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THE INCARNATION INDEPENDENT OF SIN

In discussing the Incarnation, people normally tend to talk about it in a very general sense. It is well known that God became man out of love for his creation to redeem man of that sin which separated man from God. What is believed about the Incarnation and how the Church came to teach what it does is taken for granted. Over time, through countless works on the topic, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have developed the current Church teaching on the Incarnation. It would seem, however, that not everything is settled. One matter that is still open for debate is whether or not the Incarnation is dependent on the fall of man. The phrase the primacy of Christ expresses the concept that Christ is the beginning and the end and that everything is ordered to Christ. It would seem incompatible with the primacy of Christ for His Incarnation, the greatest event in the history of creation, to be dependent upon the sin that separated God and man. Many theologians argue that the Incarnation is not contingent upon the fall of man, and the resulting belief for some theologians is that if man had not sinned, the Incarnation still would still have occurred. This argument is often posited as a hypothetical question: if man had not sinned, would the Incarnation still have occurred? However, the argument should begin with the primacy of Christ instead of the hypothetical question, because the primacy of Christ is the underlying foundation for the hypothetical question. Through the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Sacred Scripture, and the arguments of multiple theologians, one will see that it is not only possible, but

likely, that although Christ did come into the world to redeem man from sin, His Incarnation is not dependent upon sin.

To be sure not to fall into heresy while discussing speculative theological questions, any conclusion about the Incarnation must be in keeping with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made man.”¹ The Word became flesh for man as the savior of the world, the sacrificial lamb, whose blood would wash away sin. “We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Savior; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator.”² If this were all the Catechism had to say about the Incarnation, there would seem to be little point in discussing the Incarnation outside the context of redemption from sin; however, as we see from the next paragraph of the Catechism, there is more than one purpose of the Incarnation. The Catechism, quoting St. Peter, St. Irenaeus, St. Athanasius, and St. Thomas Aquinas, continues:

The Word became flesh to make us "*partakers of the divine nature*": "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine Sonship, might become a son of God." "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."³

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 456.

² Ibid., 457

³ Ibid., 460

The Catechism states that the reason for the Incarnation is not solely redemptive, but that God had a deeper motive beyond the need for reconciliation. God became man and died to redeem us, which is not disputed among orthodox theologians; however, there is another reason for the Incarnation beyond redemption: God desires union with human beings in order to fulfill man's longing for His presence. This other reason for the Incarnation can in no way imply necessity and is therefore completely free and non-essential to human nature. The desired union of God with man is more of a focus of theology in the Eastern Church, while the redemption is more of a focus of the theology of the West.

Because the Eastern Church focused on the second motive for the Incarnation, desired union of God and man, the Greek fathers began to develop the concept of Christ's primacy in the order of creation from an early date.⁴ One of the best known representatives of this idea is Saint Maximus the Confessor (d. 622).

[Christ] is that great and hidden mystery (Col. 1:25). This is that blessed end [telos] for which all things were created. This is the divine scope foreknown before the beginning of creatures, which we define to be the end that was foreknown on account of which all things [exist], but itself [exists] on account of nothing. With this end in view God produced the essences of creatures. This is properly the end of providence and the things foreknown This is the mystery that contains all the ages and that manifests the great plan of God which is infinite and pre-existed the ages in an infinite manner. . . . Really, it was for the sake of Christ . . . that all the ages and the things in the ages themselves received the beginning and the end of existence in Christ. . . . This [hypostatic union] was made when Christ appeared in the last times. By itself it is the fulfillment of the foreknowledge of God.⁵

St. Maximus brings out how Christ is the beginning and end of all things. All of creation was made with Christ as the end; in other words, when God made all creatures, He

⁴ Pancheri, Francis Xavier O.F.M., *The Universal Primacy of Christ*, trans. Juniper B. Carol O.F.M. (Front Royal: Christendom Publications, 1984), 13.

⁵ Ibid.

designed them for Christ, so that Christ could bring about God's plans. Unfortunately the West would not develop their Christology in the same way as the East.

