

QUESTION 3

The Union on the Part of the Assuming Person

Next we have to consider the union on the part of the assuming person. And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Is it fitting for a divine person to assume? (2) Is it fitting for the divine nature to assume? (3) Is the nature able to assume if personhood is mentally removed (*abstracta personalitate*)? (4) Is one person able to assume without another? (5) Is each person able to assume? (6) Is more than one person able to assume numerically one nature? (7) Is one person able to assume numerically two natures? (8) Was it more fitting for the person of the Son to have assumed a human nature than for one of the other divine persons?

Article 1

Is it fitting for a divine person to assume a created nature?

It seems that it is not fitting for a divine person to assume a created nature (*divinae personae non conveniat assumere naturam creatam*):

Objection 1: ‘Divine person’ signifies something maximally perfect or complete (*aliquid maxime perfectum*). But what is perfect or complete is such that no addition can be made to it. Therefore, since to assume is, as it were, to take something to oneself, so that what is assumed is added to the one who assumes, it seems that it not fitting for a divine person to assume a created nature.

Objection 2: That to which something is assumed is in some way communicated to what is assumed to it, in the way that dignity is communicated to one who is assumed to a high office. But as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 29, a. 3 and q. 30, a. 4), it is part of the notion of a person that a person is incommunicable. Therefore, it is not proper to a divine person to assume anything, i.e., to take anything to Himself.

Objection 3: A person is constituted by his nature. But it is unfitting for what is constituted to assume that which constitutes it, since an effect does not act on its cause. Therefore, it is unfitting for a person to assume a nature.

But contrary to this: In *De Fide ad Petrum* Augustine says, “This God”—i.e., the only-begotten—“took the form, i.e., the nature, of a servant into His own person.” But the only-begotten God is a person. Therefore, it befits (*competit*) a person to take on, i.e., to assume, a nature.

I respond: Two things are implied by the term ‘assumption’, viz., the *beginning* or *principle* of the act and the *end* or *terminus* of the act (*videlicet principium actus et terminus*). For to assume means, as it were, to take something to oneself. Now the person is both the principle and the terminus of the assumption in question. More specifically, He is the principle because it belongs properly to the person to act, and a taking up of this sort is effected by a divine action. Similarly, the person is likewise the terminus of this taking, since, as has been explained (q. 2, a. 2), the union is effected in a person and not in a nature. And so it is clear that assuming a nature belongs most properly to a person.

Reply to objection 1: Since a divine person is infinite, no addition can be made to Him. Hence, in *Epistola Synodali Ephesini Concilii* Cyril says, “We do not conceive the manner of the conjoining to be by addition (*secundum coappositionem*)”—just as, likewise, in the union of a man to God which comes about through the grace of adoption, nothing is added to God, but instead something divine is appended to the man. Hence, it is not God, but the man, who is perfected or brought to completion.

Reply to objection 2: A person is said to be incommunicable in the sense that he cannot be predicated of more than one suppositum. But nothing prevents many things from being predicated of a person. Hence, it is not contrary to the notion of a person for a person to be communicated in such a way that it subsists in more than one nature. But it is proper to a *divine* person, because of His infinity, for there to be a concurrence of natures in Him—not, to be sure, accidentally, but with respect to

subsistence.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 2, a. 6), the human nature does not constitute the divine person absolutely speaking, but it does ‘constitute’ it in the sense that the divine person is denominated from such a nature. For it is not from His human nature that the Son of God exists absolutely speaking, since He existed from eternity; instead, the only thing He has from His human nature is that He is a man. By contrast, a divine person is constituted absolutely speaking by the divine nature. Hence, a divine person is said to ‘assume’ a human nature, but not the divine nature.

Article 2

Is it fitting for the divine nature to assume?

It seems that it is not fitting for the divine nature to assume (*naturae divinae non conveniat assumere*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), to assume means to take to itself (*assumere dicitur quasi ad se sumere*). But it was not the case that the divine nature took a human nature to itself; for as was explained above (q. 2, aa. 1-2), the union was effected in a *person* and not in a *nature*. Therefore, it does not belong to the divine nature to assume a human nature.

Objection 2: The divine nature is common to the three persons. Therefore, if it is fitting for the nature to assume, it follows that it is fitting for the three persons, and so the Father assumed a human nature in the same way that the Son did. But this is erroneous.

