DUNS SCOTUS ON THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST

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by

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Like most scholastic theologians, Duns Scotus takes the broad outlines of his understanding of redemption from St. Anselm’s Cur Deus Homo. In this study, I examine Scotus’s account of Christ’s redemptive work in light of his Christology and in light of thirteenth-century Franciscan theology. Considering this theological and historical context helps to settle a number of questions that Scotus’s account of redemption raises. These questions include whether Scotus attributes satisfaction to Christ’s death, whether Scotus’s expansive notion of divine power fundamentally shapes his soteriology, and whether Scotus’s soteriology was influenced not only by Anselm but also by his scholastic predecessors. I argue that Scotus does attribute satisfaction to Christ’s death, that Scotus’s Christology is more important than his notion of divine power in influencing his soteriology, and that Scotus adopts and extends many modifications that thirteenth-century theologians made to Anselm’s soteriology.

Perhaps the most significant divide between Anselm and his thirteenth-century interpreters is the role that scholastic theologians accorded to created grace in analyzing
the source of value that they attributed to Christ’s suffering and death. Unlike his Franciscan predecessors, Scotus claims that the hypostatic union does not necessarily confer grace on Christ’s soul or augment its capacity for grace. Scotus’s understanding of the connection between Christ’s possession of the highest grace and the hypostatic union becomes the basis from which he speculates on alternative soteriological scenarios that would not involve Christ.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The New Testament teaches that Christ’s Passion and death brings about man’s forgiveness from sin and makes it possible once again for him to achieve his supernatural end. How Christ’s death actually achieves human salvation, however, has been an ancient subject of theological speculation. The soteriological speculations contained in St. Anselm’s Cur Deus Homo were the main influence on how scholastic authors understood the manner in which Christ’s death resulted in human salvation.¹ This study will examine how John Duns Scotus articulates an Anselmian understanding of redemption that is modified by certain trends in thirteenth-century theology as well as by certain implications in Scotus’s own Christology.

Anselm argued that Christ redeems humanity by making satisfaction for sin. Satisfaction requires compensating God for what he looses through human sin. Anselm

¹ Though Cur Deus Homo was the main influence on scholastic understandings of Christ’s Passion and death, the ideas of the Church Fathers also influenced scholastic theologians. These ideas were known largely through Peter Lombard’s Sentences. Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, for example, continue to see Christ’s death as depriving the devil of some sort of right that he has over man because of sin. This was a common Patristic theme. The Church Fathers, however, had many other ways of thinking about the redemptive significance of the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. For a discussion of the array of soteriological ideas in the Fathers, see Brian Daley, “‘He Himself is Our Peace’ (Ephesians 2: 14): Early Christian Views of Redemption in Christ,” The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 149-76.
sees two aspects to sin: (1) there is disobedience to God’s will, which deprives God of the honor that every rational creature owes God and (2) there is the effect of this disobedience on the human race, which deprives man of the possibility of attaining his supernatural end. According to Anselm, Christ makes satisfaction for the disobedience involved in sin. Satisfaction, then, compensates God for the loss of his honor that is the result of sin. After satisfaction has been made the second aspect of sin is reversed through a reward that God gives to Christ for making satisfaction.

According to Anselm, the freely willed death of Christ alone could make satisfaction for sin. Anselm claims that the criteria for something to count as satisfaction are as follows: (1) what is offered as compensation must be equivalent to the debt of sin and (2) what is offered cannot otherwise be owed to God. Anselm argues that the debt of sin is exceedingly severe, as we shall see in the next chapter. Satisfaction for sin requires offering to God some good that is greater than all that is not God. Offering such a good will satisfy the first condition for making satisfaction. Only God could offer something equivalent to the debt contracted by man’s sin. At the same time, only man owes this debt. For this reason, Anselm argues that the redeemer must be both God and man. The humanity and divinity of the God-man are united in a single person who is both able to and ought to make satisfaction for sin. Christ, being sinless, is not obligated to suffer death, which is the penalty for sin. By offering his life to God, Christ does something to which he was not already obligated, thus fulfilling the second condition for satisfaction.
To the account of redemption that Anselm provided, scholastic thinkers made three main contributions. First, scholastic theologians developed a more detailed account of how Christ’s human nature contributes to his ability to act as our redeemer. For Anselm, the human nature of Christ was important because it made the redeemer co-essential with the redeemed and its sinlessness freed him from the penalty of death, thus providing him with something that he could offer God as repayment for sin. According to Anselm, the life offered on the Cross takes its redemptive value exclusively from the divine person whose life it is, not from anything created that is bestowed upon the assumed nature of Christ. Scholastic theologians, however, argued that Christ’s possession of the ‘highest grace’ also contributed to giving his offering on the Cross its redemptive value. The highest grace is a created quality that inheres in Christ’s soul giving redemptive value to his suffering and death by enhancing the supernatural value of his actions that are elicited in accord with that grace.

Second, many thirteenth-century scholastics understood satisfaction to encompass more than Anselm had thought it did. Anselm held that satisfaction exclusively compensated God for the sheer disobedience involved in sin, which he sometimes describes as robbing God of honor owed him. Thus, making satisfaction of itself did not reopen the possibility of man achieving his supernatural end. To Anselm’s notion of satisfaction, many scholastics added the idea that satisfaction also compensates God for his loss of the human race. This will lead some scholastics to see satisfaction as a kind of

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merit. While this might seem like merely a terminological distinction between Anselm and his scholastic interpreters, it is important to recognize this shift in how theologians understood ‘satisfaction’ in order to accurately determine whether Scotus attributes satisfaction to Christ’s redemptive work, as we shall see in chapter 4.

Third, Anselm made various necessity claims in Cur Deus Homo which scholastic theologians closely examined. For example, Anselm argued that it was necessary to make satisfaction to God before man could be forgiven for sin. Scholastics, however, tended to argue that it was fitting, but not necessary, for God to receive satisfaction. According to most scholastic theologians, God could have raised man to salvation without receiving satisfaction for sin. Scholastics also debated whether it was necessary for a God-man to make satisfaction for sin. Before Scotus, all scholastics agreed with Anselm that only a God-man could render satisfaction for sin. Scotus’s Christology leads him to argue that a mere man (or, even an angel) could have made satisfaction for human sin under certain circumstances.

In this study, we will establish that Scotus’s way of thinking about the redemptive work of Christ follows in the tradition of his thirteenth-century scholastic predecessors just sketched. In particular, we will consider Scotus’s treatment of redemption against the background of the writings of Bonaventure, Richard of Middleton, and Peter Olivi.

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4 Richard of Middleton (c. 1249-1302) completed his Sentences commentary in the late 1290s. Book III was likely completed between 1291-95, according to Richard Cross, “Incarnation, Indwelling, and the Vision of God: Henry of Ghent and some Franciscans,” Franciscan Studies (57) 1999, n. 41, p. 98. For more information about Richard’s life and work as well as information about the dating of writings, see Edgar Hocedez, Richard de Middleton: sa vie, ses oeuvres, sa doctrine, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense,
Like these earlier Franciscan thinkers, Scotus emphasizes how the created gifts and powers of Christ’s human nature contribute to his ability to make satisfaction for sin. He too thinks of satisfaction as compensating God for his loss of the human race as well as compensating him for the disobedience of sin. Finally, Scotus criticizes the necessity claims that Anselm introduces into his account of salvation.

While Scotus adopts many of the modifications that his predecessors made to Anselm’s soteriology, he departs from some of their positions as well. This study will also establish that Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union leads him to depart from the soteriology of his Franciscan predecessors. Two aspects of Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union played a prominent role in shaping his account of Christ’s redemptive work. First, Scotus held that the assumed nature of Christ was the causal origin of its actions, rather than the divine person of Christ. The Logos is rightly called our redeemer, but his redemptive suffering issued forth from his assumed nature and takes its redemptive value from principles possessed by the assumed nature. Second, Scotus argued that the assumption of human nature by the Logos did not automatically confer grace on his soul or augment his capacity for receiving grace. Christ possessed the

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6 Normally, Henry of Ghent is the most important scholastic predecessor for understanding Scotus’s position on a given topic. Henry, however, devotes only one short quodlibetal question to any of the topics at the heart of understanding Christ’s redemptive work. In *Quodlibet* 5.10, which occupies 22 lines in the Badius edition, Henry takes up the question of whether Christ’s suffering removed the obstacles that blocked man from entering heaven. For the text of *Quodlibet* 5.10, see vol. 1, f. 168r in *Quodlibeta Magistri Henrici Goethals a Gandavo, doctoris Solemnis, Socii Sorbonici, et archidiaconi Tournacensis, cum duplici tabella, Venundantur ab Iodoco Badio Ascensio, sub gratia et privilegio ad finem explicandis*, 2 vols, (Paris; repr. 1961, Heverlee, Louvain: Bibliothèque SJ).
highest grace that God could create, but his doing so was not made possible in any way by the hypostatic union. Scotus’s analysis of how Christ possesses the highest grace leads him to the conclusion that a mere man could also have possessed the highest grace. To the extent that possessing the highest grace is required for making satisfaction for sin any rational creature could have been given this grace by God and performed some work of redemption equal in value to that of Christ’s.

1.1 Status Quaestionis

Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century histories of dogma often devoted some space to Scotus’s understanding of redemption. In more recent times, four articles and one book chapter have provided overviews of Scotus’s doctrine of redemption. These commentators have noticed that Scotus departs in many ways from


St. Anselm and the Anselmian understanding of redemption developed by his scholastic predecessors. Many of these commentators have argued that Scotus’s account of redemption diverges from that of Anselm and thirteenth-century theologians because of his understanding of divine freedom. Other commentators, however, have suggested that Scotus’s Christology largely explains his divergences from the soteriology of earlier theologians. We will argue on behalf of the second account in this study.

The interpretation of Scotus’s writings on Christ’s Passion and death, which emphasizes the role that his conception of divine freedom plays in his soteriology, can be called the “voluntarist interpretation.” This interpretation emphasizes Scotus’s criticism of the various necessity and fittingness claims made by Anselm and by thirteenth-century scholastics. According to this interpretation, Scotus held that claiming that the death of a God-man was either necessary or uniquely fitting as a means of redeeming the human race was incompatible with divine freedom. In other words, Scotus’s own understanding of how Christ redeems is largely the same as his Anselmian predecessors except for his insistence on the utter contingency of Christ’s Passion for our redemption. Before looking at various expressions of this interpretation, we will consider Scotus’s theory of redemption. For the sake of completion, I should also cite the following article: Steven S. Aspenson, “Anselmian Satisfaction, Duns Scotus and the Debt of Sin,” The Modern Schoolman, 73 (1996): 141-158. Aspenson tries to defend Anselm against the criticisms of Duns Scotus, but incredibly Aspenson never cites a single text of Scotus in his article. Instead his presentation of Scotus’s arguments relies on quoting or summarizing a few comments Marilyn McCord Adams made about Scotus’s theory in “Duns Scotus on the Goodness of God.”

Scotus, of course, never uses the term ‘voluntarism’. The term is applied to different aspects of Scotus’s thought with different meanings. The scholars whom I consider in this introduction use the term as a synonym for God’s omnipotence and the freedom of God’s power from any constraints stemming from his wisdom and goodness. This understanding of voluntarism is different from, though related to, the notion of voluntarism when it refers to the precise relation of intellect and will in eliciting an act of choice. This sense of voluntarism applies to God and creatures. For Scotus’s evolving understanding of how the intellect and will are related in an act of choice, see Stephen D. Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change his Mind on the Will?,” Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28: After the Condemnations of 1277 – The University of Paris in the Last Quarter of the Thirteenth Century, (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 2000): 719-94.
understanding of divine freedom. By doing so, we will be in a better position to judge whether his understanding of divine freedom alone could lead Scotus to diverge from Anselm’s theory of redemption in the ways that are unique to Scotus but not shared by earlier thirteenth-century theologians.

Scotus’s understanding of divine freedom is another way of talking about divine power or omnipotence. According to the doctrine of divine omnipotence, God has the power to do everything. Of course, just what this is the power to do is debated among theologians who posit different constraints on God’s will, and, thus different understandings of what is possible. The most commonly posited constraint on omnipotence is logical impossibility. Though omnipotent, God does not have the power to do the logically contradictory or the inherently impossible. The inability to do the logically impossible, however, does not diminish God’s power. There are two other possible sources of constraint that could limit what God has the power to do: (1) internal constraints coming from divine attributes such as goodness, justice, and wisdom and (2) external constraints coming from the essences of creatures.

Scotus nowhere claims that God has the power to will the logically contradictory. Yet his understanding of divine freedom does not posit that God can do all that is logically possible. In other words, there are other constraints on the divine will besides logical impossibility, according to Scotus. There is scholarly debate over whether created natures in any way constrain God’s power. Though being limited by the essences of creatures might sound like a diminishment of divine power, it is not necessarily so. The question at issue here is whether God’s decision to create human beings with certain essential nature, for example, limits what God can command a human to do. If God’s
power were limited in this way, it would only result because of more fundamental
decision of God and, therefore, would not necessarily represent any improper
diminishment of God’s power. In this sense, it would not ultimately be an external
constraint on divine power, even though talking about it as such is easier for the purposes
of analysis. Some recent research on Scotus’s moral philosophy has provided evidence
that Scotus does not believe that created essences constrain the range of what God has the
power to do.¹⁰ For example, Scotus seems to believe that nothing about human nature
makes it impossible for God to command people to lie or to have polygamous
relationships. Nevertheless, some scholars argue that what God can command creatures
to do is not wholly divorced from his own essence as good and wise or from the essence
of rational creatures which dictates what type of actions perfect them.¹¹

It is unambiguous, however, that Scotus believes that at least one of God’s
attributes does constrain the range of things that he can will. God’s nature as the highest
good requires him to refrain from willing certain things. For example, God cannot will
that rational creatures hate him or act in a way that shows any irreverence for God.¹²

¹⁰ Thomas Williams, “Reason, Morality, and Voluntarism in Duns Scotus: A Pseudo-Problem

Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 77 (3) 2003: 315-56.

¹² Duns Scotus, Ordinatio III, d. 37, q. 1, nn. 19-20 (Vatican 280-81), “De praeceptis autem
prima tabulae secus est, quia illa immediate respiciunt Deum pro obiecto. Duo quidem prima, si
intelligentur tantum esse negativa, primum scilicet ‘Non habebis deos alienos,’ et secundum ‘Non accipies
nomen Dei tui in vanum,’ hoc est ‘non facies Deo irreverentiam’, illa sunt de lege naturae, stricte sumendo
legem naturae, quia necessario sequitur ‘si est Deus, est amandus ut Deus solus’, similiter sequitur quod
‘nihil aliud est colendum ut Deus, nec Deo est irreverentia facienda’. Et per consequens in istis non poterit
Deus dispensare, ut aliquis possit facere oppositum huius vel illius prohibiti” (emphasis added).
While there is no logical contradiction involved in the idea of God willing that a creature hate him, God cannot do this because of his nature as the highest good.

Despite limitations on what God has the power to do that result from his nature as the highest good and from the demands of logical consistency, Scotus believes that God’s omnipotence would have allowed him to will many other things besides that which he has in fact willed. Scotus often expresses this conviction through invoking God’s absolute power and contrasting it with God’s ordained power. William Courtenay has pointed out that Scotus has two different ways of articulating the distinction between ordained and absolute power.\(^{13}\) In his commentaries on I Sent. d. 44, Scotus argues that ordained and absolute power are two separate ways that God’s power can be exercised. In the current order, God might act according to either of these two powers. Moreover, in commentaries on I Sent. d. 44, he applies the distinction between absolute and ordained power not only to God, but also to other rational agents. When a person acts in accord with a just law, then he acts according to his ordained power. Yet certain persons (such as kings or other political and ecclesiastical authorities) have the authority to act outside of the law by their absolute power and to establish a new order.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) William J. Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power* (Italy: Bergamo, 1990), pp. 100-02. Courtenay traces Scotus’s understanding of the power distinction in *Lectura/Ordinatio* I, d. 44 to the understanding of the power distinction that was present in canon lawyers. As Courtenay shows, the distinction originally developed in theological writings to explain what was meant by saying that God could or could not do something and thereby to fend off Avicennian necessitarianism. The canon law distinction developed to explain papal and royal power. Naturally, the understanding of the power distinction in the writings of most theologians did not follow the canonist interpretation. Yet Courtenay speculates that Scotus and other Franciscans sometimes adopted the canonist interpretation in order to provide a defense of papal actions on behalf of the mendicants, such as granting them the right to hear confessions (see *Capacity and Volition*, pp. 102-03).

Scotus’s other understanding of the distinction between absolute and ordained power does not interpret the distinction as referring to two different ways power can be exercised (nor does it apply the distinction to every rational agent, but only to God). Instead, God’s absolute power refers to what he could have done, not a way that his power has been or might be exercised. His ordained power refers to how he has decided to exercise his power, and this is the only way that God exercises power ad extra. This latter understanding of the distinction between the absolute and ordained power of God was common to many scholastic theologians.\footnote{Courtenay, \textit{Capacity and Volition}, p. 87, “In the second half of the thirteenth century the distinction of absolute and ordained power was employed by most theologians….\textit{Potentia ordinata} was equated with the total preordained, providential will of God, while \textit{potentia absoluta} was divine power without considering the divine will or the created order. The meaning and acceptability of the distinction were so firmly established that most theologians did not bother to define it or defend its use, but simply employed it as a means of exploring the degree to which the things God did not do were simply impossible or were simply possibilities that God did not choose for his own good reasons.”} Moreover, this understanding of the power distinction is the one that Scotus employs throughout his writings on questions of soteriology.\footnote{For connections between Scotus’s understanding of the power distinction and his theory of synchronic contingency, see Henri Veldhuis, “Ordained and Absolute Power in Scotus’ \textit{Ordinatio I 44},” \textit{Vivarium} 38 (2000): 222-30.}

Aside from making use of the distinction between ordained and absolute power, another way that Scotus describes divine power that is particularly relevant to his soteriology is his doctrine of divine acceptation \textit{[acceptatio divina]}. This notion is developed in Scotus’s discussion of how certain human acts can be meritorious of grace and glory. He applies his notion of merit to the salvific efficacy of Christ’s Passion and death. Scotus’s understanding of God’s freedom and unrestricted power leads him to emphasize that rewards ultimately result from a determination of the divine will to accept one type of act instead of another. God does not ultimately accept one act over another
because of any intrinsic feature of the human act. In other words, created realities do not restrict God’s freedom to impute merit to something or necessitate that he reward someone. Thus, nothing about Christ’s Passion and death compels God to grant grace and forgiveness to the human race. God would have been free not to accept this as worthy of the reward of salvation for the human race.\textsuperscript{17}

Scholars who have argued that Scotus’s notion of divine freedom and power is the fundamental force shaping his soteriology have been impressed with his anti-Anselmian claims that a good angel or a mere man could have made satisfaction for human sin just as the Incarnate Logos did. To those who hold the voluntarist interpretation of Scotus’s soteriology, allowing for this range of means of redemption seems to follow directly from Scotus’s understanding of divine freedom. Douglas Langston, for example, writes,

Scotus…puts no restrictions on God’s choice. Since God is the one who determines what sacrifice is redemptive for mankind, God can choose any method of redeeming mankind. This emphasis on God’s unrestricted freedom is, of course, in line with Scotus’ general endorsement of voluntarism. Since Anselm’s analysis would lead to a restriction of God’s freedom of choice Scotus, as a voluntarist, must provide an analysis that differs from Anselm’s.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{18} Langston, “Scotus’ Departure from Anselm’s Theory of the Atonement,” p. 240. Cf. Jean Rivière, \textit{The Doctrine of the Atonement: A Historical Essay}. After quickly summarizing Scotus’s understanding of redemption, Rivière writes, “…Hence Scot [sic] does away with all intrinsic necessity and subordinates everything to God’s free-will,” pp. 105-06. Rivière also claims that Scotus’s doctrine of redemption is fundamentally formed by a Nestorian tendancy in his Christology. As we shall see momentarily, he believes that this Nestorian tendancy is what makes room for Scotus’s emphasis on divine freedom to play the role that it does in his writings on redemption.
Langston describes Scotus’s understandings of redemption as being shaped by his ‘voluntarism.’ According to Langston, Scotus’s voluntarism does not imply simply that God could have not willed the Passion and death of Christ; it also implies other concrete means of redemption could have been chosen by the divine will. Adolf von Harnack interpreted Scotus in a similar way to Langston. Harnack writes,

Duns Scotus draws the true logical conclusion from the theory of satisfaction…by tracing everything to the ‘acceptatio’ of God. All satisfaction and all merit obtain their worth from the arbitrary estimation of the receiver. Hence the value of Christ’s death was as high as God chose to rate it…And so Duns has not hesitated to assert that an angel or even a purus homo who should have remained free from original sin and had been endowed with grace, could have redeemed us.¹⁹

Harnack believes that Scotus’s theory of divine acceptation allows him to determine what could count as satisfaction for sin because imputing satisfaction to someone is an arbitrary act of the divine will. Presumably, Harnack believes that for Scotus the arbitrariness of God’s will is limited only by logical consistency. According to Harnack, Scotus’s notion of divine acceptation is bound to lead him to undo the necessitarian arguments of Anselm and in turn shape Scotus’s entire understanding of Christ’s redemptive work.²⁰ Commenting on the implications of Scotus’s teaching on divine

¹⁹ Harnack, History of Dogma, pp. 196-7. Cf. Gustaf Aulén who does not mention Scotus by name but he writes the following: “…the Nominalism which marks the final stage of scholastic theology represents the disintegration of Anselm’s theory. The usual Latin ideas are repeated, but their basis has been undermined. The Nominalist criticism is that in the last resort all depends on the arbitrary act of God accepting satisfaction,” Christus Victor, trans. A. G. Herbert, (Wipf & Stock, 2003 [Originally published by SPCK, 1931]), p. 94.

²⁰ See further Harnack, History of Dogma, p. 197, “Of course, Duns made the further effort to show the conveniens of the death of the God-man, and here he works out essentially the same thoughts as Thomas. But this no more belongs to dogmatic. For dogmatic, it is enough if it is proved that in virtue of His arbitrary will God has destined a particular number to salvation; that in virtue of the same arbitrary will He already determined before the creation of the world, that the election should be carried out through the suffering of the God-man; and that He now completes this plan by accepting the merit of the God-man, imparting the gratia prima to the elect…” Cf. Hastings Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian
acceptation, Harnack writes, “By Scotus it was brought about that this doctrine [of redemption] also became severed from faith, and was entirely transformed into a dialectical problem. In this lies the disintegration of dogma through Scotism.”

Recently Luc Mathieu has called attention to the divergence between Scotus’s understanding of divine freedom with that found in Anselm and some of his Franciscan predecessors. Anselm and many of his thirteenth-century followers held that there was only one way that satisfaction could be made for sin. According to Mathieu, Scotus finds this position incompatible with divine liberty. Mathieu writes,

To imagine that there was not for God other means of redeeming man is for Duns Scotus to radically limit divine omnipotence. How could a created intelligence posit limits on the divine will? That God willed to save humanity in this way, there is no doubt, this is a fact, but this is consequent on the divine will, which could have made another choice.

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Theology, p. 385, “[Scotus] simply declared that the merits of Christ were sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world because God has willed to receive them as having such an efficacy. Thus Scotus at least paved the way for the idea that the connexion of the work of Christ with forgiveness and justification is wholly arbitrary and irrational.”

21 Harnack, History of Dogma, p. 198.


23 Mathieu, “Était-il nécessaire que le Christ mourût sur la croix?...”, p. 583, “Imaginer qu’il n’y aurait pas pour Dieu d’autres moyens de racheter l’homme c’est, pour Duns Scot, singulièrement limiter la toute-puissance divine. De quell droit une intelligence créée poserait-elle des limites à la volonté divine? Que Dieu ait ainsi voulu sauver l’humanité, cela ne fait aucun doute, c’est un fait, mais c’est un fait conséquent à une volonté divine qui aurait pu faire un autre choix.”
Some of Scotus’s scholastic predecessors also denied that the death of Christ was necessary for man’s salvation. According to these theologians, it was fitting, but not necessary. Yet these same scholastic theologians held that satisfaction could only have been made by a person who was both God and man. Scotus, on the other hand, argues that God could have chosen to have a mere creature make satisfaction for sin. The differences between Scotus and his predecessors seem to result from his more expansive understanding of divine freedom.

The judgment of Langston, Harnack, and Mathieu seems to find support in what Scotus writes about redemption. Scotus at one point writes, “no finite act is meritorious except because of the divine will that accepts it [as worthy of a reward]…because something is a good only to the extent that [God] accepts it.”²⁴ Scotus, moreover, wrote these words when talking about alternative ways that man’s redemption could have been secured. In particular, he makes this claim when defending the position that a good angel could have redeemed the human race, just as Christ did. Thus it seems that in order to answer the question of whether or not a rational creature such as an angel could have made satisfaction for sin, all that Scotus needs to do is to invoke the doctrine of divine acceptation, which in turn is based on his expansive understanding of divine liberty.

The voluntarist interpretation claims that Scotus’s understanding of redemption is somehow a direct consequence of his understanding of divine liberty. There is no doubt that Scotus’s understanding of divine omnipotence allowed for a greater scope of

possibilities than was common to previous understandings of omnipotence. Yet referring to the extent of divine power is not a sufficient basis for Scotus to deny (for example) that only the death of a God-man can render satisfaction for sin and to affirm that an angel could have made satisfaction for sin. It is conceivable that God’s omnipotence would only permit the use of one kind of created secondary cause in some given scenario. His choice to will this would be contingent even in this case. Having some finite number of things that he could will in a certain circumstance—whether that finite number is one or more than one—is compatible with Scotus’s notion of divine freedom and omnipotence. The voluntarist interpretation errs to the extent that it holds that from Scotus’s understanding of divine omnipotence alone we can know that some other means of redemption could have been willed by God. At most, the voluntarism of Scotus will allow us to conclude that God did not have to will Christ’s Passion and death.  

To understand why invoking God’s freedom is not sufficient to account for the unique aspects of Scotus’s theory of redemption, it is useful to think about Scotus’s approach to alternative means of redemption as tacitly relying on asking the following question: Assuming that all that God has willed and all that man has willed remains the same except for God’s decision to will the Passion of Christ as the means of redemption, could a mere creature have made satisfaction for sin? This question cannot be answered

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25 Scotus has an enormously complicated view of possibility and necessity that is the subject of scholarly debate. For an overview, see Calvin Normore, “Duns Scotus’s Modal Theory,” *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, edited by Thomas Williams, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 129-60. According to Normore, Scotus sometimes describes possibility as a matter of the non-repugnance of the different elements that are joined together in whatever is posited as possible. At other times, Scotus connects possibility to intellectual and volitional powers (making what is possible depend in some way on a being with the capacity to bring about what is possible). In any case, while the voluntarist interpretation of Scotus’s soteriology makes a number of accurate statements, it tries to get too much out of Scotus’s understanding of divine freedom. Their error can be put in this way: nothing about the nature of divine power itself will tell us whether an angel redeeming man is something which meets the non-repugnancy standard. If it does meet this standard, then God can surely will it.
by reference to the scope of divine power alone. It requires also attending to what God and man have willed and making some judgment about what is possible with reference to all of that. In the case of God, this includes, for example, his decision to require satisfaction for sin and grace for merit. In the case of man, for example, this requires analyzing the nature of sin and its consequences.

Scotus arrives at his conclusions about what other ways God could have chosen to redeem us by drawing out the implications of his positive account of how God decided to actually redeem us. Scotus’s analysis of how Christ is able to make satisfaction for sin provides him with the resources for making judgments about what other means of redemption would have been possible. To understand why Scotus diverges from his predecessors on so many points of soteriology we must understand his positive account of Christ’s redemptive work and how this account develops from his Christology. When Scotus makes the kinds of statements that seem to support the voluntarist interpretation of his soteriology, these need to be understood against this larger background of reflection in which they are made.

Aside from the inadequacy of the voluntarist interpretation of Scotus’s theory of redemption for accounting for the alternative possibilities of redemption that Scotus defends, it also shifts the emphasis of interpretation away from his positive account of redemption to the merely possible. This leads to the neglect of the details of his positive account of redemption. While Scotus is quite interested in alternative redemptive possibilities, this mainly arises from the tradition in which he is working. Anselm and earlier scholastics had already raised the question of whether an angel or a mere man could have made satisfaction for sin, before Scotus took up the issue. Scotus is, therefore,
not unique in being concerned with these questions, but rather unique in the answer he

gives to them.

The voluntarist interpretation of Scotus’s theory of the atonement is not the only

one current in scholarly literature. Some scholars have recognized the important role that

Scotus’s Christology plays in leading him away from Anselm’s claim that only a God-

man could make satisfaction for sin. For example, Marilyn McCord Adams writes,

If it is a member of Adam's race who must pay, Scotus reasons, then the acts of redemptive signifi-
cance would be those of the human soul of Christ, not those of the divine will. Yet, all of the acts of Christ's human soul are finite and ontologically incommensurate with the divine essence. Hypostatic union does not change the acts of a human soul from finite to infinite.26

Before Scotus, many scholastic theologians argued that the hypostatic union did confer infinite value on Christ’s redemptive work because the one who made satisfaction was the infinite person of the Logos. Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union does not permit him to draw the same conclusion as his predecessors. As Richard Cross writes,

Scotus differs from Anselm in wanting to see Christ’s work as an offering by the human nature to the Trinity, and not as an offering by the Son (the second person of the Trinity) to the Father. Underlying this move is his account of the hypostatic union, according to which it is simply not possible for the Son alone, without the Father and Holy Spirit, to have any causal action over human nature—a principle Scotus reminds us of when explaining that it is not the case that, as Aquinas held, the value of Christ’s work is infinite in virtue of the divine person. Aquinas, of course, need do no more than appeal to the communication of properties to explain his position; Scotus seems to suppose that for an action $a$ to have infinite intrinsic worth, it must be the case that $a$ is caused by—not just predicated of—a divine person.27


27 Cross, Duns Scotus, pp. 131-32.
As we shall argue, seeing the offering of Christ as being caused by the powers and gifts of the assumed nature will provide Scotus with a basis for holding that God’s power could have extended to willing that a rational creature (such as a good angel or human person) serve as our redeemer in ways very similar to Christ.

Marilyn Adams and Richard Cross have largely positive estimations of Scotus’s Christology, but other scholars less sympathetic to Scotus’s Christology have argued that flaws in his soteriology can be traced to flaws in his Christology. Jean Rivière and Joseph Schwane are two such scholars.28 Rivière writes,

[Scotus] lowers our Saviour to the condition of a creature, since the value of his merit depends wholly on God’s acceptance. To do so is to forget that every action of the God-man, by reason of the hypostatic union, has the infinite worth of the Divine Person from which it proceeds. In Scot’s [sic] system…there was an unfortunate tendency to Nestorianism.29

According to this interpretation, it is not voluntarism that leads Scotus away from his predecessors, but rather Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union, which makes the redeemer a mere creature. Rivière is correct to note that Scotus denies that Christ’s suffering and death has any intrinsic redemptive value. Like other meritorious acts, it is ultimately ordered to a given reward because of God’s will and not because of something

28 Douglas Langston initially suggests that the differences between the Christology of Anselm and Scotus might somehow account for their different understandings of redemption. Langston writes, “According to Anselm, Christ’s sacrifice is infinite and thus is a fitting recompense for mankind’s insult to God. Scotus, on the other hand, sees Christ’s sacrifice as a finite sacrifice that is sufficient to redeem mankind only because God wills to accept the sacrifice. The dispute seems to center around a difference in analysis about the hypostatic union. Scotus wants to distinguish carefully what may be said about the personality of Christ and what may be said about the two natures of Christ. Anselm, on the other hand, is not as concerned with these distinctions. There are, however, even more basic disagreements between the two men” (“Scotus’s Departure from Anselm,” p. 239). As we saw above, Langston believes that the more basic disagreement is Scotus’s commitment to voluntarism. Incidentally, Anselm is concerned with the nature-person distinction in Christ. See, for example, Cur Deus Homo II.7-10.

intrinsic to the act itself. According to Rivière, however, Scotus’s manner of analyzing the redemptive value of Christ’s acts results from a Nestorian tendency in his Christology. Rivière’s conclusion about the deleterious connection of Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union and his soteriology follows the judgment of Joseph Schwane who wrote,

If on the person of the God-man, [Scotus’s] teaching tends to distort and weaken the mystery [of the Incarnation] and verges on Nestorianism, his conception of the work of Christ is no different.30

In short, Scotus’s soteriology bears the marks of his inclination towards Nestorianism. As we shall see, Scotus does believe that Christ’s death is redemptive because of Christ’s human nature, but this does not make the redeemer a human person. For Scotus, the redeemer is the Incarnate Logos. Though critical of Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union, Rivière and Schwane recognize that his understanding of the hypostatic union is what ultimately shapes his explication of Christ’s redeeming work and the differences between Scotus and earlier scholastics on the topic. As Rivière put it, Christ’s redemptive work is subject to the dictates of divine acceptation because it is a human act just like other human acts, even if it is the human act of a divine person. It can be analyzed just like other human acts because of Scotus’s doctrine of the hypostatic union.

According to Nestorianism, there are two separate subjects or persons in Christ, one human and one divine. This Christology destroys the personal unity of Christ and the

Church condemned this teaching at the Council of Ephesus in 431.\textsuperscript{31} It might be said that Rivière asserts that there is only a tendency towards Nestorianism in Scotus’s Christology, but does not charge him outright with holding a Nestorian Christology. Yet having an “unfortunate tendency” towards a heresy certainly sounds like a negative judgment of Scotos’s Christology. Nevertheless, this tendency is only damning, if it leads Scotos to explicitly or implicitly develop a Nestorian Christology. For if Scotos is not a Nestorian, then this tendency that Rivière and others detect can only be picking up on some analogical similarities between Scotos’s doctrine of the hypostatic union and that of Nestorius’s teaching. Every orthodox Christology, however, bears some similarities to a heresy that it is trying to avoid in which case every orthodox Christology could be described as having a tendency to a particular heresy. To determine whether Scotos is guilty of Nestorianism, we will now turn to a more detailed presentation of Scotos’s understanding of the hypostatic union, which will be presupposed throughout the rest of this study.

1.2 Scotos’s Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union

According to Scotos, there is a real relation in the assumed nature of Christ to the Person of the Word.\textsuperscript{32} This relation gives rise to an order between the Word and the

\textsuperscript{31} For an account of the Patristic debate over Nestorianism, see John McGuckin, \textit{Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy}, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004).

assumed nature. This order is not an order of cause to caused because the whole Trinity is the cause of the assumed nature. Whatever accounts for the order between the Word and the assumed nature it must be something unique to the Word.\footnote{Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 14 (Vatican 6) in B. Ioannis Duns Scotus. Opera omnia. Vol. 9, edited by B. Hechich, B. Huculak, J. Percan, and S. Ruiz de Loizaga (Città del Vaticano: Typis Vaticanis, 2006). Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union is well established. As a result, I will only provide the text of citations for what I deem particularly important passages.}

To explain how there can be a unique relation of the assumed nature to the Word, Scotus employs a model for the hypostatic union based on the union of substance and accident.\footnote{See Duns Scotus, Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, nn. 14-16 (Vatican 5-7) and Quodlibet 19, nn. 2-3, (Wadding-Vives 492-493).} Scotus distinguishes between two aspects of how an accident is related to its subject.\footnote{Duns Scotus, Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 6-7).} An accident can be related to its subject as the informing thing to the informed. In this case, the accident actualizes some potency in the subject. An accident can also be related to its subject as the naturally posterior to the naturally prior. Something is naturally prior to something else, if it can exist without that other thing. All substances are naturally prior to their accidents. The naturally posterior depends upon the naturally prior. Thus, accidents have the following two features: they actualize potencies and they depend on their subjects. Normally, an accident has both of these features, even if the features can be distinguished. While Scotus likens the assumed nature to an accident, he denies that the human nature informs or actualizes its subject.\footnote{Duns Scotus, Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 6-7); cf. Quodlibet 19, n. 2 (Wadding-Vives 492).} The human nature,
however, does depend on its subject. According to Scotus, this amounts to the human nature having a relation of dependence on the Word.

The Word as the Word—and not as divine—is the term of the relation of dependence that has its foundation in the assumed nature. There is nothing in the Person of the Word as a divine person (or, as the second person of the Trinity in particular) that conflicts with being the term of dependence for the assumed nature. The main obstacle to being the term of the relation would have concerned the immutability of the Word, but Scotus has asserted that being the subject on which an accident depends does not necessarily require any potency on the part of the subject. There can be a dependence relation without the dependent thing necessarily actualizing any potency in that on which it depends.

Scotus admits that it is difficult to explain how the assumed nature can depend on the Word. The difficulty arises because the assumed nature is an individual rational nature and it seems to meet the criteria for personhood, according to Boethius’s widely accepted definition of personhood. Boethius held that a person is an individual substance of a rational nature.

Persons are independent beings, not dependent ones. In other words, persons ‘subsist.’ If what is assumed is a person, then the union of the Logos and the human nature reduces to Nestorianism. To show that the Logos is not united to a human person, Scotus expounds his negation theory of subsistence. A person and a nature are

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37 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 16 (Vatican 7).

38 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 17, (Vatican 7-8).

39 Boethius, *Liber contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, ch. 3.
distinguished from each other by certain negations that are true of the person, but not true of the nature.

Scotus’s own account of subsistence or personhood is developed against the background of two positions, both of which he criticizes. The first position states that the distinction between an individual nature and a person is explained by some positive entity that further contracts the nature to its suppositum.\(^{40}\) The second position states that personhood is the negation of actual dependence on anything else.\(^{41}\)

Scotus provides four arguments against the idea that subsistence is caused by a positive entity being added to the nature.\(^ {42}\) The most theologically important argument concerns the soteriological implications of this view of subsistence. The positive entity would not be assumed.\(^ {43}\) Some positive aspect of human nature would not be assumed and, therefore, remain unredeemed. Scotus quotes St. John Damascene in this context, who echoes a common Patristic thesis, namely, “that which is unassumable, is incurable.”\(^ {44}\)

Scotus also provides four arguments against the second view of the nature-person distinction according to which a nature comes to subsist exclusively because of the negation of actual dependence. On this view an individual nature subsists when it does

\(^{40}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, nn. 33-34 (Vatican 15).

\(^{41}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, nn. 35 & 40 (Vatican 16 & 18) In n. 35 Scotus explains that one account of personhood posits a negation that distinguishes between a nature and a person, but in 40 he makes clear that the negation in question is the negation of depending on an alien or improper suppositum.

\(^{42}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, nn. 36-39 (Vatican 16-18).

\(^{43}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 36 (Vatican 16).

\(^{44}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 36 (Vatican 16), “Consequens videtur inconveniens: tum quia, secundum Damascenum, 'quod est inassumptibile est incurabile'”.
not depend on an alien supposit or extrinsic person. The first and most significant argument against this theory of subsistence shows that it proves too much. If not depending on an extrinsic person were sufficient to account for personhood, then separated souls would count as persons.\(^{45}\)

Scotus defends a negation theory of subsistence that is similar to the one he rejects, altering it by only adding a second negation to account for personhood. A nature comes to subsist (or, is a person) not only because the negation of actual dependence is true of it, but also because the negation of ‘aptitudinal dependence’ is true of it.\(^ {46}\) No individual entity that has an inclination to depend on another can be a person. Anything with aptitudinal independence is inclined to exist in its own supposit even though this inclination can be obstructed. Every rational nature always lacks an inclination to depend on something else (and this is what distinguishes an assumed nature from a separated soul).\(^ {47}\) Aptitudinal independence is compatible with actual dependence. Scotus writes,

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\text{Aptitudinal independence does not posit repugnance to actual dependence, because although there is no aptitude for depending in such a nature, nevertheless, there is an aptitude for obedience, that nature is in perfect obedience to depending because of the action of a supernatural agent.} \(^ {48}\)
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Without doing any violence to a created rational nature, God is able to will that it come to posses a relation of dependence on a divine person and thus obstruct its inclination for

\(^{45}\) Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 40 (Vatican 18). See also \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 44 (Vatican 19-20).

\(^{46}\) Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 45 (Vatican 20).

\(^{47}\) Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 46 (Vatican 20-21).

\(^{48}\) Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 47 (Vatican 21). “Nec tamen haec independentia aptitudinalis point repugnantiam ad dependentiam actualem, quia licet non sit aptitudo talis naturae dependendi, est tamen aptitudo obedientia ad dependendum, per actionem agentis supernaturalis.”
independence. The nature assumed by the Logos lacks its own independence and its inclination for independence is obstructed. In this way the assumed nature fails to subsist and has a real relation of dependence on the Logos.

