

Recovering the Reformation:
Free Will, Merit and the Mass in Luther's Reformation

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Statement of Originality

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology at the University of Oxford.

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A wise man once said to me, ‘Theology is a subject that must be learned on your knees.’ Without intending to claim divine inspiration for this study, I must thank God for granting me the grace to write this thesis and the opportunity to know Him more closely by reading theology. I would also like to begin by thanking all the priests and faithful who have supported the writing of this study on the Mass. I would especially like to thank the priests and religious of Blackfriars and the Oxford Oratory, the Aquinas group, and the Jack Straws Lane community.

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Short Abstract

Recovering the Reformation: free will, merit and the Mass in Luther's Reformation

This thesis argues that Luther's reaction to Pelagianism within the Scotist tradition led to a decisive break with the scholastic theology of free will, merit and the Mass. However, by identifying the theological crux of Luther's Reformation, this thesis discovers a rapprochement in the free will theology of early Lutheranism and Counter-Reformation scholasticism. The case is made that Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will calls for a recovery of the Reformation significance of Luther's relation to scholasticism and provides the means for recovery in ecumenical dialogue today.

The thesis is presented in three parts. The first locates the origins of Luther's Reformation reaction to Pelagianism in the Scotist developments of free will, merit and the Mass from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Chapter One argues that Scotus's view of free will as autonomous volition had Pelagian repercussions on his teaching on merit. Chapter Two finds that Luther's charge of Pelagianism could similarly be applied to Scotus's theology of Eucharistic sacrifice, because the human will rather than Christ's cross is deemed by Scotus to be the source of merit in the Mass. Chapter Three examines the continued influence of Scotus's free will theology on the fifteenth-century debates concerning predestination. Scotus's free will legacy in these debates, gives historical justification for positing a connection between Scotus and Luther's denunciation of the Mass as a Pelagian work.

Part Two argues that Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will and the Mass as a testament constitutes a Reformation break with scholastic understandings of the meritorious agency of the human will. Chapter Four locates Luther's Reformation relation to the voluntarism of Ockham and Biel, the German mystical tradition, and his confessor Staupitz, in his denial that the human will attains a meritorious agency under grace. Chapter Five maintains that Luther's theology of the Mass as a testament reflects his rejection of Pelagianism and his Reformation article of passivity. In consequence, Luther's testament model is shown to be

incompatible with Cajetan's non-Pelagian theology of the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass.

Part Three affirms that Luther's belief in the passivity of the human will has Reformation significance, by examining the condemnations of Trent. However, by considering subsequent treatments on free will, it is possible to identify a convergence in late sixteenth-century Lutheran and Catholic theology. Chapter Six argues that Trent countered both the Scotist theory of merit and Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will. Luther's belief in passivity is shown to cause a Reformation rift in a way that the Scotist reformulation of free will does not, because it led Luther to renounce the meritorious offering of Masses. Chapter Seven shows that in the wake of the Majorist, Synergist and Flacian debates of early Lutheranism and the Catholic *de auxiliis* controversy, a parallel understanding of the free will to sin can be discerned. The Lutheran *Formula of Concord* (1577) relinquished Luther's Reformation article of passivity and offered a position which was in unconscious agreement with Trent.

The thesis concludes by applying the results of this historical study to key ecumenical documents on the Mass. It is suggested that the rediscovery of a historical consensus on free will, opens the door to a common understanding of merit as participation in Christ, and thus to a shared Lutheran and Catholic understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice.

Long Abstract

Recovering the Reformation: free will, merit and the Mass in Luther's Reformation

In light of the recent publication of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity *From Conflict to Communion*, which announced that the RC Church would join Lutherans in commemorating the 500th anniversary of Luther's Reformation in 2017, this study of free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass from the thirteenth to the early seventeenth centuries provides a timely exploration of key aspects of Luther's Reformation, and of its relationship to Catholic thought. This thesis argues that Luther's rejection of the meritorious offering of the sacrifice of the Mass calls for a recovery of the core article of the Reformation in Luther scholarship. It holds that Luther's belief in the passivity of the human will marks a Reformation break with scholasticism, and distinguishes his position from both the decrees of the Council of Trent and subsequent Catholic and Lutheran formulations of free will. However, in highlighting the passivity of the will as the Reformation article underpinning Luther's rejection of the merit of offering the Mass, this thesis reveals the subsequent Lutheran departure from Luther's doctrine of passivity, and discovers a sixteenth-century convergence in Lutheran and Catholic theology on free will.

The thesis opens with a discussion of two streams in historiography that have led some recent scholarship to undermine the Reformation content of Luther's theology. Firstly, in examining forerunners to the Reformation and medieval continuities in Luther's philosophy and mysticism, the research of scholars such as Oberman, Osbourne and Nugent has diminished the innovative character of Luther's theology. Secondly, historiography of the Reformation is affected by the ecumenical depiction of Luther as an 'authentic prophet' to the Catholic Church, expounded by Pesch, McSorley, Lehmann, Manns, Congar and Sobolewski. This would imply that no fundamental doctrinal division existed in the sixteenth century, or that it no longer needs to be perceived as conflicting with Catholicism. This thesis opposes this body of scholarship. In contrast, it presents the case that Luther's rejection of the sacrifice of the Mass reveals the Reformation relation of his theology of passivity to scholasticism, Trent, and later Catholic and Lutheran formulations of free will.

Part One argues that the origins of the fundamental break wrought by Luther's doctrine of the passivity of the will, lie in the Pelagianism of the Scotist view of free will. This is evident in the Scotus's teaching on the merit of the Mass, and present in the fifteenth-century debates on predestination. Considering Scotus's *Quodlibets*, Bonaventure's *Sentences* and Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*, Chapter One asks whether a Pelagian influx into scholastic thought can be traced to Scotus's thirteenth-century development of the theology of human freedom. It suggests that Scotus introduced a Pelagian view of merit, reformulating freedom to mean an indeterminate volition in human nature, which was capable, both of choosing against the dictates of reason, and of initiating a good act to merit the first grace of salvation.

Chapter Two refers to Scotus's *Quodlibets*, to explore the repercussions of his view of free will on his theology of the merit of offering the sacrifice of the Mass. It then asks whether Scotus's teaching could be seen as the source of Luther's denunciation of the Mass as a Pelagian work in his treatises *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), *A Treatise on the New Testament* (1520) and *The Abomination of the Secret Mass* (1525). It finds that Luther's theology of the Mass as a benefit, to be passively received, and his denunciation of the sacrifice of the Mass as a Pelagian work, can indeed be seen as a response to Scotus. Scotus problematically separates the sacrifice of the altar from the cross, and therefore explains the limited merit of the Mass as a consequence of finite human effort. Scotus therefore falls into a Pelagian interpretation of the Mass, because he believed human free will to be the source of salvific merit rather than its recipient.

Chapter Three selects key works, which exemplify approaches to predestination from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, in order to explore the legacy of Scotus's reformulation of free will in late scholastic thought. These include: *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge and Future Contingents* by Ockham (†1347), *The Cause of God against the Pelagians* by Bradwardine (†1349), *The Wisdom of Solomon* by Holcot (†1349), *The Theologia Germanica* by an anonymous author, the sermons of Tauler (†1361) and Gerson (†1429), and *Eternal Predestination and its Execution in Time* (1517) by Staupitz (†1524). The evidence for the Scotist view of free will in these treatises on predestination provides historical justification for positing a link between Luther's reaction to sixteenth-century Pelagianism and

Scotus's reformulation of free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass in the thirteenth century. Part One therefore concludes that the Scotist developments in scholasticism, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, presented Luther with a Pelagian interpretation of the merit of the Mass, and thus provoked his Reformation article of the passivity of the human will.

Part Two focuses on Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will and the Mass as a testament, and asks whether or not it represents a Reformation break with the spectrum of scholastic understandings of the meritorious agency of the human will. Chapter Four seeks to ascertain the extent to which Luther's theology of the human will was distinct from his scholastic heritage, by examining Luther's relation to the voluntarism of Ockham and Biel, to the German mystical tradition, and to his confessor Staupitz. In considering this question, this chapter considers Luther's theology in the following key texts: *The Heidelberg Disputation*, *The Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, *First Lectures on the Psalms* and *The Freedom of a Christian*. These works are compared to the mystical and voluntarist writings of Dionysius's *The Divine Names* (early sixth century), Tauler's *Sermons* (1300-1361), Biel's *The Circumcision of the Lord* (1460), and Staupitz's *Eternal Predestination* (1517). It is argued that Luther's theology of passivity parted ways with the most Augustinian of the scholastic voluntarists, because it denies that the human will becomes active, and thus meritorious, under the influence of grace. Chapter Five asks whether Luther's description of the Mass as a testament carries the same Reformation significance as his theology of the passivity of the human will. In determining whether Luther's theology of the Mass necessarily denotes a Reformation change, a selection of his key texts on the Mass are discussed in relation to Biel's *Exposition of the Canon of the Mass* (1488) and Cajetan's *The Celebration of the Eucharist* (1510). Luther's principal doctrinal texts on the Mass include: *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), *A Treatise on the New Testament* (1520), *The Misuse of the Mass* (1525), and *The Smalcald Articles* (1537). Chapter Five concludes that Luther's reconstruction of the Mass, from a sacrifice to a testament, reflects his theology of the passivity of the human will and is thus incompatible with Thomist understandings of the merit of the Mass as a sacrifice. Part Two therefore suggests that by examining the formation of Luther's understanding of the passivity of the human will and the Mass,

in the context of medieval scholasticism, the Scotist influence on Luther's Reformation reaction becomes apparent.

Part Three confirms the passivity of the human will as the heart of Luther's Reformation division, by comparing Luther's position to the decrees of the Council of Trent, and to the later Catholic and Lutheran formulations of the theology of free will, merit and the Mass. Chapter Six asks whether Luther, or the Pelagianism he opposed, were condemned by the Council of Trent. In examining Trent's approach to Luther's article of the passivity of the human will and the Scotist tradition, the decrees, canons, and Catechism of the Council of Trent are used as the principal points of reference. It is argued that Trent fought a theological battle on two fronts: against the Scotist theory of congruous merit and against Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will. However, Luther's belief in passivity is shown to have caused a Reformation rift, in a way that the Scotist reformulation did not, because it led Luther to a rejection of the theology and practice of offering Masses for the living and the dead.

Having confirmed that Luther's doctrine of passivity was condemned as a Reformation break by the decrees of Trent, Chapter Seven explores the extent to which the Lutheran Church relinquished this Reformation article in the series of controversies after Luther's death. Drawing on Lutheran discourses on the Majorist, Synergist and Flacian controversies, it argues that Luther's Reformation theology of the passivity of the human will was critically compromised. It points out that on the issues of good works, human cooperation, and the effects of original sin, Lutherans in the late sixteenth century came to an unconscious agreement with Trent. Indeed, by placing Lutheran controversies side by side with the Catholic *de auxiliis* controversy (1581-1607), exemplified in the writings of Bañez and Molina, it can be seen that both confessions not only underwent parallel discussions about free will, but also reached similar conclusions. In finding Luther's doctrine of the passivity of the human will to be incompatible with the decrees of Trent, Part Three firstly confirms its Reformation significance. The second finding, however, is that the renunciation of passivity in early Lutheranism, led to a hitherto unremarked convergence between Lutheran and Catholic doctrine on free will.

Finally, the Conclusion recapitulates the pivotal role of the passivity of the will in Luther's rejection of the merit of the Mass as a sacrifice, and addresses the positive implications of this recovery of Reformation difference for ecumenical dialogue. The implications of this historical study for modern ecumenism are explored in relation to the major texts arising from Catholic and Lutheran dialogue on free will, merit and the Mass: *The Eucharist: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement* (1967), the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999), and the recent publication *From Conflict to Communion* (2013). Here it can be seen that the convergence in Catholic and Lutheran formulations on the active agency of the human will, clears the way to a shared understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass. It is suggested that the language of participation rather than cooperation would help ecumenical dialogue to rediscover the essential unity between free will, merit and the Mass. The traditional Catholic terminology of cooperative merit fails to express adequately the Catholic teaching that cooperation is itself a grace. Describing merit as the fruit of the human cooperation appears to make the Scotist mistake of supposing the human free will to be a source of merit that is separate from Christ. In contrast, the terminology of participation clearly situates the human will in the life of Christ, and thus allows the Mass to be understood as a participation in his saving act. A theology of participation, therefore, recovers a Lutheran and Catholic convergence on the theology of free will, which has long since ended the need for Luther's Reformation rejection of the Mass as a sacrifice.

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Introduction

Recovering the Reformation: free will, merit and the Mass in Luther's Reformation

In light of *From Conflict to Communion*, the recent publication of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity, which announced that the Catholic Church would join Lutherans in commemorating the 500th anniversary of Luther's Reformation in 2017, this study of free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass from the thirteenth to the early seventeenth centuries provides a timely exploration of key aspects of Luther's Reformation.¹ This thesis argues that Luther's rejection of the meritorious offering of the sacrifice of the Mass calls for a recovery of the core article of the Reformation in Luther scholarship. To begin, it is necessary to discuss the current trends in historiography of Luther's Reformation. For instance, in preparing for the 2017 anniversary, what will be commemorated? Can post-conciliar Catholics join with Lutherans in viewing this commemoration as a celebration of Luther's triumph of the Gospel, or should Catholic remembrance of the Reformation remain one of mourning for a loss of doctrinal and visible Church unity?² *From Conflict to Communion* makes clear that this planned commemoration is founded on a change in the Catholic memory of the Reformation: 'What happened in the past cannot be changed, but what is remembered of the past and how it is remembered can, with the passage of time, indeed change.'³ This announcement illustrates a dramatic shift in Catholic historiography, from viewing Luther as a heretic, to heralding him as a Catholic prophet. It thus raises the question of the extent to which 'The Reformation,' as a decisive theological break with medieval scholasticism, still exists in the memory of sixteenth-century scholarship. The reassessment of Luther in Catholic theology therefore calls for a re-evaluation of the whole Reformation question. In Hillerbrand's words 'what we are dealing with is fundamentals,' because, if current scholarship

¹ The term 'Reformation' will be used to refer to Luther's break with scholastic theology. This thesis is aware that the Reformation has been used to refer to world wide religious, social and political change amongst both Catholics and Protestants. For introductions to the debate on the nature of the Reformation see: D. M. Whitford, *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research* (Kirkville, 2008) and M. A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation* (London, 1999).

² 'Catholic' is used in this thesis to refer the Roman Catholic Church.

³ *From Conflict to Communion*, 18.

posits no fundamental difference between Luther and Catholic doctrine, it is apt to follow Hillerbrand in asking, 'Was there a Reformation in the sixteenth century?'⁴

Luther's Reformation, as an event perceived to signal a decisive doctrinal breach with the Catholic Church, has been diminished on three fronts. Firstly, in examining forerunners of the Reformation and medieval continuities in Luther's philosophy and mysticism, the research of Oberman, Osbourne and Nugent has undermined the innovative character of Luther's theology.⁵ Thus Nugent describes Luther's Reformation 'as less a revolution than a "harvest" of earlier theological and spiritual motifs.'⁶ Secondly, Pesch, McSorley and Lehmann have focussed on the theological content of Luther's writings and reclaimed Luther as an 'authentic prophet' whose theology was in harmony with the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and the canons of the Council of Trent.⁷ Thirdly, the liturgical and ecumenical shifts, which have followed the Second Vatican Council, have caused scholars such as Manns, Congar and Sobolewski to question 'whether what was "un-Catholic" in the sixteenth century can be considered Catholic today?'⁸ Yet historical memory must take care not to succumb to forgetfulness in regard to Luther's Reformation, or to circumvent binding dogmas of Trent. The Reformation debates concerning central theological articles, such as justification, free will and the Mass, must be recalled for genuine ecumenical dialogue. Luther passionately proclaimed: 'By far and away the most impious abuse is that almost nothing in the Church of today is accepted with such passivity and with such certainty as the doctrine of the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice.'⁹ It is significant that the Catholic and Lutheran agreements do not address the Catholic doctrine of the meritorious offering of the sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the dead. *From Conflict to Communion* attributes this theology to 'the loss of an integrated concept of commemoration,'¹⁰ the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), reduces the satisfactory

⁴ Hillerbrand, 'Was there a Reformation in the sixteenth century?' 551.

⁵ Oberman, *Forerunners to the Reformation*.

⁶ Nugent, 'Mystical and Evangelical Theology in Martin Luther and St. John of the Cross,' 5.

⁷ McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?*; Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*; Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin*; Lehmann, *Justification by Faith: do the sixteenth-century condemnations still apply?*

⁸ Sobolewski, *Martin Luther Roman Catholic Prophet*, 51. See also: Manns, *Luther's Ecumenical Significance*, 86; Congar, *Divided Christendom*, 113-114.

⁹ Luther, *Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 79-113; Osbourne 'Faith, Philosophy and the Nominalist Background to Luther's Defence of the Real Presence,' 63-82.

¹⁰ *From Conflict to Communion*, 57.

power of offering Masses to intercessory prayer;¹¹ and the 1967 *The Eucharist: a Lutheran—Roman Catholic Statement* admits that ‘further exploration of it is required.’¹² Luther’s fundamental opposition to the merit of human free will in offering the sacrifice of the Mass is an issue which, as Power affirms, ‘does have to be squarely faced.’¹³ In undertaking an exploration of Luther’s theology of the Mass and its reception in the late medieval and Tridentine context, this study seeks to further ecumenical dialogue, by incorporating the controversial issues of free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass into the historiography of the Reformation. It is only by recovering the reasons why Luther believed the theology of free will and merit in offering the sacrifice of the Mass to be ‘the most wicked abuse,’¹⁴ a ‘work of evil scoundrels’¹⁵ and the ‘essence of the matter in dispute,’¹⁶ that 2017 can hope to overcome the sixteenth-century division, and share in the unity of celebrating the Eucharistic commemoration of Christian salvation in the sacrifice of the Mass.

The first part of this thesis engages with Luther’s theological relationship with his scholastic forbears.¹⁷ The case that Luther denounced a non-authentic wing of scholastic theology, in a spirit of genuine Catholic reform, was championed by Lortz, who argued in 1962 that: ‘Within himself Luther wrestled and overthrew a

¹¹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 10.

¹² *The Eucharist: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement* (1967), Article 3, c. For discussion of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic dialogue on the Eucharist in Germany see *Das Opfer Jesu Christi und seine Gegenwart in der Kirche*.

¹³ Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer*, 21.

¹⁴ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 35.

¹⁵ Luther, *The Smalcald Articles, Concord*, 123.

¹⁶ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 294.

¹⁷ In view of the limitations on word count, this thesis does not examine the influence of Erasmus on the formation of Luther’s theology of free will, merit and the Mass. The decision not to focus on Erasmus in a discussion on the theological origins of Luther’s Reformation has been informed by Luther’s letters. These letters demonstrate that from their first encounter, Luther expressed his disagreement with Erasmus’s humanist optimism regarding human nature. Luther’s earliest reference to Erasmus appears in his letter to Spalatin on 19 October 1516, WA Br 1, 70-71: ‘What disturbs me in Erasmus, that most erudite man, my Spalatin, is this: that in interpreting in the Apostle the righteousness of works, or of the law, or proper righteousness (as the Apostle calls it), he understands those ceremonial laws and figural observances; thereupon concerning original sin (which at least he accepts), he is unwilling for the Apostle to speak in Rom. 5.’ In 1517, Luther similarly remarks, WA Br 1, 90: ‘I am reading our Erasmus, but every day my regard for him diminishes. That he should so boldly attack the religious and the clergy pleases me, but I fear he does not sufficiently vindicate the rights of Christ and the grace of God. ... How different is the judgement of the man who yields something to free will from one who knows nothing but grace.’ Luther’s early rejection of Erasmus’s perspective reveals that Luther’s antagonism towards Pelagian accounts of the human will, and thus his theological orientation towards the sinfulness of human will, was formed prior to his engagement with Erasmus in 1525. For a discussion of Luther’s early attitudes on the will in relation to Erasmus’s theology see Kolb, *Bound Choice*, 11-15.

Catholicism that was not Catholic.’¹⁸ Lortz’s thesis that the Reformation was born of widespread theological vagueness, has been established in scholarship as the theory of *Unklarheit*.¹⁹ The thesis of Luther’s exposure to a corrupt theology of the Mass, and his corollary ignorance of Thomism, has found wide acceptance in the work of Daly, Janz, Oberman, Steinmetz, McDonough and McSorley, Gerrish and McGrath. Kilmartin comments: ‘One may sympathise with Luther to a degree when one considers what was presented as an acceptable theology of Eucharistic sacrifice by many of the chief Catholic apologists such as Johannes Eck and E. Esno, namely, Gabriel Biel’s theology of the sacrifice of the Mass.’²⁰ The common hermeneutic is therefore that Luther’s *via moderna* education was infected with a Pelagian view of free will, congruous merit and the Mass.²¹

¹⁸ Lortz, *The Reformation in Germany*, 200. Lortz marks a shift from the demonising tendency of Catholic confessional history of the Reformation, which to associated theological disagreement with the wilful disobedience of an immoral character. The confessional tone of Luther as a licentious heretic was set by Johann Cochläus (1479-1552): ‘Luther is a child of the devil, possessed by the devil, full of falsehood and vain glory. His revolt was caused by monkish envy of the Dominican, Tetzels; he lusts after wine and women, is without conscience, and approves any means to gain his end. He thinks only of himself. He perpetrated the act of nailing up the thesis for forty two gulden—the sum he required to buy a new cowl. He is a liar and a hypocrite, cowardly and quarrelsome. There is no drop of German blood in him.’ (Lortz, *The Reformation in Germany*, 296) For a discussion of the changing Catholic approaches to Luther from the sixteenth century to modern times see Sobolewski, *Martin Luther*.

¹⁹ Bagchi summarises the theory of *Unklarheit* as: ‘The supposition of a widespread theological vagueness pervading the Church at the close of the Middle Ages, which both spawned the Reformation and hindered an authentically “Catholic” reaction to it.’ *Luther’s Earliest Opponents*, 5.

²⁰ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, 172.

²¹ The term ‘congruous merit’ was open to different interpretations in scholastic thought. For example, Thomas’s theology of congruous merit differs from that of Gabriel Biel. According to Thomas, congruous merit refers to the act of human cooperation with grace rather than to good deeds performed independent of grace or before the gift of first grace. Thomas distinguishes between condign merit and congruous merit according to whether the good act proceeds from divine motion alone or from the human will as enabled by grace, *ST*, I-II, Q. 144, art. 6: ‘Our works are meritorious from two causes: first, by virtue of the Divine motion; and thus we merit condignly; secondly, according as they proceed from free will insofar as we do them willingly, and thus they have congruous merit, since it is congruous that when a man makes good use of his power, God should by His super-excellent power work still higher things. And therefore it is clear that no one can merit condignly for another his first grace, save Christ alone; since each one of us is moved by God to reach life everlasting through the gift of grace; hence condign merit does not reach beyond this motion. ... But one may merit the first grace for another congruously; because a man in grace fulfils God’s will, and it is congruous and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfil man’s desire for the salvation of another, although sometimes there may be an impediment on the part of him whose salvation the just man desires.’ According to Biel, however, human free will has the capacity to take the initiative in returning to God’s friendship through of a token act of goodness. This act is deemed congruous rather than condign because God rewards this human act with the disproportionate gift of the first grace. After the gift of infused charity, good acts can be termed condign because there is proportionality between the grace of the believer and the reward of eternal life. On congruous merit, Biel remarks in *The Circumcision of the Lord*, 174: ‘Thus God has established the rule [covenant] that whosoever turns to him and does what he can, will receive forgiveness of sins from God. God infuses assisting grace into such a man, who is then taken back into friendship.’ This study will consistently use the phrase ‘congruous merit’ to refer to Biel’s meaning because it is this version of congruous merit that is of interest in relation to accusations of Pelagianism, the legacy of Scotus and the repercussions on Luther’s Reformation.

The model of the Reformation as a misunderstanding based on a distortion of Catholic teaching has been widely employed in ecumenical statements. Schenk remarks of the work of the Ecumenical Working Circle (1986) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (1992): ‘These studies of 1986 and 1992 claimed that the “misunderstanding” of the Eucharist as a meritorious work was at the heart of Lutheran objections to the sacrificial language of the Eucharist ...’²² Similarly, *From Conflict to Communion* identifies Scotus as the prime culprit in introducing a Pelagian distortion that caused Luther’s Reformation:

Luther’s main objection to Catholic Eucharistic doctrine was directed against an understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice. The theology of the Eucharist as a real remembrance (anamnesis, *Realgedächtnis*), in which the unique and once-for-all sufficient sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:1-10:18) makes itself present for the participation of the faithful, was no longer fully understood in late medieval times. Thus, many took the celebration of the Mass to be another sacrifice in addition to the one sacrifice of Christ. According to the theory stemming from Duns Scotus, the multiplication of Masses was thought to effect a multiplication of grace and to apply this grace to individual persons. That is why at Luther’s time, for example, thousands of private Masses were said every year at the castle Church of Wittenberg.²³

In light of *From Conflict to Communion*, it is necessary to determine whether there is a case that Pelagianism and doctrinal confusion, on the issues of free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, the connection between Pelagianism and theologies of the multiplication and meritorious offerings of the Mass leads one to question whether a non-Pelagian vision of the merit of offering multiple Masses existed in scholastic thought. Finally, the narrative of Pelagianism told in *From Conflict to Communion* prompts reflection as to whether Luther could sign up to an ‘authentic’ Catholic understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice.

The first part of this thesis will examine the theological formation and legacy of Scotus’s views on free will, merit and the Mass. In determining Scotus’s influence from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the legacy of Scotus’s theory of free will

²² Schenk, *Verum Sacrificium*, 170.

²³ *From Conflict to Communion*, 55.

in the discussions of predestination, mysticism and merit will be examined with reference to Ockham, Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini, Tauler, Gerson, the author of *Theologia Germanica*, Biel and Staupitz.²⁴ It is only by placing Luther in the context of his scholastic sources that the degree of corruption, continuity, and Reformation difference can be measured.

The second section of this thesis will focus on the question of whether Luther's theology of free will and the Mass were shaped by a distinctively Reformation article of belief.²⁵ Speaking of Pope John Paul II's reference to the 'need for a new evaluation of Luther and his teaching,' and his 'praising Luther for his profound faith,' Mulloy questioned: 'Should not the Pope have made clear that what he meant by Luther's profound faith is not the same thing as the faith of the Catholic Church, that there is a most important line of division which separates the two?'²⁶

²⁴ It could be argued that the formation of Luther's belief in the bondage of the human will to sin should be placed in direct relation to Augustine rather than through the mediated steams of late scholasticism. However, I would argue, and did so in my research essay, 'A critical examination of Luther's use of Augustine in his account of his own conversion,' that Luther is not faithful to Augustine's theology of the human will in justification. In contrast to Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* doctrine, Augustine endorses the healing role of sanctifying grace, 'The Spirit and the Letter,' ch. 47: 'When, the sin being healed, it is written there, the presumptions of the law are done 'by nature' - not that by nature grace is denied; but rather by grace nature is repaired.' Moreover, Luther's reading of Augustine was conditioned by his sixteenth-century context and was thus thought-worlds apart from Augustine's late fourth-century conversion journey through 'reading the books of the Platonist' (Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 7) and his consequent adaption of Plotinus's philosophy of inner divine light. Luther's use of Augustine (or misuse, as the case may be) reveals the importance of focussing on Luther's sixteenth-century historical context. Hence, this thesis will not consider Augustine directly but the versions of Augustinianism and sixteenth-century Pelagianism that would have influenced Luther's interpretation of Augustine and the formation of his theology of the human will.

²⁵ The free will debates of Luther's Reformation that will be examined relate to the dichotomy of sin and salvation and do not aim to address acts of choice on a natural level. This emphasis on the relationship between free will and grace is in keeping with the understanding of free will used in Luther's debate with Erasmus. Erasmus defines free will as (*Diatribes*, 36): 'a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them.' It is significant that Luther limits the the bondage of the will to the realm of grace and assigns freedom of choice to the natural realm, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 118-119: 'We thus learn from Ecclesiasticus that man is divided between two kingdoms, in one of which he is directed by his own choice and counsel, apart from any precepts and commands of God, namely, in his dealings with the creatures. ... In the other kingdom, however, man is not left to his own counsel, but is directed and led by the choice and counsel of God, so that just as in his own kingdom he is directed by his own counsel, without regard to the precepts of the other, so in the kingdom of God he is directed by the precepts of another without regard to his own choice. ... If, then, these things are sufficiently clear, we have gained our point that this passage of Ecclesiasticus [Ecc. 15: 14-17] is evidence, not for, but against free choice, since by it man is subjected to the precepts and choice of God, and withdrawn from his own choice.' Luther's comments on Ecclesiasticus illustrate that his instruction on the bondage of the will is only concerned with the issues of sin and salvation. However, Luther's restriction of the free will debate to the supernatural realm does not reflect the approach of all his scholastic forebears: Scotus's discussion of the dynamics of will and intellect in free choice holds true in the realms of nature and grace. This will be discussed further in Chapter One.

²⁶ Mulloy, 'The Pope, Luther and Ecumenism,' 4.

Mulloy's assumption that there exists a fundamental dividing line between Luther and Catholic teaching has been hotly debated in recent scholarship. For instance, McSorley's discussion of Luther's contentious work *The Bondage of the Will* refuses to posit such an opposition, holding instead that Luther 'was one of the few theologians in Germany who unhesitatingly defended the biblical and Catholic teaching on man's bondage due to sin.'²⁷ In seeking to uncover whether Luther's rejection of the sacrifice of the Mass was founded on doctrinal opposition, or simply on a misunderstanding, the second section of this study will seek to identify the motivating force in Luther's theology as it emerged in reaction to the Pelagian currents of his education. By setting Luther's transformation of the fundamental theology of the Mass into that of a testament within the narrative of the free will debate, it will be shown that Luther's rejection of the Mass as a sacrifice is a corollary of his belief in the passivity of the human will. In opposition to the ecumenical thesis, here illustrated by McSorley, it will be argued that Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will created a doctrinal chasm with scholastic belief in free will.

Part Three considers the compatibility of Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will and the Mass as a testament, with the theological developments of free will in Catholic and Lutheran circles, which followed in the wake of his death. Encouraged by the report of the *Joint Declaration* that 'the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today's partner,' current historiography is eager to clear Luther's name from excommunication (1521) and the doctrinal anathemas of the Council of Trent. For instance, McSorley comments: 'It would be difficult, on the one hand, to conceive of a sense in which each of these propositions is either heretical, or scandalous, or offensive to pious ears.'²⁸ Similarly, Pesch contends that the anathemas of Trent do not oppose Luther's Reformation thought: 'On the whole the Lutheran teaching, now as in the past, is not struck by the condemnations in either of these canons.'²⁹ In critically reflecting on this branch of ecumenically inspired historiography, Part Three will examine Trent's understanding of the relationship between free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass. It will be argued that Luther's doctrine of the passivity of the human will presents a fatal

²⁷ McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?* 293.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 270.

²⁹ Pesch, 'The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification: To whom did they apply? To whom do they apply today?' 184.

obstacle to unity when compared with Trent's model of active participation, and it will be shown that Trent's vision of the agency of the human will also opposes the theology of merit, which resulted from the Scotist reformulation of free will. This thesis will thus disagree with Oberman's claim that: 'The Scotist-Nominalist tradition is not only not touched by the anathema in the canons, but had also a far more substantial part in the final formulations of the Council than hitherto has been supposed.'³⁰ Current trends in the historiography of Trent will be reversed in respect both to Luther and to the Scotist tradition.

Whilst Luther's understanding of passivity necessarily excludes him from Tridentine orthodoxy, the later Lutheran profession of the freedom of human will to sin, presented in the *Formula of Concord* (1577) will be shown to reject the doctrinal cornerstone of passivity in Luther's Reformation.³¹ The theological fruits of the Majorist, Synergist and Flacian controversies, which erupted soon after Luther's death in early Lutheranism will be compared to the Papal reaffirmations of the human free will to sin, formulated in response to the Catholic controversies of Baius, Bañez, Molina and Jansen. Whilst the first half of Part Three reveals Luther's Reformation division with Trent, the second half points to a hitherto unrecognised theological consensus between Lutherans and Catholics, which resulted from a series of parallel free will controversies. Lastly, it will be suggested that a theology of participation provides a model by which this shared sixteenth-century assent to the agency of free will can be recovered in modern ecumenical dialogue. Parts One and Two of this thesis appear to close down ecumenical conversation, but Part Three demonstrates that confronting theological difference in the sixteenth century also provides a means for recognising theological unity.

³⁰ Oberman, 'Duns Scotus, Nominalism and the Council of Trent', 218.

³¹ This study recognises that divergence exists in the Lutheran Church regarding the authority of the *Formula of Concord* but recognises it as a representative statement of sixteenth-century Lutheran belief and an important reference point for the modern Lutheran Church. On the question of the authority of the *Formula of Concord* see: Dingel, *Concordia controversa*. On the issue of doctrinal development see: Root, 'The Development of Doctrine: A Lutheran Understanding and its Ecumenical Application,' 35-51, and Lindbeck, 'The Problem of Doctrinal Development and Contemporary Protestant Theology,' 133. For a survey of theological variation within twentieth-century Lutheranism see Strommen, *A Study of Generations: Report of a two year study of 5000 Lutherans between the ages of 15-65; their beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviour*.

In introducing the debates in current scholarship it is necessary to introduce the historiographical motivations of the author as a Catholic historical theologian. The intention of 'Recovering the Reformation' is not to herald a return to a confessional interpretation of Luther's theology but, in Power's words, to 'face up to' the issues of free will, merit, and the sacrifice of the Mass. The study is shaped by a Catholic concern insofar as it is pitted against a historiographical trend which silences Luther's opposition to the Catholic dogma of offering the Mass for the dead. Luther's vehement rejection of the sacrifice of the Mass is described by Brilioth as the 'spear-point of his assault,'³² and yet this crucial issue is circumvented in many contemporary 'commemorations' of Luther's Reformation. This is an issue of concern because it suggests both a distortion of the historical truth of Luther's polemic, and an affront to the continual legitimacy of sixteenth-century dogma in modern Catholic teaching on the Mass. *From Conflict to Communion* is in danger of creating doctrinal confusion, because it restricts discussion of the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass to a corruption of Catholic teaching. It therefore seems to attribute the scholastic practice in which 'thousands of private Masses were said every year'³³ to an inauthentic Catholic theology, which had developed 'as a result of the loss of an integrated concept of commemoration.'³⁴ It appears as though the concept of *anamnesis*, in the sense of a making present of Christ's sacrifice, were the sum total of Catholic doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice. In consequence, one might mistakenly conclude that Trent's dogma of the merit of offering the sacrifice of the Mass, is no longer binding Catholic teaching. This false impression would be strengthened by the statement: 'If the understanding of the Lord's Supper as a real remembrance is consistently taken seriously, the differences in understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice are tolerable for Catholics and Lutherans.'³⁵ However, if the Eucharistic differences include articles of belief which contradict established dogmas, then the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper cannot be regarded as a Catholic articulation of the sacrifice of the Mass. The same danger is present in Lehmann's claim that Luther has 'a thoroughly prophetic meaning even for Catholics,'³⁶ because it ignores Luther's objection to the sacrifice of the Mass. Those Reformation scholars who hope that Vatican II will result

³² Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 137.

³³ *From Conflict to Communion*, art. 146.

³⁴ *Ibid*, art. 151.

³⁵ *Ibid*, art. 158.

³⁶ Lehmann, 'The Focus of Discussion Today,' 208.

in ‘a greater fidelity to the Reformation in Roman Catholicism than in Protestantism,’³⁷ who see Luther as ‘present in an extremely efficacious way in the present-day Catholic experience,’³⁸ and who ‘question whether what was “un-Catholic” in the sixteenth century can be considered Catholic today,’³⁹ must either believe with Atkinson that, ‘Catholics are becoming more Protestant,’⁴⁰ or overlook the Tridentine dogma of the merit of offering the sacrifice of the Mass.

Far from rejecting the ecumenical intention of these scholars, however, this study believes that it is only by attending to the fullness of Catholic dogma, and the heart of Luther’s polemic in recovering the Reformation debates of free will, merit and the Mass, that Catholic involvement in ecumenical agreements on Eucharistic sacrifice can bear fruit. The historiography of this study therefore inspires an investigation of the scholastics, Luther, Trent and early Lutheranism, which pointedly removes the rose-tinted spectacles of ecumenism in order to uncover causes of conflict, and thus sources of concord in the theological debates of Luther’s Reformation.

³⁷ Barth, ‘Thoughts on the Second Vatican Council,’ 357-367.

³⁸ Pesch, ‘Luther and the Catholic Tradition,’ 18.

³⁹ Sobolewski, *Martin Luther: Roman Catholic Prophet*, 51.

⁴⁰ Atkinson, *Martin Luther: Prophet to the Church Catholic*, 64.

Part One: Pre-Reformation

Part One examines the theology of free will, Eucharistic sacrifice and predestination taught by Scotus and later voluntarists, in order to assess whether Luther's sixteenth-century critique of Pelagianism stemmed from a thirteenth-century theological reformulation of free will, merit and the Mass.

Chapter One: Human freedom in the thirteenth century

The objective of this chapter is to consider some of the origins of the sixteenth-century Eucharistic controversy in Scotus's reformulation of free will, in the wake of thirteenth-century debates. The first task is to outline the teaching of Thomas (1225-1274) and Scotus (1266-1308), in order to see if they contain a fundamental disagreement concerning free will. Theological content alone is an unsatisfactory explanation for theological difference. Secondly, the historical context of thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries will be examined, in order to shed light on the motives that inspired Scotus and Thomas in their respective teachings on human freedom. Thirdly, in choosing to focus on the impact of thirteenth-century theology on later Reformation developments, this study must answer a modern objection, that the free will disagreement and the schools model are a gross historical exaggeration. Modern research presents two key questions: firstly, did the mature Thomas come to resemble the Scotist understanding of free will, and, secondly, is it valid to assume that a system of scholastic schools existed to pass on these ideas to sixteenth-century theologians? Lastly, it could be argued that it is a mistake to identify Thomas and Scotus as theological sources that fed the later disputes on human freedom, because the nature of the free will question is, in a sense, eternal. Could one not claim that the writings of Scotus and Thomas merely represent one more episode in a series of confrontations that includes Augustine vs. Pelagius, Luther vs. Erasmus, and Molina vs. Bañez, to name but the stars of the show? This chapter will argue that the different theologies of human freedom found in the writings of Thomas and Scotus are not simply historical instances of a theology stuck on re-play, but rather that the thirteenth century shaped a theology of human freedom which affected the development of ideas in late scholasticism.

In examining the different accounts of free will taught by Thomas and Scotus, some scholars, such as Milbank and Pickstock, have begun with the relative importance assigned to the faculties of will and intellect, theories of knowledge or the question of the univocity of being.¹ Whilst each of these concepts articulates difference, in focussing on particular threads in the theological canvas, there is a danger of failing to see the complete picture of human freedom in either Thomas or Scotus. The central question, from which the technical differences emanate, is the nature of freedom itself. It is on the primary level of definition rather than in the intricacies of the soul, causality, or contingency that the real source of disagreement is to be found. In speaking of the contrast between Nominalist and Thomist perspectives on human freedom, Pinckaers describes the former as ‘freedom of indifference’ and the latter as ‘freedom for excellence.’² ‘Freedom for excellence’ refers to rational decisions in the moral life that carry a ‘spontaneous sense of truth and goodness,’ and which lead to the human fulfilment of loving God and neighbour.³ In contrast, ‘freedom of indifference’ is used by Pinckaers to describe theological models that place free choice before reason. Accordingly, free will consists in humanity’s indetermination or radical indifference to opposite courses of action.⁴ Pinckaers, however, believes that ‘freedom of indifference’ is really a non-freedom because it robs humanity of the blossoming of virtue, by nullifying rational reflection on the best course of action. Although Pinckaers’s descriptions properly apply to the relationship between Thomism and the radical Nominalism of William of Ockham, it will be argued that these labels apply also to the different perspectives of Thomas and the herald of Nominalism, Duns Scotus.

‘Freedom for excellence’ is, in Pinckaers’s view, an accurate guide to Thomas’s thought because it expresses his claim that the wills of the blessed in heaven are simultaneously perfectly free and completely obedient to God.⁵ The

¹ The Radical Orthodoxy movement views Scotus’s theory of knowledge and being as the kernel of his thought and of revolutionary significance in the evolution of medieval thought. See: Milbank, ‘What is Radical Orthodoxy?’ 35. For further evaluation of Scotus’s impact on scholastic thought according to the Radical Orthodoxy movement see: Pickstock, ‘Duns Scotus: his historical and contemporary significance.’ A similar focus on the abstraction of being as the locus of transition in late medieval thought is evident in Schumacher’s discussion of ‘Divine illumination in Transition,’ 90-109.

² Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 354.

³ Ibid, 360.

⁴ Ibid, 332.

⁵ *ST*, I-II, 19:9-10.

condition of the blessed expresses the harmony between obedience and freedom, a theme which underlies Thomas's teaching on the moral life. In order to understand the test case of freedom in heaven, it is important to grasp Thomas's understanding of freedom (*liberum*) as both *arbitrium* and *voluntarium*.⁶ Both terms convey the freedom of the intellect to search for truth. *Liberum arbitrium* is reserved for cases of deliberation. Since the decision for God is made before death, the condition of heavenly freedom can be described as voluntary and yet non-deliberative.⁷ Hence, the will in heaven is obedient to God, and at the same time possesses *voluntarium* because it finds in the love of God, the fulfilment of its every desire for happiness:

Now it is impossible for anyone seeing the Divine Essence, to wish not to see it. Because every good that one possesses and yet wishes to be without, is either insufficient, something more sufficing being desired in its stead; or else has some inconvenience attached to it, by reason of which it becomes wearisome. But the vision of the Divine Essence fills the soul with all good things, since it unites it to the source of all goodness; hence it is written (Psalm 16:15): 'I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear;' and (Wisdom 7:11): 'All good things came to me together with her,' i.e. with the contemplation of wisdom. In like manner neither has it any inconvenience attached to it; because it is written of the contemplation of wisdom (Wisdom 8:16): 'Her conversation hath no bitterness or her company any tediousness.' It is thus evident that the happy man cannot forsake Happiness of his own accord.⁸

The ultimate freedom of the blessed could appear to present a paradox in Thomas's theology, for he denies that those already in heaven have the freedom to reject God. This apparent contradiction is born of understandings of free will which require the power of self-determination; free will would here reside in the ability to choose or reject a good 'on a whim.' For instance, Descartes expresses his commitment to an idea of free will that is indifferent to reason: 'We are aware of freedom of indifference within us to such a point that nothing is more obvious or more perfect.'⁹ This

⁶ See Gaine, *Will There be Free Will in Heaven?*

⁷ *ST*, I, Q. 82, Q. 83, I-II, Q. 6, Q. 8, Q. 12, 4, Q. 13.

⁸ *ST*, I-II, Q. 5, 4. Throughout this thesis, names of God will remain capitalised within quotations when this is the case in the text being quoted.

⁹ Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, 1. 41: '*Libertatis autem et indifferentia, quae in nobis est, nos ita conscious esse, ut nihil sit quod evidentius et perfectius comprehendamus.*' This interpretation of freedom can be found in philosophical dictionaries such as in *Lalande*: '[in contrast to determinism]... the power to act with no other cause than the power itself, that is, without any reason bearing on the content of the action.' The dictionary of *Foulquié* similarly holds that free will must be 'distinguished

understanding of freedom as decisions that are apparently divorced from the intellect is akin to the experience of asking a dazed looking teenager to explain their misdeed and receiving the answer 'just because' accompanied by a disgruntled shrug of the shoulders. According to this model of free will, it is possible to act without explanation or consideration of the consequences.

The model of free will outlined above rarely conveys an idea of a natural attraction towards an ultimate goal (*telos*).¹⁰ In contrast, the concept of *telos* framed Thomas's understanding of free will because he believed that 'the proper object of choice is the means to the end: and this, as such, is in the nature of that good which is called useful.'¹¹ For Thomas, the will necessarily desires to act towards the universal good, that is, beatitude. The necessity of life with God as humanity's goal does not entail a wearisome obligation but a voluntary search for the essence of goodness and happiness. Thomas observes that the pursuit of beatitude corresponds with the deepest longing of human nature:

It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Psalm 102:5: 'Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.' Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness.¹²

Thomas therefore reasons that God is necessarily humanity's *telos* because the human intellect is voluntarily drawn to the universal good.

Human nature is privileged among material creation because it alone possesses the intellectual capacity to act freely for the good. Thomas writes, 'For the sheep,

today from freedom (the power of self-determination through motivation) and close to freedom of indifference (the ability to take decisions independently of motives), in so far as it is viewed as the power to chose between contraries.' (In: Pinckaeres, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 350-351.)

¹⁰ *ST*, I-II, Q. 1.

¹¹ *ST*, I, Q. 83, 3.

¹² *ST*, I-II, Q.2, 8.

seeing the wolf, judges it a thing to be shunned, from a natural and not a free judgement, because it judges, not from reason, but from natural instinct.’¹³ Unlike the fox, whose action in ripping up the bins in search for food is purely instinctive, humans are able not to mimic the fox by their capacity to deliberate.¹⁴ In suburban England, except in cases of poverty or homelessness, one would not expect to find humans ripping open bins having caught the scent of left-over chicken curry, because reason would tell them that dinner was in the oven at home, that the decaying food in the bin could well be detrimental to health, and that such behaviour would be a cause of inconvenience to the neighbours in the morning. A free act, for Thomas, is therefore one that is freed from the limited perspectives of instinct by the deliberation of the intellect.¹⁵ Gallagher rightly remarks: ‘Thomas understands deliberation (*consilium*) as the cognitive process by which means are discovered and decided upon in the light of some already desired end.’¹⁶ In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas explains that ‘man acts through judging that something is to be shunned or sought after through his ability to know. Because this particular practical conclusion proceeds not from natural instinct but from reasoning from experience, he acts freely, being open to several possible courses.’¹⁷ Thomas therefore defines free will as ‘rational appetite’ because ‘an act of knowledge must precede every movement of the will.’¹⁸ Cuypers notes: ‘Since free judgement on alternatives underpins free decision and choice, the practical role of reason is essential to the constitution of free will.’¹⁹ The teenager who shrugged their shoulders could not, in Thomas’s view, have acted without reason. In failing to complete their homework, it is not that the teenagers had no particular good in view, but that they perceived the good of social media as higher than the good of mastering calculus. Thomas therefore reverses the modern understanding of the teenager’s situation because freedom lies in the will’s enaction of the greatest good perceived by the intellect. The explanation ‘just because’ would

¹³ *ST*, I, Q. 83, 1.

¹⁴ For a discussion of Thomas’s comparison between humans and animals in relation to deliberation see: Gallagher, ‘Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite,’ 572.

¹⁵ See Finis, *Aquinas*, 62-70.

¹⁶ Gallagher, ‘Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite,’ 584.

¹⁷ *ST*, I-II, Q. 83, 1.

¹⁸ *ST*, I-II, Q. 82, 3.

¹⁹ Cuypers, ‘Thomistic Agent-Causality,’ 102.

strip human nature of free will, and place humanity on the level of the beasts who cannot control how they act.²⁰

Having established that, for Thomas, true freedom consists in action that is both in obedience to the good, and voluntary in virtue of being known to the intellect, it is apt to proceed to examine how Thomas dealt with the charge of determinism. Has Thomas altogether excluded the notion of freedom of indifference from his theology? In other words, it seems that if human freedom comes to completion when it loses independence in heaven, and if the will is bound to follow the deliberation of the intellect, then humans are not truly independent moral agents but puppets to God's causality and the strings of reason. This critique of Thomas as a determinist was levied by John Peckham in 1270 and by Robert Kilwardby on 18 March 1277.²¹ However, it is similarly based on a misunderstanding of Thomas's paradox of human freedom. Thomas supports his idea of human freedom with a theory of causation by which God can be said to cause the causality of free actions. To act for something is to participate in the causality of being, through which God maintains the universe in the causality of creation. In Thomas's mind, it is a metaphysical impossibility to isolate a cause from the power of God. In doing so, the cause would simply cease to exist. What is fitting to rational nature, however, is that humans possess a special form of secondary causality. Thomas writes: 'And just as his initiative does not prevent natural causes from being natural, so it does not prevent voluntary action from being voluntary, but rather makes it to be precisely this; for God works in each according to its nature.'²² McCabe explains: 'So God is not an alternative to freedom, he is the direct cause of freedom. We are not free in spite of God, but because of God.'²³ According to Thomas, complete dependent on God's causality therefore, frees the human will to act in a secondary capacity in regard to contingent causes.

²⁰ The importance of the intellect in making a free choice is illustrated using the examples of sleep and drunkenness as impediments to a free choice. Gallagher observes: 'If an agent is prevented from considering his 'choices' by sleep or drunkenness or by extreme fear or anger, his action is no longer truly rational and properly human behaviour.' ('Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite,' 573.)

²¹ See: Wippel, 'Aquinas and the Unity of Substantial Form,' 137.

²² *ST*, I-II 83, 1.

²³ McCabe, *God Matters*, 15.

An analogy for the secondary causality of human freedom in contingent actions is a scenario well-known to families of the school Christmas bazaar. If a parent gives their child money with which they can buy Christmas gifts for the family, does this mean that the presents are not really from the child? Clearly, one would want to defend the causality of the child in choosing those particular presents, even though the ability of the child to partake in this action of gift-giving is granted by the parent. The Christmas bazaar can illustrate a further crucial aspect of Thomas's defence of secondary causality: what is the point of secondary causality? God could act directly in every cause but in doing so, God would deprive the child of the joy of giving a gift (back) to the parent. Human freedom has the honour of participating in God's causality by choosing this particular (and therefore contingent) good. Gilson affirms, 'So far from trespassing upon the privileges of the Creator, every perfection attributed to the secondary causes could not but increase his glory, since He is their first cause, and they an ever fresh occasion to glorify Him.'²⁴ In offering particular goods in acts of charity and prayer to God the loving Father, humanity has the excitement of children at Christmas, who rejoice in giving to parents a token of the goodness they have received.

Thomas's account of secondary causality and the necessity of the intellect for free choice, indicate that Thomas's position is intellectualist rather than voluntarist according to Hause's definitions.²⁵ Hause observes: 'an account of human action is voluntarist to the extent that the will, and not any other power, controls its own activities. Likewise, an account of human action is intellectualist to the extent that the will's activities are under the intellect's control.'²⁶ However, the characterisation of Thomas as an intellectualist has recently been critiqued by scholars who, to different degrees, posit voluntarism as fundamental to Thomas's theory of the will and

²⁴ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 199.

²⁵ This thesis follows Hause's narrow definition of voluntarism. Hause remarks: 'Generally, voluntarism is contrasted with intellectualism. "Voluntarism" in its widest sense refers to any view that asserts the will's superiority over the soul's other powers, in particular, the intellect. In this paper, I use the word more narrowly: an account of human action is voluntarist to the extent that the will, and not any other power, controls its own activities. Likewise, an account of human action is intellectualist to the extent that the will's activities are under the intellect's control.' ('Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists,' 168.) Pinpointing the autonomy of the will in relation to the intellect is helpful because it throws light on the relationship between Thomas, Scotus and the voluntarism of later scholastics.

²⁶ Hause, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists,' 168.

intellect. For instance, Stump and Kretzmann advocate a robust voluntarism in Thomas's thought and identify three hallmarks:

The self-directedness or freedom of the will considered as its partial independence from the intellect is manifested in three capacities (1) to choose among alternatives presented as equally good, (2) to refrain from pursuing a subsidiary end presented as good, and (3) to direct the intellect's attention.²⁷

A more limited account of voluntarism is ascribed to Thomas by Finnis and Kent.²⁸ Where Stump and Kretzmann maintain that the will is independent of the intellect in specification and action (i.e. choosing to consult the intellect and choosing to act on or ignore its advice), Finnis and Kent restrict voluntarism in Thomas to the will's exercise department. Thus, Thomas is deemed voluntarist under the supposition that he allows the will to refrain from action. Kent writes:

[Aquinas] teaches that the will always remains free to will or not. If it cannot act against the final judgement of the intellect, the option of inaction still remains. Second, Aquinas holds that the final judgement of reason is not reached without the will's consent. While his conception of consent is not entirely clear, he apparently wants to allow for some contribution by the will to the final judgement about what should be done. The will cannot specify or determine the judgement, but it can at least veto various means presented by intellect as suitable to the end.²⁹

The power of veto, or inaction, belongs to the spectrum of voluntarism, because it grants autonomy to the will, insofar as the will can ignore the counsel of the intellect.

Against these two suppositions of voluntarism, of specification and exercise, an intellectualist defence of Thomas has been undertaken by Donagan, Hause, Irwin and Westberg. In keeping with Thomas's framework of freedom as cognition of the good and the principles of secondary causality, these scholars highlight passages of Thomas's thought that they believe clearly contradict the voluntarist claims outlined above. One such passage is Thomas's exploration of the relationship between will, action and reason:

²⁷ Stump and Kretzman, 'Free Choice,' 362.

²⁸ See Kent, *Virtues of the Will* and Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*.

²⁹ Kent, *Virtues*, 120.

The human person can will and not will, act and not act; again, he or she can will this or that, and do this or that. The reason for this is found in the very power of reason. For the will can tend to whatever reason can apprehend as good. Now reason can apprehend as good not only to will or to act, but also not to will and not to act. Again, in all particular goods, reason can consider an aspect of some good, and the lack of some good, which has the aspect of evil; and in this respect, it can apprehend any single one of these goods as electable or avoidable.³⁰

In this article, Thomas addresses the issues of specification and inaction, arguing that both can be attributed to the intellect's determination of the good. In regard to inaction, reason can conclude that it would be better to stay in and keep warm, rather than go out and face the elements. Indeed, if the intellect realises that a certain line of thought is sinful or damaging, it can determine to will to think about other matters. Concerning Stump's case that the intellect is not able to choose between two equal alternatives, Aquinas remarks:

If two things are proposed (to the will) which are equal in one respect, nothing prevents our considering in one of them some quality which makes it stand out, and so nothing prevents the will's being inclined to that one rather than to the other.³¹

Thomas resolves the dilemma of two equal goods by insisting that the choice is made on the basis of the intellect's perception of an advantage in one of the alternatives. In these extracts from the *Summa*, Thomas aligns himself with the intellectualist rather than the voluntarist account of the will and intellect. In light of Thomas's opposition to the independence of the will in relation to specification and exercise, it is fitting to concur with Hause's conclusion:

In my view, however, the debates among the voluntarist interpreters are all moot because Aquinas is not a voluntarist at all; he is a thorough going intellectualist. In Aquinas's view, the will cannot, by any innate capacity, direct the intellect's attention, keep the intellect from issuing judgements about what one ought to do, or keep itself from willing what the intellect has determined one ought to do.³²

³⁰ *ST*, I-II 13, 6.

³¹ *ST*, I-II 13, 6.

³² Hause, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists,' 168.

If one accepts that the will naturally inclines to the universal good, and the role of the intellect is to deliberate as to the highest particular good in a given situation, does sin make a mockery of Thomas's thesis? Original sin might seem an obvious explanation for why human nature does not act as it should in pursuing beatitude. Gilson comments, 'As a man is, so is his aim. A healthy person does not take his food like a sick one.'³³ Yet to blame human sin on the distorted power of the passions, only pushes the question further back into Eden. How is it possible for humanity to sin, to turn from friendship with God and to pick the poisoned fruit?

The phenomenon of sin does not destroy Thomas's system because he refuses to assign evil a positive entity with its own causality. On the contrary, for Thomas, as for Augustine, evil is fundamentally a lack or privation.³⁴ Thomas says that evil inheres in the good, because it is a metaphysical truth that to be in act at all, is to partake in the goodness of being. Thomas remarks, 'Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea.'³⁵ Thomas describes the mode by which evil inheres in the good as 'decay.'³⁶ He teaches: 'Nothing that exists is called bad because it exists, but rather because it fails to exist in some way; thus a man is called bad when he fails to be virtuous, and an eye bad when its vision fails.'³⁷ Hence, Thomas can argue that sin has a parasitic relationship to the proper freedom of the rational intellect. He observes that 'evil is quite different from being and non-being pure and simple, for it is neither like having a form nor like simply not having it, but like being found wanting.'³⁸ The question left begging is, how can human nature be found wanting? If evil has no positive identity, how can it enter Thomas's equation?

In exploring the phenomenon of evil or privation, Thomas adopts a very modest perspective on the capacity of the human intellect. In doing so, Thomas combines the Platonic participatory model of being and causality with an Aristotelian

³³ Gilson, *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 301-302.

³⁴ Davies, *Aquinas*, 122-131.

³⁵ *ST*, I-II, 5, 1.

³⁶ *ST*, I-II 5, 3.

³⁷ *ST*, I-II 5, 3.

³⁸ *ST*, I-II 48, 2.

vision of knowledge.³⁹ Thomas's theology of sin therefore involves a philosophical reformulation both of the relationship between essence and existence in human nature and of its corollary of act and potency. Colish notes that Thomas 'uses the essence-existence distinction to explain how creatures can act in ways that fail to square with their essential definitions or best selves.'⁴⁰ These philosophical concepts rest on the belief that it is possible to live a human life without truly realising one's humanity. An obvious example of the suppression of human freedom would be that an act of violence. Thomas remarks:

Now what is compelled or violent is from an exterior principle. Consequently it is contrary to the nature of the will's own act that it should be subject to compulsion and violence, just as it is also contrary to the nature of a natural inclination or movement.⁴¹

Thomas's model of inhibited freedom goes beyond physical constraints, to conceive the whole of human life as a process of becoming; a pilgrimage towards the true liberation of a supernatural life with God. However, it is precisely within the process of learning the nature of the good that the possibility of developing a sinful moral compass occurs. Thomas explains:

But the human intellect, which is the lowest in the order of intelligence and most remote from the perfection of the Divine Intellect, is in potentiality with regard to the things intelligible, and is at first 'like a clean tablet on which nothing is written,' as the Philosopher says (*De Anima* 3, 4).⁴²

Modern society is well aware of this concept, as can be seen in the ongoing fear that 'faith schools' will indoctrinate children of certain elements of society with views that stand against the secularist mentality of political correctness. Indeed, Blair's call for 'education, education, education' (May 2001)⁴³ can be viewed as echoing Thomas's philosophy that true human freedom has to be learned.

³⁹ See Schenk, 'From Providence to Grace: Thomas Aquinas and the Platonism of the Mid-Thirteenth Century,' 307-320.

⁴⁰ Colish, *Medieval Foundations of Western Intellectual Tradition*, 299.

⁴¹ *ST*, I-II, 6, 4.

⁴² *ST*, I-II, 79, 2.

⁴³ For full text see *The Guardian Website*:

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/may/23/labour.tonyblair>

What does Thomas mean by essence and existence and how do these concepts express his belief in the potentiality of human nature in matters of freedom and sin?⁴⁴ Thomas remarks on the nature of essence and existence: ‘Therefore every substance which comes after the first simple substance participates in *esse*. But every participant is composed of that which participates and that in which it participates.’⁴⁵ One could understandably be flummoxed by the difference between the terms ‘essence’ and ‘existence’ because they both derive from the Latin verb *to be*.⁴⁶ Thomas uses existence (*ente*) to describe the sheer fact or act of being. Essence (*essentia*) is used to denote a particular way of being. The distinction is clear when fictional characters are considered: the essences of Harry Potter, Father Christmas and Winnie the Pooh are well known, yet none of these can be said to have existence. Thomas explains: ‘I can understand what a man or a phoenix is and yet not know whether they exist or not.’⁴⁷ The same distinction between the existence and essence of human nature can be true in the mind of God. God can conceive of the essence of human life before bringing this idea into existence. Existence is beyond the essence of human nature, for, as Thomas says, ‘nothing with derived existence suffices to bring itself into being.’⁴⁸ However, Thomas continues, ‘we cannot say this about God, whom we have seen to be the first cause. Neither, then can we say that God’s existence is other than his nature.’⁴⁹ God requires no external cause to actualise his essence because God’s way of being is the cause of his own existence: God’s essence is existence. Similarly, the language of potentiality that relates to human nature is excluded from the Godhead, because it implies that the existence of an act is lacking. In God, the act of being cannot be in potential, because God possesses the fullness of existence, and thus actuality.⁵⁰ In humans and created beings, however, the limited essences of created natures need to receive existence from God’s pure act of being. Human nature thus exists in a state of potentiality to God’s being.⁵¹ The relationship of potency and act is therefore a corollary of the fact that created beings cannot be God. Thomas explains:

⁴⁴ For an extended discussion of the difference between essence and existence see Thomas’s ‘On Being and Essence’ (*De Ente et Essentia*), Chapter 4.

⁴⁵ Thomas, *In Phys.* VIII, 21, 1153 cited by Schindler, ‘What’s the difference?’ 602.

⁴⁶ See Long, ‘The Real Distinction between Essence and Existence,’ 75-108.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 5.

⁴⁸ *ST*, I-II, 3, 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ See Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 92-108, 257-260.

⁵¹ See Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas*, 157-161.

God's effects resemble God as far as they can, but not perfectly. One of the defects in resemblance is that they can reproduce only manifoldly what in itself is one and simple. As a result they are composite, and so cannot be identified with their natures.⁵²

The consequence of this potentiality for creation can be expressed in what Nichols calls 'the fragility of beings.'⁵³ The freedom to sin, and so become spiritually separated from the living God, therefore mirrors the potential for death within the body. Created from nothing, the body and soul bear the innate potentiality to reject the life source, and thus be subject to everlasting darkness and the dust that knows no resurrection. Speaking of the potentiality within created beings, Thomas cites Aristotle: 'only such beings can be deprived of anything, and evil is a privation.'⁵⁴

Thomas's philosophy of essence and existence has alerted scholars to his incorporation of the neo-Platonic idea of participation into an Aristotelian framework. The discovery of Thomas's debt to neo-Platonic writers, such as Dionysius, has led Thomists to re-evaluate Gilson's view that Thomas was: 'taking the part of Aristotle against Plato.'⁵⁵ Schindler comments that, 'while participation is today generally accepted as forming a significant part of Aquinas's view of reality, the works that first pointed out its role to twentieth century Thomism—Fabro (1939) and Geiger (1942)—were received as groundbreaking studies.'⁵⁶ Whilst Gilson's *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (1948) was published after these revelatory studies, he chose not to comment on the findings of Fabro and Geiger, and instead vehemently upheld the traditional reading of Thomas's loyalty to Aristotle. However, Thomas's concept of being as participation suggests that his philosophy is more nuanced, original and dynamic than a simple rehashing of Aristotle's position would allow. Gilson's contention that Thomas's 'freedom of thought' was a result of 'his effort to eliminate all intermediaries between Aristotle and himself,'⁵⁷ must similarly be questioned in light of Thomas's utilisation of neo-Platonic thought. On the subject of Dionysius's influence on scholastic thought, Turner comments: '[Dionysios] is less what you

⁵² *ST*, 1-II, Q. 3, 3.