Objection 3: To assume is to act. But acting belongs to the person and not to the nature, which is instead signified as *the principle by which* the agent acts. Therefore, it is not fitting for the nature to assume.

But contrary to this: In *De Fide ad Petrum* Augustine says, “That nature which always remains begotten by the Father”—that is, which is received from the Father by an eternal generation—“received our nature without sin.”

I respond: As was said above (a. 1), two things are signified in the word ‘assumption’, viz., the *principle* of the action, and the *terminus* of the action. Now it is fitting for the divine nature to be the *principle* of the assumption, since it is by its power that the assumption is effected. And so it is the *person* who is first and most properly said to assume, but it can also be said, secondarily, that the nature likewise assumes the [human] nature to its own person.

And it is along these same lines that [divine] nature is said to be incarnated, not in the sense that it is converted into flesh, but in the sense that it assumes a nature of flesh. Hence, Damascene says, “According to St. Athanasius and St. Cyril, we say that the nature of God is incarnated.”

Reply to objection 1: ‘Itself’ is reciprocal and refers to the same suppositum. But the divine nature does not differ [in reality] from the person of the Word. And so insofar as the divine nature takes the human nature to the person of the Word, it is said to take it to itself.

However, even though the Father assumes the human nature to the person of the Word, He does not thereby assume the human nature to Himself, since the suppositum of the Father is not the same as the suppositum of the Word. And so it cannot properly be said that the Father assumes the human nature.

Reply to objection 2: That which belongs to the divine nature in its own right (*secundum se*) belongs to the three persons, e.g., goodness, wisdom, and other attributes of this sort. But, as has been explained, to assume belongs to the divine nature by reason of the person of the Word. And so to assume belongs to that person alone.

Reply to objection 3: Just as *what is* and *that by which it is* are the same in God, so, too, *what acts*

and *that by which it acts* are likewise the same in God, since each thing acts insofar as it is a being. Hence, the divine nature is both *that by which* God acts and also the very God *who acts*.

Article 3

If personhood is intellectually removed, can the nature still assume?

It seems that if personhood is intellectually removed, the nature cannot assume (*abstracta personalitate per intellectum, natural non possit assumere*):

Objection 1: It has been explained (a. 2) that it is by reason of the person that it belongs to the nature to assume. But what belongs to something by reason of something is such that when the latter is removed, the former cannot belong to it. For instance, the body, which is visible by reason of color, cannot be seen without color. Therefore, once personhood has been intellectually removed, the nature cannot assume.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 1), assumption involves the terminus of the union. But the union can be effected only in a person and not in a nature. Therefore, once personhood is removed, the divine nature cannot assume.

Objection 3: In the First Part (ST 1, q. 40, a. 3) it was explained that in the case of divine things, once personhood is removed, nothing remains. But to assume is something. Therefore, once personhood is removed, the divine nature cannot assume.

But contrary to this: In the case of the divine, personhood is called a *personal property* (*personalitas dicitur proprietas personalis*), and as was explained in the First Part (ST 1, q. 30, a. 2), there are three personal properties, viz., Paternity, Procession, and Filiation. But, even if these are intellectually removed, there still remains in God the omnipotence through which the Incarnation was effected. As the angel said in Luke 1:37, “No word shall be impossible with God.” Therefore, it seems that even if personhood is removed, the divine nature can assume.

I respond: There are two ways in which our intellect is related to divine matters:

In one way, *by knowing God as He is*. And it is impossible for anything to be set aside from God in such a way that something else remains, since the whole that is in God is one, except for the distinction among the persons; and yet if one of persons is removed, the others are removed, because they are distinguished solely by their relations, which have to exist together.

In the second way, the intellect is related to divine things not in the sense of knowing God as He is, but in its own manner, viz., *by understanding in a multiple and divided way that which is one in God*. And in this manner our intellect can think of divine goodness and wisdom and other such things, which are called the attributes of the essence (*quae dicuntur essentialia attributa*), without thinking of the Paternity or Filiation, which are called *personhoods* or *personal properties* (*quae dicuntur personalitates*). And on this score, if personhood is intellectually removed, we can still understand the nature to be assuming (*possumus adhuc intelligere naturam assumentem*).

