



**ALEXANDER OF HALES' ARGUMENTS FOR DENYING BELIEF
IN MARY'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

***LOS ARGUMENTOS DE ALEJANDRO DE HALES PARA NEGAR LA
CREENCIA EN LA INMACULADA CONCEPCIÓN DE MARÍA***

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to highlight the arguments performed by the 13th century English Franciscan theologian Alexander of Hales to deny the belief in the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception. With that aim in mind, this outstanding Mariologist begins by refuting the proposed arguments of those who sustain such belief. He then exposes the numerous proofs that, in his opinion, contradict the immaculist belief. We will display step by step the interrelated arguments by which Alexander of Hales rationally support his opposition to the thesis under study. The results of this research will show the original, precursory stance of Alexander of Hales in the denial of the belief in Mary's immaculate conception.

Keywords: Mariology, original sin, human conception, purification, Franciscan School.

RESUMEN

Este artículo pretende destacar los argumentos esgrimidos por el teólogo franciscano inglés del siglo XIII, Alejandro de Hales, para negar la creencia en la inmaculada concepción de la Virgen María. Con este fin, este destacado mariólogo comienza refutando los argumentos de quienes sostienen dicha creencia. A continuación, expone las numerosas pruebas que, en su opinión, contradicen la creencia inmaculista. Mostraremos paso a paso los argumentos interrelacionados con los que Alejandro de Hales fundamenta racionalmente su oposición a la tesis en estudio. Los resultados de esta investigación mostrarán la postura original y precursora de Alejandro de Hales en la negación de la creencia en la inmaculada concepción de María.

Palabras clave: Mariología; pecado original; concepción humana; purificación, Escuela Franciscana.

I. INTRODUCTION

From the first centuries of our era the Christian Church had to face heated doctrinal debates against Arians, Nestorians, Docetists and various other heretical currents, which culminated in the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451) and Constantinople II (553). These councils confirmed as dogmas that Christ is true God the Son (of the same substance as the Father) and true man, with two natures, divine and human, indissolubly united in the unique person of Christ. As essentially correlates of these two Christological dogmas, these Ecumenical Councils also established two main Mariological dogmas, namely, Mary's virginal divine motherhood and her perpetual virginity (*virgo ante partum, virgo in partu, virgo post partum*).

However, two others crucial Mariological theses – Mary's Immaculate Conception and her Assumption into heaven –, far from reaching a unanimous agreement among the Fathers and theologians from the 6th-7th centuries on, would be intensely debated within Christianity for almost a millennium and a half. It was only at a very late date that both theses became official Catholic dogmas: that of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, proclaimed by Pope Pius

IX with the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*;¹ that of the Assumption in 1950, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII with the bull *Munificentissimus Deus*.²

These last two Mariological beliefs were progressively advocated and consolidated on an increasing number of favorable thoughts from prestigious theologians. Pierre Pauwels, in an early book on the Franciscan contributions to the dogma of Mary's immaculate conception,³ mentions some antecedents of this belief.⁴

Now, in this context of the intense debates for and against the belief in Mary's immaculate conception, a sensitive doctrinal rivalry arose from the 13th century onwards between the philosophical-theological schools of the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The Dominican School, mostly opposed to this belief; the Franciscan School, divided between a group of convinced adversaries, and another faction of enthusiastic defenders of the immaculist thesis.

In this sense, as Stefano M. Cecchin notes, the antagonism between the 13th century's Dominican and Franciscan Schools on the belief in the immaculate conception was highly beneficial to the Church's theology and Mariology. Cecchin goes on to assert that in this issue the Franciscan theologians of the 13th century went from an initial denial of the immaculate belief to its unconditional defense, in whose dogmatic proclamation in 1854 the Franciscan School would play a decisive role throughout the 13th-19th centuries.⁵

1 See Stefano De Fiores, "Immacolata. I. Il lungo processo storico-teologico verso la definizione del dogma dell'Immacolata Concezione". In *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, edited by Stefano De Fiores, and Salvatore Meo (San Paolo, 1986), 613-619; and Aristide Serra, "Immacolata. II. Fondamenti biblici". In *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, edited by Stefano De Fiores, and Salvatore Meo (eds) (San Paolo, 1986), 619-625.

2 See Stefano M. Cecchin, *L'Immacolata Concezione. Breve storia del dogma* (Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2003); and Ernesto Piacentini, *L'Immacolata Madre: a 150 anni dalla definizione dogmatica* (Associazione Culturale Leone Veuthey, 2004).

3 Pierre Pauwels, *I francescani e l'Immacolata Concezione* (Tipografia Sallustiana, 1904).

4 Pauwels, *I francescani e l'Immacolata Concezione*, 23. See also Stefano De Fiores, "Immacolata. I. Il lungo processo storico-teologico verso la definizione del dogma dell'Immacolata Concezione". In *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, 611-617.

5 See Candido Mariotti, *L'Immacolata Concezione di Maria ed i francescani in occasione del cinquantesimo dalla dommatica definizione* (Tipografia del Collegio di San Bonaventura, 1904); Niccolò Dal Gal, *L'opera dei francescani attraverso i secoli per il trionfo dell'Immacolata* (Tipografia del Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1905); Diomedede Scaramuzzi, *L'evoluzione del dogma dell'Immacolata nell'Ordine francescano. Conferenza storica letta nella solenne Accademia in onore dell'Immacolata tenuta dai Frati Minori di Bitonto il 27 novembre 1904* (Tipografia del Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1905), 7-27; Éfrem Longpré, "La scuola teologica francescana nello sviluppo del dogma dell'Immacolata Concezione". In *L'Immacolata Concezione. Storia ed esposizione del dogma*, VIII Settimana di Spiritualità all'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milano 9-10 maggio 1954) (Società Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1954), 41-64; Stefano M. Cecchin, ed. *La "Scuola Francescana" e l'Immacolata Concezione. Atti del Congresso Mariologico*

In the context of these Mariological debates within the Franciscan School of the 13th century, we will study in the current paper the anti-immaculist position of the Englishman Alexander of Hales (1185-1245), whose original negative position on this problem will be shared later by his coreligionists Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231), Jean de la Rochelle (†1245), Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217/21-1274),⁶ Conrad of Saxony († 1279), Bartolomeo da Bologna († post 1294) , Pietro di Giovanni Olivi (1248-1298), Servasanto da Faenza (c. 1220-/30-c. 1300) and Matteo d'Acquasparta (1240-1302). Facing them, the Franciscan theologians of the 13th century who defended the thesis of the Immaculate Conception of Mary are the trio formed by Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), William of Ware (1260-1305), and John Duns Scot (1265-1308).⁷

Alexander of Hales is the first Franciscan of the 13th century to explicitly and fully deny the belief in the immaculate conception of Mary, an opinion that he systematizes in his famous *Summa Theologica*, the first treatise of this academic nature in medieval Scholasticism. In “De sanctificatione B. Virginis in conceptione sua”, which is Chapter I of Membrum II of the Second Question of the Second Treatise of the *Summa Theologica*, the author asks “In what state could the Virgin be sanctified?”⁸ In his opinion, this question raises four possible alternatives: whether she was sanctified before conception; whether she was sanctified at her conception; whether she was sanctified after conception and before the infusion of the soul into the body; and, finally, whether she was sanctified after the infusion of the soul into her mother’s womb.⁹ Alexander

Francescano, S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi, 4-8 dicembre 2003). Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2005; Stefano M. Cecchin, “L’influsso della mariologia francescana sullo sviluppo dell’Immacolata Concezione”. In *Signum magnum apparuit in caelo. L’immacolata segno della Bellezza e dell’Amore di Dio*, edited by Francesco Lepore (Pontificia Accademia Mariana Internationalis, 2005), 65-106; Stefano M. Cecchin, *La Madre del Signore nel pensiero francescano. Introduzione, cronistoria, bibliografia per lo studio della mariologia francescana* (Pontificia Accademia Mariana Internationalis, 2021).

