

## QUESTION 4

### The Union on the Part of What is Assumed

Next we have to consider the union on the part of what is assumed. On this score we have to consider, first, the things that are assumed by the Word of God (questions 4-6) and, second, the things that are co-assumed, i.e., the perfections and defects (questions 7-26).

Now the Son of God assumed a human nature along with its parts. Hence, on the first point there are three topics to be considered. The first has to do with the human nature itself (question 4); the second has to do with the parts of the human nature (question 5); and the third has to do with the ordering that belongs to the act of assuming (question 6).

On the first topic there are six questions: (1) Was a human nature more assumable by the Son of God than any other nature? (2) Did He assume a person? (3) Did He assume a man? (4) Would it have been fitting for Him to assume human nature as separated from all its individuals? (5) Would it have been fitting for Him to assume human nature as existing in all its individuals? (6) Was it fitting for Him to assume human nature in a man generated from the lineage of Adam?

### Article 1

#### Was human nature more assumable by the Son of God than any other nature?

It seems that human nature was not more assumable by the Son of God than any other nature (*humana natura non fuerit magis assumptibilis a filio Dei quam quaelibet alia natura*):

**Objection 1:** In *Epistola ad Volusianum* Augustine says, “In things that are done miraculously, the entire reason for what is done is the power of the one who does it.” But the power of God, who effects the Incarnation, the greatest miraculous work of all, is not limited to a single nature, since God’s power is infinite. Therefore, human nature is no more assumable by God than any other creature.

**Objection 2:** As was explained above (q. 3, a. 8), likeness is a reason that contributes to the fittingness of the Incarnation of a divine person. But just as the sort of likeness that belongs to an *image* (*similitudo imaginis*) is found in a rational nature, so, too, the sort of likeness that belongs to a *trace* (*similitudo vestigii*) is found in a non-rational nature (cf. *ST* 1, q. 45, a. 7). Therefore, a non-rational creature was assumable in the same way that human nature was.

**Objection 3:** As Gregory explains in a homily on the hundred sheep, in which he introduces Ezechiel 28:12 (“You were a seal of resemblance”), a more manifest likeness of God is found in angelic nature than in human nature. But sin is found in the angel, just as it is in the man—this according to Job 4:18 (“In His angels He found wickedness”). Therefore, angelic nature was as assumable as the nature of man was.

**Objection 4:** Since the highest perfection belongs to God, something is more similar to God to the extent that it is more perfect. But the universe as a whole is more perfect than its parts, among which is human nature. Therefore, the universe as a whole is more assumable than human nature.

**But contrary to this:** Speaking from the mouth of begotten Wisdom, Proverbs 8:31 says, “My delight is to be with the children of men.” And so the union of the Son of God with human nature seems to have a sort of fittingness.

**I respond:** Something is called ‘assumable’ in the sense that it is apt to be assumed by a divine person. This aptness cannot be understood as a *natural passive potentiality* that does not extend to what transcends the natural order, since a creature’s *union in person* with God (*unio personalis creaturae ad Deum*) transcends the natural order. Hence, it follows that something is called ‘assumable’ because of its fittingness for the sort of union just mentioned.

Now this fittingness involves two things in human nature, viz., its *dignity* (*dignitas*) and its *need* (*necessitas*)—(a) its *dignity*, because insofar as human nature is rational and intellectual, it was apt to

contain the Word Himself in some way through its operation, by knowing Him and loving Him; (b) its *need*, because it needed repair, since it was subject to Original Sin.

Now these two things belong to human nature alone. For the non-rational creature lacks the fittingness of dignity, whereas the angelic nature lacks the fittingness of need just mentioned. Hence, what remains is that human nature alone is assumable.

**Reply to objection 1:** Creatures are denominated as such-and-such from what belongs to them in keeping with their proper causes and not from what belongs to them in keeping with the first and universal causes. For instance, we say that a disease is incurable not because it cannot be cured by God, but because it cannot be cured through the subject's proper principles. So, then, a given creature is said not to be assumable, not in order to exclude something from God's power, but in order to exhibit the condition of the sort of creature that does not have an aptitude for being assumed.