The theology of the west had a different perspective, instead focusing on the subject of the redemption. St. Anselm was the notable starting point of the argument about the reason for the Incarnation of Christ in Latin theology. His thesis assumed a hypothetical formulation expressed in the question: whether the Son of God would have become incarnate if Adam had not sinned? This leads Western thought to the primary concern of establishing a connection between sin and Christ as the Redeemer. Assuming this as the central question subjects the primacy of Christ to repairing the fall of man, and makes Christ's existence primarily that of a redeemer. St. Anselm attempts to show the fittingness and necessity of the Incarnation and of the death on the cross. The sin committed is an offence against God that defrauds the honor due to Him. Anselm calls Adam's sin "quasi-infinite," because an offense is measured by the person offended, and since God is an infinite person, sin involves a guilt of unlimited gravity. Anselm's claim of the necessity of the Incarnation is present here in that the offense given cannot go unpunished; it demands a proportionate satisfaction or punishment. This is dictated by divine justice. However, the proper punishment would be for the whole human race to be condemned to hell, which would frustrate the divine plan which must be carried out notwithstanding man's deficiencies. Proportionate satisfaction must then be given; therefore the Incarnation, death, and resurrection are necessary.⁶ St Anselm, therefore, concludes that since the Incarnation is necessitated by the fall, Christ would not have become man had the fall not occurred.

⁶ Ibid., 14-15.

Continuing with western theology, St. Thomas Aquinas delves into the Incarnation and into the hypothetical question mentioned above. Thomas discusses first the fittingness of the Incarnation stating:

To each thing, 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. 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. 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."⁷

Having proven that it is fitting that God become man because God is goodness and wills to communicate himself to others, Thomas then goes on to claim that the Incarnation is not necessary for the restoration of the human nature in one sense of the word necessary, but that it is necessary for the restoration in another sense of the word. The incarnation is not necessary in the first sense because God, in his omnipotence, could have restored human nature in other ways. However, in the other sense of necessity, the end of the restoration is better and more conveniently attained through the Incarnation. In his third article of Question One, Thomas delves into the reasons for the Incarnation which he divides into two categories. St. Thomas realizes that, from scripture, it seems that Christ's Incarnation was not only because of sin, but that God had other reasons for becoming man. The first category consists of those reasons not dependent on sin.

First, with regard to faith, which is made more certain by believing God Himself Who speaks; hence Augustine says: "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: "Nothing was so

⁷ Aquinas, St. Thomas, *Suma Theologica*, trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Online Edition, 2008, <http://www.newadvent.com/suma/>, 11/07/2011, III, 1, 1.

necessary for raising our hope as to show us how deeply God loved us.” Thirdly, with regard to charity, which is greatly enkindled by this; hence Augustine says: "What greater cause is there of the Lord's coming than to show God's love for us?" Fourthly, with regard to well-doing, in which He set us an example; hence Augustine says in a sermon: "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: "God was made man, that man might be made God."

The second category consists of those reasons dependent on sin.

So also was this [the Incarnation] 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: "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: "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: "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." 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. Fifthly, in order to free man from the thralldom of sin, which, as Augustine says, "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." ⁸

Thomas next takes up the hypothetical question, whether, if man had not sinned, God would have become incarnate. After taking into account that there are reasons for the

⁸ Ibid., III, 2.

Incarnation which do not depend upon sin and the arguments among theologians on the subject at his time, he states his position:

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 Incarnation, it is more in accordance with this to say that the work of Incarnation was ordained by God as a remedy for sin; so that, had sin not existed, 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.