⁶ We have analyzed the opinion of St. Bonaventure on this problem in the paper “Saint Bonaventure’s Doctrine on the Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Conception”. *Religions* 14/7 (2023): 1-15.

⁷ We have studied the stance of John Duns Scot about this issue in José María Salvador-González, “The arguments of John Duns Scotus in defense of Mary’s Immaculate Conception”, *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia* 17/2 (2024): 215-238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/tel14070930>

⁸ Alexander Halensis, *Inquisitio Unica. De Verbo incarnato. Tractatus Secundus. De Conceptione et Nativitate. Quaestio II. De sanctitate conceptionis. Membrum II. De sanctificatione B. Virginis in conceptione sua*. In *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis Minorum Summa Theologica. Tomus IV. Liber Tertius (Textus)* (Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1948), 111-121.

⁹ “Consequenter quaeritur de sanctificatione B. Virginis, in quo satu potuit sanctificari.

Et circa hoc plura quaeruntur:

Primum est, an ante conceptionem fuerit sanctificata;

secundum est, an in conceptione fuerit sanctificata:

tertium est, an post conceptionem ante infusionem animae fuerit sanctificata;

answers each of these four dilemmas following the methodological strategy of Scholasticism, according to which he first analyzes the evidence in favor and then the evidence against, before reasoning his own opinion on the matter.

II. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE VIRGIN MARY WAS SANCTIFIED BEFORE CONCEPTION

1. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR

To the first question, whether Mary was sanctified before being conceived, Alexander sets forth two arguments which seem to show that this was the case. The first of these is taken from St. Paul, when, in his Epistle to the Romans, he says that "If the root is holy, the branches are also holy"; now, as Mary's parents (the root) were holy, so is their daughter Mary (their branch); and, as in Mary's parents there could have been sanctification for her, therefore she could have been sanctified in her parents; and, since every good that could have been conferred on Mary is inherent to her by special prerogative, therefore the Virgin was sanctified in her parents before conception.¹⁰

The defenders of the immaculate conception put forward as a second favorable proof their rejection of St. Paul's sentence, when in his Epistle to the Romans he affirms that we all sin in Adam and, therefore, we all sin in the root (Adam). The pro-immaculists object to this Pauline assertion with this argument: since sanctification is produced by the infusion of grace, we could all be sanctified at the root, and, therefore, the Virgin Mary could also be sanctified, since grace towards sanctification was stronger in her than guilt towards condemnation; and, since everything good that she could have had, she really had it, it is therefore to be assumed that she was sanctified at the root (in her parents) before being conceived.¹¹

quartum, an post animae infusionem fuerit sanctificata in utero matris suae." (Ibid., 111).

10 "Articulus I. Utrum B. Virgo ante conceptionem fuerit sanctificata. Ad primum ergo arguitur sic: 1. Rom. 11,16 dicitur: *Si radix est sancta, et rami sunt sancti*; sed sic se habent parentes B. Virginis ad ipsam sicut radix ad ramum; si ergo in parentibus B. Virginis potuit esse sanctificatio et infusio sanctitatis, ergo ramus, scilicet B. Virgo, potuit in eis sanctificari; sed quidquid potuit ei boni conferri, est ei collatum; ergo ipsa fuit sanctificata in parentibus suis ante conceptionem." (Ibid.).

11 "2. Item, ad Rom. 5,12, nos peccavimus omnes in Adam; ergo omnes peccavimus in radice. Sed sanctificatio, cum sit per infusionem gratiae, opponitur peccato; ergo nos omnes potuimus sanctificari in radice; ergo et B. Virgo, cum fortior sit gratia ad sanctificationem quam culpa ad condemnationem; sed quidquid potuit habere boni, habuit — hoc supponimus — ergo fuit sanctificata in radice, scilicet in parentibus ante conceptionem." (Ibid.).

2. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE AGAINST

Next, Alexander presents two arguments against this sanctification of the Virgin before her conception. The first counter-argument is taken from St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who in a letter to the canons of Lyons asks whether the Virgin can be considered sanctified as soon as she had already been conceived as a saint in a holy conception; to this question the Clairvauxian master answers in the negative, because, in his opinion, Mary cannot be holy before existing, and she does not exist before being conceived; therefore, she cannot be sanctified in her parents before being conceived.¹²

As a second proof against this, the English master takes up the sentence of St. Paul, when in his Epistle to the Ephesians he recognizes that “we are all by nature children of wrath.” This implies that the Virgin Mary is also by nature a daughter of wrath, and therefore could not be sanctified in her parents before being conceived.¹³

3. ARGUING HIS PERSONAL OPINION

Faced with this series of arguments for and against, Alexander then reasons his own solution to the problem in these terms. In his opinion, there is a double sanctification: that of nature and that of the person. The sanctification of the person is produced by present grace, while the sanctification of nature will be produced by future glory in the resurrection. Logically, the sanctification of the person, which is produced by present grace and by baptism, is not the sanctification of nature.¹⁴ The author complements this idea by specifying that, despite the sanctification of the person through the grace of baptism, the fomite of guilt or concupiscence remains in human nature after baptism, and is transmitted to all human nature, because it is essentially rooted in it, due to the fact that this human nature is engendered by the sexual union of the parents.

12 “Contra: a. Bernardus, in *Epistola contra Lugdunenses Canonicos*, movet quaestionem de sanctificatione B. Virginis, dicens: « Dicitur sanctificata, quatenus iam sancta conciperetur, ac per hoc sanctus vocaretur conceptus ? » Et obicit contra hoc: « Non valuit ante sancta esse quam esset; sed non erat antequam conciperetur »; ergo non potuit sanctificari antequam conciperetur.” (Ibid.)

13 “b. Item, Ephes. 2,3: *Eramus omnes natura filii irae*. Sed natura illa se extendit usque ad B. Virginem; igitur B. Virgo fuit filia irae, non ergo sanctificata ante conceptionem in parentibus.

Gratia ergo huius quaeritur quare non potuit sanctificari in parentibus. Gratia ergo huius quaeritur quare non potuit sanctificari in parentibus.” (Ibid.)

