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Late Medieval Atonement Theologies

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In this paper I will attempt to outline late-medieval theologies of salvation, from Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. While a discussion of only a handful of authors may appear a modest enough enterprise, given the richness of late-medieval theology, it will nonetheless allow us to detect some important shifts, which will come to fruition in the theology of major Protestant thinkers.

Peter Lombard discusses the salvific value of Christ's life and death in Book III, distinctions 15-22 of his *Sentences*. Other distinctions, such as those dealing with the theological virtues (dist. 23-32), the cardinal virtues (dist. 33) and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (dist. 34) are also of some significance. An in-depth discussion of medieval theories of salvation should therefore examine more than what authors write about the Cross of Christ. Indeed, as we will see, scholastic theologians of the thirteenth century operated with an integrative vision of salvation. This means a number of things. First, to recall a popular distinction (Fiddes 2007) it implies that those thirteenth century theories of salvation are generally both objective and subjective, which means that they discuss the repercussions of salvation for the relation between creation and God – this is the objective aspect; and they also deal with the transformative effect on the Christian believer through the operation of grace – this is the subjective aspect. It further means that the saving meaning of the life, death and resurrection of the Word can only be theologically understood in its entirety from the perspective of intra-Trinitarian dynamics, which, in turn, moulds their theology of creation and their views on sacramental economy. I will further suggest that this kind of integrative vision is usually undergirded by a Christian-Neoplatonist worldview, and when this crumbles, the integrative vision becomes weakened or dissipates altogether. While this occurs in some Nominalist authors something of the older vision lingers on in some late-medieval mystical authors. By way of example I will briefly examine Ruusbroec's contribution.

Part I. Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas

St Bonaventure's Christology offers an outstanding example of the kind of integrative view I have alluded to. The mediating role the Son assumes between humanity and God finds its origin in the fact that he is the middle Person within the Trinity (generated by the Father, he co-spirates the Holy Spirit) (*Brevil*. IV, 2.6). But this centrality extends even further than that. In *Collationes in Hexaemeron* I,11, quoting Col. 2:3 ('Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge') Bonaventure claims that the Son of God, as the central Person of the Trinity (I *Sent*. d.2, a.u., q.4; Hayes 2000:192-214), is also the centre of our metaphysical, ethical, and theological worlds, amongst others. In *metaphysical* terms Bonaventure's exemplarist worldview centres around the Word, in whom the Father expresses himself within the Trinity and, in doing so, provides the metaphysical foundation of the created world, which is the material expression of the archetypal exemplars which reside in the Second Person of the Trinity (I *Sent*. d. 6, a.u. q.3). Thus, like Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure considers the creation of the world as the material expression of the generation of the Word from the Father; and the intelligibility of the world, as well as its sacramentality, are founded on the divine exemplars which dwell in the Word. In the words of Zachary Hayes (2000a: 46):

> Exemplarity has a critical role to play in Bonaventure's thought both at the philosophical and at the theological levels. It is only exemplarity that can unlock the deepest meaning of created reality to the human mind, for it is only when we perceive the world in its symbolic nature as the objectification of the self-knowledge of God that we know it in its true reality.

This is, incidentally, why St Bonaventure prefers the name 'Word' to 'Son', for the name 'Word' implies a reference, not just to the Father, but also to creation, the Incarnation, and Christ's teaching. This is well expressed in his *Commentary on John,* I,6: 'And since the Son of God had to be described (...) not only in relationship to the Father, from whom he proceeds, but also to creatures, which he made, and to the flesh which he took on, and to the teaching that he communicated, he had to be described in a most excellent and fitting manner with the term Word. For that term relates to all these matters.'

Christ is also the foundation of *morality*. In terms stronger than those of Thomas Aquinas (*ST* II-II, q.23, a.7; *ST* II-II, q.10, a.4), Bonaventure will argue that genuine virtue is impossible without charity and faith in Christ. Finally, Christ is obviously at the heart of our *theological* endeavours, which focus primarily on the work of reconciliation *(opera reconciliationis).* The Incarnation and Cross of Christ are the central source of grace, which branches out in the theological and cardinal virtues, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, the habit of the beatitudes (*Brevil*. V) and the sacramental economy (*Brevil*. VI).

Within the confines of this contribution I cannot develop all aspects of Bonaventure's rich and multi-faceted Christology (such as its Trinitarian foundation; its implications for his exemplarist understanding of creation, for the nature of philosophy, and for the role Christ plays in our illumination, both epistemologically and in terms of grace).