Reply to objection 1: Since, in the case of divine things, *what is* and *that by which it is* are the same, if any of the things attributed to God is considered in the abstract in its own right (*in abstracto secundum se consideretur*), ignoring everything else, then it will be something subsistent and, as a result, a person, since it exists in an intellectual nature. Therefore, just as, now, when the personal properties are posited in God, we say that there are three persons, so, if the personal properties are excluded by the intellect, the divine nature will remain in our consideration as a subsistent and as a person. And it is in this way that the divine nature can be understood to assume a human nature by reason of its own subsistence or personhood.

Reply to objection 2: Even if the personhoods of the three persons are intellectually removed,

what will remain in the intellect is the one personhood of God as the Jews understand it, and the act of assuming could terminate in this personhood, in the same way that we now claim that the act of assuming terminates in the person of the Word.

Reply to objection 3: Once personhood is removed by the intellect, nothing is said to remain in the mode of analysis (*per modum resolutionis*), as if the subject of the relation were one thing and the relation itself something else. For whatever is thought of in God is thought of as a subsisting suppositum.

However, some of the things said of God can be thought of without the others, not by the mode of analysis, but in the manner already explained.

Article 4

Is it possible for one person to assume a created nature without another person assuming it?

It seems that it is not possible for one person to assume a created nature without another person assuming it (*una persona non possit assumere naturam creatam, alia non assumente*):

Objection 1: As Augustine says in *Enchiridion*, “The works of the Trinity are undivided.” For just as there is a single essence for the three persons, so there is a single operation. But to assume is an operation. Therefore, it is not possible for it to belong to one divine person without belonging to another.

Objection 2: Just as we say that the person of the Son is incarnated, so, too, we say that His nature is incarnated. For as Damascene says in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3, “The whole divine nature is incarnated in one of its *hypostases*.” But the nature is common to the three persons. Therefore, so is the act of assuming.

Objection 3: Just as the human nature in Christ is assumed by God, so, too, men are assumed by Him through grace—this according to Romans 14:3 (“God has taken him [to Himself]”). But this act of assuming belongs to all the relevant persons. Therefore, so does the first act of assuming.

But contrary to this: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 2 Dionysius says that the mystery of the Incarnation belongs to “discrete theology” (*ad discretam theologiam*), viz., insofar as something distinctive is said of the divine persons.

I respond: As been explained (aa. 1-2), ‘assumption’ implies two things, viz., the *act of assuming* and the *terminus of the assumption*. Now the act of assuming proceeds from the divine power, which is common to the three persons, whereas the terminus of the assumption is, as has been explained (a. 2), a person. And so what belongs to the *action* in the assumption is common to the three persons, but what belongs to the character of the *terminus* belongs to one person in such a way that it does not belong to another. For the three persons brought it about that the human nature is united to the one person of the Son (*tres enim personae fecerunt ut humana natura uniretur uni personae filii*).

Reply to objection 1: This argument goes through on the part of the operation, and the conclusion would follow if it were talking about just the operation without the terminus, which is a person.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, the nature is said *to be incarnated*, just as it is said to assume, by reason of the person in whom the union is terminated, and not insofar as [the nature] is common to the three persons.

On the other hand, the *whole* divine nature is said to be incarnated not because it is incarnated in all the persons, but because no perfection is lacking to the divine nature of the incarnated person.

Reply to objection 3: The assumption that is effected through the grace of *adoption* is terminated in a certain participation in the divine nature with an assimilation to its goodness—this according to 2 Peter 1:4 (“... partakers in the divine nature ...”). And so an assumption of this sort is common to the three persons both on the side of the *principle* and on the part of the *terminus*.

By contrast, the assumption that is effected through the grace of *union* is common [to the three persons] on the side of the *principle* but, as has been explained, *not* on the part of the *terminus*.

Article 5

Could one of the other divine persons, besides the person of the Son, have assumed a human nature?

It seems that no other divine person, besides the person of the Son, could have assumed a human nature (*nulla alia persona divina potuit humanam naturam assumere praeter personam filii*):

Objection 1: Through an assumption of this sort it was brought about that God is the Son of Man. But it would be unfitting if it belonged to the Father or the Holy Spirit to be the Son [of Man], since this would lead to a confusion among the divine persons. Therefore, the Father and the Holy Spirit were unable to assume flesh.