14 “Solutio: Dicendum quod duplex est sanctificatio, scilicet sanctificatio naturae et sanctificatio personae. Sanctificatio vero personae est per praesentem gratiam; sanctificatio naturae non erit nisi per futuram gloriam, quia ibi sanctificabitur natura, scilicet in gloria”. (Ibid.)

Hence our author infers that there is no human procreation without sin, for nature, which is transmitted by procreation, is not sanctified; therefore, it is necessary that what is generated should contract sin when it is generated.¹⁵ Therefore – the Mariologist of Hales deduces - the Virgin could not be sanctified in her parents, but it was necessary that she contracted sin from her parents; because sin was already in her parents before they conceived Mary as regards nature, and not as regards person; therefore, she could not be sanctified in her parents.¹⁶

The theologian of Hales concludes his Article I by answering two objections. To the first of these, taking up again his distinction between sanctification of nature and sanctification of the person, he maintains that, although the root (Mary's parents) is holy as to the person (but not as to nature), nevertheless, the branch (Mary) is not holy, because the branch derives from nature, not from person; and, since the parents of the Virgin could not be sanctified as to nature, but as to person, since Mary's nature proceeds from that of her parents by natural generation, she could not be sanctified in her parents.¹⁷ With this our author confirms his conviction that, although Joachim and Anne could be holy as persons by the grace received, they could not be holy as to their nature, necessarily contaminated by original sin derived from the intercourse of their respective parents; therefore, by transmitting this contaminated nature to their daughter Mary when she was conceived, she could not be holy before being conceived.

To the second objection, according to which the sin of the person of Adam corrupted all human nature, because on his person (Adam) all human nature depended, Alexander answers that the sanctification of the person could not sanctify nature: even if Adam had been sanctified personally, human nature as

15 “Santificatio autem, quae est per Baptismum et quae est per praesentem gratiam, non est sanctificatio naturae, sed solum sanctificatio personae; sed fomes adhuc remanet post Baptismum in natura et transfunditur per generationem in totam naturam. Propter hoc non est generatio sine peccato, quia natura non est sanctificata et per generationem transfunditur natura; ideo necesse est ut quod generatur, in generatione contrahat peccatum.” (Ibid.).

16 “Et propter hoc B. Virgo non potuit in parentibus suis sanctificari, immo necesse fuit quod in generatione sua contraheret peccatum a parentibus. Erat enim in ipsis ante suam conceptionem quantum ad rationem naturae, et non personae, et propter hoc in ipsis sanctificari non potuit.” (Ibid.).

17 “[Ad obiecta]: 1. Ad primum obiectum dicendum quod est sanctitas naturae et personae. Licet ergo *radix* sit *sancta* quantum ad personam, non tamen *ramus* est sanctus. Sed radix B. Virginis, id est parentes eius, non potuerunt sanctificari quantum ad naturam, sed quantum ad personam. Cum ergo natura in parentibus sit radix ipsa a qua procedit per generationem, cum illa non potuerit sanctificari, nec B. Virgo in illa radice.”

a whole would not be sanctified.¹⁸ Therefore, sanctification at the root would be a sanctification of the person, not of nature, because we exist as members of the human race thanks to nature, not thanks to the person.¹⁹ For this reason – the English Mariologist concludes - we could not be sanctified in Adam, nor could the Virgin Mary be sanctified in her parents, because we are born by way of nature, in which there is no holiness, but original sin; consequently, nature cannot be sanctified through Adam.²⁰

III. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE VIRGIN MARY WAS SANCTIFIED AT HER CONCEPTION

In the subsequent Article II Alexander of Hales raises the question of whether the Virgin Mary could have been sanctified at her conception.²¹

1. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE AGAINST

Once again, in scholastic fashion, he begins by setting out the reasons (six, to be precise) that deny such a possibility, the first four of which are taken from St. Bernard. In the first, St. Bernard says that there can be no sanctity in the sexual relationship between spouses, which implies sin, because it is produced through libido, so that Mary could not have been conceived and sanctified at the same time; and this is because – concludes the abbot of Clairvaux – it cannot be rationally admitted that there can be sanctity without the sanctifying Holy Spirit, nor can the Holy Spirit be associated with sin, which exists at conception because of the libido that produces it.²²

18 “2. Ad aliud dicendum, sicut dictum est, quod peccatum personae corrumpit naturam sicut peccatum Adae, quia ab eo dependebat tota natura humana. Sanctificatio vero, quae est perfectio personae, non potuit sanctificare naturam; unde, si Adam esset sanctificatus, non ideo esset sanctificata natura humana.” (Ibid., 12-13).

19 “Unde sanctificatio in radice redit in sanctificationem personae, et non naturae. Quia ergo non educimur ratione personae, sed ratione naturae – unde vis generativa est vis naturae et non personae nisi ratione naturae.” (Ibid.).

20 “Ideo non potuimus in Adam sanctificari, nec eadem ratione B. Virgo in parentibus suis, quia educimur ex parte illa ex qua non est sanctitas, scilicet per viam naturae; via autem naturae nec natura potuit sanctificari per Adam.” (Ibid.).

21 “Articulus II. *Utrum B. Virgo In conceptione potuerit sanctificari.* Consequenter quaeritur utrum B. Virgo potuit sanctificari in conceptione sua.” (Ibid., 13).

22 “a. Et ostendit B. Bernardus quod non, dicens: Forte inter amplexus maritales sanctitas ipsi conceptioni se immiscuit, ut simul sanctificata fuerit et concepta? Ita forte dicetur; sed contra hoc obicit sic:

In the second reason, St. Bernard asserts that Mary could not have been sanctified before conception, because she did not yet exist, nor could she have been sanctified at conception, because of the original sin necessarily inherent in conception; therefore, it remains only to believe that Mary received sanctification in the womb after being conceived, so that it can be said that her birth was holy, even if her conception was not. Therefore, Mary was sanctified after being conceived, and not at her conception.²³

According to the third argument, Alexander of Hales points out, following St. Bernard, that few human beings were granted to be sanctified at birth, although not at being conceived, to safeguard the exclusive prerogative of being conceived in holiness, a prerogative that only Christ has: this implies that no one else, not even the Virgin Mary, was sanctified at her conception.²⁴

In his fourth proof, also taken literally from St. Bernard, Alexander confirms that only Christ, who was already holy before his conception as a man, was conceived sanctified by the Holy Spirit, while all other human beings are affected by what Scripture says: "I was conceived in iniquity and my mother conceived me in sin." Therefore, since Christ is the only man conceived without sin, the Virgin was not sanctified at her conception.²⁵

In his fifth argument, the philosopher of Hales indicates that, if the Virgin Mary had not been conceived in sin and, therefore, did not have the guilt of sin, she would no longer need the redemption of Christ, liberator from sin and its guilt; but that is contrary to the Catholic faith,²⁶ because all human beings need to be redeemed by Christ.