So it is apparent that Thomas disagrees with the proposed hypothetical proposition on account of the revelation of scripture, but acknowledges that the proposition is not an impossibility. Such scriptures include Luke, who says, “For the Son of man came to seek and save the lost,”⁹ as well as Paul who says, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”¹⁰ Paul also says, “[God sent] his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.”¹¹

These verses would certainly seem to argue that Christ would not have come into the world without the sin of man. They seem to say that the reason for the Incarnation is the fall of man, and that more grace abounded because of the fall. However, it will be demonstrated by John Duns Scotus and later theologians that these verses only show that which happened in the current reality with reference to the fall. They do not remove the possibility that Christ holds a primacy in creation and that the incarnation is not, in itself, dependant upon the fall of Adam.

⁹ Luke 19:10 RSV.

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 1:15 RSV.

¹¹ Romans 8:3 RSV.

St. Anselm starts with the hypothetical question, but Blessed John Duns Scotus discusses the primacy of Christ starting from a different premise, one which pervades the Franciscan school of theology. This premise brings the question back toward the teachings of the East. Scotus is trying to determine whether, in the order of intention, in the present divine plan, Christ's predestination is dependent on the prevision of sin and therefore occasioned by it. He discusses this in his commentary on the *Third Book of Sentences* by Peter Lombard while he was teaching at Oxford and Paris. Scotus' argument pivots on God willing in an orderly manner His act of creation.

Without prejudging the matter, it may be said that, so far as the objects intended by God are concerned, since the predestination of anyone to glory is prior by nature to the prevision of anyone's sin or damnation, according to the last opinion mentioned in distinction 41 of the First Book [of sentences], this is true *a fortiori* of the predestination of that soul which was predestined to the greatest glory. For it seems to be universally true that he who wills in an orderly manner, intends first that which is nearer the end; and just as he first intends one to have glory before grace, so among those predestined to glory, he who wills in an orderly manner would seem to intend first the glory of the one he wishes to be near the end, and thus he wills glory for this soul before he wills glory for any other soul, and for every other soul he wills glory and grace before he foresees those things which are the opposite of these habits [i.e., sin or damnation].¹²

So, being that God would will in an orderly manner, He must first will the end to which everything will tend and in which all will find fulfillment. In other words, God wills things as He knows things, that is, a priori, from cause to effect. Scotus responds to those who have concluded differently in the past:

All the authorities [to the contrary] may be explained in the sense that if man had not sinned, Christ would not have come as redeemer, nor perhaps as passable, since there would have been no need for a union with a passable body for this soul glorified from the beginning, to which God chose to give not only the highest glory, but also willed that it be always present. If man had not sinned, there would have been no need for redemption; but it does not seem to be only on account of that [redemption] that God predestined this soul to so great a glory,

¹² Carol, Juniper B. O.M.F., *Why Jesus Christ?*, (Manassas: Trinity Communications, 1986), 122.

since the redemption or the glory of the soul to be redeemed is not comparable to the glory of Christ's soul. Neither is it likely that the highest good in creation is something that was merely occasioned only because of some lesser good; nor is it likely that he predestined Adam to such good before he predestined Christ; and yet this would follow. In fact if the predestination of Christ's soul was for the sole purpose of redeeming others, something even more absurd would follow, namely, that in predestining Adam to glory, He [God] would have foreseen him as having fallen into sin before he predestined Christ to glory.

It can be said, therefore, that with a priority of nature God chose for his heavenly court all the angels and men he wished to have with their various degrees of perfection before he foresaw either sin or the punishment for sinners; and no one has been predestined only because somebody else's sin was foreseen, lest anyone have reason to rejoice over the fall of another.¹³

Scotus proposes that the essence and content of divine predestination came into being in the concrete order in such a way that Christ's predestination and primacy substantially coincide. The formulation of the Scotistic argument presents the subject of predestination to better understand the mission of Christ in salvation and His role in divine works *ad extra*, outside God. "Predestination is the foreordaining of some being principally to glory, and to other things insofar as they are ordered to glory."¹⁴ This idea of predestination, in its fundamental meaning, displays God's will as not conditioned by creatures, and so His will is sovereign and free. God's will, which in Scotistic thought is synonymous with His love, is the beginning of all things, the ultimate explanation of the order of salvation that encompasses nature and grace. Predestination is, then, an ordination to the eternal glory as an end, and in an indirect way implies the modalities or means, the concrete and necessary realities needed to obtain that end. Both Scotus and St. Thomas teach that the end of predestination is the glory that is to be attained, and that grace and the will's cooperation are the means to that end. Predestination is God's gift of

