

### THIRD PART, QUESTION 31

#### Of the Matter From Which the Saviour's Body Was Conceived

(In Eight Articles)

We have now to consider the Saviour's conception. First, as to the matter from which His body was conceived; secondly, as to the author of His conception; thirdly, as to the manner and order of His conception.

Concerning the first there are eight points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether the flesh of Christ was derived from Adam?
- (2) Whether it was derived from David?
- (3) Of the genealogy of Christ which is given in the Gospels;
- (4) Whether it was fitting for Christ to be born of a woman?
- (5) Whether His body was formed from the purest blood of the Virgin?
- (6) Whether the flesh of Christ was in the patriarchs as to something signate?
- (7) Whether the flesh of Christ in the patriarchs was subject to sin?
- (8) Whether Christ paid tithes in the loins of Abraham?

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#### Whether the flesh of Christ was derived from Adam?

IIIa q. 31 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ's flesh was not derived from Adam. For the Apostle says (1 Cor. 15:47): "The first man was of the earth, earthly: the second man, from heaven, heavenly." Now, the first man is Adam: and the second man is Christ. Therefore Christ is not derived from Adam, but has an origin distinct from him.

**Objection 2.** Further, the conception of Christ should have been most miraculous. But it is a greater miracle to form man's body from the slime of the earth, than from human matter derived from Adam. It seems therefore unfitting that Christ should take flesh from Adam. Therefore the body of Christ should not have been formed from the mass of the human race derived from Adam, but of some other matter.

**Objection 3.** Further, by "one man sin entered into this world," i.e. by Adam, because in him all nations sinned originally, as is clear from Rom. 5:12. But if Christ's body was derived from Adam, He would have been in Adam originally when he sinned: therefore he would have contracted original sin; which is unbecoming in His purity. Therefore the body of Christ was not formed of matter derived from Adam.

**On the contrary,** The Apostle says (Heb. 2:16): "Nowhere doth He"—that is, the Son of God—"take hold of the angels: but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold." But the seed of Abraham was derived from Adam. Therefore Christ's body was formed of matter derived from Adam.

**I answer that,** Christ assumed human nature in order to cleanse it of corruption. But human nature did not need to be cleansed save in as far as it was soiled in its tainted origin

whereby it was descended from Adam. Therefore it was becoming that He should assume flesh of matter derived from Adam, that the nature itself might be healed by the assumption.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The second man, i.e. Christ, is said to be of heaven, not indeed as to the matter from which His body was formed, but either as to the virtue whereby it was formed; or even as to His very Godhead. But as to matter, Christ's body was earthly, as Adam's body was.

**Reply to Objection 2.** As stated above (q. 29, a. 1, ad 2) the mystery of Christ's Incarnation is miraculous, not as ordained to strengthen faith, but as an article of faith. And therefore in the mystery of the Incarnation we do not seek that which is most miraculous, as in those miracles that are wrought for the confirmation of faith' but what is most becoming to Divine wisdom, and most expedient to the salvation of man, since this is what we seek in all matters of faith.

It may also be said that in the mystery of the Incarnation the miracle is not only in reference to the matter of the conception, but rather in respect of the manner of the conception and birth; inasmuch as a virgin conceived and gave birth to God.

**Reply to Objection 3.** As stated above (q. 15, a. 1, ad 2), Christ's body was in Adam in respect of a bodily substance—that is to say, that the corporeal matter of Christ's body was derived from Adam: but it was not there by reason of seminal virtue, because it was not conceived from the seed of man. Thus it did not contract original sin, as others who are descended from Adam by man's seed.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ did not take flesh of the seed of David. For Matthew, in tracing the genealogy of Christ, brings it down to Joseph. But Joseph was not Christ's father, as shown above (q. 28, a. 1, ad 1,2). Therefore it seems that Christ was not descended from David.

**Objection 2.** Further, Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, as related Ex. 6. Now Mary the Mother of Christ is called the cousin of Elizabeth, who was a daughter of Aaron, as is clear from Lk. 1:5,36. Therefore, since David was of the tribe of Juda, as is shown Mat. 1, it seems that Christ was not descended from David.

**Objection 3.** Further, it is written of Jechonias (Jer. 22:30): "Write this man barren...for there shall not be a man of his seed that shall sit upon the throne of David." Whereas of Christ it is written (Is. 9:7): "He shall sit upon the throne of David." Therefore Christ was not of the seed of Jechonias: nor, consequently, of the family of David, since Matthew traces the genealogy from David through Jechonias.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Rom. 1:3): "Who was made to him of the seed of David according to the flesh."

**Answer that,** Christ is said to have been the son especially of two of the patriarchs, Abraham and David, as is clear from Mat. 1:1. There are many reasons for this. First to these especially was the promise made concerning Christ. For it was said to Abraham (Gn. 22:18): "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed": which words the Apostle expounds of Christ (Gal. 3:16): "To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed. He saith not, 'And to his seeds' as of many; but as of one, 'And to thy seed,' which is Christ." And to David it was said (Ps. 131:11): "Of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne." Wherefore the Jewish people, receiving Him with kingly honor, said (Mat. 21:9): "Hosanna to the Son of David."