**Reply to objection 2:** The likeness of an *image (imago)* is found in human nature insofar as human nature has a capacity for God, viz., by attaining to Him by its proper operation of knowing and loving. By contrast, the likeness of a *trace (vestigium)* has to do solely with a sort of representation that exists because of a divine impression on the creature, but it is not thereby the case that a non-rational creature, in which just this sort of likeness exists, can attain to God solely through its own operation. But what falls short in a lesser thing does not have a fittingness with respect to what is greater; for instance, a body which is not apt to be perfected by a sentient soul, is all the less apt to be perfected by an intellectual soul.

Now a union with God with respect to *personal esse* is much greater than a union with God with respect to *operation*. And so a non-rational creature, which falls short of union with God through its operation, does not have fittingness for being united to Him with respect to *personal esse*.

**Reply to objection 3:** Some claim that the angel is not assumable because he is complete in his personhood from the beginning of his creation, given that he is not subject to generation and corruption. Hence, he could not have been assumed into unity with a divine person unless his personhood were destroyed, but this befits neither the incorruptibility of the angel's nature nor the goodness of the one assuming, which does not involve corrupting any perfection in the creature being assumed.

However, this does seem to totally exclude the fittingness of assuming an angelic nature. For by producing a new angelic nature, God is able to join it to Himself in the unity of a person, and so no preexisting thing would be corrupted in such a case.

But, as has been explained, fittingness is missing on the part of *need*, since even though angelic nature is subject to sin in some angels, nonetheless, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 64, a. 2), it is an irreparable sin.

**Reply to objection 4:** The perfection of the universe is not the perfection of a single person or suppositum; instead, it is the perfection of what is 'one' thing under some sort of positioning or ordering. And as has been explained, most parts of the universe are not assumable. Hence, it remains that only human nature is assumable.

## Article 2

### Did the Son of God assume a person?

It seems that the Son of God assumed a person:

**Objection 1:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says that the Son of God assumed human nature in an atom (*in atomo*),” i.e., in an individual. But as is clear from Boethius in *De Duabus Naturis*, an “individual rational nature” is a person. Therefore, the Son of God assumed a person.

**Objection 2:** Damascene says that the Son of God “assumed those things that He planted in our

nature.” But He planted personhood there. Therefore, the Son of God assumed a person.

**Objection 3:** Nothing is consumed unless it is something that exists. But in a certain *Decretal* Innocent III says, “The person of God consumed the person of a man.” Therefore, it seems that the person of a man was first assumed.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Fide ad Petrum* Augustine says, “God assumed the nature of a man and not a person.”

**I respond:** Something is said to be assumed by the fact that it is assumed to something. Hence, that which is assumed has to be presupposed for the assumption, just as that which is moved is presupposed as being in a place for the movement itself (*sicut id quod movetur localiter praeintelligitur ipsi motui*). However, as was explained above (q. 3, aa. 1-2), no person is presupposed in the human nature for the assumption, but instead the human nature serves as the terminus of the act of assuming (*ut terminus assumptionis*). For if a person were presupposed, then either (a) it would have to be corrupted, in which case it was assumed in vain, or (b) it would remain after the union, in which case there would be two persons, the one assuming and the other assumed—which, as was shown above (q. 2, a. 6), is erroneous. Hence, it follows that there is no way in which the Son of God assumed a human person.

**Reply to objection 1:** The Son of God assumed human nature in an atom, i.e., in an individual that is none other than the uncreated suppositum which is the person of the Son of God. Hence, it does not follow that a person was assumed.

**Reply to objection 2:** Its own personhood is lacking to the assumed nature not because of the absence of anything that pertains to the perfection of human nature, but because of the addition of something that goes beyond human nature, viz., its union with a divine person.

**Reply to objection 3:** In this passage ‘consumed’ does not imply the destruction of anything that was previously there, but instead implies an obstacle to that which could otherwise exist. For if the human nature had not been assumed by a divine person, that human nature would have had its own personhood. And the one person is said, albeit improperly, to have ‘consumed’ the other person because the divine person by its union prevented the human nature from having its own proper personhood.