Instead I will focus on his soteriology in the strictest sense, namely his views on the salvific meaning of the death of Christ. As a preliminary remark, however, I need to point out that in Bonaventure's view, however, the Incarnation perfects creation, 'bringing the entire universe to full perfection by uniting the first and the last, the Word of God, which is the origin of all things, and human nature, which was the last of all creatures.' (*Brevil.* IV, 1.2) It can therefore not be understood solely in terms of reparation of sin. John Duns Scotus was to further develop this idea.

Bonaventure adopts the Anselmic theory of satisfaction but supplements it in a number of ways (as did Thomas Aquinas). He will, for instance, pay more attention to the question how exactly Christ is the fountainhead of grace and merit for humankind. Although Anselm's argument hinges on the sinlessness of Christ (as the holy representative of humanity) he did not sufficiently probe the question how Christ's headship was a source of grace, nor did he ponder the significance of the organic link between Christ and his members, the Church. Both Bonaventure and Thomas were to correct this. As has become clear from the chapter by David Hogg, Anselm's theory of satisfaction should not be interpreted in terms of a vindictive God who needs retribution of the Cross to appease his divine anger. Rather, sin distorts the created world and the sacrifice or self-gift of the God-man repairs the brokenness of creation, and restores its glory. In short, Anselm's notion of satisfaction is not indebted to the world of feudalism (as is so often claimed) but it is rather similar to the sacrament of penance, in which the sinful person expresses his sorrow by making a sacrifice, which thus becomes satisfactory (i.e., it restores the relationship with God from whom we had alienated ourselves) (Van Nieuwenhove, 2003).

When discussing the traditional view that the Incarnation occurred to redeem humankind Bonaventure adopts the Anselmic language of satisfaction:

> Humanity could not recover its excellence through any other redeemer than God. For if this redeemer had been a mere creature, then humanity would have become subject to another creature, and thus would not have regained its state of excellence. Nor could humanity have recovered its state of friendship with God *(amicitiam quoque Dei recuperare non poterat)* except by means of a suitable mediator, who could touch God with one hand and humanity with the other, who could be the likeness and friend of both: God-like in his divinity, and like us in his humanity. Nor, again, could humankind have recovered purity of soul *(innocentia mentis)* if its guilt had not been removed, which divine justice could not fittingly remit unless suitable satisfaction had been made *(per satisfactionem condignam)*. But only God could make such satisfaction for the whole human race, while humanity alone was bound to make it because it had sinned. Therefore it was most appropriate (*congruentissimum*) that humanity should be restored by a God-man, born of Adam's stock. (*Brevil.* IV, 1.4; cf. also III *Sent.* d.20 a.u. q.2)

A number of points are worth noting. Firstly, Bonaventure argues that salvation through the Incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ was the most fitting manner of redeeming humankind. He does not claim that it is the only possible way – but it has, if I can put it that way, a certain aesthetic appeal. Secondly, while *satisfactio* is intrinsically linked with Christ's suffering (III *Sent.* d. 16.1 q.1) the source of merit of Christ's atoning work is not suffering itself but rather his love and obedience which finds expression in that suffering (III *Sent.* d.18 a.1q.3). Thirdly, as he explains in III *Sent.* d.20 a.u. q.2 (inspired by St Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, II.20) *satisfactio* is deeply alien to a vindictive understanding of God, for the key presupposition of *satifactio* is the fact that it harmonises divine mercy and justice. A restoration of our relationship with God without *satisfactio,* by mere divine *fiat,* would not be in accord with justice (for it would be a whitewash of sin, unacceptable in light of the profundity of evil committed by humankind); again, if God demanded retribution without the atoning activity of the God-man, he would be lacking in mercy. Fourthly, it is important to note what 'satisfaction' effects: it is the cause of our purification from sin, allowing us to regain our 'innocence'. Thus, the satisfaction Christ offers changes our relationship with God, allowing us to recover our state of friendship with God; it does not change God; it changes us – a perspective that Anselm had shared, following St Augustine's Book X of *De Civitate Dei*. Thus, through the self-gift of God in Christ we who were guilty before God become righteous, and our miserable condition becomes transformed into a glorious one. This transformation of humankind is an on-going process, which implies our participation in the life of the Church and its sacraments, which are filled with the merit of Christ's Passion (III *Sent.* d.20 a.u. q.4) – the topic of the Fourth Book of the *Sentences*.