A second reason is because Christ was to be king, prophet, and priest. Now Abraham was a priest; which is clear from the Lord saying unto him (Gn. 15:9): "Take thee [Vulg.: 'Me'] a cow of three years old," etc. He was also a prophet, according to Gn. 20:7: "He is a prophet; and he shall pray for thee." Lastly David was both king and prophet.

A third reason is because circumcision had its beginning in Abraham: while in David God's election was most clearly made manifest, according to 1 Kings 13:14: "The Lord hath sought Him a man according to His own heart." And consequently Christ is called in a most special way the Son of both, in order to show that He came for the salvation both of the circumcised and of the elect among the Gentiles.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Faustus the Manichean argued thus, in the desire to prove that Christ is not the Son of David, because He was not conceived of Joseph, in whom Matthew's genealogy terminates. Augustine answered this argument thus (Contra Faust. xxii): "Since the same evangelist affirms that Joseph was Mary's husband and that Christ's mother was a virgin, and that Christ was of the seed of Abraham, what must we believe, but that Mary was not a stranger to the family of David: and that it is not without reason that she was called the wife of Joseph, by reason of the close alliance of their hearts, although not mingled in the flesh; and that the genealogy is traced down to Joseph rather than to her by reason of the dignity of the husband? So therefore we believe that Mary was also of the family of David: because we believe the Scriptures, which assert both that Christ was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and that Mary was His Mother, not by sexual intercourse but retaining her virginity." For as Jerome says on Mat. 1:18: "Joseph and Mary were of the same tribe: wherefore he was bound by law to marry her as she was his kinswoman. Hence it was that they were enrolled together at Bethlehem, as being descended from the same stock."

**Reply to Objection 2.** Gregory of Nazianzum answers this objection by saying that it happened by God's will, that the royal family was united to the priestly race, so that Christ, who is both king and priest, should be born of both according to the flesh. Wherefore Aaron, who was the first priest according to the Law, married a wife of the tribe of Juda, Elizabeth, daughter of Aminadab. It is therefore possible that Elizabeth's father married a wife of the family of David, through whom the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was of the family of David, would be a cousin of Elizabeth. or conversely, and with greater likelihood, that the Blessed Mary's father, who was of the family of David, married a wife of the family of Aaron.

Again, it may be said with Augustine (Contra Faust. xxii) that if Joachim, Mary's father, was of the family of Aaron (as the heretic Faustus pretended to prove from certain apocryphal writings), then we must believe that Joachim's mother, or else his wife, was of the family of David, so long as we say that Mary was in some way descended from David.

**Reply to Objection 3.** As Ambrose says on Lk. 3:25, this prophetic passage does not deny that a posterity will be born of the seed of Jechonias. And so Christ is of his seed. Neither is the fact that Christ reigned contrary to prophecy, for He did not reign with worldly honor; since He declared: "My kingdom is not of this world."

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ's genealogy is not suitably traced by the Evangelists. For it is written (Is. 53:8): "Who shall declare His generation?" Therefore Christ's genealogy should not have been set down.

**Objection 2.** Further, one man cannot possibly have two fathers. But Matthew says that "Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary": whereas Luke says that Joseph was the son of Heli. Therefore they contradict one another.

**Objection 3.** Further, there seem to be divergencies between them on several points. For Matthew, at the commencement of his book, beginning from Abraham and coming down to Joseph, enumerates forty-two generations. Whereas Luke sets down Christ's genealogy after His Baptism, and beginning from Christ traces the series of generations back to God, counting in all seventy-seven generations, the first and last included. It seems therefore that their accounts of Christ's genealogy do not agree.

**Objection 4.** Further, we read (4 Kings 8:24) that Joram begot Ochozias, who was succeeded by his son Joas: who was succeeded by his son Amasius: after whom reigned his son Azarias, called Ozias; who was succeeded by his son Joathan. But Matthew says that Joram begot Ozias. Therefore it seems that his account of Christ's genealogy is unsuitable, since he omits three kings in the middle thereof.

**Objection 5.** Further, all those who are mentioned in Christ's genealogy had both a father and a mother, and many of them had brothers also. Now in Christ's genealogy Matthew mentions only three mothers—namely, Tamar, Ruth, and the wife of Urias. He also mentions the brothers of Judas and Jechonias, and also Phares and Zara. But Luke mentions none of these. Therefore the evangelists seem to have described the genealogy of Christ in an unsuitable manner.

**On the contrary,** The authority of Scripture suffices.

**I answer that,** As is written (2 Tim. 3:16), "All Holy Scripture is inspired of God [Vulg.: 'All scripture inspired of God is profitable']", etc. Now what is done by God is done in perfect order, according to Rom. 13:1: "Those that are of God are ordained [Vulg.: 'Those that are, are ordained of God']". Therefore Christ's genealogy is set down by the evangelists in a suitable order.

