

The Term *Synderesis* and its Transformations:
A Conceptual History of *Synderesis*, ca. 1150-1450

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Short Abstract

This dissertation explores the development of the concept of *synderesis* between 1150 and 1450. In medieval moral psychology, *synderesis* referred to the innate capacity of the mind to know the first principles of natural law, or, alternatively, the will to follow these principles. But it was also interpreted as a mystical power of the soul, capable of uniting it to God. *Synderesis* also appears in Late Medieval vernacular literature, as a character in moralising texts. By approaching *synderesis* from the point of view of conceptual history I synthesise these fields and explore how *synderesis* operated beyond the formal treatises of scholastic theology.

Chapter two explores how *synderesis* developed in medieval scholasticism from Peter Lombard up to Thomas Aquinas. Chapters three and four explore how the mystical interpretation of *synderesis* first proposed by Thomas Gallus of Vercelli was incorporated into the mystical treatise *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* by Bonaventure of Balneoregio. Here, I analyse when, where and how Bonaventure integrated this mystical interpretation into his pre-existing moral-psychological interpretation of it and how his use of *synderesis* relates to the historical context in which the *Itinerarium* was written. I argue that *synderesis* should be seen as existing on a continuum of interpretations between moral psychology and mysticism. After Bonaventure and Aquinas, the concept undergoes a period of stagnation in academia, which is the subject of Chapter five. However, *synderesis* also appears in a number of non-academic texts in which the moral-psychological and mystical interpretations of the term coexist. Chapter six explores how Late Medieval vernacular authors drew on

previous scholastic discussions of the concept. I focus here in particular on Guillaume de Deguileville's *Le pèlerinage de l'âme*, where *synderesis* appears not as the moral guide of the soul, but as the accuser of the soul before the court of heaven.

Long Abstract

This dissertation examines the history of the concept of *synderesis* between ca. 1150 and 1450 from the perspective of conceptual history. What we today would call conscience was divided by some scholastics into two separate entities: *synderesis* and *conscientia*.

Generally speaking, there were two models in which *synderesis* and conscience were discussed during the Middle Ages. In the first model, most commonly associated with Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), *synderesis* is defined as a ‘habit of the practical intellect’ (*habitus intellectus practici*), which had an instinctive understanding of first principles, e.g. ‘obey God’, ‘avoid evil and seek the good’. Conscience was in turn understood as the conclusion of a moral syllogism in which *synderesis* provided the first (major) premise, e.g. ‘obey God’, and in which reason provides the second premise, e.g., ‘stealing is against the law of God’. Conscience is the act of concluding the syllogism that an act is to be pursued or not.

Alternatively, in the second model commonly associated with Bonaventure (1217/21-1274), conscience takes on the role that *synderesis* had in the first model of understanding first principles and applies them to particular situations. *Synderesis* is in turn defined as the natural will (*voluntas naturalis*), the instinctive desire to seek the good and avoiding evil.

These two models of understanding *synderesis* crystallised between 1150 and 1260 and were the basis for later discussions throughout the Middle Ages. Conceived of as a part of the soul that remained untainted by the Fall, *synderesis* became the subject of additional questions during the

century after it first entered the scholastic scene properly with Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in 1150. If it is an untainted and constant knowledge or, or desire for, the principles of natural law, can it ever err? Do heretics have it? If it is an innate and substantial part of the soul, what does it do among the damned, who have no need for moral guidance? Some of these questions, in particular that regarding heresy, did not develop randomly, but in relation to historical and cultural factors.

This dissertation studies the concept of *synderesis* as a historically contingent and evolving object. I come to this topic, therefore, as a historian, rather than as a philosopher. Rather than engaging in a formal philosophical analysis of the concept of *synderesis*, this dissertation traces its development in relation to historical changes and medieval culture in general over three centuries. In doing so, this dissertation will repeatedly return to the metaphors used by the scholastics to describe *synderesis* and its operation, since they can often reveal as much about how they thought *synderesis* worked as how the discussion was situated in medieval culture. Metaphors, turns of phrase and slips of the tongue can, in a way, tell us just as much about how *synderesis* was thought to work among heretics, for instance, as the formal question 'utrum possit synderesis extingui' ('whether *synderesis* can be extinguished') under which heresy was usually treated.

In this dissertation, I offer a new view on *synderesis* from the perspective of conceptual history, rather than philosophy. In terms of methodology, I have drawn inspiration from Quentin Skinner's approach to historical texts and concepts based on speech-act theory. By seeing a text, a

word or a concept as performative, I analyse *synderesis* in relation both to medieval scholastic sources and in relation to its wider historical and cultural context. By approaching *synderesis* from the point of view of conceptual history, rather than philosophy, strictly speaking, I analyse the uses of *synderesis* outside the genre of scholastic treatises and commentaries on Peter Lombard. Since *synderesis* was used in several different contexts, this dissertation must move between these as well. By doing so, I try to connect all the various fields in which *synderesis* was used in the Middle Ages. Crucially, it connects scholasticism with vernacular culture and literature in the analysis of how *synderesis* was appropriated in vernacular sources in the Late Middle Ages.

This dissertation consists of five analytical chapters that trace the history of *synderesis* over three centuries as a concept that appears in both Latin and vernacular sources, in medieval genres varying between the formal scholastic treatise to moralising dream-visions. These chapters are preceded by a brief background in which I outline how *synderesis* entered the scholastic debate, through a reference to Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel* in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.

Chapter two outlines the first hundred years after Peter Lombard, whose reference to the passage in Jerome where *synderesis* occurs secured the future of the concept for centuries to come. I begin by briefly outlining the most common feature of scholastic discussions of *synderesis*: its relation to reason (*ratio*). Because *synderesis* was often thought to be unerring in its knowledge of basic moral truths, the question of how it relates to sin often arose. One of the focal points of the chapter is how *synderesis* was thought

to relate to one of the most serious sins: heresy. This discussion, albeit peripheral compared to the question of *synderesis* and reason, shows how historical events, such as the rise of popular heresy and the Albigensian crusade, could influence what at first seems like a very abstract consideration. In addition, I demonstrate how this discussion drew from common medieval topoi regarding heresy.

Secondly, I consider how *synderesis* was thought to function among the damned. Since *synderesis* was considered as a substantial, and therefore inalienable, part of the soul, what function does it have among those who do no longer need moral guidance? This part prepares for the analysis of some cases of vernacular appropriation in Chapter six.

Chapters two and three consider how *synderesis* was used in mystical literature. It appears first to have entered this genre through the Victorine abbot of Vercelli, Thomas Gallus (ca. 1200-1246). It is an unfortunate feature of much modern scholarship on *synderesis* that it rarely, if ever, links the moral-psychological aspects with its appropriation within mysticism.

It is possible at times to see it used in both contexts. The chapter begins with an outline of *synderesis* in the writings of Thomas Gallus, but the focus is on Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217/1221-1274), who used *synderesis* in both the moral-psychological and the mystical contexts. Bonaventure first comments on *synderesis* in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, which is discussed in Chapter two. But within a few years, in his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (ca. 1259-60), he has evidently appropriated Gallus' interpretation of the term. I describe how

such a transition fits into Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*, where *synderesis* first appears. The *Itinerarium* is concerned with guiding its readers to mystical union and uses Francis of Assisi and his miraculous reception of the stigmata as the model for this mystical journey. As the power of the soul that brings about that mystical union, *synderesis* takes on a crucial function in this text. I argue here that whilst *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium* and the *Commentary* must be seen as two different uses of the concept, they can nevertheless be related to each other. By using Bonaventure as an example, this dissertation shows how these two interpretations of *synderesis* fit into a continuum of interpretation. In this way, I bridge the gap between the study of scholasticism and that of mysticism.

The *Itinerarium* is one of the rare occasions where we can see how *synderesis* was used in a text, instead of merely being discussed. The *Itinerarium* was written when Bonaventure had become Minister General of the Franciscan order, and at a time when the order and the cult of Francis, not to mention his stigmata, were highly controversial. I suggest in Chapter four that Bonaventure has created a psychological framework with which the reader can understand Francis' mystical experience. This, I suggest, is directed not only to the critics of the Franciscan order, but also to those within the order who harboured doubts regarding Francis's stigmata.

Chapter five begins with an overview of what happens to *synderesis* in scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. These two scholars became the two main lenses through which *synderesis* was seen, but this does not mean that there is a neat Dominican/Franciscan divide. Instead,

what we see is a form of ‘eclectic stagnation’, where scholars borrowed and occasionally attempted to synthesise the opinions of the two great masters. In spite of this eclecticism, very little happens that is noteworthy, which indicates that the concept is being kept alive in academia through Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. Instead of focusing on treatises created in and for an academic context, I widen the scope to take into account ‘non-academic’ texts, i.e., written by academically trained writers, but outside the confines of academia. *Synderesis* appears here sometimes in a very simplified form and in other cases, such as in John Wycliffe, Meister Eckhart and Jean Gerson with greater sophistication. In the case of Geert Groote and his treatise against the building of the Dom tower of Utrecht, we see *synderesis* employed in the context of dissent from his ecclesiastical superiors – a use of *synderesis* that would be hard to imagine being countenanced by the Parisian masters. This case highlights the importance of the social setting in which a concept is being employed.

The way *synderesis* was used by Eckhart and Gerson also indicates that the lines between the moral-psychological and mystical interpretations of *synderesis* are occasionally blurred. In the examples I have chosen from these authors, both interpretations seem to coexist in the same passages. Whilst Chapter three argues that *synderesis* in Bonaventure’s *Commentary* and the *Itinerarium* constitutes two extremes of a continuum, these two extremes now appear to meet each other.

The fifth and final chapter examines some cases of appropriation of *synderesis* in vernacular literature. *Synderesis* appears on a number of occasions in Late Medieval vernacular texts, which are here presented. The

chapter focuses, however, on Guillaume de Deguileville (also spelled Diguileville or Deguileville) and his influential *Pèlerinage de l'âme*, written in the mid-fourteenth century. In this text, *synderesis* appears as a character that serves as the prosecutor of the soul before the court of Heaven. This text was later translated into Middle English and I present both texts together here. I analyse the role *synderesis* plays in this text, and other Late Medieval texts, in relation to the discussions of *synderesis* in Chapter two. The chapter also examines some manuscript illustrations and how *synderesis* is represented, compared to the text.

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List of Abbreviations

- Âme* Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le pèlerinage de l'âme de Guillaume de Deguileville*, ed. Jacob Stürzinger (London, 1895).
- Analecta* *Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam fratrum minorum specantia edita a patribus Collegii S. Bonaventurae adiuvantibus aliis eruditis viris*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (10 vols., Quaracchi, 1885-1941).
- In I-IV Sent.* Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quattor libros sententiarum*, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae S.R.E. Episcopi Cardinalis Opera Omnia*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (10 vols., Quaracchi 1882-1902), i-iv.
- Brev.* Bonaventure *Breviloquium*, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae S.R.E. Episcopi Cardinalis Opera Omnia* ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (10 vols., Quaracchi 1882-1902), v, pp. 201-291.
- CCCM.* *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis* (Turnhout, 1966-).
- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout, 1953-).
- De bono.* Philip the Chancellor, *Philippi cancellarii Parisiensis summa de bono*, ed. Nikolaus Wicki (2 vols., Bern, 1985).

- De ver.* Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, in *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII p. m. edita*, (26 vols., Rome, 1882-), xxii-xxiii.
- DS.* *Dictionnaire de la spiritualité*, ed. Marcel Viller et. al. (17 vols. in 38, Paris 1937-1995).
- Explanatio* Thomas Gallus, *Thomae Galli explanatio in libros Dionysii*, ed. Declan Anthony Lawell, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis*, 223 (Turnhout, 2011).
- I-IV Sent.* Peter Lombard, *Magistri Petri Lombardi Parisiensis episcopi sententiae in iv libris distinctae*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 3rd edn (2 vols. in 3, Grottaferrata, 1971-1981).
- Itin.* Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae S.R.E. Episcopi Cardinalis Opera Omnia*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, (10 vols., Quaracchi, 1882-1902), v, pp. 295-316.
- MGH.* *Monumenta Germaniae Historica.*
- M.T.* pseudo-Denys, *De mystica theologia* in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeca*, ed. J-P. Migne (161 vols. Paris, 1857-1866.), iii, 997-1048.
- Opera.* *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae S.R.E. Episcopi Cardinalis Opera Omnia*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (10 vols., Quaracchi 1882-1902).

- PG.* *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*
(*Patrologia Graeca*), ed. J-P. Migne (161 vols.,
Paris, 1857-1866).
- PL.* *Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina*
(*Patrologia Latina*), ed. J-P. Migne (218 vols.,
Paris, 1844-1865).
- SBO.* Bernard of Clairvaux, *S. Bernardi Opera*, ed. J.
Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. Rochais (8 vols.,
Rome, 1957-1977).
- ST.* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, in Sancti
Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII
p. m. edita*, (26 vols., Rome, 1882-), iv-xii.
- Soul.* *The pilgrimage of the soul. Vol. 1: A Critical
Edition of the Middle English Dream Vision*, ed.
Rosemarie Potz McGerr, (New York and London,
1990).
- Summa aurea.* William of Auxerre, *Magistri Guillelmi Altissidorensi
summa aurea*, ed. J. Ribailier (7 vols. in 6, Paris, 1980-
87).
- Super I-IV Sent.* Thomas Aquinas, *S. Thomae Aquinatis Scriptum super
libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi, episcopi
Parisiensis*, ed. R. P. Mandonnet (4 vols., Paris, 1929-
47).

Introduction

The term *synderesis* hardly belongs to the better-known terms that came out of medieval scholasticism. It was, however, a frequently recurring term, particularly in the countless *Commentaries on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard. What we today would call conscience, was divided by some scholastics into two separate entities: *synderesis* and *conscientia*.

Generally speaking, there were two models in which *synderesis* and conscience were discussed during the Middle Ages. In the first model, most commonly associated with Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), *synderesis* is defined as a ‘habit of the practical intellect’ (*habitus intellectus practici*), which had an instinctive understanding of first principles, e.g. ‘obey God’, ‘avoid evil and seek the good’, sometimes called the ‘*synderesis* rule’.¹ Conscience was in turn understood as the conclusion of a moral syllogism in which *synderesis* provided the first (major) premise, e.g. ‘obey God’, and in which reason provides the second premise, e.g., ‘stealing is against the law of God’. Conscience is the act of concluding the syllogism that an act is to be pursued or not.

Alternatively, in the second model commonly associated with Bonaventure (1217/21-1274), conscience takes on the role that *synderesis* had in the first model of understanding first principles and applies them to particular situations. *Synderesis* is in turn defined as the natural will

¹ See V. J. Bourke, ‘The *Synderesis* Rule and Right Reason’, *Monist*, 66 (1983), pp. 71-82.

(*voluntas naturalis*), the instinctive desire to seek the good and avoiding evil.

These two models of understanding *synderesis* crystallised between 1150 and 1260 and were the basis for later discussions throughout the Middle Ages. Conceived of as a part of the soul that remained untainted by the Fall (sometimes called the *portio virginalis animae*), *synderesis* became the subject of additional questions during the century after it first entered the scholastic scene properly with Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in 1150. If it is an untainted and constant knowledge or, or desire for, the principles of natural law, can it ever err? Do heretics have it? If it is an innate and substantial part of the soul, what does it do among the damned, who have no need for moral guidance? Some of these questions, in particular that regarding heresy, did not develop randomly, but in relation to historical and cultural factors. In other words, *synderesis* was crucial in medieval discussions of moral psychology. By this term I mean the description of, and discussion of, the faculties of the soul by which it considers issues pertaining to morals, and the cognitive processes of moral reasoning.

This dissertation will study the concept of *synderesis* as a historically contingent and evolving object. I come to this topic, therefore, as a historian and make no presumption to be a philosopher.² Rather than engaging in a formal philosophical analysis of the concept of *synderesis*, this dissertation traces its development in relation to historical changes and medieval culture

² For an excellent philosophical analysis of *synderesis* and conscience, see T. C. Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1980).

in general over three centuries. In doing so, this dissertation will repeatedly return to the metaphors used by the scholastics to describe *synderesis* and its operation, since they can often reveal as much about how they thought *synderesis* worked as how the discussion was situated in medieval culture. Metaphors, turns of phrase and slips of the tongue can, in a way, tell us just as much about how *synderesis* was thought to work among heretics, for instance, as the formal question ‘*utrum possit synderesis extingui*’ (‘whether *synderesis* can be extinguished’) under which heresy was usually treated.

Whilst the historical development of the term has been studied in the past, most notably in Dom Odon Lottin’s *Psychologie et morale aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, scholarship has remained narrowly focused on *synderesis* as it appears in medieval academic texts, most prominently the *Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*.³ As a result, discussions of the term can easily become restricted to questions about who influenced whom, and tend to disregard the historical and cultural factors that shaped the concept, as well as its uses outside the formal scholastic treatise.

This dissertation offers a new view on *synderesis* from the perspective of conceptual history rather than philosophy. One problem that can easily affect much philosophical discussion of *synderesis* is that it often falls prey

³ O. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles* (6 vols. in 8, Louvain, 1942-1960). By ‘academic’, I here mean the scholastic texts written in the context of the university that follow a certain format. Examples of this genre would be the *Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, the *Quaestiones disputatae* or *Summae*.

to an a-historical approach, to see *synderesis* as a stable concept, when in fact it is in constant flux. Unsurprisingly, the focal point through which *synderesis* is often seen is Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Thomas' elevation to the status of highest ranking theologian in Catholicism with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* has often made it too easy for students of medieval philosophy and theology to turn to Aquinas as the summit of medieval theology and intellectual life. This tendency can create distortions in representations of medieval intellectual life.⁴ *Synderesis* was, in fact, often debated and redefined. In order to trace and outline the development of *synderesis*, therefore, this dissertation focuses more on primary sources than on secondary literature. This is a consequence that follows not only from the necessity of taking a diachronical approach to the concept within the confines of a doctoral dissertation, but also from the fact that the dissertation is attempting a historical and cultural analysis of a philosophical concept. In fact, this restriction from purely philosophical engagement liberates the term, as it makes room for an analysis of the uses of *synderesis* outside the genre of scholastic treatises and commentaries on Peter Lombard. Since *synderesis* was used in several different contexts, so also must this dissertation move between these contexts. By doing so, the dissertation tries to connect all the various fields in which *synderesis* was

⁴ In a recent guide to medieval philosophy, for instance, Bonaventure (Thomas' contemporary and a great theologian in his own right) is mentioned on merely six pages, whilst Thomas dominates the entire book. See *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*, John Marenbon (ed.) (New York and Oxford, 2012).

used in the Middle Ages. Crucially, it connects scholasticism with vernacular culture and literature in the analysis of how *synderesis* was appropriated in vernacular sources in the Late Middle Ages.

It seems fitting that a dissertation dealing with medieval intellectual culture must also take a stance, at least methodologically, on the matter of universals. It appears that the concepts subjected to study by historians of ideas can be discussed between the extremes of Platonic realism and Ockhamist nominalism. That is to say: do concepts have an independent existence, or do they exist merely by virtue of the utterance?

