

## QUESTION 31

### The Matter from which the Savior's Body was Conceived

Next we have to consider the conception itself of the Savior. And, first, with respect to the matter from which His body was conceived (question 31); second, with respect to the active principle (*quantum ad conceptionis auctorem*) of His conception (question 32); third, with respect to the manner and order of His conception (question 33).

On the first topic there are eight questions: (1) Was Christ's flesh taken from Adam? (2) Was Christ's flesh taken from David? (3) What about the genealogy of Christ that is posited in the Gospels? (4) Was it fitting for Christ to be born of a woman (*nasci de femina*)? (5) Was His body formed from the purest bloods of the Virgin (*de purissimus sanguinibus virginis*)? (6) Did Christ's flesh exist in His ancient fathers as some sort of designated [matter] (*secundum aliquid signatum*)? (7) Was Christ's flesh in the patriarchs damaged by sin (*peccato obnoxia*)? (8) Was Christ's flesh tithed in the loins of Abraham?

#### Article 1

##### Was Christ's flesh taken from Adam?

It seems that Christ's flesh was not taken from Adam (*caro Christi non fuerit sumpta ex Adam*):

**Objection 1:** In 1 Corinthians 15:47 the Apostle says, "The first man was from the earth, earthly, the second man from heaven, heavenly." But the first man is Adam, and the second man is Christ. Therefore, Christ was not from Adam, but instead has an origin distinct from Adam.

**Objection 2:** It was fitting for Christ's conception to be the most miraculous of all. But to form the body of a man from the slime of the earth is a greater miracle than to form the body of a man from human matter drawn from Adam. Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Christ to have taken His flesh from Adam. Therefore, it seems that Christ's body should have been formed not from the mass of the human race derived from Adam, but from some other matter.

**Objection 3:** As is clear from Romans 5:12, "sin entered this world through one man," viz., Adam, since all the nations sinned by way of origin in him (*omnes in eo gentes originaliter peccaverunt*). But if Christ's body had been taken from Adam, then He, too, would likewise have existed in Adam when the latter sinned. Therefore, He would have contracted original sin—which did not fit in with Christ's purity. Therefore, Christ's body was formed from matter taken from Adam.

**But contrary to this:** In Hebrews 2:16 the Apostle says, "Nowhere does He"—i.e., the Son of God—"take hold of the angels, but He takes hold of the seed of Abraham." But the seed of Abraham is taken from Adam. Therefore, Christ's body was formed from matter taken from Adam.

**I respond:** Christ assumed human nature in order to cleanse it of corruption. But human nature needed cleansing only insofar as it had been infected by the vitiated origin with which it descended from Adam. And so it was appropriate for Christ to assume flesh from matter derived from Adam, in order that the nature itself might be cured by being assumed.

**Reply to objection 1:** The second man, i.e., Christ, is said to be from heaven not with respect to the matter of His body, but either (a) with respect to the power forming His body or even (b) with respect to His divine nature itself. But with respect to its matter, Christ's body was earthly, just like Adam's body was.

**Reply to objection 2:** As was explained above (q. 29, a. 1), the mystery of Christ's Incarnation is in a certain way miraculous—not in the sense that it is ordered toward confirming the Faith, but as an article of the Faith. And so what is required in the case of the mystery of the Incarnation is not what is

more miraculous, as in the case of miracles that are performed in order to confirm the Faith, but instead what is more in keeping with God's wisdom and more expedient for human salvation—which is what is required in everything that belongs to the Faith.

An alternative reply is that in the case of the mystery of the Incarnation one pays attention not only to the miracle of the *matter* of that which is conceived, but more to the miracle of the *manner* of the conception and of the birth—because, namely, a *virgin* conceived and gave birth to God.

**Reply to objection 3:** As was explained above (q. 15, a. 1), Christ's body existed in Adam with respect to its *corpulent substance*, because, namely, the very corporeal matter of Christ's body was derived from Adam. However, Christ's body did not exist in Adam with respect to its *seminal nature*, since it was not conceived by a man's semen. And this is why Christ did not contract original sin in the way that the others do who are derived from Adam by way of a man's semen.

## Article 2

### Did Christ take His flesh from the seed of David?

It seems that Christ did not take His flesh from the seed of David (*Christus non sumpserit carnem de semine David*):

**Objection 1:** In putting together Christ's genealogy, Matthew takes it down to Joseph. But as was shown above (q. 28, a. 1), Joseph was not the father of Christ. Therefore, it does not seem that Christ descended from the line of David (*de genere David*).

**Objection 2:** As is clear from Exodus 6:16, Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, whereas Mary, the mother of Christ, is called a kinswoman of Elizabeth, who is a daughter of Aaron, as is clear from Luke 1:5-36. Therefore, since, as is clear from Matthew 1:3ff., David was of the tribe of Judah, it seems that Christ did not descend from the seed of David.

**Objection 3:** In Jeremiah 22:30 says of Jechoniah, "Write this man down as barren; there shall not be a man of his seed that shall sit upon the throne of David." But Isaiah 9:7 says of Christ, "He shall sit upon the throne of David." Therefore, Christ was not of the seed of Jechoniah and, as a result, He was not of the seed of David, since Matthew takes the line of generation from David through Jechoniah.