«Sed hoc», inquit, «non admittit ratio; quo modo namque aut sanctitas absque Spiritu sanctificante aut Sancto Spiritui societas cum peccato fuit? aut peccatum quo modo non fuit, ubi libido non deficit?» (Ibid.)

23 "b. Item, Bernardus: «Ante conceptionem minime sanctificari potuit, quia non erat; sed nec in ipso conceptu propter peccatum, quod inerat. Restat ergo ut, post conceptum in utero iam existens, sanctificationem accepisse credatur, quae excluso peccato sanctam fecit nativitatem, non tamen conceptionem». Ergo post conceptionem, non in conceptione, fuit sanctificata." (Ibid.).

24 "c. Item, Bernardus, per comparisonem ad Christum: «Si paucis filiorum hominum datum est cum sanctitate nasci, non tamen concipi, ut uni sane servaretur praerogativa sancti conceptus» vel sanctificationis in conceptu. Cum ergo Christus habeat praerogativam sancti conceptus, patet quod aliquis alius non fuit sanctificatus in conceptu; ergo nec B. Virgo." (Ibid.).

25 "d. Item, Bernardus: «Solus Dominus Iesus de Spiritu Sancto conceptus, quia solus ante conceptum sanctus; quo excepto, respicit universos, quod unus humiliter confitetur: *In iniquitatibus conceptus sum et in peccatis concepit me mater mea*» Solus ergo Christus conceptus est absque peccato; non ergo B. Virgo fuit in suo conceptu sanctificata." (Ibid.).

26 "e. Item, si B. Virgo non fuisset concepta in peccato, ergo non fuisset obligata peccato nec habuisset reatum peccati; si ergo quod non habet reatum peccati, non indiget redemptione, quia redemptio est propter obligationem ad peccatum et ad reatum peccati, ergo ipsa non indigeret redemptione per Christum: quod secundum catholicam fidem non est ponendum." (Ibid.).

In his sixth and final reason against, which he takes from Pope Leo the Great, Alexander insists on the idea that Christ came to save us all, for he found no one without the guilt of sin; and, since he did not find the Virgin free from the guilt of sin either, it follows that she was not sanctified at her conception, but was conceived in sin.²⁷

2. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR

Alexander then analyzes two arguments that would prove Mary's sanctification upon being conceived. According to the first, which he takes from St. Augustine, our author points out that conjugal intercourse can be meritorious, as when by obedience Sarah gave birth to Isaac to Abraham. And, since where there is merit, grace moves, and where grace moves, the Holy Spirit is there and, with him, there can be sanctification, therefore, in conjugal intercourse there can be sanctification.²⁸ Now, since Mary was conceived in conjugal intercourse, she could have been sanctified in it; and, since any good that could be given to Mary was in fact given to her, that is why she was granted the good of being sanctified upon being conceived.²⁹

The second favorable proof adduced by the immaculists reiterates ideas similar to those of the first, alleging that, if any meritorious conjugal intercourse occurs, grace is moved by its merit, and with it the Holy Spirit and sanctification are presented; therefore – in the opinion of the pro-immaculists –, the Virgin Mary could have been sanctified by being conceived; and, as every good could have been granted to her, therefore, the good of being sanctified was granted to her at her conception.³⁰

27 “f. Item, Leo Papa: « Salvator noster sicut pro liberandis omnibus venit, ita nullum a reatu liberum reperit»; ergo nec B. Virginem invenit liberam a reatu peccati; ergo concepta fuit in peccato; non ergo sanctificata in conceptu suo.” (Ibid.).

28 “Ad oppositum: 1. Coitus coniugalis potest esse meritorius, sicut dicit Augustinus, ut fuit in Abraham, quando Sara concepit Isaac ex eo, quia hoc fecit ex obedientia. Sed ubicumque est meritum, ibi est gratia movens; ubicumque est gratia movens, ibi est praesentia Spiritus Sancti; sed ubicumque est praesentia Spiritus Sancti, ibi potest esse sanctificatio; ergo in coitu coniugali potest esse sanctificatio.” (Ibid.)

29 “Cum ergo gloriosa Virgo concepta fuerit in coitu coniugali, ibi potuit sanctificari; sed quidquid boni potuit ei dari, datum est; ergo datum est ei quod esset sanctificata in conceptu suo.” (Ibid.)

30 “Ex iis ergo habemus quod est aliquis coitus coniugalis meritorius. Sed ubi est meritum, ibi movet gratia, et ibi est praesentia Spiritus Sancti et ita sanctificatio; ergo in aliquo coitu potest esse sanctificatio; ergo B. Virgo potuit in conceptu sanctificari, quia potuit conceptus esse meritorius; sed datum est ei omne bonum quod potuit; ergo in conceptu sanctificata fuit.” (Ibid., 114).

3. ARGUING HIS OPINION

Finally, the Mariologist of Hales gives his personal (negative) answer to this second question in the following terms. If there could be a meritorious conjugal intercourse, it must be distinguished whether it is meritorious as an act of the person, because it is moved by his will, or meritorious as an act of nature, because it is moved by nature itself.³¹ In the first case, since it is moved by the will, charity can also move; on the contrary, in the case of being moved by nature, there also the fomite of sin moves, because intercourse is an act inclined towards the sin of Adam (the original) and moved by the fomite of sin.³² Because the will moves there according to the order of charity, and in this respect, intercourse is meritorious; but nature moves there according to the disorder of the fomite, and on this side libidinal concupiscence and sin occur in coitus.³³

But conception – Alexander continues arguing - proceeds from coitus and depends on the movement of nature, not on that of the will, and it (the conception) consists in the natural mixture of the seminal principles of man and woman, a mixture moved by nature and libido.³⁴ Now, considering that St. Bernard says that where there is libido there is sin, the master of Hales infers that, although a coitus could be meritorious, nevertheless, a conception can never be meritorious; therefore, there will never be sanctification in conception, not even in the Virgin Mary's conception.³⁵

31 “Respondeo: Supposito, quod alibi disputatur, quod coitus coniugalis possit esse meritorius, distinguendum quod est considerare coniugalem coitum meritorium secundum quod est actus personae vel naturae. Prout est actus personae, sic est, ibi voluntas movens; prout est actus naturae, sic est ibi natura movens.” (Ibid.).

32 “Sed differenter, quia in quantum est ille actus a voluntate movente, sic etiam ibi movet caritas; in quantum est a natura movente, sic etiam ibi movet fomes peccati, quia sic ille actus ordinatus est ad peccatum Adae et ex fomite peccati.” (Ibid.).

33 “Voluntas enim movet ibi secundum ordinem caritatis, et a parte illa est meritorius; natura autem movet ibi secundum inordinationem fomitis, et a parte illa est libido in coitu et peccatum.” (Ibid.).

34 “Sed conceptio sequitur ad coitum et respicit naturam moventem, et non voluntatem. Conceptio enim dicit commixtionem, quae est in principiis seminalibus viri et mulieris, quae commixtio fit per naturam; et ideo natura est movens coniunctum in conceptione; a parte autem illius commixtionis est libido.” (Ibid.).

