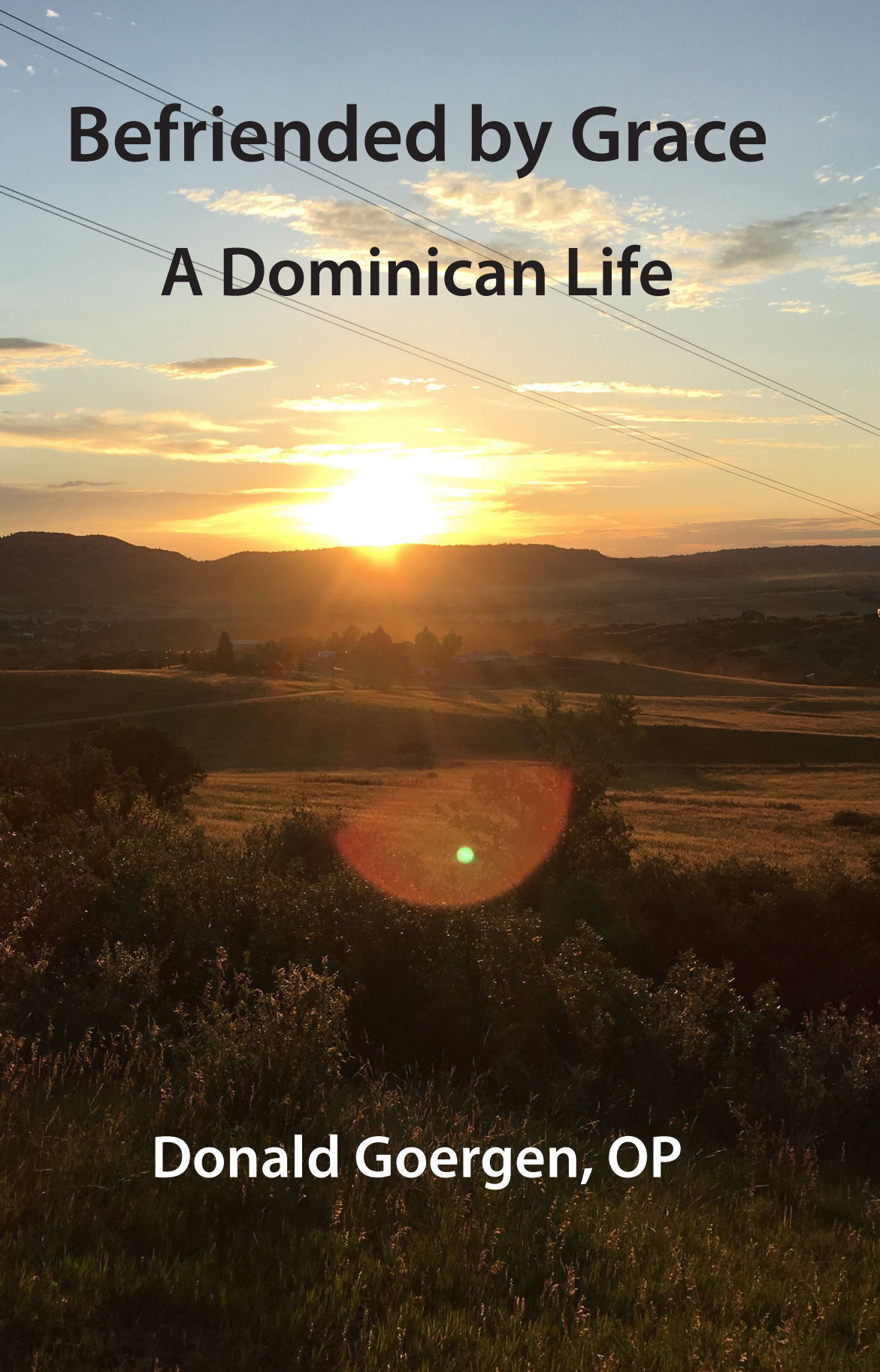




Befriended by Grace

A Dominican Life

Donald Goergen, OP

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Donald Goergen OP



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Dedicated
To Janet and Judy
My Two Wonderful Sisters