⁵³ Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar*, 8.

⁵⁴ *ST*, I-II, Q. 63, 1.

⁵⁵ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 21.

⁵⁶ Schindler, 'What's the Difference?' 601.

⁵⁷ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 21.

speak about than he is the air you breathe as you speak.’⁵⁸ Schindler likewise remarks: ‘Aquinas shares with Neo-Platonism the notion that all beings are essentially unities and at the same time that no beings in the world are simply identical with their being There is a difference, Aquinas says, between existence and that which is.’⁵⁹ In drawing on a neo-Platonic participatory model of being, Thomas is able to hold that the shortcomings of human existence are embraced in a unified picture of goodness. Thomas’s model of participation is therefore critical to his articulation of human freedom. Schenk describes the neo-Platonic position: ‘even human freedom chooses evil for Dionysius only under the appearance of good; the mistake is more clearly in the intellect.’⁶⁰ In answering the question of how sin is possible, Thomas’s reliance on the neo-Platonic authority of Dionysius will be palpable.

Thomas’s theories of essence and existence, and act and potency, provide an explanation for the metaphysical possibility of sin, but they do not explain how sinful acts are chosen. That is, that created beings exist in a state of potentiality does not explain why acts should not always be in accord with the highest good of human nature. Thomas notes that, ‘everything is perfect insofar as it is actual.’⁶¹ It is here that Thomas’s low view of the human intellect returns to centre stage. The human intellect is so weak that without grace it cannot recognise the highest good, but must learn the nature of true happiness in the trials and errors of life. In analysing Thomas’s answer to the question of why all people do not seek God as the highest good, Gilson remarks: ‘We fail to see with compelling evidence that God is the Supreme Good and the only beatitude, nor do we perceive with convincing certainty the link of a necessary connection between God and what is truly of God.’⁶² In heaven, the blessed who see the divine essence can comprehend the radical gratuity of the world, but on earth the human intellect cannot easily connect the goodness of creation to beatitude of the divine essence.

⁵⁸ Turner, ‘Dionysius and Some Late Medieval Mystical Theologians of Northern Europe,’ 121.

⁵⁹ Schindler, ‘What’s the Difference?’ 602.

⁶⁰ Schenk, ‘From Providence to Grace: Thomas Aquinas and the Platonisms of the Mid-Thirteenth Century,’ 317.

⁶¹ *ST*, I-II, Q. 5, 1.

⁶² Gilson, *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 295.

Why then did God not create human nature with a more powerful intellect? Thomas points to the spectrum of intelligence that includes angels, humans and beasts as enhancing the reflection of God's goodness. He writes:

Thus He is said to have made all things through His goodness, so that the divine goodness might be represented in things. Now it is necessary that God's goodness, which in itself is one and undivided, should be manifested in many ways in His creation; because creatures in themselves cannot attain to the simplicity of God. Thus it is that for the completion of the universe there are required different grades of being, some of which hold a high and some a low place in the universe. That this multitude of grades may be preserved in things, God allows some evils, lest many good things should never happen, as was said above.⁶³

In considering why some species such as angels are apportioned higher intellects and consequently comprehend the good with greater ease than human beings, Thomas can ultimately find 'no reason, except in the divine will.'⁶⁴ This does not mean that there was no reason for the divine will to act, for free will is always freedom for perfect goodness rather than randomness, but Thomas holds that God's intellect is so far above the human mind, that the decrees of God's goodness are not always discernable. Thomas remarks:

Yet why this particular part of matter is under this particular form, and that under another, depends upon the simple will of God; as from the simple will of the artificer it depends that this stone is in part of the wall, and that in another; although the plan requires that some stones should be in this place, and some in that place.⁶⁵

From the human perspective, Thomas concludes that we cannot understand sin, but must commend it to God's providence. In the *Summa*, he summarises Dionysius's position on evil and contingency as an authority on which to build his own teaching on providence.⁶⁶ Similarly, he comments in *De divinis nominibus*: 'Providence preserves the nature of every given thing. And because rational creatures, according to their nature, are defectible and able to be defective and to fail through free will, it

⁶³ *ST*, I, 23, 2.

⁶⁴ *ST*, I, 23, 5.

⁶⁵ *ST*, I, 23, 5.

⁶⁶ *ST*, I-II, 22:4: 'On the contrary, Dionysius says that (*Div. Nom.* I. 5, 23) 'to corrupt nature is not the work of providence. But it is the nature of some things to be contingent. Divine providence does not therefore impose any necessity upon things so as to destroy their contingency.'

does not pertain to divine providence to impede that mobility.’⁶⁷ Considering the innate inequality of creation, Gilson concurs that ‘we can assign no cause to it, because the will of God is the first Cause of all beings, and consequently no being can in respect of it play the part of cause.’⁶⁸ Thomas’s writing on predestination would appear to make liability to sin an occupational hazard of the weakness of human nature, and a necessary part of the greater goodness of God at work in his willing of creation. Has Thomas escaped the snares of determinism? Scotus, along with Kilwardy, was unconvinced.

Before proceeding to discuss Scotus’s response, it is worth noting that Thomas’s account of the angels suggests that he may well have realised that his intellectualist approach did not hold all the answers to the problems of free will and evil. Thomas’s reflections on the fall of Satan suggest that his framework offers theological direction, whilst not closing the theological question of the origin of sinful choice. The inconclusiveness of Thomas’s intellectualist argument is evident in his adherence to the principle that the created will naturally tends to the good. In regard to the fall of the angels, he writes: ‘The majority of angels did not sin, for sin is unnatural as contrary to the tendency of nature; and what is unnatural happens only in the minority of cases: nature either always, or usually, produces its effect.’⁶⁹ The question left begging is: if the fall of Satan went against nature, how did it happen?⁷⁰ Whilst Thomas’s answer might seem simply to echo Anselm’s saying that ‘Satan wanted to be like God,’ a closer reading of Thomas’s discussion of angels shows that his intellectualist thought leaves sign-posts for future theologians.⁷¹

Thomas’s genius is to point to a potentiality in the free will of angels, which allows for a distinction between the effects of God known through nature, and the perfect knowledge of God in the blissful state: ‘I grant there is no potentiality in an

⁶⁷ Thomas, *De divinis nominibus* IV, 33, cited by Schenk, ‘From Providence to Grace,’ 318.

⁶⁸ Gilson, *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 157.

⁶⁹ *ST*, I-II, 63, 9.

⁷⁰ For a discussion on Thomas’s theology of free will in the light of his teaching on the angels see Hoffmann, ‘Aquinas and Intellectual Determinism: the test case of angelic sin,’ 152.

⁷¹ Thomas references Anselm in *ST*, I-II 63, 3: ‘This would agree with Anselm’s view that the devil desired that to which he would eventually have come had he curbed his desire.’

angel's natural being; but there is in his intellectual capacity, which can turn to this or to that object; and this makes evil a possibility for him.'⁷² Thomas further remarks:

Angels have a twofold knowledge of the Word, a natural knowledge and one that belongs to the state of glory. By the former they know the Word as discerning His likeness mirrored in their own nature; whereas the glorious knowledge is seeing Him directly in Himself.⁷³

The result of this supposition is that one can apply Thomas's logic of human choice to angelic free will. Whilst all created beings desire happiness, before the beatific vision all knowledge of the good is accessed through the effects of God. Hence, an epistemological distance is formed between created goods and the goodness of the Creator. In order to love God above all things, the angelic creature must intellectually relinquish possession of the immediately apparent created goodness, to the glory of the Creator. This clash can result in the creature hating God when confronted with the duties of worship and obedience, because God's supreme goodness is more intellectually distant from the goodness that the creature already possesses in God's created effects:

And because He is this general good, the term of all natural appetite, then whoever has the immediate vision of what He is cannot help but love Him. But those who do not see God in this way know Him only through this or that of His effects; and sometimes such effects go contrary to their will. This is how creatures can sometimes be said to hate God.⁷⁴

Returning to the fall of Satan, Thomas's position draws on the intellectual tension between possession of created goodness, and the act of relinquishing created goodness in favour of the supreme goodness of God:

But he desired resemblance with God in this respect—by desiring, as his last end of beatitude, something which he could attain by the virtue of his own nature; turning his appetite away from supernatural beatitude, which is attained by God's grace. Or, if he desired as his last end, that likeness of God which is bestowed by grace, he sought to have it by the power of his own nature; and not from Divine assistance according to God's ordering.⁷⁵

⁷² *ST*, I-II, 63, 1.

⁷³ *ST*, I-II, 62, 2.

⁷⁴ *ST*, I-II, 60, 5.

⁷⁵ *ST*, I, 63, 3.

In sum, although sin seems to go against Thomas's belief in the natural inclination to the good, it has been suggested that Thomas's theory of potentiality in the angelic intellect provides a means of pursuing the problem of evil along intellectualist lines. However, teasing out the promising potential of Thomas's response to angelic sin, was not the calling of Thomas's thirteenth-century counterpart, Duns Scotus.

Scotus believed that the cornerstone of Thomas's account of human freedom—that a correct understanding of the good would entail right action—was a determinist position. Scotus's objection was that Thomas had made the will captive to the governance of reason and its degree of being. Scotus thought that free will was a power that released human action from determined cycles of nature. His critique was that Thomas had misunderstood the dynamics of humanity's natural faculties, and in so doing had excluded the will's true freedom. These objections were not a matter of theological nitpicking. Scotus held that humanity must be free from philosophical determinism, in order to possess moral responsibility; to be brought into friendship with God and to be able to love. Scotus's reading of Thomas was that secondary causality was in danger of reducing humanity to being the puppet of determinism and puppets cannot love. Copleston rightly observes that Scotus 'sees freedom as man's most striking characteristic and love as his highest activity.'⁷⁶

In objecting to Thomas's framework of free will, Scotus was obliged to reformulate the relationship between the faculties of will and intellect. It has been seen that Thomas situated freedom in the human intellect, which he believed to be exalted above the instinctive action of the beasts by its capacity to consider the good. Scotus opposed Thomas's view, contending that this illustration of the relationship between will and intellect amounted to cognitive determinism. Scotus argues his case against intellectual determination in *Questions on Metaphysics*:

If the argument refers to the intellect knowing opposites, then it is true that the intellect can accomplish nothing externally unless it be determined from some other source, because it knows contraries after the manner of nature, and is unable to determine itself towards any of these opposites. Hence it will either act towards both or not act at all. And if one concludes from this that the

⁷⁶ Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, 225.

intellect does not suffice to qualify as a rational potency, it follows from what has been said that this is true. Indeed, if—to assume the impossible—the intellect and its subordinate powers alone existed, without a will, everything would occur deterministically after the manner of nature, and there would be no potency sufficient to accomplish anything to the contrary.⁷⁷

If the intellect necessarily presents to the will what it finds to be the best good in a given situation, then Scotus concludes that this is a natural, rather than a free faculty. Scotus therefore holds that the intellect is determined by its action of knowing the good:

The intellect falls under the heading of ‘nature,’ for it is of itself determined to understand and it does not have it in its power both to understand and to not understand; or as regards propositional knowledge where contrary acts are possible, it does not have the power both to assent and dissent.⁷⁸

Scotus therefore believes that by merely positing the capacity to deliberate rationally as to the highest known good, Thomas has not granted freedom. The stages towards action might be more complicated than the instinctive acts of animals, but because the intellect is a natural power, it is similarly determined towards cognition of the good. Hence, the intellect cannot be free because it necessarily considers right action and cannot do otherwise:

Suppose someone posits a further reason for this distinction [between natural and free faculties]. Just why does nature have to do with only one sort of action? i.e if it has to do with this or that, why is it determined of itself to cause just this effect or these effects, whatever they may be, whereas will, by contrast, has alternatives, i.e., it is not intrinsically determined to this action or its opposite, or for that matter to acting or not acting at all? One can reply to such a question that there is no further reason for this. ... One can give no other reason why it elicits its action in this way except that it is this sort of cause.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Scotus, *Metaphysics*, 9.15, 623.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 798.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 608.

Scotus therefore presents an opposition between the intellect and the will, in which the freedom of the latter lies in its potential opposition to the former. Consequently, the intellect cannot be free because it cannot act against its nature.⁸⁰

In refashioning human freedom, Scotus applies the principle of autonomy to the will in three key ways. Firstly, he argues that a free power is not determined, and is free to choose opposite actions. Scotus writes: ‘At the very moment that it wills or causes something, it could equally well will the contrary. A decision of the will never takes away its potentiality to act in the opposite way.’⁸¹ In *Questions on Metaphysics*, Scotus similarly notes:

... if it is the will one is speaking about, then I say that it is able to do what it does with no conceivable predetermination to act, so that the initial determination both in order of nature and order of time, occurs in the very placing of its act. And if one claims that at that instant it can do nothing unless first determined [by something other than itself], this is false.⁸²

Scotus’s first hallmark of human freedom is, therefore, in direct opposition to the perceived determinacy of Thomas’s account of the will and intellect.

Scotus’s second criterion for human freedom follows on from the first, for if a free power is not determined by a prior cause, it must be a self-moved mover. It is critical that Scotus rejects the Aristotelian maxim, accepted by Thomas, that ‘everything moved is moved by another.’⁸³ In contrast, for Scotus the human will is a free faculty by virtue of its independence from the intellect, and is thus the sufficient cause of its own actions:

But there is only a twofold generic way an operation proper to potency can be elicited. For either (1) the potency of itself is determined to act, so that in so far as itself is concerned, it cannot fail to act when not impeded from without;

⁸⁰ See Scotus, ‘Are freedom of will and natural necessity compatible with regards to the same act and object?’ (Q. 16, *God and Creatures*, 369-387.)

⁸¹ Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, dd. 33-39: *Quantum ad primum dico quod voluntas, in quam tum est actus primus, libera est ad oppositos actus: libera etiam est, mediantibus illis actibus oppositis, ad opposita in quae tendit, et ulterius, ad oppositos effectus quos producit.* For further discussion on the autonomy of the human will in Scotus see: Creswell, ‘Duns Scotus on the Will,’ 148, and Shannon, *The Ethical Theory of John Duns Scotus*, 45-70.

⁸² Scotus, *Metaphysics*, 9.15, 622-3.

⁸³ ST, I-II, 2.3. For a discussion of Scotus’s rejection of Aristotle’s maxim see Effler, *John Duns Scotus and the Principle ‘Omnes quod movetur ab alio movetur,’* 64-66.

or (2) it is not of itself so determined, but can perform either this act or its opposite, or can either act or not act at all. A potency of the first sort is commonly called nature, whereas of the second sort is called will.⁸⁴

By separating the agency of the will from the intellect, Scotus introduces contingency into all the decisions of the will. Scotus distinguishes between diachronic contingency and synchronic contingency.⁸⁵ Diachronic contingency refers to the will's decision in cases where acts follow serially. For example, one could decide first to go for a walk and then to return home for tea. Synchronic contingency concerns decisions in which two actions are mutually exclusive, such as sitting and standing at the same time. By deeming both the dilemma of when to have tea, and whether to sit, a matter of contingency rather than necessity, Scotus felt able to uphold the freedom of the will to want both options whilst choosing a certain state of affairs. Ingham remarks of Scotus's view of free will: 'The human will wills contingently in the moment in which it produces an act of willing; since it could also (at that moment) produce an act of willing that is ordered to the contrary.'⁸⁶ Scotus's teaching on contingency therefore underlines his belief that the will is a self-moving faculty, which is of necessity free to choose any available course of action.

Thirdly, Scotus maintains that a free power can refrain from acting even when all the conditions necessary for its acting are met. In *Quodlibets* and *Questions on Metaphysics*, Scotus reflects on the human experience of having willed a certain action, whilst believing that it would have been possible to will the opposite course of action. He notes that, 'for the person who wills experiences that he could have willed or not willed what he did.'⁸⁷ Scotus explains that, the decision to not elicit a certain act is a positive *non velle* choice of the human will. He notes that, 'if it is a free agent, it is able of itself to refrain from acting ... a sample of [this] sixth is the will, which need not choose what the intellect shows.'⁸⁸ Scotus here uses the principle of *non velle* to reinforce his point that the will is not bound by the dictates of the intellect, even if it offers the counsel of beatitude. To return to Pinckaers's distinction between 'freedom of indifference' and 'freedom for excellence,' freedom for Scotus can

⁸⁴ Scotus, *Metaphysics*, 9.15, 608.

⁸⁵ Scotus, *Reportatio*, Ia, d. 39-40, n. 41-4, 251-52.

⁸⁶ Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus*, 98.

⁸⁷ Scotus, *Metaphysics*, 9.15, 610 and *Quodlibets*, Q. 16.

⁸⁸ Scotus, *Metaphysics*, 2.14, 675-99.

therefore be described as ‘freedom of indifference’ because the will’s freedom is grafted over and against the advice of the intellect.

The locus of opposition between nature and freedom is seated in Scotus’s description of the divided will.⁸⁹ Scotus would say that the experience of indecision, that is, of feeling divided on an issue, corresponds to the two competing forces in the will. On the one hand, there is a power in the will that inclines towards the most self-advantageous course of action.⁹⁰ This affection for self-gratification is termed by Scotus *affectio commodi*. Wolter observes that the *affectio commodi* ‘is radically self-centred in this sense, at least, that nature seeks primarily and above all else its own welfare.’⁹¹ On the other hand, there is a free power that inclines towards justice and has the role of restraining the ambitions of *affectio commodi*.⁹² Scotus names this freedom for right action the *affectio iustitiae*.⁹³ In *Ordinatio* 2, d. 6, Scotus teaches that the free will to modify the natural inclination of selfishness, results in the formation of virtue:

Therefore, this affection for justice, which is the first check on the affection for the beneficial, inasmuch as we need not actually seek that toward which

⁸⁹ Since Scotus’s theory of the divided will adapts Anselm’s notion of happiness and justice in free will it could be objected that Scotus’s theology of free will does not drastically alter scholastic understandings of free will. This study has not focussed on Anselm’s influence because it is clear that Anselm does not endorse the voluntarist principle of the spontaneous autonomy of the will. In line with Aristotelian and later Thomist thought, Anselm holds that freedom lies in obedience to God, *De arbitrio*, Ch. 1, 122: ‘Now, since God and the good angels are unable to sin by free choice, the ‘ability to sin’ does not belong to the definition of free choice. Therefore, neither freedom nor a part of freedom consists in having the ability to sin.’ Anselm similarly defines freedom as the holding to a good end, *De arbitrio*, Ch. 13, 142: ‘the ability to keep uprightness of will for its own sake.’ A second parallel between Anselm and the later Thomists is the reliance of the will on the intellect. Anselm teaches that the will is led by its knowledge, *De arbitrio*, Ch. 7, 136: ‘So it follows that the will, when offered something, never abandons what it wants more for what it wants less. But when it is offered something that it wants more than what it already has, it immediately leaves the thing that it does not want as much.’ Visser and Williams observe that for Anselm ‘free choice consists in having the rational ability to know what is right in conjunction with the will by which one can choose it.’ (‘Anselm’s Account of Freedom,’ 184.) Normore likewise remarks: ‘Notice, for example that the will-to-happiness seems to be very much like the Aristotelian ultimate motivating desire for happiness. ... Thus the Anselmian agent does not engage in unmotivated action.’ (‘Picking and Choosing,’ 28.) The chasm separating Scotus and Anselm is therefore that Scotus uses the principles of justice and happiness in a way that is divorced from the intellect and thus open to spontaneous self-motion. The consequences of the free will theories of Anselm and Scotus on the issues of merit and grace are therefore remarkable different. For a discussion of the non-Pelagian consequences of Anselm’s view of free will, see: Rogers, ‘Anselm on Grace and Free Will,’ 66.

⁹⁰ See Kent, ‘Rethinking Moral Dispositions,’ 366-374.

⁹¹ Wolter, ‘Native Freedom of the Will as a Key to the Ethics of Scotus,’ 150.

⁹² See Boler, ‘Transcending the Natural: Duns Scotus on the Two affections of the Will,’ 109-126.

⁹³ See Williams, ‘From Metaphysics to Action Theory,’ 345-349

the latter affection inclines, nor must we seek it above all else (namely, to the extent to which we are inclined by this affection for the advantageous).⁹⁴

In Scotus's schema, the competition between these two affections in the will becomes the battleground of the moral life. Scotus explains the devil's fall from grace in terms of the triumph of *affectio commodi* over *affectio iustitiae*.⁹⁵ Cross remarks: 'The discussion of the fall of Satan makes it clear that Scotus's two inclinations allow him to give a radically un-Aristotelian solution to the problem of wrong doing.'⁹⁶ The startling aspect of Scotus's account of the affections of the will is that the devil can be said to have acted in accordance with nature. In contrast to Thomas's notion of the natural attraction to beatitude, Scotus contends that *affectio commodi* is the natural inclination of the human will. Cross explains that in acting virtuously, 'we will an action *a*, because it issues in justice; and we refrain from willing an action *not-a*, that will issue in immediate self-fulfilment.'⁹⁷ Hence, to perform a free act from justice is configured in Scotus's account as placing a limit on a natural desire for self-fulfillment. Scotus's determination to define free will in terms of autonomy thus leads to a dark inversion of Thomas's logic that God's justice of perfect love is the natural affection of the intellect and the realisation of human freedom. The opposition between the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitiae* allows Scotus to build his ethics on an entirely different foundation from the educational model of Thomism. For Scotus, the battle of affections in the human will is the source of right and wrong action. Scotus's concept of the freedom of the will therefore opens up a different explanation of the perplexing freedom to sin. The key to understanding the dynamic of sin in Scotus's account is that happiness is associated with the selfish act.⁹⁸ Whilst the will cannot will to be miserable, it can will to not will the instance—for example, of eating cake—that would secure instant happiness. The existence of sin does not therefore present an obstacle to Scotus's account of the will. Indeed, if sinning makes humans happy and the virtuous life is characterised by the stoic labour of self-denial, it is small wonder that Satan fell, that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and that Christians confess daily '*Mea culpa!*'

⁹⁴ Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, d. 6, Q.2.

⁹⁵ *Ordinatio*, IV, 49, 9-10.

⁹⁶ Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 88.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 88-89

⁹⁸ *Ordinatio*, IV, 49, 9-10. For a further discussion on the happiness associated with *affectio commodi* see: Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 87-89.

It has been seen that the different understandings of human freedom held by Scotus and Thomas resulted in a divergence of views on the relations between the will and the intellect, the natural and the free powers, and the moral and the sinful act. In examining the form of Scotus's opposing model of free will, his fear of determinist logic has been evident at every turn. This fear appears to be absent from Thomas's model of freedom, which instead returns repeatedly to the necessity of learning the nature of the good in order to act well. In striving to identify the parting of ways in the theologies of Thomas and Scotus, the historical context will be examined in order to shed light on their different preoccupations.

Looking into the life and times of Thomas and Scotus is a crucial step in seeking to understand why these two particular conceptions of free will came to fruition.⁹⁹ Theology, far from being a timeless discipline unaffected by the events of history, is undertaken by writers formed by their community, and seeking divine answers to the needs of their society. What is immediately evident is that the thought worlds of Thomas and Scotus were separated by what van Steenberghen describes as the 'most important condemnation of the Middle Ages' and the 'true pivot of the intellectual history of this epoch,'¹⁰⁰ the condemnation of Averroism in 1277. In speaking of the thought patterns of western theology, Pieper similarly notes that 'the event of March, 1277, forms a kind of joint.'¹⁰¹ The condemnations of 1277, in this reading, inevitably influenced the writers who followed in its wake. The affair also had widespread influence as it spanned Oxford and Paris, which were the principal universities of Western Europe in the thirteenth century. If historiography has traditionally marked 1277 as a turning point in medieval history, it is necessary to examine the nature of the crisis, and consider its effect on the intellectual formations of Thomas and Scotus.

The errors listed in the condemnation of 7 March 1277 targeted a philosophical threat on the revealed truths of the Church wrought by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris. The philosophical movement aroused the suspicion of the Church authorities because it asserted the right of philosophy to contradict the

⁹⁹ See Grant, 'The Effect of the Condemnations of 1277,' 537-539.

¹⁰⁰ Van Steenberghen, *Le XIIIe siècle*, 268, cited by Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 127.

¹⁰¹ Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 136.

precepts of revelation. Following in the logical footsteps of Averroes, this Parisian dissent was dubbed 'Latin Averroism.' The movement's leader, Siger of Brabant, declared that: 'At present we have nothing to do with the miracles of God, since we treat natural things in a natural way.'¹⁰² In two of Siger's principal works, *On the Necessity and Contingency of Causes* and *On the Eternity of the World*, he invoked Aristotelian concepts against revealed truths of Christianity such as the immortality of the soul. Pieper explains that in making philosophical truth claims in defiance of theology, the separatist attitude of the Parisian philosophers left the Church with no alternative but to issue a condemnation. Pieper remarks:

Viewed with a minimum of bias, this is what they came down to: that felicity is to be sought in this, not in another, life; that the Christian religion hinders learning; that the soul of man is inseparably bound to the body; that the creation out of nothing is impossible; that the practice of theology in no way enlarges one's knowledge; that there is no state finer than devotion to philosophy. If we can duly, without prejudice, take note of all this, then we scarcely know what else the official Church might have done, except to declare authoritatively: these propositions are in opposition to Christian doctrine.¹⁰³

The ecclesiastical reaction to this show of philosophical confidence was also displayed across the channel. On 18 March 1277, Robert Kilwardby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a further condemnation, which condensed the list from 219 to 30 propositions. This resulted in a turn against the use of Aristotle in theology and tarred Thomas with the brush of Parisian heresy.

Painting the historical picture post-1277 with broad strokes, a key theological repercussion of 1277 was that the use of Aristotelian philosophy became a dividing line along which the scholastic schools positioned themselves. On one side, the Averroist controversy induced a wave of distrust of philosophical rationalism. On the other, theologians such as Albert the Great were indignant on behalf of their star pupil's inculcation in the Parisian scandal.¹⁰⁴ Many of Thomas's fellow Dominicans similarly rushed to his protection, and to the defence of Aristotelian philosophy as the

¹⁰² Siger, cited by Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy*, 192.

¹⁰³ Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 131.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 208.

handmaid of theology. A consequence of 1277 was therefore, the hardening of theological identities, which involved a narrowing of theological freedoms within religious orders. The most obvious example of this is that one of Thomas's principal opponents in the condemnations, Robert Kilwardby, was himself a Dominican. Taken as a whole, the Dominican Order responded by defending Thomas and proclaiming his theology as the official teaching of the Dominican Order at Milan in 1278.¹⁰⁵ In 1277 Kilwardby could publicly disagree with Thomas's theology, but only a year later his renunciation of Thomas would have been a breach of religious discipline. Nonetheless, although the Dominicans closed ranks in a defensive mode, the principal outcome of the condemnations was the dominance of anti-Averroist sentiments and a distrust of Aristotelian philosophy. Copleston suggests that 'Scotus's thought can be seen as part of the Christian reaction against the spread of philosophical rationalism.'¹⁰⁶ In view of the fact that determinism, the dominance of the intellect and a denial of free will, were all articles condemned as heresy, it is unsurprising that providing an alternative view of free will lay at the heart of Scotus's theological endeavour. The prominence of a Franciscan theology of free will in the first half of the fourteenth century is thus understandable, because in supporting the condemnations, Scotus and later Franciscans seemed to bear the ecclesiastical stamp of approval.

However, recent scholarship on the formation of theology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries raises significant challenges to this historiography of 1277. Courtenay's research has brought to light many exceptions to the Schools thesis. Further, he has shown that Thomism, whether in the philosophical or theological sense, was not central to the writing careers of Nicholas Trevet (1303-1325), T. Waleys (1318-1340), Simon Boraston (1320-1338), John Bromyard (1326-1340) or William d'Eyncourt (1330-1340).¹⁰⁷ Courtenay believes that the instability of the religious in teaching offices in the Universities would have inhibited the formation of specific theological traditions. He writes: 'Long-term regencies of ten, twenty, and in a few cases thirty or more years, are found only among secular masters—precisely the

¹⁰⁵ See Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 135.

¹⁰⁶ Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, 229.

¹⁰⁷ Courtenay, 'The Emergence of Schools of Thought,' 181.

group for whom schools of thought has little or no meaning.’¹⁰⁸ Courtenay accuses the grand narratives which mourn the fundamental separation of theology from Aristotelian philosophy post-1277 of imposing the post-enlightenment dilemmas onto an earlier historical situation. He concludes: ‘Equally if not more important was that it also served the perceived need in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to create a Christian philosophy that could compete effectively against modern secular philosophy.’¹⁰⁹ Courtenay’s critique is targeted at those historians who cast the events of 1277 as the end of the ‘honeymoon of the Middle Ages’¹¹⁰ marked by the breakdown of the Thomistic ‘synthesis between faith and reason,’¹¹¹ which had signalled the apex of the Middle Ages. He contends that ‘by their very structure they accord value to some intellectual development and ideas, and deny value to others.’¹¹² Courtenay argues that these grand narratives are not only determined by value judgements more proper to a later era, but that the shape of the narrative seems to precede and predetermine the history. Indeed, he suggests, ‘to define the third quarter of the thirteenth century as the peak implies that there is nowhere else to go but down.’¹¹³ Does Courtenay’s research force the historian to deconstruct all connections between 1277 and the theology of Scotus? Moreover, does his refutation of the grand narrative prohibit historians from positing conceptual links between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries?

One solution to Courtenay’s attack on the unhistorical nature of grand narratives of intellectual decline, after the breakdown of unity between philosophy and theology, would be to follow the methodology of historians such as Maurer. Maurer upholds the pattern of intellectual decay, by focussing on the historical social climate. The thesis of decline in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, far from being unhistorical, is here seen in the light of economic and social conditions. Maurer notes that ‘in comparison with the thirteenth century, the fourteenth was a period of disunion and disintegration.’¹¹⁴ On Maurer’s reading, crisis had struck at every level of society. The year 1305 saw the Pope forced to leave Rome and

¹⁰⁸ Courtenay, *Changing Approaches to Fourteenth-Century Thought*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 408, 465.

¹¹¹ Courtenay, *Changing Approaches to Fourteenth-Century Thought*, 4.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁴ Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy*, 265.

establish his court in Avignon, thus instigating the problems that would end in the Great Schism. On a political level, the fourteenth century saw the rise in the power of national kings, and closed the curtain on the dream of a united empire of Christians. On a social level, the Black Death struck in the mid-fourteenth century, devastating communities and necessitating social and economic change. Maurer concludes: 'It is only to be expected that fourteenth-century thought would reflect this tendency towards division and decline.'¹¹⁵ However, whilst Maurer is right to situate the writers of this period within wider patterns of social change, and to draw attention to the influence of experiences of widespread panic on theological writing, these historical factors do not amount to an explanation for decline in scholastic thought. Indeed, it could be argued that the experiences of confronting mass death, contending with the relocation of papal authority to Avignon and opposing the heresies of Wycliff and Huss, might have intensified theological growth. In England alone, the writings of Julian of Norwich and the exuberance of England's architectural innovation of fan-vaulting could provide evidence of theologically active, hope filled and death-defying attitudes that challenge Maurer's grim diagnosis. Historical hard times do not in themselves explain why theologians come to hold a particular theological position.

A second attempt to navigate Courtenay's attacks, whilst holding on to the historical map of the grand narrative, has been plotted by Gilson. In contrast to Maurer, Gilson situates Thomas's theology, the condemnations of 1277, and the theological response, within a pattern of intellectual history. Gilson's narrative stretches back to the different approaches adopted by Plato and Aristotle. Thomas and his contemporaries are seen primarily as contributors to an ongoing philosophical conversation between Plato and Aristotle. Gilson claims:

It would not be impossible to show that, in more than one respect, the Thomistic philosophy is the continuation and amplification in the thirteenth century of the struggle which Aristotle originally began against Plato. Plato is the objective of St. Thomas's attacks behind Avicenna, Ibn Gabirol and even St. Augustine; it is in opposition to him that he denies innate ideas, rejects the proofs of the existence of God, denies the need of a special illumination of the intellect by divine ideas, refuses to consider the soul as a substance subsisting

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 265-266.

per se and independently of the body to which it is bound, maintains the efficacy of secondary causes in a universe whose very texture is made up of the relations of a real causality between beings.¹¹⁶

Gilson thus views the whole of Thomas's philosophical enterprise and even his relationship to Church Fathers, such as Augustine, as 'taking the part of Aristotle against Plato.'¹¹⁷ The problems inherent in Gilson's position have already been observed (p. 23), but it is important to return to Gilson's argument as a means of assessing Thomas's theological motivation. He points to Thomas's early interest in the dialectical arguments directed by Aristotle to Plato in the *First Book of the Metaphysics*, as evidence of the fundamental importance of the debate of the ancients in forming Thomas's theological perspective. Gilson asserts:

Nowhere better than in the *First Book of the Metaphysics* could the original spirit of Aristotelianism reveal itself to him with its assertion of a sensible world, endowed with reality, stability and intelligibility, as against Platonism which leaves to things only the appearance of being and confines intelligibility to a world from which we are excluded.¹¹⁸

The virtue of Gilson's thesis is that, in contrast to Maurer, he gives primacy to the ideas themselves, rather than the climate of ecclesiastical and social turbulence. The critical problem, however, is that in placing scholastics within an ongoing debate of classical philosophy, Gilson's theory does not situate Thomas's use of Aristotle in his historical context. The reader is left to assume that Thomas simply recognised that Aristotle's was a superior philosophy. Gilson's historical narrative therefore rests on his own philosophical value judgement. He concludes: 'The superiority of the Aristotelian physics was so crushing that in the eyes of clear-sighted minds it could not fail to obtain the assent of reason and to secure the ultimate triumph of the doctrine.'¹¹⁹ Gilson's chapter is entitled 'The Man and His Environment,' yet it fails to show how the environment might have made one set of philosophical ideas more intellectually palatable.

There is another approach which both avoids the methodological problems inherent in the views of Maurer and Gilson, whilst drawing on the strengths of their

¹¹⁶ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 21.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 23.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 21.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 16.

respective arguments. On the one hand, it has been seen that Maurer's positing of theological decline as a direct consequence of sociological distress, was problematic since it belittled the value of intellectual thought. On the other hand, Gilson disconnects scholastics from their wider environment, and so embraces an ivory-tower image of theological writing, and simplifies the different positions. The question that the third approach must answer is therefore: how did the historical context shape intellectual concerns and influence the priority accorded to different models of human freedom?

In order to address this, it is necessary to consider Gilson's question, 'How did St. Thomas conceive the work which it was his mission to accomplish?'¹²⁰ An alternative to the answers, given by Gilson and Maurer, lies in the origin of the Dominican intellectual tradition, in its founding mission in Languedoc. Responding to the Cathar heresy that had gripped Languedoc was by no means the only undertaking of what became an international preaching mission. However, St. Dominic's preaching crusade in Southern France heralded the foundation of the Order and thus played a key role in establishing Dominican identity.¹²¹ Thomas's appropriation and critique of Platonic and Aristotelian concepts was not in the manner of an armchair academic but as a friar of the relatively recently founded Order of Preachers. It is noteworthy that in joining the Dominicans, Thomas fought against the will of his family, who had intended him to join the prestigious Benedictine monastery Monte Cassino. In meeting the historical Thomas, the historian would indeed find a theologian and a philosopher but more noticeable would be his Dominican habit, religious community and involvement in the friar's mission to his contemporary society. Opposing the dualism of the Cathar heresy can therefore be seen as a part of Thomas's Dominican heritage, and thus an important influence on his intellectual formation.¹²²

Historiography has wrestled with the geography of Catharism and the nature of the Cathar heresy. Indeed, scholarship has warned against plotting the borders of

¹²⁰ Ibid, 29.

¹²¹ For an early account of the history of the Albigensian crusade against Catharism see: Veuz-de-Cernay's *Historia Albigensis*. For an overview of the history of the Cathars see: Roquebert, *Histoire des Cathares*.

¹²² For a detailed study of dualism and Cathar theology, see: Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*.

Cathar influence on the basis of similar beliefs, rather than on the basis of direct historical contact. The traditional image of Catharism as a renewal of late antique Manichaeism, which was held by Conybeare in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910), is no longer seen as a legitimate historical understanding.¹²³ Pegg summarises this a-historical attitude:

To study heresy, ... as though ideas wander over landscapes and centuries like loose hot-air balloons, so that the trick is to catch those drifting beliefs which look similar to each other, allows for whatever ideal contextualisation, whatever intellectual continuity, an erudite zeppelin-chaser so chooses.¹²⁴

However, Lambert and Hamilton have led recent research in confirming the basic tenet of the Schmidt's 1848 publication, '*Histoire et doctrine des Cathars*.'¹²⁵ Hamilton notes: 'But the increase in knowledge about the Bogomils has not only confirmed the main thrust of Schmidt's argument, that they and the Cathars were two branches of a single faith, it has also shown that the similarities between them were even greater than Schmidt surmised.'¹²⁶ The spread of the absolute 'Pauline' branch of this dualist sect, from its origin in ninth-century Bulgaria to the region of Languedoc in the mid-twelfth century, has therefore been revived in modern scholarship.¹²⁷ Catholic authorities responded to this flourishing Cathar movement with both sword and preaching, in an effort known as the Albigensian crusade. The Dominican attempt to win back the hearts of the Cathars to the Catholic faith through preaching, by word and pen, would have discouraged a scholarly vision of the natural world that favours a Platonic view of spiritual detachment. The content of Cathar belief is crucial because it was this mission that helped establish the Dominican identity, and so played a key role in orientating Thomas's theology of human freedom.

The records of the inquisition show that, whilst practices and doctrines varied amongst the Cathars, all were marked by a strict dualism between spirit and matter.¹²⁸ Cathar dualism extended not only to food practices, but penetrated all their attitudes to the flesh, including the role of women, sexual intercourse and child bearing. The

¹²³ Conybeare, 'Cathars,' 515-517.

¹²⁴ Pegg, 'On Cathars, Albigenses, and Good Men of Languedoc,' 188-189.

¹²⁵ Schmidt, *Histoire et doctrine de la secte des Cathares*, 163-84.

¹²⁶ Hamilton 'The Legacy of Charles Schmidt to the Study of Christian Dualism,' 193.

¹²⁷ See Hamilton 'The Legacy of Charles Schmidt,' 193-194, and Lambert, *The Cathars*, 28-59.

¹²⁸ On the importance of Inquisitorial accounts as a historical source for Catharism see: Pegg, 'On Cathars, Albigenses, and the Good Men of Languedoc,' 190.

human body, along with the whole of the material world, was seen as the devil's prison for souls that were really captured angels.¹²⁹ The world and all 'earthly goods' were seen as inherently evil.¹³⁰ Consequently, the highest model of Cathar life was a deliberate process of self-starvation. This was the perfect way of life—or of death, as the case may be—as it released the soul from contact with matter. Even the government of Cathar society mirrored the dualism of their belief. The leaders, known as Perfects, were those who committed themselves to these 'perfect' practices, and the weaker members of society were called 'believers.' The Cathars held a doctrine of metempsychosis, such that, if the human wearers of the souls immersed themselves too heavily in matter, the souls would be bound after death to other material bodies. The inquisitor Alan of Lille reported that the Cathars refrained from eating meat due to their belief in metempsychosis, for the meat might contain a fragment of earthbound soul.¹³¹ Italian inquisitorial accounts have been used by Biller to revise another trend in modern Cathar scholarship, which suggests that women were attracted to Cathar communities, by the chance to hold power and authority as 'Perfects.' This opportunity for power is held to have drawn women away from the male dominated and clerical structures of the Catholic Church.¹³² Biller argues, in opposition, that contemporary sources suggest that medieval women in Languedoc felt suppressed by the Cathar attack on marriage, the procreative and nourishing features of womanly development, and that women were thus not enthralled by the opportunities for power that this movement offered.¹³³ Indeed, the societal implication of the Cathars's abhorrence of matter was that procreation was treated as mortal sin. It was not the indulgence of sexual appetite that was at fault—this was actively encouraged—but acts that were open to new life. Conceiving a baby was paramount to colluding with the devil, because it would lead to further entrapment of angels by matter. Runciman comments: 'Had it been possible the Cathars would have desired race-suicide, either immediate or by the non-procreation of children.'¹³⁴ The Cathars tended towards a Docetic understanding of Christology in which Christ only appeared

¹²⁹ Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, 148.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

¹³² The feminist reading of Catharism was begun by Barber's 'Women in Catharism' and receives its fullest account in Brenon's *Les Femmes Cathares*. See Barber, 'Women and Catharism,' 45-62.

¹³³ Biller, 'The common women in the western Church in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries,' 127-157.

¹³⁴ Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, 151.

human. Within their dualist schema, it was impossible for the divine Christ-eon to become incarnate or die on a cross. Christ's appearance of humanity could therefore carry no redeeming significance. Christ was a teacher and no more. He was thought to be, as Runciman observes, 'like a Buddha rather than the Christ of Orthodox Christianity.'¹³⁵ The Cathars' adherence to a strict dualism between spirit and matter, in both their belief and practice, consequently challenged the Catholic understanding of salvation, creation and society. On this basis, the view of human freedom presented by Thomas must be revisited.

When the development of Thomas's view of human freedom is considered in light of the Dominican approach to the Albigensian crusade, the theological guiding lines become visible. Thomas's view of human freedom is fundamentally anti-dualist. His theory that freedom for the good is learned through the material world is in direct opposition to the anti-materialism of the Cathars. Whilst the Cathars saw the material world as the devil's prison for angels, Thomas describes the created world as reflecting the goodness of God, and as a gift through which humanity can learn to love God.¹³⁶ For Thomas, the material world is a help rather than a hindrance to the weakness of the human intellect. It is significant that Thomas teaches that the proposition 'God exists,' though self-evident in itself, is not evident to fallen humanity, and has to be made evident through arguments based on the world around us. In preparation for the five ways, Thomas writes: 'This is done by means of things which, though less evident in themselves, are nevertheless more evident to us, by means, namely, of God's effects.'¹³⁷ Gilson observes the role of creation in pointing human intellects to God's existence:

Consequently, they had either to be given a merely confused and general knowledge, or to be united with bodies to enable them to receive from sense objects the proper and particular knowledge of what these objects are. ... God has treated the human soul as we treat those crude minds which can learn only with the help of sensible illustrations.¹³⁸

The Cathars provide part of the historical backdrop to Gilson's philosophical observation. The controversy in Languedoc therefore helps to explain why Thomas's

¹³⁵ Ibid, 149.

¹³⁶ *ST*, I-II, 89.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 243.

theology of human freedom took the particular direction that it did. The origins of the Dominican missions in France inspired a theory in which human freedom was attained through the goodness of the material creation. The philosophical angle that Thomas adopted is seen by Gilson as fundamentally anti-Platonic. Thomas's perspective on creation does conflict with the Platonic theory of knowledge but the historian would be mistaken in describing it as anti-Platonic. His writings on human freedom belonged to his efforts to further the preaching efforts of an order that had begun its international mission in opposing the dualism of the Cathar heresy.

The Dominican crusade against the Cathars provided Thomas with a different thought world than that of Scotus, and contributed to the dissimilarity of their views on human freedom. Was this a permanent state of affairs? Did the mature Thomas undergo a radical shift during the turbulence of the Parisian Averroist controversy? The case has been made by Keenan that Thomas later came to the recognition later held by Scotus, namely, that a theology of human freedom which escaped determinism necessitated the will's autonomy from the intellect. Keenan contends that while Thomas's early thesis on human freedom 'leads to the conclusion that sin consists in error, that the will is a passive power, and that reason is the root of freedom,'¹³⁹ during his second regency in Paris and whilst writing *On Evil* and Q. 9 of the *Prima secunda*, Thomas redefined the freedom of the will, to mean an autonomy to engage in motion, that wholly 'precedes and is independent of reason.'¹⁴⁰ Drawing on the terminology of Joseph Fuchs, in which a distinction is made between the transcendental and categorical levels of the human nature, Keenan links this reversal in Thomas's view of the relationship between will and intellect with a new distinction between goodness and rightness in Thomas's later writings: 'The distinction between goodness and rightness is not between person and act, but between heart and reason.'¹⁴¹ Goodness is categorised as a transcendental aspect of freedom and rightness, pertaining to the categorical aspect of freedom to choose. The contentious passage on which Keenan's thesis of the autonomy of the will is based is *On Evil* 6:

Since deliberation and choices are about particulars, which is what action is about, it is required that what is apprehended as good and fitting be

¹³⁹ Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness*, 33.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, ix-x.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 14.

apprehended as good and fitting in particular and not merely in general. If then something is apprehended as a fitting good according to all the particulars that can be considered, it will move the will necessarily, and for this reason the human person of necessity desires happiness, which according to Boethius is ‘a state made perfect by the gathering together of good things.’ Yet, I say ‘of necessity’ with respect to the determination of the act since one cannot will the opposite, but not with respect to the exercise of the act, because one may now not will to think about happiness, since even the very acts of intellect and will are something particular.¹⁴²

Keenan’s interpretation of this passage is that the will is only subsequent to reason in matters of specification, whilst it is prior to—and independent of—the intellect, in the exercise of willing. The will is seen to possess ultimate primacy over the intellect because the human person is free not to think of happiness, which would otherwise move the will necessarily. On Keenan’s reading, the versions of human freedom taught by Thomas and Scotus converge in the historical milieu of the Parisian controversy. Must one conclude that the mature Thomas had performed a U-turn in his teaching on human freedom?

In opposition to Keenan, Sherwin argues that ‘throughout his career Aquinas maintains that the will is a rational appetite: the will always follows some intellectual cognition.’¹⁴³ In contrast to Keenan, Sherwin sees that passages such as *On Evil* 6 as standing in a hermeneutic of continuity with Thomas’s earlier theology of *De Veritate*. Sherwin critiques Keenan’s depiction of Thomas’s thought for failing to recognise that, ‘on the level of human action every act of exercise of the will presupposes a choice.’¹⁴⁴ In *On Evil* 6, Thomas is referring to the human person’s act of thinking about happiness as a particular action. Happiness is being used, not as the universal inclination of the will, but a specific object of ‘deliberation and choice.’¹⁴⁵ The way in which the human person can be held to be free not to think about happiness at a particular moment, is akin to the choice not to contemplate philosophy. The exercise of thinking—even thinking about the highest good—is not always the action that is the appropriate good in a particular instance. Sherwin explains, ‘In this

¹⁴² Thomas, *On Evil*, 242.

¹⁴³ Sherwin, ‘Thomas Aquinas and Charity’s Relationship to Knowledge,’ 52.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

life, thinking-about-happiness is a particular act, e.g. thinking about happiness when one should be sleeping or helping a neighbour in distress is not a fitting good.’¹⁴⁶ When the action of the human person to think about happiness is seen as something which itself contains the process of deliberation, it is apparent that *On Evil* 6 need not be seen as evidence of a distinct change in Thomas’s thought. Moreover, Sherwin points to passages in Thomas’s later work *Summa Theologiae* that supports his case for continuity. For instance:

The human person can will and not will, act and not act; again, he or she can will this or that, and do this or that. The reason for this is found in the very power of reason. For the will can tend to whatever reason can apprehend as good. Now reason can apprehend as good not only to will or to act, but also to will and not to act. Again, in all particular goods, reason can consider an aspect of some good, and the lack of some good, which has the aspect of evil: and in this aspect, it can apprehend any single one of these goods as electable or avoidable.¹⁴⁷

Sherwin agrees that there are developments in Thomas’s later work on human freedom, such as his use of formal and efficient causation as an image of the dynamic between will and intellect. Sherwin argues, however, that these should be seen as refinements to his earlier notion of the will. The essence of this continuity in Thomas’s thought is, in Sherwin’s words, his conviction that ‘the human person, when acting in a fully human way, always acts from knowledge and in freedom.’¹⁴⁸ Sherwin provides a convincing rebuttal of Keenan’s contention that a revolution on the subject of human freedom is evident in Thomas’s mature thought. It is thus plausible to posit a real distinction between the theologies of human freedom found in Thomas and Scotus.

A further means of comparing the different approaches of Thomas and Scotus is to compare the two approaches to evangelical poverty maintained by Dominicans and Franciscans. Here it is instructive to compare the early Franciscan Rule of 1223 with Thomas’s opusculum ‘*De Perfectione*.’ Thomas’s teaching that riches are not an ultimate obstacle to heaven, reveals his emphasis on the goodness of the created order.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 46.

¹⁴⁷ ST, I-II 13.6.

¹⁴⁸ Sherwin, ‘Thomas Aquinas and Charity’s Relationship to Knowledge,’ 50.

The purpose of a vow of poverty is to aid the perfection of charity and so ‘prevent our affections from being attached to riches.’¹⁴⁹ Critically, however, pure love of God and the possession of wealth are not ultimately incompatible. Thomas remarks:

It may be objected, however, that St. Matthew, St. Bartholomew, and Zaccheus were rich; nevertheless they entered into Heaven. St. Jerome replies, that, ‘we must remember that they had ceased to be wealthy at the time of their admission to heaven.’ Abraham, however, never lost his wealth, but, as we read in Genesis, died a rich man, bequeathing his property to his sons. How then could he be perfect? Nevertheless God said to him ‘Be perfect’ (Gen. 27: 1). This question cannot be answered if we hold that it is the mere renunciation of wealth which constitutes perfection. For, if that were the case, no one who was rich could be perfect. Our Lord does not say that perfection lies in giving up what we possess, but he mentions this renunciation of our possessions as a means to perfection. We see this by his own words, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and follow me.’ The following of Christ constitutes perfection; the sacrifice of riches is a means to perfection.¹⁵⁰

Thomas’s praise of the rich man, who is not consumed by his riches but is able to follow Christ in love, stands in contrast to the Franciscan belief.

The Franciscan rule presents wealth as an absolute obstacle to heaven. It is a friar’s imitation of Christ’s poverty rather than his love that identifies him as an heir to the kingdom of heaven. The rule states:

The friars are to appropriate nothing for themselves, neither a house, nor a place, nor anything else. As strangers and pilgrims (1 Pet. 2:11) in this world, who serve God in poverty and humility, they should beg alms trustingly. And there is no reason why they should be ashamed, because God made Himself poor for us in this world. This is the pinnacle of the most exalted poverty, and it is this my dearest brothers, that has made you heirs and kings in the kingdom of heaven, poor in temporal things, but rich in virtue. This should be your portion, because it leads to the land of the living. And to this poverty, my

¹⁴⁹ Thomas, *De Perfectione*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

beloved brothers, you must cling with all your hearts, and wish never to lose anything else under heaven, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵¹

These different interpretations of the vow of poverty held by these two mendicant orders highlights Thomas's efforts to affirm the usefulness of the vow without degrading the goodness of material benefits. In keeping with his theological schema that the goodness of the material world leads humanity to God, Thomas refuses to interpret the call to follow Christ in a dualist light. Following Christ is not an escape from the material world, but a journey in learning to love God above all created goods. Thomas's understanding of the vow of poverty therefore illustrates the fact that his anti-dualist approach was not confined to the Dominicans' early theological combat with the Cathars. Thomas's attitude to evangelical poverty is significant in pointing towards the anti-dualism on which all his theology, including that of free will, has its foundation.

This chapter has established that Thomas and Scotus presented two competing versions of human freedom to academic discourse in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It has found that Pinckaers's distinction between 'freedom of indifference' and 'freedom for excellence' can be applied to Scotus and Thomas respectively. The question of the freedom to sin has helped to uncover the foundations of their differing models of will and intellect in human freedom. It has been seen that the underlying problem is the need to posit a second principle to explain the possibility of sin. If God made the world, and God is good, why do humans turn to evil deeds? Where Scotus accounts for sin by placing two competing modes of willing in the soul—*affectio commodi* and *affectio iustitiae*—Thomas describes sin as, at root, the mistaken perception of the good. Scotus's version of human freedom places the autonomy to sin within the human will, whilst Thomas sees it as an inherent danger of child-like intellects, trying to learn the good through their interaction with creation. How did these two different narratives of human freedom come to be held? This chapter has steered a middle course through the social determinism of Maurer and the abstract philosophical explanation offered by Gilson, to examine the influence of some of the intellectual concerns of the thirteenth century on the development of free will theories. This has proved enlightening in both cases. It has been shown that, whilst fear of

¹⁵¹ *Franciscan Rule* (1223).

determinism governed Scotus's theology of the autonomy of the will, it was the Dominican battle against Cathar dualism which inspired Thomas. Thanks to the Dominican preaching crusade against the Cathar heresy, Thomas's theological framework endorsed the goodness of material creation as a means to the freedom of knowing and obeying God. By situating theological divergence within the historical context of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, this chapter has re-established the traditional view that a real theological difference existed between Thomas and Scotus, countering the recent historical revisionism of Courtenay and Keenan. Scotus's reformulation of free will therefore established an opposing theological framework to that of Thomas: one that would have crucial repercussions on scholastic understandings of the merit of the Mass as a sacrifice.

Chapter Two: Scotus and the Mass

In order to explore whether Scotus's understanding of free will paved the way to the Eucharistic debates of Luther's Reformation, this chapter begins by asking how Scotus's view of human freedom informed his teaching on the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice. In doing so, Scotus's theology of the Mass will be broken down into its theological components. Firstly, his teaching on good works and the principles of merit will be studied in relation to the charge of Pelagianism. Secondly, his theology of Christ's sacrifice will be examined. The belief of some modern scholars, that Scotus's theory of atonement does not signal a dramatic breach with scholastic satisfaction theories, will be called into question. Thirdly, Scotus's theology of the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice will be discussed. These factors allow one to consider the resemblance between Scotus's theology of free will in the Mass and Luther's Reformation doctrine. Did Scotus's soteriology present Luther with the tools for constructing a theology of imputed righteousness and provide Luther with a theology of merit that could be used to kindle the flames of Reformation polemic? Moreover, if Luther's Reformation theology reflects aspects of Scotus's theology, whilst vehemently rejecting others, how do these doctrines hold together in Scotus's thought? It will be argued that free will is the 'watchword,' as Pieper remarks, in navigating Scotus's thought. Free will is the source of conflict and concord between Scotus and Luther in regard to the theology of the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice.

This chapter begins by examining Scotus's understanding of merit because this principle informs his interpretation of the Mass as a good work. Scotus's theology of free will, and in particular his view of it as a faculty of autonomous volition in the human soul, has repercussions for his understanding of good works. Shannon points to the connection between Scotus's view of free will and ethics, noting: 'This capacity makes morality and even community possible by freeing us from the limits of our nature for the good of others.'¹ The crucial difference between Scotus and Thomas on the question of charitable deeds is that, for Scotus, human freedom means that the will is open to every act. Significantly, the will can choose to perform an act independent

¹ Shannon, *The Ethical Theory of John Duns Scotus*, 47.

of, or even against, the counsel of reason. In Scotus's ethical framework, there is no division between acts belonging to the natural level and acts proper to the supernatural level. The acts of believing and loving God, for instance, are not in themselves supernatural deeds. Scotus writes:

For if two persons elicit an act of love of God, one because he naturally knows God to be good, the other because he believes this to be so, neither the scientific act of knowledge nor the act of faith regarded individually is required *per se* to have the act of love.²

Such acts can stem from infused faith and charity, and thus be supernatural, but equally they can not. It is the added impulse of grace that makes deeds supernatural. Loving and believing in God is therefore possible for the human will without the workings of grace. Given Scotus's ambiguity as to whether or not acts of faith and love of God stem from a created habit of charity, it is necessary to question Yang's claim that: 'Accusations of Pelagianism heaped upon Scotus's doctrine of first grace (*prima gratia*) are unfounded.'³

Von Harnack and Grensted criticise Scotus, arguing that he taught that Christ only merited the first grace for the elect and thereafter leaves the faithful to journey to heaven unassisted by grace. Yang defends Scotus, arguing that Scotus's emphasis on the first grace was not intended to exclude subsequent graces. Rather, Scotus's intention was to guard against Pelagianism by stressing that the merit of the first grace belongs wholly to Christ. However, turning to Scotus's teaching on the relationship between natural and supernatural virtue, it appears that Yang's defence of Scotus is too generous. Yang writes:

But how, asks Scotus, are pilgrims supposed to develop this disposition [for the first grace] in the first place, on their own or by grace? This is why Scotus argues that Christ merited, first and foremost, the *prima gratia*, by which Christ unites to himself those who are not united and have never disposed themselves to this union.⁴

Yet Scotus's discussion of dispositions for merit clearly opposes Yang's interpretation. Scotus notes that natural morality is in a state of potentiality to grace,

² Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 17, 396.

³ Yang, 'Scotus's Voluntarist Approach to Atonement Reconsidered,' 423, footnote 2.

⁴ *Ibid*, 423.

and consequently, that the soul must be made ready to receive grace through the moral life:

For it is reasonable that a merely natural act first receive such perfection as that of moral virtue which does not transcend nature's powers, and only then, that it receives further such perfection as is simply supernatural. Hence the reason given above, viz., that the potential is not specifically distinct from that in relation to which it is potential, not only holds for a purely natural act with respect to moral perfection but also for the perfectly moral act, for under the major premise, we could include a minor which would apply not merely to the natural act but also to the moral act.⁵

In the *Quodlibets*, Scotus presents the relationship between nature and grace as a continuum, in which supernatural meritorious acts embody the fullness of natural virtue. His depiction of natural morality, as a necessary pre-condition for the infusion of grace, conflicts with Yang's defensive premise on the topic of *prima gratia*. In Q. 17, Scotus concludes that different levels of good works gradually lead to an increase in perfection:

The first expresses a relationship to the potency which freely elicits the act; the second adds to this a relationship to the virtue which inclines to such an act, or rather to the rule of virtue, i.e., a dictate of right reason; the third expresses a relationship to charity which inclines the will to such an act; the fourth adds a relationship to the divine will which accepts the act in a special way. The third adds some goodness over and above that conferred by the second and is itself required for the fourth, not indeed by the very nature of things, but rather by a disposition of the accepting will.⁶

The necessity of a foundation of moral virtue as a disposition for grace suggests that Scotus does not escape the tinges of Pelagianism, but rather opened the door for Biel's later maxim, that the first grace will be given to those who do their best (*facere quod in se est*).⁷

⁵ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 17, 393.

⁶ Ibid, 398.

⁷ The implications of the *facere quod in se est* principle in Biel's theology will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Briefly, Biel's use of the *facere quod in se est* clause is significant for this study on the origins of Luther's Reformation theology because it was interpreted in a Pelagian light. Oberman argues that the implication of Biel's teaching was that, 'everyone is by nature in a position to discharge this first duty. For God, however, the *facere quod in se est* means only one thing: he is obliged, because he has placed the obligation on himself, to infuse his grace in everyone who had done his very best.' (Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 132.) It is noteworthy that Thomas understands *facere quod*

The central place of Scotus's theory of human freedom, in his understanding of merit, becomes clear in his discussion of the distinguishing feature of a meritorious act. Returning to the previous quotation from *Quodlibets*, it is evident that the fourth level of the meritorious act is not associated with an increase in inherent goodness. Scotus notes that, the difference lies in its relationship 'to the divine will which accepts the act in a special way.'⁸ The act is meritorious because God's free will deems it to be so. Similarly, Scotus remarks that the presence of created grace informing the third level of charitable acts is a precondition for merit, 'not indeed by the very nature of things, but rather by a disposition of the accepting will.'⁹ Scotus makes the case that charity has no necessary connection with merit, but is required because of the decision of God's free will. In itself, an act of loving God that comes from the presence of grace in the soul does not, according to Scotus, have a direct bearing on whether or not the act is meritorious. McGrath remarks:

The inner connection between acceptation and the habit of charity lies in neither the nature of acceptation nor the habit of charity, but solely in the divine ordination that there should be a causal relationship between them, which has now been actualised *de potentia Dei ordinata*.¹⁰

For instance, Scotus argues:

Neither is charity required *per se* for the substance of the act nor for the act to be meritorious. It is only a precondition for the act's being accepted. But even for this it is not a necessary precondition if the necessity referred to be that characteristic of an essential order of causes.¹¹

Meritorious acts are deemed to presuppose the habit of charity because in the established order of God's free will—*de potentia Dei ordinata*—God has 'contingently decided not to accept the act unless it be elicited in accord with such an inclination.'¹² Scotus's vision of the radical contingency of creation on the free will of God, is the blueprint of his theology of merit. There can be no definition of a

in se est in an explicitly non-Pelagian manner. He considers the question: 'Can man prepare himself for grace without the external assistance of grace?' In *ST*, I-II, 109.5.6, Thomas answers: 'Man can do nothing without God, according to the text of John, "Without me you can do nothing." And so, when man is said to do what is in him, this is said to be in his power in so far as he is moved by God.'

⁸ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 17, 398.

⁹ *Ibid*, 398.

¹⁰ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 179.

¹¹ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 17, 397.

¹² *Ibid*, 397-398.

meritorious act other than a direct appeal to the will of God. Scotus concludes that merit ‘implies two additional relations in the act, one to the accepting will, the other, to the reward that the will has assigned to the act.’¹³

The non-necessity of a created habit of grace is exemplified in Scotus’s discussion of faith in the Trinity. He holds that belief in God as Trinity is possible on the basis of acquired or infused faith. Scotus believes that, by harnessing the powers of natural deliberation, it is possible to assent to the teaching of the Trinity without infused grace. He notes: ‘as for the belief in the proposition [God is Trinity], I say that this is possible even in this life and on natural grounds, at least by acquired faith,’¹⁴ arguing that, ‘texts of Augustine indicate that belief in the testimony of others can be so firm as to warrant its being called “knowing”.’¹⁵ Scotus is referring to Augustine’s words of conversion: ‘I would not believe in the Gospel, did not the authority of the Catholic Church compel me.’¹⁶ What did Scotus believe to be the compelling authority of the Catholic Church in Augustine’s declaration? Scotus does not point to apostolic succession as an ultimate guarantee of the Church’s witness to the message of Christ. Instead, he remarks:

The more truthful the witness, then, the more we can and ought to believe him. And a community can be trusted even more than an individual. The Catholic Church is a most truthful community, however, for it condemns lying and commends truth in the highest measure. Therefore, its testimony can be believed with the greatest of certitude, especially where it damns the lie most, in matters of faith and morals.¹⁷

Scotus’s theory, that honesty and moral virtue provide the assurance of legitimacy would worry modern Catholics in light of the recent abuse scandal. Scotus’s argument would similarly have failed to convince Augustine, in his campaign for Church unity against the Donatist claims of superior moral conduct. However, the logic of the argument allows Scotus to posit belief in God as Trinity, on the basis of a naturally acquired faith, rather than through the supernatural gift of faith infused into the soul. In regard to belief in the Trinity, the fruit of acquired faith and infused faith appear to

¹³ Ibid, 389.

¹⁴ Ibid, Q. 18, 319.

¹⁵ Ibid, 319.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 7:7.

