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Thomas R. Heath O.P.

Excerpt

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 27-30

POST PRÆDICTA, in quibus de unione Dei et hominis et de his quæ unionem sequuntur tractatum est, restat considerandum de his quæ Filius Dei incarnatus in natura humana sibi unita fecit vel passus est. Quæ quidem consideratio quadripartita erit.

Nam primo considerabimus de his quæ pertinent ad ingressum ejus in mundum;
 secundo, de his quæ pertinent ad processum vitæ ipsius in hoc mundo;¹
 tertio, de exitu ipsius ab hoc mundo;²
 quarto, de his quæ pertinent ad exaltationem ipsius post hanc vitam.³

Circa primum quatuor consideranda occurrunt:

primo quidem, de conceptione Christi;
 secundo, de ejus nativitate;⁴
 tertio, de ejus circumcissione;⁵
 quarto, de ejus baptismo.⁶

Circa conceptionem autem ejus, oportet aliqua considerare

primo, quantum ad matrem concipientem;
 secundo, quantum ad modum conceptionis;⁷
 tertio quantum ad perfectionem prolis conceptæ.⁸

Ex parte autem matris occurrunt quatuor consideranda:

primo quidem, de sanctificatione ejus;
 secundo, de virginitate ejus;
 tertio, de desponsatione ejus;
 quarto, de annuntiatione ipsius, vel de præparatione ipsius ad concipiendum.⁹

¹3a. 38-45, vol. 53 of this series, *The Life of Christ*

²3a. 46-52, vol. 54, *The Passion of Christ*

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SANCTIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

HAVING GONE THROUGH the matters relating to union of God and man and the corollaries that follow from that union, we turn now to the things the Incarnate Son of God actually did and suffered in the human nature united to him. We shall examine under four headings the things involved:

- first, in his coming into the world;
- second, in the regular course of his life;¹
- third, in his departing from the world;²
- fourth, in his exaltation after his life on earth.³

Four matters relate to the first point:

- first, the conception of Christ;
- second, his birth;⁴
- third, his circumcision;⁵
- fourth, his baptism.⁶

His conception brings up several points, and the

- first relates to the mother who conceived him;
- the second, to the manner of his conception;⁷
- the third, to the perfections of the child conceived.⁸

There are four points touching on the mother who conceived him, the

- first, on her sanctification;
- the second, on her virginity;
- the third, on her betrothment;
- the fourth, on the annunciation, which prepared her for conception.⁹

³3a. 53–9, vol. 55, *The Resurrection*

⁴3a. 35–6

⁵3a. 37

⁶3a. 38.

⁷3a. 31–3

⁸3a. 34, questions 31–7 make up vol. 52, *The Childhood of Christ*.

⁹3a. 27–30, these four points are considered in the four Questions that make up the present volume.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 27, I

Quaestio 27. de sanctificatione beatæ virginis

CIRCA PRIMUM quærentur sex:

1. utrum beata Virgo mater Dei fuerit sanctificata ante nativitatem ex utero;
2. utrum fuerit sanctificata ante animationem;
3. utrum per huiusmodi sanctificationem fuerit sibi totaliter sublatas fomes peccati;
4. utrum per huiusmodi sanctificationem fuerit consecuta ut nunquam peccaret;
5. utrum per huiusmodi sanctificationem adepta fuerit plenitudinem gratiarum;
6. utrum sic fuisse sanctificata fuerit proprium sibi.

articulus 1. utrum beata Virgo fuerit sanctificata ante nativitatem ex utero

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:¹ I. Videtur quod beata Virgo non fuerit sanctificata ante nativitatem ex utero. Dicit enim Apostolus *Non prius quod spirituale est, sed quod animale: deinde quod est spirituale.*² Sed per gratiam sanctificantem nascitur homo spiritualiter in filium Dei: secundum illud, *Ex Deo nati sunt.*³ Nativitas autem ex utero est nativitas animalis. Non ergo beata Virgo fuit prius sanctificata quam ex utero nasceretur.

2. Præterea, Augustinus dicit, *Sanctificatio qua efficitur templum Dei, non nisi renatorum est.*⁴ Nemo autem renascitur nisi prius nascatur. Ergo beata Virgo non fuit prius sanctificata quam ex utero nasceretur.