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Foreword

Timothy Radcliffe OP

Befriended by Grace is the apt title for this beautiful collection of articles by Donald Goergen. Friendship is at the heart of our Dominican theological tradition, as Don shows so well. Our brother, St Thomas Aquinas, argued that the very life of God is the eternal, equal friendship within the Trinity. Friendship gives us joy and prepares us for the preaching of the gospel. Bede Jarrett, the Provincial of England almost a hundred years ago, wrote of friendship as 'being to me the most beautiful thing on earth'.¹ While many religious orders warned against the dangers of 'particular friendships', as young friars we were told to beware of particular enmities! Don writes 'When the going got tough, what held us together were our relationships, friendships.' This shines out in his moving tribute to Sister Ann Willits OP.

Don has been a treasured friend for almost fifty years. I first got to know him when he visited Blackfriars, Oxford, shortly after publishing his courageous and ground-breaking book *The Sexual Celibate*. When I was Provincial, Don was one of my most trusted mentors. If ever I were to find myself in a crisis, it is to Don that I would go. I still would!

Don's wisdom springs from the deep roots of his contemplative life. When I had a sabbatical in 2001, I went to the Ashram he founded, called 'The Friends of God'. That marvellous month was so nourishing because one could rest in the peace of God and the company of His friend Don.

Friendship is more than emotion. It is the secret of being humanly alive. Remember the famous saying of the second century St Irenaeus

1. *Meditations for Layfolk*, (London, Catholic Truth Society, 1941), 33

of Lyons: *Gloria Dei, homo vivens*, the glory of God is a human being fully alive. All of the articles in this book are, in one way or another, a summons to live.

For example, ‘The Quest for the Christ of Africa’ shows how much African theologians, with their love of life, have to offer the West, where we are so often captured by ‘the culture of death.’ A member of the Synod on Synodality, Father Orobator, SJ, gave thanks that he was raised by parents who practised traditional African religion, with its profound sense of the gift of life. He wrote, ‘central to the whole religious system throughout Africa is a *deep belief in the livingness of creation*’.² It is a vision of the Christian life that summons us beyond tribal and ethnic divisions. When ethnic violence broke out in a central African country, people went from door to door demanding to what tribe one belonged. If you gave the wrong answer, you might die. When people knocked, our brothers cried out ‘to the tribe of Dominic’.

The Synod was a profoundly rich encounter in which every culture was called to share its own rich sense of what it was to be alive, and to be challenged in its compromises with the forces of death. We are just at the beginning of understanding where this will take us.

One cannot understand what it means to be truly alive until one has faced one’s mortality. Don shares what he has gained through the experience of cancer in ‘Embracing Death.’ From my own experience, I too know that the worst moment is the time between hearing the words ‘you have cancer’ and the beginning of treatment. I was moved to tears by Don’s reflection on how we can embrace this ‘thief in the night’. It is not the end to be dreaded by waiting ‘to jump into the lap of God’. ‘God can’t wait to welcome us home.’

Recently I read the as yet unpublished text of a book by an Italian Dominican, Giovanni Castellano, on the death of his father. Giovanni, aged twenty-four, is at the beginning of his Dominican life as Don and I are nearing the end. Yet he too manages to shed a radiant light on what may look so dark. When someone dies young, we are inclined to think that their death is premature. But he writes that ‘a life offered for love, even if it ends apparently too soon, is already a life fulfilled because it corresponds to the project that God has inscribed in the

2. Agbonkhianmeghe E Orobator, *Religion and Fatih in Africa: Confessions of an Animist* (New York: Orbis, 2018), 16.

Universe³: a beautiful and realistic vision of life which embraces death, shared across the differences of age and nationality, both rooted in the tradition of our Order.

