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PAPAL TEACHING ON JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

Daniel J. Heisey*

Since 1966 three Popes have spoken and written on John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308), and this essay traces the history of the development of nearly fifty years of papal teaching. That teaching began right after the close of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), but the roots of papal teaching on Scotus go back much farther. Within Catholic intellectual circles, at least, Scotus remains a controversial figure, and part of the historical context for the developing papal teaching on Scotus involves longstanding scholarly misgivings about some of Scotus' ideas and certain interpretations they have received.

Scotus seems to be absent, at least in name, from papal writings before the mid-1960s. For example, although Scotus is associated with defending belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception, he is not mentioned in a century of papal teaching on that dogma. The Apostolic Constitution of Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854), infallibly defining for Catholics that belief, the Encyclical Letter of Pius X, *Ad diem illum laetissimum* (1904), commemorating fifty years of *Ineffabilis Deus*, and the Encyclical Letter of Pius XII, *Fulgens corona* (1953), marking the centenary of *Ineffabilis Deus*, while bearing the stamp of his argument, make no reference to Scotus himself.[1]

This essay considers an Apostolic Letter of Paul VI, *Alma parens* (1966), the homily by John Paul II for the beatification of Scotus (1993), John Paul II's address to members of the Scotus Commission (2002), an Apostolic Letter by Benedict XVI, *Laetare, Colonia Urbs* (2008), and a general audience by Benedict XVI given on Wednesday, 7 July, 2010. These five papal texts place Scotus within the framework established by Vatican I and its Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* (1870), as well as within the scope of Vatican II, especially its decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964).

In 2010 Gonçalo Figueiredo, of the University of Coimbra, surveyed these papal documents on Scotus, giving a summary of each in turn.[2] While noting the role of Scotus in discussions of Christian unity, he concluded that these three post-conciliar Popes were also using Scotus to expand the Church's intellectual reach beyond the realm of Thomism. This present essay, taking into consideration the historical context as well, discerns a corresponding pattern.

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[1] For Scotus and Mary, see Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 303-304; Sarah Jane Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 212-214; Hilda C. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, vol. 1 (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 300-302; for Scotus' Mariology, see Luigi Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages: The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thought of Medieval Latin Theologians*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 243-252.

[2] Gonçalo Figueiredo, "Duns Escoto nos Papas pós Concilares," *Itinerarium: Revista Quadrimestral de Cultura* 56 (May/December, 2010): 293-318.

Within the wider context of the two Vatican councils, papal teaching thus far on Scotus indicates his emerging importance for ongoing conversation amongst various Christian communities, particularly on a scholarly level discussing how questions of faith and reason intersect. While proposing and promoting such discussion, the Popes nevertheless have avoided outlining and imposing a detailed agenda for dialogue based on the works of Scotus. Despite enjoying a reputation as a Marian theologian, Scotus' Mariology has played at best a minor role in the ordinary magisterial teaching of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI.

Paul VI and Scotus' Ecumenical Role

The occasion for Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Alma parens* was a pair of scholarly conferences on Scotus held in mid-September of 1966 at Oxford and Edinburgh.[3] That year was selected to mark 700 years since Scotus' birth. As his name implies, he had hailed from the kingdom of Scotland, his home believed to be the village of Duns in Berwickshire, and after entering the Franciscans, he studied and taught at universities in Oxford, Cambridge (probably), Paris, and Cologne. He died in Cologne and lies entombed in the Franciscan church there. Beyond those points, his biography remains sketchy.[4]

Since those modern conferences were to include scholars and clergy from various Christian communities, Paul VI spoke in general terms about the ecumenical role Scotus could play.[5] In the Pope's view, Scotus' adherence to the Augustinian tradition prevalent within medieval Franciscan thought allowed him to establish common ground with different branches of the Augustinian school which had diverged considerably since the early sixteenth century. When Paul VI wrote *Alma parens*, Vatican II's decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio,* was new on the scene and the pope eventually took action when he met officially in Jerusalem with the Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras and in Rome with the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey.

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[3] Paul VI, *Alma parens*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 609-614; for an English translation (used here), see the Appendix of Stefano M. Manelli, *Blessed John Duns Scotus: Marian Doctor* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2011), 103-110; also "Oxford's Duns Scotus," *The Tablet* (10 September, 1966): 1015; "The Relevance of Scotus," *The Tablet* (17 September, 1966): 1054. See also Hyginus Eugene Cardinale, "The Significance of the Apostolic Letter *Alma parens* of Pope Paul VI," in *De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti: Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis Oxonii et Edimburgi, 11-17 Sept. 1966 Celebrati*, ed. , vol. 1, Studia Scholastico-Scotistica 1 (Rome: Commissionis Scotisticae, 1968): 54-61.

