

## Article

# The Eternal Plan of the Father and the Immaculate Conception of the Mother: The Foundations of an Objective Mariology in the Theology of Blessed John Duns Scotus

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**Abstract:** This article explores selected aspects of the Mariology of Blessed John Duns Scotus, a medieval Franciscan philosopher and theologian. Even though the Subtle Doctor did not develop a theological synthesis as mature as that of St. Thomas Aquinas, his observations continue to provide a relevant source of inspiration for a more in-depth look at Franciscan protological and soteriological concepts. Duns Scotus earned his place in the history of theology as a eulogist of the mystery of the Incarnation and defender of the truth about the Immaculate Conception. In fact, what he had accomplished laid the necessary foundation for the dogmatic ruling on that matter in 1854. The article begins by presenting the scholar's view of the relation between creation and Redemption from the standpoint of Christ's perfect mediation. The Marian Doctor was an advocate of emphasizing the objectivity of Redemption, although he himself stopped short of the "threshold" of the mystery of the Father with respect to the Mother of the Son of God, the most perfect Mediator—also for the Virgin Mary. In the end, the Subtle Doctor did not draw all the possible conclusions from his theological vision of creation and salvation history. Next, the article outlines the perspective of God's eternal plan. Blessed John Duns Scotus's theology reveals a vision of history in which everything is directed toward the fulfilment of God's eternal plan: the very plan of which St. Paul wrote very forcefully yet subtly and to which St. John Paul II often referred. The interpretation of that plan is the foundation of an "objective Mariology". Finally, the author addresses the question of the freedom of both the Creator and His creation from the perspective of the Creator's plan and in accordance with the Marian Doctor's assumptions. An analysis of Duns Scotus's Mariology reveals its depth and innovative character and, at the same time, certain limitations which—in his time—were mentally unsurmountable.

**Keywords:** John Duns Scotus; medieval theology; God's eternal plan; the dogma of the Immaculate Conception; Virgin Mary; free will



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*Dignare me laudare Te, Virgo Sacrata;  
da mihi virtutem contra hostes Tuos.*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Among the most prominent and influential thinkers of the Middle Ages was Blessed John Duns Scotus (d. 1308), a Franciscan friar from Scotland (Kośła 2011; Łopat 2011, pp. 450–66). The close of the thirteenth century saw a clash between two currents in philosophy: Thomism and Augustinianism. While a great number of solutions were adopted from Thomism, it was Augustinianism that determined the general stance of theology for the years to come. This process is believed to have been initiated by the Franciscans, and Duns Scotus was the main "architect" behind the new doctrine, hence its name: Scotism. As for Duns Scotus himself, he "also merited the title *Doctor Subtilis* on account of the acuity of his intellect and the brilliance of his philosophical and theological doctrine, which he generously shared in his teaching at universities in Paris and Oxford

and, above, all, in his many writings" (Łopat 2022, p. 74).<sup>2</sup> These writings constitute a rich philosophical and theological legacy that represents the accomplishments of a remarkable thinker who was capable of listening to predecessors and contemporaries alike.

While Scotism and Thomism shared many of their arguments, St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) and Duns Scotus differed in their overall outlook on reality. In Aquinas's view, the world was comprised of general truths and conceived of as a rational and necessary creation, whereas Scotus focused on individual, specific beings and conceived of the world as partially irrational and created in freedom. A juxtaposition of the Subtle Doctor's ideas with St. Thomas's comprehensive theological vision reveals fundamental differences in their perceptions of the created world and in their very theologies. As Bartnik (2001, p. 276) notes, "while St. Thomas was characterized by his metaphysical and systematical genius, Scotus excelled with his brilliant dialectical and critical thinking" (see Lohfink and Weimer 2010, pp. 367–68). In that regard, many similarities can be observed between Scotism and St. Augustine's concepts. In a sense, the bishop of Hippo provided an outline of what Scotus would later, in his unique manner, develop and justify dialectically, transposing St. Augustine's suggestions into a subtle scholastic system. Within that system, he placed faith above reason, intuition above abstraction, and the individual above the community. Even more importantly, he asserted the primacy of the will over the intellect, which must have had many implications for the vision of reality that he adopted: a vision which differed from the ancient models while retaining a typically Christian character. In fact, Duns Scotus created a system of thought that was to "become in the following centuries a fixed point of reference for a broad speculative current, one increasingly more capable of winning agreement among the Minors" (D'Onofrio 2008, p. 435). His followers continued to develop his ideas, albeit with varying success.