**But contrary to this:** Romans 1:3 says, "... who was made to Him of the seed of David according to the flesh."

**I respond:** As is clear from Matthew 1:1, Christ is specifically said to come from two ancient fathers, viz., Abraham and David. The reasons for this are many:

First of all, because a promise concerning the Christ was specifically made to them. For in Genesis 22:18 it was said to Abraham, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed in your seed"—which in Galatians 3:16 the Apostle interprets to mean Christ, saying, "To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to your seeds', as of many, but as of one, 'And to your seed, which is Christ'." And to David it is said, "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne" (Psalm 131:11). This is why the people of the Jews, receiving their king with honor, said, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:9).

The second reason is that Christ was going to be king, prophet, and priest. Now Abraham was a priest, as is clear from what the Lord said to him in Genesis 15:9 ("Take to yourself a three-year-old cow, etc."). He was also a prophet—this according to what is said in Genesis 20:7 ("... he is a prophet, and he will pray for you"). And David was both king and prophet.

The third reason is that circumcision first began with Abraham, whereas God's election was

especially manifested in the case of David—this according to what is said in 1 Kings 13:14 (“The Lord was looking for a man after His own heart”). And so the reason why Christ is called the son of these two men is in order that He might be shown to be the salvation both of the circumcised and of the elect among the gentiles.

**Reply to objection 1:** This was an objection posed by Faustus, the Manichean, who wanted to prove that Christ is not the son of David because He was not begotten by Joseph, down to whom Matthew takes his series of generations. Against this Augustine responds as follows in *Contra Faustum* 33: “Since the same evangelist affirms that Joseph was Mary’s husband and that Christ’s mother was a virgin, and that Christ was from the seed of David, what is left except to believe that (a) Mary was not an outsider to the family of David, and that (b) it is not in vain that she was called the wife of Joseph, because of the close alliance of their hearts, even if he did not have carnal intercourse with her, and that (c) the order of generations is taken down to Joseph [rather than to her] by reason of the dignity of the husband? So, then, we believe that Mary was likewise of the family of David, because we believe the Scriptures, which assert both that Christ was from the seed of David according to the flesh, and that Mary was His mother, not by carnal intercourse with a man but as a virgin.”

**Reply to objection 2:** Gregory Nazianzus responds to this objection by claiming that by God’s will it happened that the royal family was united to the priestly line, with the result that Christ, who is both king and priest, was born of both lines according to the flesh. Hence, Aaron, who was the first priest according to the Law, took a wife from the tribe of Judah, Elizabeth, daughter of Aminadab (Exodus 6:23). It is therefore possible that Elizabeth’s father had married a wife of the line of David, through whom the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was of the line of David, would be a kinswoman of Elizabeth—or, conversely, and better, that Blessed Mary’s father, who was of the family of David, had married a wife of the family of Aaron.

Alternatively, as Augustine explains in *Contra Faustum* 23, if Joachim, the father of Mary, was of the line of Aaron (as the heretic Faustus asserted by appeal to certain apocryphal writings), then one has to believe that Joachim’s mother—or even his wife—was of the line of David, with the result that we will claim that Mary was in some way among the progeny of David.

**Reply to objection 3:** As Ambrose explains in *Super Lucam*, the prophetic passage in question here “does not deny that descendants are going to be born from the seed of Jechoniah. And so Christ is born of his seed. And the fact that Christ has reigned is not contrary to the prophecy, since He did not reign with secular honor. For He Himself said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (John 18:36).”

### Article 3

#### Is Christ’s genealogy correctly constructed by the evangelists?

It seems that Christ’s genealogy is not correctly constructed by the evangelists (*genealogia Christi inconvenienter ab Evangelistic textatur*):

**Objection 1:** Isaiah 53:8 asks, “Who will narrate His generation?” Therefore, Christ’s generation should not have been narrated.

**Objection 2:** It is impossible for one man to have two fathers. But Matthew says, “Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary” (Matthew 1:16), whereas Luke says that Joseph was the son of Heli (Luke 3:23). Therefore, the things they write are contrary to one another.

**Objection 3:** It seems that in certain matters [the genealogies] diverge from one another. For instance, at the beginning of his book (Matthew 1:1-17), starting with Abraham and descending all the

way down to Joseph, Matthew enumerates forty-two generations. By contrast, Luke places the generation of Christ after Christ's Baptism (Luke 3:23-38), starting with Christ and going back through the number of generations all the way up to God, thus positing seventy-seven generations, counting the two endpoints. Therefore, it seems that they describe the generation of Christ incorrectly.

**Objection 4:** In 4 Kings 8:24 we read that Joram begot Ahaziah, who was followed by his son Joash, who was followed by his son Amaziah, after whom reigned his son Azariah, called Uzziah, who was followed by his son Jotham. But Matthew says that Joram begot Uzziah. Therefore it seems that his account of the generation of Christ is incorrect, since he omits the three kings in the middle.

**Objection 5:** All those who are named in the generation of Christ had fathers and mothers, and most of them had brothers. But in the genealogy of Christ Matthew names only three mothers, viz., Tamar, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah. Moreover, he mentions the brothers of Judah and Jechoniah, and, again, Perez and Zerah. Luke did not posit any of them. Therefore, it seems that the evangelists did not correctly lay out Christ's genealogy.

**But contrary to this** is the authority of Scripture.

**I respond:** As 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All of Sacred Scripture is divinely inspired." But what is done divinely is ordered divinely—this according to Romans 13:1 ("Things that come from God are well ordered (*quae a Deo sunt, ordinata sunt*)"). Hence, the genealogy of Christ is laid out in the correct order by the evangelists.