¹⁷ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 14, 319-320.

be identical. Scotus holds that the only difference lies in the possibility that acquired faith could be mistaken, whereas infused faith is always true because it comes from God:

So far as eliciting the act is concerned, however, one difference between the two is this: an act of belief could be elicited by acquired faith, even if it alone were present, in the same way that we believe certain articles to which no infused faith inclines us simply because testimony of the witnesses deserves to be believed. ... Infused faith is unable to incline one toward something false since it inclines in virtue of the divine light of which it is a participation.¹⁸

In view of Scotus's description of the relationship between infused and acquired faith, it is evident that the salvific aspect of faith lies not in the act of faith itself, but in God's decision to deem infused faith a precondition for salvation. According to Scotus's argument, it is not certain that all who pledge belief in the Trinity have the salvific gift of infused faith. Moreover, if belief in the Trinity is professed on the basis of natural faith alone, why has God withheld the saving gift of supernatural faith? It is, therefore, difficult to avoid ascribing arbitrariness to Scotus's account of faith and meritorious works. Scotus emphasises God's freedom to the extent that, he undermines the need for infused habits of charity and faith. Indeed, Scotus writes:

God can cause any absolute immediately and yet without necessity. If he uses an intermediary cause, he can still produce it without necessity, for the intermediary cause does not force him to cause its effects. Therefore, though both [i.e., the intermediary cause and its effect] be caused by a common cause, not only will the ultimate effect be contingent, but even if the intermediary cause be given, the effect will still be caused contingently.¹⁹

Whilst Scotus upholds habits of grace as a condition of God's ordaining will, it could be argued that, in cutting the cords of the logical necessity of habits of grace, Scotus has paved the way for Luther's theology of imputed righteousness.²⁰

The impact of Scotus's theology of free will on conceptions of created habits of grace can be appreciated when compared to the standard thirteenth-century alternative. Janz writes:

¹⁸ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 14, 320-321.

¹⁹ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 16, 372.

²⁰ See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 185-186.

In this period the idea of a supernatural habit emerged, and grace was explained in the thirteenth century in terms of man's supernatural end. But this understanding, as Lonergan has observed, was foreshadowed in Lombard, for whom grace is not only what frees free will, but also the ground of merit with respect to eternal life.²¹

Janz shows that Thomas's more detailed exploration of the relationship between habits of grace and merit was both in continuity with Lombard, and characteristic of thirteenth-century thought. Thomas posits an ontological connection between the presence of grace in the soul and the attainment of eternal life. He terms the merit of good deeds performed by those in a state of grace, condign merit. This is because the supernatural reward of heaven is similar in kind to the supernatural presence of grace in the soul. Thomas explains:

If, however, we speak of a meritorious work, inasmuch as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting, it is meritorious of life everlasting condignly. For thus the value of the merit depends upon the power of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting according to John 4:14: '... shall become in him a fount of water springing up into life everlasting.' And the worth of the work depends on the dignity of the grace, being made a partaker of the Divine Nature, is adopted as a son of God, to whom the inheritance is due by right of adoption, according to Romans 8:17, 'If sons, heirs also.'²²

In contrast to Scotus, Thomas teaches that habits of grace are ordained, not merely to tick the box of a divine application form for heaven, but as an ontological necessity. Habits of grace have an ontological relation to heaven, because they are the presence of eternal life of grace in the soul.

Thomas's account of the ontological necessity of habits of grace for salvation further differs from Scotus, in regard to the role of dispositions. Where Scotus veered dangerously onto the Pelagian ground of claiming good works as a prerequisite for saving grace, Thomas emphasises the incapacity of nature to reach salvific heights, due to its inherent limits and the corruption of sin. Thomas comments:

²¹ See: Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 44, and Lonergan, 'St. Thomas's Thought on *Gratia Operans*,' 300.

²² *ST*, II-II, 23.3.

The gift of grace may be considered in two ways: first in the nature of a gratuitous gift, and thus it is manifest that all merit is repugnant to grace, since as the Apostle says (Romans 11:6), ‘if by grace, it is not now by works.’ Secondly, it may be considered as regards the nature of a thing given, and thus, also, it cannot come under the merit of him who have not grace, both because it exceeds the proportion of nature, and because previous to grace a man in a state of sin has an obstacle to his meriting grace viz. sin.²³

Thomas’s theology of dispositions is thus at sharp variance with Scotus’s. Thomas does not teach that it is necessary to fulfill the potential of natural goodness in order to receive the gift of grace. Rather, he sees sin as an obstacle to virtue, and presents a soteriology that begins with forgiveness. Janz observes of Thomas’s teaching in the *Summa* that, ‘the preparation for the reception of grace requires a special gift of God internally moving the soul or inspiring a good purpose. The provision of the proper disposition for justification does not lie within man’s natural powers alone.’²⁴ The drastic effects of Scotus’s theory of human freedom on his theology of habits of grace, and the relationship between the natural and supernatural in preparation for the first grace, can therefore be appreciated against the backdrop of Thomas’s theology. Thomas writes: ‘Man’s every good work proceeds from the first grace as from its principle; but not from any gift of man. Consequently, there is no comparison between gifts of grace and gifts of man.’²⁵ Thomas’s view—that acts of grace bear ontological significance for salvation and differ in kind from acts of nature—can therefore be recognised as alien to the Scotist schema.

The transformation wrought by Scotus’s theology of free will has been underestimated in current scholarship. The distinction between the ordained and absolute has been deemed to have prevented the free will revolution from having an effect on the soteriological writing of the fourteenth century. Oberman, Courtenay, Oakley, Hamm and Schulze, all point to the dialectic between the *potentia absoluta* and the *potentia ordinata* as providing the key to a non-Pelagian reading of the

²³ Ibid, 23.5.

²⁴ Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 56-57.

²⁵ ST, II-II, 23. 5.3.

scholastic understandings of the relationship between nature and grace.²⁶ Oberman remarks:

William Courtenay has convincingly countered the charge of arbitrariness by pointing out that the *potentia Dei absoluta* ‘referred to the total possibilities initially open to God, some of which were realised by creating the established order; the unrealised possibilities are now only hypothetically possible.’²⁷

Oberman and Courtenay contend that whilst fourteenth-century scholastics inherited from Scotus an idea of the ultimate power of God’s infinite possibilities, the concept of God’s ordained power guaranteed a secure order and causality for theology. Oberman emphasises that: ‘The *potentia ordinata*, i.e., the reality as object of man’s exploration, is therefore not threatened by a whimsical God but unfolds the complete and definitive plan of God for his creation.’²⁸ The reliability of God’s ordained order, freely chosen before time, is seen to place a safeguard around the potential havoc that Scotus’s vision of free will could affect on theories of sin, grace and redemption. In fourteenth-century thought, was the Scotist idea of God’s free will employed only in relation to discussions about God’s absolute power, or was its impact greater than this trend in current scholarship allows?

In critiquing the stance adopted by Oberman and Courtenay, the theology of the necessity of habits of grace for salvation provides a test case for the impact of Scotus’s theology of human freedom on fourteenth-century scholastic thought. Ockham’s definition of God’s ordained and absolute power breaks down the safeguards imagined by Courtenay. Ockham does indeed describe the *potentia Dei ordinata* as ‘power to do something in accordance with the laws that have been ordained and instituted by God.’²⁹ The *potentia absoluta*, however, is the ‘power to do anything such that its being done does not involve a contradiction, regardless of whether or not God has ordained that he would do it.’³⁰ Implied in the second instance of God’s power is the freedom to interfere with the ordained state of affairs. Hence, in addressing the question of whether or not a habit of grace is necessary for entrance

²⁶ See Courtenay, *Changing Approaches to Fourteenth-Century Thought* and Oberman, ‘*via antiqua* and *via moderna*.’

²⁷ Courtenay, ‘Nominalism and Late Medieval Religion,’ in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, 26-59, cited by Oberman, *Ancients and Moderns*, 27.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 28.

²⁹ Ockham, *Sixth Quodlibet*, 491.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 491.

into eternal life, Ockham is free to consider the possibility of God's damning someone in possession of grace.³¹ Scotus had released the connection between habits of grace and meriting eternal life, thus leaving everything dependent on God's acceptance. He had already insisted that the absence of grace is no obstacle to salvation for those who had not yet heard the Gospel, pointing to Cornelius (Acts 10: 1-8) as an example of this natural faith.³² Scotus believed that, for those ignorant of Christ, judgement for eternal life would be based on actions performed in accordance with natural reason. Brampton comments:

In such cases as the foregoing [Cornelius], Scotus claims that God may grant beatitude to a man *in puris naturalibus* and save him *sine omni merito praecedente* and without the infusion of grace. In doing so, God acts by reason of his *potentia absoluta*. When therefore the question is asked what is to happen to the meritorious acts by which we hope to achieve salvation, the answer is that we do not achieve salvation: it is bestowed upon us by God *ex sua libera voluntate*. Acts in themselves are not meritorious; they become meritorious when and only when they are freely and voluntarily accepted by God: *meritum quia acceptatum, tamen non e converse*, for merit is the result of a judgement and not the basis of a claim.³³

Brampton's point is that Scotus uses *potentia absoluta* to allow God to save irrespective of the presence of habits of grace. Moreover, Brampton highlights the dependence of all merit on God's free will to accept it as such, thus allowing God to accept natural goods as meritorious of eternal life. The direct consequence of this logic is that Ockham can consider the instance of God's granting acceptance without created habits of grace, and damning those in possession of the habit. Ockham declares:

I claim that if one is speaking about absolute necessity, then it is not the case that God of necessity accepts an act elicited out of created charity. Rather, by his absolute power he is able not to accept that act, taking 'not to accept' for 'not to will to give someone eternal life.' ... But no matter which act or habit is posited in a wayfarer (*viatore*), God can will to reduce that act and that habit—as well as the subject of them both—to nothingness. Further, God is

³¹ Ibid, 495.

³² Brampton, 'The Doctrine of the *potentia Dei absoluta*,' 573.

³³ Ibid, 573.

able to conserve such a habit and such an act in a wayfarer for many years without eternal life.³⁴

The use of the concepts *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* in the fourteenth century should not therefore be seen as safeguards against the Pelagian dangers of Scotus's idea of free will. Indeed, Ockham's teaching on the non-necessity of habits of grace therefore reveals the implications of Scotus's theory of free will. In commenting on the change wrought by Scotus's vision of free will, McGrath rightly remarks: 'The fourteenth century saw this consensus [of the necessity of habits of grace] shattered through the systematic application of the dialectic between the two powers of God and the concept of covenantal causality.'³⁵

In the second section of this chapter the soteriological effect of Scotus's free will theology will be considered. It has become apparent that the foundation of merit in Scotus's thought lay not in the possession of a habit of grace but in the accepting will of God. Does the same logic apply to Scotus's soteriology of Christ's atonement and the forgiveness of sins? In exploring this question, it is helpful to recapitulate the connection between satisfaction and the Thomistic notion of habits of grace. If Scotus dispensed with the logic of habits of grace, does redemption lie in Christ's love of the Father, or in a declaration of God's free will to accept Christ's sacrifice as salvific? Lastly, it will be asked whether or not Scotus could be seen as foreshadowing the Lutheran idea of salvation as a declaration of alien righteousness. Clearly, the thirteenth century is far removed from the sixteenth but the focus will be on the degree to which Scotus's soteriological concepts are present in Luther's Reformation understanding of righteousness.

Yang presents the case that older scholarship such as that of Langston and Grensted was mistaken in its attack on Scotus's theology of atonement. The view Yang wishes to discredit is that Scotus's theology of Christ's finite merit and his emphasis on the accepting will of God broke with the Anselmian model of satisfaction and fashioned God as a whimsical tyrant. Rather, Langston notes, 'the finite sacrifice of Christ was not redemptive for all mankind because of any intrinsic merit of the finite sacrifice; it was redemptive simply because God chose to accept the finite

³⁴ Ockham, *Sixth Quodlibet*, Q. 2, 495.

³⁵ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 177.

sacrifice of Christ as sufficient recompense for mankind's fall.'³⁶ Grensted similarly remarks of the governing role of God's free will: 'If everything is referred to the *acceptatio* of God, there is clearly no limit to that which God may choose to accept.'³⁷ Yang protests:

Focussing narrowly on certain statements made by Scotus, based on his view of how differently God could have ordered the world according to his absolute power, they depict the Franciscan as an extreme voluntarist who argued that God could have, simply by sheer will, accepted in place of the passion of Christ a purely creaturely sacrifice of an angel or a saint as adequate satisfaction for human sins. They further claim that Scotus rejected St. Anselm of Canterbury's principle of satisfaction along with his argument for the necessity of the God-man who alone could atone for the infinite sin of humanity.³⁸

Yang argues that Scotus's theology of the finite worth of Christ's sacrifice is subtly nuanced by the *ex circumstantia suppositi*, which granted a quasi-infinite status of merit to Christ's passion. The hypostatic union plays a key role in Scotus's soteriology, because God looked on the finite merit of Christ's humanity and saw the special circumstances on the incarnate Word. Yang comments:

An examination of the ways in which Scotus posits a merit of finite worth and arrives at its infinite sufficiency—when combined with a balanced presentation of Scotus's voluntarism—will disclose a perfectly orthodox doctrine of the atonement that emphasises the personal dimension of God's atoning grace, without diminishing the value of Christ's merit, portrays the divine acceptance as an orderly power that observes limits and fittingness, and upholds the necessity for a God-man and satisfaction in the present order.³⁹

Yang is right to draw attention to the fact that Scotus's soteriology does not exclude Anselm's basis of the necessity of the hypostatic union. Anselm taught that 'no one can pay except God, and no one ought to pay, except man: it is necessary that a God-man should pay it.'⁴⁰ There is, however, a fundamental shift in the soteriological logic of these two interpretations. In Scotus's account, the saving factor is not found in the

³⁶ Langston, 'Scotus's Departure from Anselm's Theory of Atonement,' 238.

³⁷ Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of Atonement*, 161.

³⁸ Yang, 'Scotus's Voluntarist Approach to the Atonement Reconsidered,' 421.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 422.

⁴⁰ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?* Book 2, 6.

essence of Christ's love itself, which is a sacrifice of love on behalf of the sinful hearts of the world. In more Anselmian terms, the Scotist model does not rest in Christ's rendering to God what is due but rather in God's choosing to declare Christ's passion salvific for humanity. Indeed, in Scotus's theology, Christ's atonement is an example of God's defying the ordained rules and choosing to attribute infinite merit to a finite act. Scotus's conviction of the importance of the free acceptance of God's will leads him away from theories of satisfaction based on an ontological habit of charity in Christ, and towards a declarative theology of atonement.

In Scotus's picture of salvation, Christ's crucifixion is not an anomaly. The declaration of the free will of God is the pattern guiding Scotus's theology of the nature of sin, and his understanding of penance. Cross claims, 'Scotus's account of sin is wholly legal and forensic. Human sinfulness, according to Scotus, is not some kind of real quality inhering in the sinner. That is, actual sin does not cause any lasting state in the sinner.'⁴¹ Cross is right to draw attention to the forensic structure that underpins Scotus's teaching on sin. For instance, Scotus cites Augustine's claim that, for God, 'turning his face from sin is the same as not holding a person to punishment.' Scotus interprets this to mean that God can decide not to punish sin, without inducing a change in the sinner. He writes: 'to remain in guilt [*reatus*] after a [sinful] act is just for [the sinner] to be ordered by God's will to a punishment equal to the sin.'⁴² The outcome for Scotus's theology of sin is that the ontological significance of sin and grace are again usurped by a declaration of God's free will. Hence, Cross deduces that 'God's one will-act involves willing punishment for a person at t1, and non-punishment at t2, without any corresponding real change in the person at all.'⁴³ A further example of Scotus's forensic tendencies is evident in his teaching on penance. Rather than conceiving penance as a healing remedy to the intrinsic damage inflicted by sin on the soul, Scotus sees penance simply as the undergoing of the punishment willed by God. Scotus's theology of sin and penance therefore reflects his theology of atonement, the non-necessity of habit of grace and his theology of free will. Penance has no real ontological connection to sin, but because of God's free decision to

⁴¹ Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 95.

⁴² Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, 4.14.1.

⁴³ Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 96.

impose punishment Scotus concludes that it is ‘regularly required for the removal of sin.’⁴⁴

In order to see the novelty of Scotus’s perspective on sin and redemption, it is helpful to compare it with the Thomistic synthesis of satisfaction, habits of grace and penance. In Thomas’s mind, salvation through Christ lies principally in the satisfactory power of his ‘holy love.’ The Thomist model of Christ’s satisfaction is not an exchange of punishment but a fulfilment of the just love humanity should have for God. The problem of sin is that it causes ‘a sort of sickness of the soul [*infirmetas animae*],’ which destroys humanity’s ‘relationship to the true ultimate end [*ordo ad ultimum finem*].’⁴⁵ In this understanding, ‘forgiveness of sin is accomplished through union with God, from whom sin in some way separates us.’⁴⁶ Indeed, Thomas describes sin as a turning away from God, by which an attachment to creaturely goods becomes an obstacle to union with God:

A body can be disfigured in two ways: in one, when something required for its beauty is missing, for instance proper colour or right proportion of its members; in another way, when something obscuring its beauty, like dust or dirt, gathers on it. So also the soul is marred in one way when the splendour of grace is missing by reason of mortal sin; in another way, through unchecked affection for something temporal, by reason of venial sin. Therefore, to take away the stain of mortal sin, an infusion of grace is needed. But to take away the stain of venial sin, some act under grace is called for; through this the inordinate attachment to a temporal thing is removed.⁴⁷

Christ’s loving obedience to the Father unto death restores the true end of human nature, which sin has obstructed. Thomas therefore follows Augustine in seeing the nature of Christ’s sacrifice as a work ‘for the purpose of being united to God in holy fellowship.’⁴⁸ Similarly, the works of penance, which follow the reception of Christ’s salvific grace in the sacrament of confession, are seen as a restoration of the soul’s internal order. Thomas teaches:

⁴⁴ Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, 4.14.1.

⁴⁵ *ST*, I-II, 82.

⁴⁶ *ST*, III 87.1

⁴⁷ *ST*, III, 87.3.

⁴⁸ *ST*, III, 46.3.

There is not only the infusion of grace and the removal of sin, but also the response of free will towards God, which is the act of faith quickened by charity, together with the thrust of free will against sin, which is the act of penitence. Yet these human acts are present as the effect of operating grace, and are brought into being at the same time as the forgiveness of sin.⁴⁹

Penance, itself a work of Christ's grace, is viewed as a participation in the satisfaction of Christ, through which the soul is led to its supernatural glory. Thomas writes: 'Now, when the soul cleaves to things by love, there is a kind of contact in the soul.'⁵⁰ Thomas's language of the soul's contact with grace paints a fundamentally different picture of sin and the satisfactory works of penance than that found in the forensic image of Scotus's theology of salvation.

To conclude the second section of this chapter, it should be asked whether Scotus's conception of salvation, based God's free will to accept acts as meritorious, shows any similarity to Luther's doctrine of justification as a declaration of alien righteousness. The quest at present is not to establish a direct connection between the ideas of Luther and of Scotus but simply to assess conceptual likeness. McGrath has emphasised the importance of Luther's rejection of habits of grace in relation to his Reformation theology of justification: 'There is every reason to suppose that Luther's critique of the role of created habits in justification, and his emphasis upon justification as a personal encounter of the individual with God, reflect a general disquiet concerning the theological foundations of created grace.'⁵¹ Similarly, the early Lutheran church's rejection of Osiander's theology of sanctification reflects Luther's abhorrence of the idea that an internal change could take place in the sinner, and his corollary rejection of habits of grace. McGrath notes: 'As the Osiandrist controversy made clear, an anti-Pelagian doctrine of justification could still be rejected as unrepresentative of the Reformation, if justifying righteousness was conceived intrinsically.'⁵² McGrath's thesis—of the continuity between the Reformation doctrine of a declaration of imputed righteousness and the Scotist questioning of the necessity of habits of grace for justification—can be substantiated

⁴⁹ *ST*, III, 86.6.

⁵⁰ *ST*, II-II, 86.1.

⁵¹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 185-186.

⁵² *Ibid*, 210.

in Luther's writings. In *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520) Luther stresses the relational, rather than the intrinsic nature of righteousness:

The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. ... Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own.⁵³

Here, Luther describes justification in terms of being 'reckoned' righteous. Clearly, for Luther, as for Scotus, salvation depends not on the sinner who is *simul iustus et peccator*, but on God's free decision to regard the sinner as righteous on account of Christ. In the preface to his lectures on Romans, Luther teaches:

Since the saints are always conscious of their sin, and seek righteousness from God in accordance with his mercy, they are always reckoned as righteous by God (*semper quoque iusti a Deo reputantur*). Thus in their own eyes, and as a matter of fact, they are unrighteous. But God reckons them as righteous on account of their confession of their sin. In fact, they are sinners; however, they are righteous by the reckoning of a merciful God (*re vera peccatores, sed reputatione miserentis Dei iusti*). Without knowing it, they are righteous; knowing it, they are unrighteous. They are sinners in fact, but righteous in hope (*peccatores in re, iusti autem in spe*).⁵⁴

Luther's Reformation doctrine was founded on his relief that his salvation was not the responsibility of his overburdened conscience, but rested rather on the external righteousness of Christ, commuted to him through faith. However, whilst there is a parallel between Luther's doctrine of declarative righteousness and Scotus's cornerstone of God's free will, it would be a mistake to class Luther as a Scotist or Scotus as a proto-Reformer. The significance of Scotus's thought for Luther's Reformation does not lie in the intent to delete habits of grace from accounts of salvation. Rather, the significance lies in his introduction of an alternative soteriology, which transferred righteousness from the sinner and into the hands of God's free will.

In the third part of this chapter, the previous two sections on Scotus's theology of merit, and of Christ's sacrifice for sin, will be brought together in a study of his understanding of the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice. Here too, the question to be

⁵³ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31, 351.

⁵⁴ Luther, WA 56.343.16-17.

addressed is how far the theology that underpinned Luther's rejection of the sacrifice of the Mass is already present in Scotus's teaching. The nature of this conceptual preparation is twofold. Firstly, Scotus's theology of the Mass will be examined with a view to his belief in the primacy of the free acceptance of the divine will. This theological aspect will be considered in connection with Luther's language of promise. Secondly, the implications of Scotus's theology of Christ's finite sacrifice and merit will be examined in relation to his instruction on stipends. Has Scotus's separation of the merit of the Mass from the merit of Calvary made the Mass into a semi-Pelagian work? Is it therefore possible that Scotus's teaching on the Mass embodied the basis of Luther's Reformation doctrine, whilst expounding ideas that Luther would denounce as the third Babylonian captivity of the Church?

In discussing the root of merit in the Mass, Scotus returns to the place of free will, both as the source of merit in humanity, and as the source of God's acceptance of good works. In parallel to his theology of Christ's passion, Scotus maintains that the merit of the Mass does not lie in any intrinsic worth—even in Christ's body and blood—but in the will. Using the example of the poor widow (Luke 21:1-4), he argues that the matter of the sacrifice, be it coins or the body and blood of Christ, is not the determining principle for the benefit of the Mass:

This is not accepted unless the one offering it is accepted 'This poor widow has put in more than all the rest.' ... This shows that just as the Eucharist is not accepted precisely because of what is contained therein, but it has to be offered, so neither is it fully accepted when offered, except by reason of the good will of someone offering it.⁵⁵

Scotus here departs from the scholastic appeal to the efficacy of the sacraments *ex opera operato*, as he believes that God's acceptance is not determined by the intrinsic worth of the Mass. His intention is to distance himself from the position that the merit of the Mass comes through its being uttered, and to move towards an emphasis on God's acceptance of an individual's faith.

Scotus's appeal to God's free decision to bestow eternal life, his disregard for the matter of a sacrifice, and his emphasis on personal love rather than ritual,

⁵⁵ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, 459-460.

resonates with Luther's Reformation theology of the Mass. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), Luther protests against the belief that the Mass is an *opus operatum* and specifically against the 'lie that the Mass is effective simply by virtue of the act having been performed.'⁵⁶ Luther comments: 'Whoever sets aside these words (1 Cor. 11) and meditates or teaches concerning the mass will teach monstrous and wicked doctrines, as they have done who have made the sacrament an *opus operatum* and a sacrifice.'⁵⁷ Secondly, he stresses the importance of personal faith as the true matter of the sacrament:

'Believe,' says Augustine, 'and you have eaten.' But what does one believe, other than the word of the one who promises? Therefore I can hold Mass every day, indeed, every hour, for I can set the words of Christ before me and with them feed and strengthen my faith as often as I choose. This is truly spiritual eating and drinking.⁵⁸

Just as Scotus could affirm the possibility of a perfect contrition, which would deem the sacrament of confession unnecessary, and locate the principle of merit in the Mass in the will, so Luther could separate the Eucharistic gift of the forgiveness of sins from the Mass itself. For both theologians, the faith of the heart trumps the importance of the ritual. Thirdly, Luther's use of promise can be seen as an extension of Scotus's belief in God's freedom to grant salvation independent of habits of grace. Luther remarks: 'You see, therefore, that what we call the Mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins, made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God.'⁵⁹ Mirroring the logic of Scotus's denial of the necessity of habits of grace, Luther's theology of God's promise in the Mass is not bound by intrinsic righteousness or ontological habits of grace. Luther writes: 'If the Mass is a promise, as has been said, then access to it is to be gained, not with any words, or powers, or merits of one's own, but by faith alone.'⁶⁰ Luther's early polemical writings against the Mass thus appear to express three similarities with Scotus's theology: a critique of the Mass as *opus operatum*, a focus on personal faith as the source of benefitting from the Mass and, most significantly, the contingency of the Mass on the promise of God's free decision to save.

⁵⁶ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 47.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 37.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 38.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 38-39.

The primacy of the will in Scotus's theology of the Mass also led him to formulate a rationale for the finite merit of offering the Mass as a sacrifice. Scotus made a clear separation between Christ's sacrifice at Calvary and the sacrifice of the Mass. As Cross observes, 'Scotus puzzlingly argues on scriptural grounds that there is no obvious sense in which Christ sacrifices himself in the Eucharist.'⁶¹ Scotus reasoned that the source of merit is different, because the will of the immediate offerer is different:

Neither is it immediately the will of Christ himself, for although as contained in the sacrifice he is offered, he is not in this case the one who is immediately offering the sacrifice, according to those words in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* 9:22, 'Not that Christ might offer himself there again and again ... Christ was offered up but once,' add 'by himself.'⁶²

Scotus held that whilst Christ is offered in the Mass, the merit of the Mass is not directly related to Calvary because it is the will of the Church, rather than that of Christ, which is active in the Mass. He remarks: 'It is clear, then, that the Eucharistic offering is accepted not because of Christ's good will as the immediate offerer, but rather by reason of the will of the universal Church, and this is of limited merit.'⁶³ If the merit of the Mass is not found in Christ's sacrifice, Scotus concludes, it 'corresponds in full justice to some merit in the Church.' Kilmartin notes that, 'as offered by this universal Church, the sacrifice of the Mass is always efficacious because there are always some members who are holy and whose devotion, related to each Mass, accounts for its value.'⁶⁴ The merit of the Mass rests on the righteousness of individuals whose faith guarantees spiritual benefit for others. Scotus observes:

If it is only proper to the Church militant, then on the assumption that no single pilgrim were in a state of grace, the value of the Mass would be nil. And if only one pilgrim were in a state of grace, the value of the sacrifice would be equivalent to his personal merit.⁶⁵

The consequence of Scotus's free will logic for the theology of the merit of the Mass has been held responsible by Cavanaugh for 'the late medieval trafficking in the

⁶¹ Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 145.

⁶² Scotus, *Quodlibets*, 460.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 460.

⁶⁴ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, 160.

⁶⁵ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, 460.

transferability of merit.’⁶⁶ Similarly, Kilmartin argues for the long term effect of Scotus’s teaching on merit:

While other opinions concerning the origin of the limitations of the fruits of the Mass were not limited to Scotus’s explanation, it is his theological orientation [that the efficacy of the Mass was dependent on the piety of parishioners] that determined the teaching about Mass stipends and its practice [in the Catholic Church] up to the twentieth century.⁶⁷

The centrality of the will in Scotus’s theology, therefore, had a troubling effect on his theology of the sacrifice of the Mass, because it caused him to separate the salvific value of the Mass from Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

Scotus’s identification of the faithful as the source of merit in the Mass resulted in the systemisation of stipends and spiritual benefits, which were a step removed from the grace of Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary. It is possible to apply Luther’s Reformation charge to the writings of Scotus: ‘To call the Mass a sacrifice is to deny Christ’s sacrifice, yet the papists fail to see what a terrible abomination the repulsive devil is carrying on every day and everywhere in the secret Mass.’⁶⁸ If the value of the Mass corresponds to the piety of individuals, how is it possible to avoid the allegation of semi-Pelagianism? Luther’s sixteenth-century protest to *via moderna* theologians could therefore similarly be addressed to Scotus’s teaching of the Mass. Luther exclaims: ‘This has been the fate of the Mass; it has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work.’⁶⁹ Therefore, whilst Luther’s image of the Mass as a testament of Christ’s mercy has conceptual similarities to the theology of Scotus, Luther’s critique of the Mass must principally be seen as a rejection of Scotus’s idea that the salvific value of the Mass is rooted in human works. Luther teaches:

Now just as I cannot give or receive the sacrament of baptism, of penance, of extreme unction in any one’s stead or for his benefit, but I accept for myself alone the blessing therein offered by God—and here for myself alone the blessing therein offered by God—and here there is no *officium* but *beneficium*, no work or service but reception and benefit alone—so also no one can

⁶⁶ Cavanaugh, ‘Eucharistic Sacrifice,’ 588.

⁶⁷ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, 168.

⁶⁸ Luther, *The Abomination of the Secret Mass*, LW 36, 314.

⁶⁹ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 47.

observe or hear Mass for another, but each one for himself alone; for there is nothing there but a taking and receiving.⁷⁰

Having compared the approaches to the Mass taken by Scotus and Luther, it is clear that Luther's rebuttal of works righteousness is of crucial importance. Cavanaugh observes that Luther 'must protect the fundamental asymmetry produced by God's justification of miserable sinners.'⁷¹ Hence, although similarities can be found in the ideas of Luther and Scotus, Luther would have considered any theological relationship annulled by Scotus's designation of the Mass as a human work. Scotus's interpretation of the merit of the Mass falls under Luther's denunciation of those who have committed 'by far the most wicked abuse of all.'⁷²

This chapter has found that in his teaching on the nature of merit, Christ's sacrifice and the embrace of these two concepts in the Mass, Scotus's theology bears both a resemblance to and a drastic disunity with Luther's thought. The resemblance in the nature of merit and Christ's sacrifice has been seen to reside in Scotus's affirmation of the freedom of God's will to accept the sinner to eternal life. That God could declare righteousness to persons not in possession of a habit of grace has been related to Luther's doctrine of a declaration of righteousness. For both theologians, the ontological aspect of righteousness, satisfaction and the Mass has been displaced by an emphasis on the freedom of the divine will. The radical dissimilarity between Scotus and Luther is evident in their different approaches to the benefit of the Mass. The Mass has been shown to exemplify the dangers inherent in Scotus's theology of merit. Scotus's defence of the freedom of the will led him to an overly optimistic reading of the capacity of the will *in puris naturalibus*. Thus it has been argued that the forces of Pelagianism penetrated Scotus's theology, despite the defensive walls of the *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*. However, and notwithstanding conceptual similarities, when placed together, the theologies of the Mass taught by Luther and Scotus stand in bitter opposition. It has been found that Luther's reasons for protesting against his contemporaries that the Mass 'has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work,'⁷³ could equally be applied to Scotus's theology, for Scotus unwittingly introduced a separation between the merit of Christ's

⁷⁰ Luther, *Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 94.

⁷¹ Cavanaugh, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice,' 597.

⁷² Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 35.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 47.

death on the cross and the merit of the Mass. In doing so it is difficult to acquit Scotus of Luther's charge: 'By them we have been carried away out of our own land, as into a Babylonian captivity and despoiled of all our precious possessions.'⁷⁴

This chapter closes by returning to the primary importance of the freedom of the will as the source of the concepts shared by Scotus and Luther and their utter disparity on the subject of the Mass. The methodology of this comparison has assumed that it is valid to compare the thought of two theologians who were separated by centuries. In order for the theological observations of this study to be useful, however, the question of the historical connection between Scotus and Luther needs to be considered. If, on the one hand, there is no actual thread of continuity in the history of ideas then observations such as those made in this chapter become meaningless speculation. If, on the other hand, Scotus introduced ideas that fed into the Reformation era, then this analysis of the effect of his concept of free will on the Mass is critical. It is therefore necessary to assess the legacy of Scotus's concept of free will in the history of scholastic thought, up to eve of the Reformation. It has been shown that, the real point of contention in comparing the teachings of Luther and Scotus on the sacrifice of the Mass, is the issue of the merit of the Mass. The heart of the matter is therefore a matter of giving and receiving salvation. Is it necessary for sinners to first make a meritorious sacrifice and offering in order to benefit from the salvific value of Christ's sacrifice? In the next chapter, the legacy of Scotus in the different streams of scholastic thought will be measured by examining the place of merit in the doctrine of predestination.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 47.

Chapter Three: The legacy of Scotus in free will and predestination

The ongoing influence of Scotus's theory of free will in late scholastic thought can be illustrated with reference to the fifteenth-century debate on predestination. His belief that freedom lies in the ability to choose between opposite courses of action, independent of reason or the promptings of grace, leads to a rivalry between divine and human freedoms. God's free act to predestine would seem to override the human will and thus contradict the theology of free will in humanity. Ingren rightly asks: 'If God's will and freedom are so fundamental to the moral domain, then in what way does Scotus protect the autonomy of human freedom? Has Scotus set up a framework within which a clash of freedoms is inevitable?'¹ The question of predestination is the main entrance for the historian seeking to assess the theological realm of merit in fifteenth-century scholasticism and consequently to determine the legacy of Scotus's teaching of merit in the Mass. The key question is: to what extent does salvific merit depend on the autonomy of the human will? This chapter seeks to measure Scotus's legacy in later scholastic thought, by transferring the question of the capacity of the human will to merit, to the eternal sphere of predestination.

Voluntarists have taken a number of different approaches to the subject of predestination, each of which indicates the use and prominence of Scotus's theory of free will in late scholastic thought. Firstly, Scotus's theology of predestination will be considered in relation to the earlier Franciscan tradition, exemplified in the theology of Bonaventure. Does Scotus's theology of predestination demonstrate that his theology of free will has commenced a new chapter in the historical narrative of free will? Secondly, the degree of continuity between Scotus and Ockham on the question of free will in predestination will be considered. In order to appreciate this succession of thought, their theory of free will in predestination will be set in the context of justification and the philosophical debate concerning universals. Thirdly, it is important to reflect on the 'Ockhamist' version of predestination expounded by Biel, Holcot and Eck on the eve of Luther's Reformation. For example, Eck taught: 'If you are not predestined, endeavour to be predestined,' and announced this as a 'teaching

¹ Ingham and Dreyes, 'The Philosophical Vision of J. D. Scotus,' 138.

of Augustine which is better known than the history of Troy.’² However, was Augustine’s emphasis on original sin also prominent in late medieval Germany? Lastly, this chapter will argue that descendants of Scotus’s theory of free will existed, which opposed the ‘Ockhamist’ interpretation of predestination on the grounds that it was semi-Pelagian. To introduce this Augustinian branch of German theologians and mystics, this study will attend to the teaching of Tauler, Gerson and the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica*.

To begin, it is helpful to predict Scotus’s approach to predestination on the basis of his teaching on justification. This exercise enables an appreciation of the dynamic of free will in Scotus’s theology. Indeed, Oberman remarks: ‘It is a reliable rule of interpretation for the historian of Christian thought, that the position taken with respect to the doctrine of predestination is a most revealing indicator of the understanding of the doctrine of justification.’³ Justification and predestination are therefore closely related. It has been shown in the previous chapter that Scotus emphasised the natural capacity of the human will to fulfil the precepts of morality. The meritorious value of these natural acts depended on the divine will, which ascribed supernatural worth to decisions of the will. Hence, Scotus’s vision of justification placed the roles of the divine and human will within a covenantal structure. The autonomy of the divine will lay in establishing covenantal precepts as the ordinary means of salvation. Scotus articulates God’s free decision to establish certain laws in the present order, using the distinction between God’s ordained and absolute power:

God, therefore, insofar as he is able to act in accord with those right laws he set up previously, is said to act according to his ordained power; but insofar as he is able to do many things that are not in accord with it, but go beyond these pre-established laws, God is said to act according to his absolute power.⁴

It is significant that Scotus believes the divine will acted independently of, and prior to, the divine intellect when instituting the ordained order: ‘I say that there are some general laws, ordering things rightly, that have been set up beforehand by the divine

² Eck, *Chrysopassus praedestinationis*, I, 66: ‘Ex data distinctione clare potest haberi verus sensus propositionis divini Augustini, quae est notior alias historia Trioana: “Si non es praedestinatus, fac ut praedestineris.”’

³ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 185.

⁴ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 44, 192.

will and not by the divine intellect, as something antecedent to any act of the divine will.⁵ In Scotus's model of justification, the autonomy of the human will was safeguarded by the requirement that, within this established order, the good volition of the human will was necessary for attaining the first grace. The Scotist pattern of justification is one of divine self-limitation, such that God's plan of salvation is made co-dependent on the free movement of the human will. Wolter comments: 'For even by his absolute power, God could not force the human will to elicit an act of volition or nolition, since to do so would entail a contradiction.'⁶ The expected effect of Scotus's theology of justification on the question of predestination is that God's knowledge of those who will be saved rests on God's foreknowledge of the free volition of the human will. Scotus's theory of human free will within the *potentia ordinata*, established by the divine will, would seem to outlaw the possibility that God could interfere with this covenantal system of justification by imposing the divine will of predestination to salvation or reprobation.

However, Scotus's theology of predestination does indeed make this unexpected move. For all Scotus's careful effort to preserve the autonomy of the divine and human wills in justification, his teaching on predestination privileges the divine will, to the extent that the salvation of the elect is guaranteed. The case for God's foreknowledge of the predestined might be the logical continuation of his theology of justification, but this is not the explanation that Scotus offers. Instead, Scotus maintains that God firstly wills the beatitude of his elect, and subsequently wills the means to their glorification. He writes:

This is proved first from the fact that one who wills methodically the end and those things which are means for attaining the end, first wills the end before willing any of those things which are means for attaining the end, because one wills other things in view of such an end. Therefore, since the whole process by which the creature capable of eternal happiness is brought to the perfection of its end, the ultimate end of which is perfect happiness, God who wills to give anything in this order, first wills the end to this creature capable of eternal happiness, and afterwards, as it were, wills to it those things which are in the

⁵ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 44, 192. For a detailed study of Scotus's doctrine of predestination see: Pannenberg, *Die Prädestinationslehre des Duns Skotus*, 54-68, 90-119, 125-39.

⁶ Wolter, *Duns Scotus*, 31.

order of means pertaining to that end. But grace, faith, merits, and the good use of free will; all of these are directed to this end, although some refer more remotely and others more closely to it. Therefore God wills eternal happiness to the creature before any of these means; and He wills whatsoever of these means before He foresees that it will have any of them. Therefore He does not will eternal happiness to it because He foresees any of these means.⁷

The doctrine of predestination therefore exhibits a reversal of Scotus's theory of justification. According to the logic of predestination, God does not wait on the good volition of the human will to determine who will be saved, but uses the good works of his saints as a means to secure their preordained salvation. Scotus comments:

It is only because God wills or preordains that one shall make good use of free will that He foresees this person will make good use of it; for, as stated in the thirty-ninth distinction, the certain foreseeing of future contingent things is due to the determination of these by the divine will. If, therefore, the occasion presents itself to the divine will of two persons equal in natural endowments, why, I ask, does He preordain that this one shall make good use of free will and the other not? There seems to be no reason to assign for this except the divine will.⁸

A dramatic example of Scotus's contention—that predestination to salvation is willed before foreseen merits or sins—is presented in *Ordinatio* 1, dist. 41. Here he argues that God's predestination of the blessed is logically prior to his knowledge of Adam's disobedience in Eden, and the consequent fallen deeds of humanity.⁹ McGrath remarks that 'Scotus appears to be the first theologian to use the principle that the end is willed before the means to that end, to demonstrate the utter gratuity of predestination.'¹⁰ The destiny of the elect is wholly governed by the divine will. Scotus notes, 'Predestination properly understood refers to an act of the divine will, namely to the ordering of the election of some intellectual or rational creature to grace and glory through the divine will.'¹¹ His account of predestination to salvation is therefore a departure from his theology of justification, because the good volition of

⁷ Scotus, *Super Gen.*, XI, 17.

⁸ Scotus, *Com. Oxon.*, in *Ium Sent.*, d. 41, no. 1153, 1256.

⁹ Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, 1.41.1.0.

¹⁰ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 165-66.

¹¹ Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* I dist., 10.1, q. *unica* n. 2.

the human will is seen as a consequence, rather than a cause, of the election to salvation that is freely willed by God from eternity.

Scotus's theology of predestination presents a further paradox. The logic of the absolute sovereignty of God's autonomous will is not applied to the fate of the reprobate. In considering the unhappy fortune of the reprobate, Scotus reverts to the theory of humanity's free volition to sin as expounded in his theology of justification. God's decision not to predestine to salvation, and thus not to provide some persons with the means for attaining beatitude, is based on God's foreknowledge of sin. This logical disparity is evident in Scotus's remark, that 'there is no reason for predestination even on the part of the one predestined such that it is in any way prior to this predestination. But there is some cause for positive reprobation.'¹² Here, Scotus holds that cause for predestination to salvation lies solely with the divine will, but that damnation (positive reprobation) must have its cause in the sin of the creature. McGrath observes that the theory of predestination to salvation stands 'in contrast to Scotus's teaching on reprobation, which is understood to be a passive act of divine permission in regard to human sin.'¹³ How can Scotus reconcile God's action in refraining from providing the reprobate with the necessary means to turn from sin to salvation, with God's unalterable power to save the elect?

Scotus attempts to solve this paradox in his view of God's salvific action by using the concept of an antecedent will. He argues that God wills antecedently, that is, before the sinful circumstances of human action, for all of humanity to be saved. However, the free will of humanity to sin means that God is not obliged to impose his antecedent will to effect universal salvation. Ingham suggests that Scotus 'makes use of the model of partial efficient co-causality, where two independent causes cooperate in the production of a single effect.'¹⁴ In other words, Scotus excuses the divine will from the responsibility of reprobation by appealing to the autonomy of the human free will. Hence, Ingham concludes that, in the case of the reprobate, 'the divine will, antecedently prepared to bestow righteousness, awaits the act of the created will.'¹⁵ In dealing with reprobation, Scotus therefore appeals to God's foreknowledge of the

¹² Scotus, *Super Gen.*, XI, 17.

¹³ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 166.

¹⁴ Ingham, *The Philosophical Vision of J. D. Scotus*, 142.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 142.

sinful actions of human free will. Scotus cites Augustine in support of his contention that foreknowledge of reprobation rests on the choices of human free will, rather than on God's predetermination:

And in the following chapter he [Augustine] says: 'It does not follow then that there is no choice in our will. ... If he who foresaw what was to be in our will foresaw, not nothing, but something, it follows that there is a power in our will, even though he foresaw it.' ... Although the necessity of the foreknowledge or of the foreknown as foreknown is one of immutability, it is not simply a necessity of inevitability or absolute determination. It is only inevitable on the assumption that this will take place.¹⁶

The logic of Scotus's theology of divine free will in reprobation is noticeably different from his rationale for predestination to salvation. In freely electing the citizens of heaven, God first predestines to glory and subsequently grants the means to that beatitude. God's free will to predestine his elect is not seen to depend on the sins or merits of the human will. Scotus's treatment of the reprobate therefore demonstrates a further inconsistency in his theological schema. Scotus's theology swings from invoking the absolute autonomy of the divine will in predestination, to an appeal to human free will as the determining power in reprobation. The signs of scholastic conflict on the role of free will in predestination are already evident in the internal disunity of Scotus's thought.

Pinckaers has challenged the thesis that Scotus's theology of free will, and consequently of predestination, marks a reformulation of free will in scholastic thought. Pinckaers argues that the vision of free will as an independent power, which is able to reject the advice of reason and even to will not to will, 'had already been formulated in the Franciscan school.'¹⁷ Specifically, responsibility for the theology of the absolute autonomy of the will, which underpins Scotus's dilemma of the wills in predestination, is laid at Bonaventure's door. The key text that Pinckaers cites is Bonaventure's discussion of free will in *Commentary on Sentences* dist. 2.5, a. 1, q. 2, which presents an argument for free will as a power distinct from will and intellect, illustrated by the image of the Father:

¹⁶ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, 16.3, 386.

¹⁷ Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 331-332.

Likewise, the reason responds to the Son, the will to the Spirit: therefore if there is in us the positing of some power to reform us corresponding to the Father, there is in us the positing of some power besides reason and will, which pertains to our reformation; but such is naught but free will.¹⁸

Pinckaers also cites a section from the same passage in support of his case that the early Franciscan school held that free will meant ‘indetermination or a radical indifference’:¹⁹

[Free will] is the power that commands the will and reason, rules them and moves them both; its first act is not discernment and willing but a reflective action upon them both, moving and ruling them, that is, the action expressed when we see we wish to discern and we wish to will. This act precedes reason and will, and its power corresponds to the Father, for his is the most powerful of acts and it is primary, not being moved, but moving.²⁰

Pinckaers contends on the basis of these extracts that Bonaventure, before Scotus and Ockham, believed that ‘free will was the prime faculty, anterior to intelligence and will as well as to their acts.’²¹ His case would seem to be sealed by Bonaventure’s remark: ‘it belongs to free will to move all the powers of the soul and to command the reason, to discern, and the will, to desire: therefore it seems, that it is a third power distinct from them.’²² If Pinckaers’s thesis regarding Bonaventure’s theology of free will is correct, the consequence would be that Scotus’s theology of human freedom, as evidenced in his doctrine of predestination, did not have a dramatic effect on scholastic theology. An emphasis on the legacy of Scotus’s theology of free will, rather than an ongoing Franciscan tradition, would therefore be a mistake.

Yet a careful reading of Bonaventure’s *Commentary on the Sentences* reveals that it is Pinckaers who has made the mistake.²³ The passages cited, which suggest a concurrence between Bonaventure and Scotus on free will, do not in fact express

¹⁸ Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 2.5, a 1, q. 2.

¹⁹ Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 331-332.

²⁰ Bonaventure: *II Sent.*, dist. 2.5, a. 1, q. 2: ‘... et est virtus imperans rationi et voluntati et utramque regens et movens, cuius actus primus non est discernere et velle, sed actus reflexus; super haec duo et haec duo movens et regens, ille videlicet quo dicitur quis velle discernere vel velle se velle. Et iste actus praeambulus est ad rationem et voluntatem, et ista potentia correspondet Patri, pro eo quod actus eius maxime potens est et primus est, cum non moveatur, sed moveat.’

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 2.5, a. 1, q. 2.

²³ I am grateful to Richard Conrad who first noticed this and pointed it out to me.

Bonaventure's opinion. Pinckaers has been thrown off course by the presentation of Bonaventure's argument, because there is a constant interchange in the text between the opinion of others and Bonaventure's own view. Pinckaers has navigated Bonaventure's threefold structure of 'There is asked', 'On the contrary' and 'I respond.' The complication is that even under the 'I respond' section (*Respondeo*), Bonaventure presents the contrary sides of the debate before actually giving his opinion in the fourth paragraph. Hence, the passage of the *Commentary on Sentences* dist. 25, a. 1, q. 2, used by Pinckaers to prove Bonaventure's supposed endorsement of free will as a power independent of will and intellect, in fact begins, 'For certain doctors wanted to say' ²⁴ Similarly, the second paragraph of the *Respondeo* begins, 'But to others it seems otherwise,' ²⁵ after which Bonaventure proceeds to outline their contrary opinions. It is only in the fourth paragraph of the *Respondeo* that Bonaventure moves on to present his own view, declaring:

For I do concede, that 'free will' according to its thing (*rem*) does not mean a power distinct from reason and will, yet I nevertheless concede, that it has some distinction according to its reckoning, by reason of which it is said to be the 'faculty' of each. ²⁶

Bonaventure's theology of free will, when extracted from his discussion of differing authorities, reveals that he does not profess free will to be a power distinct from will and reason. By examining the full passage it is clear that Bonaventure maintains that free will is a faculty that comes from the powers of will and intellect:

But speaking of the distinction of powers according to their reality, 'free will' does not mean a power diverse or distinguished from the powers of the reason and the will. In virtue of this the powers of the rational soul are sufficiently divided into the cognitive and the motive [powers], and all the acts of the soul can be exercised through these powers, the cognitive and the affective, i.e. reason and will, as the arguments which are brought forward for this, show. For since both reason and will are naturally able to reflect upon themselves; when I name the will as willing something, and the will as willing that it will, I do not mean 'one power' and 'another' according to reality. For it is not

²⁴ Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 25, a. 1, q. 2: '*Ad praedictae quaestionis intelligentiam notandum est quod super hac quaestione diversae fuerunt doctorum positiones.*'

²⁵ *Ibid* : '*Aliis autem aliter videtur quod...*'

²⁶ *Ibid* : '*Concedo enim quo liberum arbitrium secundum rem non dicit potentiam distinctam a ratione et voluntate; concedo tamen nihilominus quod aliquam distinctionem habet secundum rationem, ratione cuius dicitur facultas utriusque.*'

necessary in spiritual things that the one moving, and the one moved, differ according to substance, because, just as Anselm says, ‘the will is an instrument moving its very self,’ and the reason is a power cognising its very self, by a similar argument; and therefore, if there is a distinction to be made here, this is only according to our reckoning. ... For I do concede that ‘free will’ according to its reality, does not mean a power distinct from reason and will, yet I nevertheless concede, that it has some distinction according to our reckoning, by reason of which it is said to be the faculty of each. ... Moreover, for the present, let it suffice to say, that there is not so great a distinction as to cause [‘free will’] to be another power in the genus of powers, really distinct from the reason and the will.²⁷

It is therefore clear that Bonaventure does not hold free will to be an independent power in human nature. By human reckoning, it is possible to have a theological terminology of free will but it cannot be identified as a separate power (or thing) in human nature. Hence, *pace* Pinckaers, Bonaventure did not hold the thesis of a ‘radical indifference in the will regarding contraries,’²⁸ and thus did not pre-empt Scotus’s scholastic reformation of free will. Bonaventure’s belief in the cooperation of will and intellect in fact aligns closely to the position adopted by Thomas. The divergence between Bonaventure and Scotus on the question of free will, in fact, confirms Scotus’s theological break with the established Franciscan tradition and thus the importance of tracing Scotus’s legacy in late scholasticism.

Scotus’s break with the early Franciscan tradition, as exemplified by Bonaventure, is obvious when his theology of predestination is compared to the latter’s synthesis of the intellect and will in God. Bonaventure’s perspective on

²⁷ Ibid : ‘*Loquendo autem de distinctione potentiarum secundum rem, sic liberum arbitrium non dicit potentiam diversam vel distinctam a ratione et voluntate, pro eo quod potentiam animae rationalis sufficienter dividuntur per cognitivam et motivam, et omnes actus animae per has potentias, quae sunt cognitive et affective sive ratio et voluntas, exerceri possunt, suit rationes quae ad hoc inducuntur ostendunt. Cum enim tam ratio quam voluntas sit nata super se reflecti, cum nomino voluntatem ut volentem se velle, non dico potentiam aliam et aliam secundum rem. Movens enim et motum in spiritualibus non oportet differre secundum substantiam, quia, sicut dicit Anselmus, “voluntas est intrumentum se ipsum movens,” et ratio etiam est virtus se ipsum cognoscens, pari ratione; et ideo, si aliqua est ibi distinctio, haec est solum secundum rationem.— Et sic patet responsio ad quaestionem et ad rationes ad utramque partem. Concedo enim quo liberum arbitrium secundum rem non dicit potentiam distinctam a ratione et voluntate; concedo tamen nihilominus quod aliquam distinctionem habet secundum rationem, ratione cuius dicitur facultas utriusque. Quanta autem sit distinctio, melius patebit infra. Ad praesens autem tantum dixisse sufficiat quod non est tanta distinctio quod faciat ipsum esse aliam potentiam in genere potentiae, a ratione et voluntate realiter distinctam.*’

²⁸ Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 332.

predestination reflects his theology of free will as a faculty dependent on the mutual relations of will and intellect. He maintains that in the divine essence, the will, knowledge and power of God are indistinguishable, as if united in a divine mind (*mens*).²⁹ Bonaventure teaches:

Since ‘predestination’ signifies the Divine Essence as the cause of grace and glory, and this according to the ordained distribution of grace and glory, as much as it concerns itself, it does not only convey knowledge, but also a will and a power.³⁰

Both unable and unwilling to tear apart the operations of knowledge and will in God, Bonaventure speaks of God’s ‘practical knowledge’ in which God’s will, knowledge and power inform each other to effect, dispose and execute salvation.³¹ McGrath rightly holds that, for Bonaventure: ‘Predestination is understood as an act of intellect before the decision to elect or reject, and the information supplied by the intellect relates to the foreseen use of the grace granted to the individual in question.’³²

At the heart of Scotus’s departure from the Franciscan tradition of Bonaventure, therefore, is the disjunction of the intellect and will in his theology of predestination. Scotus teaches: ‘Predestination properly understood refers to an act of the divine will, namely to the ordering of the election of some intellectual or rational creature to grace and glory through the divine will.’³³ Scotus thus emphasises the priority of the divine will in predestination. McGrath observes that Scotus’s dependency on the divine will in his theology of predestination led him to preclude the role of the divine intellect:

By shifting the emphasis from the divine intellect to the divine will, Scotus could also put the matter of foreknowledge in its place; for ‘the necessity of foreknowledge or of the foreknown’ was indeed a ‘necessity of immutability,’ but this did not make it a matter of ‘absolute determination,’ since such

²⁹ Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 25, a. 1, q. 2.

³⁰ Bonaventure, *Commentarius in Primum Librum Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, b. 1, Q. 2, 207: ‘*Respondeo: Dicendum quod cum praedestinatio significet divinam essentiam ut causam gratiae, et hoc secundum ordinatam distributionem.*’

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 165.

³³ Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, I dist. XI. q. 2.

determination would pertain to the will of God, not to the knowledge or foreknowledge of his intellect.³⁴

Maurer agrees that for Scotus the explanation for divine action ‘cannot be [God’s] understanding but only his will, for the divine knowledge is purely natural and necessary, but the divine will is free and open to an infinity of effects.’³⁵ Maurer rightly notes the subordination of the intellect is reflected in Scotus’s classification of the intellect as a ‘natural’ rather than a ‘free’ power. This comparison between Scotus and Bonaventure on predestination shows that the tension between the radical autonomy of free will in God and humanity in late scholastic thought is the legacy of Scotus.

Ockham’s theology of predestination exemplifies the battle between the autonomy of two wills that Scotus had prepared for his scholastic successors. Whilst Ockham briefly presents the opinions of Thomas and Bonaventure, it is clear, as Maurer remarks, that his theology of predestination is formed within the Scotist paradox of free will: ‘The only theological opinion on God’s knowledge of the contingent future that Ockham considers at length and argues against, is that of Duns Scotus. The reader has the impression that Ockham regarded this alone as worthy of serious consideration in his day.’³⁶ Ockham’s struggle with the dual autonomies of free will in God and humanity is evident in his teaching that ‘the created will can oppose the determination of the divine will.’³⁷ The nature of free will as a self-determining power obliged Ockham to hold that ‘the determination of the [created] will was not from eternity.’³⁸ Ockham’s position therefore both endorses Scotus’s theory of the will and is a modification of Scotus’s doctrine of the predestination of the elect. Ockham perceives the contradiction in Scotus’s logic between the predestined and the reprobate and remarks: ‘For I ask whether or not the determination of a created will necessarily follows the determination of the divine will. If it does, then the will necessarily acts, just as fire does, and so merit and demerit are done away with.’³⁹ Levering observes that Ockham held ‘that if the divine

³⁴ Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma*, 30, commenting on Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 16.

³⁵ Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham*, 234.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 233.

³⁷ Ockham, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 49.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 88.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 49. It is noteworthy that Erasmus uses the same argument of moral responsibility when debating free will with Luther: ‘If the power to distinguish good and evil and the will of God has been hidden

will determines immutably what humans consider to be contingent, then real contingency, real human freedom, is denied. Humans would be no freer than the natural movements of the elements.’⁴⁰ Ockham therefore concludes that Scotus had betrayed the meaning of free will in his doctrine of predestination and that he had fallen into a theology of determination.

For Ockham, predestination is based on God’s foreknowledge of human acts of free will. Both Marilyn McCord Adams and Norman Kretzmann affirm that Ockham taught ‘predestination on the basis of foreseen choices.’⁴¹ Ockham himself writes, ‘For just as God is not a punisher before man is a sinner, so He is not a rewarder before man is justified by grace.’⁴² Moreover, if the complete free will of humanity is to be theologically safeguarded, Ockham holds that the form of God’s foreknowledge must be by inference rather than according to an absolute truth. Levering explains:

[Ockham] first denies that philosophy can demonstrate God’s foreknowledge of all future contingents. The philosopher, he says, must follow the logic of the dictum, ‘That which is not true in itself cannot be known at that time when it is not true.’ In so far as something is a future contingent, in time it has not yet happened. Even from eternity, God cannot know (as a universal) a contingent thing that has not yet happened in time, precisely because it is contingent and therefore not universally true. Until it happens in time, its truth cannot be universally known.⁴³

Hence, if the human will is truly free to perform the opposite action, even God’s knowledge of salvation is limited. Foreknowledge of salvation or reprobation can only be granted on the grounds of ‘intuitive intellectual cognition’ (*nolitia intuitiva intellectiva*).⁴⁴ Rather as a long-married couple might claim to know what each other

from men, it could not be imputed to them if they made the wrong choice. If the will had not been free, sin could not have been imputed, for sin would cease to be sin if it were not voluntary, save when error or the restriction of the will is itself the fruit of sin. Thus the responsibility for rape is not impud to the one who has suffered violence.’ (Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will*, 50, transl. Rupp.)

⁴⁰ Levering, *Predestination*, 87.

⁴¹ Adams and Kretzmann, ‘Introduction,’ *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, 31.

⁴² *Ibid*, 88.

⁴³ Levering, *Predestination*, 86.

⁴⁴ Ockham, *Ordinatio*, d. 38, q. unica, in: Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, 135, cited by Levering, *Predestination*, 86.

are thinking, so, God's intimate knowledge of creatures means that the results of humanity's freedom are already known to God. Ockham writes:

Just as the [human] intellect, on the basis of one and the same intuitive cognition of certain simple things, can have evident knowledge of contradictorily contingent propositions, such as 'A exists,' 'A does not exist,' in the same way it can be granted that the divine essence is intuitive knowledge that is so perfect, so clear, that it is evident cognition of all things past and future, so that it knows what part of a contradiction is true and which part false.⁴⁵

The consequence of this model of God's foreknowledge means that predestination acquires, in McGrath's words, a 'fundamental eschatological orientation.'⁴⁶ It is only when the human will finally perseveres that the truth of God's prediction is affirmed and the bestowal of eternal life is granted. For both McGrath and Oberman, the theological focus of their examination of Ockham's development of Scotus's position is on the relationship between predestination and the temporal freedom of the human will in justification. However, whilst Ockham's theology of predestination is concerned with human responsibility, there is a philosophical dimension to Ockham's qualification of Scotus's theory of free will in predestination that must be considered.

In his *Tractatus de praedestinatione et de praescientia Dei et de futuris contingentibus* Ockham undertakes a philosophical critique of Scotus's position on predestination.⁴⁷ In this treatise, Ockham situates his critique of Scotus's theology of the antecedent will and reprobation within the philosophical debate concerning the existence of universal natures. Ockham begins by opposing Scotus's philosophical defence of God's foreknowledge, which Ockham understands to rest on the invalid philosophical supposition that 'at one and the same time there is more than one instant of nature.'⁴⁸ Ockham objects that in reality only one instant of nature can occur at any one time. For example, the decision to turn right at a particular junction excludes the

⁴⁵ Ockham, *Tract. De paedes*, I, cited by Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham*, 238.

⁴⁶ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 167.

⁴⁷ Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 72.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 74. The Latin terminology in this phrase uses the preposition 'in': 'in A instanti' (at t1), 'in eodem instanti' ('at the same instant'). Ockham uses the phrase 'instant of nature' to refer to a sequence in which the will is naturally prior to its act, because the will exists at an instant of nature prior to the instant of nature at which its act exists. See Adams, 'Introduction,' *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, 30-33.

decision to turn left. In contrast to Scotus, Ockham contends that the alternative option, which was not taken by the will, must be seen as a redundant possibility. Ockham remarks: ‘If the will wills X at t1, then after t1 “the will willed X at t1” always will be necessary.’⁴⁹ Ockham’s discussion of the capacity for opposites in the same instant, leads him to accentuate the determination of the will in the divine essence:

The divine intellect, apprehending by its own nature the terms of some proposition relating to an actual external event, offers them, as it were, to the divine will in the form of a disjunction, but is of itself unable to determine the truth of either of the alternatives. Thus the object presented to the divine will is the choice of the excluded middle. At a given instant in time, A shall either happen or not—A. The actual truth, whether A happens or not, is decided by the divine will, which chooses one of the two opposite and contradictory alternatives, being by its nature equally free to realise either.⁵⁰

In focusing on instants of nature in God, Ockham is rejecting different standards at work in Scotus’s teaching on predestination to election and reprobation. According to Scotus, salvation is the work of the divine will alone, but reprobation is dependent on God’s foreknowledge of sin. In Scotus’s model, in the first instant God freely wills that an individual be saved through a seemingly contingent set of circumstances. In the second instant, God can be said to know the decision of his will, and thus have certain knowledge of predestination. In contrast to Scotus, Ockham critiques the idea of different instants in God in order to show that the autonomy of the divine will can not depend on God’s intellect. Ockham concludes: ‘I do not agree with Scotus as regards that non-evident capacity in the will, for he is mistaken in all those “instants of nature.”’⁵¹

Ockham’s critique of ‘instants of nature’ can be better understood within his rejection of the existence of universal natures. It will be shown that, once again,

⁴⁹ Ibid, 74.

⁵⁰ Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* I, dist. 1.1, q. 2, no. 20: ‘*Restat videre secundum principale qualiter cum hoc stet certitudo scientiae ejus. Hoc potest poni dupliciter; uno modo per hoc, quod intellectus divinus videt determinationem voluntatis divinae, scilicet illud fore pro A., quia voluntas illa illud determinat fore pro eo; scit enim illam esse immutabilem et non impedilem. Vela liter quia ista via videtur ponere quendam discursum in intellectu divino, quasi ex intuitione determinationis voluntatis et immutabilitatis ejus concludit hoc fore. Potest poni aliter, quod intellectus divinus aut offert simplicia...*’ (Transl. Harris, *Duns Scotus*, 217.)

⁵¹ Ibid, 75-76.

