

Summa of a Scotus Summa.

The following translations from Jerome of Montefortino's selection and arrangement of Scotus' writings are meant to make more readily and readably accessible the philosophical theology of the Subtle and Marian Doctor. The selections follow the pattern of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*. However, only the responses in the body of each article are translated here. Adding the objections and replies that are in Montefortino's original (again following the Thomistic pattern) would not only greatly extend the size of the translation but would also make the whole less accessible to interested readers. It would again put Scotus' positions back into the larger dialectical context whereas the desideratum here is to present those positions as simply and as straightforwardly as possible. One does, admittedly, in this way lose the completeness as well as some of the rigor and flavor of Scotus' own writing, but if one really wants Scotus as Scotus pure, one should not bother with Montefortino in the first place but go directly to the recently completed critical texts of Scotus' own writings. The present 'Summa of a Summa' (title borrowed, with appreciation, from Peter Kreeft) has a different purpose and a different utility.

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QUESTION TWENTY-SEVEN: OF THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Article 1: Whether the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, was sanctified before her birth from the womb

I answer that, it must be said that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before birth from the womb. The authority of the Church is altogether convincing on this; and that it involves no repugnance is made clear: for, [Oxon. 3 d 3 q.1 n.9] as far as Divine acceptance is concerned, grace is equivalent to original justice; so much so that original sin is not imputed to one who has grace, as is clear in Baptism or in Circumcision. In whatever instant, therefore, that that soul was in the womb of her mother, God could have given her equal or greater grace than was to be given in Baptism; therefore she would then have been sanctified. And also, in the first instant of her being, when original sin ought to have been present, if God had then given sanctifying grace, the stain of original sin would have been prevented. And if that stain is thought to be contracted and to overflow into the soul from infected flesh, God could equally have cleansed the flesh itself and afterwards have infused the soul. And if that soul had been for a single instant under original guilt, it is in no way unacceptable to understand that it was cleansed immediately after that instant; for if a natural agent [Oxon. *ib.* n.10] can begin to act in an instant, in such a way that in that instant there was a subject in a state of rest under the contrary property and in the immediately following time, supposing it was under the property of being cold, it was, through the action of the agent, under the property of being hot, much more could that come about through a supernatural agent. For in whatever instant a natural agent acts God can act; therefore in the time immediately following upon the instant in which the soul of the Blessed Virgin was under original guilt, he could infuse grace into it and destroy original guilt. But if she had been under guilt for some time, God could also, before she was born, bestow grace upon her, as he does with those already born and who receive the sacrament of Baptism.

Article 2. Whether she was sanctified before animation

I answer that, it must be said that although the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her animation, because the flesh, as it is not the subject of sin, so neither is it of sanctifying grace, she was nevertheless sanctified in her very animation, that is to say, in the same moment in which it was necessary, from the common law of the sons of Adam, that guilt be in her, such that there never was, nor did she contract, original sin. The very excellence of her Son, for the purpose of not derogating from which some hold the opposite opinion, is what shows this. For [Oxon. *ib.* n.4] it was fitting for the most perfect Mediator, such as Christ the Lord was, to have had the most perfect act of mediating with respect to some person of whom he was Mediator: but he is not conceived to have existed as the most perfect Mediator of God and of his Mother unless he had preserved her from falling into original guilt; therefore she was preserved from being infected with original guilt. *The minor is shown:* [Oxon. *ib.*] first by comparison to God to whom he reconciles: second by comparison to the evil from which he liberates: third by comparison to the