**Reply to objection 1:** As Jerome explains in *Super Matthaeum*, Isaiah is talking about the generation of Christ's divine nature. By contrast, Matthew is laying out the generation of Christ with respect to His human nature—not by explicating the manner of the Incarnation, since this is likewise ineffable, but by enumerating the fathers from whom Christ proceeded with respect to His flesh.

**Reply to objection 2:** This objection, which was posed by Julian the Apostate, has been answered in different ways by different writers.

For instance, as Gregory Nazianzus reports, some claim that the individuals whom the two evangelists enumerate are the same individual, but under different names, as if each had two names. But this cannot stand, since Matthew names one of David's sons, viz., Solomon, whereas Luke names another, viz., Nathan, and according to the history found in 2 Kings, they were clearly brothers.

Hence, others have claimed that Matthew handed down the *true* genealogy of Christ, whereas Luke handed down the *putative* genealogy; this is why he began, "... being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23). For there were some among the Jews who, in light of the sins of the kings of Judah, believed that the Christ would be born of David not through the kings, but through another of his lines of descent consisting of private men.

On the other hand, others have claimed that Matthew listed carnal fathers, whereas Luke listed 'spiritual' fathers, i.e., morally upright men who are called [Christ's] fathers because of a likeness [to Him] in justice.

However, in the book *De Quaestionibus Novi et Veteris Testamenti* the response is that Luke should not be understood to be claiming that Joseph is the son of Heli, but that Heli and Joseph were at the time of Christ descendants of David by different lines. Hence, what is being said of Christ is that He is reputed to be the son of Joseph and that Christ Himself was also a son of Heli, as if to say that, for the same reason that He is called the son of Joseph, Christ can be called the son of Heli and of all those who descend from the line of David—just as in Romans 9:5 the Apostle says, "... from whom"—i.e., from the Jewish people—"Christ came according to the flesh."

By contrast, in *De Quaestionibus Evangeliarum* Augustine lists three possible solutions: "There are three lines of reasoning, one of which was followed by a given evangelist. For either (a) one evangelist named the father by whom Joseph was begotten, whereas the other posited either his maternal

grandfather or some one of his older relatives; or (b) one was Joseph's natural father and the other had adopted him; or (c), in accord with the Jewish custom, one of them had died without children, and when a near relation married the dead man's wife, the son born of this latter union was counted as the son of the dead man"—which is a kind of legal adoption, as Augustine himself explains in *De Consensu Evangelistarum* 2.

And this last line of reasoning is closer to the truth. Jerome also posits it in *Super Matthaem*, and in *Ecclesiastica Historia* Eusebius Caesariensis asserts that it was handed down by Africanus the historian. They claim that at different times Mathan and Melchi procreated individual sons of one and the same wife, Esther by name. Since Mathan, who was a descendant of Solomon, had taken her as a wife first and had died, leaving a son, Jacob by name, and since the Law did not forbid a widow to marry another man, Melchi, who descended from the family of Nathan, since he was from the same tribe but not from the same family, took the wife left by Mathan, and from her he received a son by the name of Heli. And so Jacob and Heli were brothers born of the same mother but from fathers belonging to different lines. One of them, Jacob, by a mandate of the Law, took the wife of his brother Heli, who had died without children, and begot Joseph, who was his own son by the nature of generation, but who was counted as the son of Heli according to the precept of the Law. And this is why Matthew says, "Jacob begot Joseph," whereas Luke, since he is describing the genealogy under the Law (*describit legalem generationem*), names no one as having begotten him.

And even though Damascene says that the Blessed Virgin Mary was connected with Joseph according to that genealogy by which Heli was counted as his father—for he claims that she was a descendant of Melchi—we must nonetheless believe that she was in some way descended from Solomon through those fathers enumerated by Matthew, who is said to have set down Christ's genealogy according to the flesh—especially taking into account Ambrose's claim that Christ was of the seed of Jechoniah.

**Reply to objection 3:** In *De Consensu Evangelistarum* Augustine explains, "Matthew intended to emphasize the *kingly* persona of Christ and Luke the *priestly* persona. Hence, what is signified in Matthew's genealogy is *the taking on of our sins* by our Lord Jesus Christ," viz., insofar as by His carnal origin He assumed "'the likeness of sinful flesh' (Romans 8:3)." By contrast, in Luke's genealogy what is signified is *the washing away of our sins*," which is effected by Christ's sacrifice. "And this is why Matthew traces the generations in descending order and Luke in ascending order." This is also why "Matthew descends from David to Solomon, by whose mother David had sinned, whereas Luke ascends to David from Nathan, since through the prophet of that name God had expiated his sin." Hence it is also the case that because "Matthew wished to signify that Christ had descended to our mortality, at the very beginning of his Gospel (Matthew 1:1-17) he recalled the generations themselves, in descending order, from Abraham down to Joseph and down to the birth of Christ Himself. By contrast, Luke—not at the beginning of his Gospel, but after Christ's Baptism (Luke 3:23-38)—narrated the genealogy in ascending, and not descending, order, as though putting more emphasis on the priest in expiating sins, to which John bore witness when he said, 'Behold Him who takes away the sin of the world'. And ascending, [Luke] passes through Abraham and reaches God, to whom we are reconciled once we are cleansed and expiated. He also justifiably took up the origin of adoption, since by adoption we are made sons of God, whereas it was through carnal generation that the Son of God became the Son of Man. Moreover, he demonstrated sufficiently that he called Joseph the son of Heli not because Joseph was *begotten* by Heli, but because he had been *adopted* by him—even though he called Adam himself a son of God because he had been *made* by God."

