

THIRD PART, QUESTION 14

Of the Defects of Body Assumed by the Son of God (In Four Articles)

We must now consider the defects Christ assumed in the human nature; and first, of the defects of body; secondly, of the defects of soul.

Under the first head there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether the Son of God should have assumed in human nature defects of body?
- (2) Whether He assumed the obligation of being subject to these defects?
- (3) Whether He contracted these defects?
- (4) Whether He assumed all these defects?

Whether the Son of God in human nature ought to have assumed defects of body?

IIIa q. 14 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that the Son of God ought not to have assumed human nature with defects of body. For as His soul is personally united to the Word of God, so also is His body. But the soul of Christ had every perfection, both of grace and truth, as was said above (q. 7, a. 9; q. 9, seqq.). Hence, His body also ought to have been in every way perfect, not having any imperfection in it.

Objection 2. Further, the soul of Christ saw the Word of God by the vision wherein the blessed see, as was said above (q. 9, a. 2), and thus the soul of Christ was blessed. Now by the beatification of the soul the body is glorified; since, as Augustine says (Ep. ad Dios. cxviii), “God made the soul of a nature so strong that from the fulness of its blessedness there pours over even into the lower nature” (i.e. the body), “not indeed the bliss proper to the beatific fruition and vision, but the fulness of health” (i.e. the vigor of incorruptibility). Therefore the body of Christ was incorruptible and without any defect.

Objection 3. Further, penalty is the consequence of fault. But there was no fault in Christ, according to 1 Pet. 2:22: “Who did no guile.” Therefore defects of body, which are penalties, ought not to have been in Him.

Objection 4. Further, no reasonable man assumes what keeps him from his proper end. But by such like bodily defects, the end of the Incarnation seems to be hindered in many ways. First, because by these infirmities men were kept back from knowing Him, according to Is. 53:2,3: “[There was no sightliness] that we should be desirous of Him. Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not.” Secondly, because the desire of the Fathers would not seem to be fulfilled, in whose person it is written (Is. 51:9): “Arise, arise, put on Thy strength, O Thou Arm of the Lord.” Thirdly, because it would seem more fitting for the devil’s power to be overcome and man’s weakness healed, by strength than by weakness. Therefore it does not seem to have been fitting that

the Son of God assumed human nature with infirmities or defects of body.

On the contrary, It is written (Heb. 2:18): “For in that, wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succor them also that are tempted.” Now He came to succor us. Hence David said of Him (Ps. 120:1): “I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me.” Therefore it was fitting for the Son of God to assume flesh subject to human infirmities, in order to suffer and be tempted in it and so bring succor to us.

I answer that, It was fitting for the body assumed by the Son of God to be subject to human infirmities and defects; and especially for three reasons. First, because it was in order to satisfy for the sin of the human race that the Son of God, having taken flesh, came into the world. Now one satisfies for another’s sin by taking on himself the punishment due to the sin of the other. But these bodily defects, to wit, death, hunger, thirst, and the like, are the punishment of sin, which was brought into the world by Adam, according to Rom. 5:12: “By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death.” Hence it was useful for the end of the Incarnation that He should assume these penalties in our flesh and in our stead, according to Is. 53:4, “Surely He hath borne our infirmities.” Secondly, in order to cause belief in the Incarnation. For since human nature is known to men only as it is subject to these defects, if the Son of God had assumed human nature without these defects, He would not have seemed to be true man, nor to have true, but imaginary, flesh, as the Manicheans held. And so, as is said, Phil. 2:7: “He... emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man.” Hence, Thomas, by the sight of His wounds, was recalled to the faith, as related Jn. 20:26. Thirdly, in order to show us an example of patience by valiantly bearing up against human passibility and defects. Hence it is said (Heb. 12:3) that He “endured such opposition from sin-

ners against Himself, that you be not wearied. fainting in your minds.”

Reply to Objection 1. The penalties one suffers for another’s sin are the matter, as it were, of the satisfaction for that sin; but the principle is the habit of soul, whereby one is inclined to wish to satisfy for another, and from which the satisfaction has its efficacy, for satisfaction would not be efficacious unless it proceeded from charity, as will be explained (Suppl., q. 14, a. 2). Hence, it behooved the soul of Christ to be perfect as regards the habit of knowledge and virtue, in order to have the power of satisfying; but His body was subject to infirmities, that the matter of satisfaction should not be wanting.