Ockham's objection to the philosophy of universals rests on his belief that this concept undermines the autonomy of God's free will. He writes:

No universal is anything existing in any way outside the soul; but everything which is predicable of many things is of its nature in the mind, whether subjectively or objectively; and no universal belongs to the essence or quiddity of any substance whatever.⁵²

For instance, Ockham would argue that it is not philosophically permissible to speak of 'human nature' because what really exists is a vast collection of individuals. Scotus had cracked the lens of universalism by introducing a principle of individuation (*haecceity*).⁵³ Ockham's philosophical response was to take hold of the individuating principle and use it to smash the universal theory of perception. Ockham wanted to look directly at existing realities, without the mediation of a philosophical language of non-temporal natures. Consequently, as Leff explains, he rejected the idea that God's creation of individuals takes place with reference to an idea of humanity held in the divine essence: 'An idea is not a real thing, but a connotative or relative term for something known by an intellectual principle, in virtue of whose knowledge it can produce a real being outside the intellect.'⁵⁴ According to Ockham there is no prior universal nature of 'humanity' in God that is subsequently embodied by Plato, Socrates and many others. He writes, 'Plato and Socrates agree (share in) something or in some things, but that they agree (are alike) by some things, that is, by themselves and that Socrates agrees with Plato, not in something, but by something, namely himself.'⁵⁵ Ockham similarly maintains that it is a philosophical error to separate the decisions of God's 'nature' from his real 'temporal' decisions.⁵⁶ He writes:

⁵² Ockham, *I Sent.* 2, 8, cited by Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 56-57. See: Cox, 'Luther, the Scholastics and the Eucharist,' Ch. 5, 63.

⁵³ For a discussion of *haecceity* see: Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 149, and Noone, 'Universals and Individuation,' 119. Harris remarks on Scotus's combination of two principles, the universal and the particular, in an individual: 'Scotus distinguishes in each individual two entities or realities which are formally distinct, the universal and the particular; the universal element, the essence or *natura*, which is common to all individuals of the same species, and the *haecceitas*, which constitutes the individual, which he calls the *entitas singularis*. Each of these has a unity of its own. The former, the unity of a universal, is, as we have seen, a real unity, independent of the knowing mind, but less than the numerical unity of the singular as such. The latter is the concrete unity of the particular. Between these two elements, the *natura* and the *haecceitas*, there is a formal difference, which is a distinction a *parte rei*, a difference which is not solely conceptual in origin, but founded on an objective ground in reality itself.' *Duns Scotus*, vol. 2, 94-95.

⁵⁴ Leff, *William of Ockham*, 437.

⁵⁵ Ockham, *I Sent.* 2, 6, cited by Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 57.

⁵⁶ Temporal is used here by Ockham to distinguish God's real actions from the non-temporal philosophical idea of God's nature.

It is inconsistent to say that the divine will, as naturally prior [to its act] posits its effect in reality at time A in such a way that it can not posit it in reality at the same instant. For there are no such instants of nature as he [Scotus] imagines, nor is there in the first instant of nature such an indifference as regards positing and not positing. Rather, if at some instant it posits its effect in reality, it is impossible by means of any capacity whatsoever that both the instant occurs and [the effect] does not occur at that instant, just as it is impossible by means of any capacity whatever that contradictories are true at one and the same time.⁵⁷

Maurer argues that ‘what is at stake in this disagreement between Ockham and Scotus is the validity of a notion of an “instant of nature,” and profoundly the concept of nature itself.’⁵⁸ However, the foundation of Ockham’s philosophical rejection of Scotus’s use of ‘instants of nature’ is his loyalty to Scotus’s vision of the indeterminate freedom of the will. Ockham believed that dispensing with the categories of ‘natures’ and ‘universals’ gave rise to a greater appreciation of the freedom of God. Without the philosophical supposition of a common human nature it became possible to appreciate the creation of each individual as an independent and unconditioned free act of God. Similarly, in dispelling from the discussion of predestination the notions of instants of nature in God that are independent of how God really acts, Ockham’s intention was to remove philosophical obstacles so as to attain a clearer view of the reality of God’s freedom.

Biel’s theology of predestination similarly expresses Scotus’s legacy of the necessary opposition between the divine and human freedoms. At first sight, Biel appears to follow Scotus in transferring responsibility for predestination wholly to the divine will, contending that there is no cause for predestination outside God. He thus seems to advocate a doctrine of double predestination:

All the elect are predestined from eternity, just as the reprobates are foreknown from eternity. Nor can anyone written in [the Book of Life] be blotted out; this is because of God’s immutability, which could not be preserved if one could posit anything new in final predestination or

⁵⁷ Ockham, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, transl. Adams and Kretzmann, 87.

⁵⁸ Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham*, 236.

reprobation. If a statement about some person is to become true in place of a contradictory statement about him (e.g. “Fred is not predestined” gets replaced by “Fred is predestined”), this requires either a change in one of the two poles or a change due to movement or the passage of time. But time and movement can have no effect on eternity. Nor does a change in the one predestined or foreknown suffice [to bring about a change in someone’s status as predestined or foreknown], since nothing really existing outside God can be posited as a cause of predestination.⁵⁹

However, Biel’s contention that there is no cause for predestination other than God is qualified by his understanding of a cause. The first meaning of a cause is the direct connection with an effect: if a cup of tea spills on the desk, the papers on the desk become tea stained. Biel notes: ‘Sometimes “cause” is taken to mean some reality from whose existence the existence of something else follows as an effect.’⁶⁰ Biel also presents a second understanding of ‘cause’ that has significant implications for the role of human free will in predestination. Biel argues that cause can relate to an order of priorities without any efficient, material, formal or final connection:

‘Cause’ can be taken in another way to refer to some priority one proposition has over another by way of consequence. For example, one might ask the reason [*causa*] why a fire didn’t heat some material, and the answer is that it was not brought close enough. In this kind of way it is often said that the antecedent is the cause of the consequent (or: what preceeds is the cause of what follows), even though it is not a cause in the proper sense, since it is neither an efficient, nor a material, nor a formal, nor a final cause. For when one proposition follows on another (and not *vice versa*) by a natural consequence, the antecedent can be spoken of as the cause of the consequent, and not the other way round.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Biel, Lec 33: F: ‘*Omnes electi ab eterno sunt predestinati sicut et reprobri ab eterno presciti. Neque ascriptus deletur propter dei immutabilitatem que salvari non posset ponendo novitatem in predestinatione et reprobatione finali. Requirit enim successiva contradictoriorum verificatio de eodem mutationem aut in altero extremo aut motu vel temporis lapsu. Sed ad eternitatem nihil facit tempus vel motus nec sufficit mutatio in predestinato vel prescito, quia nihil in re extra deum ponitur causa predestinationis.*’ Cited by Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 188 (Oberman’s translation). The use of Fred as an example has been inserted by Oberman.

⁶⁰ Biel, I Sen. d. 41, Q.1 art. 1 nota 2: ‘*Per causam quandoque intelligitur res aliqua ad cuius esse sequitur aliud tanquam effectus.*’ Cited accordingly by Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 188 (Oberman’s translation).

⁶¹ Biel, I Sen. d. 41, Q.1 art. 1 nota 2 : ‘*Alio modo capitur causa ut dicit quandam prioritatem unius propositionis ad aliam secundum consequentiam sicut si queritur causa quare ignis non calefacit quia*

In Biel's example of the fire not warming, the cause could be said to be not the fire but the distance the person stands away from the fire. The causal effect of the fire is not deficient but other causes are at work to mitigate it. These two senses of causation can be used as an analogy for Biel's perspective on predestination. Under the first direct causality, it can be said that the grace of predestination is like the fire of God's love, freely willing to burn for all eternity. Under the second model of causality, the human will can be said to be the cause of election or reprobation because it can either choose to draw near to the fire and receive the saving warmth of God's salvation or choose to stand at a distance and so be the cause of the frostbitten eternity of reprobation. Biel's use of the second kind of causation allows him to harmonise his theology of predestination with his teaching on justification. The responsibility for salvation, *de facto*, lies with the movement of the human free will to strive to abandon the arctic land of sin and reach the fire of grace. Oberman observes that Biel's theory of predestination is based on God's foreknowledge of the action of the human will for good or ill. Oberman summarises Biel's position: 'Just as God foresees that the stubborn sinner will persevere in sin and will be, "therefore," condemned, thus God also foresees that the righteous man will persevere in love and "therefore" he predestines him.'⁶² Hence, Biel preaches that 'from eternity God sees the future petitions of man,'⁶³ thus situating his theology of predestination within his theology of justification. The *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* provide a covenantal setting in which divine and human freedom can be reconciled. Biel's resolution of the Scotist dilemma is to follow in Ockham's footsteps and, in Oberman's words, apply to predestination 'the same organic structure as we discovered in justification.'⁶⁴

non est approximatus passo et sic frequentur dicitur quod antecedens est causa consequentis et tamen non est proprie causa quia nec causa efficiens, materialis, formalis vel finalis. Quando enim ab una propositione ad aliam est consequentia naturalis non econverso potest aliquo modo antecedens dici causa consequentis et non econverso.' Cited accordingly by Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 189 (Oberman's translation.)

⁶² This argument is taken from Biel, I Sent. d. 41, q. 1, art. 2, concl. 1, 2: '*Dare est aliquam causam reprobationis accipiendo causam secundo modo quia sequitur iste peccabit finaliter ergo damnabitur. Non enim est deus prius ultor quam sit aliquis peccator... Alicuius predestinationis est aliqua causa vel ratio secundo modo capiendi causam. Patet quia aliqui propter meritum salvantur ita quod si non voluntarie mererentur non salvarentur; horum predestinationis est aliqua ratio sicut reprobationis. Nam sicut damnandi reprobantur quia previdentur finaliter peccaturi, ita tales predestinantur quia previdentur finaliter perseveraturi in charitate.'* Cited accordingly by Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 190 (Oberman's translation.)

⁶³ Biel, Lect. 31, C: '*ab eterno Deus vidit petitionem hominis futuram*, cited by Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 191.

⁶⁴ Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 193.

Oberman recognises the semi-Pelagian implication of Biel's teaching: '[God] freely decided to delegate some of this power to his creatures: *de facto*, therefore, the viatores live an existence conditioned by justification by works and by predestination *post previsa merita*.'⁶⁵ However, McGrath objects that 'Oberman misunderstands Biel to refer predestination to justification, whereas it is clear that Biel refers to it as the final bestowal of eternal life.'⁶⁶ McGrath here accuses Oberman of 'introducing the terminology of Protestant orthodoxy,'⁶⁷ which McGrath sees as a misunderstanding of Biel's definition of predestination. However, by setting Biel's theology of predestination within the context of Scotus's free will legacy, it is clear that Oberman is right to draw attention to the Pelagianism haunting Biel's attempt to resolve the Scotist dichotomy of two autonomous freedoms.

The writings of Eck and Holcot similarly display Scotus's influence and are therefore instructive to this study on the legacy of Scotus in the fifteenth-century disputes on free will and predestination.⁶⁸ In his *Lectures on the Wisdom of Solomon* Holcot maintains: 'According to God's law the pilgrim who does whatever he can to dispose himself for grace always receives grace.'⁶⁹ Similarly, Eck proclaims the popular dictum widely accredited to Augustine: '*Si non es praedestinatus, fac ut praedestineris*': 'If you are not predestined, endeavour to be predestined!'⁷⁰ These statements endorse Oberman's suggestion that justification and predestination could be thought of as two sides of the same coin within the *via moderna* school. Hence, Oberman holds that deeming Biel's theology of predestination an extension of his justification maxim (*facere quod in se est*), far from being 'anachronistic and misleading,'⁷¹ is an appropriate reading of Biel's relation to the legacy of Scotus's theory of free will.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 193.

⁶⁶ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 170.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 169.

⁶⁸ For a study of Eck and other Catholic polemicists in Luther's Reformation see: Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*.

⁶⁹ Holcot, *Lectures on the Wisdom of Solomon*, 149.

⁷⁰ Eck, *Chysopassus praedestinis*, 1.6: '*Si non est praedestinatus, scilicet per praesentam gratiam, fac poenitendo et displicentiam de peccatis habendo ut praedestineris gratiam acquirendo, a qua diceris praedestinatus secundum praesentem iusticiam*.' Cited by McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 174. This point is reiterated in Eck's latter *annotatiunculae* on the first book of the Sentences, I Sent. Dist. xli: '*Deus nunquam deert homini facienti quod in se est. Et haec est ratio praedestinationis*.' (Ed. Moore, 120 and 27-8.)

⁷¹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 170.

This version of predestination on the basis of God's foreknowledge, which can be found in Ockham, Biel, Holcot and Eck, did not have to wait for the advent of Martin Luther to be deplored as a Pelagian error. In contrast to Eck, Staupitz remarks: 'The well-known saying attributed to our own Augustine is by no means defensible in the way in which it is put: "If you are not predestined make yourself predestined." For the gifts and call of God are not the results of penitence.'⁷² Copleston observes the scholastic awareness of a Pelagian threat in some versions of predestination:

The result of this insistence on human freedom, coupled with Ockham's admission of the theoretical possibility of man's performing meritorious acts and achieving salvation without the intervention of grace as a secondary cause, was the impression in certain quarters that a new form of Pelagianism had arisen, concerned with emphasising human freedom and self-sufficiency at the expense of the universal divine causality and the divine omnipotence.⁷³

Oberman has made the case that these advocates of a strong doctrine of predestination together formed a third scholastic school, alongside the Thomists and Scotists. He cites as evidence Ambrosius Catharinus Politus, who paraphrased St. Paul's words, 'I am for Apollos, I am for Paul, I am for Cephas' (1 Cor. 1:12) in contemporary form: 'I am for Thomas, I am for Scotus, I am for Ockham or for Gregory.'⁷⁴ Oberman holds that Gregory of Rimini was the leading authority of this Augustinian school, and that this appears to be supported by the introduction of a *via gregorii* at the University of Wittenberg in 1508.⁷⁵ Müller identifies Simon Fidati of Cassia (†1348) Hugolino of Orvieto (†1374), Agostino Favaroni of Rome (†1443) and Jacobus Perez of Valencia (†1470) as theologians of the *schola augustiniana moderna* who emerged in the Augustinian order.⁷⁶ More recent scholarship, however, has cast some doubt on the existence of the *schola augustiniana moderna*. Schulze remarks that: 'The universal influence and acclamation of Augustine rendered him, as Abraham, the "father of multitudes".'⁷⁷ Similarly, Trapp maintains that 'Augustinianism should not

⁷² Staupitz, *Eternal Predestination and its Execution in Time*, 181.

⁷³ Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, 258.

⁷⁴ A. C. Politus: 'Ego Apollo, ego Pauli, ego vero Cephae' [1 Cor. 1:12] with 'ego Thomae, ego Scoti, ego Ockham vel Gregorii.' Cited by Oberman, *The Harvest of the Medieval Theology*, footnote, 205.

⁷⁵ See Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, 135-148

⁷⁶ Müller, *Luthers theologische Quellen: Seine Verteidigung gegen Denifle und Gisar* (Giessen, 1912). Müller's thesis is discussed by McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, 82-84 and *Iustitia Dei*, 202-3.

⁷⁷ Saak, 'The Reception of Augustine,' 372.

be looked at as belonging to the exclusive domain of any one group of scholars,’⁷⁸ although he concedes that historians might ‘speak cautiously of attitudes, not schools.’⁷⁹ The different approaches taken to predestination are precisely the attitudes that reveal the allegiance of scholastics within the free will debate. James highlights the role of the theology of predestination in identifying and shaping an Augustinian wing of late scholastic thought, arguing that: ‘it is the distinctive and constitutive element of the late medieval Augustinian movement traced to the Augustinian Eremit, Gregory of Rimini, and designates *schola augustiniana moderna*.’⁸⁰ Gregory of Rimini stood fast against what he perceived as the Pelagianising tendencies of predestination on the basis of foreknowledge, as can be seen in his response to the letter *Ad Demetriadem* in 413: ‘neither this passage nor the letter from which it is taken is the work of Jerome; it comes rather from Pelagius.’⁸¹ Two different strands of anti-Pelagian voluntarism can be seen: firstly, in the writings of Gregory of Rimini (†1358), Bradwardine (†1349), Staupitz (†1524); and secondly, in the mystical treatises of Gerson (†1429), Tauler (†1361), and the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica*. In attacking the Pelagian aspects of the predestination account of Ockham and Scotus, did these German exponents of an Augustinian school break with Scotus’s legacy of free will?

In opposition to perceived Pelagian tendencies in the Ockham-Biel perspective on predestination, the writings of Gregory of Rimini, Bradwardine and Staupitz expounded a doctrine of double predestination which sought to avoid these pitfalls. Bradwardine begins his treatise, *The Cause of God against the Pelagians* (1332) by stating his aim of refuting a Pelagian interpretation of predestination on the basis of foreknowledge. He writes: ‘The Pelagians now oppose our whole presentation of predestination and reprobation, attempting either to eliminate them completely or, at least, to show that they are dependent on personal merit.’⁸² In striving to eradicate the danger of Pelagianism, these writers spoke only of the autonomy of the divine will

⁷⁸ Trapp, ‘A Round Table Discussion,’ cited by Saak, ‘The Reception of Augustine’, 399.

⁷⁹ Trapp, ‘Augustinian Theology,’ 150, cited by McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 68.

⁸⁰ James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 7. McGrath similarly comments: ‘A very different understanding of the nature of divine predestination, however, emerged during the fourteenth century, and is particularly associated with the academic Augustinian revival at Oxford, and especially Paris, usually known as the *schola augustiniana moderna*.’ (*Iustitia Dei*, 140.)

⁸¹ Gregory of Rimini, *II Sent.*, dist. 26-28, q. 1, art. 1: ‘*nec verba illa epistola in qua continentur, fuerunt Hieronymi, sed Pelagii.*’ Cited by Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation*, 68.

⁸² Bradwardine, ‘The Cause of God against the Pelagians,’ *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 151.

and denied the agency of human free will in the theology of predestination. Gregory of Rimini presents his view that it is the divine will and not the human will, which determines predestination to salvation or to reprobation:

It is clear to me from the statements of Scripture and of the saints that the following conclusion must be accepted as true, and taught and preached as such. First, that no-one is predestined on account of the good use of the free will, which God foreknows and considers to his advantage. Second, that no-one is predestined because it is foreknown that he will not finally place any obstacle in the path of habitual or actual grace. Thirdly, that whosoever God predestines, is predestined in a manner that is gracious and merciful. Fourthly, that no-one is condemned on account of the evil use of the free will, which is foreknown by God. Fifthly, that no one is condemned because it is foreseen that he will finally place an obstacle in the path of grace.⁸³

Bradwardine supports Gregory's emphasis on the unquestionable authority of the divine will:

Since God is omnipotent, completely free Lord of His whole creation, whose will alone is the most righteous law for all creation—if He should eternally punish the innocent, particularly since He does it for the perfection of the universe, for the profit of others, and for the honour of God Himself, who would presume to dispute with Him, to contradict Him, or ask, 'Why do you do this?' I firmly believe, no one!⁸⁴

The teaching of double predestination found in the writings of Gregory and Bradwardine is advocated in the sixteenth century by Staupitz. Refuting the Ockham-Biel interpretation, Staupitz maintains:

No one elicits or merits this grace, nor is this grace due to merits foreknown by God, nor to good use of reason in the future foreseen by God, nor to merits

⁸³ Gregory of Rimini, In II Sent., dist. 11,11, q. 1, a. 2; ed. Trapp, 3.326, 17-26: '*Mihi autem videtur quod ex dictis scripturae et sanctorum sequuntur hea conclusiones cum quarum omnium veritate non state veritas alicuius modi dicendi de praedictis. Harum prima est, quod nullus est praedestinatus propter bonum usum liberi arbitrii quem Deus praescivit eum habiturum qualitercumque consideret bonitas eius. Secunda, quod nullus est praedestinatus quia praescitus fore finaliter sine obice habituali et actuali gratiae. Tertia, quod quemcumque Deus predestinavit gratis tantummodo et misericorditer praedestinavit. Quarta, quod nullus est reprobatus propter malum usum liberi arbitrii quem illum Deus praevidet habiturum. Quinta, quod nullus est reprobatus quia praevisus fore finaliter cum obice gratiae.*' Cited by McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 174.

⁸⁴ Bradwardine, *The Cause of God against the Pelagians*, 162.

already performed. Rather, the sole source of this grace is the most kind and generous will of God.⁸⁵

In deeming the divine will the 'sole source' of predestination, Staupitz follows Gregory and Bradwardine in eliminating the role of human free will. He teaches that the fate of the reprobate does not frustrate the will of God to save because the punishment of hell also pertains to the goodness of God's justice. He writes:

Because mercy and justice contribute equally to the praise of the Almighty it has been decreed that some should be elected and predestined to conformation with the image of the Son of God and to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not have faith are judged already.⁸⁶

Although separated in time, Gregory, Bradwardine and Staupitz express positions of double predestination which can be seen as common reactions to a theology of predestination based on foreknowledge of the human will. Their anti-Pelagian tracts do not break away from the Scotist legacy that the will must have an autonomous freedom, which is free to act in a contrary way to reason. In prioritising Scotus's teaching on the autonomy of God's free will, these advocates of a strict 'Augustinian' approach to predestination were necessarily led to a theology of double predestination. However, between these poles of Pelagianism and double predestination there were a group of late scholastics who followed a mediating position on the question of free will in predestination.

The first example of a mediating position is the German mystic and theologian Johannes Tauler (†1361). Tauler's theology is found chiefly in his collection of sermons, which were preached to a movement known as the 'Friends of God' located in Bavaria, Switzerland, the Rhineland and the Low Countries. Its community spirituality brought together clergy and laity, celibate and married, contemplative and active.⁸⁷ Ozment's sociological study of *The Age of Reform* has noted that these communities were able to 'bridge the barriers of sex, age, social class, education and heresy' and yield a spiritual and social 'democratisation' and 'egalitarianism.'⁸⁸ The historical context of Tauler's sermons is crucial to an understanding of the pastoral approach taken in his theology of predestination. His theology of desolation, darkness

⁸⁵ Staupitz, *Eternal Predestination*, 179.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 179.

⁸⁷ For an exploration of Tauler's historical context see: Hass, 'Preface,' *Johannes Tauler: Sermons*.

⁸⁸ Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550*, 115.

and silence was a means of offering comfort to sinful consciences. He offered assurance that salvation could be found not in the security of good works but in the tears of a confession.⁸⁹

Tauler's anti-Pelagian stance earned him the title of 'German Church-father' from Luther.⁹⁰ Tauler preaches against the presumption of those who trust in good works achieved by human free will:

They are pretty sure that they have left the darkness far behind; and yet they are fundamentally Pharisees, filled with self-love and self-will. All their striving is centered upon themselves. Outwardly one can barely tell them from God's friends, for they often spend more time on pious exercises than God's friends: One can always see them reciting prayers, keeping fasts and strict rules. ... In everything, in God and in His creatures, such people seek nothing but their own gratification. So deeply embedded is this pharisaical tendency in their nature that every corner of the soul is invaded by it. It is impossible to overcome this habit by natural means; one might as well break down mountains of iron. There is only one way, and that is for God to take over and inhabit man. And this He does only for those who love Him.⁹¹

Tauler's scolding of those who trust in the natural powers of the human will to merit and so win favour in God's eternal sight seems to mirror the approach of Gregory, Bradwardine and Staupitz. At first sight, Tauler's counsel that the only way to salvation is 'for God to take over' looks as if Tauler is taking refuge in the autonomy of the divine will in the Scotist battle of the wills.

In fact, however, Tauler's concern to be pastorally sensitive leads him to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic of the divine and human wills.

The difference between the two kinds of people is this: The first want to prepare the depths of their souls themselves and will not leave it to God. Their faculties are imprisoned to their sins from which they cannot free themselves.

⁸⁹ For a further example of a pastorally orientated theology of 'self-humiliation' see: Dempsey Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching: a study of John Geiler of Keisersberg*.

⁹⁰ Schmidt, 'Introduction,' 2. See also: LW 48, 36, *Letter to George Spalatin* (14 Dec 1516): 'Nevertheless I shall add my advice: if reading a pure and solid theology, which is available in German and is of a quality closest to that of the Fathers, might please you, then get for yourself the sermons of John Tauler, the Dominican.'

⁹¹ Tauler, 'Sermon 10,' 51.

They may even delight in persisting in them of their own free will. ... As soon as they are assailed by sin and become aware of it, they flee unto God and there can be no more trace of sin, for they now dwell in God's freedom. External works are of no avail to them, of none whatsoever. Does not the word *surge* mean arise? That indeed is a work. It is the one work necessary, and they should perform it without ceasing as long as they live.⁹²

Tauler here presents the mediating position that salvation lies in *surge*, by which he means the self surrender of the human free will to the will of God. For Tauler, however, works of human free will are indeed void, save the one critical work of active passivity. Haas remarks that Tauler's spirituality 'is characterised by a decisive paradox: it is mysticism of ascent to the same degree as it is mysticism of descent.'⁹³ The key lesson of Tauler's sermons is that, while salvation does not lie in the vanity of human works, it does depend on the surrender of the human will. Commenting on the verse: 'Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you,' (Isaiah 60:1) Tauler notes: 'The text says arise, which implies active consent. Man must do his part and rise from everything that is not God, away from himself and all created things.'⁹⁴ Tauler's 'middle and royal road' seeks to avoid the pitfalls of Pelagian merit but does *de facto* leave the human will as the initiator of salvation. Thus he preaches: 'When the Holy Spirit finds that we have done our part, He comes with His light, which outshines all natural light and infuses supernatural virtues such as faith, hope and charity, and the accompanying graces.'⁹⁵ Tauler's position is really an anti-Pelagian modification of the Ockhamist covenant, and in that sense it mediates between Biel and Bradwardine. Whilst recognition of an inner darkness replaces the criteria of merit, God's will to save waits on the autonomy of the human free will until 'we have done our part.'

A second example of a mediating 'Augustinian' position on the question of predestination is that of the mystic and theologian Jean Gerson (1429†).⁹⁶ Brown observes that 'Gerson's influence seems to have been particularly strong in German-

⁹² Tauler, 'Sermon 5,' 48.

⁹³ Haas, *Johannes Tauler Sermons*, xv.

⁹⁴ Tauler, 'Sermon 5,' 46.

⁹⁵ Tauler, 'Sermon 23,' 81.

⁹⁶ For a study of late medieval mysticism see: McGinn, *The Presence of God*, vol. 4., *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, and Turner, 'Dionysius and Some Late Medieval Mystical Theologians of Northern Europe,' 121- 152.

speaking areas, for the first printed editions [of his works] were produced in Cologne (1483), Strasburg (1488-9 and 1494), Nuremberg (1498), and Basle (1489).'⁹⁷ Gerson is therefore a significant example of mediating voluntarism, because he was a known authority in the Reformation drama. Brown further remarks: 'Biel of Tübingen, too, used Gerson as one of his major authorities, and the chancellor was an important source for John Pupper of Goch in the mid-fifteenth century and for Staupitz, Luther's mentor, in the early sixteenth century.'⁹⁸ Gerson was famous, not primarily for having been made proctor of the French nation (1383-4) or chancellor of Paris University (1395) but because of his prolific theological career, in the course of which he produced over five hundred works.

Gerson describes predestination as 'the central and supreme hinge of all Paul's arguments.'⁹⁹ Initially, his theology seems akin to that of Gregory, Bradwardine and Staupitz because he rejects God's foreknowledge of sin or perseverance as a condition of election. Gerson declares that everything hinges on the divine will 'because if it were because of works, [salvation] would not be by grace.'¹⁰⁰ He further believes that individuals are 'predestined and elected from eternity [*ab aeterno*], out of pure generosity and grace [*pura liberalitate et gratia*].'¹⁰¹ This anti-Pelagian stance certainly places him within the 'Augustinian' branch of the Scotist dynasty. Oberman draws attention to the anti-Pelagian messages of Gerson's mystical images:

Gerson interprets a dream in which a man falls into a latrine and tries in vain to climb out of the filth with the help of a stick, as follows: the man in the latrine is a symbol of the hopeless position of the sinner, and the stick is a symbol of his own efforts, which cannot ever suffice without God's help.¹⁰²

In emphasising humanity's radical dependence on grace if it is to be raised from sin, Gerson echoes Scotus's teaching on predestination. Predestination to salvation is declared by the divine will before knowledge of foreseen merits, but reprobation is declared after knowledge of foreseen sins. Burrows observes: '[Gerson's decision not to define predestination of the elect as foreknowledge but to explain it as an election *ab eterno*, aligns his soteriology with the Scotist position, interpreting predestination

⁹⁷ Brown, *Pastor and laity in the theology of Jean Gerson*, 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Gerson, *Canonis Missae Expositio*, lect. 87, cited by Burrows, *Jean Gerson after Constance*, 473.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 474.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 473.

¹⁰² Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, 98.

ante praevisa merita, or ‘before foreseen merits.’¹⁰³ However, in maintaining that reprobation is ‘not without human cause,’¹⁰⁴ Gerson can be seen as trying to have his theological cake and eat it. The philosophical weakness of this position is that there is an inherent contradiction between claiming complete freedom for the human and divine will. Was Gerson able to find a new way through the Scotist dilemma and so mediate the free powers of the will in God and humanity?

Gerson’s creativity was that he, like Tauler, adapted the Ockhamist covenant in an anti-Pelagian direction. Gerson held that within the framework of a covenant, the freedom of both wills can be acknowledged. The terms of the covenant were similarly seen to protect against the danger of Pelagianism. The condition of Gerson’s covenant of predestination was that each person should act as ‘prosecutor, witness, and judge against himself, exaggerating [guilt] as much as he is able.’ ‘I wish you to despair,’ Gerson continues, ‘but of yourself and in yourself.’¹⁰⁵ Unlike the anti-Pelagian reaction of Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini and Staupitz, the agency of human free will has not disappeared but changed. The crucial ‘work’ of human free will was to cry out in despair to God and thus the aim of his mystical theology was to lead viatores ‘through the highest desperation regarding man to the highest hope in God.’¹⁰⁶ If Gerson’s anti-Pelagian polemic links his theology to that of Gregory, Bradwardine, Staupitz and Tauler, his language of seeking equally situated him in the realm of the Ockhamist covenant. Mirroring Biel’s maxim *facere quod in se est*, Gerson proclaims: ‘God is the rewarder of those seeking him (*inquirentibus se remunerator [Deus] est*).’¹⁰⁷ Burrows rightly acknowledges Gerson’s affinity to the Ockhamist interpretation:

This substitution on the basis of Hebrews 11:6 of *inquirentibus* (‘for those seeking’) for *facientibus* (‘for those doing’) in the Ockhamist covenant alters his doctrine of salvation as well as his pastoral strategy decisively: salvation begins not with moral achievement but with an utter desperation of human acts on account of which viatores are driven in faith to God. The quest for God becomes the natural ‘act’ rewarded by God with the promise of salvation.

¹⁰³ Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance,’ 473.

¹⁰⁴ Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 9, 194, cited by Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance,’ 474.

¹⁰⁵ Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 9, 199, cited by Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance,’ 471.

¹⁰⁶ Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 9, 233, cited by Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance,’ 471.

¹⁰⁷ Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 9, 188, 189, 197, cited by Burrows, ‘Jean Gerson after Constance,’ 477.

Hence, this is still a covenant demanding human initiative, at least *de potentia Dei ordinata*, but it resists any elevation of moral achievement.¹⁰⁸

Gerson's objective of opposing Pelagian tendencies, while balancing the freedom of the wills in predestination, leads him to adopt the same path as Tauler. Within a covenant ordained by the free will of God, the human will must use its freedom to take the initiative *coram Deo*. The initiative is that of despairing of the ability of the human will to merit salvation. In placing the initiative *de facto* in the agency of human free will, it is clear that Gerson forms his theology of predestination by revising the Ockhamist covenant. Indeed, Oberman notes that, those who saw themselves as part of the Ockhamist school recognised their affinity to Gerson:

For Biel, Gerson was a great systematic and mystical authority whom he honoured and quoted, not only from his university lectern in Tübingen, but even from his pulpit at the Cathedral of Mainz. There is no doubt in his mind nor in that of the other nominalist school-men that Gerson belonged to the *via moderna*.¹⁰⁹

Burrow calls Gerson's theology of predestination a 'middle and royal road',¹¹⁰ but it is clear that Gerson's way does not lead away from the Scotist crossroads of choosing a theology of predestination that is either determinist or Pelagian.

The anonymous German work *Theologia Germanica* is the third example of an approach that is opposed to Pelagian error whilst trying to account for divine and human agency in salvation. The *Theologia Germanica* depicts the belief in self-merit as the source of all disobedience, sin and the fall:

Hereby we may mark what disobedience is: to wit, that a man maketh some account of himself, and thinketh that he is, and knoweth, and can do somewhat, and seeketh himself and his own ends in the things around him, and hath regard to and loveth himself, and the like.¹¹¹

The *Theologia Germanica* mirrors Tauler in seeing self-will as an obstacle to God's action. It teaches: 'And because I will not do so, but I count myself to be my own, and say "I," "Mine," "Me" and the like, God is hindered, so that He cannot do His work

¹⁰⁸ Burrows, 'Jean Gerson after Constance,' 478.

¹⁰⁹ Oberman, 'Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Mysticism,' 264.

¹¹⁰ Burrows, 'Jean Gerson after Constance,' 467.

¹¹¹ *Theologia Germanica*, 56.

and His divine will.’¹¹² Instead, the human will should ‘be swallowed up and lost therein, so that the Eternal will alone should do and leave undone in us.’¹¹³ At first, the author, therefore, appears to endorse the position held by Bradwardine, Rimini and Staupitz, that the human will can do nothing to alter its predestination to salvation or reprobation: ‘Now mark what may help or further us towards this end. Behold, neither exercises, nor words, nor works, nor any creature nor creature’s work can do this.’¹¹⁴ The strong doctrine of the depravity of human nature gives the impression that the *Theologia Germanica* is an advocate of absolute predestination and a forerunner to Luther’s treatise *The Bondage of the Will* (1525).¹¹⁵

On closer examination, however, the *Theologia Germanica* is also more nuanced. Thus it instructs that it is only he who ‘truly perceiveth and considereth himself,’¹¹⁶ who is open to the grace of salvation. In the process of ‘true repentance,’ humans discover themselves to be ‘utterly vile and wicked,’ and this realization opens the door to salvation:

And then, when the man neither careth for, nor seeketh, nor desireth, anything but the Eternal Good alone, and seeketh not himself, nor his own things, but the honour of God only, he is made a partaker of all manner of joy, bliss, peace, rest and consolation, and so that man is henceforth in the Kingdom of Heaven.¹¹⁷

The *Theologia Germanica* thus returns to the importance of the human will in triggering or preventing conversion, which in eternity has the power to prevent predestination to salvation. Whilst including a strong doctrine on the fallen condition of human nature, *Theologia Germanica* maintains the Scotist teaching of the autonomy of human free will. It concludes: ‘For just as neither this thing nor that can bring about or further this union, so there is nothing which hath power to frustrate or hinder it, save the man himself with his self-will, that doeth him this great wrong.’¹¹⁸ The theology of predestination found in *Theologia Germanica*, though praised by

¹¹² Ibid, 38-39.

¹¹³ Ibid, 78.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 78.

¹¹⁵ For a summary of the key themes of Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*, see Kolb, *Bound Choice*, 31-66.

¹¹⁶ *Theologia Germanica*, transl. Winkworth, 50.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 50-51.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 79.

Luther as ‘precious in knowledge and divine wisdom,’ does not fundamentally break with the Ockhamist insistence on the agency of human free will as the initiating force for salvation within the *potentia ordinata*. Nevertheless, it is clear that the ‘German theologians,’ such as the authors of *Theologia Germanica*, Gerson and Tauler, whom Luther extols as ‘without doubt the best theologians,’ were striving to find an impossible ‘middle and royal road’ within the Scotist paradox of the wills.¹¹⁹

This chapter has found that the fierce disagreements between scholastics on the question of predestination have their source in Scotus’s theology of free will. It has been seen that the dangers of Pelagianism and determinism haunted the late scholastic debate on predestination. The task for these voluntarist writers was to include two mutually exclusive powers in the theology of predestination. Scotus had left the legacy that the freedom of the will—be it human or divine—must be independent of reason and possess a power of self-determination. Hence, the task undertaken by these scholastics was doomed to failure. In revising Pinckaers’s view on the theological relationship between Scotus and Bonaventure, the full force of Scotus’s break with the Franciscan theology has been made evident. This chapter has seen a whole host of voluntarists wrestle with Scotus’s conundrum of free will in predestination: Ockham, Biel, Holcot, Eck, Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini, Staupitz, Tauler, Gerson and the author of *Theologia Germanica*. Within the Scotist spectrum, it has been shown that Biel and Ockham represent the side of human freedom, whereas Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini and Staupitz stand on the side of the divine will. The middle position held by Tauler, Gerson and the author of *Theologia Germanica* offers compromise without philosophical or theological resolution. The simultaneous appeal of the middle position of these ‘German theologians,’ to anti-Pelagianism and the agency of human free will, represents a crucial development in historical drama of the legacy of Scotus’s reformation of free will. Could it be that these ‘German theologians’ whom Luther praised so highly were the forefathers of Luther’s own theology of salvation? On reading *Theologia Germanica*, Luther exclaimed: ‘And I will say, though it be boasting of myself and “I speak as a fool,” that next to the Bible and St. Augustine, no book hath ever come into my hands, whence I have learnt, or would wish to learn more of what God, and Christ,

¹¹⁹ Luther, ‘Historical Introduction,’ *Theologia Germanica*, 10. See LW 31, 75-76.

and man and all things are... .' ¹²⁰ In light of Luther's own declaration, should the historian go further and suggest that there was no 'Reformation' doctrine of the will aside from the theologies of the will already expressed by these 'German theologians'?

¹²⁰ Ibid, 9.

Part Two: Luther's Reformation

Part Two argues that Luther's belief in the passivity of the human will is the key Reformation point that underlies his theology of the bondage of the will and the Mass as a testament.

Chapter Four: Luther and Scotus on free will

This chapter assesses Luther's relationship to Scotus's theology of free will as he encountered it through the mediation of late scholastic voluntarism. The central question is whether or not Luther established a theology of the role of the human and divine will in salvation, distinguishable from the spectrum of positions on free will discussed in the previous chapter. In short, did Luther's theology of free will really constitute a theological Reformation? In assessing whether or not Luther held an innovatory, Reformation position when compared to Scotus's theory of free will, his praise of the German mystics such as the *Theologia Germanica*, together with his intimacy with Staupitz, cast a historical mist across the boundaries of scholastic and Reformation thought. If Luther can declare, 'I received everything from Dr. Staupitz,'¹ does this mean that Luther's theology of free will was just another exposition of Augustinian voluntarism? This chapter will consider the degree of continuity in Luther's theology both with the language of descent into hell in the *Theologia Germanica*, and with the image of marital union used by Staupitz. In seeking to articulate theological difference, the focus of this study will be on whether or not the human will is active or passive in justification. The theological question of passivity is twofold: firstly, is the human will passive before grace, and secondly, does grace enable the will to attain an active righteousness? In striving to identify whether or not Luther arrived at a theological position that was different from scholastic voluntarists, the question of the existence of a change at one point of his career from scholastic thought to Reformation concepts is crucial. That is, if Luther did reach a Reformation position, then there must be a transition period in his work that reflects a rupture with scholastic voluntarism. Is the historian to understand Luther's statement: 'I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise

¹ Luther, WATr 1, no. 526, cited by Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 125.

itself though open gates,’² as signifying a breakthrough moment? Oberman suggests not, contending that a ‘temporally-defining dividing line’³ between scholasticism and the Reformation is no longer possible. In discerning whether or not Luther held a Reformation theology distinct from scholastic versions of Scotus’s theory of free will, it is, therefore, essential that theological comparisons are set within the context of Luther’s historical development.

To begin it is fitting to consider Luther’s direct references to Scotus’s theology of the will, in order to appreciate Luther’s central concerns regarding free will. In both his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517) and *The Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther considers the legacy of Scotus’s theology of the will to be the primary issue of debate. Luther’s objective is a thorough refutation of what he considers to be a Pelagian teaching of the natural capacity of the human free will to choose the good. In these anti-Pelagian tracts, Scotus is considered only in reference to his theory of the autonomy of the human will: this is the target of condemnation. The theological steps in Luther’s critique of Scotus begin with an affirmation of the depravity of human nature, proceed to recognition of the incapacity of human nature to turn from sin, and conclude by deeming Scotus’s view of human free will a Pelagian error.

In describing the fallen condition of man, Luther begins the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* by declaring: ‘It is true that man, being a bad tree, can only will and do evil.’⁴ This premise is affirmed in thesis thirteen of the *Heidelberg Disputation*: ‘Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.’⁵ Luther’s reason for believing in humanity’s necessary sinfulness apart from grace is revealed more fully in the second stage of his critique of Scotus: namely, his opposition to the ability of the human will ‘to freely assent’ to God or sin. A series of theses in the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* address this issue:

5. It is false to state that man’s inclination is free to choose between either of two opposites. Indeed, the inclination is not free, but captive. This is said in opposition to common opinion.

² Luther, *Preface to the Complete Edition of his Latin Writings*, 336-337.

³ Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, 95.

⁴ Luther, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, 9.

⁵ Luther, *Heidelberg Confession*, LW 31, 40.

6. It is false to state that the will can by nature conform to correct precept. This is said in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel [Biel].

10. One must concede that the will is not free to strive toward whatever is declared good. This is in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel.

13. It is absurd to conclude that erring man can love the creature above all things, therefore also God. This in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel.

17. Man is by nature unable to want God to be God. Indeed, he himself wants to be God, and does not want God to be God.⁶

Ironically, in refuting Scotus's theology of the capacities of the human will, Luther here invokes Scotus's opposition between the two freedoms of God and man. That is, he argues that the desire of the human will to be free necessarily opposes the subservience commanded by God's free will. Hence, free will in humanity means only the force of sinful disobedience such that it 'does not want God to be God.'⁷ In his proof of thesis 13 of the Heidelberg Confession, Luther advances his view with reference to Augustine: 'Hence St. Augustine says in his book, *The Spirit and the Letter*, "Free will without grace has the power to do nothing but sin," and in the second book of *Against Julian*, "You call the will free, but in fact it is an enslaved will," and in many other places.'⁸ In consequence of this belief in the essential opposition between freedom in God and in humanity, Luther condemns Scotus's teaching on the good volition of the human will in securing salvation as 'doubly guilty.'⁹ The proof of thesis 16 of *The Heidelberg Disputation* states:

While a person is doing what is in him, he sins and seeks himself in everything. But if he should suppose that through sin he would become worthy of, or prepared for grace, he would add haughty arrogance to his sin and not believe that sin is sin and evil is evil, which is an exceedingly great sin.¹⁰

The result of Luther's polemic against Scotus's theology of the natural capacity for good, inherent in human free will, is a denunciation of Pelagianism. In thesis 28 of the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, Luther declares:

If it is said of the Scripture passages, 'Return to me ... and I will return to you' [Zech. 1:3], 'Draw near to God and he will draw near to you' [Jer. 29:13], and

⁶ Luther, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, 9-10.

⁷ Ibid, 10.

⁸ Luther, *Heidelberg Confession*, LW 31, 49.

⁹ Ibid, 50.

¹⁰ Ibid, 50.

the like, that one is by nature, the other by grace, this is no different from asserting what the Pelagians have said.¹¹

Luther's opinion of Scotus's theology of the will is, therefore, one of fierce criticism. It is important to appreciate, however, that Luther's target is Scotus's teaching of the meritorious capacity of human free will, and not Scotus's view of free will itself. Indeed, in examining Luther's line of reasoning, it has been seen that his condemnation of Scotus as Pelagian rests on an acceptance of Scotus's belief in the meaning of freedom as a self-ruling power.

It is telling that in every accusation levied explicitly against Scotus's theology of the human free will, Scotus is coupled with Gabriel Biel. The union between Scotus and Biel in Luther's mind reveals the historical circumstances of Luther's critique. Luther's exposure to Scotus came primarily from reading Biel's *Expositio* and *Collectorium* at Erfurt, in which Scotus's theory of human free will is used to further Biel's teaching on congruous merit.¹² Luther's purpose in the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* and at Heidelberg was not to undertake a work of historical theology, addressing the inherent weaknesses of Scotus's theology of free will, but to speak out against the Pelagian dangers that he discerned in the scholastic audience of his day. The most effective means of discrediting his opponents was to knock down the theological authority that undergirded what Luther regarded as Biel's problematic theory of merit. Luther's attack on the understanding of congruous merit taught by Scotus, Ockham and Biel, which suggested that the human will must perform a good act of volition towards God in order to receive grace, is made explicit in *The Disputation against Scholastic Theology*:

18. To love God above all things by nature is a fictitious term.
29. The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole disposition toward grace is the eternal election and predestination of God.
30. On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace.

¹¹ Luther, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, 11.

¹² For a discussion of Luther's academic programme at Erfurt see Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, 137-139, and Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 7-8.

33. And this is false, that doing all that one is able to do can remove the obstacles to grace.¹³

These theses directly oppose Biel's maxim that man can do his best to receive grace (*facere quod in se est*), and reject the Ockhamist understanding of predestination as determined by foreknowledge of future merits. Luther's rejection of Scotus's theory, that the human will has the power to opt for good or ill at all times, is, therefore, integral to his critique of the scholastic writers examined in the previous chapter. In subtly different ways, each of these scholastics applied Scotus's teaching that the human free will can, without the aid of grace, 'love God above all things.' Luther believed that this free-will tradition, which was exemplified in the theories of Biel and Ockham and in the mysticism of Pseudo Dionysius, was paramount to the heresy of Pelagius, for it claimed that *de facto* the human will can take the initiative to open the shutters of the soul, to receive the light of saving grace.

In understanding Luther's relation to Scotus's theory of free will, could it be that Luther's attack on the meritorious capacity of human free will belonged to an anti-Pelagian polemic already established by Tauler, Gerson and the *Theologia Germanica*? If Luther's theology of the human will was merely repeating the approach taken by these mediating scholastic voluntarists, the designation of Luther's beliefs as Reformation theology would stand in need of historical revision. Commenting on the influence of texts such as the *Theologia Germanica*, Vann Neufeld notes Luther's 'enthusiastic "spiritual kinship" with German mysticism.'¹⁴ The mysticism of despair, characteristic of these authors, presents the possibility of a strand of continuity between Luther's Reformation and the scholastic world. Hoffman maintains that mysticism was integral to Luther's theology because Luther's Reformation theology was informed by his own spiritual experience: 'Martin Luther's theology may lose Martin Luther himself if shorn of its mystical elements.'¹⁵ Should the historian conclude with Nugent that Luther's Reformation theology of the will

¹³ Luther, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, 10-11.

¹⁴ Vann Neufeld, 'The Cross of the Living Lord', 131-132. For a discussion of Luther's relationship to the German mystics covered in this chapter see also: Ozment, *Homo spiritualis* and *Mysticism and Dissent*. For German scholarship consult the articles by Hamm, Leppin, Volker, Munzert, and Heidrun in: Hamm and Leppin (eds.), *Gottes Nähe unmittelbar erfahren: Mystik im Mittelalter und bei Martin Luther*, and compare also Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, *Nos extra nos: Luther's Theologie zwischen Mystik und Scholastik*.

¹⁵ Hoffman, 'Luther and the Mystics,' 100.

was, as Nugent suggests, ‘less a revolution than a “harvest” of earlier theological and spiritual motifs’?¹⁶ The theological similarities and differences between Luther and Tauler, Gerson and the *Theologia Germanica* will be examined in order to assess whether or not Luther broke with this strand of Scotist thought.

At first sight, it would seem fitting to place Luther’s Reformation theology of free will in the same boat at the *Theologia Germanica*. Not only does this work’s anti-Pelagian stance, especially when combined with its theology of sin and justification through despair, appear to pre-empt Reformation teaching, but Luther professes his admiration for its anonymous author. Luther edited two of the seventeen editions of the *Theologia Germanica* that were produced in his lifetime. He writes:

Let as many as will, read this little book, and then say whether theology is a new or an old thing among us; for this book is not new. ... I thank God that I have heard and found my God in the German tongue, as neither I nor they have yet found Him in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew tongue. God grant that this book may spread abroad then we shall find that the German theologians are without doubt the best theologians.¹⁷

In this eulogy to the *Theologia Germanica*, Luther seems to be protecting himself from the charge of theological innovation by situating his theology within an established German theological tradition for he stresses that ‘this book is not new.’¹⁸

The case for continuity appears to be supported by the theological parallels between Luther and the *Theologia Germanica* in regard to the incapacity of the human will to merit. In this reading, Luther’s understanding of sin could be viewed as an echo of the understanding of disobedience as self-righteousness, presented in the *Theologia Germanica*:

Hereby we may mark what disobedience is: to wit, that a man maketh some account of himself, and thinketh that he is, and knoweth, and can do

¹⁶ Nugent, ‘What has Wittenberg to do with Avila?’ 655. On the concept of ‘harvest’ see Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* and compare McGinn’s introduction to *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, which discusses the use of the term ‘harvest’ in the historiography of late medieval Mysticism.

¹⁷ Luther, ‘Historical Introduction,’ *Theologia Germanica*, 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.

somewhat, and seeketh himself and his own ends in the things around him, and hath regard to and loveth himself, and the like.¹⁹

The *Theologia Germanica* likewise describes the sin of the fall in terms of the belief that righteousness and merit are human possessions:

What did the devil do else, or what was his going astray and his fall else, but that he claimed for himself to be also somewhat, and would have it that somewhat was his, and somewhat was due to him? This setting up of his claim and his I and Me and Mine, these were his going astray, and his fall. And thus it is to this day.²⁰

Clearly, the theology of congruous merit held by Ockamists would have been implicated by this understanding of sin. The anti-Pelagian intent of the *Theologia Germanica* is apparent in the remark: ‘And thus it is to this day.’ This anti-Pelagian understanding of the essence of sin as self-righteousness would therefore seem to suggest continuity between the *Theologia Germanica* and Luther’s Reformation endeavour.

The means of justification presented by the *Theologia Germanica* also seem to reflect Luther’s mysticism of descent. In *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), Luther describes how the sinner must be made to experience hell:

When God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven he does it by bringing down to hell, as Scripture says: ‘The Lord kills and brings down to hell and raises up’ [1 Samuel 2:6] ... God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under iniquity.²¹

The *Theologia Germanica* similarly teaches that salvation is found in the midst of the hellish experience of utter despair:

When a man truly perceiveth and considereth himself, who and what he is, and findeth himself utterly vile and wicked, and unworthy of all the comfort and kindness that he hath ever received from God, or from the creatures, he falleth into such a deep abasement and despising of himself, that he thinketh himself unworthy that the earth should bare him, and it seemeth to him reasonable that

¹⁹ *Theologia Germanica*, 56.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 37.

²¹ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 62.

all creatures in heaven and earth should rise up against him and avenge their Creator on him, and punish and torment him; and that he were unworthy even for that. And it seemeth to him that he shall be eternally lost and damned, and a footstall to all the devils in hell, and that this is right and just.²²

Hence, it would appear that Luther's theology of justification in the depths of despair shares the aim of the *Theologia Germanica*, which sets out to show the movement from despair to salvation: 'How a righteous Man in this present Time is brought into Hell, and there cannot be comforted, and how he is taken out of Hell and carried into Heaven, and there cannot be troubled.'²³ Van Neufeld contends that the shared language of hell in describing the process of justification points to Luther's unity with the mysticism of despair:

The process by which God does his work has been variously described as *opus alienum*, *Anfechtung*, *via negativa*, 'Dark Night of the Soul.' Each expression declares in its own way anguish and darkness and weakness and failure, which comprise the heart of that affinity which Luther shared with the mystics of the cross.²⁴

Given this shared conception of sin as self-righteousness, and justification through the experience of hell, it is legitimate to ask whether or not these similarities amount to a theological unity between the *Theologia Germanica* and Luther's Reformation.

The thesis of Luther's unity with the established German mystical theology of the *Theologia Germanica* is, however, broken by one key principle of Luther's Reformation theology: the passivity of the will. For all the shared language of despair and humility, the question of whether or not the human will is active in justification reveals the separation between Luther's Reformation and this example of late scholastic German mysticism. Van Neufeld rightly remarks that, 'the central and fundamental recognition of God as initiator forms the "great dividing line" in mystical (and religious) thought: self-initiated mysticism is powerless to free the soul from sin.'²⁵ Luther maintains that the human will is blind to its own sinful condition, and thus, by nature, unable to prepare for grace through the active humility of self-despair. In the *Smalcald Articles* (1537), he perseveres in this logic of passivity:

²² *Theologia Germanica*, 50.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Van Neufeld, 'The Cross of the Living Lord,' 138.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Christ also says in John 16:8, 'The Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin.' This, then, is the thunderbolt by means of which God with one blow destroys both open sinners and false saints. He allows no one to justify himself. He drives all together into terror and despair. This is the hammer of which Jeremiah speaks, 'Is not my word like a hammer which breaks the rock into pieces?' (Jer. 23:29). This is not *activa contritio* (artificial remorse), but *passiva contritio* (true sorrow of the heart, suffering, and pain of death).'²⁶

For Luther, it is God who enlightens the sinner to the depravity of humanity's condition by the sending of the Holy Spirit. The experience of hell and despair do not precede the advent of the Holy Spirit but follow in its wake. In contrast, the *Theologia Germanica* presents a theology of active self-surrender, in which the healing of justification can be prevented by the failure of the human will to humble itself to a condition of passivity to the divine will:

And in this bringing back and healing, I can, or may, or shall do nothing of myself, but just simply yield to God, so that He alone may do all things in me and work, and I may suffer Him and all His work and His divine will. And because I will not do so, but I count myself to be my own, and say 'I', 'Mine', 'Me' and the like, God is hindered; for this cause my fall and my going astray remain unhealed.²⁷

The *Theologia Germanica*, therefore, assumes that the volition of the human will can prevent the salvific healing of grace. It thus remains within the covenantal framework of Ockham and Biel.

The way in which the passivity of the will divides Luther from the *Theologia Germanica* can be further apprehended with reference to the route to mystical ascent advised by the latter. The *Theologia Germanica* portrays the mystical ascent to experience eternity as an inward turn, in which the soul finds a point of contact between the multifaceted goodness of creation and the One Goodness of God. It belongs to the Dionysian tradition of mysticism by which an internal ascent of the soul is possible: 'But it behoveth you to know that a master hath said on this passage of St. Dionysius, that it is possible, and may happen to a man often, till he become so

²⁶ Luther, *The Smalcald Articles* (1537), in: Tappard, *Book of Concord*, 292-318. The explanations of *activa contritio* and *passiva contrition* are Luther's.

²⁷ *Theologia Germanica*, 39.

accustomed to it, to be able to look into eternity whenever he will.’²⁸ The key motif of the mysticism of *Theologia Germanica* is not an external revelation, but God’s command ‘Man, know thyself.’²⁹ The language of ‘Goodness’ which is employed in these passages regarding the internal aspects of mysticism is overtly Neo-Platonic. The reader is led from contemplation of the natural goods, which have received goodness, to the recognition of the knowledge of the One Good imprinted on the soul:

Now some might ask, ‘But what is that one thing?’ I answer, it is Goodness, or that which hath been made good; and yet neither this good nor that, which we can name, or perceive or show; but it is all and above all good things. Moreover, it needeth not to enter into the soul, for it is there already, only it is unperceived. When we say we should come unto it, we mean that we should seek it, feel it, taste it.’³⁰

Hence, the highest mystical experience of the *Theologia Germanica* is not recognition of the destitute sinfulness of the human condition, but rather the ability of the human will to reach the heights of heaven through internal contemplation:

And a single one of these excellent glances is better, worthier, higher and more pleasing to God, than all that the creature can perform as a creature. (And as soon as a man turneth himself in spirit, and with his whole heart and mind entereth into the mind of God which is above time, all that ever he hath lost is restored in a moment. And if a man were to do this a thousand times a day, each time a fresh and real union would take place; and in this sweet and divine work standeth the truest and fullest union that may be in this present time. For he who hath attained thereto, asketh nothing further, for he hath found the Kingdom of Heaven and Eternal Life on earth.)³¹

The internal ascent here described makes evident that, whilst there might seem to be a unity of thought with Luther’s theology of sin, at a deeper level the mysticism of the *Theologia Germanica* actually hinges on Scotus’s theology of the free volition of the human will. The human will cannot only recognise its sinfulness and become humble before God, but can also reach beatitude without passing through the kind of experience of despair described by Luther’s theology of the cross.

²⁸ Ibid, 45. For a further discussion of German mysticism see McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*.

²⁹ *Theologia Germanica*, 45.

³⁰ Ibid, 47-48.

³¹ Ibid, 46.

Luther's theology of the cross, in contrast, stands in opposition to all notions of mystical union that depend on the free volition of the human will. For Luther, the horror of the crucifixion exposes the sinfulness of human self-will, which invents a notion of God that suits human vanity, rather than turning to the suffering face of God in Christ. In the proof of thesis 20 of *The Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther portrays the theologian of glory:

So, also, in John 14:8, where Philip spoke according to the theology of glory: 'Show us the Father.' Christ forthwith set aside his flighty thought about seeking God elsewhere and led him to himself, saying, 'Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father' [John 14:9]. For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ.'³²

Luther's vision of the passivity of the human will, to the extent that humanity does not have the power to recognise or escape sin, necessarily entails that his mysticism is cross-centred. It would be contradictory to claim that the human will is a slave to sin and yet has the power to ascend to knowledge of the ultimate Good. Rather, if the human will is in captivity to the realm of darkness, then the only vision of God is the that of God crucified by sin. Luther therefore opposes the mysticism of Dionysius and, in consequence, the mysticism of the *Theologia Germanica*. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), Luther remarks of Dionysius:

If one were to read and judge without prejudice, is not everything in [Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy*] his own fancy and very much like a dream? But in this theology, which is rightly called mystical, of which certain very ignorant theologians make so much, he is downright dangerous, for he is more of a Platonist than a Christian. So if I had my way, no believing soul would give the least attention to these books. So far, indeed from learning Christ in them, you would lose even what you already know of him. I speak from experience. Let us rather hear Paul that we may learn Jesus Christ and him crucified. He is the way, the life, and the truth; he is the ladder by which we come to the Father.³³

Nygren accurately summarises Luther's opposition to versions of mysticism that include the active engagement of the human will:

³² Thesis 21, *Heidelberg Disputation*, LW 31, 52-53.

³³ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 109.

The thought of the mystical vision of God, for instance, which is one of the more prominent features of Eros religion, has always been able to attach itself to the text, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' without any notice being taken of the deep cleavage between the mystical and the eschatological vision of God, for which alone the text speaks and which is only another way of speaking about perfected fellowship with God.³⁴

The highest mystical vision possible this side of heaven, is not, Luther believed, the purity of an eternal Good, but the revelation of the self as a sinner prostrate at the foot of the cross.

Luther's theological relationship with Tauler and Gerson follows a similar pattern. Whilst there are common themes of anti-Pelagianism, self-despair and humility, the principle of passivity distinguishes Luther from these mystical writers. Oberman has drawn attention to the toilet imagery in the theology of Luther, Tauler and Gerson.³⁵ Commenting on his reinterpretation of righteousness in Romans 1.17, Luther writes: 'The Holy Spirit gave me this realisation in the cloaca.'³⁶ Each writer uses the image of the toilet or latrine to emphasise the filth of sinfulness in fallen human nature. There is a significant difference in Luther's interpretation, however, because in the mystical images of Tauler and Gerson the sinner is extracted from the filth of the excrement. In contrast, in Luther's understanding, the filth simply reveals what he sees as the truth of humanity's present sinful condition. Moreover, he implies that if mystics try to provide release from this sin, they have fallen into a theology of glory. Luther's argument is laid out in one of his weekly sermons on Matthew 6-7 preached during 1530-32:

What then is a pure heart? Or what does it consist in? Answer: it is quickly said—you may not try to climb up to heaven nor run after it in a monastery and try to create it with your own thoughts. But rather be wary of everything that you know to be your own thoughts in yourself, as of useless mud and filth, and know that a monk in a cloister, when he sits in his most sublime state of meditation and thinks of his Lord God, as he himself paints and dreams him,

³⁴ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, transl. Watson, 288, cited by Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 192.

³⁵ See Gerson, *Canonis Missae Expositio*, lect. 87, cited by Oberman, *The Reformation*, 98.

³⁶ Luther, *WATr* 2,177 n. 1: 'Diese kunst hat mir der Geist Gottes auf dieser cloaca eingegeben.' Cited by Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, 95.

and wants to throw the world right out of his heart, he is sitting (begging your pardon) in shit, not just up to his knees, but right up over his ears, because he is dealing only with his own thoughts, without God's Word.³⁷

Luther's belief in the passivity and sinfulness of the human will led him to oppose versions of mystical ascent. Nygren astutely contrasts Dionysian mysticism, 'fellowship with God on God's own level, on the basis of holiness,' with Luther's belief that salvation is 'fellowship with God on our level, on the basis of sin.'³⁸ The end of Luther's mysticism is no more than the realisation that, to cite the title of Oberman's discussion, 'We are beggars, that is the truth' (*Wir sein Pettler, Hoc est verum*).³⁹

The division in mystical thought, wrought by Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will, informs a historical diagnosis of Luther's relationship to Tauler, Gerson and the *Theologia Germanica*. On the one hand, Tauler's image of the sinner feeling himself 'hemmed in between two walls with a sword behind him and a sharp spear in front,'⁴⁰ does point to a shared experience of human limitation. It also must not be denied that Luther read and admired these authors. Indeed, Luther's marginal comments on Tauler's work show attentiveness to their shared Augustinian heritage and to the recognition of a spiritual void:

According to St. Augustine, God has to fulfill everything: but since natural emptiness is not possible, spiritual emptiness is even less so.—And for this reason you shall be silent: for the ultimate silence And from this follows that this whole sermon evolves from mystical theology which draws its knowledge from experience and not from doctrine. Nobody comprehends this unless he accepts this hidden detachment.⁴¹

On the other hand, the nature of Luther's 'spiritual kinship' with Tauler, Gerson, and the *Theologia Germanica* is certainly not one of direct continuity. It has been seen

³⁷ Luther, *Weekly Sermon on Matthew 5-7* (1530-32), here Matthew 5.8, WA 32, 325, transl. Oberman, *The Reformation*, 99.

³⁸ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 690. For a critical examination of Nygren's categories of *agape* and *eros* see Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, 113-120.

³⁹ Oberman, *The Reformation*, 92, citing WATr 5, 318.

⁴⁰ Tauler, *Meditations on the Passion of our Lord*, 143.