According to Scotus, the assumed nature comes to possess its relation of dependence without any other change taking place in the assumed nature.⁴⁹ In other words, the relation of dependence in the assumed nature does not arise because of some change in a non-relational or absolute feature of the nature that gives rise to the relation.⁵⁰ Scotus explains his position by considering what would happen if the Word were to dissolve the hypostatic union and the formerly assumed nature were to come to subsist in a proper supposit. The negation of dependence would now be true of it and its aptitude for independence would no longer be obstructed. In this case, there would be a relational change because the relation of dependence would be dissolved, but this change in relation would not result from or result in any non-relational feature of the assumed nature changing.⁵¹ This position, as Scotus realizes, seems to contradict the understanding of

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⁴⁹ Scotus’s reasons for denying that there is any non-relational foundation in the assumed nature for the relation of dependence can be found in Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, nn. 55-56 (Vatican 25-6). Scotus’s main reason (given in n. 56) is that the absolute entity would not be either substantial or accidental. It could not be accidental because subsisting is prior naturally to every accident. If it is substantial, then there would be something in Christ’s human nature that is not present in other human natures. But this is not right, according to Christian orthodoxy.

⁵⁰ Duns Scotus, Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, nn. 53 (Vatican 24), “Sed circa istum articulum tertium est alia dubitatio: an sit aliqua entitas absoluta, nova, positiva, quae sit fundamentum huius relationis novae, scilicet dependentiae et unionis ad Verbum, ita quod ipsa posita, non posset eam non consequi relatio eius ad Verbum.” For an interesting discussion of this aspect of Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union see Richard Cross, The Metaphysics of the Incarnation, pp. 133-35.

⁵¹ Duns Scotus, Ordinatio III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 54 (Vatican 24-5), “Videtur quod sic, quia alias esset mutatio primo ad relationem et a relatione, quia si Verbum dimitteret illum naturam absolutam assumptam, relatio unionis non esset—per se—nullum absolutum esset; ergo mutatio esset primo a relatione (sic si assumeter naturam primo personatam in Petro). Si non oportet aliquod novum absolutum advenire ad hoc ut personaretur a Verbo, primus terminus huius mutationis esset relatio nova; sed consequens istud est contra Philosophum V Physicorum, quia in ‘ad aliiud’ non est motus, nec ut principii ne cut termini. Confirmatur etiam per rationem, quia relatio non videtur esse nova nisi aliquod absolutum
relation in Aristotle, who held that some non-relational change is the foundation for a relational change.\textsuperscript{52}

To allay the potential conflict between his understanding of the ‘relation of dependence’ and Aristotle’s doctrine of relation, Scotus distinguishes between two different ways that a categorical relation can be related to its term. Some relations necessarily obtain once the terms of the relation exist.\textsuperscript{53} If there are two white objects, then the relation of similarity necessarily obtains for these two objects.\textsuperscript{54} This understanding of how relations obtain between things is perhaps the commonly known Aristotelian view of relations. This relation of similarity will be dissolved once one of the objects is painted blue, for example.

Scotus also discusses a second type of categorical relation. In this case, it is possible for two things to exist without being related to each other, but which can come to be related in some way without any change in the term or foundation. The existence of a foundation for the relations does not necessitate the relation. That these foundations come to be related is usually the work of God who can cause the relation to obtain at

\textit{sit novum in altero extremo: si enim aliquid omnino eodem modo se habet in se, igitur et ad quodlibet alterum; nihil est novum in Verbo in se nec in natura assumpta, nisi sit consequenter aliquod absolutum novum; ergo tale absolutum oportet ponere.}\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{52} What exactly does this position rule out? Among other things, there is no need to posit grace as logically prior and explanatory of why the assumed nature comes to have the relation of dependence on the Word. In chapter 3, we will see the significance of this point for Scotus’s soteriology.

\textsuperscript{53} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 57 (Vatican 26-7). Aside from the two examples of categorical relations that I describe above, Scotus also gives the example of a transcendental relation. In this case the foundation of the relation cannot exist without also being related to another thing. Scotus’s example of this is the relation of creature to God as creator. Once a creature exists he necessarily has a relation to God as creator. For a study of Scotus’s understanding of categorical and transcendental relations, see Mark G. Henninger, SJ, chapter 5, \textit{Relations: Medieval Theories 1250-1325}, (Oxford University Press, 1989).

\textsuperscript{54} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 58 (Vatican 27).
In the case of death, for instance, the soul and the body are separated. If both of these things continued to exist in themselves, then they could be reunited. This reunion would involve a relation obtaining between soul and body, but it would not involve any change in the soul or the body. God could simply will that they be reunited without them also undergoing a non-relational change.

According to Scotus, this second way that a relation arises is consistent with Aristotle’s understanding of relations and, moreover, it helps to elucidate the relation of dependence involved in the hypostatic union and the kind of change that dissolving the hypostatic union would involve. Scotus cites Aristotle’s understanding of place relations to confirm that his own view of relations is consistent with that of the Philosopher. Changes in place involve relational changes where there is no change in an absolute form presupposed.

We can now conclude that Scotus’s understanding of the hypostatic union does not posit two persons. He is careful to distinguish between nature and person and he provides a way of thinking about the union in person that is compatible with his negation

55 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 59 (Vatican 27), “Tertio modo, relatio potest non necessario conseqi fundamentum, quia illud non necessario coexigit terminum nec habitudinem illam ad terminum; nec etiam fundamento et termino positis, necessario consequitur relati ad ambo extrema vel unum, sed contingenter dicitur advenire extrinsece, etiam postquam quodlibet absolutum in ipso et in termino fuerit positum in esse. Et in isto modo non oportet ponere aliquod absolutum novum in altero extremorum, etiam dato quod relatio sit nova.”

56 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 59 (Vatican 27-8), “Hoc modo se habent multae relationes, puta communiter unio absuluti ad absolutum: si enim forma per se esset et materia per se esset (ut corpus organicum separatum et anima separata)...si de novo uniantur, nullum absolutum novum est in altero extremo, sed ista relatio contingenter se habet, etiam ut possit esse non esse extremis positis.”

57 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, pars 1, q. 1, n. 61 (Vatican 29), “Potest tamen esse mutatio ad respectum extrinsicsus adveniendem absque novitate alicuius absoluti in illo in quo est vel in termino; immo et motus, quia secundum eum, V Physicorum, ubi dicit quod in ‘ad aliquid’ non est motus ad ‘ubi’ –et tamen ‘ubi’ nullam formam absolutam dicit, sed tantum respectum in corpore circumscripno ad locum circumscribente; et ille respectus pertinet a modum praedictum.”
theory of subsistence.\textsuperscript{58} Christ’s human nature does not subsist—is not expressed through its own proper created suppositum—because it lacks independence and its inclination to independence is obstructed. Instead, his human nature depends on the person of the Word.

It does not seem that Scotus’s understanding of subsistence is incompatible with orthodoxy. Moreover, soteriological concerns seem to be at the forefront of how he understands personhood insofar as he wants to be able to show that every positive aspect of being human is assumed by the Word and, thus, redeemed. Yet it is possible that the charge of Nestorianism is insinuated or leveled against Scotus because of how he talks about Christ’s human nature apart from his attempt to explain the non-subsistence of the assumed nature. Perhaps Scotus’s understanding of Christ’s human agency reveals the Nestorian character of his Christology. According to Scotus, the human actions of Christ have his human nature as their subject. Scotus writes,

\begin{quote}
When it is said that the Word causes the operations of the [human] nature, I say that this is true, just as [it is true when] the Word is called ‘a man’: because the assumed nature, and the things which are part of the nature, are said of the Word (just as he is called white and black). Nevertheless, the Word does not elicit his acts in a way that is any different from the Father or the Holy Spirit,—and, therefore, there is no difference in how [the Word] elicits an act of willing of the created will of Christ from what would be the case of his willing if the nature
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} Alfred Freddoso has argued that Scotus’s understanding of subsistence has a fatal metaphysical flaw. According to Freddoso, the negative view of personhood conflicts with Leibniz’s Law (namely, “the identity of indiscernibles”), according to which no two different individuals can be exactly the same. According to Freddoso, there is no distinction between a person and an individual nature on Scotus’s account because there is no positive property that distinguishes them. Thus, assuming an individual nature would be tantamount to assuming a person. See Alfred J. Freddoso, “Human Nature, Potency and the Incarnation”, Faith and Philosophy 3 (1986): 27-53. Richard Cross has defended the metaphysical viability of Scotus’s understanding of personhood in The Metaphysics of the Incarnation, pp. 308-09. I do not examine whether Scotus’s account of subsistence is consistent with Leibniz’s Law, but if Freddoso is correct, then Scotus is a Nestorian and his soteriology is also fatally flawed to the extent that it follows from the implications of his Christology.
were not assumed; but because he [the Word] subsists in that nature, therefore, he is said denominatively to elicit that act.\(^59\)

Christ’s human acts are elicited through the powers of his individual human nature in just the same way that they would be were the human nature not united to the Word. Scotus, therefore, does not agree with Rivière that every action of Christ is infinitely valuable or altered in any other way because they are the acts of the person of the Word.\(^60\) Scotus disagrees with this because strictly speaking the human acts of Christ do not proceed from the Word, but from the assumed nature. This might seem to set up two subjects in Christ that reduces Scotus’s Christology to that of Nestorius. The belief, however, that persons, rather than individual natures, are the causal origin of human activity does not

\(^{59}\) Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 17, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 427), “Et quando dicitur quod Verbum operabatur operationes naturae, dico quod hoc verum est, sicut Verbum dicitur ‘homo’: propter enim naturam assumam, quae convenient naturae, dicuntur de Verbo (sicut dicitur album et nigrum aut quantum). Non tamen Verbum habet specialem elicitionem respectu actus volendi magis quam Pater vel Spiritus Sanctus,—et ideo non plus nec specialiore modo elicit actum volendi voluntatis creatae Christi quam si natura non esset assumpta; sed quia subsistit in illa natura, ideo dicitur denominative illum actum elicere et illo actu velle.” Cf. Ordinatio III, d. 17, q. 1, nn. 16-7 (Vatican 569-70). Commenting on passages from the Reportatio and the Ordinatio that are similar in content to the passage I quoted from the Lectura, Richard Cross writes, “These passages make it unequivocally clear that the human substance (the assumed nature) of Christ is the causal origin of its human actions in just the same way as any other human substance is the causal origin of its human acts,” The Metaphysics of the Incarnation, p. 222. For more on the distinction between what the causal and predicative aspects of Christ’s agency (to use Richard Cross’s way of describing the distinction), see Léon Seiller L’Activité Humaine du Christ selon Duns Scot, Etudes de science religieuse, 3 (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1944), and Richard Cross, The Metaphysics of the Incarnation, chapter 10, “Christ’s Human Activity: Agency and Predication”, pp. 218-229 (I have been aided significantly in understanding the implications of Scotus’s doctrine of the hypostatic union for how his human acts are elicited by this chapter from Richard Cross’s book).

\(^{60}\) Rivière is drawing upon Aquinas’s claim that Christ’s person augments his human acts in certain ways. Aquinas makes this claim because he defends the further claim that properly speaking actions are acts of the supposit, not the nature. For the historical background and influence of this idea see Alain de Libera, “Les actions appartiennent aux sujets: petite archéologie d’un principe leibnizien”, in Stefano Caroti, el al (eds), ‘Ad ingenii acuitionem’: Studies in Honour of Alfonso Maierù, FIDEM, Textes et études du Moyen Âge (Louvain-la-Neuve: FIDEM, 2006), pp. 199-219. For a discussion of the distinction between actions being of the supposit and actions being of the individual as well as related matters in Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Duns Scotus, see Richard Cross, “Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers in the Late Thirteenth Century: Some Reflections on the Axiom ‘actiones sunt suppositorum’”, in Compléments de substance: Études sur les propriétés accidentelles offertes à Alain de Libera, Ch. Erismann & A. Schniewind (éd.), (Vrin, 2008), pp. 133-146.
seem to be required for an orthodox Christology. The teaching of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon leave it open as a philosophical and theological question about whether persons or natures are the origin of action. These Councils require a unity in person, and Scotus has developed one way of articulating this unity through his negation theory of subsistence. Throughout his writings, Scotus consistently attributes agency to natures, not persons. Assuming the viability of Scotus’s theory of subsistence, attributing causal agency to natures rather than persons does not reduce his Christology to Nestorianism. Yet this view of Christ’s human agency has significant implications for Scotus’s understanding of Christ’s redemptive work.

1.3 The Chapters Ahead

As indicated above, this study will build upon the work of those who argue that Scotus’s Christology is what fundamentally shapes his account of redemption. To their work, we will add a more detailed examination of how Scotus’s Christology plays this role and a fuller appreciation of the historical background against which Scotus develops his ideas about redemption. Chapters 3, 4, and 6 take into account the views of some Scotus’s scholastic predecessors along with Scotus’s own views on matters related to redemption. In particular, we will consider St. Bonaventure, Richard of Middleton, and Peter Olivi. As we shall see, these Franciscan theologians present views that are identical

These theologians are also witnesses to scholastic modifications to Anselm’s theory that Scotus adopts himself to some extent. In chapter 2, we will recount the understanding of redemption that Anselm puts forward in *Cur Deus Homo*, which Scotus and earlier Franciscans take as their starting point in reflecting on Christ’s redemptive work. The focus of this chapter is on Anselm’s notion of satisfaction and his argument for why only a God-man can make satisfaction for sin. Attention is also paid to his understanding of necessity.

In chapter 3, we will consider the character of Christ’s created grace and the connection that scholastic theologians posited between the assumption of Christ’s human nature and its possession of created grace. Anselm does not write about the created grace of Christ’s soul. Indeed it is unlikely that he had such an idea as created grace at all. Thinking about how grace allows Christ to perform his redemptive work is one of the most important modifications scholastic theologians make to Anselm’s theory of redemption. Franciscan theologians before Scotus held that a human nature could only possess the highest grace, if it were assumed by a divine person. Moreover, these theologians held that possessing the highest grace was required for making satisfaction for human sin. Thus, scholastics before Scotus could defend in a new way Anselm’s claim that the redeemer had to be a God-man. While Scotus agrees with his predecessors

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62 The main places where Scotus (c. 1266-1308) treats Christ’s redemptive work are in *Lectura/Ordinatio* III. The *Lectura* is the more complete of the two sources because there are no *Ordinatio* versions of dd. 18-20. Regarding the dating of *Lectura* Book III Thomas Williams writes, “These lectures were also given at Oxford, but later [than the earlier books of the *Lectura*], possibly during Scotus’s exile from Paris in 1303-04,” *Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, p. 8. For more about the life and works of Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308), see Antonie Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 15-147.
that Christ’s redemptive work depended in part on his possession of the highest grace, he
does not believe that the hypostatic union is necessary for possessing the highest grace.

We turn to scholastic treatments of satisfaction for sin in chapter 4. We shall see
that some scholastics speak of satisfaction as compensating God for his loss of honor as
well as for his loss of the human race. Scotus mainly describes Christ’s satisfaction for
sin in terms of the second aspect, that is, compensating God for his loss of the human
race. Christ’s death, according to Scotus, compensates God for his loss of the human race
by meriting grace for the fallen, which allows them to be returned to God. It is for this
reason that he tends to speak of Christ’s redemptive work in terms of merit rather than
satisfaction. It has seemed to some commentators that Scotus does not attribute
satisfaction to Christ’s death. Yet taking into account how Scotus’s predecessors
understood satisfaction it becomes clear that Scotus thinks of Christ’s death as making
satisfaction for sin.

In chapter 5, we will provide an account of how Scotus thinks about Christ’s
ability to merit human salvation. Scotus straightforwardly applies his understanding of
merit to Christ’s redemptive acts. The chapter will begin by looking at Scotus’s general
theory of merit before turning to how he applies that theory to Christ’s meritorious
suffering and death.

In chapter 6, we will consider a special topic in scholastic theories of Christ’s
redemptive merit. Scholastic theologians distinguished between the sufficiency of
Christ’s merit and its efficacy. Franciscan theologians before Scotus held that Christ’s
merit was infinite in terms of its sufficiency because it was inexhaustible (an infinite
number of men could in principle be redeemed through it). Scotus critiques their way of
explaining the sufficiency of Christ’s merit because it depends on evaluating the intrinsic
worth of Christ’s merit on the basis of facts about either the divinity of Christ’s person or
the way that the divine and human will of Christ jointly elicit his acts. In responding to
the position of his predecessors about the sufficiency of Christ’s merit, Scotus works out
the implications of his attempt to straightforwardly apply his theory of merit to Christ’s
acts.
CHAPTER 2:

ST. ANSELM’S \textit{CUR DEUS HOMO}

In \textit{Cur Deus Homo}, St. Anselm of Canterbury attempts to demonstrate the truth of Christian teaching about redemption without recourse to his beliefs about Christ [\textit{Christo remoto}].\footnote{The translation for \textit{Cur Deus Homo} is from \textit{Anselm: Basic Writings}, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), pp. 237-326. I use Williams’ translation with only one modification: he translates \textit{satisfactio} as ‘recompense’, but I substitute the more literal translation, ‘satisfaction’. There is nothing wrong with Williams’ translation of \textit{satisfactio}, but I prefer the more literal translation in order to maintain a standard translation for the term for all the theologians considered in this dissertation. I will also provide references to the critical edition of Anselm’s writings: Anselm, \textit{Opera Omnia}, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946-61). \textit{Cur Deus Homo} is in volume 2, pp. 39-133. For the definitive biography of St. Anselm (1033-1109) see R.W. Southern, \textit{St. Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).} He argues from the reality of sin to the need for a God-man to redeem us by freely offering his life to God for the human race. St. Anselm addresses his argument to persons who find it unbelievable that an omnipotent and wise God would choose to become incarnate and die on a Cross. Nevertheless, Anselm’s argument has been most influential on believers rather than unbelievers. It was very influential among Christian theologians of the high and late Middle Ages. His argument is set out in this chapter to provide an important part of the background to the discussion of scholastic theories of redemption explored in later chapters.
Anselm begins his argument by making the following assumptions: human beings were created for happiness, this happiness cannot be possessed in this life, sin is an obstacle to ever possessing this happiness, and forgiveness of sin is required before this happiness can be possessed. These assumptions allow Anselm to draw his first conclusion: “It follows that the remission of sins is necessary for human beings if they are to attain happiness.”

Anselm describes the nature of sin in a number of different ways. Sin, for example, involves failing to pay back to God what a person owes him. A person owes God obedience to his will. More specifically, a person owes God his freely willed obedience to the divine will. Sin, then, is any free act of disobedience to the will of God. If we are obedient to God, however, we preserve the justice or rectitude of our will and remain free from sin. If we do this we give honor to God. Sin, therefore, is also described as stealing honor from God. Though talk of stealing honor from God may sound foreign to contemporary people, dishonoring God is equivalent to disobeying the will of God in Anselm’s writings.

Sin places us in a state of guilt in which we remain until we compensate God for our wrongdoing. Anselm will often speak of sin as robbing God of honor. We compensate God for the honor that we stole from him through our disobedience by

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3 *CDH* I.11, p. 261 (Schmitt 68), “And so sinning is nothing other than failing to pay back what one owes to God.”

4 *CDH* I.11, p. 261 (Schmitt 68), “What is the debt that we owe to God? Every will of a rational creature ought to be subject to God’s will.”

5 *CDH* I.11, p. 261-2 (Schmitt 68), “No one who discharges this debt [of obedience to God’s will] sins. This is the justice or rectitude of will that makes people just or upright in heart, that is, in will. This is the only and the complete honor that we owe to God and that God requires of us.”
making satisfaction for sin. Anselm lists two criteria for satisfaction: (1) what is offered as satisfaction must be equivalent to the debt and (2) what is offered cannot otherwise be owed to God (apart from our obligation to make satisfaction).\(^6\)

Before going on to discuss how satisfaction could be made, Anselm considers whether divine mercy should lead him to forgive sin apart from receiving satisfaction.\(^7\) Anselm dismisses this suggestion as unworthy of God’s justice and inconsistent with a true understanding of mercy. Doing so, for instance, would treat a sinner as if he were a non-sinner, but God will not treat unlike things as if they were alike. If God does not receive satisfaction for sin, then he will punish the sinner. This leads to Anselm’s next major conclusion: “Necessarily, when God’s honor is taken away, then either it is paid back or punishment follows.”\(^8\)

Punishment or satisfaction can compensate God for the honor he loses through sin. God’s honor is vindicated when the creature obeys his will. Rational creatures are able to submit freely to God’s will. When they do this, they avoid sin and preserve the justice of their own will. Yet a rational creature can also be forced against its will to obey God. This is what occurs in punishment. Punishment more specifically involves depriving the creature of something of his own against his will. The punishment for sin is


\(^7\) CDH I.12-3, pp. 262-5 (Schmitt 69-71).

\(^8\) CDH I.13, p. 265 (Schmitt 71).
the loss of future happiness. This gives honor to God because it is one way of vindicating his lordship over all of creation. It is a punishment because it achieves this vindication against the sinner’s will.

As we have noted, a condition for making satisfaction requires offering to God something that you do not already owe him. Anselm’s interlocutor, Boso, lists a number of acts that might fit this description. For instance, a person might be able to satisfy for sin by repenting, feeling contrition, undertaking some great acts of self-denial, showing mercy to others, or by being newly obedient to God. Anselm replies, however, that a person already owes all of these things to God.

For the sake of argument, Anselm will allow that there is some act that we do not already owe to God in order to determine if anything a human person might do will meet the other condition for making satisfaction, namely offering something equivalent to the debt of sin. This gives Anselm an occasion to discuss the magnitude or severity of sin.

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9 *CDH* I.14, pp. 265-6 (Schmitt 72). Anselm further clarifies his notion of giving honor to God in I.15, pp. 266-7. There he notes that honoring God does not bestow anything on God and dishonoring him does not actually deprive him of anything. Instead, the real effects of virtue and sin are on the creature. Yet to the extent that you can speak of God’s will being disobeyed, you can speak of his honor being stolen. In the end, however, God’s will and honor will be vindicated. Anselm writes, “…although a human being or an evil angel may be unwilling to be subject to God’s will and ordering, he has no power to escape it. If he flees from God’s commanding will, he runs into God’s punishing will. And if you ask by what path he runs from one to the other, the answer is just this: by God’s permitting will” (II.15, p. 266 [Schmitt 73]).

10 *CDH* I.14, p. 265 (Schmitt 72), “It is impossible for God to lose his honor. Either a sinner spontaneously repays what he owes or else God exacts it from the sinner against his will. For either someone offers to God by his own spontaneous will the subjection that he owes, whether by not sinning or by making restitution for sin, or else God brings him into subjection against his will by tormenting him—thus showing that he is his Lord, which the sinner refused to acknowledge voluntarily.”

11 *CDH* I.20, p. 279 (Schmitt 86-7).

12 In *CDH* II.18, pp. 269-76 (Schmitt 76-84), Anselm will allow that God does make it possible for people to do things that are not strictly required of them. His example of a supererogatory action in that chapter is entering monastic life. This conclusion seems to be in tension with his teaching in I.20. Perhaps, however, the possibility for supererogatory action depends upon the redemptive work of the God-man. In any case, Anselm consistently maintains that no merely human act could be equivalent to the debt of sin.
Anselm asks the reader to engage in a thought experiment involving God commanding a person to not take a single glance to the left or to the right. If the person obeys God’s will, then the whole created universe will perish. If he obeys God’s will, then the universe will be preserved. It is acknowledged that looking to the left or the right is of little intrinsic moral worth for good or ill. What makes it wrong is that God commanded that it not be done. Moreover, this makes it wrong in such a way that no other consideration could justify glancing to the left or to the right. No creature ever justly acts against God’s will. Thus, if faced with the choice posited by the thought experiment, one should obey God’s will rather than act to preserve the continued existence of the universe. Indeed, writes Anselm, “even if there were infinitely many worlds spread out before me, I would give the same answer.”

Every sin involves transgressing the will of God and each time it is just as serious a transgression as it is in the thought experiment: for the debt that one contracts in any sin is greater than all created good that does or could exist. Anselm writes, “you do not make satisfaction unless you pay back what is greater than the thing for the sake of which you ought not to have committed the sin.” No person guilty of sin can meet the criteria for making satisfaction. Even if a sinner could offer to God something not owed to him, no creature could offer a good that is better than all of created reality. The thought experiment has shown, however, that satisfaction will consist in giving God a good that is greater than all that is not God.

13 CDH I.21, p. 282 (Schmitt 89), “Si infinito numero multiplicarentur et similiter mihi obtainderentur, id ipsum responderem.”

14 CDH I.21, p. 282 (Schmitt 89).
Perhaps God should just abandon the entire human race to its justly deserved punishment, given its inability to make satisfaction for sin. Anselm next considers the purpose for which God created human beings. He created man with free will so that he could choose to love good over evil and to love the highest good for its own sake.\footnote{CDH II.1, p. 290 (Schmitt 97-8).} Doing this would have led to man’s ultimate happiness. God will not let sin frustrate his original plans for human beings, even if it would be just for him simply to punish those guilty of sin and never lead anyone to his or her ultimate end. Anselm writes, “it is necessary for God to complete what he has begun, lest he seem to fall short in his undertaking in a way that is not fitting.”\footnote{CDH II.4, p. 292 (Schmitt 99).}

In order for God to bring to completion what he has begun, someone who is both God and man must make satisfaction for the human race. As we have seen, no mere human is able to offer to God something that he does not already owe him or something that is equivalent to the debt of sin. A God-man, however, could offer something equivalent to sin’s debt. Paying the debt of sin requires offering to God something that surpasses everything that is less than God. Only God surpasses all that is not God. Therefore, only God is able to pay the debt. Yet, only human beings owe the debt. Therefore, concludes Anselm, “it is necessary that a God-man make this satisfaction.”\footnote{CDH II.6, p. 294 (Schmitt 101).} Moreover, the divinity and humanity of the redeemer will be united in a single person so that there is one person who both is able to pay the debt and who owes the debt.\footnote{CDH II.7, pp. 294-5 (Schmitt 101-02).}
Anselm argues that the human nature of the God-man will be free of sin. As such, he is not obligated to suffer death, which is the penalty for sin.\textsuperscript{19} If he were to freely offer his life to God, then he would be giving something to God that he did not already owe him. This would meet one of the conditions required for making satisfaction. Anselm also has recourse to claims about fittingness at this point in his argument. Giving up one’s life would be a fitting way to compensate God for sin for at least three reasons.\textsuperscript{20} Man sinned through pride and pleasure and it would be fitting for him to be restored through humility and pain. Man’s sin marked an easy victory for the devil such that it brought great dishonor to God. By redeeming us through death, Christ would offer great honor to God by undertaking something so difficult. Finally, sin leads man as far away from God as is possible, whereas giving up one’s very life for the sake of God leads one as close to God as is possible.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to showing that Christ has something worthy to offer God as satisfaction for sin that is not owed to God, he argues that this life is equivalent to the debt of sin. Anselm engages in a thought experiment in order to determine the value of Christ’s life. The thought experiment is formulated in two different ways, each time giving one a choice between killing the God-man or letting some other terrible consequence result. Whichever consequence is more terrible will show which object has

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{19} \textit{CDH} II.10-11, pp. 298-304 (Schmitt 106-112).
\item\textsuperscript{20} \textit{CDH} II.11, p. 303 (Schmitt 111).
\item\textsuperscript{21} In \textit{CDH} I.3, pp. 247-8 (Schmitt 50-1), Anselm mentions some additional considerations of fittingness that show forth God’s wisdom in redeeming us as he did. At that earlier point in the argument fittingness claims were deemed irrelevant because unless they were based upon a solid foundation they would not seem like anything more than “beautiful pictures” to the unbeliever. That Anselm has brought back fittingness claims in \textit{CDH} II.11 shows that he takes himself to have provided that sturdy canvas required to support the fittingness arguments.
\end{itemize}
greater value. According to the first formulation, a person is faced with the choice of killing a person he knows to be both divine and human or allowing the whole world to perish. Boso responds that he would not knowingly choose to kill the God-man “even if I were shown an infinite number of worlds.” Christ’s life is more valuable than even an infinite amount of created good. Anselm goes on to rephrase his thought experiment as a choice between killing the God-man or becoming guilty of all the sins of the world. Again, Boso would prefer to become guilty of all the sins that have been and will be committed than to be guilty of killing the God-man. The reason that killing the God-man is worse than the two options presented is because “a sin that is committed against his person is incomparably more serious than all conceivable sins that are not against his person.” All sins are against the will of God, but killing the God-man is against the person of God in some unique way. Anselm elaborates, “…sins not committed against the person of God, no matter how great or how numerous they are, cannot be compared to the destruction of this man’s bodily life.” The human life of the God-man is as good as its destruction is evil. Its destruction is a greater evil than all human sin. As Anselm writes, “…his life is more worthy of love than those sins are worthy of hate.”

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22 *CDH* II.14, p. 306 (Schmitt 113), “Non facerem, etiam si infinitus mihi numerus mundorum obtenderetur.” Attributing infinity in some sense to sin is one of the well known aspects of *CDH*. He explicitly does this at the beginning of *CDH* II.14 (Schmitt 113), “Nunc rogo ut doceas me, quomodo mors eius praevaleat numero et magnitudini peccatorum omnium, cum unum quod putamus levissimum peccatum tam infinitum monsters, ut si numeros obtendatur infinitus mundorum, qui sic pleni sint creaturis sicut est iste, nec possint servari quin redigantur in nihilum, nisi faciat aliquis aspectum unum contra voluntatem dei, non tamen fieri debeat.”

23 *CDH* II.14, p. 306 (Schmitt 114).

24 *CDH* II.14, p. 307 (Schmitt 114).

25 *CDH* II.14, p. 307 (Schmitt 114).
life outweighs the debt of sin. If offered as compensation for the debt of sin, the life of
the God-man would be more than equivalent to the debt of sin. Anselm argues that Christ’s unwavering obedience to God’s will leads him to his
death. The world could not tolerate someone so holy and thus conspired to put him to
death. At the same time, he had the power to avoid death, if had wished. Yet in dying
because of his unwavering obedience to God’s will in all things, he gave to human beings
a unique example. No other martyr or prophet who was led to his death because of his
love for God and obedience to his will lost what he was not going to lose at some point.
Admirable as the examples of martyrs are, their death would have been required of them.
Christ, on the other hand, is the only person to give his life to God when he did not have
to. In giving this to God, Christ pleased God more than he would have had he not done it.
This raises the question of whether in fact Christ was obligated to offer his life to God.
Did Christ owe to God what it was better and more pleasing to do? If he did, then his
death will no longer count as satisfaction for sin because it would be owed to God.

Anselm argues that Christ was not obligated to offer this honor to God, even
though it is better for him to have done it than to not do it. There are certain
circumstances where God allows rational creatures to choose among different options of
varying goodness. Even where one option is better than another, the person is not always
obligated to choose the better of the two. Anselm gives the example of people having a
choice between the married state of life and the monastic life. The latter is better, but
neither one is absolutely required of anyone. Anselm, however, does note that if someone
chooses the better option he can rightly look “forward to a reward for the spontaneous

26 CDH II.14, p. 307 (Schmitt 114-5).
gift that he is offering to God.”

God did not obligate Christ to pursue the best course of action, just as he does not obligate all people to become monks. Christ too remains free to choose or not to choose what is better and more pleasing to God. In either case, Christ will be doing good, preserving justice, and acting in obedience to God’s will.

Christ’s offering of his life to God provides compensation for the debt of sin, but of itself this does not usher in human salvation. It is conceivable that Christ would make satisfaction for human sin without this resulting in the restoration of the human race to God. Salvation results not directly upon making satisfaction, but from a reward given to Christ because he offered to God the great good of his sinless life. Anselm writes, “you will not judge that the one who freely gave so great a gift to God should go unrewarded.”

The reward that the Father gives the Son will either be something that the Son does not have or the cancellation of a debt that he does have. Yet the Son lacks nothing and owes nothing. It seems that he is unable to receive a reward, even if the Father is able to give one. According to Anselm, however, a reward could instead be given to those on whose behalf the Son gave his life. Anselm writes,

27 CDH II.18, p. 321 (Schmitt 128-9).

28 CDH II.18, p. 322 (Schmitt 129), “For he himself is both God and a human being. Therefore, in terms of his human nature, from the time he was a human being his divine nature (which is distinct from his human nature) conferred on him this prerogative: that whatever he possessed was his own, so that there was nothing he ought to give, other than what he willed to give. But in terms of his person, whatever he possessed, he had it from himself in such a way, and was so perfectly self-sufficient, that he did not owe any repayment to anyone and did not need to give anything in order to be repaid.”

29 This shows that Anselm clearly believed that some supererogatory acts were possible for human beings. This is not the impression that one gets from Anselm’s reply to Boso in CDH I.20. The real obstacle to a mere human making satisfaction for sin seems to be the impossibility of him offering to God something of equivalent value to the debt of sin, not the impossibility of offering to God something you do not already owe him.

30 CDH II.19, p. 322 (Schmitt 130).
To whom will [the Son] more fittingly give the fruit and reward of his death than to those for whose salvation he made himself a human being, as truthful reasoning has taught us, and to whom, as we have said, he gave an example by dying for the sake of justice?\footnote{CDH II.19, p. 323 (Schmitt 130).}

The human race became heirs to the reward given to Christ for making satisfaction for sin. The boundless worth of this reward can compensate for any debt that a sinner contracts.

Divine justice and mercy are exemplified in the means he chose to bring about human redemption. Anselm has argued that God’s justice demands satisfaction for sin prior to forgiving sin. He also notes that the way that God has arranged for satisfaction to be made exemplifies the depths of God’s mercy. For justice could have just as easily condemned all men to punishment. Instead, God sent his only Son to redeem the human race through the bitterness of the Passion.\footnote{CDH II.20, p. 324 (Schmitt 131-2). For a discussion of this mercy in Anselm, see Joseph Houston, “Was the Anselm of Cur Deus Homo a Retributivist?”, Cur Deus Homo, Roma 21-23 Maggio 1998, Studia Anselmiana (128), (eds.) P. Gilbert, H. Kohlenberger, E. Salmann, (Roma, 1999), pp. 621-39.}

Anselm has argued that it was necessary for man to be redeemed, it was necessary for redemption to be achieved through making satisfaction for sin, that it was necessary for a God-man to make this satisfaction, and necessary for him to make it through freely offering his life to God on the Cross. These various necessity claims will become a focus of scholastic discussions of Anselm’s soteriology.\footnote{For a recent defense of Anselm’s argument in Cur Deus homo that makes a special effort to explain and defend the coherence of the necessity claims that Anselm makes, see Sandra Visser and Thomas Williams, Anselm, Great Medieval Thinkers, (Oxford, 2009), chapter 13. They take issue with Brian Leftow “Anselm on the Cost of Salvation,” Medieval Philosophy and Theology 7 (1997): 73-92 over the extent to which Leftow’s interpretation emphasizes the fittingness arguments of Cur Deus Homo.} Anselm does not fully explain what he means by attributing necessity to these various aspects of salvation history. He even
notes at the beginning of *Cur Deus Homo* that he hesitates to undertake a discussion of redemption without first working out more fully what is meant by necessity and possibility.\(^{34}\)

Anselm expounds some of his ideas about modality in the course of his discussion with Boso. When Anselm claims that each step of God’s redemptive plan is necessary it is easy to wonder whether he believes that God remains free in his decision to save man. Anselm addresses this concern in *Cur Deus Homo* II.5. Anselm distinguishes between a necessity that someone act in a way that is against his will and a necessity that follows upon the will of an agent.\(^{35}\) Anselm sees an illustration of the latter type of necessity in a person who makes monastic vows. A person is free to take monastic vows or to not take them. Once he takes vows, however, he necessarily must keep them. This type of necessity does not rob the monk of his freedom. It only requires him to fulfill what he has set out to do. He has bound himself to a certain way of life freely and he adheres to his vows freely. God’s plan of salvation is necessary in a way that is analogous to the monk’s life. God freely created man for eternal life and will act consistently in order to fulfill his purpose.\(^{36}\) An inner act of freedom, rather than an external compulsion, is at the root of the necessity attributed to both the monk and God.

\(^{34}\) *CDH* I.1, p. 246 (Schmitt 49).

\(^{35}\) *CDH* II.5, p. 292 (Schmitt 99-100), “There is a necessity that eliminates or diminishes gratitude to a benefactor, and there is a necessity that increases the gratitude one owes for a benefit. When someone confers a benefit unwillingly because of the necessity to which he is subject, he is owed little or no gratitude. But when he spontaneously subjects himself to the necessity of conferring a benefit, and he does not remain subject to the necessity against his will, then he surely deserves greater gratitude for his benefit.” See also William J. Courtenay, “Necessity and Freedom in Anselm’s Conception of God,” *Analecta Anselmiana*, 4.2 (1975): 39-64.

\(^{36}\) *CDH* II.5, p. 293 (Schmitt 100), “Finally, God does nothing out of necessity since he is in no way compelled to do or prevented from doing anything. And when we say that God does something as though out of the necessity of avoiding dishonorableness (which God certainly does not fear), we should
Anselm thinks of God’s plan of redemption as having the character of necessity insofar as God immutably wills it. This is much different from the claim that it is the only thing that God could have willed for our redemption. Nevertheless, Anselm does not emphasize the distinction between these two claims. Most scholastic authors will argue that it is fitting, not necessary, that satisfaction be required for sin and that Christ’s death be the means of making satisfaction. In making this claim they are considering implicitly the claim that God could have willed something different for our salvation from what he did will (maybe this alternative would be less fitting or equally fitting, but it would be possible). Anselm prefers to take what he knows God did will for our salvation and investigate it as far as reason will allow, but not to speculate on what God could have done in some other order of salvation.

Anselm’s argument in Cur Deus Homo introduces a number of topics and questions for scholastic authors. First, the notion of satisfaction is the main attribute in virtue of which the Cross redeems the human race. Anselm understood satisfaction to redress the disobedience of sin. In offering God his life, Christ made up for our disobedience by doing what was not required of him and giving him a good that is greater than the debt contracted by human sin. Scholastic authors will adopt this understanding of satisfaction, but develop it to also include compensation for the effect of sin (the loss of understand this more properly as meaning that he does it out of the necessity of preserving his honorableness, which he has from himself and not from another, and for that reason it is improperly called necessity. Nevertheless, let us say that it is necessary that the goodness of God, because of its immutability, complete what it has begun in human beings, even though the whole of this good work is a matter of grace.”

37 Courtenay, Capacity and Volition, pp. 31-36, argues that Anselm’s understanding of necessity in Cur Deus Homo was “important for the eventual creation of the distinction of absolute and ordained power” (34). Anselm’s idea of a self-imposed necessity is one way of understanding the obligation that God has to act in accordance with what he has ordained.
the human race), and not merely its disobedience. Second, the notion of reward or merit that Anselm introduces at the end of *Cur Deus Homo* will receive an expanded treatment in scholastic authors, who developed a more systematic concept of merit that they then applied to Christ’s death. Also, scholastic theologians will consider at length the extent to which various aspects of salvation history are necessary, fitting, or contingent. Finally, scholastic authors will build upon Anselm’s analysis of how the humanity of the God-man contributes to his redemptive work. For Anselm, Christ’s human nature is sinless and co-essential with the redeemed. To this scholastic authors will add that it possesses the highest grace that confers on his death some of its redemptive value. We now turn to scholastic ideas about Christ’s created grace.
CHAPTER 3:
CHRIST’S CREATED GRACE AND THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

Scholastic discussions of Christ’s grace occur under three headings: the grace of the union, individual grace, and the grace of headship (or, “capital grace”). The sources for the division of Christ’s grace into these three types are found in various New Testament texts and Patristic writings. Peter Lombard collected many of these sources in Book III dd.12-13 of his Sentences.¹ For example, referring to the grace of the union, the Lombard reports the following statement from Augustine, “in those things that arise in time, that is the highest grace: that man is joined to God in the unity of person.”² The Gospel of Luke describes Christ as having “the fullness of grace,” which scholastic theologians understood as a reference to Christ’s individual grace.³ The Gospel of John in an oft-cited text in scholastic discussions of Christ’s grace of headship states, “And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.”⁴ Christ’s grace of headship allows him to be a source of grace for the members of his mystical body.

³ Lk 2:40 is quoted in this context in III Sent. d. 13, c. 1 (Brady 84).
⁴ John 1:16; cf. Eph. 1:22-23, “and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
In this chapter, we will discuss how Bonaventure, Richard of Middleton, and Duns Scotus understand the connection between the hypostatic union and Christ’s possession of capital grace. This will also involve looking at what these authors say about Christ’s individual grace because those two graces are really identical. All three theologians considered in this chapter agree that Christ’s individual grace is the highest degree of grace that a created nature could possess. Possessing the highest individual grace makes his capital grace sufficient for permitting Christ to make satisfaction for human sin and merit grace for the human race.