Again, the number forty pertains to the time of the present life, because of the four parts of the world in which we lead our mortal life under the rule of Christ. And forty is four times ten, whereas ten itself is the sum of the numbers progressing from one to four. Again, the number ten can also refer to the

decalogue, and the number four can refer to the present life or even to the four Gospels, according to which Christ reigns in us. And this is why “Matthew, emphasizing the kingly persona of Christ, enumerated forty persons, not counting Christ” (Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* 2). But this meaning holds only if, as Augustine asserts, it is the same Jechoniah who is posited at the end of the second series of fourteen and at the beginning of the third series of fourteen. According to Augustine, this was done in order to signify that “under Jechoniah there was a sort of defection to strange nations during the Babylonian transmigration, which likewise prefigured the fact that Christ was going to migrate from circumcision to uncircumcision (*a circumcissione ad praeputium migraturum*).”

By contrast, Jerome claims that there two Joachims, i.e., Jechoniahs, viz., father and son, each of whom is taken up into the genealogy of Christ, in order to make clear the distinction among the generations, which the evangelist divides into three groups of fourteen; and this amounts to forty-two persons. This latter number befits the Holy Church, since the number is a product of six, which signifies the work of the present life, and seven, which signifies the restfulness of the life to come. For seven times six is forty-two. Again, the number fourteen itself, which is constituted by adding ten and four, can involve the same signification that is attributed to forty, which arises from the same numbers via multiplication.

Now the number that Luke makes use of in Christ’s genealogy signifies the totality of sins (*universitas peccatorum*). “For the number ten is shown in the ten precepts of the Law to be the number of moral uprightness. On the other hand, to sin is to go beyond the Law. But the number eleven goes beyond the number ten.” And seven signifies the totality, because “the totality of time is involved in the number of the seven days” (Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* 2). Now seven times eleven is seventy-seven. And so this number signifies the totality of sins that are taken away by Christ.

**Reply to objection 4:** In *Super Matthaicum* Jerome says, “Because Joram allied himself with the family of the most wicked Jezebel, memory of him is omitted down to the third generation, lest it should be posited in the holy order leading to the Nativity.” And so, as Chrysostom says, “As great as was the blessing conferred on Jehu, who had taken vengeance on the house of Ahab and Jezebel, so great was the curse on the house of Joram, because of the wicked daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, so that down to the fourth generation his sons are cut off from the number of the kings—just as it is written in Exodus 20:5, “I shall visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations.”

Notice, too, that there were other kings who sinned and *are* mentioned in Christ’s genealogy; however, their wickedness was not continuous. For, as *De Quaestionibus Veteris et Novi Testamenti* explains, “Solomon is included in the series of kings because of his father’s merits, and Rehoboam because of the merits of Asa, the son of [Rehoboam’s] son Abijah. By contrast, the wickedness of those other three [viz., Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah] was continuous.”

**Reply to objection 5:** In *Super Matthaicum* Jerome says, “None of the holy women are mentioned in our Savior’s genealogy, but only those whom Scripture censures, so that He who had come for the sake of sinners, being born of sinners, might erase all sin.” Thus the women mentioned are Tamar, who is censured for having carnal intercourse with her father-in-law; Rahab, who was a prostitute; Ruth, who was a foreigner; and Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, who was an adulteress. The last of these, however, is not mentioned by name, but is designated by the name of her husband, both (a) because of her sin, since she was conscious of the adultery and the murder, and also (b) in order that, once her husband is named, David’s sin might be called to mind. (And because Luke intends to emphasize that Christ is the expiator of sins, he does not make mention of such women.)

Now [Matthew] does mention “the brothers of Judah” (Matthew 1:2), (a) in order to show that they belong to the people of God—though because Ismael, the brother of Isaac, and Esau, the brother of Jacob, had been separated from the people of God, they are not mentioned in Christ’s genealogy—and, again, (b) in order to exclude pride with respect to birth, since several of Judah’s brothers were born of

servant-girls, and yet all of them together were patriarchs and heads of tribes. Perez and Zerah are mentioned together (Matthew 1:3) because, as Ambrose explains in *Super Lucam*, “what is described through them are the twin lives of the people: one, according to the Law,” signified by Zerah, “the other through faith,” signified by Perez. Matthew posits “Jechoniah and his brothers” (Matthew 1:11), because all of them reigned at different times, which had not happened in the case of other kings—or, again, because they were all alike in both wickedness and misery.

#### Article 4

##### Was it fitting for the matter of Christ’s body to be taken from a woman?

It seems that it was not fitting for the matter of Christ's body to be taken from a woman (*materia corporis Christi non debuit esse assumpta de femina*):

**Objection 1:** The masculine sex is more noble than the feminine sex (*sexus masculinus est nobilior quam sexus femininus*). But it was especially fitting for Christ to take on what is most perfect in human nature. Therefore, it seems to have been fitting for him to take on flesh not from a woman (*de femina*) but instead from a man (*de viro*), in the way that Eve was formed from the rib of a man.

**Objection 2:** If anyone is conceived by a woman (*ex femina*), he is enclosed in the woman’s womb. But it is unfitting for God, who, as Jeremiah 23:24 puts it, “fills up heaven and earth,” to be enclosed in the small womb of a woman. Therefore, it seems that He should not have been conceived by a woman (*de femina*).