Scotus earned his place in the history of the development of Catholic dogmas with his contribution to the acceptance of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. It was he who maintained that accepting "the Immaculate Conception as a free theological opinion formalizes the idea that will permit the Western theology to adopt it. Mary was redeemed by Christ's cross, in anticipation of Her Son's merits" (Sesboüé 2001, p. 507).<sup>3</sup> This is why "in the Franciscan tradition, he is venerated as the Doctor of the Immaculate Conception. Indeed, he should be credited with finding a theological solution to the previously unsolvable problem of reconciling the dogma of the universality of Christ's redemption with the doctrine of the preservation of Mary from original sin" (Łopat 2022, p. 74). It should also be noted that the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin of Nazareth, which would only be dogmatized in 1854 by Pius IX,<sup>4</sup> had had a long history of its own.<sup>5</sup> In his beatification homily, St. John Paul II referred to John Duns Scotus as "the cantor of the incarnate Word and defender of the Immaculate Conception of Mary" (John Paul II 1993, n. 3). Furthermore, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1988, he stated that "one could say that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is a marvelous doctrinal synthesis of the Christian faith" (John Paul II [Jan Paweł II] 1999, p. 285). What makes the Subtle Doctor's proposed approach to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin of Nazareth so innovative? As Father Stefano Cecchin OFM rightly emphasizes, "one cannot understand Scotus's thinking by reading selected passages alone, without having an integral vision of all his doctrine (Cecchin 2015, p. 99).

In order to understand the Mariological ideas presented by Duns Scotus, and more specifically, the spirit of his Marian doctrine, it is necessary to consider integrally the entire theological vision that emerges from his writings. This article attempts to capture a holistic perspective of Blessed John Duns Scotus's theology. It begins by presenting the scholar's view of the relation between creation and Redemption from the standpoint of Christ's perfect mediation. Then, it outlines the perspective of the eternal plan devised by God who is good and makes everything good (cf. Gen 1:31, RSVCE). Finally, the author addresses the question of the freedom of both the Creator and His creation from the perspective of the Creator's plan and in accordance with the Marian Doctor's assumptions.

## 2. The Concept of a Complete Theological Vision

To fully understand the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary as conceptualized by the Marian Doctor, it is necessary to take into account his groundbreaking philosophical and theological solutions. Duns Scotus rejects the concept of God as a motionless mover who acts in a world created out of necessity and without freedom, which was the model developed by Greco-Arabic philosophy. In its place, he proposes the vision of God as an intelligent being who always acts with freedom, without necessity or external compulsion.<sup>6</sup> Along his journey toward the adoption of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception lies the correct understanding of the concept of “necessity”. Scotus was convinced that “after the Incarnation, there is no longer any reason to consider God and creation in terms of ‘necessity’ as was typical of the deterministic ‘sensation’ of reality that characterized Greek culture” (Cecchin 2015, p. 100). In the Subtle Doctor’s view, the Incarnation is the *summum opus Dei*.<sup>7</sup> As such, it complements and renews the work of creation. According to Cecchin (2015, pp. 100–1), “the reason is that—following the theology of predestination in Paul’s Christological hymns—since Christ is ‘before all things’ (Col 1:17–18), the reason for His Incarnation and for the universality of redemption does not necessarily stem from the fact that ‘all men sinned’ (Rom 5:12) but rather from logical arguments”. This is due to the fact that Christ as the universal mediator, “the first-born of all creation” (cf. Col 1:15), reveals in history a specific manifestation of the Triune God’s love.