**Reply to Objection 1.** As Jerome says on Mat. 1, Isaias speaks of the generation of Christ's Godhead. Whereas Matthew relates the generation of Christ in His humanity; not indeed by explaining the manner of the Incarnation, which is also unspeakable; but by enumerating Christ's forefathers from whom He was descended according to the flesh.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Various answers have been made by certain writers to this objection which was raised by Julian the Apostate; for some, as Gregory of Nazianzum, say that the people mentioned by the two evangelists are the same, but under different names, as though they each had two.

But this will not stand: because Matthew mentions one of David's sons—namely, Solomon; whereas Luke mentions another—namely, Nathan, who according to the history of the kings (2 Kings 5:14) were clearly brothers.

Wherefore others said that Matthew gave the true genealogy of Christ: while Luke gave the supposititious genealogy; hence he began: "Being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph." For among the Jews there were some who believed that, on account of the crimes of the kings of Juda, Christ would be born of the family of David, not through the kings, but through some other line of private individuals.

Others again have supposed that Matthew gave the forefathers according to the flesh: whereas Luke gave these according to the spirit, that is, righteous men, who are called (Christ's) forefathers by likeness of virtue.

But an answer is given in the Qq. Vet. et Nov. Test.<sup>\*</sup> to the effect that we are not to understand that Joseph is said by Luke to be the son of Heli: but that at the time of Christ, Heli and Joseph were differently descended from David. Hence Christ is said to have been supposed to be the son of Joseph, and also to have been the son of Heli as though (the Evangelist) were to say that Christ, from the fact that He was the son of Joseph, could be called the son of Heli and of all those who were descended from David; as the Apostle says (Rom. 9:5): "Of whom" (viz. the Jews) "is Christ according to the flesh."

Augustine again gives three solutions (De Qq. Evang. ii), saying: "There are three motives by one or other of which the evangelist was guided. For either one evangelist mentions Joseph's father of whom he was begotten; whilst the other gives either his maternal grandfather or some other of his later forefathers; or one was Joseph's natural father: the other is father by adoption. Or, according to the Jewish custom, one of those having died without children, a near relation of his married his wife, the son born of the latter union being reckoned as the son of the former": which is a kind of legal adoption, as Augustine himself says (De Consensu Evang. ii, Cf. Retract. ii).

This last motive is the truest: Jerome also gives it commenting on Mat. 1:16; and Eusebius of Caesarea in his Church history (I, vii), says that it is given by Africanus the historian. For these writers say that Mathan and Melchi, at different times, each begot a son of one and the same wife, named Estha. For Mathan, who traced his descent through Solomon, had married her first, and died, leaving one son, whose name was Jacob: and after his death, as the law did not forbid his widow to remarry, Melchi, who traced his descent through Mathan, being of the same tribe though not of the same family as Mathan, married his widow, who bore him a son, called Heli; so that Jacob and Heli were uterine brothers born to different fathers. Now one of these, Jacob, on his brother Heli dying without issue, married the latter's widow, according to the prescription of the law, of whom he had a son, Joseph, who by nature was

<sup>\*</sup> Part i, qu. lvi; part 2, qu. vi.

his own son, but by law was accounted the son of Heli. Wherefore Matthew says "Jacob begot Joseph": whereas Luke, who was giving the legal genealogy, speaks of no one as begetting.

And although Damascene (*De Fide Orth.* iv) says that the Blessed Virgin Mary was connected with Joseph in as far as Heli was accounted as his father, for he says that she was descended from Melchi: yet must we also believe that she was in some way descended from Solomon through those patriarchs enumerated by Matthew, who is said to have set down Christ's genealogy according to the flesh; and all the more since Ambrose states that Christ was of the seed of Jechonias.

**Reply to Objection 3.** According to Augustine (*De Consensu Evang.* ii) "Matthew purposed to delineate the royal personality of Christ; Luke the priestly personality: so that in Matthew's genealogy is signified the assumption of our sins by our Lord Jesus Christ": inasmuch as by his carnal origin "He assumed 'the likeness of sinful flesh.' But in Luke's genealogy the washing away of our sins is signified," which is effected by Christ's sacrifice. "For which reason Matthew traces the generations downwards, Luke upwards." For the same reason too "Matthew descends from David through Solomon, in whose mother David sinned; whereas Luke ascends to David through Nathan, through whose namesake, the prophet, God expiated his sin." And hence it is also that, because "Matthew wished to signify that Christ had condescended to our mortal nature, he set down the genealogy of Christ at the very outset of his Gospel, beginning with Abraham and descending to Joseph and the birth of Christ Himself. Luke, on the contrary, sets forth Christ's genealogy not at the outset, but after Christ's Baptism, and not in the descending but in the ascending order: as though giving prominence to the office of the priest in expiating our sins, to which John bore witness, saying: 'Behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world.' And in the ascending order, he passes Abraham and continues up to God, to whom we are reconciled by cleansing and expiating. With reason too he follows the origin of adoption; because by adoption we become children of God: whereas by carnal generation the Son of God became the Son of Man. Moreover he shows sufficiently that he does not say that Joseph was the son of Heli as though begotten by him, but because he was adopted by him, since he says that Adam was the son of God, inasmuch as he was created by God."