The danger in conceptual history is the temptation to treat concepts and statements as ideal objects disembodied from the specific circumstances of their utterance and the intention that went into that utterance. One may take the term *synderesis* as it occurs in, e.g., Thomas Aquinas and write a teleological prehistory leading up to that formula, or describe some authors as falling short of articulating an idea whose ideal form they were not aware of in the first place. It is easy for the historian to write a history where one author ‘prepares the way’ for a future author whose work he could not know. As Quentin Skinner has pointed out, such a history easily overlooks the intention that went into the use of a concept at the time of its utterance.⁵ In a way, there is no history of an ‘idea’, but rather the history of the various uses of a word and the intentions that go into it. My aim, particularly in Chapter two, is to show how the concept of *synderesis*

⁵ On these and similar pitfalls, see in particular Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 57-89.

developed and how new questions were being posed which led to the expansion of the concept. However, as Knud Haakonssen points out, the historian of ideas should not only look for the intentions of the author in the use of a word or a statement; one should also see the various logical possibilities inherent in a concept, several of which may be unintentional from the point of view of the author.⁶ ‘The point is’, he writes, ‘that fruitful intellectual history is not simply the record of successfully expressed ideas but also an appreciation of mistakes, of missed opportunities, of the only half understood.’ Missing this point, Haakonssen argues, means that we may not fully understand the intellectual problems handed down from one generation to another, intentionally or not.⁷ In this sense, a phrase or a word may lay the foundation for later thought. A later reader who interacts with the text of a previous master, as was the case in the series of commentaries on the *Sentences*, may not necessarily look for the intentions of that writer but for the logical possibilities of the statements and the concepts that were used. In other words: because *synderesis* was often discussed within a literary genre, it acquired a life and being of its own that went beyond the intentions of each individual author.

One may speak of an author’s use of a concept as foreshadowing a later use in the sense that there is a logical possibility of that use in the concept, instead of a teleological history in which the concept is gradually reaching

⁶ K. Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 11-13.

⁷ Haakonssen, *Natural Law*, p. 12.

its full articulation. This distinction between the teleological notion of a concept as foreshadowing its later, 'perfect', form, and the logical possibilities of a concept as foreshadowing a later idea is important because I will by necessity refer to how one author's choice of words lays the foundation for later uses that may not have been intentional. Whenever I discuss a term with regard to its later usage, it is in this second, logical, sense that I discuss it.

But as Skinner has suggested, one may also see the individual utterance as a form of speech act. A statement can be said to uphold, contradict, defend, elaborate or ignore a previous scholar's view of *synderesis*, for instance; or it can be said to engage with a particular set of problems that an author was facing.⁸ Following J.L. Austin's (and by extension Ludwig Wittgenstein's) speech-act theory, Skinner proposes that we attempt to recover the sense in which a word or term was used. To take a simple example: my wife sees me walking across a field with a bull charging from behind. She begins to wave her arms to alert me to my imminent death. My survival depends on understanding that arm-waving is a form of warning, and not a reminder that I forgot to put the bins out. To take it further: my wife's intention to warn me is not something I retrieve from her by mystically stepping into her head, but rather by seeing them embodied in her act, which employs certain conventions (be it privately agreed conventions of communicating, or more commonly established ways of

⁸ Cf. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, p. 116.

employing words and gestures) for how to warn people. The use of a concept, in other words, can embody a set of intentions. In the case of a historical text, it is necessary to reconstruct much of the context.⁹ I have not followed this model programmatically, but this way of reading texts has inspired some of my interpretations of the uses of *synderesis*.

This dissertation offers a conceptual history of *synderesis*, but a problem immediately presents itself from the very brief definition of *synderesis* given in the beginning of this introduction: if Thomas Aquinas saw *synderesis* as the understanding of first principles, and if Bonaventure saw *synderesis* as the desire to seek the moral good as dictated by conscience, is *synderesis* then the same concept in these two authors? Does the term describe the same reality? It is perhaps more helpful to think of *synderesis* as a term that embodies different concepts pertaining to moral psychology and mysticism. It is this capacity to take on new meanings that make *synderesis* worthy of a history of its own. I have therefore chosen to study the different concepts that are embodied in the term *synderesis* itself, and chosen not to study how these concepts may appear elsewhere where the term *synderesis* does not. In other words, the occurrence of the term *synderesis* has been my main selection criterion for the sources I have studied in this dissertation. A second criterion for my choice of sources is

⁹ This is a very simplified version of Skinner's argument. For a more thorough treatment of the idea of speech-acts as applied to historical texts, see chapters five and six in Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 90-127. The example illustrating the perils of walking in a field is adapted from Wittgenstein as found in *Visions of Politics*, p. 97.

whether they reflect a significant development in the discussion. I have also chosen to put my emphasis on cases where we can see *synderesis* put into use and not merely being the subject of academic discussion. For this reason, I have focused on Bonaventure's changing use of *synderesis*, and how it functions in the *Itinerarium* more than I have on Thomas Aquinas who did not alter his definition of *synderesis* significantly.

These choices make it possible to write a more general history of *synderesis* that transcends the divides between philosophy, mysticism and vernacular literature and to show how these areas intersect. Where other histories of *synderesis* have followed the boundaries between scholastic theology and mysticism, I have chosen to focus on the occurrence of *synderesis* regardless of where it may occur. It is in this way a conceptual historian may contribute to existing scholarship by not being limited to scholastic treatises, for example. The inclusion of vernacular sources expands the timeframe of the main part of this dissertation to the mid-fifteenth century, when the main traits of the vernacular uses of *synderesis* had been established. I thus begin with Peter Lombard, and end around the death of John Lydgate.

Scholarship on *synderesis* since the late nineteenth century can be divided into three main groups. In the first group there are the etymological and philological studies that examine the origins of the term and how it entered medieval scholasticism. Here the works of Heinrich Appel, Jacques de Blic and Johannes Steltzenberger stand out together with the much later

work of Douglas Kries.¹⁰ In the second group we find the study of *synderesis* in the scholasticism of the High Middle Ages, in which Lottin's landmark study can be found, together with Timothy C. Potts' philosophical examination of *synderesis* in the writings of Philip the Chancellor, Aquinas and Bonaventure, and the works of Michael Bertrand Crowe.¹¹ To this group, one should also count a series of articles by Robert Greene that not only cover the Middle Ages, but also the use of *synderesis* up to the seventeenth century. In the third group are those authors that have highlighted *synderesis* in medieval mysticism: Endre von Ivanka's *Plato Christianus* provides an outline of how terms like *synderesis* and *apex mentis* developed from the Church Fathers and came into the sphere of medieval mystics. In more recent years, Declan Lawell's editions of the works of Thomas Gallus have been accompanied by his detailed studies

¹⁰ Heinrich Appel, *Die Lehre der Scholastiker von der Synteresis* (Rostock, 1891); Jacques de Blic, 'Syndérèse ou conscience?', *Revue d'Ascétique et de mystique*, 25 (1949), pp. 146-57; Johannes Steltzenberger, *Syneidesis, Conscientia, Gewissen: Studie zum Bedeutungswandel eines moraltheologischen Begriffes* (Paderborn, 1964); Douglas Kries, 'Origen, Plato and Conscience ("Synderesis") in Jerome's Ezekiel Commentary', *Traditio*, 57 (2002), pp. 67-83. See also M. Waldmann, 'Synteresis oder Syneidesis? Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Gewissen', *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 119 (1980), pp. 332-371.

¹¹ Timothy C. Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1980). Michael B. Crowe, 'The Term *Synderesis* and the Scholastics', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 23 (1953), pp. 151-64, 228-45. See also his *The Changing Profile of the Natural Law* (The Hague, 1977). Robert Greene, 'Instinct of Nature: Natural Law, Synderesis, and the Moral Sense', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1997), pp. 173-198; 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991), pp. 195-219, and 'Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991), pp. 617-44.

into Gallus' vocabulary.¹² For all their many merits, these works are mostly limited to Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel* and its thirteenth-century reception, and either scholastic theology or mysticism, whilst overlooking the occurrence of *synderesis* in Late Medieval vernacular literature. One attempt to bridge the gap between *synderesis* in Bonaventure's scholastic and mystical texts has been made in a doctoral dissertation by Robert Davis, which will be discussed in Chapter three.¹³

This dissertation consists of five analytical chapters that trace the history of *synderesis* over three centuries as a concept that appears in both Latin and vernacular sources, in medieval genres varying between the formal scholastic treatise to moralising dream-visions. These chapters are preceded by a brief background in which I outline how *synderesis* entered the scholastic debate, through a reference to Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel* in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.

Chapter two outlines the first hundred years after Peter Lombard, whose reference to the passage in Jerome where *synderesis* occurs secured the future of the concept for centuries to come. I begin by briefly outlining the most common feature of scholastic discussions of *synderesis*: its relation to

¹² Endre von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln, 1964). Declan Lawell, 'Ne de ineffabili penitus taceamus: Aspects of the Specialized Vocabulary of the Writings of Thomas Gallus', *Viator*, 40 (2009), pp. 151-184; 'Spectacula contemplationis (1244-46): A Treatise by Thomas Gallus, *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévale*, 76 (2009), pp. 249-285.

¹³ Robert Davis, 'The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure', (Harvard University, Ph.D. thesis, 2012).

reason (*ratio*). Because *synderesis* was often thought to be unerring in its knowledge of basic moral truths, the question of how it relates to sin often arose. One of the focal points of the chapter is how *synderesis* was thought to relate to one of the most serious sins: heresy. This discussion, albeit peripheral compared to the question of *synderesis* and reason, shows how historical events, such as the rise of popular heresy and the Albigensian crusade, could influence what at first seems like a very abstract consideration. In addition, I demonstrate how this discussion drew from common medieval topoi regarding heresy.

Secondly, I consider how *synderesis* was thought to function among the damned. Since *synderesis* was considered as a substantial, and therefore inalienable, part of the soul, what function does it have among those who do no longer need moral guidance? This part prepares for the analysis of some cases of vernacular appropriation in Chapter six.

Chapters two and three consider how *synderesis* was used in mystical literature. It appears first to have entered this genre through the Victorine abbot of Vercelli, Thomas Gallus (ca. 1200-1246). It is an unfortunate feature of much modern scholarship on *synderesis* that it rarely, if ever, links the moral-psychological aspects with its appropriation within mysticism.

It is possible at times to see it used in both contexts. The chapter begins with an outline of *synderesis* in the writings of Thomas Gallus, but the focus is on Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217/1221-1274), who used *synderesis* in both the moral-psychological and the mystical contexts. Bonaventure first comments on *synderesis* in his *Commentary on the*

Sentences of Peter Lombard, which is discussed in Chapter two. But within a few years, in his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (ca. 1259-60), he has evidently appropriated Gallus' interpretation of the term. I describe how such a transition fits into Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*, where *synderesis* first appears. The *Itinerarium* is concerned with guiding its readers to mystical union and uses Francis of Assisi and his miraculous reception of the stigmata as the model for this mystical journey. As the power of the soul that brings about that mystical union, *synderesis* takes on a crucial function in this text. I argue here that whilst *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium* and the *Commentary* must be seen as two different uses of the concept, they can nevertheless be related to each other. By using Bonaventure as an example, this dissertation shows how these two interpretations of *synderesis* fit into a continuum of interpretation. In this way, I bridge the gap between the study of scholasticism and that of mysticism.

The *Itinerarium* is one of the rare occasions where we can see how *synderesis* was used in a text, instead of merely being discussed. The *Itinerarium* was written when Bonaventure had become Minister General of the Franciscan order, and at a time when the order and the cult of Francis, not to mention his stigmata, were highly controversial. I suggest in Chapter four that Bonaventure has created a psychological framework with which the reader can understand Francis' mystical experience. This, I suggest, is directed not only to the critics of the Franciscan order, but also to those within the order who harboured doubts regarding Francis's stigmata.

Chapter five begins with an overview of what happens to *synderesis* in scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. These two scholars became the two main lenses through which *synderesis* was seen, but this does not mean that there is a neat Dominican/Franciscan divide. Instead, what we see is a form of ‘eclectic stagnation’, where scholars borrowed and occasionally attempted to synthesise the opinions of the two great masters. In spite of this eclecticism, very little happens that is noteworthy, which indicates that the concept is being kept alive in academia through Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. Instead of focusing on treatises created in and for an academic context, I widen the scope to take into account ‘non-academic’ texts, i.e., written by academically trained writers, but outside the confines of academia. *Synderesis* appears here sometimes in a very simplified form and in other cases, such as in John Wycliffe, Meister Eckhart and Jean Gerson with greater sophistication. In the case of Geert Groote and his treatise against the building of the Dom tower of Utrecht, we see *synderesis* employed in the context of dissent from his ecclesiastical superiors – a use of *synderesis* that would be hard to imagine being countenanced by the Parisian masters. This case highlights the importance of the social setting in which a concept is being employed.

The way *synderesis* was used by Eckhart and Gerson also indicates that the lines between the moral-psychological and mystical interpretations of *synderesis* are occasionally blurred. In the examples I have chosen from these authors, both interpretations seem to coexist in the same passages. Whilst Chapter three argues that *synderesis* in Bonaventure’s *Commentary*

and the *Itinerarium* constitutes two extremes of a continuum, these two extremes now appear to meet each other.

The fifth and final chapter examines some cases of appropriation of *synderesis* in vernacular literature. *Synderesis* appears on a number of occasions in Late Medieval vernacular texts, which are presented here. The chapter focuses, however, on Guillaume Deguileville (also spelled Diguileville) and his influential *Pélerinage de l'âme*, written in the mid-fourteenth century. In this text, *synderesis* appears as a character that serves as the prosecutor of the soul before the court of Heaven. This text was later translated into Middle English and I present both texts together here. I analyse the role *synderesis* plays in this text, and other Late Medieval texts, in relation to the discussions of *synderesis* in Chapter two. The chapter also examines some manuscript illustrations, showing how *synderesis* was represented with respect to the text.

Many of my primary sources have still not been edited in their entirety, but are only available in Dom Odon Lottin's *Psychologie et morale aux xii^e et xiii^e siècles* which is an invaluable sourcebook on *synderesis* and conscience, among many other things. I shall therefore on many occasions refer to Lottin for these sources. Where a modern edition is available, I have consulted it. In most cases, however, I have had to rely on Lottin for transcription of the primary sources on *synderesis*. Lottin names his manuscripts, but does not provide much further information about them regarding ownership, provenance and dates. Occasionally, Lottin offers alternative readings in the running text, but he does not give a critical apparatus. This heavy reliance on Lottin is inevitable, but it does come with

the risk that mistakes are made. Some manuscripts are not dated, and still difficult to date, and one has to rely on Lottin's judgement regarding the chronology at some points. Moreover, his transcriptions of the sections on *synderesis* are taken out of their immediate context and it is impossible to say whether Lottin overlooked occurrences of the term elsewhere in the manuscripts he consulted and how *synderesis* related to other topics in these sources. This was a necessary choice for Lottin, but it does make it difficult to describe how *synderesis* functions in its immediate context. The ongoing digitisation projects over the world will undoubtedly make it easier in the coming years to reassess Lottin's work.

Needless to say, a dissertation dealing with the occurrences of *synderesis* over the course of three centuries cannot be an exhaustive account of every author. The sources I have chosen for the first four chapters reflect the trends that were prevalent at the University of Paris, where Lombard's *Sentences* were first used in education. The questions that the Parisian masters posed, and the solutions they came up with, especially during the first century after Lombard, were on the whole the model for later interpretations of *synderesis* outside of Paris.

A number of concepts naturally close to *synderesis* are not included in this dissertation. One such term is *instinctus naturae* which at times came close to functioning as a synonym for *synderesis*.¹⁴ The concept *apex*

¹⁴ For a brief overview of this concept and its intersection with the history of *synderesis*, see R. A. Greene, 'Instinct of Nature: Natural Law,

mentis (also referred to as *principalis animae*), which has a long history of its own and which sometimes intersects with *synderesis*, will only be dealt with briefly and in conjunction with *synderesis*.¹⁵ Conscience (*conscientia*) was closely associated with *synderesis*, in particular after Philip the Chancellor, and I will discuss this term when necessary whilst maintaining the focus on *synderesis*.

Synderesis was often referred to as the ‘higher part of reason’, or as ‘the spark of higher reason’, a part of the soul that is distinct from the lower part of reason. It is therefore necessary to briefly explain the term ‘part of the soul’, as it will recur at several instances throughout the dissertation. Following Augustine’s *De trinitate*, reason was thought to consist of two parts (*partes*), sometimes also called the faces (*facies*) of the soul. This division is derived from the two functions of the mind in Augustinian psychology: to consider the ‘eternal reasons’ (i.e., universal principles) and to guide humanity through life. To use the term ‘part’ to distinguish between these two functions can create the false impression that medieval scholars thought that reason was composed of different parts, whereas in fact the overwhelming majority used the term to distinguish between two functions.¹⁶

Synderesis, and the Moral Sense’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1997), pp. 173-98.

¹⁵ For a history of *apex mentis*, see E. von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln, 1964), pp. 315-51.

¹⁶ For a history of *ratio superior* and *ratio inferior*, see R. W. Mulligan, ‘Ratio Inferior and Ratio Superior in St. Albert and St. Thomas’, *The Thomist*, 19 (1956), pp. 339-67.

The sources that the scholastic masters used date back to Late Antiquity and to Jerome in particular, with several instances where an influence from Augustine can be seen. The history of how *synderesis* ended up in the medieval universities is somewhat complicated and it is therefore necessary to first briefly introduce Jerome and his *Commentary on Ezekiel* and its reception.

Chapter one. Background. From Jerome to the Early Schoolmen

When the scholastic masters discussed *synderesis*, they did so with reference to Jerome's (347-420) *Commentary on Ezekiel* from the early fifth century. In all likelihood, however, Jerome never used the term *synderesis*, but a similar term, *syneidesis*. This corruption of the initial reading of Jerome likely arose when Jerome's commentary on Ez. i, was incorporated into the *Glossa ordinaria* in the twelfth century. In the following sections, I outline how this term was handed down to the scholastic masters and some of its origins in early Christian and gnostic writings. I will here briefly outline the passage in Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel* where *synderesis* (or *syneidesis*) occurs, with some of its background history, and how it was received in the eleventh and twelfth century. The reference to this passage by Peter Lombard in his *Sentences* was crucial in securing the future of the concept of *synderesis*. But Lombard's reference to the passage in Jerome is combined with aspects of Augustinian thought, which influences the way *synderesis* is discussed in the first century after Lombard.

1. Jerome and his Sources

1.1 Jerome's Commentary on Ezekiel

In his commentary on the first chapter of Ezekiel, Jerome expounds the vision the prophet records of four creatures, each with four faces — that of a human, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Sparks (*scintillae*) were flying in the air between the four

animals.¹ He offers a number of interpretations of this passage before he comes to that which would provide the raw material for centuries of scholastic thought:

[...] plerique, iuxta Platonem, rationale animae et irascentium et concupiscentium, quod ille λογικὸν et θυμικὸν et ἐπιθυμητικὸν uocat, ad hominem et leonem ac uitulum referunt: rationem et cogitationem et mentem et consilium eandem uirtutem atque sapientiam in cerebri arce ponentes, feritatem uero et iracundiam atque uiolentiam in leone, quae consistit in felle, porro libidinem, luxuriam et omnium uoluptatum cupidinem in iecore, id est in uitulo, qui terrae operibus haereat; quartum que ponunt quae super haec et extra haec tria est, quam graeci uocant συνείδησις – quae scintilla conscientiae in cain quoque pectore, postquam eiectus est de paradiso, non extinguitur, et, uicti uoluptatibus uel furore, ipsa que interdum rationis decepti similitudine, nos peccare sentimus –, quam proprie aquilae deputant, non se miscentem tribus sed tria errantia corrigentem, quam in scripturis interdum uocari legimus spiritum, qui interpellat pro nobis gemitibus ineffabilibus [Rom. viii. 26].²

[...] most people interpret the man, the lion and the ox as the rational, emotional and appetitive parts of the soul, following Plato's division, who calls them the *logikon* and *thymikon* and *epithymetikon*. They locate reason, cognition, mind, thought and wisdom in the brain; wild feelings, anger and ferocity in the gall-bladder; desire, wantonness and the desire for all kinds of delights in the liver. And they posit a fourth part which is above and beyond these three, and which the Greeks call *syneidesis*: that spark of conscience which was not even extinguished in the breast of Cain after he was turned out of Paradise, and by which we discern that we sin, when we are overcome by pleasures or frenzy and meanwhile are misled by an imitation of reason. They reckon that this is, strictly speaking, the eagle, which is not mixed up with the other three, but corrects them when they go wrong, and of which we read in Scripture as the spirit 'which intercedes for us with ineffable groaning'.

