

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02959-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 51 - Our Lady, (3a. 27-30)

Thomas R. Heath O.P.

Frontmatter

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The *Summa Theologiae* ranks among the greatest documents of the Christian Church, and is a landmark of medieval western thought. It provides the framework for Catholic studies in systematic theology and for a classical Christian philosophy, and is regularly consulted by scholars of all faiths and none, across a range of academic disciplines. This paperback reissue of the classic Latin/English edition first published by the English Dominicans in the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, has been undertaken in response to regular requests from readers and librarians around the world for the entire series of 61 volumes to be made available again. The original text is unchanged, except for the correction of a small number of typographical errors.

The original aim of this edition was not narrowly ecclesiastical. It sought to make this treasure of the Christian intellectual heritage available to theologians and philosophers of all backgrounds, including those who, without claiming to be believers themselves, appreciate a religious integrity which embodies hardbitten rationalism and who recognise in Thomas Aquinas a master of that perennial philosophy which forms the bedrock of European civilisation. Because of this the editors worked under specific instructions to bear in mind not only the professional theologian, but also the general reader with an interest in the 'reason' in Christianity. The parallel English and Latin texts can be used successfully by anybody with a basic knowledge of Latin, while the presence of the Latin text has allowed the translators a degree of freedom in adapting their English version for modern readers. Each volume contains a glossary of technical terms and is designed to be complete in itself to serve for private study or as a course text.

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PIÆ MEMORIÆ

JOANNIS

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IN AN AUDIENCE, 13 December 1963, to a group representing the Dominican Editors and the combined Publishers of the New English *Summa*, His Holiness Pope Paul VI warmly welcomed and encouraged their undertaking. A letter from His Eminence Cardinal Cicognani, Cardinal Secretary of State, 6 February 1968, expresses the continued interest of the Holy Father in the progress of the work, 'which does honour to the Dominican Order, and the Publishers, and is to be considered without doubt as greatly contributing to the growth and spread of a genuinely Catholic culture', and communicates his particular Apostolic Blessing.

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TO MY MOTHER

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[Excepting Latin text of 'DE CONCEPTIONE CHRISTI QUANTUM AD MATREM
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EDITORIAL NOTES

THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

THE LEONINE text found in the Marietti Edition, Rome, 1952, published under the guidance of Peter Caramello, has been the first basis of the translation. A comparison was made with the Piana text found in the Ottawa Edition, 1941, edited by the Institute of Medieval Studies of Ottawa, and most variations were noted. The translation attempts a middle course between legalism and anarchy and has been guided by the spirit of Frost's definition of freedom: feeling comfortable in harness.

FOOTNOTES

Those signified by a superior number are usually the references given by St Thomas and tracked down by the Leonine Commission, with the exception of no. 1 to each article which refers to parallel texts in his writings. Those signified alphabetically are editorial references and explanatory remarks.

REFERENCES

Biblical references are to the Vulgate; Patristic references to Migne (PG, Greek Fathers; PL, Latin Fathers). When the English titles are well known, references to the works of St Thomas and Aristotle are in English. Titles of St Thomas's works are abbreviated as follows:

Summa Theologiae, without title. Part, question, article, reply; e.g. 1a. 70, 1 ad 2. 2a2æ. 25, 4.

Summa Contra Gentiles, *CG*. Book, chapter; e.g. *CG* 11, 14.

Scriptum in IV Libros Sententiarum, *Sent.* Book, distinction, question, article, solution or *quæstiuncula*, reply; e.g. 11 *Sent.* 15, 1, 1, ii ad 3.

Compendium Theologiae, *Compend. theol.*

Scriptural commentaries (*lecturæ, expositiones reportata*): Job, *In Job*; Psalms, *In Psal.*; Isaiah, *In Isa.*; Jeremiah, *In Jerem.*; St Matthew, *In Matt.*; St John, *In Joann.*; Epistles of St Paul, e.g. *In 1 Cor.* Chapter, verse, *lectio* as required.

Philosophical commentaries: Aristotle, *Peri Hermeneias*, *In Periherm.*; Posterior Analytics, *In Post. Anal.*; Physics, *In Phys.*; *De Cælo et*

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Mundo, *In de Cæl.*; *De Generatione et Corruptione*, *In de Gen. et Corr.*; *De Anima*, *In de Anima*; *Metaphysics*, *In Meta.*; *Nichomachean Ethics*, *In Ethic.*; *Politics*, *In Pol.* Book, chapter, *lectio* as required, 1, also for references to Dionysius, *De divinis Nominibus*, *In de Div. Nom.* References to Aristotle include the Bekker numbering.

Quæstiones quodlibetæ, *Quodl.*

Complete titles are given for other works.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cathreine Virnston typed the final version in a burst of speed that breaks all records, including her own. My gratitude to her must be said first. I am grateful also to my brethren at 123 who forgot their exasperation, at 487 who gave me a shot without a snooker without believing, necessarily, I would make it, and Rosario Scordo for helping at the end.