### Article 3

#### Did the divine person assume a man?

It seems that the divine person assumed a man:

**Objection 1:** Psalm 64:5 says, “Blessed is he whom you have chosen and assumed,” which a Gloss explains to be about Christ. And in *De Agone Christiano* Augustine says, “The Son of God assumed a man, and in him endured what is human.”

**Objection 2:** The name ‘man’ signifies human nature. But the Son of God assumed a human nature. Therefore, He assumed a man.

**Objection 3:** The Son of God is a man. But He is not a man whom He did not assume, since then, by parity of reasoning, He would be Peter or any other man. Therefore, He is the man whom He assumed.

**But contrary to this** is the authority of Felix, Pope and martyr, which is introduced by the Council of Ephesus: “We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, because He is the eternal Son of God and the Word of God, and not a man assumed by God in the sense that He is another besides that man. Nor did the Son of God assume a man in the sense that there is another man besides Him.”

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 2), what is assumed is not the terminus of the assumption, but is instead presupposed by the assumption. And it was explained that the individual to which the human nature is assumed is none other than the divine person, who is the terminus of the assumption.

Now the name ‘man’ signifies the nature insofar as it apt to exist in a suppositum, since, as Damascene puts it, “Just as the name ‘God’ signifies one who has the divine nature, so the name ‘man’

signifies one who has a human nature.” And so it is not proper to say that the Son of God assumed a man, as long as we are presupposing, as the truth of the matter has it, that in Christ there is a single suppositum and a single *hypostasis*.

However, according to those who claim that there are two *hypostases* or two *supposita* in Christ, it could fittingly and properly be said that the Son of God assumed a man. This is why the first opinion posited in *Sentences* 3, dist. 6 concedes that a man is assumed. But as was shown above (q. 2, a. 6), this opinion is erroneous.

**Reply to objection 1:** Locutions of this sort should not be used extensively as if they were proper. Instead, they should be explained in a respectful way (*pie sunt exponendae*) whenever they are used by the sacred doctors—with the result that we may say ‘assumed man’ because (a) a man’s nature has been assumed and because (b) the assumption is terminated in the Son of God’s being a man.

**Reply to objection 2:** The name ‘man’ signifies human nature in the concrete (*in concreto*), i.e., insofar as it exists in some suppositum. And so just as we cannot say that a suppositum is assumed, so we cannot say that a man is assumed.

**Reply to objection 3:** The Son of God is not the man whom He assumed; instead, He is the man whose nature He assumed.

#### Article 4

##### Should the Son of God have assumed human nature as separated from all its individuals?

It seems that the Son of God should have assumed human nature as separated from all its individuals (*filius Dei debuit assumere naturam humanam abstractam ab omnibus individuis*):

**Objection 1:** The assuming of human nature was effected for the common salvation of all men. Hence, 1 Timothy 4:10 says of Christ that He is “the savior of all men, especially of the faithful.” But nature as it exists in individuals falls short of its commonality. Therefore, the Son of God should have assumed human nature insofar as it is separated from all its individuals.

**Objection 2:** In the case of all things, what is most noble in them has to be attributed to God. But within each genus, what is *per se* is the most important. Therefore, the Son of God should have assumed what is *per se* a man. But this, according to the Platonists, is human nature separated from the individuals. Therefore, the Son of God should have assumed this nature.

**Objection 3:** As has been explained (a. 3), it is not the case that human nature is assumed by the Son of God insofar as it is signified in the concrete by the name ‘man’. So as is clear from what has been said (a. 3), human nature is being signified insofar as it exists *in* the singulars. Therefore, the Son of God assumed human nature insofar as it is separated from the individuals.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, “The incarnate Word of God did not assume the sort of nature that is thought of by pure contemplation (*nuda contemplatione consideratur*). For this is no incarnation at all, but a deception and a pretense of an incarnation.” But human nature insofar as it is separated from, or abstracted from, its singulars is “being thought of by pure contemplation, since it does not subsist in its own right (*secundum seipsam non subsistit*),” as the selfsame Damascene puts it. Therefore, the Son of God did not assume human nature insofar as it is separated from its singulars.

**I respond:** Prescinding from the *esse* that it has in its singulars, the nature of man, or of any other sentient thing, can be thought of in two ways: (a) in one way, as having *esse* in its own right (*per seipsam*) outside of matter, as the Platonists claimed; and (b), in a second way, as existing in an intellect, either human or divine.