Synderesis, or, as here, *syneidesis* (on the difference between the two, see section 1.2. below), is compared to the eagle who flies over the emotional and

¹ Ez., i. 4-12.

² Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem libri xiv*, ed. Fr. Glorie, *CCSL* 75 (Turnhout, 1964), pp. 11-12. Translation slightly adapted from Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 79-80.

appetitive powers of the soul and corrects them, but does not engage in their activities. It is the spark of conscience (*scintilla conscientiae*), which was still active in such abject creatures as the fratricide Cain. One may be deceived by what seems to be the dictates of *synderesis* whilst performing a sinful act, but in fact one follows a deceitful likeness of it. A few lines later, Jerome writes:

et tamen hanc quoque ipsam conscientiam, iuxta illud quod in prouerbiis scriptum est: impius cum uenerit in profundum peccatorum, contemnit, cernimus praecipitari apud quosdam et suum locum amittere, qui ne pudorem quidem et uerecundiam habent in delictis et merentur audire: facies meretricis facta est tibi, nescis erubescere.³

And yet we see that this conscience is overthrown among some, according to Proverbs [xviii. 3] ‘when the wicked man descends into the abyss of sins, he shows contempt’, and loses its place among those who have no decency or shame for their transgressions. They deserve to hear ‘you have put on the face of a prostitute, and you know not how to blush.’ [Jer. iii. 3]

The reference here to *hanc conscientiam* is not wholly straightforward, but should be taken to refer back to *syneidesis*, which is the Greek word for conscience. (The fact that Jerome used *syneidesis* as a term for ‘the spark of conscience’, *scintilla conscientiae*, complicates the matter even further.) This passage was nevertheless taken in scholasticism to refer to the possibility that *synderesis* could be hindered in its action in some way or other. With this brief passage, Jerome had provided future generations with enough material for centuries of discussion. The prehistory of this term, before Jerome, could in itself fill an entire thesis and I so shall not discuss it here, as it has little bearing on how the scholastic masters chose to use the term *synderesis*. For them, Jerome was the

³ Jerome, *In Hiezechielem*, p. 12.

main source, and it is rather how they approached this material that is the topic of this dissertation.

1.2. *Synderesis*, *Synteresis* or *Syneidesis*?

In the above quotation, from the latest edition of Jerome, the term used is *syneidesis*, which is the reading that is best supported by the manuscript evidence. But previous editions have used the term *synteresis* (of which *synderesis* is a variation) and that is the version we see in the *Glossa ordinaria* as well.⁴ How did this reading arise and what is the significance of it?

Jerome has here taken over the Platonic idea of a tripartite soul, introduced to Christian literature by Origen, and identified these with three of the four animals.⁵ In Jerome's own translation of Origen's commentary on Ezekiel, we see the interpretation of the faces of the human, the lion, and the ox as *ratio*, *iracundia* and *concupiscentia*, respectively. Origen thinks that in addition to these there is the spirit of man which presides over humanity to help him, and which is signified by the eagle ('spiritus...qui praesidet ad auxiliandum').⁶ Gregory of Nazianzos followed Origen with one small addition: the eagle, Gregory thought, represented *syneidesis* (conscience) which is set in authority over the other powers (τῆν

⁴ See Jerome, *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis presbyteri commentariorum in Ezechielem prophetam libri quatordecim*, PL, xxv, 22. *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strasburg 1480/I*, ed. K. Froelich and M.T. Gibson (4 vols., Turnhout, 1992), iii, p. 224.

⁵ On the idea of a tripartite soul, see D.N. Bell, 'The Tripartite Soul and the Image of God in the Latin Tradition', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 47 (1980), pp. 16-52, at pp. 23-52.

⁶ Jerome, *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis presbyteri, translatio homiliarum Origenis in Jeremiam et Ezechielem, ad Vincentium Presbyterum*, PL, xxv, 707.

συνείδησιν ἐπικειμένον τοῖς λοιποῖς) which is what Paul referred to when he wrote about the spirit of man).⁷

It has been proposed by Jacques de Blic, among others, that the occurrence of *synteresis* in Jerome is merely a corrupt form of the more frequently occurring word *syneidesis* and that it should be interpreted as conscience.⁸ That *syneidesis* is the correct reading was in fact suggested already in the late 1870s, a suggestion which sparked much controversy at first.⁹

However, the word *synteresis*, although rare, does exist in Greek philosophical and patristic literature, which Jerome had at hand.¹⁰ *Synteresis* comes from the verb τηρέω which means ‘to keep’ or ‘to guard’. As such, it would correspond to the Classical Latin concept of *conservatio*. Appel notes that the word *synteresis* occurs once more in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzos, as well as the concept δύναμις συντηρητική and in Gregory of Nyssa it occurs on three occasions.¹¹ If *synteresis* is not a corruption of *syneidesis*, then these authors are very likely the persons Jerome referred to with the word *plerique* and *Graeci*.

Crucially, however, *synteresis* cannot be supported by the manuscript tradition. De Blic cites extensive evidence from medieval manuscripts (of which two are

⁷ H. Appel, *Die Lehre*, pp. 4-5.

⁸ J. de Blic, ‘Syndérèse ou conscience?’, see in particular pp. 152-7.

⁹ For an overview of this literature, see Crowe, ‘The Term Synderesis’, pp. 152-3, with footnotes.

¹⁰ See *Thēsauros tēs Hellēnikēs glōssēs. Thesaurus Graecae linguae*, ed. Henri Estienne et al., (London, 1816) which lists four occurrences under *synteresis*.

¹¹ Appel, *Die Lehre*, p. 12. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *S. Gregorii Nysseni, de hominis opificio*, PG, xlv, 192; *S. Gregorii Nysseni oratio cathechetica magna*, PG, xlv, 96, *S.P.N. Gregorii episcopi Nysseni adversus Apollinarem*, PG, xlv, 1169; Gregory of Nazianzos, *S. Gregorii Theologi archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani orationes*, Oratio 30. 19, PG, xxxvi, 129.

later than 1200) which shows that the dominant reading of Jerome gives *syneidesis*. De Blic believes that *syneidesis* was corrupted when Jerome's commentary on Ez. i entered the *Glossa ordinaria*, possibly through a manuscript tradition of Jerome, or Hrabanus Maurus' reference to Jerome.¹² The many hours spent by the masters over the term *synderesis* and what its exact nature is seem to have begun with a mere scribal error.¹³ Indeed, de Blic suggests that once the error had entered the *Glossa*, it gained such an authority that the previous, authentic, reading *syneidesis* was suppressed.¹⁴ The distinction between *syneidesis* and *synteresis* was not necessarily of great importance for the schoolmen who established the term in the scholastic treatises of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They had their data from Jerome's commentary and a term of Greek origin into which one may read many things that were not necessarily intended by those patristic authors who first used it. *Synderesis* is, as we will see throughout this dissertation, an extremely flexible concept which can be used to answer various questions. There is, however, one aspect of *synderesis* that seems to live on from Antiquity into the Middle Ages, and that is the notion of it as a 'spark' of

¹² De Blic, 'Synderese ou Conscience?', pp. 152-7, see in particular p. 155. For Hrabanus' use of Jerome, see Hrabanus Maurus, *Beati Rabani Mauri Fuldensis abbas et Moguntini archiepiscopi commentaria in libros ii Paralipomenon*, PL, cix, 409. The *Patrologia Latina* edition has the term *Sinesis*, which is a corrupt form of *synderesis*.

¹³ De Blic, 'Syndérèse ou conscience?', p. 155, 'En somme, du point de vue de la philologie et de l'histoire doctrinale, l'enseignement scolastique de la *synderesis*, est un accident' ('In short, seen from the point of view of philology and the history of doctrine, the scholastic teaching on *synderesis* is an accident.')

¹⁴ De Blic, 'Syndérèse ou conscience?', p. 156.

conscience. This term also reflects the idea that the soul has an aspect which is untainted by the Fall.

1.3. The Genealogy of *Scintilla*

The origin of *synderesis* is, as we have seen, deeply embedded in Classical thought. One of the images that Jerome uses is the ‘spark of conscience’ (*scintilla conscientiae*). The fire-imagery bears a resemblance to the Stoic idea that the soul has received a bit of the divine fire (what von Ivanka calls ἀπόσπασμα des göttlichen Urfeuers) to which it strives to reunite.¹⁵ But the notion of a spark of the soul has also been put in relation to Platonic and Gnostic beliefs by Michel Tardieu. The notion of a spark (*scintilla*) has a long history stretching from Antiquity up to the Middle Ages which it will be worthwhile to give a very brief overview of here. Michel Tardieu expertly traces the origins of *scintilla* in the Platonic and early Christian gnostic tradition. Early Christian descriptions of heresies by Irenaeus (d. ca. 180) and Hippolytos (170-235), so-called heresiologies, describe the teachings of gnostic thinkers in the first centuries from the perspective of what they considered to be orthodoxy. The notion of a divinely endowed spark was popular in gnostic exegesis on Genesis, where it was believed that God had breathed a spark (Gr. σπιντήρ) into mankind. It is thus similar to the notion of πνεῦμα or ψυχή, as the principle of life in the human body. Irenaeus records the concept of a spark of life (σπιντήρα ζωής/*scintilla vitae*) in the

¹⁵ Von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus*, p. 318.

teachings of the gnostic Saturninus, which makes the human being come alive and that after death returns to the heavens and joins its kin.¹⁶ Considering that the use of *scintilla* here is in relation to Gn. i. 26, Tardieu argues that it is related to the notion of the image of God.¹⁷ Other gnostic sects such as the Sethians believed in a spark of light, which fits into the world-view that the soul has a part of the heavenly fire that has been imprisoned in the flesh.¹⁸ The same group, according to Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 310/20-403), believed in a spark endowed from on high, that bore the resemblance of justice (σπιντήρ τῆς δικαιοσύνης).¹⁹ Similarly, in the *Paraphrase of Sem*, contained in the Nag Hammadi papyri, we see the notion of a spark, (*scintilla*) as heavenly in origin and inextinguishable, in addition to being σπιντήρ τῆς δικαιοσύνης.²⁰ A crucial focal point for the transmission of the notion of σπιντήρ /*scintilla* is the so-called Chaldean Oracles, a set of neo-Platonic syncretistic sayings from the second century, where the term ψυχᾶιος σπινθήρ (Latin *scintilla animae*) appears.²¹

Marius Victorinus (fl. 4th c.) had introduced this term in Western Latin Christianity, which according to Pierre Hadot shows that he had read the

¹⁶ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, ed., Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau (7 vols. in 6, Paris, 1965-1979), 1.24.1 (ii, p. 322).

¹⁷ M. Tardieu, 'Psychaios spinther, Histoire d'une métaphore dans la tradition platonicienne jusqu'à Eckhart', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 21 (1975), pp. 225-255, at p. 228.

¹⁸ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 232.

¹⁹ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 236.

²⁰ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, pp. 236-7

²¹ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 243.

Chaldean Oracles.²² Victorinus thinks that the mind has an analogous affinity to the divine Word (λόγος) and is placed between matter (ὕλη) and the spiritual realities (*spiritus et intelligibilia*) and with its mind (νοῦς), it can turn to both of them. He then comes to the crucial phrasing:

Etenim suae licentiae est, et privatione veri luminis, propter scintillam tenuem proprii τοῦ νοῦ, rursum vocatur.²³

For it is entirely free, and it is called back from its deprivation of the true light through a small spark of its own mind (νοῦς).

Victorinus's use of *scintilla proprii τοῦ νοῦ* is crucial in understanding later scholasticism, for this term will later on be adopted by Augustine in his *De civitate Dei*:

Ex quo enim homo in honore positus, postea quam deliquit, comparatus est pecoribus, similiter generat; non in eo tamen penitus extincta est quaedam velut scintilla rationis, in qua factus est ad imaginem Dei.²⁴

For after humanity fell from the place of honour in which it was created, it became like the beasts, and begets young like them. However, the spark of reason with which it was made in the image of God was not entirely extinguished.²⁵

The extraordinarily rich Greek term νοῦς has here been rendered as *ratio* in Augustine's appropriation of Victorinus. This understanding of *scintilla* will later

²² Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 245. Cf. Marius Victorinus, *Traitées theologiques sur la Trinité*, ed. Pierre Hadot and Paul Henry (2 vols., Paris, 1960), ii, p. 884.

²³ Marius Victorinus, *Traitées theologiques*, i, p. 162, Tardieu *Psychaios spinther*, p. 245.

²⁴ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ed. Bernhard Dombart and Adolph Kalb, *CCSL* 47, 48 (2 vols., Turnhout, 1955), 22. 24. 2. (ii, p. 847)

²⁵ Adapted from the Loeb translation by William Green in *The City of God against the Pagans* (7 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1957-1972), vii, p. 325.

recur in Anselm of Laon and Alcher of Clairvaux in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.²⁶ The inclusion of *scintilla* in Augustine's text ensured that this Platonic and gnostic concept lived on in the Middle Ages, but it does not entirely account for Jerome's use of *scintilla*. Tardieu traces Jerome's use of it down to Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.²⁷ Commenting on Cant. i. 11. ('We will make you earrings of gold, studded with silver') Origen interprets the silver decorations as the divine sparks sent into the souls of the saints of the Old Testament:

scintillae quaedam spiritualis intelligentiae animis eorum inicendae sunt, ut gustum quodammodo desiderandae dulcedinis sumant.²⁸

Some sparks of the spiritual intellect are to be sent into their souls, so that they have a small taste of the sweetness that is so desirable.

Tardieu explains that while the word *scintilla* is contained in the text Jerome is glossing (Ez. i. 7. 'scintillae quasi aspectus aeris candentis') it is also likely that Jerome drew inspiration from the above quotation from Origen, without mentioning him explicitly (simply by using *plerique*) but does not rule out entirely a borrowing from Victorinus either. An influence is possible, since Jerome is commenting on the *similitudo hominis* in Ez. i. 5. by referring to the concept of *imago Dei* in Gn. 1.26, the same passage that Victorinus was referring to when introducing the concept of *scintilla propria* τοῦ νοῦ.²⁹ I am not entirely convinced that it is that obvious that Jerome had borrowed from Origen and find that Tardieu

²⁶ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 246.

²⁷ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 249-250

²⁸ Origen, trans. Rufinus, *Commentarius in Cantica Canticorum*, ed. W.A. Baehrens, in *Origenes Werke*, Paul Koetschau et al. (12 vols., Leipzig, 1899-1955), viii, p. 164.

²⁹ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 250

does not substantiate this claim enough. In my view, the connection with Victorinus lies closer at hand and would be less controversial for Jerome. Origen does mention *scintilla* on other occasions as well, as Tardieu notes, twice in his *Peri archôn (De principiis)* translated by Rufinus. In this passage, *scintilla* is not so much a part of the soul, but something the soul becomes like when it breaks free from the shackles of materiality and pierces through to the incorporeal world and there obtains a place of light or *scintilla* ('tamen cum ad incorporea nititur atque eorum rimatur intuitum, tunc scintillae alicuius aut lucernae vix obtinet locum').³⁰

The notion of a divine spark in the mind or intellect, immutable and permanent was thus preserved through Jerome, but now given a new and ethical dimension which would characterise its later fate, as Tardieu points out.³¹ The idea of a divine spark that had been placed in the soul resonates throughout the history of *synderesis* (although the scholastics were probably unaware of the origins of the term *scintilla*/ σπιντήρ). This is especially clear in the case of the notion that *synderesis* was that part of the soul that was untainted by the Fall, the *portio virginalis animae*, as some called it. It was the final trace of humanity's pristine purity, and the key to reaching that lost state.

³⁰ Origen, trans. Rufinus, *De principiis*, ed. P. Koetschau, in *Origenes Werke*, ed. Paul Koetschau et al. (12 vols., Leipzig, 1899-1955), v, p. 20.

³¹ Tardieu, *Psychaios spinther*, p. 250.

2. A Conflation of Terms

Tardieu's exposition of the origins of the concept of *scintilla* and its transmission lays bare a feature of the first decades of debate on *synderesis* which Lottin did not make clear: that Jerome's introduction of *syneidesis* (later misinterpreted as *synteresis/synderesis*) in the *Commentary on Ezekiel* was conflated with Augustine's concept of *scintilla rationis* (his translation of *scintilla proprii τῶν νοῦν*). Jerome had used the term *scintilla conscientiae* to describe *syneidesis/synderesis*, whereas the early scholastic sources give the term *scintilla rationis*, which indicate an influence from Augustine.

A few decades before Peter Lombard, Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) had referred to a *scintillula rationis* which always remains in the soul and maintains the belief in and worship of God. Between the Fall and the Mosaic law (and later the Gospels), Anselm thought, humanity had to rely on the light of natural law (*rationis scintillula*). However, since most of humanity was impaired by sin, this light was only fully functional in a small group of people.³²

The result of this conflation is that while Peter Lombard refers to Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel, he does not use the term *synderesis* at all, but instead employs Augustine's *scintilla rationis*. In response to the question how humanity, subjected to the rule of sin, still seeks the good, Lombard writes:

Recte igitur dicitur homo naturaliter velle bonum, quia in bona et recta voluntate conditus est. Superior enim scintilla rationis, quae etiam, ut ait Hieronymus, in Cain non potuit extingui, bonum semper vult et malum odit. – Alium autem dicunt motum esse mentis, quo mens, relicta superiorum lege, subicit se peccatis eisque obletatur. Iste motus, ut aiunt, antequam

³² Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 105-6.

alicui adsit gratia, dominatur in homine et regnat, alterumque deprimit motum. Uterque tamen ex libero arbitrio est. Veniente autem gratia, ille malus motus eliditur, et alter naturaliter bonus liberatur et adiuvatur ut efficaciter bonum velit. Ante gratiam vero, licet naturaliter velit homo bonum, non tamen absolute concedi oportet bonam habere voluntatem, sed potius malam.³³

Man is therefore rightly said to naturally want the good, because humanity was created with a good and uncorrupted will. For the spark of higher reason, which (as Jerome said) could not be extinguished even in Cain, always desires good and hates evil. – They say that there is another impulse (*motus*) of the mind, by which the mind, having left the heavenly laws behind, subjected itself to sins and found delight therein. This impulse, they say, dominated the soul and ruled it before the advent of grace, and suppressed the other impulse. Both impulses belong to the free will. With the arrival of grace, however, this evil impulse is broken, and the other [i.e., *superior scintilla rationis*] which is good by nature, is freed and helped so that it opts for the good efficaciously. However, although man naturally desires the good before the arrival of grace, it cannot be wholly conceded that the soul for that reason has a good will, but rather an evil one.

Although Lombard does not use the term *synderesis* here, his reference to Jerome secured the future of the concept for centuries of scholastic debate. The importance of this reference in Lombard's *Sentences* for the future of the concept cannot be overstated: for as long as the *Sentences* remained the textbook for academics, and the subject of innumerable *Commentaries on the Books of Sentences*, *synderesis* would be a recurring feature, by virtue of the authority of Peter and his *Sentences*.