⁴¹ Luther, *Marginal notes on Tauler's Sermons* (ca. 1516), WA 9, 96: 'Aug— got muoss das als ervollen: Vacuum naturale non est possibile, multo minus spirituale est—Und darumb solt tu schweigen: Silentium AnagigicumUnde totus iste sermo procedit ex theologia mystica, quae est sapientia experimentalis et non doctrinalis. Quia nemo novit nisi qui accipit hoc negotium absconditum.' Cited by Schmidt, *Johannes Tauler Sermons*, 15.

that on the critical question of human free will, Luther rejected the position of these mystics. Whilst Luther praised Tauler as Germany's 'Church Father' and the *Theologia Germanica* as 'this noble book,' his fundamental disagreement with Tauler, Gerson and the *Theologia Germanica* regarding the role of human free will excludes the idea that Luther's Reformation was an offshoot of the mediating position of the scholastic spectrum of Scotus's theology of free will.⁴² It is more plausible that subsequent to the formation of his Reformation theology, Luther claimed the authority of these writers in virtue of their emphasis on despair, in order to protect himself from the charge of originality (and thus of heresy). In his introduction to the *Theologia Germanica*, he writes: 'Let as many as will, read this little book, and then say whether Theology is a new or an old thing among us; for this book is not new.'⁴³ Where then did Luther's theology of the passivity of human free will come from?

A second area of possible continuity between Luther's Reformation theology of the human will, and late scholastic voluntarism lies in Luther's relation to the radical Augustinian wing of the Scotist spectrum of free will. Here, Scotus's belief in the free volition of the human will is rejected, but his understanding of the absolute sovereignty of divine free will is maintained. It has been seen previously that writers such as Gregory of Rimini, Bradwardine and Staupitz argued in favour of double predestination. According to these writers, God's foreknowledge of the actions of the human free will is excluded from the verdict of predestination to salvation and reprobation. Reacting to the dangers of Pelagianism, these authors concluded that God's decision to save or to damn rests wholly on the freedom of the divine will. Could it be that Luther's theology of the bondage of human will to sin, and the passivity of the human will in justification, belonged to this stream of Augustinian voluntarism? This discussion will focus on Staupitz, who was not only representative of this branch of voluntarism, but also in direct contact with Luther, as his predecessor in Wittenberg, his superior in the Augustinian order and his confessor.⁴⁴ Hamm

⁴² Luther, 'Historical Introduction,' in *Theologia Germanica*, 10, and see also Schmidt's introduction to *Johannes Tauler: Sermons*, 2.

⁴³ Luther, 'Historical Introduction,' *Theologia Germanica*, 10.

⁴⁴ The first detailed study of Staupitz's relationship to Luther's Reformation was undertaken by Kolde, *Die Deutsche Augustiner-Kongregation und Johann von Staupitz. Ein Beitrag zur Ordens- und Reformationsgeschichte nach meist ungedruckten Quellen* (Gotha, 1879). This project was revived by Steinmetz a century later in his studies, *Luther and Staupitz: An essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation* (Durham, 1980), and *Misericordia Dei: The theology of Johannes von Staupitz in its late medieval setting* (Leiden, 1968). The importance of Staupitz to Luther studies has been

remarks: 'Staupitz was not only Luther's superior in the Order and his teacher, but also his pastor, friend, and surrogate father.'⁴⁵ Pointing to an intimate pastoral relationship, Luther declares 'I received everything from Dr. Staupitz.'⁴⁶ The significance of Staupitz's role is revealed in a letter, written by Luther in 1518 to accompany his publication of a commentary on the *Ninety-Five Theses*, in which he attributes his new understanding of confession and penance to his conversations with Staupitz.⁴⁷ This expression of gratitude could lead one to presume that Luther was not in fact a theological revolutionary but a faithful son of Staupitz. Luther remarks not only that Staupitz 'started the teaching'⁴⁸ but that it was Staupitz 'through whom the light of the Gospel began to shine for the first time from darkness into our heart.'⁴⁹ Luther also mentions his indebtedness to Staupitz in a letter to Count Albrecht of Mansfeld on 23 February 1542: 'I was once bogged down in such thoughts and doubts. And if Dr. Staupitz—or rather God through Dr. Staupitz—had not helped me, I would have drowned in them and long been in hell.'⁵⁰ The intimacy between Luther and Staupitz is further revealed in Luther's sense that Staupitz had abandoned him in the midst of crisis (1519):

Although you know much about what is going on here, you are both distant and hold your tongue, reverend father, and neither do you write your letters which we are sitting on the edge of our seats to receive. Nevertheless, I am going to break the silence. We wish, everyone wishes, for you in some way to make yourself known in this assault of heaven. I believe that you have received my report on the Diet of Augsburg, that is, my anger and indignation

received by modern scholars and is explored by Oberman in, 'Captivitas Babylonica: Johann von Staupitz's Critical Ecclesiology,' and 'Duplex Misericordia: The Devil and the Church in the Early Theology of Johann von Staupitz,' in *The Impact of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1994), 26-47. Oberman also discusses the role of Staupitz in *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 125 and *Masters of the Reformation*, 64-112. Wider authorship includes: Lothar Graf zu Dohna, 'Staupitz and Luther: Continuity and Breakthrough at the Beginning of the Reformation,' *Via Augustini*, 116-129 and noteworthy in German scholarship are Wriedt, *Gnade und Erwählung. Eine Untersuchung zu Johann von Staupitz und Martin Luther* (Mainz, 1991), Zumkeller, *Johannes von Staupitz und seine Christliche Heilshre* (Würzburg, 1994) and Hamm, 'Johann von Staupitz (1468-1524): spatmittelalterlicher Reformer und 'Vater' der Reformation,' *ARG* (2001), 6-41.

⁴⁵ Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 142.

⁴⁶ Luther, *Table Talk*, WATr 1, no.526, cited by Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 125. See LW 54, 97.

⁴⁷ Luther, *To John von Staupitz* (30 May 1518), WABr. 1, 525-527, cited by Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 143.

⁴⁸ Luther, *Table Talk*, LW 54, 97.

⁴⁹ Luther, *To John von Staupitz* (17 September 1523), LW 49, 48.

⁵⁰ Luther, *Letter to Count Albrecht of Mansfeld* (23 February 1542), WABr 9. 6227, 23-25, cited by Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 142.

at Rome. God has seized me, and is driving me, and even leading me on; I am not the one in control. I want to be at peace, but I am snatched up and placed in the middle of an uprising.⁵¹

The task in hand is therefore to examine the similarities and possible differences in the theologies of Luther and Staupitz on free will. Only when a picture of Luther's theological and historical relationship to Staupitz has been drawn, can the degree of continuity be assessed. Steinmetz comments: 'If Luther is to be believed, then Staupitz is not merely a forerunner but the *father* of the Protestant reformation.'⁵² By comparing the theologies of the human will presented by Staupitz in *Eternal Predestination and its Execution in Time* (1517) and in Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* (1525) and *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), the question of whether Staupitz was 'forerunner' or 'father' of Luther's Reformation will be put to the test.

The key article that Staupitz shares with Luther's theology is the bondage of the human will to sin. The controversial nature of Staupitz's belief in the depravity of the human will is evident in his forced abdication as Vicar General of the Augustinian Hermits in 1520, having been accused of heresy.⁵³ In common with Luther, Staupitz's reaction to the danger of Pelagianism led him to exalt divine free will to the exclusion of human free will. This has been seen in regard to Staupitz's teaching on predestination. He writes: 'Therefore, let no one pride himself that it is because of his merits that he is enrolled among the faithful, and let no one claim for nature what properly belongs to grace.'⁵⁴ Staupitz's strict rejection of the capacity of the human will to merit the first grace is seen in his portrayal of the fall:

If, however, you attribute your election to nature, and accept your heritage from Adam, you are left, not with faith, hope, and love but with a half-dead man, lame, weakened by wounds, and powerless to perform even his natural tasks, to say nothing of those works which are beyond us and which transcend our every faculty.⁵⁵

The freedom of the human will to perform the good is so destroyed by sin that Staupitz can, like Luther, be described as teaching the bondage of the will.

⁵¹ Luther, 'To John von Staupitz,' WABr 1, 344, cited and transl. by Saak, *High Way to Heaven*. See also LW 48, 109.

⁵² Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz*, 4.

⁵³ See Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 140.

⁵⁴ Staupitz, *Eternal Predestination*, 178.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 178-179.

Thus our thinking is enslaved and our will is bound, so that all wisdom of the world, all intelligence, knowledge, and prudence becomes so subservient to concupiscence that it seems they were meant to serve only that purpose. ... Indeed what serves concupiscence cannot be elevated to the knowledge of God, for he who begins with self-love cannot get beyond himself.⁵⁶

In arguing that human nature is surrounded by the darkness of self-conceit and thus unable to discern the light of grace, Staupitz returns to the initiative of God's free will. Only God's free will to smash the hardness of hearts caused by sin can affect salvation. Since merit is impossible, he writes, 'the sole source of this grace is the most kind and generous will of God.'⁵⁷ Luther's comment that Staupitz 'started the teaching' of his Reformation theology can thus be applied to Staupitz's theology of the bondage of the will to sin.

The shared tenet of the bondage of the will to sin appears to express itself in their shared use of marital imagery. At first sight, Luther and Staupitz seem to be using this image of loving exchange between the sinner and Christ in the same way. Staupitz teaches:

You are that matchless Spouse that is my possession, this is my concern, that is I. Therefore, You are mine and everything You have is my own and I am Yours and whatever there is in me is Your own. And because we are one, things which are Yours become mine whole yet remaining Yours, and, likewise, things which are mine become Yours while at the same time they remain mine. Therefore I am righteous because of Your righteousness and a sinner because of my guilt. You are a sinner because of my guilt and righteous because of Your own righteousness.⁵⁸

This joyful marital exchange seems to be mirrored in Luther's teaching that, through the marital exchange caused by faith in Christ, the sinner is completely righteous whilst simultaneously completely sinful. In *The Freedom of a Christian* Luther remarks:

The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the apostle teaches,

⁵⁶ Ibid, 185.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 179.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 190.

Christ and the soul become one flesh [Eph, 5:31-32]. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage—indeed the most perfect of all marriages since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage—it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride how shall he not take all that is hers?⁵⁹

The common appeal to an image of marital exchange would appear to suggest a united theological front between Luther and Staupitz. However, whilst the correlation between their shared view of the bondage of the will and the logic of exchange is a noteworthy similarity between these two authors, a word of caution is necessary. Although the assertion of the human will's bondage is the same and the marital image seems to be identical, it would be wrong to assume that both writers interpreted the marital exchange of sin and righteousness in the same way. In his assertion that, 'I am righteous because of Your righteousness and a sinner because of my guilt,' was Staupitz the 'forerunner' or 'father' to Luther's Reformation theology? Did Staupitz share Luther's understanding of the exchange of righteousness, in which the Christian is, at the same time, completely righteous and completely sinful (*simul iustus et peccator*)?

On closer examination, a theological rift can be seen between Luther and Staupitz regarding their understanding of the passivity of the human will in the marital exchange between the sinner and Christ. The critical difference is that whereas Luther understands the human will to remain passive before and after the gift of grace, Staupitz incorporates ideas of internal righteousness and the active cooperation of the

⁵⁹ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31, 351.

human will after the advent of the first grace, Staupitz teaching that the human will is regenerated to a state of active love:

In this regeneration God is the father, the will is the mother, and the seed is the means by which the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ sprout forth. Where these three come together a son of God is born, justified, and made alive through faith active in love: that is to say, active through the fire of our love, set afire by the love of Him who is the only perpetual fire, coming down from heaven.

The contrast between Luther's belief in passivity and Staupitz's vision of agency in the theology of the human will after grace, is reflected in the modern debate concerning the correct interpretation of the marital image in Luther scholarship.⁶⁰

Finnish scholars such as Mannermaa, Karkklainen and Peuro have argued that Luther's '*simul iustus et peccator*' could be compatible with the deification motif of Eastern orthodoxy if interpreted as the partial co-existence of sin and righteousness.⁶¹ For example, Peuro asserts, 'God changes the sinner ontologically in the sense that he or she participates in God and in his divine nature, being made righteous and "a god".'⁶² In contrast, Clark, Trueman and Althaus have opposed the validity of applying the 'theosis' language of orthodoxy, not only on the basis of its historical irrelevance to sixteenth-century Germany, but because Luther's marital imagery belonged to his rejection of the ontological righteousness implied by the scholastic discourse concerning habits of grace.⁶³ The crux of Luther's argument against an internal, albeit partial, possession of righteousness is captured in his *post scriptum* to Melancthon's letter to Brenz, May 1531:

I, myself, Brenz, usually take it thus: I imagine that there is no quality in my heart which is called either faith or charity, but I put in their place Jesus Christ, as I say: This is my righteousness, he himself is my status and my formal righteousness (so called). In this way I free myself and escape from the sight of the law and of works, further, I even escape from that objective Christ who is understood either as teacher of doctrine or as giver of a gift. On the contrary,

⁶⁰ For a summary of Luther's marital language and the mystical approach favoured by the Finnish school, see Jeanron, *A Theology of Love*, 96-102 and 185-188.

⁶¹ Clark, '*Iustitia Imputata Christ*', 270-309; Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 227; Trueman, 'Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning?', 233; Peuro, 'Christ as Favour and Gift,' 47.

⁶² *Ibid*, 47-48

⁶³ For a discussion of bias in the Finnish interpretation see MacCulloch, 'Recent Trends,' 720-731.

I want him to be himself both my gift and my doctrine, so that I might have everything in him.⁶⁴

It is on precisely this matter of sanctification, or (in the terminology of the Finnish school) deification, that Luther is at variance with Staupitz. In Luther's eyes, introducing a theology of a progressive growth in internal righteousness after the marital union of the sinner with Christ would detract from the completeness of the gift of righteousness. The Reformation aspect of Luther's theology of the will with respect to Staupitz is thus, that it is through the external righteousness of faith that the freedom of a Christian is complete:

From this anyone can clearly see how a Christian is free from all things and over all things so that he needs no works to make him righteous and save him, since faith alone abundantly confers all these things. Should he grow so foolish, however, as to presume to become righteous, free, saved, and a Christian by means of some good work, he would instantly lose faith and all its benefits, a foolishness aptly illustrated in the fable of the dog who runs along a stream with a piece of meat in his mouth and, deceived by the reflection of the meat in the water, opens his mouth to snap at it and so loses both the meat and the refectation.⁶⁵

In this passage from *The Freedom of a Christian*, Luther clearly delineates his position from the Finnish understanding of the partial existence of sin alongside a steady growth of internal righteousness. Hampson observes that for Luther, 'There is no linear progress from being a sinner to being justified. It is not that which is given in creation that is transformed through grace.'⁶⁶ Rather, '*simul iustus et peccator*' means that the righteousness of salvation cannot depend on the later good deeds of the human will.

In contrast, Staupitz's understanding of the role of the human will in the sinner's marital exchange does fit the pattern of the Finnish interpretation of Luther.

⁶⁴ Luther, 'To John Brenz' (1531), WABr 6, 99-100: 'Et ego soleo, mi Brenti, ut hanc melius capiam, sic imaginari, quasi nulla sit in corde meo qualitas, quae fides vel charitae vocetur, sed in loco ipsorum pono Jesum Christum, et dico: Haec est iustitia mea, ipse est qualitas et formalis (ut vocant) iustitia mea, ut sic me liberum et expedium ab intuitu legis et operum, imo et ab intuitu obiectivi illius Christi, qui vel doctor vel donator intelligitur. Sed velo ipsum mihi esse donum vel doctrinam per se, ut omnia in ipso habeam.'

⁶⁵ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31, 356.

⁶⁶ Hampson, *Christian Contradictions*, 101.

For Staupitz, the bondage of the human will before grace is followed by liberation. The human will is freed from sin such that the later themes of Staupitz's tract, as Ritschl observes, follow the standard scholastic image of a pilgrimage of justification through good works.⁶⁷ According to Staupitz, the Christian comes to possess an internal righteousness, being made perfect in 'the gift of healing.'⁶⁸ Staupitz's theology of imparted righteousness even incorporates a theology of mystical ascent echoing the Dionysian themes explored above. In *The Divine Names*, Dionysius speaks of the action of grace:

It refurbishes and restores the image of God corrupted within them. It is the sacred stability which is there when the tide of unholiness is tossing them about. It is safety for those who made a stand. It is the guide bringing upward those uplifted to it and is the enlightenment of the illuminated. Source of perfection for those being made perfect, source of divinity for those being deified, principle of simplicity for those turning toward simplicity, point of unity for those made one; transcendently, beyond what is, it is the Source of every source.⁶⁹

Dionysius's mysticism of ascent through the stages of the soul's purification, illumination and perfection or union can be seen as analogous to Staupitz's idea of a four-fold mystical experience, at the climax of which stands the perfection of Mary: 'On the fourth level stands the Virgin Mary alone, "who is the only one who knows how sweet Jesus is".'⁷⁰ The aim of this process of 'regeneration,'⁷¹ is 'glorification,'⁷² to join the glory of saints as they sing in 'constant praise.'⁷³ Staupitz reinforces his message, that righteousness is internal rather than external, in his discussion of the comforting role of the sacraments. He notes: 'Through true Absolution, hope reclothes the nakedness that results when righteousness is lacking. Through the Sacrifice of the Mass, hope lifts up the believer thrown into peril by his deficient merit.'⁷⁴ The sacraments restore the balance of righteousness in the soul when the ongoing battle with sin takes the upper hand. Clearly, Staupitz's understanding of the nature of the

⁶⁷ Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 110.

⁶⁸ Staupitz, *Eternal Predestination*, 199.

⁶⁹ Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 51.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 193.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 182.

⁷² *Ibid*, 186.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 200.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 197-198.

marital exchange of faith differs from Luther's, because, for Staupitz, the gift of righteousness is not merely a promise made to the Christian, but a possession. Staupitz ends his tract with a note of pastoral caution that again expresses his belief in the active engagement of the human will to become righteous after the gift of grace. He writes: 'Others spread poison by boasting of the exceptional degree of their own righteousness. If they are not exceptional, if they have superiors or even peers in virtue, they are thoroughly offended.'⁷⁵ It would be impossible for Luther to offer these words of counsel, because Luther rejected the possibility that the human will could possess a quality of righteousness. It is consequently evident that, whilst Staupitz and Luther share an image of marital exchange, their difference of interpretation rests on Luther's Reformation belief that the human will remains passive after justification. In contrast to Staupitz, Luther's belief in the passivity of the will means that the righteousness of justification is imputed rather than imparted.

With regard to the theological relationship between Luther and Staupitz, the question remains of why Luther departed from Staupitz's belief in the sanctifying effects of grace, and instead felt compelled to maintain the passivity of the human will after the gift of grace. Luther's reasoning that internal righteousness would detract from the completeness of Christ's saving gift has been touched on above. However, in comparing Staupitz's *Eternal Predestination and its Execution in Time* and Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*, it is possible to detect a deeper motivation that led to this theological articulation of Christ's exchange. Considering the question of the certainty of salvation, Staupitz ends with fearful anxiety, whereas Luther's theology of passivity allows him to receive the keys to heaven. On the one hand, Staupitz resorts to the signs of good works as evidence of election:

Although it is not his own investigation that enables man to ascertain whether 'he is subject to the hate or love of God,' he is able through the unfailing signs given for this purpose to have a sure hope and to cast off despair; this despair arises from questions regarding one's election and is the greatest tribulation of the soul.⁷⁶

On the other hand, Luther's experience of spiritual anxiety (*Anfechtung*) regarding knowledge of salvation lies at the root of his Reformation formulation of the passivity

⁷⁵ Ibid, 198.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 197.

of the human will. McDonough agrees that, Luther's theology of 'faith alone' or passive justification was 'an escape from self-love, anxiety, and uncertainty.'⁷⁷ In *The Bondage of the Will* Luther explains that the passivity of the will before and after justification is the only way to secure the peaceful knowledge of salvation. This passage is cited in full because it is the climax of his treatise on the will, combining his personal experience of anxiety with his Reformation understanding of the passive righteousness of the human will:

For my own part, I frankly confess that even if it were possible, I should not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my hands by which I might strive toward salvation. For, on the one hand, I should be unable to stand firm and keep hold of it amid so many adversities and perils and so many assaults of demons, seeing that even one demon is mightier than all men, and no man at all could be saved; and on the other hand, even if there were no perils or adversaries or demons, I should nevertheless have to labour with perpetual uncertainty and to fight as one beating the air, since even if I lived and worked to eternity, my conscience would never be assured and certain how much it ought to do to satisfy God. For whatever work might be accomplished, there would always remain an anxious doubt whether it pleased God or whether he required something more, as the experience of all self-justifiers proves, and as I myself learned to my bitter cost through so many years. But now, since God has taken my salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work or exertion but by his grace and mercy, I am assured and certain both that he is faithful and will not lie to me, and also that he is too great and powerful for any demons or any adversaries to be able to break him or to snatch me from him.⁷⁸

Luther concludes that if the human will is seen to possess an ontological righteousness after grace, anxiety regarding the imperfection of this righteousness is an unavoidable consequence. His burning desire to find the peace of salvation for his terrified conscience caused him to disagree with Staupitz's model of the human will. Staupitz 'started the teaching' of Luther's Reformation theology by commending the idea of

⁷⁷ McDonough, *The Law and the Gospel in Luther*, 41.

⁷⁸ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 288-289.

the bondage of the will before grace but he did not follow Luther's Reformation doctrine of the passivity of the human will after grace.

In assessing Luther's relationship to Staupitz's theology of human free will, the different premises apparent in *The Bondage of the Will* and *Eternal Predestination and its Execution in Time* are striking. Whereas Luther argues from the scruples of his conscience and his experience of despair to a theology of passivity, Staupitz commences with the logic of predestination. Staupitz begins his tract with the observation that God 'himself knows all there is to know, and perceives it in the mirror of eternity, and grasps the past, present, and future all at once.'⁷⁹ Hence, the human involvement in justification is dealt with as an aspect of the 'execution' of eternal predestination. Steinmetz notes that Staupitz is 'like a kindly schoolmaster who is eager to show that if you will only grant him A, then steps B, C, and D will naturally, even necessarily follow from it.'⁸⁰ Staupitz teaches: 'For just as the knowledge of natural things flows from the knowledge of the first principle, so also each individual grace flows from the grace of predestination.'⁸¹ This recognition of the two different focal points, Luther's quest for the certainty of salvation in the present and Staupitz's concern for the law of eternity, prompts inquiry into the exact nature of Luther's historical contact with Staupitz.

The key to understanding the theological dynamic between Luther and Staupitz on the question of free will is to note that Staupitz did not meet Luther as a teacher but as his confessor. In the emotional environment of the confessional, Luther's theological anxiety over merit could receive the fruits of Staupitz's theology of the will and apply these to his own developing theological framework. Luther later recalled how, in 'delightful and wholesome' talks in the confessional, Staupitz placed this theology of the bondage of the will at the service of Luther's spiritual anxiety.⁸² However, whilst the different thought-worlds of Luther and Staupitz met in these pastoral contexts, Luther's methodology reveals that Staupitz was not the 'father' of Luther's Reformation theology even if he acted as Luther's spiritual 'father' during Luther's hours of despair. Commenting on the nature of Staupitz's influence,

⁷⁹ Staupitz, *Eternal Predestination*, 175.

⁸⁰ Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz*, 112.

⁸¹ Staupitz, *Eternal Predestination*, 180.

⁸² Luther, *To John von Staupitz* (30 May 1518), LW 48, 65.

Steinmetz is therefore right to maintain that ‘Luther was not so much impressed with the theological foundations of this advice.’⁸³ Saarnivaara similarly notes of their pastoral relationship: ‘They did not meet in the classroom or library, but in the chapel, the refectory, and the confessional.’⁸⁴ Staupitz ‘began the teaching’ of Luther’s Reformation theology of the will in the confessional, by helping Luther to see that repentance was a sign of grace, but Luther incorporated this pastoral advice into his own developing theology of the passivity of the will in justification.

Staupitz thus encountered Luther as a monk plagued by the fear that sin would prevent the efficacy of sacramental grace. Luther’s memoirs recall his sense that, ‘I was not sufficiently sorry for my sins. I forgot something in my confession.’⁸⁵ Previously, Luther had fought to fulfil the condition of Biel’s formula of absolution, namely, to do all that was within him in order to attain the congruous merit of contrition.⁸⁶ The words of Biel’s formula of absolution were as follows: ‘I absolve thee from thy sins through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of the contrition of thy heart, the confession of thy mouth, and the intercession of the saints.’⁸⁷ Luther struggled to elicit this perfect act of love and his awareness of sin drove him to a state of intense spiritual anxiety (*Anfechtung*). Writing to Staupitz in 1518, Luther comments, ‘I tried to express a feigned and constrained love.’⁸⁸ Staupitz’s ‘evangelical absolution’⁸⁹ liberated Luther’s conscience from the captivity of Biel’s theology of human free will. However, Staupitz’s pastoral advice regarding the bondage of the will to sin does not detract from the novelty of Luther’s belief in the passivity of the human will after the gift of grace. It has been seen that Luther’s interpretation of Christ’s marital exchange was not merely an echo of the tradition of Augustinian voluntarism, as expressed by Gregory of Rimini, Bradwardine and Staupitz. Furthermore, the effect of Staupitz’s advice shows that the formation of Luther’s Reformation theology of the will was piecemeal. Luther’s journey to a doctrine of the passivity of the will was certainly influenced by his education, his

⁸³ Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz*, 32.

⁸⁴ Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 39.

⁸⁵ Luther, WA 40, 2, 15, 15, cited by Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 257.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of the conditions of contrition or attrition for absolution in scholastic theology see: Oberman, *The Harvest of Late Medieval Theology*, 146.

⁸⁷ Luther, WA 21, 291, cited by Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 27-28.

⁸⁸ Luther, *To John von Staupitz* (30 May 1518), LW 48, 66.

⁸⁹ Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 33.

advisors and even his confessors. Yet this comparison with Staupitz has shown that Luther reacted in a novel way to the Scotist legacy of free will. Luther's exposure to the divergence between Staupitz and Biel regarding confessional absolution was itself a microcosm of free will debate in late scholasticism. In rejecting Biel's formula and transforming the theological interpretation of Staupitz image of marital exchange, the originality of Luther's response to the Scotist dilemma is evident.

Luther's piecemeal departure from the Scotist theory of free will is illustrated by the interpretation of Biel's *facere quod in se est* found in his *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513-1515). These early writings have been, in Axel Gyllenkrok's words, the 'worst bone of contention for interpreters of Luther' because they represent an ambiguous position between the covenantal teaching of his youth, and his Reformation doctrine of the passivity and depravity of the human will. However, given the discussion of this chapter, it is apparent that the Psalms lectures can be plausibly understood as making evident the course of theological development suggested above. They show that Luther's theology was conceived within, but then grew away from, Biel's theology of congruous merit and that in the midst of this process Luther came to realise his partial affinity with German mysticism.

Bizer addresses the question of passivity in Luther's *First Lectures on the Psalms* in his study *Fides ex auditu*. Here, Bizer argues that 'faith' should be understood as the active humility of the human will. For Luther, Bizer suggests, '*fides* is merely another expression for *humilitas* [humility].'⁹⁰ The most comprehensive treatment of Bizer's thesis—that Luther here holds humility as a precondition for grace—can be found in Ozment's study *Homo Spiritualis*. In confronting passages that seem to echo the theology of Biel, Ozment admits that Bizer's account 'of a highly refined Pelagian *facere quod in se est* and *meritum de congruo* is something more than a straw man.'⁹¹ Luther's adherence to Biel's theology of congruous merit, by which the human will has the capacity and duty to prepare for grace, can be indicated with reference to several key passages. Luther seems to explicitly endorse Biel's covenantal theory of congruous merit in the following:

⁹⁰ Bizer, *Fides ex auditu*, 19-20.

⁹¹ Ozment *Homo Spiritualis*, 159.

God infallibly gives His grace to one who does what is in his power. Such preparation is not from worthiness (*de condigno*), for grace is a gift too incomprehensible to human nature that the later can presume worthiness of it. Preparation for grace, rather, is from a ‘fittingness’ (*de congruo*) made possible by the promise of God and His covenant of mercy.⁹²

Ozment’s study further shows that Luther revises these concepts in opposition to Biel’s theology. Ozment suggests that the disposition Luther describes is ‘a God-awakened awareness that all that man is and does remains completely powerless in the face of God and death, and thoroughly ineffective before God.’⁹³ Luther’s language of humility is not, in Oberman’s words, ‘a psychologically refined form of medieval monastic virtue,’⁹⁴ reminiscent of Biel’s ascent to a pure love for God. Luther’s meaning is rather that humility is a necessary prerequisite, because it makes room for grace in the soul. Luther’s teaching on the humility of the human will in the Psalms can, therefore, be seen as similar to Tauler’s concept of *surge* or the emphasis on self-despair presented in *Theologia Germanica*. In his lectures on the Psalms, Luther writes that the human will must prepare for grace by acknowledging the inner darkness of sin in order to receive the light of grace:

How does light arise now before the righteous [Ps. 97:11], when one is not able to be righteous except as light has already arisen? We answer as follows. Light does not arise except with those who are in darkness. For those who are already in the light, light cannot arise, since it is the nature of light that it does not arise with itself, but only in and with the darkness. Thus, those who see themselves as being in darkness and unworthy are already righteous, because they give to themselves what is their own, and to God what is His own. Thus, light arises with them. This means simply that they have confessed that they are in darkness and that light is of God. Therefore, we read that it is to the humble that God gives his grace [1 Pet. 5:5]. And from this it follows that before all things we should be humiliated, so that we may receive light and grace, and indeed, that we may preserve light and grace. Humility and grace simply will not be separated, although one precedes the other as John the

⁹² Luther, WA 4, 262: ‘Hinc recte dicunt doctores, quod homini facienti quod in se est, deus infallibiliter dat gratiam, et licet non de condigno sese possit ad gratiam preparare, quia est incomparabilis, tamen bene de congruo propter promissionem istam dei et pactum misericordie.’ Cited by Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis*, 164.

⁹³ Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis*, 182.

⁹⁴ Oberman, *The Reformation*, 102.

Baptist precedes Christ, quickly following one upon the heels of the other.

Thus, it follows that as long as confession remains in the heart, so long does beauty remain, and as long as humility remains, so long does grace remain.⁹⁵

In this passage, Luther presents a theology of justification in which the human will is neither passive nor meritorious. The mediating position that Luther strikes in his lectures on the Psalms opposes the agency of the human will as earning salvific merit, whilst affirming the necessary agency of the human will in recognizing the interior darkness of sin. It has been made evident by examining Luther's relationship to Staupitz that this mid-way position on the human will in justification would not ultimately provide Luther with peace of conscience. How could he be sure that he had turned out all the inner lights of pride in order to allow Christ's saving grace to enlighten the soul? Studying Luther's *First Lectures on the Psalms* therefore recapitulates the importance of the passivity of the human will in determining the Reformation aspect of Luther's writings. Indeed, after his Reformation breakthrough, in which he rejected 'formal or active righteousness,' Luther recalls that he 'returned to interpret the Psalter anew.'⁹⁶ Luther's tenet of the passivity of the human will both before and after the advent of grace thus signals a Reformation break, not only with the versions of scholasticism represented by Biel, the German mystics and Staupitz, but with his own earlier theology of human free will as expounded in his *First Lectures on the Psalms*.

This chapter has made the case that Luther established a new Reformation relation to Scotus's theology of free will. The essence of his Reformation position has been found to lie in his belief in the passivity of the human will before and after the gift of grace. In short, the novelty of Luther's position within the spectrum of voluntarism is that he exalts the freedom of the divine will to the complete exclusion of the human will in the process of salvation. Luther therefore vehemently rejects Scotus's belief in the freedom of the human will, in order to affirm Scotus's theory of the autonomy of the divine will. This study has examined the development of Luther's Reformation relation to Scotus's theory of free will as it was historically mediated to him in the writings, advice and counsel of late scholastic voluntarists. In assessing the Reformation quality of Luther's theology, this chapter has compared Luther's

⁹⁵ Luther, *LW* 11, 264, cited by Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis*, 180.

⁹⁶ Luther, *Autobiographical Fragment*, *LW* 34, 336.

theology with the chief exponents of scholastic voluntarism that he read and admired. Firstly, the notion that Luther was simply another exponent of the German mystical tradition, as exemplified in the *Theologia Germanica*, has been refuted with reference to the Luther's belief in the bondage of the will. Secondly, in view of their shared belief in the bondage of the will before the granting of first grace, this chapter has asked whether or not Staupitz was the father of Luther's theology. It has found that the pastoral dynamic between Luther and Staupitz allowed for an exchange of ideas such that Luther can truly state that Staupitz 'started the teaching.' However, Luther's independence from Staupitz is secured by the Reformation article that the passivity of the will excludes active righteousness after the gift of grace. Thirdly, this chapter has pinpointed the driving force behind Luther's insistence on the passivity of the will as his experience of *Anfechtung*. This anxiety manifested itself to Staupitz in scruples of conscience in confession, but was triggered by the theology of congruous merit consequent to Biel's theology of human free will. Luther recalls his struggle for the certainty of salvation:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. ... Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.⁹⁷

Lastly, this study has explored Luther's *First Lectures on the Psalms* to illustrate his transition from scholastic interpretations of free will, to a Reformation doctrine of passivity. Luther's Reformation shift was from a theology of active humility expressed in his first lectures of the Psalms, to a Reformation belief in the bondage of the will, and a marital exchange of righteousness. The heart of Luther's battle with his scholastic contemporaries was that in maintaining the Scotist definition of human free will, whether to the smallest degree of congruous merit or subsequent to the gift of grace, they remained in a state of uncertainty regarding salvation. Luther's Reformation theology of the passivity of the will escaped this uncertainty by giving up the scholastic attempt to straddle the freedoms of the divine and human will. In sum, the *Anfechtung* that triggered Luther's Reformation doctrine can be seen as

⁹⁷ Ibid, 336-337.

psychological manifestation of the theological chaos wreaked by Scotus's theology of free will on late scholastic voluntarism.

The impact of Luther's Reformation of Scotus's theory of free will can be grasped with reference to the wider effects of the passivity of the will in Luther's theology. In order to form an effective comparison with Scotus, Luther's rejection of the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice will be examined. It has been seen in Chapter Two that Scotus's theology of human free will led him to teach that the grace of the Mass was principally secured by the efforts of pious devotion. In contrast, Luther describes the belief that the Mass is a good work and a sacrifice as 'the most wicked abuse of all.'⁹⁸ The connection between Luther's Reformation belief in the passivity of the human will and his theology of the Mass therefore raises several questions to be considered in the next chapter. Firstly, are the positions of Luther and Scotus on the Mass irreconcilable? Secondly, how does Luther's Reformation theology of the human will inform his polemic against the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice? And lastly, how does Luther's theology of the human will shape his own Reformation understanding of the Mass?

⁹⁸ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 35.

Chapter Five: The effect of Luther's Reformation perspective on free will on his theology of the Mass

The task of this chapter is to assess the consequences of Luther's Reformation perspective on the human free will for his rejection of the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice. The passivity of the human will in justification has been seen in the previous chapter to mark a Reformation break with scholasticism because it negates the agency of the human will, both before and after the gift of grace. The point here is to assess whether or not Luther's relationship to scholastic theologies of the Mass followed the blueprint of his doctrine of the passivity of the human will. If so, Luther's theology of the Mass would reflect his anti-Pelagian stance towards congruous merit and deny agency to human will after grace. Luther's dispute with scholasticism, which focused on the question of the Mass as a sacrifice, therefore provides a liturgical enactment of what might otherwise be seen as theological nitpicking on the notion of human free will. In examining whether or not Luther's theology of the Mass amounted to a Reformation break with scholasticism, Gabriel Biel and Cardinal Cajetan will be used as representative authorities of different streams of sixteenth-century scholastic thought on the Mass. The chapter will begin by identifying the beliefs and practices of the Mass which Luther believed needed to be reformed. The next step will be to examine the writings of Biel and Cajetan to determine whether or not Luther's complaints were built on a sound theological footing. This approach targets the aspects of the theology of the Mass that angered Luther, and sheds light on the principles governing the formation of his Reformation theology of the Mass as a testament. Was Luther's Reformation theology of the Mass truly a Reformation? By placing Luther's theology within the context of the scholastic teaching of Biel and Cajetan, this chapter assesses whether or not Luther's rejection of the Mass as a sacrifice signalled the same kind of Reformation break as that implied by his belief in the passivity of the human will.

Before investigating the effect of Luther's theory of passivity on his reception of scholastic teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice, it will be helpful to recapitulate the problematic elements of Scotus's theology of human free will, as they relate to his

understanding of the Mass.¹ Scotus's belief, that the human will has the power freely to choose the good, affected the theology of the Mass as a sacrifice in two key ways. Firstly, it leads him to situate the merit of the Mass in the good action of the human will. Scotus holds that, whilst, in the Mass, Christ is offered to the Father, the merit of the Mass corresponds not to the value of the object offered, but to the good will of the one who does the offerings:

This is not accepted unless the one offering it is accepted ... 'This poor widow has put in more than all the rest.' ... This shows that just as the Eucharist is not accepted precisely because of what is contained therein, but it has to be offered, so neither is it fully accepted when offered, except by reason of the good will of someone offering it.²

This position clearly falls prey to the Pelagian danger of seeing the grace of salvation as a reward for human effort, rather than as a gratuitous gift. Moreover, Scotus's trust in the meritorious power of human free will separates the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass from the merit of Christ's sacrifice. In consequence, it is difficult to defend Scotus from the charge of nullifying the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice, because Scotus views the Mass as a sacrificial offering separate from the cross. His emphasis on human free will, therefore, forces him to re-interpret the declaration in Hebrews that Christ's sacrifice was completely sufficient for redemption:

Neither is it immediately the will of Christ himself, for although as contained in the sacrifice he is offered, he is not in this case the one who is immediately offering the sacrifice, according to those words in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* 9:22, 'Not that Christ might offer himself there again and again ... Christ was offered up but once,' add 'by himself.'³

Scotus's theology, and in particular his belief that the merit of the Eucharistic sacrifice flowed, not from Christ's cross at Calvary, but from the Church's sacrifice of devotion, can, therefore, be seen as allowing an influx of a Pelagian theology of works into his theology of the Mass. However, whilst it is apparent that Luther's charge, that the Mass 'has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work,' could be applied to Scotus's theology, the connection between Luther's Reformation endeavour and the problems consequent on Scotus's theology of free will also

¹ See Chapter Two, 65-71.

² Scotus, *Quodlibets*, 459-460.

³ *Ibid*, 460.

depends on the resonance of Scotus's voice in the sixteenth-century context of Luther's theological formation.

Gabriel Biel's *Canonis Missae Expositio* was the principal exposition of the theology of the Mass that Luther studied during his education at Erfurt.⁴ Luther's condemnation of scholastic theology of the Mass should thus be understood principally as a rebuke of Biel's theology. Modern scholarship has confirmed Biel's influence in forming Luther's perception of the whole of scholastic theology. Luther's dependence on the *Canonis Missae Expositio* is apparent, not only in his citations, but also in his opinion of other branches of scholastic thought.⁵ Steinmetz has drawn attention to Biel's 'irenic spirit,' by which he created the impression of a unity in scholastic theology, noting that Biel misconstrued Thomas's theology of justification to reflect his own theology of congruous merit.⁶ Hütter similarly remarks: 'Because Biel appealed to the authority of St. Thomas in order to substantiate his own semi-Pelagian theology of grace, Luther came to think that not only the *doctores moderni* but also the *doctores antiqui* were Pelagians.'⁷ Biel's attempt to build bridges between the two ways belonged to the structural framework of the newly founded Tübingen University. The teaching programme at Tübingen was shared between *via moderna* and *via antiqua* which were located within the same building in the University. Oberman observes that, the two ways, 'though divided by a wall, shared a common roof,' and that this structural proximity fostered an intellectual atmosphere of theological reconciliation.⁸ However, like Steinmetz and Hütter, Farthing's study of Biel's presentation of Thomas's theology finds that Biel misrepresents core doctrines of Thomas, such as justification:

St. Thomas would not recognise as his own the doctrine of justification which Biel attributes to him One whose primary access to the Thomist perspective is by way of Biel's interpretation, will remain uninformed and misinformed about Thomas's doctrine of sin, grace and justification.⁹

⁴ See Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 7-8.

⁵ Oberman draws attention to Biel's misconstrual of different scholastic interpretations of the *facere quod in se est* principle: 'Biel's explanation of the possibility of this *facere quod in se est* makes it clear that, though the *facere quod in se est* means different things to different people, everyone is by nature in a position to discharge this first duty.' Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 132.

⁶ Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, 52.

⁷ Hütter, 'Grace and Free Will,' 527.

⁸ Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation*, 31.

⁹ Farthing, *Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel*, 194.

Given the influence of Biel in fashioning Luther's perception of scholastic theology, it is reasonable to interpret Luther's Reformation rebuke of Eucharistic sacrifice as foremost an attack on Biel's theology.

An examination of the theological content of Luther's polemic against the Mass provides an indication of the key issues that Luther believed to be erroneous in Biel's theology. The theological tenets of Luther's rebuttal of Biel's theology echo Luther's view of the problematic features of Scotus's theology, which stemmed from an emphasis on the meritorious power of human free will. Firstly, Luther rejects Scotus's teaching that the human will must attain a pure disposition for receiving Holy Communion. This is a corollary of Luther's opposition of Biel's theology of perfect contrition as a condition for receiving absolution.¹⁰ In his *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), Luther denies that contrition is a prerequisite for absolution, perceiving that by it 'Christ's merit is belittled, while monkish merits are aggrandized.' Luther recalls the formula of absolution current in his Augustinian monastery:

God forgive thee, brother. The merit of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the blessed Saint Mary, always a virgin, and of all the saints; the merit of thy order, the strictness of thy religion, the humility of thy profession, the contrition of thy heart, the good works thou hast done and shalt do for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, be available unto thee for the remission of thy sins, the increase of thy worth and grace, and the reward of everlasting life. Amen.¹¹

For Luther, such perfect contrition was not only an impossible demand of sinners, but that such a teaching defied Christ's forgiveness. Hence, he rebukes his religious brothers as 'hypocrites who do not know the first thing about grace, the Gospel, or Christ.'¹² The question of the correct disposition for effectual reception of the grace of the Mass is intimately linked to the theology of dispositions for grace in confession because, according to Catholic penitential discipline, absolution from mortal sin is a prerequisite for receiving Holy Communion. Having argued that perfect contrition is an impossible feat for the human will bound to sin, Luther concludes that the Mass is

¹⁰ For accounts of Biel's theology of contrition see Schwab, *Entwicklung und Gestalt*, 38, and Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 144-160.

¹¹ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 68-69.

¹² *Ibid*, 69.

a solace for sinners rather than the food of saints.¹³ Luther's protest against the idea that a perfect disposition is necessary for grace reveals that he believed the standard scholastic teaching to be that forgiveness of sins was conditional on the meritorious disposition of the human will:

The Papists have taught: 'Beware, do not go thither unless you are pure and have no evil conscience,' so that Christ may be certain to have a pure abode. They have so stupefied and frightened the poor souls by this that they have fled from the sacrament, and yet have had to receive it under constraint—with such trembling that they would gladly have entered a fiery furnace.¹⁴

Luther's denial of the role of human works in salvation led him to identify the crux of the problem as the agency of the human will in the first moments of conversion. His objection to the necessity of a correct disposition for the reception of grace is therefore a useful example in measuring Biel's relation to Scotus's teaching on the meritorious capacity of the human will.

Luther's rejection of the idea that a correct disposition is necessary for Mass touches the heart of Biel's theology of congruous merit. Biel's teaching on dispositions in the Mass, is connected to his belief that, the unaided penitent must attain a perfect love for God in order to receive absolution in the sacrament of confession. It has been seen that Biel's theology was reflected in the condition of 'the contrition of thy heart,' which was included in the formula for absolution at Erfurt.¹⁵ However, underlying the demand for a perfect disposition as a prerequisite for receiving Holy Communion and absolution is Biel's loyalty to Scotus's theory of human free will. The salvific gift conferred by the sacraments is seen by Biel to require the concurrence of two freedoms: those of both the divine and the human will. He remarks: 'If we do not add our merits to those of Christ, the merits of Christ will not only be insufficient but non-existent.'¹⁶ Accordingly, it is through the possession of freedom to choose good or ill that the human will is able to merit the graced

¹³ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 46-47.

¹⁴ Luther, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood—Against the Fanatics*, LW 36, 351.

¹⁵ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, LW 26, 69.

¹⁶ Biel, *Sermons de festivitibus christi* 2, G: "*Cui nisi nostrum meritum iungatur insufficiens, imo nullum erit.*" See also Biel, III Sent. D. 19, q. 1, art. 2, concl. 5: 'Though the passion of Christ is the principal merit on account of which grace is infused, the kingdom opened and glory granted, yet is can never be the sole or complete meritorious cause.' ('... *sequitur quod licet passio Christi sit principale meritum propter quod confertur gratia, apertio regni et Gloria nunquam tamen sola et totalis causa meritoria.*')

disposition necessary for Mass. In his *Collectorium*, Biel describes the ability of the human will to remove the obstacle of sin:

By removing the obstacle and by a good movement toward God elicited by the power of free will, the soul can merit the first grace *de congruo*. The proof for this is as follows: God accepts the act of a person who does what is in his power as a basis for the bestowal of the first grace; not because of any obligation in justice, but because of his generosity. Now when the soul removes the obstacle by ceasing from the act of sin, by ceasing to consent to it and by eliciting a good movement toward God as its principal end, it does what is in its power. Therefore God, because of his liberality, accepts this act of the removal of the obstacle and of the good movement toward Himself and infuses grace into the soul.¹⁷

Oberman observes the role of congruous merit in Biel's theology of the Mass:

The sharpest formulation of this contrast between two kinds of merit appears in Biel's commentary on the Mass: the infusion of grace is granted to the sinner when he does his very best, not on grounds of a previous pact, but on grounds of God's generosity.¹⁸

Luther's attack on the necessity of a correct disposition for Mass, therefore, expresses his fundamental objection to Biel's theological maxim. Namely, that, the grace of the Mass is only granted to the human will when it does its best to love God. Luther's first objection, to the condition of meritorious dispositions in the Mass, thus reveals Biel's allegiance to Scotus's confidence in the power of human free will.

Luther's second allegation against scholasticism, and which again is principally directed against the theology of Biel's *Canonis Missae Expositio*, is that the Mass 'has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work.'¹⁹ Luther's protest moves from denying the possibility of the human will to merit *de congruo* the correct disposition for Mass, to accuse the theology of the Mass of

¹⁷ Biel, *Collectorium*, II Sent., d. 27, Q. 1, art.2, concl. 4: 'Anima obicis remotione ac bono moto in Deum ex arbitrii libertate elicitio primam gratiam mereri potest de congruo. Probatur: Quia actum facientis quod in se est Deus acceptat ad tribuendum gratiam primam, non ex debito iustitiae, sed ex sua liberalitate. Sed motum in Deum tanquam in suum principium et finem facit quod in se est. Ergo actum remotionis obicis et bonum motum in Deum acceptat Deus de sua liberalitate ad infundendum gratiam.' *Quaestiones de Justificatione*, ed. C. Feckes (Aschendorff, 1929), 31.

¹⁸ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 171.

¹⁹ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 35.

Pelagian corruption. In *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood* (1526), Luther exclaims that the Mass is to be understood ‘not as a work for the sake of money or merit, as the monks and priests hold Mass, but for the forgiveness of sins.’²⁰ The fatal error, Luther argues, is that of seeing the Mass as a human work rather than a divine gift. In the *Smalcald Articles* (1537), Luther describes the scholastics as teaching that the Mass is a means of reconciliation to God, in virtue of the good work of offering the Mass:

The Mass is and can be nothing else than a human work, even a work of evil scoundrels (as the canon and all books on the subject declare), for by means of the Mass men try to reconcile themselves and others to God and obtain and merit grace and the forgiveness of sins.²¹

As early as 1520, in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther objects to the belief that the benefit of the Mass stems from the good work of the human will, rather than from Christ’s Eucharistic presence:

They all imagine that they are offering up Christ himself to God the Father as an all-sufficient sacrifice, and performing a good work for all those who they intend to benefit, for they put their trust in the work which the Mass accomplishes, and they do not ascribe this work to prayer. In this way the error has gradually grown, until they have come to ascribe to the sacrament what belongs to the prayers, and to offer to God what should be received as a benefit.²²

Luther’s comments suggest that Scotus’s teaching of Christ as the one who is offered by the priest, rather than as the immediate source of merit, was still present in late scholastic voluntarism. Was Biel the torchbearer of Scotus’s theology of the Mass and thus the culpable party in Luther’s objection that, ‘the holy sacrament has been turned into mere merchandise, a market, and a profit-making business’?²³

In *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* (1960), Clark memorably argued that scholastic theologians held a united teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice, and that this ‘was still reigning peacefully and unchallenged’²⁴ on the eve of the Reformation.²⁵ In

²⁰ Luther, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood—Against the Fanatics*, LW 36, 349.

²¹ Luther, *The Smalcald Articles*, 123.

²² Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 50.

²³ Ibid, 35.

²⁴ Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, 84.

²⁵ It is important to engage with Clark’s argument, even though it was put forward in 1960, because his analysis of Luther’s Reformation of the Mass as a sacrifice remains authoritative in modern

portraying the theology of sixteenth-century scholasticism as without spot or stain, Clark supposed Luther's Pelagian criticism to be a mere fiction. With a distinct note of sarcasm, Clark criticises Luther for his misleading picture of scholastic theology, expressing doubt that Luther 'really thought Catholic theology explained the Eucharistic offering in the ultra-Pelagian sense as a meritorious act of men and not of Christ, as a mere *Menschenwerk*.'²⁶ Yet, it has been seen that Biel's teaching does potentially give rise to the Pelagian dangers incumbent in Scotus's view, namely, that the source of merit of the Mass is located in the act of offering and distinct from the sacrifice of Calvary. Although Biel observes the infinite good of Christ's Eucharistic presence, he teaches that the merit of the Mass, which corresponds to the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass, is separate from, and of far less value than, Christ's sacrifice on the cross:

In the sacrament of the Eucharist there is the fullness of spiritual grace and merit—yes, Christ himself is contained in it, who is uncreated and infinite grace; yet the fruit of the satisfaction for punishment and the conveyance of gifts is limited to a certain amount and measure because the meritorious value of the oblation of Christ in the sacrament of the Mass is much less than that of the sacrifice of the Cross.²⁷

Biel's remark that the sacrifice of the altar 'is much less than the sacrifice of the Cross,' further echoes Scotus's belief that, the sacrifice of the Mass is required as a source of merit above and beyond the divine presence reserved in the tabernacle:

The good to be rendered by virtue of the sacrifice does not correspond exactly to the good contained in the Eucharist; for that good is equal when the Eucharist is reserved in the pyx; and yet it is not then of equal value to the Church as when it is offered in the Mass, whether this be called indefinitely the offering of the Eucharist or the consecration or the reception or the oblation or some action of the priest in the person of the Church. Therefore, beyond the good contained in the Eucharist, the offering of the Eucharist is

scholarship. Thus, Macy recently referred to Clark's Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation as a 'classic study' (*A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, 34, published in 2014). The validity of Clark's presentation of the Mass in late scholasticism is similarly assumed by Thompson, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and Patristic Tradition*, and the authority of Clark's study is further evident in McGuckian's 2005 study, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*.

²⁶ Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, 340.

²⁷ Biel, *Canonis Missae Expositio*, Lect. XXVII, K, 265.

required. This is not accepted unless there be the acceptance of the one who offers.²⁸

In view of the Scotist themes embodied in Biel's theology of the Mass, it is apparent that Clark's rose-tinted perspective on scholasticism needs to adjust to the Pelagian light which is evident in Biel's writings on the Mass. Biel's adoption of Scotus's theology of the human will as the source of merit in the Mass endorses Luther's accusations of Pelagian error. The common reliance of Scotus and Biel on human free will in the Mass, not only made the Mass a 'work for the sake of money or merit,'²⁹ but also had a graver effect. Scotus's legacy of human free will in the theology of the Mass was to cast a spectre over the 'fundamental article' of Luther's Reformation theology of the Mass.

Luther perceived that Biel's Pelagian interpretation of the Mass was not only based on self-righteousness in the human will but also had the more troubling effect of vanquishing Christ's redemptive grace. 'It should be condemned and must be abolished,' Luther writes, 'because it is a direct contradiction to the fundamental article, which asserts that it is not the celebrant of the Mass, and what he does, but the Lamb of God and the Son of God who takes away our sin.'³⁰ In *The Abomination of the Secret Mass* (1525), Luther explains that to trust in the power of the human will as the source of merit in the Eucharistic sacrifice would be to imply that the Father 'had let his Son shed his blood in vain and his death accomplished nothing and was of no importance.'³¹ Luther maintains that the sole source of merit in the Mass, as indeed in the whole of the Christian life, must be the passion of Christ. In contrast, the fact that Biel allows the Scotist theory of human free will to compromise the theology of the forgiveness of sin, is evident from his argument that 'If we do not add our merits to those of Christ, the merits of Christ will not only be insufficient but non-existent.'³² In upholding the Scotist view of free will, Biel's soteriological vision is warped to the extent that Christ's free forgiveness is forced to make room for the good works of the human will. In contrast, Luther's Reformation theology of the Mass necessarily excludes the possibility of the human will's token efforts of congruous merit in order

²⁸ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, Q. 20, art. 21, 459.

²⁹ Luther, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood—Against the Fanatics*, LW 36, 349.

³⁰ Luther, *The Smalcald Articles*, 123.

³¹ Luther, *The Abomination of the Secret Mass*, LW 36, 313.

³² Biel, III Sent. D. 19, q. 1, art. 2, concl. 5: 'Cui nisi nostrum meritum iungatur insufficiens, imo nullum erit.'

to defend the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice. In *A Treatise on the New Testament* (1520), Luther presents his argument that the soteriological significance of works must be rejected in order to safeguard reconciliation through Christ:

I cannot conceive that the institution of so many Masses and requiems can be without abuse, especially since all this is done as good works and sacrifices by which to recompense God, whereas in the Mass there is nothing else than the reception and enjoyment of divine grace, promised and given us in His testament and sacrament.³³

Luther's chief objection to the theology of Biel and Scotus is that, in making the Mass a human work, the benefit of the Mass has been blown into oblivion. The central contention of Luther's polemic against Pelagianism is thus that the merit of the Mass cannot rest on the shoulders of sinners, for if it did, 'we should lose the Gospel, Christ, the comfort [of the sacrament], and every grace of God.'³⁴

In protesting against what Luther saw as a Pelagian corruption of the Mass, the passivity of the human will can be seen as the cornerstone of his Reformation understanding of the Mass as a promise and a testament.³⁵ Luther remarks: 'You see, therefore, that what we call the Mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God.'³⁶ In contrast to Biel's belief that the merit of the Mass is in part a reward for the human will's merit in attaining a pious disposition, Luther argues that the sacrament offers a promise of forgiveness that is passively received. That is, he holds that the human will does nothing but receive the word of forgiveness: 'Likewise in the Mass we give nothing to Christ, but only receive from Him; unless they are willing to call this a good work, that a person sits still and permits himself to be benefited, given food and drink, clothed and healed, helped and redeemed.'³⁷ Luther understands the words uttered by Christ at the Last Supper to be a last will and testament. As a testament, the promise of Christ is sealed by his death and the rich rewards of grace offered as the free inheritance of the adopted sons and daughters of God. Luther

³³ Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 102.

³⁴ Ibid, 97.

³⁵ Vajta suggests that Luther takes his idea of the Mass as Christ's last will and testament from a homily of Chrysostom on Heb. 9: 13. See Vajta, 'Luther on Worship,' 39, and Luther's *Lectures on Hebrews*, WA 57, 211.

³⁶ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 38.

³⁷ Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 93.

exclaims: 'How could he help loving so great a benefactor, who of his own accord offers, promises, and grants such great riches and this eternal inheritance to one who is unworthy and deserving of something far different?'³⁸

The consequence of Luther's language of promise and testament is that the theology of the Mass is safeguarded from the possibility of a human return or the encroachment of Pelagian error. Luther writes that:

It will at once be seen what is the right and what is the wrong use of the Mass, and what is the worthy and what the unworthy preparation for it. If the Mass is a promise, as has been said, then access to it is to be gained, not with any works, or powers, or merits of one's own, but by faith alone.³⁹

Cavanaugh notes the anti-Pelagian intent of Luther's metaphor, remarking that the death of the benefactor prevents the possibility of a theology of mutual exchange:

Paradoxically, the only condition of possibility for the gift is an absolute 'forgetting' of the gift, that the gift go unrecognised, leave no trace behind and therefore cease to be. Death through self-sacrifice is therefore the supreme gift, for it is self-annulling and unreturnable.⁴⁰

In order to outlaw the possibility of exchange, Luther establishes the passivity of the will as the foundation stone of his theology of the Mass using the image of a beggar to illustrate the absurdity of positing the merit of the Mass in the human will rather than God: 'Nor would anyone dare to be so foolish as to assert that a ragged beggar does a good work when he comes to receive a gift from a rich man.'⁴¹ Luther therefore holds, against Biel and Scotus, that the Mass is an offering from God to humanity not from humanity to God. Commenting in *A Treatise on the New Testament* on the Elevation of the Host at consecration, Luther remarks that the priest 'elevates it not toward God but toward us; to remind us of the testament and to incite us to faith in that testament.'⁴² Luther's theology of the Mass as a testament reflects and strengthens his belief in the passivity of the will because it confirms that the will does not present its own merits in the Mass but receives grace as a gift. His rebuke of Biel's theology of the Mass as Pelagian is therefore a consequence of his belief in the passivity of the

³⁸ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 41.

³⁹ Ibid, 38-39.

⁴⁰ Cavanaugh, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice', 596.

⁴¹ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 51.

⁴² Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 96.

human will in receiving grace. However, the anti-Pelagian thrust of Luther's approach to the passivity of the human will in the Mass does not fully establish the Reformation significance of his position. It remains to be seen whether Luther's theology of the Mass employed the principle of the passivity of the human will in a way that also renounced the theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice held by sixteenth-century Thomists.

In 1524 Luther denounced Thomas Aquinas as 'the source and foundation of all heresy, all error and the obliteration of the Gospel.'⁴³ Addressing the theology of the Mass in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), Luther declares that: 'They all [i.e. scholastic theologians] imagine that they are offering up Christ Himself to God the Father as an all-sufficient sacrifice, and performing a good work for all those whom they intend to benefit.'⁴⁴ It has been shown that Luther's theology of the Mass as a testament was designed to emphasise the gift of Christ's grace; what Thomas describes as the nature of the Mass as a sacrament.⁴⁵ Thomas remarks that the Eucharist has the nature of a sacrament 'in that it is received' and 'produces directly that effect for which it was instituted—for spiritual nourishment through union with Christ and His members, as food becomes one with the person fed.'⁴⁶ However, Thomas further notes that 'the Eucharist is at once a sacrifice and a sacrament' and that the sacrificial aspect of the Mass has 'the power of rendering satisfaction.' This is a position which Luther appears to vehemently reject in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*.⁴⁷ However, beginning with the confessional histories of Denifle in 1904 and Grisar in 1911, church historians have questioned whether Luther was actually familiar with Thomas's theology as presented in his own works.⁴⁸ This thesis was

⁴³ Luther, 'Widder den newen Abgott' (1524), WA 15, 194, cited by Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 3.

⁴⁴ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 50.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the theological kinship between Luther and Thomas's understanding of sacraments as effective signs (*signum efficax*) see Gass, *Die Abendmahlslehre bei Luther und Calvin*. Gass comments on baptism: 'Gerade in diesen letzten Formeln kommt Luthers formelle Nähe zum Thomismus am stärksten zum Ausdruck.' See also McDonough, *The Law and the Gospel in Luther*, 124-125.

⁴⁶ ST, III 79, 5.

⁴⁷ Thomas cites the words of the Canon of the Mass: 'Be mindful of your servants, men and women, for whom we offer, or who offer up to you, this sacrifice of praise for themselves and all theirs, for the redemption of their souls, for their hope of safety and salvation.'

⁴⁸ Denifle, *Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwicklung*, and Grisar, *Luther*. Whilst Denifle and Grisar marked an important transition in Luther scholarship, comparative studies of Luther and Thomas can be found as early as the seventeenth century. See, for instance, Dorsch, *D. Thomas Aquinas exhibitus Confessor Veritatis Evangelicae Augustana Confessione repetitae*. For a discussion of

cleansed of some of its Catholic bias by Joseph Lortz, who viewed Luther's ignorance of Thomism as proving that the Reformation was a tragic endeavour.⁴⁹ Pesch expresses the same sentiment, noting: 'Thomas Aquinas is not to be counted among the sources of Luther's thought, not even as an underground source.'⁵⁰ Pesch here rules out two related possibilities: firstly, that Luther knew and rejected Thomas, and, secondly, that Luther knew and used Thomas.⁵¹ The nature of Luther's second-hand knowledge of Thomism has been subject to detailed investigation by Janz, who asks: 'Was Luther's confrontation with late medieval Thomism in fact a confrontation with Thomas himself?'⁵² Janz believes that the historical circumstances support the case that, despite his profession to the contrary, Luther was unacquainted with the Thomist theology of the Mass. Indeed, Luther's knowledge of Thomas does indeed seem to be sketchy. Firstly, as has already been noted in this study, Luther's contact with Thomas's theology was mediated primarily through the misleading writings of Biel. Secondly, although the *Summa Theologiae* was available to Luther in the Erfurt library, it is telling that Luther does not cite Thomas directly. Indeed, the only direct citation of Thomas in Luther's writings is from '*Verbum Supernum*' and Luther mistakenly uses a line from this hymn to refute its author.⁵³ Thirdly, Steinmetz's research has shown that Luther did not gain a Thomist education in his encounters with Staupitz, Pollich, Carlstadt and Cajetan. As Steinmetz remarks, 'whatever else Staupitz may have been for Luther, he was not Luther's tenuous link to the world of late medieval Thomism.'⁵⁴ Steinmetz further describes Pollich as 'a scholar better known for his writings on syphilis than for his defence of Thomism.'⁵⁵ Even the

Dorsch's study compare Zeller, 'Lutherische Orthodoxie und Mittelalterliche Scholastik,' 527-546 and Donnelley, 'Calvinist Thomism,' 441-455. For a summary of the historiography of Luther's knowledge of Thomism see Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 1-5.

⁴⁹ Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland*. For an opposing response to the thesis of tragic ignorance see Grane, 'Die Anfänge von Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit dem Thomismus,' 241-250 and 'Luthers Kritik an Thomas von Aquin in *De Captivitate Bablonica*,' 1-13. Grane argues that from 1518 to 1522 Thomism was Luther's greatest enemy, 'Anfänge,' 245.

⁵⁰ Pesch, 'Existential and Sapiential Theology: The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas,' 61-62. Also see Pesch, *Die Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin*.

⁵¹ For a contrasting argument to Pesch's position see Hennig, *Cajetan und Luther: Ein historischer Beitrag zur Begegnung von Thomismus und Reformation*.

⁵² Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 8. Other historians who support the thesis of Luther's ignorance of Thomas's theology include McDonough, *The Law and the Gospel in Luther* and McSorley, 'Thomas Aquinas, John Pupper of Goch, and Martin Luther: An Essay in Ecumenical Theology,' 97-129.

