

## Immacolata Concezione e incarnazione secondo Guglielmo di Ware

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Anselm of Canterbury affirms that Mary was cleansed from original sin, before her birth and thanks to the merits of Christ; so the redemption is so strong that it reaches all men in time and space, including Adam, Eve and Mary who is pure by virtue of the future death of her son: « [...] Nam si moriturus non esset, Virgo de qua assumptus est munda non fuisset» .

Robert Grosseteste, in the sermon *Tota pulcra est*, preaches that Mary was born without the stain of original sin, due to the previous sanctification that occurred thanks to the purification from the sin contracted or through the preservation from the guilt that she would have contracted without the infusion of the grace in the instant of animation.

Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio mentions the immaculatist theory as the opinion of others: « [...] in anima Virginis gratiam sanctificationis Prevenisse maculam peccati originalis» . Sanctifying grace prevented the stain of original sin in the Virgin's soul; the Virgin was freed from original sin in a different way from other creatures, because « [...] alii post casum erecti sunt. Virgo Maria quasi in ipso casu sustentata est ne rueret, sicut exemplum ponitur de duobus cadentibus in luto" . The scheme 'Deus decuit, potuit, voluit, fecit' is used for grace in the first instant of Mary's conception; this grace proves incompatible with original sin which must be denied.

In Bonaventure's opinion, given the precedence of the being of nature to the being of grace in a temporal and metaphysical sense, first the soul must be united with the flesh and then it can accept the infusion of sanctifying grace; therefore, if Mary's flesh was not conceived by a virgin and therefore is infected, it cannot fail to infect Mary's soul with original sin; sanctification follows from the infection of the flesh in Mary who, as the daughter of Adam, must first exist and then receive grace.

This argument unites Bonaventure to Henry of Ghent who distinguishes between the instant of Mary's conception and the following time; Mary is found «in culpa et filia irae tantum per unum instans», that is, at the act of conception, while she is subsequently «in gratia». Henry uses the same argument to support Mary's permanence in original sin in a single instant: «Decens erat,

sanctificari potuit [...] ergo rationabile videtur mihi ita factum esse.» Therefore, the sanctification of Mary follows from the infection of the soul by original sin and is justified on the basis of the consequentiality of decency, congruity and reasonableness.

Peter John Olivi opens the way to the thesis of the preventive preservation of Mary from original sin, identifying three ways of communicating the merit of Christ, of which the first places this communication before its realization, according to the eternal plan of God, for the donation of a law and to orient the theological virtues towards a future object.

An anonymous author of the late thirteenth century shares this opinion, fearing that Christ could have prevented his mother from contracting original sin.

Raymond Lull, in *Disputatio eremite et Raymundi super aliquibus dubiis quaestionibus Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, composed in 1298, clearly maintains that «Nisi beata Virgo disposita fuisset quod Filius Dei de ipsa carnem assumeret, scilicet quod non esset corrupta neque in aliquo peccato sive actuali sive originali, - Filius Dei ab ipsa carnem assumere non potuisset, cum Deus et peccatum in aliquo subiecto concordari non possint.» In Lull's intentions, the assumption of Mary into the flesh implies her exemption from original sin due to the proportion between God the Son and the Blessed Virgin: «Concluditur ergo quod beata Virgo non contraxit peccatum originale, immo sanctificata fuit scisso semine de quo fuit a suis parentibus [...] »

William of Ware, on a Marian and Christological subject, does not seem to perceive the influence of Henry of Ghent, pointed out by Stephen Dumont regarding the generation of the Son. In fact Ware openly disputes the opinion of Henry of Ghent in question 11 of the third *Sentences* book, published by the Fathers of St. Bonaventure and Barnaba Hechich presenting a text prior to the possible alterations made by Martin Anglicus, editor of Ware's works, and then to the possible contributions of John Duns Scotus in dialogue with his Oxford master.

According to Ware, Henry, introducing two metaphysical instants in the single temporal instant of Mary's conception, seems to place the Blessed Virgin in a condition that does not conform to the principle of non-contradiction and that of the excluded middle term (text 1 of the handout).