When arguing that no other sinless creature *(creatura pura)* could make satisfaction or atone, Bonaventure (again following Anselm) claims that the offense of God – given his infinite dignity – is so large that even a sinless creature that is not divine could not possibly make recompense (III *Sent.* d.20 a.u. q.3). As we will see, Duns Scotus was to question the notion that Christ's merit has an infinite value on account of his divine Personhood. He will also dispute whether the Word-incarnate was necessary for our salvation. Before we deal with Duns Scotus's views we will examine the soteriology of St Thomas Aquinas.

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Thomas Aquinas's Christology is to be found mainly in the Third Part of his *Summa Theologiae.* Again it would be a mistake to neglect to mention that he, like Bonaventure, operates with an integrative vision, which situates soteriological issues in a broader Trinitarian perspective, and connects them with sacramentology, ecclesiology, and the life of Christian virtues. Like Bonaventure, Thomas draws an explicit connection, for instance, between the generation of the Word from the Father within the Trinity, and the acts of creation and salvation. In relation to creation: in generating the Son the Father expresses himself and the whole of creation (*ST* I, q.34, a.3). Every created thing,

therefore, has traces of the Trinity written in the core of its being. The Word is reflected in the very form inherent in a created thing, 'as the form of the thing made by art is from the conception of the craftsman *(ex conceptione artificis)*' (*ST* I, q.45, a.7) – a perspective deeply indebted to Augustine's Christian Neoplatonism. Or again, there is both a visible sending of the Son (Incarnation), and an invisible sending in the soul resulting in 'a certain experimental knowledge' or loving wisdom (*ST* I, q.43, a.5 ad 2). These missions are the temporal 'extensions', if you like, of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. We acquire this loving wisdom by becoming incorporated in Christ through grace and charity, becoming adoptive sons. Thus we are likened to the Eternal Word, reflecting, and participating in, the oneness between the Father and his Son (*ST* III, q.23, a.3).

Scholars (Torrell:1999) have noted that Thomas pays more attention than his predecessors to the life of Christ (*ST* III, q.35-45), before considering his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. When discussing the saving meaning of Christ's death, Thomas adopts the notion of satisfaction from Anselm, and he shares his view that the infinity of sin required a God-man, whose divine Personhood bestowed an infinite dignity upon his saving work (*ST* III, q.1, a.2 ad 2) – a view Duns Scotus was to challenge. I wrote "required" because Thomas holds the view that, strictly speaking, God could have saved humanity in a different way, without the Incarnation of his Son (*ST* III, q.1, a.2). Again, in relation to the question whether God would have become human if sin had not occurred, he appears to have a preference for the view that God would have become incarnate anyhow, although he acknowledges that the Biblical witness favours the other view (*ST* III, q.1, a.3).

With Anselm and Bonaventure, Thomas argues that *satisfactio* harmonises God's mercy and justice (*ST* III, q.46, a.1, ad 3), and he draws a distinction (*ST* I-II, q.87, a.7) between punishment in the strict sense (which is inflicted upon us against our will), on the one hand, and making satisfaction on the other. We freely undertake the latter to restore our relationship with God, through Christ, as in acts of penance. This distinction also applies to the Cross of Christ (which must be understood in terms of penance by the sinless representative of humanity, rather than in terms of punishment by an angry God). Thus, given this link between penance and making satisfaction, Thomas's soteriology cannot be possibly understood in penal terms, or meeting the demands of vindictive justice but should be seen in terms of 'the reconciliation of friendship' *(reconciliatio amicitiae)* (*ST* III, q.90, a.2).

Thomas makes some interesting additions. First, he makes clearer than Anselm had done, that one person can make satisfaction for another if they are united in charity (*ST* I-II, q.87, a.8). This explains why Thomas emphasises the organic unity between Christ and the members of his Body: 'The Head and members are as one mystic person; and therefore Christ's satisfaction belongs to all the faithful as being his members.' (*ST* III, q.48, a.2 ad 1) – a theological view which is closely linked with his more developed notion as to how Christ can be the source of grace as the Head of the Church (*ST* III, q.8):

'grace was bestowed upon Christ, not only as an individual, but inasmuch as he is the Head of the Church, so that it might overflow into his members.' (*ST* III, q.48, a.1) This intimate link between Christ and his Church, the community of believers, further suggests that Thomas does not subscribe to a theory of substitution but sees salvation in terms of participation (we participate in, and appropriate, the salvation Christ effected).