[4] Mary Beth Ingham and Mechtild Dreyer, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus: An Introduction* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 9-16; Thomas Williams, "Introduction: The Life and Works of John Duns the Scot," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-6; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, Great Medieval Thinkers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3-4. The sketchiness of Scotus' biography allows for dramatic license, a television film having been produced: *Blessed Duns Scotus: Defender of the Immaculate Conception* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011); Adriano Braidotti portrayed Scotus. It must be noted that the screen credits explain that a scene wherein Scotus speaks about the Eucharist derives from a meditation by Chiara Lubich (1920-2008). In 2011 this movie won Best Film and Best Actor at the Vatican's second annual Mirabile Dictu International Catholic Film Festival.

[5] The ecumenical theme occurred also in Pacificus Kennedy, "John Duns Scotus: The Subtle Doctor," *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 67 (December, 1966): 217; Keith P. O'Brien, "A 'Saint for Europe'," *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English (12-24 March, 1993): 4.

In *Alma parens,* addressed in large part to British Christians, Paul VI cited a joint declaration made earlier in 1966 in Rome by him and Michael Ramsey. With *Alma parens*, the theology of Scotus thus became another way for Rome to extend what both the King James Version and the Douay-Rheims called "the right hand of fellowship" (Gal 2:9). Cheerful optimism is the general tone of this Apostolic Letter of Paul VI, although Ramsey and his advisors were at a loss what to make of the Pope's suggestion that a thirteenth-century schoolman could serve as the basis for twentieth-century dialogue.[6] Paul VI seems to have been suggesting an interesting topic for further discussion, the details to be worked out in conversation at some unspecified time. In terms of particular points of Scotus' teaching, what exactly he had in mind for such dialogue stands beyond the historian's competence to speculate.

"The teachings of Scotus," wrote Paul VI, "could perhaps provide the golden framework for this serious dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion and the other Christian Communities of Great Britain." Tacitly acknowledging centuries of British Protestant suspicion of Roman Catholicism as the superstitious schema of a hostile foreign monarch, Paul VI pointed out that for three hundred years before the Reformation, Scotus' "doctrine was commonly taught in the schools of Britain, not a foreign imposition but brought to flower on the fertile soil of Scotus' native land. To put emphasis on Scotus' usefulness in furthering modern ecumenical dialogue, the Pope quoted an observation regarding Scotus made by Jean Gerson (1363-1429), that Scotus sought "not to assert himself with quarrelsome singularity, but with humility to establish concord."

However vaguely stated, that concord and fellowship already existed to the extent that all Christians bore common witness to the faith in the fact of critics and doubters in the secular world, and somewhat surprisingly the Pope also noted the place that Scholastic thought could hold in modern discourse. Paul VI pointed to *Aeterni patris* (1879), Leo XIII's encyclical letter on Thomas Aquinas, and said that while Leo XIII encouraged Thomism, he also extolled other Scholastic doctors, with Leo XIII naming as one example Bonaventure. Therefore, Paul VI concluded, Scotus could be ranked among them, though not surpassing or supplanting Aquinas.

It was a daring extrapolation from an encyclical letter advocating that Catholic scholars study and adopt Thomistic thought. Nevertheless, it would appear that Paul VI was seeking to ground his insights about Scotus in the deeper tradition of papal teaching, and he seems to have perceived that Leo XIII intended a broader purpose, the promotion of the Scholastic method in an era marked by empiricism, utilitarianism, and materialism.

Further to the point, Leo XIII, and by extension Paul VI, was ultimately rooting his endorsement of Scholastic thought in a conciliar document from Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, which itself drew upon some fifteen centuries of Catholic intellectual life. Just as Leo XIII had devoted much of his pontificate to interpreting and applying the teachings of Vatican I,[7] so too did Paul VI dedicate a major part of his reign to explaining and implementing those of Vatican II. In so doing, both Popes were aware of centuries of theological continuity, and

[6] Owen Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 325. In person, Paul VI reminded Ramsey about the English saints (all medieval) venerated both by Rome and by Canterbury: Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 462.