What is interesting to note here is that Lombard refers to *synderesis* in relation to a question regarding the will. The heading of the question is 'Quomodo intelligendum sit illud: Homo etiam qui servus est peccati, naturaliter vult bonum'

³³ *II Sent.*, d. 39, c. 3.

(‘How should the passage “man, who is a slave under sin, naturally wants the good” be understood?’).³⁴ That is to say: *synderesis* enters the scholastic debate properly in a question relating to the will (*voluntas*). But the terminology Lombard uses, a version of *scintilla rationis*, opens up for the possibility of seeing *synderesis* in relation to reason. Over the coming centuries, *synderesis* will be discussed in relation to these two powers of the soul. But for the first decades, the interpretation of *synderesis* in relation to reason came to dominate.

Lombard discusses *synderesis* in relation to the idea of two *motus*, two impulses to two mutually exclusive things, the good and the evil. As the *motus* to seek the good, *synderesis* is what later scholars would call ‘natural will’ or ‘natural reason’, that is to say, it operates instinctively, in a non-deliberative way. In later discussions, the term *fomes peccati* was the term often used to describe the *motus* to evil. A literal translation of this term would be ‘a tinder for sin’, but whenever I do not use the term *fomes peccati* itself, I will use the term concupiscence.

One of the earliest commentators on the *Sentences*, ‘Udo Magister’, who wrote between 1160 and 1165, was according to Lottin the first to bring *synderesis* into academic discussion by following up on Peter’s reference to Jerome.³⁵ Udo did, however, follow Peter (and Anselm) in identifying *synderesis* with Augustine’s *scintilla rationis*, not Jerome’s *scintilla conscientiae*. With Anselm, Peter and

³⁴ *II Sent.*, d. 39.

³⁵ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, 106. Interestingly, another MS gives the term *sinendesis*; see Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 107.

Udo, a precedent had been set whereby the two traditions intersected with each other for the coming century.

The reason why *synderesis* was so easily conflated with *scintilla rationis* was that *synderesis* tended to appear in texts trying to explain the nature of sin and moral knowledge. Since reason has a role in a sinful act, the term *scintilla rationis* could easily function as a synonym for *synderesis* (and as a Latin term it might have seemed more comprehensible). In Udo's treatment of *synderesis* we see the following choice of words:

Ecce dicit [Augustinus] quod ratio consentit peccato. Quod ergo Ieronimus superius dixit quod sinderesis, id est ratio, nunquam se miscet tribus peccatis, intelligendum est per approbationem; quandoque autem miscet se per consensum et delectationem. Quod autem dictum est: peccatum fit ratione, ergo rationabiliter, prima sic distinguitur: peccatum fit ratione, id est peccatum fit per consensum rationis et delectationem, uerum est: sed fit ratione, id est rationabiliter, falsum est.³⁶

[Augustine] says that reason consents to a sin. Jerome's opinion, expressed above, that *synderesis*, i.e., reason, is never mixed up with the three sins should be understood in the sense that it does not give its approval to them. Sometimes, however, it is mixed up with them [the other sins] through consent and delight. The idea that has been expressed that a sin comes about through reason, and therefore would be rational, must first be qualified in the following way: a sin comes about through reason, i.e., a sin happens through the consent of reason and the delight in it. That is true. But the idea that it comes about through reason in the sense that it is rational is false.

This understanding of *synderesis* is best explained by the identification of *synderesis*, not with *scintilla conscientiae*, but with *scintilla rationis*, which is implicit in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. Udo misunderstands Jerome's terms *rationale animae*, *irascitivum* and *concupiscitivum* as denoting sins and thinks

³⁶ Udo Magister, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 108.

that the notion that *synderesis* does not ‘blend’ (‘non se miscet’) with these means that it does not approve of sins, while it may very well consent and even delight in them.

Simon of Bisignano, glossing Gratian’s *Decretum* between 1173 and 1176, sought to understand what Gratian meant by the term natural law, *ius naturale*, which was thought to be innate in every human soul, including the evil. His conclusion was that natural law is the same as the higher part of the soul, reason, which is called *synderesis*. In this he follows the outline of morality in salvation history we saw in Anselm of Laon and which was also partly reflected in the thinking of one of the earliest commentators on Gratian, Rufinus (writing ca. 1157-59).³⁷ Lottin notes that Simon identifies *synderesis* with natural law, where Rufinus had identified natural law as ‘vis quaedam humane creature a natura insita ad faciendum bonum cavendumque contrarium’ (‘a certain power of the human being, inserted by nature for the purpose of doing the good and avoiding its opposite’).³⁸ This interpretation interestingly makes the natural law something innate, unlike later definitions of natural law which see it as something external to the soul. Lottin believes that Simon had read Jerome and applied his concept of *synderesis* to Rufinus’ discussion of natural law. I am not entirely convinced that a reading of Rufinus and Jerome alone would suffice for Simon to present this explanation. By making the highest part of the soul synonymous with both *ratio* and *synderesis*, Simon reveals an influence from the Augustinian understanding of

³⁷ Cf. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 105-6. It is worthwhile noticing, however, that Rufinus does not use the words *scintilla rationis*, or *synderesis*.

³⁸ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 108, n. 2.

scintilla propria τοῦ νοῦ, mediated either through Anselm, Peter Lombard or Udo Magister.

Synderesis never became a recurrent feature among the canonists, however, but thanks to Peter Lombard and Udo, it became a popular feature in academic discourse, because of the widespread use of the *Sentences*. It is hard to overestimate the importance of the *Sentences* for the continued history of *synderesis*. With Lombard's reference in place, and the passage from Jerome in the *Glossa*, scholars could now get to work and discuss the concept. But as we have seen, the presence of *synderesis*, instead of *syneidesis*, in scholasticism appears to be due to a misreading of Jerome. In addition, the term Jerome used as a synonym, *scintilla conscientiae*, had been replaced by the Augustinian term *scintilla rationis* which linked *synderesis* closer to reason. This change came to set the trend for much of the discussion of *synderesis* in the thirteenth century, to which we now turn.

Chapter Two. From the Early Masters to Bonaventure and Aquinas: Synderesis in Early Scholasticism ca. 1165-1252

1. Introduction

Jerome defined *synderesis* as a spark of conscience, but as we have seen, the early scholastic reception of the term was influenced by Augustine in defining it as identical to, or at least part of, reason. This definition in turn formed much of the basis of how the schoolmen discussed other aspects of *synderesis* — whether it sins or can be extinguished in the damned and in heretics. This chapter will show how the idea of *synderesis* developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and how it acquired new meanings during this time. The point of this chapter is not to go through all the authors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and every possible nuance of how they thought about *synderesis* — such an account would in itself fill an entire book. Instead, I will limit this exposition to an outline of the phases of development and the most important aspects of how *synderesis* was discussed in the first hundred years after Lombard. *Synderesis* was from the outset thought to have some connection with reason, and the consequences of this basic belief were evident in other areas of how the concept was understood: its impeccability, its function, or non-function, among the heretics, its existence among the damned, and how it related to the cognitive process of reasoning. It is therefore necessary to begin by discussing how *synderesis* could relate to reason before going on to how it was discussed in other areas. After having described the discussion of *synderesis* and reason, I will analyse the development of the discussion in two thematic sections. The first theme analyses how *synderesis* was thought to function among the living who had fallen out with the Church, i.e., the

alleged heretics. The second theme explores its functions among the dead. Within each of these sections, I will follow a chronological order of description.

Of particular interest are the metaphors which the authors chose to illustrate various functions of *synderesis*, as they reveal how the concept of *synderesis* related to the culture in which it was debated, and which assumptions, conscious or unconscious, contributed to its development. These metaphors remind us of the imperative not only to see philosophical answers as historically contingent, but, as Mary Carruthers points out, to see the questions themselves as not of an ‘eternal’ nature. ‘The questions themselves’, she writes, ‘proceed from assumptions embedded deeply within a culture’s habits of mind, those presuppositions about human and cosmic nature that are absorbed in earliest education and often survive to color in some degree all subsequent experience, even of the rarest individuals.’¹

2. *Synderesis*, Reason and Will

Synderesis was thought to relate to the knowledge of general and abstract principles. The main questions that were asked about *synderesis* from the very beginning, was what part of the soul it relates to, and whether it is a power (*potentia*) or a habit (*habitus*). The practical difference between the two is negligible: either *synderesis* is seen as the power of the soul that grasps the principles of natural law, or the innate habit, or disposition, of reason that does so.

A consensus formed early on that *synderesis* was related to reason (*ratio*), or to higher reason (*superior ratio*) or that it is a spark of higher reason (*scintilla superioris rationis*). Alternatively, it was seen as relating to the will (*voluntas*).

¹ M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2008), p. 58.

Put simply, *synderesis* could either be thought of as a cognitive power by which the soul comes to understand the basic principles of natural law, or, alternatively, the desire to live according to those principles. The principles that *synderesis* was supposed to grasp are of a general nature (e.g., obey God) and it was rarely thought to give specific instructions.²

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is necessary to give a brief outline of how *synderesis* was thought to relate to reason and will and how this developed. This is relatively well established knowledge and will only serve the purpose of outlining the main question that faced medieval scholars when discussing *synderesis*.³ Because *synderesis* was often identified as an unerring capacity to understand, or desire, the moral good, the question arose of how it related to sin. This is in turn related to the references to heresy which can be seen in the treatises on *synderesis*, which will be the topic of the next section.

During the first decades after Lombard, *synderesis* appears relatively rarely, after Udo, the most noteworthy case is Peter of Poitiers (1130-1215, writing ca. 1170). The canonists did not use the term and theologians showed only some mild interest in it.⁴ Peter of Poitiers thought that reason always contradicts evil and discourages the soul from pursuing an evil act. Following Lombard's distinction

² See in particular Stephen Langton's statement 'bonum persuadet et malum dissuadet in genere, non descendendo ad specialia' (it [*synderesis*] persuades the soul to seek the good and dissuades from evil in general, not going into particular cases'), Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 113. Lottin notes (p. 115) that Langton's positions were followed more or less exactly by Geoffrey of Poitiers.

³ For an accessible summary of how *synderesis* developed in the first century after Lombard, see Crowe, 'The Term Synderesis', pp. 153, 156-64.

⁴ See Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, pp. 109-10. For the history of some of the other terms preferred by some canonists, in particular *instinctus naturae*, see R. A. Greene, 'Instinct of nature'; see in particular p. 180.

between the two impulses (*motus*), Peter of Poitiers thinks that one moves the soul naturally to love God and hate evil, and that one drives the soul to earthly things and delights. No one is so evil, Peter writes in his *Sententiae*, that his or her reason does not nag the conscience. This, he thinks, is that spark of reason, *scintillula rationis*, which was not extinguished even in Cain himself and which was called *synderesis*.⁵

Once more, there is an identification of *synderesis* with reason, or a spark thereof, instead of with Jerome's spark of conscience, suggesting that Peter's reading of Jerome had been filtered through the earlier twelfth-century commentators.

Lottin notes that Peter of Poitiers made one important distinction between deliberative and natural reason, although he did not have the precise terminology for it.⁶ Natural reason (*synderesis*) is that instinctive knowledge of what is good and wrong that requires no deliberation. Because of the tension between deliberative and natural will, one can still decide to do something sinful which one nevertheless knows is wrong.

Peter Lombard's implicit use of *synderesis* in discussing the concept of the two 'impulses' (*motus*) was followed and expanded by Stephen Langton (ca. 1150-

⁵ Peter of Poitiers, *Sententiae Petri Pictavensis*, ed. P. S. Moore, J.N Garvin, and M. Dulong (2 vols., Notre Dame, 1943, 1950), 2, c. 4. (ii, p. 170). As Lottin points out, although the terminology is not there yet, what Peter outlines is the distinction between natural and deliberative reason. This distinction mainly concerns what we know rationally and intuitively (e.g., the good should be done), and how the soul through a process or deliberation consents to sin). Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 109.

⁶ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 109.

1228) in his *Quaestiones theologiae*.⁷ For Langton, *synderesis* is that ‘higher’ appetite which relates to reason (‘*valet synderesis ad vim rationalem*’) whose primary function is to persuade the soul to detest evil, but secondarily to do the good. The difference between these primary and secondary functions will return when Stephen discusses *synderesis* and damnation. This higher appetite (*synderesis*) is opposed to the lower appetite (*fomes peccati*), or concupiscence, leading the soul to sin. Between these two, reason acts as the free arbiter (*liberum arbitrium*). *Synderesis* is thus that part of the rational power of the soul which detests evil *naturaliter*, i.e., without having to deliberate.⁸ Lottin notes that Peter of Poitiers (and here we may include Udo as well) did not distinguish between the various functions of the rational faculty, whereas Langton makes such a differentiation between *synderesis* and the free will.⁹

It is, however, in the 1220s and with William of Auxerre’s *Summa aurea* (written ca. 1215-1226, but probably in a near-final state ca. 1223) that discussions of *synderesis* take off properly.¹⁰ William defined *synderesis* as higher reason (*ratio superior*). But the way William thought that *synderesis* and higher reason operate is complex and differs from many subsequent thinkers. Higher

⁷ The *Quaestiones theologiae* is difficult to date with any precision. The editors of the first volume of the *Quaestiones* (which does not include his discussion of *synderesis*) place it between 1170 and 1207, but it is plausible it was written some time in the 1190s, see Stephen Langton, *Quaestiones Theologiae liber I*, ed. Riccardo Quinto and Magdalena Bieniak (Oxford, 2014), p. 5.

⁸ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 110-11, for Langton’s text, see pp. 110, n. 3. and pp. 112-13.

⁹ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 112.

¹⁰ William worked on the first four books of the *Summa aurea* between 1215 and 1226 but probably completed them by 1223, but then he seems to have kept redacting them until later in the 1220s. Stefan Ernst, ‘Wilhelm von Auxerre’, in *Theologisches Realenzyklopädie* (38 vols., Berlin, 1976-2007), xxxvi, pp. 48-51, at p. 49.

reason, or *synderesis*, has two main ways of operating: one by which it reaches its conclusions based on sense perception, and one by which it attaches itself to the eternal truth, i.e., he follows the Aristotelian division between particulars and general knowledge. William's definition of *synderesis* as higher reason, and his idea that higher reason has these two ways of operating, means that *synderesis* is seen as capable of sinning because it can be deceived by particulars, or phantasms produced from sensory perception. Other authors would make a strict distinction between higher reason/*synderesis* and lower reason, seeing *synderesis* as incapable of sin since it only concerns itself with general and abstract axioms.

William also builds up an analogy with the Aristotelian notion of *intellectus* and the idea that *intellectus* cannot err (*intellectus semper verus*). *Intellectus* is here taken as the understanding of principles and axioms, such as 'the whole is greater than its part' and in this sense it cannot err.¹¹ Just as *intellectus* is always correct in speculative matters, so *synderesis* is always correct in morals, or 'that which must be done' (*in faciendis*).¹² This analogy between *intellectus* and *synderesis* was very influential and will return at several instances during the thirteenth century. William was, however, highly unusual in thinking that *synderesis* is capable of sin, and in his understanding of how higher reason operates. One of the other innovations that William brought to the discussion of *synderesis* is that he introduced Aristotelian terminology to the discussion, in

¹¹ This is slightly different from the notion of *intellectus* as a power of the soul which he elsewhere defines as that by which the soul perceives the incorporeal things that have been abstracted from what can be apprehended by sense perception. Cf. *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 299.

¹² *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301.

particular his treatment of *intellectus* and its understanding of principles that are known by themselves (*per se nota*).¹³

William's discussion of *synderesis* was followed closely by the Dominican masters Hugh of St. Cher (ca. 1200-1263) in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (ca. 1230-1232) and Roland of Cremona (1178-1259) in the *Summa magistri Rolandi* (ca. 1232). Roland takes the analogy with *intellectus* which William had introduced and fuses it with *synderesis*, so that the terms *intellectus*, *synderesis* and *superior ratio* are used interchangeably.¹⁴

Roland differs from William, however, in the sense that he does not believe that *synderesis* can err at all. This identification with *intellectus* means that Roland thinks that it only operates on the level that is most abstracted from materiality, most pure, unlike the senses that deal with the raw data of matter. While *synderesis* is incapable of error because of this identification with *intellectus*, this does not mean that sin does not exist. *Synderesis* can be 'incapacitated' in the sense that the lower faculties of the soul do not obey it, as when an abbot is disobeyed by his evil monks. Lower reason, Roland thinks, may be ensnared by worldly delights and thus unable to receive the illumination from *synderesis* — like a rusty mirror incapable of reflecting images, or as the body of a paralysed person does not obey the commands of the mind to move.¹⁵ While the knowledge provided by *synderesis* is correct, we may err in our perceptions (*in sensibilibus*). This is because the process of combining and uniting sensory data in the part of the brain called *sensus communis* requires a transfer of signals from the

¹³ *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301.

¹⁴ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 131.

¹⁵ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 130-134.

sense organs. In such a transfer an error may occur ‘by the blending with some phantasm’ (‘per aliquam fantasiam se immiscentem’). There are thus errors that arise from the processing of sensory data that may affect the mind as far up as the lower reason. This process, and its implications for *synderesis* will be discussed further in section 3.2. ‘Heresy and Fantasy’. But it would be wrong, Roland thinks, to say that all activities of combining and comparing data are fraught with error. The intellect does so too, but in the abstract, for instance when it considers the relations of the persons in the Trinity.¹⁶ By this Roland means that the intellect is capable of understanding the substance shared by Father, Son and Holy Spirit, just as we may come to know that Peter, John and James share a human nature — a form of knowledge that is not available for the lower powers of the soul.

The most important author by far when it comes to *synderesis* in the first hundred years after Lombard is Philip the Chancellor (1160-1236) and his *Summa de bono* (1225-1228), written briefly after William’s *Summa aurea*.¹⁷ Philip shaped much of later discussions of *synderesis* by creating what amounts to the first formal treatise on the subject. Philip begins by asking whether *synderesis* is a power (*potentia*) or habit (*habitus*), where he opts for a compromise in the term

¹⁶ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 131-132. ‘Non omne quod est collatorum errat, sicut est synderesis vel superior intellectus [...] [superior intellectus] confert Filium et Patrem et Spiritum sanctum, et multa alia.’ (‘Not everything that is learned by comparing is faulty knowledge, as in the case of *synderesis* or the higher intellect. The higher intellect compares the Son with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and many other things’). *Sensus communis* is a technical term in medieval faculty psychology, derived from Aristotle through Avicenna. It is sometimes also referred to as *fantasia*. For a brief overview of its function, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 62-68.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the dating of Philip’s text, see Wicki’s introduction in *De bono*, i, pp. 49-66, where he also argues that the *Summa duacensis* (see below) should be dated after Philip.

potentia habitualis, a habitual power.¹⁸ This became one of the most common definitions of *synderesis* and was used in the *Summa duacensis*, an anonymous set of *quaestiones* composed by a Parisian master between 1228 and 1235.¹⁹ In his third question, on the relation between *synderesis* and sin, Philip defines this term: ‘Potentia habitualis dicitur que facilis est ad actum’ (‘A habitual power is that which easily goes into action’). *Synderesis* is a habitual power in the sense that it is not hindered in its action by itself in any way.²⁰ Put differently, a habitual power is a power of the soul that is perfected by a habit towards a particular end.²¹ In this case it is the intellect that operates in a particular way for a particular purpose – to understand the principles of natural law.

As for *synderesis*’ relation to reason, Philip explores the meaning of reason by observing the different senses of the word ‘reason’. Reason has in common with *synderesis*, like desire and emotion (*concupiscitivum* and *irascitivum* in Jerome’s terminology) that they are motive powers – they lead the soul to something. But distinct from these two other powers, *synderesis* can also be seen as a *modicum lumen*, that small guiding light that remained after the fall, so that reason has not completely turned to temporal things (the objects of emotion and desire). In this sense, Philip writes, *synderesis* is not separate from the other powers, but remains in them as a steadfast guide.