Therefore, the second version signals the intellectual labor of William who, not being at all convinced of the contrary thesis, proposes the immaculatist thesis as another opinion that William chooses to support, aware of being able to fall into error; but Ware prefers to err by excess rather than by default, handing over to Mary the preservation from sin.

William declares his theoretical uncertainty also in the case of the twofold generation of Christ, in question 25 of the third *Sentences* book (text 2).

This uncertainty induces Ware to opt for the criterion of superabundance and for supererogatory solutions that recognize the double sonship and the special status of Mary, superior to that of any other creature and inferior only to the primacy of Christ.

IN Question 11 It is motherhood rather than Christ's primacy that ennobles Mary, in the wake of Grosseteste and Llull: William distinguishes between natural and obediencial power in view of grace. The first indicates the act exercised by power, as happens to angels and saints who receive grace *in patria*, while obediencial power refers to the person and grace, considered separately or in combination. Thus three ways are included of which the first and third consider the two elements separately, while the second way brings into question the combination of the person and grace, highlighting the case of Mary who, having become the mother of Christ, can receive special influence and according to the pre-existing obediencial power, greater grace than a common creature and herself without the mediation of this influence. The edition of the Fathers of St. Bonaventure appears more concise than that of Hechich, but it is introduced by a 'credo' that reveals the author's intention (text 3).

While the first obedient power takes place in Mary before the conception of Christ, motherhood assures Mary a special grace that is not comparable with that of any other creature; but, despite the superiority of Mary as the mother of God to any other creature in terms of grace, the soul of Christ surpasses the grace of Mary for union with the Word. All the grace that belongs to Mary as a person, before the conception of the Son, guarantees exemption from mortal sin, while the grace that Mary receives as the mother of God also excludes her from venial sin.

Ware not only affirms the possibility, but also the reality of preventive preservation under Grosseteste's authority, reproaching the common opinion for lacking the assertive feature of the authorities employed and trusting in the authorities of the saints.

So Ware shares with Scotus a clearly immaculatist theory that leads to the preventive preservation of the Blessed Virgin, but at least with two substantial differences. On the one hand, as seen elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, Scotus assures Mary preventive preservation and special grace for the merit gained by

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<sup>1</sup> see F. FIORENTINO, *La preservazione preventiva di Maria secondo Giovanni Duns Scoto*, forthcoming.

Christ for the passion on the cross in *Lectura Oxoniensis* and *Ordinatio*, while Ware, like Grosseteste and Lull, associates this preservation to motherhood of Christ rather than Christ's redemption. On the other hand, while Scotus usually supposes the only possibility of preventive preservation, together with the options of sanctification after the metaphysical instant of conception or a certain time in the life of Mary, except in the *Ordinatio* in which Scotus ends up endorsing the greater probability of this preservation under the condition of avoiding to contradict the scriptural and ecclesiastical authorities, Ware assumes both the possibility and the reality of this preservation, availing Grosseteste's authority and reproaching the common opinion for the lack of assertive character of the authorities employed. Beyond these differences, Ware and Scotus are united by the use of many arguments, by contesting the opinion of Henry of Ghent and the common one, by the primacy of Christ and by the special grace, recognized to Mary.

For Ware in question 25, this special condition allows Mary to avoid original sin, as a person, and venial sin, as a mother, as well as to provoke the dependence of Christ who reveals to be the natural and real son of Mary, establishing with the mother a real relationship and not just a rational one; this relationship is interrupted during the triduum and resumes unchanged with the resurrection of Christ, without being altered by the supernatural intervention of God who cannot change the past, but only the effects of the past in the present *de potentia absoluta*, in question 223 of the fourth *sentences* book.

Although both Ware and Scotus tend to dissociate redemption from Adamic sin, denying the purely occasional character of this redemption, Ware, in the eighth question of the third *sentences* book, distinguishes a double meaning in the case of the incarnation: the absolute one which is independent of the adamic sin, and the relative sin that assumes the circumstances and the end of that sin. The primacy of Christ, while preceding the special grace of Mary, cannot prevent the humanity of Christ from depending in a natural and real way on Mary as his mother (text 4).

Ware, responding to the third main argument, can prefigure the theory of preventive incarnation (text 5).