person for whom he reconciles. And *the first* in this way, by supposing that it was not impossible for original guilt to be prevented from being present, since it is not guilt, except contracted from another; and if that was possible, for no one did it become the Mediator to have done it than for his Mother. Therefore *the argument is as follows*: [Oxon. n.5] a mediator is not conceived to mediate most perfectly, or to placate someone for an offense that had to be contracted, unless he prevents the offense from being present and prevents anyone from being offended by it; for if he placates someone already offended, and sways him to remit guilt, he does not exercise the most perfect act of mediating or placating, as he would have done by preventing the offense; therefore Christ does not most perfectly reconcile or placate the Trinity for the guilt to be contracted by the sons of Adam, if he does not prevent the Trinity from being offended, on account of the inherent guilt, in some one among them. Since therefore Christ was the most perfect Mediator, it is necessary that he have altogether prevented someone from contracting original guilt: but it was not fitting that this be any other besides his most blessed Mother. -- The argument under *the second head*: [Oxon. *ib.* n.6] because Christ seems to be more immediately our Repairer from original sin than from actual sin; for the necessity of the Incarnation is commonly assigned from original sin: but he was to that extent the most perfect Mediator with respect to his Mother that he preserved her from every actual sin; therefore also from original sin; especially since this original sin is a greater punishment than the lack of the Divine vision; for sin is the greatest of punishments for an intellectual nature; therefore Christ, as the most perfect Mediator, merited to take away this most heavy penalty from his Most Blessed Mother, otherwise he would not have reconciled most perfectly nor would he have been the most perfect Mediator. -- The argument finally *from the third*. [Oxon. *ib.* n.7] A person who has been reconciled is not supremely obliged to his mediator unless he has from him the whole of the good which he can receive: but preservation from contracting guilt can be had through a mediator; therefore no person was supremely beholden to Christ as Mediator if he did not preserve anyone from original sin. (The minor was touched on also in article 1, and will be declared more clearly in the following articles.)

Article Two again

I answer that, the Most Blessed Virgin must be said to have been sanctified, not before her animation, but in the very instant of nature of her animation or of her conception, not from for the guilt which was present, but from the guilt which would have been present if grace, in that same instant, had not been infused into her. Nor does there appear to be any repugnance involved in this: for [Oxon. 3 d.3 q.1 n.9ff.], as was said in the preceding article, just as God could infuse the grace, by which original sin is destroyed, in subsequent instants, so he could do it also in any antecedent instant, and therefore also in the first, in which, that is to say, she was understood, on the part of her substance, to be in existence; and therefore since he has taught that he made the Mediator to be most perfect, we must attribute what is more honorific and more excellent to Mary: so [Oxon. 3 d 18 n.17] just as there is in the super-heavenly courts the humanity of Christ our Lord possessed, without any preceding merits, of supreme grace and glory, and just as there are many there who have never sinned with personal sin, and many who repented after their sins; so similarly there should be some person there who was not at any time guilty

of any sin, whether actual or original, and that is the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Intervening Article. Whether innocence is a more outstanding benefit from God than repentance

I answer that, [Oxon. *ib.*] it must be said that it is a simply greater divine benefit for innocence to be preserved than to grant repentance after commission of sin. *Proof:* because the state of innocence (insofar, that is, as it not only includes the sanctifying grace first granted, but as it also involves its additional consequences, as the gift of perseverance and the other helps, both intrinsic and extrinsic) absolutely and simply joins one more perfectly to the end, and even more perfectly contains, as concerns freedom from sin, the effect of penitential grace, than repentance itself; therefore it is a greater benefit from God. *Proof of the assumption:* because the gift of innocence frees from sins by preventing one from falling into them: repentance, however, frees after a fall: but it is better and more desirable not to fall into sins than after a fall to be freed from them. Hence God conferred a greater benefit on his Mother by preventing her from contracting original guilt and from committing any actual sin, than he conferred on Magdalene and the other Saints who at some time committed sins and were freed through repentance. She is therefore, from never having fallen into sin, an altogether singular glory and embellishment among the Blessed .