Duns Scotus considers the Holy Trinity to be the “Highest Good”: persisting in absolute freedom, it desires to act beyond Itself and include others in Its inner love. According to Cecchin (2015, p. 101), “since God loves in the most ordered way, and the center of His love is the One who is in the bosom of the Father, that is, the Word (Jn 1:18), in His love ad extra, all is oriented toward the Word as well. Any creature finds the meaning of its existence in the Word, and it does so even before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4)”. The Marian Doctor is fascinated by the profundity of Paul’s texts on the election of all creatures in Christ and on their destiny. This universal predestination takes place in the love of the Creator who, since the very beginning, has planned the Incarnation.

The perspective presented by Blessed John Duns Scotus is certainly compelling, especially if one considers the fact that in the general opinion of thirteenth-century thinkers, the reason behind the Incarnation was the “necessity” of redeeming the fallen man, and the truth of which St. Paul the Apostle had written and which Scotus revealed—that the Incarnation is a manifestation of God’s free love—went largely unnoticed. Ultimately, then, it is not the sin of the beginning, which took the form of original sin in Adam’s descendants, but the love of the Triune God expressed in the purpose, life, mission and sacrifice of “the first-born of all creation” (cf. Col 1:15) that forms the foundation of the Incarnation of God’s Son.

The Redemption accomplished by Christ is universal in its scope because it responds to the universality of sin. Thus, since sin is universal, the possibility of being redeemed must be universal, too: “For St. Thomas Aquinas, Mary could not have escaped this necessity, either, for ‘if the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never incurred the stain of original sin, this would be derogatory to the dignity of Christ, by reason of His being the universal Savior of all’<sup>8</sup>” (Cecchin 2015, p. 102). The Subtle Doctor, however, believed otherwise. Following St. Paul’s ideas, he recognized that “God, in an ordered fashion, ‘before the foundation of the world’ (Eph 1:4), desired happiness for those elected, notwithstanding any merit or offense attached to those who were to be elected” (Cecchin 2015, p. 102). A special place among those elected is reserved for the Virgin Mary, Mother of God’s Son, first in the order of grace, for she is “full of grace” (Lk 1:28). This primacy of the Immaculate Virgin follows from the primacy of Christ, “the first-born of all creation” (cf. Col 1:15), of whom Mary is the Mother.

The Franciscan school attaches great importance to the primacy of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Even St. Francis of Assisi placed “Christ in the very center of his theological intuitions, for it is only He who can explain the Triune God and perfectly unite creation with the Creator” (Warchol 2015, p. 117; see also Ambrożkiewicz 1992, pp. 18, 86–87, 89; Pompei 1995, pp. 772–75).

Blessed Duns Scotus equates the primacy of Christ with the absolute beginning—in the aspect of creation—of Redemption and the renewal of creation.<sup>10</sup> In his view, “there is no reason for predestination, even on the part of the predestined, that is prior to predestination itself. For condemnation, however, there is a reason that is prior not to the very action of God, for in such case, He would be passive, but prior to the very act of condemnation, which contains in itself its cause”.<sup>11</sup> Duns Scotus’s intuitions would later be explored in more depth and expanded upon in the ideas of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe (d. 1941) (see Manelli 2009, pp. 71–118).

The Subtle Doctor says that “as others needed Christ so that, through His merit, their sins already contracted might be remitted, so She needed a Mediator who would protect Her from sin”.<sup>12</sup> The Mystery of the Incarnation also reveals that Christ, too, as the Redeemer, wanted to “need” the Virgin Mary in accordance with His Father’s eternal plan. According to Lopat (2022, p. 76), “since John Duns Scotus considers the Incarnation to be God’s work *ad extra par excellence*, the first, so to say, in *ordine intentionis*, to which all other things that God is guided by are related and subordinated, then in consequence, he believes that the woman who worked so closely with the Redeemer in the fulfillment of this miraculous plan must have occupied a special place in the eternal purpose of the Incarnate Word. John Duns Scotus strongly emphasizes that Christ and His Mother are tightly bound together in one eternal act through which God determined ‘in advance’ the Incarnation of His Son”.