Again, the number forty pertains to the time of our present life: because of the four parts of the world in which we pass this mortal life under the rule of Christ. And forty is the product of four multiplied by ten: while ten is the sum of the numbers from one to four. The number ten may also refer to the decalogue; and the number four to the present life; or again to the four Gospels, according to which Christ reigns in us. And thus "Matthew, putting forward the royal personality of Christ, enumerates forty persons not counting Him" (cf. Augustine, *De Consensu Evang.* ii). But this is to be taken on the

supposition that it be the same Jechonias at the end of the second, and at the commencement of the third series of fourteen, as Augustine understands it. According to him this was done in order to signify "that under Jechonias there was a certain defection to strange nations during the Babylonian captivity; which also foreshadowed the fact that Christ would pass from the Jews to the Gentiles."

On the other hand, Jerome (on *Mat.* 1:12-15) says that there were two Joachims—that is, Jechonias, father and son: both of whom are mentioned in Christ's genealogy, so as to make clear the distinction of the generations, which the evangelist divides into three series of fourteen; which amounts in all to forty-two persons. Which number may also be applied to the Holy Church: for it is the product of six, which signifies the labor of the present life, and seven, which signifies the rest of the life to come: for six times seven are forty-two. The number fourteen, which is the sum of ten and four, can also be given the same signification as that given to the number forty, which is the product of the same numbers by multiplication.

But the number used by Luke in Christ's genealogy signifies the generality of sins. "For the number ten is shown in the ten precepts of the Law to be the number of righteousness. Now, to sin is to go beyond the restriction of the Law. And eleven is the number beyond ten." And seven signifies universality: because "universal time is involved in seven days." Now seven times eleven are seventy-seven: so that this number signifies the generality of sins which are taken away by Christ.

**Reply to Objection 4.** As Jerome says on *Mat.* 1:8,11: "Because Joram allied himself with the family of the most wicked Jezabel, therefore his memory is omitted down to the third generation, lest it should be inserted among the holy predecessors of the Nativity." Hence as Chrysostom\* says: "Just as great was the blessing conferred on Jehu, who wrought vengeance on the house of Achab and Jezabel, so also great was the curse on the house of Joram, through the wicked daughter of Achab and Jezabel, so that until the fourth generation his posterity is cut off from the number of kings, according to *Ex.* 20:5: I shall visit [Vulg.: 'Visiting'] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations."

It must also be observed that there were other kings who sinned and are mentioned in Christ's genealogy: but their impiety was not continuous. For, as it is stated in the book *De Qq. Vet. et Nov. Test.* qu. lxxxv: "Solomon through his father's merits is included in the series of kings; and Roboam...through the merits of Asa," who was son of his (Roboam's) son, Abiam. "But the impiety of those three† was continuous."

**Reply to Objection 5.** As Jerome says on *Mat.* 1:3: "None of the holy women are mentioned in the Saviour's genealogy, but only those whom Scripture censures, so that He who came for the sake of sinners, by being born of sinners, might blot out all sin." Thus Tamar is mentioned, who is censured for her sin with her father-in-law; Rahab who was a whore; Ruth who was

\* Cf. *Opus Imperf. in Matth.* Hom. i, falsely ascribed to Chrysostom. † i.e. Ochozias, Joas, and Amasias, of whom St. Augustine asks in this question lxxxv, why they were omitted by St. Matthew.

a foreigner; and Bethsabee, the wife of Urias, who was an adulteress. The last, however, is not mentioned by name, but is designated through her husband; both on account of his sin, for he was cognizant of the adultery and murder; and further in order that, by mentioning the husband by name, David's sin might be recalled. And because Luke purposes to delineate Christ as the expiator of our sins, he makes no mention of these women. But he does mention Juda's brethren, in order to show that they belong to God's people: whereas Ismael, the brother of Isaac, and Esau, Jacob's brother, were cut off from God's people, and for this reason are not mentioned in Christ's genealogy. An-

other motive was to show the emptiness of pride of birth: for many of Juda's brethren were born of hand-maidens, and yet all were patriarchs and heads of tribes. Phares and Zara are mentioned together, because, as Ambrose says on Lk. 3:23, "they are the type of the twofold life of man: one, according to the Law," signified by Zara; "the other by Faith," of which Phares is the type. The brethren of Jechonias are included, because they all reigned at various times: which was not the case with other kings: or, again, because they were alike in wickedness and misfortune.