While retaining the notion of satisfaction in the key-question on the efficiency of Christ's passion (*ST* III, q.48), Thomas introduces a number of other central terms, such as merit (*ST* III, q.48, a.1) and redemption (*ST* III, q.48, a.4), the "buying back" from our servitude to sin – although it must be said that Thomas reverts back to language of *satisfactio* to describe *redemptio* throughout the article. Another key term, of major significance, is sacrifice, which has the advantage of being more explicitly Biblical than *satisfactio*, and which allows Thomas to develop a rich theology of how the Old Testament ceremonies prefigured the sacrifice of Christ (ST, I-II, q.102). Let's discuss this notion of sacrifice in some more detail, as it will allow us to recapitulate a number of issues. First, sacrifices are offered to God, not for his benefit, but for that of ourselves and our neighbour (*ST* II-II, q.30, a.4 ad 1) – which again illustrates that Thomas does not subscribe to a theory of divine propitiation or appeasement (*ST* III, q.49, a.4 ad 2). Secondly, Thomas states that every external sacrifice derives its value from an inner or invisible sacrifice. Drawing on Book X of *De Civitate Dei*, he repeatedly quotes (ST III, q.22, a.2; *ST* III, q.48, a.3 *obj.* 3) Augustine's dictum that 'a visible sacrifice is a sacrament – that is, a sacred sign – of an invisible sacrifice.' An outward or visible sacrifice can be any action performed for God's sake; but this outward action is only an expression of an inner sacrifice, which is our gift of self to God in devotion and love (cf. *ST* II-II, q.85, a.4). Thus, the 'invisible sacrifice' which finds expression in visible sacrifices we perform, is our sanctification, whereby we offer ourselves up to God (*ST* III, q.22, a.2; *ST* II-II, q.85, a.2, quoting Ps. 51:19; *ST* II-II, q.85, a.4 and *ST* III, q.48, a.3 ad 2). This view of sacrifice has a number of implications.

Firstly, it entails that the sufferings of Christ are not the primary source of our salvation, but rather what they denote ('invisibly'), namely his love and obedience to the Father (*ST* III, q.47, a.4 ad 2; *ST* III, q.47, a.2 ad 3). While later medieval piety relished suffering and the power of the blood (Walker Bynum 2004), this is not Thomas's primary concern.

Secondly, it establishes an intimate link between Christ's self-gift in his life and death, and the self-gift of the Christian believer throughout his life. For every deed performed for the sake of God acquires a 'sacrificial' dimension, uniting us to God and Christ (*ST* II-II, q.85, a.3 ad 1). This brings us to an important aspect of Thomas's soteriology, namely the way he emphasises how we need to appropriate Christ's saving work, by becoming members of his Body, the Church, in faith, hope, and love and participation in the sacraments (*ST* III, q.49, a.3 ad 1). For the fact that Christ is the Head of the Church cuts both ways: it means that Christ's merits can be shared with us; but it also means that we

are called to become Christ-like through sharing in his sacrificial life. Indeed, Thomas, when acknowledging that afflictions and death still remain although Christ has redeemed us, states that this is as it should be, for our afflictions in this life allow us to become conformed to Christ's sufferings (*ST*, I-II, q.85, a.5 ad 2), allowing us to bear the marks of Christ's passion in us (Van Nieuwenhove, 2005:291). Commenting on Rom. 8:17 he writes that we can only partake in Christ's glory through sharing in suffering, allowing us to grow in likeness to Christ (*Ad Rom.* no. 651; *ST* III, q.49, a.3 *ad* 3; *ST* I-II, q.85, a.5 ad 2). The least one can say is that Thomas's understanding of salvation does not fail to face up to the realities of life's afflictions.