[7] Raymond de Souza, "Two Popes," *First Things* 136 (October, 2003): 36-40.

thus they understood that their respective Church councils depended upon the Council of Trent and its predecessors.

The philosophical perils of the nineteenth century had mutated into more monstrous forms during the twentieth century, and so Paul VI sought to enlist once again Scholasticism against what he called "the black cloud of atheism which hangs darkly over our age." To that end the Pope praised Scotus' "noble attempt to find harmony between natural and supernatural truths." Paul VI's concern over the threat of atheism came six years before his now famous homily of 29 June, 1972, in which he warned that "the smoke of Satan" had entered the Church. From even a year after the Second Vatican Council closed, Paul VI saw that the Church needed to deploy both faith and reason to combat the persistent errors of the post-Enlightenment secular mind, errors that could also infect the sacred.

John Paul II and Scotus' Beatification

Although John Paul II did not cite Duns Scotus in his Marian Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), a few years later he made a significant contribution to the Church's esteem for Scotus, namely for his life of holiness and virtue. In July, 1991, John Paul II declared Scotus to be venerable; in March, 1993, he beatified him. In his homily at Saint Peter's Basilica for the beatification, John Paul II noted that from the time of Scotus' death in 1308 there had been here and there local veneration of him, and said that the glory of the Lord "shines forth in the teaching and holiness of life of Blessed John, minstrel of the Incarnate Word and defender of Mary's Immaculate Conception." [8] This emphasis on personal holiness is to be expected in a homily for someone's beatification, and the Pope explained further why Scotus was important in the late twentieth century.

The Pope observed that although the modern age abounds in "a wealth of human, scientific, and technological resources," many people "have lost a sense of faith and lead a life distant from Christ and his Gospel." In that situation, said the Pope, "Blessed Duns Scotus presents himself not only with his sharp mind and extraordinary ability to penetrate the mystery of God, but also with persuasive power of his holiness of life which for the Church and the whole of humanity makes him a teacher of thought and life." John Paul II quoted from Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Alma parens* citing the statement by Jean Gerson about Scotus working not to assert himself but to build up concord. John Paul II also quoted Paul VI's words about Scotus helping to combat the dark forces of atheism. With the beatification of John Duns Scotus, we see the ordinary Magisterium of the Church developing, one Pope building upon the teaching of another.

Early in 2002 John Paul II addressed members of the Scotus Commission.[9] While this address was primarily an expression of thanks and an exhortation to these scholars to continue their work of editing and publishing the writings of John Duns Scotus, it reiterated

[8] John Paul II, "Christians Follow Different Paths to the Same Destination," *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English (12-24 March, 1993): 1 and 4; see also John Paul II, "Authentic Witnesses of the Gospel," *The Pope Speaks* 38 (July/August, 1993): 245-248. Quotations here come from the version in the English language edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*.

[9] John Paul II, "Address to the Members of the Scotus Commission," (16 February, 2002); English text, Manelli, *Blessed John Duns Scotus*, 111-113, apparently taken from that found on the Vatican's web site.

the main points made in Paul VI's *Alma parens* and in John Paul II's own homily for Scotus' beatification. Here John Paul II again quoted *Alma parens* on Scotus' role in current ecumenical dialogue, and because of Scotus' balanced use of human reason and divine revelation, the Pope called Scotus "a pillar of Catholic theology." So, by the dawn of the third millennium, three papal documents had set a new course for Catholic assessment of John Duns Scotus.

Excursus: Scotus Before Paul VI and John Paul II

Even though Paul VI cited Leo XIII, this papal attention given to John Duns Scotus seemed to appear without precedent. As we have seen, prior to Paul VI, Scotus went unnamed in papal letters and homilies. Then, in twenty-six years, Scotus went from a rather suspect (or at least problematic) theologian to one being held up by one Pope as an ecumenical example, and then by another Pope as someone worthy of commemoration at the altar. Clearly, these two Popes were charting a sea change in Scotus' reputation within the Catholic Church. To appreciate that change in course, it is worth pausing to review where matters stood before 1966.

By the beginning of the twentieth century Roman Catholic scholars were reserved in their estimation of Scotus, deviating as he did from the conclusions of Thomas Aquinas.[10] Amidst scholarly reticence there had been a sonnet, published posthumously in 1918, by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), celebrating Scotus as one "Who fired France for Mary without spot," but Hopkins was then an obscure poet with limited yet loyal admirers.[11] By the time of the pontificate of Paul VI, Étienne Gilson had published a vast and judicious study of Scotus' philosophical work in 1952, comparing and contrasting Scotus and Aquinas.[12] For three decades, both in Rome and in Croatia, Karlo Balić had been editing volumes of Scotus' writings, providing them with prefaces in Latin.[13] Since Paul VI had set in motion papal teaching on Scotus by addressing scholarly conferences in English-speaking lands, our attention here turns to writers in that language.