An important aspect of the manner in which Scotus interprets the mystery of the Immaculate Conception<sup>13</sup> is the notion—probably found in the writings of St. Paul—of the most perfect Mediation that is fulfilled in the Incarnate Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. In his view, “Christ was the most perfect Mediator and, as such, He must have exercised the highest degree of mediation with respect to another person. However, He would not have been a perfect Mediator and Redeemer if He had not preserved [His] Mother from original sin . . . Therefore, since He Himself was the most perfect Mediator for His Mother, what follows from this is that He must have preserved Her from original sin . . . Therefore, through His death, Christ mediated in favor of His Mother so as to merit the absolution of not only the sins which She might commit but also the original sin which She might contract”.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. The Good God’s Eternal Plan

The Apostle of the Nations acknowledges that he has received grace in order to “preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” (Eph 3:8–9). Elsewhere, he confesses, most likely speaking of himself: “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven . . . And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise . . . and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter” (2 Cor 12:2–4). An object of great interest from theologians and attention from pastors is the mysterious plan so often mentioned by St. Paul,<sup>15</sup> St. Peter<sup>16</sup> or the author of the Letter to the Hebrews.<sup>17</sup> Pope St. Leo the Great (d. 461) taught that “the providential Mercy of God, having determined to succour the perishing world in these latter times, fore-ordained the salvation of all nations in the Person of Christ” (Schaff 2007, p. 145). St. John Paul II also referred to that plan when he wrote: “The *divine plan of salvation*—which was fully revealed to us with the coming of Christ—is eternal. And according to the teaching contained in the Letter [to the Ephesians] and in other Pauline Letters (cf. Col. 1:12–14; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:18–29), it is also *eternally linked to Christ*. It includes everyone, but it reserves a special place for the ‘woman’ who is the Mother of him to whom the Father has entrusted the work of salvation<sup>18</sup>” (John Paul II 1987, n. 7; emphasis added). In fact, it is impossible to separate the mystery of Mary’s Immaculate Conception from the Triune God’s eternal reasons.<sup>19</sup> What is the mystery plan that continues to be fulfilled and, in God’s design, precedes the creation of things? How is it interpreted by Blessed John Duns Scotus?

The Subtle Doctor begins with God's love, which in his mind should be considered the beginning and cause of all predestination. Creatures exist without necessity, and the reason for their existence is the Creator's free act of love. According to Warchol (2015, p. 119), "the only rationale behind the outward action of the Divine will is God's love that yearns to communicate with other beings. It is unthinkable that any being could influence God's will in the act of predestination". The next step toward an understanding of the issues raised in this paper is the simple conclusion that "the predestination of Christ is not only not rendered necessary by human sin; rather, even creation itself is a consequence of that predestination, since the world was created for the purpose of receiving the Word, who is distinguished from the other divine persons precisely inasmuch as he is characterized, unlike the Father and the Spirit, by embodying the perfect relationship of divine love for creatures" (D'Onofrio 2008, p. 448). The work of Redemption is an additional task for the Incarnate Word of God, who—by descending from the Father—restores to humanity and to the world wounded by Adam's sin their proper orientation toward the renewal of "all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (Acts 3:21).

Another important consideration is that Christ's predestination "has as an integral element the eternal preservation of Mary from original sin. She was predestined to be the mother of Christ and therefore received this special privilege in order that reconciliation might be the work of a mediator who had no element of enmity against the Father" (D'Onofrio 2008, p. 448). Therefore, Duns Scotus's teaching reveals that the Mother's privilege is a consequence of the Son's primacy and of the fact that He is destined to become the absolute mediator between the good Creator and His creation, which—through disobedience—fell into sin.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. The Creator's Eternal Plan and the Freedom of Creation

Blessed John Duns Scotus addresses the question of freedom and its relationship to reason in his characteristic fashion. In his opinion, freedom is a fundamental characteristic of the will. However, as Benedict XVI (2010) notes, "unfortunately, in later authors, this line of thinking turned into a voluntarism, in contrast to the so-called 'Augustinian and Thomist intellectualism'". God's freedom cannot contradict either truth or goodness, for this would contradict His perfection. In its original form, the Scotist vision is free from such extremes and errors. As Benedict XVI (2010) emphasizes, "for Duns Scotus a free act is the result of the concurrence of intellect and will, and if he speaks of a 'primacy' of the will, he argues this precisely because the will always follows the intellect", with which it finds a common purpose in truth and goodness.