The three authors considered here do not agree on the precise connection between the hypostatic union and the possession of the highest grace. Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton hold that the highest grace could only be possessed by a human nature assumed into unity with a divine person. Bonaventure holds this position because he believes that the possession of the highest grace is logically presupposed to the assumption. According to Bonaventure, the human nature united to the Logos must possess the highest degree of holiness in order to dispose it for the highest union possible with God. According to Richard, a human nature lacking grace altogether could be united to the Logos. The presence of the Logos himself to the assumed nature would have been sufficient for conferring sufficient holiness on the humanity of Christ. Richard, however, argues that the hypostatic union augments the capacity of the assumed nature for receiving grace, and for this reason he holds that only a rational nature assumed by a divine person could possess the highest degree of grace. According to Scotus, being assumed into unity with a divine person is not required for possessing the highest grace. Against Bonaventure, no supernatural gifts are bestowed on the nature simply because of
the assumption. The assumption of Christ’s human nature only brings about its
dependence on the Word. Moreover, the assumption does not augment the capacities of
the assumed nature. An assumed nature is not able to receive more grace than a non-
assumed nature. Scotus, therefore, holds that any rational nature could possess grace that
would be equal to that of Christ’s.

3.1 St. Bonaventure

According to Bonaventure, the grace of union refers to grace in three different
ways. In one way, the grace of union refers to God’s decision to bring about the
hypostatic union. This is a grace in the sense that any act exemplifying divine generosity
is a grace. In another way, the grace of the union refers to the relation of dependence of
the human nature on the Person of the Word. In this sense, the grace of the union refers to
a created grace that is non-habitual, but relational. Of the remaining way that one can
interpret the grace of union, Bonaventure writes,

The grace of union names the grace that disposes [Christ’s soul] for union de
congruo. In this way, the grace of the union names a created quality, namely, a
habit of the soul.

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6 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 2, p. 287a, “Tertio modo dicitur gratia unionis, id est ipsa unio gratis facta; et sic nominat ipsam relationem.”

7 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 2, p. 287a, “Alio modo gratia unionis dicitur gratia disponens ad unionem de congruo; et sic nominat qualitatem creatam, scilicet habitum animae.”
In this last sense, the grace of the union is identical to Christ’s individual grace, which is a type of habitual grace. The habitual grace given to Christ’s soul makes it congruous or fitting that his soul be assumed into personal unity with the Logos.

The habitual grace of Christ’s soul is presupposed logically, not temporally, to the assumption. Bonaventure writes,

A soul would not be suited for assumption by the Word unless it was made deiform and assimilated [to God] perfectly through grace. Therefore, [the assumption]...does not exclude the deiformity of grace and glory but rather presupposes it.

Bonaventure places the habitual grace of Christ and the habitual grace of mere men in different genera because of the different kinds of union with God that these graces make possible. The created grace that mere men possess assimilates their intellect and will to union with the whole Trinity; this, however, does not make them worthy of assumption by one of the Persons of the Trinity. Christ’s created grace, on the other hand, is of such a degree and quality that his soul is fittingly united to the person of the Logos.

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8 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, p. 277a, “Dicendum, quod absque dubio in Christo est ponere donum gratiae, quae quidem gratia dicitur gratia singularis personae: et hoc quidem donum esse creatum.”

9 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, p. 277b, “...nec anima esset idonea, ut assumeretur a Verbo; nisi esset deiformis et Deo assimilata perfecte per gratiam: et ideo hoc...deiformitatem gratiae et gloriae non excludit, quin potius praesupponit.” cf. Bonaventure III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 3, p. 282a-b.

10 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, ad. 4, p. 280b, “Ad illud quod obicitur, quod finitum non excedit aliud finitum nisi finite; dicendum, quod illud habet veritatem, quando omnino sunt eiusdem generis; nam si non sunt eiusdem generis proximi, falsitatem habet, sicut patet, quod linea in infinitum excedit punctum, et superficies lineam. Gratia autem Christi non tantum disponit ad frutionem, secundum quod aliae gratiae, verum etiam ad unionem. Et hinc est, quod cum uniri cum deitate sit novus et singularis modus divinae existentiae et habitatio in creatura, quantum ad hoc potest attendi excessus sine mensura.”

11 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 2, art. 3, q. 2, p. 52a-53a, “Dicendum, quod cum quaeritur, utrum anima uniatur ipsi Verbo mediante aliquo habitu gratuito, hoc dupliciter intelligi: aut quod ille habitus in illa unione tenat rationem congruentiae, vel rationem causae. Si ita, quod teneat rationem congruentiae, sic concedi potest, quod anima unitur ipsi Verbo mediante habitu creato quia non decet ipsam Verbo uniri, nisi
According to Bonaventure, Christ has the highest possible degree of habitual grace that could inhere in a human soul: “without any doubt his soul will be more deiform through the abundance of grace given to it than the soul of any other creature.”¹² Christ has the highest grace because his human soul was given the highest union with God that is possible for a creature.¹³

Bonaventure does consider, however, whether grace might be superfluous for making Christ’s soul able to be assumed. The assumed soul must be deiform or holy, but perhaps the hypostatic union of itself is sufficient to prevent the human intellect and will of Christ from turning away from God. Bonaventure formulates this objection to his position in the following way: “The uncreated Word, united to the soul of Christ and its powers, can most efficaciously rule them and lead them to good ends.”¹⁴ In other words, the presence of the Logos alone to the assumed nature is sufficient for conferring and maintaining the holiness or deiformity that is required of a created rational nature united in person to the Logos. If this were correct, grace would be superfluous. Bonaventure,

¹² Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, ad. 4, p. 277b, “Unde absque dubio deiformior est illa anima per abundantiam gratiae sibi datam, quam sit alia creatura.”

¹³ Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 279b, “Si autem loquamur de ipsa in comparatione ad gratias aliorum hominum; sic improportionabiliter excedit ratione unionis ad personam Verbi, ad quam unionem gratia illa dispositum animam Christi.”

¹⁴ Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, arg. 4, p. 276b, “Item, Verbum increatum, unitum animae Christi et eius potentiss, potest eas efficacissime regere et ad bona perficienda elevare.”
however, simply reasserts his belief that the soul is not fittingly brought into the highest union that can obtain between God and a created nature. Bonaventure assumes that holiness is impossible apart from grace.

Aside from disposing his soul for union, Christ’s habitual grace enables him to merit for himself and for others. Christ’s ability to merit for himself is had in virtue of his individual grace and when that grace is considered as a principle of meriting for others it is identified with Christ’s capital grace. In this sense, there is a merely conceptual distinction between Christ’s individual and capital grace. Yet as we shall see, for Bonaventure there is a sense in which the capital grace of Christ and his individual grace are not identical, for Christ’s headship is a function of both his created grace and his divine nature. To the extent that capital grace refers to his divine nature, it is not identical with his habitual grace. The purpose of positing this dual character to Christ’s capital grace will be explained presently.

Bonaventure begins his explanation for the dual character of the grace of headship by examining why the New Testament applies the metaphor of headship to Christ. He picks out three characteristics of a material head that can be applied to Christ in a

15 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, ad. 4, p. 277b, “Ad illud quod obiicitur de Verbo unito, quod potest regere; dicendum, quod verum est, quantum est ex parte ipsius Verbi uniti, sed defectus est ex parte liberi arbitrii, quod indiget debita dispositione ad hoc, quod regimini ipsius Verbi se valeat conformare; indiget etiam dispositione debita, ut possit ipsi Verbo uniri in una persona.”

16 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, p. 276a, “Item, meritum dicit ordinationem ad aliquod maius per aliquod, quod reddit Deo acceptum; sed quod reddit acceptum non potest esse sine gratia, quod vero ordinatur ad maius non potest esse nisi creatum: ergo meritum non est nisi per donum gratiae creatae. Sed meritum fuit in Christo: ergo habuit gratiam creatam, per quam meruit; et illa est gratia singularis personae: ergo etc.” Bonaventure states that he accepts this argument on p. 276b.

17 This view is found at least as early as Summa Fratris Alexandri, (Quaracchi: College of St. Bonaventure, 1948), bk. III, tract. 3, q. 1, tit. 2, mem. 1, c. 1, pp. 143-6. For more on early thirteenth-century views of Christ’s capital grace, see John F. Boyle, The Structural Setting of Thomas Aquinas’ Theology of the Grace of Christ as he is Head of the Church in the Summa Theologiae (1989, Unpublished Dissertation, University of Toronto), pp. 91-8.
metaphorical manner. First, a head and its body conform to each other. Second, the head is the source [principium] of the members. Third, the head influences or directs the senses and the motion of the body. These characteristics of headship apply to Christ in different ways depending upon whether his headship is taken in reference to his divine or human nature. In virtue of his human nature, Christ conforms to his body. The second property—being a source for the members—is a result of his divine nature because it is through that nature that he is the creator of all the members of his body. The third property of headship is the most important one for understanding how Christ’s headship plays a role in his redemptive work. The third property is attributed to Christ in virtue of both of his natures. The influence of the head on the senses and the motion of the body refer metaphorically to causing faith and charity in the members of his mystical body. Bonaventure connects sensation with faith and motion with charity. Possessing faith and charity is an effect of created grace. Christ, as head of the Church, both prepares his members for receiving grace and he causes grace in his members. As head, according to

18 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 1, p. 284a-b, “Ad praedictorum intelligentiam est notandum, quod caput in spiritualibus transmutive dicitur a capite in corporalibus; ‘omnes autem transferentes secundum aliquam similitudinem transferunt’ [Aristotle, Topics VI, c. 2]: et ideo caput in spiritualibus dicitur secundum concomitantiam ad aliquam proprietatem capitis materialis. In capite autem materiali haec tria reperimus, scilicet quod est membris conforme, est membrorum principium, est etiam influxivum sensus et motus.”

19 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 1, p. 284a-b, “Tertio vero proprietas, scilicet influendi motum et sensum, competit ei ratione divinitatis et ratione humanitatis.”

20 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 3, p. 289a-b, “Ad praedictorum intelligentiam est notatum, quod sensus in spiritualibus attenditur quandum ad cognitionem, motus vero quantum ad affectionem et dilectionem, quae est pondus inclinans unumquemque spiritum et trahens ad locum sibi debitum. Influere ergo motum et sensum est causare in nobis fidem et dilectionem, sive fidem operantem per dilectionem, sive cognitionem et amorem.”

21 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 1, p. 284b, “Dupliciter enim contingit sensum et motum gratiae influere: aut per modum praeparantis, aut per modum impartientis.”
his human nature, Christ disposes his members for salvation.\textsuperscript{22} As head, according to his
divine nature, Christ is the efficient cause of grace in his members.

3.2 Richard of Middleton

Richard of Middleton records two opinions about the connection between
hypostatic union and the possession of the highest grace by the soul assumed into that
union. According to the first view, grace is necessarily bestowed on the assumed nature
in order to prevent the dissolution of the hypostatic union. Without grace, the assumed
human nature could fall into sin. If this occurred the union would be dissolved
immediately because God cannot be united to a sinful nature.\textsuperscript{23} While this view holds that
grace is necessarily bestowed on the assumed nature, it does not claim that grace is
logically presupposed to the union. According to the second view, grace is necessary to
make the human nature congruously disposed for the union. This view maintains that the
human nature received grace “first in the order of nature before it was united [to the

\textsuperscript{22} Bonaventure, \textit{III Sent.} d. 13, art. 2, q. 1, p. 284b, “Si per modum impartientis et conferentis, sic
est ipsius Christi ratione divinae naturae, qui ‘solus Deus est, qui illuminat pias mentes’, solus est, qui
baptizat interius, pro eo quod ‘mens nostra immediate ab ipsa Veritate formatur’, sicut saepe dicit
Augustinus.” A few lines later, Bonaventure writes also, p. 284b, “Vel per alia verba, et in idem redit,
influere per modum merenti, Christi hominis; per modum efficientis, Christi Dei; vel influere quantum ad
remissionem poenae, Christi hominis, quantum ad remissionem culpae, Christi Dei.”

\textsuperscript{23} Richard of Middleton, \textit{III Sent.} d. 13, art. 3, q. 1, p. 124a, “Respondeo, quod gradita unionis
modo [2a] pro aliquo habitu gratiae redente humanam naturam Christi magis congruam ad hoc, ut maneat
unita secundum illos, qui dicunt prius ordine naturae fuit unita, quam fuerit subjectum habitus gratiae, vel
[2b] etiam quo fuit congrua assumi secundum illos, qui dicunt, quod prius ordine naturae fuit informata
habitu gratiae, quam unita. [3] Tertio modo pro ipsa gratuita unionem. Primo modo gratia unionis est gratia
increata. Secundo modo est gratia creada. Tertio modo secundum quod ipsa unio dicit aliquam relationem
realem non personae Verbi ad naturam humanam, sed e converso, etiam est creada, ut superius ostensum est
distinguio 5.” \textit{Super quatuor libros Sententiarum…questiones}, 4 vols, (Brescia 1591 [Reprint Minerva
1963]).
Word].” Both views are similar in that they maintain that the holiness required of the assumed nature can only arise through grace. These two views differ, however, over whether grace is logically presupposed to the union as a medium joining the soul to the person of the Logos. Only the second view claims that grace is logically presupposed to the assumption.

Richard of Middleton outlines the two aforementioned understandings of the relation between Christ’s habitual grace and the hypostatic union in III Sent. d. 13, art. 3, q. 1. He does not endorse either of these two views in article 3. Richard’s earlier comments on the habitual grace of Christ in III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, however, shows that he rejects both views. According to Richard, grace is neither necessary for keeping the assumed nature from falling into sin nor necessary for making it fitting that Christ’s human soul is assumed by the Logos. In article 1, question 1, Richard notes that many theologians deny that Christ’s human nature necessarily possessed created grace. This has led some theologians to argue that the Word could have assumed a human nature that did actually commit sins. Richard, however, denies that the Logos could be united to a

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24 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 3, q. 1, p. 124a, “…quod prius ordine naturae fuit informata habitu gratiae, quam unita.”

25 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 3, q. 1, ad. 3, p. 124a, “Ad tertum cum dicitur, quod gratia unionis causa fuit, ut humana natura in divino supposito existat, etc. Dico quod non fuit causa necessitatis, sed quaedam dispositi congrua ad hoc, ut humana natura assumeretur ad existentiam talem, secundum communem opinionem, quae point, quod prius ordine naturae fuit in ea habitus gratiae, quam fuerit unita.”

26 In recording these two views of how grace may be conferred on the assumed nature, Richard probably has in mind the different views of Bonaventure and Aquinas. Both of these theologians held that Christ’s soul will possess the highest grace, but for Aquinas this is not because grace is logically presupposed to the assumption. Aquinas in fact denies that grace is a medium of the assumption in Summa Theologiae III, q. 6, art. 6. See also Summa Theologiae III, q. 7, art. 1 for Aquinas’s explanation for why Christ possesses the highest created grace. According to Aquinas, Christ’s soul possesses the highest grace because it is more closely united to the source of grace than any other creature. Thus, the hypostatic union is logically presupposed to the possession of the highest grace.
sinner. According to his view, the human nature would necessarily be morally virtuous because of its participation in uncreated being through the hypostatic union. Being so closely joined to God, Christ’s soul would be rendered impeccable. Yet, lacking habitual grace, the human nature of Christ would not enjoy the beatific vision or be able to perform supernaturally meritorious works.\(^{27}\)

Richard, however, believes that the human nature assumed by the Word does in fact possess habitual grace. His reasons for believing this are soteriological. For without habitual grace, Christ could not make satisfaction for sin or merit grace for sinners or possess the beatitude that God willed for the assumed nature.

Christ possesses a degree of created grace that no human person could possess. Richard of Middleton reports that some theologians have claimed that the degree of grace that Christ possesses places his grace in a different species than the grace of mere men.\(^{28}\)

These theologians assert that only a nature assumed by a divine person is in potency to

\(^{27}\) Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 1, ad. 3, p. 118b, “Ad tertium dicunt quidam, quod natura humana non fuisset assumptibilis a filio Dei nisi fuisset gratia informata, et secundum hanc opinionem esset solutum argumentum. Sed quia tenetur a multis et magnis, quod naturam humanam filius Dei sine gratia saltem praecedente duratione vel ordine naturae assumptionem assumpisset, et tiam quod prius ordine naturae fuerit assumpta, quam fuerit subiectum habitus gratiae: ideo dicunt aliqui ad argumentum, quod si filius Dei sic cem assumpsisset, anima Christi Deus clara visione non vidisset, et sic existens peccare potuisset, sed cum peccasset, fuisset soluta unio, quia nullo modo fuisset possibile, ut peccatrix remaneret unita. Aliter tamen mihi videtur dicendum, si enim filius Dei natura, humanam assumpsisset, sine aliquo habitu gratiae propter tam excellentem participationem increati esse, fuisset confirmata in rectitudine, sed Deum clare non vidisset, ut dicunt aliqui, aut non ita clare, sicut modo; nec opera eius ita meritoria essent, sicut cum habitu gratiae, non est ergo habitus gratiae in anima Christi superfluus.”

\(^{28}\) Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, ad. 1, p. 119a-b, “…gratia autem animae Christi non est eiusdem speciei cum gratia alicuius alterius hominis, ut aliqui dicunt, et ideo quamvis sit finitae essentiae, non tamen oportet, quod gratia alicuius alterius hominis sibi possit proportionari, sed quamvis gratia Christi, secundum quod accipitur pro gratuita unione naturae humanae eius divinae personae, ut natura supposito, nec sit eiusdem speciei cum gratia cuiuslibet alterius hominis, nec sibi proportionata, quia tali unione nullius alterius hominis natura est divinæ personæ unita, tamen difficile est videre quomodo habitus gratiae gratum facientis informatis animam Christi non sit eiusdem speciei cum habitibus gratiae gratum facientis in aliis hominibus, cum ut habitum est lib. 2 gratia et charitas realiter idem sint…”
this species of grace. Richard argues against this view. Christ’s individual grace and the grace of others are both in the Aristotelian category of quality. Moreover, both instances of grace have the same elevating effect on their recipient insofar as the possession of grace for Christ and for mere men makes it possible for them to elicit meritorious acts. According to Richard, a difference in magnitude or intensity does not require positing two different species of grace.

Richard notes that there is an account of the disproportion between the grace of Christ and others that does not rely on placing Christ’s grace in its own unique species. According to this account, a nature assumed into hypostatic unity with the Logos has a greater capacity for receiving grace than a non-assumed nature. The capacity for receiving grace corresponds to the perfection of one’s actual existence. Christ’s human nature exists in the Person of the Word and this way of existing disproportionately exceeds the actual existence of any other created nature. Only a human nature united hypostatically to a person of the Trinity has the capacity for receiving as much grace as Christ received. The difference of Christ’s grace and the grace of others is not in its

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29 Richard of Middleton, *III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, ad. 2*, p. 119b, “Ad secundum cum dicitur, quod omni finito potest Deus facere aliquid maius etc. Dico quod hoc non est verum, in eadem specie. Non enim posset facere nobiliorem creaturam in specie animae, quam anima Christi, nec maiorem capacitatem in creatura quam quid sit capax unibilitatis cum creatore. Dico ergo, quod quamvis Deus non potuerit Christo dare maiorem plenitudinem gratiae, ex hoc tamen non sequitur quod sit infinita, quia capacitas animae, quae illa gratia est impleta finita est.” This is similar to the view that Thomas Aquinas expresses in *Summa Theologiae* IIIa, q. 7, arts. 2 & 9.

30 Richard of Middleton, *III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, ad. 1*, p. 119b, “Unde aliqui aliter respondent ad argumentum dicendum, quod perfectio operis et capacitas habitus habilitantis ad illam operationem respondent naturae per comparationem ad perfectionem suae actualis existentiae. Cum ergo actualis existentiae humanae naturae Christi, qua existit in verbo Dei, ut natura in supposito improportionabiliter excedat existentiam actualem Angeli cuiuscunque capax est tanti habitus gratiae, quod in ea non posset esse tantus, si non esset unita, nec in quocunque Angelo, nisi Deus illum uniret sibi in unitate personae, sicut humana natura Christi est unita.”
species but in the capacity of the recipient, which is determined by one’s manner of existence.

Richard’s understanding of Christ’s capital grace is very similar to Bonaventure’s. Richard picks out two aspects of headship that explain why this metaphor is applied to Christ and his grace. First, the head and body share in the same nature. Christ is called head in this sense because of his human nature. Second, the head is also the origin of sensation and motion for the body. Christ’s headship in this sense consists in the spiritual influence he has over his mystical body. Christ exercises this spiritual influence through both his divine and human natures. Like Bonaventure, therefore, Richard maintains that the grace of headship refers in different ways to the created grace of his human nature and to his divine nature. Richard writes,

By the divine nature he efficiently and principally pours the sense of correct cognition and the motion of correct desire into the members of his Church. By reason of his human nature, he does not pour these things into his members, except meritoriously and dispositively. Therefore, he is much more the head of the Church by reason of his divine nature than by reason of his human nature. Yet he is uniquely the head of the Church as a human being when headship is considered with respect to conformity in nature.

Christ, through his human nature, cannot function as the efficient cause of grace because producing faith and charity in the members of the Church is an act of creation. No gifts or

31 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art 3, q. 3, p. 123b, “Cum ergo ad plenam rationem capitis requiratur influential sensus et motus in ipsa membra, et conformitas in natura, sequitur, quod est maxime caput ecclesiae ratione utriusque naturae simul...” For a fuller discussion of headship, see Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 1, p. 121a-b.

32 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 3, p. 123b, “…ratione enim divinae naturae influit effective, et principaliter membris ecclesiae sensum recte cognitionis, et motum recte affectionis, ratione autem humanae naturae non influit ista, nisi meritorie et dispositive, et ideo magis est caput ecclesiae ratione divinae naturae, quam humanae, sed quantum ad conforimitatem in natura non est caput ecclesiae, nisi ratione humanae naturae.”
powers of Christ’s human nature enable him to create something. Yet Christ’s created grace enables him to be a meritorious or dispositive cause of human redemption by preparing members of his mystical body to receive grace and salvation.

3.3 Duns Scotus

Scotus presents two arguments against the claim that grace functions as a medium of the assumption of Christ’s human nature. A divine person could assume an irrational nature. Irrational natures, however, are not capable of receiving grace. Grace, therefore, cannot be a necessary medium for the assumption of a created nature. This argument shows that the assumption of a created nature does not require bestowing grace on it. Scotus presents another argument for the same conclusion. This argument is based on what is involved in the very act of assuming a created nature rather than being based upon the incapacity of some assumable natures for grace. Accidental qualities cannot serve as a medium in the instantiation of substantial natures because there must first be a substance before any of its powers can be perfected through accidental qualities.

33 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 3, p. 123a, “Et ostendo quod ratione divinae naturae, quia caput influit in membris sensum et motum. Sed Christus inquantum homo non influit membris ecclesiae, fidem et charitatem per quas fideles habent sensum recte cognitionis et motum recte affectionis, quia ille virtutes sunt in membris ecclesiae per creationem.” This text is taken from the first objection but it is clear from the body of the question that Richard only disagrees with the objection if it is taken as an argument for excluding Christ’s headship from having any relation to his human nature. Scotus will later maintain the same point about created realities having no ability to efficiently cause grace.

34 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 2, q. 2, n. 90 (Vatican 105), “Non necessitatis, quia, ut praedictum est, natura irrationalis—quae non est capax gratiae—potest assumi...”
rational substance is first instantiated before it receives grace because grace is a habit that perfects one’s operations.\textsuperscript{35}

Scotus finds confirmation for his position that an accidental quality is not required for assumption by considering what would happen to Christ’s human nature, if the hypostatic union were dissolved and the formerly assumed nature were to come to subsist.\textsuperscript{36} At the instant of dissolution, the human nature would come to subsist in its own created person. The negations that were not formerly true of Christ’s human nature are now true of it, but this transition does not require any accidental medium to bring about its subsistence.\textsuperscript{37} The only change that would occur would be a relational change, which in this case does not involve any changes in the absolute (substantial or accidental) features of the human nature. No accidental medium either brings about subsistence or assumption.

Scotus, of course, does believe that the soul of Christ possesses created grace. He asks whether Christ’s grace is the highest grace. Scotus distinguishes between two ways that an instance of grace could be considered the highest degree of grace. First, “highest” could be taken positively in which case it would refer to a grace that exceeds every other

\textsuperscript{35} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 2, q. 2, n. 88 (Vatican 156). \textit{Ordinatio} n. 88 combines \textit{Lectura} nn. 92 and 95: \textit{Lectura} III, d. 2, q. 2, n. 95, p. 106, “Praeterea, habitus est ad operandum et maxime gratia ad meritorie operandum,—igitur eiusdem erit operatio et principium operationis; sed operatio est suppositi et ipsum praesupponit; igitur similiter natura prius erit suppositum quam recipiat habitum disponentem ad operandum.”

\textsuperscript{36} Though Scotus denies that habitual grace is a medium helping to bring about the assumption of the human nature to the Person of the Word, he does allow that grace can be called a cause of the union, if grace refers to the gratuitous will of God. One can say that God brings about the hypostatic union from grace because hypostatic union is not something attainable by the powers intrinsic to any created nature but results only from divine generosity, see \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 2, q. 2, n. 98, (Vatican 160).

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Lectura} III, d. 2, q. 2, n. 93 (Vatican 106). See Chapter 1 for more on Scotus’s negation theory of subsistence.
individual grace and no other instance of grace could be equal to it or exceed it. Second, “highest” could be taken negatively in the sense that no other grace exceeds Christ’s grace, but other people besides Christ could also have an equal amount of grace. \(^38\) Scotus notes that if Christ possesses the highest grace, then it must be highest in the negative sense because a divine person could assume multiple human natures and give them the same degree of grace. \(^39\)

Scotus has only committed himself to the claim that if Christ has the highest grace, he is not the only one who could possess that grade of grace. Before arguing that Christ does in fact possess the highest grace, Scotus considers an argument for denying that Christ could possess the highest grace:

The soul of Christ is not the highest thing that can receive grace because a human soul is not the highest intellectual nature. Therefore, Christ’s soul cannot receive the highest grace. \(^40\)

It seems that the more excellent a created rational nature is, the greater its capacity for grace. Therefore, an angelic nature would have a greater capacity for grace than any human soul.

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\(^38\) Dun Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 27 (Vatican 393), "Ad primam questionem dico quod quod 'summum' potest accipi dupliciter: uno modo positive, per 'excedentiam ad omnia alia'; alio modo negative, per 'non excedi ab aliquo alio'. Primo modo non potest esse nisi unum dictum per superabundantiam. Secundo modo possunt esse multa talia, sicut sunt 'generalissima', quae non habent genus superius." Cf. *Lectura* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, nn. 36-9 (Vatican 281).

\(^39\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 28 (Vatican 393-4), "Primo modo loquendo, dico quod Deus non potuit conferre animae Christi summam gratiam possibilem cui non potest creare aequalem, quia potuit et potest aliam naturam aequalem isti assumere et aequalem gratiam sibi dare; secundo modo, dico quod summam gratiam creabilem potuit dare huic animae."

\(^40\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1, n. 2 (Vatican 385), "Quia anima Christi non potuit esse summum gratificabile, quia non summa natura intellectualis; ergo nec summam gratiam potuit recipere. Probatio consequentiae: quia natura intellectualis excellenter est capax maioris perfectionis et excellenterioris, quia capacitas perfectionis est secundum gradum naturae perfectibilis." cf. *Lectura* III, d. 13, q. 1, n. 3 (Vatican 273).
Scotus outlines one reply to this argument that is reminiscent of Richard of Middleton’s position on how the hypostatic union affects the capacity of Christ’s soul for grace.\(^{41}\) According to the reply, an angelic nature does have an inherently greater capacity for grace than a human nature. The hypostatic union, however, augments the capacity of the human soul for grace to such an extent that it becomes capable of receiving more grace than an angel.\(^{42}\)

According to Scotus, however, the hypostatic union does not augment the assumed nature’s capacity for grace because the hypostatic union consists precisely and exclusively in the dependence of the human nature on the person of the Word. Scotus writes,

\begin{quote}
No new absolute is posited through the union because to be united to the Word indicates only a special dependence of the human nature on the Word. Therefore, just as the nature remains the same in all its absolute qualities, so also its capacities remain the same because the capacity of something is its nature.\(^{43}\)
\end{quote}

The assumption of a nature into the unity of person does not change the potencies of the nature. The assumption only results in dependence on the supposit of another.

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\(^{41}\) Richard of Middleton, to my knowledge, does not explicitly claim that an angel can receive more grace than a non-assumed human soul, but this claim is implicit in what he does say about one’s manner of existing determining one’s capacity for grace (assuming that Richard believes that an angel’s manner of existing is higher than a human person’s manner of existing).

\(^{42}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 56 (Vatican 407-08), “Ad primum dicitur quod licet non sit summum gratificabile, tamen unitur personae Verbi, et ex hac unione ampliatur eius capacitas ut possit recipere summam gratiam, quam non posset recipere si non esset assumpta.” Scotus rejects this line of reasoning.

\(^{43}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1, n. 57 (Vatican 408), “Circa istam naturam nihil ponitur absolutum novum per unionem, quia ipsam uniri Verbo non dicit nisi specialem dependentiam eius ad Verbum; sicut ergo manet natura eadem quantum ad omnia absoluta, ita et eandem habens capacitatem, quia capacitas eius est sua natura.”
Scotus points out that even if the assumption of a rational nature did augment its capacity for grace, then according to the principles of the opposing argument, Christ still would not be able to possess the highest grace that God could create. At best he would *de facto* possess the highest grace that God did create. The assumption of an angelic nature would augment its capacity for grace just as it would augment the capacity of a human nature. Given that an angelic nature, according to the initial argument, has an inherently greater capacity for grace than a human soul, no human soul could ever possess as much grace as an assumed angelic nature.\footnote{Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1, n. 58 (Vatican 408), “Praeterea, si angelus fuisset assumptus, habuisset ex vi assumptionis maiorem capacitatem quam nunc habet, per te, ita quod tantum auctum fuisset ultra capacitatem naturalis eius per assumptionem quantum nunc est auctum per unionem ex parte animae ultra suam naturalem capacitatem, vel plus; et secundum hoc, ipsa natura posset capere plus de gratia quam modo anima Christi, et in hic non fuit summa, —cuius oppositum tenetur.”}

Turning to his own position, Scotus argues that human and angelic natures are receptive to the same amount of grace. According to Scotus, there is a class of accidents called “appropriate accidents,” which come in different grades that determine the intensity of the accidental from. For Scotus, an “appropriate accident” is just an accident that does not harm the recipient in any of its grade.\footnote{Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 45 (Vatican 402), “Secundo, quod est magis ad propositum, supposito quod summa gratia possit unica actione creari, probo quod illa possit conferri animae Christi: Primo quia subjectum receptivum accidentis convenientis, habentis gradus, quod tamen non determinatur ex se ad aliquem illorum graduum, potest—quantum est ex se—recipere illud accidentes secundum quemcumque ipsorum graduum; anima est tale subjectum respectu gratiae; ergo potest, quantum est ex se, recipere quemcumque gradum gratiae.”} To use Scotus’s example, heat is not an appropriate accident for water. While water is able to receive the accident of heat in some grades, there are other grades of heat that will destroy water.\footnote{Perhaps a positive example that could further elucidate Scotus’s notion of an appropriate accident would be “knowledge of something.” No amount of knowledge of how a computer works, for} Rational creatures have a capacity for grace in any of its grades.\footnote{Perhaps a positive example that could further elucidate Scotus’s notion of an appropriate accident would be “knowledge of something.” No amount of knowledge of how a computer works, for}
By saying that grace is an appropriate accident for the soul, Scotus acknowledges that he has only shown that it is possible for the highest grace to inhere in Christ’s soul. He goes on to ask whether Christ actually possessed the highest grace. In both the *Lectura* and the *Ordinatio*, Scotus approvingly cites the opinion of Peter Lombard who held that God gave to Christ as much grace as it was possible to give as support for believing that the highest created grace inhere in Christ’s soul.48

Aside from citing the authority of Peter Lombard, Scotus offers his own argument for holding that Christ possesses the highest grace. This argument is based on the implications of God’s acting in accordance with right reason.49 In both cases, Scotus begins his argument with a proposition from Augustine’s *De libero arbitrio*. In the *Ordinatio*, Scotus cites the following from Augustine: “whatever occurs to you by true reason, you can know that God does this more than he does not do it.”50 Scotus quotes this passage slightly differently in the *Lectura*. In neither case does he quote what is in

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47 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 13, q. 1, n. 55 (Vatican 288), “Nunc autem voluntas est in potentia neutra respectu gratiae, nec determinatur ad certum gradum gratiae ex natura sui; ergo potest recipere gratiam secundum quocumque gradum,--et per consequens, si sit possibilis summa gratia (ut praestensum est), illam potest voluntas Christi recipere.”


49 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 62 (Vatican 290); *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 54 (Vatican 406-7).

50 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 54 (Vatican 407), “Quidquid tibi vera ratione melius occurrerit, scias hoc Deum magis facisse quam non fecisse.” Here is the line as Scotus quotes it in *Lectura* III, d. 13, n. 62, “Quidquid recta ratione occurrerit esse melius, credendum est summum Bonum hoc facere.” In the *Lectura* Scotus replaces Augustine’s ‘true reason’ with his own ‘right reason.’
the critical edition of *De libero arbitrio*, but the citation in the *Ordinatio* is closest to the critical text. In both the *Lectura* and *Ordinatio*, Scotus invokes Augustine’s statement as support for his own claim that we can be sure that God has done what right reason recognizes as the best course of action. According to the *Ordinatio*, our right reason recognizes that absolutely speaking it is better to give the highest grace to someone without any merit than to not do this because conferring the highest grace in this way manifests the mercy of God. In fact, according to Scotus, there could be no higher expression of God’s mercy. That it is better for God to do this than not do it, still makes it only probable that God has in fact done this, according to Scotus. God is not always constrained to act according to what right reason indicates is the best course of action. Moreover, based on these considerations alone it is even less probable that he has given the highest grace to any particular soul. These considerations suggest, but by no means prove, that Christ possesses the highest grace that God create. For this reason Scotus offers an additional consideration to make it reasonable to believe that Christ does possess

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52 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III d. 13, q. 2, n. 54, (Vatican 406-07), “Confirmatur ista responsio per illud Augustini III *De libero arbitrio*: ‘Quidquid tibi vera ratione melius occurrerit, scias hoc Deum magis fecisse quam non fecisse’; videtur autem simpliciter melius—secundum rectam rationem—summam gratiam esse alicui collatam quam non esse collatam, quia in hoc maxime manifestatur summa misericordia Dei in dando summum bonum gratiae sine meritis: igitur est probable dicere hoc esse factum, --et non in alio quam in anima Christi; ergo etc.”

53 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 13, q. 1-4, n. 90 (Vatican 297), “…licet autem in omnibus alii creaturis apareat summa potentia (propter modum faciendi et gubernandi), non tamen apparat summa misericordia nisi in aliquo effectu; unde quod dedit animae Christi summam gratiam quam potest creare, sine aliqubus meritis, est summa misericordia: aliter enim non appararet summa misericordia, nec posset etiam ostendi in aliquo effectu.”

54 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 2, n. 53 (Vatican 406), “Quantum ad secundam quaestioem, de facto, probable est dicere secundum Magistrum quod Deus tantam gratiam ei contulit quantam potuit.”
the highest grace: “In commending Christ, I prefer to praise him too much than too little, if through ignorance I must err on one side.”\textsuperscript{55} These reasons, however, still remain tentative and probable, but do not establish with certainty the conclusion that Christ possesses the highest grace.

Despite the tentativeness of his arguments, Scotus does explicitly state that God conferred the highest grace on the soul of Christ throughout \textit{Lectura} III, d. 13 and \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 13 as well as in \textit{Lectura} III, d. 20.\textsuperscript{56} Given that Scotus does in fact hold that Christ has received the highest grace, it must be the case that Scotus accepts this on the basis of revelation. Reason only tells him that God will probably give the highest grace to someone, but revelation tells him this is actually the case and who the person is that has received this grace. The part of revelation that leads Scotus to believe that Christ does possess the highest grace is the part of revelation that teaches that Christ is head of the Church.

Scotus agrees with his Franciscan predecessors in seeing Christ’s created grace as allowing him to function as a meritorious or dispositive cause of grace for others. Scotus states that it is fitting for the person who communicates grace to others to have the highest grace. Scotus bases this on an analogy with what happens in the order of nature

\textsuperscript{55} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 13, q. 2, n. 53 (Vatican 406), “In commendando Christum, malo excedere laudando quam deficere a laude sibi debita, si propter ignorantiam oporteat in alterum incidere.”

where the ability to be the first cause of something in another requires that the cause be
the first or highest thing in the relevant category.\(^57\)

Scotus asks whether *de potentia ordinata*, God could give the highest grace to
another person in addition to Christ. He argues that in the current order of salvation only
Christ could possess the highest grace. Scotus’s argument approaches this conclusion
from Christ’s role as head of the Church. The function of the head is to meritoriously
cause grace in others in virtue of possessing the highest grace. Only one person could
have the highest grace “because no other nature could be the head of those who have
grace because there cannot be two heads, just as there cannot be two highest things in the
same order.”\(^58\) Thus, to the extent that the highest grace is conferred on someone so that
he can meritoriously earn grace for others, only one person will possess the highest
grace.\(^59\)

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potest esse summa gratia in Christo, etiam accipiendo superlativum affirmative, ita quod Deus de potentia
ordinata non potest creare aequalem gratiam gratiae Christi, qui decret quod sicut in ordine reali sit aliquid
primum, ita etiam decret quod in esse gratiae sit aliquid primum, quod est caput Ecclesiae, scilicet Christus;
sed si esset alius habens tantom gratiam, tunc essent duo capita Ecclesiae!” and n. 61, p. 290, “Praeterea,
confirmatur hoc per rationem praecedentem [viz., n. 59], quia decret quod illud quod habet rationem
influens in alia in esse gratiae, habeat rationem summi in esse gratiae (sic ut illud quod influit in alia in
esse naturae, est primum in natura); cum igitur Christus, qui est caput Ecclesiae, influat in membra
Ecclesiae in esse gratiae, decet quod habeat summam (licet finitam).”

58 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio III*, d. 13, q. 1, n. 50 (Vatican 406), “quia nulla alia natura posset esse
caput habentium gratiam, quia non possunt esse duo capita, sicut nec duo suprema in eodem ordine.” cf.
*Lectura III*, d. 13, q. 1, n. 59, pp. 289-90, “Verumtamen de potentia ordinata potest esse summa gratia in
Christo, etiam accipiendo superlativum affirmative, ita quod Deus de potentia ordinata non potest creare
aequalem gratiam gratiae Christi, quia decret quod sicut in ordine reali sit aliquid primum, ita etiam decret
quod in esse gratiae sit aliquid primum, quod est caput Ecclesiae, scilicet Christus; sed si esset alius habens
tantam gratiam, tunc essent duo capita Ecclesiae!” Cf. *Ordinatio III*, d. 13, q. 1, n. 51 (Vatican 406),
“Similiter, si posset dari alicui alii tanta gratia, ergo tantum posset proficere in meritis, quod posset tantum
mereri,--quod videtur absurdum.”

59 Earlier we saw that Scotus admitted that different divine persons could assume different human
natures at the same time. Moreover, these different human natures could both be given the highest grace
that God could create. Yet both of these graces, from what we have seen of Scotus’s notion of headship,
could not be instances of “capital grace.” God could ordain only on the assumed natures to be the head of
the Church, even though both of the assumed natures would possess an equal amount of grace.
It is common among Franciscans to understand Christ’s capital grace as referring to both his divine and human natures. Scotus speaks of Christ’s headship as permitting him to be “the source of grace for his members” but he does not provide the twofold analysis of Christ’s grace that is characteristic of earlier Franciscans. Scotus does not see the grace of headship as a function of Christ’s divine nature. It is in virtue of his created grace alone that Christ is head of the Church. Even though he does not follow the Franciscan interpretation of capital grace, neither does he follow a Thomistic understanding of it whereby Christ as head of the Church is an instrumental efficient cause of grace in his members. As Richard of Middleton had claimed earlier, causing grace is an act of creation and no created power can play a causal role in such an act. According to Scotus, the grace of headship is exclusively a function of Christ’s human nature and it enables Christ to be a meritorious, not an efficient, cause of grace in others. Thus, Scotus does follow the Franciscan tradition in that he sees Christ’s capital grace as a meritorious or dispositive cause of grace rather than an instrumental efficient cause of grace.