Reply to Objection 2. From the natural relationship which is between the soul and the body, glory flows into the body from the soul’s glory. Yet this natural relationship in Christ was subject to the will of His Godhead, and thereby it came to pass that the beatitude remained in the soul, and did not flow into the body; but the flesh suffered

what belongs to a passible nature; thus Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii, 15) that, “it was by the consent of the Divine will that the flesh was allowed to suffer and do what belonged to it.”

Reply to Objection 3. Punishment always follows sin actual or original, sometimes of the one punished, sometimes of the one for whom he who suffers the punishment satisfies. And so it was with Christ, according to Is. 53:5: “He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins.”

Reply to Objection 4. The infirmity assumed by Christ did not impede, but greatly furthered the end of the Incarnation, as above stated. And although these infirmities concealed His Godhead, they made known His Manhood, which is the way of coming to the Godhead, according to Rom. 5:1,2: “By Jesus Christ we have access to God.” Moreover, the ancient Fathers did not desire bodily strength in Christ, but spiritual strength, wherewith He vanquished the devil and healed human weakness.

Whether Christ was of necessity subject to these defects?

IIIa q. 14 a. 2

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ was not of necessity subject to these defects. For it is written (Is. 53:7): “He was offered because it was His own will”; and the prophet is speaking of the offering of the Passion. But will is opposed to necessity. Therefore Christ was not of necessity subject to bodily defects.

Objection 2. Further, Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii, 20): “Nothing obligatory is seen in Christ: all is voluntary.” Now what is voluntary is not necessary. Therefore these defects were not of necessity in Christ.

Objection 3. Further, necessity is induced by something more powerful. But no creature is more powerful than the soul of Christ, to which it pertained to preserve its own body. Therefore these defects were not of necessity in Christ.

On the contrary, The Apostle says (Rom. 8:3) that “God” sent “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Now it is a condition of sinful flesh to be under the necessity of dying, and suffering other like passions. Therefore the necessity of suffering these defects was in Christ’s flesh.

I answer that, Necessity is twofold. one is a necessity of “constraint,” brought about by an external agent; and this necessity is contrary to both nature and will, since these flow from an internal principle. The other is “natural” necessity, resulting from the natural principles—either the form (as it is necessary for fire to heat), or the matter (as it is necessary for a body composed of contraries to be dissolved). Hence, with this necessity, which

results from the matter, Christ’s body was subject to the necessity of death and other like defects, since, as was said (a. 1, ad 2), “it was by the consent of the Divine will that the flesh was allowed to do and suffer what belonged to it.” And this necessity results from the principles of human nature, as was said above in this article. But if we speak of necessity of constraint, as repugnant to the bodily nature, thus again was Christ’s body in its own natural condition subject to necessity in regard to the nail that pierced and the scourge that struck. Yet inasmuch as such necessity is repugnant to the will, it is clear that in Christ these defects were not of necessity as regards either the Divine will, or the human will of Christ considered absolutely, as following the deliberation of reason; but only as regards the natural movement of the will, inasmuch as it naturally shrinks from death and bodily hurt.

Reply to Objection 1. Christ is said to be “offered because it was His own will,” i.e. Divine will and deliberate human will; although death was contrary to the natural movement of His human will, as Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii, 23,24).

Reply to Objection 2. This is plain from what has been said.

Reply to Objection 3. Nothing was more powerful than Christ’s soul, absolutely; yet there was nothing to hinder a thing being more powerful in regard to this or that effect, as a nail for piercing. And this I say, in so far as Christ’s soul is considered in its own proper nature and power.

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ contracted bodily defects. For we are said to contract what we derive with our nature from birth. But Christ, together with human nature, derived His bodily defects and infirmities through His birth from His mother, whose flesh was subject to these defects. Therefore it seems that He contracted these defects.

Objection 2. Further, what is caused by the principles of nature is derived together with nature, and hence is contracted. Now these penalties are caused by the principles of human nature. Therefore Christ contracted them.

Objection 3. Further, Christ is likened to other men in these defects, as is written Heb. 2:17. But other men contract these defects. Therefore it seems that Christ contracted these defects.

On the contrary, These defects are contracted through sin, according to Rom. 5:12: “By one man sin entered into this world and by sin, death.” Now sin had no place in Christ. Therefore Christ did not contract these defects.