In the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, the Subtle Doctor liked to contemplate the mystery of the Passion of the Savior "as the expression of the loving will, of the immense love of God who reaches out with the greatest generosity, irradiating his goodness and love" (Benedict XVI 2010).<sup>21</sup> It was not only Christ's cross on Calvary but also the mystery of the Holy Eucharist that revealed His love. Duns Scotus held great reverence for the Eucharist and saw it "as the Sacrament of the Real Presence of Jesus and as the Sacrament of unity and communion that induces us to love each other and to love God, as the Supreme Good we have in common" (Benedict XVI 2010).<sup>22</sup> There, the original love from which all was created and in which man was redeemed is a goal both for humanity in general and for all individuals. In that love, the ultimate union is to be attained with God, who on Earth, by being born of the Virgin Mary, became food for all those who believed His words.

Out of all people, the Virgin of Nazareth was filled most completely with Divine love (see Lk 1:28). In the interpretation of Her person and Her appointed place in God's eternal plan, the Subtle Doctor followed the principle according to which one may "ascribe to the Holy Virgin all the attributes and prerogatives that appear the most perfect, as long as they do not contradict the testimony of the Holy Scriptures and the declarations of the Magisterium of the Church" (Łopat 2022, p. 78).<sup>23</sup> This brings to mind the famous syllogism "*potuit, deuit, ergo fecit*"<sup>24</sup> that has been wrongly attributed to Duns Scotus.<sup>25</sup> Despite the misattribution, Scotus did in fact apply this principle—inherited from his mentor William

of Ware (d. 1305)—to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary: “With his irresistible dialectical force, John Duns Scotus was able to ‘neutralize’ the objections typically raised against the doctrine of Mary being freed from original sin, which were in essence limited to two arguments: (1) that the passing down of original sin inevitably affected all men as descendants of Adam; and (2) that Christ’s redemptive work has a universal significance which even His Mother could not ‘escape,’ so that She also had to be freed from original sin to achieve salvation” (Łopat 2022, pp. 78–79). With regard to the “neutralization” of the above objections, Scotus’s notion of the priority of the individual over the community was an important factor.

In the Subtle Doctor’s thought, Mary is connected to the mystery of the Holy Trinity that acts in the world and to the eternal plan of salvation that God freely willed and joined with the Incarnation of His Son: “God’s plan of Christ’s absolute predestination . . . also included the predestination of Mary, through whom, in accordance with that same and only plan, the Word of God was to assume a human nature” (Warchoń 2015, p. 124). Mary is the true Mother of the Incarnate Son of God; she became Her as a virgin and remained a virgin. The grace of the Immaculate Conception is linked to the grace of Her Divine motherhood, which in turn stems from Her constant virginity. The freedom of the Immaculately Conceived Virgin Mary expresses itself to the fullest extent in Her fiat to God’s plan and is most certainly linked to Her vow of virginity (Lk 1:34).<sup>26</sup> This subject, however, is so broad that it needs to be addressed in a separate paper.

## 5. Conclusions

The Mariology of Blessed John Duns Scotus must be considered through the lens of all his theology and against the background of all his epistemological and ontological assumptions. While it does not represent a fully mature synthesis, it is nevertheless a historically important step that enabled theology to develop in a more appropriate direction. The solutions proposed by Blessed John Duns Scotus were ground breaking for his time and remain valid today. In fact, they may help overcome today’s issues (such as restricting the autonomy of theology under the pretense of “scientific” correctness, pursuing theology in a fragmentary manner that does not take into account its complete vision based on events in the history of salvation, or ignoring the revealed notion of God’s hidden designs that continue to be fulfilled until the Final Judgment).

The Subtle Doctor’s theology reveals a vision of history in which everything is directed toward the fulfilment of God’s eternal plan: the very plan of which St. Paul wrote very forcefully yet subtly and to which St. John Paul II often referred in his teaching. This plan also provides a foundation for the development of an “objective Mariology”, which aims to decipher God’s intentions for the Virgin of Nazareth and for Her real, objective participation in the work of Redemption accomplished by Her Son. In Scotus’s view, the work of the Incarnate Redeemer, although subsequent in time, precedes the work of creation in the sense that everything exists in order to find its fullness in Christ, “the first-born of all creation” (Col 1:15).