One of the pillars of this tradition is what Don calls ‘the Spirit of integration.’ ‘Deep within the Dominican spirit lies an urge toward integration, balance. Dominican spirituality is an integrative, integrating, integral spirituality.’ Don sees this exemplified in Meister Eckhart in his awareness of the inseparability of action and contemplation. Of course, when he notes that Eckhart was ‘professor, provincial, preacher and confessor’ I immediately thought of Don himself. Balance might sound boring if it were not a dynamic interplay filled with vitality. And with Don, laughter is always ready to explode! So, yes, if a deep crisis were to shake me, I shall go and buy my plane ticket.

Timothy, Cardinal Radcliffe OP.
Blackfriars, Oxford.
The Feast of the Epiphany 2025

3. My translation from *Tenersi Stretti: Continuare ad amare al di là della morte*/

Preface

I was born on August 16, 1943, the youngest of the three children of Sylvia (Wilhelmi) and Julius Goergen, Judy and Janet being my two older sisters. We grew up on farms outside Remsen, Iowa, a farming community. We were of mixed German, Luxembourg, and Alsatian descent. We attended St Mary's Grade and High Schools, taught by Franciscan sisters from Dubuque, Iowa. I went to Loras College, a college of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, studying Latin, Philosophy, and French. Dominican friars taught in the Department of Philosophy at Loras, and I became aware that one could be both a priest and a professor. Previously I had known only diocesan priests in parochial settings. After studying for the diocesan priesthood for several years, for the Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa, I became a novice in 1970 for the Province of St Albert the Great, USA, of the Order of Preachers, making my first profession on December 19, 1971, and ordained to the priesthood on April 26, 1975. In 2025 I will have been a Dominican priest for fifty years. I did my doctoral work in systematic theology at the Aquinas Institute of Theology, then located in Dubuque, Iowa, a Dominican graduate school of theology and ministry, re-located in 1981 to St Louis, Missouri. In 2002, I was awarded the STM degree by the Master of the Order, Timothy Radcliffe. I taught at the Aquinas Institute for many years, both in Dubuque and in St. Louis. I also served as Regent of Studies, Provincial, and Student Master for the province, although teaching was always my greatest joy. I also co-founded and for nine years lived in the Dominican Ashram, the Friends of God, living a more contemplative Dominican lifestyle while at the same time engaged in a preaching ministry.

The readings selected for this book manifest the areas in which I most consistently taught: Christology, pneumatology, spiritual theology, and religious life. Although religion and society in the 1960s and 70s was my area of greatest interest, the needs at Aquinas Institute required a professor for Christology as that professor had recently been made the President of Aquinas Institute. I have never regretted anything I have been asked to teach nor any assignment as a Dominican that I was asked to undertake. My doctoral dissertation had been on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In the 2000s much of my teaching was on the thought of Thomas Aquinas. My most recent book was on both: *Thomas Aquinas and Teilhard de Chardin, A Christian Humanism in an Age of Unbelief*. Unlike some who approach Thomas Aquinas and Teilhard de Chardin as if irreconcilable one with the other, I see their commonalties in a both/and way. Both have contributed richly to my own intellectual life.

I have entitled this collection *Befriended by Grace*, for grace or providence has been a theme in my life, my experience, my teaching, and my writings. An emphasis of mine is that grace does not come pain-free. At one time, in my early thirties, I had said that my autobiography could be quite brief: God-4; Goergen-0. Things did not go my way, or ways in which I would have chosen, but they were either for the good or God harvested good from them. My separation from diocesan seminary life was heart-wrenching and yet grace filled. The call to teach Christology for the first time moved my teaching in an unexpected but providential direction. The freedom to establish the Dominican Ashram was surely a grace, and grace and freedom is an important cornerstone in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. It was seemingly accidental, certainly providential, that I was invited while still living in the ashram, to begin teaching courses on the thought of St. Thomas that then continued for twenty-five years. The ashram, named *The Friends of God*, was testimony to the role and gift of friendship in my life, the influence of the spiritual movement around Meister Eckhart known as the friends of God, and the importance of friendship in the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and Teilhard de Chardin. Would that there had been space to include more selections here from my book on Thomas and Teilhard, both scholars and mystics albeit different in both respects. And another of my books was the brief life: *St. Dominic, The Story of a Preaching Friar*. Saint Dominic would most often sign his letters 'a humble servant of the