Philip then considers reason and *synderesis* in relation to a fourth motive force in the form of understanding, *intelligentia* (a synonym for *intellectus*).

¹⁸ *De bono*, i, pp. 192-5.

¹⁹ *Summa duacensis*, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 160.

²⁰ *De bono*, i, p. 199.

²¹ R. Davis, ‘The Force of Union: Affect and Ascent in the Theology of Bonaventure’ (Harvard University, Ph.D. thesis, 2012), p. 40.

Intelligentia, he thinks, is the highest power and always directs the soul to the highest good (*summum bonum*). Reason, on the other hand, is sometimes correct, sometimes not, and by means of comparison it considers particular goods and evils ('ratio vero sit recta et non recta inspectrix bonorum et malorum particularium per collationem'). *Intelligentia* is thus not meant to deal with a particular good or to consider a particular course of action. When reason considers good or evil in accord with *intelligentia*, it is correct, because *intelligentia* is always correct (and thus is similar to William of Auxerre's use of the Aristotelian motto *intellectus semper verus*). But, just as in William of Auxerre's model, reason can also act in accordance with *fantasia*, that is, knowledge that relies on the phantasms extracted from the objects of sense perception and stored in the mind. When it does so, it can be deceived. In this fourth consideration, Philip separates *synderesis* from *ratio* and identifies it with *intelligentia*, i.e., the instinctive knowledge of principles on which reason relies in moral judgements.²²

It is possible that Philip's discussion of *synderesis* and reason was inspired by Alexander of Hales (ca. 1185-1245), the first Franciscan to occupy a chair in Paris. In his *Glossa in quatuor libros sententiarum* (ca. 1223-1227), Alexander argued that reason can be understood in two ways, *ut est ratio*, that is to say, as deliberative reason, or *ut est natura quaedam*, by which is meant natural reason. *Synderesis* is identical to reason in this latter capacity. The editors of Alexander's *Glossa* have argued that Alexander's text was in fact Philip's main inspiration in writing the *Summa de bono*.²³

²² *De bono*, i, pp. 197-8.

²³ Alexander of Hales, *Magistri Alexandri de Hales glossa super quatuor libros sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (4 vols., Rome,

Philip, and the *Summa duacensis* were the first treatises that paired the treatment of *synderesis* and conscience. Philip defines conscience as the joining together of *synderesis* with free will (*liberum arbitrium*) – that is to say, *synderesis* provides the general rules, which the free will decides on how to apply. Conscience is the conclusion of of this deliberation.²⁴ In other words, we are now approaching what has become one of the standard models of understanding *synderesis* as that which gives the major premise of a syllogism whilst reason gives the minor premise and conscience is the act of coming to a conclusion.

John of La Rochelle (d. 1245), who later worked with Alexander of Hales on the *Summa halensis* (see below), shows a certain degree of eclecticism in his *Summa de vitiis* (ca. 1235) by following, as Lottin notes, the *Summa duacensis* on conscience, but William of Auxerre, Hugh of St. Cher and Roland of Cremona on *synderesis*.²⁵ His main question regarding *synderesis* in his *Summa de vitiis*, is whether it is capable of sin and here he follows William's distinction between the ways in which higher reason can operate and how it (and *synderesis*) can be deceived.²⁶

In his *De anima* (ca. 1240), William of Auvergne (ca 1180/90-1249), the scholar who later became bishop of Paris, rejects in quite undiplomatic terms what previous authors and his contemporaries said about *synderesis*. For William, *synderesis* is a function of the soul, the 'reflection of natural law' (*splendor iste*

1951-1957), 2. d. 40. 2. For an analysis of Philip's dependence on Alexander, see pp. 8-20 in the introduction to vol. 2 of Alexander's *Glossa*. For the dating of the *Glossa*, see pp. 20-1 in the same introduction.

²⁴ *De bono*, i, p. 201. This stance is echoed in the anonymous treatise preserved in Paris, BnF, MS lat. 14726, cf. Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 165.

²⁵ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 168, 171.

²⁶ John of La Rochelle in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 169.

legis naturalis) in the soul, or higher reason when it makes natural law known. Since it is merely a function of reason, it can also be lost, and William cites the cases of ‘morons’ and insane people (*morones, furiosi*), who have lost their use of reason. William mockingly suggests that one must consider the possibility of two *syndereses*: one as a function of reason, and one as a function of the will (*voluntas*). The first speaks against evil, whilst the second struggles against it.²⁷ Something close to William’s mocking suggestion had been proposed as a serious idea only a few years earlier in the *Summa duacensis*. The anonymous author thinks that since the free will relates to both will and reason (or the practical intellect), *synderesis* should also be seen in relation to both, since he thinks that it corrects both reason and will.²⁸

In the *Summa halensis* (1236-1245/56), the *Summa* attributed to Alexander of Hales, but which in fact was a collaborative effort that involved John of La Rochelle among others, we see *synderesis* once more in relation to reason.²⁹ Alexander and his collaborators draw extensively from Philip’s *Summa de bono*. As Lottin points out, they use the same questions, the same arguments for and against, in the same order and with the same terminology, but with more simplified conclusions.³⁰ However, in the third part of the *Summa halensis*, where the issue of natural law is dealt with, *synderesis* appears to relate to the will, rather

²⁷ William of Auvergne, *Guilielmi Alverni Opera Omnia* (2 vols., Paris, 1674, repr. Frankfurt, 1963), ii, pp. 219-220.

²⁸ *Summa duacensis*, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 160.

²⁹ As Victorin Doucet has argued in ‘The History of the Problem of the Summa’, *Franciscan Studies*, 7 (1947), pp. 26-41, 274-312, the *Summa halensis* was unfinished when Alexander of Hales and John of La Rochelle died in 1245. It was completed by William of Melitona in 1256 on the orders of Pope Alexander IV.

³⁰ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 178.

than to reason. Here, conscience is seen as the means by which the mind comes to know the principles of natural law, whereas *synderesis* is the will to seek it:

Lex autem dictat ei bonum faciendum et malum vitandum; post haec sequitur iudicium in ratione, et sic formatur conscientia; ulterius, facto iudicio quod sic debet esse, deinde sequitur synderesis, quae est scintilla conscientiae, quae instigat voluntatem ad bonum faciendum.³¹

But the [natural] law tells [the moral agent] that the good is to be done and evil avoided; after this, reason passes judgement and thus conscience is formed; lastly, a judgement having been reached that things must be in a certain way, *synderesis*, which is the spark of conscience, follows, which spurs the will to do the good.

Conscience is formed after reason has passed judgement on how principles are to be acted on. Thereafter comes *synderesis* that compels the will to carry out the task.³² The idea of seeing *synderesis* in relation to the will had been suggested in the *Summa duacensis* which related it to both reason and will. Here, however, it relates exclusively to the will, which is a significant shift. The fact that this shift from reason to will occurs within the same text highlights the fact that the *Summa halensis* was a collaborative effort.

With Alexander and the *Summa halensis*, a new way of understanding *synderesis* was being established – of *synderesis* as related to the will. At around the same time as the *Summa halensis* was being produced, this view of *synderesis* was elaborated by Odo Rigaud (ca. 1210-1275), the scholar who later became archbishop of Rouen, in his unfinished *Commentary on the Sentences* (ca. 1240-3). Natural reason, Odo thinks, is always directed towards the (moral) good, but it needs to be informed by an innate habit. When it functions this way it grasps first

³¹ Alexander of Hales, *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (4 vols., Quaracchi, 1924-1948), 3. p. 2. inq. 2. q. 2. (p. 345).

³² Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica*, 3. p. 2. inq. 2. q. 2. (pp. 344-5).

principles and does so infallibly. In other words, it has the function other scholars would ascribe to *synderesis*. This is not how Odo defines the term, however. He thinks that just as reason is informed by a habit in grasping first principles, so the natural will is informed by a habit in desiring to follow these principles. He then accounts for two ways of interpreting *synderesis*: some, he says, identify this habitual power of the will with *synderesis*; others believe that *synderesis* is a habit only. In this way of seeing *synderesis*, it forms one habit together with conscience and natural law. Odo stays short of picking a side, remaining content with saying that both are merely different ways of defining the term with no real difference in how *synderesis* is understood. Although he does not clearly articulate his position, it is clear from the argument, that Odo defines *synderesis* in relation to the natural will, rather than reason. *Synderesis* is the desire to live according to the principles of natural law, rather than just understanding them (which is the role of reason).³³

Albert the Great (c. 1200-1280) briefly covers *synderesis* in this *Commentary on the Sentences* (1243-1249), where he treats it as relating to *intellectus* and which pronounces on general matters. In his *De homine* (after 1243), however, Albert gives examples of the rules that *synderesis* reveals to the soul which are far more specific than what other scholastics would allow. His example of a general rule is that fornication is a mortal sin, which is more specific than ‘God must be obeyed’ or ‘the good is to be sought and evil avoided’. This feature is quite unique in the history of the concept. Conscience is the conclusion in a moral syllogism, where *synderesis* provides the major premise and reason the minor.³⁴ Albert also

³³ Odo Rigaud, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 198-9.

³⁴ Albert the Great, *In II Sent.*, d. 24 f a. 14, and *Alberti Magni ordinis fratrum praedicatorum de homine*, ed. H. Anzulewicz and J. R. Söder (Monasteri Westfolorum, 2008), p. 530.

seems to be the first to discuss the relation between *synderesis* and conscience within the Aristotelian conceptual apparatus of the moral syllogism, using the term ‘syllogism’ explicitly. This model of interpreting *synderesis* had a strong influence on Albert’s disciple, Thomas Aquinas and later came to dominate the tradition that saw *synderesis* in relation to reason or the intellect.

The interpretation of *synderesis* as related to the will, proposed by the *Summa halensis* and Odo Rigaud, was later followed by Bonaventure, to whom we now turn. Together with Aquinas, his discussion of *synderesis* formed the basis of the continuing discussions in the centuries to come.

2.1. Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas

Bonaventure’s *Commentary on the Sentences* (completed around 1252), closely follows the *Summa halensis*. He begins by asking whether *synderesis* ‘which is the spark of conscience’ is apprehensive (*in genere cognitionis*) or affective (*in genere affectionis*), that is to say, whether *synderesis* is the knowledge of the principles of natural law, or the desire to follow these principles.

Bonaventure thinks that conscience is a habit of the practical intellect, which grasps the precepts of the natural law. As the understanding of first principles, conscience is an innate habit of the practical intellect, but as the application of these principles in a particular setting, it is an acquired (and fallible) habit.³⁵ The function of *synderesis* is to stimulate the soul to seek that good dictated by the conscience. ‘Just as the intellect from the creation of the soul’, Bonaventure writes, ‘has a light which guides it in passing judgement on things it can

³⁵ In *II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 1. q. 2. resp.

apprehend (*in cognoscendis*), thus the affect also has a natural weight (*pondus*) which draws it to that which is to be sought after (*in appetendis*).³⁶ *Synderesis* is thus that ‘weight’ of the will which inclines it to the moral good (*bonum honestum*). By discussing *synderesis* in terms of Jerome’s original *scintilla conscientiae*, Bonaventure steers clear of the early scholastic tradition of seeing it as the spark of reason (*scintilla rationis*). Instead, he sees the term *scintilla conscientiae* to mean that conscience cannot motivate itself on its own to seek the good it grasps and interprets, but needs a stimulus, which is *synderesis*.

Bonaventure uses the term *potentia habitualis*, introduced by Philip the Chancellor, and applies it to both *synderesis* and conscience.³⁷ *Synderesis* and conscience relate to the natural law in both senses of the word ‘natural law’: as a habit of the mind (here echoing some of the canonists’ views that natural law is innate) which relates both to *intellectus* (knowledge of the law) and affect (the desire to fulfil it) and thus to both conscience and *synderesis*; as a set of precepts, the natural law is known and dictated by conscience, whilst *synderesis* motivates the soul to fulfil it.³⁸ Conscience, Bonaventure thinks, is always correct when it considers universal rules, but when it descends to apply them to particular situations it is capable of

³⁶ In this, Bonaventure follows Odo closely, but has added the concept of *pondus*.

³⁷ *In II. Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2 q. 1 resp. ‘quemadmodum ab ipsa creatione animae intellectus habet lumen, quod est sibi naturale iudicarium, dirigens ipsum intellectum in cognoscendis, sic affectus habet naturale quoddam pondus, dirigens ipsum in appetendis.’ (‘As the intellect has a light with it from the creation of the soul which serves it as a natural judge, guiding the intellect regarding things that are to be known, so the affect has a certain natural weight guiding it regarding things that are to be sought.’). Like Alexander’s *Summa*, he relates *synderesis* to the ‘natural’ will only, cf. *In II. Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2 q. 1 resp ad. 4.

³⁸ *In II. Sent.*, d. 39. a. 2.q. 1. resp. ad caetera.

error, whereas *synderesis* speaks against evil per se.³⁹ Conscience has here taken over much of the function that previously was ascribed to *synderesis*.

Bonaventure then asks whether one can be deprived of *synderesis* through sin. Here he once more marks his distance from those who believe that *synderesis* is identical to higher reason. Previous scholars, Bonaventure thinks, taught that *synderesis* has two types of movement: towards God, when it is governed by natural law, or towards the lower powers of the soul, whence it gets the occasion for sin. Previous scholars take the example of Arius who erred with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity and therefore erred with regard to higher reason, or *synderesis*. Bonaventure replies by returning to the basic definition of the role of *synderesis* ‘to stimulate to the good and speak against evil’ and that there are therefore others who define *synderesis* as a part of the will. Since Bonaventure defines *synderesis* with natural will (as Odo did), he places the origin of sin ‘below’ it, in the deliberative will, which chooses between good and evil. *Synderesis* thus remains in a sinful soul but its action can be hindered.⁴⁰ Bonaventure’s choice to see *synderesis* as an affective power and related to the will, rather than reason is important for his later use of *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium*, where it functions as an affective power of the soul that unites it to God.

In his *Commentary on the Sentences* (1254-1256), Aquinas (1225-1274) makes an analogy between all natural things being moved by an unmoved mover, and

³⁹ *In II Sent.*, d. 39. a. 2. q. 3. ad 4.

⁴⁰ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2 q. 3 resp.

reason which operates by relying on firm (unchangeable) principles.⁴¹ These principles are not known through deliberation, ‘sed subito intellectui offertur’ (‘but are immediately present to the intellect’).⁴² Reason, when investigating abstract matters, relies on principles that are known in themselves (*per se nota*), when it operates according to this habit, it is called *intellectus* (‘quorum habitus intellectus dicitur’).⁴³ Similarly, practical reason deduces eternal principles such as ‘God’s commandments are to be obeyed’. When acting according to this habit, it is called *synderesis*. *Synderesis*, Thomas says, is thus distinguished from practical reason not according to the power itself (*ratio*), but according to the way it operates (habit). Unlike other habits, say, smoking, this habit is innate, given by the light from the agent intellect. Likewise, it cannot be lost, just as we cannot lose the habit of knowing that ‘the whole is greater than its part’.

In his terminology, Aquinas here prefers the term *habitus*, but occasionally uses the term *potentia cum habitu*, or *potentia subiecta habitui nobis innato*.⁴⁴ It is when reason (a power) acts in a certain way (habit) with regard to the principles of natural law that it is called *synderesis*. Later, in *De veritate*, he says regarding these two terms: ‘Et quodcumque horum fuerit, non multum differt [...]’ (‘And

⁴¹ On Aquinas and *synderesis*, see also Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 44-60, and Crowe, ‘The Term Synderesis’, pp. 228-45.

⁴² William of Auxerre voices the same opinion, referring back to Aristotle: ‘[...] secundum quod dicit Aristoteles, quod intellectus est acceptio immediate propositionis; et secundum hoc intellectus semper est verus in speculativis. Eodem modo synderesis semper est vera quantum ad primam viam in faciendis [...]’ ‘[...] according to Aristotle, the intellect [understanding] is the immediate acceptance of a proposition, and according to this the intellect is always correct in speculative matters. In the same way, *synderesis* is always correct in practical matters whenever it refers to the first way.’ *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301.

⁴³ The term *per se nota* appears already in William of Auxerre, see *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301.

⁴⁴ *Super II Sent.*, d. 24. q. 2. a. 4. resp. and *Super II Sent.*, d. 24. q. 2. a. 3 resp.

whichever it is, it does not matter very much [...]). In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas has shifted his terminology to use the term *habitus* alone: ‘Unde et principia operabilium nobis naturaliter indita, non pertinent ad specialem potentiam sed ad specialem habitum naturalem, quem dicimus synderesism.’ (‘Wherefore the moral principles that are naturally placed in us do not pertain to a particular power, but to a particular natural habit which we call *synderesis*’).⁴⁵

One point that makes Aquinas stand out somewhat from previous masters in his *De veritate* is that he refuses to identify *synderesis* with higher or lower reason, instead choosing to see it as relating to both. For *synderesis* instructs the soul with regard to universal principles such as ‘God is to be obeyed’, which pertains to higher reason, as well as principles such as ‘one must live according to reason’ which relates to lower reason.⁴⁶

Synderesis provides the major premise in a moral syllogism, Aquinas thinks, such as ‘all evil things must be avoided’, whilst higher or lower reason provide the minor premise. Higher reason can for instance say ‘adultery is evil, because it is prohibited by God’, whilst lower reason may be deceived by carnal desire and say that God permits adultery. In this example, one relies on the safe guidance from the word of God, whereas the other relies on much less reliable knowledge and therefore easily falls into error. Conscience, in turn, is the conclusion of this syllogism, and depending on whether it is higher or lower reason that interprets the major premise provided by *synderesis*, conscience will come to different results. *Synderesis*, Aquinas thinks, cannot err, but reason can err, and therefore

⁴⁵ *ST*, 1a q. 79, a. 12. resp.

⁴⁶ *De ver.*, q. 16 a. 1 ad 9.

conscience can come to wrong conclusions.⁴⁷ Conscience is neither a power or habit, Aquinas thinks, but an act of concluding the syllogism.⁴⁸ *Synderesis* cannot be extinguished, but can be disabled, for instance when the soul is overcome with sexual passion.⁴⁹

In *De veritate* (ca. 1257-1258), Aquinas writes that conceived of as the *lumen habituale*, the light that the mind has from the agent intellect by which it comes to know universal principles, speculative and moral, it is impossible that *synderesis* is extinguished. It can, however, be extinguished with respect to its action. The action of *synderesis* is hindered in those who do not have full use of their free will, or reason, due to damages to the physical organs on which reason relies. Its action can also be hindered when, in applying its precepts, the soul has been overcome by passions.⁵⁰

It is interesting to note that *synderesis* is treated rather summarily in the *Summa theologiae*. It is mainly contained to question seventy-nine in the first part of the *Summa*, which asks whether it is a power or a habit. Its other appearances in the *Summa* are very peripheral and do not add anything.⁵¹ Michael Crowe suggests

⁴⁷ *Super II Sent.*, d. 24 q. 2. a. 4. resp. Cf. *De ver.*, q. 16. a. 2 resp.

⁴⁸ *Super II Sent.*, d. 24 q. 2. a. 4. resp. One of the interesting features of Aquinas' teaching on conscience is that it must at all instances be obeyed. Not to obey one's conscience, even when it errs, is to commit a sin. That does not mean, however, that one is free to do whatever one wants, but everyone is responsible for the formation of the conscience. For an overview on *synderesis* and conscience and the binding power of an erring conscience (with a brief comparison with Bonaventure), see, T. Hoffmann, 'Conscience and Synderesis', in B. Davies and E. Stump (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford and New York, 2012), pp. 256-62.