Article 3: Whether in virtue of this sanctification the tinder (fomes) of sin was entirely taken away from her

I answer that, it must be said that through sanctification the kindling was altogether taken away from the Blessed Virgin; for by ‘kindling’ [Oxon. 2 d.29 n.4] we understand a proneness in the sensitive appetite whereby it is borne immediately to its proper objects and desires to delight in them, and if it be pulled back therefrom by the rational appetite, it is not pulled back willingly and pleasingly, but unwillingly and with sadness; and from this, of course, arises a battle between the flesh and the spirit, and the greatest discord. In the state of innocence, however, there was peace and tranquility; but in the Blessed Virgin there was brought about through sanctification the same peace and tranquility; so much so that neither was her sensitive appetite borne to its proper objects beyond what was prescribed by her rational appetite, nor was this for her any cause of sadness; therefore all kindling of sin was taken away from her. *Declaration of the minor:* for just as, from the excellence of her Son, whereby he was the most perfect Mediator and Redeemer, it was fitting for her to have had the most special privilege of preservative redemption, so much so that she was not at all, as others are, redeemed after fall into original sin, but before she could be guilty of it; so, in the same manner, it was fitting for her to be so far removed from all sin that not even any the least inclination for it remained in her; for this equally has regard to the most noble act of the most perfect Mediator and Redeemer. -- Again, [Oxon. 3 d.3 q.1] in the other sons of Adam, who in him sinned, although original sin is destroyed in Baptism or in Circumcision, after the original stain, through the merits of the Mediator, whether as foreseen or as displayed, there nevertheless remains in them all the kindling of sin and the proneness to sin; because, of course, although he was their Repairer and Redeemer, he did not, however, with respect

to them, have the most noble act which it was necessary for him to have. Since, therefore, he had this act with respect to his Mother, as he took away from her actual and original sin, so also he took away the kindling and every proneness to sin.

Article 4: Whether the result of this sanctification was that she never sinned

I answer that, it must be said that the Blessed Virgin had it from sanctifying grace at the instant of her conception that she should never sin. Which fact indeed [Report. 3 d.3 q.1 n.1] Augustine expressed most clearly (*De Natura et Gratia*, ch.36) in saying: “When there is discussion of sins I wish to have about the Holy Virgin Mary, because of the honor of the Lord, altogether no question. For from this we know that more of grace was conferred on her for overcoming sin in every part, because she merited to conceive and bear him who it is established had no sin.” Therefore that the Blessed Virgin overcame sin in every part is to be attributed to her sanctification, which was so great that it admitted altogether no sin. -- *Next*, [Oxon. 2 d.23 n.7] that human nature, being of itself defectible, should not sin is from grace. On this supposition I argue as follows: Christ would not be the most perfect meritorious cause and the most perfect Mediator if he had not merited that there be given to some person, namely to his Mother, as much grace as was possible and fitting to exist in a pure creature: but he was in very truth such a meritorious cause; for [Oxon. 3 d.13 q.4 n.9] we ought to attribute every excellence to Christ the Lord; therefore he merited that God should give as much grace as befitted a pure creature, and from thence that that much grace was, as a matter of fact, given to his Mother, who was before all creatures most united to himself, since he assumed flesh from her flesh: but if she had at any time sinned, then in no wise had that fullness of grace been given to her that could, without incongruity, exist in a pure creature, because we could conceive some other greater grace, which would bring it about that the person sanctified by it should admit, and commit, no sin; the grace, therefore, that was conferred on the Blessed Virgin was of such a kind, and so great, that it prevented original sin and excluded altogether every actual sin. -- *Finally*, [Oxon. 3 d.19 n.6] Christ, through his passion, reconciled the human race, guilty of the sin of its first parent, to the Trinity accepting that passion; but he most perfectly reconciled no others except his Mother, nor was he their most perfect Repairer, because he permitted them all to be born as children of wrath, and did not prevent the actual sins of many of them; therefore [Oxon. 3 d.3 q.1 nn.4 to 7] he ought to have had the act of the most perfect Reconciler towards his Mother; from her, accordingly, he ought to have warded off all penalties impeding the most perfect reconciliation: but if he had permitted her at any time to fall into some sin, however minimal, he would not have freed her from all penalties and evils; therefore he would not have most perfectly reconciled her to the Trinity; for sin is a greater penalty for an intellectual nature than any other penalty, although it be not a sin, whatsoever; and consequently the blessed Virgin, as Mother of Christ, ought to have obtained it from her sanctification that she should never fall into any sin.