What John Duns Scotus had accomplished laid the necessary foundation for the dogmatic ruling on the matter in question. The Subtle Doctor was an advocate of emphasizing the objectivity of Redemption, although he himself stopped short of the “threshold” of the mystery of the Father with respect to the Mother of the Son of God, the most perfect Mediator. In the end, the Marian Doctor did not draw all the possible conclusions from his theological vision of creation and from his soteriology, such as the conclusion that the Creator’s designs concerning His free decision to affect the Incarnation of His Son suggests that He would also need to prepare His Son’s Mother. After all, did the Creator not reveal His plan in the Protoevangelium (Gen 3:15)? The Marian Doctor associated the privilege of the Immaculate Conception of the Redeemer’s Mother with Her prior Redemption, which she must have attained by virtue of being a descendant of the house of Adam. Is the Creator, however, not free in his eternal designs and in their fulfilment in time? What is there to be redeemed in the Immaculate Conception? Blessed John Duns Scotus himself

could not have reached such conclusions, since his deliberations were too tightly bound by the paradigms of scholastic theology, even though they are not dogmas of the faith of the Catholic Church. From the perspective of the present state of theology, one can see certain limitations in the views outlined by the Subtle Doctor. At the same time, however, his intellectual achievements and rich spiritual legacy warrant a more in-depth reflection.

It is clear that Blessed John Duns Scotus built upon the assumptions made by his predecessors to construct his own method for the interpretation of such truths of the faith as the universality of the Redemption accomplished by Christ or the universality of original sin and its consequences for humankind. Resisting the temptation to simplify or reject these truths, he demonstrated how they can be reconciled with the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the Redeemer's Mother. Brilliant for their time, his solutions now demand further development and "objectivization" in the light of personalism and an objective Mariology that refers to the eternal plan of God the Father. When analyzing Scotus's ideas from the perspective of, for instance, the "Marian dogmas" and the growing awareness of who Mary is in God's eternal plan and what Her role is in the work of Redemption, one can see the breadth of his ideas and, at the same time, certain limitations that he inherited from the style of argumentation characteristic of the scholastic school of his time. Nevertheless, his subtle intellect and his ability to build upon the findings of his contemporary—or slightly earlier—theologians enabled him to defend the privilege bestowed upon the Mother of the Redeemer of humankind.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Allow me to praise thee, O sacred Virgin./ Against thy enemies give me strength".

<sup>2</sup> "His works were all connected with his teaching at the universities: commentaries on works of logic and on Aristotle's *On the Soul* and *Metaphysics*, *Disputed Questions* and *Quodlibetal Questions*, the treatise *The First Principle* (or *The First Principle of All Things*), and the *Theoremata*. Then, fundamental for his theological teaching, there were the several editions of his commentary on the *Sentences*; the gigantic *Oxford Work* (*Opus Oxoniense*), a true summa of theological thought, also cited as *Ordinatio*; finally the *First Reading* (*Lectura prima*) and the more summary *Notes on the Parisian Lectures*" (D'Onofrio 2008, pp. 435–36). See also John Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, Wadding-Vivès edition (Duns Scotus 1891–1895).

<sup>3</sup> See John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, l. III, d. 3, q. 1 (Duns Scotus 1933, pp. 17–54); *Opus Parisiense*, l. III, d. 3, q. 1 (Duns Scotus 1933, pp. 223–35).

<sup>4</sup> In the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (*Ineffable God*) announcing the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8 December 1854), Pius IX pronounced that "the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin" (Pius IX 1854).

