

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ is not, as man, the Mediator of God and men. For Augustine says (*Contra Felic. x*): “One is the Person of Christ: lest there be not one Christ, not one substance; lest, the office of Mediator being denied, He be called the Son either of God alone, or merely the Son of a man.” But He is the Son of God and man, not as man, but as at the same time God and man. Therefore neither should we say that, as man alone, He is Mediator of God and man.

Objection 2. Further, just as Christ, as God, has a common nature with the Father and the Holy Ghost; so, as man, He has a common nature with men. But for the reason that, as God, He has the same nature as the Father and the Holy Ghost, He cannot be called Mediator, as God: for on 1 Tim. 2:5, “Mediator of God and man,” a gloss says: “As the Word, He is not a Mediator, because He is equal to God, and God ‘with God,’ and at the same time one God.” Therefore neither, as man, can He be called Mediator, on account of His having the same nature as men.

Objection 3. Further, Christ is called Mediator, inasmuch as He reconciled us to God: and this He did by taking away sin, which separated us from God. But to take away sin belongs to Christ, not as man, but as God. Therefore Christ is our Mediator, not as man, but as God.

On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei ix, 15*): “Not because He is the Word, is Christ Mediator, since He Who is supremely immortal and supremely happy is far from us unhappy mortals; but He is Mediator, as man.”

I answer that, We may consider two things in a mediator: first, that he is a mean; secondly, that he unites others. Now it is of the nature of a mean to be distant from each extreme: while it unites by communicating to one that which belongs to the other. Now neither of these can be applied to Christ as God, but only as man. For, as God, He does not differ from the Father and the Holy Ghost in nature and power of dominion: nor have the Father and the Holy Ghost anything that the Son has not, so that He be able to communicate to others something belonging to the Father or the Holy Ghost, as though it were belonging to others than Himself. But both can be applied to Him as man. Because, as man, He is distant both from God, by nature, and from man by dignity of both grace and glory. Again, it belongs to Him, as man, to unite men to God, by communicating to men both precepts and gifts, and by offering satisfaction and prayers to God for men. And therefore He is most truly called Mediator, as man.

Reply to Objection 1. If we take the Divine Nature from Christ, we consequently take from Him the singular fulness of grace, which belongs to Him as the Only-begotten of the Father, as it is written (*Jn. 1:14*). From which fulness it resulted that He was established over all men, and approached nearer to God.

Reply to Objection 2. Christ, as God, is in all things equal to the Father. But even in the human nature He is above all men. Therefore, as man, He can be Mediator, but not as God.

Reply to Objection 3. Although it belongs to Christ as God to take away sin authoritatively, yet it belongs to Him, as man, to satisfy for the sin of the human race. And in this sense He is called the Mediator of God and men.

ST. THOMAS AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (EDITORIAL NOTE)

The privilege of the Virgin-Mother of God and the supreme prerogative of her Son may be seen from the following diagram:

THE LAW AND THE COURSE OF ORIGINAL SIN UNDER THE LAW. . . . all descendants from Adam. . . . spring from Adam materially and seminally. . . . the body lies (not under the guilty, but) under the effects of original sin. . . . the stricken body dispositively causes the soul to contract the guilt of original sin. . . . all contract both debt and stain. . . . all need a Redeemer to destroy the stain contracted PARTIALLY EXEMPT FROM THE LAW; PRIVILEGE OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. . . . the Blessed Virgin. . . . springs from Adam materially and seminally. . . . the body lies (not under the guilt, but) under the effects of original sin. . . . the stricken body would have dispositively caused the soul to contract the guilt of original sin. . . . the soul at the moment of union with the body was prevented by the infusion of grace from contracting sin. . . . Mary contracted the debt, but not the stain. . . . Mary needed a Redeemer to prevent her from contracting the stain WHOLLY EXEMPT FROM THE LAW; MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION. . . . Our Blessed Lord. . . . springs from Adam materially, not seminally (q. 31, a. 1). . . . His body lay under neither guilt nor effects of original sin. . . . the body being entirely free, could not transmit the stain to His soul. . . . no preventive grace needed. . . . Jesus Christ contracted neither debt nor stain. . . . Jesus Christ is not redeemed, but the Redeemer

It will thus be seen how accurately St. Thomas speaks of the “flesh” or body of our Blessed Lady. For it should be remembered that, according to St. Thomas, the human body is animated in succession by (1) a vegetative, (2) a sensitive, and (3) a rational soul. Hence his assertion that “the flesh of the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin” (q. 14, a. 3, ad 1) means that the body of the Blessed Virgin, being descended from Adam both materially and seminally, contracted the bodily defects which are conveyed by seminal generation, and are the results of the privation of original justice (q. 69, a. 4, ad 3). Before animation, therefore the body of the Blessed Virgin would not be infected with the guilt of original sin, because privation of grace can only be in that which is the subject of grace, viz. the

rational soul. Nevertheless, before animation the body of the Blessed Virgin, being seminally descended from Adam, was such that it would have been the means of transmitting the taint of original sin to the rational soul at the very first instant of animation, unless the grace of the Redeemer intervened and sanctified her soul “in that self-same instant,” thus redeeming her and preventing her from contracting the guilt of original sin.

Why, then, does St. Thomas say that because the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before animation, therefore she could be sanctified only after animation?

Such a conclusion would hold if it were a question of the order of Nature: “a thing must be before it is such [prius est esse quam esse tale]”; and therefore the soul must be, before it is sanctified. But if St. Thomas held for a posteriority of time, no matter how short, we ask how it was that he did not perceive the fallacy of the argument, since it might be neither before nor after, but in the very instant of, animation.

The question is answered thus: St. Thomas as a Doctor of the Church and in matters which were not then “de fide,” is a witness to the expression of the faith of his time. Hence his line of argument coincides with,

because it follows, that of St. Bernard, Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure. It was not likely that St. Thomas would differ from the great masters of his time, who failed to understand that the grace of redemption might at the same time be one of preservation and prevention. Nor is it likely that St. Thomas had any reliable information about the movement* in progress at that time towards a belief in the Immaculate Conception. . No doubt he knew something of it, but the names of its promoters would have weighed little with him as against those of Bernard, Albert, Peter, Alexander, and Bonaventure. And it must not be forgotten that among those who upheld the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, not a few ascribed the privilege as being absolute and not one of preservation and Redemption. Hence it is that St. Thomas insists on two things: (1) that the Mother of God was redeemed, and (2) that the grace of her sanctification was a grace of preservation. And, be it remarked in conclusion, these two points, so much insisted on by St. Thomas, are at the very basis of the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

* Principally in England, where, owing to the influence of St. Anselm (1109), the doctrine was maintained by Eadmer (1137). Nicolas of St. Albans (1175), Osbert of Clare (1170), Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1253), William of Ware (1300), who was the master of Duns Scotus (1308)