Objection 2: Through the divine Incarnation men acquired adoption as sons—this according to Romans 8:15 (“You have not received the spirit of servitude again in fear, but the spirit of the adoption of sons”). But adoptive filiation is a participated likeness of natural filiation, which does not belong to either the Father or the Holy Spirit. Hence, Romans 8:29 says, “... those whom He foreknew and predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son.” Therefore, it seems that no other person could have been incarnated besides the person of the Son.

Objection 3: The Son is said to be sent and to be begotten by a temporal generation, insofar as He was incarnated. But it is unfitting for the Father to be sent and, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 32, a. 3 and q. 34, a. 4), He is innascible. Therefore, at least the person of the Father could not have been incarnated.

But contrary to this: Whatever the Son can do, the Father and* the* Holy* Spirit* can do; otherwise, the three persons would not have the same power. But the Son was able to be incarnated. Therefore, the Father and the Holy Spirit were likewise able to be incarnated.

I respond: As has been explained (aa. 1, 2 and 4), assumption implies two things, viz., the *act* itself of assuming and the *terminus* of the act of assuming. Now the principle of the act is the divine power, whereas the terminus is a person. But the divine power is related commonly and indifferently to all the persons. Again, the same common notion of personhood is found the three persons, even though their personal properties differ from one another.

Now whenever a power is related indifferently to many things, it can terminate its action in any of those things; this is clear in the case of those rational powers that are related to opposites and are such that they can act in either way. So, then, the divine power could have united the human nature either to the person of the Father or to the person of the Holy Spirit, in the way that it in fact united it to the person of the Son. And so one should reply that the Father or the Holy Spirit was able to assume flesh, just as the Son did.

Reply to objection 1: The temporal filiation by which Christ is called the Son of Man does not constitute His person in the way that the eternal filiation does; instead, it is something that follows upon His temporal generation. Hence, if the name ‘filiation’ were transferred in this way to the Father or the Holy Spirit, no confusion among the divine persons would follow.

Reply to objection 2: Adoptive filiation is a certain participated likeness of natural filiation, but through appropriation (*appropriate*) it is effected in us by the Father, who is the principle of the natural filiation, and through the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and the Son—this according to Galatians 4:6 (“God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!”).

And so just as now that the Son has been incarnated, we receive adoptive filiation as a likeness of

His natural filiation, so, if the Father were incarnated, we would receive adoptive filiation from Him as from the principle of natural filiation, and also from the Holy Spirit as from the common nexus between the Father and the Son.

Reply to objection 3: It is fitting for the Father to be innascible with respect to *eternal* generation, and a *temporal* generation would not exclude this.

On the other hand, the Son is said to be “sent” through the Incarnation because He is from another*, and without this the Incarnation would not satisfy the character of a mission.

Article 6

Can two divine persons assume numerically one and the same nature?

It seems that it is impossible for two divine persons to assume numerically one and the same nature (*duae personae non possunt assumere unam et eandem numero naturam*):

Objection 1: Suppose that this did happen. Then there would be either one man or more than one man. But not more than one man; for just as one divine nature in many persons is not compatible with there being more than one God, so one human nature in many persons is not compatible with there being more than one man. Similarly, there likewise could not be one man, since one man is *this man*, which points to one person, and so the distinction among the three divine persons would be destroyed—which is inadmissible. Therefore, it is not the case that two or three persons can receive a single human nature.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 4), an assumption is terminated in a oneness of person. But the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not one person. Therefore, it is not the case that three persons can assume a single human nature.

Objection 3: Damascene, in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3, and Augustine, in *De Trinitate* 1, claim that it follows from the Incarnation of the Son of God that whatever is said of the Son of God is said of the Son of Man, and vice versa. Therefore, if the three persons assumed a single human nature, it would follow that whatever is said of any of the three persons is said of that man and, conversely, whatever is said of that man can be said of each of the three persons. So, then, what is proper to the Father, viz., generating the Son from eternity, would be said of that man and, as a result, it would be said of the Son of God, which is absurd. Therefore, it is impossible for the three divine persons to assume a single human nature.

But contrary to this: An incarnate person subsists in two natures, viz., the divine nature and a human nature. But three persons can subsist in a single divine nature. Therefore, they can likewise subsist in a single human nature, so that it is one human nature assumed by three persons.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 2, a. 5), no new person or *hypostasis* is effected by the union of the soul and the body in Christ; instead, what is effected is a nature assumed into a divine person or *hypostasis*. This is effected not by the power of the human nature, but by the power of the divine person.