3. Præterea, quicumque est sanctificatus per gratiam est mundatus a peccato originali et actuali. Si ergo beata Virgo fuit sanctificata ante nativitatem ex utero, consequens est quod fuerit tunc emundata ab originali peccato. Sed solum originale peccatum poterat eam impedire ab

¹cf below art. 2, ad 2; III *Sent.* 3, I, I, iii; *Quodl.* VI, 5, I; *Compend. Theol.* 224; *In Salut. Angelic.*; *In Psalm.* 45; *In Jerem.* I

²*Corinthians* 15, 46 (C): The practice I have followed in citing the Scriptures in English is this. The Jerusalem Bible translation is used whenever the sense is substantially the same as the Latin text used by St Thomas. When that sense is not the same I have chosen either the Confraternity (C) or the Douay-Rheims translation (D), noting in every case how it differs from the Jerusalem (J). In the case at hand J reads—*First the one with the soul, not the spirit, and after that the one with the spirit.* St Paul is arguing that the spiritual man follows the earthly man; that Adam, the first man, became 'a living soul', while the last man, Christ, became 'a life-giving spirit'.

The first point applies this doctrine analogously to the case of our Lady's sancti-

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Question 27. the sanctification of the blessed Virgin

HERE THERE ARE six points of inquiry:

1. was the blessed Virgin, mother of God, sanctified before her birth?^a
2. was she sanctified before animation?
3. was the inflammation of sin wholly removed from her by this sanctification?
4. did sanctification result in her never sinning?
5. did full intensity of grace come to her through sanctification?
6. was such sanctification uniquely hers?

article 1. was the blessed Virgin, mother of God sanctified before her birth?

THE FIRST POINT:¹ 1. It would seem that the blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth. For the Apostle says, *But it is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual.*² But man is born spiritually as a son of God through sanctifying grace, as *John* says, *who were born of God.*³ Now birth refers to physical birth. Hence the blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth.

2. Moreover, Augustine notes, *the sanctification by which man becomes a temple of God applies only to him who is reborn.*⁴ Now no one is reborn who is not, first of all, born. Hence the blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth.

3. Furthermore, whoever is sanctified through grace is cleared^b of original and actual sin. If, then, the blessed Virgin was sanctified before her birth she would have been cleared of original sin. But only original sin could prevent her from entering the kingdom of God, so that, if she had

fication. She had to be born physically before she was born spiritually. St Thomas of course does not agree with this point of view.

²*John* 1, 13 (C); *Who was born of God* (J). The *who* in the J refers to Christ, in the D and C to those who believed in him. The point is unaffected.

⁴*Epist. ad Dardanum* CLXXXVII 10, PL 33, 844

^a*Nativitas ex utero* is translated throughout as *birth*, since the first universally accepted meaning of *birth* is the physical emergence from the womb.

^b*mundatus*, from *mundo*, to cleanse, purify. Yet 1azæ, 86, 1 teaches that the word 'stain' (*macula*) is a metaphor for 'the privation of the soul's brightness in relation to its cause which is sin' (ad 3) and that it is more like a shadow than a stain. One doesn't cleanse off a shadow. The word 'cleared' suggests light; it also suggests getting rid of a drag or a load.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 27, I

introitu regni caelestis. Si ergo tunc mortua fuisset, videtur quod janua regni caelestis introisset. Quod tamen fieri non potuit ante passionem Christi: juxta illud Apostoli, *habemus enim fiduciam in introitu sanctorum per sanguinem ejus*.⁵ Videtur ergo quod beata Virgo non fuerit sanctificata antequam ex utero nasceretur.

4. Præterea, peccatum originale ex origine contrahitur, sicut peccatum actuale ex actu. Sed quandiu aliquis est in actu peccandi non potest a peccato actuali mundari. Ergo etiam nec beata Virgo a peccato originali mundari potuit dum esset adhuc in ipso actu originis, in materno utero existens.

SED CONTRA est quod Ecclesia celebrat Nativitatem beatæ Virginis. Non autem celebratur festum in Ecclesia nisi pro aliquo sancto. Ergo beata Virgo in ipsa sui nativitate fuit sancta. Fuit ergo in utero sanctificata.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod de sanctificatione beatæ Mariæ, quod scilicet fuerit sanctificata in utero, nihil in Scriptura canonica traditur: quæ etiam nec de ejus nativitate mentionem facit. Sed sicut Augustinus⁶ rationabiliter argumentatur quod cum corpore sit assumpta in cælum, quod tamen Scriptura non tradit, ita etiam rationabiliter argumentari possumus quod fuerit sanctificata in utero. Rationabiliter enim creditur quod illa quæ genuit *Unigenitum a Patre, plenum gratiæ et veritatis*,⁷ præ omnibus aliis majora gratiæ privilegia accepit: unde legitur, quod Angelus ei dixit, *Ave, gratia plena*.⁸

