

## DE RATIONIBUS FIDEI

# REASONS FOR THE FAITH AGAINST MUSLIM OBJECTIONS (and one objection of the Greeks and Armenians) to the Cantor of Antioch

by  
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## FOREWORD

This short tract, *De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos, Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochenum*, was written by St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1276) at Orvieto, Italy, in 1264. It follows right on the heels of his longer *Summa contra gentiles*, completed that same year. We do not know who the Cantor of Antioch was, except that he must have been in charge of music in the cathedral. Perhaps his bishop, the Dominican Christian Elias, referred him to Thomas Aquinas. The questions the Cantor asks must have been the subject of lively discussions in a city where Latin Christians mixed with Eastern Christians and Muslims.

The latter work, written at the request of St. Raymond of Peñafort to help Dominicans preaching to Muslims and Jews in Spain and North Africa, concentrated on how Christian doctrine could be presented to people who do not accept the authority of the Bible. It said little about Islam directly, since Thomas Aquinas admitted that he knew very little about it (Book I, ch. 2). He therefore concentrated on explaining the Catholic Faith.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#)he *Contra gentiles*. Thomas' answers use material already discussed in greater detail in that work. The originality of the present work is its concise brevity and its focus on the essential points where the Catholic Faith differs from and transcends Islam.

In this work Thomas shows a good grasp of what these differences are: first of all, the Trinity and how God shares his life with us in the Incarnation, then the crucifixion of Jesus and the whole question of human force and power in religion. The objection to the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is not a standard Muslim objection, but I have heard it. The final one, on determination, was much discussed in Muslim theology and philosophy; its theoretical and practical implications are greater than most Muslims or Christians realize, but it is very summarily treated here.

This work is from the Middle Ages and does not reflect all the nuances of current Catholic teaching regarding Islam. An instance of this is the use of the term "unbelievers" which Thomas uses of Muslims. The Church today calls them believers, although they do not believe in all that Christians believe.

In this translation, from the Marietti 1954 edition of the *Opuscula theologica*, I have given priority to clear plain English rather than literal fidelity. Yet I could not but retain some philosophical vocabulary, such as "substance", "accident", "hypostasis" and "predication".

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Blessed Peter the Apostle received a promise from the Lord that on his confession of faith the Church would be founded and that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. That the faith of the Church entrusted to him would hold out inviolate against these gates of Hell, he address the faithful of Christ (1 Pet 3:15): "Proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts," that is, by firmness of faith. With this foundation established in our hearts we can be safe against any attacks or ridicule of unbelievers against our Faith. Therefore Peter adds: "Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have."

The Christian **faith** principally consists in acknowledging the holy Trinity, and it specially glories in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For "the message of the cross", says Paul (1 Cor 1:18), "is folly for those who are on the way to ruin, but for those of us who are on the road to salvation it is the power of God."

Our **hope** is directed to two things: (1) what we look forward to after death, and (2) the help of God which carries us through this life to future happiness merited by works done by free will.

The following are the things you say the Muslims attack and ridicule: They ridicule the fact that we say Christ is the Son of God, when God has no wife (Qur'ân 6:110; 72:3); and they think we are insane for professing three persons in God, even though we do not mean by this three gods.

They also ridicule our saying that Christ the Son of God was crucified for the salvation of the human race (Qur'ân 4:157-8), for if almighty God could save the human race without the Son's suffering he could also make man so that he could not sin.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) that if the body of Christ were even as big as a mountain, by now it should have been eaten up.

On the state of souls after death, you say that the Greeks and Armenians hold the error that souls after death are neither punished nor rewarded until the day of judgement, but are in some waiting room, since they can receive no punishment or reward without the body. To back up their error they quote the Lord in the Gospel (Jn 14:2): "In my Father's house there are many places to live in."

Concerning merit, which depends on free will, you assert that the Muslims and other nations hold that God's fore-knowledge or decree imposes necessity on human actions; thus they say that man cannot die or even sin unless God decrees this, and that every person has his destiny written on his forehead.

On these questions you ask for moral and philosophical reasons which the Muslims can accept. For it would be useless to quote passages of Scripture against those who do not accept this authority. I wish to satisfy your request, which seems to arise from pious desire, so that you may be prepared with apostolic doctrine to satisfy anyone who asks you for an explanation. On these questions I will make some explanations as easy as the subjects allow, since I have written more amply about them elsewhere [in the *Summa contra gentiles* ].

## **Chapter 2: How to argue with unbelievers**

First of all I wish to warn you that in disputations with unbelievers about articles of the Faith, you should not try to prove the Faith by necessary reasons. This would belittle the sublimity of the Faith, whose truth exceeds not only human minds but also those of angels; we believe in them only because they are revealed by God.

Yet whatever come from the Supreme Truth cannot be false, and what is not false cannot be repudiated by any necessary reason. Just as our Faith cannot be proved by necessary reasons, because it exceeds the human mind, so because of its truth it cannot be refuted by any necessary reason. So any Christian disputing about the articles of the Faith should not try to prove the Faith, but defend the Faith. Thus blessed Peter (1 Pet 3:15) did not say: "Always have your proof", but "your answer ready," so that reason can show that what the Catholic Faith holds is not false.

## **Chapter 3: How generation applies to God**

First of all we must observe that Muslims are silly in ridiculing us for holding that Christ is the Son of the living God, as if God had a wife. Since they are carnal, they can think only of what is flesh and blood. For any wise man can observe that the mode of generation is not the same for everything, but generation applies to each thing according to the special manner of its nature. In animals it is by copulation of male and female; in plants it is by pollination or generation, and in other things in other ways.

God, however, is not of a fleshly nature, requiring a woman to copulate with to generate offspring, but he is of a spiritual or intellectual nature, much higher than every intellectual nature. So generation should be understood of God as it applies to an intellectual nature. Even though our own intellect falls far short of the divine intellect, we still have to speak of the divine intellect by comparing it with what we find in our own intellect.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) whenever it actually understands it forms something intelligible, a kind of offspring, which is called a concept, something conceived by the mind. This is signified by an audible voice, so that as the audible voice is called the exterior word, the interior concept of the mind signified by the exterior audible word is called the word of the intellect or mind. A concept of our mind is not the very essence of our mind, but something accidental to it, because even our act of understanding is not the very being of our intellect; otherwise our intellect would have to be always in act.