**Objection 3:** Those who are conceived by women suffer from a certain sort of uncleanness; as Job 25:4 asks, “Can a man be justified compared with God? Or he that is born of a woman appear clean?” But it was not fitting for there to be any sort of uncleanness in Christ, since He is the Wisdom of God, of which Wisdom 7:25 says, “Nothing defiled enters into her.” Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Him to have taken on flesh from a woman.

**But contrary to this:** Galatians 4:4 says, “God sent His Son, made of a woman (*factum ex muliere*).”

**I respond:** Even though the Son of God could have taken human flesh from whatever matter He pleased, it was nonetheless most fitting that He should take His flesh from a woman (*ut de femina carnem acciperet*).

First of all, because all of human nature was thereby ennobled. Hence, in *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, “The liberation of mankind had to be apparent in both sexes. Therefore, since He had to take on the male sex, which is the more honorable sex, it was fitting that the liberation of the female sex should be apparent from the fact that this male was born of a woman.”

Second, because the truth of the Incarnation is thereby built up. Hence, in *De Incarnatione* Ambrose says, “You will find [in Christ] many things in accord with nature and many things beyond nature. For in accord with nature He existed within the womb”—viz., of a woman's body—“but it was beyond the condition of nature that a virgin conceived and gave birth, in order that you might believe that He was God, who was restoring the nature, and that He was man, who in accord with nature was born of a human being.” And in *Epistola ad Volusianum* Augustine says, “If almighty God were to create a man formed somewhere else, not from a mother’s womb, but a man He brought suddenly to light, would He not be confirming an erroneous opinion? It would not in any way be believed that He had assumed a true man. And while He is doing all things in a miraculous way, would He be eliminating what He did in a merciful way? But now He has appeared as the mediator between God and man in such a way that, uniting the two natures in a unity of person, He has elevated the ordinary by means of the extraordinary

and tempered the extraordinary by means of the ordinary.”

Third, because in this way all the diversity of human generation is brought to completion. For the first man was produced from the slime of the earth without a male or a female, and Eve was produced from a male without a female, whereas the remainder of human beings are produced from a male and a female. Hence, the fourth possibility was reserved as proper to Christ, to be produced from a female without a male.

**Reply to objection 1:** The reason why He assumed human nature in the masculine sex is that the masculine sex is more noble than the female. But lest the female sex be disdained, it was fitting for Him to assume flesh from a female. Hence, in *De Agone Christiano* Augustine says, “Do not disdain yourselves, men: the Son of God assumed a man. Do not disdain yourselves, women: the Son of God was born of a woman.”

**Reply to objection 2:** In *Contra Faustum* Augustine replies as follows to Faustus, who made use of the objection in question here: “The Catholic Faith, which believes that Christ, the Son of God, was born of a virgin according to the flesh, clearly does not in any way believe that the same Son of God was shut up in the woman’s womb in such a way that (a) He did not exist outside of it, that (b) He deserted His governance of heaven and earth, or that (c) He withdrew from the Father. But you, Manicheans, with a heart that can ponder nothing but corporeal images, do not at all grasp these things.” For as he says in *Epistola ad Volusianum*, “This understanding of men thinks of nothing but bodies with powers, none of which can exist as a whole everywhere, since they must necessarily exist in different places because of their innumerable parts ... The nature of the soul is far different from that of the body ... How much more is this true of God, who is the creator of the soul and the body? He is able to exist everywhere as a whole and to be contained by no place. He is able to come without leaving the place where He was; He is able to leave without deserting the place He came from.”

**Reply to objection 3:** In the conception of a man from a woman there is nothing unclean insofar as it is a work of God; hence, Acts 10:15 says, “What God has created, you must not call common,” i.e., unclean.

However, there is here a sort of uncleanness stemming from sin, insofar as an individual is conceived with lust (*cum libidine*) in the intercourse between a man and a woman. But as was shown above (q. 28, a. 1), this did not exist in the case of Christ. But even if there were uncleanness there, the Word of God, who is in no way mutable, would not be defiled by it. Hence, in *Contra Quinque Haereses* Augustine says, “God, the creator of man, says: ‘What is it that troubles you about my birth? I was not conceived by lustful desire. I created the mother of whom I would be born. If the sun’s rays are able to dry up the filth of the drains without being able to be defiled by it, how much more can the splendor of eternal light cleanse whatever it shines upon without itself being able to be polluted?’”

## Article 5

### Was the flesh of Christ conceived out of the purest bloods of the Virgin?

It seems that the flesh of Christ was not conceived out of the purest bloods of the Virgin (*caro Christi non fuerit concepta ex purissimis sanguinibus virginis*):

**Objection 1:** The Collect [for the Feast of the Annunciation] says that God “wanted His Word to take on flesh from the Virgin.” But flesh differs from blood. Therefore, the body of Christ is not taken from the blood of the Virgin.

**Objection 2:** Just as the woman (*mulier*) was formed miraculously from the man, so the body of Christ was formed miraculously from the Virgin. But the woman is said to have been formed not from



the blood of the man, but instead from his flesh and bones—this according to Genesis 2:23 (“This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”). Therefore, it likewise seems that the body of Christ should have been formed not from the blood of the Virgin, but from her flesh and bones.