⁵³ Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*, 104-105.

⁵⁴ Steinmetz, 'Luther and Staupitz', 19-34.

⁵⁵ Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, 47.

representation of Thomism present in the theological interchange between Luther and Carlstadt at Wittenberg is complicated by the latter's renunciation of his Thomist education.⁵⁶ Lastly and most significantly for this study, Cajetan's disputation with Luther in Augsburg in 1518 must be seen as inadequate in acquainting Luther with the Thomist teaching on the Mass, not least since the debate focussed on the subjects of indulgences and the papacy.⁵⁷ Bagchi's important study on Catholic controversialists in Luther's Reformation demonstrates that a thorough theological response to Luther was hindered by the papacy's blanket suspicion of theological debate. Indeed, Pope Aleander bemoaned the 'two plagues' that beset the Church, denouncing indiscriminately 'the hands of printers and the tongues of doctors.'⁵⁸ The Catholic controversialists feared being blamed and censured for encouraging heterodoxy. In consequence, the Catholic response to Luther's theological protest emphasised the question of Papal authority, aimed to discredit his personality, and strove to cast the Reformation as an act of sedition.⁵⁹ The tract '*De Fide et Operibus adversus Lutheranos*' (1532), addressed to Luther by Cajetan, marks a rare attempt to engage in the theology of justification and thus could have caused Luther to revise his opinion of Thomas as 'the source of all heresy.' However, it was written at the end of Cajetan's career, and this presentation of Thomist ideas was too late to persuade Luther that any leaven of truth remained in the dough of scholasticism.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the circumstances surrounding Luther's education in Biel's theology and his brief encounters with the Thomists of his day suggest that Luther's condemnation of Thomism should not hinder the search for theological common ground between the teaching of Luther and Cajetan on the Mass as a good work and a sacrifice.

Indeed, Cajetan's *The Celebration of the Mass* (1510) could be seen, not only as an attack on Biel's Pelagian interpretation of the sacrifice of the Mass, but also as one which was very similar to that later launched by Luther. Cajetan's opposition to the Biel-Scotist interpretation of the meritorious power of the human will in the

⁵⁶ Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 118.

⁵⁷ In the '*Acta Augustana*,' WA 2, 6-26: Luther argued that indulgences had little to do with the main issue. On Luther's meeting with Cajetan at Augsburg see Pesch, *Hinführung zu Luther*, 103-115, Wicks, *Cajetan und die Anfänge der Reformation*, 43-112 and Wicks, *Cajetan Responds: a reader in Reformation controversy*, 3-46.

⁵⁸ Pope Aleander cited by Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 266.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 259-267.

⁶⁰ Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism*, 126.

theology of the Mass can be summarised in three main points. Firstly, Cajetan held a different view of the role of devotion in the Mass from that of Biel or Scotus; secondly, he believed that the merit of the Mass was infinite; and thirdly, he suggested that the priest was acting *in persona Christi* during the Eucharistic offering. It is necessary to reflect on these points of difference between Cajetan and Biel in order to establish whether Cajetan's broadly Thomist notion of the Eucharistic sacrifice mirrored Luther's model of the Mass as a testament.

Cajetan's treatise *The Celebration of the Mass* was written both to provide instruction in the theology and practice of the multiplicity of Masses and stipends. In this text Cajetan provides an interesting insight into the disparity between the Thomist and *via moderna* understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass. At first sight, the correlation between the level of merit and an individual's devotion seems to mirror that taught by Biel and Scotus, and Thomas did indeed hold that the Mass, for those present and for those for whom the Mass is offered, 'renders satisfaction ... according to the amount of their devotion.'⁶¹ Turning to Cajetan's treatise, however, it is clear that Cajetan understands the correlation between devotion and merit in a different way to Biel. Rather than devotion acting as the source of merit, Cajetan holds that an imperfect level of devotion actually acts as a limiting factor in receiving grace. Cajetan comments: 'If, however, we view the Mass in terms of its application to particular people, then the effect is finite.'⁶² It is not that devotion on the part of those offering and attending Mass that earns a certain amount of merit from God, as Biel had suggested, but that devotion on the part of those for whom the Mass is offered opens the soul to the outpouring of merit in the Mass. Devotion is praiseworthy, not because it produces salvific fruits, but because it acts as a basket, thus allowing the Christian to receive a greater quantity of the meritorious fruits of Christ's passion made present in the Mass. Cajetan emphasises the infinite value of the Mass:

And because that which is offered up in this sacrifice is infinite and can be neither used up nor diminished by the devotion of one lone person, the conclusion is that one sacrifice suffices for the devotion of many, yes, even an infinite number of persons.⁶³

⁶¹ *ST*, III 79:5.

⁶² Cajetan, *The Celebration of the Mass*, 58.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 259.

Cajetan therefore identifies the sacrifice of the Mass with the infinite merit of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary. The 'organic link,' as Kilmartin puts it, between the altar and the cross, is confirmed by the Thomist understanding of the priest acting *in persona Christi*.⁶⁴ Where Biel conceived of Christ as the body sacrificed at the hand of clerics, Thomas understands Christ also to be the great high priest who offers himself through the priest who 'acts in His person.'⁶⁵ For Thomas, the Mass is thus of infinite merit, because 'the celebration of this sacrament is a definite image representing Christ's Passion, which is his true sacrifice.'⁶⁶ In respect to the individual for whom the Mass is offered, however, the degree of merit must be limited. Cajetan concludes from the finite character of human receptivity that 'the satisfaction which accrues to each devout recipient is always finite.'⁶⁷ Hence, Cajetan's theological justification for the multiplicity of Masses and stipends is the polar opposite of the works mentality of Biel and Scotus. Cajetan's theology, therefore, does not fall foul of Luther's charge that scholastics identified the devotion of the human will rather than Christ's cross as the meritorious sacrifice of the Mass.

In assessing whether or not Luther's theology of the Mass constitutes a Reformation difference in respect to Cajetan's theology of Eucharistic sacrifice, it is necessary to consider passages in Luther's writings on the Mass that suggest the idea of a sacrifice on the part of the human will. In *A Treatise on the New Testament* (1520), Luther exclaims: 'Now if you ask what is left in the Mass to give it the name of a sacrifice ... I answer: nothing is left.'⁶⁸ However, later in this treatise on the Mass Luther appears to contradict himself, because he asks again: 'What sacrifices, then, are we to offer?'⁶⁹ This time he responds, 'ourselves, and all that we have, with constant prayer, as we say, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).'⁷⁰ Could this discrepancy mean that Luther's rebuke of the Mass as a sacrifice was only intended to counter Biel's theology of the meritorious power of the human will? Luther remarks: 'And in this way it is permissible, yes profitable, to call the Mass a sacrifice; not on its own account, but because we offer ourselves as a sacrifice

⁶⁴ See Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, 159, 160-161, 348.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 134.

⁶⁶ *ST*, III 83:1.

⁶⁷ Cajetan, *The Celebration of the Mass*, 258.

⁶⁸ Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 97.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 98.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 98.

along with Christ.’⁷¹ This gives the impression that Luther would be happy to include the concept of the self-sacrifice of devotion in the Mass, providing that it is free from Biel’s semi-Pelagian interpretation.

Moreover, his description of the Mass as ‘a fountain of love’ in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* seems to mirror Cajetan’s understanding of the infinite merit of the Mass in virtue of Christ’s passion. Luther teaches: ‘This incomprehensible overflowing of God’s goodness, showered upon us through Christ, that moves us above all to love Him most ardently in return, to be drawn to Him with fullest confidence, and, despising all else, be ready to suffer all things for Him.’⁷² Not only do Luther’s writings on Eucharistic sacrifice appear here to agree with Cajetan’s view of the proper role of devotion and the source of infinite merit, but Luther’s early writings also reveal that the idea of the priest as a mediator of Christ was not a subject that provoked his anger. Similarly, Luther’s *Sermon on Preparing to Die* (1519) can be seen as in keeping with Thomas’s insistence that the priest acts *in persona Christi* in the sacrifice of the Mass.⁷³ Luther writes, ‘in the sacraments your God, Christ Himself, deals, speaks, and works with you through the priest.’⁷⁴ Further, he consoles the dying: ‘You must trust in the priest’s absolution as firmly as though God had sent a special angel or apostle to you, yes, as though Christ Himself were absolving you.’⁷⁵ Luther’s acceptance of a non-Pelagian version of Eucharistic sacrifice, his affirmation of the infinite merit of the Mass, his highlighting of the role of devotion as a response to grace, and his openness to priestly mediation of Christ’s forgiveness all give the impression that Luther and Cajetan held a common understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass.

However, this apparent unity on the question of the active participation of the human will in the sacrifice of the Mass is in fact superficial, and it would be a grave error to identify Luther’s theology with that of his Thomist contemporaries on the basis of cherry-picked quotes relating to sacrifice. The crux of the difference between

⁷¹ Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 99.

⁷² Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 46.

⁷³ ST, III 22:3. Thomas observes, ‘For the priest of the Old Law was the type of Christ while the New Law priest acts in His person, For what I have given, if I have given anything, for your sakes have I done in the person of Christ.’

⁷⁴ Luther, *A Sermon on Preparing to Die*, LW 42, 647.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 649.

Luther and Cajetan hinges on the question of the passivity of the will after the gift of grace. According to Cajetan, the active participation of the human will with the life of grace is crucial to the process of salvation. In contrast for Luther, the passivity of the will after grace is a necessary prerequisite for maintaining the sufficiency of God's declarative word of forgiveness for salvation. The language of sacrifice articulated by Luther and Cajetan must be placed in the context of two very different vocabularies of sin and salvation. In order to appreciate the role of the passivity of the human will after grace in distinguishing Luther's Reformation theology from that of Cajetan on the matter of Eucharistic sacrifice, it is, therefore, necessary to study the theological frameworks that supported their theologies of the Mass. In so doing the following topics will be considered in relation to the passivity of the human will: firstly, the Thomist theology of satisfaction; secondly, Luther's theology of imputed righteousness; and thirdly, their different perspectives on Christ's redemptive sacrifice. It is only by examining the different soteriological frameworks, of sanctification, substitution, and the nature of Christ's sacrifice itself, that the effect of the passivity of the will in establishing the Reformation significance of Luther's theology of the Mass can be grasped.

Underpinning Cajetan's language of sacrifice in the Mass is the centrality of the active agency of the human will in the ontological understanding of sin and salvation in Thomist thought. The notion of making satisfaction is used to communicate a belief that salvation is not seen merely as an acquittal of wrong but the restoration of the whole human condition to the love of God. Marshall comments, 'We are apt to find this puzzling, since it may seem obvious to us that requiring satisfaction is less merciful, and more demanding than sheer forgiveness would be.'⁷⁶ The question that Marshall is posing to Thomism is: 'Why does God not just cancel the debt?' Thomas's answer is that God, as the highest arbiter of justice, could indeed cancel the debt of sin without offending his justice. However, satisfaction is more fitting because it heals human nature.⁷⁷ In the Thomist mindset, to be saved is for the human will to have received healing, and thus attain the condition of true freedom in offering praise to God. In his *Commentary on Romans*, Cajetan remarks of the transformative effect of grace, through which the sinner is not only deemed just but

⁷⁶ Marshall, 'Anselm, Debt and Gift,' 175.

⁷⁷ *ST*, III 46: 2.

made just: ‘They are justified, that is to say they become just from (having been) sinners, through grace, that is not out of works but gratuitously.’⁷⁸ In order for this to happen, the damage inflicted by sin on the internal relations of the will, intellect and passions has to be reordered by grace. Hütter observes: ‘Thomas has in mind this destitution of the proper order of intellect, will, and the sense appetites when he considers the four wounds of human nature consequent upon sin: ignorance, malice, weakness, and concupiscence.’⁷⁹ Thanks to the grace of the sacraments the wounds of sin need not be permanent, because grace can heal and reorient the human will to God. Thomas suggests:

The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ’s Passion according as [one] is made perfect in union with Christ Who suffered. Hence, as Baptism is called the sacrament of Faith, which is the foundation of the spiritual life, so the Eucharist is termed the sacrament of Charity, which is ‘the bond of perfection’ (Col. 3:14).⁸⁰

This sacramental contact reverses the effect of the soul’s contact with sin, by forming a habit of grace. Thomas writes: ‘Now, when the soul cleaves to things by love, there is a kind of contact in the soul.’⁸¹ It is precisely through the contact with grace that the human will is taught to love, and thus brought into active participation in the life of grace. Hütter rightly remarks of Thomas’s system that ‘active participation, “*participatio actuosa*” in Christ’s sacrifice in charity is the way God chose most fittingly for sinners to become saints.’⁸² In contrast to a doctrine of passivity, it is through being made active in love that the human will is brought to a state of salvation. Similarly, in *Opusculum de Fide*, Cajetan emphasises the importance of charity in the human will: ‘It is therefore clear that it is the common doctrine of the Church that it is not through unformed faith, but through a faith formed by charity that the remission of sins occurs.’⁸³ Cajetan’s theological framework of sin and satisfaction can be seen as necessarily excluding the passivity of the human will after

⁷⁸ Cajetan, comment on Romans 1:1, XV, K: ‘*Iustificantur autem, hoc est peccatoribus iusti fiunt, gratis, hoc est non operibus sed gratuito.*’ *Epistolae Pauli et Aliorum Apostolorum... iuxta sensum literalem enarratae*.

⁷⁹ Hütter, ‘The Debt of Sin and the Sacrifice in Charity,’ 135.

⁸⁰ *ST*, III 73:3.

⁸¹ *ST*, I-II 86:1.

⁸² Hütter, ‘The Debt of Sin and the Sacrifice in Charity,’ 147.

⁸³ Cajetan, *Opusculum de Fide*, Ch. 4, 289: ‘*Perpicuum est igitur, verissimam esse communem Ecclesiae doctrinam, quod non per fidem informem, sed per fidem formatam charitate fit remissio peccatorum.*’

the gift of grace, because the purpose of grace, such as the grace of the Mass, is to bring the human will into communion with Christ's act of self-sacrificial love.

In contrast, Luther's model of salvation as an exchange of righteousness between the sinner and Christ, excludes the possibility of the human will's active participation in the grace of the Mass. The ontological framework of habits of grace is not merely absent from Luther's account, but seen by Luther as a threat to the 'fundamental article' of the forgiveness of sins.⁸⁴ Luther's image of testament was designed to exclude the possibility of a meritorious human offering to God both before and after the gift of grace. Luther's theology of testament in the Mass must, in Cavanaugh's words, 'protect the fundamental asymmetry produced by God's justification of miserable sinners.'⁸⁵ In *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), Luther argues that the concepts of habits of grace and of internal righteousness subtract from the sufficiency of Christ's forgiveness:

This faith cannot exist in connection with works—that is to say, if you at the same time claim to be justified by works, whatever their character—for that would be the same as 'limping with two different opinions' [1 King 18:21], as worshipping Baal and kissing one's hand [Job 31:27-28], which, as Job says, is a very great iniquity.

The freedom of the Christian, for Luther, is precisely a freedom from the struggle to obtain an internal righteousness. Through faith in Christ, the sinner can lay claim to the external perfect righteousness of Christ:

And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, 'If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his,' as the bride of Solomon [2:16] says, 'My beloved is mine and I am him.'⁸⁶

The effect of Luther's doctrine of the passivity of the will on the theology of the Mass can thus be appreciated as an expression of the external gift of Christ's righteousness. The message of the testament is that salvation does not depend on human efforts but comes in all its fullness to be received passively by the human will.

⁸⁴ Luther, *The Smalcald Articles*, Art. 2.

⁸⁵ Cavanaugh, 'Eucharistic Sacrifice,' 597.

⁸⁶ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31, 352.

Luther consequently believed that the Thomist teaching of the necessity of the active cooperation of the human will with grace to acquire a state of ontological righteousness belonged to a scholastic conspiracy, and that its effect was to hold the sacrament in Babylonian captivity:

This ignorance of the testament, this capacity of so great a sacrament—are they not too sad for tears? When we ought to be grateful for benefits received, we come arrogantly to give what we ought to take. With unheard of perversity, we mock the mercy of the giver by giving as a work the thing we ought to receive as gift, so that the testator, instead of being a dispenser of his own goods, becomes the recipient of ours.⁸⁷

McDonough affirms: ‘The Thomistic account of salvation, in terms of entitative and operative habits given initially by Christ and presupposing the free and active participation of man in Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, appears to [Luther] as pure heresy.’⁸⁸ In sum, Luther’s terminology of sacrifice in the Mass differs fundamentally from the Thomist tradition because he believes the human sacrifice of prayer to bear no soteriological significance. The Christian may be active in prayer and neighbourly duty but on a salvific level these external actions matter not a jot:

Thus we do not despise ceremonies and works; but we set great store by them; but we despise the false estimate placed upon works in order that no one may think that they are true righteousness, as those hypocrites believe who spend and lose their whole lives in zeal for works and never reach that goal for the sake of which the works are done, who, as the Apostle says, ‘will listen to anybody and can never arrive at the knowledge of the truth.’ [II Tim. 3.5].⁸⁹

It is therefore evident that Luther’s theology of the Mass as a testament broke with the Thomist model of active participation, because it was indeed a Reformation reflection of his doctrine of passivity. Applying Luther’s comment from his 1531 *Preface to the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, it can be seen that Luther believed that in the Mass: ‘We work nothing, we render nothing to God, but only, we receive and suffer the

⁸⁷ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 47-48.

⁸⁸ McDonough, *The Law and the Gospel*, 53.

⁸⁹ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31, 376.

action of another, namely God. Therefore it pleases one to call this righteousness of faith, or Christian righteousness, passive righteousness.’⁹⁰

The dramatic divergence of Luther’s Reformation theology of the Mass as a testament, from Cajetan’s vision of the Mass as a sacrifice, can be grasped more fully against the backdrop of the Thomist understanding of the nature of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. As has been seen, Luther supposed that the active participation of the human will in the Mass implied that the Christian’s sacrifice of devotion could alter, or add to, Christ’s once and for all redemptive act. The unity of grace between the cross and the altar in Thomas’s vision, however, enables him to teach that the Mass ‘has the nature of a sacrifice inasmuch as it makes present Christ’s Passion.’⁹¹ It is possible for participants in the Mass to be incorporated into Christ’s saving act, because the nature of Christ’s sacrifice is seen (alongside many other concepts) as one of satisfaction, rather than penal substitution. According to Thomas’s vision, the saving power of the cross, lies not in an experience of desolation, through which Christ bears the wrath of the divine will, but in an act of ‘holy love,’ which heals the breach between God and humanity.⁹² In speaking of the meaning of the Christ’s death as a sacrifice, Thomas cites Augustine’s view that the true meaning of sacrifice is an act “for the purpose of being united to God in holy fellowship.”⁹³ At the same time, the gravity of sin is not ignored in Thomas’s theology of the cross, because he sees the intimate love between the Father and the Son as increasing Christ’s sorrow and anguish for the sins of the world. Thus, he argues that: ‘Among the many reasons for Christ’s inner pain first comes all the sins of mankind for which he was satisfying by his suffering.’⁹⁴ The essence of this satisfaction is that, amidst the affliction of human sinfulness on the cross, Christ offered an act of contrition on the behalf of humanity. Thomas remarks: ‘Christ’s suffering exceeded all the anguish of any penitent, because it came from greater wisdom and love, which intensifies the suffering in contrition, and because he suffered for all the sins at the same time.’⁹⁵ The cry of Christ, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Mat. 27:46), is understood in the Thomist tradition, to belong to the act of contrition which Christ presents in our

⁹⁰ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, LW 26, 5.

⁹¹ ST, III 79:7.

⁹² White, ‘Jesus’ Cry on the Cross and His Beatific Vision,’ 555-582.

⁹³ ST, III 46:3.

⁹⁴ ST, III 46:6.

⁹⁵ ST, III 46:6.

person (*in persona nostra*).⁹⁶ In contrast to the opinion of modern theologians such as Moltmann and von Balthasar, who claim that Christ entered the hell of the damned, Thomas believed that the saving remedy of humanity lay in Christ's love, rather than in his forsakenness.⁹⁷ Commenting on the perfection of Christ's love, which Thomas believed flowed from the possession of the beatific vision throughout Christ's life, he notes: 'the intensity of pain and sadness Christ suffered, was due to its [Christ's love of the Father] purity.'⁹⁸ The satisfaction which Christ undertook in order to restore humanity to its ultimate end [*ordo ad ultimum finem*] is fundamentally an act of pure love for God.⁹⁹ Thomas remarks:

Sadness can be useful when it is aimed at satisfying for sin, for "the sorrow that is according to God produces repentance that tends to salvation." [2 Cor. 7:10] Christ, then, in order to atone for the sins of all men, suffered the most profound sadness, absolutely speaking.¹⁰⁰

It is precisely through the action of grace, which inspires contrition, and raises hearts and minds in prayer, that the human will can participate in the satisfaction of Christ's great act of contrition on the cross. By the gift of grace, the human will is rekindled in the saving love of Christ's sacrifice made present in the Mass. Thomas thus concludes: 'The reality of this sacrament is charity, not merely in habit, but also in act.'¹⁰¹

Turning to consider the idea of Christ's sacrifice that underpinned Luther's theology of the Mass, the redemptive narrative is one in which Christ bears the weight of divine wrath, and thereby frees the rest of humanity from the penalties due to sin. The centrality of the model of penal substitution to Luther's vision of the Mass is evident in his treatise on *The Misuse of the Mass* (1521):

The body of Christ is given and His blood poured out, and thereby God is reconciled, for it was given and poured out for you—as He says 'for you'—so that He may avert from us the wrath of God which we by our sins have

⁹⁶ Marshall, 'The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God,' 265.

⁹⁷ See Moltmann, *The Crucified Christ*, and Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*. Christ's descent into the hell of the damned has been challenged by Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*. See my research essay, 'Christ's Descent into Hell in Sixteenth-Century Theological Debate.'

⁹⁸ *ST*, III 46:6.

⁹⁹ See White, 'Jesus' Cry on the Cross,' 555-582.

¹⁰⁰ *ST*, III 46:6.

¹⁰¹ *ST*, III 79:5.

deserved. And if the wrath is gone then the sins are forgiven If the body were not given and the blood not poured out, then the wrath of God would remain upon us and we would retain our sins. Here you see clearly that no work of satisfaction or sacrifice of reconciliation is of any use; only faith in the given body and the shed blood reconciles. Not that faith does the reconciling in and of itself, but it lays hold on and obtains the reconciliation which Christ has performed for us.¹⁰²

Luther argues that the salvific element of Christ's passion was 'that He may avert from us the wrath of God which we by our sins have deserved.'¹⁰³ The Thomist appeal to the bond of love between the Father and the Son, as the source of a vicarious act of contrition on behalf of humanity, therefore contrasts with Luther's account of Christ's utter desolation and experience of hell. Luther exclaims: 'This man, who was scourged, who is the lowest under death, under the wrath of God, under sin and every kind of evil, and finally under hell, is the highest God.'¹⁰⁴ Luther's teaching on Christ's sacrifice is that the Father's forgiveness comes only after he has inflicted the punishment owing to sin.

The contrast between Luther's view and the Thomist model can be summarised by saying that, for Thomas, sinners crucified Christ, but for Luther, the Father crucified Christ on account of sin. Luther affirms that Christ's most intense suffering of spiritual agony was on account of the Father's desertion of the Son. Referring to Psalm 22, Luther comments: 'David is talking here about this sublime, spiritual suffering, when Christ fought with death and felt nothing in his heart but that he was forsaken by God. ... And in fact he was forsaken by God.'¹⁰⁵ According to Luther, Christ assumed the Father's anger on the bloody gibbet and so averted wrath from the sinner. If the issue is one of penalty for sin, salvation cannot depend on the transformative work of grace in the human will. For Luther, The debt has been paid, God is appeased and so 'no work of satisfaction or sacrifice of reconciliation is of any use,'¹⁰⁶ for the work is already accomplished. The substitution model of atonement is therefore reflected in Luther's image of testament, because, as Cavanaugh comments,

¹⁰² Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass*, LW 36, 177.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, LW 5, Ch. 28, 219.

¹⁰⁵ Luther, 'Commentary on Psalm 8:5,' LW 10, 126.

¹⁰⁶ Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass*, LW 36, 177.

‘it is the pastness of the sacrifice that delivers it from the taint of exchange.’¹⁰⁷ According to Luther, the salvific content of the Mass does not lie in restoring the human will to an active participation in God’s self-giving love, but in proclaiming the acquittal of the sinner, on account of Christ’s penal sacrifice. Luther’s theology of the nature of Christ’s redemptive act therefore complements his Reformation doctrine of the passivity of the human will in the Mass. Critically, the agency of the human will bears no relation to the soteriological significance of Christ’s sacrifice.

Lastly, it must be asked if Luther’s theology on the passivity of the human will in the Mass, expresses the same fear of works righteousness, as has been uncovered in his writings on justification and predestination. The place given to conscience in Luther’s theology of the Mass as a testament shows that his Reformation of Eucharistic sacrifice and his theology of the passivity of the will had a common source and motivation. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther reiterates the driving fear of his Reformation theology, arguing that by deeming righteousness a quality of the human will, the certainty of salvation is lost and the sinner is left in fear of peril:

From all that has been said we conclude that the Mass was provided only for those who have a sad, afflicted, disturbed, perplexed and erring conscience, and that they alone commune worthily. For, since the word of promise in this sacrament sets forth the forgiveness of sins, let every one draw near fearlessly, whosoever he may be, who is troubled by his sins, whether by remorse or by temptation. For this testament of Christ is the one remedy against sins, past, present and future, if you cling to it with unwavering faith and believe that what the words of the testament declare is freely granted to you. But if you do not believe this, you will never, anywhere, by any works or efforts of your own, be able to find peace of conscience. For faith alone, means peace of conscience, while unbelief means only distress of conscience.¹⁰⁸

The formation of Luther’s Reformation theology of the Mass as a testament, therefore, follows the same pattern as his belief in the passivity of the human will. In the passage above, Luther teaches that the virtue of the model of a testament is that it communicates the non-reciprocity of grace, because the salvific gifts offered are not

¹⁰⁷ Cavanaugh, ‘Eucharistic Sacrifice,’ 598.

¹⁰⁸ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 57.

conditioned by active righteousness of the human will. The divergence of Luther's theology from that of both Biel and Cajetan was, therefore, determined by the need to possess a righteousness that lay outside the accusations of conscience. As early as 1517, in his explanation to *The Ninety-Five Theses*, Luther reveals the intensity of the spiritual anxiety which would shape his theology of the Mass:

Yet they [his *Anfechtungen*] were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had not himself experienced them could not believe them ... the soul cannot believe that it can ever be redeemed.¹⁰⁹

Luther could escape this torment only by maintaining the passivity of the human will both before and after the advent of grace. This Reformation article freed him to teach, that the Mass offers the saving comfort of the forgiveness of sins to those 'who have a sad, afflicted, disturbed, perplexed and erring conscience.'¹¹⁰

In conclusion, this chapter has found that Luther's theology of the Mass as a testament reflects his theology of the passivity of the human will and the concerns of conscience that governed this critical doctrine. Luther's theology of the Mass can therefore be said to carry Reformation significance. Firstly, it parts ways with Biel's theology that the meritorious value of the Mass lies not in the merits of Christ's passion, but in the good will of those who offer the Mass. Significantly, this study has noted the legacy of Scotus's teaching on the powers of the human will and the source of merit in the Mass in the teaching of Biel's *Collectorium*. In opposition to Biel's teaching, Luther drew on the image of testament to convey his belief that the Mass is a gift from God. In doing so, Luther opposed those whom he believed tried 'to offer to God what should be received as a benefit.'¹¹¹ Secondly, in comparing Luther's anti-Pelagian polemic with Cajetan's treatise on *The Celebration of the Mass*, the possibility was raised of a hypothetical reconciliation between Luther and this sixteenth-century Thomist vision of the Mass as a sacrifice. However, Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will after grace, has been found to ensure the Reformation significance of Luther's theology of the Mass. Luther not only rebelled against his Erfurt *magister*, but also applied his theology of passivity to the Mass in

¹⁰⁹ Luther, *Explanation of the Ninety-Five Theses*, LW 31, 129.

¹¹⁰ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 57.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 50.

such a way that he rejected the Thomist teaching on the grace-enabled active participation of the human will in Christ's sacrifice. Whilst the theology of Luther and Cajetan were united in opposing the Pelagian implications of the theology of the Mass taught by Biel, the disparity of their thought has been made evident by contrasting their soteriological understandings of the nature of sin, salvation and Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In reflecting on Luther's appeal to the peace of conscience as the fruit of his theology of the Mass as testament, this chapter ends by returning to the origin of Luther's Reformation theology. The Reformation story of Luther's theology of the human will and the Mass is, to a large degree, determined by the first chapters of his theological career. The divergence between the theological frameworks of Luther and Cajetan serves to underscore the fact that Luther's theology of the Mass was born of the extreme anxiety, which was provoked by the legacy of Scotus's free will theory in the instruction of Biel's *Canonis Missae Expositio*.

Part Three: Post Reformation

Part Three considers the teachings of the Council of Trent, the early Lutheran disputes concerning free will and the Catholic *de auxiliis* controversy. It suggests that, whilst the decrees of the Council of Trent confirm the Reformation division wrought by Luther's article of passivity, the subsequent developments point to a convergence in the free will theology of early Lutheranism and Tridentine Catholicism.

Chapter Six: Trent on free will and the Mass

O'Malley begins his recent work—'Trent: What happened at the Council'—by commenting: 'For many the bell tolls ominously, intimating regression, repression and the dreaded Counter-Reformation.'¹ Yet the impression that the canons of the Council of Trent both excluded Luther's Reformation theology, and resulted in a narrowing of Catholic orthodoxy to a 'Thomist syntax,'² has been called into question by modern developments in scholarship.³ In contrast to the paralleling of the Council of Trent with the militant confessional stance of the Spanish Inquisition, the state of the question in Trent scholarship today is rather, who—or what—did the decrees of Trent really 'counter', if anyone?⁴ The revisionist thesis regarding the Council of Trent has two aspects. Firstly, scholars have claimed that the doctrines of Trent do not anathematise Luther's Reformation theology.⁵ Secondly, Oberman has alleged that Tridentine orthodoxy not only maintained the breadth of scholastic discourse, but enshrined the theology of congruous merit, which this study has shown to be the fruit of the Scotist reform of free will.⁶ In light of these developments in the historiography of Tridentine orthodoxy, this chapter asks: did the decrees of the Council of Trent 'counter' anyone, or should Trent's teaching on the merit of the Mass be seen as including both Luther's Reformation theology and Scotist teaching? In examining

¹ O'Malley, *Trent: What happened at the Council*, 1.

² Oberman, 'Fourteenth-Century Religious Thought,' *Dawn of the Reformation*, 4.

³ The question of the effect of the Council of Trent belongs to a discussion of the validity of the term 'Counter-Reformation'. See: O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*; Evannet, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation*; Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation,' 706-720; Ditchfield, 'Of Dancing Cardinals and Mestizo Madonnas: Reconciling the History of Roman Catholicism in the Early Modern Period,' 386-408.

⁴ McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?* 265-266.

⁵ See Pesch, 'The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification: To whom did they apply? To whom do they apply today?' 184.

⁶ Oberman, 'Duns Scotus, Nominalism and the Council of Trent,' 218.

these two arenas of revision to the Counter-Reformation status of Trent, this study will locate the Council's instruction on the nature of the Mass as a sacrifice, within the interpretative frame of Trent's wider teaching on sin, justification and merit. In respect to the theological relationship between Trent and Luther, focussing on the broader picture will help to identify whether or not the decrees drew a fundamental dividing line between Catholic orthodoxy and Reformation theology. Similarly, in assessing the legitimacy of Oberman's inclusion of the Scotist understanding of congruous merit within the teaching of Trent, the contested meaning of the verb *promereri* will be situated within the wider context of Trent's doctrine on original sin, justification and contrition. Lastly, it will be asked whether Luther's Reformation rejection of the sacrifice of the Mass, and the voluntarist understanding of merit in the Mass, should be treated as equal impediments to Tridentine orthodoxy. Did Trent respond to these two theological variants with equal strength? It will be suggested that Luther's theology of the passivity of the will is the key for deciphering the limits of Tridentine orthodoxy with regard to the central themes of free will, merit and the Mass.

The first stream of revisionism in the historiography of Luther's theological relationship to the Council of Trent is closely related to the ecumenical movement. It holds that the mutual anathematising of Catholics and Protestants was principally the result of misunderstandings on both sides. An example of the thesis that the Reformation was a tragic miscommunication can be found in a 1947 report 'Catholicity,' composed by Anglicans on the validity of Anglican orders and addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, which describes Cranmer's objection to the 'sacrifices of Masses' as the result of 'battles in a fog.'⁷ An even earlier exponent of the 'tragic misunderstanding' thesis is Adolf von Harnack, who announced in 1894: 'It may be doubted whether the Reformation would have developed itself if the decree [on justification at the Council of Trent] had been issued at the Lateran Council at the beginning of the century, and had really passed into the flesh and blood of the Church.'⁸ The theory that theological wires had become crossed in the sixteenth-century debate, so that Trent misinterpreted the real meaning of Luther's theology, has continued in modern historiography. Writing in 2012, O'Malley notes:

⁷ *Catholicity*, 43.

⁸ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 7, 57.

The fundamental problem in reconciling the two positions [of Luther and of Trent] is that they are manifestations of different intellectual cultures, the one more academic and analytical, the other more personal and existential. ... Luther's justification by faith alone was his eureka experience that, as he saw it, liberated him from the jaws of spiritual death. He clung to it, therefore, for dear life. Trent's decree was the intellectual's emotionally cool response to Luther's spiritual anguish.⁹

O'Malley here suggests that the difference of language, one 'personal' and the other 'emotionally cool,' is the real obstacle, and not theological difference.¹⁰ Pesch employs the same argument, emphasising that 'substantively Luther is not struck' by the decrees of the Council, and that the continued separation between Lutherans and Catholics today 'centers on the relative importance of their respective phraseologies.'¹¹ The task in hand is, therefore, to analyse the validity of this ecumenical premise, which holds that on the issue of human agency in salvation, in Pesch's words, 'the Council argued past the real thought and intention of Luther.'¹²

The chief reasons offered by the ecumenical school of thought for believing that Luther and Trent misunderstood one another on the questions of free will, merit and the Mass are threefold. Firstly, Luther's rejection of the Mass as 'the third and most wicked abuse' in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* is seen as applying only to the theology of the Mass expounded by Biel, and is thus not thought to apply to the doctrines laid out at Trent. Secondly, ecumenical research has re-interpreted the Tridentine language of merit and propitiation. In so doing, a shared theology of intercession, as a sacrifice in the Mass, is applied to both Luther and Trent, and thus the Reformation breach is seen to be healed. Thirdly, and most significantly, the claim has been made that Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will as expounded in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525) should not be seen as an obstacle to theological union.

⁹ O'Malley, *Trent: What happened at the Council*, 116.

¹⁰ A similar account of the nature of the different Catholic and Lutheran understandings of 'assurance' is offered by Rahner who notes: 'Even though Catholic theology cannot accept the abstract ontological and objective formula of *'simul iustus et peccator'*, this formula is nevertheless justifiable if it is understood as the expression of the experience of the individual person.' ('Justified and Sinner at the Same Time,' 218-230, quotation, 224-225.)

¹¹ Pesch, 'The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification,' 184.

¹² *Ibid*, 186.

The first principle, that Luther only rejected an unorthodox version of the role of free will in the Mass, might at first sight appear to be justified in the light of this study's previous examination of Luther's reaction to the Pelagian dangers of Biel's theology. Pfnür, for instance, holds that Luther was only rejecting an erroneous and non-Tridentine theology of the Mass. Comparing Trent with the *Confessio Augustana*, the *Apology*, and the *Smalcald Articles*, he observes:

A resolution of the question of these Reformation rejections means: The Reformation condemnations in this question are justified and must also be regarded as continual warning signs. Nevertheless they aim at an extreme position and do not touch the ecclesiastically responsible and representative Catholic position, neither at that time or today.¹³

Indeed, Luther's statements could lead one to believe that he was only interested in attacking abuses of the Mass. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), Luther remarks: 'And this abuse has brought an endless host of other abuses in its train, so that the faith of the sacrament has become utterly extinct and the holy sacrament has been turned into a mere merchandise, a market, and a profit-making business.'¹⁴ The key issue is, therefore, whether or not the measures taken by Trent to reform these abuses, allow the historian to posit theological agreement between Luther and the Council on the issues of free will, merit and the Mass.

The discussion in chapters four and five of this thesis, which explored Luther's reaction to the Pelagian strains of Biel's theology, has revealed that Luther's rejection of the Mass as a sacrifice reflected his belief in the passivity of the human will in justification. His theology of the Mass as a testament, taught that the flow of grace is one way, from God to human beings, rather than allowing the gift of grace in the sacrament to be offered back to God as sacrifice.¹⁵ This distinction was neatly articulated at Trent by Giovanni Antonio Delfino, Provincial of the Conventual Franciscans at Bologna:

¹³ Pfnür, 'Confessio Augustana, the Apology, and the Smalcald Articles,' 143.

¹⁴ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 35.

¹⁵ This has been described by Thomas using the scholastic twofold understanding of the Mass as a sacrament and a sacrifice (ST, III 79:5). Luther accepts the sacramental nature of the Eucharist as an effective sign of the grace of Christ's passion but rejects the sacrificial model as attempting 'to offer to God what should be received as a benefit.' (*The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 50.)

There is a difference between the Eucharist as a sacrament and as a sacrifice, for as a sacrament it is of no avail except to those who receive it, whereas as a sacrifice it is of advantage to others also, for whom it is offered, and for whom the priest intends to offer it, and to whom he intends it to be applied.¹⁶

Schillebeeckx outlines the Catholic vision of the circular pattern of grace, which would include both the sacramental and sacrificial aspect of the Mass.

Every grace of God is strictly divine, that is, it creates out of nothing and gratuitously. But precisely because every grace is creative, man himself becomes indeed the active subject of grace. And so grace itself becomes a visible, tangible, historical reality in man's freedom. ... There is, therefore, an inner proportion between the life of grace on this earth and life in the everlasting Kingdom. This proportion rests on that very grace which realises the human answer to grace, and it is this which makes the Catholic Church speak of 'merit.' The word is not important, but the content is: merit indicates the historicity of the supremacy of grace within human freedom, and in no sense competes with *sola gratia*.¹⁷

As has been seen, Luther rejects this circular structure of grace, free will and merit, and in consequence perceives the idea of merit at Mass, based on the human cooperation of priest and congregation, as attempting to 'mock the mercy of the giver, so that the testator, instead of being a dispenser of his own goods, becomes the recipient of ours.'¹⁸ However, it is precisely this principle of grace-enabled cooperation in the Mass that is apparent in *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* (1566):¹⁹

¹⁶ Denflino cited by McHugh, 'Sacrifice of Mass at the Council of the Trent,' 164.

¹⁷ Schillebeeckx, 'The Tridentine Decree on Justification: A New View,' 93.

¹⁸ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 47-48. In scholastic terminology, 'special' and 'personal' merits (or fruits) are incurred in the Mass in addition to the 'ministerial' merit, which applies grace to the person for whom the Mass is offered. The 'special' and 'personal' fruit, relates to the degree of individual cooperation with the grace of the Mass. The cooperation of the free will of the member of the congregation therefore also yields graces that are impetratory, propiatory and satisfactory for themselves, and for those for whom they offer this 'special fruit.' The priest likewise gains merit through his personal cooperation, which can be received for his personal benefit, or offered for others. For a summary of the scholastic division of the merit of the Mass into general, special, personal, and ministerial, see: O'Connell, *The Celebration of the Mass: a study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal*, vol. 1, 40- 44.

¹⁹ *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* was finished in 1564 and was chiefly composed by Leonardo Marini, Archbishop of Lanciano; Muzio Calini, Archbishop of Zara; Egidio Foscherari, Bishop of Modena; and Francisco Fureiro, a Portuguese Dominican. For further reading on *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* see: Janz, *Three Reformation Catechisms*, and Brancatelli, 'Beset on Every Side: Reimagining the Ideology of the Roman Catechism 1566.'

The Sacrament is not only a treasure of heavenly riches, which if turned to good account, will obtain for us the grace and love of God; but it also possesses a peculiar character, by which we are enabled to make some return to God for the immense benefits bestowed upon us.²⁰

The conviction that cooperative grace allows Christians ‘to make some return’ is expressed in Trent’s doctrine of justification. Canon thirty-two on justification declares:

If anyone says that the good deeds of a justified person are the gifts of God, in the sense that they are not also the good merits of the one justified; or that the justified person, by the good deeds done by him through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ (of whom he is a living member), does not truly merit an increase in grace, eternal life, and (so long as he dies in grace) the obtaining of his own eternal life, and even an increase in glory: let him be anathema.²¹

Luther’s attack on the meritorious role of human cooperation with grace can, therefore, be seen as relevant not only to Trent’s doctrine of justification, but also to any notion that humanity’s making an offering to God represents a cyclical return of grace in the Mass. Luther’s denunciation of the sacrifice of the Mass—‘by far the most wicked abuse of all’—was thus a practical application of his theory of the passivity of the human will under grace. The pattern of grace evident in Trent’s teaching on justification, which is reflected in the Catechism’s teaching on the Mass, therefore conflicts with Luther’s one-way model of grace, conveyed using the image of a testament. Hence, the ecumenical argument that confessional division on the inter-related issues of free will, merit and the Mass is the result of mutual misunderstandings between Luther and Trent stumbles over the obstacle of the passivity of the human will. The passivity of the human will after the gift of grace is, therefore, a parting in the ways between Luther’s theology of testament and Trent’s cyclical pattern of grace. According to Trent’s cyclical framework, grace empowers the human will to cooperate in offering the sacrifice of the Mass, and thereby to gain merit.

²⁰ *CCT*, 243.

²¹ *CT*, 681.

The second tool used by ecumenists to fuse the theology of Luther and Trent is the reinterpretation of the meaning of the controversial terms ‘merit’ and ‘propitiation’. If the meanings of these terms are redefined using the language of ecumenism then, the argument goes, the stumbling blocks to unity could be overcome. The WCC paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, contends that: ‘It is in the light of the significance of the Eucharist as intercession that reference to the Eucharist in Catholic theology as “propitiatory sacrifice” may be understood.’²² An adequate understanding of the Tridentine meaning of propitiation is here held to be communicated merely by the concept of intercessory prayer. Pesch similarly considers merit to be an unhelpful term in relaying the meaning of Trent’s teaching. He insists that ‘we need not contradict the Council of Trent if, in the interest of the long present objective agreement with evangelical theology, we take leave of the concept and word “merit”.’²³ In addition, Pesch advises that the terms merit and propitiation should both be put ‘on the black list’ because ‘substantive content can be expressed without any difficulty by other and better concepts.’²⁴ The validity of this second principle of redefining the terms of the debate must therefore be assessed by examining whether or not Luther and Trent attached to the terms ‘merit’ and ‘propitiation’ a meaning which went beyond the concept of intercessory prayer.

It is significant that immediately after rejecting the Mass as a sacrifice, Luther affirms the place of intercessory prayer. It is helpful to return to Luther’s description of sacrifice and prayer in the Mass, presented in *A Treatise on the New Testament* (1520). Luther teaches: ‘Now if you ask what is left in the Mass to give it the name of a sacrifice I answer: nothing is left.’²⁵ Later in the treatise, however, Luther asks again: ‘What sacrifices, then, are we to offer?’²⁶ He answers, ‘ourselves, and all that we have, with constant prayer, as we say, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).’²⁷ The key point here is that Luther distinguishes between the sacrifice of prayer and the sacrifice of the Mass. Critically, the sacrifice of prayer is not considered by him to be a part of justification, and the sinful human will is not

²² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 10.

²³ Pesch, ‘The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification,’ 191.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 191.

²⁵ Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 97.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 98.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 98.

seen to be transformed through this offering of prayer.²⁸ Hence, Luther objects to the Mass as a sacrifice when ‘sacrifice’ is interpreted as having a salvific power independent from the grace received in Holy Communion. In reality, Luther remarks:

Everyone takes and receives of it for himself only, in proportion as he believes and trusts. Now just as I cannot give or receive the sacrament of baptism, of penance, of extreme unction in any one’s stead or of his benefit, but I accept for myself alone the blessing therein offered by God—and here there is no *officium* but *beneficium*, no work or service but reception and benefit alone—so also no one can observe or hear Mass for another, but each one for himself alone. For there is nothing there but a taking and receiving.²⁹

Luther’s rejection of the terms ‘merit’ and ‘propitiation’ was therefore meant as an attack on a vision of the Mass as a sacrifice, which simply by virtue of its being offered, resulted in salvific grace being given to the intended beneficiary. McHugh affirms this reading of Luther’s purpose:

For what the Lutherans and older Protestants had rejected was not the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, but the assertion that such a celebration, conducted in the form of the Roman Mass, constituted a propitiatory sacrifice which had value in itself for the expiation of sin, even if no one except the celebrant received Holy Communion.³⁰

Luther’s concern is to ensure that the sacrifice of prayer, offered in the form of intercession and thanksgiving, has no bearing on the saving efficacy of the Mass. Cavanaugh rightly points out: ‘Luther does allow for a return to God outside the Mass itself, but he must protect the fundamental asymmetry produced by God’s justification of miserable sinners.’³¹ Moreover, Cavanaugh notes that in Luther’s revision of the Mass, ‘The *Te igitur* is removed on the grounds that our offering mocks the sufficiency of Christ’s offering.’³² Clearly, Luther understood the terms ‘merit’ and ‘propitiation’, to communicate a version of the Mass as a sacrifice that exceeded the function of intercessory prayer, for he identified these terms with a theology in which

²⁸ In *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 87, Luther’s theological divergence from the concept of the cooperative agency of free will with grace, can be seen in his image of the human will being ridden by God: ‘If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills, as the Psalm says: ‘I am become a beast [before thee] and I am always with thee’ (Ps. 73:22).

²⁹ Ibid, 94.

³⁰ McHugh, ‘The Sacrifice of the Mass at the Council of Trent,’ 159.

³¹ Cavanaugh, ‘Eucharistic Sacrifice,’ 597.

³² Ibid, 591.

the sacrifice of the Mass partook in Christ's saving mission of rendering satisfaction and grace for the benefit of the living and the dead.

Turning to consider the Tridentine canons, one finds 'propitiation' used to denote the efficacy of the sacrifice to provide grace for those for whom the Mass is offered. Trent teaches that the Mass has a salvific benefit beyond that communicated to those receiving the Eucharist directly. Luther's theology of the Mass as a testament is therefore rejected in Canon one: 'If anyone says that a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God in the Mass, or that the offering is nothing but the giving of Christ to us to eat: let him be anathema.'³³ Nichols pinpoints the decisive issue by asking: 'Is the Eucharist merely the commemoration of a sacrifice; or is it a commemorative sacrifice? Is it, in other words, an action which commemorates a sacrifice in such a way that it is itself a sacrifice?'³⁴ Canon three confirms that the action of offering the memorial of Christ is itself a work that conveys Christ's salvific grace:

If anyone says that by the sacrifice of the Mass is only one of praise and thanksgiving, or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice enacted on the cross and not itself appeasing; or that it avails only the one who receives and should not be offered for the living and the dead, for their sins, penalties, satisfaction and other needs: let him be anathema.³⁵

Canon three touches the point of unity amongst the scholastics and Trent's division with Luther. Here, propitiation implies that the Mass is not simply about *receiving* but also involves the active agency of *offering* to God, and that this offering benefits the salvation of the living and the dead.³⁶

Lastly, in considering Trent's understanding of merit and propitiation, it is necessary to examine the relationship between theology and liturgical practice. The offering of the sacrifice of the Mass for the salvation of friends, family, benefactors and departed souls was almost literally the bread-and-butter of the Church's life,

³³ CT, 735.

³⁴ Nichols, *The Holy Eucharist*, 88.

³⁵ CT, 735.

³⁶ It is significant that, although the degree of priestly devotion in offering the sacrifice of the Mass does not affect the magisterial fruit, which is applied to those for whom the Mass is offered, the priest must offer the Mass in conformity with this intention. Hence, even in regard to the 'ministerial fruit' of the Mass, merit is connected to the cooperation of the donor to seek the benefit of grace for a particular intention, and to the priest's acceptance of a requested intention.

providing a steady income for monasteries, cathedrals, confraternities, and many other parts of the Church. Power observes:

The main point of all the definitions is that the Mass celebrated by a duly ordained priest, under whatever circumstances, is beneficial for those for whom it is offered, and that through this offering some grace of remission of sins flows. If this is not admitted, then it was apparently the idea of the Conciliar Fathers that the whole belief in the Mass and the whole practice of the Mass would fall apart.³⁷

The point here is not that praxis forced Trent to adopt a certain theological stance, but rather that the continuing practice of offering the Mass for departed souls gave the terms ‘merit’ and ‘propitiation’ a particular meaning in the Reformation disputes. As has already been seen, both Luther and the participants at Trent were aware that the merit and propitiatory value of the sacrifice of the Mass spoke of an efficacy of grace which exceeded the limits of the concept of intercessory prayer. The meaning of merit and propitiation, as understood both by Luther and by Trent, was that Christ’s grace was not only received as sacrament, but secured for others through the meritorious cooperation embedded in the system of stipends for the offering of the Mass as a sacrifice. Jüngel’s defence of Luther’s understanding of the Mass identifies the theological principle underlying the disagreement over merit and propitiation:

Of course it remains unfortunate that the Roman Catholic Church following Trent continues to speak widely of the sacrificial action of the priest or of the Church. On the contrary: the self-sacrifice of Christ calls precisely not for our sacrifice, it does not call for us to do anything, but rather it calls for us to receive, although from this receptivity Christian action does result—just as the work week results from the creative passivity of the Sabbath.³⁸

Luther’s rejection of the propitiatory nature of the merit of the Mass was thus a matter of contention (or, indeed, anathema) for Trent. This is because Luther broke with the Catholic understanding of grace, which saw grace as enabling an active participation of the Christian’s will in Christ’s saving act of propiation on the cross.

The third principle upon which unity between Luther and the Council of Trent on the sacrifice of the Mass is posited rests on resolving the fundamental issue of the

³⁷ Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer*, 128.

³⁸ Jüngel, ‘Church unity is already happening,’ 34.

human will in justification. There are two contrary solutions proposed by this stream of ecumenical revisionism. The first is to claim that Luther did not really teach a theology of the passivity of the will, and thus that the mistake of Trent was to suppose that Luther believed the polemical images which he had evoked in *The Bondage of the Will*. Pesch maintains:

Canon four misunderstands 'passivity' as 'apersonality.'... [However,] *assentire* is not only an intellectual 'agreement' in the sense of holding something true, but an existential self-application. Those who dispute it are assumed to understand the human being as *quoddam inanime*, a 'life-less thing.' Luther had often spoken in this pointed fashion. He intends, or at least never overlooks, what canon four wants to establish: 'assent' as self-involvement, allowing oneself to be grasped by God.³⁹

Having contended that Luther's vision of the human will in justification presented in *The Bondage of the Will* involved active consent, Pesch concludes that unity could be posited by relativising references to this problematic treatise. He remarks that confessional confrontation would be eased by 'an interpretation of the canons of Trent which stresses more strongly their Augustinian imprint,' and 'through a hesitation by Lutheran theology and church to declare every pointed assertion of *De servo arbitrio* as the unrenounceable heritage of Reformation theology.'⁴⁰ Pesch's claim for unity between Trent and Luther's Reformation on the subject of the human will, therefore requires an examination of *The Bondage of the Will* in the context of Luther's wider writings on the possibility of active cooperation.⁴¹

However, Pesch's reevaluation of the treatise *The Bondage of the Will*, to make room for the idea of an active consent in Luther's theology, must be questioned in the light of Luther's insistence on the passivity of the human will. The clearest articulation of Luther's belief in the irresistible control of either God or the devil over the human will is found in his image of the beast and rider:

Thus the human will is placed between the two like a beast of burden. If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills, as the Psalm says: 'I am become a beast [before thee] and I am always with thee' (Ps. 73:22). If Satan rides it, it

³⁹ Pesch, 'The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification,' 179-180.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 179-180.

⁴¹ For a similar consideration of Luther's pastoral writings see Methuen, 'Luther's Large Catechism and the Practical Implications of Evil.'

wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or to seek him out, but the riders themselves contend for the possession or control of it.⁴²

In this passage Luther makes explicit his view that the human will has no deciding power in its governance by good or evil. Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will in questions of salvation transfers the battleground from the individual's conscience to the cosmic realm of an end of time battle between God and the devil. Oberman observes that in Luther's eyes the 'Great Reformation' was the eschatological rule of Christ, and that his role was that of a prophet sent to warn the elect of the onslaught of the Satan's counter-reformation.⁴³ Oberman remarks: 'Far from wanting to achieve a 'Reformation,' the evangelist Luther knows that by proclaiming the Word of God, he is accelerating the satanic rape and enslavement of the world: "It is not our job to hold it back".'⁴⁴ Oberman warns the modern historian of the danger of minimising the role Luther ascribed to the devil in his reflections on the earthly life, remarking that 'interpreters, intent on mining [Luther's] riches, have been given to present him as "relevant" and hence "modern." Thus they have been inclined to bypass or remove medieval "remnants"—first among these, the devil himself.'⁴⁵ Oberman's study of the impact that Luther's belief in demonic power had in his theology, strongly suggests that the historian would be more faithful to Luther's meaning if the demonic captivity of the human will is taken literally. Indeed, in *The Bondage of the Will* Luther teaches that the passivity of the human will is due to its servitude to the devil:

As if we did not know that the world is the kingdom of Satan where besides the blindness we are born with from our carnal nature, we are under the dominion of the most mischievous spirits, so that we are hardened in that very blindness and imprisoned in a darkness no longer human but demonic.⁴⁶

By approaching Luther as a medieval man rather than through the lenses of the enlightenment, it is necessary to doubt Pesch's thesis of consent and instead take Luther's description of the bondage of the will to the devil at his word.

⁴² Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 65.

⁴³ Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, 72.

⁴⁴ Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, 33.

⁴⁵ Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, 72.

⁴⁶ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 98.

It could be objected that Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will as portrayed in *The Bondage of the Will* is not consistent with his wider writings. However, the following passages make clear that this is not the case. Luther's theology of the captivity of the will to sin is displayed as early as *The Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517), in which Luther argues that human nature 'being a bad tree, can only will and do evil.'⁴⁷ In thesis 30, Luther posits humanity's rebellion from God and thus excludes the possibility of the human will possessing the capacity to accept or reject grace: 'On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace.'⁴⁸ Luther's belief that the human will is only active in serving the kingdom of the devil, but passive under grace, recurs at the Heidelberg Disputation (1518). Luther remarks: 'Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity.'⁴⁹ This is compounded by thesis 13: 'Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.'⁵⁰ *The Disputation against Scholastic Theology* and *The Heidelberg Disputation* reveal that Luther's teaching on the bondage of the will to sin was not merely a product of hot tempered polemics, but arose from a consistent belief in the captivity of human nature to the kingdom of the devil. Indeed, as has been shown above, to introduce a capacity in the human will which is capable of choosing to accept or reject salvific grace would be to negate the motivation behind Luther's Reformation. It would place salvation and damnation back into human hands, and in consequence all certainty of salvation would slip through Luther's fingers. The last section of *The Bondage of the Will* is of crucial importance because it explains why holding the complete passivity of the will to the power of either God or the devil is essential in his Reformation endeavour.

I frankly confess that even if it were possible, I should not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my own hands by which I might strive toward salvation. ... Even if there were no perils or adversities or demons, I should nevertheless have to labour under perpetual uncertainty and to fight as one beating the air, since even if I worked to eternity, my

⁴⁷ Luther, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁹ Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, LW 31, 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 40.

conscience would never be assured and certain how much it ought to do to satisfy God.⁵¹

The first aspect of the premise, that *The Bondage of the Will* does not really mean captivity to the devil, and that it can be excluded from the Reformation debate, must therefore be rejected. The passivity of the human will was central to Luther's Reformation, and to claim a theological unity between Trent and Luther on the subject of free will, without this fundamental article, would be to create a theological unity based on historical fiction.

McSorley presents an alternative thesis of unity between Trent and Luther on the subject of free will, which, in contrast to Pesch, has the bondage of the human will as its cornerstone. McSorley contends that Luther and Trent held a shared theology of the condition of the fallen human will, and that the fallout of the Reformation was the result of the lack of any 'true dialogue or meeting of minds between the Church and Luther prior to his separation from the Church.'⁵² Luther's rejection of free will in *The Bondage of the Will* should be seen, McSorley suggests, as a rejection of 'a non-authentic "episode" of Church history ... an episode which Luther knew at first hand'.⁵³ This 'non-authentic' stream of scholasticism, in which 'certain theologians asserted that the sinner could do something of value before God by his own free will without grace,'⁵⁴ is identified by McSorley as Biel's theology of congruous merit. By identifying 'the Reformation problem' as the theology of congruous merit, McSorley is able to argue that the Council of Trent was actually in complete agreement with Luther's treatise *The Bondage of the Will*. Indeed, McSorley remarks of Luther's doctrine of the *servum arbitrium*: 'It is unquestionably a Catholic concept that is in complete harmony with the concept of *liberum arbitrium captivatum* in the Council of Trent.'⁵⁵ McSorley's interpretation of the canons of the Council of Trent is therefore one that embraces Luther's theology of the passivity of the will, and agrees with Luther that posing the possibility of consent in the human will is paramount to Pelagianism:

⁵¹ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 288-289.

⁵² McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?* 270.

⁵³ Ibid, 256-257.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 256-257.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 355.

Has not Luther put his finger on a problem that is widespread even today: the Pelagian tendency present in many Christians which inclines them to think that the effectiveness of God's grace depends ultimately on our free acceptance of it or that our response to the Gospel is mainly a matter of free resolutions?⁵⁶

In complete opposition to Pesch, McSorley's thesis of theological unity between Luther and Trent therefore rests on the supposition that the theology of the human will, canonised at Trent was in 'complete harmony' with Luther's theology of the captivity of the human will to the kingdom of the devil. On the basis of this reading of Tridentine orthodoxy, McSorley concludes: 'Between this concept of *servum arbitrium* and the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church there is no difference which is capable of justifying the separation of the Churches.'⁵⁷ The question is, can McSorley's thesis of unity be maintained, or is there an essential difference between Luther and Trent on the human will?

McSorley's claim could appear to be warranted in view of Trent's doctrine of the fall, presented in the articles on original sin and justification. Trent affirms that the damage of the fall prevents human nature from meritorious acts of free will without the aid of grace. All are fallen in Adam and in need of redemption in Christ:

If anyone asserts that this sin of Adam which, one by origin and passed on to all by propagation and not by imitation, inheres in everyone as something proper to each, is removed by human and natural powers, or by any remedy other than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ ... let him be anathema.⁵⁸

Trent is indeed united with Luther insofar as both reject the Pelagian teaching that works performed independent of grace can restore humanity:

First of all, for a true and genuine understanding of justification, the holy council declares that everyone must acknowledge and confess that, since all lost their innocence in the sin of Adam, became unclean and (in the words of the Apostle) by nature children of wrath, as is set out in the decree on original sin, they were so far slaves to sin and under the power of the devil and death, that not only could the gentiles not be freed from or rise above it by the force

⁵⁶ Ibid, 267.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 369.

⁵⁸ CT, 666.

of nature, but neither could the Jews even by the letter of the law of Moses, though their free will, for all it had been weakened and sapped in strength, was in no way extinct.⁵⁹

The first section of Trent's article on the human will therefore seems to endorse Luther's theology of the bondage of the will. However, the end of this article hints at a implicit discrepancy in its assertion that, 'their free will, for all it had been weakened and sapped in strength, was in no way extinct.'⁶⁰ It is only by placing the articles that emphasise the sinfulness of the human will in the context of Trent's broader instruction on the human will that the Tridentine meaning of 'in no way extinct' can be appreciated, and the degree of unity with Luther rightly assessed.

Trent's declaration that human free will is in 'no way extinct,' points to a fundamental difference between Luther and Trent: unlike Luther, Trent affirms the place of the human will in accepting or rejecting the gift of saving grace. McSorley is right to note that Trent denied the meritorious capacity of unaided human will. However, he is mistaken in deeming Trent to have excluded the power of free will to reject grace, and thus the responsibility of human free will to cooperate with the grace of conversion. Hence, if the human will is not completely passive it must have the real possibility of cooperation with grace and the possibility of sinning against the grace presented to the human will. Article 5 explains:

Consequently, though God touches a person's heart through the light of the Holy Spirit, neither does that person do absolutely nothing in receiving that movement of grace, for he can also reject it; nor is he able, by his own free will and without God's grace, to move himself towards justice in God's sight. Hence, when Scripture says, 'Return to me and I will return to you,' [Zach. 1, 3] we are being reminded of our freedom; when we answer 'Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored,' [Lam. 5, 21] we are admitting that we are forestalled by the grace of God.⁶¹

This passage indicates that Trent did not perceive the human will to be, as Luther put it in *The Bondage of the Will*, a beast between two riders unable to 'choose to run to

⁵⁹ CT, 671.

⁶⁰ CT, 671.

⁶¹ CT, 672.

either of the two riders or to seek him out.’⁶² According to Trent, the motion of grace in the soul is not an irresistible force moving the human will, but an invitation which the human free will has the option to reject. Hence, article 5 provides an image of the human will as one that requires grace to gain salvation but has the capacity to receive or reject grace. Trent’s defence of the human will’s agency, cooperative faculty and capacity to reject grace, is also demonstrated in Canon 4:

If anyone says that a person’s free will when moved and roused by God, gives no co-operation by responding to God’s summons and invitation to dispose and prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification; and that it cannot, if it so wishes, dissent but, like something inanimate, can do nothing at all and remains merely passive: let him be anathema.⁶³

This canon is in direct contrast to Luther’s theology of the passivity of the human will. Given that McSorley acknowledges Luther’s theology of the irresistibility of grace, this canon presents a barrier to his thesis of theological unity between Luther and Trent. The case for theological incompatibility between Luther and Trent on the issue of the human will is sealed by Trent’s affirmation of the possibility of the human will to sin after the gift of sanctifying grace. It is clear that this sin is not a result of God withdrawing his grace but of the human will choosing to abstain from cooperating with the grace offered: ‘For God does not abandon those once justified by his grace, unless he is first deserted by them.’⁶⁴ Trent further states: ‘For, unless they themselves neglect his grace, as God has begun the good work, so he will bring it to completion, bringing about both the will and the performance.’⁶⁵ These canons indicate that the Tridentine rejection of Pelagianism did not amount to unity with Luther’s theology of the bondage of the will, because Trent rejected the passivity of the human will, in its acknowledgment that grace can be rejected before, during, and after the gift of justifying grace.

To recapitulate the first section of this chapter, it has been found that on the subject of the active agency of the human will to merit, the logic of the Council of Trent does counter Luther’s article of passivity, which has been seen as the foundation stone of his belief in the Mass as a testament. This has been shown in respect to three

⁶² Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 65.