Let three examples suffice. Writing in the late 1950s, Frederick Copleston, a Jesuit, observed that, "[a]s a positive and constructive system," Scotus' philosophy "belongs to the thirteenth century, the century which witnessed the philosophies of St. Bonaventure and, above all, of St. Thomas;" and yet, "in its critical aspects and in its voluntaristic elements, associated though the latter are with Augustinian-Franciscan tradition, it looks forward to

[10] Timothy B. Noone, "Universals and Individuation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, 100; Efrem Bettoni, *Duns Scotus: The Basic Principles of His Philosophy*, trans. Bernardine Bonansea (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1961), 185-186.

[11] Robert Bridges, ed., *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins,* 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 40; Elgin W. Mellown, "The Reception of Gerard Manley Hopkins' *Poems*, 1918-30," *Modern Philology* 63 (August, 1965): 38-51; R. V. Young, "Hopkins, Scotus, and the Predication of Being," *Renascence* 42 (Fall, 1989,-Winter, 1990): 35-50.

[12] Étienne Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot: Introduction a ses Positions Fondementales*, Études de Philosophie Médiévale 42 (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1952). See also Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), 454-464; Etienne Gilson, "Doctrinal History and its Interpretation," *Speculum* 24 (October, 1949): 482-492.

[13] Carolus Balić, ed., *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950-). Carolus Balić, ed., *Joannis Duns Scoti: Theologiae Marianae Elementa*, Bibliotheca mariana medii aevi 2 (Šibenik, Yugoslavia: Typographia Kačić, 1933).

the fourteenth century," that of William of Ockham and his Nominalism.[14] He also wrote, "[T]hough Scotus was undoubtedly a man of genius, a thinker of great speculative and analytic ability, one may perhaps say that it was St. Bonaventure who stood nearer in thought, as in time, to the spirit" of Saint Francis of Assisi.[15]

Around the same time, a Benedictine, David Knowles, saw the era and arguments of Scotus as the beginnings of a rift that would lead to the post-Reformation intelligentsia taking as axiomatic that there exists an unbridgeable opposition between faith and reason, science and religion. "Though there is nothing of the sceptic in Duns," Knowles wrote, "and though his theology is in all its basic principles the same as that of Aquinas, the realms of philosophy and theology are beginning to fall apart each into its own focus, in a way unfamiliar to the traditions of both Bonaventure and of Aquinas."[16] Nonetheless, Knowles acknowledged that although the origins of such a conflict can be located during the career of Scotus, he was not its originator. Scotus, Knowles conceded, "was indeed in every way wholly orthodox, whatever may be thought of his influence as a metaphysician or natural theologian."[17]

When writing about the era of the Counter-Reformation, Monsignor Philip Hughes noted the "somewhat startling" deference given to Scotus, as well as to Aquinas and Augustine, by Richard Hooker (c. 1554-1600) in his *Treatise on the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,* an eight-volume exposition of the Anglican *via media*.[18] Hughes had explained, in the third volume of his three-volume history of the Church, published in the late 1940s, the troubling metaphysical mistakes that some scholars derived from Scotus' philosophical writings. He then wrote that to know only Scotus' philosophical works "is, of course, to know him barely at all."[19] Hughes encouraged the reader to consider other facets of Scotus' life and work, including his personal holiness. Hughes maintained with conviction that Scotus' holiness would be formally recognized and sanctioned by the Catholic Church.

By implication, Scotus' beatification seemed to set aside the qualms or concerns of orthodox intellectuals, whether chroniclers of the history of philosophy, like Copleston, or the history of religious orders, like Knowles, and meanwhile to vindicate the prescience of a cautious narrative historian like Hughes. Too glib may be what *The Tablet* opined, that

[14] Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, The Bellarmine Series 12, vol. 2 (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1959), 485. See also F. C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 213-229.

[15] Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, 242.

[16] David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962), 308.

[17] David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 238. See David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 75, making the distinction between Scotus and other Scholastics who sought always to elucidate and clarify the deposit of faith and William of Ockham and others who always sought to criticize and restate it.