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**Whether the matter of Christ's body should have been taken from a woman?**

IIIa q. 31 a. 4

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the matter of Christ's body should not have been taken from a woman. For the male sex is more noble than the female. But it was most suitable that Christ should assume that which is perfect in human nature. Therefore it seems that He should not have taken flesh from a woman but rather from man: just as Eve was formed from the rib of a man.

**Objection 2.** Further, whoever is conceived of a woman is shut up in her womb. But it ill becomes God, Who fills heaven and earth, as is written Jer. 23:24, to be shut up within the narrow limits of the womb. Therefore it seems that He should not have been conceived of a woman.

**Objection 3.** Further, those who are conceived of a woman contract a certain uncleanness: as it is written (Job 25:4): "Can man be justified compared with God? Or he that is born of a woman appear clean?" But it was unbecoming that any uncleanness should be in Christ: for He is the Wisdom of God, of whom it is written (Wis. 7:25) that "no defiled thing cometh into her." Therefore it does not seem right that He should have taken flesh from a woman.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Gal. 4:4): "God sent His Son, made of a woman."

**I answer that,** Although the Son of God could have taken flesh from whatever matter He willed, it was nevertheless most becoming that He should take flesh from a woman. First because in this way the entire human nature was ennobled. Hence Augustine says (QQ. lxxxiii, qu. 11): "It was suitable that man's liberation should be made manifest in both sexes. Consequently, since it behooved a man, being of the nobler sex, to assume, it was becoming that the liberation of the female sex should be manifested in that man being born of a woman."

Secondly, because thus the truth of the Incarnation is made evident. Wherefore Ambrose says (De Incarn. vi): "Thou shalt find in Christ many things both natural, and supernatural. In accordance with nature He was within the womb," viz. of a woman's body: "but it was above nature that a virgin should conceive and give birth: that thou mightest believe that He was God, who was renewing nature; and that He was man who, ac-

ording to nature, was being born of a man." And Augustine says (Ep. ad Volus. cxxxvii): "If Almighty God had created a man formed otherwise than in a mother's womb, and had suddenly produced him to sight...would He not have strengthened an erroneous opinion, and made it impossible for us to believe that He had become a true man? And whilst He is doing all things wondrously, would He have taken away that which He accomplished in mercy? But now, He, the mediator between God and man, has so shown Himself, that, uniting both natures in the unity of one Person, He has given a dignity to ordinary by extraordinary things, and tempered the extraordinary by the ordinary."

Thirdly, because in this fashion the begetting of man is accomplished in every variety of manner. For the first man was made from the "slime of the earth," without the concurrence of man or woman: Eve was made of man but not of woman: and other men are made from both man and woman. So that this fourth manner remained as it were proper to Christ, that He should be made of a woman without the concurrence of a man.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The male sex is more noble than the female, and for this reason He took human nature in the male sex. But lest the female sex should be despised, it was fitting that He should take flesh of a woman. Hence Augustine says (De Agone Christ. xi): "Men, despise not yourselves: the Son of God became a man: despise not yourselves, women; the Son of God was born of a woman."

**Reply to Objection 2.** Augustine thus (Contra Faust. xxiii) replies to Faustus, who urged this objection; "By no means," says he, "does the Catholic Faith, which believes that Christ the Son of God was born of a virgin, according to the flesh, suppose that the same Son of God was so shut up in His Mother's womb, as to cease to be elsewhere, as though He no longer continued to govern heaven and earth, and as though He had withdrawn Himself from the Father. But you, Manicheans, being of a mind that admits of nought but material images, are utterly unable to grasp these things." For, as he again says (Ep. ad Volus. cxxxvii), "it belongs to the sense of man to form conceptions only through tangible bodies, none

of which can be entire everywhere, because they must of necessity be diffused through their innumerable parts in various places...Far otherwise is the nature of the soul from that of the body: how much more the nature of God, the Creator of soul and body!...He is able to be entire everywhere, and to be contained in no place. He is able to come without moving from the place where He was; and to go without leaving the spot whence He came.”

**Reply to Objection 3.** There is no uncleanness in the conception of man from a woman, as far as this is the work of God: wherefore it is written (Acts 10:15): “That which God hath cleansed do not thou call common,” i.e. unclean. There is,

however, a certain uncleanness therein, resulting from sin, as far as lustful desire accompanies conception by sexual union. But this was not the case with Christ, as shown above (q. 28, a. 1). But if there were any uncleanness therein, the Word of God would not have been sullied thereby, for He is utterly unchangeable. Wherefore Augustine says (Contra Quinque Haereses v): “God saith, the Creator of man: What is it that troubles thee in My Birth? I was not conceived by lustful desire. I made Myself a mother of whom to be born. If the sun’s rays can dry up the filth in the drain, and yet not be defiled: much more can the Splendor of eternal light cleanse whatever It shines upon, but Itself cannot be sullied.”

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**Whether the flesh of Christ was conceived of the Virgin’s purest blood?**

IIIa q. 31 a. 5

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the flesh of Christ was not conceived of the Virgin’s purest blood: For it is said in the collect (Feast of the Annunciation) that God “willed that His Word should take flesh from a Virgin.” But flesh differs from blood. Therefore Christ’s body was not taken from the Virgin’s blood.