⁴⁹ *Super II Sent.*, d. 39 q.3 a.1. ad 4.

⁵⁰ *De ver.*, q. 16, a. 3 resp.

⁵¹ The other places in the *ST* are: 1a q. 79 a. 13 resp. and ad 3; 1a 2ae q. 94 a. 1. arg. 1 and 2, and ad 2; 2a 2ae q. 47 a. 6. ad 1 and 3.

that as Aquinas became more and more preoccupied with Aristotle's *Ethics*, he may have abandoned his previous use of the term *synderesis* and some of its associations with the idea of divine illumination, an idea derived from Augustine's epistemology.⁵² Unlike *De veritate* or the *Commentary on the Sentences*, there is in fact no reference to *lumen* in the *Summa theologiae*, which appears to confirm Crowe's suggestion.

As we can see from this overview, the early identification of *synderesis* with *rationis scintilla* is reiterated throughout most of early scholasticism. I have chosen not to examine whether this position is tenable and its implications for moral philosophy. The purpose of this overview is as a basis for the other questions regarding *synderesis* that were posed by the masters. One of the frequently recurring questions is whether *synderesis* is capable of sin, and it is clear from this overview that given how *synderesis* is defined, e.g., as higher reason, it is generally thought that it cannot sin in itself, but that the general rules it provides can be misapplied. Some think that *synderesis* is culpable in such a misapplication, others would put the blame on some other part of the soul, e.g., conscience or lower reason. The recurrence of this question undoubtedly reflects some of the pastoral realities facing the clergy, in particular following the fourth Lateran council of 1215, of which one of the main features was the institution of annual confession.

The question of whether *synderesis* could sin, or be completely extinguished, produces two questions regarding how it functions in those who have left the faith of the Church, and those who are now in Hell. After all, Jerome said that

⁵² Crowe, 'The Term Synderesis', p. 245.

synderesis was not extinguished in the most reprobate sinner Cain, but he did not say anything about whether *synderesis* remains in Cain in Hell. In the following, we will explore first how *synderesis* was thought to function among the living, before turning our attention to the afterlife.

3. *Synderesis* and Heresy

Medieval heresy has for the past few decades attracted the attention of an increasing number of medievalists.⁵³ In particular, the nature of the movements considered heretical in southern France and northern Italy commonly referred to as ‘Catharism’ has provoked heated debate. Indeed, the terms ‘Cathar’ and ‘Catharism’ are highly contentious, given that it implies an established religion with a set of ideas, and I shall in the following avoid these terms.

Those favouring a more traditional interpretation of the phenomenon have tended to see the movements considered heretical in southern France and northern Italy as an organised group espousing dualist beliefs, whereas sceptics such as

⁵³ Over the past decades, there has been increasing amount of scholarship on heresy. Some of the most important pieces in the past three and a half decade include, *Texts and The Repression of Medieval Heresy*, Caterina Bruschi and Peter Biller (eds.) (Woodbidge, 2003); Bernard Hamilton, *Crusaders, Cathars and the Holy Places* (Aldershot, 1999); *Inventer l’heresie? Discours polémique et pouvoirs avant l’inquisition*, Monique Zerner (ed.) (Nice, 1998); Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983); John H. Arnold, ‘Inquisition, Texts and Discourse’, in *Texts and Repression of Medieval Heresy* (Woodbidge, 2003), pp. 63-80, and ‘The Historian as Inquisitor: The Ethics of Interrogating Subaltern Voices’, *Rethinking History*, 2, pp. 379-386; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294-1324*, (London, 1978); Carol Lansing *Power and Purity: Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (Oxford, 2001) Antonio Sennis ‘Questions about the Cathars’ in *Cathars in Question*, Antonio Sennis (ed.) (York, 2016), pp. 1-20 is also a very good overview of the current debate.

Robert Moore and Mark Gregory Pegg prefer to see reports of heresy as arising out of clerical misunderstanding of dissidents and local practices.⁵⁴ In addition, there is the question of chronology: Pegg considers these supposed heresies as expressions of local religious practices (with both social and political dimensions) that were interpreted as expressions of heresy. Pegg argues that these local phenomena became more clearly articulated and consolidated during the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229), although it never became an organised religion, or as some have proposed, a ‘Cathar church’.⁵⁵

A similar line of thought is offered by Julien Théry-Astruc who considered the supposed heretics as local dissidents and as a form of anti-clerical protest fuelled by social discontent.⁵⁶

The exact nature of these alleged heresies and their degree of organisation is not the main concern of this section, but rather how discussions of moral

⁵⁴ Peter Biller, ‘Goodbye to Catharism?’, in *Cathars in Question*, Antonio Sennis (ed.) (York, 2016), pp. 274-304, in which Biller marks himself out in relation to Moore and Pegg. For a similar stance on the issue of the Waldensians, see Peter Biller ‘Goodbye to Waldensianism?’, *Past and Present*, 192 (2006), pp. 3-33. Biller may be characterised as espousing a more traditional interpretation, affirming the existence of the Cathars. John Arnold’s work may be considered to take a bit more moderate stance, see e.g., John H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc*, (Philadelphia, 2001). For a critical take on the view that there were ‘Cathars’ that were clearly dualist, see Robert I. Moore, *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (London, 2012) as well as his landmark study *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2007). See also M. G. Pegg’s *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245-1246* (Princeton, 2001) which stands close to Moore.

⁵⁵ Mark Gregory Pegg, ‘The Paradigm of Catharism; or, the Historians’ Illusion’, in *Cathars in Question*, Antonio Sennis (ed.) (York, 2016), pp. 21-52.

⁵⁶ Julien Théry-Astruc, ‘The Heretical Dissidence of the ‘Good Men’ in the Albigeois (1276-1329): Localism and Resistance to Roman Clericalism, in *Cathars in Question*, Antonio Sennis (ed.), pp. 79-111.

psychology in one of the centres of orthodoxy, the University of Paris, helped to establish some of the categories through which alleged heretics were seen.

3.1. *Synderesis* as a Tool for Understanding Heresy

During the 1220s we see a new tendency in interpreting *synderesis*, which shows how the interpretation of the concept is dependent on new historical realities. It is here we see for the first time the application of the concept to the problem of heresy. Did *synderesis* still exist in heretics? This question does not derive directly from Jerome's gloss, but is an offshoot from the question of the alleged impeccability of *synderesis*. The timing of this development is not an accident. In 1209 Pope Innocent III had launched the Albigensian Crusade against the groups of alleged heretics in Languedoc, a crusade which would continue for twenty years. It should be noted here in relation to the ongoing debate over the nature of heresy and the problem of naming the phenomenon that Innocent did not use the term 'Cathars' or 'Albigensians' during the launch of the crusade, but only used the term *heretica pravitas* ('heretical depravity').⁵⁷

⁵⁷ *Layettes du Trésor des chartres*, ed. Jean Baptiste Alexander Teulet et. al. (5 vols., Paris, 1863-1909), i, p. 340. See Claire Taylor, 'Looking for the "Good Men" in the Languedoc: An Alternative to "Cathars"?', in *Cathars in Question*, Antonio Sennis (ed.) (York, 2016), pp. 242-56 for a discussion of the problems associated with the term 'Cathar' and the difficulty of finding an appropriate term to describe the heresies in southern France and northern Italy. Jean-Louis Biget points out that the term 'Cathar' was never used by the alleged heretics themselves. See J-L. Biget, "Les Albigeois", remarques sur une dénomination', in *Inventer l'herésie? Discours et polémiques et pouvoirs avant l'inquisition*, Monique Zerner (ed.) (Nice, 1998), pp. 219-56, at 219, n. 2. As his article points out, the term 'Albigensian' is also quite problematic.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries had seen various forms of popular heresies arising, including the Amalricians, and the supposedly dualist heresies in southern France and northern Italy. In November 1215, Pope Innocent III opened the Fourth Lateran Council, which in its third canon imposed new strictures on heretics and those clerics who condoned heresy or went so far as to join heretics.⁵⁸ But what had caused a Catholic to become a heretic and why did he or she remain in their heresy, even in the face of death? In the discussion of *synderesis*, this is a question that seems to have risen following Lateran IV, the Albigensian Crusade and the early activity of the papal inquisitors.

At the end of the second canon of Lateran IV, the council delegates condemned Amalric of Bène (d. 1204/7) in a way that shows how the accusation of heresy was often followed by other accusations, such as that of madness and demonic influence:

Reprobamus etiam et condemnamus perversissimum dogma impii Almarici, cuius mentem sic pater mendacii excaecavit, ut eius doctrina non tam haeretica censenda sit, quam insana.⁵⁹

We do also reproach and condemn the most perverse teaching of the impious Amalric, whose mind was blinded by the father of lies, so that his doctrine was not to be considered not as much heretical as insane.

It has been pointed out that this is not the only time heresy and madness had been paired; the coupling seems to have been a commonplace. As Sabina Flanagan argues, heresy as madness and demonic possession appears as parts of a

⁵⁸ Lateran IV, § 3, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N. J. Tanner (2 vols., London and Washington, 1990), i, pp. 231-33.

⁵⁹ Lateran IV, § 2, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 233.

spectrum.⁶⁰ The mind of Amalric had been blinded by the father of lies, whose main task is to pervert the sense of right and wrong, i.e., opposite to that of *synderesis*. In the following, we will see several ways of understanding how *synderesis* can fail in its task of leading the soul because the soul has been somehow blinded or deceived or as a result of cognitive error.

Regarding the possibility that *synderesis* is implicated in sin, William of Auxerre (writing in the first half of the 1220s) writes ‘it seems clearly that *synderesis* is the higher part of reason and that it occasionally sins, for the sin of Arius and Sabellius originates here’.⁶¹ Sabellius, and Arius even more, are the archetypes of heretics and heresiarchs, whose heresies were often seen as the beginning of a series of reiterations throughout the Middle Ages.⁶²

But William makes a distinction in the workings of reason (*ratio*). On the one hand, it is capable of seeing truth, of being illuminated, of seeing the natural law and what is to be done and to be avoided. If one follows this particular way of reason, one does not sin. On the other hand, reason can operate by beginning from sensible reality and it then runs the risk of being deceived by conclusions derived

⁶⁰ S. Flanagan, ‘Heresy, Madness and Possession in the High Middle Ages’, in J.C. Laursen, C.J. Nederman and I. Hunter (ed.), *Heresy in Transition: Transforming Ideas of Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2005), pp. 29-41, at p. 31. Flanagan argues that in some cases ‘madness’ could function as an excuse for the person accused of heresy.

Flanagan’s argument draws from that of G. Dickson, ‘The Burning of the Amalricians’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40 (1989), pp. 347-69, at 352.

⁶¹ *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301, ‘Nobis videtur sine preiudicio quod *synderesis* est superior pars rationis, et ipsa aliquando peccat; in ea enim fuit peccatum Arrii et Sabellii.’ (‘It appears without doubt that *synderesis* is the higher part of reason and that it occasionally sins. For the sin of Arius and Sabellius lies here.’).

⁶² Bernard Gui, for instance, writing a century later called the heretics in southern France and northern Italy the ‘New Manicheans’ on account of their alleged dualism Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l’inquisiteur*, ed. and transl. G. Mollat and G. Drioux (2 vols., Paris, 1926-1927), i. p. 10.

from there. If *synderesis* works on information provided by lower reason, its conclusions are fallible. This was the sin of Arius: ‘ut Arrius volens per rationes naturales eterna metiri’ (‘Just like Arius, wishing to lie about the eternal [truths] by means of reason pertaining to nature’).⁶³ William does not expand on this issue, but one may deduce from his previous statements that *synderesis* in Arius and Sabellius had relied on knowledge coming from the more precarious mode of operation, by relying on knowledge deriving from sense perception. The sin of the heretic is therefore that he has relied only partly on the enlightenment of *synderesis*, and instead remains reliant on lower reason, content with what can be learned only from the senses.⁶⁴

Although the term *Arianus* was often used when describing religious dissidents in southern France (especially in the twelfth century), this does not necessarily mean that William had these in mind.⁶⁵ But given the fact that the *Summa aurea* was written during the Albigensian crusade, there is a likelihood that William’s reference to Arius and Sabellius was prompted by the reaction of the institutional Church to allegations of local heresy. If that is the case, however, William’s perception of religious dissidence and how it could be related to the ongoing

⁶³ *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 302. This formula is repeated with slight variation by John of La Rochelle, see Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 169.

⁶⁴ *Summa aurea*, ii, pp. 301-2.

⁶⁵ For a good summary of some prominent cases where the term *Arianus* was used, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women’s Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame and London, 1995), pp. 260-1, n. 35. On the risks of taking references to Arianism and other heresies as clear evidence of an actually existing ‘Catharism’, see Mark Gregory Pegg, ‘The Paradigm of Catharism’, p. 29.

discussions of moral psychology was filtered through the lense of ancient heresies that has returned to haunt the Church.

William expands on his thoughts on *synderesis* and higher reason, which implicitly condemn heresy. *Synderesis* and higher reason he thinks are the true *imago Dei* of the soul, in which the soul sees God and true justice. Having been enlightened by the gift of wisdom, the soul strives to be humble and conform itself to the first form (God).⁶⁶ *Synderesis* is thus that most noble part of the soul that makes humans special, and in a sense helps the soul to become more like God. Implicit in this view of *synderesis* is that when it sins, as in the case of heresy, some of that likeness to God is lost.

The fact that some people convicted of heresy appeared to be willing to suffer death for their beliefs caused Philip the Chancellor to wonder how their conscience had led them to this point. He writes: '[...] videtur in heresiarchis quibus conscientia dictat subire martyrium pro fide sua defendenda. Sed hoc est error peccati. Ergo non remurmurat synderesis in eis contra peccatum' ('[...] it can be observed that leaders of heresy are told by their consciences to undergo martyrdom to defend their faith. But this is an error of sin. *Synderesis* does therefore not speak against sin in them.').⁶⁷ Philip's solution is to consider the effect of *synderesis* to be diminished among the heretics because of the loss of true faith which he considers the foundation of all good things. But conscience remains undiminished and it is through conscience that the heretics remain in their faith in the face of death. It is conscience which provides them with what they

⁶⁶ *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301.

⁶⁷ *De bono*, i, p. 202.

think is the faith, which is not the task of *synderesis*. The heretic may err in particular matters of the faith, but in the general distaste for the evil and for sin, *synderesis* still functions.⁶⁸ In other words, there is nothing wrong with the will to do good and abhor evil among the heretics, it is only that they have grossly misunderstood the particulars of good and evil. When their error is explained to them, Philip says, many of them return, after all ('cognito errore, plerique revertuntur').⁶⁹ Naturally, it was far from always the case that things unfolded in such a neat manner. For Philip, however, mapping the psychology of heresy seems to be meant as an aide in returning heretics to the faith. Philip here brings up the example of Augustine who first erred and then returned to the Catholic faith and Philip quotes Ambrose's words to Monica: '[...] sine, quia legendo quantus iste sit error, inveniet.' ('[...] let him be, because by reading he will find out how great that error is').⁷⁰ Finally, and on a more humorous note, Philip compares the phenomenon to someone who knows the general truth that a mule is sterile and yet believes that it is pregnant. When this slightly confused person investigates the matter more closely, he realises his mistake and by understanding that mules in general are sterile he then realises that this particular mule is not pregnant.⁷¹

It is conceivable that Philip's use of the term *synderesis* with regard to heretics was later put into practice. In 1232, Pope Gregory IX had sent two Dominican

⁶⁸ *De bono*, i, pp. 203-4.

⁶⁹ *De bono*, i, p. 204.

⁷⁰ *De bono*, i, p. 204. Cf. Augustine, *Sancti Augustini confessionum libri xiii*, ed. M. Skutella and L. Verheijen, *CCSL* 27 (Turnhout, 1981), 3, 12. The modern edition has a somewhat different reading.

⁷¹ *De bono*, i, p. 204.

friars, Robert le Bougre and Walter, to investigate heresy in Burgundy together with the prior of Besançon. The following year, Robert was made papal inquisitor of La Charité sur Loire, and later became inquisitor general, around 1235. In 1236, Aubry de Trois-Fontaines tells us, the newly appointed inquisitor general appeared in Châlons-sur-Marne to investigate and punish heresy and had with him a certain master Philip, chancellor of Paris.⁷² Nicolai Wicki even thinks Philip took a central role in the proceedings there. It has been suggested that Philip accompanied Robert on several other inquisitions in Péronne, Cambrai, Douai and Lille during his last year in life.⁷³ The notion of *synderesis* is of course unlikely to appear in an inquisitorial record, but it does not stretch the imagination that Philip's understanding of *synderesis* and its function among heretics, which I have outlined, informed his approach to the heretics he encountered.

In the *Summa* of the Dominican master Roland of Cremona (1178-1259), written ca. 1232, we see this theory being picked up and developed. Roland was a master of theology in Paris prior to moving to Toulouse as a lecturer in 1229 when the Dominican order set up a *studium* there to combat heresy.⁷⁴ In one of the arguments for the peccability of *synderesis*, Roland brings in the line from Jer.

⁷² Aubry of Trois-Fontaines, *Albrici monachi Triumfontium chronicon*, ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, in *MGH Scriptores*, 23 (Hannover, 1874, repr. 1964), pp. 631-950, at p. 937.

⁷³ See Wicki's introduction to *De bono*, i, p. 25. D. A. Trail 'Philip the Chancellor and the Heresy Inquisition in Northern France, 1235-1236, *Viator*, 37 (2006), pp. 251-52.

⁷⁴ In 1231, Roland took a central role in the exhumation and posthumous burning of the Waldensian heretic Galvan, as well as Arnaut Peyre, a canon who had concealed his true beliefs to the death. Guillaume de Pelhison, *Chronique (1229-1244)*, ed. J. Duvernoy (Paris, 1994), pp. 40-4. For more information on this practice, see C. Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 220-4

i.16. ‘Filii Mempheos et Taphnes constupraverunt te usque ad verticem’ (‘The sons of Memphis and Taphnes have destroyed you up to the crown of your head’), as well as Gregory the Great’s gloss ‘vertex corrumpitur cum fides corrumpitur’ (‘the crown of the head is corrupted when the faith is corrupted’), as well as Jerome’s gloss on Ezekiel that *synderesis* is in danger (*precipitatur*) when a sin is committed.⁷⁵ Roland thinks that heretics attack the soul ‘usque ad verticem’ but do not overcome the pinnacle of the soul, i.e., *synderesis*. This is because heretics lure lower reason into error, because it is adjacent to, but not identical with, *synderesis*.⁷⁶ Heretical ideas can thus ‘infect’ the soul, but only to a certain level, that of lower reason, because of their ‘carnal’ nature. Heresy thus arises because of a psychological and cognitive error, of not being able to transcend the knowledge of lower reason. Roland expands a little on this point later. He thinks that the different powers of the soul are capable of seeing truth in the abstract to a greater and lesser degree. *Synderesis*, being the highest, receives truth in its unadulterated form. It is when there is a mixture of the truth of a thing with its accidental features that errors may arise (‘ubi est error ibi est admixtio’).

Sicut sensus non decipitur quia non confert, ita superior intellectus non decipit[ur], quia accipit tantum ueritates rerum sine accidente, quia non operatur per instrumentum; quia sensus aliquantum abstrahit, et ymaginatio plus, et inferior ratio plus; ergo cum superior intellectus sit ultimum abstrahens, omnino abstrahit ab omnibus fantasiis et accidentibus. Licet dicatur quod superior intellectus non decipiatur, non tamen dicitur quod omnia scit. Patet ergo quod heretici qui decepti sunt decepti sunt per fantasias; et in inferiori ratione est eorum infidelitas, ideo errant in trinitate et in duobus principiis.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 130. The term *constupro* literally means ‘debauch’ and this sexual connotation will return in later interpretations of this passage in connection with *synderesis*.