Thirdly, the link Augustine established between 'sacrifice' and 'sacrament' proves very fruitful too. Sacrifice, so Thomas informs us, is etymologically derived from the notion of making holy (*facit sacrum* –cf. *ST* II-II, q.85, a.3 ad 3). It is therefore no surprise that Thomas, when beginning to explain the nature of sacraments in general, again quotes Augustine's saying that the visible sacrifice is the sacred sign, or sacrament, of an invisible sacrifice (in the *Sed Contra* of *ST* III, q.60, a.1). A sacrament is defined in general terms as a sign of something holy which sanctifies us *(signum rei sacrae inquantum est sanctificans homines - ST* III, q.60, a.2), or, in popular scholastic parlance, it effects what it signifies *(efficiunt quod figurant*: *ST* III, q.62, a.1 ad 1) – and what it effects is our sanctification, which is exactly what constituted the nature of the invisible sacrifice in Augustine's dictum. The 'something holy' a sacrament refers to is ultimately Christ's saving work. Indeed, because Christ's humanity is the instrument of his divinity – a notion Thomas borrowed from John Damascene – all aspects of Christ's life and death acquire a saving significance (*ST* III, q.48, a.6). The intimate link between sacrifice and sacrament can be further clarified by mentioning Thomas's insight – inspired by St Paul – that Christ's passion is the sacrament of our salvation, for through Christ's death and resurrection we die to sin and attain new life in and for God (*Ad Rom.* 6:11, no. 491; *ST* III, q.56, a.2 *ad* 4).

The sacraments in the strict sense (baptism, Eucharist…) are specific signs and instrumental causes of the continuing efficacy of Christ's salvific work. As suggested, they derive their saving power from Christ's passion, as was symbolised by the water and blood flowing from the side of the crucified Christ (*ST* III, q.62, a.5). Baptism, 'the door of the sacraments' (*ST* III, q.73, a.3), for instance, makes us conformable to Christ's passion and resurrection, insofar as we die to sin and begin a new life of righteousness (*ST* III, q.66, a.2). This illustrates, again, that Thomas sees our justification in intrinsicist terms: it is not a mere imputation of justice but requires an inner transformation, caused by Christ's passion (in the past), effected (in the present) in us through grace and virtues, and pointing towards our future participation in eternal life with God (*ST* III, q.60, a.3). Similarly, in an article in which Thomas discusses the different names of the Eucharist (*ST* III, q.73, a.4), he points out that it recalls the *sacrifice* of Christ's passion (past), establishes unity or *communion* amongst the faithful (present), and anticipates our future enjoyment of God, sharing in the good grace (*Eucharist*) of life ever-lasting (cf. Rom. 6:23).

Thomas's soteriology is a very rich one indeed. It is a vision spanning the whole spectrum of his theology – from its origins in the heart of the Trinity to his sacramentology and eschatology. It permeates every aspect of his theology and spirituality. Shunning all extrinsicism, for him salvation is a call to participation and transformation in Christ, which explains why Thomas's discussions of different virtues in the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae* are often crowned by a reference to the beatitudes (*ST* I-II, q.69) and gifts of the Holy Spirit (*ST* I-II, q.68), indicating that the Christian life of virtue needs to be understood from within Christological and pneumatological perspectives (Pinckaers 1995: 154-155). Given the centrality of his notion of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, implying an intimate link between Christ and the faithful, I am reluctant to call his soteriology a "theory" of salvation but rather an invitation to live and die in Christ.

While Thomas's soteriology is not legalistic, forensic, penal or substitutionary, some modern scholars might still object to the fact that Thomas refuses to attribute suffering to the divine nature (*ST* III, q.46, a.12) – unlike many twentieth century theologians who argue that a God who is immune to suffering cannot love either (Moltmann 1974:219-227). Thomas, deeply imbued with a sense of the otherness and transcendence of God, argues that the Word suffers, not in his divine nature, as God, but in his human nature, as man. While this theological position may not satisfy modern theologians it seems to me a sound one. As Thomas Weinandy (2000:206) made clear, the view that God suffers as God – whatever that could possibly mean – does not do justice to the radical nature of the Christian claim of what the Incarnation is about. What matters is not that God suffers as God, but that the Word suffers as a human being:

> This is what humankind is crying out to hear, not that God experiences, in a divine manner, our anguish and suffering in the midst of a sinful and depraved world, but that he actually experienced and knew first hand, as one of us – as a man – human anguish and suffering within a sinful and depraved world. This is what a proper understanding of the Incarnation requires and affirms. (Weinandy 2000:206)

Part II. Duns Scotus and William of Ockham

Duns Scotus wrote after the Condemnations of 1277, which led to an increasing separation of faith and theology, on the one hand, and reason and philosophy, on the other, which in turn resulted in a growing voluntarist understanding of God, rather than the other way around. (Van Nieuwenhove, 2013) This voluntarism was to have important ramifications for both his own and later scholastic soteriology, such as Ockham's.