**Objection 2.** Further, as the woman was miraculously formed from the man, so Christ’s body was formed miraculously from the Virgin. But the woman is not said to have been formed from the man’s blood, but rather from his flesh and bones, according to Gn. 2:23: “This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” It seems therefore that neither should Christ’s body have been formed from the Virgin’s blood, but from her flesh and bones.

**Objection 3.** Further, Christ’s body was of the same species as other men’s bodies. But other men’s bodies are not formed from the purest blood but from the semen and the menstrual blood. Therefore it seems that neither was Christ’s body conceived of the purest blood of the Virgin.

**On the contrary,** Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii) that “the Son of God, from the Virgin’s purest blood, formed Himself flesh, animated with a rational soul.”

**I answer that,** As stated above (a. 4), in Christ’s conception His being born of a woman was in accordance with the laws of nature, but that He was born of a virgin was above the laws of nature. Now, such is the law of nature that in the generation of an animal the female supplies the matter, while the male is the active principle of generation; as the Philosopher proves (De Gener. Animal. i). But a woman who conceives of a man is not a virgin. And consequently it belongs to the supernatural mode of Christ’s generation, that the active principle of generation was the supernatural power of God: but it belongs to the natural mode of His generation, that the matter from which His body was conceived is similar to the matter which other women supply for the conception of their offspring. Now, this matter, according to the Philosopher (De Gener. Animal.), is the woman’s blood, not any of her blood, but brought to a more perfect stage of secretion by the mother’s

generative power, so as to be apt for conception. And therefore of such matter was Christ’s body conceived.

**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 as theirs. Now, flesh and bones in other women are actual parts of the body, the integrity of which results therefrom: and consequently they cannot be taken from the body without its being corrupted or diminished. But as Christ came to heal what was corrupt, it was not fitting that He should bring corruption or diminution to the integrity of His Mother. Therefore it was becoming that Christ’s body should be formed not from the flesh or bones of the Virgin, but from her blood, which as yet is not actually a part, but is potentially the whole, as stated in De Gener. Animal. i. Hence He is said to have taken flesh from the Virgin, not that the matter from which His body was formed was actual flesh, but blood, which is flesh potentially.

**Reply to Objection 2.** As stated in the Ia, q. 92, a. 3, ad 2, Adam, through being established as a kind of principle of human nature, had in his body a certain proportion of flesh and bone, which belonged to him, not as an integral part of his personality, but in regard to his state as a principle of human nature. And from this was the woman formed, without detriment to the man. But in the Virgin’s body there was nothing of this sort, from which Christ’s body could be formed without detriment to His Mother’s body.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Woman’s semen is not apt for generation, but is something imperfect in the seminal order, which, on account of the imperfection of the female power, it has not been possible to bring to complete seminal perfection. Consequently this semen is not the necessary matter of conception; as the Philosopher says (De Gener. Animal. i): wherefore there was none such in Christ’s conception: all the more since, though it is imperfect in the seminal order, a certain concupiscence accompanies its emission, as also that of the male semen: whereas in that virginal conception there could be no concupiscence. Wherefore Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii) that Christ’s body was not conceived “seminally.” But the men-

strual blood, the flow of which is subject to monthly periods, has a certain natural impurity of corruption: like other superfluities, which nature does not heed, and therefore expels. Of such menstrual blood infected with corruption and repudiated by nature, the conception is not formed; but from a certain secretion of the pure blood which by a process of elimination is prepared for conception, being, as it were, more pure and more perfect than the rest of the blood. Nevertheless, it

is tainted with the impurity of lust in the conception of other men: inasmuch as by sexual intercourse this blood is drawn to a place apt for conception. This, however, did not take place in Christ's conception: because this blood was brought together in the Virgin's womb and fashioned into a child by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Therefore is Christ's body said to be "formed of the most chaste and purest blood of the Virgin."

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**Whether Christ's body was in Adam and the other patriarchs, as to something signate?**

IIIa q. 31 a. 6

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ's body was in Adam and the patriarchs as to something signate. For Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. x) that the flesh of Christ was in Adam and Abraham "by way of a bodily substance." But bodily substance is something signate. Therefore Christ's flesh was in Adam, Abraham, and the other patriarchs, according to something signate.

**Objection 2.** Further, it is said (Rom. 1:3) that Christ "was made...of the seed of David according to the flesh." But the seed of David was something signate in him. Therefore Christ was in David, according to something signate, and for the same reason in the other patriarchs.

**Objection 3.** Further, the human race is Christ's kindred, inasmuch as He took flesh therefrom. But if that flesh were not something signate in Adam, the human race, which is descended from Adam, would seem to have no kindred with Christ: but rather with those other things from which the matter of His flesh was taken. Therefore it seems that Christ's flesh was in Adam and the other patriarchs according to something signate.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. x) that in whatever way Christ was in Adam and Abraham, other men were there also; but not conversely. But other men were not in Adam and Abraham by way of some signate matter, but only according to origin, as stated in the Ia, q. 119, a. 1, a. 2, ad 4. Therefore neither was Christ in Adam and Abraham according to something signate; and, for the same reason, neither was He in the other patriarchs.