INTRODUCTION

THE DOMINANT PRINCIPLE controlling the treatment of our Lady in the writings of St Thomas may be formulated somewhat like this: she cannot be understood except in relation to Christ, or perhaps more broadly, she cannot be understood in isolation. That he kept to this principle while writing the *Summa* is clear since it is manifestly impossible to carve out four questions on our Lady from the *Tertia Pars* and treat them as standing complete by themselves. One cannot introduce this volume, then, by saying, here is his definitive and exhaustive treatment of our Lady. No, these four questions have come from somewhere and are going somewhere. They have come from a profound consideration of the meaning of the Incarnation, the union of God and man (which itself came from somewhere else) and they are going on towards an existential consideration of Christ her Son, who was born, lived, suffered, died, rose from the dead, and thus saved us from our sins.

But our Lady is not just a 'moment' in this process. She was part of the divine plan from the beginning, and so is included in one of St Thomas's great insights on God's power.¹ She lives on now in glory and belongs to the consideration of the state of things at the end of time.

Even so, an artist who desires to paint someone must choose a moment, and the moment Thomas chose to catch the meaning of Mary is not that eternal moment in God's mind at the beginning (or at the end) of time; it is not even that deeply touching moment at the end of the earthly life of her son. He considers Mary not as she is holding the dead Christ in her arms but the promise of the living Christ in her womb. The treatment of our Lady in the *Summa* has more of Fra Angelico's hope than of Michelangelo's tragic completion.

'We ought now to turn to all those things that touch on Christ's entrance into the world; and in this matter let us first look at the mother conceiving him.' He turns then to Mary, the mother conceiving him, and in the four Questions of this volume, considers her holiness, her innocence, her human love for Joseph, and her humility before the great news.

He cannot, obviously, say everything here. The consideration of her title, mother of God, for example, which he clearly considers the greatest claim to our honour, comes a little later in Question 35, when he is studying the birth of her son. But things like this should not deter us from reading this volume. He says many things about our Lady in these four questions, and he says them very well.

¹cf 1a. 25, 6 ad 4

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His style, too, in these pages will surprise the reader who vaguely feels that he cannot be read except as a bracing exercise in mathematical logic or metaphysics. Somehow, the material he comments on, the fresh beauty of St Luke's infancy gospel, for example, and the mystical thrust of the *Song of Songs*, have entered into the spirit of his own pages and give them buoyancy and brightness. Nor is it far-fetched to speculate that the loveliness of our Lady herself and the regard Thomas had for her is the final explanation for the lyrical quality of this section. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that the *Summa* here approaches poetry.

'She lay there, hidden in his stone folds, like a blue flower in granite.' Mark Van Doren is describing the way a woman, perhaps even a girl, without scheme or desire, can enter the sanctuary of the most rugged masculine heart and touch it to praise. To some St Thomas's image persists as the maker of a remote, disciplined and unyielding theology. His *Summa* is laced with logic and metaphysics, to be sure, but there is the poetry and the moments when the reader's heart burns with the beauty of the truth. The tract on our Lady is one of those moments. It lies in the stone folds like a blue flower in granite.

It is helpful to remember this, too, in our evaluation of his exegesis.² His textual criticism obviously cannot compare with that of modern Scripture scholars, and it would be a mistake to require it of him. It would be equally mistaken, however, to pay no attention to what he, and the Fathers he cites, say on any given text, for that would be equivalent to dismissing the value of a great and essential tradition.³ Still, in consideration of this problem I have included an appendix dealing with the present New Testament scholarship of our Lady, and have, as well, given the Jerusalem Bible translation of each of the texts cited together with its modern exegesis. I have inserted these translations into the main body of the text when it was possible (most of the time) or have indicated them in the footnotes.

I have included also a longish historical study of the teaching of St Thomas on our Lady as it developed through his works. The study shows, I think, fairly conclusively that Thomas did develop his thought on our Lady, but at the same time he remained a man of great moderation who firmly resisted making extravagant gestures in theology.

Another appendix on the Immaculate Conception attempts to deal realistically with that teaching. I have tried to show what the author held, and why. And I have presented some new theories which have appeared in recent theological literature together with my own evaluation.

²cf 'Our Lady in Biblical and Speculative Theology.' T. R. Heath, *The Thomist Reader* (1958) 106-20

³A tradition that is called upon extensively in the Marian section of Vatican II's pronouncements

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‘We have but one Mediator, as we know from the words of the Apostle, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all* (1 Timothy, 2, 5). The maternal duty of Mary towards men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.’⁴

On October 29, 1963, the Fathers at the Second Vatican Council voted by a small majority against issuing a separate document on our Lady and elected to devote a chapter of the *Constitution on the Church* to her. The reason for that decision was in large part ecumenical, that is, the Catholic Bishops did not want to offend our separated brethren by any suggestion of exaltation of the Virgin Mary that might in the judgment of Protestants obscure the unique mediatorship of Christ the Lord.

It is possible to make a fair judgment from all his writings, but especially from the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae*, and say now that St Thomas would certainly have welcomed that decision. He was neither ‘maximalist’ nor ‘minimalist’ concerning our Lady, but he was a responsible theologian, sensitive on the one hand to the ‘truth in itself’ and on the other to the truth as it affects men.

As we have said, the dominant principle controlling his treatment of our Lady was: she cannot be understood except in her relation to Christ. She cannot be studied in isolation. And his insistence on that principle may very well be his contribution to our age of ecumenical dialogue and search for unity among all Christians. Indeed the opportunity this book gives for seeing him work out that principle in his Marian studies might be the best justification for this book today.

⁴Vatican II *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, VIII 1 n. 60