(a) Now as the Philosopher proves in *Metaphysics* 7, [the nature of man] cannot subsist in its own

right (*per se subsistit non postest*), since sensible matter belongs to the nature of a species of sensible things and is posited in its definition, e.g., flesh and bones in definition of man. Hence, it cannot be the case that human nature exists outside of sensible matter.

However, even if human nature did subsist in this way, it would not have been fitting for it to be assumed by the Son of God:

First, because this act of assuming is terminated in a person, whereas it is contrary to the nature of a common form that it should be individuated in this way in a person.

Second, because only common and universal operations can be attributed to a common nature, and by operations of this sort a man can neither merit nor demerit, even though the assumption in question was effected in order for the Son of God to merit on our behalf in His assumed nature.

Third, because a nature existing in this way is not sensible, but instead intelligible. But the Son of God assumed human nature in order appear visibly to men in it—this according to Baruch 3:38 (“After this He was seen upon the earth and lived among men”).

(b) Similarly, human nature as existing in the divine intellect could not have been assumed by the Son of God. For in that case it would be nothing other than the divine nature, and so human nature would have existed from eternity in the Son of God.

Similarly, it is not appropriate to claim that the Son of God assumed human nature as it exists in a human intellect. For this would be nothing other than His *being thought of* as assuming human nature. And so, if He had not assumed it *in reality*, this act of thinking would be false. Nor, as Damascene pointed out, would this be anything other than a sort of pretense of an incarnation.

**Reply to objection 1:** The incarnate Son of God is not the common savior of everyone by a commonality of *genus or species* that is attributed to a nature separated from its individuals; instead, He is the savior of everyone by a commonality of *cause*, insofar as the incarnate Son of God is the universal cause of human salvation.

**Reply to objection 2:** *Man* in its own right is not found in reality in such a way that it exists outside of its singulars, in the way that the Platonists claimed—although some say that Plato himself did not understand *Man* as separated to exist except in the divine intellect. And so *Man* in this sense need not have been assumed by the Word, since it had been present to Him from eternity.

**Reply to objection 3:** Even though human nature was not assumed in the concrete in such a way that a suppositum was presupposed by the assumption, it was nonetheless assumed in an individual, since it was assumed in order to exist in an individual.

## Article 5

### Should the Son of God have assumed human nature in all its individuals?

It seems that the Son of Man should have assumed human nature in all its individuals:

**Objection 1:** It is human nature that was assumed primarily and in its own right (*primo et per se assumptum est*). But what is fitting in its own right for a nature belongs to everything that belongs to that nature. Therefore, it was fitting for human nature to be assumed by the Word of God in all its supposita.

**Objection 2:** The divine Incarnation proceeds from God’s charity; this is why John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” But charity brings it about that an individual shares himself with his friends as much as he can. Now as was explained above (q. 3, a. 7), it was possible for the Son of God to assume more than one human nature and, by the same line of reasoning, *all* human natures. Therefore, it was fitting for the Son of God to assume the nature in all its supposita.

**Objection 3:** The wise worker completes his work in the most efficient way he can (*breviori via qua potest*). But it would have been the most efficient way if all men had been assumed to a *natural*

filiation rather than for the many to be “led to *adoption* as sons,” as Galatians 4:5 puts it, by a single natural Son. Therefore, human nature should have been assumed by the Son of God in all its supposita.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, “The Son of God did not assume human nature insofar as it is thought of as a species, nor did He assume all its *hypostases*.”

**I respond:** It was not fitting for human nature to be assumed by the Word in all its supposita.

First, because the many supposita of human nature that are connatural to it would have been destroyed. For since, as has been explained (a. 3 and q. 2, a.), in the assumed nature one must not think of any suppositum beyond the assuming person, if there were no non-assumed human nature, it would follow that there was just one suppositum of human nature, viz., the assuming person.

Second, because this takes away from the dignity of the incarnate Son of God, insofar as He is the firstborn among many brothers with respect to human nature, just as He is the firstborn of all creatures with respect to the divine nature. For in the case under discussion all men would be of equal dignity.