<sup>5</sup> "The Immaculate Conception would remain the subject of a long-standing debate among Latin theologians. During the Carolingian Renaissance, Paschasius Radbert, abbot of Corbie (c. 790–860), was the first to claim that Mary 'knew no corruption that derived from the first origin.' The Greek feast of the Conception of the Virgin Mary was transposed to the West in the mid-eleventh century and became widely adopted across Europe in the twelfth century . . . The great scholastic theologians, however, would remain conflicted. Anselm of Canterbury, St. Bernard and then St. Thomas would reject the Immaculate Conception as being incongruent with the universality of original sin, with Thomas concluding that Mary had been cleansed of original sin through grace in her mother's womb . . . Bonaventura, on the contrary, would echo a more moderate current in the Franciscan school, and the idea that Mary had been redeemed by being preserved from sin rather than being cleansed of it would be expressed as early as the thirteenth century . . . In 1439, the Council of Basel arrived at a definition of the Immaculate Conception, which must have required admirable unanimity from its advocates, and established a solemnity for all the Church on December 8. The definition was expressed using terminology which is remarkably similar to that which Pius IX would use in 1854. The above council, however, was deemed 'schismatic' on account of its conciliarist arguments and had had no

communication with the pope for two years; consequently, the text holds no value from the standpoint of the magisterium” (Sesboüé 2001, pp. 507–8).

6 See John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, l. I, d. 40, q. un., n. 4 (Duns Scotus 1950–).

7 John Duns Scotus, *Opus Parisiense*, l. III, d. 7, q. 4 (Duns Scotus 1933, p. 14). See also John Duns Scotus, *In III Sententiarum*, d. 32, q. un., n. 6 (Duns Scotus 1891–1895, vol. 15, p. 430).

8 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 27, a. 2 ad 2 (Aquinas 1947).

9 For more information on this subject, see Comodi (2021, pp. 125–75).

10 “Christ would not have come as Redeemer, nor would He have adopted a corporeal form that is susceptible to suffering, if man had not sinned, for there would not have been any necessity in that regard”—John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, l. III, d. 7, q. 3 (Duns Scotus 1933, pp. 5–6).

11 John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, l. I, d. 41, q. un., n. 40 (Duns Scotus 1950–).

12 John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, l. III, d. 3, q. 1 (Duns Scotus 1933, pp. 35–36).

13 For a detailed study on this subject, see Adams (2010) and Ingham (2019).

14 John Duns Scotus, *Lectura in III librum Sententiarum*, d. 3, q. 1 (Duns Scotus 1950–).

15 Rom 16:25–27; 1 Cor 2:4–10; Eph 1:4–6, 7–10, 2:10; Col 1:26–27; 2 Tm 1:9–10.

16 1 Pt 1:18–21.

17 Heb 4:3.

18 Footnote 19 of the encyclical (John Paul II 1987) reads as follows: “Concerning the predestination of Mary, cf. Saint John Damascene, *Hom. in Nativitatem*, 7, 10: *S. Ch.* 80, 65; 73; *Hom. in Dormitionem* 1, 3: *S. Ch.* 80, 85: ‘For it is she, who, chosen from the ancient generations, by virtue of the predestination and benevolence of the God and Father who generated you (the Word of God) outside time without coming out of himself or suffering change, it is she who gave you birth, nourished of her flesh, in the last time . . . ’”

19 Eph 1:4; 1 Pt 1:1–5.

20 See John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, l. III, d. 3, q. 1 (Duns Scotus 1933, pp. 22–23). See also Manelli (2021, pp. 441–42).

21 See also John Duns Scotus, *Ioannis Duns Scoti Tractatus de primo principio*, c. 4 (Duns Scotus 1941).

22 See also John Duns Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia, In IV Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, n. 3 (Duns Scotus 1891–1895, vol. 24, pp. 9–10); Denzinger (2009), n. 1651.

23 See John Duns Scotus, *In III Sententiarum*, d. 3, q. 1, n. 5 (Duns Scotus 1891–1895, vol. 14, p. 165).

24 This can be translated as “he was able to do it, it was appropriate, so he did it”.

25 For more information on that subject, see Rosini (1994, p. 80, footnote 16) and Veuthey (1988, p. 83).

26 See John Duns Scotus, *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 30, q. 2 (Duns Scotus 1891–1895, vol. 19, p. 278); *Opus Oxoniense*, l. IV, d. 30, q. 2, n. 5 (Duns Scotus 1950–).

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