**Objection 3:** Christ’s body was of the same species as the bodies of other human beings. But the bodies of other human beings are formed not from the purest blood, but from the semen and the menstrual blood (*sed ex semine et sanguine menstruo*). Therefore, it seems that Christ’s body was likewise not conceived out of the purest bloods of the Virgin.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says, “From the Virgin’s chaste and purest bloods, the Son of God formed for Himself flesh animated by a rational soul.”

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 4), in the case of the conception of Christ, it was in accord with the condition of nature that He was born of a woman (*est natus ex femina*), but beyond the condition of nature that He was born of a virgin. Now as the Philosopher shows in *De Generatione Animalium*, the natural condition is such that in the generation of an animal the female supplies the *matter*, whereas the *active principle* in generation comes from the male (*ex parte autem maris sit activum principium in generatione*).

Now a female who conceives from a male is not a virgin. And so the *supernatural* condition of Christ’s generation involves the active principle in that generation having been a divine supernatural power, whereas what belongs to the *natural* mode of Christ’s generation is that the matter from which His body is conceived conforms to the matter that other females contribute to the conception of an offspring. But according to the Philosopher in *De Generatione Animalium*, that matter is the woman’s blood (*est sanguis mulieris*)—not just any blood, but blood that has been put through a certain more ample filtering by the mother’s generative power (*sanguis perductus ad quandam ampliolem digestionem per virtutem generativam matris*) in order to be a matter apt for conception. And so the body of Christ was conceived out of this sort of matter.

**Reply to objection 1:** Since the Blessed Virgin was of the same nature as other women, it follows that she had flesh and bones of the same nature. But the flesh and bones in other women are actual parts of the body from which the whole of the body is constituted, and so they cannot be subtracted without the corruption or diminution of the body. However, it was fitting for Christ, who had come to restore what had been corrupted, not to inflict any corruption or diminution on the [bodily] integrity of His mother. And so it was fitting for Christ’s body to be formed not out of the flesh and bones of the Virgin, but out of her blood, which, as *De Generatione Animalium* explains, is not yet an actual [bodily] part but is a whole in potentiality. And so He is said to have taken flesh from the Virgin, not in the sense that the matter of His body was [her] actual flesh, but in the sense that it was [her] blood, which is flesh in potentiality.

**Reply to objection 2:** As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 92, a. 3), since Adam was, as it were, a certain principle of human nature, he contained within his body some flesh and bones which did not belong to his personal wholeness, but which he had solely insofar as he was a principle of human nature. And the woman (*mulier*) was formed out of this flesh and bones, without any loss to the man. But there was no such stuff in the body of the Virgin out of which Christ’s body could have been formed without the corruption of His mother’s body.

**Reply to objection 3:** A woman’s seed (*semen feminae*) is not apt for generation, but is something incomplete (*aliquid imperfectum*) in the genus of seeds that could not be brought to perfect seminal completion (*ad perfectum seminis complementum*) because of the imperfection of the female power. And so, as the Philosopher asserts in *De Generatione Animalium*, such a seed is not necessarily required for conception. And so it did not exist in Christ’s conception, especially because, even though it is incomplete in the genus of seeds, it is nonetheless emitted with a certain degree of concupiscence, just like the male seed is. But concupiscence could have had no place in the virginal conception in question.

And this is why Damascene says that Christ's body was not seminally conceived.

Now menstrual blood, which women emit every month, has a certain natural impurity of corruption, as do other overflows, which nature does not need but instead expels. But what is conceived is not formed from the sort of menstrual blood which has corruption and which nature repudiates; rather, this is a certain purging of the pure blood which is being prepared for conception by a sort of filtering and which is, as it were, purer and more perfect than other blood. Still, this purer blood has the impurity of lust in the conception of other human beings, insofar as from the very intercourse of male and female such blood is attracted to the right place for conception. By contrast, this did not occur in the case of the conception of Christ, since by the operation of the Holy Spirit the pure blood in the womb of the Virgin came together and was formed into the offspring. And this is why Christ's body is said to have been formed out of the most chaste and most pure bloods of the Virgin.

### Article 6

#### Did Christ's body exist in Adam and His other fathers as designated [matter]?

It seems that Christ's body existed in Adam and His other fathers as designated [matter] (*corpus Christi fuerit secundum aliquid signatum in Adam et in aliis patribus*):

**Objection 1:** In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 10 Augustine says that Christ's flesh existed in Adam and Abraham "as a corpulent substance" (*secundum corpulentem substantiam*). But a corpulent substance involves something designated. Therefore, Christ's flesh existed in Adam and in Abraham and in His other fathers as something designated.

**Objection 2:** Romans 1:3 says, "He was made from the seed of David according to the flesh." But the seed of David was something designated in him. Therefore, Christ existed in David as something designated, and for the same reason He existed in His other fathers as something designated.

**Objection 3:** Christ has an affinity to the human race insofar as He assumed flesh from the human race. But if that flesh did not exist in Adam as something designated, then He seems to have an affinity not to the human race, which is derived from Adam, but to other things from which His flesh is assumed. Therefore, it seems that Christ's flesh existed in Adam and the other fathers as something designated.

**But contrary to this:** In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 10 Augustine explains that other human beings existed in Adam in the same way that Christ existed in Adam. However, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 119, a. 1), the other human beings existed in Adam not through any designated matter, but only with respect to their origin (*non fuerunt in Adam et Abraham secundum aliquam materiam signatam, sed solum secundum originem*). Therefore, neither did Christ exist in Adam and Abraham through any designated [matter].