So the word of our intellect can be likened to a concept or offspring, especially when the intellect understands itself and the concept is a likeness of the intellect coming from its intellectual power, just as a son has a likeness to his father, from whose generative power he comes forth.

The word of our intellect is not properly an offspring or son, because it is not of the same nature as our intellect. Not everything that comes forth from another, even if it is similar to its source, is called a son; otherwise a painted picture of someone would be a son. To be a son, it is required that the one coming forth from the other must not only resemble its source but also be of the same nature with it.

But in God understanding is not different from his being. Consequently the word which is conceived in his intellect is not something accidental to him or alien from his nature but, by the very fact that it is a word, it must be coming forth from another and must be a likeness of its source. All this is true even of our own word.

But besides this, the Word of God is not an accident or a part of God, who is simple, nor something extrinsic to the divine nature, but is something complete, subsisting in the divine nature and coming forth from another, as any word must be. In our human way of talking, this is called a son, because it comes forth from another in its likeness and subsists in the same nature with it.

Therefore, as far as divine things can be represented by human words, we call the Word of the divine intellect the Son of God, while God, whose Word he is, we call the Father. We say that the coming forth of the Word is an immaterial generation of a son, not a carnal one, as carnal men surmise.

There is another way that this generation of the Son of God surpasses every human generation, whether material, as when one man is born from another, or intelligible, as when a word is brought forth in the human mind. In either of these cases what is born is younger than its source. A father does not generate as soon as he begins to exist, but he must first mature. Even the act of generation takes time before a son is born, because carnal generation is a matter of stages. Likewise the human intellect is not ready to form intelligible concepts as soon as a man is born, but when he matures. So he does not always actually understand, but after potentially understanding he actually understands and again stops actually understanding and remains understanding only in potency or with habitual knowledge. So a human word is younger than a man and sometimes stops existing before the man.

But these two limitations cannot apply to God, who has no imperfection or change, or going from potency to act, since he is pure and first act. The Word of God, therefore, is co-eternal with God.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) does not simultaneously understand everything, or with one act, but by many different acts; therefore the words of our intellect are many. But God understands everything simultaneously by one single act, because his understanding must be one, since it is his very being. It follows therefore that in God there is only one word.

There is yet another difference: The word of our intellect does not measure up to the power of our intellect, because when we mentally conceive one thing we can still conceive many other things; thus the word of our intellect is imperfect and can be composed, when several imperfect notions are put together to form a more perfect word, as happens in the process of formulating a definition. But the divine Word measures up to the power of God, because by his essence he understands himself and everything else. So the Word he conceives by his essence, when he understands himself and everything else, is as great as his essence. It is therefore perfect, simple and equal to God. We call this Word of God a Son, as said above, because he is of the same nature with the Father, and we profess that he is co-eternal with the Father, only-begotten and perfect.

#### **Chapter 4: How the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son**

We must also observe that every act of knowledge is followed by an act of the appetite. Of all appetitive acts love is the principle. Without it there is no joy at gaining something one does not love, or sadness at missing something one does not love - that is, if love is taken away; likewise all other appetitive acts would go, since they are all somehow related to sadness and joy. Therefore, since God has perfect knowledge, he must also have perfect love, which arises as the expression of an appetitive act, as a word arises as the expression of an intellectual act.

But there is a difference between an intellectual and an appetitive act. For an intellectual act and any other act of knowledge takes place by the knowable thing somehow existing in the knowing power, namely, sensible things in the sense and intelligible things in the intellect. But an appetitive act takes place by an orientation and movement of the appetitive power to the things exposed to the appetite. Things that have a hidden source of their motion are called spirits. For instance, winds are called spirits because their origin is not apparent. Likewise breath, which is a motion from an intrinsic source, is called spirit. So, as divine things are expressed in human terms, the very love coming from God is called a spirit.

But in us love comes from two different sources. Sometimes it comes from a bodily and material principle, which is impure love, since it disturbs the purity of the mind. Sometimes it comes from the a pure spiritual principle, as when we love intelligible goods and what is in accord with reason; this is pure love. God cannot have a material love. Therefore we fittingly call his love not simply Spirit, but the Holy Spirit, since holiness refers to his purity.

It is clear that we cannot love anything with an intelligible and holy love unless we conceive it through an act of the intellect. The conception of the intellect is a word; so love must arise from a word. We call the Word of God the Son; so it is clear that the Holy Spirit comes from the Son. Just as God's act of knowledge is his very being, so also is his act of loving. And just as God is always actually understanding, so also he is always actually loving himself and everything else by loving his own goodness. Therefore, as the Son of God, who is the Word of God, subsists in the divine nature

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Since everything that subsists with an intelligent nature we call a "person", which is equivalent to the Greek "hypostasis", it is necessary to say that the Word of God, whom we call Son, is a hypostasis or person. No one doubts that God, from whom a word and a love comes forth, is a subsistent reality, and can also be called a hypostasis or a person. Thus we fittingly posit three persons in God: the person of the Father, the person of the Son and the person of the Holy Spirit.

We do not say that these three persons or hypostases are distinct by essence, since, just as God's act of knowing and loving is his very being, so also his Word and Love are the very essence of God. Whatever is absolutely asserted of God is nothing other than his essence, since God is not great or powerful or good accidentally, but by his essence. So we do not say the three persons or hypostases are distinct absolutely, but by mere relations which arise from the coming forth of the word and the love.

Since we call the coming forth of the word generation, and from generation result the relationships of fatherhood and sonship, we say that the person of the Son is distinct from the person of the Father only by fatherhood and sonship, while all else belongs to both commonly and without distinction. Just as we call the Father true God, almighty, eternal and whatever else, so also the Son, and for the same reason the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, since the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are not distinct in their divine nature, but only by relationship, we are right in saying that the three persons are not three gods, but one true and perfect God.

Three human persons are three men and not one man, because the nature of humanity, which is common to them, belongs to each separately because they are materially distinct, which does not apply to God. So in three men there are three numerically different human natures, while only the essence of humanity is common to them. But in the divine persons there are not three numerically different divine natures, but necessarily only one simple divine nature, since the essence of God's word and of his love is not different from the essence of God. So we profess not three gods, but one God, because of the one simple divine nature in three persons.