60 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q.1-4, n. 52 (Vatican 406), “...sit influentia gratiarum in membris”

61 In other contexts he rejects the notion of instrumentality that Aquinas used to speak of Christ’s capital grace as itself both a meritorious and efficient cause of grace in others. Scotus rejects the notion of instrumental efficient causality for the sacraments because created powers cannot be creative efficient causes. See *Ordinatio* IV.2, q. 1, n. 23, p. 476, “Hoc etiam patet sic, solus Deus determinat se ad effectum causandum sibi proprium; si enim posset ab alio determinari ad agendum, iam esset causa secunda respectu eius; effectus autem significati per Sacramenta sunt proprii soli Deo; ergo solus Deus potest determinare se ad causandum effectus Sacramentorum, regulariter concomitantes Sacramenta. Hoc est autem Sacramenta habere efficaciam, scilicet habere effectus regulariter concomitantes; ergo a sola voluntate divina habent determinate Sacramenta efficaciam, tanquam a causa principali.” For a discussion Scotus’s understanding of sacramental causality see Richard Cross, “On the Polity of God: The Ecclesiology of Duns Scotus,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, no. 1, (February 2007): 31-36.
In his commentaries on III Sent. d. 13, Scotus never explicitly affirms that a non-assumed nature could possess the highest grace. Scotus at one point asks whether *de potentia absoluta*, the highest grace could inhere in an intellectual nature not assumed by a divine person. Scotus writes, “although God *de potentia Dei absoluta* could confer as great a grace to another nature, whether assumed or perhaps not assumed, he did not do so *de potentia ordinata.*” In this statement he hesitates to unambiguously affirm that a non-assumed nature could possess the highest grace. He has already argued that any rational nature has an inherent potency for the highest grace, but he has not explicitly claimed that any other nature could receive the highest grace apart from assumption. Scotus’s earlier claim that Christ could only possess the highest grace “negatively” did not imply that a non-assumed nature could have an equal grace to Christ’s because it was based on the idea that multiple incarnations could give rise to different human natures with the same amount of grace. Yet given his arguments that the hypostatic union is not necessary to make the assumed nature receptive of the highest grace, we would expect Scotus to hold without hesitation that a non-assumed nature could possess it *de potentia Dei absoluta*. Though his commentaries on III Sent. d. 13 do not unambiguously affirm this possibility, *Lectura III*, d. 20 does. The import of this claim for Scotus’s soteriology will be discussed in the next chapter.

62 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 13, q. 1, n. 52 (Vatican 406), “...licet Deus de potentia Dei absoluta posset tantam gratiam conferre alii naturae, sive assumptae sive forte non assumptae, non tamen de potentia ordinata...”

63 Aquinas, for instance, held that all rational natures have the same inherent capacity for grace but that only through being assumed by a Person of the Trinity does a rational nature receive the greatest share of created grace that is possible for a creature. This view of the creature’s capacity for grace makes it conceivable that Scotus and Aquinas would agree on this point, even though ultimately they do not.

64 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 20, n. 33 (Vatican 50), “…Deus dedisset sibi gratiam summam quam posset recipere (sicut dedit Christo)...”
3.4 Conclusion

All the theologians considered in this chapter agree that Christ possesses the highest grace and that acting in accord with this enables him to be a meritorious cause of grace for others. We have seen, however, that there is disagreement among theologians over the precise connection between possessing the highest grace and being assumed into personal unity with the Logos. Bonaventure argues for the strongest connection between these two things by claiming that possessing the highest grace is a medium of the assumption logically presupposed to the hypostatic union. Richard of Middleton denies that grace is a medium of the assumption, but he does hold that possessing the highest grace is only possible for a nature assumed into unity with a divine Person. Scotus, on the other hand, argued that the soul has a capacity for possessing the highest grace that is independent of the hypostatic union.

The various positions on Christ’s created grace discussed above have two main consequences for scholastic theories of redemption. First, all the Franciscans discussed in this dissertation see Christ’s ability to make satisfaction as partly resulting from his possession of the highest grace. This was not an aspect of Anselm’s explanation for how the God-man was able to make satisfaction, but it becomes a characteristic feature of thirteenth-century accounts of redemption. Second, scholastics before Scotus found in their analysis of Christ’s created grace an additional reason to uphold Anselm’s claim that only a God-man could make satisfaction for sin. This position was a consequence of their belief that only an assumed nature could possess the highest grace. How these two consequences from scholastic positions on Christ’s created grace shape scholastic accounts of redemption will be seen in the remaining chapters.
Anselm and scholastic theologians agree that the purpose of satisfaction is to offer some sort of compensation for the loss to God that occurs as a result of human sin. For Anselm satisfaction compensates God for the loss of honor that he suffers as a result of sin. God is deprived of honor when rational creatures disobey God’s will. Obedience to God’s will is the honor that the free creature owes God. To make up for dishonoring God, some new and great act must be offered to God that was not already owed to him. According to Anselm, only the freely willed death of a God-man can compensate God for the debt incurred by human sin.

Scholastic theologians before Scotus followed Anselm’s view that satisfaction compensated God for a loss of honor brought about by the sheer disobedience involved in sin. They, however, also argued that Christ’s satisfaction consisted in compensating God for the loss of the human race that results from sin. If the human race had not fallen in Adam, its members would have been raised to eternal beatitude. While Scotus emphasizes satisfaction as compensating God for his loss of the human race, he also thinks of it as making up for a loss to God’s honor in the Anselmian sense.

When both Scotus and earlier scholastics explain how Christ makes satisfaction for the second aspect of sin’s damage, they rely on the idea that Christ’s created grace—his capital grace—enables him to merit grace for fallen humanity. Doing this allows
members of the human race to move from a state of sin into a state of grace. In making this transition possible, Christ returns to God what he lost in the human race on account of sin. In this way, satisfaction came to be seen as a kind of merit by some scholastic theologians.

The role accorded to possessing the highest grace in explaining Christ’s ability to make satisfaction for sin provided scholastics before Scotus with an additional reason for holding that only Christ could make satisfaction. According to these earlier theologians, only a soul united to God in person could possess the highest grace. Scotus, on the other hand, argues that the hypostatic union is not a necessary condition for possessing the highest grace. He comes to this conclusion through an analysis of what is involved in a human nature coming to depend on a divine person. Having separated hypostatic union and the possession of the highest grace, he is able to argue that a mere man [purus homo] could have possessed a grace that would make his acts as satisfactory and meritorious as those of Christ.

4.1 St. Bonaventure

Bonaventure distinguishes the following two aspects of sin: the injury or damage it causes [inuria] and the penalty that is owed [damnum]. The damage done by sin refers to sin insofar as it is an offense against God, which in Anselm’s terms is equivalent to

1 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 3, sed contra 2, p. 423a, “Dicendum, quod de duobus consuevit fieri satisfactio et requiri, videlicet de injuria et de damno.”
depriving God of honor. The magnitude of the injury is determined by the dignity of the one offended by sin. In this sense, sin is infinite because it is against a person who has infinite dignity. Aside from the injury done by sin, there is also its penalty. The penalty [\textit{damnum}] for sin is twofold: (1) the loss of justice and the gaining of guilt and (2) the debt to eternal punishment. According to Bonaventure, satisfaction for sin requires offering something to God that compensates him for both sin’s \textit{injur}ia and \textit{damnum}.

According to Bonaventure, only Christ can make satisfaction for sin. No mere creature can offer to God something that is equal to the injury [\textit{injur}ia] of sin, which is infinite. The life of Christ, however, is able to make up for the injury of sin because it is the life of the infinite God. In holding this, Bonaventure is closely following the

\begin{itemize}
  \item[2] Bonaventure, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 3, p. 422a, “Item, satisfactio debet proportionari offensae et injuriae; sed tanta est offensa et injuria, quantus est ille cui infertur: cum igitur Deus sit infinitus, offesna et injuria Dei est in finita.”
  \item[3] Bonaventure, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 3, sed contra 3, p. 422a, “Item, nullus satisfacit, nisi restituat tantum et amplius, quantum abstulit; sed nulla pura creatura valet totum genus humanum, quod per peccatum Adae fuit Deo substractum, restituere.”
  \item[4] Bonaventure, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 425b, “Satisfactio plena est, quando simul fit satisfactio de injuria et de damno; satisfactio vero semiplena est, quando, remissa offensa, satisfactio fit pro damno.”
  \item[5] Bonaventure, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 3, p. 423a, “oportuit, ut persona satisfacientis esset Deus et homo.”
  \item[6] Bonaventure, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 3, p. 423a, “Dicendum, quod duobus consuevit fieri satisfactio et requiri, videlicet de injuria ed de damno. Si igitur Deus requirit satisfactionem ab humano genere; aut requirit pro utroque, aut pro altero horum. Si pro utroque, planum est, quod impossibile est, aliquam puram creaturam Deo satisfacere pro humano genere, pro eo quod tam gravis est injuria, quae infertur Deo ob excellentissimam eius dignitatem, quod nulla pura creatura potest recompensare aliquid ille aequale.”
  \item[7] Bonaventure, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 3, p. 423a, “Si vero exigat satisfactionem de solo damno, condonando injuriam; nec sic potest pro toto genere humano satisfacere aliqua pura creatura. Aut enim illa creatura esset homo, aut non esset homo. Si esset homo, cum unus purus homo non possit aequivalere toti generi humano, talis homo, offerendo se ipsum Deo, nunquam recompensaret damnum, quod Adam intulit, corrupiendo totum genus humanum.
\end{itemize}
argument of *Cur Deus Homo*, which held that the suffering of a God-man would be as valuable as the divinity of his person.

Christ’s Passion also leads to the remission of guilt and punishment for sinners. The remission of guilt comes about when a person receives grace that confers justification and sanctification on the person. Bonaventure, however, considers one serious obstacle to holding that the Passion of Christ could lead to the justification of someone guilty of sin. Bonaventure writes,

> Justification from guilt occurs through receiving grace. But only God can give grace to someone…Therefore, only God can delete guilt and justify man. Therefore, the deletion of guilt and man’s justification is not from the Passion.  

Whatever confers grace on sinners is the cause of a person’s justification. Human suffering—even the human suffering of a God-man—does not seem to be the kind of thing that could cause grace in others and lead men to their justification because it is a created entity. No created entity can cause grace to inhere in the soul of another person. Thus, the suffering of Christ cannot lead to man’s justification. Replying to this objection leads Bonaventure to explain how Christ’s created grace plays a role in his ability to make satisfaction for the *damnum* of sin. While the Passion is not an efficient cause of justification, it is a meritorious cause of justification. Christ is able to merit for

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8 Bonaventure, *III Sent.* d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, sed contra 3, p. 400a, “Item, iustificatio a culpa est per gratiae infusionem; sed solus Deus est, qui potest gratiam infundere, sicut in primo libro et in quarto ostenditur; ergo solus Deus potest culpam delere et hominem iustificare: ergo culpae deletio et iustificatio non est a passione.”

9 Bonaventure, *III Sent.* d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, sed contra 4, p. 400a, “Item, nihil corporale influit iustitiam in rem spiritualem; sed passio Christi fuit corporalis: ergo non potest animam iustificare sive a peccato mundare.”

10 Bonaventure, *III Sent.* d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, p. 401b, “Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod iustifactio est per gratiam, quae infunditur a solo Deo; dicendum, quod etsi gratia solo Deo habeat infundi, nihilominus...
others because he possesses the grace of headship. This grace makes his suffering proportionate to the justification of any individual sinner.\(^\text{11}\) In this respect, the gifts given to Christ’s human nature play an important role in allowing him to fulfill his redemptive mission.\(^\text{12}\)

Bonaventure denies that God must necessarily receive satisfaction for sin prior to elevating man to salvation. Bonaventure writes,

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\text{[God] could delete every demerit and establish man in his prior state, and nothing disordered would remain or be unpunished. For sin brings with it its own punishment, through which it is ordered, and in this way, if the human race would have been liberated without satisfaction, nothing would occur contrary to justice.}\(^\text{13}\)
\]

In a limited way Bonaventure agrees with Anselm that divine justice requires satisfaction or punishment prior to forgiveness, for even if God were to liberate us from sin apart

tamen Christus per suam passionem potuit eam nobis promereri; et sic dicimur a passione iustificare.” Cf. Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, p. 400b, “Attamen neutri, id est nec resurrectioni nec passioni, attribui potest proprie causalitas iustificationis sive deletio culpae, quia non inventur ibi proprie aliquod genus causae, sicut in opponendo ostensum est. Habent tamen nihilominus aliquam causalitatem in hoc, quod habent aliquam causae proprietatem. Attribuitur enim his iustificatio nostra per modum meriti intervenientis, quod quidem habet dispositionis rationem et reduci habet ad causam materialem.”

\(^\text{11}\) For Bonaventure and for all scholastics, Christ’s merit of our justification is transmitted to sinners through the sacrament of baptism. We will consider how Scotus understands the fruits of Christ’s Passion to be transmitted to others in chapter 5.

\(^\text{12}\) Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 2, q. 1, p. 284b, “Si per modum praeparantis, sic est ipsius Christi ratione humanae naturae, in qua passus est propter nos et patiendo satisfecit et removit inimicitiias et dispositut ad suscipiendam gratiam perfectam.” cf. p. 285a, “Ad illud vero quod obiicitur, quod non potest esse gratia creat, quia non posset influere; iam patet responsio, quia quamvis non possit influere effective et causative, potest tamen influere meritorie et dispositive secundum naturam humanam.” cf., p. 289b, “Nam propter meritum passionis Christi promisum Patribus praecedentibus dedit Deus gratiam reconciliationis; et propter exhibitum dat nobis gratiam reconciliationis abundantibus, in qua quidem gratia est sensus cognitionis et motus affectionis.”

\(^\text{13}\) Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 6, p. 431b, “Potuisset enim omnia demerita delere et hominem in priori statu constitui; nec remansisset aliquid inordinatum in universo nec etiam impunitum. Peccatum enim fert secum poenam suam, per quam ordinatur; et ita si sine satisfactione genus humanum liberasset, non propter hoc contra iustitiam fecisset.”
from receiving satisfaction, there would still be punishment for sin. Bonaventure differs from Anselm in that he does not believe that the punishment must be everlasting. God’s justice is vindicated with a temporal punishment of sin. Bonaventure’s position expresses a larger disagreement with Anselm in that it holds that making satisfaction was not necessary for human salvation. Most scholastic theologians also hold this position.

Nevertheless, Bonaventure argues that there is something uniquely fitting in God’s choice to require satisfaction for sin, both on the part of God and man. It is fitting on the part of God because it accords most fully with both divine justice and mercy. His mercy is manifested in forgiving man’s sins, and his justice is manifested in demanding satisfaction for sin. On the part of the human race, there are two reasons why salvation through satisfaction is fitting. First, sin involves indulging in some kind of disordered pleasure. It is fitting, therefore, that iniuria and damnum of sin are overcome by bodily suffering. Second, if satisfaction for sin is made, then forgiveness and salvation can in part be merited. It is preferable for a person to gain something by merit (whether one’s own or another’s) rather than without any merit.

Bonaventure identifies four reasons for why it was fitting for God to will that satisfaction be made through Christ’s death in particular. In explaining this, Bonaventure

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14 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 2, p. 421a, “Et ideo in reparatione generis humani, quae est excellentissima viarum Dei, congruum est, ut simul currat misericordia cum iustitia…Et iste modus magis fuit congruous quam alius. Nam si Deus culpam non dimisisset, sed vindictam exegisset; non manifestare eius misericordia; si vero omnino dimisisset nec satisfactionem exegisset, non manifestaretur iustitia. Si ergo istae duae conditiones sunt in Dei opere servandae praecipue, magis congruebat, humanam naturam reparari per satisfactionem quam per aliam viam, ex parte Dei reparantis.”

15 Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 2, p. 421a, “Magis etiam congruebat ex parte nostri, pro eo quod reparatio nostra ad hoc erat, ut nos reduceret a culpa ad iustitiam, a miseria ad gloriam. Sicut ergo, cum genus humanum cecidit per culpam, Deum inhonoravit per praevariationem et inordinatam delectationem; sic, cum redit a culpa ad iustitiam, decens est, ut Deum honoret sustinendo poenam, et in hoc magis reparatur ad normam iustitiae. Rursus, sicut gloriosius est acquirere vitam aeternam per merita quam sine meritis, sic gloriosius est reconciliari Deo per satisfactionem quam sine.”

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brings together Anselmian ideas with ways of thinking about redemption more common in the early Church. Bonaventure writes,

[The Passion of Christ] was most acceptable for placating God, most fitting for curing our ills, most efficacious for enticing the human race, and most prudent for conquering the enemy of the human race.\textsuperscript{16}

The idea that Christ’s death conquers the devil—or the enemy of the human race—has a long Patristic lineage.\textsuperscript{17} Bonaventure quotes from \textit{Cur Deus Homo} II, ch. 11 when explaining why the Passion was most acceptable to God as a way of placating God. Anselm had argued that there is nothing more difficult for someone not obligated to die than to freely offer his life for the honor of God.\textsuperscript{18} The Passion also functions as an exemplary cause of the remission of sins by enticing us to a deeper love of God.\textsuperscript{19} The Passion incites this love for God because it provides man with a unique and compelling example of God’s love for human beings. No mere creature could be an exemplary cause of our justification in the way that Christ is; that the one who makes satisfaction for the penalties of sin is both God and man is more powerful example of God’s love for his creatures than would be the case if a mere creature died for our sins.

\textsuperscript{16} Bonaventure, \textit{III Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 5, pp. 427b-28a, “Fuit enim acceptabilissimus ad placandum Deum, congruentissimus ad curandum morbum, efficacissimus ad attrahendum genus humanum, prudentissimus ad expugnandum generis humani inimicum.”

\textsuperscript{17} For this aspect of Patristic soteriology see, H.E.W. Turner, \textit{The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption}, ch. 3.

\textsuperscript{18} Bonaventure finds confirmation for Anselm’s claim in Ephesians 5:2, “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

\textsuperscript{19} Bonaventure, \textit{III Sent.} d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, p. 401a, “Nam passio excitat nos ad Dei dilectionem, et ulterius insinuat nobis, qualiter mori debeamus peccatis; et ita est exemplum provocans et exemplar regulans. Et quod sit exemplum habetur ex primae Petri secundo: \textit{Christus passus est pro bobis, vobis relinquens exemplum}. Quod sit exemplar, habetur ad Romanos sexto: \textit{Si complantati sumus similitudine mortis ipsius}, etc.”
4.2 Richard of Middleton

Richard of Middleton distinguishes between *redemptio* and *reparatio*. He writes, "*redemptio* includes more than simple *reparatio*, because *redemptio* names *reparatio* that is made through the offering of a condign price." The condign price is paid by making satisfaction for sin. If God wanted merely to save man through *reparatio*, then satisfaction would not have been required. Thus, like Bonaventure and against Anselm, Richard admits that human salvation could have been brought about without making satisfaction for sin.

Condign satisfaction requires offering something to God that is equal to the quantity of guilt. The guilt of sin is infinite in three ways: sin is against an infinite good, it deprives man of an infinite good, and it corrupts something that is potentially infinite (namely, the number of human beings God could have raised to eternal beatitude). Richard holds that only a God-man is capable of rendering satisfaction for the infinite guilt that sin involves. The first way that sin is infinite corresponds to Anselm’s notion that the magnitude of sin is determined by the nature of the one offended by it. The third way corresponds to the thirteenth-century notion that satisfaction must also compensate God for his loss of the human race. The second point mentioned by Richard describes

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20 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 211a, “…redemptio plus importat, quam simplex reparatio, quia redemptio dicit reparationem factam per solutionem condigni pretii.” Richard makes this distinction but he does not always observe it. Sometimes he uses the term ‘reparatio’ when he clearly means ‘redemptio.’ The context, however, always makes clear whether he is talking about salvation being granted after satisfaction or not.

21 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 210b, “Si autem accipiatur reparatio pro liberatione per satisfactionem condignam, sic dico quod per alium modum natura humana non potuisset reparari, quam per emendam factam ab illo qui esset Deus, et homo, quia satisfactio condigna fieri non potuit per hominem quid non Deus esset, quia peccatum hominis fuit contra bonitatem infinitam, quae Deus est: et naturam humanam privavit bono infinito, rem etiam corruptit infinitam in potentia, quia si Deo placet individua naturae humanae multiplicari possent sine fine, et ideo peccatum hominis ex triplici causa aliquo modo fuit iniuria infinita.”
that loss to God from the perspective of human beings, who are deprived of an infinite
good because of their sin.

Aside from its infinite magnitude, Richard also provides another reason for the
inability of a mere man to make satisfaction: man already owes God any good work that
he could accomplish. Satisfaction, however, requires offering something to God that one
does not already owe him. Regardless of the inherent value of any human offering, man
has nothing that he does not already owe to God. Richard cites Cur Deus Homo I.20
when expounding this view about man’s inability to do anything supererogatory.22

No mere creature could make satisfaction for sin and bring about man’s
redemptio, but Richard considers whether a mere creature could do something to bring
about his own reparatio. He writes,

It seems that a man is able to do something [potest facere quod in se est] for his
own restoration. God does not require from man more than he is able to do for his
own restoration. Therefore, a man could do something for his own restoration that
would suffice for God and in this way a man could restore himself.23

Richard provides an example of the kind of thing that a mere man might be able to do for
his own restoration. It would seem that any man who gave up his life out of love for God

22 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 5, p. 212a.

23 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 5, p. 211b, “Et videtur quod sic, quia homo, ad
sui ipsius reparationem, potest facere quod in se est, sed Deus ad reparationem hominis non requirit ab eo
ultra ullud quod potest: ergo homo ad sui reparationem potuit facere aliquid, quod Deo suffecisset, et sic
seipsum poterat reparare.” For more on the medieval idea that God will grant grace to people who do
whatever good is within their natural powers, see Alister McGrath, Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian
Wawrykow, God’s Grace and Human Action: ‘Merit’ in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas, (Notre Dame,
1995), chs. 2-3; Wawrykow, “Facienti quod in se est,” in Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas,
(Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), pp. 54-6. Usually medieval theologians invoke the
principle that God will not deny grace to those who do their best in the context of whether or not the natural
powers of a person can enable one to subjectively appropriate the fruits of Christ’s redemptive work. In the
passage quoted above, Richard of Middleton invokes the facienti principle in order to ask whether a mere
person could receive grace apart from Christ’s redemptive work.
could count on God’s generous nature to grant him the grace that would bringing him to salvation, even if the life he offers—the life of a sinner—is not a condign satisfaction.\textsuperscript{24} According to Richard, however, no person who is under the penalty of sin and deprived of grace can possess the type of charity or love necessary for making one’s acts pleasing to God.\textsuperscript{25} If man’s salvation is achieved by \textit{reparatio}, then this will not be in response to any act of the creature. It will consist simply in God bestowing grace wholly unmerited on the sinner.

Richard, however, does not reject the principle that God does not require from a man more than he is able to do, but he makes the following qualification to it: “although fallen man cannot pay a debt for sin, he can in virtue of the merit of his friend, who is Christ.”\textsuperscript{26} In other words, God’s generosity and mercy is displayed in not demanding from a creature any more than he or a friend could accomplish. When Richard denies that a mere man could do something to restore himself he is envisioning a mere man in a scenario where Christ had not redeemed the human race. On this scenario no mere man could even congruously make satisfaction for his sins (that is, do something that leads to his \textit{reparatio}).

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{24} Richard of Middleton, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 5, ad. 2, p. 211b, “Item per maiorem dilectionem quam homo posset habere, potest personam suam reparare, quia charitas reparat animam, sed ut habetur Ioan. 15, maiorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis: ergo videtur, quod quilibet homo sustinendo mortem pro Deo animam suam per seipsum potuit reparare.”

\footnote{25} Richard of Middleton, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 5, ad. 2, p. 212a, “Ad secundum dicendum, quod per maiorem dilectionem, quam homo posset habere in virtute propria nunquam posset reparari, quia per virtutem propriam tantum non posset habere charitativam dilectionem, sed ad illam attingit per virtutem meriti Christi dum sibi quantum potest conatur coniungiri per fidem et dilectionem.”

\footnote{26} Richard of Middleton, III \textit{Sent.} d. 20, art. 1, q. 5, p. 212a, “quamvis autem homo lapsus non possit per se reddere debitum pro peccato potest tamen in virtute meriti amici sui, qui Christus est.”
\end{footnotes}
Richard of Middleton emphasizes that the satisfaction that Christ makes leads to man’s justification. Justification involves being liberated from the guilt of sin and receiving the first grace, which is given in baptism. He lists five different ways that Christ’s Passion could be a cause of justification. His Passion could be (1) a formal cause, (2) a principal efficient cause, (3) a congruous cause, (4) an instrumental efficient cause, or (5) a sufficient and condign cause of the liberation from guilt and the granting of grace. Christ’s Passion does not act as the formal cause of redemption because the formal cause is grace. The Passion is also not the principal efficient cause of redemption. God, by his divine power, is its principal efficient cause. Causing man’s salvation as a congruous cause is something that a “mere man” can accomplish through his prayers on behalf of another person. Christ, however, operates in a superior way to any mere man. Christ’s death also does not act as an instrumental efficient cause of salvation. The sacraments act in this way insofar as they are “instruments of divine mercy,” according to Richard. Christ’s Passion does, however, serve as a sufficient and condign cause of human salvation. Richard writes,

27 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, p. 199a, “Respondeo, quod nos esse liberatos ab omni culpa, per Christi passionem quinque modis potest intelligi, aut tanquam per causam formalem, aut tanquam per causam principaliter efficentem, aut tanquam per causam tantum de congruo disponentem, aut tanquam per causam efficientem instrumentalem, aut tanquam per causam sufficienter et de condigno quantum est ex parte sua nos disponentem ad hoc, ut ab omni culpa liberati simus.” Note also that Richard here speaks of causing the deletion of guilt and the granting of grace. He will bring both of these under Christ’s merit. This, therefore, is another example, in addition to those provided in chapter 3, of thinking of satisfaction as a kind of merit. For insofar as Christ’s merit deletes guilt we could speak of satisfaction according to Anselm’s notion of satisfaction whereby one does something to remove guilt and obtain forgiveness for sin.

28 This claim might seem to be in tension with Richard of Middleton’s earlier claim that no mere man could do something to bring about his own reparatio. The tension is dissolved if we assume that Richard’s claim that a mere man can be a congruous cause of someone’s justification is true only because Christ has (in some way yet to be determined) condignly caused our justification. His earlier claim about man’s inability to restore himself was made on the assumption that Christ did not already usher in our salvation.
Through the Passion of Christ we are liberated from all guilt *quantum ad sufficientiam*. Through his Passion, Christ sufficiently and condignly merited the remission of sins for all. This is clear from the last question of the preceding distinction where it was shown that through the Passion, Christ sufficiently merited the first grace for us with condign merit.\(^{29}\)

Being a sufficient and condign cause is the same thing as being a meritorious cause.\(^{30}\)

Christ condignly merits redemption. God is compensated for his loss of the human race because men can now possess grace that removes their guilt and permits them to reestablish a saving relationship with God. Like Bonaventure, Richard describes Christ’s satisfaction for the guilt of sin as a kind of meritorious action, because returning the human race to God results from the Passion meriting grace on our behalf.

Richard asks whether or not the bodily suffering and death of Christ in particular was the only way that Christ could have made condign satisfaction for sin. He cites various opinions on this question, three of which hold that only Christ’s death would constitute an adequate satisfaction for sin.\(^{31}\) He first discusses, however, an opinion that maintains that Christ could have satisfied for sin in some way other than by offering his life on the Cross.

\(^{29}\) Richard of Middleton, *III Sent.* 19, art. 1, q. 1, p. 199a-b, “Quinto autem modo per passionem Christi liberati sumus ab omni culpa quantum ad sufficientiam. Christus enim per suam passionem omnibus nobis sufficienter meruit merito condigni omnium peccatorum remissionem, quod patet per hoc, quod in ultima questione praecedentis distinctonis declaratum est, scilicet quod Christus per suam passionem nobis sufficienter meruit merito condigni, primam gratiam gratum faciendam. Unde haec quaestio multum est illi questioni vicina quamvis autem per passionem Christi liberati sumus ab omni culpa, quantum ad sufficientiam.”

\(^{30}\) Richard of Middleton, *III Sent.* d. 18, art. 2, q. 4, p. 195a, “…Christus per suam passionem nobis omnibus meruit primam gratiam gratum faciendam, quantum ad sufficientiam…” This is the passage that Richard refers to in the quote above.

According to the first opinion, any suffering that Christ would have undergone on our behalf could have constituted satisfaction for sin. Richard writes,

Some people say that any suffering that he sustained for us would have been a sufficient satisfaction since it would be [the suffering] of an infinite good. God could have ordained that satisfaction come through suffering on Christ’s part that did not include his death. But God did not ordain that the human race be redeemed through some suffering other than the death of Christ.  

Any suffering that Christ would have offered to God on behalf of man would have infinite value that could have restored to God his stolen honor and the lost human race. God willed, however, that Christ’s death be the means of offering satisfaction.

Richard records an opinion that argues that Christ’s sufferings prior to the Passion could not have been satisfactory because the souls of the Old Testament saints did not enjoy the vision of God until after the death of Christ. One of the goods achieved by Christ’s death is the “opening of the door to heaven,” which remained closed even to the saints of the Old Testament until Christ’s death. Richard replies that this does not show that God could not have ordered pre-Passion suffering to human salvation, only that he did not do so.  

Another opinion states that Christ could not satisfy for human sin in any other way besides the Passion because sin imposed a twofold death on the human race. This

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32 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 210b, “Quidam enim dicunt, quod cum bonitatis infinitae quaelibet poena quam pro nobis sustinuit sufficiens satisfactio fuisse. Si Deus per aliam poenam Christi citra mortem satisfactionem fieri ordinasset. Sed Deus ordinaverat genus humanum non redimendum per aliam poenam, quam per Christi mortem.”

33 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 211b, “Ad rationem autem illorum, qui dixerunt Christum satisfecisse de condigno pro peccatis, per poenas quas sustinuit ante mortem. Potest dici, quod quamvis satisfecisset quantum est ex radice vel conditione satisfacientis personae non tamen quantum est ex genere poena pensata divina ordinatione, quia ex divina ordinatione mors deebatur ad mortis debitum relaxandum.”
twofold death consists of natural death and eternal damnation. Therefore, it seems that only death could remove the punishment of death rendered against the human race. This opinion, Richard points out, only shows that it is fitting that death removes death. Like the second opinion, it assumes what has actually happened and presupposes that the current order of salvation is necessary. There are reasons that the especially bitter suffering of the Cross is a fitting reversal of the consequences of sin, but this is not the only way that Christ could have made condign satisfaction for sin.

Richard reports a final opinion, which is based on principles set forth in *Cur Deus Homo*. The Passion was necessary according to this opinion because of the conditions that must be met for some act to serve as compensation for sin. Satisfaction requires offering to God something that one does not already owe to God. According to *Cur Deus Homo*, Christ owed his whole life as an act of obedience to God, just as all men do. Yet Christ was not a debtor to death because he was free from sin. Thus, the only act that Christ could offer God that he did not already owe him was to suffer death freely for the sake of justice. Regarding this opinion Richard writes,

> This argument does not seem to disprove the first opinion because just as Christ was not a debtor to death so also he was not a debtor to any kind of suffering because sinners not only deserve the punishment of death but also other types of suffering.34

Suffering or punishment is due to the sinner both in this life and the next, unless he is forgiven. Christ, not being a sinner, was not obligated to suffer in any way. Any

34 Richard of Middleton, *III Sent.* d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 211a, “Sed haec ratio non multum videtur conclusere contra primam opinionem quia sicut Christus non erat debitor mortis, sicut non erat debitor alieius poenae, quia non tantum poena mortis debitur illi, cui debitur propter peccatum: sed etiam aliae poenae.”
voluntarily sustained pain or punishment on Christ’s part would have been supererogatory and being the suffering of an infinite good it would have been proportionate to the debt of sin. Hence, Christ could have made satisfaction for sin in some other way besides his Passion and death on the Cross. According to Richard, only the Passion atones for sin “because from divine ordination death is owed for relaxing the debt of death.”\(^{35}\) The current plan of redemption results from divine ordination, but it is not necessary.

Edgar Hocedez has noted that Richard of Middleton does not himself explicitly affirm that Christ could have done something other than offer his life on the Cross as an adequate satisfaction for sin; instead, he just reports these views as the opinions of others.\(^{36}\) Nevertheless, his treatment of the arguments for and against this position leaves the impression that he is convinced that Christ’s death was not a necessary means of offering satisfaction for sin. Richard is the first Franciscan to record arguments supporting this claim. Earlier authors claimed that man could have been saved apart from Christ making satisfaction for sin, but these authors never explicitly addressed whether Christ could have made satisfaction in different ways. These theologians remained content to explain why freely accepting death was a fitting way to render satisfaction. This implies that it was not a necessary means of satisfaction, but other possibilities were

\(^{35}\) Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 20, art. 1, q. 4, p. 211b, “...quia ex divina ordinatione mors deebatur ad mortis debitum relaxandum.”

\(^{36}\) Edgar Hocedez, Richard de Middleton: Sa Vie, Ses Oeuvres, Sa Doctrine, p. 292, “Richard adopte donc les grandes lignes anselmiennes, mais il ne suit pas le docteur de Canterbury jusqu’au bout, comme on peut le voir par la suite: car, se demandant si le Christ aurait pu satisfaire de condigno autrement que par sa mort, il se contente de rappeler, sans se prononcer, les diverses opinions, et fait même, en cours de route, la critique de certains arguments de saint Anselme, ouvrant ainsi la voie à Duns Scot.”
The one exception that we have found to this trend in scholastic theology before Richard of Middleton occurs in Aquinas’s second Quodlibetal question, where Aquinas argues that Christ could have made satisfaction for sin in many different ways apart from offering his life on the Cross.\textsuperscript{38}

4.3 Duns Scotus

Scotus examines Anselm’s claims about how Christ makes satisfaction for sin in Lectura III, d. 20. In that place he refers his reader to his commentary on IV Sent. d. 15 for a fuller account of his understanding of the nature of satisfaction.\textsuperscript{39} In Ordinatio IV, d. 15, he presents two different definitions of satisfaction. According to the first definition, “satisfaction is voluntarily paying back (\textit{redditio}) an equivalent thing that is not already owed.”\textsuperscript{40} Scotus contrasts \textit{redditio} with an \textit{absoluta datio}. Scotus uses \textit{redditio} to pick out what is owed to someone as recompense for an offense or owed to someone as a result of some type of contractual or formal social arrangement. In these latter contexts, a person

\textsuperscript{37} See for example, Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 20, a. 1, q. 5, pp. 427-28. Bonaventure argues that the death of Christ is the most acceptable, congruous, efficacious, and prudent way to have satisfaction offered for sin.

\textsuperscript{38} Thomas Aquinas, Quodlibet 2, q. 1, art. 2, pp. 212-14 “Utrum quelibet passio Christi suffecisset ad redemptionem humani generis sine morte” (\textit{Opera Omnia}, tom. 25, 1996). Richard of Middleton read Aquinas quite extensively and so he might have known of Aquinas’s statements in Quodlibet 2. In any case, Richard may just be a witness to the fact that many students and teachers at the university held the position that some lesser suffering on Christ’s part than his death would have been an adequate satisfaction.

\textsuperscript{39} Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 30 (Vatican 49), “Contra ea quae dicuntur in secundo articulo, an scilicet posset homo Deo reconciliari sine satisfactione, dicetur in IV distinctione 15 quaestione 1 ‘De poenitentia’.” The Lectura version of Book IV no longer exists. Allan Wolter has suggested that all existing copies were destroyed during the English Reformation. See, “Reflections of the Life and Works of Scotus,” American Philosophical Quarterly (67) 1993, p. 34.

freely enters into a relationship with other persons, and this brings with it certain
obligations or debts towards others. Making good on these obligations is a type of
satisfaction. Offering a gift to a friend is an instance of an *absoluta datio*, whereas putting
in a full day’s work is a *redditio*.\(^{41}\) The notion of *redditio* is closely connected to another
element of the definition, namely, that of equivalence. Justice requires that what is given
is either equal or at least proportional in some significant way to what is owed.\(^{42}\) Finally,
making satisfaction must be a voluntary act, otherwise the act would be an instance of
punishment and not satisfaction.\(^{43}\) Satisfaction, in short, requires the free performance of
a supererogatory action that offers something to another person that is of equal value to a
debt, whether this debt arises from a sin or from freely entering into some sort of special
association or relationship with another. Nevertheless, for reasons that will become clear,
Scotus states that the first definition of satisfaction is most at home in contexts where
making recompense for sin is not at issue.\(^{44}\) He discusses this definition of satisfaction in
order to explain how satisfaction for sin might have been made in a different order of

\(^{41}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 3 (Wadding 104), “Primum, scilicet *redditio*, patet,
quia non est absoluta datio; nam hoc, quod est satis, dicit commensurationem ad aliquid praecedens
 correspondendem.”

\(^{42}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 3 (Wadding 104), “Quod etiam sit *aequivalentis*,
patet, quia hoc importat illa particula satis; hoc etiam requirit iustitia reddens satisfactionem pro illo cui
correspondet.”

\(^{43}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 3 (Wadding 104), “Quod dicitur *voluntaria*, patet,
quia si esset involuntaria, non esset satisfactio, sed satispassio; et hoc modo ille, a quo exigitur in inferno
poena debita culpae commissae satis patitur, et non satisfacit.”

\(^{44}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 3 (Wadding 104), “Et ista ratio satisfactionis
communis est ad contractus et obligationes quascumque; hoc enim modo recipiens beneficium potest
beneficianti bene facere, et hoc modo dilectus diligenti recompensando dilectionem aequalem; et ita tam in
actibus liberalibus voluntatis quam in actibus quodammodo necessariis, scilicet contractibus, ubi est
quaedam obligatio, quasi necessitas ad reddendum, potest inveniri ista ratio consimiliter, cum culpa faciat
delinquentem debitorem et, in quem peccat, potest ibi ista ratio satisfactionis inveniri ut, scilicet reddat sibi
aequivalens, et alias indebitum, quantum sibi abstulit per peccatum.”
salvation. Though the first definition does not apply to satisfaction for sin in the current order, it could explain how one compensates God for sin in a different order.

The second definition of satisfaction that Scotus offers is as follows: “satisfaction involves voluntarily taking up an external laborious or penal work in order to make up for a sin committed by oneself and doing this to placate an offense against God.” Scotus labels the second definition “satisfaction in the strict sense” because in the current order of salvation the satisfaction made for sin involves external works, such as fasting or almsgiving. Sin brings certain punishments upon the sinner. These punishments involve different kinds of bodily suffering culminating in death. If the sinner freely undertakes some external laborious work to make up for his sin, then he makes satisfaction and frees himself from his debt to temporal punishment. The acts that satisfaction consists in are not punishments, but done in the place of punishment. Many of the characteristics of satisfaction listed in the first definition also apply to the second definition. For example, satisfaction in the strict sense requires a free act. This free act consists in offering something to God that you do not otherwise owe him (apart from, of course, the moral obligation to make satisfaction).

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45 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 11 (Wadding 122), “...dico quod satisfactio est operatio exterior laboriosa vel poenalis, voluntarie assumpta, ad puniendum peccatum commissum a se, et hoc ad placandum divinam offendam; vel est passio seu poena voluntarie tolerata in ordine praedicto. In hoc modo accipitur satisfactio multo strictius et particularius, quam satisfactio primo modo, quia illa potuit consistere in actu poenalis passionis voluntariae interiori vel exteriori.”

46 Man satisfies for his sins against God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Each one of these types of acts corresponds to a different kind of sin and the different species of these acts exhaust what can count as satisfactory according to the second definition. The humility required for prayer and any act of worship corresponds to sins of pride and other spiritual sins. Fasting and other acts of self-flagellation is an appropriate way of making satisfaction for sins of the flesh. Temporal sins such as greed or theft are atoned for through almsgiving. Scotus discusses how each way of making satisfaction corresponds to different classes of sins in *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, nn. 40-42, p. 888.
Scotus’s general treatment of satisfaction comes from his writings on the sacrament of penance, where the removal of one’s debt to temporal punishment is at issue rather than the removal of one’s debt to eternal punishment. Nevertheless, Scotus uses second definition of satisfaction as a model for understanding Christ’s Passion and he uses both definitions to explain how satisfaction could have been made for sin in some other order of redemption not involving the Incarnation and death of Christ.

Scotus’s way of explaining how Christ makes satisfaction, however, leads him to disagree with a number of positions taken by his predecessors. According to Anselm, for instance, nothing a mere creature could do is of equal value to the debt of sin because sin creates an infinite debt. Any good act a creature could perform would only have a finite value. Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton endorsed Anselm’s claim that sin creates an infinite debt. Scotus, however, resists describing sin as infinite just as he resists describing Christ’s satisfaction as infinite. Scotus writes, “He [Anselm] wished to have infinity in every way, where there is none from the formal definition of the thing.”

Scotus’s criticism of Anselm, however, is not limited to a point about the intrinsic finitude of sin and its debt. Although Anselm and scholastic theologians before Scotus say that sin is infinite these theologians do not believe that sin is intrinsically infinite. Their reason for calling sin infinite is to bring out its great severity and to make the point that no mere human could compensate God for it rather than to attribute intrinsic infinitude to it. Consider for instance the way that Richard of Middleton described the magnitude of sin. Sin, for Richard, was infinite because it involves turning away from an

47 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 31 (Vatican 50), “Unde ipse vult omnino habere infinitatem, ubi nulla est ex formali ratione objecti rei.”
Infinite Good and because it involves the loss of the human race to God, which could have contained an extensively infinite number of men. God himself is an intrinsically infinite good, but turning away from him in sin is not something that is an intrinsically infinite evil. In an important sense, therefore, Richard too denies that sin is formally infinite.