⁷⁶ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 130-1.

⁷⁷ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 132.

Just as the sense is not deceived since it does not operate through comparisons, so the higher intellect is not deceived because it only receives truths without accidents, owing to the fact that it does not work through any medium. For the sense abstracts [form] to some extent, and imagination more [than the sense], and lower reason more [than the imagination]. Therefore, because the higher intellect abstracts the most, it abstracts form entirely from all phantasms and accidents. Although it is said that the higher intellect is not deceived, it does not mean that it knows all things. It is therefore clear that the heretics who have been deceived have been so through their phantasms, and their infidelity lies in their lower reason, they therefore err with regard to the Trinity and the two principles.

Heretics rely on their lower reason and are deceived by sense perceptions of materiality and phantasms, Roland thinks, a matter to which we will return in the next section. As a result, they are in grave error regarding the nature of the Trinity and in their embrace of dualism – the latter in particular a clear reference to the alleged beliefs of the groups of heretics in southern France and northern Italy. This is, in fact, the first time that a particular heretical belief is indicated in the discussions of *synderesis*. The fact that the *Summa* was written after Roland had moved to Toulouse, which was in the heartland of the supposed heretics, may suggest that he did encounter dualist beliefs (or what he perceived as dualism) before writing the *Summa*. This does not, however, provide a solution to the question discussed above of whether these groups were dualists from the beginning, or if we are still dealing with a case of Church intellectuals imposing their perspective on local religious practices. This sudden turn to something more specific than William of Auxerre's reference to Arius and Sabellius does nevertheless suggest that Roland's move from Paris and his persecution of religious dissidents left a mark on his discussion of *synderesis*.

As we saw in the previous section, Roland compared *synderesis* or *intellectus* with how *sensus communis* functions in gathering and combining sensory data. *Sensus communis* was thought to be fallible because phantasms could enter the

process of gathering and combining sensory data and corrupt it. *Synderesis* or *intellectus*, on the other hand, is infallible since it operates on a completely abstract level, and among other things is able to grasp the relations of the persons in the Trinity.⁷⁸ This idea lends further weight to the above quotation, since it emphasises that proper trinitarian doctrine belongs to the realm of *synderesis* and *intellectus*, whereas heretics rely on the lower and fallible form of reasoning, which is why they come to the wrong conclusions about the faith.

Later in his discussion, Roland thinks of *synderesis* as ‘summus rex in regno anime’ but as such it can face disobedience, just as when evil monks fail to obey their abbot. Thus, *synderesis* does not commit or condone sin, even if it occurs in the soul. Lower reason is occasionally deceived and allured by the delights of sin (*dulcedine peccati*) or affected by carnal desire (*carnalitate*). Having been overcome by the lowest of the instincts and the opposite of *synderesis*, sensuality, it may not be open to the spiritual influence from higher reason (‘non potest recipere influentiam spiritualem a superiori’). It is therefore not the fault of *synderesis* if the lower powers disobey it.⁷⁹

An anonymous master, with affinities to the ideas of John of La Rochelle according to Lottin, follows in one of his *Quaestiones* (probably written in the 1230s or early 1240s) what has by now become a commonplace: that *synderesis*, when referring to the eternal divine laws, never fails, but it can do so when it relies on knowledge that comes through the senses or *fantasiae*.⁸⁰ It can thus

⁷⁸ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 131-2.

⁷⁹ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 133-134.

⁸⁰ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 172. These *Quaestiones* cannot be dated with any precision. William J. Courtenay places it in the early thirteenth century, *Ockham and Ockhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of His*

provide the universal guidelines of what to do and what to avoid, but ‘[...] in particulari per admixtionem ad fantasiam in qua aliquid aliud quam uerum apparet...ex hoc est quod aliquando precipitatur.’ (‘[...]in particular matters, because of its combination with phantasms in which something other than the truth appears [...] it is from this that it occasionally is overthrown.’). The author refers to Sabellius as the model heretic who was deceived by this lesser form of reasoning, which Lottin takes as evidence that the author had read William of Auxerre.⁸¹ This anonymous author uses an interesting example to show how *synderesis* works in relation to lower reason and which gives a glimpse of his assumptions held about heresy:

Et sicut contingit quod habens medicine theoricam scientiam in iudicando quod contraria contrariis curantur, nunquam decipitur, tamen in aptando theoriam actioni potest decipi, nescit enim quandoque utrum morbus iste ex frigida aut ex calida causa proueniat, sic dico quod *synderesis* per comparisonem ad diuinas leges nunquam decipitur, sed secundum quod fantasiam vel sensum respicit a quibus per colligantiam anime ad corpus aliquando decipitur; et hoc est quod dicitur precipitari, et hoc modo precipitata fuit in Sabellio.⁸²

And just as it happens when someone who knows medical theory and judges that a disease is cured by its opposite, he is not deceived, yet he may be deceived in applying theory to a particular case, for he does not know whether that disease comes from a cold or warm cause, so I therefore say that *synderesis* is not deceived with regard to the eternal law. But when it looks to the fantasy or to senses it is occasionally deceived through the connection between the soul and the body, and this is why it is said to be overthrown and in this way it was overthrown in Sabellius.

Thought (Leiden, 2008), p. 42. The similarities with John of La Rochelle would place the date of composition to some time in the 1230s or 1240s.

⁸¹ Anon. Paris, BnF, MS not. nouv. acq. lat. 1470. in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 172-173.

⁸² Anon. Paris, BnF, MS not. nouv. acq. lat. 1470 in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 173.

So, just as the physician may have absolute and perfect knowledge of the basics of Galenic medicine but may fail to apply it to a particular disease because he does not know its nature, so *synderesis* among the heretics has been misapplied to their erroneous and heretical beliefs. The casual use of a medical metaphor to explain religious dissent reveals a view of heretics as spiritually and morally ill, and what is thus conceived can also easily be thought of as contagious. The topos of heresy as a form of disease was a recurring topos in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages.⁸³ One thirteenth-century example out of many is Humbert of Romans' *Legenda s. Dominici*, which adopted this topos when describing the heretics of southern France as 'corrupted with the pestiferous infection of heretical pravity', and whose 'poison' was repealed by preaching Cistercians.⁸⁴ William of Auxerre's thought on *synderesis* and heresy was reformulated and repeated in John of La Rochelle's *De vitiis*.⁸⁵

⁸³ See for instance Hilary of Poitiers, *Sancti Hilarii Pictavensis episcopi de Trinitate*, ed. Pieter Frans Smulder, CCSL 62, 62A (2 vols., Turnhout, 1979-1980), book 5 c. 15 (i, p. 164); Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 18. 51 (i, p. 649) and Gratian, *Decretum magistri Gratiani*, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Emil Friedberg and Emil Ludwig Richter (2 vols., Leipzig, 1879-81), i, p. 2. c. 24 q. 3. can. 31.

⁸⁴ Humbert of Romans, *Legenda S. Dominici auctore Humberto de Romanis*, ed. A. Waltz in *Monumenta historica sancti patris nostri Dominici* (2 vols., Rome, 1935), ii, pp. 377, 379. Cf. Caldwell Ames *Righteous Persecution*, p. 110. We find the medical metaphor employed later, when Bernard Gui writes: '[...] sicut non omnium morborum est eadem medicina, quin potius singulorum diverse sunt et singule medicine, sic nec ad omnes hereticos diversarum sectarum idem modus interrogandi, inquirendi et examinandi est servandus, set ad singulos, ut in pluribus, singularis et proprius est habendus. ('As the same medicine is not used for all diseases — rather there are different and particular medicines for each — so neither for all heretics of different sects is [there] the same mode of interrogating, inquiring, and examining, but for each and everyone an individual and proper manner is to be observed.')

Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, i, pp. 6-8, translation in Caldwell Ames *Righteous Persecution*, pp. 163-164.

⁸⁵ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 168.

Like Philip the Chancellor, William of Auvergne discusses briefly in *De anima* (ca. 1240) the fact that people condemned to death for heresy remain in their faith even in the face of death and what this means for the doctrine of *synderesis*. William believed that as his contemporaries interpreted *synderesis*, it would either mean that one is incapable to be led astray in matters of the faith, or that it would not be evil to believe in heresy (both propositions would probably be seen as preposterous by his contemporaries). William firmly believed that *synderesis* could be extinguished, since he saw it primarily as a *function*, and neither as a power or habit of the mind. It is extinct, for instance, in those who have lost their reason, and ‘morons’ (*furiosi, moriones*), those who are deeply entrenched in their vices, and in particular among the heretics who defend their teachings to the death. The heretic may simply have lost the use of their reason, and therefore also *synderesis*, and persist in their faith in the face of death.⁸⁶ In his *Commentary on the Sentences* (1254-1256), Aquinas wrote that even non-Christians or heretics have *synderesis*, but since they do not have the light of faith, *synderesis* does not hold them back in matters that are contrary to the faith.⁸⁷ Whilst *synderesis* is unerring, reason may err and lead someone astray. Aquinas here follows Albert’s *Commentary on the Sentences* (1243-1249) in citing the case of heretics whose conscience tells them that they should rather be burned at the stake than to take an oath. This is because their higher reason has become twisted (‘quia ratio superior perversa est’) and they therefore believe that all oaths are forbidden.⁸⁸ This is in

⁸⁶ William of Auvergne, *Opera*, ii, pp. 219-20.

⁸⁷ *Super II Sent.*, d. 39 q. 3 a. 1 ad 3.

⁸⁸ *Super II Sent.*, d. 24 q. 2. a. 4 resp., Cf. *Super II Sent.*, d. 39. q.3 a.2. Cf. Albert the Great, *In II Sent.*, d. 24 f a. 14.

all likelihood a reference to the passage in Mt. v. 33-37, where Christ prohibits oaths, saying that anything but the replies ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ comes from the Devil. It was a common (perceived) feature of heresy that oaths were not to be taken; indeed it could sometimes even work as a litmus test of heresy.⁸⁹ Heresy was, therefore, a misapplication of the principles given by *synderesis*, caused by a misunderstanding by higher or lower reason which leads conscience to come to an erroneous conclusion.⁹⁰ To formulate this in terms of a moral syllogism: *synderesis* gives the major premise that God must be obeyed, reason gives the minor premise that Christ prohibited oaths, and the conclusion (conscience) is that oaths must not be taken.

In *De veritate*, Aquinas argues that the error of heresy arises in the higher reason of the heretics so that the rules provided by *synderesis* are not applied properly in a particular case. But their general knowledge of right and wrong, i.e., *synderesis*, is still alive and well.⁹¹

It is possible to discern a distinct development in the discussions of *synderesis* from William of Auxerre to Aquinas. In the beginning, *synderesis* was discussed in relation to heresy in the abstract, through references to Arius and Sabellius, but in the writings of the three Dominican friars Roland of Cremona, Albert the Great, and Aquinas, the description of how *synderesis* functions in an alleged heretic is complemented by references to particular beliefs considered heretical. This may suggest a direct or indirect contact with local religious practices.

⁸⁹ For examples of this, see R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy* (Toronto and London, 1995), pp. 79, 119.

⁹⁰ *Super II Sent.*, d. 39 q. 3 a. 2 resp.

⁹¹ *De ver.*, q. 16 a.3. ad 2.

A second important development is that in the writings of Philip the Chancellor, Albert the Great, and Aquinas, ecclesial perceptions of heresy had begun to be articulated through the moral syllogism where *synderesis* gives the major, and infallible, premise. This is an important aspect of how heresy was perceived and how the voices of the confessing subject may have been filtered through the inquisitorial discourse. The voice of the confessing subject cannot, as John Arnold points out, be wholly extricated from the inquisitorial discourse.⁹² But an awareness of how the categories of moral psychology may have informed the interrogations can help us to provide a critical reading of some of the most important source material on medieval heresy.

3.2. Heresy and Fantasy

In the above presentation of how *synderesis* was thought to function among heretics, one word keeps returning: *fantasia*. This word implies that heretics such as Arius and Sabellius relied on a lower form of knowledge and thus were more prone to error than the orthodox Christian. To explain the valence of this particular word, it is necessary to briefly describe the general outlines of how sense perception was thought to be transformed into an ‘image’, a phantasm, that could be stored in memory, and be an object of intellectual reflection. In

⁹² See John H. Arnold, ‘The Historian as Inquisitor: The Ethics of Interrogating Subaltern Voices’, *Rethinking History*, 2 (1998), pp. 379-86, and in particular p. 384. The argument of this article is later expanded in his book *Inquisition and Power*, especially in his introduction, pp. 1-15 and chapter three, pp. 74-110. For Arnold, ‘it is a mistake to ignore the context of inquisition within which our evidence is produced, not because one must strip away the “veil”, but because one must recognize that we are caught in a false paradigm if we search for the subject prior to speech, for the deponent before he or she confesses.’, p. 110.

Aristotelian psychology, as it was received and transmitted by Avicenna (980-1037), the senses first perceive an object. Then the *sensus communis* receives and combines the signals from the sense organs. Then *imaginatio* detains the sensible form, e.g. the image of a cow which has entered the brain via the sensory organs. Sometimes this faculty is called the *vis formalis*. In some texts, this part of the brain is paired with the *sensus communis* and thought to be placed in the front of the brain. Next, the ‘deliberative imagination’ composes images — by joining images together, breaking up images and creating new images of things that do not necessarily exist (e.g., a unicorn made up of the images of a horse and a horn). This part of *imaginatio* is in turn connected to the power of judgement, *vis cogitativa*, whose activity takes place on a pre-rational level, i.e., we are aware of what happens, but do not necessarily deliberate on it. Each sense-image is endowed with *intentio*, an opinion or a feeling about something, or something as vague as ‘point of view’ regarding an object. One may think of Proust’s madeleines which brought and held a certain *intentio*, bringing back a set of memories. The sense-image and the emotional value that comes with it in *intentio* is the completed phantasm, which then can be stored in memory and is an object for the *intellectus* to work on.⁹³

When scholastic authors write about *synderesis* and heresy and use the word *fantasia*, it had connotations with this particular process. Roland of Cremona saw *sensus communis* as fallible, when he constructed his comparison between the infallible *synderesis* and the fallible *sensus communis*, both engaging in the process of *collatio*. For him, every power of the soul abstracts form from matter to

⁹³ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 64-65.

some extent. *Intellectus* is the *ultimum abstrahens* extracting pure form from the phantasm that is the final product of the process described above. It perceives the (universal) nature of a thing and not its particular features. The heretics have thus not engaged with their phantasms properly, but have been deceived by them and this is the reason for their dualistic beliefs and errors regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. The latter case can be exemplified in the following way: a heretic imagines the Trinity as three separate persons, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is a phantasm which is the result of putting together (in the deliberative *imaginatio*) various images, e.g., an image of Christ from the local church, a dove that one has seen by the window, and an old man passing by the same window. Simply relying on this newly created phantasm, without considering the relations of the persons, puts one at risk of seeing the three persons of the Trinity as three separate gods ('tritheism'), or, as Arius did, fail to see that the Father and the Son are of the same being. The substance shared by the three persons is understood through *intellectus*, analogous to realising (*intelligere*) that Peter, James, and John share something in common in that they are all humans and share a human nature. This is a realisation that can only come when one has abstracted their form from the accidental features that taint sensory perception.

Alexander of Hales complained that the heretics were making graven images for themselves, when they imagined God to be what he is not. 'They believe about God only that which they come up with by their imagination and fantasy'.⁹⁴ The heretic has failed to reach the abstract knowledge of God that is accessible

⁹⁴ Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica*, 3 p. 2. inq. 3. tract. 2 sect. 1. q.2. tit. 10.7 (iv. p. 590), 'non enim de Deo credunt nisi quod imaginatione et phantasia confingunt.'

through *intellectus*. The idea that heresy arose from phantasms has patristic origins and can be found for instance in Augustine writing against Donatus:

Et quotquot haereses uel praecisiones et schismata facta sunt, per hos carnales facta sunt.
Aut enim carnaliter senserunt, et fecerunt sibi imagines fantasmatum suorum, et errauerunt, et reprehendit eos fides catholica; et cum arguerentur, exclusi sunt foras pondere suo.⁹⁵

And however many heresies or sects and schisms come about, they come about through these carnal men. For they either think in a carnal way, and make unto themselves images out of their phantasms, and they fall into error and the Catholic faith reproaches them. And when they are proven guilty they are excluded from the community by their own force.

The heretics have become carnal men (*carnales*) and think in a carnal way, and have deceived themselves having made up images (of what God is and is not) from their phantasms. But the accusation of being carnal which Augustine levelled against the Donatists reminds us of the somatic nature of the process of creating phantasms. *Sensus communis* was often thought to be located in the front of the brain, sometimes paired together with *imaginatio*. The phantasm that had been created was then stored in the *vis memorativa* placed at the back of the brain.

There were exceptions, of course. William of Auxerre distinguished the ways in which *fantasia* can be interpreted regarding heresy:

Fantasia autem tripliciter accipitur. Quandoque dicitur idem quod sensus communis, quod beatus Augustinus vocat ‘sensus interiorum’, quandoque dicitur ipsa ymaginatio et fantasia ymaginatio sive ydolum impressum in instrumento ymaginationis vel memoria. Tertio modo dicitur fantasia opinio que acquiritur ex apparentibus rationibus; et ideo quandoque vera, quandoque falsa. Peccatum Arrii et Sabellii fuit ex fantasia, id est ex opinione falsa, quam acquisiuit ex apparentibus rationibus male collatis.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Augustine, *Sermo 4*, in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini sermones de vetere testamento*, ed. C. Lambot, *CCSL 41* (Turnhout, 1961), p. 44.

⁹⁶ *Summa aurea*, ii, pp. 302-3.

Fantasy can be understood in three ways. Sometimes it means the same as *sensus communis*, which blessed Augustine called ‘the interior sense’, sometimes it refers to the imagination itself, and the ‘fantasy imagination’ or the image impressed on the instrument of imagination or memory. In a third way, fantasy refers to the opinion which is created out of arguments that appear to be true, and therefore it is sometimes right, sometimes wrong. The sin of Arius and Sabellius sprang from fantasy, that is, from a false opinion which they had acquired from poorly combined arguments.

As William notes here, *fantasia* can sometimes work as a synonym for the *sensus communis*, sometimes it can signify *imaginatio* or the image impressed in the imagination. What the first two definitions have in common with the third is that they refer either to the process of *collatio*, of combining sensory signals, or its end product, or the faculty that deals with that product. As such, *fantasia* is unreliable. The nature of Arius’ and Sabellius’ heresy as a result of poorly combined reasons can therefore be seen in analogy to the poorly constructed images that mislead the soul.