⁶³ CT, 672.

⁶⁴ CT, 675.

⁶⁵ CT, 676.

chief arguments. Firstly, it has been seen that Luther's theology of the Mass as a testament rejected the participation of the human will in Christ's satisfactory and meritorious offering, and thus outlawed the united scholastic belief and practice of offering the Mass for the departed souls. In rejecting Scotus's theology of free will and its place in the Mass, Luther formulated a twin theology of the human will and the Mass that was modelled on his truly Reformation doctrine of the passivity of the human will. Secondly, in studying the meaning ascribed to merit and propitiation by Luther and the Council of Trent, it has been made evident that a boycott of these terms would only result in a façade of unity without dealing with the real sixteenth-century points of dispute. Thirdly, the thesis that Luther and Trent did not really disagree on the underlying matter of free will has been rebuked on two fronts. Firstly, this discussion has disagreed with Pesch's argument that the treatise of *The Bondage of the Will* should be excluded from a discussion of theological unity between Trent and Luther, as it was merely a series of polemical issues, which did not represent Luther's true opinion. On the contrary, it has been seen that *The Bondage of the Will* is not only in harmony with Luther's wider writings, but also sheds light on the heart of Luther's Reformation motivation, namely, that his belief in the passivity of the human will resulted from the fears of his conscience. Secondly, this discussion argued against McSorley's thesis that Trent agreed with Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will. This has been disproven in relation to Trent's decree that free will is 'in no way extinct' and that the human will can consent to, or reject the offering of grace. It is correct to say that Trent and Luther both rejected Pelagianism, but McSorley is mistaken insofar as he defines Pelagianism by Luther's standards, which Trent does not. This section has therefore suggested that Trent's teachings on free will and the sacrifice of the Mass did counter Luther's Reformation theology of free will, merit and the Mass. However, it remains to be seen whether McSorley is right in his claim that the Council of Trent was countering 'a non-authentic "episode" of Church history.'⁶⁶

The second section of this chapter will ask if the Scotist understanding of the merit of free will in the Mass received canonical approval at Trent. In other words, was what McSorley calls the 'non authentic' tradition of congruous merit, which this

⁶⁶ McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?* 265-266.

study has traced from Scotus to Biel, incorporated into Tridentine orthodoxy? The disagreement between scholastics regarding the role of human free will can be regarded as related to the question of congruous merit, because the contention of the Biel-Scotus version of the Mass is that merit is the result of the agency of the human will independent of grace. It has been argued in Chapter Two that the principle underpinning the Scotist theology of the Mass is an understanding of human free will as an independent volition capable of loving God above all things. The power to perform good acts is then seen to lie within the capacity of the human will, and the meritorious worth of such good acts is dependent on God's decision to ascribe eternal life to them. The Scotist teaching on the role of free will in gaining merit in the sacrifice of the Mass was, therefore, located within a broader schema of congruous merit. In order to discern whether or not the Scotist view was accommodated by Trent, it will therefore be helpful to explore this theology of the merit of the Mass in the context of Trent's teaching on original sin, justification and contrition.

Firstly, it is necessary to examine current scholarship on the question of whether or not Trent was Counter-Reformation in relation to Luther's theology alone, or if Trent also countered the Scotist theology of congruous merit. The traditional interpretation of Trent's theological relationship to scholastic differences is exemplified by Jedin in his seminal work on the history of the Council of Trent. Jedin argues that Trent provided an umbrella of orthodoxy over all scholastic schools, and aimed only to protect the Church from the storm of Reformation theology. The purpose of Trent, he suggests, was to draw 'a line of demarcation between Catholic dogma and Protestant teaching—not to settle controverted opinions in the Catholic schools—it follows that in all doubtful cases previously professed theological opinions may continue to be held.'⁶⁷ This thesis of inclusivity has been further developed by Oberman, who alleges that Trent supported the Scotist theology of congruous merit. He maintains that Trent's teaching on the ability of sinners to prepare for the reception of sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) illustrates that, 'the Scotist interest in the *meritum de congruo* (congruous merit) has been fully validated, taken into account and safeguarded.'⁶⁸ Oberman's case for Trent's endorsement of congruous merit rests on his translation of the verb *promereri*.

⁶⁷ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, vol. 2, 309.

⁶⁸ Oberman, 'Duns Scotus, Nominalism and the Council of Trent,' 218.

Oberman contends that *promereri* should be translated as ‘to truly merit, completely or fully.’ The key passage reads: ‘*quia nihil eorum, quae iustificationem praedunt, sive fides, sive opera, ipsam iustificationis gratiam promeretur.*’⁶⁹ Depending on how *promereri* is translated, this passage can be seen as either including or excluding the theology of congruous merit. For example, Tanner translates this passage in an exclusive way: ‘Nothing that precedes justification, neither faith nor works, would merit the grace of justification.’⁷⁰ This can be compared with Oberman’s rather different translation: ‘None of the acts which precede justification, whether faith or works, *fully* merits the grace of justification.’⁷¹ In light of this innovative translation of *promereri*, Oberman argues that Trent’s instruction can be read as a reflection of the strong Franciscan contingent present at the council, rather than as a prequel to what he deems a ‘Thomistic syntax’ in Catholic thought. Oberman concludes: ‘We hope to have established that the “Franciscan contribution” has been far more penetrating than it usually has been given credit for.’⁷² Oberman’s thesis of Trent’s positive response to congruous merit, which has been shown in Chapters One and Four to be the fruit of the Scotist formulation of free will, will, therefore, be the focus in exploring this question.

In considering the state of scholarship on the question of ‘whom did Trent counter?’ it is significant that, whilst Oberman’s thesis of the orthodoxy of congruous merit at Trent has been widely accepted, his suggestion that the Council had a positively Franciscan flavour has received modification. More recent scholarship has returned to Jedin’s broad Church thesis, according to which no one scholastic school is prioritised or anathematised at Trent. Schillebeeckx remarks:

While I accept Oberman’s analysis of the Tridentine texts, I would like to add one or two precisions to his evaluation of them ... One cannot really say that the dogma of Trent decided in favour of the Scotist and nominalist *meritum de congruo*, by which man can prepare himself for God’s grace and so merit it by his own strength on the basis of God’s liberality, not by God’s justice.⁷³

⁶⁹ CT, 674.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Oberman, ‘Duns Scotus, Nominalism and the Council of Trent,’ 218.

⁷² Ibid, 209.

⁷³ Schillebeeckx, ‘The Tridentine Decree on Justification,’ 92.

Schillebeeckx's point is that, although congruous merit was accepted, the Council's intention was not to decide 'in favour' of any one brand of scholasticism. Schillebeeckx continues:

In spite of the pressures that were brought to bear, Trent maintained its principle of not defining anything on which the three parties, Thomist, Scotist and Nominalist were not agreed. In this sense the Tridentine definition limited itself to the minimum, an action that was, and still is, repugnant to the Reformers, and rightly so.⁷⁴

O'Malley similarly believes that theological differences between scholastics did not significantly affect the making of Tridentine orthodoxy. He writes: 'Although the different schools of medieval theology did not agree about many particulars related especially to metaphysics, they agreed on the essential dogmatic issues.'⁷⁵ The preliminary task in this investigation, into the degree to which Trent supported the Scotist theology of the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass, is therefore to establish whether or not Trent was involved in choosing between different scholastic theologies. This is because the trend in scholarship, holding that Trent accepted congruous merit, is largely dependent on the assumption that the Tridentine proceedings did not involve a narrowing of Catholic orthodoxy.

To confront the thesis of Trent's theological non-involvement in scholastic differences, we turn to Girolamo Seripando (1493-1563), general of the Augustinian Hermits, and an exponent of the theory of double justice at the Council. Double justice holds that although the Christian possesses inherent righteousness, this remains incomplete, and in view of the ongoing struggle against sin, an imputation of Christ's righteousness is also necessary. Seripando's contribution to the making of the Tridentine decrees was such that Jedin observes, 'no other theologian had as much influence on its composition, positively or negatively, as he.'⁷⁶ Yet despite his significant contribution to the drafts of the decrees, the theology of double justice which Seripando advocated was excluded from the decrees of Trent.⁷⁷ This is of particular importance because, before the Council, the theory of double justice was believed by scholastics such as Gropper, Pigghe, Contarini and Italian Spirituali

⁷⁴ Ibid, 92.

⁷⁵ O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, 119.

⁷⁶ Jedin, *Papal Legate at the Council of Trent*, 392.

⁷⁷ See discussion in Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 62-65.

movement, to lie within the spectrum of Catholic orthodoxy. Contarini employed his belief in double justice in the attempts at rapprochement with Melancthon, Bucer and Pistorius, at the Colloquy of Regensburg in 1541. The decrees of Regensburg illustrate the belief among scholastics, such as Contarini, that double justice was a permissible theology of justification within Catholic orthodoxy:

Although fear of God, patience, humility and other virtues ought always to grow in the regenerate, because this renewal is imperfect and enormous weakness remains in them, it should nevertheless be taught that those who truly repent may always hold with certain faith that they are pleasing to God on account of Christ the mediator.⁷⁸

Contarini's sentiments are echoed in the two additional clauses proposed by Seripando to chapter 16 of Trent's decree on justification.

1. If a man is conscious of not having acted with such fervour of charity as to have complied with the commandments of God and thereby merited eternal life, or if he is in doubt about it, let him repent and call upon God's mercy for the sake of Christ's Passion.
2. Let a man keep before his eyes the strict judgement of God and in a contrite spirit have recourse to his mercy for the sake of Christ's Passion.⁷⁹

Trent's decision to reject double justice was in large part a response to the theological objections raised by Diego Laynez, the second Superior General of the Society of Jesus, on 26 October 1546. This decision was affirmed on 31 October and reiterated on 11 December 1546.⁸⁰ The final decree excludes the possibility of two streams of righteousness in the process of justification:

There are not two righteousnesses, which are given to us, God's and Christ's, but one righteousness of God through Jesus Christ, that is love or grace, by which the justified are not merely reputed, but truly called and are righteous Finally, the one (*unica*) formal cause is the justness of God: not that by which he himself is just, but that by which he makes us just.⁸¹

Trent thus makes clear that it is the gift of righteousness, which is internal and inherent rather than external and imputed, that is the Christian's pledge of salvation.

⁷⁸ 'The Regensburg Agreement' (1541), Article 5, 235.

⁷⁹ Seripando, *CT* 5, 761-672, to be added to the draft at *CT*, vol. 5, 639, lines 33-35, cited by Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent*, 287-288.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of Laynez's refutation of double justice, see Maxcey, 'Double Justice, Diego Laynez, and the Council of Trent,' 269-278.

⁸¹ *CT*, 673.

By protecting the sufficiency of inherent righteousness, the Council's intention is to reassure the faithful of the sufficiency of the grace of baptism and, if baptismal grace has been lost by mortal sin, of confession. Ludovicus Vitriarius went so far as to describe the right of the baptized who do not die in a state of mortal sin to demand their entitlement to eternal life in the moment of final judgment:

[The justified person] will be brought before God's judgment seat, and God will interrogate him in these words: 'What do you ask?' He will reply: 'I ask for eternal life.' 'On what grounds?' 'Because you are bound to give it to me.' 'Which law says so?' 'Your own! – for in your Law it says [all who swear by him shall be praised].'⁸²

The exclusion of double justice reveals that the Council of Trent did not refrain from excluding problematic elements of scholastic thought. Crucially, during the Tridentine proceedings, Seripando found his version of scholasticism outlawed. Reflecting on Contarini and Seripando's assumption of the orthodoxy of double justice, Matheson writes: 'We shall have to move towards a rather more differentiated conception of pre-Tridentine Catholicism.'⁸³ More work needs to be done in this area, but this preliminary examination of Trent's attitude to double justice demonstrates that it is a mistake to assume that Tridentine orthodoxy provided a theological safe haven for all existing streams of scholastic theology. The issue of double justice is important, precisely because it demonstrates that Trent was willing to intervene in disputes within scholastic theology as well as to oppose Protestant reformers.

In assessing whether or not the Scotist theory of congruous merit, which underpinned the Scotist vision of merit in the Mass, was included at Trent, it is necessary to situate the verb *promereri* in the wider pattern of Trent's teaching on the relationship between nature and grace. Trent's teachings of justification and the sacrament of penance suggest that, contrary to the theory of congruous merit, grace precedes any motion towards salvation. Trent's descriptions of the theology of merit,

⁸² *Concilium Tridentinum* 5:569: '*Praesentetur [iustificatus] ante tribunal Dei, et interroget illum Deus et dicat: Quid petis? At ille: Peto vitam aeternam. Quare? Quia teneris illam mihi dare. Qua lege? Tua, quia in lege tua dicit [Ps. 62:12].*' Cited by Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 63.

⁸³ Matheson, *Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg*, 181.

therefore, help to throw light on the understanding of merit used in relation to the sacrifice of the Mass.

Firstly, Trent's rejection of congruous merit is exhibited in its affirmation of prevenient grace, the grace that invites and disposes the sinner to turn to God and repent. By emphasising the role of prevenient grace in preparation for justification, Trent opposes Biel's teaching that grace is rewarded to sinners who do their best to love God above all things, according to their natural powers alone. Chapter 5 of the decree on justification states:

The Council further declares that actual justification in adults takes its origin from a predisposing grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from the invitation that calls them, with no existing merits on their side; thus, those who had been turned away from God by sins, are disposed by God's grace inciting and helping them, to turn towards their own justification, by giving free assent to, and co-operating with, this same grace.⁸⁴

Chapter 6 of the same decree reinforces the role of prevenient grace: 'People are disposed for that justice when, roused and helped by divine grace and attaining the faith that comes from hearing, they are moved freely towards God and believe to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised ...'.⁸⁵ The Council's insistence that it is grace, and not an independent volition of free will, which is the power that 'always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works' therefore counters the adherence to congruous merit found in the work of Biel and Scotus.

Secondly, Trent's theological demarcation, regarding the validity of different scholastic teachings on merit, can be grasped in respect to the Council's instruction on the sacrament of penance. Here too, Trent emphasises that the powers of the human will alone are unable to restore humanity after the grace of baptism has been lost through mortal sin. After mortal sin, the Council describes the sinner's condition as shipwrecked, and in need of rescuing, through the sacrament of penance: 'For this kind of justification, is a restoration of the fallen, which the holy fathers suitably call a second plank for the grace shattered in a storm.'⁸⁶ Chapter 14 of the decree on

⁸⁴ *CT*, 672.

⁸⁵ *CT*, 672.

⁸⁶ *CT*, 677.

justification with its reference to ‘God’s prompting’ is another example of Trent’s rejection of the Scotist theology of congruous merit:

Those who fall away by sin from the grace of justification, which they had received, can again be justified, when at God’s prompting they have made the effort through the sacrament of penance to recover, by the merit of Christ, the grace which was lost.⁸⁷

Biel’s development of Scotus’s free will logic had led to a theology in which the human will had to attain perfect contrition before the absolution of the sacrament of penance could be efficacious. In contrast to Biel’s affirmation of the capacity of fallen free will, Trent not only maintains the sufficiency of attrition as a condition for absolution, but defends this weak form of contrition as itself a work of grace:

But of that imperfect contrition, which is called attrition since it is generally conceived, either out of a consideration of the baseness of sin or from a fear of hell and punishments, as long as it excludes the will to sin and hopes for pardon, the council declares that not only does it not make a person a hypocrite and even more a sinner, but that it is even a gift of God and an impulse of the Holy Spirit, not yet actually dwelling in the penitent, but only moving him, helped by which he prepares for himself a path towards justice; and although it cannot of itself and without the sacrament of penance lead to justification, yet it disposes him to beg and obtain the grace of God in this sacrament of penance.⁸⁸

It is thus clear that the confidence which the Scotist tradition had placed in the powers of unaided human free will is negated by the Council of Trent. In contrast to Oberman’s thesis of Trent’s positive endorsement of congruous merit, the Council’s teaching on prevenient grace must be acknowledged to outlaw this tenet of Scotist tradition from Tridentine orthodoxy. Indeed, against the theology proposed by Scotus and developed by Biel, Canon Three declares: ‘If anyone says that, without preceding inspiration of the Holy Spirit and without its help, a person can believe, hope, love and repent, as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be granted to him: let him be anathema.’⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *CT*, 676-677.

⁸⁸ *CT*, 705.

⁸⁹ *CT*, 679.

Thirdly, the rejection of congruous merit, made evident in the decrees on justification and penance, must be applied to the role of human free will in the merit of the Mass. What theological repercussions does Trent's understanding that grace 'always precedes, accompanies and follows'⁹⁰ every meritorious action, have on the Scotist understanding of the merit of the Mass? It has been shown in Chapter Two that the weakness of Pelagianism in Scotus's account of the Mass lay in his separation of the will of the Christian from the will of Christ. Scotus emphasised that the merit of the Mass was not directly related to either the sacrifice of Calvary or the real presence of Christ in the sacrifice. By separating the dynamic of grace in the Eucharistic sacrifice from the salvific action of Christ's offering on the cross, Scotus created a theology of the merit of this Eucharistic sacrifice that depended on the pious efforts of the human will. This can be reviewed using a couple of Scotus's key observations. He writes: 'It is clear, then, that the Eucharistic offering is accepted not because of Christ's good will as the immediate offerer, but rather by reason of the will of the universal Church, and this is of limited merit.'⁹¹ Scotus similarly notes: 'This shows that just as the Eucharist is not accepted precisely because of what is contained therein, but it has to be offered, so neither is it fully accepted when offered, except by reason of the good will of someone offering it.'⁹² Speaking of the supposed orthodoxy of the Scotist understanding of the merit of the Mass as a sacrifice, Kilmartin remarks:

While other opinions concerning the origin of the limitations of the fruits of the Mass were not limited to Scotus's explanation, it is his theological orientation (that the efficacy of the Mass was dependent on the piety of parishioners), that determined the teaching about Mass stipends and its practice up to the twentieth century.⁹³

The task is thus to ascertain if the decrees of the Council of Trent support Kilmartin's claim, or whether Trent remained consistent to its policy of prohibiting congruous merit, and thus countered the Scotist formulation of free will in the sacrifice of the Mass.

In seeking to understand Trent's attitude to the Scotist view of human free will in the Mass, it is crucial to grasp the Council's view of merit as a participation in

⁹⁰ *CT*, 678.

⁹¹ Scotus, *Quodlibets*, 460.

⁹² *Ibid*, 459-460.

⁹³ Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West*, 168.

Christ's saving work. The Council's teaching on merit and satisfaction, illustrates that grace confers a unity between the human will and Christ. It will become apparent that this grace-enabled participation is alien to the Scotist criterion that merit depends on the independence of the human will, in offering a sacrifice separate from the cross. The Council speaks of merit, not as separate from Christ's salvific work, but as the Christian's participation in the life of Christ:

Thus we have nothing of which we can boast; but all our boasting is in Christ, in whom we live, in whom we merit, in whom we make satisfaction and yield fruits that will benefit repentance, which have their worth from Him, are offered by Him to the Father and through Him are accepted by the Father.⁹⁴

These theologies of merit and satisfaction are brought together in Trent's view of the dynamic of grace, which incorporates the human will into the work of Christ: 'Just as no Catholic ever supposed that the value of the merit and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ was either obscured, or in some way diminished, as a result of acts of satisfaction on our part.'⁹⁵ Christ is neither obscured nor diminished, because the Christian's power of satisfaction lies in the participation of their human will in Christ's satisfaction:

For this satisfaction which we offer in payment for our sins is not so much ours that it is not also done through Christ Jesus; for we can do nothing of ourselves as of ourselves; with his cooperation we can do everything in him who strengthens us.⁹⁶

The theological understanding that it is Christ who offers the Mass, through the ministry of the priest—an aspect of union between Christ and the priest missing in the Scotist separation of the merit of the Mass from the merit of the cross—further expresses Trent's vision that the merit and satisfaction of the Mass is a participation in Christ's cross. The Council declares: 'For it is one and the same victim here, offering himself by the ministry of his priests, who then offered himself on the cross: it is only the manner of offering that is different.'⁹⁷ This teaching is reinforced by *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*: 'The priest is also one and the same, Christ the Lord; for the ministers who offer Sacrifice, consecrate the holy mysteries, not in their

⁹⁴ *CT*, 709.

⁹⁵ *CT*, 709.

⁹⁶ *CT*, 709.

⁹⁷ *CT*, 733.

own person, but in that of Christ.’⁹⁸ Trent’s understanding of merit in the sacrifice of the Mass must, therefore, be read as a participational model, in which the intention to offer the Mass, shared by the donor, priest and congregation, is ‘grafted into Christ.’ In contrast to the Scotist model of merit as an act of independent volition, Trent proclaims that all merit is a partaking of the grace and satisfaction of Christ, which flows from ‘the head to the members and the vine to the branches.’⁹⁹ This depiction of the participation of the human will in Christ is therefore in contrast with the Pelagian theology of the sacrifice of the Mass, which developed as a result of the Scotist interpretation of free will.

The case that the Council’s teaching on merit, presented in the decrees on justification and penance, implies that the Scotist interpretation of the merit of the Mass was not endorsed by Trent is further strengthened by examining the formation of the decree on the sacrifice of the Mass. A significant sign of the Council’s refusal of the Scotist separation of the altar from the cross is the revision made on 3 January 1552 of the second chapter of the first draft. In the original version of the second chapter of the first draft, it explicitly states, ‘these two sacrifices’ (of the Eucharist and the Cross): its exact words are ‘*Ita autem de duobus his sacrificiis sermo habetur... .*’¹⁰⁰ McHugh notes that these words ‘clearly and repeatedly imply that there are here two distinct sacrifices.’¹⁰¹ By setting the developmental changes in the drafts of the decree on the Mass within the context of the speeches presented in the proceedings, Jedin makes a compelling case that the problematic components of the original draft on the sacrifice of the Mass were the work of the legate Crescenzo and his associates.¹⁰² Jedin points out that the phraseology of the draft reproduces the closing sentiments of a speech made by Crescenzo to the Council of Trent, in which he contends that the merit of the Mass yields an additional merit to that of the cross. Crescenzo’s logic that the Mass ‘therefore adds to the passion of Christ rather than detracts from it [*arrogat igitur, non derogat passioni Christi*],’¹⁰³ conflicts with the Council’s later insistence that all the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass flows from the

⁹⁸ CCT, 247.

⁹⁹ CT, 678.

¹⁰⁰ The first draft is recorded in the German Catholic Historical Society’s collection of the proceedings of the Council of Trent, *Concilium Tridentinum*, 7, 477-478, footnote n.

¹⁰¹ McHugh, ‘The Sacrifice of the Mass at the Council of Trent,’ 169.

¹⁰² Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*, vol.3, 524.

¹⁰³ Crescenzo’s speech can be found in *Concilium Tridentinum*, vol. 7, 382 and vol. 8, 34-36.

Christ's cross. One of the last contributions to the debate was made by Girolamo Muzzarelli, a Dominican from Bologna. Muzzarelli's explanation of the satisfactory merit of the Mass clearly excludes the Scotist notion of congruous merit: 'But this sacrifice does not avail for the blotting out of sins by way of merit, only by way of successful petition, so that forgiveness is requested and granted, but not as if it were earned or deserved.'¹⁰⁴ The turn away from the Scotist interpretation is marked by the losing party's accusation that it represents 'Cajetanism.'¹⁰⁵ The proceedings had made it plain to Crescenzo, and those influenced by the Scotist interpretation, that the Council's formulation endorsed a vision of the merit of the Mass that, if not exclusively Thomist, was certainly not Scotist.

The revised chapter of the decree on the sacrifice of the Mass can, therefore, be understood as steering clear of the Pelagian danger implicit within the Scotist tradition of separating the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass from the salvific efficacy of Christ's cross. Trent teaches that the Mass was instituted:

... in order to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as human nature requires), by which that bloody sacrifice on the cross should be represented, its memory persist until the end of time, and its saving power be applied to the forgiveness of sins which we daily commit.¹⁰⁶

The decree also provides further indication of a non-Scotist understanding on the Mass in its insistence that the merit of the Mass does not stem from the worthiness of the priest, congregation or mass donor. In contrast to the Scotist emphasis on the holiness of the will of those who offer the Mass, the decree holds that the effectiveness of the Mass does not rest on the devotion of individual Christians, but on the worthiness of Christ himself: 'And this is none other than the clean oblation that can be soiled by no unworthiness or evil on the part of those offering, which the Lord foretold through Malachi as being offered in purity in every place to his name, and would be great among the nations.'¹⁰⁷ The debates and revisions that took place in the

¹⁰⁴ Muzzarelli (22 August): '*Hoc autem sacrificium prodest ad peccata delenda, non meritorie, sed impetratorie, ita ut venia impetretur, non autem per modum meriti.*' Cited by McHugh, *Sacrifice of Mass at the Council of Trent*, 165.

¹⁰⁵ Hosius accused Mantua of being a 'Cajetanist': 'Letter from Methua to Ganzaga' (7 Sept. 1562), *La Correspondenza del card. Ercole Gonzaga, presidente del Concilio di Trento: Archivio storico per le provincie Parmensi*, ed. G. Drei, 17 (1917) 101, cited by Jedin, *Papal Legate*, 654.

¹⁰⁶ CT, 733.

¹⁰⁷ CT, 733.

formation of the decree, together with the theology of the decree itself, substantiate the claim of this chapter: namely that Trent's model of merit as participation in Christ, entailed a rejection of both Luther's Reformation doctrine of the passivity, and the Scotist free will tradition.

The third section of this chapter asks whether Trent's censor of Luther and the Scotist interpretation of free will in the Mass should be weighed in equal measure. Is there a sense in which Luther's theology of the human will, and his consequent theology of the Mass as a testament, deserves the title of Reformation, in a way that the Scotist reformulation of the meritorious power of free will in the Mass does not? If so, the task is to identify the key theological articles which close the door to unity between Trent and Luther, whilst allowing the Scotist school to at least stand in the porch of Tridentine orthodoxy.

In examining the relationship between Luther and Trent on the role of the human will in the Mass, it has been found that Luther's belief in the passivity of the human will after the gift of grace is the fundamental obstacle to unity. This doctrine necessarily excludes Trent's model of merit and satisfaction, by which the human will is enabled by grace to participate in Christ's sacrifice, as a living member of his mystical body. In contrast, Luther's theology of testament proclaims that the human will is only a recipient of the benefits of Christ's grace in the Mass. Speaking of the Mass, Luther remarks: 'Here there is no *officium* but *beneficium*, no work or service but reception and benefit alone—so also no one can observe or hear Mass for another, but each one for himself alone. For there is nothing there but a taking and receiving.'¹⁰⁸ The Reformation implications of Luther's doctrine of passivity have been seen to have had a profound impact, not only in dispensing with the scholastic practice of offering Masses for the benefit of the living and deceased, but also in excluding the freedom of the human will to reject grace. Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* presents a theology in which either the power of the devil or God governs the human will with an irresistible force. It has been argued that this strict application of the passivity of the human will under the powers of good or evil was rejected by the Council of Trent. In contrast to Luther, Trent declares: 'Consequently, though God

¹⁰⁸ Luther, *A Treatise on the New Testament*, LW 35, 97.

touches a person's heart through the light of the Holy Spirit, neither does that person do absolutely nothing in receiving that movement of grace, for he can also reject it.¹⁰⁹ The Reformation quality of Luther's theology of passivity is thus secured by Trent's anathematisation of the view that the human will is stripped of the power to dissent from grace:

If anyone says that a person's free will when moved and roused by God, gives no co-operation by responding to God's summons and invitation to dispose and prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification; and that it cannot, if it so wishes, dissent but, like something inanimate, can do nothing at all and remains merely passive: let him be anathema.¹¹⁰

The fundamental principle which defines Luther's theology of the human will in the Mass as a Reformation is, therefore, his belief in absolute passivity before and after grace. This article closes the door to reconciliation between Luther's theology and Trent, because it has the twofold effect of outlawing the practice of a meritorious offering in the sacrifice of the Mass, and denies the canonised freedom of the human will to reject grace.

The problematic features of Pelagianism, prevalent in the Scotist theology of free will in the Mass, were also opposed in Trent's teaching on merit and propitiation in the decrees on justification, penance and the sacrifice of the Mass. However, the Scotist theory of congruous merit, and its corollary of the independence of the volition of the human will from Christ's sacrifice in the merit of the Mass, should not be seen as a Reformation in equal measure to Luther's Reformation doctrine of passivity. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, whilst the Scotist theory of merit in the Mass was a corruption of the doctrine of merit endorsed by Trent, it did not create the same obstacle to unity. The Scotist tradition had preserved an identical practice of offering the Mass as a meritorious sacrifice, although this had become attached to a Pelagian understanding. In light of the instructions of Trent, scholastics versed in a Scotist understanding could adjust their theology whilst continuing their priestly business of offering Masses for both the living and the dead. The discrepancy between Tridentine orthodoxy and Scotist teaching did not create the dramatic change in praxis that Luther's theology of testament entailed. Secondly, Trent's opposition to Luther's

¹⁰⁹ *CT*, 672.

¹¹⁰ *CT*, 679.

Reformation denial of the freedom of the human will to dissent from the operations of grace can be seen to leave the door of Tridentine orthodoxy at least ajar to the Scotist tradition of free will in the Mass. Although Trent's affirmation of the human will's ability to reject grace did not amount to an endorsement of the Scotist theory of free will in the sacrifice of the Mass, it did give the Scotist school a foothold in the Tridentine era. In establishing that 'neither does that person do absolutely nothing in receiving that movement of grace, for he can also reject it,'¹¹¹ Trent preserved an arena for the scholastic debate concerning the human free will. In declaring that the human will possessed a freedom to reject grace, the Scotist school could maintain a principle of an independent volition. Could not this negative freedom be transformed to mean that the human will had the positive power not to reject grace and, if so, was this not a form of congruous merit? The decrees that deem Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will in the Mass a theological Reformation, therefore serve to safeguard the Scotist view from a similar exclusion from Tridentine orthodoxy. The Pelagian dangers of the Scotist account of free will in the Mass were certainly countered by the Council, but their shared practice and the preservation of the freedom of the human will to reject grace allowed the Scotist tradition to slip back through the doors of orthodoxy and enter the forum of the free will debate in the Tridentine era.

This chapter has made the case that the response of Trent to the controversial topics of free will, merit and the sacrifice of the Mass, is rightly termed a Counter-Reformation, both in respect to Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will and to the Scotist theory of merit. In the first section, the theology of the bondage of the will has been seen to rupture the arguments posited by recent historiography and recent ecumenical endeavours for unity between Luther's Reformation theology and the decrees of Trent. The diverse approaches for theological rapprochement, examined in this chapter, have all crumbled under the Reformation impact of Luther's belief in the passivity of the human will. These have included various versions of the Reformation as a result of misunderstandings, such as O'Malley and Pfnür, as well as Pesch's and McSorley's contrasting approaches to the claim that Luther and Trent actually held an identical theology of the human will. In the second section,

¹¹¹ *CT*, 672.

Oberman's thesis, that Trent positively endorsed the Scotist theology of merit, has been refuted. Interpreting *promereri* in the wider context of the decrees, reveals that Trent neither encouraged nor refrained from in-house scholastic differences regarding free will. The dynamic of grace which Trent presents in its teaching on justification and penance, is contrary to the Scotist view of the Mass, in which human free will merits salvific grace, apart from Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Hence, the second finding of this chapter has been that Trent did indeed counter the Scotist theology of the merit and sacrifice of the Mass. In the third section, the case was made that, whilst both Luther's theology and the Scotist interpretation were opposed by Trent, only Luther's doctrines of passivity and testament should truly be treated as a Reformation in respect to Tridentine orthodoxy. The justification for this distinction is twofold. Firstly, in contrast to Luther, the Scotist reformulation did not result in a radical break in the practice of offering the Mass as a sacrifice. Secondly, the effect of Trent's teaching that the human will was free to resist grace was simultaneously to exclude Luther's central doctrine of passivity, and to present an opening for the Scotist defence of the independent volition of human free will. O'Malley concludes his study of the Council of Trent by remarking: 'For the peace that resulted, everybody had paid the price in compromises, some of which came back after the council to trouble the Church.'¹¹² It has been shown, however, that Trent's decision to 'counter' the theological dangers of Luther's theology of passivity, and of the Pelagianism of the Scotists, was not in fact governed by a series of compromises, or as O'Malley suggests, the inevitable result of a theology which was 'the product of a committee.'¹¹³ Rather, the decrees of Trent barred Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will in the Mass from Catholic orthodoxy, and in doing so, compromised the validity of Scotist theology. O'Malley's observation of the recurring problems of free will in the wake of the Council of Trent does, however, raise an important question. If the Council of Trent acted decisively to counter the distortions of the Mass prevalent in both Luther's Reformation and the Scotist tradition, did the Council of Trent also put an end to the scholastic free will controversy?

¹¹² O'Malley, *Trent: What happened at the Council*, 254.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 254.

Chapter Seven: Free will to sin after Luther and Trent: a point of contention or convergence?

Luther's doctrine of passivity and Trent's insistence that the human will is free to reject grace would appear to yield a theological stalemate for ecumenical discourse. However, this chapter explores how the theology of the free will to reject salvific grace unravelled itself in the Lutheran context after the death of Luther (1546), and in the Catholic context after the close of the Council of Trent (1565). In examining the Lutheran and Catholic approaches to the ability of the human will to reject grace, this chapter suggests that, the Churches reached a parallel consensus. This is a significant step for ecumenism. The aim of this chapter is to ascertain whether or not Luther's article of the passivity of the human was retained in Lutheranism, and thus continued to exert its Reformation power, as a barrier to Catholic orthodoxy. Firstly, the theological development of free will within Lutheranism will be considered. This section begins with an exploration of the theological tension, on the subject of free will between Luther and his successor Melancthon. It proceeds to reflect on the effects of this divergence, within early Lutheranism in the Majorist, Synergist and Flacian controversies.¹ Secondly, the fate of Trent's inclusion of the free will to sin will be studied in relation to the unresolved dispute between Jesuits and Dominicans, and it will be shown that this dispute confirmed a polarity in Catholic thought. This dispute was provoked by Bainism and supplied theological weapons to Jansenism. Thirdly, the points of consensus that can be drawn from these internal disputes will be compared. Whilst the theology of free will shook the houses of Lutheran and Catholic orthodoxy in the periods post-Trent and post-Luther, does this shared confusion point to the theology of the free will to sin, as a point of ecumenical convergence? Addressing the issue of justification, Lane comments: 'The differences within Protestantism and Catholicism are far greater than the differences between them.'² In examining the waves of controversy after Trent and Luther, this chapter seeks to determine whether or not Lane's statement can be applied to the division between Catholics and Lutherans regarding the free will to sin. Could it be that, in the wake of

¹ For a comprehensive examination of how Luther's theology of *The Bondage of the Will* was received and modified by his followers see Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election and Wittenberg Theological Method*.

² Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 150.

these controversies, Luther's fundamental reason for rejecting the Mass as a sacrifice, the passivity of the human will, had been overcome?

Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), was a close associate of Luther at Wittenberg, yet his theological allegiance to Luther's Reformation article of the passivity, has been debated amongst Reformation scholars.³ Historiographical opinion is divided between those who view Melanchthon's teaching on the necessity of good works as emblematic of his sympathy for Erasmus, and those who interpret Melanchthon's theology as an evangelical development of Luther's position. For instance, Wengert holds that, in Melanchthon's writings, 'his praise of Erasmus focussed on the Dutch humanist's language skills,' and did not express his sympathy for Erasmus's position on free will.⁴ However, Wengert's account seems unlikely in light of Melanchthon's letter to Spalatin (Sept. 1524), in which he expresses his theological approval of Erasmus's *Diatribes Concerning Free Choice*:

I desperately desire that this subject, which is the most important in the Christian religion, should be carefully examined, and for this reason I rejoice that Erasmus has taken up the struggle. For a long time, I have wished that some prudent person should oppose Luther on this matter. If Erasmus is not this man, I am greatly deceived.⁵

In contrast to Wengert, Maxcey argues that Melanchthon's teaching on the necessity of good works is the fruit of his humanist training. Maxcey holds that Melanchthon expresses a theological orientation on the theology of free will, which was fundamentally different from that of Luther. Maxcey writes: 'It is as a result of his interest in natural knowledge and natural law, as well as through his background in classical thinkers, that Melanchthon arrives at a theology of good works.'⁶ Maxcey's thesis is that Melanchthon, contrary to Luther, believed good works to be necessary for salvation. Maxcey's view is supported by the work of Kolb, Greschat and Bente. Kolb suggests that Melanchthon only withdrew the dictum 'good works are necessary for salvation,' 'after a controversy over its use involving one of his disciples, Casper

³ For a summary of the evolution of Melanchthon's thought on the subject of free will and of the historiographical debate see Kolb, *Bound Choice*, 76-95.

⁴ Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness*, 157.

⁵ Melanchthon, 'Letter to Spalatin concerning the Luther-Erasmus Debate' (1524), 196.

⁶ Maxcey, *Bona Opera*, 294.

Cruciger.’⁷ This does not necessarily represent a change in his thought, but can be seen as illustrative of his irenic approach. Bente affirms this view:

Nowhere, however, did [Melanchthon] reject [philosophy] or advise against its use, because it was inherently erroneous and false as such, but always merely because it was subject to abuse and misapprehension,—a qualified rejection, which self-evidently could not, and did not, satisfy his opponents.⁸

Lastly, Graybill places Melanchthon’s statements on the necessity of good works, within an evolutionary model of theological development away from Luther’s position. Graybill argues that Melanchthon’s teaching ‘was something new,’ and that this marked the first revival of the truly Biblical concept of ‘Evangelical free will.’⁹ Whilst the definition of the ‘truly Biblical’ teaching of free will in justification will always be open to debate, Graybill’s study helpfully points to the way in which Melanchthon combines Luther’s theology of imputed righteousness with the Catholic notion that grace enables good works.

It is telling that Luther rejected Melanchthon’s attempt to bring together the theology of Luther and the scholastics on justification at the Colloquy of Regensburg (1541). Indeed, upon receiving the Regensburg Book, Luther voiced his belief in the theological inconsistency of double justice:

These people, whoever they may be, mean quite well, but theirs are impossible proposals, which the pope, cardinals, bishops and canons can never accept. ...

It is useless to undertake concord with such means. Moreover, there are many things therein which we shall not and cannot present to our people.¹⁰

Luther’s disapproval of Melanchthon’s negotiation of the theology of double justice at Regensburg supports Graybill’s vision of Melanchthon’s theological novelty. However, the Regensburg disagreement between Luther and Melanchthon also sends up a flare which illuminates their theological relationship. Melanchthon’s openness to double justice, or ‘evangelical free will,’ and Luther’s point blank refusal of it, suggest that Bente and Maxcey are justified in positing a theological departure in Melanchthon’s theology from Luther’s Reformation doctrine of the passivity of the

⁷ Kolb, *Melanchthon neben Luther*, 217-230.

⁸ Bente, ‘Historical Introductions to the Symbolic Books’ and ‘The Evangelical Lutheran Church’ in *Concordia Triglotta*, 115.

⁹ Graybill, *Evangelical Free Will*, 316.

¹⁰ Luther cited by Mackensen, ‘Diplomatic Role,’ 327.

human will. The case for a theological divergence between Luther and Melanchthon on the issue of the free will to reject grace, can be appreciated by focussing on the key issues of predestination, cooperation in conversion and the necessity of good works. Examining Melanchthon's approach to free will is of critical importance, because it demonstrates that the fundamental article of passivity was debated afresh by Luther's earliest disciples. In leading this debate over the founding article of Luther's Reformation, Melanchthon opened the door to uncertainty concerning the theological identity of Lutheranism. Melanchthon can thus be seen as paving the way to the later division between the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans ('genuine Lutherans').

The topic of predestination is indicative of Melanchthon's view of the freedom of the human will to sin, because it affirms God's will for universal salvation. If God really does want all people to come to possess faith in Christ and eternal life, Melanchthon concludes, that it is necessary to hold that God provides the grace to make this possible. Commenting on Romans 5: 3-5 in 1532, Melanchthon expresses his disapproval of theologians who use predestination as a means of limiting God's mercy:

Because the sentence is universal 'That all may receive mercy,' on that account it is opposed to dangerous imaginations regarding predestination, lest we dispute that mercy was promised to others but not to us. Such imaginations are false and impious to indicate that these promises are deceitful and misleading, because to all much mercy is promised and required, in order that all believe. In such a universal sentence we are also included. And similar universal testimonies are available for consideration.¹¹

Given Melanchthon's defence of God's universal offer of salvation, the only possible explanation for the unrepentant, is that the human will possesses the freedom to reject grace. Graybill observes: 'Melanchthon's thought here implied that if it was not the will of God that any should reject the Gospel (and indeed it was not, for God did not will the damnation of any), then the cause for such rejection must have lain within the

¹¹ Melanchthon, 'Commentarii in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos' (1535), in: *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, ed. R. Stupperich, vol. 5, 161-162: '*Est et hoc observandum, quod sententia est universalis 'ut omnium misereatur,' ideoque opponenda est periculosis imaginationibus de praedestinatione, ne disputemus aliis promitti misericordiam, nobis non promitti. Tales imaginationes falsae sunt et impiae, quia calumniantur et corrumpunt has promissiones, quae omnibus pollicentur misericordiam et requirunt, et credant omnes. In eiusmodi universals sententias nos quoque includamus. Ac prodest similia testimonia universalia habere in conspectus.*' Cited by Graybill, *Evangelical Free Will*, 207.

individual human being.’¹² In his discussion of Romans 9, Melanchthon concludes that it is an individual’s responsibility not to reject the gift of salvation: ‘The mercy of God is the true cause of election, but nevertheless to some degree there is some cause in the one accepting, insofar as one does not refuse the offer of the promises due to the evil that is within us.’¹³ It is helpful here to recall that Luther resolved the apparent contradiction in God’s mercy, implied by the different provisions of grace given to the elect and the reprobate, by appealing to God’s unfathomable goodness. In *The Bondage of the Will* Luther remarks: ‘The God whose judgement here is one of incomprehensible righteousness, is a God of most perfect and manifest righteousness.’¹⁴ Whereas Luther maintains the passivity of the human will, and so concludes that reprobation and sin are ultimately subsumed into the goodness of God’s plan of election, Melanchthon’s defence of God’s desire for universal salvation leads him to draw the opposite conclusion. Melanchthon’s writings on Romans reveal that, in contrast to Luther, he locates the final explanation for sin and the fate of the unconverted in the obstinacy of the human will. In Melanchthon’s mind, defending the good news of God’s love for salvation requires that the human will is responsible for the sin of rejecting grace.

The second tenet held by Melanchthon *contra* Luther on free will, is the principle of human cooperation with grace in the dynamic of conversion. The role of the human will in accepting or rejecting grace has been seen to follow on from Melanchthon’s interpretation of Romans regarding predestination. The principle of cooperation is explored further in his second edition of the *Loci Communes*. His simultaneous rejection of divine determinism and embracing of the human free will to sin can be seen in his explanation of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. Melanchthon holds that the Hebrew use of this phrase signifies divine permission of disobedience, rather than a divine agency causing Pharaoh’s lack of repentance:

This impression that the will is not active is a dangerous delusion from which one must free the mind. Pharaoh and Saul opposed God freely and without compulsion, although he had given them frequent and convincing proofs of his

¹² Graybill, *Evangelical Free Will*, 208.

¹³ Melanchthon, ‘*Commentarii in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*’ (1535), in: *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, vol. 5, 254: ‘*Misericordiam Dei vere causam electionis esse, sed tamen eatenus aliquam causam in accipiente esse, quatenus promissionem oblatam non repudiate, quia malum ex nobis est.*’ Cited by Graybill, *Evangelical Free Will*, 209.

¹⁴ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 292.

presence. On the other hand, the conversion of David did not occur in such a manner as when a stone is turned into a fig. Free will cooperated in him; for when he heard the threats and the promises of God, he willingly confessed his faults¹⁵

This passage makes clear that Melanchthon believed sin and conversion to involve a free act of the human will, which must cooperate both with the external calling of the Word and the internal invitation of the Holy Spirit. Melanchthon explicitly rejects Luther's view, noting that, 'nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace,'¹⁶ and arguing that the human will cannot be a wholly negative force, for otherwise the rejection of God would be necessarily be a consequence of a lack of grace. Melanchthon's position, that reprobation is ultimately not God's fault, leads him to posit some power in the human will in the process of conversion, to the extent that the will can freely accept or reject grace. Faced with the question of the bondage of the human will to sin, Melanchthon responds:

I answer: 'It is the eternal and unchanging commandment of God that you should obey the voice of the gospel, hear the Son of God, and acknowledge the Mediator.' You may say, 'I cannot.' But in a manner you certainly can, and when you have consoled yourself with the gospel, then ask God to assist you, and know that the Holy Spirit is efficacious in such consolation. Convince yourself that God intends to convert us in this manner, when we, moved by the promise, wrestle with ourselves, pray for help, and resist our lack of trust, our disbelief, and evil inclinations. For this reason some in former times have said that free will has the capability of turning toward grace; that means hearing the promise, endeavouring to assent to it, and struggling against sin Since the promise is universal, and there are no contradictory wills in God, the reason for the acceptance of some and the rejection of others must necessarily be within ourselves. The right use of this doctrine in the practice of faith and in the consolation of the soul will confirm the truth that these three causes concur: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Will.¹⁷

¹⁵ Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1548), 197.

¹⁶ Luther, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, Thesis 30, 10-11.

¹⁷ Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1548), 197.

Melanchthon's rejection of Luther's theology of the passivity of the will is reinforced by his revival of the scholastic terminology, scorned by Luther, of *necessitate consequentiae* (necessity contingent on former events) and *necessitate consequentis* (absolute necessity). Melanchthon uses these terms to explain the dynamic between divine sovereignty and human free will. Thus, the decisions of human free will, on a natural and a supernatural level, are not seen as fatalistic (*necessitate consequentiae*), but can be considered necessary with respect to preceding causes. Melanchthon's theory of the cooperation of the human will with grace therefore contradicts Luther, because Melanchthon judges that, the efficacy of conversion lies in the active agency of the human will in receiving or rejecting the love of God.

The third factor that distinguishes Melanchthon's theology of free will from Luther's doctrine of passivity relates to the freedom to perform good or sinful acts. In Luther's schema, the human will remains sinful in itself, although, in its state of passivity to grace, it can be used as an instrument in performing good works. Luther explains that, 'human nature is so evil that in those born anew of the Spirit it not only does not endeavour after the good but actually strives and fights against it...'.¹⁸ In contrast, Melanchthon expresses his belief in the freedom of the human will to sin, by emphasising the role of good works in perserving in the life of grace. Where for Luther, the ongoing temptations and falls into sin are seen as manifesting the persistent sinfulness of the human, Melanchthon views good works as a manifestation of the internal cooperation of the human will with grace. Hence, Melanchthon states in the Leipzig Articles of 1548 that there is a serious problem where good works are lacking:

Further, if anyone who has been in God's grace acts against God's command or his conscience, he grieves the Holy Ghost, loses grace and righteousness and falls beneath God's wrath... . For this reason, to speak briefly, it is readily understood that good works are necessary, for God has commanded them; and if the course of life be in opposition thereto, God's grace and Holy Ghost are rejected, and such sins merit eternal damnation.¹⁹

Here, Melanchthon's divergence from Luther on the subject of free will finds expression in the different significance given to good works. Good works acquire a

¹⁸ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 288.

¹⁹ Melanchthon, 'Of Good Works,' 191.

semi-salvific importance for Melanchthon, because a neglect of the love of neighbour is seen as expressing an internal neglect of grace. Moreover, the Leipzig articles suggest that good works keep the heart open to God's love: 'The new virtues and good works are so highly necessary that if they are not quickened in the heart, there would be no reception of divine grace.'²⁰ Melanchthon's position on the necessity of good works for salvation is striking because Luther's Reformation was pitted against what the latter saw as a Pelagian tendency to judge salvation on the basis of personal merit. The root of this dramatic reversal in the theology of good works in early Lutheranism has been found in Melanchthon's belief that the human will is free to accept or reject grace. Had it been left solely in Melanchthon's care, Luther's Reformation article of passivity would have died of abandonment in the early years of Lutheranism.

There were, however, those who styled themselves 'Gnesio-Lutherans' (genuine Lutherans). This group set out to ensure that Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will was not left in the sole care of Melanchthon and his fellow Philippists. After Luther's death, ink was first spilled in anger against Melanchthon's theology of the necessity of good works, which was the most obvious sign of his disagreement with Luther on the matter of free will. This first conflict on good works is known as the Majorist controversy, because it was Georg Major (1502-74) who replied on behalf of the Philippists to the accusations levied against them, that they were papists and Pelagians.²¹ Although the Gnesio-Lutheran movement was led by Matthias Flacius Illyricus, it was Nikolaus von Amsdorf who was responsible for composing the treatise that sparked the theological conflict. 'I, Nikolaus von Amsdorf, therefore declare that whoever teaches these words as they stand, "Good works are necessary to salvation," is the same as a Pelagian, a mameluke, a denier of Christ, and a duplicitous papist.'²² With similar boldness, Major announced: 'And I say publicly with clear words that no one is saved through evil works and also that no one is saved without good works. ... Good works must be present, not as merits but as required obedience to God'²³ Major's defence of the necessity of good works,

²⁰ Ibid, 192.

²¹ Further reading on Major see: Kolb, 'Georg Major as Controversialist: Polemics in the Late Reformation,' and Wengert, 'Georg Major as Exegete of First Timothy,' 79-118.

²² Amsdorf, 'Brief Instruction Concerning Major's Answer,' 193.

²³ Major, 'Answer to Amsdorf,' 194.

was intended to underscore the connection between conversion and obedience to God, and thus to maintain the Christian's responsibility to live a moral life. Wengert highlights Major's intention to emphasise the new life of faith rather than create a works-centred theology of salvation: 'His preaching on pious living seldom aimed at the cultivation of specific works. It aimed first of all for the fostering of—indeed, the demand for—faith in Christ, for example, according to the model of Simeon in Luke 2.'²⁴ Major's sermon on the conversion of Paul (1553) illustrates his belief that the conversion of grace enables and flows into a new life of obedience: 'For whoever believes and is justified, is now bound and obligated to begin to be obedient to God the Father, to do good and avoid evil, or else that person risks losing his or her righteousness and salvation.'²⁵ Major's belief in the necessity of good works, therefore, expresses his allegiance to a Philippist rejection of the passivity of the human will. Following Melanchthon, Major's theology favours a doctrine of the agency of the human will to consent to or reject the grace that prompts good works.

In contrast, Amsdorf's theology invokes Luther's doctrine of the bondage of the human will to sin. In a preface to Luther's sermons, he argues that a theology of good works can only detract from salvation in Christ: 'For Luther, of blessed and holy memory, writes many places and especially in Galatians, that good works are not only not necessary, they are also harmful to salvation.'²⁶ Flacius rallied to Amsdorf's cause and his theology similarly appeals to Luther's distrust of human works as signs of salvation. Thus, awareness of the depravity of the sinful human will is seen to entail that righteousness is external; salvation must always be sought *extra nos*. Flacius remarks:

Furthermore, the devil will also charge his poor conscience and the words of Isaiah who said: 'All our good works are as filthy raiment,' or the words of Luther who said: 'No good work is without sin. Where then are your good works that are necessary for salvation?' Dr. Luther, as one who experienced many difficult temptations, often said that the devil can easily make our good works dissolve away. ... Major will also have to state and determine the least number of ounces or pounds of good works one must have to be saved. He

²⁴ Wengert, 'Georg Major as Exegete of First Timothy,' 117.

²⁵ Major, 'Sermon on the Conversion of Paul,' 194.

²⁶ Amsdorf, 'Preface to Luther's Sermons on John 18-20' (1557), 195.

will have to determine the exact hour at which a sinner began to do good works so he can be certain that he has some good works. And so we come back again to the old attack of conscience.²⁷

Flacius's description of the terrors of conscience in the face of the demands of good works accurately relates to Luther's conclusion to the treatise *The Bondage of the Will*:

For my own part, I frankly confess that even if it were possible, I should not wish to have free choice given to me, or to have anything left in my hands by which I might strive toward salvation. For, on the one hand, I should be unable to stand firm and keep hold of it amid so many adversities and perils and so many assaults of demons, seeing that even one demon is mightier than all men, and no man at all could be saved; and on the other hand, even if there were no perils or adversaries or demons, I should nevertheless have to labour with perpetual uncertainty and to fight as one beating the air, since even if I lived and worked to eternity, my conscience would never be assured and certain how much it ought to do to satisfy God. For whatever work might be accomplished, there would always remain an anxious doubt whether it pleased God or whether he required something more, as the experience of all self-justifiers proves, and as I myself learned to my bitter cost through so many years.²⁸

The Majorist controversy therefore reflects the Philippist break away from Luther's Reformation article of passivity because, as the Gnesio-Lutherans observed, the requirement of good works contradicts Luther's belief that, God has 'taken my salvation out of my hands.'²⁹

The second storm to threaten Lutheran unity struck at Melanchthon's second principle of the cooperation of the human will with grace in the course of conversion. Johannes Pfeffinger (1493-1573) sought to describe the effects of original sin on the human will in a way that included Melanchthon's theory of the power to human will to cooperate in conversion. Pfeffinger veered away from Luther's theology of the bondage of the will to the devil, holding that original sin had weakened, rather than

²⁷ Flacius, 'Against the Evangelist of the Holy Gown, Dr. Miser Major,' 193-194.

²⁸ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 288-289.

²⁹ Ibid, 288-289.

destroyed, the faculty of human freedom. He set out to defend Melanchthon's teaching in the Leipzig Interim (1548), stating that God 'does not work with man as with a block, but draws him, so that his will also cooperates.'³⁰ Pfeffinger further remarks: 'Some assent or apprehension on our part must occur when the Holy Spirit has aroused the mind, the will, and the heart.'³¹ Following Melanchthon's logic, Pfeffinger grounds his theology of original sin, on the premise of God's universal will for salvation:

For since the promise of grace is universal, and since we must obey this promise, some difference between the elect and the rejected must be inferred from our will, namely, that those who resist the promise are rejected, while those who embrace the promise are received. ... All this shows that the will is not idle in conversion or like a stone or block in its conduct.³²

Pfeffinger's insistence on the free will to sin, and its corollary of the human will as co-worker with grace in conversion, is evident in his remark that:

We too, ought to assent as much as we are able, and not resist the Holy Spirit, but submit to the Word, ponder, learn, and hear it ... for we are, as St. Paul has said most seriously, co-workers with God, whose co-working, indeed, is assisted and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.³³

Pfeffinger's defence of cooperation led to an outcry from the Gnesio Lutherans and gave rise to the synergist controversy.

Tilman Heshus (1527-88) spearheaded the attack against the Philippist adherence to the cooperation of the human will in his treatise, 'On So-called Free Will—against the Synergists' (1562). In the eyes of the Gnesio-Lutherans, Pfeffinger's teaching represented a return to the scholastic theory of synergism, which was understood as a capacity to differentiate right from wrong. The synergist principle in human nature had been critiqued by Luther, as denying the effects of the fall, and consequently the total need for a saviour. Luther notes: 'If the power of free choice is not wholly in error or damnable, but sees and wills what is virtuous and good and what pertains to salvation, then it is in sound health and has no need of Christ the

³⁰ Melanchthon, 'Letter on the Leipzig Interim,' 187.

³¹ Pfeffinger, 'Five Questions on the Freedom of the Human Will' (1555), 198.

³² Ibid, 198.

³³ Ibid, 198.

physician. [Matt. 9:12]³⁴ Heshus recovers Luther's theology that the bondage of the human will to sin obliterates the power to recognise good and evil:

His powers, related to his understanding and will, are ensnared and imprisoned and locked up under the power and tyranny of sin and are the enslaved servant of the devil—thus that he by himself can wish, desire, or choose nothing other than what is opposed to righteousness, pleasing to the devil, and worthy of hellfire ...³⁵

In choosing to oppose Pfeffinger's interpretation of cooperation in order to maintain Luther's principle of the passivity of the human will, Heshus is forced to concede that the non-election of persons to eternal life has its final cause in God. Whilst he remarks that, 'it is rightly and truly believed of God that he wants all men to be saved,'³⁶ Heshus contends that, 'it is one thing to speak about the general will of God, and quite another to speak about the election and plan of God.'³⁷ In view of his belief that, 'it in no way follows, that one may conclude from this, that there is some power of free will remaining in man and some cooperation in conversion,' Heshus frames God's act of reprobation, as one of refraining from offering the assistance given to the elect. Hence, Heshus unconvincingly argues that, by excluding a principle of cooperation in human nature, his theology of the bondage of the will allows for the supposition that, God does not actively 'hinder the salvation of anyone ...'.³⁸ The flames of the synergist controversy were fanned by the political involvement of the Duke of Saxony, who sought to make Heshus's belief normative through the imposition of the 'Book of Confutation' in his region. When, in 1559, Victorin Stringel opposed this ruling, political involvement led first to his imprisonment and subsequently to a public debate on free will, in the Weimar Disputation of 1560. The political repercussions of the synergist controversy thus reinforced divisions between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans. The synergist controversy did not come to an end, but grew to become the Flacian controversy.

In the Weimar Disputation, Stringel and Flacius identified the root of the disagreement regarding cooperation, in their different understanding of original sin.

³⁴ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33, 282.

³⁵ Heshus, 'On so-called free will against the Synergists' (1562), 198.

³⁶ Ibid, 199.

³⁷ Ibid, 199.

³⁸ Ibid, 199.

Stringel held original sin to be a defect or weakening of free will affecting the mind, will, and heart. Critically, he did not view original sin as replacing the inherent goodness of human nature or completely destroying free will:

Original sin [however] is not a substance or a certain substantial quantity. Rather, it is a quality of a secondary sort that is a loss of strength or power. ... From this, it is possible to discern what it really is, namely, not a substance or a property that differentiates one species from another but an accident, a privation that comprises both a deficiency and a disordered movement or impulse³⁹

Flacius perceived that a mere weakening of fallen free will would lead to the necessity of human cooperation, and thus tend to a Pelagian schema of salvation based on merit. Flacius retorts: 'Stringel, then, would have it that there is in us a desire to receive the food, that is, the benefits of God. In fact, you thereby attribute to corrupt man a very great power with respect to spiritual things. Now, then, deny that this opinion is Pelagian' ⁴⁰ For his part, Flacius argued that original sin substantially alters humanity, stripping away the image of God and the capacity for free will. Indeed, according to Flacius, original sin causes human nature to reflect the malice of Satan: 'Scripture testifies to the contrary that what pertains to the divine in the intellect has not only been killed, put to death, and destroyed, but man also has been transformed into the image of Satan.'⁴¹ This depressing vision of human nature is a necessary corollary of the Gnesio-Lutheran position on good works and cooperation. Flacius realised that, if Luther's Reformation principle of the passivity of the human will was to be defended from the Synergists, then he had to maintain that original sin had destroyed the *imago Dei* in human nature:

I explain my entire view as follows: Man is purely passive. If you consider the innate faculty of the will, its willing, and its powers, then he is purely passive when he receives. But the Adamic will not only does not operate or cooperate but, according to the innate malice of the heart, even operates contrarily.⁴²

Hence, Flacius maintained that 'original sin is a substance,' that the newly born bear 'the true and living image of Satan,' and thus that the human 'is altogether and

³⁹ Stringel, 'The Weimar Disputation,' 202.

⁴⁰ Flacius, 'The Weimar Disputation,' 202.

⁴¹ Flacius, 'The Weimar Disputation,' 203.

⁴² Ibid, 202-203.

substantially changed and transformed into a lump of the same ferment'⁴³ The Flacian controversy, which blew up at the Weimar Disputation on original sin, thus pushed both parties to embrace extreme positions in the free will debate. Faced with these extreme options, of either acquiescing with a Pelagian principle of human cooperation, or admitting that humanity 'has been transformed into the image of Satan,' what possible degree of consensus on the free will to sin resulted from the controversies of early Lutheranism?

In seeking to determine whether or not a resolution was reached in the wake of these three controversies concerning free will, the *Formula of Concord* (1577) will be examined as a representative statement of early Lutheran doctrine.⁴⁴ In exploring the Formula's statements regarding good works, cooperation, and original sin, it is important to keep the two extremes of the Flacian controversy in mind. Rather than settling on a consistent theological schema of free will, the principal task was to mediate between the two polarities of the debate, in order to maintain a sense of Lutheran unity. An attitude of repugnance, to the extreme of Flacius's theology of the bondage of the will is evident in the final report of the theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig (1570):

But how would a Christian father or mother view the shape of the child if we must say: This fruit of your body is the flesh and blood of Satan dwelling in you and your wife, formed and created in an essential way according to his image and likeness, that is from Satan that your child received and obtained, through you, a so corrupted, evil nature, substance, and essence, such a gruesome, horrible lava. If, we ask, a pious, God-fearing father and mother viewed their children with this thought, what kind of joy, comfort, and pleasure would they have in marriage?⁴⁵

It is therefore fitting to ask whether the *Formula of Concord* settled the question of free will in early Lutheranism in favour of the Philippists, or of the Gnesio-Lutherans, or by opting for a middle way. In doing so, it will be possible to grasp the status of

⁴³ Flacius, *Treatise on Original Sin* (1567), 204.

⁴⁴ This study recognises that divergence exists in the Lutheran Church regarding the authority of the *Formula of Concord*, but recognises the *Formula of Concord* as a representative statement of sixteenth-century Lutheran belief and as an important reference point for the modern Lutheran Church. On the question of the authority of the *Formula of Concord* see Dingel, *Concordia controversa*. For a survey of theological variation within twentieth-century Lutheranism, see Strommen, *A Study of Generations*.

⁴⁵ 'Final Report of the Theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig,' 205.

Lutheran orthodoxy on the freedom of the human will to sin, which had been rejected in Luther's Reformation but was accepted by Trent.

Reading the *Formula of Concord* selectively, it is possible to find statements which seem to certify the perspective of the Gnesio-Lutherans on the issues of good works, cooperation and original sin. Amsdorf's abhorrence to the idea that good works can effect the state of salvation, for instance, seems to be supported by the statement: 'We also believe, teach, and confess that at the same time, good works must be completely excluded from any questions of salvation, as well as from the article on our justification before God' ⁴⁶ Heshus's denial of the power of cooperation in conversion finds support in the Formula's condemnation of the view that, 'the human will is able out of its own natural powers to a certain degree, even though small and feeble, to do something, to help and cooperate, to dispose and prepare itself for grace, to grasp this grace, to accept it, and to believe in the gospel.' ⁴⁷ Moreover, the *Formula of Concord* appears to exclude the existence of synergism, and thus to embrace a theology of passivity, by describing the human will as a dead corpse which is completely dependent on the resurrection of grace. The Epitome pronounces: 'As little as a corpse can make itself alive for bodily, earthly life, so little can people who through sin are spiritually dead raise themselves up to a spiritual life.' ⁴⁸ Lastly, even Flacius's notion of original sin, in which the human will is completely bound to sin and conformed to the devil's opposition to grace, can find a foothold in the Formula's statement: 'the unregenerated human will is not only turned away from God but has also become God's enemy' ⁴⁹ Similarly, the Formula notes: 'It is correct to say that in conversion God changes recalcitrant, unwilling people into willing people through the drawing power of the Holy Spirit... .' ⁵⁰ The language of the *Formula of Concord* was therefore broad enough to appease adherents of the Gnesio Lutherans, and thus foster unity amongst early Lutheranism.