## **Chapter 5: The reason for the incarnation of the Son of God**

A similar blindness makes Muslims ridicule the Christian Faith by which we profess that the Son of God died, since they do not understand the depth of such a great mystery. First of all, lest the death of the Son of God be misinterpreted, we must first say something about the incarnation of the Son of God. For we do not say that the Son of God underwent death according to his divine nature, in which he is equal to the Father who is the foundational life of everything, but according to our own nature which he adopted into the unity of his person.

To say something about the mystery of the divine incarnation, we must observe that any intellectual agent operates through a conception of his intellect, which we call a word, as is clear in the case of a builder or any craftsman who operates outwardly

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) is the very Word of God, it follows that God made everything through the Son.

It is a rule that the principles which make something are also the principles for repairing it. If a house falls down, it is restored according to the plan by which it was first made. Among the creatures created through God's Word, rational creatures hold the first rank, since all other creatures serve them and seem ordered to them. That is reasonable, because a rational creature has mastery over his action through free will, while other creatures do not act from free judgement but by force of nature. Universally what is free is higher than what is in bondage; slaves serve the free and are governed by them. Therefore the fall of a rational creature is truly considered more serious than the defect of any irrational creature. Nor is there any doubt that God judges things according to their real value. So it was fitting for Divine Wisdom to repair the fall of human nature, much more than to step in if the heavens were to fall or any other catastrophe occur in bodily things.

Rational or intellectual creatures are of two kinds: one separated from a body, which we call an angel, and the other joined to a body, which is the human soul. In either one there can be a fall because of freedom of the will. By a fall, I do not mean that they fall out of existence, but that they lapse from righteousness of the will. A fall or a defect refers specially to a principle of operation, as we say that a craftsman has gone wrong because he is deficient in the skill he needs to do his job, and we say that a natural thing is deficient or spoiled if the natural power by which it acts is corrupted, for example if a plant lacks the power of germinating or a piece of land lacks the power to be fruitful. A rational creature operates by its will, where it has freedom of choice. Therefore the fall of a rational creature is a defect of righteousness of the will, which takes place by sin. The defect of sin, which is nothing other than perversity of the will, is something especially for God to remove, and that by his Word by which he created all creatures.

The sin of angels, however, could not be corrected, because the immutability of their nature makes them impenitent from any direction they once take. But men's will is changeable by nature, so that they are not only able to choose different things, good or evil, but also abandon one choice and turn to another. This changeableness of the will remains in man as long as he is united to his body which is subject to variation. When the soul is separated from the body it will have the same immutability as an angel naturally has; so that after death the soul is impenitent, and cannot turn from good to evil or from evil to good. Therefore it was fitting for God's goodness to restore fallen human nature through his Son.

The way of restoring should correspond to the nature being restored and to its sickness. The nature to be restored was man's rational nature endowed with free will, who should not be subject to exterior power but be recalled to the state of righteousness according to his own will. His sickness, being a perversity of the will, demanded that the will should be called back to righteousness. Righteousness of the human will consists in the proper ordering of love, which is its principal act. Rightly ordered love is to love God above all things as our supreme good, and to refer to him everything that we love as our ultimate goal, and to observe the proper order in loving other things by preferring spiritual to bodily goods.

To excite our love towards God, there was no more powerful way than that the Word of God, through whom all things were made, should assume our human

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) First of all, because the strongest way God could show how much he loves man was his willing to become man for his salvation; and nothing can provoke love more than to know that one is loved.

Then also, man whose intellect and affections are weighed down towards bodily things cannot easily turn to things that are above himself. It is easy for any man to know and love another man, but to think of the divine highness and be carried to it by the proper affection of love is not for everyone, but only for those who, by God's help and with great effort and labour, are lifted up from bodily to spiritual things. Therefore, to open the way to God for everyone, God willed to become man, so that even children could know and love God as someone like themselves; and so by what they can grasp they can progress little by little to perfection.

Also, for God to become man gave man the hope of eventually participating in perfect happiness, which only God naturally has. If man, knowing his weakness, were promised the eventual happiness of which angels are hardly capable, since it consists in the vision and enjoyment of God, he could hardly hope to reach it unless the dignity of human nature was demonstrated in another way, namely, by God valuing it so highly that he became man for his salvation. So God's becoming man gave us hope that man can eventually be united to God in blessed enjoyment.

Man's knowledge of his dignity, coming from God's assuming a human nature, helps to keep him from subjecting his affections to any creature, whether by worshipping demons or any creatures through idolatry or by subjecting himself to bodily creatures through disordered affection. For if man has such a great dignity by God's judgement and he is so close to him that God wanted to become man, it is unworthy of man to subject himself improperly to things inferior to God.

## **Chapter 6: The meaning of "God became man"**

When we say that God became man, let no one take this to mean that God was converted into a man, as air becomes fire when it is turned into fire. For God's nature is unchangeable. Only bodily things can be changed from one thing into another. A spiritual nature cannot be changed into a bodily nature, but can be united to it somehow by the strength of its power, as a soul is united to a body. Although human nature consists of soul and body, the soul is not of a bodily but a spiritual nature. But the distance between any spiritual creature and God's simplicity is much more than the distance between a bodily creature and the simplicity of a spiritual nature. Therefore, as a spiritual nature can be united to a body by the strength of its power, so God can be united to a spiritual or a bodily nature. And in that way we say that God was united to a human nature.

We should observe that everything seems most properly identified with what is principal in it, while other aspects seem to adhere to what is principal and are taken up and used by it as it disposes. Thus in civil society the king seems to envelop the whole kingdom and he uses others as he disposes as if they were parts of his own body joined to him naturally. Although man is naturally both soul and body, he seems more principally a soul, since the body adheres to it and the soul uses the body to serve its own activity. Likewise, therefore, in the union of God with a creature, the divinity is not dragged down to human nature, but the human nature is assumed by God, not to be converted into God, but to adhere to God. The body and

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There is, however, a difference. Although the soul is more perfect than the body, it does not possess the total perfection of human nature. Thus it has a body so that the body and soul together form one human nature, of which the soul and body are parts. But God is perfect in his nature and nothing can be added to the fullness of his nature. So another nature cannot be united to the divine nature so as to make a common nature from them both. For it would be repugnant to the perfection of the divine nature to be a part of that common nature. The Word of God therefore assumed a human nature consisting of a soul and a body in such a way that neither becomes the other, nor are the two melted into one nature, but after being united the two natures remain distinct, each with their own properties.