Article 5: Whether in virtue of this sanctification she received the fullness of grace

I answer that, it must be said that the Blessed Virgin, through sanctification of the sort she had, acquired fullness of the graces. If indeed [Oxon. 4 d.25 q.2 n.3; 2 d.19 n.5] her

sanctification was of such a sort and so great that no pure creature can be equaled to her in sanctity; then, in a more excellent way, which no sanctity of another creature reached, she was sanctified; therefore [Oxon. 4 d.4 q.6 n.3] her sanctification had a higher and more excellent mode, which it did not fit any other creature to have reached. But that higher mode carried before it fullness of the graces. For she acquired sanctity and fullness of the graces in the way and at the kind of level that the grace was that Christ her Son merited for her: but Christ [Oxon. 3 d.3 q.1 n.4] had towards his Mother the most excellent act of mediating and of meriting grace; for he not only merited that a guilt of hers, which did nowhere exist in her, should be destroyed, but in addition that it should not exist in her, which, that he should merit it also for the other Saints, was not conceded. A greater and a more ample grace therefore did he obtain for his Mother than for all the other Saints. For just as all the other Saints, apart from his Mother, were at some time under sin, so, for it to be that the Blessed Virgin was never under guilt, she was deemed worthy of a greater love from God, and hence was endowed with a greater sanctity, than all the Saints together; for they together had all been deprived at some time of grace, whether through their own or through an alien guilt; therefore together all were not always pleasing to God, nor always holy, and thence the single sanctity of the Blessed Virgin is far more excellent than the sanctity of all the rest. Therefore she had fullness of the graces, which could not be found in any other creature, since there was no other creature as loved and as dear to God.

Article 6: Whether it was proper to her to be thus sanctified

I answer that, [Oxon. 4 d.4 q.3 n.2] it must be said that being sanctified in the womb is proper in such a way to the Blessed Virgin that it was conceded to none of the Saints, and that it was not appropriate to be conceded to them, because she alone was the future Mother of God. For although it be that John the Baptist and Jeremiah had been sanctified in the womb, and indeed before they were born; nevertheless, neither of them was immune from the original stain, but as they were conceived children of Adam, so they sinned in him. They were cleansed, therefore, and reconciled to God, after having been his enemies, through the merits of the Mediator. But [Oxon. 3 d.3 q.1] the Blessed Virgin was so prevented by sanctifying grace that she was always daughter of God, and by far the most acceptable to him, because he had chosen her to be like this, and had in fact made her to be like this, and that is why we read that it was said by the Angel uniquely to her: “Hail full of grace,” *Luke* 1.

QUESTION TWENTY-EIGHT: OF THE VIRGINITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

Article 1: Whether the Mother of God was a Virgin in Conceiving

I answer that, [Oxon. *ib.* n.2] the fact that Blessed Mary was a Virgin in conceiving is something certain *de fide* as being express in the Scriptures, as has been just noted. Hence Damascene says (Bk.3, ch. 12), “We celebrate the God-bearer, the generatrix of God, the parent of God, as properly and truly a Holy Virgin.”

Article 2: Whether Christ's Mother was a Virgin in His Birth

I answer that, [Oxon. 4. d.49 q.16 n.4] it is to be held by most certain faith that Christ the Lord was born of the Virgin Mary, and thence it is that the Most Blessed Mother of our Savior was a Virgin in giving birth; for in the way that she could have been a Virgin and conceive a Son in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit supplying the concurrence of the higher cause which would naturally have been about to be cooperator; so in that way she could, with the preservation of the integrity of her most unimpaired Virginity, have brought forth her Son by the same supernatural power as that by which she had conceived him. Therefore the body of Christ, when it was exiting from its maternal womb, was at the same time with the parts of the other body of its Mother, and went through them; and for that reason the closures of her virginity, by divine power, remained intact, and that is why [Oxon. 3 d.4 q.1 n.1] the Angel said to Mary: “You will conceive in your womb and you will bring forth a son,” *Luke* 1, that is, that just as you will conceive a son without any tearing of your virginity, so you will bring him forth with your virginity intact. And certainly this was done most acceptably [Oxon. 4 d.30 q.2 nn.2, 3], because Christ did not suppose that faith in his origin had to be built on his Mother’s injuries. Therefore, just as he wished her to be betrothed to Joseph, lest he be said to be conceived in adultery, so he determined and wished [Oxon. 4 d.1 q.6 n.12] that her virginity be preserved for her in giving birth and that she not undergo thereby any diminution of her integrity, whence it is established that she had acquired fulness of graces and of supernatural gifts.