Duns Scotus is mainly remembered for his defence of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary – a doctrine which had been rejected by the major thirteenth century scholastics as it appeared to undermine the universality of Christ's salvific activity, which is why they argued that Mary's sanctification occurred *in utero* sometime after her conception. Duns Scotus also explicitly argued that the Incarnation and the predestination of Jesus would have taken place, even if sin had not occurred (*Lect. Par*. III, 19,7) – thus radicalising the views on this issue of his predecessors.

Duns Scotus is in some ways an innovator, and in other ways a transitional figure: while he retains a realist outlook (as distinct from Ockham's later nominalism) he does introduce a moderate voluntarism in theology. This voluntarism is aimed at safeguarding God's utter freedom and transcendence: 'no other good, apart from God himself, functions as a reason for God's willing' (*Rep. Par. I-A,* d.41 sol. q., no. 55), and if something is right or good it is such 'not simply on account of right reason, but insofar as it is willed by God' (*Rep. Par. I-A,* d.44 q.2 no.31). This perspective has important implications for soteriology. Duns Scotus adopts the theory of satisfaction (*Lect. Par.* III, 20; *Ord*. III, d.20 un., n.3 & 10; *Ord*. IV, d.15, q.1) but he differs from Anselm on a number of issues. First, Duns Scotus denies that the offense caused by Adam's sin is intrinsically infinite – which was a key presupposition of Anselm and his followers. He further denies (*Lect*. III, d.20, q.1, no. 39) that satisfaction for sin could only have occurred through a God-man (again aiming to safeguard God's utter freedom). In contrast to his predecessors Duns Scotus is of the view that a pure creature could have made satisfaction for humanity. This does not take anything away from the glory of God, on the contrary. As Andrew Rosato puts it (Rosato 2009:175): '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.'

Scotus pays particular attention to the questions how Christ's atonement is the source of merit. Christ's saving work is only considered meritorious because God deems it such (*Ord*. III, d. 19, q. un., no. 7). This does not mean that, for Duns Scotus, divine *acceptatio* is utterly arbitrary. The divine acceptance of Christ's merit is based, not on his divine Personhood (a theological position which Scotus considers problematic, if only because it downplays the role of Christ's human will) but it is grounded on the created will and created grace of the God-man (Rosato 2009:165ff). Andrew S. Yang has made clear *acceptatio* is a 'broad theological term' that does not simply refer to the fact that God passively accepts our good acts performed at the stirring of the infused habit of charity. It can also refer, in a more active sense, to the divine ordination to accept such acts as meritorious in accordance with his eternal will, which provides the ontological basis for the passive acceptance. Duns Scotus's notion of divine *acceptatio* thus aims to underscore that ultimately the divine will, rather than secondary causes, is the cause of merit:

[It] means that there is a higher cause of God's passive acceptance of X than the fact that X is of such meritorious worth, and that this cause is none other than the *acceptatio* by which God has preordained X as an act meritorious of a certain reward and has promised to passively accept it in the future as such. Therefore, Scotus' voluntarism is not as extreme as some scholars allege. (Yang 2009: 432-33).

Scotus' moderate voluntarism further extends to his understanding of sin (where he adopts a forensic notion) and his view on sacraments (here he refuses to attribute instrumental causality), and ethics (his rejection of eudaimonistic ethics). (Van Nieuwenhove 2013:240). Thus, while Scotus's voluntarism is not as radical as is often alleged, the integrative dimension begins nonetheless to crumble in his theological outlook. The emphasis shifts to questions of merit and divine acceptance, while the intrinsic connections between theology of the Trinity, soteriology, and sacramentology are beginning to wane. It is, however, in the theology of William of Ockham that we find a more radical exponent of this approach.

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William of Ockham is best remembered for his nominalist position, namely, the philosophical view that universals are nothing but names, and every mind-independent thing is particular. Universality is a feature of our cognitive acts and does not refer to anything outside the mind. This nominalist position is a clear departure from the realist stance of Duns Scotus and his thirteenth century predecessors (Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas). William, however, further radicalises Duns Scotus's voluntarism and his aversion of Neoplatonism. Like Duns Scotus, Ockham operates with a strong understanding of divine freedom and omnipotence. This also implies a rejection of divine ideas.