I answer that, In the verb “to contract” is understood the relation of effect to cause, i.e. that is said to be contracted which is derived of necessity together with its cause. Now the cause of death and such like defects in human nature is sin, since “by sin death entered into this world,” according to Rom. 5:12. And hence they who incur these defects, as due to sin, are properly said to contract them. Now Christ had not these defects, as due to sin, since, as Augustine*, expounding Jn. 3:31, “He that

cometh from above, is above all,” says: “Christ came from above, i.e. from the height of human nature, which it had before the fall of the first man.” For He received human nature without sin, in the purity which it had in the state of innocence. In the same way He might have assumed human nature without defects. Thus it is clear that Christ did not contract these defects as if taking them upon Himself as due to sin, but by His own will.

Reply to Objection 1. The flesh of the Virgin was conceived in original sin,[†] and therefore contracted these defects. But from the Virgin, Christ’s flesh assumed the nature without sin, and He might likewise have assumed the nature without its penalties. But He wished to bear its penalties in order to carry out the work of our redemption, as stated above (a. 1). Therefore He had these defects—not that He contracted them, but that He assumed them.

Reply to Objection 2. The cause of death and other corporeal defects of human nature is twofold: the first is remote, and results from the material principles of the human body, inasmuch as it is made up of contraries. But this cause was held in check by original justice. Hence the proximate cause of death and other defects is sin, whereby original justice is withdrawn. And thus, because Christ was without sin, He is said not to have contracted these defects, but to have assumed them.

Reply to Objection 3. Christ was made like to other men in the quality and not in the cause of these defects; and hence, unlike others, He did not contract them.

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ ought to have assumed all the bodily defects of men. For Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii, 6,18): “What is unassumable is incurable.” But Christ came to cure all our defects. Therefore He ought to have assumed all our defects.

Objection 2. Further it was said (a. 1), that in order to satisfy for us, Christ ought to have had perfective habits of soul and defects of body. Now as regards the soul, He assumed the fulness of all grace. Therefore as regards the body, He ought to have assumed all defects.

Objection 3. Further, amongst all bodily defects death holds the chief place. Now Christ assumed death. Much more, therefore, ought He to have assumed other defects.

On the contrary, Contraries cannot take place simultaneously in the same. Now some infirmities are contrary to each other, being caused by contrary principles. Hence it could not be that Christ assumed all human infirmities.

I answer that, As stated above (Aa. 1,2), Christ as-

sumed human defects in order to satisfy for the sin of human nature, and for this it was necessary for Him to have the fulness of knowledge and grace in His soul. Hence Christ ought to have assumed those defects which flow from the common sin of the whole nature, yet are not incompatible with the perfection of knowledge and grace. And thus it was not fitting for Him to assume all human defects or infirmities. For there are some defects that are incompatible with the perfection of knowledge and grace, as ignorance, a proneness towards evil, and a difficulty in well-doing. Some other defects do not flow from the whole of human nature in common on account of the sin of our first parent, but are caused in some men by certain particular causes, as leprosy, epilepsy, and the like; and these defects are sometimes brought about by the fault of the man, e.g. from inordinate eating; sometimes by a defect in the formative power. Now neither of these pertains to Christ, since His flesh was conceived of the Holy

* Alcuin in the Gloss, Ord. † See introductory note to q. 27

Ghost, Who has infinite wisdom and power, and cannot err or fail; and He Himself did nothing wrong in the order of His life. But there are some third defects, to be found amongst all men in common, by reason of the sin of our first parent, as death, hunger, thirst, and the like; and all these defects Christ assumed, which Damascene (*De Fide Orth.* i, 11; iii, 20) calls “natural and indetractable passions” —natural, as following all human nature in common; indetractable, as implying no defect of knowledge or grace.

Reply to Objection 1. All particular defects of men are caused by the corruptibility and passibility of the body, some particular causes being added; and hence, since Christ healed the passibility and corruptibility of our body

by assuming it, He consequently healed all other defects.

Reply to Objection 2. The fulness of all grace and knowledge was due to Christ’s soul of itself, from the fact of its being assumed by the Word of God; and hence Christ assumed all the fulness of knowledge and wisdom absolutely. But He assumed our defects economically, in order to satisfy for our sin, and not that they belonged to Him of Himself. Hence it was not necessary for Him to assume them all, but only such as sufficed to satisfy for the sin of the whole nature.

Reply to Objection 3. Death comes to all men from the sin of our first parent; but not other defects, although they are less than death. Hence there is no parity.