**I answer that,** As stated above (a. 5, ad 1), the matter of Christ's body was not the flesh and bones of the Blessed Virgin, nor anything that was actually a part of her body, but her blood which was her flesh potentially. Now, whatever was in the Blessed Virgin, as received from her parents, was actually a part of her body. Consequently that which the Blessed Virgin received from her parents was not the matter of Christ's body. Therefore we must say that Christ's body was not in Adam and the other patriarchs according to something signate, in the sense that some part of Adam's or of anyone else's body could

be singled out and designated as the very matter from which Christ's body was to be formed: but it was there according to origin, just as was the flesh of other men. For Christ's body is related to Adam and the other patriarchs through the medium of His Mother's body. Consequently Christ's body was in the patriarchs, in no other way than was His Mother's body, which was not in the patriarchs according to signate matter: as neither were the bodies of other men, as stated in the Ia, q. 119, a. 1, a. 2, ad 4.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The expression "Christ was in Adam according to bodily substance," does not mean that Christ's body was a bodily substance in Adam: but that the bodily substance of Christ's body, i.e. the matter which He took from the Virgin, was in Adam as in its active principle, but not as in its material principle: in other words, by the generative power of Adam and his descendants down to the Blessed Virgin, this matter was prepared for Christ's conception. But this matter was not fashioned into Christ's body by the seminal power derived from Adam. Therefore Christ is said to have been in Adam by way of origin, according to bodily substance: but not according to seminal virtue.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Although Christ's body was not in Adam and the other patriarchs, according to seminal virtue, yet the Blessed Virgin's body was thus in them, through her being conceived from the seed of a man. For this reason, through the medium of the Blessed Virgin, Christ is said to be of the seed of David, according to the flesh, by way of origin.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Christ and the human race are kindred, through the likeness of species. Now, specific likeness results not from remote but from proximate matter, and from the active principle which begets its like in species. Thus, then, the kinship of Christ and the human race is sufficiently preserved by His body being formed from the Virgin's blood, derived in its origin from Adam and the other patriarchs. Nor is this kinship affected by the matter whence this blood is taken, as neither is it in the generation of other men, as stated in the Ia, q. 119, a. 2, ad 3.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ's flesh was not infected by sin in the patriarchs. For it is written (Wis. 7:25) that "no defiled thing cometh into" Divine Wisdom. But Christ is the Wisdom of God according to 1 Cor. 1:24. Therefore Christ's flesh was never defiled by sin.

**Objection 2.** Further, Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii) that Christ "assumed the first-fruits of our nature." But in the primitive state human flesh was not infected by sin. Therefore Christ's flesh was not infected either in Adam or in the other patriarchs.

**Objection 3.** Further, Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. x) that "human nature ever had, together with the wound, the balm with which to heal it." But that which is infected cannot heal a wound; rather does it need to be healed itself. Therefore in human nature there was ever something preserved from infection, from which afterwards Christ's body was formed.

**On the contrary,** Christ's body is not related to Adam and the other patriarchs, save through the medium of the Blessed Virgin's body, of whom He took flesh. But the body of the Blessed Virgin was wholly conceived in original sin, as stated above (q. 14, a. 3, ad 1), and thus, as far as it was in the patriarchs, it was subject to sin. Therefore the flesh of Christ, as far as it was in the patriarchs, was subject to sin.

**Answer that,** When we say that Christ or His flesh was in Adam and the other patriarchs, we compare Him, or His flesh, to Adam and the other patriarchs. Now, it is manifest that the condition of the patriarchs differed from that of Christ: for the patriarchs were subject to sin, whereas Christ was absolutely free from sin. Consequently a twofold error may occur on this point. First, by attributing to Christ, or to His flesh, that condition which was in the patriarchs; by saying, for instance, that Christ sinned in Adam, since after some fashion He was in him. But this is false; because Christ was not in Adam in such a way that Adam's sin belonged to Christ: forasmuch as He is not descended from him according to the law of concupis-

cence, or according to seminal virtue; as stated above (a. 1, ad 3, a. 6, ad 1; q. 15, a. 1, ad 2).

Secondly, error may occur by attributing the condition of Christ or of His flesh to that which was actually in the patriarchs: by saying, for instance, that, because Christ's flesh, as existing in Christ, was not subject to sin, therefore in Adam also and in the patriarchs there was some part of his body that was not subject to sin, and from which afterwards Christ's body was formed; as some indeed held. For this is quite impossible. First, because Christ's flesh was not in Adam and in the other patriarchs, according to something signate, distinguishable from the rest of his flesh, as pure from impure; as already stated (a. 6). Secondly, because since human flesh is infected by sin, through being conceived in lust, just as the entire flesh of a man is conceived through lust, so also is it entirely defiled by sin. Consequently we must say that the entire flesh of the patriarchs was subjected to sin, nor was there anything in them that was free from sin, and from which afterwards Christ's body could be formed.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Christ did not assume the flesh of the human race subject to sin, but cleansed from all infection of sin. Thus it is that "no defiled thing cometh into the Wisdom of God."