Scotus considers what Anselm writes about the severity of sin in *Cur Deus Homo* I, ch. 21. In that chapter Anselm claimed that disobeying the will of God in any matter is worse than letting all created good perish. On this basis, Anselm concludes that satisfaction requires offering to God a good that is greater than every created good that actually exists. According to Scotus, however, satisfaction requires giving to God only something that is greater than the evil of one’s sin. Satisfaction does not need to consist in offering something formally greater than all created good. Satisfaction for sin will be equivalent to its debt when a person elicits an act of love for God that is performed with a greater effort of will than was present in one’s act of sin.

48 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 19 (Vatican 45), “Tertio ostenditur quod satisfactio ista, quae debetur, non potuit fieri ab homine puro, quia 22 cap. I libri arguit: ‘Non satisfacit aliquis pro peccato hominis, nisi reddat aliquid maius quam sit illud pro quo peccatum facere non debuerat’; sed pro omni eo quod est vel esse possit citra Deum, non debutt peccasse; ergo non potest satisfacere nisi reddat aliquid maius omni creatura facra aut possibili fieri. Sed quod est maius omni creatura simul sumpta, sicut arguit ibi, non potest reddie re purus homo; igitur oportet Deum satisfacere pro peccato.”

49 Anselm writes, “I must admit that I ought not to do anything contrary to God’s will, even to preserve the whole of creation” (*Cur Deus Homo* I, ch. 21, p. 281). In what seems like rhetorical amplification, Anselm goes on next to write that one should not act against God’s will “even if there were infinitely many worlds spread out before me”. This is one of the sources for the claim that sin is infinite. Scotus does not focus much on the infinity claims of Anselm or scholastics like Bonaventure because the formal nature of sin is not infinite and the infinity claims seem to muddle the issue of what is required for satisfaction. Scotus, however, in focusing on the more limited claim that sin requires a satisfaction that is greater than all created good focuses on a more promising aspect of Anselm’s position.

50 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 31 (Vatican 49), “Sed dato quod satisfactio requiratur, an requiritur necessario quod satisfaciens sit Deus, ut dicitur in tertio articulo (ubi dicitur quod non potest satisfieri Deo nisi aliquid formaliter maius omni creatura sibi offerantur quam sit illud pro quo peccare non debuerat, quod est tota creatura)? Credo quod, salva gratia sua, hoc non est verum, quia non oportuit
Scotus, however, will allow that satisfaction can be infinite in one sense. It could be called infinite because of its object. Scotus writes,

Just as someone sins against God through [improperly] loving a creature…so also in making satisfaction to God, one ought to offer something that is objectively greater than is the creature [loved by the sin], namely a love that attains to God for his own sake. This love, insofar as it terminates in God for his own sake, objectively exceeds the love of the creature infinitely, just as God exceeds the creature infinitely.51

When a person makes satisfaction, the object of one’s love [God] is infinite and infinitely greater than any object of sin. This passage also contains a statement of what Scotus sees as the fundamental element of all acts of satisfaction, whether or not they involve freely undertaking a laborious external work. Every act of satisfaction is a manifestation of eliciting an act of love for God for himself insofar as he is the highest good.

This would allow acts that conform exclusively to the first definition of satisfaction to atone for sin in a different order of salvation. Scotus writes,

I say that satisfaction [for sins against God] usually consists in voluntary penal acts or punishments more than in other good acts that are not penal, nevertheless one could satisfy through some good act that is not a penal act because God can rightly accept a great act of charity in place of the punishment owed to one’s guilt. Although such an act would not be the proper punishment for sin, nevertheless it

51 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 31 (Vatican 49-50), “sicut pro amore creaturae, ut obiecti diligibilis, peccavit—cum non debuit peccare—in Deum, ita satisfacendo Deo debuit offerre aliquid maius obiective quam sit creatura, scilicet amorem attingentem Deum propter se; et iste amor obiective, ut terminatur in Deum propter se, excedit amorem creaturae in infinitum, sicut Deus creaturam.”
is a great good, and it returns more honor to God than something which is the proper punishment of a given sin.\textsuperscript{52}

In a different order of salvation, satisfaction could require or at least permit rendering to God some type of imminent or internal act, such as an act of love of God or some type of good external act that did not involve freely suffering in some way that corresponded to the punishment that is owed for redressing sin.\textsuperscript{53}

When Scotus states that some pure act of love for God shows God more honor than freely undertaking a punitive act, he seems to be at odds with the Anselmian way of understanding satisfaction, which claims that only the death of the God-man could constitute satisfaction. Anselm, however, held that Christ’s death was the only act that could constitute an adequate satisfaction, not because of a general commitment to the idea that punitive acts alone are satisfactory, but rather because undergoing death was the one thing that Christ was not already obligated to offer God. It is this circumstance that led Anselm to argue that satisfaction was necessarily made through an external laborious work. Scotus’s position, then, seems consistent with the spirit of Anselm’s understanding of satisfaction, even if it differs on the range of acts that could constitute adequate satisfaction.

\textsuperscript{52} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio IV}, d. 15, q. 1, n. 8 (Wadding 117), “…dico quod satisfactio in isto intellectu magis consistit in actibus poenalibus vel passionibus voluntariis quam in alius actibus bonis non poenalibus, licet quandoque posset per aliquem actum bonum non poenalem satisfieri, quia bene potest Deus actum magnum charitatis acceptare pro punitione debita uni culpae; licet enim non sit propria punitio, est tamen maurus bonum, et magis Deo reddens honorum quam illa quae, esset propria illius punitio.”

\textsuperscript{53} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio IV}, d. 15, q. 1, n. 11 (Wadding 122), “…dico quod satisfactio est operatio exterior laboriosa vel poenalis, voluntarie assumpta, ad puniendum peccatum commissum a se, et hoc ad placandum divinam ofensam; vel est passio seu poena voluntarie tolerata in ordine praedicto. In modo accipitur satisfactio multo strictius et particularus, quam satisfactio primo modo, quia illa potuit consistere in actu poenalis passionis voluntariae interiori vel exteriori.”
4.3.1 Christ’s Satisfaction for Sin

Scotus has left the impression that he does not consider satisfaction to be an aspect of Christ’s Passion and death. Scholars have noticed that Scotus generally prefers to describe Christ’s redemptive work in terms of merit rather than in terms of satisfaction. Instead of attributing satisfaction explicitly to Christ, Scotus tends to speak of Christ’s death “meriting the deletion of our guilt.”\(^{54}\) J. Patout Burns writes, “The central concept of Scotus’s theory [of redemption] is not satisfaction but merit.”\(^{55}\) Douglas Langston argues that Scotus rejects Anselm’s ideas about satisfaction because they are somehow inconsistent with his voluntarism.\(^{56}\) Marilyn McCord Adams also expresses uncertainty over whether Scotus attributes satisfaction to Christ’s death.\(^{57}\)

Richard Cross, however, argues that satisfaction is an element in Scotus’s theory of redemption because Scotus views satisfaction as a kind of merit. Cross writes,

> The link, on my reading, between satisfaction and merit can be explained by the fact that, according to Scotus, satisfaction consists in receiving something from God (in this case, the remission of sins). So Christ’s satisfaction can be spoken of as a sort of merit; it is that in virtue of which we receive a benefit from God.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{54}\) For example, see *Ordinatio* IV, d. 15, q. 1, n. 5 (Wadding 105-06), where Scotus speaks of the Passion of Christ meriting the deletion of guilt; “Item, passio Christi non delet culpam nostram, nisi ut causa meritoria, et per consequens ut causa secunda…”

\(^{55}\) J. Patout Burns, “The Concept of Satisfaction in Medieval Redemption Theory,” p. 301, and later on p. 301, “The key to Scotus’ understanding of the work of Christ is his notion of merit.”


\(^{57}\) Adams, “Duns Scotus on the Goodness of God,” p. 495, “Thus, Scotus writes, ‘every created offering holds good only to the extent that God accepts it and not more’ and something counts as ‘merit because accepted, but not vice versa.’ A fortiori, which (if any) created act counts as satisfaction for sin is a matter of God’s free and contingent volition.”

\(^{58}\) Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, p. 131.
According to Richard Cross, Scotus sees satisfaction as a kind of merit because it leads to receiving a gift from God, namely the remission of sins. In support of the conclusion that satisfaction is part of Scotus’s understanding of redemption, Richard Cross also notes that Scotus nowhere denies that Christ makes satisfaction for sin. Rather than denying that Christ makes satisfaction, Scotus is largely concerned to show that satisfaction for sin could have been brought about in many ways apart from the actions of Christ.

The judgment of Richard Cross seems correct to me. My only qualification is one of emphasis. It is true that we receive a benefit from God in virtue of Christ’s satisfaction. Yet describing Christ’s satisfaction in this way obscures why Scotus sees this as a kind of satisfaction. Christ’s death makes satisfaction because it compensates God for his loss of the human race and his plan to bring its members to eternal life. By returning human beings to God, God is compensated for his loss. Seeing this compensatory aspect of Christ’s death brings out more clearly why Scotus sees it as making satisfaction for sin. This compensation, of course, is accomplished through our benefiting Christ’s death, which earns the first grace and penitential grace both of which help explain how we are returned to God.

59 Richard Cross, Duns Scotus, p. 131, “At one point Scotus expressly states, ‘When Christ…offered himself on the cross he made adequate satisfaction for an infinity of sin.’ And Scotus does not elsewhere state explicitly that an Anselmian account of satisfaction is false. The burden of the discussion in Ordinatio 3.20.un is that if Anselm’s theory is true, it is only contingently so.” For the quote from Scotus, Cross cites, Quodlibet 20, n. 1 (AW, p. 443 [n. 20.2]). Scotus makes the statement cited by Richard Cross in one of the initial arguments that he rejects. Scotus does not ever explicitly reject the claim that Christ makes satisfaction, but he does deny that Christ’s death has an infinite value.

60 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 39 (Vatican 52), “Si autem volumus salvare Anselmum, possumus dicere quod rationes suae procedunt supposita divina ordinatione quod sic ordinaverit hominem redimi,—et ita videtur processus, ita quod noluerit aliqoud ex praerordinatione sua magis acceptare quam mortem Filii sui; nulla tamen necessitas absoluta fuit. Unde et in Ps. [129:7] dicitur: “Copiosa est apud Deum redemptio”.

96
Moreover, Scotus’s attribution of merit to Christ’s death follows a well-established scholastic tradition that sees meriting the deletion of guilt as one of the aspects of the satisfaction made by Christ. Recall, for example, how Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton describe Christ’s satisfaction. They claim that satisfaction is a kind of merit to the extent that satisfaction is ordered towards redressing what Bonaventure labeled the *damnum* of sin, its penalty which comes about because of our guilt. The penalty of sin was man’s loss of justice. This loss is redressed because Christ’s Passion makes grace available to people again that justifies us. Richard of Middleton writes,

> Although no pure man, neither for himself nor for another, could merit the first grace with condign merit, Christ is able to condignly *merit* it for us…For he was not only a man, but also God…and because of the dignity of the one suffering, his passion was condign *satisfaction* for all sins. Condign *satisfaction*, however, *merits* the remission of sins with condign *merit*.\(^{61}\)

In this passage, Richard slides back and forth between attributing satisfaction and merit to Christ insofar as his death leads to the remission of our sins because for him satisfaction in part consists in compensating God for his loss of the human race, and not only returning stolen honor to God.

The writings of Peter Olivi also attest to the close association between satisfaction and merit in thirteenth-century discussions of Christ’s redemptive work. Olivi lists four meanings for the term “merit.” The second definition states that merit establishes a right

\(^{61}\) Richard of Middleton III *Sent.* d. 18, art. 2, q. 4, p. 195a, “Quamvis enim nullus purus homo, nec sibi, nec ali unquam merito condigni mereri potuerit primam gratiam gratum facientem: Christus tamen eam nobis meruit merito condigni, quia secundum Damascenum lib. 3 c. 15 super hominem, quae sunt hominum agebat, et parum post natura humana enim agebat humana. Non enim homo erat solum, sed etiam Dus. Unde et huiss passionis vivificative, et salutaris, supple enim erat propter enim dignitatem patientis sua passio condigna fuit satisfactio pro omnibus peccatis nostris. Condigna autem satisfactio meretur merito condigni remissionem peccati…”
to a reward because of an act of service [obsequium].\textsuperscript{62} The reward will be equal to whatever was given or done by the person who merits. Olivi gives the example of someone who works in the field of a farm owner and by working merits a salary according to the terms of a contract [ex pacto]. According to Olivi, Christ merits in this sense of the term through making satisfaction for human sin. Olivi writes, “Christ in the second way merits in satisfying for us, because [he offered] an equivalent, indeed something more than equivalent and because of a pact this was pleasing to the divine will to whom he was making satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{63}

Though Scotus overwhelmingly talks of Christ meriting on our behalf rather than making satisfaction for us, there are a few places where Scotus explicitly attributes satisfaction to Christ’s death. For example, in \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 9, Scotus raises Anselm’s claim that Christ’s life is able to delete an infinite amount of guilt, at which point Scotus writes the following: “this topic will be addressed later in the material on the satisfaction of Christ for our sin.”\textsuperscript{64} Scotus is referring to his commentaries on \textit{III Sent.} d. 20, material that is not included in the Ordinatio, but it is included in the Lectura. In \textit{Lectura} III, d. 20 he talks about Christ’s merit, but not explicitly about his satisfaction. Yet if there is a sense in which satisfaction is a kind of merit, this ceases to be surprising.

\textsuperscript{62} Peter Olivi, q. 2, “Quaeritur an Christus plene satisfacerit pro nobis et meruierit nobis gratiam et gloriain; quod est quaerere an sit perfectus Redemptor et Mediator hominum,” \textit{Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione}, ed. P. Aquilinus Emmen, O.F.M, (Quaracchi, 1981), p. 98, “secundo modo meritum dicit ius coaequalis recompensationis ad quaesitum per exhibitionem alicuius doni vel obsequii; et hoc modo qui dat nummum pro pane valente denarium, meruit illum habere; aut qui in agro alterius ex pacto facit opus communiter valens duodecim nummos, pro duodecim meruit illos.”

\textsuperscript{63} Peter Olivi, \textit{Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione}, p. 99, “Christus igitur secundo modo meruit in satisfaciendo pro nobis, quia aequivalens, immo praevalens dedit et hoc ex pacto seu ex beneplacito divinae voluntatis, cui satisfaciebat.”

\textsuperscript{64} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 9, q. 1, n. 50 (Vatican 338), “…de hoc inferius, in material de satisfactione Christi pro peccato nostro.”
There is at least one other place that Scotus explicitly attributes satisfaction to Christ’s suffering. In *Lectura III*, d. 15, Scotus discusses whether Christ experiences *tristitia* in the higher portion of his soul. In this place Scotus considers an argument that concludes that Christ could not have made satisfaction for sin unless there was *tristitia* in the higher portion of his soul. According to the argument, the suffering and sorrow involved in Christ’s Passion was sufficient for making satisfaction for Adam’s sin. Adam sinned in the superior portion of his soul and so the corresponding satisfaction should also be an act of the superior portion the soul. The argument concludes: “Therefore, Christ was suffering in that [portion] when he made satisfaction.”

Scotus rejects the premise that claims that Christ’s manner of making satisfaction needed to involve suffering in the higher portion of his soul. Scotus, however, does not deny that Christ makes satisfaction for Adam’s sin. Scotus writes,

> When a greater person makes satisfaction for a lesser person, it is not necessary that there is pain and satisfaction in that [portion] in which the other [lesser] person sins [*deliquit*], but something lesser can suffice from the greater person.\(^{66}\)

The dignity of Christ’s person was greater than Adam’s as were the gifts of Christ’s human nature. Therefore, Christ did not need to suffer in the higher portion of his will to make satisfaction for Adam’s sin.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{65}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura III*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 18, (Vatican 364), “Praeterea, illa tristitia sive dolor quem habuit de passione sua, suffecit pro peccato Adae,--sed iustitia exiguit ut secundum illut fiat satisfactio secundum quod deliquit; sed Adam deliquit et peccavit secundum portionem superiorem; ergo in illa patiebatur Christus in satisfaciendo.”

\(^{66}\) *Lectura III*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 119 (Vatican 397), “…quia quando dignior persona satisfacit pro indigniore, non oportet quod in illa sit poena et satisfactio in quo alius deliquit, sed minor posset sufficere in illo digniore.”

\(^{67}\) *Lectura III*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 119 (Vatican 397), “Et ideo quia Christus fuit dignior persona quam Adam, ideo ipsum non oportuit pati secundum portionem voluntatis, sed sufficiebat pati in appetitu.”
4.3.2 Satisfaction Rendered by a Mere Creature

In Lectura III, d. 20 and Ordinatio IV, d. 15, Scotus considers Anselm’s claim that making satisfaction was necessary for man to avoid eternal punishment. According to Anselm, divine justice permitted only two responses to sin: punishment or forgiveness after satisfaction is made for sin. In Lectura III, d. 20, Scotus grants for the sake of argument that satisfaction is necessary for reconciling man to God. He does this, however, only to go on to argue that satisfaction could have been made in many other ways besides the Passion and death of Christ. Thus, in the Lectura Scotus’s position seems compatible with the claim that God could have simply forgiven sin apart from satisfaction. When Scotus addresses the question of the necessity of satisfaction in Ordinatio IV, d. 15 he writes,

If the opinion that God cannot accept some act of a penitent person as satisfaction for sin apart from the merit of Christ’s Passion is understood to hold with respect to God’s absolute power [de potentia absoluta divina], then this can be refuted by first recalling that it was possible that the Son of God would not have become incarnate, and as a result would not have suffered. Since this would have been possible, God could have justly led the predestined to beatitude...Therefore, it would have been possible for a penitent person to make satisfaction for himself, because God cannot justly beatify a sinner without satisfaction.68

sensitivo inferiore; unde passio in solo sensu Christi suffecisset ad delendum peccatum Adae.” This passage is interesting not only because Scotus attributes satisfaction to Christ’s redemptive work, but also because he attributes the value of Christ’s satisfaction to the dignity of his person. Nowhere else does Scotus count Christ’s divine dignity among the factors that contribute to the value of Christ’s redemptive work.

68 Duns Scotus, Ordinatio IV, d. 15, q. 1, n. 4 (Wadding 105), “Sed, si illa opinio intelligat de potentia absoluta divina, quod non possit actum aliquem acceptare paenitentis, tanquam satisfactionem istam pro peccato, nisi in quantum coniungitur merito passionis Christi, improbatur primo, quia possible fuit Filium Dei non fuisse incarnatum, nec per consequens passum; et cum hoc possible fuisse, Deum produxisse praedestinatum ad Beatitudinem, et iuste, non tamen excludendo misericordiam, ergo possible fuisse tunc paenitentem sibi satisfecisse, quia non potest iuste peccatorem sine satisfactione beatificare.” emphasis added.
Nowhere in Scotus’s writings do we explicitly find the distinction, common to
Bonaventure and other scholastics, between salvation as a result of satisfaction and
salvation resulting apart from satisfaction for sin. In the passage above, moreover, Scotus
draws the conclusion that divine justice requires satisfaction before raising someone
guilty of sin to beatitude. 69

It seems, therefore, that Scotus is in full agreement with Anselm, who held that
forgiveness after satisfaction or, instead, punishment in lieu of satisfaction were the only
responses to sin in harmony with divine justice. The only difference between Scotus and
Anselm will concern the means that God could have willed to render satisfaction. For
Anselm only the death of a God-man constitutes an adequate satisfaction for sin, but for
Scotus (as we shall see) a whole host of acts could have constituted satisfaction for sin.
Scotus, however, makes one important qualification to his understanding of the relation
between divine justice and satisfaction that sets him apart from Anselm and pushes him
closer to the position of Bonaventure and other scholastics, who held that God could have
saved man apart from receiving satisfaction for sin. In *Ordinatio* IV, d. 15, Scotus writes,

> The Passion of Christ does not delete our guilt, except as a meritorious cause, and
> as a result it is a secondary cause, which is not of the essence of the thing, indeed
> it is reduced to the genus of an efficient cause; but whatever God can do through a

69 Richard Cross also notices that Scotus never denies that satisfaction is necessary for salvation, though Cross never comments on or calls attention to Scotus’s claim that divine justice requires satisfaction for sin. See Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, p. 204, footnote 22: “We might expect Scotus to take issue with (ii), and claim that God could forgive us without satisfaction. In fact, although Scotus is clear that God could forgive us—if he so chose—in virtue of our own acts of satisfaction without Christ…he never suggests that God could forgive us without any satisfaction.”
secondary efficient cause, he can do immediately; therefore, without it he could
*justly* and properly remit our guilt.\(^7^0\)

Scotus, therefore, holds that satisfaction is necessary, only if God decides to employ
secondary causes in his plan of salvation. If God were to will man’s salvation without the
mediation of a secondary cause, then satisfaction is not necessary.

Scotus describes in some detail how satisfaction for sin could have been offered
to God by a mere creature apart from the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. To show this
possibility, Scotus directly addresses the arguments of Anselm and thirteenth-century
theologians, which held that (1) only Christ or a God-man is able to offer something to
God that was of proportionate to the debt of sin and (2) that no one guilty of sin would be
able to perform a supererogatory act.\(^7^1\) If either one of these claims were necessarily true,
then no mere creature could make satisfaction apart from participating in Christ’s
satisfaction.

As we have seen, Scotus holds that the debt of sin is finite. Therefore, some finite
act could be equivalent to its debt. According to Scotus, an act of love for God for his
own sake that is elicited with greater intensity than the act of sin will be equivalent to the

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\(^7^0\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 5 (Wadding 105-06), “Item, passio Christi non delet
culpam nostram, nisi ut causa meritoria, et per consequens ut causa secunda, quae non est de essentia rei,
imo reducitur ad genus causae efficientis; sed quidquid potest Deus per causam secundam efficientem,
potest immediate; ergo sine illa posset iuste et ordinate remittere culpam.” Scotus usually distinguishes
meritorious and efficient causes in this context. It seems to me that he is using ‘efficient cause’ in a loose
sense here.

\(^7^1\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio IV*, d. 15, q. 1, n. 4 (Wadding 105), “De secundo dicitur, quod non est
possibile homini satisfacere de peccato Deo, quem offendit. Primo, quia per peccatum auferitur honor Deo
debitus; nihil autem aequivalens honor ei potest a nobis sibi reddi. Secundo, quia peccatum mortale est
infinitum malum; tantum enim malum est, quantus ille in quem peccatur; nihil autem a nobis potest sibi
reddi, nisi bonum finitum; ergo non aequivalens; ergo, etc. Item ex alio medio, sic: quia quidquid possimus Deo
impendire obsequii et honoris, totum debitum est ratione creationis, gubernationis et redemptionis; ergo nihil possimus sibi
impendere, quod sit indebitum sibi, etiam ab innocente, et per consequens alias debitum quam pro peccato.”
debt of sin. Performing such an act, however, is only possible for the creature, if he possesses grace. Scotus accepts that without grace the relevant proportionality between an act of satisfaction and sin will not be present. 72 Although in the current order of salvation grace is available to people only through Christ’s satisfaction, this is not the only way grace could have become available. By extrapolating from his Christology, Scotus explains how a creature guilty of sin could possess grace apart from any merits either of his own or of another. He believes that this would be possible on the basis of how Christ received grace. 73 Christ receives the highest grace apart from any merits whatsoever. Just as Christ received grace without merit, so also mere men could have received grace without merit on either their own part or the part of another. Although the example of how Christ receives grace shows the broad possibility of someone receiving grace without merit, it is not clear that this is sufficient to establish that a sinner can receive grace apart from any merit whatsoever. A sinner not only does not merit grace, he merits punishment. His sin is an obstacle to receiving grace. Christ’s human nature was conceived without original sin and, therefore, presented no such obstacle.

72 Duns Scotus, Ordinatio IV, d. 15, n. 6 (Wadding 106), “Si dicas, actus meus non fit aequivalens in bono illo malo in displicentia, nisi actus iste eliciatur ex gratia; sed prima gratia non daretur peccatoris, nisi ex passione Christi. Contra hoc, quia de potentia absoluta bene poset dari prima gratia sine merito passionis Christi.”

73 Duns Scotus, Ordinatio IV, d. 15, q. 1, n. 6 (Wadding 106), “Si dicas, actus meus non fit aequivalens in bono illo malo in displicentia, nisi actus iste eliciatur ex gratia; sed prima gratia non daretur peccatoris, nisi ex passione Christi. Contra hoc, quia de potentia absoluta bene poset dari prima gratia sine merito passionis Christi, et sine omni merito; nullo enim modo passio eius nec exhibita, nec praevisa erat meritum respectu gratiae sibi conferendae, immo prius praevidebatur gratiam habiturus quam eius passio acceptanda.” Many thirteenth century theologians used this Christological argument to show that grace can be given apart from merits to show that God could have granted grace to sinners apart from Christ. Yet in the writings of these theologians this argument showed that God could dispense with the requirement of satisfaction and still bring people to salvation. For Scotus this argument helps to explain why mere creatures will be in a position to make satisfaction for their own sins.
Scots does see a difference between the sinner and Christ receiving grace without merit. The sinner must do something to be given grace. Although a sinner merits punishment, Scotus argues that a sinner can congruously merit grace. Requiring that grace be congruously merited provides Scotus with a way of distinguishing how the sinless Christ receives grace without any merit from the way that someone with an obstacle to receiving grace could receive it without merit. Scotus writes,

_God, de potentia absoluta_, could have given grace to a sinner after attrition, which is a congruous disposition and congruous merit. Through this grace contrition could arise [in the sinner] and in this way his sin could be deleted through satisfaction because an act equivalent to the good that sin removed would be given to God.\(^{74}\)

Congruously meriting grace is not merit in the strict sense. Thus, grace will be given to the creature on this scenario apart from his own merit or the merit of another. The sorrow that one has over his sins, born out of love for God, could become an adequate satisfaction for sin once this act of love for God is elicited in accord with the grace that makes one contrite. In this way, a mere man could elicit an act proportionate to the debt of sin.

If human beings were required by God to do any good act that they could do, then it would be impossible for a mere creature to make satisfaction for sin (even if the possession of grace made a person’s acts proportionate to the debt of sin). Richard of Middleton, for instance, had denied that a mere creature could make satisfaction on the grounds that apart from Christ no supererogatory actions would be possible. There are

\(^{74}\) Duns Scotus, _Ordinatio_ IV, d. 15, q. 1, n. 7 (Wadding 107), “…potest dici quod Deus de potentia absoluta posset dedisse peccatori post attritionem, tanquam post dispositionem congruum, et meritum de congruo, gratiam, per quam motus eius fieret contrition, et sic per satisfactionem delevisse peccatum, quia per actum illum reddentem Deo aequivalens illi bono quod abstulit peccatum.”
also parts of Cur Deus Homo that also defend this conclusion. Scotus argues, however, that supererogatory action could be possible apart from the redemptive work of Christ.

Scotus writes,

Some act could have been otherwise unowed, because although God could have willed to obligate us to him for whatever we could do, nevertheless, from his mercy in considering our frailty and difficulty in doing good, he willed that we should not be regularly obligated to him apart from the Decalogue. He, then, could have ordained that man be obliged to keep the Decalogue, without Christ being incarnate. Therefore, man could perform supererogatory works, which would otherwise have been unowed to God, and then the whole definition of satisfaction would be preserved.\textsuperscript{75}

To understand how only being obligated to fulfilling the precepts of the Decalogue would leave a space for supererogatory action, it is helpful to understand Scotus’s limited interpretation of these precepts. For example, the second precept that commands us to not take the Lord’s name in vain prohibits us from showing any kind of irreverence to God. Yet it does not positively obligate us to perform any particular act of reverence. In the scenario that Scotus describes where man is required to observe only the precepts of the Decalogue, any act of reverence could count as supererogatory.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} Duns Scotus, Ordinatio IV, d. 15, q.1, n. 7 (Wadding 107), “Posset etiam ille actus esse alias indebitus, quia licet Deus posset velle nos obligare sibi, ut quid quid sumus, et possimus teneamur Deo, tamen ex maxima misericordia sua considerans nostram fragilitatem et difficultatem ad bonum, noluit nos regulariter obligare nisi ad Decalogum; et ita potuisset tunc ordinasse obligare hominem ad Decalogum, scilicet Christo non incarnato. Posset ergo tunc homo aliqua opera super erogationis exercere, quae alias sibi essent indebita, et tunc salvaretur tota ratio satisfactionis.” Commenting on this passage, Adams writes: “As things stand, we owe God obedience in everything. But God could have considered our fragility and lowered the requirements to keeping the Ten Commandments, thereby putting us in a position to perform supererogatory acts” (see Adams, Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology (Cambridge: 2006), pp. 183-84).

\textsuperscript{76} For Scotus on the Decalogue, see Ordinatio III, d. 37, q. 1 (Vatican 271-91) in Scotus, Opera omnia, Vol. 10, edited by B. Hechich, B. Huculak, J. Percan, and S. Ruiz de Loizaga (Città del Vaticano: Typis Vaticanis, 2007). Scotus, of course, thinks that God has obligated us to more than the Decalogue in the current order of salvation.
Scotus has given a general explanation for how a mere creature could do something that meets the conditions for making satisfaction by showing that it is coherent to believe that grace could have been given to creatures apart from Christ and that God could permit there to be moral space for supererogatory actions. Scotus also sets out concrete examples of how a mere creature could have made satisfaction for sin, apart from the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. His examples include Adam atoning for his own sin, some mere man atoning for the sins of the whole human race, an angel atoning for the sins of the human race, and human persons individually atoning for their sins.

If Adam had performed an act of love of God for his own sake with a greater intensity than was his act of sinning, then this would have been a sufficient satisfaction. Adam could have made this satisfaction himself through exercising free choice in accordance with grace and charity. Had Adam done so, he could have been restored to his original state and the effects of sin would not have been transmitted to his descendents. Yet now that it has been so transmitted, Scotus goes on to argue that it is still not necessary to have a God-man make satisfaction for the penalties incurred through original sin. A mere man could have satisfied for human sin. Scotus writes,

It seems that a mere man [purus homo] could satisfy for all people, if he would have been conceived without sin, which would be possible by the operation of the Holy Spirit and a mother (as in the case of Christ), and from his liberality God could have given the highest grace to this man without any preceding merits (just

77 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 31, (Vatican 49), “unde si Adam per gratiam datam et caritatem habuisset unum vel multos actus diligendi Deum propter se, ex maiore conatu liberi arbitrii quam fuit conatus in peccando, talis dilectio suffecisset pro peccato suo redimendo et remittendo, et fuisset satisfactio.” Cf. Ordinatio IV, d. 15, q. 1, n. 6 (Wadding 106), “Contra, satisfactio est redditio aequivalentis pro aequivalente, sed quantum malum fuit peccatum avertens a Deo, tantum bonum est conversio ad Deum ex charitate; quantum etiam bonum naturam fuit inesse actui meo, tantum bonum et non plus abstulit peccatum meum, et tantum bonum potest inesse actui meo; sic ergo per illum omnino aequivalens redditur.”
as he gave Christ), and this person could have merited the deletion of sin just as [he merits] beatitude.\textsuperscript{78}

Scotus presupposes how Christ makes satisfaction for sin and argues that this shows that a mere man could have accomplished the same. According to this scenario a human person could have been conceived without sin and been given the highest grace. The highest grace is distinguished from lower graces in that it allows one to make satisfaction for others and condignly merit rewards for others, whereas a lower grade of grace is only proportionate to making satisfaction for one’s own sins or condignly meriting for oneself. Scotus’s claim in this passage that the highest grace could have been given to a mere man implicitly relies on his arguments about Christ’s grace that were discussed in Chapter 3, where we saw that being assumed by the Person of the Word is not a necessary condition for possessing the highest grace.

Anselm had argued that the one who makes satisfaction must be a human being because those who owe the debt are of the human race. Scotus denies that the redeemer must be co-essential with the redeemed. He claims a good angel could have made satisfaction on behalf of the human race. An angel would be able to perform an act of satisfaction because such an angel would not have incurred the debt of sin and would be able to offer something that pleases God to serve as recompense for human sin.\textsuperscript{79} The

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{78} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III, d. 20, q.1, n. 33, (Vatican 50), “Praeterea, videtur quod unus purus homo potuit satisfacere pro omnibus, si fuisset conceptus sine peccato, sicut potuisset—de possibili—operatione Spiritus Sancti et matris (sicut Christus fuit), et Deus dedisset sibi gratiam summam quam posset recipere (sicut dedit Christo), sine meritis praecedentibus, ex liberalitate sua, et talis potuisset meruisse deletionem peccati sicut et beatitudinem.”

\textsuperscript{79} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III, d. 20, q.1, n. 32, (Vatican 50), “…unus qui non est debitor potest pro alio satisfacere, sicut pro alio orare; unde sicut Christus, non existens debitor, satisfecit, sic,—si placuisset Deo—potuisset unus angelus bonus satisfecisse offerendo Deo aliquid placitum pro nobis, quod Deus ipse acceptasset pro omnibus…”
\end{quote}
angel would presumably possess the highest grace and this would account for the proportionality of his acts to the debt of sin. Whether the act is supererogatory or not is, of course, determined by how God chooses to obligate his creatures to the moral law.\(^{80}\)

Anselm had thought that we would be indebted to an angel or a mere man in a way that would detract from our obligations to God, if human salvation were brought about by mere creature rather than a God-man.\(^{81}\) According to Scotus, this concern is unfounded because the ability of a mere man or an angel to make satisfaction is ultimately owed to God and his decisions. We would, however, rightly feel some gratitude towards any person who made satisfaction for our sins. Scotus admits that we would feel so indebted, but this no more detracts from our more fundamental obligation to God than does our debt to the Blessed Virgin or other saints who intercede for us and help bring about good things for us.\(^{82}\)

The final scenario that Scotus considers involves each individual man satisfying for his own sins. In the current order of salvation, sinners are given the first grace apart from their own merit. They receive it in virtue of Christ’s merit. After possessing the first grace, a person is cleansed from the effects of original sin and is in a position to merit his

\(^{80}\) When discussing how an angelic act of satisfaction would be equivalent to man’s sin, Scotus writes, “...potuisset unus angelus bonus satisfecisse offerendo Deo aliquid placitum pro nobis, quod Deus ipse acceptasset pro omnibus, cum tantum valeat omne oblatum creatum pro quanto Deus acceptat, et non plus...” (Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, n. 32, Vatican 50). Taken alone, this statement seems to make redemption arbitrary and hence to support some interpretations of Scotus that see his voluntarism as the main or only principle determining his soteriology. From the foregoing discussion of satisfaction, however, it has been shown that Scotus explains alternative ways of rendering satisfaction for sin by relying on much more than God’s unrestricted freedom.

\(^{81}\) Anselm, Cur Deus homo, I.5, p. 249 (Schmitt 52).

\(^{82}\) Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q.1, n. 34 (Vatican 50-51), “Obligamur tamen sibi multum, sicut obligamur beatae Virgini et aliis sanctis qui meruerunt nobis, --sed semper finaliter Deo et summe, tamquam ei a quo omnia bona aliorum proveniunt.”
own beatitude. Scotus holds that in an alternate scenario, a person could be given the first grace apart from any merit whatsoever and through this grace make satisfaction for his sins. This grace would not be the highest grade of grace but it would be a grade of grace that would make a person’s act of satisfaction proportionate to the debt that he owes for his individual sins. Scotus writes,

Speaking of what is possible, it seems that someone could satisfy for himself, if he was given the first grace without any merit because although anyone now is a “son of wrath”, nevertheless [God] gives to the person the first grace apart from any merit possessed by the recipient, and then that person can merit his beatitude. Therefore, a person could also merit the deletion of his guilt.  

On this scenario, God would forego satisfaction for original sin by granting the first grace to the sinner without this grace having been merited at all. In virtue of this grace, a person could make satisfaction for personal sins. This scenario is very similar to the current order of salvation. The main difference is that now Christ merits the first grace for us whereas on this scenario the first grace is completely unmerited and simply infused by God.

Christ’s Passion is just one contingent means of redeeming man among many other equally efficacious means that God could have willed. Adam, an angel, or each individual could accomplish the same outcome as was accomplished on the Cross. It may seem that Scotus does not believe that there is anything especially fitting about the way that God did choose to redeem man. More to the point, that Christ is the Incarnate Son of God seems wholly superfluous to his redemptive work. This impression, however, is

83 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q.1, n. 35 (Vatican 51), “Praeterea videtur (de possibili, dico) quod quilibet posset satisfacere pro se, si data fuisset gratia prima sine meritis cuilibet homini, quia licet quilibet modo sit “filius irae”, dat tamen modo cuilibet primam gratiam sine meritis proprieis, --et tunc meretur beatitudinem; ergo potuit etiam meruisse deletionem culpae.”
incorrect. According to Scotus, the utter contingency of redemption being wrought by the Incarnate Logos should make us more grateful to God than would be the case were it in any way necessary.\textsuperscript{84} Scotus explains,

\begin{quote}

In order to move us to love him, he did this (I believe) and because he wished man to cling more to him—just as if someone first gave birth to another and afterwards instructed him in learning and sanctity, he would be more obligated to her than if she only gave birth to him and \textit{someone else} did such things for him.\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

That the redeemer is the Logos does not explain his ability to make satisfaction for sin. This is explained by the redeemer’s possession of the highest grace and God’s decision to predestine the Cross as the means of redemption. While the divine identity of Christ’s person does not give Christ his ability to make satisfaction for sin, it still possesses great redemptive significance. That the redeemer is God, especially when something less would have sufficed, is a particularly powerful expression of God’s desire to move his creatures to a greater love for him. Although he could have entrusted the work of redemption to a mere creature, he chose not to do so. No other means of redemption could announce so clearly how much God loves his fallen creatures and wants them to return to him.\textsuperscript{86}

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\textsuperscript{84} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura III}, d. 20, q. 1, n. 38 (Vatican 51), “Tamen de facto libere, sui gratia, passionem suam ordinavit et obtulit Patri pro nobis. Et ideo multitum tememur ei: ex quo enim homo aliter potuituisse redemptum, et tamen ex libera voluntate redemit sic, multitum ei tememur, et amplius quam si sic necessario—et non aliter—potuissimusuisse redempti.”
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{85} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura III}, d. 20, q. 1, n. 38, (Vatican 51-52), “Ideo ad alliciendum nos ad amorem sui, hoc praecepui (ut credo) fecit at quia hominem voluit magis Deo teneri,--sicut si aliquis primo genuisset aliquem et postea instruxit eum in disciplina et sanctitate, amplius obligaretur ei quam si tantum genuisset eum, et alius sibi fecisset alia.”
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\textsuperscript{86} At one point Scotus comments on the contingency of the Passion in such a way that makes it seem that the Passion of the God-man not only accomplishes what a rational creature could accomplish but accomplishes something more in that the offering of the God-man is not simply equivalent to the debt of sin, but provides a superabundant satisfaction. Scotus writes, “De potenita tamen ordinata, Deus non disposuit alicui peccatori dare primam gratiam nisi in Virtute meriti illius, qui erat sine peccato, scilicet
\end{flushright}
4.4 Conclusion

Scotus does attribute satisfaction to Christ’s redemptive work. Moreover, he thinks of Christ making satisfaction in a way that is consistent with how his scholastic predecessors understood satisfaction to compensate God for some sin. In this case, satisfaction compensates God for his loss of the human race. The human race is given back to God through Christ’s death because it merits grace for the fallen. Also, Scotus agreed with earlier scholastic authors that Christ could make satisfaction in virtue of possessing the highest created grace. Nevertheless, as we saw in the last chapter, Scotus did not believe that Christ was able to possess the highest created grace because of the hypostatic union. This allowed him to speculate about how other rational creatures could have made satisfaction in some order of salvation not involving the incarnation and death of the Son of God. Even though Scotus attributes a type of satisfaction to Christ’s redemptive work, it is a type of satisfaction that is explained in terms of his theory of merit. In the next chapter, we will provide a full account of Scotus’s understanding of merit and how Christ is able to merit.

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Christi, qua sicut tactum est supra, non disposuit sibi reconciliare inimicum, nisi per obsequium magis gratum, quam offensa eius erat sibi displicens; et tale obsequium eius est passio Christi vel meritorum eius; et sicut non disposuit dare gratiam peccatori sine Passione, sine qua gratia nulla potest esse satisfactio omnino, quia nec aequivalens modo, nec simpliciter, nec in divina acceptione, ideo multo magis de potentia ordinata non est possibile satisfieri Deo de peccato, nisi in virtute passionis Christi” (Ordinatio IV, d. 15, n. 7, Wadding 107). Even if in this case there is a hint that Scotus sees the satisfaction offered by Christ as more valuable than what could be offered by a mere creature, the general tendency of Scotus is to emphasize the equivalency of the satisfaction offered by Christ and the satisfaction that mere rational creatures could have offered on the scenarios discussed above.
CHAPTER 5:
CHRIST’S REDEMPTIVE MERIT

In the last chapter, our examination of the notion of satisfaction in scholastic theology demonstrated that Scotus thought of satisfaction as a type of merit. In holding this, Scotus was following a tradition that existed at least since the time of Bonaventure. In this chapter, we will consider in more detail Scotus’s understanding of how Christ is able to merit redemption for the human race. The first part of this chapter will provide a general account of Scotus’s understanding of merit. In the second part of the chapter we will see how Scotus applies his understanding of merit to Christ. Scotus denies that Christ can merit anything for himself because he possesses the beatific vision from the first moment of his existence. During his earthly life, Christ merits only for others. Scotus explains how Christ could have merited for others in many different ways (even as a comprehensor), but he argues that Christ only merits in his Passion and death. For the members of his mystical body, Christ merits the following three things: the first grace (baptismal grace), penitential grace, and the opening of the door to heaven. Scholastics before Scotus held that Christ’s merit was unique when compared to mere men not only because he acted in accord with the highest grace, but also because the person eliciting the act was the divine person of the Word (the implications of this view for their account of Christ’s merit will be discussed in the next chapter). Scotus, however, does not hold that the Logos is the agent of Christ’s human acts. Thus, Scotus’s analysis of how Christ
merits refers strictly to the created gifts and powers of the nature assumed by the Logos.