It should also be observed that, since a spiritual nature is united to a bodily one by spiritual power, the greater the power of the spiritual nature the more perfectly and firmly it assumes a lower nature. God's power is infinite, with every creature subject to him and he uses each as he wishes. He could not use them unless he were somehow united with them by the strength of his power. The more he exercises his power on them, the more perfectly he is united with them. Among all creatures he exercises his power by giving them existence and moving them to their proper operations; in this way he is said to be in everything in a common way. But he exercises his power in a special way in holy minds, whom he not only conserves them in existence and moves them in their actions like other creatures, but also converts them to know and love him; thus he is said to dwell especially in holy minds, and holy minds are said to be full of God.

Since God is said to be more or less united to a creature according to the amount of power he exercises in it, it is clear that, since the strength of divine power cannot be comprehended by the human intellect, God can be united to a creature in a higher way than the human intellect can grasp. Therefore we say that God is united to a human nature in Christ in an incomprehensible and ineffable way, not only by indwelling as is true of other saints, but in a singular way, so that a human nature belongs to the Son of God, and that the Son of God, who has from eternity a divine nature from the Father, from a point of time has wonderfully assumed a human nature of our race. Thus each and every part of the human nature of the Son of God can be called God, and whatever any part of his human nature does or suffers can be attributed to the only-begotten Word of God. Thus we fittingly say that not just his soul and body are the Son of God, but also his eyes and hands, and that the Son of God sees bodily with the sight of his eyes and hears by the hearing of his ears; the same applies to the activities proper to the other parts of his soul or body.

There is no better comparison of this admirable union than the union of a body and a rational soul. It is also a suitable comparison because our word remains hidden in our heart and becomes sensible by being vocalized and written. But these comparisons fall short of representing the union of the divine and human natures, just as any other comparison of human things with divine. For the Divinity is not united to a human nature so as to be a part of a nature, nor is it united to a human nature as an expression, as the word of the heart is signified by a voice or writing, but the Son of God truly has a human nature and can be called a man.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) a force in the body after the manner of material and bodily forces, because not even the intellect of a soul united to a body is a bodily power. Much less therefore is the Word of God, who assumed for himself a human nature in an ineffable and more sublime way.

It is also clear from the foregoing that the Son of God has both a divine and a human nature, the one from eternity, the other assumed from a point of time.

Many things can be had by the same person in different ways, but the principal element is always said to "have", while the less principal elements are "had". Thus the whole has many parts, as a man has hands and feet; we do not say the inverse: that hands and feet have a man. Likewise one subject has many accidents, as an apple has colour and smell, but not the inverse. Man also has exterior things, like possessions and clothing, but not the inverse. Only in the case of essential parts is something said both to have and to be had, as the soul has the body and the body has the soul. And in marriage a man has a wife and a wife has a husband. The same in the case of things united by relationship: thus we say that a father has a son and a son has a father.

Were God united to a human nature as a soul to a body so as to make one common nature, we could say that God has a human nature and a human nature has God, just as a soul has a body and the inverse. But because the divine and human natures cannot be made one nature because of the divine perfection, as said above, and because the principal factor in the union is on the side of God, it clearly follows that we must say that God has a human nature.

Whatever is said to exist by a nature is called a subject or hypostasis of that nature, just as what has the nature of a horse is called a hypostasis or a subject with a horse-nature. In the case of an intellectual nature such a hypostasis is called a person; thus we call Peter a person because he has a human nature, which is intellectual. Since the Son of God, the only-begotten Word of God, has assumed a human nature, as said above, it follows that he is a hypostasis, subject or person with a human nature. And since he has a divine nature from eternity, not by way of composition but by simple identity, he is also called a hypostasis or person of divine nature, as far as divine things can be expressed by human words. Therefore the only-begotten Word of God is a hypostasis or person with two natures, divine and human, and he subsists in these two natures.

But if anyone objects that human nature, even in Christ, is not accidental, but a substance, and not a universal substance but a particular one which is called a hypostasis, it would seem that Christ's human nature would be a hypostasis apart from the hypostasis of the Word of God, and that in Christ there would be two hypostases.

The one who makes this objection should observe that not every particular substance is called a hypostasis, but only that which does not belong to something more principal. For instance, the hand of a man is a particular substance, but is not called a hypostasis or a person, because it belongs to a more principal substance which is man; otherwise in every man there would be as many hypostases or persons as there are members or parts. Therefore Christ's human nature is not accidental but a substance; it is not universal but particular; nevertheless it cannot

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Therefore Christ is one because of the unity of his person or hypostasis, and he cannot be called two; rather he is properly said to have two natures. Although the divine nature can be predicated of the hypostasis of Christ, which is the hypostasis of the Word of God, which is his essence, nevertheless human nature cannot be predicated of him abstractly, just as it cannot in the case of anyone having a human nature: Just as we cannot say that Peter is human nature, but is a man having a human nature, so we cannot say the Word of God is a human nature, but that it has taken on a human nature and for this reason can be called a man.

Therefore each nature is predicated of the Word of God, but the human nature only concretely, as when we say that the Son of God is a man. But the divine nature can be predicated both abstractly and concretely: thus the Word of God is the divine essence or nature and is God. But since God has a divine nature and man has a human nature, these two names signify the two natures that are had, but only one person has both of them. Since the one having the nature is a hypostasis, when we call Christ God we understand the hypostasis of the Word of God; likewise when we call him a man we understand the Word of God. So we call Christ God and man, but do not say that he is two, but one in two natures.