¹³ Ibid., 122-123

¹⁴ Pancheri, 33.

creative love, a gift of life He wishes to share with His creatures.¹⁵ “If predestination is a gratuitous gift of God, which in no way depends on the creature, we will have to say, that it precedes the prevision of sin which is a defect and a privation. It cannot be conditioned by anything positive – and much less negative – on the part of creatures.”¹⁶ Scotus points out that if the predestination of all takes place before the prevision of sin, the same must be said of Christ who is the greatest of the predestined. Taking the pivot point of Scotus’ argument mentioned above, “he who wills in an orderly manner, intends first that which is nearer the end.” It follows that,

We cannot possibly affirm, without denying such perfections in God, that he ordains that which is more perfect to that which is less perfect. Indeed, as being is to being, so is the good to the good. The ontological gradation of beings expresses, then, in its reference, a hierarchy of being-good which is a manifestation of the ‘ordinate volens’¹⁷ and cannot be subverted without denying that God is, in fact, ‘ordinatissime volens.’ Thus it would be a denial of the rationality and morality of the divine will to affirm, for instance, that man has been made for the dog, or in order to rear or breed dogs, in such a way that the good of the dogs conditions the existence of man and exhausts its finality.

To state Christ’s existence was occasioned by Adam’s sin and that the primary reason for His coming was to be a remedy for that sin means exactly the overturning of the scale of values ‘being good.’ It means declaring that the most exalted creature, the God-Man, is occasioned by sin and subordinated to man. All this involves the denial of the ‘ordinate volens’ and to the moral perfection of the divine will. Turning around this untenable solution, we will have to say on the contrary, in virtue of the axiom ‘ordinate volens,’ that God willed Christ not only independently of sin and without essential reference to it, but that He willed angels and man – indeed all creatures – for the sake of Christ because he is the ‘fini propinquier.’¹⁸ In other words, God willed Christ as the archetype, the cause, the end, the mediator of all the predestined. And since every predestination by nature ‘precedes’ the prevision of the Fall and is independent of it, *a fortiori* the predestination of Christ cannot depend on it either.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ordinate volens: Well ordered or ordained will

¹⁸ Fini propinquier: nearest end.

¹⁹ Ibid., 34-35.

Freeing man from sin according to Scotus is a successive moment in God's order of intention. In reference to man, the Incarnation is the execution of a potency due to sin. This does not change the fundamental dimension of the Incarnation. According to Scotus, Christ's death has a sense of "crossing over" to resurrection and is the actuation of the Incarnation in history. According to St. Anselm, it was necessary that man be redeemed, that he could not be redeemed without satisfaction, this satisfaction was to be accomplished by Christ, and Christ's passion was the most fitting mode of this. John Scotus rejects the character of the necessity and its fittingness in the above conclusions. In the Incarnation, the governing principle is divine love, and so is it in the redemption. The things accomplished by Christ concerning man's redemption were not necessary except by the presumption that the divine ordination ordained that it should happen that way. Scotus thus rejects any talk of necessity in the plan of salvation, especially one imposed by the sin of Adam. The existence of Christ's life and passion are an effect of God's free design based on love. God's will moves itself and is not moved from the outside.²⁰

This explains why there is no contest or tension between the *ordo amoris*²¹ and the *ordo justitiae*,²² since the latter is but a facet of the former. There is no justice that necessarily demands a satisfaction through the death of the God-Man. All the concrete modalities of the Incarnation, including the Passion and death on the Cross, are but different manifestation of the *ordo amoris*. This, as Scotus points out, stimulates our filial admiration and gratitude toward God: "Given that man might have been redeemed in another way, while yet God by His free will redeemed him thus, we are bound to him much more than if there had been no other way in which we might have been redeemed."²³

²⁰ Ibid., p 45

²¹ Ordo amoris: order of love.