While the fullness of Christ’s grace allows for both unique possibilities as well as limits to what Christ can merit, the way he elicits meritorious acts is identical to the way human persons merit.

5.1 The Nature of Merit

In the scholastic commentary tradition on Peter Lombard’s Sentences, the locus classicus for discussions of merit occurs in commentaries on Distinction 27 of Book II. In this location, however, Scotus only takes up the question of whether or not grace is identical to the habit of charity.¹ Scotus’s understanding of merit must instead be culled from various other places. One place where Scotus discusses merit is Lectura III, d. 18, which contains a discussion of merit in itself before treating the special case of Christ’s merit.² Scotus’s discussion of Christ’s merit is notable because it is the only place where he examines how the two affections of the will contribute to a meritorious act. Another important statement about the nature of merit is located in Quodlibet 17, which is about the distinction between natural and meritorious acts of love.³ Scotus’s commentaries on I Sentences d. 17 provide a third place where he discusses aspects of his view of merit because there he takes up an examination of the relation between habitual grace and divine acceptation.⁴

¹ Duns Scotus, Ordinatio II, d. 27 q. 1 (Vatican 283-89); Lectura II, d. 27, q. 1 (Vatican 271-2).
² Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, nn. 15-16 (Vatican 4-5).
³ Duns Scotus, Quodlibet 17 (Alluntis and Wolter 388-98)
⁴ Duns Scotus, Ordinatio I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2 (Vatican 139-231).
In the various places where Scotus discusses merit, we learn that the ultimate basis for merit is God’s decision to accept certain kinds of acts as worthy of a reward. At the same time, grace is the basis *secundum quid* of merit. Moreover, grace intrinsically perfects one’s actions by giving them greater “intensity.” With these points in mind, we now turn to a detailed exposition of Scotus’s understanding of merit.

Meritorious acts are a class of free actions that earn or deserve a reward from God. Scotus writes,

*merit formally names an order between some laudable act in the person meriting and the acceptance of that act for a reward, which the one accepting it gives to the person for whom it is accepted.*

God could accept an act could as worthy of a reward for either the person who elicited the act or for another person.

Merit in the proper sense is called ‘condign merit’. In cases of condign merit a reward is given to the act in accordance with justice. Ultimately, the reward given for merit is eternal life, but an increase of grace in this life can also be given as a reward. Scotus is indecisive about whether meritorious acts are rewarded in accordance with

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5 Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet* 17 (Aluntis and Wolter 390), “What is more, ‘meritorious’ connotes or demands as a kind of prerequisite that the act issue from a double principle, as it were. One is the will as freely eliciting or commanding the act, for nothing is accepted as meritorious unless it be freely in the power of the agent. Further, what merit and demerit have in common, viz., imputability, demands this relationship to a will as master of its acts. For nothing is imputed to anyone as deserving a reward or punishment, and hence as praiseworthy or blameworthy, unless it lies in his power.” Cf. *Ordinatio* I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 146, p. 209, “actus qui est meritum est in potestate mea, supposita influentia generali, si habeo usum liberi arbitrii et gratiam...meritum est actus potentiae liberae et secundum donum gratiae elicitus, acceptus Deo ut praeemiabilis beatitudine.”

6 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III d. 18, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 5), “tunc ergo meritum dicit formaliter ordinem alicuius operis laudabilis in merente ad acceptantem et ad retribuendum, quod retribuit acceptans ei pro quo acceptatur.”
commutative or retributive justice.⁷ In any case, Scotus holds that there some type of equality or proportionality between the act and the reward that allows us to talk about the reward being given in accordance with justice.⁸

Scotus distinguishes among the substance of the act, the various attributes of an act, and the meritorious quality of an act. The substance of the act refers to the kind of act that is in question. For instance, an act could be an act of justice or an act of generosity. These acts would differ in substance.⁹ In addition to the substance of the act, Scotus lists the following features of an act: intensity, enjoyment, goodness, and moral rectitude.¹⁰ Any act that conforms with right reason and possesses all of these features will be morally good. Morally good acts as such are not rewarded with grace or eternal life. Scotus writes,

⁷ Duns Scotus, Ordinatio I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 144 (Vatican 208), “ratio meritii non habetur complete nisi habeat ratio digni vel dignae ordinabiliis ad praemium (quod est beatitudo), et hoc dignae secundum iustitiam commutativam vel retributivam.”

⁸ Duns Scotus, Quodlibet 17 (Alluntis and Wolter 389), “A meritorious act…he accepts with reference to some good which ought to be justly awarded to it.” Cf. Lectura III d. 18, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 4), “Et dico quod ‘meritum’ est aliquid acceptum vel acceptandum in aliquo, pro quo ab acceptante est aliquid retribuendum illi in quo aliquid acceptatur, quasi debitum illi pro suo merito vel alteri pro quo meruit.” Aside from condign merit, Scotus has a category of congruent merit. Congruously meritorious acts are not elicited in accord with grace. The natural powers of the human person are succifient for eliciting such acts. In cases of congruous merit there is not any proportionality between the act and the reward. Scotus refers to congruent merit in Lectura, III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 25 (Vatican 34).


¹⁰ Duns Scotus, Ordinatio I, d. 17, q. 1-2, n. 126 (Vatican 200-01), “Quantum ad primum articulum potest dici quod ex nullo actu quem experimur, nec ex substantia actus, nec ex intensione actus, neque ex delectabilitate sive ex facilitate in operando, neque ex bonitate sive ex rectitudine morali actus, possimus concludere aliquem talem habitum supernatralen inesse, quia quocumque istorum dato posset aliquis habens caritatem cognoscere se certitudinaliter esse in caritate, ex hoc videlicet quod actum illum experiretur inesse sibi, vel ex hoc quod experiretur actum sic intensum inesse, vel sic delectabiliter et faciliter inesse, vel rectae ratione consonum esse.”
I say that beyond the intensity of an act, the enjoyment and facility in acting, its rectitude or goodness and conformity to right reason…beyond all of these things, I say, there is one condition in the act, namely that it is acceptable to God; not only by common acceptation, by which God accepts every creature…but by a special acceptation in the divine will which consists in ordering some act to eternal life, as condign merit for the reward.\textsuperscript{11}

God accepts acts as worthy of a reward when the act is elicited with grace or charity. A meritorious act will possess all of the features of a moral act, but will have the additional feature of being elicited in accord with charity. Being accepted by God as worthy of a reward, however, is what ultimately makes an act meritorious.\textsuperscript{12} Grace is only the basis of merit \textit{secundum quid}.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{11} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 129 (Vatican 202), “Dico igitur quod ultra omnes condiciones praedictas, videlicet ultra intensionem actus, delectabilitatem et facilitatem in agendo, rectitudinem sive bonitatem et conformitatem rectae rationis (sive rectae secundum dictamen prudentiae sive secundum dictamen fidei), ultra—inquam—haec omnia, creditur esse una condicio in actu, videlicet quod est acceptabilis Deo; non quidem solum communi acceptatione, qua Deus acceptat omnem creaturam…sed acceptatione speciali, quae est in voluntate divina ordiniatio huismodi actus ad vitam aeternam, tamquam meriti condigni ad praemium.” Cf. \textit{Quodlibet} 17.6, Wolter, p. 389 (Wadding 12:461). For an analysis of all of the texts in Scotus where there is a discussion of divine acceptation of acts, see Werner Dettloff, \textit{Die Lehre von der Acceptatio Divina bei Johannes Duns Scotus mit besonderer Berucksichtigung der Rechtertigungslehre}, Franziskanische Forschungen, 10 (Dietrich Coelee: Werle, 1954).

\item\textsuperscript{12} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 144 (Vatican 208-09), “Contra: ratio meriti non habetur complete nisi habeatur ratio digni vel digne ordinabilis ad praemium (quod est beatitudo), et hoc digno secundum iustitiam commutativam vel retributivam; sed quicumque actus, ex solis intrinsece agentibus, non habet hunc ordinem (tunc enim Deus non posset ei qui sic operatus est, non retribuere beatitudinem nisi inuste eam sibi subtraheret,—hoc est falsum); ergo talis ordo secundum iustitiam est ex sola voluntate divina gratuiter ordinante, et ita ratio meriti complete erit ex voluntate divina ordinante istum actum ad praemium.” That the divine will is the ultimate explanation for why something is meritorious is brought out starkly in the following passage, where Scotus admits that non-graced actions could have been equally meritorious had God willed \textit{[de potentia absoluta]} to accept them as such, “…dico quod Deus de potentia absoluta bene potuisset acceptare naturam beatificabilem—acceptione speciali praedicta—existentem in puris naturalibus; et similiter, actum eius ad quem esset inclinatio mere naturalis, potuisset acceptare ut meritorium. Sed non creditur ita disposuisse quod naturam puram vel actum eius sic acceptet, quia ‘actum ex puris naturalibus esse meritorium’ appropinquant errori Pelagii. Ideo verisimilius creditur quod acceptet naturam, et actum eius tamquam meritorium, per habitum supernaturalem”, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 160 (Vatican 215).

\item\textsuperscript{13} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 148 (Vatican 210). Bonnie Kent writes, “[charity] helps to explain how, but not why, some individuals attain the reward of happiness” In “Rethinking Moral Dispositions: Scotus on the Virtues,” \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus}, p. 368. I think that her way of putting the matter is useful and that the idea that grace explains \textit{how} some
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The relation between act and reward is external and contingent. Scotus compares the way that certain relations obtain between an act and its reward to the way that animation follows the result of natural causes that produce a human embryo. That the embryo receives a rational soul is not within the power of the natural causes at work in human procreation, but God has determined that animation will always follow upon the actions of certain natural causes. In a similar way, obtaining a reward is beyond the intrinsic power of acting in accordance with grace, but God has decreed that rewards will be given to these acts.\textsuperscript{14}

While morally good and meritorious acts will be substantially the same, the person who acts in accord with charity will elicit an intrinsically more perfect act than the person who does not operate with charity. The act elicited in accordance with charity is more perfect because charity increases the “intensity” of the act.\textsuperscript{15} Charity intensifies all people’s acts attain a reward might seem more clear to some people than Scotus’s way of putting it where charity is the basis for merit secundum quid.

\textsuperscript{14} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 146 (Vatican 209), “sed completio in ratione meriti non est in potestate mea nisi dispositiva, tamen sic dispositiva quod ex dispositione divina semper sequitur illud completivum ad agere meum, sicut semper sequitur animation ad organizationem factam a causa naturali.” The intrinsic goodness of an act done in grace is not such that justice requires that it receive a reward. It is for this reason that Scotus sometimes claims that in rewarding creatures God always rewards \textit{ultra condignum}: \textit{Ordinatio} I, q. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n.149, pp. 210-11, “…intelligendum est de acceptatione divina aeterna, qua Deus, ab aeterno praevide hunc actum ex talibus principiis eliciendum, voluit ipsum esse ordinatum ad praemium, et actu volitionis suae ordinando ipsum ad praemium, voluit ipsum fore meritum; qui tamen secundum se consideratus, absque tali acceptatione divina, secundum strictam iustitiam dignus tali praemio non fuisset ex intrinsica bonitate sua quam haberet ex suis principiis: quod patet: quia semper praemium est maius bonum merito et iustitia stricta non reddit melius pro minus bono. Ideo bene dicitur quod Deus semper praemiat ultra condignum, universaliter quidem ultra dignitatem actus qui est meritum,--quia quod ille sit condignum meritum, hoc est ultra naturam et bonitatem intrinsicam eius, ex gratuita acceptatione divine; et forte adhuc, ultra illud aliud quod de communi lege esset actus acceptandus, quandoque Deus praemiat ex liberalitate mera.”

\textsuperscript{15} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 40 (Vatican 154), “Concedo, propter istas rationes, quod tenendo habitum esse causam partialem respectu actus, esset causa secunda et non prima, sed ipsa potentia esset causa prima et absolute non indiget habitu ad operandum; tamen minus perfecte operatur sine habitu quam cum habitu (et hoc, posito aequali conatu ex parte potentiae), sicut quando duae causae concurrent ad effectum unum, una sola non potest per se in ita perfectum effectum sicut ambae simul. Et hoc modo salvatur quare actus est intensior a potentia et ab habitu quam a potentia sola: non
those features that are not the substance of the act. For example, there is an increase in facility and enjoyment because of charity.  

Charity inclines a person to perform certain types of actions. These acts are those that exemplify love for God for his own sake. The habit of charity can incline a person towards meritorious action either as an active cause or a non-active cause. If it is a non-active cause, then charity acts like a weight pulling something toward the ground. According to Scotus, this way of explaining how charity inclines a person towards

quidem quod sit causa substantiae actus, et habitus causa intentionis actus (quasi duobus causatis correspondeant duae causae), sed quod ambae causae concurrentes possunt producere perfectiorem effectum quam altera sola, --qui tamen effectus secundum se totum et ut ‘per se unus’, est a duabus causis, sed in diverso ordine causantibus.“; cf. n. 151, p. 211. For a discussion of how charity intensifies an act, see Thomas Osborne, ch. 5, Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics, (Notre Dame, 2005).

16 According to Scotus the increased perfection of the act occurs geometrically. Ordinatio I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 181 (Vatican 225), “Nulla enim potentia habitualis potest habere actum ita perfectum sine habitu, sicut cum habitu; immo quanto potentia perfectior est, tanto minus potest habere actum proportionalem suae perfectioni, si careat omni habitu, quia ex quo similis est proportio geometrica duarum potentiarum inaequalium ad habitus proportionaliter perfectivos, ergo erit alia proportio, arithmetica,--et ita simpliciter magis deficiet potentia perfectior, si non habitetur, quam potentia inferior et imperfectior.” Cf. Ordinatio III, d. 27, q. 1, n. 63 (Vatican 77), “Quantum ad tertium dictum istius articuli, scilicet de habitu caritatis, dico sicut alias dictum est distinctione 17 I libri, scilicet quod iste habitusdat ac
tui—quantum ad intensionem substantiae actus—aliquam intensionem ulteriorum quam sola potentia eadem et ex aequali conatu possit dare actui suo. Et quantumcumque potentia creatae esset perfectior, tanto —si non haberet caritatem creatam correspondentem sibi secundum proportionem (dico arithmeticam, quia est aequalitas secundum proportionem geometricam)—esset imperfectior: quantum enim deficit voluntas minor si non habeat caritatem sibi proportionalem, tantum videtur deficere voluntas maior geometrice si non habeat caritatem sibi proportionalem.”

17 Duns Scotus, Ordinatio I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 133 (Vatican 204), “Oportet ergo dicere quod iste habitus, praeter hoc quod est décor spiritualis, etiam est inclinans ad determinatos actus, et hoc sive non-active, secundum quartam viam positam in solutione praecedente,—sive (quod magis videtur) active, secundum tertiam viam” (emphasis added). Possessing charity confers a certain spiritual beauty on the person that makes him acceptable to God so that even when a person is not eliciting an act in accord with charity, he is still accepted by God as worthy of eternal life. While possessing habitual charity makes a person acceptable to God, it does not make every act that a person elicits meritorious. Possessing habitual charity is compatible with committing venial sins, but those acts are not meritorious. Ordinatio I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 131, “Ratio quidem acceptandi naturam videtur esse sicut quidam decor naturae, complacens voluntati divinae, ita quod sive ponatur habitus iste activus sive non-activus, ex hoc solo quod est talis formis decorans et ornans animam, potest esse ratio acceptationis et acceptandi naturam.”

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meritorious acts is defensible, but he prefers thinking of charity as an active co-cause of the meritorious act. The other co-cause is the will.

Scotus presents two arguments to show that charity plays a causal role in eliciting a meritorious act. First, if it did not do this, then the most perfect act of love for God could be caused by the will alone unaided by grace. While Scotus holds that man’s natural powers enable him to love God above all things, he believes that the most perfect way of doing this is only possible through the infused virtue of charity. The second reason for granting charity a causal role is taken from two different images for the relation between grace and the human will that Scotus finds in the writings of St. Augustine. Augustine wrote that grace and the will were related to each other as a rider is to a horse. A rider actively directs the horse. If grace were not an active cause, Augustine’s analogy would be vitiated. Scotus also cites a passage from Augustine where the will is called the attendant \textit{[pedissequa]} of grace. This image also indicates that

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18 For his defense of charity being a non-active cause of meritorious acts, see \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, nn. 46-52 (Vatican 156-59).

19 Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 134 (Vatican 204), “Primo, quia aliquin videretur quod sine illo posset haberi actus intensissimus diligendi Deum, et hoc tam in via quam in patria, et ita beatitudin: nam in illo instanti naturae in quo elicitur actus a principio activo, --si sola voluntas esset ibi principium activum, ipsum esset principium ‘in quantum activum’ aeque perfectum sine isto habitu sicut cum isto, et potentia ipsa posset aequali conatu agree (ut patet); ergo perfectissiimus actus diligendi Deum, sine habitu tali haberi posset.”

20 Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 135 (Vatican 205), “Secundo probatur idem, quia aliquin non videretur esse verum quod dicit Augustinus de libero arbitrio, quod ‘gratia se habet ad liberum arbitrium sicut sessor ad equum’, quia sessor active regit et movet equum, alienaliter.”

21 Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 135 (Vatican 205), “Nec etiam illud quod dicit in \textit{Epistola ad Bonificatum}: \textit{[Voluntate]}--inquit--\textit{[concomitante, non praeente, pedissequa, non domina]>}, Non esset autem voluntas pedissequa gratae, si ipsa gratia nullam causalitatem haberet.” The second image is taken from Augustine’s \textit{Letter to Paulinus} (\textit{Ep. 186}), which in the Middle Ages was thought to have been written to pope Boniface. Scotus’s Vatican editors discuss this misattribution in note 1, p. 205.
grace has a causal role and indeed is the main cause of the act with the will simply
assisting in the subordinate role of an attendant.

Grace and free will are both co-causes of a meritorious act. One of these causal
principles will be the primary cause of the act, the other the secondary cause. Although
Augustine’s two images make habitual charity seem like the primary cause of a
meritorious act, Scotus offers a number of reasons for thinking that the will is the primary
cause. For instance, powers use habits in acting, habits do not use powers.22 The main
reason, however, for thinking that the will is the primary cause concerns what is required
for preserving the freedom of the will. Meritorious acts would not be free acts, if grace
were the primary cause. For Scotus freedom requires indeterminacy towards
contradictory ends. Grace is a natural cause. A natural cause operates deterministically
towards a single end, and fails to reach that end only if it is impeded by something.23 If
grace were the primary co-cause of meritorious acts, the will would act in the manner in
which it was acted upon by charity and its freedom would be overridden.24

In order to sort out more precisely which of the two co-causes is primary, Scotus
distinguishes two aspects of a meritorious act. First, there are those aspects of a
meritorious act that are not precisely the cause of its meritoriousness. These aspects of
the act include its substance, intensity, and moral rectitude. Second, there is that feature

22 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 138 (Vatican 207), “Primo, quia potentia utitur
habitu, non e converso.”

23 For the idea of nature as deterministically inclined to a single end, see Tobias Hoffmann, “The
Distinction between Nature and Will in Duns Scotus,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire de

24 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 139 (Vatican 207), “Secundo, quia actio non
esset libera, si gratia esset prima causa: voluntas enim naturaliter moveretur, quia gratia naturaliter moveret,
--et sicut voluntas non libere moveretur, ita nec libere ageret, cum non ageret nisi quia mota.” Cf. n. 37, pp.
153-54 for another form of this argument.
of the act that makes it meritorious.\textsuperscript{25} The will is the primary cause of a meritorious act when the act is considered according to its substance.\textsuperscript{26} In another way, however, the habit of charity is the primary cause of the act. Scotus writes,

By taking the act according to the basis of merit, we can say that this condition principally attaches to the act because of the habit and less principally from the will: for the act is accepted as worthy of a reward more because it is elicited from charity than because it is elicited from free will, although each one is necessarily required.\textsuperscript{27}

When a meritorious act is considered from the perspective of the basis of merit (the basis secundum quid), then charity is the principal cause of the act.\textsuperscript{28} Scotus can adopt the image of the horse and rider found in Augustine and the idea that the will is the attendant of grace as long as these images refer to how grace operates when the act is considered from the perspective of how it becomes meritorious.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio I}, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 142 (Vatican 207-08), “Hic potest dici quod in actu meritorio (de quo est modo sermo) duo considero, videlicet: illud quod praeedit rationem meritori, et in hoc gradu includitur et substantia actus et intensio et rectitude eius moralis; ultra hoc, considero etiam ipsam rationem meritorii, quod est acceptari a divina voluntate in ordine ad praeium, vel acceptabilem esse sive dignum acceptari.”
\item \textsuperscript{26} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio I}, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 151 (Vatican 211), “Habitus iste secundum substantiam inclinat active ad actum, et hoc active ut causa partialis (tenendo tertiam viam in solutione praeecedente), et in hac causalitate habitus est causa secunda et potentia causa prima, sicut dictum est in solutione praeecedente de habitu in communi et potentia, ponendo habitum ‘activum’; et hoc probant rationes iam adductae.”
\item \textsuperscript{27} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio I}, d. 17, q. 1-2, n. 152 (Vatican 211), “Sed accipiendo actum secundum rationem meritorii, potest dici quod ista condicio principaliter competit actui ab habitu et minus principaliter a voluntate: magis enim acceptatur actus ut dignus praemio quia est elicitus a caritate, quam quia est a voluntate libere elicitus, quamvis utrumque necessario requiratur.”
\item \textsuperscript{28} Scotus finds an analogy for the divergence between the primary cause of an act’s substance and the primary cause of its meritoriousness in the case of producing beautiful music: “Similiter, sonus magis est ex percussione corporis sonantis quam ex ordine percussionis, et tamen ut acceptabilis auditui, magis est ex ordine percussionis quam ex efficacia potentiae percutientis; immo posset esse efficacioc virtus percutiens, et minus acceptabilis, --immo omnino non acceptabilis auditui, quia non est sonus harmonicus.”
\item \textsuperscript{29} Cf. Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio I}, d. 17, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 154 (Vatican 212-13).
\end{itemize}
5.2 Habitual Grace and the Two Affections of the Will

As we have seen, meritorious acts are freely elicited acts. For Scotus the human will operates in accordance with two basic affections or inclinations. These two affections are called the *affectio iustitiae* and the *affectio commodi*. Scotus’s discussion of Christ’s merit in *Lectura* III, d. 18 analyzes Christ’s merit in terms of how Christ can act in accord with the *affectio iustitiae* alone or in accord with the *affectio iustitiae* as it constrains his *affectio commodi*. Without a general understanding of Scotus’s view of the two affections of the will it is difficult to understand Scotus’s discussion of Christ’s merit in *Lectura* III, d. 18.

According to Scotus, there are the two affections that are intrinsic to the will: the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitiae*. By the *affectio commodi*, a person is inclined to seek what is beneficial to himself. One’s own flourishing is pursued through eliciting acts in accordance with the *affectio commodi*. If left unchecked the *affectio commodi* will lead one to seek goods only for oneself without concern for the intrinsic worth or

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30 Except for *Lectura* III, d. 18 on Christ’s merit, the various treatments of merit found in Scotus’s writings listed above do not contain any discussion of the two inclinations of the will. This is because only in *Lectura* III, d. 18 does Scotus give sustained attention to how a person elicits a meritorious act. His other main treatments of merit are occasioned by different concerns. For instance, his commentary on I Sent. 17 is mainly focused on explaining how the habit of charity co- operates with the will (without attending to the two affections) and his *Quodlibet* 17 is concerned to distinguish meritorious and natural love. In *Lectura* III, d. 18 he gives a more penetrating analysis of how the will actually elicits meritorious acts.

flourishing of other people. Fortunately, the affectio iustitiae can constrain and temper the affectio commodi. By the affectio iustitiae a person is inclined to act towards another or on behalf of another according to the intrinsic worth of the other. The good for another is the formal object of the affectio iustitiae. The affectio iustitiae enables one to freely act for the good of another irrespective of the consequences of the good for the agent.\(^\text{32}\)

God is the formal object of the habit of charity with which a person elicits a meritorious act. Charity is a virtue of the will.\(^\text{33}\) This virtue of the will perfects either the will’s affectio commodi or its affectio iustitiae. To determine which inclination charity perfects, we must discover how God is the formal object of charity. Scotus identifies three ways in which God could count as the formal object of charity. God could be the object of acts elicited in accordance with charity (1) insofar as God is the highest Good apart from how this affects us or anyone else, (2) insofar as God bestows every good on a rational agent, or (3) insofar as he is the good we desire for our happiness (i.e., insofar as God is the object of our individual beatitude).\(^\text{34}\) The second two ways of determining the object of charity conceive God as relative to our own well-being in some way, and, thus, more properly as ways that God could be the object of a habit that perfects the affectio commodi. According to Scotus, the theological virtue of hope perfects the affectio commodi. The formal object of charity is God as he is a good in himself, not as he is a

\(^{32}\) Although it is possible that an agent could will against his own good in accordance with the affectio iustitiae, it is also possible for a person to will his own good in accordance with the affectio iustitiae in which case one will also be fulfilling the drive of the affectio commodi. This is possible because justice sometimes demands the promotion of one’s own good and not only the good of others.

\(^{33}\) On the development of the idea that virtues inhere in the will, see Bonnie Kent, *Virtue of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

\(^{34}\) Scotus discusses the possible candidates for the formal object of charity in *Ordinatio* III, d. 27, q. 1, nn. 18-20 (Vatican 53-55).
good relative to the agent.\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, charity perfects the \textit{affectio iustitiae}.\textsuperscript{36} A person’s beatitude will follow as a consequence of loving God through acts of charity but it does not serve as the reason for loving God.\textsuperscript{37}

Scotus explains that loving God above all should occur both extensively and intensively. Loving God above all extensively requires loving God more than everything else that is not God. This, for example, would lead one to will that everything that is not God cease to exist rather than will \textit{per impossibile} that God not exist. Loving God above all intensively refers to the degree of affection that one should have towards God. A person should have a greater love for God than he has for any other individual or group.\textsuperscript{38}

Even though God insofar as he is a good in whom we participate and in whom we find fulfillment is not the proper object of charity, this aspect of our love for God can aid us in loving God for his own sake.\textsuperscript{39} All those goods that God bestows on creatures

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 27, q. 1, n. 30 (Vatican 58-9), “Prima ratio est propria ratio obiectiva, et nulla alia proprie loquendo et stricte; et haec ratio obiectiva est ratio Dei in se. Praecisa autem ratio ‘huius essentiae’ est formalis ratio terminandi omnem actum et habitum theologicum, et hoc in quacumque natura intelligenti (sic et tactum est supra in questione ‘De subiecto theologiae’, in proemio I). Quod probatur breviter ex hoc quod potentia, respiciens aliquod objectum commune adaequatum sibi sive in ratione motivi sive in ratione termini, non potest perfectissime quietari nisi in eo solo in quo est perfectissima ratio objecti adaequati; omnis potentia intellectiva et volitiva respicit pro objecto primo adaequato totum ens terminative et motive; in nullo ergo ente, sive creato sive increato, potest quietari perfecte nisi in illo in quo inventitur perfectissima ratio entis. Tale autem solum est ‘hoc primum ens’, sed non sub ratione aliqua relativa, sed sub ratione qua est ‘hoc ens’.”
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 21, q. 1, n. 17 (Vatican 53), “Hanc itaque virtutem, perficientem voluntatem in quantum habet affectionem iustitiae, voco ‘caritatem’.”
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III d. 27, q. 1, n. 32 (Vatican 60), “Tertio ratio, quae est esse objectum finiens actum, non proprie ratio formalis obiectiva, quia naturaliter consequitur actum elicitum.”
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 27, q. 1, n. 55 (Vatican 73), “Quantum ad primum dico quod illud ‘super omnia’ potest intelligi vel extensive vel intensive: extensive, scilicet quod plus diligat Deum quam omnia alia, puta quia ex aliqo affectu vult citius omnia alia non esse quam Deum non esse, --intensive, puta quia ex maiore affectu vult Deo ‘bene esse’ quam alique alterii.”
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} III, d. 27, q. 1, n. 31 (Vatican 59), “Secunda ratio potest aliqualiter dici ratio obiectiva respectu actus amandi praecise, nam ipsa est aliqualiter nata allicere ad amandum, --et talis
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
through creation, redemption, and beatitude, can be taken together as indications that God is indeed the highest good. Yet realizing that God is the highest good in himself and not just a source of goods for others leads a person to elicit acts of will towards God in accordance with the *affectio iustitiae*. One can then begin to love God for his own sake and not because of the goods that he bestows on the agent.\(^{40}\)

Each habit has only one formal object. As has been established, the formal object of charity is God himself as the highest good. It seems, therefore, that the habit of charity cannot also have our neighbor as its formal object. It is common, however, to believe that we are also able to love our neighbor in a meritorious way as a result of charity or grace. According to Scotus, the habit of charity that has God as its formal object can also incline a person to love his neighbor.\(^{41}\) Scotus writes,

> The first object of charity is God alone in himself; all other objects are certain mediating objects as if they were reflexive acts by means of which one tends to the infinite good, who is God. It is the same habit, however, that is the principle of both direct [*rectè*] and reflexive acts.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{40}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 27, q. 1, n. 31 (Vatican 60), “Et in isto secundo gradu amabilitatis potest poni omne illud in quo ratio amabilitatis potest demonstrare se, sive creando sive reparando sive disponendo ad beatificandum, ita quod inter haec non sit distinctio nec caritas magis respiciat ultimam nec secundam rationem magis quam primam, sed communiter omnes sicut rationes quasdam non solum boni honesti, sed boni communicantis et amantis, --et quia amantis, ideo digni redamari, iuxta illud Ioan. *Diligamus Deum quoniam ille prior dilexit nos.*”

\(^{41}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 28, q. 1, n. 11 (Vatican 86), “Deus ergo, amorem infundens quo omnia perfecte et ordinate tendant in ipsum, dat habitum quo habeatur carus ut Bonum commune et ut Bonum condiligendum ab alius; et ita habitus ille qui est respectu Dei in se, est etiam inclinans ad velle eum haberi et diligi ab alio...”

\(^{42}\) Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 28, q. 1, n. 12 (Vatican 86), “ita quod primum objectum est solus Deus in se, omnia autem alia sunt quaedam media objecta quasi actuum reflexorum, mediantibus quibus tendo in infinitum Bonum, quod est Deus. Idem est autem habitus qui est principium actus recti et reflexi.”

125
Our neighbor is an object of charity insofar as we will that God is loved above all, not only by us, but also by others. In willing this, charity indirectly refers us to our neighbor. Charity leads us to perform certain acts towards and on behalf of our neighbor in order to promote love of God for his own sake. In order to bring the acts of charity that bear directly on our neighbor and on God under the same habit, Scotus denies that God need always be the first and immediate object of a will informed by charity. God could be the first object of such a will either in execution or intention. For acts of charity in their fullest sense, God is first in both of these ways. Yet, it is consonant with the habit of charity that God not be the first object in execution. It is only necessary that God be first in intention.\footnote{Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 57 (Vatican 17), “Nec oportet universaliter quod omnis actus meritorius sit primo et immediate in executione circa Deum, sed in intentione requiritur; sed in executione potest aliquid immediatus diligi, sed in Deum finaliter.”} Thus, in execution, an act of charity could more immediately bear on another human person.

5.3 The Merit of Christ

God has ordained merit towards a number of rewards such as an increase in sanctifying grace and the beatific vision. A standard tenet of medieval Christology held that from the first moment of his existence Christ possessed the fullness of grace and enjoyed the beatific vision. According to medieval theologians, once a person obtains the beatific vision he is no longer in a position to merit anything because he has reached the
goal towards which merit is ordered. Hence, it does not seem that Christ could merit anything during his earthly life.\textsuperscript{44}

In order to account for how Christ could merit, medieval theologians distinguished between Christ insofar as he was a \textit{comprehensor} and insofar as he was a \textit{viator}. The term comprehensor applies to someone who has achieved the ultimate end of human existence, the beatific vision. Theologians used the term viator for someone who had not yet achieved this end. A \textit{viator} is still journeying to his heavenly fatherland in some respect. Christ’s intellect was beatified, but his body did not share in the goods that follow upon this beatitude. Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton, for example, both argue that Christ can merit insofar as he is a \textit{viator}.\textsuperscript{45} Bonaventure writes,

\begin{quote}
To the objection that having the gift of glory prevents one from receiving a reward for a work, it must be said that this is true when someone is in the state of the fatherland \textit{simpliciter}; but when one is not only in the state of a \textit{comprehensor} but also in the state of a \textit{viator}, then his work can be rewarded because of his status as a \textit{viator}. By divine dispensation, Christ is able to obtain [a reward] in this way.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 14 (Vatican 4), “In ista questione primo videndum est quomodo Christus meruit. Difficile tamen videtur salvare quod meruit, cum fuerit beatus et perfecte coniunctus fini secundum voluntatem in primo instanti; ideo si in primo instanti vel in aliquo alio posset mereri, videtur quod alii beati possent mereri in infinitum, et ita illorum praemium numquam perfecte haberetur, et sic beatitudo eorum semper esset in fieri et numquam essent beati!” (for the same sentiment see also n. 30, p. 9).
\item \textsuperscript{45} Richard of Middleton, III \textit{Sent.} d. 18 art. 1, q. 1, p. 188b, “Respondeo, quod Christus aliquid meritum et magnum fuit, quod meruit. Christus enim non tantum fuit comprehensor, sed etiam viator, ut superius dictum est. Fuit etiam per liberum arbitrium dominus suae actionis. Actio etiam sua propter perfectam charitatem agentis et rectam eius intentionem proportionata fuit prae mio magno, ad merendum autem non requiruntur, nisi tria praedicta: ergo Christus meruit.”
\item \textsuperscript{46} Bonaventure III \textit{Sent.} d. 18 art. 1 q. 2, p. 384a-b, “ad illud quod obiicitur, quod habens munus gloriae non facit opus remunerabile; dicendum, quod illud verum est, quando alquis est simpliciter in statu \textit{patriae}; cum autem non tantum est in statu \textit{comprehensoris}, verum etiam in statu \textit{viatoris}, tunc opus eius esse potest remunerabile propter statum \textit{viae}; et sic reperire in Christo secundum divinam dispensationem.”
\end{itemize}
Christ was a comprehensor in terms of the supernatural goods that his soul possessed and these goods were not gained through merit. Full beatitude, however, consists in the glory of not only the soul but also the body. Many scholastic theologians claimed that Christ merited impassibility and glorification of his body, which he did not possess as a viator.

Scotus, however, disagrees with earlier theologians over what Christ is able to merit for himself. Scotus presents his position on what Christ merits for himself by responding to Peter Lombard’s claim that Christ merits for himself the impassibility of his body. According to Scotus, at neither the first moment of his existence or any other moment is Christ able to merit something for himself. Scotus writes,

That which ought to have existed, if it had not been impeded by a miracle is not gained through merit; but the glory and impassibility of body and similarly the soul would have been infused in the first instant of the Incarnation, if this had not been impeded by a miracle.

Scotus offers what he calls a “pious gloss” on the Lombard’s position by saying that it is possible to hold that Christ merits the removal of the miraculous impediment preventing his body and the lower portion of the soul from enjoying the glory and impassibility that is usually concomitant with the intellectual goods of beatitude in the higher portion of the soul. Though Scotus admits that in this attenuated sense Christ might be able to merit
for himself, he does not explore this possibility any further. The remainder of his discussion of Christ’s merit is focused on his merit for others.

Scotus does hold that Christ’s status as a viator enables him to merit for others. Scotus analyzes Christ’s ability to merit by looking at the different ways that he elicits an act in accord with grace as it perfects his affectio iustitiae. Scotus writes,

The first object of merit concerning which someone merits is God himself, according to which he wills the good for God by the affectio iustitiae, this involves willing that he exist and exist in the best way (namely as just, wise, etc); but the affectio commodi concerns one’s own good. Therefore, merit does not first consist in the affectio iustitiae as it moderates and orders the affectio commodi for one’s own good.⁵₀

Merit principally result from willing in accord with grace as it perfects the affectio iustitiae in itself, rather than willing in such a way that the affectio iustitiae constrains the affectio commodi. At the same time it is possible to merit through eliciting an act that involves the affectio iustitiae constraining the will’s other inclination.

Scotus will set out three different ways that Christ could merit based on how one can act through the affectio iustitiae. Before looking at these three ways of eliciting a meritorious act, it is important to note that Scotus adds yet another layer of complexity to his analysis of Christ’s ability to merit by introducing the traditional idea that the soul is divided into a higher and lower portion. The distinction that Scotus is drawing between the higher and lower portions of the soul refers to the powers of the soul as they are

amotionem impedimenti, quare scilicet non fuerunt haec statim, scilicet meruit desitionem miraculi prohibentis redundantiam gloriae in portionem inferiorem et in corpus. Sic patet quid non meruit.”⁵₀

⁵₀ Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 19 (Vatican 5-6), “…primum obiectum circa quod meretur aliquis primo, est ipse Deus, secundum quod affectione iustitiae vult Deo bonum, ut ‘esse’ et ‘bene esse’ (scilicet iustum, sapientem etc.); sed affectio commodi respicit proprium bonum. Et ideo meritum non consistit primo in affectione iustitiae, ut moderet et ordinat affectionem commodi circa bonum proprium....”
ordered, respectively, to eternal or temporal objects. The lower portion of the soul is
ordered towards knowing and willing temporal things, whereas a person knows eternal
things or elicits acts about eternal things according to the higher portion of the soul.
Scotus examines whether Christ’s meritorious acts were elicited by the higher or lower
portion of his will. He will argue that Christ merits according to the lower portion of his
will because that is the unbeatified portion of his soul. The higher portion of the soul,
directed to the eternal, is where Christ experiences the beatific vision.

The distinction between the two portions of the soul originates in Augustine’s
description of the mind in *De Trinitate* XII. Peter Lombard included some of the relevant
passages from *De Trinitate* XII in Book II of his *Sentences.*51 Through this source the
division of the soul into a higher and a lower portion came to be discussed alongside the
Aristotelian faculty psychology adopted by many scholastic theologians. According to
Scholastic-Aristotelian psychology, the soul possesses an intellect and will and these are
two separate powers. Scotus argues that the intellect and will are, respectively, the same
power in the higher and lower portion of the soul. Thus, even after introducing the
higher/lower distinction into the soul, there are still only two powers in question rather
than four.

Scotus explains why the higher and lower portions of the will are the same
volitional power on the basis of how the habit of charity perfects the will. One habit does
not perfect two powers. The single habit of charity perfects both portions of the will. As

51 See Peter Lombard, *Sentences*, bk. II, d. 24, ch. 5, n. 5 (Brady 454). The main treatments of the
two portions of the soul in the writings of Scotus can be found in *Lectura* II, d. 24, q. 1 (Vatican 219-27);
*Reportatio* II, d. 24, q. 1 (Wadding 354-66); *Ordinatio* III, d. 15, q. 1, nn. 72-75 (Vatican 510-12); *Lectura*
III, d. 15, q. 1, nn. 59-61 (Vatican 378); *Lectura* III, d. 18, q. 1 (Vatican 1-23). In *Lectura* III, d. 18 Scotus
discusses the two portions of the soul in passing, and he is clearly presupposing what he has said elsewhere
about the two portions.
proof for this, Scotus notes that if this was not the case, then the commandment to love God and neighbor would have been given in vain. Insofar as charity leads us to will the good for our neighbor, we are willing something according to the lower portion of the soul. Insofar as charity enables us to love God, we are willing something according to the higher portion of the will. In both cases, a single habit is perfecting a single power.

5.3.1 The First Way

Scotus begins his account of Christ’s merit by showing how bodily suffering can be meritorious. Scotus writes,

Christ merits according to the lower portion, not according to all the acts of the lower portion, but according to those which are contrary to the affectio commodi, and, therefore, it is commonly said that Christ merits through suffering.