Whatever belongs to a nature can be attributed to the hypostasis of that nature, while a hypostasis of both a human and a divine nature is supposed in a name signifying the divine nature as well as in a name signifying the human nature; this hypostasis is single having both natures. Consequently both human and divine things can be predicated by that hypostasis, whether it is referred to by a name signifying the divine nature or by a name signifying the human nature. Thus we can say that God, the Word of God, was conceived and born of the Virgin, suffered, died and buried, attributing to the hypostasis of the Word human things because of the human nature. Inversely we can say that man is one with the Father, that he is from eternity and that he created the world, because of the divine nature.

In predicating such diverse things of Christ a distinction can be made according to which nature they are predicated. Some things are said according to his human nature and others according to his divine nature. But if we consider whom they are said about, they apply indistinctly, since it is the same hypostasis of which divine and human things are said. It is like saying that the same man sees and hears, but not according to the same power; he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. Likewise the same apple is seen and smelt, in the first case by its colour, in the second by its smell. For this reason we can say that the seeing person hears and the hearing person sees, and that what is seen is smelt and what is smelt is seen. Similarly we can say that God is born of the Virgin, because of his human nature, and that man is eternal, because of the divine nature.

## **Chapter 7: The meaning of "The Word of God suffered"**

The foregoing shows that there is no contradiction in our professing that the only-begotten Word of God suffered and died. We do not attribute this to him according to his divine nature but according to his human nature, which he assumed into the unity of his person for our salvation.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) the human race otherwise than by the death of his only-begotten Son, such a person ought to observe that in God's deeds we must consider what was the most fitting way of acting, even if he could have acted otherwise; otherwise we will be faced with this question in everything he made. Thus if it is asked why God made the heaven of a certain size and why he made the stars in such a number, a wise thinker will look for what was fitting for God to do, even if he could have done otherwise.

I say this supposing our belief that the whole disposition of nature and all human acts are subject to Divine Providence. Take this belief away and all worship of the Divinity is excluded. Yet we argue presently against those who say they are worshippers of God, whether Muslims or Christians or Jews. As for those who say that everything comes necessarily from God, we argued at length elsewhere [ *Contra gentiles*, II, c. 23]. Therefore if someone considers with a pious intention the fittingness of the suffering and death of Christ, he will find such a depth of knowledge that any time he thinks about it he will find more and greater things, so that he can experience as true what the Apostle says (1 Cor 1:23-24): "We are preaching a crucified Christ: to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God." He continues (v. 25): "God's folly is wiser than human wisdom."

First of all, we must observe that Christ assumed a human nature to repair the fall of man, as we have said. Therefore, according to his human nature, Christ should have suffered and done whatever would serve as a remedy for sin. The sin of man consists in cleaving to bodily things and neglecting spiritual goods. Therefore the Son of God in his human nature fittingly showed by what he did and suffered that men should consider temporal goods or evils as nothing, lest a disordered love for them impede them from being dedicated to spiritual things. Thus Christ chose poor parents, although perfect in virtue, lest anyone glory in mere nobility of flesh and in the wealth of his parents. He led a poor life to teach us to despise riches. He lived without titles or office so as to withdraw men from a disordered desire for these things. He underwent labour, thirst, hunger and bodily afflictions so that men would not be fixed on pleasure and delights and be drawn away from the good of virtue because of the hardships of this life. In the end he underwent death, so that no one would desert the truth because of fear of death. And lest anyone fear a shameful death for the sake of the truth, he chose the most horrible kind of death, that of the cross. Thus it was fitting that the Son of God made man should suffer and by his example provoke men to virtue, so as to verify what Peter said (1 Pet 2:21): "Christ suffered for you, and left an example for you to follow in his steps."

Then, because not only good conduct and avoiding sins is necessary for salvation, but also the knowledge of truth so as to avoid error, it was necessary for the restoration of the human race that the only-begotten Word of God who assumed a human nature should ground people in truth by a sure knowledge of it. Truth taught by men is not so firmly believed, because man can deceive. Only by God can knowledge of the truth be confirmed without any doubt.

So the Son of God made man had to propose the teaching of divine truth to men, showing them that it came from God and not from man. He did this by many miracles. Since he did things that only God can do, such as raising the dead, giving sight to the blind etc., people had to believe that he spoke with God's authority.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#)ht say they were made up. Therefore Divine Wisdom provided a remedy against this in Christ's state of weakness. For if he were rich, powerful and established in high dignity, it could be thought that his teaching and his miracles were received on account of his favour and human power. So to make the work of divine power apparent, he chose everything that was rejected and low in the world, a poor mother and a poor life, illiterate disciples and messengers, and allowed himself to be rebuked and condemned even to death by the magnates of this world. This made it apparent that his miracles and teaching were not received because of human power, but should be attributed to divine power. Thus in what he did or suffered, human weakness and divine power were joined together at the same time. Thus at his nativity he was wrapped in cloth and put in a manger, but praised by the angels and adored by the Magi led by a star. He was tempted by the devil, but ministered to by angels. He lived without money as a beggar, but raised the dead and gave sight to the blind. He died fixed to the cross and numbered among thieves, but at his death the sun darkened, the earth trembled, stones split, graves opened and the bodies of the dead were raised.

Therefore if anyone considers the great fruit of such beginnings, namely, the conversion of peoples over the world to Christ, <sup>(1)</sup> and wants further signs in order to believe, he must be considered harder than a stone, since at Christ's death even stones were shattered. Thus the Apostle says (1 Cor 1:18): "The message of the cross is folly for those who are on the way to ruin, but for those of us who are on the road to salvation it is the power of God."

There is a related point we should make here. The same reason of Providence which led the Son of God made man to suffer weakness in himself, let him to desire his disciples, whom he established as ministers of human salvation, to be abject in the world. Thus he did not choose the well educated and noble, but illiterate and ignoble men, that is, poor fishermen. Sending them to work for the salvation of men, he commanded them to observe poverty, to suffer persecutions and insults, and even to undergo death for the truth; this was so that their preaching might not seem fabricated for the sake of earthly comfort, and that the salvation of the world might not be attributed to human wisdom or power, but only to God's wisdom and power. Thus they did not lack divine power to work miracles as they appeared abject according to the world. For the restoration of man it was necessary for men to learn not to trust proudly in themselves, but in God. For the perfection of human justice requires that man should subject himself totally to God, from whom he also hopes to gain every good, and should thank him for what he has received. In order to train his disciples to despise the present goods of this world and to sustain all sorts of adversity even to death, there was no better way than for Christ to suffer and die. Thus he himself told them (Jn 15:20): "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too."