preaching'. An antiphon by which he is celebrated reads '*Praedicator gratiae, nos junge beatis* (Preacher of grace, unite us with the blessed)'. Life in the Spirit is grace indeed.

I am grateful to ATF Press and to Hilary Regan for giving me the opportunity to offer here selections from what I have written, but I need to say something about the difficult process in making the choices. I have arranged the articles and books in the bibliography chronologically. Within the body of the book, however, the selections have been grouped thematically. Although over the years I have changed my mind on some questions, what has changed most would be emphases or ways of expressing something. The need for a more inclusive use of language became more and more conscious over the past fifty years as well. I may at times refer to an earlier writing not included within this collection. For a selection from within a book, the numbering of the note may also have changed from what it was in the original. I introduce each selection briefly to contextualize it. If a portion of an article is omitted, it is so indicated. It was not easy to decide what to include. There were always others to be considered.

Some selections are more academic, others more reflective of the style of an essay. Some are a selection from a book, others an entire article. They of course reflect my varied interests and how they developed. My first book, *The Sexual Celibate*, manifested an effort to reflect on religious life from an interdisciplinary perspective. Christology emerged, however, as the area in which I most consistently taught. Between 1986 and 1994, I published a four-volume series as a theology of Jesus. Both Thomas Aquinas, however, and Teilhard de Chardin, were continuous influences with whom I found much kinship, hence my most recent book about them. Some writings emerged out of my ministry as Provincial, *Letters to My Brothers and Sisters*, and others out of opportunities that came my way, such as opportunities to spend time in India or six months teaching in Kenya or my over than fifty years of Dominican life, as in my *St Dominic, the Story of a Preaching Friar*. Behind the scenes, along the way, was a persistent interest in spirituality, mysticism, the evolution of consciousness, and interreligious studies.

I made the selections, but I need to acknowledge assistance, both in making the selections and in significant technological support. Would that I could name all, but I would be remiss if I did not thank Gracie Alfaro, Ann Garrido, AnnMarie Hemmerling, Stacie

Rachelski, Ed Ruane, OP, Scott Steinkerchner, OP, as well as friends and family who have always been sources of support. Once when leaving for a lengthy retreat, a Dominican sister from New Zealand said as I departed, 'Enjoy God'. According to St Augustine, God is the only one to be truly enjoyed. My hope, however, is that you might enjoy one or other of these selections and in so doing draw closer to the One who is Joy.

With gratitude,
Donald J Goergen, OP
Feast of St Dominic
August 8, 2024

Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on the 'Motive' of the Incarnation

[This article was published in the October 1980 issue of *The Thomist*]

Both pre-Chalcedonian and post-Chalcedonian Christology focused on the relationship between humanity and divinity in the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. Roman Catholic Christology has always devoted attention to the 'person' of Christ, to his ontological 'make-up' which is the ultimate source of his activity. If we look at the development of Christology in the Middle Ages, it becomes clear that intense study was given to this issue.¹ One of the significant contributions of Thomas Aquinas to Christology touches on this same topic.²

There is, however, another issue which was important for medieval Christology: not the nature of the Incarnation or the mode of union, but the purpose or motive of the Incarnation. This question may not have been the primary Christological concern of the Middle Ages, but it was a question which medieval theologians pondered³