35 “Et propter hoc dicit B. Bernardus: « Quo modo peccatum non fuit, ubi libido non defuit ? » Licet ergo coitus ex una parte possit esse meritorius, nunquam tamen conceptio poterit esse meritoria, et ita nec sanctificatio in conceptione. Et ideo B. Virgo in sua conceptione sanctificari non potuit.” (Ibid.).

IV. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE VIRGIN MARY WAS SANCTIFIED AFTER CONCEPTION AND BEFORE THE INFUSION OF THE SOUL INTO THE BODY

Next, Alexander examines in his Article III the question of whether the Virgin Mary was sanctified from original sin before the infusion of her soul into the body.³⁶

1. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR

Again, Alexander begins here by analyzing the arguments that would confirm this possibility. He takes as the first argument of the defenders of the immaculate conception the fact that, according to the Gospel of Luke, when the Virgin Mary after the Annunciation went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist, “the child rejoiced for joy in her womb”: this is interpreted in the sense that, even though there was not in John the spirit of life, because he was not born, nevertheless the spirit of grace was already in him. Now then – the immaculists deduce – that which is given in John the Baptist cannot be denied to the Virgin Mary; therefore it is evident that her flesh was sanctified before being animated by the infusion of her soul.³⁷

As a second favorable demonstration, the pro-immaculists assume what, according to the Holy Scriptures, God said to Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you came out of the belly, I sanctified you.”³⁸ In this regard, the defenders of the thesis in reference point out that God's knowledge is double, depending on whether it is a simple knowledge, which knows good or bad things indifferently, or a knowledge of approval, which only knows good things and approves them. And, as God speaks to Jeremiah according to the knowledge of approval of only good things, it follows

36 “Articulus III. *Utrum B. Virgo post conceptionem ante infusionem animae fuerit sanctificata*. Consequenter quaeritur utrum B. Virgo post suam conceptionem fuerit sanctificata ante infusionem animae, ita quod caro eius esset sanctificata antequam infunderetur anima in ea.” (Ibid., p. 114).

37 “Et ostenditur quod sic: 1. Sicut in Luc. 1,41 habetur de B. Ioanne, quando B. Virgo salutavit Elisabeth post annuntiationem Angeli et factam, scilicet quod conciperet Salvatorem, *exsultavit in gaudio infans in utero*, dicit Glossa «Nondum in eo erat spiritus vitae, et tamen iam erat spiritus gratiae». Si ergo quod datum est Ioanni non debet negari gloriosae Virgini, patet quod ante animae eius infusionem in carne fuit caro eius sanctificata.” (Ibid., 115).

38 2. Item, Ierem. 1,5, dixit Dominus ad Ieremiam: *Priusquam te formarem in utero, novi te, et priusquam exires de ventre, sanctificavi te*. Sed noscere Dei est dupliciter, quia est notitia simplex et est notitia approbationis. Notitia simplex est, qua novit bona et mala indifferenter, notitia approbationis, qua solum novit bona et qua approbat ipsa bona”. (Ibid.).

that before the infusion of his soul Jeremiah was already in a good state.³⁹ But – the standard-bearers of the immaculate conception conclude –, since what is given to Jeremiah cannot be denied to the Virgin, it follows that she was sanctified in the womb before the infusion of her soul.⁴⁰

2. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE AGAINST

As an argument against Mary's sanctification before animation, Alexander argues that nothing belongs to grace that does not at the same time belong to glory, since grace is ordered to glory. Our author assumes in this regard the opinion of St. Augustine, when he says in *De civitate Dei* that the abortive (miscarried fetuses unable to be born) do not belong to the glory of the resurrection, since this only belongs to the living who died; and, since the abortive did not die, since they never had life, they do not belong to the glory of the resurrection.⁴¹ The theologian of Hales rounds off this idea by asserting that the flesh does not belong to glory before its infusion by the soul, since what was never animated will never be glorified, and does not belong in any way to grace; therefore, since sanctification occurs through grace, the flesh (the body) cannot be sanctified before it has been infused by the soul.⁴²

3. ARGUING HIS PERSONAL OPINION

Having analyzed the evidence for and against the sanctification of Mary before being animated by the soul, Alexander reasons his personal position on the matter in these terms: before its animation by the soul, the flesh (the body) cannot be sanctified, because our body is corruptible and lacks by itself the natural possibility of perpetuating itself in being, since the need for perpetuity in being is inherent to it by its union with the rational soul, which is a perpetual

39 “Constat quod Dominus loquitur ad Ieremiam de notitia approbationis; sed illa nunquam est nisi de bono; ergo iam erat Ieremias in statu bono, antequam esset formatus in utero. Sed ante formationem corporis non infunditur anima; ergo ante infusionem animae erat in statu bono.” (Ibid.).

40 “Sed quod datum est Ieremiae, non debuit negari B. Virgini; ergo ipsa fuit sanctificata in utero ante infusionem animae.” (Ibid.).

41 “Contra: a. Nihil pertinet ad gratiam, quod non pertinet ad gloriam, quia gratia ordinata est ad gloriam. Sed Augustinus dicit, in libro *De civitate Dei*, de abortivis quod non pertinent ad gloriam resurrectionis, quia nihil pertinet ad gloriam resurrectionis nisi quod cecidit per mortem; sed illi non ceciderunt per mortem, quia nunquam habuerunt vitam; ergo non pertinent ad resurrectionis gloriam.” (Ibid.).

42 “Similiter, cum caro ante infusionem animae nullo modo pertineat ad gloriam, quia dato quod nunquam animetur, nunquam glorificabitur, ergo nullo modo pertinet ad gratiam; sed sanctificatio est per gratiam; ergo ante infusionem animae non potest sanctificari.” (Ibid.).

substance.⁴³ From this our author concludes that the human body, when perfected by the rational life that is substantially united to it, acquires the possibility of perpetual life and the need to be resurrected. On the contrary, other animal and plant beings, which are not ordered or united to a perpetual soul, are corruptible.⁴⁴

Alexander complements his reasoning by specifying that it is evident that the human body receives from its union with the soul the possibility of glory; and, as grace is ordered to glory, so also in a similar way the human body receives the possibility of grace by its union with the soul.⁴⁵ And, just as the human body before its animation by the soul has no conditions to be ordered to glory, in an analogous way it lacks conditions to be ordered to grace; therefore, – the English thinker concludes –, before animation by the soul, the body cannot receive grace nor can it be sanctified.⁴⁶

5. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE VIRGIN MARY WAS SANCTIFIED AFTER THE INFUSION OF THE SOUL INTO THE WOMB OF HER MOTHER

Finally, Alexander of Hales addresses in his article IV the question of whether the Virgin Mary was sanctified after the infusion of the soul into the womb of Anne.⁴⁷

43 “Solutio: Dicendum quod caro ante animationem nullo modo potest sanctificari. Et ratio huius est, quin corpus nostrum de se est corruptibile nec habet de se naturam perpetuationis ad esse, sed necessitas perpetuitatis esse inest ipsi ex unione ad animam rationalem, quae est substantia perpetua.” (Ibid.).