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 5, a. 1), the matter of Christ's body was not the flesh and bone of the Blessed Virgin or anything that was an actual part of her body; instead, it was her blood, which is flesh in potentiality. On the other hand, whatever was received in the Blessed Virgin from her parents was an actual part of the Blessed Virgin. Hence, what was received in the Blessed Virgin from her parents is not the matter of Christ's body. And so one must reply that Christ's body did not exist in Adam and the other fathers as something designated, in the sense, namely, that some part of Adam's body, or the body of some other father, could be designated determinately in such a way that one would say that Christ's body will be formed from *this* matter. Instead, Christ's body existed there with respect to its origin, as did the flesh of other human beings. For Christ's body had a relation to Adam and the other fathers by the mediation of His mother. Hence, Christ's body existed in the fathers in no way other than did His mother's body, which did not exist in the fathers through designated matter—in the same

way that, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 119, a. 1), the bodies of other human beings do not exist in their fathers through designated matter.

**Reply to objection 1:** When it is claimed that Christ was “a corpulent substance” in Adam, this should be taken to mean not that Christ’s body in Adam was a certain corpulent body, but that the corpulent substance of Christ’s body, i.e., the matter which He took from the Virgin, was in Adam as in an active principle and not as in a material principle. For, more specifically, through the generative power of Adam and of the others who descended from Adam all the way down to the Blessed Virgin, the matter in question was prepared in the right way for the conception of Christ’s body. However, it is not the case that this matter was formed into Christ’s body by the power of semen derived from Adam. And so Christ is said to have existed in Adam *by way of origin with respect to corpulent substance*, but not *by way of origin with respect to seminal nature*.

**Reply to objection 2:** Even though Christ’s body did not exist in Adam and His other fathers with respect to seminal nature, nonetheless, the Blessed Virgin’s body, which was conceived from male semen, *did* exist in Adam and her other fathers with respect to seminal nature. And so, by the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, Christ is said to exist according to the flesh from the seed of David by way of origin (*per modum originis*).

**Reply to objection 3:** Christ has an affinity to the human race by reason of a similarity of nature. But a similarity of nature has to do not with *remote matter*, but with *proximate matter* and with an *active principle* that generates for itself something similar in species.

So, then, Christ’s affinity to the human race is sufficiently preserved by the fact that Christ’s body was formed from the Virgin’s bloods, which were derived by way of origin from Adam and the other fathers. And just where the matter of these bloods was taken from is irrelevant to this affinity—in the same way that, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 119, a. 2), it is irrelevant in the generation of other human beings.

## Article 7

### Was the flesh of Christ in His ancient fathers infected by sin?

It seems that the flesh of Christ in His ancient fathers was not infected by sin (*caro Christi in antiquis patribus peccato infecta non fuerit*):

**Objection 1:** Wisdom 7:25 says that “nothing defiled enters into” the Wisdom of God. But, as 1 Corinthians 1:24 says, Christ is “the Wisdom of God.” Therefore, Christ’s flesh was never infected by sin.

**Objection 2:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 Damascene says that Christ “assumed the beginnings of our nature (*primitias nostrae naturae*).” But in its first state human flesh was not infected by sin. Therefore, Christ’s flesh was not infected either in Adam or in the other fathers.

**Objection 3:** In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 10 Augustine says, “Human nature always had, along with the wound, the medicine for the wound.” But what is infected cannot itself be the medicine for the wound; instead, it itself needs the medicine. Therefore, it was always the case that there was something in human nature which was not infected and from which Christ’s body was later formed.

**But contrary to this:** Christ’s body is related to Adam and the other fathers only by the mediation of the body of the Blessed Virgin, from who He took His flesh. But as was explained above (q. 14, a. 3), the Blessed Virgin’s body was as a whole conceived in original sin. And so, too, insofar as it existed in the fathers, it was damaged by sin. Therefore, insofar as Christ’s flesh existed in His fathers, it was damaged by sin.

**I respond:** When we claim that Christ, or Christ’s flesh, existed in Adam and in the other fathers, we are comparing Him, or His flesh, to Adam and to the other fathers. Now it is clear that the situation of the fathers was different from the situation of Christ, since the fathers were subject to sin, whereas Christ was altogether immune from sin. Therefore, there are two ways in which one can go wrong in making this comparison:

First, by attributing to Christ, or to His flesh, the condition that existed in the fathers—for instance, if we were to claim that Christ sinned in Adam because He existed in him in some way. This is false, because it is not the case that in the manner in which Christ existed in Adam, Adam’s sin belonged to Him. For as was made clear above (a. 1, ad 2 and a. 6, ad 1 and q. 15, a. 1, ad 2), Christ was not derived from Adam either in accord with the law of concupiscence or with respect to seminal nature (*non derivatur ab eo secundum concupiscentiae legem sive secundum rationem seminalem*).

Second, it is possible to go wrong by attributing the condition of Christ, or of His flesh, to something that was actual in the fathers, with the result that, as some have claimed, because Christ’s flesh, insofar as it existed in Christ, was not damaged by sin, so, too, in Adam and the others there was some part of their body which was not damaged by sin and from which Christ’s body was afterwards formed. This cannot be the case:

First, because, as has already been explained above (a. 6), Christ’s flesh did not exist in Adam and the other fathers as some designated [matter] that could be distinguished from the rest of their flesh as the pure from the impure.

Second, because, since human flesh is infected by sin by being conceived through concupiscence, it follows that just as all of the flesh of a given human being is conceived through concupiscence, so, too, all of the flesh is infected by sin.