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1. A valuable study in this regard is Walter Principe's four volumes on the theology of the hypostatic union in the early thirteenth century: *William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (1963); *Alexander of Hales's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (1967); *Hugh of Saint-Cher's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (1970); *Philip the Chancellor's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (1975); all published by the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto.
 2. *ST*, III, qq. 2–6, written toward the end of Thomas's second Parisian regency, and especially q. 17, written after *De unione Verbi Incarnati*, constitute Thomas's contribution to and discussion of the mode of the Incarnation. See James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d' Aquino* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 307–315.
 3. For further discussion of the history of this question, see Rudolf Haubst, ('Das hoch-und- spätmittelalterliche "Cur Deus homo?"' *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* (1955): 302–303. Also Robert North, *Teilhard and the Creation of the Soul* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), 139–161.

and which was significant both in late medieval thought and in the Christology of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The issue was expressed as follows: would God have become incarnate if man had not sinned? Would there be any 'reason' for the Incarnation if there had been no need of redemption? Was the intention of God in becoming man to redeem humankind from sin, so that there would have been no Incarnation if there had not been sin? But, if there is 'more' to the Incarnation than the goal of redemption, in what does this 'more' consist?

Of course, in one sense, there is no way to answer such a question. Any response can easily become a faulty, speculative tendency to 'read the mind of God.' Can we know what God had in mind in becoming incarnate? Man can know *that* God became incarnate and *that* the Incarnation was redemptive, but can we know anything more than that? As Thomas Aquinas rightly points out, we can only know through what God has chosen to reveal to us. Does his revelation then tell us anything concerning this question? In the end, it is a question of what the Scriptures say, and it is in the interpretation of Scripture that different opinions emerge.

Whether there would have been an Incarnation if man had not sinned is a question primarily discussed within Latin theology during the high and late Middle Ages. An exception seems to have been Isaac of Nineveh, 700 A.D. As North points out, Rupert of Deutz, c 1100, raises the question, and Alexander of Hales, c 1200, does so as well. Albert the Great gives his opinion in the early thirteenth century. Robert Grosseteste agrees with Albert. Bonaventure, however, takes the opinion contrary to that of Albert, as does Thomas Aquinas. Alexander, Albert, Robert Grosseteste, generally represent the opinion later attributed to Duns Scotus. Bonaventure and Thomas maintain the opinion associated with Thomas.

Theologians of the half century after Thomas accepted the opinion of Albert, e.g., Matthew of Aquasparta, Raymond Lull, Peter of Auvergne, William of Ware, Duns Scotus. John of St. Thomas and Cajetan later defended the view of Thomas. But Ambrose Catharinus and Giacomo Nacchianti, both Dominicans, did not follow Thomas on this issue.

For a discussion of the view of Duns Scotus, see: Johannes Bissen, 'De Motivo Incarnationis', in *Antonianum*, 7 (1932): 314–336; Robert North, *Teilhard and the Creation of the Soul* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), 139–161; Edwin Rabbitt, "The 'Motive' of the Incarnation: Was Scotus a Scotist?", in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 65 (1945): 117–125; Dominic Unger, 'Franciscan Christology: Absolute and Universal Primacy of Christ', in *Franciscan Studies*, 2 (1942): 428–475; Dominic Unger, 'Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1235–1253) on the Reasons for the Incarnation', in *Franciscan Studies*, 16 (1956): 1–36.

Setting aside the question of whether Scotus himself was a 'scotist' on this particular question, what we have come to label the 'scotist-thomist' controversy had little to do originally with the views of Thomas and Duns Scotus themselves, for the so-called 'scotist' or Franciscan position had already been the opinion of the famous teacher of Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest Dominican intellectuals of the Middle Ages, namely Albert.⁴ On the other hand, Bonaventure,⁵ the great Franciscan, and Thomas both held the same opinion.

The issue becomes something more than various theological opinions, however, with the Protestant Reform. For now, 'creation-centered' theology and 'salvation-centered' theology are opposed to each other. For Luther, the Incarnation takes place for justification. The centrality of Scripture, of Paul, of justification, was emphasized and became a norm for Protestantism. Yet, to the Catholics, the Protestant Reform seemed to be a reaction which cut off rich theological traditions. To Catholic eyes, it appeared as if it were Luther alone who interpreted justification, and justification alone which was the norm for interpreting Paul; and, finally, Paul alone the norm for understanding Scripture.