²² Ordo justitiae: order of justice.

²³ Ibid.

Scotus states that the Incarnation of Christ was not foreseen as being occasioned by sin, but foreseen by God from all eternity, immediately as a good more proximate to the end.²⁴

First, God understood himself as the highest good. In the second instant he understood all creatures. In the third [instant] he predestined some to glory and grace, and concerning some he had a negative act by not predestining. In the fourth [instant] he foresaw that all these would fall in Adam. In the fifth [instant] he preordained and foresaw the remedy – how they would be redeemed through the Passion of his Son, so that, like all the elect, Christ in the flesh was foreseen and predestined to grace and glory before Christ's passion was foreseen as a medicine against the fall, just as a physician wills the health of a man before he wills the medicine to cure him.²⁵

So the preordination and predestination of the elect takes place before anything is done about the reprobate so that no one will rejoice over the damnation of another as a benefit to himself. Therefore the predestination of Christ was foreseen before the fall and all demerit was foreseen. It seems unreasonable that God would leave such a work as the Incarnation undone on account of a good deed done by Adam, such as not sinning. So, according to Scotus, first God loves himself, second He loves himself for others, third He wishes to be loved by him who can love him with the greatest love, and fourth, God foresees the union of man, who is to love Him with the greatest love, even if no one had fallen.²⁶

There are scriptural references that support the Scotistic argument. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says:

²⁴ Carol, p 124.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p 126

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He predestined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he feely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.²⁷

That we are predestined in the love of God through Christ, and we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, shows that Christ “was the exemplary and final cause of our predestination.”²⁸ The blessings and predestination of man are conditioned on Christ and presuppose the existence of Christ already present in the mind of God. Verse five, “He predestined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ,” states that man was predestined through Christ according to the purpose of God’s will. It was not motivated by any external factor, i.e. the fall of man.²⁹ Another biblical foundation for Scotus’ thought which goes to further prove what was just stated is St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”³⁰ Christ is called ‘first-born,’ and man is predestined to the image of God’s Son. The conclusion drawn from this must be that in

²⁷ Ephesians 1:3-10 RSV.

²⁸ Carol, 162.

²⁹ Ibid., 164.

³⁰ Romans 8:29-30 RSV.

God's mind, in the *ordine intentionis*,³¹ Christ is prior to man and therefore His existence is not dependent upon man or man's sin.³²

There is an incongruity, however, in Scotus' argument which has been raised by the followers of St. Thomas. This incongruity seemingly does what Scotus was trying to avoid, making God's actions dependent upon man.

With one single act God willed the incarnation to take place in a concrete and determinate manner, in its substance and in its modality. One cannot say that God first willed the substance in an indetermined manner, and later in a concrete manner after the prevision of man's sin; the first determined volition is neither intelligible, nor, therefore feasible. Or else one would have to suppose that God first willed Christ to be impassible, and then after the prevision of sin, changed the modality, making it passible. But this is obviously absurd, and it would be equivalent to admitting a determination; from below; which reflects on Christ.³³

So in order to have the Incarnation, it must be willed in the divine plan in its entirety: both as redeeming and as divinizing man. Later thinkers in the Scotistic tradition have found a way around this problem, one that orders the *ordine intentionis* differently to better harmonize the various elements in the plan of salvation. French theologian John F. Bonnefoy, O.F.M. arranges the intention as such: (1) since good tends to diffuse itself, and God is the sovereign good, He communicates himself freely in a sovereign way through the incarnation. Christ, then, is the first willed of every creature, the beginning of God's ways (Prov. 8:22). Since whoever wills in an orderly manner, wills the end before the means, Christ's primacy requires He be first of the predestined. (2) "God decrees the existence of Mary so that Christ may have a perfect beneficiary with whom He may share His own goodness and happiness. Thus Mary is the first predestined to

³¹ Ordine intentionis: order of intention.