Invenimus autem quibusdam aliis hoc privilegialiter esse concessum ut in utero sanctificarentur: sicut Jeremias, cui dictum est, *Antequam exires de vulva sanctificavi te*;⁹ et sicut Joannes Baptista, de quo dictum est, *Spiritu Sancto replebitur adhuc ex utero matris suæ*.¹⁰ Unde rationabiliter creditur quod beata Virgo sanctificata fuerit antequam ex utero nasceretur.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod etiam in beata Virgine prius fuit animale, et post id quod est spirituale: quia prius fuit secundum carnem concepta, et postea secundum spiritum sanctificata.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod Augustinus loquitur secundum legem communem, secundum quam per sacramenta non regenerantur aliqui nisi

⁵Hebrews 10, 19. When there is no letter either C or D or J after the text, it is to be understood that the translation is that of the Jerusalem Bible (J).

⁶Tract on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, in the Preface: PL 40, 1141

⁷John 1, 14

⁸Luke 1, 28 (C): J translates, *Rejoice, so highly favoured*, noting that the *rejoice* may be regarded as containing a messianic reference. Luke 1, 42 reads, *of all women you are the most blessed*. This text, perhaps, brings out the point St Thomas is making here. R. Laurentin, *Structure et Théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957). 64–71. These

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died, she would have entered that kingdom. This she could not have done before the passion of Christ, as the Apostle notes, *Through the blood of Jesus we have the right to enter the sanctuary.*⁵ Hence it would seem that the blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth.

4. Moreover, original sin is incurred through one's origin just as actual sin is incurred through one's own actions. But so long as one is in the act of sinning he cannot be cleansed of actual sin. Hence so long as the blessed Virgin existed in her mother's womb she was still in the process of origin, and so could not be cleared of original sin.

ON THE OTHER HAND the Church celebrates the birth of the blessed Virgin.⁶ But only the feasts of holy people are celebrated by the Church. Hence the blessed Virgin was holy at the time of her birth. Thus she was sanctified in the womb.

REPLY: There is nothing in the canonical scriptures about the sanctification of the blessed Virgin; nothing that says she was sanctified in the womb; and nothing whatever on her birth. Still, Augustine in his discussion of the Assumption of the Virgin⁶ puts it fairly that although the Scriptures have nothing to say on the Assumption, yet, her body was assumed into heaven. So we may argue here that she was sanctified in the womb. Now it is reasonable to believe that she who gave birth to *the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth,*⁷ had received greater gifts than any other. We read in *St Luke* that the angel said to her, *Hail, full of grace.*⁸

We note also that some other people by way of privilege were sanctified in the womb. Jeremiah is an example. About him it was written, *Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee.*⁹ John the Baptist is another; *Luke* has of him, *Even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.*¹⁰ It is reasonable then to believe that the blessed Virgin was sanctified before her birth.

Hence: 1. The physical came first and after that the spiritual, even in the blessed Virgin, since she was conceived first in the flesh and afterwards was sanctified in the spirit.

2. Augustine is following the common law here which does state that

words are used very infrequently in the Old Testament and when they are it is always in the context of an announcement of messianic joy. *Zechariah* 9, 9. S. Lyonnet, '*Chaire kecharitomene*' *Biblica* 20 (1939) 131-41.

⁵*Jer.* 1,5 (D); *Before you were born I dedicated you* (C). *Before you came to birth I consecrated you* (J). C and J note that the designation is for a prophetic function rather than an inward sanctification.

¹⁰*Luke* 1,15

⁶September 8

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prius nati. Sed Deus huic legi sacramentorum potentiam suam non alligavit, quin aliquibus ex speciali privilegio gratiam suam conferre possit antequam nascantur ex utero.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod beata Virgo sanctificata fuit in utero a peccato originali quantum ad maculam personalem: non tamen fuit liberata a reatu quo tota natura tenebatur obnoxia, ut scilicet non intraret in Paradisum nisi per Christi hostiam; sicut etiam de sanctis Patribus dicitur qui fuerunt ante Christum.

4. Ad quartum dicendum quod peccatum originale trahitur ex origine in quantum per eam communicatur humana natura, quam respicit proprie peccatum originale. Quod quidem fit quando proles concepta animatur. Unde post animationem nihil prohibet prolem conceptam sanctificari: postea enim non manet in materno utero ad accipiendam humanam naturam, sed ad aliqualem perfectionem ejus quod jam accepit.

articulus 2. utrum beata Virgo sanctificata fuerit ante animationem

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:¹ I. Videtur quod beata Virgo sanctificata fuit ante animationem. Quia, ut dictum est,² plus gratiæ est collatum Virgini matri Dei quam alicui sanctorum. Sed quibusdam videtur esse concessum quod sanctificarentur ante animationem. Quia dicitur, *Priusquam te formarem in utero, novi te*³: non autem infunditur anima ante corporis formationem. Similiter etiam de Joanne Baptista dicit Ambrosius, quod *nondum inerat ei spiritus vitæ, et jam inerat ei Spiritus gratiæ*.⁴ Ergo multo magis beata Virgo ante animationem sanctificari potuit.