It is here, perhaps, that William's main contribution lies (rather than in his nominalism as such): if the world consists solely of individual items, and universals have no real ontological status, the Christian Neoplatonic world loses its rational foundation. There are no longer any divine ideas (for they were, of course, universals), or rather: divine ideas operate no longer as exemplars of created beings but are nothing but the immediate knowledge God has of creatures themselves. This rules traditional exemplarism out, and with its demise the world loses its intrinsic ontological intelligibility, which explains why Ockham is often portrayed as a philosopher who prepares the way for both a more empiricist or experiential approach, and a more fideist one. Moreover, as I argued elsewhere (Van Nieuwenhove 2013:256-263), the rejection of divine ideas implies the demise of the medieval sacramental worldview in which creation is a pointer towards God, and makes him present. Accordingly, it will also do away with the transcendental thrust of medieval theology, opening the way for a more *diesseitig* approach to the world.

We have only a fragmentary *Reportatio* of his comments on Book III of the *Sentences*, consisting of only 12 questions. Of these only questions 8 (on grace in the soul of Christ) and 10 (on the Incarnation) have a general Christological rather than soteriological relevance in the strict sense. The reader will search in vain for an extended discussion of Anselm's theory of salvation in any of Ockham's writings. This is not surprising: if the distinction between divine mercy and justice is a mere conceptual one, Anselm's concern to harmonise them must look rather futile. (McGrath 1985: 189)

While he shares voluntarism with Duns Scotus, Ockham's version of voluntarism is fairly radical: 'if God wants it, by that very fact it is just' (IV *Sent*. q.10-11). This has implications for his theory of salvation. For instance, Ockham will argue that 'a human being is able by the absolute power of God to be saved without created charity' (*Quodlib*. VI, q.1 a.2). Clearly, Ockham radicalises Duns Scotus's divine *acceptatio* theory. Only God decides the worth of a person or an action, and nothing is meritorious save by God's acceptance. On the other hand, the point should not be over-emphasised: after all, Ockham is happy enough to state (ibid.) that 'according to the laws now ordained by God, no human being will ever be saved (...) without created grace.' Thus, the contrast between ordained and absolute power aims to stress the radical contingency of everything that is not God, and that the world as we know is not necessary. Such a view does not necessarily imply the concept of an arbitrary God. Indeed, rather than construing it in terms of an arbitrary God, the distinction between God's *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* marks 'the voluntary self-limitation of the omnipotent God and hence the non-necessary contingent nature of the established order of creation and redemption.' (Oberman 1987:460)

What is more worrying than voluntarism as such, I think, is the fact that the world has lost its inner intelligibility (the rejection of divine ideas embedded in creation) and its sacramental character, resulting in a loss of the transcendental thrust of medieval scholastic thought in the fourteenth century and, in general terms, the espousal of a more extrinsicist understanding of the world. Henceforth, 'a purely natural' understanding of the world develops, and the integrative vision that permeated scholastic theology in the thirteenth century dissolves. Thus, Ockham operates not only with a strong acceptation-theory, but also with an extrinsicist and forensic understanding of grace and sin (Aers 2009: 31). Mortal sin, for instance, cannot be defined in real terms but only in nominal terms: it is that which is forbidden by God, or that which we omit to do although it has been ordered by God (IV *Sent*. q. 10-11). Again, salvation depends solely on divine acceptance, and downplays the role of infused habits or the virtue of charity. In the words of one scholar, sympathetically disposed towards Ockham's outlook:

> Ockham's point is that nothing in the natural world dictates the order of salvation. Beatific vision and damnation do not depend on the intrinsic nature of things but solely on the will of God. Hence the rules of salvation are an external

order not unlike the legal systems of human rulers, who regulate rewards and punishments by statute.' (Wood 1997: 268-269)

Given his individualism Ockham further fails to develop the notion of the Church as the Body of Christ; and the connection effected by charity between the virtues becomes weakened.

It is not difficult to see Ockham as a precursor of Protestant theology which will consider sin and salvation mainly in forensic terms. Medieval theologians, in contrast, had considered sin as a distortion of created reality. Through their critique of the divine ideas and rejection of exemplarism – a move that was inspired by their espousal of a voluntarist God whose power and freedom could not possibly be limited by a rationality outside of himself – Ockham and his followers inaugurated a world which has lost its transcendental intelligibility. Sin, too, comes to be understood mainly in terms of an offence against God (i.e., a forensic notion) which can be dealt with through an extrinsicist justification. Similarly, the merit of Christ, also, is imputed by God (divine *acceptatio*) – an idea John Calvin was to adopt in his *Institutes of Christian Religion* II, 17.1-5.

Part III. Jan van Ruusbroec

The more integrated vision of salvation was, however, not to disappear altogether. Indeed, it continued to find expression in the writings of some of the fourteenth century mystical theologians. As Denys Turner will discuss this topic in the following chapter, a number of brief references to one mystical theologian, Jan van Ruusbroec, will have to suffice.