Now the situation with the divine persons is such that one of them excludes another not from sharing the same nature, but only from sharing the same person. Therefore, since, as Augustine explains in *Epistola ad Volusianum*, in the mystery of the Incarnation “the entire character of what is done is the power of the one doing it,” this matter has to be judged more by the condition of the person who is assuming than by the condition of the human nature that is being assumed.

So, then, it is not impossible for the divine persons that two or three of them should assume a single *human nature*. However, it would be impossible for them to assume a single human *hypostasis* or single human person. As Anselm says in *De Conceptu Virginali*, “It is impossible for more than one person to assume one and the same *man*.”

Reply to objection 1: Given the hypothesis that three persons assume a single human nature, it

would be true to say that the three persons are one man, and this because there is one human nature—just as it is now true to say that they are one God, and this because there is one divine nature.

Nor does ‘one [man]’ imply a oneness of *person*; instead, it implies a oneness in the human nature. For it would not be possible to argue from the fact that three persons are one *man* that they are one *absolutely speaking*. For nothing prevents men who are many absolutely speaking from being one with respect to something, e.g., one people. In the same way, in *De Trinitate* 6 Augustine says, “The Spirit of God and the spirit of man are diverse by nature, but by inherence they become one spirit”—this according to 1 Corinthians 6:17 (“He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit”).

Reply to objection 2: Given the hypothesis, the human nature would be assumed not into the oneness of a single person, but into the oneness of each person, so that just as the divine nature has a natural oneness with each of the persons, so the human nature would, through the assumption, have a oneness with each of the persons.

Reply to objection 3: As regards the mystery of the Incarnation, there was a communication or sharing of the properties that belong to the nature (*fuit communicatio proprietatum pertinentium ad naturam*). For whatever belongs to a nature can be predicated of a person who subsists in that nature, now matter which nature is signified by the name in question.

Therefore, given the above hypothesis, those things that belong to the human nature and those that belong to the divine nature can be predicated of the person of the Father and likewise of the person of the Son and of the person of the Holy Spirit. However, it would not be the case that what belongs to the person of Father *by reason of His proper person* can be attributed to the person of the Son or to the person of the Holy Spirit—and this because of the distinction among the persons, which remains.

Thus, one could say that just as the Father is unbegotten, so the man is unbegotten, insofar as the term ‘man’ supposits for the person of the Father. But if one were to reason further: ‘The man is unbegotten; the Son is the man; therefore the Son is unbegotten’, there would be a fallacy of a figure of speech or a fallacy of accident. In the same way, we now say that God is unbegotten because the Father is unbegotten, and yet we cannot conclude that the Son is unbegotten, even though He is God.

Article 7

Can one divine person assume two human natures?

It seems that one divine person cannot assume two human natures:

Objection 1: As is clear from what has been said above (q. 2, aa. 3 and 6), the nature assumed in the mystery of the Incarnation does not have a suppositum beyond the suppositum of the divine person. Therefore, if one supposes that there is a single divine person who assumes two human natures, there would be a single suppositum for two natures of the same species. But this seems to imply a contradiction, since the nature of a species is multiplied only by a distinction among the supposita.

Objection 2: Given the hypothesis, it could not be said that the incarnate divine person is one man, since He would not have just one human nature. It could likewise not be said that He is more than one man, since multiple men are distinct in supposita, and here there would be just one suppositum. Therefore, the hypothesis in question is altogether impossible.

Objection 3: In the mystery of the Incarnation the one divine nature is united to the whole assumed nature, i.e., to each part of it. For Christ is “perfect God and perfect man, whole God and whole man,” as Damascene puts it in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3. But the two human natures could not be totally united with one another, since the soul of the one would have to be united to the body of the other and, again, the two bodies would have to exist together—all of which would make for a confusion among the natures. Therefore, it is impossible for a divine person to assume two human natures.

But contrary to this: Whatever the Father can do, the Son can do. But after the Incarnation of the Son, the Father is able to assume a human nature that is numerically different from the human nature that the Son has assumed. For the power of the Father or the power of the Son is in no way diminished by the Son's being incarnated. Therefore, it seems that after the Incarnation, the Son is able to assume another human nature in addition to the one He has already assumed.