Normally, for a person who enjoys the beatific vision it is not possible to act contrary to the affectio commodi because the affectio commodi of the blessed is fully satisfied through their enjoyment of the highest Good. There is simply no object that is contrary to the affectio commodi when the person is in patria. Hence, the opportunity for willing against it and meriting thereby does not arise for the blessed. Christ, however, was a

52 Duns Scotus, Lectura II, d. 24, q. 1, n. 11 (Vatican 221-222), “Item, hoc probatur ex unitate habitus: unus habitus non perficit duas potentias; sed caritas, quae est tantum unus habitus, perficit voluntatem quod portionem superiorem et inferiorem (aliter enim frustra daret praeceptum de diligendo Deum et proximum); ergo etc. Et hoc est sic arguere: habitus unus voluntatis, caritas, ponitur respectu aeternorum et temporalium et aeternorum.” cf. Reportatio II.24, q.1 (Wadding 365b).

53 In both cases, God also remains the first object in the order of intention so that God is always loved in some way even in acts that are elicited according to the lower portion of the will.

54 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 24 (Vatican 7), “Christus meruit secundum portionem inferiorem, sed non secundum omnes actus portionem inferiorem, sed non secundum omnes actus portionis inferioris, sed secundum illos qui contrariantur affectioni commodi, et ideo ponitur meritum Christi communiter in passionibus.”
viator according to the lower portion of his soul. As a viator, there were objects that were present to the sensitive part of his soul that were contrary to his affectio commodi that provided the opportunity to engage in meritorious action. These actions could be meritorious because the affectio iustitiae can guide the affectio commodi.\(^{55}\)

What Scotus has in mind about merit arising from the affectio iustitiae constraining the affectio commodi becomes clearer through considering some concrete examples of such actions. As a viator, there were many ways that he could freely will something against his affectio commodi that would be meritorious. Scotus cites fasting and keeping vigil as two examples of acts that are contrary to the affectio commodi that could be meritorious. What makes fasting or keeping vigil meritorious is not simply that one chooses to forego food and rest, but rather that someone chooses to forego these goods in accordance with the affectio iustitiae as perfected by habitual grace. Scotus writes, “there is no merit through the affectio commodi, unless it is referred to the ultimate end by the affectio iustitiae.”\(^{56}\) In fasting or keeping vigil out of love for God, these acts that are contrary to the affectio commodi become meritorious.\(^{57}\) Christ’s acceptance of suffering and death is an extreme example of the affectio iustitiae

\(^{55}\) Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 19 (Vatican 6), “Et ideo omne velle affectione commodi, si non ordinetur et moderetur affectione commodi, si non ordinetur et moderetur affectione iustitiae, est demeritum, quia immoderatus appetitus proprii boni est malum; vel si posset esse indifferens, si non moderetur affectione iustitiae, de hoc non modo (forte potest dici secundum quod praevenit affectionem iustitiae).”

\(^{56}\) Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 19 (Vatican 6), “Et ideo in affectione commodi, nisi referatur ad ultimum finem affectione iustitiae, non consistit meritum.”

\(^{57}\) Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 21 (Vatican 6-7), “Sed Christus, quia secundum aliquid fuit viator et passibilis secundum virtutem sensitivam et portionem inferiorem voluntatis, ideo habuit multa obiecta sibi praesentata sensibus et portioni inferiori rationis, circa quae libere velle potuit aliquid contra affectionem commodi, quae semper est ad conveniens illi cuius est; et ideo ieiunando, orando, vigilando et multis talibus potuit mereri, et exercendo huiusmodi vel interius volendo talia propter Deum exerceri ab eo.”
constraining the *affectio commodi*. That Christ’s *affectio iustitiae* is perfected by the highest grace makes Christ’s death exceedingly meritorious.

5.3.2 The Second Way

According to the first way, the only acts by which Christ can merit are those acts of the lower portion of the will that are contrary to the *affectio commodi*. The second way that Christ could merit adds to this some acts of the lower portion that are elicited purely in accord with the *affectio iustitiae* rather than only those acts whereby the *affectio iustitiae* constrains the *affectio commodi*. Scotus writes,

> It can be said that [Christ] could merit with respect to all the acts of the lower portion (I speak of those acts which concern means to the end).\(^{58}\)

For example, if Christ were to elicit an act of love towards another person for the sake of God, then this could be meritorious. Thus, not only bodily suffering, but a whole range of other acts directed at temporal goods out of love for God could be meritorious.\(^{59}\)

Scotus considers an objection to this more expansive understanding of how Christ could merit through the lower portion of the will. Scotus formulates the objection as follows:

> Something that is in the term absolutely cannot merit; but the lower portion of Christ’s will was in the term absolutely, because it could not have a disordered act

\(^{58}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 25 (Vatican 8), “...potest dici quod quantum ad omnes actus portionis inferioris potuit mereri (dico de iis actibus qui respiciunt ea quae sunt ad finem).”

\(^{59}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 29 (Vatican 9), “...quia igitur sic fuit, ideo potuit aliquid accidere secundum affectionem commodi, quod tamen acceptavit, et ita mereri. Fuit ergo in termino secundum affectionem iustitiae, licet non secundum affectionem commodi; et praeter hoc, portio inferior meruit eliciendo operationem circa creata (ut diligendo benedictam Matrem suam et alios bonos in Deum, et malos propter Deum).”
concerning something towards the ultimate end; therefore, it was fully at rest [in God] because it was not in the power of the lower portion to have an act immediately concerning an eternal object, but only concerning objects in relation to that object.  

The lower portion does not act directly regarding the final end. It is the role of the higher portion of the will to elicit an act immediately concerning the ultimate end. The lower portion of a person’s will chooses means to one’s ultimate end. In the beatific state, however, the lower portion no longer needs to choose means towards the ultimate end. The lower portion of Christ’s will was “in its term”, which is to say that it was fully at rest in the end. Being at rest or in its term seems to prevent one from meriting even through the lower portion of the will. This objection could be used against both the first and second ways that Scotus has argued that Christ could merit and Scotus provides responses showing why it does not rule out either of these ways.

Scotus’s response to this objection will integrate the common scholastic distinction between being a comprehensor and a viator with his distinctions between the two affections of the will and the two portions of the will. Scotus distinguishes between different ways that beatification can affect the lower portion of the soul. As a result of the soul’s beatitude, the lower portion of the will could be at rest with respect to its affectio iustitiae. This is true of the higher and lower portion of Christ’s will. It is this that makes

60 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 27 (Vatican 8), “Contra: Illud quod est in termino simpliciter, non potest mereri; sed portio inferior fuit simpliciter in termino, quia non potuit habere actum inordinatum circa aliquid ad finem; ergo fuit quietata quantum potuit, quia non est in potestate ipsius habere—ut portio inferior—actum circa objectum aeternum immediate, sed circa alia ordinate in relatione ad illud objectum.”

61 It should be noted that this objection, if successful, would mean that it would also have been impossible for Christ to merit according to the first way set out above. Thus, what Scotus says in reply to the objection will also clarify his understanding of how Christ elicits his meritorious acts in the first way.
Christ unable to sin. The lower portion could also be at rest with respect to its *affectio commodi*. Scotus explains:

> [Christ] was not in the term according to the lower portion so that he had impassibility, nor did he also have everything which he could have according to the *affectio commodi*, because he did not have the highest advantage [*summum commodum*] that could be joined to him.\(^{62}\)

Other people *in patria* have all that could be *commodum* as well as the impeccability of the will. The lower portion of Christ’s will does not possess all that is *commodum* because he can still undergo bodily suffering. Thus far Scotus has showed how the objection does not nullify Christ’s ability to merit according to the first way.

In order to explain how Christ could merit according to the second way, Scotus argues that Christ’s *viator* status means that the acts of his lower portion are not included within his beatitude. Various temporal objects of Christ’s will—such as love of neighbor—are not included in his beatitude. Whether or not something is included in one’s beatitude refers to whether you are obligated by your beatific state to perform the act in question. Scotus writes,

> Although the angels and the blessed have good operations concerning us, they do not merit because their acts are included in their beatitude, that is, because of beatitude and from its plenitude, they are obligated by God to [do good] towards us.\(^{63}\)

\(^{62}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura III*, d. 18, q. 1, n. 29 (Vatican 9), “Sed tamen non fuit secundum portionem inferiorem in termino sic quod habuerit impassibilitatem, nec habuit omne quod potuit habere secundum affectionem commodi, quia non summum commodum sibi coniunctum quantum potuit coniungi.”

\(^{63}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura III*, d. 18, q. 1, n. 22 (Vatican 7), “Tunc ergo quamvis angeli habeant bonas operations circa nos, vel alii beati, quia tamen illi actus sunt inclusi in beatitudine istorum, hoc est ratione beatitudinis et ex huiusmodi plenitudine et collatione obligantur nobis a Deo, potest dici quod ipsi non merentur.”
While the blessed can elicit acts towards creatures, these acts are not meritorious.

Normally, both portions of the will of a beatified person would be outside the realm of merit, but in the case of Christ, the acts of his lower portion are not included in his beatitude during his earthly life.⁶⁴

5.3.3 The Third Way

According to the third way of explaining Christ’s merit, Christ is able to merit through all the acts of the higher portion of his will. The higher portion of his will and its affectio iustitiae are in the term or beatified. It is in the higher portion of the will where Christ elicits his beatific act of loving God for his own sake. Nevertheless, Scotus maintains that Christ could even have merited something for other people through the beatific act that is elicited by the higher portion of his will. In other words, Christ could merit as a comprehensor.

It is difficult to make sense of Scotus’s claim that Christ could merit for others as a comprehensor because insofar as a person possesses the beatific vision he is outside the state of merit. Every thirteenth-century theologian before Scotus who had considered the question of whether Christ could merit as a comprehensor rejected this possibility.

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⁶⁴ Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 23 (Vatican 7), “Sed huiusmodi praedicti actus Christi non includuntur in sua beatitudine; ergo per istos actus meruit, quia, quantum ad tales actus, fuit viator, non comprehensor (ita quod radicaliter includatur in sua beatitudine.” Scotus, in other places, also is careful to note that beatification of the will does not impede Christ’s ability to merit. Scotus sees Christ’s ability to merit as a special dispensation granted to him, but not other person in patria. Ordinatio, III, d. 12, q. 1, n. 8 (Vatican 381), “Ad questionem istam breviter respondeo quod cum Christus in primo instanti unionis eius cum Deo fuerit beatus, beatitudo abstulit sibi omnem potestatem peccandi quae potest auferri per beatitudinem, licet cum hoc dispensative staret potestas merendi.”
because merit is ordered toward the ultimate end and ceases to be possible once the person reaches this goal. Scotus recognizes the difficulties raised by his position.65

It is important to note that Scotus does not think that Christ can merit anything for himself as a comprehensor. To the extent that merit is ordered towards leading oneself to beatitude, it is logically impossible to merit once you are in patria. If you could merit beatitude in the state of beatitude, then your beatitude would never be in a state of being, but perpetually in a state of becoming. But this is a contradiction.66

To defend the possibility of meriting as a comprehensor, Scotus begins by invoking the ultimate foundation of merit, a determination of the divine will. Scotus writes that his position that Christ could merit as a comprehensor is possible “because such things depend on divine liberty accepting one act and not another.”67 God’s generosity has deemed that certain acts are ordered to a reward—the acts of a viator performed in a state of grace, but God could also deem other acts meritorious.

Scotus wants to block the implication that the beatific act of any person would necessarily be meritorious for others, were God to deem Christ’s beatific act meritorious in this way. Defending the meritoriousness of Christ’s beatific acts relies on his status as a viator in a way that is different from how his viator-status is usually used to explain his ability to merit. Scotus distinguishes between the formal cause of a meritorious act and other circumstances surrounding the act that also provide a basis for merit. Normally, an

65 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 30 (Vatican 9), “…potest dici alia via—tertia—quod Christus meruit etiam secundum portionem superiorem et secundum omnem actum eius. Hoc tamen est difficile tenere, propter alios sanctos, qui tunc videntur posse mereri in infinitum.”

66 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d 18, q. 1, n. 14 (Vatican 4).

67 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d 18, q. 1, n. 34 (Vatican 10), “et maxime cum talia dependeant ex libertate divina acceptante unum actum, non alium.”
act is meritorious when it is freely elicited in accordance with grace by a *viator*. These are the formal causes of a meritorious act. Christ’s beatific act does not conform to these conditions. According to Scotus, however, “divine acceptation not only considers the act but also certain accidental conditions of the supposit, who elicits the act.”

Even though the beatific act of Christ and another saint would formally be the same kind of act, there are accidental differences between Christ’s beatific act and the beatific act of another saint. Christ’s status as a *viator* is an accidental condition distinguishing the circumstances that surround Christ’s beatific act from the beatific act of other saints.

Scotus offers an analogy in order to elucidate how accidental conditions surrounding the agent can explain why God could consistently reward the beatific acts of Christ without rewarding the beatific acts of other people. In Scotus’s example, someone has offended another person. Two people beg forgiveness from the offended person on behalf of their friend who caused the offense. Scotus posits that each person intercedes with equal sincerity but that one of these people is a friend of the offended person and the other is a stranger to him. Their supplication is the formal cause of receiving forgiveness. The acts of the friend and the stranger are formally the same. Yet an accidental condition can shape one’s response to the two people in that the offended person is more ready to offer forgiveness because he is being asked to do so by a friend, a condition that has little to do with the sincerity or justice of the request. In a similar way, God could assign a reward to Christ’s beatific act because of an accidental circumstance surrounding his

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68 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 34 (Vatican 10). “...acceptatio divina non solum respicit actum, sed condicionales accidentales suppositi elcientis actum.”

69 Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 34 (Vatican 10). “Sic accidentalis condicio, scilicet quod persona non est extra terminum simpliciter, secundum aliquid est causa quare actus eius est meritorious, etiam beatificus, non alterius (scilicet angeli vel animae Petri).”
beatific act, namely his status as a viator. His status as a viator is not formally a part of his beatific act but it provides a basis for distinguishing why God could assign Christ’s beatific act a reward, but not the beatific act of someone else.

Scotus argues for the possibility of Christ meriting as a comprehensor, we suggest, in order to show that Christ could have merited in just the same way that mere men can merit something. In the case of a viator besides Christ, the primary way of merit is eliciting an act of love for God in himself (such as any act of worship) through the graced affectio iustitiae alone. A person elicits this act through the unbeatified higher portion of his will. Scotus has shown that Christ could have merited in this way too, despite the extraordinary grace conferred upon his human soul.

5.4 Christ’s Merit and Suffering

Scotus writes, “[Christ] died for justice. He freely ordained his Passion and offered himself to the Father for us.” Though Scotus outlines three ways that Christ could merit, he seems to maintain that Christ merits only in the first way. Moreover, Christ does not merit through many acts conforming to the first way, but only in his Passion and death. It might seem inconsistent for Scotus to claim that Christ only merits on the Cross because many of Christ’s historical acts could conform to the first and second ways that he set out above for explaining how Christ could merit. The grace that

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70 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 18, q. 1, n. 28 (Vatican 8), “Praeterea, sicut meritum in nobis respicit partem intellectivam, sic in Christo; sed in nobis non est meritum in portione inferiore (nisi fuerit in superiore complacendo), sicut nec peccatum; ergo Christus non potuit mereri secundum portionem inferiorem tantum, nisi meretur secundum portionem superiorem.”

71 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 20, q. 1, nn. 37-38 (Vatican 51), “Et ideo pro iustitia mortuus est. Tamen de facto libere, sui gratia, passionem suam ordinavit et obtulit Patri pro nobis.”
Christ merits for people on the Cross is transmitted to them through the sacraments. Scotus’s discussion of the sacraments in *Ordinatio IV*, d. 2 leads him to examine the question of whether Christ could merit something for others prior to undergoing the Passion. Scotus considers this possibility when discussing an objection to the claim that the sacraments have their efficacy because of Christ’s Passion. According to this objection, not every sacrament can have its efficacy from the Passion because Baptism and the Eucharist were instituted prior to the Passion. Presumably the objector thinks it superfluous to institute something that is powerless. Christ, therefore, must be a meritorious cause of sacramental grace because of something that he did before accepting his suffering and death. Perhaps Christ merited the efficacy of these sacraments through some act of love of neighbor or some suffering not connected to his Passion.

In replying to this objection, Scotus offers two different responses. The first response allows that Christ could have merited prior to his crucifixion. Yet even in this case, Scotus connects Christ’s merit to his Passion. Scotus believes that it would have been possible for the sacraments of the New Law to have their efficacy merely from Christ’s intention to offer his life on the Cross to God. Scotus writes,

> It could be said that all the sacraments of the New Law have efficacy from the Passion of Christ as already offered not in an exterior act but offered in an interior act; for from the instant of his conception, Christ had the merit of the Passion, and in that interior act consists the more principal basis of merit. Therefore, whatever he instituted during his earthly life could at that time have efficacy from the

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72 See the second objection in *Ordinatio IV*, d. 2, q. 1, n. 3 (Wadding 135a), “Secundum, scilicet perfectio maxima quantum ad extensionem declaratur, quia sicut in vita naturali, primum est generatio, deinde sequitur nutritio et roboratio, et sanitatis perditae reparatio, et haec quattuor pertinent ad quamlibet personam singularem; praeter hoc autem requiritur aliquod pertinens ad communitatem, quo aliquis constitutatur in gradu necessario ad aliquem actum necessarium communitati. Ita spiritualiter ad completam perfectionem extensive, oportet esse adiutorium aliquod pertinens ad generationem spiritualem; et secundo aliquid pertinens nutritionem; terto pertinens ad roborationem; quarto ad reparationem post lapsum.”
Passion, which was perfectly willed by Christ himself in which volition was the principal oblation and this oblation was pleasing to God. On this basis, however, it cannot be said that [the merit of] his Passion was accepted before the Incarnation or Passion simply because God foresaw these things. For prior [to the Incarnation and Passion] this oblation was neither an interior nor exterior act [of Christ].

From the first instant of his existence, Christ willed to suffer for the human race in accordance with the divine will. This ever present adherence to God’s will, which was only brought to fruition in his last moments of earthly life, could have been a meritorious cause of the sacraments instituted by Christ during his life such that the sacraments could have been fully efficacious prior to his death. In this case the efficacy of the sacraments is not a result of God merely foreseeing the Passion, but rather a result of Christ’s actual intention to suffer on behalf of sinners. Scotus makes this point to maintain the distinction between the rites of the Old Law, which have their efficacy from the Passion of Christ as foreseen by God, and the sacraments of the New Law, which have their efficacy from Christ actually eliciting a meritorious act. According to Scotus, an action that has already been performed has more of a claim to a reward than an act merely foreseen by God. Scotus considers the idea that a greater good is conferred after

73 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* IV, d. 2, q. 1, n. 10 (Wadding 140a), “Ad secundum potest dici quod omnia Sacramenta novae legis habent a passione Christi, ut exhibita, efficaciam, non quidem in actu exteriori, sed interiori exhibitam. Ab instanti enim conceptionis Christus habuit meritum passionis, et in illo interiori actu consistit principalior ratio meriti, et ideo quidquid instituit tempore vitae suae, potuit etiam habere tunc efficaciam a passione volita perfecte ab ipso Christo, in qua volitio erat principalis oblatio, et principalis oblatio grata facta Deo. Nec potest dici, quod sic passio illa accepta fuisse ante incarnationem vel passionem, quia etsi Deus eam praepsidit, non tamen fuit oblata actu interiori, neque exteriori.”

74 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* IV, d. 2, q. 1, n. 9 (Wadding 139a & 140a), “Ex istic patet aliquid corollarium, quod suppositum fuit in quaestione de Circumcisione, quia passio Christi, cum esset causa meritoria respecti efficaciae Sacramentorum veterum, et etiam respectu gratiae collatae antiquis Patribus, tamen maiorem efficaciam habet respectu nostrorum Sacramentorum et gratiae nunc conferendae, quam tunc; quia iuste obsequium exhibitum ad bonum maius acceptatur, quam praepsum. Trinitas autem nunc confert tanquam propter passionem Christi exhibitam, etiam a nobis creditam, ut exhibitam; tunc autem contulit, ut propter eam a scipo praepsum, et ab aliis fidelibus praepreditam, ut exhibendum.”
something is actually offered is supported by common human experience. Something merely hoped for or foreseen in human affairs does not receive as full a response as does something that is actually completed.\textsuperscript{75}

Scotus does not endorse his suggestion that Christ’s intention to suffer and die on behalf of the human race is \textit{de facto} sufficient for merit. Moreover, he goes on to outline a second response to the objection, which states that the sacraments instituted during Christ’s earthly life could have their full efficacy only after Christ underwent the Passion. Scotus writes,

It could be said that the Sacraments of the New Law had a lesser efficacy during the life of Christ than they had after his Passion; and, nevertheless, it is not unfitting that they be instituted during his life because they were instituted not for that time period but for the time after his death when they would have their principal effects.\textsuperscript{76}

This view preserves the full sense of Scotus’s claim that an act as already performed leads to a greater reward than a foreseen act. Even though the sacraments of the New Law can only have their full efficacy after the Passion actually takes place, they still could have had an efficacy similar to the rites of the Old Law prior the Passion.

What is interesting about his attempt to account for the possibility that the sacraments might have some efficacy prior to the occurrence of the Passion is that he attempts to link the merit that would confer this efficacy on the sacraments in some way

\textsuperscript{75} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} IV, d. 2, q. 1, n. 9 (Wadding 140a), “Exemplum in nobis, mauis bonum conferimus propter obsequium exhibitum quam speratum.”

\textsuperscript{76} Duns Scotus, \textit{Ordinatio} IV, d. 2, q. 1, n. 10 (Wadding 140a), “Vel potest dici quod Sacramenta novae legis vivente Christo, omnia minorem habuerunt efficaciam quam post eius passionem, et tamen non fuit inconveniens, quod institueretur ipso vivente, quia erant instituta, non ut pro tunc, sed ut pro tempore post eius mortem habitura principalem efficaciam.”
to Christ’s willingness to suffer, rather than to some other possible meritorious act that he could have performed. This provides further indication that Scotus limited Christ’s meritorious activity to his Passion and death.

5.5 The Specific Rewards of Christ’s Passion and their Transmission

Christ’s merit is sufficient and efficacious for earning a number of rewards for the predestined. According to Scotus, Christ merits the first grace, penitential grace, and the opening of the door to heaven. Christ merits grace that is transmitted through the rites of the Old Law and the Sacraments of the New Law. The Passion as foreseen by God is a meritorious cause of the efficacy of the rites of the Old Law. The merit of the Passion as actually performed is a cause of the efficacy of the sacraments of the New Law.

The clearest example of the greater efficacy of Christ’s merit as something that is actually exhibited concerns the opening of the door of heaven. By this, Scotus means that Christ merits for people the possibility of entering the state of beatitude. Christ’s merit takes away all obstacles to entering into eternal life. The “door” to heaven was closed as a punishment for sin, even for those whom God elected and sanctified under the Old Law.78

77 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 24 (Vatican 34), “Quantum vero ad gloriam, dico quod meruit apertionem ianuae ut causa totalis, scilicet ut statim post passionem eius sine aliquo obstaculo pateret ingressus,—quod tamen non meruit per passionem praeviam...”

78 Duns Scotus, Ordinatio IV, d. 2, q. 1, n. 9 (Wadding 140a), “Hinc etiam apparebat quare Baptismus aperuit ianuam, non autem Circumciscio; non quidem ex parte meritorum, sed quia quantumcumque magna gratia collata fuisset in virtute passionis Christi praevisae, non conferebatur ut efficax ad finem gratiae, scilicet ad beatitudinem, nisi prius obsequium illud esset solutum; minima autem, si conferretur nunc in virtute huius obsequii iam soluti, conferretur tamen ut sufficienter disponens ad beatitudinem.”
Scotus discusses the various goods that Christ merits through his Passion by invoking a distinction between being a “total meritorious cause” and being the “principal meritorious cause.” When Christ merits something as the total cause, no effort is required on the part of the person to benefit from Christ’s merit. When Christ merits something as a principal cause, then the person must congruously merit a share in Christ’s merit. Christ merits the first grace for infants and the opening of the door to heaven as a total cause. The first grace cleanses a person from the guilt of original sin and joins one to God in a supernatural relationship. Under the Old Law the first grace was transmitted through circumcision and under the New Law it is transmitted through Baptism. Christ merits the first grace for adults as the principal cause. Adults seeking baptism congruously merit its grace through their desire to be incorporated into the body of Christ. Christ merits penitential grace for people as a principal cause, but the sinner needs to congruously merit this grace through attrition.

5.6 Conclusion

Scotus provided three ways of explaining how Christ could elicit a meritorious act. These three ways draw on the traditional distinction between Christ as a viator and a

79 Duns Scotus, *Lectura III*, d. 19, q. 1, n. 24 (Vatican 34), “Et dico quod Christus illis quibus meruit secundum efficaciam, meruit ut totalis causa meritoria primam gratiam, ita quod in hoc non cooperabantur nec modo cooperantur Christo, sed ipse tamquam totalis causa—in Lege Vetere quoad circumcisionem, et in Nova quoad baptismalem gratiam—merefatur omnibus praedestinatis tamquam causa totalis, ita quod per se non requiritur aliqua condicio a parte suscipientis talem gratiam ut meritum Christi habeat effectum suum, licet hoc requiratur de congruo in adultis.”

80 Duns Scotus, *Lectura III*, d. 19, q. 1, n. 25 (Vatican 34), “Quantum vero ad gratiam poenitentiale, meruit ut causa principalis, non tamen ut totalis causa, quia ad hoc requiritur ut voluntas nostra cooperetur merito passionis Christi, ut sic mereatur ista gratia saltem de congruo per aliquam contritionem, quam tamen meruit nobis eius passio de condigno.”
comprehensor, but are developed in light of Scotus’s doctrine of the two affections of the will and his partitioning of the soul into a higher and lower portion. Scotus goes beyond his predecessors in arguing for the possibility that Christ could merit as a comprehensor, which in Scotus’s terms means that Christ could merit by eliciting an act through his affectio iustitiae insofar as the graced will operates according to the higher portion of the soul. Though Scotus argues for this possibility, he in fact holds that Christ only merits through his suffering and death. Scotus also distinguishes his account of Christ’s merit from earlier theologians by arguing that Christ can only merit for others. For Scotus the whole purpose of Christ’s ability to merit is linked to his redemptive work on the Cross. Scotus’s way of explaining Christ’s ability to merit for others conforms perfectly to his general account of merit that was discussed in the first part of the chapter. At no point does Scotus rely on the divine identity of Christ’s person to explain why his merit leads to man’s redemption. Scotus’s commitment to straightforwardly applying his general account of merit to Christ’s redemptive work leads him to disagree with his scholastic predecessors over the sufficiency of Christ’s merit, to which we now turn.
CHAPTER 6:

THE SUFFICIENCY AND EFFICACY OF CHRIST’S REDEMPTIVE MERIT

In this chapter we will consider what Bonaventure, Peter Olivi, Richard of Middleton, and Scotus say about the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ’s merit of grace for fallen humanity. Some scholastic theologians before Scotus describe Christ’s merit of grace for others as infinite quantum ad sufficientiam. This way of talking about Christ’s merit was meant to indicate that an endless number of human beings could benefit from Christ’s merit. Among Franciscan theologians before Scotus there were two closely related ways of explaining why Christ’s merit had an inexhaustible quality. According to the first way, the infinite dignity of Christ’s person was somehow able to confer an infinite value on his meritorious acts. This is the Anselmian way of defending the infinite sufficiency of Christ’s merit. According to the second way, Christ elicits his acts differently than mere men because a divine person is acting in the case of Christ. Christ’s acts are elicited both by a human will and a divine will. This confers an infinite value on his acts.

Discussions of the infinite sufficiency of Christ’s merit give rise to questions about its efficacy. Though Christ’s merit is infinitely sufficient, it is not efficacious for all people. Christ’s merit is finite quantum ad efficaciam. The scholastics considered in this chapter offered two different explanations for the limited efficacy of Christ’s merit. According to one explanation, Christ’s merit fails to be efficacious because a person fails
to congruously merit a share in it. According to the other, it fails to be efficacious for those whom God did not predestine to share in it.

Scotus argues against the position of his scholastic predecessors on the infinite sufficiency of Christ’s merit because he does not believe that the divinity of Christ is part of the formal reason for why his death is meritorious, nor does he hold that Christ elicits his human acts in a way that is any different from mere human persons. As was established in the last chapter, Scotus consistently explains the intrinsic value of Christ’s merit based on principles of his human nature, such as his grace and free will, never having recourse to his divine nature or person. Scotus argues that Christ’s merit is sufficient just for those for whom it is efficacious. According to Scotus, God predestines a determinate number of people to beatitude and that number determines the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ’s merit.

6.1 Anselm on the Infinite Value of Christ’s Life

According to Anselm, the actions of the God-man are infinitely valuable because of the divinity of his person:

Only humanity owed this debt, but it was so great that only God could pay it; thus, there had to be one and the same being who was both God and human. For this reason it was necessary for God to assume a human being into unity of person, so that the one who in his nature owed the debt and could not repay it would be the same person as the one who could repay it….And you proved quite compellingly that this man’s life was so sublime and so precious that it could suffice to pay what was owed for the sins of the whole world, and infinitely more besides.¹

¹ Anselm, *CDH* II.18, p. 319 (Schmitt 126-7).
The human nature of the God-man is important for Anselm so that the one who makes satisfaction for sin is co-essential with those for whom the satisfaction is made. The redemptive value of his death, however, is not accounted for by the humanity of the God-man or any of its created qualities. It is the divinity of the God-man that imbues the life offered on the Cross with its infinite worth. Anselm speaks above of the infinite value of Christ’s satisfaction, not of Christ’s merit.² Anselm in fact never speaks of Christ’s merit as infinite. Yet when some scholastic theologians come to examine the magnitude of Christ’s merit, they employ the same type of reasons that Anselm uses to arrive at the magnitude of Christ’s satisfaction to explain how Christ’s merit is infinite. This extrapolation from how Anselm determines the magnitude of Christ’s satisfaction is consistent with the scholastic notion that satisfaction is a kind of merit.

6.2 St. Bonaventure

Bonaventure records the following argument for the infinitude of Christ’s merit:

Grace is as great as the merit that proceeds from it; but the merit of Christ was infinite, because it could never be exhausted, just as Anselm said. Therefore, his grace, through which he merits, seems to be infinite.³

² Though Anselm does not have a highly developed theory of merit, he maintains that Christ is worthy of receiving a reward from God because he offered satisfaction for sin. According to Anselm, Christ himself is in need of nothing and thus would not benefit from any possible reward. Yet his actions are still deserving of a reward and God will not fail to recognize this. For this reason, God gives Christ a reward that he passes on to the human race. Anselm writes, “To whom will the Son more fittingly give the fruit and the recompense of His death than to those for whose salvation He became a man?” (CDH II.19, p. 134).

³ Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 279a, “Item, tanta est gratia, quantum est meritum procedens ex ipsa; sed meritum Christi fuit infinitum, quia nullatenus potest exhauriri, et suffecisset infinitis millibus hominum, sicut dicit Anselmus: ergo gratia, per quam meruit, videtur habere immensitatem.”
According to the argument above, the magnitude of merit is correlative to the magnitude of created grace with which the meritorious act was elicited. If Christ’s merit is infinite, then so too should the grace from which it proceeds. It is noteworthy that the argument claims Anselm as an authoritative source for the position that Christ’s merit is infinite. As we have seen, Anselm never attributes infinity to Christ’s merit, only to his satisfaction.\(^4\) Bonaventure affirms the infinitude of Christ’s merit: “therefore, quantum ad sufficientiam, if there were an infinite number of men bound by original sin, they could be liberated through his Passion.”\(^5\) The infinite sufficiency of Christ’s merit, however, is not a result of Christ’s created grace.\(^6\) Bonaventure writes,

> With respect to its effect, the grace of Christ disproportionately exceeds [the grace of others] because on account of this—that that man was the Son of God—his merit was determined by the dignity of his person, from whom the work issues forth. For this reason the merit of his suffering infinitely exceeds the merits of our suffering.\(^7\)

\(^4\) Moreover, even though scholastics saw merit as a kind of satisfaction in the case of Christ, Anselm kept the two strictly separate. The reward given to the God-man benefits the human race after satisfaction for the dishonor to God has been made, and for Anselm that is the only type of satisfaction that the redeemer needs to make.

\(^5\) Bonaventure, III Sent. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 279b, “Et ideo quantum ad sufficientiam, si infinita milla hominum essent reatu originalis astricta, per illius passionis effectum potuissent esse liberata.”

\(^6\) Bonaventure holds that in itself Christ’s grace is finite, just like any other created entity. Yet, when compared to the grace of mere men, it is infinite. It is infinite in this sense because its effects (making the human soul suitable for the hypostatic union) immeasurably outstrips the effects that are possible for the grace bestowed on mere men. Nevertheless, Bonaventure does rely on this point to support his claim that Christ’s merit is infinite quantum ad sufficientiam. Bonaventure, III Sent. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 279b, “Si igitur loquamur de gratia Christo collata, secundum quod est singularis persona, in se; sic, cum dicat donum creatum, necessario circa creaturam potius dicit complementum quam imperfectionem.” Bonaventure, III Sent. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 279b, “Si autem loquamur de ipsa in comparatione ad gratias aliorum hominum; sic improportionabiliter excedit ratione unionis ad personam Verbi, ad quam unionem gratia illa disposit animam Christi.”

\(^7\) Bonaventure, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 279b, “Quantum ad effectum similiter improportionabiliter excedit gratia Christi: quia propter hoc, quod ille homo erat Dei Filius, meritum illius pensatur secundum dignitatem illius personae, a qua exit opus; et propterea meritum passionis suae in infinitum excedit merita passionum nostrarum.”
Christ’s merit is infinite because of the dignity of his divine person. Bonaventure explicitly denies that Christ’s created grace is able to make his merit infinite *quantum ad sufficientiam*, when he responds to the objection set out above:

To the objection that the merit of Christ is infinite, it must be said that the infinity of his merit arises from the union of his soul to the divine person—from which union, not only a man, but also God, is said to die—on account of which his merit is infinite, *not by reason of the created grace in itself*, but by reason of the infinite dignity of the Person. This is what Anselm wished to say, when he says, that it is necessary that the one who makes satisfaction be God and man.\(^8\)

Yet it is not clear how Bonaventure combines this account of the sufficiency of Christ’s merit with his claim that Christ’s created grace makes him a meritorious cause of grace for others. As we saw in chapter 3, Bonaventure held that the powers and gifts of Christ’s human nature made him a dispositive or meritorious cause of grace for others. This is how Christ is head of the Church according to his human nature. When he discussed Christ’s headship, he did not claim that Christ’s divinity partly accounted for why he could be a meritorious cause of grace in others. Yet he relies precisely on this aspect of Christ in order to explain how his Passion could be merit enough grace that an endless number of people could partake of it. This tension arises from not fully harmonizing the Anselmian analysis of Christ’s redemptive work with the thirteenth-century notion that Christ’s created grace explains how he can merit grace for others.

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\(^8\) Bonaventure, *III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 280a-b*, “Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod meritum Christi est infinitum; dicendum, quod infinitas meriti consurgit ex unione illius animae ad personam divinam—ob quam unionem non tantum homo, sed etiam Deus mori dicitur—propter quod meritum illud est infinitum, non ratione gratiae creatae in se, sed ratione infinitae dignitatis personae. Unde et hoc vult Anselmus dicere, cum dicit, quod oportuerit illum qui satisfacere posset, esse Deum et hominem.”
6.3 Peter Olivi

In his *Questiones de Merito Christi Redemptoris*, Peter Olivi considers how Christ’s Passion merits human redemption. Olivi begins with an objection to the very possibility that Christ is able to merit anything, much less merit an infinite reward. Olivi writes,

Persons merit rather than natures. For it is not said that a hand giving alms merits something, but rather the person who does this [merits]. But the person of Christ cannot merit anything either according to itself or by reason of it. Therefore, etc.

According to this argument, Christ cannot merit because he is a divine person. God himself cannot merit because he has no need or possibility of gaining anything whether by merit or some other means. Olivi replies to this by saying that persons are said to merit because they are the one’s performing meritorious acts. Nevertheless, persons as such are not the habitual principles of meritorious acts. Presumably, created grace is the habitual principle that Olivi has in mind. Certain created principles of the nature assumed by the

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10 Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione*, q. 2, p. 91, the following is one of the objections but Olivi accepts the major premise: “Item, mereri est personae potius quam naturae: non enim dicitur quod manus dans eleemosynam hoc meruit, sed persona quae hoc dedit. Sed Christi persona nihil secundum se aut ratione sui poterat mereri: ergo etc.”

11 Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione*, q. 2, p. 123, replying to one of the initial objections that held that God himself can merit something: “Ad secundum dicendum quod non est simile de Deo inquantum homo et de eodem inquantum Deus. Deus enim inquantum Deus non potest in se aliquem actum meritorium de nove facere, nec aliquem habitum meritorium de novo acquirere; non etiam est ordinabilis ad aliquod praemium in se formaliter susciendum. Deus tamen inquantum homo seu ratione naturae humane potest ista. Propter quod non est simile.”

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Logos allow Christ to perform acts that are formally meritorious.\textsuperscript{12} Christ merits not insofar as he is a divine person, but insofar as he has a human nature with certain powers and gifts. Nevertheless, Olivi goes on to explain the infinite magnitude of Christ’s merit in terms of his person in that his created acts take their value from being the created acts of a divine person.

Olivi argues that something finite can be called infinite, if it has a relation to something infinite. He calls this “relative infinity” in order to distinguish it from something that is absolutely infinite.\textsuperscript{13} Nothing that is “relatively infinite” is intrinsically infinite, even if it can in some way be called infinite. Christ’s meritorious acts are infinite in two different senses because of two relations they bear to something infinite: one to the person of the Word, the other to the reward that it is owed.\textsuperscript{14} The first relation explains the second: that the human acts of Christ bear this relation to the Logos explains why they are able to bear a relation to such a great reward.

The divine person of the Word is the ultimate subject of Christ’s actions.\textsuperscript{15} This subject has infinite dignity that can augment the value of his human actions. Olivi writes,

\begin{quote}
Peter Olivi’s response to this argument to the argument quoted above from p. 91 is on p. 133, “Ad quantum dicendum quod, licet mereri sit personae tamquam suppositi actuum meritoriorum, non tamen tamquam habitualis principii ipsorum, nec sic quod ipsa persona sit formalis essentia ipsius meriti. Licet etiam mereri competat Christo homini ratione personae, non tamen nisi inquantum est persona talis naturae assumptae et meritoriorum operum naturae assumptae.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Peter Olivi speaks of “relative infinity” in many places. Consider the following, which, although taken from the first part of an objection, is not a premise that Olivi rejects in his reply (p. 94): “Item, constat quod meritum Christi non habet infinitatem absolutam; sed si habet, habet relativam, ratione scilicet personae cuius eius.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Peter Olivi, \textit{Questiones de Incarnatione et Redempzione}, q. 2, p. 104, “Si enim in ceteris dignitas et sanctitas personae est notabilissima circumstantial seu ratio meritorium—unde unus actus humiliotionis in persona regia aut in persona innocentissima est longe laudabilior et grandi praemio dignior quam in persona servili et impia—mirabile esset quod in Christo homine haec ratio esset exclusa.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Peter Olivi, \textit{Questiones de Incarnatione et Redempzione}, q. 2, p. 103, “Primus autem modus non dicit solum respectum creatum naturae respectum creatum naturae humanae et suae gratiae ad personam
\end{quote}
“although we admire the humiliations of Christ even up to death, we are astonished above all that so great a person willed to suffer something so tremendous.”

In another place, Olivi asks rhetorically: “With respect to Christ’s human acts, what does God value more, that they are the acts of the only begotten God or that they are the acts of his sanctified human soul?”

It is clearly the former, for Olivi. The great value of Christ’s redemptive acts derives from his divine person, not the sanctity of his human soul. Although the Logos himself cannot merit anything, the Logos can merit through his human nature and in this case it is not irrelevant—indeed it is the most significant factor contributing to its great value—that the person meriting is a divine person.

According to Olivi, judging the value of Christ’s acts on the basis of his person conforms to our normal practice: “If in other cases the dignity and sanctity of the person is…a basis of merit…it would be astonishing that this basis would be excluded in the case of Christ.”

Referring to the dignity of the agent is not a standard way of determining the value of meritorious actions in scholastic theology, which relies on created grace for determining the magnitude or value of merit. Olivi’s reliance on the dignity of the person to determine the magnitude of merit, however, can be traced to Cur...
Deus Homo. In making the aforementioned claim, Olivi cites Cur Deus Homo II.14 where Anselm argues that one should prefer to be guilty of all sins that have been or will be committed instead of knowingly harming Christ because a sin against his person is greater than all other sins combined.\textsuperscript{19} According to Olivi, the dignity of Christ’s person determines how grave a sin against him is just as it determines how meritorious any of his acts will be.