While Ruusbroec appears to adopt the Anselmic theory of salvation his main contribution lies elsewhere. He is more interested in describing our transformation through the modelling of our life on that of Christ, enabling us to participate in the intra-Trinitarian dynamics. In his first book, *The Realm of Lovers,* Christocentric and Trinitarian emphases are further enriched by weaving the gifts of the Holy Spirit and angelic hierarchies into a complex picture that forms the backdrop for an outline of our transformation. I will first deal with the Trinitarian aspect; then I will consider the role of the Word Incarnate, and finally I will mention, by way of example, how one of gifts of the Holy Spirit is integrated into Ruusbroec's outline of our transformation.

For Ruusbroec, the acme of the Christian life is the 'common life' *(ghemeyne leven)*, perhaps best translated as the Catholic or universal life. In order to understand its meaning, I need first to sketch his theology of the Trinity.

Ruusbroec adopts the Bonaventurean doctrine, according to which the Father generates his Word from the fruitfulness of his paternal nature, and from the mutual contemplation of Father and Son the Holy Spirit proceeds as their Bond of Love. Ruusbroec calls this (the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit) the 'out-going' aspect of the Trinity. He then makes an original move: he claims that the Holy Spirit, as the Bond of Love of Father and Son, is the principle of the return of the divine Persons into their shared perichoretic unity – this is the 'in-going' dimension of the Trinity – where the divine Persons then find 'rest' – this is the moment of fruition or rest. From here the process starts all over again, in its threefold dynamic ('going-out'; 'going-in'; 'fruition'), allowing him to describe the Trinity in highly dynamic terms as 'an ebbing, flowing sea' (Van Nieuwenhove 2003a).

The real significance of this original Trinitarian theology is the way it shapes the life of the Christian: the Christian is called to share in the 'out-going' dimension (a life of charity, engaging actively with the external world); in the 'in-going' aspect (a life of devotion and interiority); and in a life of contemplation and fruition of God (in the Augustinian sense of 'enjoying God', namely God as the ultimate concern in life). The contemplative life, however, is not the highest for Ruusbroec. As indicated, his ideal is the common life, which combines all three dimensions in a harmonious synthesis (charitable activity, interiority, contemplation).

If Ruusbroec's ideal is deeply Trinitarian, it is no less Christocentric for that. For Christ is, of course, 'the common person', the one who is without cease contemplating and active:

> Christ is, in accordance with his humanity, the greatest contemplative that ever was, for he was one with Wisdom, and he himself was the Wisdom with which we contemplate. Yet he was also actively meeting the needs of people in his works of charity, while contemplating the countenance of the Father without cease. And this is the nobility of this gift: to be active and contemplative, and remain unhindered, as much as one can. (*Realm*, 2158-64)

The 'nobility of this gift' refers to the gift of understanding (Latin: *intellectus*), one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Ruusbroec further relates it to the beatitude of the pure of heart, who will see God – for these people have become so like Christ, the Wisdom and Image of God, that they do not become distracted (*onverbeeldet*) by earthly temptations.

From this brief outline it will have become clear that Ruusbroec adopts the exemplarism of the Augustinian-Bonaventurean tradition but he develops it in a more theological-anthropological manner. While acknowledging that the sacramentality and intelligibility of the world is due to its ideal existence as divine exemplars (*Realm*, 2076-2103), he pays particular attention to how the soul is attuned to union with the Image of God, the second Person of the Trinity. He ends his book by describing how the Christian becomes transformed (*ghetransformeert*)

by the eternal Image, the Wisdom of the Father, who is an Image and Exemplar of all creatures. In this Image all material and spiritual things have their life. Through this Image all creatures flow into their created being, and receive a likeness to God. (…) But the noble, common person is most alike [to God], for he flows out with virtues, and in this he resembles God, who flows out with his gifts; and he remains in eternal enjoyment, and there he is one with God beyond all gifts. This is an enlightened common person in a most noble fashion. (*Realm*, 2749-56)

Thus, Ruusbroec is one of the last heirs to a Christian-Neoplatonist tradition in which exemplarism grounds the sacramentality and intelligibility of creation, and moulds the human person in such a way as to be naturally attuned to becoming transformed in Christ, the Image and Exemplar of God, through whom we come to participate in the intra-Trinitarian dynamics of activity and fruition.

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