Third, because it was fitting that just as a single divine suppositum was incarnated, so He assumed just a single human nature, in order that there might be a uniformity on both sides.

**Reply to objection 1:** It is fitting in its own right (*secundum se*) for human nature to be assumed, since this does not belong to it by reason of the person, in the way that it *is* fitting for the divine nature to assume by reason of the person. However, it is not the case that this is fitting for human nature in its own right in the sense of belonging to its essential principles, or in the sense of being a natural property through which it would belong to all its supposita.

**Reply to objection 2:** God’s love is made manifest to men not only in the very act of assuming human nature, but mainly through those things that He suffered in His human nature for other men—this according to Romans 5:8 (“God commends His charity towards us, because when we were still His enemies, Christ died for us”). But there would be no place for this if He had assumed human nature in all men.

**Reply to objection 3:** The efficiency of the manner that the wise worker observes involves not doing through many things what can be done through one. And so it would be most appropriate that all other men should be saved through one man.

## Article 6

### Was it fitting for the Son of God to assume a human nature from the lineage of Adam?

It seems that it was not fitting for the Son of God to assume a human nature from the lineage of Adam (*non fuerit conveniens ut filius Dei humanam naturam assumeret ex stirpe Adae*):

**Objection 1:** In Hebrews 7:26 the Apostle says, “It was fitting that we should have a high priest separated from sinners.” But He would have been more separated from sinners if He had not assumed a human nature from the lineage of Adam. Therefore, it seems that He should not have assumed a human nature from the lineage of Adam.

**Objection 2:** In any given genus, the beginning is more noble than what comes from the principle. Therefore, if He wanted to assume human nature, it would have been more fitting to assume it in Adam himself.

**Objection 3:** As a Gloss on Galatians 2:15 (“We by nature are Jews and not sinners from among the Gentiles”) explains, the Gentiles were greater sinners than the Jews. Therefore, if He wanted to assume human nature from among sinners, He should have assumed it from among the gentiles than from the lineage of Abraham, who was a just man.

**But contrary to this:** In Luke 3:23ff. our Lord’s genealogy is traced back all the way to Adam.

**I respond:** As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 13, “God could have taken up a man elsewhere than from the race of Adam, who by his sin had tied up the human race. But God thought better to take up a

man who was from that race that had been conquered and through whom He would conquer the enemy of the human race.” And this because of three considerations:

First, because it seems to pertain to justice that the one who sinned should make satisfaction. And so it was fitting that, with respect to the nature that had been corrupted through itself, what was assumed was that through which satisfaction had to be made for the whole nature.

Second, it likewise pertained to the greater dignity of man when the victor over the devil was born of that race which had been conquered through the devil.

Third, because the power of God is also thereby more manifest when, from that corrupted and weak nature, He assumed that which was moved forward to such great power and dignity.

**Reply to objection 1:** It was fitting for Christ to be separated from sinners as regards their *guilt* (*ad culpam*), which He had come to destroy, but not as regards their *nature*, which He had come to save and according to which “it was fitting for Him in all things to be made like unto His brothers,” as the selfsame Apostle says in Hebrews 2:17. And His innocence is even more remarkable in the fact that His nature, assumed from the mass subject to sin, had such great purity.

**Reply to objection 2:** As has been explained, it was necessary for Him who had come to destroy sin to be separated from sinners with respect to the guilt which Adam was subject to—Adam, whom Christ “led out of his sin,” as Wisdom 10:2 puts it. But it was necessary that He who had come to make everyone clean should not Himself have to be made clean, just as in every genus of change the first mover is immovable with respect to that movement, e.g., the first cause of an alteration is unalterable. And so it was not fitting that He assume human nature in Adam himself.

**Reply to objection 3:** Since it was fitting for Christ to be maximally separated from sinners with respect to their guilt in the sense of attaining the height of innocence, it was fitting that the genealogy should go from the first sinner all the way to Christ by the mediation of some just individuals, in whom certain marks of future holiness showed forth. For this reason, too, God instituted certain signs of future holiness in the people from whom Christ was to be born. These signs began with Abraham, who was the first to receive the promise of the Christ and circumcision as a sign of the consummation of the covenant, as related in Genesis 17:11.