Thus far, Olivi has been explaining the magnitude of Christ’s merit and argued that it is infinite because of the infinity of his person. Now he turns to the reward given to Christ’s merit, which also bears a relation to something infinite. The reward in question is the reward of eternal life that is given to some members of the human race in virtue of Christ’s merit. Olivi compares the infinitude of Christ’s merit in this sense to the infinitude that some theologians attribute to sin. Just as an offense against God is not intrinsically infinite, neither is the reward given for Christ’s merit. Instead human sin and Christ’s merit (both intrinsically finite things) bear a relation to an infinite good: sin turns one away from an infinite good, while Christ’s merits can turn someone towards an infinite good, but it does this through granting created grace to sinners, which is not intrinsically infinite.\textsuperscript{20}

Perhaps accounting for the value of merit in relational terms is not sufficient to distinguish the merit of Christ from the merit of other people. One might claim that the

\textsuperscript{19} Olivi cites this passage from CDH on pp. 104-05. Olivi, and all medieval authors, cite this passage from CDH as chapter 13, but it is chapter 14 the modern critical edition.

\textsuperscript{20} Peter Olivi, Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione, q. 2, p. 105, “Secundus etiam modus habet relationem infinitam, id est ‘ad infinitum’: sicut enim Dei offensa non habet essentiam infinitiam, nec fundatur in essentia infinita, sed tamen est pro tanto infinita, quia infinitum bonum offendid et quia est digna poena infinita: sic meritum Christi est pro tanto infinitum, quia est dignum acceptatione et remuneratione infinita.”
merit of any person in a state of grace bears a relation to something infinite, and thus the merit of Christ is of no greater value than that of any holy person. By comparing what Olivi writes about the merit of Christ to the merit of a saint, the fundamental importance that Olivi attaches to the role of Christ’s personhood in conferring value on Christ’s actions becomes visible in a new way.\(^2\) Olivi admits that the merit of Christ and the merit of a saint each bear a relation to something that is infinite, namely God. Although both Christ and a saint bear a relation to the infinite God, these relations are not of the same order. In the case of a saint, the foundation for this relation does not lie in the very person of the one who is meriting. Christ’s human nature, through which he merits, is united to God in the very person of the Word whereas other men are united to God through created grace alone, not hypostatic union.\(^2\)

If Christ earns a reward for the human race, which is sufficient for the redemption of all, then we must ask why not all people benefit from it.\(^2\) Olivi explains the limited efficacy of Christ’s merit through looking at what occurs in predestination. Olivi holds that Christ merits grace and its conservation for men, not in every case, but only for those

\(^{2}\) Peter Olivi considers this objection in *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione* q. 2, p. 94: “Item, constat quod meritum Christi non habet infinitatem absolutem; sed si habet, habet relativam, ratione scilicet personae cuius eius. Sed ex hoc non debet poni maius merito sanctorum: quia eadem ratione illa habent infinitatem relativam, quia sunt a Deo infinito ut a principio et sunt ad Deum ut ad objectum.”

\(^{2}\) Peter Olivi offers an example of what he takes to be a case of unequal infinities in order to provide a parallel for his claim that the merit of Christ is a greater infinite than the merit of any other person. An infinite surface in length and width is greater than an infinite line because the former contains an infinite number of lines. Christ’s merit contains within it all the grace and merit that is distributed to individual saints. Olivi, p. 106, “Non etiam mireris, si in his quae sunt diversorum generum aut rationum, potest unum infinitum esse maius altero quia superficies infinita secundum longum et latum est infinitates infinitior quacumque linea infinita, quoniam in ea sunt infinitae tales lineae, et ultra hoc est in ea infinita latitudo.” Olivi, see also p. 94 n. 6 and p. 141.

\(^{2}\) Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione*, q. 2, p. 93, “Item, quicumque meretur alteri gloriam vel quodcumque aliud, facit quod ille habeat ius meriti in Gloria illa, ita quod ex tunc potest de iure petere illam. Ergo tunc, quando Christus hoc meruit, habuissent hoc omnes electi, et etiam dammandi; quod non est dare.”

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whom God predestined to benefit from it. Merit—whether that of Christ or of mere men—is an effect of predestination, not its cause. According to Olivi, Christ’s merit is willed prior to any grace that God wills for any human person. God wills Christ’s merit to be the source of our grace and for this reason it must be willed prior to willing grace or glory for any other man. It is only through being predestined to partake of Christ’s foreseen merits that any person can receive beatitude. Olivi writes,

God did not will or predestine that a fallen person would receive any grace without first understanding that he willed and predestined that [the Word] become incarnate as a man and our redeemer.

Although the rewards of the Passion could have been communicated to all people, they are not. As a result, the efficacy of Christ’s merit is finite.

24 Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione* q. 2, p. 136, “Ad tertium dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, Christus non meruit nobis gratiam vel eius conservationem in omnem eventum, sed solum secundum beneplacitum suum et iuxta ordinem praedestinationis suae.”

25 See Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione*, q. 2, p. 114, section VI.

26 Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione*, q. 2, p. 114, “Deus autem nullam gratiam voluit aut praedestinavit fieri homini lapso, nisi praeposito et praenuncio quod voluit et praedestinavit se fieri hominem et redemptorem nostrum.” Olivi, p. 109-110, on how Christ’s merit is communicated to us: “Sub ratione quidem causali tripliciter. Primo quidem, quia, sicut dictum est, Dei voluntas non fertur super nos ut causa effective nostrae iustificationis, nisi ut praeposito et quasi subiuncto merito Christi. Ex quo oportet quod Dei voluntas prius quodammodo applicet illud nobis, illud scilicet actualiter ordinando ad nos. Quae quidem ordinatio non oportet quod aliud ponat in re quam ponat volitum inquantum volitum, aut significatio signi voluntarii, quae, inquantum talia, in sola voluntate et intentione ordinantis aliquid ponunt. Praeter hoc tamen ordinatio ponit aliquid in voluntate et intentione animae Christi, volentis hoc nobis sub praedicta ratione dari. Secundo, quia formalis gratia et Gloria Christi in omni hierarchia et hierarchico ministerio et influxu tenet principatun; et ideo eius est per media usque ad infima omnes hierarchice reducere in Deum et ministerialiter derivare dona Dei in omnes, prout in libris *De angelica et Ecclesiastica hierarchia* habet tradi…Tertio, tamquam promerens in dono gratiae, quod promeruit; et hoc modo participatur in omnibus influxibus gratiarum tamquam in donis promeritis et impetratis.”

27 Peter Olivi, *Questiones de Incarnatione et Redemptione*, q. 2, p. 139, “Ad tertium dicendum quod aliud est meritem Christi prout est in Christo, annullare, et aliud annullare illud sibi ipsi. Licet etiam per nos non positi tolli, quin meritem Christi, quantum est de se, sit pro omnibus nobis sufficiens et quin ex Christi voluntate antecedenti seu conditionali fuerit ad nostram salutem ordinatum, nihilominus per nos potest fieri quod de facto nobis non communicetur, aut quod illud iam communicatum amittamus.”
6.4 Richard of Middleton

While discussing whether Christ can merit the glory of his body, Richard of Middleton explicitly states criteria that Christ must meet in order to be able to perform meritorious acts. He writes,

Three things are required for someone to merit something: [1] he must be in a state in which he can merit, [2] he must perform an act worthy of the reward which he merits, and [3] the thing must be something that can be merited.”

Christ satisfies the first criterion by being a viator. Christ is able to meet the second criterion “because all of his acts were formed by perfect charity.” Finally, the bodily goods that attend beatitude are something that can be merited.

The three criteria set that Richard sets out are standard scholastic criteria for meritorious activity. While these criteria are sufficient for explaining how Christ merits for himself, Richard does not deem them sufficient for explaining every aspect of Christ’s merit for others. As was the case with Bonaventure and Peter Olivi, Richard of Middleton will go beyond these criteria when explaining the sufficiency of Christ’s redemptive merit.

Richard claims that although Christ’s grace is essentially finite, it is infinite in one respect. It is infinite with respect to its potential effects. Richard writes,

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28 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 18, art. 2, q. 2, pp. 192b-193a, “…quod aliquis rem aliquam mereatur, non requiruntur nisi tria, scilicet, quod ille sit in statu in quo sibi possit mereri, et quod aciat actum dignum tanto praemi, sicut est illa res, quam meretur, et quod illa res nata sit cadre sub merito illius.”

29 Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 18, art. 2, q. 2, p. 193a, “…quia omnes actus eius fuerunt perfectissima charitate formati.”
[the grace of Christ] is in one way infinite with respect to its effect, inasmuch as the merit of Christ proceeding from it was sufficient for the redemption of an infinite number of men were there to be that many.\(^{30}\)

Even though Christ’s meritorious acts are formed by perfect charity or created grace, Richard denies that this explains the infinite sufficiency of his merit.\(^{31}\) He writes, “the merit of Christ is not weighed only according to the nobility of his created grace, which is finite, but also according to the nobility of the person acting, who is infinite.”\(^{32}\)

In another place, Richard of Middleton combines Anselmian considerations about Christ’s merit with the scholastic emphasis on the role of free will in eliciting meritorious acts. He writes,

Although the passion of Christ was finite intensively and extensively with respect to the nature in which Christ was suffering…nevertheless, the one who was suffering was not only man but also God. Although he did not suffer according to his divine nature, nevertheless the suffering was not only accepted by the human

\(^{30}\) Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 13, art. 1, q. 2, p. 119a, “Est etiam aliquo modo infinita quantum ad effectum, inquantum meritum Christi per eam procedens sufficiens fuit ad redemptionem hominum infinitorum sit tot essent.”

\(^{31}\) Richard of Middleton, III Sent. d. 19, art. 1, q. 1, p. 199a-b, “Quinto autem modo per passionem Christi liberati sumus ab omni culpa quantum ad sufficientiam. Christus enim per suam passionem omnibus nobis sufficienter meruit merito condigni omnium peccatorum remissionem, quod patet per hoc, quod in ultima questione praecedentis distinctios declaratum est, scilicet quod Christus per suam passionem nobis sufficienter meruit merito condigni, primam gratiam gratum facientem. Unde haec quaestio multum est illi questioni vicina quamvis autem per passionem Christi liberati sumus ab omni culpa, quantum ad sufficientiam.” Cf. III Sent. d. 18, art. 2, q. 4, p. 195a, “…Christus per suam passionem nobis omnibus meruit primam gratiam gratum facientem, quantum ad sufficientiam…”

\(^{32}\) Richard of Middleton, III Sent. 13, art. 1, q. 2, ad. 3, p. 119b, “Ad tertium dicendum quod meritum Christi non tamen ponderatur secundum nobiletem gratiae creatae, quae finita est, sed etiam nobiletem gratiae creatae, quae finita est, sed etiam secundum nobiletem personae agentis, quae infinita est.” cf. Richard of Middleton, III, d. 18, art. 2, q. 4, p. 195a, “Quamvis enin nullus purus homo, nec sibi, nec alii unquam merito condigni mereri potuerit primam gratiam gratum facientem: Christus tamen eam nobis meruit merito condigni…Non enim homo erat solum, sed etiam Deus…propter enim dignitatem patientis sua passio condigna fuit saitafactio pro omnibus peccatis nostris. Condigna autem satisfactio meretur merito condigni remissionem peccati…”
will of Christ, but also by the divine will of Christ, which is infinite. Therefore, the merit of that suffering had infinite power in a certain respect.\(^{33}\)

One criterion for merit is that a meritorious act must be elicited freely. The way that Christ satisfies this criterion is different from the way mere men do. Christ’s merit is infinite because his actions are not willed merely by a finite will, but also by an infinite will.

Richard of Middleton presents a different explanation for the limited efficacy of Christ’s merit than Peter Olivi. Richard refers to the canon of the Mass as confirmation that not all people will benefit from Christ’s merit:

not all receive the efficacy of his merit because of the indisposition of many; and, therefore, it is said in the canon of the Mass about the blood of Christ, that it ‘is poured out for us and for many.’\(^{34}\)

This indisposition is the result of human failure, not divine predestination. People have the power to congruously dispose themselves for the first grace that Christ condignly merits for them, but not all people do this.\(^{35}\) Christ’s merit has only a finite efficacy

\(^{33}\) Richard of Middleton, *III Sent. d. 19*, art. 1, q. 3, p. 201a, “Ad primum in oppositum dicendum quod quamvis passio Christi fuerit finita intensive et extensive inquantum natura, secundum quam Christus patiebatur, erat res finita, tamen quia ille qui patiebatur, non tantum erat homo, sed etiam quamvis non pateretur secundum naturam divinam, nec tantum acceptabatur illa passio a voluntate Christi humana, quae finita est, sed etiam a voluntate eius divina, quae est infinita, ideo meritum illius passionis virtutem secundum respectum aliquem habuit infinitam.” At one point Richard quotes from the Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* Book III, chapter 15. Richard writes, “Quamvis enim nullus purus homo, nec sibi, nec ali unquam merito condigni mereri potuerit primam gratiam gratum facientem: Christus tamen eam nobis meruit merito condigni, quia secundum Damas. lib 3 c. 15 super hominem, quae sunt hominum agebat et parum post natura humana enim agebat humana” (III, d. 18, art. 2, q. 3 p. 195a).

\(^{34}\) Richard of Middleton, *III Sent. d. 19*, art. 1, q. 1, p. 199, “...non tamen omnes recipiunt istius meriti efficaciam propter multorum indispositionem et ideo in canone missae dicitur de sanguine Christi, quod pro nobis et pro multis effundetur...”

\(^{35}\) Richard of Middleton, *III Sent. d. 18*, art. 2, q. 4, p. 195, “Ad secundum autem rationem dici potest, quod meritum Christi quantum ad primae gratae gratum facientis infusionem attingit omnes illos, qui disponunt se quantum in ipsis est, ad hoc, ut Christo per gratiamconiungantur.”
because people fail to remove impediments that prevent them from receiving a share in Christ’s merit.  

6.5 Scotus’s Critique of Earlier Accounts of the Sufficiency and Efficacy of Christ’s Merit

Scotus presents a compressed description of two arguments supporting the conclusion that Christ’s merit was infinite quantum ad sufficientiam. Scotus writes,

[1]...they say that the merit of Christ had a certain infinity from the supposit of the Word, which was eliciting the operations of the assumed nature… and, therefore, the operations of that supposit were an infinite good. On account of this, his Passion and death and other operations had a certain infinity so that they could suffice for destroying sin and granting grace and glory to an infinite number of people. [2] Similarly, merit is determined according to the dignity of the person meriting, who is infinite. Therefore, he infinitely merits in such a way that according to sufficiency he satisfies for all men.

According to the first argument, the value of Christ’s merit is determined by the way that his divine will elicits his human acts. This is similar to one of Richard of Middleton’s explanations for the infinite sufficiency of Christ’s merit. According to the second

36 Richard of Middleton III Sent. d. 19, art. 1, q. 3, p. 200, “…dico, quod omnes homines per meritem passionis Christi liberati sunt a poena aeterna, quantum ad sufficientiam, non tamen quantum ad efficientiam, quia nullus de illis, qui iam habet aeterna poena in actu, potest se disponere ad recipiendum efficaciam meritis passionis Christi, quia omnes illi in sua mailita obstinate sunt, et ideo nullus de illis meritis passionis Christi recipit efficaciam.” And on p. 201, “Sed omnes illi qui se disponunt ad recipiendum meriti passionis Christi efficaciam, per illam passionem a reatu poneae aeternae absoluuntur.”

37 Duns Scotus, Lectura III d. 19, q. 1, n. 9, (Vatican 27-8), “…dicunt quod meritem Christi habuit infinitatem quandam ex supposito Verbi, quod eliciebat et exercebatur operations huui naturae assumptae, quia eliciebat operations omnes et actus convenientes utrique naturae, et ideo—virtute illius suppositi—et operationes illius suppositi fuerunt bonum infinitum: et sic mors et passio et aliae operations habuerunt infinitatem quandam, ut sufficerent pro infinitis peccatis delendis, et gratis et gloriis conferendis. Similiter, meritem pensatur secundum dignitatem personae merentis, quae est et fuit infinita; ergo infinite merebatur, et sic quantum ad sufficientiam satisfecit pro omnibus.” n.b., Scotus in the last sentence slides from talking about Christ’s merit to his satisfaction.
argument, the value of Christ’s merit is taken from the dignity of the person who merits.

The second argument is a reflection of how Anselm argued for the infinite value of
Christ’s satisfaction. This way of thinking about Christ’s merit is directly in line with
many thirteenth-century theologians, such as Bonaventure and Peter Olivi as well as
Richard of Middleton.

Scotus describes claims about the infinitude of Christ’s merit as “hyperbolic.”

Each of his arguments against his predecessors takes the form of a reductio ad absurdum.
Scotus begins by criticizing the second argument for the infinity of Christ’s merit. The
person of the Word is formally infinite. If Christ’s meritorious acts take their value from
the dignity of his person, then they too will be formally infinite. This, however, is
absurd because no created act or reward can be formally infinite. Scotus also argues that
any attempt to determine the value of Christ’s human acts on the basis of his Person
implies that something created is as valued by God as something uncreated. Scotus
writes,

it follows that if the person of Christ is as acceptable to the Trinity as his person is
worthy of love, then what the assumed nature wills is as worthy of love as what
the uncreated will of the Word wills, but this is to say nothing, because it posits
that something created is as worthy of love as something uncreated!40

38 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 12 (Vatican 29), “…Contra hunc modum dicendi arguo, quia dicta ista quibus dicitur quod vita Christi fuit ita excellens ut haberet quamdam infinitatem etc., talia enim dicta videntur hyperbolica et exponenda.”

39 Duns Scotus, Lectura III d. 19, q. 1, n. 13 (Vatican 29), “Si bonum velle Christi tantum fuit acceptatum quantum erat persona Verbi, tunc cum persona illa simpliciter sit infinita, infinite fuit bonum velle eius acceptatum; sed cum Deus non acceptet aliquid nisi quantum habet de aceptabilitate, sequitur quod bonum velle illius naturae ratione suppositi habuit infinitum rationem acceptabilitatis…”

40 Duns Scotus, Lectura III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 13 (Vatican 29-30), “Et ultra sequitur quod si persona Christi tantum acceptetur a Trinitate quantum persona eius diligentur, tantum diligeret velle naturae
As we have seen some of Scotus’s predecessors did claim that Christ’s merit was infinite *quantum ad sufficientiam* because of the infinite dignity of his Person. Nevertheless, Scotus’s arguments against the infinity of Christ’s merit might not seem to do justice to the more limited conclusion that his predecessors were trying to defend. Perhaps these earlier theologians held that Christ’s merit was infinite extensively, not intrinsically. In other words, perhaps, they only claimed that it was infinite in the sense that an endless number (an extensively infinite number) could benefit from it. This is certainly one aspect of their teaching on the sufficiency of Christ’s merit. Yet their way of explaining how Christ’s merit had this highly qualified sense of infinitude relied on invoking the unqualified infinity of the Person of Christ. In this case, Scotus offers a fair criticism of how his interlocutors defend the infinitude of Christ’s merit.

Nevertheless, Scotus does not hold that it would be impossible for God to count the personhood of Christ among the factors that determine the value of his merit. In fact, according to Scotus, the only way that Christ’s merit could be infinite *quantum ad sufficientiam* would be to do just this.\(^41\) Scotus writes,

> Because of some condition on the part of the Person meriting—which is not formally a condition of a meritorious act—[God] could accept his merit as sufficient for an infinite number; and in this way, the merit of Christ was something quasi-infinite, but not formally infinite, but infinitely acceptable because it would be for an infinite number—which would not be the case, if he

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\(^41\) Something has meritorious goodness to the extent that God accepts it to be a good of a certain degree. Scotus writes, “*cum nullus actus finitus formaliter habeat rationem meriti nisi a voluntate divina acceptante*” (*Lectura*, III.19, n. 23, pp. 33-34). Given that the ultimate foundation of merit is in the divine will, we might expect Scotus to say that Christ’s human actions could have been given an extensively infinite reward, but he does not argue for this.
were a mere man, because [God] would accept [the act as] infinite because of the infinity of the Person meriting.42

The position that Scotus expresses here brings him closer to the position of his predecessors. Yet important differences remain. Scotus understands his predecessors to consider the dignity of Christ’s person as part of the formal reason for why his acts were meritorious. For Scotus, however, the dignity of Christ’s person is not part of why his act is meritorious, but that the one who merits is the Logos serves as a condition surrounding the act that can be a basis for rewarding the act with something that is not even proportionate—much less equal—to the inherent value of the meritorious act that comes from satisfying the formal conditions for a meritorious act (namely, acting through free-will and grace).43

Now we turn to Scotus’s response to the first argument that he set out for the infinitude of Christ’s merit. The hypostatic union, according to Richard of Middleton, alters the way that Christ elicits his human acts and imbues them with greater worth as a result. Scotus eventually calls this position into question, but for the moment he is willing to grant that the divine will of the Word does have a unique causal relation to the assumed will. On Scotus’s interpretation of Richard’s view, the divine and created will of

42 Duns Scotus, Lectura, III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 23 (Vatican 34), “pro aliqua condicione personae merentis—quae non est formaliter condicio acuts merendi—potest acceptare illud meritum tamquam sufficiens pro infinitis; et sic meruit Christi fuit quasi infinitum, non tamen formaliter infinitum, sed ut infinite acceptatum, quia pro infinitis—quod non fuisset si fuisset purus homo, quia infinitum acceptavit propter infinitatem personae merentis.”

43 See also what Scotus writes in his reply to the fourth objection: “Ad quartum dicendum quod si praemium passionis Christi debuit retribui secundum iustitiam commutativam, non posset tunc nisi bonum finitum retribui, et sic non posset mereri pro infinitis. Sed quia Deus retribuit secundum iustitiam distributivam, considerando condiciones non tantum formales ex parte actus merendi, sed ex parte agentis, ideo potuit acceptari passio Christi—quae erat actus meritorius finites—ad praemium infinitum, propter dilectionem et acceptationem personae merentis” (Lectura III, d. 19).
the Word are co-causes of his meritorious acts. It might seem that having the divine will as a co-cause could confer an infinite intensity on his acts and make his acts worthy of an infinite reward. Scotus argues, however, that these two co-causes would not be sufficient for attributing infinity to Christ’s merit because no act that essentially depends upon a finite cause can be infinite. An infinite cause and a finite cause acting together can only produce a finite effect.\textsuperscript{44} As we learned in the last chapter, Scotus holds that a meritorious act is more “intense” than an act that is substantially the same. The divine will cooperating with the will of Christ, however, does not increase the intensity of his acts to such an extent that they become infinitely meritorious.

Scotus in fact denies that the person of the Word or his will causes the human acts of Christ in any unique way.\textsuperscript{45} Scotus’s way of describing the relation between the assumed and divine wills of Christ relies on the doctrine of the undivided operations of the Trinity \textit{ad extra}. The doctrine of the inseparable operations is drawn from the belief that the attributes of the divine nature are common to each person. For instance, when the Trinity brings about effects in the world, all three Persons act in accordance with the power of the one will that is common to each of them.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, all three Persons are equally responsible for all actions \textit{ad extra}. The divine will of Christ was related to his created will in the same fashion that all secondary causes are related to the primary cause.

\textsuperscript{44} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III, d. 19, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 30), “Et si detur quod Verbum habuit specialem efficientiam super actum illum, adhuc probo quod actus non sit formaliter infinitus nec infinite acceptatus, quia actus formaliter infinitus et infinite acceptatus non potest essentialement dependere ab aliquo, scilicet creato, et hoc—principiis finites in perfections—cum causalitate infinita coagente.”

\textsuperscript{45} Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III d. 19, q.1, n. 15 (Vatican 30), “nec habuit Verbum aliquam causalitatem super illud velle quam non habuit tota Trinitas.”

Just as our acts are finite even though they have the divine will as their primary cause, so too the acts of Christ are finite.

Although Scotus denies that the Word has any special causal efficacy over the assumed will, he holds that the hypostatic union permits Christ’s human acts to be predicated of the Word in a way that they cannot be predicated of the other persons of the Trinity. Scotus writes, “because [the Word] subsists in [a human] nature, he is therefore denominatively said to elicit and will the acts [of the assumed nature].” The only principles of Christ’s meritorious acts, however, are his created will and created grace. Both of these are finite principles, even when considered in relation to their divine supposit and its divine will.

The only difference between Christ’s human acts and the human acts of mere men is that Christ’s human acts are elicited in accord with the highest grade of grace. It is this—not the divine person of the Word or the divine will—that accounts for their having more merit than the actions of other men.

In addition to taking into account the arguments of his predecessors regarding the sufficiency of Christ’s redemptive merit, Scotus considers one thirteenth-century argument about its limited efficacy. The argument he considers is similar to one that

47 Duns Scotus, Lectura III d. 17, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 427), “sed quia subsistit in illa natura, ideo dicitur denominative illum actum elicere et illo actu velle.”

48 Duns Scotus, Lectura III d. 19, q. 1, n. 15 (Vatican 30), “in per se principio huius velle, et in omnibus quae concurrunt ad rationem illius principii, est finitas ( nisi in Verbo), quia gratia et voluntas eius finitae sunt, etiam si sumantur cum omnibus et quibuscumque respectibus ad Verbum; ergo et velle formaliter fuit finitum et limitatum, et per consequens finite acceptatum.”

49 Having the highest created grace accounts for this from the perspective of the person acting; of course, from the divine perspective of predestination, the ultimate reason for Christ merits our redemption is that God will to accept the death of Christ as meritorious of grace for those whom God predestined to beatitude.
Richard of Middleton espoused. Richard claimed that Christ’s merit was efficacious for those who congruously earned its benefits. According to Scotus, Richard’s position does not do justice to the priority of Christ’s merit to human effort to partake of the reward Christ earned through his suffering and death. Christ does not primarily merit grace for others who are already joined to him in some way, even through the weak connection of congruous merit. According to Scotus, the grace that Christ merits for others is able to lead people who are not yet united to him to become united to him through the reception of the first grace, given in baptism, apart from any kind of merit or effort on the part of the recipient.\footnote{Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III d. 19, q. 1, n. 17 (Vatican 31), “oportet ergo dicere quod meruit nobis gratiam primam, qua coniuncti essemus sibi: ergo meruit ut ‘non coniuncti sibi’ coniungerentur ei,--et in hoc potissime consistebat meritum eius. Non ergo solum meruit ut ‘coniuncti sibi’ ulterius cooperarentur et sic glorificarentur tandem, sed meruit ut ‘non uniti’ unirentur (etiam qui numquam disposuerant se).”}

For Scotus, the merit of Christ’s Passion consists mainly in granting grace to people completely separated from God and secondarily it relates to the ongoing activity of God in the life of someone who has received the first grace. As Scotus writes, Christ “merits the first baptismal grace for me more than he merits any work following afterwards from that grace.”\footnote{Duns Scotus, \textit{Lectura} III d. 19, q. 1, n. 17 (Vatican 31), “unde magis meruit mihi gratiam primam baptismalem quam quodcumque opus sequens postea ex gratia.”} In one case, however, Scotus will accept that a person can congruously merit the first grace that Christ condignly merits for us. This is the case of an adult who seeks baptism. Yet even in this case, Scotus holds that the person seeks baptism ultimately as a result of predestination rather than merely individual initiative.

Scotus does not present Olivi’s position on the efficacy of Christ’s merit, but his own
account of the efficacy of Christ’s merit is similar to Olivi’s way of construing its limited efficacy, as we shall see.

6.6 Scotus’s Account of the Efficacy and Sufficiency of Christ’s Merit

When Scotus articulates his own account of Christ’s redemptive merit he begins by first treating its efficacy before turning to its sufficiency. Peter Olivi explained the limited efficacy of Christ’s merit in terms of predestination rather than relying on the failure of certain people to congruously merit a share in Christ’s merit. Scotus follows a similar approach, but his explanation of the efficacy of Christ’s merit is based on a different understanding of the order in which God wills certain things in his eternal act of predestination. According to Scotus, God wills in an orderly fashion, and this involves (1) willing the end before the means and (2) willing greater goods before lesser goods. 52 Scotus divides God’s act of predestination into “instants of nature” that allow him to set out the logical order in which God wills the various goods that constitute the major points in the process of predestination.

52 On the orderly willing of God see: Lectura III d. 19 (Vatican 32); see also the following: Ordinatio I, d. 17 n. 102; Ord. I d.41 nn. 24-27; Ord. II d. 20 n. 22. Scotus is explicit about the first condition for orderly willing but does not explicitly mention the second. I follow Richard Cross in holding that willing greater goods before lesser goods (the second condition) plays an important role in how Scotus understands the order of the different logical moments in God’s eternal act of predestination. See Cross, Duns Scotus (Oxford, 1999), p. 128. Richard Cross does not provide any textual warrant for this second condition. Though Scotus is not explicit about the second condition, I believe that it can legitimately be inferred from something he says about Christ’s predestination. According to Scotus, God wills the glory of Christ’s soul before willing glory for any other soul because Christ’s glory is a greater good than the glory of other human beings. In Ordinatio III, d. 7, q. 3 (Vatican 287), Scotus writes, “…universaliter enim, ordinate volens prius videtur velle hoc quod est fini propinquius, et ita, sicut prius vult gloriam alicui quam gratiam, ita etiam inter praedestinatos—quibus vult gloriam—ordinate prius videtur velle gloriam illi quem vult esse proxumum fini, et ita huic animate.”
For the purpose of analyzing the efficacy of Christ’s merit, Scotus divides the phases of divine predestination into the following instants of nature: First, God willed glory (or beatitude) for the soul of Christ. The means of this glory is connected to the hypostatic union and thus God next wills the Incarnation.\(^{53}\) Second, God willed glory for other rational creatures. Third, he willed that these creatures possess habitual grace and perseverance in grace as the means of attaining this glory. Fourth, God foresaw the Fall of Adam and other human beings in Adam. Fifth, God willed the Passion of Christ as remedy for sin. Christ’s Passion restores grace to those for whom God willed glory in stage two.\(^{54}\)

A determinate number of people were predestined to beatitude logically prior to God’s foreknowledge of sin and prior to his willing of Christ’s Passion as a remedy for sin. When God does will the Passion as a remedy for sin, God only wills that it is meritorious for redeeming the finite group of people predestined for beatitude. Scotus writes, “[Christ] efficaciously offered himself for a determinate number of the predestined, namely the elect, and then the whole Trinity accepted it.”\(^{55}\) Christ’s merit

\(^{53}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III d. 19, q. 1, n. 20 (Vatican 32), “Sciendum ergo est quod anima Christi praedestinata fuit ab aeterno ad maximam gloriam, non quia alii praevisi errant cadere, sed ut frueretur Deo; immo prius erat Christus—secundum modum intelligendi nostrum—praedestinatus ad gloriam, quam fuerit praevius a Deo casus et lapsus humani generis, quia omnes praedestinatus prius sunt praedestinati quam praevium sit eis illud quod est ad finem, quia primo volitum volitione ordinata omnibus est finis.”


\(^{55}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III d. 19, q. 1, n. 22 (Vatican 33), “et ideo efficaciter se obtulit praedestinatis determinatis, scilicet electis, et tune tota Trinitas acceptavit.”
quantum ad efficaciam is finite because the number of people predestined for beatitude is finite.

In contrast to Olivi, Scotus’s discussion of the efficacy of Christ’s merit is more detailed and based on a different way of ordering the events of predestination. Olivi does not analyze God’s eternal act of predestination into discrete logical moments aside from the moments where God wills Christ’s merit and our beatitude. According to Olivi, the means of salvation—Christ’s Passion and its merit—are willed prior to the moment when God wills the salvation of any individual rational creature. Olivi’s account of predestination is a reasonable way to explain the different logical moments of predestination for a theologian who does not believe that the Incarnation was willed independently of the plan of redemption. Scotus, however, does believe that God willed the Incarnation independently of sin. Scotus’s description of the different moments of predestination is his attempt to organize the various things that we know that God did will.\(^{56}\)

After examining the efficacy of Christ’s merit, Scotus presents his own view of its sufficiency. Scotus’s position on the sufficiency of Christ’s merit is easily inferred from his critique of his predecessors and his own positive account of the efficacy of Christ’s merit. Christ’s meritorious actions are caused solely by his assumed will in accordance with his created grace. His meritorious actions, then, are formally finite. Scotus writes, “Christ’s act of meriting was formally finite, there was nothing in it that could make it

\(^{56}\) This also becomes clear by considering damnation. Nothing about Scotus’s understanding of the orderly manner of divine predestination requires that not all people are in fact predestined for glory. Scotus had other reasons in mind for assuming the limited number of the predestined, such as Biblical texts that describe the narrow road to salvation.
formally infinite, because then it would not be merit (just as the divine will does not merit).”\(^57\) The finite reward earned by Christ’s Passion is sufficient for redeeming all of the elect. Earlier theologians saw a surplus of value in Christ’s merit that was not fully exhausted by those who partake of it. For Scotus, however, there is an isomorphism between the value of Christ’s merit and the number of people who will benefit from it.

6.7 Conclusion

Scotus’s position on the intrinsic finitude of Christ’s merit is what we would expect from the way he straightforwardly applies his understanding of merit to Christ. No effort of human will or degree of created grace could yield something that is intrinsically infinite. The finite efficacy of Christ’s merit, according to Scotus, is a result of God predestining only a determinate number to beatitude. Scholastic theologians before Scotus claimed that Christ’s merit was infinite with respect to its sufficiency. Their way of explaining this led them to incorporate Anselm’s ideas about how to determine the redemptive value of the Cross with thirteenth-century theories of merit, which focused mainly on how created grace determined the value of one’s meritorious acts. Scotus rejects certain ways of integrating these two strands of theological reflection for two different reasons. First, he argues that some of the ways his predecessors brought these two strands together implied that Christ’s human actions were intrinsically infinite or as beloved by God as the divine person of the Word. Second, he does not believe that Christ’s divine will contributes to how Christ elicits his meritorious acts.

\(^{57}\) Duns Scotus, *Lectura* III d. 19, q. 1, n. 23 (Vatican 33), “cum actus merendi Christi fuerit formaliter finitis, nullus respectus fundatus in eo potuit ei dare infinitatem formaliter, quia tunc non posset esse meritum (sicut nec velle divinum est meritum).”
Though Scotus disagrees with his predecessors on the sufficiency of Christ’s merit, both he and they hold that Christ’s merit *de facto* only applies to a determinate (not extensively infinite) number of people. His predecessors, however, were not content to claim that his merit was proportionate to this reward solely on the basis of the created principles of his meritorious acts. This was motivated largely by the belief that the identity of Christ’s person should confer value on his acts or augment the way that they are elicited. According to Scotus’s predecessors, the intrinsic worth of Christ’s merit far outstripped the number of people who would benefit from it. Scotus, on the other hand, believes that Christ’s created grace makes his acts proportionate to the reward for which God accepts them. Of course, this reward is conferred only because of God’s decision to accept Christ’s death as meritorious. Yet this does not introduce any unique voluntarist element into Scotus’s soteriology. What is unique about Scotus’s position on this topic is Christological: the Person of the Logos does not confer value on Christ’s merit. This position led him to rely on created grace and divine acceptation as fully accounting for the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ’s merit.
CONCLUSION

In the introduction we claimed that a fuller understanding of Duns Scotus’s account of Christ’s redemptive work required looking at that account in light of the writings of Scotus’s thirteenth-century Franciscan predecessors as well as in light of his own Christology. We can now take stock of how this historical and theological context aids our understanding of Scotus’s treatment of redemption.

No one would claim that Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* is irrelevant for understanding Scotus’s soteriology; we hope to have shown that the writings of thirteenth-century Franciscans are also relevant for understanding Scotus’s soteriology in at least three ways. First, some scholars denied that Scotus attributed satisfaction to Christ’s redemptive work. We have seen, however, that Scotus’s understanding of what Christ merits through his Passion is consonant with the way ‘satisfaction’ was understood by earlier thirteenth-century theologians like Bonaventure and Peter Olivi. For these Franciscans satisfaction included the idea that Christ’s death compensates God for his loss of the human race. Once restoring the human race to God was seen as an instance of compensation, it could be brought under the rubric of satisfaction. For Anselm, by contrast, compensation was offered for the dishonor man does to God by sin, but not for the effects of sin on man. Man could not attain the eternal beatitude that was his ultimate end because of sin. Christ’s Passion merits grace that restores man to the status of a
viator and ultimately allows for the possibility that he will become a comprehensor. With this possibility being made open by Christ’s Passion, God is compensated for his loss of the human race. The distinction between merit and satisfaction became more fluid in the thirteenth-century and led to Scotus’s practice of almost exclusively describing Christ’s redemptive work in terms of ‘merit.’

The thirteenth-century understanding of satisfaction as a kind of merit also leads to another connection between Scotus’s understanding of redemption and that of his predecessors. Scholastic theologians debated whether Christ’s merit was infinite quantum ad sufficientiam. This debate has distant roots in Cur Deus Homo, but in its developed form it is distinctively scholastic. Scotus’s way of setting out his view on the matter begins with a critique of the views of others, in particular views associated with positions taken by Bonaventure, Richard of Middleton, and Peter Olivi. Scotus criticizes the views of his predecessors on the sufficiency of Christ’s merit because they rely in part on explaining its sufficiency by something that is not part of the formal definition of merit. Merit formally requires a free act elicited in accordance with created grace. God accepts those types of acts as worthy of certain rewards for the one performing the act or for someone on whose behalf the act is performed. The dignity of the person meriting and the way that the divine will is related causally to the act are not part of the formal reason why some act is meritorious, and, therefore they do not augment the meritorious nature of the act at all, according to Scotus. That Scotus was able to criticize his predecessors on these grounds follows from the next point of connection between him and earlier Franciscans.

For the topic of redemption the most important connection between Scotus and his scholastic predecessors concerns the question of Christ’s created grace. Reflection on
the created grace of Christ’s soul was another distinctively scholastic contribution to an Anselmian soteriology. Scotus closely examines how Christ comes to possess created grace and whether it is in any way a consequence of the assumption. In working out his views on this matter, he takes himself to be correcting his scholastic predecessors, who held that only a soul assumed by a divine person could possess the highest grace. Scotus argues that every rational nature is in potency to the highest grace.

This brings us to the important role that Scotus’s Christology plays in shaping his understanding of redemption. That Christ is a divine person does not explain the efficacy of Christ’s satisfaction and merit. The person of Christ contributes neither to the grace that makes his acts redemptive nor to the manner in which those acts are elicited. Christ’s redemptive acts have the assumed nature as their causal origin (not the Person) and they are elicited solely in accord with created principles (grace and free-will). This understanding of how Christ performs his redemptive work allowed Scotus to show that God could have willed that a human person or an angel render condign satisfaction for sin. Scotus’s Christology leads him to conclude that such a person could have possessed the same qualities that made Christ’s death an adequate satisfaction for sin.

For Anselm the redemptive value of Christ’s death was explained exclusively by the dignity of the Person on the Cross. For thirteenth-century theologians like Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton the redemptive value of the Cross was explained in part by the divine dignity of the Person of Christ and in part by the created habit of grace with which he elicited his redemptive acts. Scotus, on the other hand, argues that the Passion had its redemptive value because of the grace with which Christ elicits his acts. This introduces a fundamental question worth raising, even though speculating on
its answer is beyond the scope of our study: Did Scotus destroy a delicate balance maintained by his Franciscan predecessors or did he instead bring to its logical conclusion any soteriology that emphasizes the connections among satisfaction, merit, and created grace?

Scotus’s understanding of how Christ redeems us seems to eclipse the most salient and compelling aspect of the Christian doctrine of redemption, namely, that our redemption occurs because God himself died for us. In other words, Christians believe that nothing less than the suffering of the Incarnate God could lead man out of his state of alienation from God and back to a saving relationship with him. While no scholastic theologian held that nothing else would have sufficed for our salvation, many of them saw some unique good that was made possible through the death of a God-man that would not have been possible for a mere man to accomplish. Many scholastics described this unique good as the rendering of condign satisfaction for sin. Scotus, as we have seen, does not agree that only a God-man could have rendered condign satisfaction for human sin. Yet he does see something that is uniquely secured through the Incarnation and death of the Logos. According to Scotus, the divinity of the redeemer has the possibility of evoking a certain type of response from man that no other means of redemption involving a mere creature could. Knowing that God became incarnate and died on the Cross, when something other or lesser would have been able to merit grace for the fallen, should enkindle a deep love for God in man because it reveals the lengths to which God will go to bring his fallen creatures back to him. Without any need to secure his ultimate purpose in salvation history through the work of a God-man, God nevertheless did not remain at a
distance, but became an intimate part of salvation history through the Incarnation and Passion of Christ.

In this way, Scotus represents an exemplarist understanding of Christ’s Passion. The example of God’s love for man in the Passion of Christ is better able to incite others to a life of grace than any means of redemption involving a mere creature. The idea that the Passion of Christ evokes a response in man concerns what we might call the subjective element of redemption (as distinct from what is objectively accomplished on man’s behalf through the Passion). This exemplarist element is most closely associated with Peter Abelard in contemporary historiography, but it is a minor part of Anselm’s thought as well. It is also prominent in the writings of Bonaventure and Aquinas. Scotus, therefore, does have a way of explaining why the Logos was our redeemer. It was not an arbitrary choice of God that defies analysis. God willed the Passion of the Incarnate Logos to express his love for creatures in a dramatic way that is better suited to enkindling in the creature love for God. For Scotus the redemptive significance of Christ’s person lies in the subjective dimension of redemption, not its objective one.
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