2. Præterea, conveniens fuit, sicut Anselmus dicit, *ut illa Virgo ea puritate niteret qua major sub Deo nequit intelligi*:⁵ unde et dicitur, *Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te*.⁶ Sed major puritas fuisset beatæ Virginis si nunquam fuisset inquinata contagio originalis peccati. Ergo hoc ei præstitum fuit quod, antequam animaretur caro ejus, sanctificaretur.

3. Præterea, sicut dictum est,⁷ non celebratur festum nisi de aliquo sancto. Sed quidam⁸ celebrant festum Conceptionis beatæ Virginis. Ergo

¹cf III Sent. 3, 1, 1 ii. Quodl. VI, 5, 1. Compend. Theol. 224; In Psalm. 45; In Jerem. 1

²The preceding article

³Jer. 1, 5 cf note 9 of preceding article

⁴In Luc. 1, 33, on 1, 15. PL 15, 1547 B

⁵De conceptu virginali 18. PL 158, 451 A

⁶Canticles 4, 7

⁷art. 1, On the other hand

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no one can be regenerated by the sacraments who is not first of all born. But God did not so bind his power to this law of the sacraments that he could not, by way of privilege, confer grace on some people not yet born.

3. The blessed Virgin was cleared of original sin with regard to personal fault while she was still in the womb. She was not cleared of the guilt falling on the whole of nature, consequently she could not enter Paradise except through the sacrifice of Christ. This second claim is also made about the patriarchs who lived before Christ.

4. Original sin is incurred by way of origin since human nature is transmitted through origin, and original sin affects the nature. But this happens at the time of the animation of the child conceived. After the animation nothing prevents the child conceived from being sanctified in the womb. After all it remains in the womb, not to receive human nature, but the further perfection of human nature.

article 2. was the blessed Virgin sanctified before animation?^{2a}

THE SECOND POINT:¹ 1. It would appear that the blessed Virgin was sanctified before animation. Now, as just said,² more grace is attributed to the Virgin Mother of God than to any one of the saints. But it would appear that sanctification before animation was granted to some, since it is said in *Jeremiah*, *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.*³ But the soul is not infused before the formation of the body. In a similar way Ambrose says of John the Baptist that *the spirit of life was not yet in him, but still the Spirit of Grace was in him.*⁴ For far greater reason, then, the blessed Virgin could be sanctified before animation.

2. Moreover, it was fitting, as Anselm says, *that this Virgin should shine with such a purity that none greater under God can be thought of.*⁵ Hence it is written, *You are wholly beautiful, my love, and without a blemish.*⁶ But the blessed Virgin would have had a greater purity if she had never been touched by the contagion of original sin. Hence she had the privilege of being sanctified before her flesh was animated.

3. Besides, as we have already noted,⁷ a feast is celebrated only for a holy person. But some⁸ do celebrate the feast of the Conception of the

¹The feast first appeared in the East towards the end of the seventh century and went on to England about 1060, though its theology was still vague.

²We define that the most blessed Virgin Mary at the first instant of her conception was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, by the singular grace and privilege of the omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, and that this doctrine was revealed by God and therefore must be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.' Pius IX in *Ineffabilis Deus*, Denz. 1641. Also 256, 734 sq., 792, 1073 (b), 1100, 1924, 2147a.

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videtur quod in ipsa sua conceptione fuerit sancta. Et ita videtur quod ante animationem fuerit sanctificata.

4. Præterea Apostolus dicit, *Si radix sancta, et rami*.⁹ Radix autem filiorum sunt parentes eorum. Potuit ergo beata Virgo sanctificari etiam in suis parentibus, ante animationem.