The issue of the relationship between creation, Incarnation, and redemption is not simply academic; it has ecumenical implications. In the days of Albert and Thomas we find both opinions peacefully held, more compatibly entertained than in the late medieval or post-Reformation theology. Other issues have complicated and intensified this one. It is too great a simplification to say that Greek theology and Franciscan theology tend to be creation-centered and cosmic, and that Latin theology and Thomas Aquinas tend to be salvation-centered. Thomas, arguing from Scripture, holds that salvation from sin is the motive of the Incarnation, but he also suggests that another

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4. Alexander of Hales, a Franciscan, prior to Albert, is also generally considered to have held this 'scotist' view. See Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica*, III, pars I, tractatus I, quaestio 2, titulus 2 (Quaracchi edition, 1948, volume 4, text, 41–42) (Cologne edition, 1622, III, q. 2, m. 13). Haubst, 304, however, concludes it is difficult to know the precise opinion of Alexander of Hales.
 5. Bonaventure, *Commentaria in libros sententiarum*, III, distinctio 1, articulus 2, quaestio 2 (Quaracchi edition, 1887, volume 3, 21–28). Also see Alexander Schaefer, 'The Position and Function of Man in the Created World According to St. Bonaventure', in *Franciscan Studies*, 20 (1960): 261–316, and 21 (1961), 233–382.

motive is possible. It is also too simple to say that Catholicism is creation-centered and Protestantism salvation-centered.

This question is also important because it has pastoral implications for morality, spirituality, politics, and liturgy as well as ecumenism. Most contemporary Catholic christologies, such as that of Karl Rahner, are ‘scotist’. ‘Scotism’ is found in contemporary Protestantism as well, as we see in the theology of Herbert Richardson and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, was influenced by Scotus.

Let us turn, then, to Albert and Thomas to see what we can learn from their theologies composed when the issue was less polemical.

Albert on the motive of the Incarnation⁶

Three central ideas form the core of Albert’s opinion and can be found in his *solutio* to the question. First, Albert manifests an awareness of the tenuous character of any opinion on this question. In the end, we simply do not know whether God would have become man if man had not sinned. The ‘motive’ for the Incarnation involves the freedom of God and hence the incomprehensibility of that decisive choice. Thus Albert is modest about offering an opinion. His own view is not to be asserted strongly (*nihil de hoc asserendo dico*); it is uncertain (*in hac quaestione solutio incerta est*); and it is expressed reservedly—insofar as an opinion can be formed (*quantum possum opinari*).⁷

Second, Albert’s opinion is that ‘the son of God would have become man even if there had never been sin’. Albert’s opinion is not

6. The chronology of Albert’s life poses many difficulties. Sometime after 1240 he came to Paris, where he lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard for at least two years, c 1243–1245, and possibly for four years, 1241–1245. During the summer of 1248 Albert went to Cologne to organize the first Dominican *studium generale* in Germany. The final revision of Book IV of the *Sentences* was completed in Cologne in 1249. He was elected provincial of the German province in 1254. He died in 1280, about 80 years old. See Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, pp. 32–51; also Weisheipl, ‘The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great’, in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences—Commemorative Essays 1980*, edited by James Weisheipl (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1980).

7. Albert’s discussion and direct quotations from him are from his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Book III, distinction 20, article 4. For secondary sources, see Haubst, p. 305, and North, p. 141. See VM Pollet, ‘Le Christ d’après saint Albert le Grand’, in *La Vie spirituelle*, 34–35 (1933): 78–108.

the same as that of Thomas; nor, however, is it as far removed from Thomas's as it first appears to be.