And so one should respond that all of the flesh of the ancient fathers was damaged by sin and that there was no part which was immune from sin and from which Christ’s body would later be formed.

**Reply to objection 1:** Christ assumed the flesh of the human race clean of any infection by sin and not infected by sin. And so nothing defiled entered into the Wisdom of God.

**Reply to objection 2:** Christ is said to have assumed “the beginnings of our nature” with respect to a likeness of condition, since He assumed flesh that was not infected by sin, just as the flesh of man had been before sin. However, this does not imply a continuity of purity in the sense that the particular flesh of a mere human being was preserved immune from sin down to the time of the formation of Christ’s body.

**Reply to objection 3:** In human nature before Christ there was a wound in actuality, i.e., the infection of original sin. However, the medicine for the wound existed there not in actuality, but only with respect to the power of origin, in the sense that the flesh of Christ was going to be propagated from those fathers.

## Article 8

### Was Christ tithed in the loins of Abraham?

It seems that Christ was tithed in the loins of Abraham (*Christus fuerit in lumbis Abrahae decimatus*):

**Objection 1:** In Hebrews 7:9-10 the Apostle says, “Levi”—the great-grandson of Abraham—“was tithed in Abraham,” because when Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedech, “Levi was still in his loins.” Similarly, Christ existed in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave those tithes. Therefore, Christ Himself was likewise tithed in Abraham.

**Objection 2:** Christ was from the seed of Abraham according to the flesh that He received from His mother. But His mother was tithed in Abraham. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, Christ was, too.

**Objection 3:** As Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 10, “That which needed curing was tithed in Abraham.” But all flesh that had been damaged by sin needed curing. Therefore, since, as has been explained (a. 7), Christ’s flesh was damaged by sin, it seems that Christ’s flesh was tithed in Abraham.

**Objection 4:** [An affirmative response to the question] does not seem in any way to detract from Christ’s dignity (*hoc non videtur aliquo modo derogare dignitati Christi*). For supposing that the father of the pope gives tithes to some priest, there is nothing to prevent his son, the pope, from being greater than the simple priest. Therefore, even if Christ is said to be tithed when Abraham gives tithes to Melchisedech, it is not thereby ruled out that Christ is greater than Melchisedech.

**But contrary to this:** In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 10 Augustine says, “Christ was not tithed there”—that is, in Abraham—“since His flesh drew [from Abraham] not the raging heat of the wound, but the matter of the healing medicine.”

**I respond:** Given the Apostle’s intention [in Hebrews 7:6], one has to respond that Christ was not tithed in the loins of Abraham. For the Apostle is proving that the priesthood according to the order of Melchisedech is greater than the Levitical priesthood by appealing to the fact that Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedech while Levi, to whom the priesthood under the Law pertained, still existed in Abraham’s loins. But if Christ had also been tithed in Abraham, then His priesthood would not be according to the order of Melchisedech, but instead would be less than the priesthood of Melchisedech. And so one should respond that Christ was not tithed in the loins of Abraham in the way that Levi was.

For since one who gives tithes retains nine parts for himself and contributes to the other the tenth part, which is a sign of perfection, insofar as it is in some sense the terminus of all the numbers that proceed up to ten, it follows that he who gives tithes professes himself to be imperfect and attributes perfection to the other. Now the imperfection of the human race is due to sin, which requires perfection in the one who cures sin. But it belongs to Christ alone to cure sin, since He is “the lamb who takes away the sin of the world,” as John 1:29 says. But as the Apostle shows in Hebrews 7, Melchisedech bore the figure of Christ. Therefore, by the fact that Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedech, he prefigured that he, as conceived in sin, along with all who were going to descend from him, required the cure that comes through Christ by reason of their having contracted original sin. But Isaac and Jacob and Levi, and all the others, existed in Abraham in such a way that they were derived from him not only with respect to their corpulent substance but also with respect to seminal nature, through which original sin is contracted. And so all of them were tithed in Abraham, i.e., prefigured as needing the cure that comes through Christ. By contrast, Christ alone existed in Abraham in such a way that He was derived from him not with respect to seminal nature, but [only] with respect to His corpulent substance. And so He did not exist in Abraham as someone in need of a cure, but instead existed in him as the medicine for the wound. And so Christ was not tithed in the loins of Abraham.

**Reply to objection 1:** From this the reply to the first objection is clear.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, she existed in Abraham as one in need of a cure. And she was tithed there, as descending from Abraham with respect to seminal nature. But as has been explained, it was not this way with Christ’s body.

**Reply to objection 3:** Christ’s flesh is said to have existed in His ancient fathers as damaged by sin with respect to the quality that His flesh had *in the parents themselves*, who were tithed, but not with respect to the quality that His flesh has *insofar as it is actual in Christ*, who was not tithed.

**Reply to objection 4:** The Levitical priesthood was passed on according to carnal origin (*secundum carnis originem derivabatur*). Hence, it existed no less in Abraham than in Levi. Hence, by the fact that Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedech as someone greater, the priesthood of Melchisedech,

insofar as it bears the figure of Christ, is shown to be greater than the Levitical priesthood. By contrast, the priesthood of Christ follows spiritual grace and not carnal origin. And so it can be the case that the father gave tithes to some priest as a lesser individual to a greater individual, and yet his son, if he is pope, is greater than that priest—not because of his carnal origin but because of the spiritual grace that he has from Christ.