44 “Unde ex hoc quod perficitur et imprimatur ei vita rationalis, ex unione retinet corpus humanum possibilitatem ad vitam perpetuam et necessitatem resurgendi. Sic autem non est in aliis corporibus animatis, quia non habent ordinem nec unionem ad formam perpetuam, quia anima vegetabilis et sensibilis, quae sunt perfectiones aliorum corporum animatorum, sunt corruptibiles.” (Ibid.).

45 “Patet ergo quod corpus humanum accipit ex unione ad animam possibilitatem ad gloriam. Cum igitur gratia ordinetur ad gloriam, similiter accipiet possibilitatem suscipiendi gratiam per unionem sui ad animam.” (Ibid.).

46 “Sicut ergo corpus ante animationem non habet conditionem per quam possit ordinari ad gloriam, similiter nec conditionem per quam possit ordinari ad gratiam; ergo ante animationem non potest suscipere gratiam; ergo nec sanctificationem, cum sanctificatio sit per gratiam.” (Ibid.).

47 “Articulus IV. Utrum B. Virgo post animae infusionem fuerit sanctificata in utero matris suae. Consequenter quaeritur an post infusionem animae fuerit sanctificata in utero matris suae, quamvis ista quaestio mota sit primo Tractatu de Trinitate, ubi quaeritur: Quo modo Deus sit in rebus per gratiam.” (Ibid., p. 16).

1. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE AGAINST

Following his usual scholastic methodology, our author begins by analyzing the arguments (seven, in particular) that would deny such a possibility, the first six of which he takes from St. Augustine. The bishop of Hippo verbalizes objections 1 and 2 in his writing *Ad Dardanum*, when he says that he does not see how men can build a dwelling place for God in themselves if they are not reborn, which is impossible before they are born.⁴⁸ Therefore, no one can have God dwelling in them, except if they are reborn, and no one can be reborn before being born; therefore, since sanctification comes from grace indwelling the soul, it is evident that the Virgin Mary could not have been sanctified in her mother's womb before being born.⁴⁹ Consequently – Alexander deduces, assuming St. Augustine's sentence –, “the sanctification by which we become temples of God is only possible for the reborn, who can only be born men”.⁵⁰

The thinker from Hales draws the third reason against St. Augustine, who, in the case of St. John the Baptist and Jeremiah, sanctified in the womb before being born, assures that, although both received some kind of sanctification, the sanctification we speak of is received through grace.⁵¹ This is explained because, by receiving grace while alive, we become temples of God; and, consequently, the Virgin Mary could not receive grace in the womb nor sanctification before being born.⁵²

In the fourth (somewhat confused) proof against it, Alexander, after pointing out, taking up an idea of St. Augustine, that there are two forms of birth,

48 “Et ostenditur quod non fuit sanctificata, l. sicut dicit Augustinus, Ad Dardanum: «Non video quo modo aedificentur homines in domum Dei ad habendum in se inhabitantem Deum nisi cum fuerint renati, quod non possunt esse antequam nati».” (Ibid.).

49 “Ex hoc sic obicitur: Nullus potest habere Deum inhabitantem in se nisi fuerit renatus, nec potest esse renatus antequam natus; ergo nullus antequam natus potest habere Deum inhabitantem in se; si ergo Deus inhabitat per gratiam, nullus in utero, antequam sit natus, potest habere gratiam; cum ergo sanctificatio fiat per gratiam inhabitantem, patet quod B. Virgo in utero matris suae ante suam nativitatem non potuit sanctificari.” (Ibid.).

50 “2. Item, Augustinus, Ad Dardanum: «Illa sanctificatio, qua effimur singuli templa Dei, non est nisi renatorum, quod non nisi nati homines esse possunt».” (Ibid.).

51 “3. Sed posset dici quod legitur quod Ioannes et Ieremias fuerunt sanctificati in utero antequam essent nati. — Contra quod obicit Augustinus hoc modo: « [Quamlibet sententiam habeamus] de hominibus constitutis intra materna viscera, utrum existimemus eos aliquo sanctificationis modo donari et hoc propter Ioannem et Ieremiam, tamen illa sanctificatio, qua effimur templa Dei, non est nisi renatorum quod non nisi nati homines esse possunt.” (Ibid., 116-117).

52 “Sed illa sanctificatio est per receptionem gratiae, quia per receptionem gratiae effimur templa Dei; ergo B. Virgo in utero non potuit recipere gratiam nec sanctificationem ante suam nativitatem.” (Ibid., 116-117).

one in the womb, and the other outside the womb, asserts that no one can obtain a sanctification in the womb, when his mother conceives him, but that he can obtain a sanctification outside the womb, when his mother gives birth to him, because then the flesh has already been infused by the soul.⁵³ And – the Master of Hales continues –, when Christ says that “If someone is not born again,” he refers to the birth outside the womb, when his mother gives birth to him, and not to the birth in the womb, when she conceives him; therefore, since no one can be sanctified before being reborn, as Christ says, so no one can be sanctified in the womb before being born.⁵⁴

Our author takes as a fifth proof against the opinion of St. Augustine, according to which, “if a man could be regenerated in the womb by grace, since he still has time to be born, he would be reborn before being born, which is absurd.” From this the English master deduces that he cannot be sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit before being born, since to be sanctified is to be reborn; therefore, the Virgin could not have been sanctified in her mother’s womb.⁵⁵

Alexander takes as a sixth proof against the opinion of St. Augustine, according to which the sanctification of Jeremiah can be understood as predestination, according to the denomination which the Gospel gives to the sons of God not as not yet reborn, but only as predestined; and, as Christ dies to call the sons of God only as predestined, but not yet regenerated, in a similar way – the Mariologist of Hales deduces – can be understood that sanctification of Jeremiah, since it could not have occurred in the womb before birth.⁵⁶

53 “4. Posset dici ad hoc quod duplex est nativitas, scilicet nativitas in utero et nativitas ex utero. Sanctificationem autem ante nativitatem in utero nemo potest habere, sed ante nativitatem ex utero potest, quia iam est infusa anima in utero carni.” (Ibid., 11).

54 “Dominus autem, cum hinc loqueretur, inquit: Nisi quis renatus fuerit denuo etc., eam computans primam nativitatem, quae fit matre pariente, non concipiente, quae fit ex ea, non quae fit in ea»; ergo renasci dicitur respectu nativitatis ex utero quae est matre pariente, et non respectu nativitatis in utero. Item, iam diceretur tertia nativitas, quam Dominus vocat secundam; ergo, cum non possit aliquis sanctificari antequam renasci, non potest aliquis sanctificari in utero.” (Ibid.).

55 “5. Item, «si homo regenerari per gratiam in utero potest, quoniam restat illi adhuc nasci, renascitur antequam nascatur; quod fieri nullo modo potest»; ergo nec sanctificari potest per gratiam Spiritus antequam nascatur, quia sanctificari non est nisi renasci; ergo, Virgo non potuit sanctificari in utero.” (Ibid.).