**Reply to Objection 2.** Christ is said to have assumed the first-fruits of our nature, as to the likeness of condition; forasmuch as He assumed flesh not infected by sin, like unto the flesh of man before sin. But this is not to be understood to imply a continuation of that primitive purity, as though the flesh of innocent man was preserved in its freedom from sin until the formation of Christ's body.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Before Christ, there was actually in human nature a wound, i.e. the infection of original sin. But the balm to heal the wound was not there actually, but only by a certain virtue of origin, forasmuch as from those patriarchs the flesh of Christ was to be propagated.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that Christ "paid tithes" in Abraham's loins. For the Apostle says (Heb. 7:6-9) that Levi, the great-grandson of Abraham, "paid tithes in Abraham," because, when the latter paid tithes to Melchisedech, "he was yet in his loins." In like manner Christ was in Abraham's loins when the latter paid tithes. Therefore Christ Himself also paid tithes in Abraham.

**Objection 2.** Further, Christ is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh which He received from His Mother. But His Mother paid tithes in Abraham. Therefore for a like reason did Christ.

**Objection 3.** Further, "in Abraham tithes was levied on that which needed healing," as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit.

x). But all flesh subject to sin needed healing. Since therefore Christ's flesh was the subject of sin, as stated above (a. 7), it seems that Christ's flesh paid tithes in Abraham.

**Objection 4.** Further, this does not seem to be at all derogatory to Christ's dignity. For the fact that the father of a bishop pays tithes to a priest does not hinder his son, the bishop, from being of higher rank than an ordinary priest. Consequently, although we may say that Christ paid tithes when Abraham paid them to Melchisedech, it does not follow that Christ was not greater than Melchisedech.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. x) that "Christ did not pay tithes there," i.e. in Abraham, "for His flesh derived from him, not the heat of the wound, but the matter

of the antidote.”

**I answer that,** It behooves us to say that the sense of the passage quoted from the Apostle is that Christ did not pay tithes in Abraham. For the Apostle proves that the priesthood according to the order of Melchisedech is greater than the Levitical priesthood, from the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedech, while Levi, from whom the legal priesthood was derived, was yet in his loins. Now, if Christ had also paid tithes in Abraham, His priesthood would not have been according to the order of Melchisedech, but of a lower order. Consequently we must say that Christ did not pay tithes in Abraham’s loins, as Levi did.

For since he who pays a tithes keeps nine parts to himself, and surrenders the tenth to another, inasmuch as the number ten is the sign of perfection, as being, in a sort, the terminus of all numbers which mount from one to ten, it follows that he who pays a tithes bears witness to his own imperfection and to the perfection of another. Now, to sin is due the imperfection of the human race, which needs to be perfected by Him who cleanses from sin. But to heal from sin belongs to Christ alone, for He is the “Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29), whose figure was Melchisedech, as the Apostle proves (Heb. 7). Therefore by giving tithes to Melchisedech, Abraham foreshadowed that he, as being conceived in sin, and all who were to be his descendants in contracting original sin, needed that healing which is through Christ. And Isaac, Jacob, and Levi, and all the others were in Abraham in such a way so as to be descended from him, not only as to bodily substance, but also as to seminal virtue, by which original sin is transmitted.

Consequently, they all paid tithes in Abraham, i.e. foreshadowed as needing to be healed by Christ. And Christ alone was in Abraham in such a manner as to descend from him, not by seminal virtue, but according to bodily substance. Therefore He was not in Abraham so as to need to be healed, but rather “as the balm with which the wound was to be healed.” Therefore He did not pay tithes in Abraham’s loins.

Thus the answer to the first objection is made manifest.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Because the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, she was in Abraham as needing to be healed. Therefore she paid tithes in him, as descending from him according to seminal virtue. But this is not true of Christ’s body, as stated above.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Christ’s flesh is said to have been subject to sin, according as it was in the patriarchs, by reason of the condition in which it was in His forefathers, who paid the tithes: but not by reason of its condition as actually in Christ, who did not pay the tithes.

**Reply to Objection 4.** The levitical priesthood was handed down through carnal origin: wherefore it was not less in Abraham than in Levi. Consequently, since Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedech as to one greater than he, it follows that the priesthood of Melchisedech, inasmuch as he was a figure of Christ, was greater than that of Levi. But the priesthood of Christ does not result from carnal origin, but from spiritual grace. Therefore it is possible that a father pay tithes to a priest, as the less to the greater, and yet his son, if he be a bishop, is greater than that priest, not through carnal origin, but through the spiritual grace which he has received from Christ.