SED CONTRA est quod ea quæ fuerunt in veteri Testamento, sunt figura Novi: secundum illud, *Omnia in figura contingebat illis*.¹⁰ Per sanctificationem autem tabernaculi, de qua dicitur, *Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus*,¹¹ videtur significari sanctificatio matris Dei, quæ tabernaculum Dei dicitur, secundum illud *Psalmi, In sole posuit tabernaculum suum*.¹² De tabernaculo autem dicitur, *Postquam cuncta perfecta sunt, operuit nubes tabernaculum Testimonii, et gloria Domini implevit illud*.¹³ Ergo et beata Virgo non fuit sanctificata nisi postquam cuncta ejus perfecta sunt, scilicet corpus et anima.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod sanctificatio beatæ Virginis non potest intelligi ante ejus animationem, duplici ratione. Primo quidem, quia sanctificatio de qua loquimur non est nisi emundatio a peccato originali: sanctitas enim est *perfecta munditia*, ut Dionysius dicit.¹⁴ Culpa autem non potest emundari nisi per gratiam: cujus subjectum est sola creatura rationalis. Et ideo ante infusionem animæ rationalis beata Virgo sanctificata non fuit.

Secundo quia, cum sola creatura rationalis sit susceptiva culpæ, ante infusionem animæ rationalis proles concepta non est culpæ obnoxia. Et sic, quocumque modo ante animationem beata Virgo sanctificata fuisset, nunquam incurrisset maculam originalis culpæ: et ita non indignisset redemptione et salute quæ est per Christum, de quo dicitur *Matt., Ipse salvum faciet populum suum a peccatis eorum*.¹⁵ Hoc autem est inconveniens,

⁹Romans 11, 16

¹⁰1 Corinthians 10, 11 (C); J has *warning for type*

¹¹Psalm 45, 5 (D): *There is a river whose streams refresh/The city of God, and it sanctifies the dwelling of the most high.* 46: 5 (J). *There is a stream whose runlets gladden the city of God, the holy dwelling of the most high.* 45, 5 (C)

¹²Psalm 18, 5 (D). *He has pitched a tent there for the sun.* (C) *High above he pitched a tent for the sun.* 19, 5 (J)

¹³Exodus 40, 31-2 (D): *Thus Moses completed his work. The cloud covered the Tent of the Meeting and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.* 40, 33-4 (J). *Moses finished all the work. Then the cloud covered the Meeting Tent, and the glory of the Lord filled the dwelling.* 40, 33-4 (C)

¹⁴De divinis nominibus 12. PG 3, 969. St Thomas lect. 12

¹⁵Matthew 1, 21

^bnisi postquam cuncta ejus perfecta sunt, scilicet corpus et anima.

^cAfter the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception the *magisterium* no

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Virgin. Hence it would seem that she was holy in her conception, and it would seem also that she was sanctified before her animation.

4. Again the Apostle says, *all the branches are holy if the root is holy.*⁹ Now the root of the children is their parents. Hence the blessed Virgin could have been sanctified in her parents before animation.

ON THE OTHER HAND those things in the Old Testament are figures of the New according to the saying of Scripture, *All things happened to them as a type.*¹⁰ By the sanctification of the tabernacle, of which it is written, *the most high has sanctified his own tabernacle,*¹¹ is seen to signify the sanctification of the mother of God, who is called the tabernacle of God according to the *Psalms*, *He had set his tabernacle in the sun.*¹² Concerning the tabernacle it says in *Exodus*, *After all things were perfected, the cloud covered the tabernacle of the testimony and the glory of the Lord filled it.*¹³ Hence the blessed Virgin was not sanctified until 'after all things were perfected', namely her body and soul.^b

REPLY: The sanctification of the blessed Virgin before her animation is unintelligible for two reasons. First, the sanctification we are talking about is the being cleared of original sin, since sanctification is a *perfect clearing*, as Dionysius says.¹⁴ Now fault cannot be cleared except through grace, and grace belongs only to the rational creature. Therefore the blessed Virgin was not sanctified before the infusion of the rational soul.^c

Secondly, since the rational creature alone is subject to fault, the conceived child is not liable to fault before the infusion of the rational soul. Thus in whatever way the blessed Virgin would have been sanctified before animation she never could have incurred the blemish of original sin.^d She would not then have needed the redemption and salvation which is through Christ, which *Matthew* states, *He is the one who is to save his people from their sins.*¹⁵ Now it is simply not fitting that Christ should

longer favours the doctrine of this article. *To be sanctified* applies not only to the one who is cleared of the original sin he already has, but also to that person who with divine grace intervening is preserved from original sin which he *could have*, indeed, *should have* contracted. Thus the reasoning of St Thomas would be easily changed: 'The sanctification of which we speak is nothing but the preservation from original sin. But only the rational creature can be preserved from original sin since he alone is capable of grace. And therefore before the infusion of the rational soul the blessed Virgin was not sanctified.'

^dWe must say now, 'in whatever way the blessed Virgin would have been sanctified before animation she would never have been subject to the common law of original sin', namely, she never would have been in danger of having sin. That is, there would have been nothing at all to save her from.