Article 3: Whether Christ’s Mother remained a Virgin after His Birth

I answer that, it must be said that in the way that Blessed Mary was a Virgin in conceiving and in giving birth to Christ the Lord, so she remained most unimpaired after having given birth; although the impure Helvidius most audaciously wished to assert that after giving birth to Christ she bore others from congress with Joseph her spouse; but that heretic, wicked and to be detested, can be refuted from the divine Scripture itself; for [Oxon. 4 d.30 q.2 n.4] the Blessed Virgin (as will appear in the *following article*) had issued a vow of chastity, as is insinuated in those words of Mary to Gabriel, *Luke* 1, “How will that be, since I do not know man?” that is, how can I betroth myself to Joseph, I who had proposed and vowed that I would keep my virginity perpetually? If, with this in place, she contracted marriage, she did it because the Holy Spirit had taught her by revelation that she was not to be known by her husband; therefore, as she had been a Virgin in conceiving and in giving birth, so also she remained a Virgin after giving birth. -- Moreover, [Oxon. *ib.* n.5] in *Matthew* 1 it is said that an Angel informed Joseph in these words, “Do not fear to take Mary your wife.” Since, therefore, everything that was done as regards Joseph through Angelic illumination was done for the sake of Mary, who was, without his mediation, in that ineffable and marvellous conception of the Son of God, it must indubitably be held that she too had been taught through the Angel, or immediately by God, before she was betrothed to Joseph, not to fear to take that just man as her spouse, since she was being given by the Holy Spirit to him as guardian and as witness of her virginity, who would contain himself equally along with her, and in many things fitting for the guarding of her virginity would comply with and serve her; therefore there can be no doubt about the perpetual and unimpaired virginity of the Mother of God.

Article 4: Whether Christ's Mother took a Vow of Virginity

I answer that, [Oxon. *ib.*] it must be said that the Blessed Virgin, before marriage was contracted with Joseph, had absolutely vowed her chastity and virginity to God; and this the Saints commonly infer from her response to Gabriel, *Luke* 1: "How will that be since I do not know man?" Hence Augustine (*De Sancta Virginitate*, ch. 4) says: "Which, certainly, she would not say unless she had first vowed herself a Virgin to God." And indeed, if she had not known man up to that day, and had not lacked the proposal of knowing and being known thereafter, in vain would she have posed her question in that way; because, being to be known thereafter, she could, if she were not sterile, have conceived and brought forth. That question, therefore, bears on its face, and almost expressly states, her most firm proposal not to know man, and that is why she inquires in astonishment how that could be, that she herself should bring forth, when she had proposed to preserve her virginity in perpetuity. And the Angel, responding to this understanding, instructs her about the manner in which she was to be a future Mother and to remain a Virgin, saying (*Luke* 1): "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

QUESTION TWENTY-NINE: OF THE ESPOUSALS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