Then we must observe that in the order of justice sin should be punished by a penalty. We see how cases of injustice are handled in human courts, that the judge takes from the one who has too much through grabbing what belongs to another and gives it to the one who has less. Anyone who sins over-indulges his appetite, and in satisfying it transgresses the order of reason and of divine law. For that person to be brought back to the order of justice something must be taken from what he

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This restoration of justice by penalty sometimes is done by the will of the one who is punished, when he imposes the penalty on himself so as to return to justice. Other times it is done against his will, and in that case he does not return to a state of justice, but justice is carried out in him.

The whole human race was subject to sin. To be restored to the state of justice, there would have to be a penalty which man would take upon himself in order to fulfil the order of divine justice. But no mere man could satisfy God sufficiently by accepting some voluntary punishment, even for his own sin, to say nothing of the sin of the whole human race. For when man sins he transgresses the law of God and tries, were he able, to do injury to the God of infinite majesty. The greater the person offended, the greater the crime; we see, for instance, that someone who strikes a soldier is punished more than someone who strikes a farmer, and much more if he strikes a king or prince. Therefore a sin committed against the law of God is somehow an infinite offence.

Again we must observe that the dignity of the person making reparation is also to be considered. For example, one word of a king asking for pardon of an offence is considered greater than if someone lower went on his knees and showed any other sign of humiliation to beg pardon from the one who suffered the injury. But no mere man has the infinite dignity required to satisfy justly an offence against God. Therefore there had to be a man of infinite dignity who would undergo the penalty for all so as to satisfy fully for the sins of the whole world. Therefore the only-begotten Word of God, true God and Son of God, assumed a human nature and willed to suffer death in it so as to purify the whole human race indebted by sin. Thus Peter says (1 Pet 3:18): "Christ himself died once and for all for sins, the upright for the sake of the guilty."

Therefore it was not fitting, as Muslims think, for God to wipe away human sins without satisfaction, or even to have never permitted man to fall into sin. That would first be contrary to the order of justice, and secondly to the order of human nature, by which man has free will and can choose good or evil. God's Providence does not destroy the nature and order of things, but preserves them. So God's wisdom was most evident in his preserving the order of justice and of nature, and at the same time mercifully providing man a saving remedy in the incarnation and death of his Son.

## **Chapter 8: The meaning of "The faithful receive the body of Christ"**

Since people are cleansed of sin through the suffering and death of Christ, in order to preserve constantly in us the memory of such an immense gift, when the time of his suffering was drawing near, the Son of God left his faithful a memorial of his suffering and death that would be constantly recalled, giving his disciples his own body and blood under the forms of bread and wine. The Church of Christ continues celebrating this memorial of his venerable suffering up to the present day all over the world.

Anyone even slightly instructed in the Christian religion can see how unreasonably unbelievers ridicule this sacrament. For we do not say that the body of Christ is cut

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#)int, so that it would have to run out, even if his body were as big as a mountain, as they say. But we say that by the conversion of bread into the body of Christ the very body of Christ exists in this Sacrament of the Church and is eaten by the faithful. Because the body of Christ is not divided, but something is changed into it, there is no way that by eating it its quantity could be reduced.

But if an unbeliever wants to say that this conversion is impossible, let him think of the omnipotence of God. He will agree that by the power of nature one thing can be converted into another by taking on another form. Thus air is converted into fire when the matter which previously was under the form of air later becomes subject to the form of fire. Much more, therefore, the power of almighty God, which brings the whole substance of a thing into existence, can not only change something by form, as nature does, but also convert the whole thing, so that bread is converted into the body of Christ and wine into his blood.

If anyone objects to this conversion on the grounds of what appears to the senses, where there is no difference, let him observe that divine things are offered to us under the veil of visible things. That we may have the spiritual and divine refreshment of the body and blood of Christ, and not take it as ordinary food and drink, it is taken under the form of bread and wine; that avoids the horror of eating human flesh and drinking blood. Nevertheless, we do not say that the forms that appear in the Sacrament are just in the imagination of the viewer, as happens in magical tricks, because any deceit is unworthy of this Sacrament. But God, who is the creator of substance and accidents, can preserve sensible accidents in existence even when the substance is changed into something else. For he can produce and preserve in existence the effects of secondary causes by his omnipotence without secondary causes.

But if someone does not admit the omnipotence of God, we do not attempt to argue with him in this work. We are here arguing against Muslims and others who admit the omnipotence of God.

There are further mysteries in this Sacrament which should not be discussed here, since the sacred things of faith should not be exposed to unbelievers.

## **Chapter 9: How there is a special place where souls are purified before receiving beatitude**

We must now consider the opinion of those who say there is no purgatory after death. Some hold this opinion by over-reaction, as happens in many other questions. Trying to avoid one error they fall into the contrary. Thus Arius wanted to avoid the error of Sabellius who merged the persons of the Holy Trinity, but he wound up dividing the divine essence. Likewise Eutyches wanted to avoid the error of Nestorius who divided the person of God and man in Christ, but went over to the contrary error of saying that he had a single divine and human nature. So some, wishing to avoid the error of Origen who said that the pains of Hell would eventually purify all its occupants, assert that there is no purifying pain after death.

The Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church treads carefully between contrary errors. It distinguishes the persons in the Trinity against Sabellius, without leaning towards the error of Arius, but professes only one essence of the persons. In the mystery of

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[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#)es not join Nestorius in making two persons. Likewise, regarding the state of souls after death, it professes that those who leave this life without mortal sin and have the gift of love may undergo some purifying pain, but it does not agree with Origen in saying that all pain after death is purifying; rather it professes that those who die with mortal sin are tortured with the devil and his angels with eternal punishment.