However, the instruction of the *Formula of Concord*, on the necessity of good works and the role of the human will in determining predestination, could also be read

⁴⁶ Article Four, *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, 200.

⁴⁷ Article Two, *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, 199.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

in a Philippist light, so as to imply the opposite teaching on the subject of free will. Firstly, on the topic of good works, Major's insistence on the necessity of good works for the Christian life is echoed in the Formula: 'We also believe, teach, and confess that all people, particularly those who have been reborn and renewed through the Holy Spirit, are obligated to do good works.'⁵¹ Providing that good works are seen as the fruits rather than the cause of conversion, the Formula concludes: 'the words 'necessary,' 'should,' and 'must' are used correctly ... '⁵² The bone of contention in the Majorist of controversy, of whether or not Christians could lose salvation through a neglect of good works, is therefore left unanswered. Secondly, the Formula teaches that grace resurrects, rather than re-creates, the image of God in humanity. Hence, Flacius's vision of the image of Satan is excluded, and the terms *substantia* and *accidens* permitted, to explain the effect of original sin as corruption:

But in the schools and among the learned these terms are familiar and can be used without any misunderstanding to differentiate the essence of a thing from that which in an 'accidental' way adheres to the thing. Therefore, these words are properly retained in scholarly discussion of original sin.⁵³

Thirdly, Pfeffinger's principle of the cooperation in the human will as an explanation for reprobation can find ample support in the Formula. It deems the human will to have the freedom to choose to go to Church, to be open to the Word of the Gospel, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit:

A person who has not yet been converted to God and been reborn can hear and read this Word externally, for in such external matters, as stated above, people have a free will to a certain extent even after the fall, so that they may go and listen to a sermon. Through these means (the preaching and hearing of His Word), God goes about His work and breaks our hearts and draws people, so that they recognise their sins and God's wrath through the preaching of the law and feel real terror, regret, and sorrow in their hearts. Through the preaching of the holy Gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ and through meditating upon it, a spark of faith is ignited in the In this way the Holy Spirit, who effects all of this, is sent into their hearts ... '⁵⁴

⁵¹ Article Four, *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, 200.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Article One, *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, 199.

⁵⁴ Article 11, *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, 201.

The principle of cooperation implied by the freedom, ‘that they may go and listen to a sermon,’ is made more explicit in regard to those who reject these ordained means of receiving grace, and thus who are responsible for their own reprobation. The *Formula of Concord* clearly teaches that the journey to hell results from human choice, because God desires the salvation of all and offers saving grace to everyone:

However, if people do not want to hear or read the proclamation of God’s Word, but disdain it and the congregation of God’s people, and then die and perish in their sins, they can neither find comfort in God’s eternal election nor obtain mercy. For Christ, in whom we are chosen, offers his grace to all people in the Word and in the holy sacraments, and he earnestly desires that people should hear it.⁵⁵

In contrast to the Gnesio-Lutherans, and in contradiction to other remarks in the Formula, these statements express sympathy for the Philippist cause.

Must one deduce that the Formula simply compiled both opinions in a common statement, in the hope of keeping both parties happy? The extensive explanation of the role of human freedom in relation to predestination suggests, in fact, that the Formula did sanction a restricted freedom of the human will. In cautioning against the two extremes—of seeing good works as effecting justification and the replacement of the image of God with the image of the devil—the Formula discovered the middle road of maintaining the free will to sin. The capacity of the human will to reject the Gospel is manifest in its insistence that ‘God does not force human beings in such a way that they must become godly (for those who persistently resist the Holy Spirit and stubbornly struggle against what is recognised truth, as Stephen said of the obdurate Jews in Acts 7:51, will not be converted).’⁵⁶ The *Formula of Concord* could thus be read in harmony with the Council of Trent, which maintains that conversion is by grace alone, but grants the human will the freedom to reject grace. The fact that the Formula grants that humanity can, through ‘plugging their ears and their hearts,’ block the ‘Holy Spirit’s ordinary path, so that he cannot carry out his work in them,’⁵⁷ opens the way to unity. It can therefore be seen that, on

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the subject of free will, this statement of early Lutheran orthodoxy and the Council of Trent, are in agreement.

This exploration of the series of controversies that plagued early Lutheranism has shown that a polarity of opinion on free will quickly emerged, in relation to the topics of good works, cooperation and original sin. The theology of Melancthon and later Philippists expresses the early dissatisfaction with the cornerstone of Luther's Reformation theology, namely, the bondage of the human will to sin. In fashioning a unity between two extremes, the *Formula of Concord* enshrined the freedom of the human will to sin, thus formalising the rejection of Luther's Reformation article within early Lutheran orthodoxy. This finding, that the *Formula of Concord* could be read so as to cohere with Trent's teaching on the free will to sin, raises the question of how far Lutherans and Catholics were really at odds at the peak of the confessional era.

In order to grasp the extent to which the Lutheran controversies open the way to an ecumenical consensus regarding the free will to sin, it is necessary also to examine the development in Catholic circles of Trent's teaching on the free will to sin.⁵⁸ In examining the different approaches to the causal relationship between the human will and God's will, the Catholic commentaries post-Trent similarly fell into two opposing camps. In the aftermath of Trent, the key debate that marked Catholic theology on free will is known as the *de auxiliis* controversy, which centred on the writings of Dominigo Bañez (†1604) and Luis de Molina (†1600). In 1597 Clement VIII established a special commission, the congregation *de auxiliis divinae gratiae*, to investigate this dispute over free will.⁵⁹ On the one hand, Bañez and the Dominican school expounded a theology of the sole agency of grace in conversion, which, they held, undermined the freedom of the human will to reject grace. On the other hand, Molina and the Jesuit school privileged the human will as *de facto* the determinative element in the process of salvation. The Jesuits employed the theory of 'middle knowledge,' a means of safeguarding God's absolute power in predestination whilst

⁵⁸ For a discussion of grace and nature in Catholic theology post-Trent, see Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 211-262.

⁵⁹ For an overview of the history of the *de auxiliis* controversy and the 'Congregation *de auxiliis*,' see Sherry, *Historia congregationum de auxiliis divinae gratiae*, and Vansteenberghe, 'Molinisme,' 2095-2101, 2141-2145 and 2154-2166.

allowing them to preach that, in the everyday decisions of life, the responsibility of cooperating with the grace of conversion lies with the human will. In continuity with the debates at Trent concerning the operations of the human will and grace on the question of merit, the common thread to these post-Trent Catholic controversies is that of causality. Three issues of causality recur. Firstly, if conversion is *sola gratia*, how can the freedom of the human will as a secondary cause be preserved? Secondly, if grace is efficacious, how can the resistance of the human will be understood except as a shortage of the necessary grace of conversion? Thirdly, how can the existence of sin and its terminus in hell, be reconciled with God's omnipotence and his universal desire for salvation? Writing in 1686, Nicholas de Melebranche outlined the three available options in dealing with these questions:

There are only three ways to explain the power of secondary causes. The first is that creatures can act by their own efficacy without the concurrence of God. The second is that they can act with this concurrence. The third is that they can in no way act by an efficacy that is proper to them, but only through the efficacy of the divine power, in consequence of the general laws of nature, or of the general and always efficacious acts of the will of its author, by which God lets them share in his power without letting them have any share in his independence.⁶⁰

The terms 'general concurrence' and 'different states of nature' occurred within the Catholic debates as means of preserving human freedom, alongside a degree of the agency of grace. The central aim of the second section of this chapter is, however, to understand the differences in the terminology of causality, in order to assess whether or not these debates mirror the developments in early Lutheranism, and thus whether they point to common concerns regarding the free will to sin.

The causality expounded by Bañez, violently rejects the Scotist schema of causality, in which the human will is deemed to possess an independent causal power. Bañez begins his treatise by rejecting this Scotist version of human freedom, and, in doing so, outlines his approach to causation, predestination and sin. Bañez refutes Molina's declaration that an 'agent is called free which, once everything necessary for acting has been granted, is able to act or not to act, or to do one thing in such a way

⁶⁰ Malebranche, '*Réponse au livre I des Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques de M. Arnauld*,' 700-701.

that it could also do the opposite.’⁶¹ Bañez disagrees because he believes that ‘everything necessary for acting’ is not only external to the agent, but should include the reduction of the potentiality to act in the human will.⁶² Bañez maintains that ‘our free will, when it passes from not deliberating to deliberating and freely determining itself to act, is nevertheless, by a priority of nature, determined by the divine will.’⁶³ This passage from potency to act is deemed to belong to the divine power, because God is pure act; thus every good act is seen by Bañez as a participation in the goodness of God. If the causality of the good properly belongs to God, it follows in Bañez’s argument that this internal movement must be rooted in grace, which God chooses to bestow gratuitously on those chosen, to perform good acts. Bañez’s schema of causality, therefore, projects a comprehensive version of providence, in which every motion is in some way determined by the premotion of God moving created potency to act: ‘I do not understand what that divine premotion is, if it is considered passively, other than the very power of the intellect placed in completed act by the author of nature, who works in all things according to the plan of his providence.’⁶⁴ Bañez’s founding concept of causality is summarised by Farrelly:

He gives to the creature, not only the power of acting which it then puts into effect, but also the act itself of the creature. Its action is a passage from potency to act, and it is thus a gain of being, of goodness, and of perfection. Since its act is an act of potency and every created perfection is a participation of the perfection of God, the creature’s act itself is a participation in the act of God through God’s causality.⁶⁵

Bañez’s notion of the human will as a secondary cause is therefore stripped of independent agency, and must be seen as determined by the premotion of God. Freedom is seen to lie in the activity of the human will under the inspiration of the divine, rather than in possessing the capacity for cooperation or rejection. Hence, although human freedom is a secondary cause, this does not alter the efficacy of

⁶¹ Molina, *Concordia*, Q. 14, a.13, d.2, n.3: ‘*illud agens liberum dicitur quod, positis omnibus requisitis ad agendum, potest agere et non agere, aut ita agere unum ut contrarium agere possit.*’

⁶² For a summary of Bañez’s concerns and the objections to the Molinist position see Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 126-150, and Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace, and Free Will*, 19–28. For responses to these criticisms see Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account*, 109–20, Freddoso, Introduction to *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 64–75, and Lehner (ed.), *Die scholastische Theologie im Zeitalter der Gnadenstreitigkeiten*, vol. 1, 139–142.

⁶³ Bañez, *Comentarios inéditos a la prima secundae de santo Tomás*, 1, c.1, n. 1, 358.

⁶⁴ Bañez, *Tractatus*, II, c. 2, no. 2, 284.

⁶⁵ Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace and Free Will*, 5.

God's will, which chooses to act through human agency.⁶⁶ In regard to the causality of human freedom in relation to God's grace, Bañez thus resolves that God 'reaches all things strongly and sweetly, therefore, insofar as he most efficaciously performs what he wills, not destroying the condition of secondary causes.'⁶⁷

The consequence of Bañez's adherence to the determining power of grace in the free acts of the human will is a theology of election, which can only lead to the doctrine of double predestination. Indeed, Bañez describes providence in terms of predestination: as a 'plan pre-existing in the divine mind about the efficacious means to achieve the end.'⁶⁸ The causal relations in the world correspond to the chosen means by which certain individuals will necessarily attain eternal life. As Farrelly observes, this follows from Bañez's principle that God is omnipotent in providing efficacious grace: 'God would not be omnipotent if he could not gain the created will's consent, for there would be something he could not do.'⁶⁹ Bañez concludes from the efficacious causality of grace, that God does not will that all humanity be saved. God's love is so radically unequal that to a portion of humanity it extends only so far as to grant them earthly existence, and to preserve the goodness of their existence in hell. The elect are thus God's favourites, on whom a supernatural love is bestowed. However, since all are dead to sin without the action of grace, this unequal love is not held by Bañez to rest on any merit or contrition in the individual. Speaking of the fall of the angels, Bañez argues: 'There is no need that they previously sin for this, that God by his consequent will, desires to permit some of them to defect from their ultimate end'⁷⁰ Bañez therefore sees God's omnipotence, efficacious grace, and the degree of love conferred on humanity, as interwoven and mutually compelling:

The acts which we can imagine being in the divine mind both with reference to all and those proper to the predestined are these. God knew all possible men, among whom he loved certain ones with reference to natural existence, and these he willed to create. Among these he loved some still further for the supernatural end. This divine love is called choice insofar as he separated

⁶⁶ For a discussion of God's knowledge of secondary causality, see Osborne, 'Augustine and Aquinas on Foreknowledge through Causes,' 219-232.

⁶⁷ Bañez, *Scholastica commentaria*, I-II, Q. 19. art. 8, 30.

⁶⁸ Bañez, *Scholastica commentaria*, I-II, Q.23. art. 2, 481.

⁶⁹ Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace and Free Will*, 5.

⁷⁰ Bañez, *Scholastica commentaria*, I, Q. 119, art.6, 422.

these for himself from among others whom he willed to create. And finally he predestined these chosen ones; that is, he foresaw and ordained that through definite supernatural means, they would effectively arrive at their supernatural end.⁷¹

God's knowledge of predestination and the workings of providence are utterly certain, according to Bañez, because every action, even the supposedly free actions of the human will, is determined by the causal influence of grace. The end result, predestination, is not based on foreknowledge, because, as Farrelly notes: 'What is true of the gift of eternal life is true too of the gift of each grace. If two men experience the same temptation and one overcomes, it is due to grace, and not to his own will that the one is better than the other.'⁷² This scenario of the fate of those who lack sufficient grace is a necessary component of Bañez's picture of predestination, in which God loves some only to a sinful earthly life (and consequently to hell) and others to heaven. Even for Bañez, however, the phenomenon of sin is so obviously an act of opposition to God that, with regard to the efficacy of predestination the causality of grace in the sinful act requires attention beyond that already discussed.

Bañez does not shy away from the conclusion that a shortfall of grace inevitably leads to sin. Portrayed positively, this non-involvement of God in human action could be described as God's permissive will, which allows the fallen creature to persist in the confusion of its desires and seek sinful gratification. It is precisely God's refusal to bestow a greater degree of his love in grace that allows for his knowledge of sin. Bañez contends: 'Hence, from the fact that God knows that his will has not determined the created will to act well in the matter of temperance, for example, he knows evidently that the created will will sin and fail in the matter of this virtue.'⁷³ God is not seen as actively causing the creature to sin but the inevitability of sin shows that Bañez's theology amounts to a doctrine of double predestination. As Garrigou-Lagrange explains, the use of human freedom made by the fallen creature without God's grace is necessarily sinful: 'But sin follows inevitably the divine permission to sin which, as was stated, implies that one is not maintained by God in

⁷¹ Bañez, *Scholastica commentaria*, I, Q. 23, art.2, 480.

⁷² Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace and Free Will*, 8.

⁷³ Bañez, *ST*, 1.14.13, 353.

the performance of the good.’⁷⁴ In respect to the temporal execution of God’s plan, Bañez maintains that the cause of sin lies within the human will: ‘Still the first and adequate cause of the denial of help, considered as an execution [of God’s providence] in time, is the free will that has of itself the power to desire to defect and to disobey the command of God, with God’s permission ...’⁷⁵ Bañez admits, however, that, on the level of causality, it is God’s will to refrain from bestowing the grace of participation in the act of goodness that determines sinfulness: ‘I concede that of that negation of being the cause is purely the negation of effective help, that God was not held to give. He preferred to permit the sin and this not always as a punishment of another sin.’⁷⁶ Bañez’s theory of free will, as causally determined by the gift of grace, therefore leads to a disguised form of double predestination, in which responsibility for sin and reprobation is placed in the hands of God, who, contrary to 1 Tim. 2:4, does not desire ‘everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.’

In 1588, in a work entitled *De Concordia arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providential, praedestinatione et reprobatione ad nonnullos primae parte D. Thomae articulos*, Molina wrote against the vision of free will causality, first taught by Baius and later elaborated by Bañez.⁷⁷ Molina’s treatment of the critical topics of the influence of divine grace, God’s foreknowledge, providence, predestination and reprobation were grafted in opposition to the determinist vision of efficacious grace.⁷⁸ Molina outlines three key objections to the model of causality held by Thomists such as Baius and Bañez. Firstly, he argues that human freedom has been destroyed: ‘I do not understand how freedom of choice, whether in respect to good acts or bad acts or even indifferent acts, can endure intact, or how fatalistic necessity with regard to all these things can be avoided ...’⁷⁹ He perceives that Trent’s provision of the freedom of the will to reject grace has been destroyed by Bañez’s theory that the causality of grace is always efficacious. Hence, Molina points

⁷⁴ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 687.

⁷⁵ Bañez, *Tractatus*, II, c. 4, no. 2, 400.

⁷⁶ Bañez, *Tractatus*, II, c. 4, no. 2, 399.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of the broader history of the free will debate see Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, 5-12, and Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism*, 87-93.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of the key issues in modern debates on Molinism see Perszyk, *Molinism*.

⁷⁹ Molina, *Concordia*, disp. 53, 216.

out that the freedom to sin or cooperate is excluded: ‘I do not understand how, in that case it remains within its power not to consent to, and not to cooperate with, the concurrence that is efficacious for a non-evil act—a condition that is required for there to be any sort of freedom or moral good or merit.’⁸⁰ Secondly, Molina objects to the idea that sin is the result of God’s refusal of grace. If the human will is denied the means to choose or perform a good act, Molina asks, how can sin really be characterised as a rejection of God?: ‘Nor do I understand how, in the absence of a concurrence that is efficacious for a nonevil act, the faculty of choice is able to refrain from sinning—a condition that is required for there to be any sort of freedom in sin and even for there to be such a thing as sin itself.’⁸¹ Thirdly, Molina’s critique exposes Bañez’s dark conclusions about God’s relation to sin and reprobation: ‘In fact, I do not understand why our sins would not have to be attributed to God as the author of nature who has conferred upon the created faculty of choice a propensity towards those sins.’⁸² Molina’s alternative theological vision of the agency of the human will with grace, and God’s predestination according to middle knowledge, was a response to these key problems. Whilst it is important to recognise the legacy of the Scotist theory of free will in Molina’s thought, and to acknowledge the weaknesses in the account, it is crucial to begin by recognising Molina’s aim, which was to protect the love of God for all humanity. If God’s love is to be upheld, Molina realised, sin has to have its causal locus in human free will.

The cornerstone of Molina’s system, rejected by Bañez, was his definition of human free will: ‘That agent is said to be free which, once everything necessary for acting is given, is able to act and not to act or to do one thing in such a way that it could also do the contrary.’⁸³ The crucial element in this description is that the human will is seen to possess an independent power of determination. The freedom of the human will lies in the ability to reject or accept grace. Thus, the human will can ‘do the contrary’ when offered the grace of a virtuous act, the grace to desist from mortal sin, or even the grace of conversion. Molina’s view of grace, presupposes that there is something in the human will which grace addresses, and which has the power to shut

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Molina, *Concordia*, Q. 14, a.13, d.2, no. 3, 14: ‘... illud agens liberum dicitur quod positis omnibus requisitis ad agendum, potest agere et non agere, aut ita agere unum ut contrarium etiam agere possit.’

the door on the divine guest. Molina's emphasis on the independence of the secondary cause of the human will, therefore, leads to a theology which asserts that a good act has two causal principles. The continual offer of grace made to the human will is referred to as the general concurrence of God:

It must be said then that God concurs immediately (by the immediacy of a supposition) with secondary causes for their operations and effects, so that the secondary cause immediately elicits its operation and thereby produces its terminus or effect. God, by a certain general concurrence, immediately flows with it into the same operation and through the operation or action produces its terminus and effect. Whence it happens that the general concurrence of God is not God's inflowing into the secondary cause as if this latter acted and produced its effect by being first moved by him, but the inflowing is immediately with the cause into its action and effect.⁸⁴

In this passage, Molina demonstrates that the movement of grace is not through the freedom of the will, but along with it. Through his 'general concurrence,' God provides the participation in goodness that is required by the determination of the human will to act for the good. Bañez recognises that this model limits the agency of grace to that of a help-mate, and derisively comments: 'God no more concurs in our meritorious acts, than he does in the efforts of a Turk planting vineyards.'⁸⁵ Schmutz points to the root of this opposition in the causal frameworks of Bañez and Molina: 'It is this denial of the *in* in favour of the *cum* that reveals all the distance that separates Molina's position from the classical Thomism to which, however, he claims to adhere.'⁸⁶ Indeed, Molina's description of the human free will, as possessing its own internal causal power, is reminiscent of the Scotus's avowal that the proposition that 'esse is directly an effect of God,' put forward by Thomas, 'seems false.'⁸⁷

Schmutz rightly observes the continuation of the Scotist reform of free will in Molina's defence of the independent causality of the human will freely to accept or to

⁸⁴ Molina, *Concordia*, Q. 14, a. 13, d. 26, n. 5: '*Dicendum itaque est Deum immediate immediatione suppositi concurrere cum causis secundis ad earum operationes et effectus ... Quo fit ut concursus Dei generalis non sit influxus Dei in causam secundam, quasi illa prius eo mota agat et producat sum effectum, sed sit influxus immediate cum causa in illius actionem et effectum.*'

⁸⁵ Bañez, *Scholastica commentaria*, II-II, Q. 24, a. 6: '*Deus enim est, qui operator in nobis et velle et perficere pro bona voluntate, perversa interpretatio videtur dicere, quod loquitur de concursu eiusdem ordinis cum illo, quo concurrat cum Turca ad plantandum vineas.*'

⁸⁶ Schmutz, 'The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature,' 207.

⁸⁷ Scotus, *Opus oxoniense*, VI, dist. 1, q. 1, 7.

reject grace. In tracing the influence of Scotus's view of free will in the Reformation era, Molina's writings therefore offer a key example of the way in which, Scotus's idea of causality could recur and be transferred to different theological settings. It has been argued in Chapter Six that, the Council of Trent enshrined a causal framework that ostracised the Scotist theory of congruous merit. It is therefore no surprise that the post-Trent debates on free will took place within the approved standard of Thomism. Nonetheless, Molina's use of the Scotist understanding of free will, located, as it is, in the context of a commentary on St. Thomas, reveals the endurance of Scotus's ideas in the theology of free will after Trent. Schmutz highlights Molina's appeal to Scotus on the causal dynamic of human free will:

The model of causality that Molina (and many other Jesuits) invokes goes back to a tradition largely alternative to that of Thomism. It is symptomatic in this regard that Molina, in the same passage, calls upon the authority of Duns Scotus, 'who seems in many ways to oppose us' but on this precise point 'absolutely agrees with us,' in order to explain the shift that his *Concordia* imposed on the Thomistic doctrine of causality. This invocation of the Scotist doctrine of causality, which we also find in Suárez, Vázquez, and other great Jesuit masters of later generations, is indeed highly significant, for through the *concursus generalis* these authors rediscover a vocabulary that was established by the end of the thirteenth century.⁸⁸

Molina's image of God conserving the goodness of the cause is already developed by Scotus in his golfing analogy of the effect of God's general causality. Scotus explains that grace does not give a *forma* to the direction of the ball, but simply provides 'assistance or general influence, however one wants to call it,' such that the 'actual conjunction of such active causes, out of which, being so conjoined and their proper activities being presupposed to the conjunction, ensures the common effect of both causes.'⁸⁹ Similarly, Molina's theory is in harmony with another heir to Scotus's

⁸⁸ Schmutz, 'The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature,' 207, cites Molina, *Concordia*, II, disp. 26, no. 5: '*Quin Scotus, qui apertius multo videtur nobis adversari, sane in quarto Sententiarum nobiscum prorsus consentit.*'

⁸⁹ Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, dist. 3, pa. 2, Q.1, n. 281: '*Secundo modo videtur esse in quibusdam moventibus localiter, sicut manus movet baculum et baculus movet pilam: non enim dat manus baculo duritiam, per quam expellit corpus ad locum,— sed dat praecise baculo motionem localem, qua scilicet applicator ad istam expulsionem propter impossibilitatem unius corporis duri ad aliud corpus durum, quod non cedit ei. Hoc modo videtur esse in agentibus ad aliquem effectum productum per generationem vel alterationem, quia licet ibi causa ordinatae habeant aliquam rationem causandi et inferior non causet nisi in virtute superioris, ista tamen virtus assistentia sive influentia— quocumque*

theory of free will, Ockham, and his view that ‘In truth, God is a partial cause immediately concurring with every cause to produce every effect, and this is rightly to concur along the lines of general influence.’⁹⁰ Molina’s description of human free will as possessing an independent causality, therefore, places the *de auxiliis* controversy within the long tradition of the Scotist reform of free will. Scotus’s theory of free will causality found expression in Molina’s doctrine of middle knowledge through which he sought to resolve the three problems of freedom, sinfulness, and the theology of double predestination which he found in Bañez’s version of Thomism.

In order to grasp the place of middle knowledge in Molina’s system, it is first necessary to outline the threefold distinction drawn by Molina in his description of God’s knowledge of human action. The first stream of knowledge is God’s natural knowledge. This knowledge is of the divine essence by which God knows all possible courses of action. In God’s natural knowledge, the possibilities remain completely open, and thus might be equated with the scholastic principle of God’s absolute, rather than ordained power. Secondly, Molina believes that God possesses middle knowledge (*scientia media*). This refers to God’s knowledge of the decisions that individuals would freely choose in each of the possible situations known to the divine essence. Thirdly, Molina posits a free knowledge in God, in order to describe the infallible knowledge God has of human free will, once God has elicited a certain order of events. This third category of God’s knowledge of human free will therefore possesses the same degree of certainty as Bañez’s theory of the determinism of efficacious grace, but is informed by God’s middle knowledge of human free will. Molina explains that, via middle knowledge, God apprehends how ‘free choice by its innate freedom indifferently chooses this or its opposite.’⁹¹ Molina therefore believes that the theory of middle knowledge protects the causal autonomy of human free will, whilst securing God’s omnipotence. It does not, Molina contends, fall prey to a

modo nominetur— non est impression alicuius formae vel cuiuscumque inhaerentis in causa inferiore vel superiore, sed tantum est ordo et actualis coniunctio talium causarum activarum, ex quibus, sic coniunctis et suis proriis activitatibus praesuppositis coniunctioni, sequitur effectus communis ambarum causarum.’ See also Scotus, *Reportat parisiensa*, II, dist. 37, q. 2, n. 3: ‘Igitur videtur quod voluntas sit tota causa immediate. Deus tamen conservat et coagit per influentiam generalem cuiuscumque actui, quem voluntas eligit.’

⁹⁰ Ockham, *Quaestiones variae*, in *Opera theologica*, t. 8, 162-163: ‘Nunc autem, Deus est causa partialis immediate concurrens cum omni causa ad producendum quemcumque effectum, et hoc est forte concurrere secundum generalem influentiam.’

⁹¹ Molina, ‘On Divine Foreknowledge,’ *Concordia*, disp. 52, 180.

Pelagian theory of predestination based on foreknown merits, because God's foreknowledge, through middle knowledge, is assured before the series of events has been elicited by God's free will. Molina remarks on the dynamic between human free choice and divine foreknowledge:

The fact that a being endowed with free choice would, were it placed in a given order of things and circumstances, turn itself toward one or the other part does not stem from God's foreknowledge; to the contrary, God foreknows it because the being endowed with free choice would do that very thing.⁹²

Levering characterises Molina's middle knowledge as a transitional knowledge between free human action and the omnipotence of God's free will: 'He argues that there must be a transitional knowledge, according to which God knows not merely every mode in which his being can be participated (natural knowledge), but knows these created modes in the nexus of secondary causes that they require in order to come to be.'⁹³ Middle knowledge was therefore used by Molina as a means of escaping the determinism of Bañez. By referring to God's middle knowledge, Molina believed that it is possible both for free will to act without determination, and for God to have freely willed the situation to occur. In advocating middle knowledge as a safeguard to human freedom, the questions of sin and predestination must be considered to assess whether or not Molina's theory succeeded in escaping the snares of determinism in sin and of predestination, both of which he found so abhorrent in Bañez's vision of the efficacious causality of grace.

At first sight Molina's theory of providence and sinfulness seems to liberate God of responsibility for sin and reprobation, as well as preserving the role of human free will. For in Molina's account, God's providence appears to include, rather than control, the dignity of human freedom:

From this it clearly follows that no prejudice at all is done to freedom of choice or to the contingency of things by God's foreknowledge, a foreknowledge through which, because of the infinite and wholly unlimited perfection and acumen of His intellect, He sees with certainty what the free choices placed in any order of things will do, even though they could really, if they so willed, do the contrary; rather, even though that knowledge exists,

⁹² Ibid, 170.

⁹³ Levering, *Predestination*, 113.

freedom of choice and the contingency of things with respect to both parts remain intact, just as if there were no foreknowledge.⁹⁴

McGrath summarises Molina's position as a collaboration between God's providence and human free will:

God knew infallibly, by his *scientia media*, that if Paul went to Troas and thence received a call to go to Macedonia, he would obey this call. Therefore, Molina argues, God created the world with such circumstances that Paul would find himself in Troas at an opportune moment, and thence proceed to Macedonia—thus maintaining both the divine sovereignty and human freedom. The efficacy of grace is thus maintained, but is understood to arise on account of something extrinsic to grace (the consent of the human will) rather than the intrinsic nature of grace itself.⁹⁵

The flip side of McGrath's example of providence, however, is that divine free knowledge elicits circumstances in which God foresees the sinfulness of the human will. Molina therefore defines predestination as 'the plan in God of the order or means by which he foresees that the rational creature will be led to eternal life with the intention of executing that order.'⁹⁶

However, if God infallibly knows that a certain sequence of events leads to the end of eternal life and an infinite number of possibilities are known in the divine essence, why does God choose sequences of events in which the human will falls into sin? Farrelly observes:

The first act is God's permission to sin which consists in his choice of those circumstances and graces which give wholly adequate means to avoid sin, but in which God knows that the creature will sin The second act is that of hardening the sinner, and it consists in God's choice of means of conversion which are adequate, but which God foresees will result in a greater hardness of the sinner and final impenitence. Only in the third act does God exclude the sinner from heaven and condemn him to hell It is only the third act,

⁹⁴ Molina, *Disputation* 52, 184.

⁹⁵ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 352.

⁹⁶ Molina, *Concordia*, Q 23, a. 1, d.1, no. 8.

strictly speaking, that is reprobation, and for this there is always a cause in the creature, namely, his foreseen sins and final impenitence.⁹⁷

Farrelly's description of the process of consent to sin and eventual reprobation, demonstrates that, in Molina's system, it is not Bañez's concern for the amount of grace, but the actual series of circumstances that is of critical importance. Molina's theory at first seems to suggest that human free will is to blame for sin and reprobation, but in fact it is God's threefold knowledge which has determined the circumstances in which sin is chosen. Levering rightly concludes: 'Although Molina insists upon the autonomous role of created free choice in the causal chain, nonetheless Molina's more fundamental emphasis is on the causal chain itself, as known by God in his "middle knowledge".'⁹⁸ It is therefore clear that when Molina's theory of the human freedom to sin, is pushed back into the realm of God's natural, middle and free knowledge, Molina is not in fact able to resolve the predicament of holding God responsible for sinfulness and the fate of the reprobate. Rather, Molina's middle knowledge reveals that God could have chosen differently and thus that in choosing a series of events the divine will carries the same determining power as Bañez's theory of the causal efficacy of grace.

The end of the *de auxiliis* controversy was not marked by an official pronouncement on the theology of free will, which would have provided a helpful point of comparison with the teaching of the Council of Trent. Rather than sanctioning Bañez's theory of causality or making Molina's middle knowledge a theological standard for Catholicism, in 1607 Pope Paul V imposed silence.⁹⁹ The mutual denouncements of Pelagianism or determinism (or Jansenism) that had been hurled between Jesuits and Dominicans were to end. It would be a mistake, however, to deem this Papal decision to impose silence merely a theological boycott on the issue of free will. Farrelly suggests that Pope Paul V was aware of the danger of the extremes of negating human freedom and compromising the gratuitous nature of grace. In view of the fact that both Jesuits and Dominicans professed to avoid these dangers, Papal censure of either party was considered unnecessary. Farrelly provides the following useful summary of the situation:

⁹⁷ Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace and Free Will*, 27-28.

⁹⁸ Levering, *Predestination*, 116.

⁹⁹ *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1090.

Paul V declared that, though a decision was desirable, it was not necessary. The Dominicans hold that grace does not destroy freedom, but perfects it, and moves it in accord with the nature of the will. The Jesuits hold that the whole initiative in salvation comes from God's grace. So the former are far from Calvinism, the latter are far from Pelagianism. Hence he allowed the two schools to continue to hold their opinions, but forbade each to qualify the other with a censure.¹⁰⁰

The silence that brought the *de auxiliis* controversy to an official close therefore serves as an illustration of the difference between theology and doctrine in the emerging Tridentine tradition. Providing that the different schools of thought remained within the boundaries of doctrine, space for theological disagreement remained open. However, in view of the determinist conclusions of Bañez, in relation to the causality of grace, and of Molina in regard to the chain of events elicited according to God's free knowledge, the question left begging is whether or not official doctrine had abandoned Trent's boundary of the free will to sin.

In discerning whether or not this season of free will controversies in the years post-Trent had altered the borders of doctrine laid down by the Council of Trent, the test case subjects of sin and predestination can be examined with reference to the papal condemnations of errors that preceded and followed the *de auxiliis* controversy. The condemnations of the propositions of Michael Du Bay by Pope Pius V in 1567 and the exposure of errors in the work of Cornelius Jansen by Pope Innocent X in 1653 provide an indication of when it was felt necessary to break the silence of legitimate theological difference by the enforcement of doctrinal orthodoxy. In the first instance, the Tridentine standard that salvation is a supernatural event that exceeds the capacities of nature is evident in Pope Pius V's rejection of a proposition put forward by Michel Baius (du Bay): 'The sublimation and exaltation of human nature in participation with the divine nature has been due to the integrity of the first condition, and hence must be called natural, and not supernatural.'¹⁰¹ Not only is Trent's *sola gratia* model defended, but Trent's preservation of human freedom in regard to the voluntary nature of sin is evident in the censure. It condemns Baius's belief that, 'man sins and merits damnation even in that which he does of necessity'

¹⁰⁰ Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace and Free Will*, 148.

¹⁰¹ Prop. 21, 'Condemnation of the Propositions of Michael du Bay,' by Pope Pius V (1567).

and its corollary, ‘What is done voluntarily, even if it is done of necessity, is done freely.’¹⁰² Although the content of the condemnations is phrased according to Baius’s description of the states of human nature in Eden and after the fall, it is clear that the Church’s censure targets Baius’s explicit denial of Trent’s doctrines of supernatural grace and human free will to sin.

In the second instance, a similar pattern can be observed in the condemnations of Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638) imposed by Pope Innocent X (1653). The following five propositions of Jansen’s theology are listed as condemned articles of belief. The Papacy’s rejection of these statements, demonstrates that the Papacy perceived in Jansen’s theology, a denial of Trent’s insistence that sin is the result of the voluntary resistance to grace in the human will:

1. Some of the commandments of God are impossible for just men who wish and try to fulfil them with their existing powers; and the grace which would make them possible is also lacking.
2. In the state of fallen nature there is never any resistance to interior grace.
3. In the state of fallen nature freedom from necessity is not required in man for merit or demerit but only freedom from compulsion.
4. The semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity for antecedent interior grace or individual actions and for the beginning of faith; in this they were heretical in that they made the grace such that human will could resist it or comply with it.
5. It is semi-Pelagian to say that Christ died or shed his blood for all men.¹⁰³

The condemnation of these five pillars of Jansenism reveals the Church’s loyalty to Trent as a doctrinal norm in the wake of these free will controversies. In these statements there is an explicit connection between the determinism of God’s will in effecting conversion, sin as a lack of divine help, and God’s partial will to save humanity. In doing so, the condemnations of Jansen bring to light the theological dangers that have been found to have silently haunted the *de auxiliis* controversy. Jansen’s beliefs publically trespassed on the established doctrinal borders of grace and the free will to sin, established at Trent, and they were therefore denounced as heretical. It is clear that whilst the problematic of divine determinism confessed by

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ ‘Errors of Cornelius Jansen condemned by Pope Innocent X’ (1653), *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 406.

Baius and Jansen is current in the *de auxiliis* controversy, the disciplinary muscles of the Papacy were exercised only in instances of open disobedience to the doctrinal norms of Trent. If the suppositions of the irresistibility of the divine will and grace, the necessity of sin and the denial of God's desire for universal salvation are heretical in the work of Baius and Jansen, it can only be assumed that where this is suggested in theology of Molina and Bañez, they too are culpable of betraying Trent. All this suggests that the thin line between orthodoxy and heresy in the free will controversies post-Trent should be differentiated less by theological content than a theologian's professed loyalty or disobedience to the doctrines of Trent.¹⁰⁴

Having examined the free will debate on both sides of the confessional divide, one can conclude that the controversies following Trent and Luther actually point to the emergence of a doctrinal consensus. The first sign of convergence lies in the controversies themselves. The fact that both Lutherans and Catholics dealt with the same questions of free will, albeit using different terminology, demonstrates that opinions for and against human freedom in respect to grace existed on both sides of the confessional divide. Secondly, the fundamental question of the passivity of human free will in salvation harassed Catholics and Lutherans alike. In Lutheran circles, Melancthon's objection to Luther's theology of the bondage of the will opened the door to the Majorist, Synergist and Flacian controversies. The internal Lutheran division regarding the passivity of the human will thus found expression in the theology of good works, cooperation and original sin. In the Catholic sphere, the *de auxiliis* controversy wrestled with the passivity of the human will in regard to the efficacy of grace, in effecting conversion and in regard to the problems of sin and reprobation. Whilst Molina's theory of middle knowledge was supposed to preserve human freedom from the determinist consequences of a theory of the passivity of the human will, this study has shown that it too fell into a form of determinism. In protecting the freedom of the will to sin on a temporal level, Molina shifts the problem of determinism to the level of God's threefold knowledge of the sequences of events, through which the human will would secure or relinquish eternal life. In sum, the difficulty faced by Catholics and Lutherans was to maintain, on the one hand, that salvation is by grace alone, and thus by God alone, and on the other, that it is the

¹⁰⁴ Bosworth's thesis, *Perceptions of the origins and causes of heresy in medieval heresiology*, makes a similar point with regard to the definition of medieval heresy.

human will, and not God, that is responsible for sin and its eternal consequences. Thirdly, this study has shown that in seeking to resolve the polarity of opinions, Catholics and Lutherans reached the same doctrinal consensus. The freedom of the will to sin was affirmed in the *Formula of Concord* and restated in the condemnations of Baius and Jansen. The shared theological battles, the common questioning of the passivity of the human will in regard to God's sovereignty and grace, and the mutual doctrinal consensus of the free will to sin, reveals that Catholics and Lutherans had unknowingly overcome the root of the Reformation division, which was the passivity of the human will in justification and in the sacrifice of the Mass.

The discovery that these controversies led to a consensus between Lutherans and Catholics on the freedom of the human will to sin, has important implications. The root of the divergence between Luther and the theology of the Council of Trent has already been shown to lie in Luther's doctrine of the passivity of the human will. It was Luther's belief in passivity that made his vision of justification and the Mass not only a Reformation but also incompatible with Trent's teaching that the human will could actively participate in the life of grace, and could refuse this cooperation. In removing the obstacle of the passivity of the human will, this convergence opens the door to an ecumenical theology that, firstly, deems sin the responsibility of the human will, and thus upholds God's universal love, and secondly, which allows for grace to enable the human will to participate in Christ's sacrificial love for the Father in the Mass. Lane recognises the implications of the phenomenon of internal disagreement and a cross-confessional unity regarding key doctrinal principles for modern ecumenism, suggesting that 'the differences within Protestantism and Catholicism are far greater than the differences between them.'¹⁰⁵ The examination of the free will controversies which has been undertaken here lends support to Lane's analysis: 'A number of early opponents of the Reformation were guilty of semi-Pelagianism but on the other hand, many prominent Catholic theologians then and thereafter were considerably more Augustinian on this issue, than are large numbers of Evangelicals today.'¹⁰⁶ The key question that arises from this recognition that a consensus on free will existed amidst Catholic and Lutheran controversies is: What are the theological steps necessary in ecumenical theology, in order to restore a shared understanding of

¹⁰⁵ Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 150.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 150.

the Mass as a sacrifice, which was lost as a result of Luther's short lived theology of the passivity of the human will?

Conclusion

The purpose of this closing chapter is, firstly, to recapitulate the findings of this study, and secondly, to reflect on its implications for contemporary ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics on the twin issues of free will, and the Mass as a sacrifice. The argument of this thesis has been that, although the Pelagian corruption present in the Scotist formulation of free will caused Luther's Reformation article of passivity and rejection of the Mass as a sacrifice, Trent countered both reforms and established a position on free will which is strikingly similar to that which the Lutheran Church came to hold in the *Formula of Concord*. Luther's Reformation thought has been situated within the broader scholastic, Tridentine and Lutheran developments of the theology of free will and the Mass as a sacrifice. The key notes to be reviewed are: Scotus's innovative definition of free will, his consequent reinterpretation of the Mass as a sacrifice, the perseverance of Scotus's framework in the scholastic debates on free will in predestination, the passivity of the human will as the essence of Luther's Reformation reaction to the Scotist tradition, the implications of passivity on Luther's reconstruction of the Mass as a testament, Trent's rejection of both the Scotist teaching of congruous merit and Luther's theology of passivity, and the Lutheran breakaway from the defining feature of Luther's Reformation theology in their harmony with Trent's teaching on the freedom of the human will to sin. This study is in a position to contribute to contemporary dialogue because it has shed light on the origins of Luther's Reformation concerns in the theological developments from the thirteenth century; it has identified the defining article of his Reformation theology; and it has discerned a common consensus in the theology of Lutherans and Catholics in the period after the death of Luther and the close of Trent. The ecumenical advances enshrined in the statement *The Eucharist* (1967), and the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999) can only be measured and furthered by attentiveness to the historical reasons for theological discord. Both documents will be assessed in the light of this research. It will be suggested that by recovering a theology of participation in Christ, the Lutheran rejection of the Reformation article of passivity, opens the way to a shared belief in free will, merit and the Mass.

The first part of this thesis has argued that Luther's polemic against the Mass as a Pelagian work has its roots in Scotus's reformulation of free will. It has been shown that Scotus's reformulation of free will, to mean an autonomous power, able to choose good or ill, independent of any assistance or consideration, forced him to reshape the scholastic theology of meritorious act, conversion and habits of grace. Steered by his belief that human will is necessarily open to any course of action, Scotus teaches that acts such as faith, hope and charity lie within the realm of unaided free will. The salvific quality of action is thus seen to lie in God's free will to declare some good works meritorious. This schema inevitably undermines the effects of sin on human nature and leads to great uncertainty among the faithful. Who is to know whether their act of faith has been assigned supernatural significance by God? Scotus tries to close this circle of uncertainty using a theology of congruous merit, in which God is held to ordain supernatural value to good acts elicited by the natural power of human free will. Hence, the Pelagian legacy of Scotus is born as the result of his belief that salvific merit *de facto* depends on the good act of the autonomous power of human free will. When applied to the Mass as a sacrifice, Scotus's conviction that merit depends on the free volition of the human will, results in a picture of the priest and the pious as the source of merit in the Mass rather than the salvific fruits of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This examination of Scotus's theology of free will and the Mass as a sacrifice, has therefore found that Luther's rebuke that the Mass, 'has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work,'¹ could be applied to Scotus's theology of Eucharistic sacrifice.

The second section of this thesis has argued that Luther's rejection of the imbued Pelagianism in the Scotist tradition had a truly Reformation significance because his doctrine of the passivity of the human will in justification overturned the principle of human cooperation and thus broke with the scholastic practice of offering Mass for the living and the dead. Luther believed a theology of human cooperation with grace in the sacrifice of the Mass to be unnecessary and dangerous. He argued this on the grounds that it implied that something was lacking in the atoning work of Christ's cross and that it led to a return to the Pelagian belief that salvation depended on an active cooperation of the human will. Hence, the comfort of Christ's cross and

¹ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 47.

the certainty of salvation would be pulled from the hands of sinners. Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will and its corollary of the Mass as a testament, were of Reformation significance, because he believed that, any notion of the participation of the human will in Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, undermined salvation in an attempt, 'to offer to God what should be received as a benefit.'²

The third phase of this thesis has examined the reactions to Luther's Reformation theology of the passivity of the human will at the Council of Trent, and in the subsequent internal controversies experienced by Lutherans and Catholics. It has argued that these debates resulted in a common belief in the freedom of the human will to sin as a principle of doctrine. Trent expressed its allegiance to this principle by countering both Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will and the Scotist concept of congruous merit. The same pattern is evident in Trent's teaching on the Mass. Far from signalling a breach between the merit of cross and the altar, Trent teaches that in the Mass, the power of the human will to merit lies in the agency of grace, which unites the Christian to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The condemnations that followed the *de auxiliis* controversy demonstrate Papal efforts to reiterate Trent's teaching that, although salvation is a work of God's grace, the rejection of grace by sin and the fate of reprobation must be maintained as the full responsibility of the human will. Across the confessional divide, it has been shown that the Majorist, Synergist and Flacian controversies led to a similar consensus in the theology of the *Formula of Concord*. In the wake of these controversies, it has been argued that the Lutheran Church compromised Luther's Reformation theology of the passivity of the human will to the extent that, on the issues of good works, human cooperation and the effects of original sin, early Lutherans were unconsciously in agreement with Trent.

The second task of this conclusion is to consider whether this unconscious agreement on the freedom of the will has been transformed into a conscious theological unity by modern ecumenical discourse. In considering the statements concerning the free will to sin, presented in the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999), the focus will be on the key issues of congruous merit, the passivity of the

² Ibid, 50.

human will and active participation, which this study has shown to be the hallmarks of the division in the Reformation era.

Firstly, the *Joint Declaration* clearly excludes the idea of congruous merit that this study has seen resulted from Scotus's reformulation of free will. The articles establish that both Lutherans and Catholics confess that salvation is a free work of grace that cannot be earned by human works:

15. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.

17. Our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way.³

On the Lutheran side, this declaration serves to resolve the long-lasting suspicion of Pelagianism, the origins of which this study has found to reside in Luther's encounter with the Scotist vision of merit, as expounded by Gabriel Biel. On the Catholic side, the joint rejection of congruous merit allows the *sola gratia* message of Trent's teaching on justification to be made explicit and available in an environment free from the antagonistic connotations of the anathemas. In establishing a common front against a Pelagian interpretation of congruous merit, the *Joint Declaration* successfully addresses the first part of the Reformation problem, which was the corrupting influence of Scotist interpretation of free will.

The second pillar of this thesis has been Luther's Reformation doctrine of the passivity of the human will. The possibility of ecumenical unity on the issue of free will therefore depends on whether the Lutherans present had returned to Luther's Reformation understanding of the passivity of the human will or if the explanations reflect the post-Trent convergence on the free will to sin. Article 21 shows that although Luther's terms of passivity and bondage are used, the meaning ascribed to them actually follows the position of the *Formula of Concord*. Hence, the non-Reformation article of the freedom of the human will is made explicit:

³ *The Joint Declaration on Justification*, art. 15 and 17.

21. Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace. When they emphasise that a person can only receive (mere passive) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word.⁴

The shared belief of Lutherans and Catholics that salvation is fully the work of God, whilst sin is fully the work of the human will, is affirmed in the discussion of predestination in the *Joint Declaration*. Article 6 affirms: All people are called by God to salvation in Christ.'⁵ This study has observed the connection between theories of free will and predestination, and can therefore perceive that this statement endorses the freedom of the human will to sin. Luther's language of passivity is therefore interpreted by the Lutheran party in the *Joint Declaration* to express the consensus of God's universal love and the freedom of the human will to sin.

The third contentious issue exposed in this study has been the theology of human cooperation with grace, and this too must be placed in the modern context of the *Joint Declaration*. The active agency of the human will was impossible according to Luther's doctrine of the continual passivity of the human will under grace. However, if the *Joint Declaration* defied Luther in holding the freedom of the human will to reject grace, does the declaration similarly reject the passivity of the human will after the gift of grace? Whilst the following articles stress that good acts are the result, rather than the cause of saving grace, the necessity of good works as an expression of living faith demonstrates a shared belief in the active agency of the human will within the life of grace:

22. We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit affects in them an active love.

23. When [Lutherans] stress that God's grace is forgiving love ('the favour of God'), they do not thereby deny the renewal of the Christian life. They intend

⁴ *Joint Declaration*, art. 21.

⁵ *Joint Declaration*, art. 6.

rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings.

25. We confess together... such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works.

39. The concept of preservation of grace and growth in grace and faith is also held by Lutherans. They do emphasise that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living. When they view the good works of Christians as the fruits and signs of justification and not one's own 'merits', they nevertheless also understand eternal life in accord with the New Testament as unmerited 'reward' in the sense of the fulfilment of God's promise to the believer.⁶

These statements point to a consensus on the role of grace to enable the human will to act well, as an expression of the love of Christ, which has been received as a free gift. However, the fact that the distinction between the forgiveness of the sinner and the renewing effects of grace is revisited so often in these articles suggests that a realisation of the consensus in the *Joint Declaration* depends not only on the Lutheran assent to the non-passivity of the human will in the renewal work of grace, but also on the Catholic expression of the theology of merit. In studying the satisfactory and propitiatory power of merit in the Mass, it is clear that an ecumenical consensus on human cooperation with grace would need to include the Catholic teaching that merit not only denotes personal reward, but can benefit the salvation of the living and the dead. Unless merit is described as a participation in Christ's saving act, Catholic theology will inevitably be seen as clinging to a Pelagian theology of works rather than trusting in Christ's forgiveness and the sufficiency of his sacrifice to merit eternal life.⁷ The *Joint Declaration* therefore points to the consensus on the free will

⁶ *Joint Declaration*, articles: 22, 23, 25, 39.

⁷ Jeanrond accurately expresses this dichotomy between those whose actions are saving because they participate in Christ's saving love, and those who view meritorious deeds as independent of Christ's grace. The latter have the outer appearance of the Christian life, but lack the heart of love that comes from receiving Christ's love as a gift. Jeanrond remarks: 'One of the great misunderstandings of this process has been the urge of Christians to copy Jesus himself rather than to accept his invitation to participate in the transformative dynamics of humanity thus reconciled with God. It seems that some Christians are more concerned with reinventing Christianity than with following Jesus as respected and free subjects in the praxis of love. The point of Christian discipleship is not to copy Jesus, but to accept his proclamation and self-sacrifice so that we can live life fully in God's loving presence.' (Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, 247.)

to sin, but does not secure agreement on the implications of this shared premise for the theology of merit in the sacrifice of the Mass.

The great achievement of the *The Eucharist: a Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement* (1 October 1967) is that, in considering the theology of the merit of the sacrifice of the Mass, it expresses the merit of the cooperation of the human will with grace in terms of participation in Christ. This ecumenical statement on the Eucharist perceives that it is unhelpful to conceive of grace as in abstract, mechanical or quantitative terms. Instead, grace is seen as forming a bond of unity between the Christian and Christ. This principle of participation can be used to inform ecumenical treatment of the historical issues of the Scotist theology of congruous merit, the active agency of the human will in the sacrifice of the Mass and, crucially, the salvific power of this meritorious cooperation.

In considering this Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement on the Mass as a sacrifice, it should first be noted that the crux of disagreement does not concern whether or not the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is made present in the Mass or if his grace is truly given in the sacrament. The unity between Lutherans and Catholics on these aspects of the theology of the Mass as a sacrifice is established in the first article:

Lutherans and Catholics alike acknowledge that in the Lord's Supper: 'Christ is present as the Crucified who died for our sins and who rose again for our justification, as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world who gives himself to the faithful.'⁸

The area of contention in the statement on Eucharistic sacrifice does not therefore concern the theology of the Mass as a making present, or as anamnesis of Christ's passion. Rather, the document addresses the continuation of Luther's Reformation fears that the Mass had become a Pelagian work, the merit of which is seen to stem from human works rather than Christ's cross. The first obstacle to an ecumenical understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice is thus the Lutheran memory of the Pelagian dangers of Scotist theology. The document acknowledges the historical root of the problem, the Lutheran response and the phenomenon of continued suspicion:

⁸ *The Eucharist: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement* (1967), art. 1:

Historically, our controversies have revolved around the question of whether the worshipping assembly ‘offers Christ’ in the sacrifice of the Mass. In general, Lutherans have replied in the negative, because they believed that only thus could they preserve the once-for-all character and the full sufficiency of the sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharist from becoming a human supplement to God’s saving work, a matter of ‘works righteousness. ... First of all, we must be clear that Catholics as well as Lutherans affirm the unrepeatable character of the sacrifice of the cross. The Council of Trent, to be sure affirmed this, but Lutheran doubts about the Catholic position were not resolved.’⁹

The virtue of this statement, however, is that it not only identifies the historical origins of theological division, but proceeds to describe the agency of grace in a way that is faithful to Catholic theology whilst answering Lutheran fears.

The statement uses the principle of participation in Christ as a means of overcoming the seeming competition in Catholic theology, between Christ’s merit and the meritorious role of the human will in cooperating with grace in the sacrifice of the Mass. The heart of the matter is, therefore, the Catholic practice of offering Masses for the living and the dead and the meaning of merit as possessing a propitiatory and satisfactory power for sin. Jüngel objects to the Catholic theology of merit on the grounds that it exceeds the limits on thanksgiving by using ‘the same concept of sacrifice and self-sacrifice both of Christ and of Christians.’¹⁰ The 1967 statement reconciles the tension Jüngel observes between the satisfaction, merits and sacrifice in Christ’s cross and the satisfactory, meritorious and sacrificial nature of the cooperation of the human will. It does so by conveying the dynamic of grace as a participation in Christ. By receiving grace the love of the human will in the Mass can be involved in the saving acts of satisfaction and sacrifice, because the human will is participating in the saving act of Christ’s own will. As members of Christ’s body, the merits of the human will can never detract from Christ, but participate in him:

The members of the body of Christ are united through Christ with God and with one another in such a way that they become participants in His worship, His self-offering, His sacrifice to the Father. Through this union between

⁹ *The Eucharist: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement*, art. 2

¹⁰ Jüngel, ‘Church Unity is Already Happening: the Path towards Eucharistic Community,’ 34.

Christ and the Christians, the Eucharistic assembly ‘offers Christ’ by consenting in the power of the Holy Spirit to be offered by Him to the Father. Apart from Christ we have no gifts, no worship, no sacrifice of our own to offer to God. All we can plead is Christ, the sacrificial lamb and victim whom the Father himself has given us.¹¹

This image of merit, as the union of the human will with Christ’s saving act, is expanded with reference to Rahner’s description of participation in the Mass:

The contemporary Catholic theologian Karl Rahner explains this point by saying that the Eucharistic offering of Christ inseparably involves ‘the believing, inner ‘yes’ of men to the movement of loving obedience of Christ to the Father.’ He goes on to speak directly to the fears which Protestants have expressed regarding the notion of the ‘sacrifice of the Mass’: ‘The sacrifice of the Mass creates no new gracious and saving will in God vis-à-vis the world which did not already exist through the cross (and only through the cross!).’ ‘We can speak of ‘moving’ God to forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy and assistance through the sacrifice of the Mass only in the sense that the gracious will of God, founded exclusively on the reconciliation of the cross, becomes visible in the sacrifice of the Mass, comes to man.... and takes hold of him’—producing, Rahner goes on to suggest, manifold effects in the worshippers and, through their actions and prayers, in the world.¹²

The 1967 statement on merit of the sacrifice of the Mass is therefore able to use participation in Christ as a means of addressing the Lutheran fear that merit implies a Pelagianism of the human will and detracts from the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. The human will can merit and partake in the satisfactory love of Christ because grace has grafted the human will into Christ’s own will. The Mass dramatically illustrates this union because in receiving the body of Christ, the Christian becomes the body of Christ.

The concept of participation in the body of Christ is not a theological novelty but an ecumenical application of the theology of *corpus mysticum* (the mystical body of Christ). Augustine exemplifies this view, noting, ‘the entire universal Church is but

¹¹ *The Eucharist: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement* (1967), art. 2. b.

¹² Rahner, ‘*Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer*, 267, 288, cited in *The Eucharist: A Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement*, notes, 6.

one single sacrifice to God and one single body of Christ.’¹³ In his study ‘*Corpus Mysticum*,’ de Lubac suggests that, as a result of the Berengar controversy about the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist, a shift occurred from a theological language of symbolism to one of dialectic. De Lubac argues: ‘Fixated on the truth of presence, it was undoubtedly fatal for theological attention in some sense to neglect the ‘mystical’ meaning of the sacramental body.’¹⁴ In reacting to Berengar, de Lubac contends that the emphasis on the incorporation of Christians into Christ’s body in the Eucharist was lost:

The flow of controversy went in the opposite direction, in certain cases, to the extent of making people forget the ecclesial symbolism altogether. Thus everything was considered finalised once the true body had been duly established, and that was one more reason for not speaking of the mystical body.¹⁵

According to de Lubac’s picture of the rise and fall of the idea of *corpus mysticum* in the scholastic era, it would be tempting to pinpoint this as the source of the misunderstandings between Catholics and Lutherans on the issue of merit.

The Canons and Catechism of the Council of Trent, however, demonstrate that the *corpus mysticum* theology of participation was not neglected in describing the union between Christ and the Christian in the Mass. Indeed, against de Lubac’s critique that scholasticism had lost sight of Augustine’s Eucharistic imagery,¹⁶ the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* quotes Augustine:

But we are, in some sort, changed into its substance, so that to this subject we may with propriety transfer these words of St. Augustine: ‘I am the food of the grown: grow and though shalt eat me; nor shalt thou change me into thee, as thy corporal food, but thou shalt be changed into me.’¹⁷

In regard to the meaning of merit in the Mass, the Council directly relates merit to the Christian’s participation in the life of Christ.

Thus we have nothing of which we can boast; but all our boasting is in Christ, in whom we live, in whom we merit, in whom we make satisfaction and yield

¹³ Augustine, *City of God*, 10:6, cited by de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 25.

¹⁴ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 221.

¹⁵ Ibid, 222.

¹⁶ Ibid, 226.

¹⁷ Ibid, 231-232.

fruits that will benefit repentance, which have their worth from Him, are offered by Him to the Father and through Him are accepted by the Father.¹⁸

The Catechism further relates this grace enabled incorporation of the Christian into the body of Christ using the imagery of the consecration of the bread and wine:

Moreover, the body of Christ, which is one, consists of many members, and of this union nothing is more strikingly illustrative than the elements of bread and wine, for bread is made from many grains: wine is pressed from many bunches of grapes; and thus do they declare that we, though many, are most closely bound together in this divine mystery, and made as it were one body.¹⁹

The 1967 statement should, therefore, be seen as articulating Trent's teaching that grace enables the participation of Christians in the body of Christ. Through this participation in Christ's mystical body, the human will simultaneously receives saving grace and shares in Christ's act of saving love. Catholic theology can thus join with Lutherans in offering the certainty of salvation for those who, as members of Christ's body, participate in his saving life. In view of the free will to sin, however, the possibility of cutting oneself off from Christ's body remains throughout life and thus absolute certainty of eternal life cannot be known. The image of merit as participation in Christ therefore clears away the Pelagian mirage, which has clouded Lutheran perceptions of the Catholic theology of offering Masses for the living and the dead. The statement cites Augustine's *City of God* as a succinct expression of this theology: 'in the sacrament of the altar which she (the Church) offers, she herself is also offered.'²⁰

So there is hope. Although the first two parts of this study of the historical theology of free will and the Mass revealed the reality of a Pelagian corruption and the non-compatibility of Luther's doctrine of passivity with Catholic orthodoxy, Part Three has shown that a common consensus about free will formed over a surprisingly short period of time. On the one hand, the Scotist understanding of merit was repeatedly excluded at Trent and in subsequent official condemnations of errors. On the other hand, Luther's theology of the passivity of the human will was transformed in the course of controversies that ensued after his death. Lutheran theology came to

¹⁸ CT, 709.

¹⁹ CCT, 213.

²⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 10.6.

include the possibility of rejecting grace and the active agency of the human will after the gift of grace. This survey of the theological development of the Reformation has therefore found that Catholics and Lutherans have long been united on the doctrine of free will, but that the implications of this theological consensus for Eucharistic unity have been blocked by the confessional misconceptions concerning the Mass as a sacrifice. It has been shown throughout this study however, that free will and the merit of the Mass are essentially united. Thus, agreement on free will should indicate the possibility of agreement on the Mass as a sacrifice. As Lash rightly observes: ‘Must we not ask whether, in ecumenical encounter, there is often present the silent assumption that “of course we are divided in faith,” when perhaps this has ceased, under the healing grace of God, to be the case?’²¹ The *Joint Declaration on Justification* and *The Eucharist: a Lutheran-Roman Catholic Statement*, have been examined in order to determine a means through which this ecumenical agreement can be realised. This concluding chapter has shown that, the answer to a shared understanding of the Mass lies in contemplating the theological richness of what it means to receive the body of Christ. As members of Christ’s body, everything that is said of human merit properly belongs to Christ. The power of the human will to merit, satisfy and offer the Mass for the salvation of the living and the dead is, therefore, a participation in Christ’s complete and sufficient act of salvation. Having shown that the Reformation obstacle of passivity has been overcome and that Lutherans and Catholics hold the human will to be free to reject or actively participate in the life of Christ, this study has demonstrated that the theology of free will, merit and the Mass do not form a barrier to ecumenical unity. In the body of Christ, the principles of free will, merit and the Mass work together in unison. May this ecumenical realisation enable the body of Christ, which was divided by the sixteenth-century disputes, to be united again in offering the prayer of the sacrifice of the Mass: ‘Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is Yours Almighty Father, for ever and ever, Amen.’

²¹ Lash, *His Presence in the World: A Study of Eucharistic Worship and Theology*, 137.

Abbreviations

CCT: *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, transl. J. Donovan (Rome, 1839).

CT: 'The Council of Trent,' *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, ed. N. P. Tanner (London, 1990).

LW: M. Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia and Saint Louis, 1955-1986).

ST: T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. and transl. by the Dominican friars of the English Province, 61 vols. (London, 1964-1981).

WA: M. Luther, *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Schriften*, 65 vols, ed. H. Böhlau (Weimar, 1883-1993).

WABr: M. Luther, *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*, 18 vols, ed. H. B. Nachfolger (Weimar, 1930-1985).

WATr: M. Luther, *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, 6 vols, ed. H. B. Nachfolger (Weimar, 1912-1921).

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