56 “6. Item, Augustinus obicit de sanctificatione Ieremiae, dicens: «Illa sanctificatio potest non inconvenienter secundum praedestinationem intelligi, sicut filios Dei appellat Evangelium nondum renatos, sed solum praedestinos; cum dicitur Ioan. 11,51-52: Christus erat moriturus ut filios Dei congregaret in unum, hic vocat filios Dei secundum praedestinationem solum, scilicet nondum regeneratos»; ergo similiter in illa sanctificatione convenienter potest intelligi. Non est igitur instantia de Ieremia quod possit fieri sanctificatio ante nativitatem ex utero” (Ibid.).

Alexander assumes as a seventh and last proof against sanctification in the womb the warning of St. Jerome, when he assures that one should not believe him except what he extracts from the New or the Old Testament; and, as on the sanctification of the Virgin there is nothing found in either the New or the Old Testament, one should not believe that she was sanctified in the womb.⁵⁷

2. EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR

Alexander then analyzes five arguments that prove that the Virgin was sanctified in the womb. According to the first, St. Bernard says in his letter to the canons of Lyon that Jeremiah was sanctified before leaving the mother's vulva, and St. John the Baptist felt the Lord Jesus in his mother's womb. Therefore, the same sanctification in the womb can be affirmed, with even greater reason, of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁸

In the second proof, the theologian of Hales insists on the same ideas, reiterating that, according to prophecy, Jeremiah was sanctified before leaving his mother's womb, and according to a gloss on the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptist was sanctified and received the Holy Spirit while still in the mother's womb.⁵⁹

As a third argument, Alexander assumes what St. Ambrose formulates in a gloss on the passage from the Gospel of Luke, when Elizabeth said that, upon hearing the greeting of her cousin Mary at the Visitation, her child (Elizabeth's) exulted with joy in her womb. Ambrose comments, in this regard, that the mother Elizabeth was not filled with the Holy Spirit before her son John, but that her son, filled with the Spirit of God, filled his mother, and for this reason it is evident that the angel told Mary that her womb would be filled with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ From this the English Mariologist, assuming the opinion of St. Bernard, concludes that the privilege granted to very few mortals, such as

57 "7. Item, Hieronymus: «Non credas mihi, nisi quod dixeris tibi traxero de Novo vel Veteri Testamento». Sed de sanctificatione Virginis in utero nihil invenitur nec in Novo nec in Veteri Testamento; ergo non debet credi fuisse sanctificata in utero." (Ibid.).

58 "Ad oppositum: a. Bernardus, in Epistola ad Canonicos Lugdunenses: «Lego de Ieremia quod priusquam exiret de vulva, sanctificatus sit et de Ioanne Baptista non secus sentio, qui Dominum in utero sensit»." (Ibid.).

59 "b. Item, Ierem. 1,5, dicit Dominus ad Ieremiam: Priusquam exires de ventre, sanctificavi te, Glossa 7: - Ioannes etiam sanctificatus fuit in utero, et Spiritum Sanctum accepit." (Ibid.).

60 "c. Item, Luc. 1,44, ubi dixit Elisabeth ad Mariam: Ut autem facta est vox salutationis tuae in auribus meis, exsultavit infans in gaudio in utero meo, Glossa Ambrosii: « Non prius mater repleta Spiritu Sancto quam filius, sed filius repletus replet et matrem, et apparet quod Angelus dixerat quod Spiritu Sancto replebitur adhuc ex utero matris suae »." (Ibid.).

Jeremiah and John the Baptist, of being sanctified in the maternal womb could not be denied to the Virgin Mary; therefore, it is unquestionable that Mary was holy before being born.⁶¹

In the fourth proof in favor of the sanctification of Mary in the womb, Alexander reinterprets –perhaps somewhat inappropriately– the opinion of St. Bernard, when he says that the Church is not wrong in celebrating the day of the birth of the Virgin, because, if she had been born in sin, there would be no joy or festive celebration, but weeping; therefore, since we must celebrate this feast with joy and solemnity, it is evident that the birth of Mary was holy, because she had been sanctified before being born.⁶²

As a fifth and last argument in favor of the belief in the sanctification of the Virgin in the womb, the master of Hales adopts the criterion of St. Anselm, who in his work *De conceptu virginali* asserts that it was fitting that the conception of Christ should be produced by a most pure mother endowed with a purity that would make any greater purity unthinkable below God. According to St. Anselm, God the Father, who had begotten from his own heart an only-begotten Son equal to himself, now decided that he should also have a human mother of such a nature that he should be a common son of God the Father and a virgin mother, on whom the Holy Spirit would operate so that he (Christ) who proceeded from him (God the Father) as God would be conceived and born as a man; therefore, it was fitting that the human conception of Christ should take place in a most pure mother, for whom a greater purity than hers below God would be unthinkable.⁶³ Consequently, if the Virgin Mary had not been purified and sanctified in the maternal womb, it would be understood that Jeremiah and John the Baptist would have a greater purity than that of the Virgin; and, since it is

61 “Ex iis ergo patet quod Ioannes fuit sanctificatus in utero et similiter Ieremias. Ex iis sic arguit Bernardus: «Quod paucis mortalium constat esse collatum, fas certe non est tantae Virgini fuisse negatum». Sed constat aliis collatam esse gratiam sanctificationis in utero, sicut Ioanni et Ieremiae, ergo sanctificatio in utero fuit collata Virgini; ergo «mater Domini procul dubio prius fuit sancta quam nata».” (Ibid.).

62 “d. Item, Bernardus: «Non fallitur omnino sancta Ecclesia celebrans » sanctam « eius nativitatis diem ». Sed statui in peccato non debetur gaudium nec solemnitas, sed luctus; ergo, cum nativitati B. Virginis debeatur gaudium et solemnitas, patet quod eius nativitas fuit sancta; ergo B. Virgo prius fuit sancta quam nata, quia si esset nata in peccato, potius esset flendum de sua nativitate quam gaudendum. ”. (Ibid.).