³² Carol, 166.

³³ Pancheri, 48.

glory, to the fullness of grace in one and the same decree with Christ, and then to the divine maternity.” (3) God decides to give existence to other intelligent creatures on whom Christ and Mary will bestow gifts, and then Christ would grant men and angels a share in the divine life through sanctifying grace. (4) God decrees the creation of the material universe to be the throne and footstool of His Son. (5) “God decrees that Christ and Mary will earn (merit) such gifts for their benefactors.” (6) God decrees the suffering and death of Christ and Mary’s share in them. (7) God decrees the beneficiaries be guilty of demerit toward the donor because forgiving is more perfect than giving.³⁴

The incarnation, in this order, is before sin and therefore independent of it, however, unlike John Scotus, the Incarnation is linked to its redemptive aspect and is decreed, in *ordine intentionis*, prior to the fall. This theory eliminates conditional decrees. There is not a condition in which God must do something by necessity because of the actions of creation, or in which God adds to His will after willing the Incarnation. The other theory that should be given attention is that of Dr. William H. Marshner of the theology department of Christendom College.

First: In a logically early moment God knows, through the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*,³⁵ all the possible worlds, with different ones presumably having different things to recommend them.

Second: Among these possible worlds which God understands, there is one in which a race is raised to friendship with Him through capitulation in its first parent. Still through the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, He understands the possible loss of that friendship, and its possible restoration through the Logos, become incarnate.

Third: God prefers this world because of the infinite glory resulting from the redemptive Incarnation which is a feature of it.

³⁴ Carol, 141-143.

³⁵ *Scientia simplicis intelligentiae*: God knows all that is merely possible by the knowledge of simple intelligence.

Fourth: God chooses to create this particular world, and through the *scientia visionis*,³⁶ he now knows all that His creation will contain relative to each efficacious decree.³⁷

Dr. Marshner, unlike John Scotus, does not begin with the Incarnation willed in isolation, but willed within possible worlds that have the Incarnation as a feature. God chooses this world so that the Incarnation would occur in the way it did. The Incarnation, therefore, is willed first for the sake of everything that follows and is redemptive in its nature from the beginning. Christ's predestination, from John Scotus' argument, is preserved and the possible world which God chose to exist is willed for the sake of the Incarnation.³⁸ Both Bonnefoy's and Marshner's theories agree in substance. "The essential element in both seems to be exactly the same, namely: the predestination of Christ and His Holy Mother took place in an instant which was logically prior to the prevision of sin as *absolute futurum*³⁹. . . . The existence of Christ and Mary was not contingent on the Fall as foreseen through the *scientia visionis*."⁴⁰ Dr. Marshner's theory seems to harmonize Thomas and Scotus. "Specifically, the theory makes a substantial concession to the Thomists in the sense that it presents Christ as Redeemer in the very first logical instant in which His existence is efficaciously decreed by god. The classical distinction between a passible and an impassible Incarnation is thus repudiated."⁴¹

³⁶ *Scientia visionis*: God knows all real things in the past, present, and future.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁹ *Absolute futurum*: complete or unconditional future.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

So in proving that the Incarnation is not dependent upon the fall of man, history has put forth great theologians who have greatly disputed the facts of the argument, arguing from a couple of different points. The more current theory of Dr. Marshner seems to present God's will in creation in a much more fitting order, an order which is quite in keeping with the ideas of the Eastern theologians such as St. Maximus the Confessor, the underlying arguments of the Western theologians such as St. Anselm, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and Sacred Scripture. It takes the hypothetical question, that if man had not sinned, the Incarnation still would still have occurred, which brought the argument into hypothetical reasoning, and brings to reality that this is not the essential question, and what is more important is the predestination and primacy of Christ, as mentioned above. So, it would seem that the most fitting of the theories is that of Dr. Marshner which proves the primacy of Christ and retains the redemptive nature of the Incarnation.

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