Third, Albert offers his opinion hesitantly but still sees it as more probable (*probabilius*) because, as he says, it is more in accord with the piety of faith (*credo hoc quod dixi, magis concordare pietati fidei*). His reason, given the uncertainty of either opinion, for being inclined more to one side of the question than to the other is based on what seems to him to agree with the life of the faithful.⁸

Let us look at Albert's discussion a little more closely. If man had not sinned, he asks, would the Son of God have become incarnate?

Albert first gives four reasons why God would not have become incarnate if man had not sinned, and to each of these he subsequently replies. Then Albert presents the other side and states six reasons why God would have become incarnate even if man had not sinned. These "sed contra" arguments cannot be identified with Albert's opinion itself, for he also replies to all six of these and disagrees with all six. In accord with the style of the Schools, Albert is giving the arguments for both sides, but he does not then simply accept one side. None of the arguments on either side stands; hence both opinions are uncertain. This uncertainty is Albert's most fundamental assertion. The basis on which he then expresses a preference is his understanding of the piety of faith. Let us look briefly at some of these pros and cons.

He offers the following arguments in favor of the opinion that God would not have become incarnate if man had not sinned. The first two arguments are the liturgical use of the *Exultet* sequence of Easter, and its *felix culpa* theology. With this approach, however, Albert disagrees. He writes, 'Such ways of speaking as calling a fault "blessed" or "happy" are most improper, for it is not called blessed or happy in itself but from what follows upon it . . . The Incarnation of Christ is not a consequence of the fault; nevertheless, the great works of redemption . . . did come after the fault.' Hence the poetic *felix culpa* argument does not prove that, if there had been no sin, there would have been no Incarnation. Properly speaking the fault

8. I have translated '*pietas fidei*' as 'the piety of faith'. It is not immediately clear how Albert understands the expression. *Pietas* can mean piety, devoutness, the devotional life, the practice of the faith. *Fides* refers to the faith, the life of faith. Perhaps *pietas fidei* can be seen as the life of the faithful, the practice of the faith. I use "the piety of faith" as a translation in order to avoid interpretation, but 'the life of faith' or simply 'the Christian life' might render it better.

is not “blessed” in itself, but only incidentally, since the works of redemption do follow it and are grace.

The third argument is based on Romans 8:28, that all things work unto good for those who love God. A gloss includes, ‘even sins.’ So good can come even from original sin and this good is the incarnate Christ; if there had been no sin, there would have been no need for Incarnation. The fault in this argument is the gloss. For Albert, sin does not work unto good except incidentally, for example, by making someone more vigilant. Hence one cannot link the Incarnation only to original sin. Redemption does follow upon sin, but one does not know whether there would have been an Incarnation or not if there had been no sin. To assume that the Incarnation is tied only to redemption would be begging the question.

The fourth argument is that without sin there would be no need for liberation or redemption. If man had not sinned, God would not have manifested so great a love as he did after sin had been committed. To this Albert replies that Christ might still have become incarnate to demonstrate his infinite love and to prepare multiple delights for us since he regards us as brothers and sisters.

Albert therefore does not accept the above arguments; in one form or other they all beg the question. Incarnation and redemption are in fact related, but would they have to be so in such a way that there could not be one without the need for the other? Albert is unconvinced that they are ‘necessarily’ tied together. God could have become incarnate in any case. Whether he would have is another question, and Albert’s response is—we do not know.

Does Albert accept the other opinion: that God would have become incarnate even if man had not sinned? This position is also flawed. The first opinion is false because it states that God *would not* have become incarnate apart from sin; the second is false because it states that God *would* have become incarnate apart from sin. Albert’s opinion is that God *could* have (hence the first opinion is false), but that *we do not know whether he would have* (hence the second opinion is false). Albert’s own opinion is that *probably* God would have become incarnate but we cannot conclude that with certainty. The freedom of God underlies Albert’s opinion. The first opinion is false because it denies the freedom of God to become incarnate and the second because it denies God’s freedom not to. These stated opinions do not sufficiently esteem the freedom of God.