As for the truth of the matter, we must first of all say that those who die in mortal sin are immediately carried away to hellish punishment. This is clear from the Gospel; thus Luke states the words of the Lord (16:22) that "the rich man died and was buried; in hell he looked up..." He describes his own torture (v. 24): "for I am in agony in these flames." Job also says of the wicked (21:13): "They enjoy life and then go down suddenly to Sheol." See also Job 22:17: "They say to God, 'Go away from us'." Not only are the wicked in hell for their own sins, but before the suffering of Christ even the just went down at death to the underworld for the sin of our first parent. Thus Jacob said (Gen 37:35): "I will go down to Sheol in mourning." Thus Christ himself at death went down to the underworld, as the Creed says, and as the Prophet [David] foretold (Ps 16:10): "You will not leave my soul in Sheol," which Peter, in Acts (2:25), applies to Christ. Christ however went to the underworld in a different way, not laden with sin but alone "free among the dead" [Latin for Ps 88:6]; he descended to disarm principalities and powers (1 Cor 15:24) and take captives (Ps 68:19), as Zechariah predicted (9:11): "As for you, because of the blood of your covenant I have released your prisoners from the pit in which there is no water."

But because God's acts of compassion are above all his works, we believe still more that those who die without stain receive immediately the reward due to them for eternity. This is proven by clear texts; with reference to the sufferings of the saints, the Apostle says (2 Cor 5:1): "We are well aware that when the tent that houses us on earth is folded up, there is a house for us from God, not made by human hands but everlasting, in the heavens." These words appear at first sight to indicate that as soon as the mortal body is dissolved man is clothed with heavenly glory.

But to make the meaning plainer, let us examine the following verses. Since he referred to two things: the dissolution of our earthly dwelling and the gaining of a heavenly dwelling, he shows how man's desire regards each, with an explanation of each. So, regarding the desire for a heavenly dwelling, he says (v. 2) that "we groan" because we are delayed from reaching our desire, and "we yearn to be clothed over with our heavenly dwelling." These words indicate that the heavenly dwelling he is talking about is not something separated from man, but something attached to him. For we do not say that a man puts on a house, but a garment; rather we say that someone dwells in a house. So, when he combines the two concepts "to be clothed over with our heavenly dwelling", he shows that what we first desire is something attached, because it is put on, and it is also containing and exceeding, since it is dwelt in. Exactly what this object of desire is the following verses make clear.

Because he did not simply say "clothed" but "clothed over", he explains this (v. 3): "provided we are found clothed and not naked," as if to say: If the soul puts on an eternal dwelling without taking off its earthly dwelling, the acquisition of that dwelling is being clothed over. But because the earthly dwelling must be taken off in order to put on the heavenly one, we cannot speak simply of being clothed over.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) be clothed over"? He answers that by saying (v. 4): "While we are in our present tent," that is, clothed with our present transitory dwelling, not having a permanent dwelling, "we groan, weighed down" as by something happening against our desire, since by our natural desire "we do not wish to be stripped naked" from our earthly tent, "but to be clothed over with a heavenly tent, so that what is mortal may be absorbed by life," that is, that we may go into immortal life without tasting death.

Someone could again ask the Apostle why, as it seems reasonable, should we want not to be stripped of our earthly dwelling which is natural to us in order to put on a heavenly dwelling? He answers (v. 5): "God has designed us for this," that is, to desire heavenly things. How God does this, he adds: "He has given us the Spirit as a pledge." For the Holy spirit, whom we receive from God, makes us certain and eager to gain our heavenly dwelling, like claiming something owed to us because of the pledge we hold. Because of this certainty we are lifted up to desire a heavenly dwelling.

So we have two kinds of desire: the first is natural, which is not to abandon our earthly dwelling, and the second is from grace, which is to gain a heavenly dwelling. But both desires cannot be fulfilled, since we cannot reach our heavenly dwelling without leaving our earthly one. So with a firm trust and boldness we prefer the desire that comes from grace to our natural desire, and wish to leave our earthly dwelling and go to our heavenly one. That is what he adds (vv. 6-8): "Therefore we continue to be confident. We know that while we dwell in the body we are away from the Lord. We walk by faith, not by sight. I repeat, we are full of confidence and would much rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

It is now clear that the Apostle meant the corruptible body by the term "the tent that houses us on earth"; this body is like a garment to the soul.

It is also clear that what he meant by "a house not made by human hands, but everlasting in the heavens" is God himself, whom men put on or dwell in, when they are present to him face to face, that is, seeing him as he is. But they are on the road, away from him, when they hold by faith what they do not yet see. Therefore the saints desire to travel away from the body, that their souls may be separated from their bodies by death, so that, having left the body, they may be present to the Lord.

It is therefore clear that the souls of the saints, separated from the body, have reached their heavenly dwelling. Therefore the glory of holy souls, which consists in the vision of God, is not deferred to the day of judgement when bodies are raised. This is also clear from what the Apostle says to the Philippians (1:23): "I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ." This desire would be frustrated if, after his body was dissolved, he was not with Christ, who is in heaven. The Lord also clearly said to the penitent thief on the cross (Lk 23:43): "Today you will be with me in paradise," meaning by paradise the enjoyment of glory. So it is not to be believed that Christ defers the reward of his faithful, as far as the glory of their souls is concerned, until the resurrection of the body. The words of the Lord (Jn 14:2), "In my Father's house there are many places to live in," refer to different degrees of rewards given to the saints in heavenly happiness, not outside the heavenly home but in it.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#)ath. Many passages of Scripture clearly say that no one can enter heavenly glory with any stain. Speaking about participation in Divine Wisdom, Wisdom 7:25 says: "Nothing impure can find its way into her." But heavenly happiness consists in the perfect participation in Wisdom, by which we see God face to face. Therefore those who are brought into this must be completely without stain. This is also supposed in Isaiah, 35:8: "It will be called the Sacred Way; the unclean will not be allowed to use it," and in Revelation 21:7: "Nothing unclean may come into it."

Some people, at the hour of death, happen to have some stains of sin which do not merit the eternal damnation of hell, such as venial sins, like idle words etc. Those who die with such stains cannot go straight to heavenly happiness, although they would if they did not have these stains, as we have seen. Therefore, after death they at least suffer a delay in entering glory. There is no reason why our objectors should concede that souls after death suffer this penalty rather than any other, especially since the lack of the vision of God and separation from him is a greater pain, even for those in hell, than the punishment of fire which they suffer there. Therefore the souls of those who die with venial sins undergo a purifying fire.