Article 1: Whether Christ should have been born of an Espoused Virgin

I answer that, [Oxon. *ib.* n.2] it must be said that Christ ought to have been born of a betrothed Virgin; for this fact there are appropriate reasons, and two are taken from Ambrose on that passage in *Luke* 1: "The Angel Gabriel was sent etc." *The first reason* is so that her spouse might be witness to Mary's virginity, and thus she would not have occasion for lying about her virginity, because, according to Ambrose, if she had not been betrothed, she would have had occasion for lying, but as betrothed she would not have. And hence, both from the testimony and as a presumption, more credit would have been given to the fact about her virginity. – *The second reason* is so that Mary might not be noted as infamous, as would in fact have happened if she had brought forth when not betrothed. Christ therefore did not think that faith in his origin was to be built on injuries to his Mother; for he knew a virgin's shame to be tender and her repute for honor fragile; therefore the Lord preferred that his origin rather than his Mother's honor be by some cast into doubt. And thus to virgins who live in bad repute no veil of excuse would be left, which they would have if the Mother of God had been defamed. – *Another reason* is touched on by Origen on that passage in *Matthew* 1: "Since she had been betrothed etc.," so that, of course, the Spouse of Mary might do service for the Virgin and the Child going into and out of Egypt. – Finally, [Oxon. *ib.* n.3] it was appropriate for Christ to be born of a betrothed woman, so that he might not seem to take his beginning from an injury to the law, nor give occasion to the Jews and to Herod of persecuting him, since by the law about the offspring of an unmarried woman he would be damned.

Article 2: Whether there was a true Marriage between our Lord's Mother and Joseph

I answer that, it must be said that there was a true marriage between the Most Blessed Virgin and Joseph. But [Oxon. 4 d.30 q.2 nn.4-6] how that could be the case, when she had for a long time vowed her virginity, must be shown. Therefore one must know that in the marriage contract there is and enters in, indeed, a mutual giving of bodies to carnal copulation, but only under the implicit condition, *if it be asked for*; for it never be asked for, the obligation to render it is not compelling. Hence it is that those who contract marriage with the intention of at once vowing chastity do truly contract it: but by parity the vow of chastity of the Blessed Virgin Mary could stand in presence of a true contract; therefore she truly contracted marriage. For a marriage of this sort carried no prejudice with it to the vow already expressed; because, if it did, it ought to have done so by reason of the carnal copulation to which she was held under the condition, *if it be asked for*. But she was very certain that it would never be asked for (as was said in article 3 of the preceding question); therefore she could truly have contracted marriage without prejudice to her vow of chastity. In that contract, therefore, she gave and transferred lordship of her body to Joseph her spouse; but she did not give the use, nor did she bind herself to giving the use at some time, because she knew that he would never ask the use of it, and because God had absolved her from rendering this sort of debt, and he relaxed it for her by way of dispensation, so that even if it were asked for she should not render it.

But the fact that lordship might be separated from use is elegantly held in the chapter *Exiit, De Verbor. Significat. in 6* [Oxon. 4 d.30 q.2 n.6] where, from the relevant sentence, it is said that a lord can, having retained to himself the lordship of some thing, hand over the use to another, and that he can separate the use perpetually from the lordship, which is necessary for those using it and not having lordship over it; therefore Blessed Mary could similarly hand over lordship of her body to such an act, *if it be asked for*, having however held back the use, since she was certain that it was not ever to be asked for from her by him to whom she transferred lordship of her body. Nor did the Blessed Mary do that by her own authority, but rather she retained that use to herself by the authority of the Holy Spirit, who properly reserved for her that use, in such a way that he to whom was handed over lordship and power of Mary's body, and to whom such a use was thence owing, would never be about to demand it, nor ever about to request it, having been inhibited by the supreme power of God. – *Confirmation*: for an adulteress has over the body of another's husband the power which she has acquired in marrying him, and nevertheless she does not have nor can she have use of that body because of the adultery, in which she has lost the right of asking for the debt from her husband; therefore if sin can perpetually prohibit use, though the power given in marriage stands, much more could the Holy Spirit do that because of some honorable cause, which causes were handled in the preceding article. *Another confirmation*: if someone had contracted with an oath an engagement to marry, and had afterwards vowed chastity, he would be held to contract the marriage promised by the oath, and thereafter, before the consummation of the marriage, he ought to enter religion; that man had given power, therefore, over his body to his wife by truly contracting marriage, and he had meanwhile the intention, as far as his part was concerned, of never giving the use of it, although he might not know whether his bride would in the meantime ask for the use or not; therefore much more is it licit thus to contract a marriage if he knew that his wife was never going to ask for the use, as is the case in the proposition about the Blessed Virgin.