63 “e. Item, Anselmus, in libro *De conceptu Virginali*: « Decebat, ut illius hominis conceptio de matre purissima fieret ea puritate qua maior sub Deo nequit intelligi ». Et ponit rationem huiusmodi: « Cui Deus Pater unicum Filium, quem de corde suo genuit aequalem sibi, ita dare disponebat, ut naturaliter esset unus idemque communis Dei Patris et Virginis filius, et quam substantialiter Filius sibi matrem facere eligebat, et de qua Spiritus Sanctus operaturus erat, ut de illa conciperetur et nasceretur ille de quo ipse procedebat; et propter hoc decebat ut illius hominis, scilicet Christi, conceptio de matre purissima fieret qua puritate nulla maior possit intelligi sub Deo ». ”. (Ibid., 117-118).

impossible to think of a greater purity than that of Mary, it follows that she was sanctified before being born.⁶⁴

3. ARGUING HIS OPINION

After having examined the reasons for and against the thesis in question, Alexander of Hales forcefully expresses his opinion in these synthetic terms:

It must be granted that the glorious Virgin was sanctified before she was born after the infusion of her soul into her body in the womb of her mother; and it must also be granted that she was enriched with a gift of grace greater than any other being.⁶⁵

To conclude, Alexander responds to the seven objections he previously set forth as opposed to the thesis defended. Our author refutes the first six, raised by St. Augustine, saying that regeneration, produced by the sacraments according to the common law, is different from sanctification, produced by a special grace of the Holy Spirit according to a private law.⁶⁶ Therefore, although God has granted the sacraments the virtue and power to sanctify, he (God) can nevertheless sanctify and justify by the grace of the Holy Spirit without the need for the sacraments to be received.⁶⁷ The theologian of Hales completes his reasoning by saying that the sanctification corresponding to all men only occurs among those who are born, since it is produced by the sacraments; but the sanctification which is by the grace of a prerogative of the Holy Spirit can occur in the womb; and the sanctification of the Virgin, of Jeremiah and of John the Baptist was by the grace of a prerogative of the Holy Spirit, which is valid to a greater extent in the sanctification of the Virgin Mary.⁶⁸

64 "Sed si non esset purificata et sanctificata in utero, iam intelligeretur maior puritas in Ioanne et Ieremia quam in Virgine; si ergo in illis non potest intelligi maior puritas quam in Virgine, relinquitur quod prius fuit B. Virgo sanctificata quam nata." (Ibid., 118).

65 "Solutio: Concedendum est quod gloriosa Virgo ante suam nativitatem post infusionem animae in suo corpore fuit sanctificata in utero matris suae; et concedendum etiam quod maiori dono gratiae fuit ditata quam aliquis alius." (Ibid.).

66 "Ad obiecta]: 1-6. Ad rationes autem Augustini dicendum quod est regeneratio quae est per gratiam sacramentorum, et haec est secundum legem communem. Est alia, quae est per gratiam Spiritus Sancti, et haec est secundum legem privatam, quia, sicut dicit Augustinus, « Deum non alligavit virtutem suam sacramentis »." (Ibid.).

67 "Unde quamvis dederit virtutem sacramentis et potentiam sanctificandi, nihilominus potest ipse iustificare et sanctificare per gratiam Spiritus Sancti sine susceptione sacramenti; unde sine sacramento potest dare gratiam." (Ibid.).

68 "sanctificatio pertinens ad omnes non potest esse nisi hominis nati, quia est per sacramenta; sed illa, quae est per gratiam praerogativae Spiritus Sancti, potest esse in utero. [...] Sanctificatio autem B. Virginis,

Alexander replies to the seventh objection by arguing that although the sanctification of the Virgin Mary is not expressly read of in any passage of the Old or New Testament, yet it may be read metaphorically in the verse of the Psalm, “The Most High hath sanctified his tabernacle,” for this sanctification of the Virgin was prefigured in many passages of the Old and New Testament.⁶⁹ The Master of Hales complements this reasoning by saying that, in a similar way, in the Old and New Testaments it is read that Jeremiah and John the Baptist were sanctified in the womb, and, therefore, what was granted to those two men cannot be denied to Mary; and thus faith and reason confirm that it is to be believed that what happened with the sanctification of Jeremiah and John the Baptist in the mother's womb happened also with the Virgin Mary, who, in a still more strong way than in the two cases cited, was sanctified in the mother's womb.⁷⁰

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Alexander of Hales is the first Franciscan theologian of the 13th century to deny belief in Mary's immaculate conception. To argue his denial, he poses that the question “In what state could the Virgin be sanctified” can have four possible alternatives: whether she was sanctified before conception; whether she was sanctified at her conception; whether she was sanctified after conception and before the infusion of the soul into the body; and, finally, whether she was sanctified after the infusion of the soul into her mother's womb. Our author analyzes each of these four alternatives argumentatively, following the scholastic methodology of first analyzing the evidence in favor, then the evidence against, before reasoning his own opinion on the matter.

To the first question, whether the Virgin Mary was sanctified before conception, Alexander asserts that, although Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, could be holy as persons by the grace received, they could not be holy as to their nature, necessarily contaminated by original sin derived from the intercourse of

Ioannis et Ieremiae fuit praerogativae per gratiam Spiritus Sancti et per legem privatam, et maxime sanctificatio B. Virginis.” (Ibid.).

69 “7. Ad aliud dicendum quod, etsi sanctificatio B. Virginis in utero non legatur expressa, legitur tamen in significatione — Psalmus: Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus — quia prefigurata fuit in multis locis in Veteri et Novo Testamento.” (Ibid.).

70 “Similiter legitur in ratione fidei in Veteri et Novo Testamento; nam legitur de Ioanne et Ieremia quod sanctificati fuerint in utero, sed quod aliis est concessum, non est tantae Virgini negatum. Et ita fides est et ratio fidei, quia credendum est, ex quo illi fuerunt sanctificati in utero, quod similiter B. Virgo, et multo fortius, fuit sanctificata in utero.” (Ibid.).

their respective parents; therefore, by transmitting that contaminated nature to their daughter Mary when they conceived her, she could not be holy before being conceived.

To the second question, our author also denies that the Virgin Mary was sanctified at her conception. In this sense, he fully assumes the dominant opinion currently that conception resulting from intercourse— with the mixture of the seminal principles of man and woman —is moved naturally by the libido, and depends on the movement of nature, not that of the will. Now, adopting the thesis of St. Bernard of Clairvaux that where there is libido there is sin, Alexander deduces that, although a coitus like that of Joachim and Anne could be meritorious, nevertheless, a conception can never be meritorious, because it is contaminated by libido, and, therefore, there will never be sanctification in conception, not even in that of Mary.

Hales' theologian also denies the third alternative as to whether the Virgin Mary was sanctified after conception and before the infusion of the soul into the body. In his judgment, the human body receives from its union with the soul the possibility of glory; and, as grace is ordered to glory, so also the human body receives the possibility of grace by its union with the soul. And, just as the human body before its animation by the soul has no possibility of being ordered to glory, in an analogous way it also lacks the conditions to be ordered to grace. Hence our author concludes that the body (including that of the Virgin) cannot receive grace nor be sanctified before it is animated by the soul.

To the fourth question, whether the Virgin Mary was sanctified after the infusion of the soul into the womb of her mother, Alexander of Hales answers positively. According to him, although the sanctification corresponding to all men only occurs among those who are born, since it is produced by the sacraments, nevertheless, the sanctification produced by the grace of a prerogative of the Holy Spirit can occur in the womb; and the sanctification of Mary, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist was by the grace of an exclusive prerogative of the Holy Spirit, which is valid to a greater extent in the sanctification of the Virgin. And if faith and reason confirm that we must believe what the Bible says about the sanctification of Jeremiah and John the Baptist in the mother's womb, we must rationally believe and accept that this also happened with the Virgin Mary, who, in a much greater way than in the two cases cited, was sanctified in the womb of her mother Anna.

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