Albert offers six reasons as to why God would have become incarnate even if man had not sinned, all six of which he also rejects.

The first one is the axiom, Goodness is diffusive of itself. God cannot better diffuse himself than by becoming incarnate. Albert replies: Goodness diffuses itself according to the capacity of those who receive it. The union of the divine and human is not something merited by human nature itself. Hence it was not necessary for God to share Himself in this way. Again Albert presumes God's freedom.

The next is similar to the first. 'The greatest love shares itself in the greatest way. But there can be no greater love than when someone joins himself to another. Therefore since God's love for man was so great, he would unite himself to him. Therefore it seems that God would unite himself to man even if man had not sinned.' Albert replies, 'The manifestation of his love in glorification was enough, for it was not necessary that God manifest every manner of love.' Again Albert appeals to God's freedom.

There is no need to look at all of the six statements along with Albert's objections to them. One further example is sufficient, the third argument: 'An angel is not capable of being united to the divine nature, but man is capable of being united. Since no aptitude is created by God in vain, therefore it was necessary that God become incarnate.' But, for Albert, 'this aptitude is not from nature but from the grace of election . . . It is not necessary that God do anything whatsoever in the best way in which he could have done it if he had so willed, but it is enough that he does things as he wills, as long as he does not deny to them anything concerning their nature.'

Albert, then, is hesitant and uncertain about any opinion which involves the divine will and freedom; hence his position is that we do not know whether God would have become incarnate or not if man had not sinned. But the opinion that God would have become incarnate is probable for Albert simply because it is congruent with the piety of faith. It certainly would be fitting for God to do so.

The early Thomas: The Commentary on the *Sentences*

In his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Thomas's view appears closer to his master and teacher, Albert, than the thomist

opinion might lead one to believe.⁹ He is aware of the soundness of both positions with respect to this question and also the tenuousness of each. The arguments for neither side are necessary. In fact, in the commentary, Thomas does not adhere strongly to either opinion.

Thomas gives seven reasons in favor of the opinion that God would have become incarnate even if man had not sinned.¹⁰ He then gives four reasons for the contrary opinion. His own response is that either view can be sustained. He is aware of the ‘probable’ character of both views and maintains that both views can be held—held as probable. He expresses no direct preference for either.

Thomas begins his response with a theological and methodological principle. Only he who willed the Incarnation could know its motive. That which depends on the will of God alone cannot be known by us, or rather can be known only insofar as it has been revealed, hence insofar as it is in the Scriptures and the holy exposition of Scripture. In Scripture, however, the only cause assigned to the Incarnation is the redemption of man from the slavery of sin. Hence some say that ‘probably’ the Son of God would not have become man if man had not sinned. As a support for this opinion, Thomas quotes Pope Leo and St. Augustine. It is interesting—given the principles and given Thomas’s apparent conviction that this is the ‘reason’ most consistent with Scripture—that he still speaks only of the probability of the opinion, not its conclusiveness. The major support for this opinion, however, is its basis in revelation itself.

Thomas then considers the opinion of others who would maintain that, *in fact*, the Incarnation accomplished not only a liberation from sin but also the exaltation of human nature and the consummation of the whole universe. Hence, even if there were no sin, these other

9. Thomas studied under Albert shortly after Albert was preparing his own lectures on the *Sentences*. It is not certain whether he had already studied under Albert in Paris. If he did, he would have been with him from 1245–1252. Nevertheless, he studied under him in Cologne from 1248–1252. In 1252, Thomas went back to Paris and lectured on the *Sentences* from 1252–1256, at the age of twenty-seven. Undoubtedly at this time Albert’s influence on Thomas is strong. Thomas’s *Summa* comes later. He worked on the first questions of the *tertia pars*, the christological section, in 1272. He stopped writing toward the end of 1273, and he died in 1274. Albert was still alive. (Cf Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 67–80, 289–320).

10. For this discussion and the references, see Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, III, distinction 1, question 1, article 3.