[18] Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, vol. 3 (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954), 218.

[19] Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church*, vol. 3 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1947), 119. See Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Reformation* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1957), 28-29, where Scotus is presented as "a genius" engaged in an "academic world" that was "seething with a passion for fundamental analysis and criticism."

Scotus' "humanist and Reforming critics, opponents of the medieval schoolmen, who expressed their contempt in the word 'dunce,' have got their comeuppance."[20]

Still, John Paul II giving official recognition of Scotus' holiness and citing Paul VI's commendation of Scotus' Scholasticism could well leave Scotus' Catholic critics disconcerted for some time to come. In the meantime, scholarly interest in Scotus has grown: in 2003 appeared *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, and the October, 2005, issue of the journal *Modern Theology,* and the September/December, 2009, issue of the journal *Itinerarium* focused on Scotus.

Benedict XVI and Scotus the Thinker

To mark 700 years since the death of Scotus, Benedict XVI issued in 2008 an Apostolic Letter addressed to Joachim Cardinal Meisner and others participating in a commemorative symposium held in Cologne, where Scotus is buried.[21] In this letter Benedict XVI began by recalling the words of praise for Scotus offered by Paul VI and John Paul II. He then wrote that Scotus distinguished himself "by contributing to the progress of the doctrine of the Church and of human science." Benedict XVI wrote that Scotus combined "piety with scientific research," and so the Pope said that he desired "to remind scholars and everyone, believers and non-believers alike, of the path and method that Scotus followed in order to establish harmony between faith and reason." Here may be an echo of Jean Gerson's comment about humility and concord.

While being "[f]irmly anchored to the Catholic faith," wrote the Pope, "Duns Scotus strove to understand, explain, and defend the truth of the faith in the light of human reason." In so doing, Benedict XVI underscored, Scotus "strove to do nothing other than show the consonance of all truths, natural and supernatural, that come from one and the same Source." Thus mentioning God, the Pope noted that "[t]he primacy of the will sheds light on the fact that God is charity before all else." With an allusion to his first Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), Benedict XVI wrote that he saw "with joy that the unique doctrine of this Blessed keeps a special place for this truth, which we consider principally worthy to be researched and taught in our time." In this brief letter on the relevance of Scotus, Benedict XVI rang out essential themes of faith and reason, truth and love.

Two years later, Benedict XVI also addressed the life and works of Scotus during his weekly general audience, occasions he used for delivering a series of popular lectures on important people and ideas from Church history.[22] On that summer day in 2010, Benedict XVI began by outlining the life of John Duns Scotus and quoted from John Paul II's homily for Scotus' beatification. Benedict XVI then turned to Scotus' teaching, and this address, later published as an essay, stands thus far as the longest papal text on Scotus.

According to Benedict XVI, Scotus' great contributions to theology were his writings on the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and Mary. Scotus argued that, even if there had never been a

[20] "A Saint in the Making," *The Tablet* (12 December, 1992): 1568.

[21] Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, *Laetare, Colonia Urbs* (28 October, 2008), on the 700th anniversary of the death of Scotus: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 101 (2009): 3-6. There is an English translation on the Vatican's web site.

[22] Benedict XVI, *Holy Men and Women of the Middle Ages and Beyond: General Audiences, 13 January, 2010, to 26 January, 2011* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 86-93.

Fall—no original sin—God would still have sent the Son. The Incarnation, said Scotus, was God's ultimate act of love, sending His Son into His creation. For Scotus, because of God's freedom, the Incarnation was not contingent upon human sin.

Because there had been a Fall, however, Christ's redeeming Passion, Death, and Resurrection were provided by God for human salvation. That salvific providence became manifest in the Eucharist. Benedict XVI then noted Scotus' defense, rare among scholars of his day, of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Part of Scotus' importance, said Benedict XVI, is his integrity and also therefore his courage to go against the prevailing scholarly consensus of his day.

As a means of showing that Scholasticism can have a meditative dimension, Benedict XVI told his audience that Scotus' "strongly 'Christocentric' theological vision opens us to contemplation, wonder, and gratitude." Benedict XVI declared that "Christ is the center of history and of the cosmos; it is he who gives meaning, dignity, and value to our lives!" Although Benedict XVI did not quote Paul VI's *Alma parens*, he did quote a homily given by Paul VI in 1970 in Manila. On that occasion Paul VI had spoken of Christ as the center of history and as an inexhaustible source for contemplation.