I respond: What has the power for one thing and not for more has a power that is limited to the one thing. But the power of a divine person is infinite and cannot be limited to any created thing. Hence, one should not claim that a divine person assumed one human nature in such a way that He could not assume another. For it seems to follow from this that a personhood belonging to the divine nature was so hemmed in by one human nature that another human nature could not be assumed to its to its personhood.

Therefore, it is clear that regardless of whether we are thinking about a divine person with respect to His *power*, which is the *principle* of the union, or whether we are thinking about Him with respect to His *personhood*, which is the *terminus* of the union, we must claim that a divine person is able to assume a numerically different human nature in addition to the human nature that He has in fact assumed.

Reply to objection 1: A created nature is perfected in its notion by its form, which is multiplied by a division of the matter. And so if the composition of form and matter constitutes a new suppositum, it follows that the nature is multiplied in accord with the multiplication of supposita.

However, as was explained above (a. 6), in the mystery of the Incarnation the union of the form and the matter, i.e., of the soul and the body, does not constitute a new suppositum. And so it is possible for there to be a numerical multitude on the part of the nature because of the division of the matter, but without a distinction among supposita.

Reply to objection 2: It might seem that, given the hypothesis in question, it would follow that there are two men, because of the two natures, without two supposita existing there—in the same way that, as was explained above (a. 6, ad 1), three persons would be called one man because of the single assumed human nature.

But this does not seem to be true. For names should be used in accord with what they are imposed to signify, and this arises from thinking about the things that are before us. And so, as regards the mode of signifying and co-signifying, it is necessary to think about those things that are before us. Now in the case of such things a name imposed from a form is never predicated in the plural except because of a plurality of *supposita* (*in quibus numquam nomen ab aliqua forma impositum pluraliter dicitur nisi propter pluralitatem suppositorum*). For instance, a man who is clothed with two vestments is not called 'two clothed individuals (*duo vestiti*)', but is instead called 'an individual who is clothed with two vestments (*unus vestitus duobus vestimentis*)'; and someone who has two qualities is spoken of in the singular as 'someone qualified by two qualities' (*dicitur singulariter aliquis secundum dua qualitates*).

Now the assumed nature behaves in some respects in the manner of a piece of clothing, even though, as was stated above (q. 2, a. 6, ad 1), this is not a likeness in all respects. And so if a divine person assumed two human natures, then because of the oneness of the suppositum He would be called one man having two human natures.

Now it happens that many men are called one people because they come together in some one thing and not because of a oneness of suppositum. And, similarly, as was explained above (a. 6, ad 1), if two divine persons were to assume numerically one human nature, they would be called one man not because of a oneness of suppositum, but insofar as they come together in something that is one.

Reply to objection 3: The divine and human natures are not ordered in the same way to the one divine person. Instead, the divine nature is related to the person antecedently as something that is one with that person from eternity, whereas the human nature is related to the divine person in a posterior way as something that is assumed by the divine person in time—not in the sense that the human nature is the person Himself, but in the sense that the person subsists in the nature. For the Son of God is His divinity (*est sua deitas*), but He is not His humanity. And so in order for a human nature to be assumed

by a divine person, it follows that the divine nature is united by a personal union to the whole of the assumed nature, i.e., with respect to all of its parts.

On the other hand, the two assumed natures would be related uniformly to the divine person (*duarum naturam assumptarum esset uniformis habitudo ad personam divinam*), and it would not be the case that one of the human natures assumes the other. Hence, it would not be necessary for one of the human natures to be united totally to the other; that is, it would not be necessary for all the parts of the one human nature to be united to all the parts of the other human nature.

Article 8

Was it more fitting for the Son of God to be incarnated than for the Father or the Holy Spirit to be incarnated?

It seems that it was not more fitting for the Son of God to be incarnated than for the Father or the Holy Spirit to be incarnated:

Objection 1: Through the mystery of the Incarnation men have been led to a true cognition of God—this according to John 18:37 (“For this was I born, and for this I came into the world, to give testimony to the truth”). But by the fact that the person of the Son of God has been incarnated, many have been kept from a true cognition of God because they have directed toward the person of the Son Himself many things that are said of the Son with respect to His human nature—for instance, Arius, who posited an inequality among the persons because of what is said in John 14:28 (“The Father is greater than I”). But this error would not have occurred if the person of the Father had been incarnated, since no one would have thought that the Father is less than the Son. Therefore, it seems that it would have been more fitting for the person of the Father to be incarnated than for the person of the Son to be incarnated.

