the mystery of the Incarnation which was made known to the world ought not to have been put off till the end of the world.

I answer that, As it was not fitting that God should become incarnate at the beginning of the world, so also it was not fitting that the Incarnation should be put off till the end of the world. And this is shown first from the union of the Divine and human nature. For, as it has been said (A[5], ad 3), perfection precedes imperfection in time in one way, and contrariwise in another way imperfection precedes perfection. For in that which is made perfect from being imperfect, imperfection precedes perfection in time, whereas in that which is the efficient cause of perfection, perfection precedes imperfection in time. Now in the work of the Incarnation both concur; for by the Incarnation human nature is raised to its highest perfection; and in this way it was not becoming that the Incarnation should take place at the beginning of the human race. And the Word incarnate is the efficient cause of the perfection of human nature, according to Jn. 1:16: "Of His fulness we have all received"; and hence the work of the Incarnation ought not to have been put off till the end of the world. But the perfection of glory to which human nature is to be finally raised by the Word Incarnate will be at the end of the world. Secondly, from the effect of man's salvation; for, as is said Qq. Vet et Nov. Test., qu. 83, "it is in the power of the Giver to have pity when, or as much as, He wills. Hence He came when He knew it was fitting to succour, and when His boons would be welcome. For when by the feebleness of the human race men's knowledge of God began to grow dim and their morals lax, He was pleased to choose Abraham as a standard of the restored knowledge of God and of holy living; and later on when reverence grew weaker, He gave the law to Moses in writing; and because the gentiles despised it and would not take it upon themselves, and they who received it would not keep it, being touched with pity, God sent His Son, to grant to all remission of their sin and to offer them, justified, to God the Father." But if this remedy had been put off till the end of the world, all knowledge and reverence of God and all uprightness of morals would have been swept away from the earth. Thirdly, this appears fitting to the manifestation of the Divine power, which has saved men in several ways--not only by faith in some future thing, but also by faith in something present and past.

Reply to Objection 1: This gloss has in view the mercy of God, which leads us to glory. Nevertheless, if it is referred to the mercy shown the human race by the Incarnation of Christ, we must reflect that, as Augustine says (Retract. i), the time of the Incarnation may be compared to the youth of the human race, "on account of the strength and fervor of faith, which works by charity"; and to old age---i.e. the sixth age---on account of the number of centuries, for Christ came in the sixth age. And although youth and old age cannot be together in a body, yet they can be together in a soul, the former on account of quickness, the latter on account of gravity. And hence Augustine says elsewhere (Qq. lxxxiii, qu. 44) that "it was not becoming that the Master by Whose imitation the human race was to be formed to the highest virtue should come from heaven, save in the time of youth." But in another work (De Gen. cont. Manich. i, 23) he says: that Christ came in the sixth age---i.e. in the old age---of the human race.

Reply to Objection 2: The work of the Incarnation is to be viewed not as merely the terminus of a movement from imperfection to perfection, but also as a principle of perfection to human nature, as has been said.

Reply to Objection 3: As Chrysostom says on Jn. 3:11, "For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world" (Hom. xxviii): "There are two comings of Christ: the first, for the remission of sins; the second, to judge the world. For if He had not done so, all would have perished together, since all have sinned and need the glory of God." Hence it is plain that He ought not to have put off the coming in mercy till the end of the world.

There is one key aspect of Aquinas's discussion which I would like to highlight: the notion of 'fittingness' or, in Latin, *convenientia* (from which, of course, we have 'convenient'). Why is this important?

You will remember that Anselm had discussed whether God brought salvation through the incarnation as a matter of necessity. Aquinas nuances this discussion. He wants to argue that God's actions are neither a matter of mere caprice (as if the incarnation were some kind of divine whim, or just one amongst a host of options open to God to which he's largely indifferent) nor of forced necessity. In other words, God did not *have to* bring salvation through the incarnation, but neither was the incarnation some random choice. Rather, Aquinas describes the incarnation as 'fitting'. What does this mean?

Aquinas states that there are two kinds of necessity which one must consider in relation to the incarnation. The first is that kind of necessity which is absolute, and Aquinas gives the example of food as a necessity for nourishing the body. Put simply, there's no other way of sustaining the body. The second kind of necessity refers to one course of action which is simply much more expedient or appropriate than others. For example, I could walk from Lampeter to London, but it would be better to take the train. It is this second kind of 'necessity' which Aquinas thinks pertains to the incarnation. God could have saved us by means of his omnipotence without the need for the incarnation. This would be a matter of divine decree. Yet Aquinas argues that it is better – and in this sense 'necessary' – that God bring about our salvation by means of the incarnation. In article 2 above, he enumerates two sets of five reasons for the 'fittingness' of Christ's incarnation.

This is significant because Aquinas introduces not a logical justification for the incarnation, but an aesthetic understanding of its necessity. In other words, Aquinas thinks that God brings about salvation in the most 'beautiful' (or appealing) way possible. This is the sense of the Latin term *convenientia*. The English terms 'convenient' or 'fitting' are a little weak in this context. The sense of Aquinas's Latin is that God's incarnation in Christ draws us to the salvation he offers by its strange beauty. For those of us who celebrate Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, we perhaps know something of this strange beauty.

Further Reading

D. Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), esp. chs 9 & 15.

Brian Leftow and Brian Davies (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ch.12.

Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), chs. 15 and 16 (*Available online via Athens and Oxford Scholarship Online*)

Nicholas Healy, *Aquinas – Theologian of the Christian Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), particularly ch.4.

John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), ch.3.

Questions for Consideration

1. What do Anselm and Aquinas *add* to the Chalcedonian debates?
2. What does Anselm mean when he claims that the incarnation is 'necessary'?
3. Does Anselm offer a penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement?
4. What reasons does Aquinas give for the *convenientia* of the incarnation?