If someone says that these venial sins will wait to be purified by the fire that will burn up the world before the coming of the Judge, this cannot hold. It has been shown above that the souls of the saints which have no stain gain heavenly happiness as soon as they die, and at the same time souls with venial sins cannot enter glory. In that case their entrance into glory would be deferred because of venial sins until the day of judgement, which is most improbable, since this would be too great a penalty for light sins.

Another reason for purgatory is that some people did not finish making due penance for the [mortal] sins they repented of before death, and it would not befit God's justice to let them off; otherwise those who die suddenly would be in a better position than those who spend a long time in this life doing penance. Therefore they suffer something after death. This cannot be in hell, where people are punished for mortal sins, since the mortal sins of these people have been forgiven by their repentance. Nor would it be fitting, as a penalty, to defer the glory due to them until the day of judgement. Therefore there should be some temporal purifying punishment after this life before the day of judgement.

Church rites established by the Apostles agree with this. For the whole Church prays for the faithful departed. It is clear that it does not pray for those who are in hell, where there is no redemption, nor for those who have reached heavenly glory. It remains therefore that there are some temporal purifying pains after this life, for whose remission the Church prays. Thus even the Apostle says (1 Cor 3:13-15): "Each person's handiwork will be shown for what it is. The Day which dawns in fire will make it clear and the fire itself will test the quality of each person's work. The one whose work stands up to it will be given his wages; the one whose work is burnt down will suffer the loss of it, though he himself will be saved, but only as one fleeing through fire." This cannot be understood of the fire of hell, because those who suffer that fire are not saved. Therefore it must be understood of a purifying fire.

It may be said that this should be understood of the fire that will precede the coming of the Judge, especially since the passage says, "The Day will make it clear", while the

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) universal judgement of the whole world, as the Apostle says in 1 Thessalonians (5:2): "The Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night." In reply we must point out that as the day of judgement is called the day of the Lord, because it is the day of his coming for the universal judgement of the whole world, so the day of each person's death can also be called the day of the Lord, because then Christ comes to each person to reward or condemn him.

With reference to rewarding the good, Christ said to his disciples (Jn 14:3): "After I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you to myself." With reference to the damnation of the evil it is said in Revelation 2:5: "Repent and behave as you did at first, or else, if you will not repent, I shall come to you and take your lamp-stand from its place."

Therefore the day of the Lord on which the universal judgement takes place will be revealed in the fire which will precede the coming of the Judge, when the reprobate will be pulled to judgement, and the just who are left alive will be purified, but the day of the Lord on which he will judge each person at his death will be revealed by a fire that will purify the good and condemn the wicked.

Therefore it is clear that there is a purgatory after death.

## **Chapter 10: That divine predestination does not impose necessity on human acts**

Last of all we come to the question whether, because of divine ordination or predestination, human acts become necessary. This question requires caution so as to defend the truth and avoid falsity or error.

It is erroneous to say that human acts and events escape God's fore-knowledge and ordination. It is no less erroneous to say that God's fore-knowledge and ordination imposes necessity on human acts; otherwise free will would be removed, as well as the value of taking counsel, the usefulness of laws, the care to do what is right and the justice of rewards and punishments.

We must observe that God knows things differently from man. Man is subject to time and therefore knows things temporally, seeing some things as present, recalling others as past, and fore-seeing others as future. But God is above the passage of time, and his existence is eternal. So his knowledge is not temporal, but eternal. Eternity is compared to time as something indivisible to what is continuous. Thus in time there is a difference of successive parts according to before and after, but eternity has no before and after, because eternal things are free from any change.

Thus eternity is totally at once, just as a point lacks parts that are distinct in location. For a point can be compared to a line in two ways: first as included in the line, whether at the beginning, middle or end, secondly as existing outside a line. A point within a line cannot be present to all the parts of the line, but in different parts of the line different points must be designated. But a point outside the line can view all parts of the line equally, as in a circle, whose central point is indivisible and faces all the parts of the circumference and all of them are somehow present to it, although not to one another.

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[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [Rationes.htm](#) a line. It is not present to all parts of time, but in different parts of time different instances are designated. Eternity is something like the point outside a line, like the centre of a circle. Since it is simple and indivisible, it comprehends the whole passage of time and each part of time is equally present to it, although one part of time follows another.

Thus God, who looks at everything from the high point of eternity, views as present the whole passage of time and everything that is done in time. Therefore, when I see Socrates sitting, my knowledge is infallible and certain, but no necessity is imposed on Socrates to be seated. Thus God, seeing everything that is past, future or present to us as present to himself, knows all this infallibly and certainly, yet without imposing on contingent things any necessity of existing.

This comparison can be accepted, if we compare the passage of time to travel over a road. If someone is on a road over which many people pass, he sees those who are just ahead of him, but cannot certainly know those who come after him. But if someone stands in a high place where he can see the whole road, he sees at once all who are moving on the road. Thus man, who is in time, cannot see the whole course of time at once, but only thinks that just in front of him, namely the present, and a few things of the past, but he cannot know future things for certain. But God, from the high point of his eternity sees with certitude and as present all that is done through the whole course of time, without imposing necessity on contingent things.

Just as God's knowledge does not impose necessity on contingent things, neither does his ordination, by which he providentially orders the universe. For he orders things the way he acts on things; his ordination does not violate but brings to effect by his power what he planned in his Wisdom.

As for the action of God's power, we should observe that he acts in everything and moves each single thing to its actions according to the manner proper to each thing, so that some things, by divine motion, act from necessity, as the motion of heavenly bodies [according to ancient cosmology], while others contingently, which sometimes fail in their proper action because of their corruptibility. A tree, for example, sometimes is impeded from producing fruit and an animal from generating offspring. Thus Divine Wisdom orders things so that they happen after the manner of their proper causes. In the case of man, it is natural for him to act freely, not forced, because rational powers can turn in opposite directions. Thus God orders human actions in a way that these actions are not subject to necessity, but come from free will.

These, then are what I can write at present about the questions you sent to me. They are treated in greater detail elsewhere [in the *Summa contra gentiles* ].

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1. Literally, "of nearly the whole world to Christ."