By way of summary, Benedict XVI touched upon a sensitive point for some reason steered clear of by Paul VI and John Paul II. That is, Benedict XVI noted that Scotus grappled with the question of human intellect and human free will, coming to believe a position at variance with what had been taught by Thomas Aquinas and that had derived from Augustine of Hippo. Scotus saw human freedom as a quality of the will, but he was careful also to see that the will follows the intellect; for him, freedom is not an innate and absolute quality of the will, preceding the intellect.

Later thinkers, however, believing they were building upon Scotus' teaching, invested the will with absolute freedom, apart from the intellect. Scotus' disciples gave the strong impression that Scotism should be associated with the still controversial topics of voluntarism and univocity. Both concepts have been adopted to advance arguments for individualism and relativism, but some modern scholars, such as Richard Cross and Thomas Williams, contend that those conclusions are not necessary results of Scotus' thought. These scholars maintain Scotus' claim for univocal theory, for example, is that it properly applies to logic, not metaphysics.[23]

It would seem that these recent Popes, certainly at least Benedict XVI, consider those points worth discussing. By encouraging scholars to approach Scotus as a model for a way to combine reason and faith, intellect and will, Benedict XVI and his two great predecessors seem also to be guiding but not determining the scholarly conversation. They appear to be

[23] See Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God*, Ashgate Studies in the History of Philosophical Theology (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 256-257; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 37-39. See also Thomas Williams, "The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutary," *Modern Theology* 21 (October, 2005): 575-585; Giorgio Pini, "Scotus on Hell," *The Modern Schoolman* 89 (July/October, 2012): 223-241. Related to these subjects is Scotus' understanding of Being: see Cross, *Duns Scotus on God,* 258-259; Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 43-45; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 5, trans. Oliver Davies, et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 18. Original edition, 1965. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 3, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 137-138. Original edition, 1987.

encouraging scholars to revisit, amongst other subjects, those two major disputed questions linked to Scotus and his complicated writings, dense works that earned him the designation of "The Subtle Doctor." To what end that scholarly re-examination could arrive, these recent Popes, learned men in their own right, have left open to wherever honest inquiry may lead.[24]

Conclusion

What emerges from reading these five papal documents is Scotus presented as a scholar and as a basis for ecumenical dialogue. As a representative of how an intellectual can combine faith and reason, Scotus may serve as a reminder of the First Vatican Council's teaching in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* about the complementary nature of faith and reason. As a figure of common Augustinian heritage for Catholics and Protestants, Scotus can bear witness to the ecumenical hope expressed in the Second Vatican Council's decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. As a university professor, Scotus' ecumenical appeal seems largely to attract modern academics, but from their learned conferences and publications may grow closer collaboration and deeper understanding amongst Christians outside the academy and of diverse confessions.

A striking innovation was Paul VI's use of Leo XIII's promotion of the Scholastic method employed by Thomas Aquinas to include the Scholasticism of Scotus as well. While Aquinas represented the use of Scholastic disputation to integrate the thought of Aristotle into a Christian system, Scotus used Aristotle and the Scholastic method from within the Platonic and Augustinian traditions. It is worth underlining the fact that for Paul VI the Scholastic method, in particular as handled by Scotus, held apologetic value especially against atheism in the post-conciliar era, although in the decades following that council Catholics seemed to be embarrassed by apologetics, perhaps considering them gauche or at least a faux pas in a new season of ecumenical talks.

Especially from John Paul II attention focused on Scotus' holiness and his Marian devotion, but on the whole, in these five papal documents Scotus' role as a defender of Marian doctrine received less notice. Since for Roman Catholics the question of Mary's Immaculate Conception was infallibly and dogmatically settled in 1854 by Pius IX, these three Popes in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries seem to have seen no need to enlist Scotus in defense of that dogma. Rather, those three Popes chose to place emphasis, at times vague, upon other aspects of Scotus' work, and it may be that future Popes will develop that emphasis in weightier ways, such as in an encyclical letter on Scotus or in a homily upon the occasion of his canonization.

[24] A point made well by Cross, *Duns Scotus on God*, 10: "I have found working slowly and carefully through Scotus' arguments has provided an unparalleled example of someone thinking painstakingly through a vast range of complex theological issues, and has been an opportunity to learn a great deal from a highly individual, creative, and thoughtful theologian. Scotus' beatification by Pope John Paul II in 1993 is testimony to the esteem in which Scotus' theological method is evidently still held."