Objection 2: One effect of the Incarnation seems to be the re-creation of human nature—this according to Galatians 6:15 (“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any account, but a new creature”). But the power to create is appropriated to the Father. Therefore, it would have been more fitting for the Father to be incarnated than for the Son to be incarnated.

Objection 3: The Incarnation is ordered toward the forgiveness of sins—this according to Matthew 1:21 (“You will call His name ‘Jesus’, for He will save His people from their sins”). But the forgiveness of sins is attributed to the Holy Spirit—this according to John 20:22-23 (“Receive the Holy Spirit: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them”). Therefore, it was more fitting for the person of the Holy Spirit to be incarnated than for the person of the Son to be incarnated.

But contrary to this: In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, “In the mystery of Incarnation the wisdom and power of God were made manifest—the *wisdom*, because He found a most fitting payment of a most intractable price, and the *power*, because He made the victim the victor once again.” But power and wisdom are appropriated to the Son—this according to 1 Corinthians 1:24 (“... Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God”). Therefore, it was fitting for the person of the Son to be incarnated.

I respond: It was most fitting for the person of the Son to be incarnated:

First, *on the part of the union*. For it is fitting for things that are similar to be united. But on the part of the person of the Son, who is the Word of God, one notices, in one way, a *general fittingness with respect to every creature (ad totam creaturam)*. For the word of the craftsman, i.e., his conception, is an exemplary likeness of those things that are made by the craftsman. Hence, the Word of God, which is God’s eternal conception, is an exemplary likeness of every creature (*similitudo exemplaris totius creaturae*). And so just as creatures are established in their proper species through *participation* in this likeness of creatures, but in a changeable way, so it was fitting for the creature to be restored in relation to the eternal and unchangeable perfection through the *non-participatory* but *personal* union of the Word

to the creature. For the craftsman repairs his artifact, if it has been damaged, through the conceived form of the craft by which he made the artifact. In a second way, there is a *special fittingness in the case of human nature*, because the Word is the conception of eternal wisdom from which all the wisdom of men is derived. And so man progresses in wisdom, which is his proper perfection insofar as he is rational, by participating in the Word of God, in the way that a disciple is instructed by receiving the word of the master. Hence, Ecclesiasticus 1:5 says, “The Word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom.” And so it was fitting for man’s consummate perfection that the very Word of God should be united in His person to human nature.

Second, the reason for this fittingness can be taken from *the end of the union*, which is the fulfillment of the predestination of those who have been preordained for a heavenly inheritance, which is owed only to the children (*non nisi filiis*)—this according to Romans 8:17 (“... if children, heirs also”). And so it was fitting that through Him, who is a natural Son, men should participate in a likeness of His filiation according to adoption, just as the Apostle says in the same place (“... whom He foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”).

Third, a reason for this fittingness can be taken from *the sin of the first parent*, the remedy for which is applied through the Incarnation. For the first man sinned by desiring knowledge, as is clear from the words of the serpent, who promised man the knowledge of good and evil. Hence, it was fitting for it to be through the Word of true wisdom that man, who had withdrawn from God by his disordered desire for knowledge, should be led back to God.

Reply to objection 1: There is nothing that human malice would be unable to misuse, given that it misuses even the very goodness of God—this according to Romans 2:4 (“Do you disdain the riches of His goodness?”). Hence, even if the person of the Father had been incarnated, man could have taken from this an occasion for some error, e.g., that the Son could not have been sufficient for repairing human nature.

Reply to objection 2: The first creation of things was effected by the power of God the Father through His Word. Hence, it was fitting for the re-creation to be effected by the power of God the Father through His Word, in order that the re-creation might correspond to the creation—this according to 2 Corinthians 5:19 (“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”).

Reply to objection 3: It is proper to the Holy Spirit to be the gift of the Father and the Son. Now the forgiveness of sins is effected through the Holy Spirit as through a gift of God. And so it was more fitting that the Son, whose gift the Holy Spirit is, should be incarnated for the justification of men.