Whether or not these decriptions refer to actual beliefs of religious dissidents is not the point here. What the discussions of *synderesis*, heresy and fantasy indicate is that the perceptions of dissidents can be filtered through not only the moral syllogism as above, but also through theories of cognition that ranked dissident beliefs as lower and more ‘carnal’ than orthodoxy. If we are to establish the various discourses within which the confessing subject operates, as Arnold argues we should, we must be aware of the cognitive processes the inquisitors may have assumed were at work in the person they interrogated.⁹⁷

Theories of cognition may have informed the official understanding of orthodoxy and heresy on many levels. As an example of how orthodoxy was

⁹⁷ Cf. Arnold, ‘The Historian as Inquisitor’, pp. 379-86.

defined, we may briefly consider one of the contentious areas of the thirteenth century, the Eucharist. One of the most common accusations against alleged heretics from the ninth century onwards was that they did not believe that the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ. The official position of the Church was that the substance of bread and wine was changed into body and blood when a validly ordained priest celebrated mass, whilst the accidental features (e.g., taste) remained the same. The question of whether the bread and wine were truly turned into the body and blood of Christ during mass was one of the standard questions used by inquisitors in the mid-thirteenth century.⁹⁸ An erroneous belief regarding the Eucharist would be characterised as having come about *per fantasiam* because it limits itself to sense perception and the phantasms formed out of it. Few expressed this problem more concisely than Thomas Aquinas. True faith, Aquinas thought, accepted the words of Christ (presumably, as explained by the Church) to be able to move beyond the visible features of the Eucharist. This is a theme which he approached in his hymns for the feast of Corpus Christi, composed around 1264.

Visus gustus, tactus, in te fallitur
Sed auditus solus tuto creditur
Credo quicquid dixit Dei filius
Nihil veritatis verbo verius.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Peter Biller, 'Cathars and the Natural World', in *God's Bounty? The Churches and the Natural World. Papers Read at the 2008 Summer Meeting and the 2009 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (eds.) (Woodbridge), pp. 89-110, at pp. 100-1. For the view that rejection of the doctrine of the Eucharist was an expression of local anticlericalism, see Jean-Louis Biget, *Heresie et inquisition dans le midi de la France*, (Paris, 2007), pp. 109-11.

⁹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Adoro devote*, in F.J.E. Raby (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse* (Oxford, 1959), vv. 5-8 (p. 403).

Seeing, tasting, feeling, all fail in thee, only hearing is safely trusted, I faithfully believe whatever God's son said, nothing is more true than the word of Truth.

The senses are unable to penetrate the eucharistic species; only faith may open up the mind to see the divine reality hiding beneath. Someone who has failed to grasp this will follow the injunction of *synderesis* not to worship anything but God and thus not treat the Eucharist with reverence and adoration. They will have been deceived *per fantasiam*, and therefore while *synderesis* may be fully functional in demanding that no act of idolatry may be committed, it will not be properly applied.

The connection between heresy and fantasy far preceded the scholastic discussions about *synderesis*, and remained in place in centuries to follow (one late occasion is a process against some Waldensians in 1430).¹⁰⁰ But what we see from 1220 onwards is that it was beginning to become internalised in the moral psychology of scholastic thought. The uses of *fantasia* in patristic and medieval literature came with a negative set of associations that in turn was put in relation to the heretic who, like Arius, failed to rise above the level of *fantasia*.

This aspect of *synderesis* never came to particular prominence, but it shows how the idea of *synderesis*, despite the appearance of stability, was quite fluid and could acquire new functions and be applied to new situations. This aspect of *synderesis* also shows the strategies that a society which conceives of itself as rational may employ to categorise and objectify those elements, such as heretics, that disrupt that order. Heresy was a danger, because it showed a different way of being which threatened orthodoxy, a way that was supposedly more irrational, or

¹⁰⁰ See *Quellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser von Freiburg im Üchtland (1399-1430)*, ed. K. Utz Tresp (Hannover, 2000), p. 304.

deficient in its level of knowledge. In such a context, *synderesis* as an aspect of higher reason could help to explain what had gone awry with the best of intentions and show what part of the soul the missionary or inquisitor must appeal to.

The use of *synderesis* and *fantasia* in discussions of heresy thus appears to have been born out of the need to understand, investigate and convert alleged heretics. There seems to be a general consensus in that heretics had kept their wish to do good and avoid evil, only that they had greatly misunderstood the nature of good and evil. Probing into the mind of a heretic as these scholastic treatises try to do, amounts to an attempt to understand heresy in a natural framework, instead of ascribing the phenomenon to purely demonic powers. But even if the Devil was not seen as a cause of heresy in these texts, there was nevertheless devilry going on. The heretical or sinful soul which had been misled through their phantasms as to what was proper belief and the proper course of action and pursued a wicked way of life in the honest belief that it was good. This is the diabolical nature of heresy which pursues evil under the guise of goodness. As in the condemnation of Amalric at Lateran IV, the mind has been blinded by the Father of lies in the sense that lies, false beliefs and phantasms had deceived the mind.

This attitude towards heresy bears some resemblance to Innocent III's intervention in the case of a group of ascetics in Castanaso in the early thirteenth century. The bishop of Bologna reported to the pope that some people opposed to the way of life of this small apostolic community claimed that they had fallen into profanity and blasphemy. Sabina Flanagan suggests, based on similar cases, that 'this is a typical scenario for the raising of a charge of heresy'. Those who were affected by these psychological issues believed that they were possessed, but Innocent proceeded with caution. Instead of seeking a supernatural explanation of

their madness and possession, (and potentially heresy) he opts for a natural explanation, seeing it as a case of mania caused by excessive asceticism. Flanagan notes that in this case, ‘possible heresy is explained as madness on the natural, rather than the supernatural/diabolical model’ and that this suggests that Innocent may have believed that madness could have been a defence against accusations of heresy.¹⁰¹ Something similar seems to occur here, in these accounts of what has happened in the mind of the heretic. Explaining the cognitive cause of the error amounts to such a naturalistic explanation and made it easier for the inquisitor in his attempts to return the heretic to the fold. Instead of seeing it as a case of possession, it could be seen as a fault in the somatic process of thinking and inability to rise above that, and once the condition had been identified, it could be dealt with. A similar attitude can be found much later in Bernard Gui, who argued for customised modes of interrogation depending on the nature of the heresy (‘considering their quality, condition, state, disease, and place’) and defined the goal of the inquisitor as the ‘prudent doctor of souls’ who ‘with the bridle of discretion may lead around the subtleties of heretics so that, with God’s help, with the hand of a midwife the twisting serpent may be led out from the bilge-water and abyss of errors’.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ S. Flanagan, ‘Heresy Madness and Possession’, pp. 38-9. Jean de Gobi, writing in the 1320s, tells in one of his *exempla* of how a heretic was told by his friends to play the fool at the arrival of the inquisitors that he may escape the stake and be bound in church instead. *La scala coeli de Jean Gobi*, ed. M-A Polo de Beaulieu (Paris, 1991), p. 408. Cf. Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution*, p. 208.

¹⁰² Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l’inquisiteur*, i, pp. 8. translation from Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution*, p. 164.

3.3. Bonaventure's Doctrine on *Synderesis* and Heresy

3.3.1 *Synderesis*, Heresy and Sexual Sin

In his second quaestio on *synderesis* ('*utrum synderesis per peccatum extingui possit*' 'whether *synderesis* can be extinguished through sin'), Bonaventure asks whether *synderesis* can be extinguished, and in this he seems to draw from Roland of Cremona's discussion. The answer to his question is that it can only be prevented from its task, but not extinguished, because *synderesis* refers to a naturally existing capacity ('*dicat quid naturale*'), a substantial aspect of the soul, and is therefore inalienable. There are three main ways, Bonaventure thinks, in which *synderesis* can be prevented from fulfilling its role: through blindness (*tenebra obcaecationis*), or through lascivious delight (*lascivia delectationis*), or through obstinate hardness of heart (*duritia obstinationis*). Blindness causes *synderesis* to fail in its task to speak against evil because it has been deceived as to what is good and evil.¹⁰³ The words Milton put in the Devil's mouth 'evil, be thou my good!' is an apt description for what was believed to have occurred in the mind of the heretic.¹⁰⁴ Bonaventure here brings up the example of the heretic martyr who believes that he or she dies for the true faith and for that reason does not feel the remorse that one should have for participating in heresy, but rather feels 'a certain feigned and empty delight' ('*quoddam gaudium fictum et*

¹⁰³ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 2. resp. Cf. *Summa aurea*, p. 302 and Roland of Cremona, Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 133, '[...] inferior ratio abstrahitur et illicitur, id est inficitur dulcedine peccati uel afficitur carnalitate [...]' ('[...] lower reason is taken out from its place and seduced, that is, it is corrupted by the sweetness of sin or influenced by carnality [...]').

¹⁰⁴ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. A. Fowler, 2nd edn (London, 1998), 4. 110.

vanum’).¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Bonaventure thinks, the lascivious are so immersed in their carnal delights that there is no place for remorse, ‘because carnal men are carried away by such force of delight that reason then has no place in them’.¹⁰⁶

Bonaventure introduces this paragraph with ‘Propter lasciviam delectationis similiter impeditur’ (‘Similarly, it is impeded because of the lasciviousness of delight’).¹⁰⁷ This echoes Roland of Cremona’s view that lower reason can be deceived and incapacitated by the sweetness of sin (*dulcedine peccati*) and thus be unable to receive the illumination of *synderesis*.¹⁰⁸ The key word which connects the previous paragraph with this one is *similiter* (similarly), thus juxtaposing religious and sexual deviance. Bonaventure’s analogy between the two kinds of obstacles to the action of *synderesis* merits some commentary.

The casual way in which Bonaventure associates lasciviousness with heresy reveals some common medieval assumptions of the nature of heresy, which often expressed itself in literary topoi. We have already seen how heretics were assumed to rely on a lower level of reasoning (*inferior ratio*) and whose knowledge therefore was thought to be less abstract, less spiritual than that of those belonging to the Church. In that sense, the heretics were ‘carnal men’, with ‘carnal thoughts’. It is interesting to note here how ‘carnal men’ is a concept that comes up when Bonaventure discusses lasciviousness instead of (as in previous treatises) the blindness of the heretic, but that nevertheless the two are put into an analogous relationship. Purity of faith and purity of the flesh are here placed in a

¹⁰⁵ *In II Sent.*, d. 39. a. 2. q. 2. resp.

¹⁰⁶ *In II Sent.*, d. 39. a. 2. q. 2. resp ‘[...] quia carnales homines tanto impetu delectationis feruntur ut ratio tunc non habeat locum.’ (‘[...] because carnal men are so carried away by the impulses of delight that reason loses its place’).

¹⁰⁷ *In II Sent.*, d. 39. a.2. q. 2. resp.

¹⁰⁸ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 133.

clear relation to each other. This is after all not so surprising considering what Peter Lombard writes, quoting Augustine, in the *Sentences*, ‘Quo inardescentes “fidem nostram adversus errores carnalium atque animalium hominum” [...] munire vel potius munitam ostendere [...] studuimus’ (‘Thus enraged, we have striven to protect our faith, or rather show that it is already protected [...] against the errors of carnal and animal men’).¹⁰⁹

It has been argued that during the High Middle Ages we see an increasing grouping together and making other of heretics, lepers, Jews and those who deviated from the strict, and heteronormative, sexual standards of the official discourse.¹¹⁰ Just as heretics had perverted the moral order by inverting good and evil and delighting in an evil that was perceived as good, so the lascivious person perverts the sexual and natural order by failing to live up to the standards of the Church.¹¹¹

The connection between heresy and lasciviousness as impediments to *synderesis* should be seen in the context of the accusations of sodomy and lechery that were hurled against the members of movements considered heretical, because

¹⁰⁹ *I Sent.*, prol. 2, citing Augustine’s prologue to the third book of *De Trinitate*, Cf. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de trinitate libri xv*, ed. W.J. Mountain and Fr. Glorie, *CCSL* 50, 50A (2 vols., Turnhout, 1968), i, p. 127, and I Cor. ii. 14. ‘But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned’.

¹¹⁰ See for instance R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*.

¹¹¹ See for instance *In III Sent.*, 34, p.2. a.1 q.1 resp. ‘[...] inordinate amare est magnae lasciviae, sed ordinate amare est magnae virtutis et excellentiae [...]’ ([...] to love inappropriately is a great sin of lust, but to love appropriately is a sign of great virtue and excellence [...]) and *Commentarius in Evangelium S. Lucae*, in *Opera*, vii, c. 17. v. 28., par. 49. (vii, p. 442): ‘Quia igitur Sodomitae et lascivi erant et avari et securi, ideo erant ira divina digni [...]’ (‘Because the Sodomites are lascivious and greedy and careless they are therefore worthy of divine wrath [...]).’

of their (alleged) reservations concerning marriage.¹¹² As an example one may mention Alan of Lille (d. 1202) who described heretics in his *De fide catholica* (written between 1185 and 1200). According to Alan, the dualist heretics want to purge themselves from that which they have from the Prince of Darkness, which is the body, and that for that reason they engage in promiscuous sexual activity! They spurn marriage as something against natural law, he says, since natural law dictates that all should be held in common.¹¹³ In a later passage, the Waldensians are described as ‘voluptatum amatores, carnales laetitia spiritualibus praeponentes.’ (‘lovers of [carnal] delights, who put carnal joys before spiritual matters’).¹¹⁴ This alleged promiscuity among the heretics is mirrored by Alan’s discussion of the practice of polygamy among Muslims later in the same treatise.¹¹⁵

During the thirteenth century, it had become a topos to accuse people of a different religious conviction of also being sexually different or perverted by the standards of the Western Church. Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay in his *Hystoria albigensis* (1218), for instance, describes the heretics in Languedoc as sexually

¹¹² On heretics and their alleged reservations regarding marriage, see J. A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago and London, 1987), p. 399. See also V. L. Bullough ‘Postscript: Heresy, Witchcraft and Sexuality’, in V. L. Bullough and J. Brundage (eds.), *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church* (Amherst, 1982), pp. 208-217, which gives a brief and accessible overview of how sexual behaviour judged to be ‘deviant’ was associated with heresy and witchcraft.

¹¹³ Alan of Lille, *De fide catholica contra haereticos sui temporis, praesertim albigenses liber quattor*, i, lxiii, *PL*, ccx, 366.

¹¹⁴ Alan of Lille, *De fide catholica*, ii, i, *PL*, ccx, 380.

¹¹⁵ Alan of Lille, *De fide catholica*, iv, vii, *PL*, ccx, 425.

lascivious.¹¹⁶ After Peter, we find Jacques de Vitry's allegation in his *Historia Iherosolimitana* (ca. 1219-1225) that the prophet Muhammed had introduced sodomy in the Arab world.¹¹⁷ Lerner takes Philip the Chancellor as one of the propagators of the idea that heretics perverted traditional *mores*. In his *In psalterium Davidicum CCXXX sermones* (ca. 1220), Philip says that ‘Fornax horum est ignis concupiscencia: quia causa omnia heresis est vel luxuria, vel cupiditas vel superbia’ (‘Their furnace is the fire of concupiscence, for the cause of all heresy is either lechery (*luxuria*), cupidity, or pride’).¹¹⁸ In his *Sermones festivales*, he says ‘concedunt quod usura et luxuria non sunt peccatum’ (they believe that usury and lechery are no sins’). In his *Sermones super Evangelia* (ca. 1230) he says, regarding the heretics in southern France, ‘Hii sunt in exteriori vita rigidi, in occultis plus ceteris voluptuosi.’ (‘they are strict in their outer lives but in secret more voluptuous than all others’).¹¹⁹ Likewise, he accuses heretics of believing that the ‘work of the flesh’ is not sinful. This accusation is echoed later

¹¹⁶ Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 399. For a discussion of the topos of heretics as sexually lascivious, see R. E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 20-34.

¹¹⁷ Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Iherosolimitana abbreviata*, in *Gesta Dei per Francos, sive Orientalium Expeditionum et regni Francorum Hierosolimitani historia*, ed. J. Bongars (Hannover, 1611), pp. 1051-1145, at pp. 1055-6.

¹¹⁸ Philip the Chancellor, *Philippi de Greve in psalterium Davidicum CCXXX sermones* (2 vols., Paris, 1522), ii, fol. 187r, translation in Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 22, n. 24. The date of composition of this text has been a mystery until Lerner’s article in 2007 dating it to ca. 1220. Robert Lerner, ‘Philip the Chancellor Greets the Early Dominicans in Paris’, in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 77 (2007), pp. 5-17.

¹¹⁹ Philip the Chancellor, *Sermones festivales* in Paris, BnF, MS lat. 3280, fol. 120r; *Sermones super Evangelia*, in Paris, BnF, MS lat. 3281 fol. 247r, both quoted in Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 23, n. 26 and 28. In the literature on Philip, there are no dates available for *In psalterium* and *Sermones festivales*. See, e.g., Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in Mediaeval Culture* (Oxford, 1929), p. 43. See also Wicki’s outline of Philip and his works in the introduction to Philip’s life and works in *De bono*, i, pp. 13-28.

by Albert the Great in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (1243-1249) where he speculated about heresies that believed that fornication was not a sin.¹²⁰ Robert Lerner points out, however, that this is such a recurring description of so many disparate groups of heretics that ‘it is hard to believe it was a dogma in any of them’.¹²¹

The supposed belief that fornication is not evil, but something good, inverts what Philip, Albert, Bonaventure and the other schoolmen perceived as good and evil. It is this inversion which in Bonaventure’s treatment of *synderesis* finds a counterpart in the heretic who is prepared to die for his or her erroneous belief.

The accusation of sexual deviance against alleged heretics would be a recurring topos during the fourteenth century accounts of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and in the proceedings against the Templars.¹²² The link between religious and sexual deviance becomes even stronger in the case of sodomy, which Bonaventure does not mention explicitly here, but which was an extremely common topos in the description of alleged heretics.¹²³ Throughout the thirteenth centuries, lay confraternities founded by the mendicant orders had as their task to seek out and

¹²⁰ Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, pp. 20-1. Cf. Albert the Great, *In IV Sent.*, in *B. Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, ed. S. Borgnet (38 vols., Paris, 1890-1899), d. 17. a. 33. (xxix, p. 705).

¹²¹ Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, p. 20.

¹²² See A. Gilmour-Bryson, ‘Sodomy and the Knights Templar’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 7 (1996), pp. 151-183.

¹²³ On homosexuality and the transformation of attitudes to homosexuality in the twelfth century and onwards, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980), chapter 10, ‘Social Change: Making Enemies’, pp. 269-302, and chapter 11, ‘Intellectual Change: Men, Beasts, and “Nature”’, pp. 303-332. For a short but very instructive overview, see M. Goodich, ‘Sodomy in Medieval Secular Law’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 1 (1976), pp. 295-302.

denounce heresy and sodomy.¹²⁴ In some countries, people accused of sodomy were brought before an ecclesiastical court in the presence of the bishop, instead of a secular court, and some laws stipulated burning at the stake for sodomites caught *in flagrante*, i.e., the same punishment as for heretics.¹²⁵

3.3.2. King *Synderesis* and Rebellion

In order to explain how *synderesis* can be incapacitated in its role to stimulate to the good, Bonaventure uses the image of the ruler and the servant to describe how *synderesis* is affected by sin: Since its role is to rule over the other powers of the soul and it may lose its capacity to rule, it may be said to be endangered by sin (*per culpam praecipitari*).¹²⁶ We saw this metaphor being used in Roland of Cremona's discussion of the impeccability of *synderesis*, calling it the king of the soul, and comparing it to an abbot who may not always be obeyed by his monks.¹²⁷ Leadership, Bonaventure thinks, presumes that the leader is governed by rectitude and the subjects by obedience. Now, although *synderesis* is always right, and governed by rectitude, its action may meet resistance from both (deliberative) reason and will — reason through the blindness of error (*erroris excaecatio*) and will from the obstinacy of impiety (*impietatis obstinatio*). In this sense, one may say that *synderesis* is overthrown (*praecipitari*) because of sin.¹²⁸ In terms of the king-metaphor: the good and just king may face a rebellion by his evil subjects.

¹²⁴ Goodich, 'Sodomy', p. 297-8.

¹²⁵ Goodich, 'Sodomy', p. 297.

¹²⁶ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2 q. 3 resp.

¹²⁷ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, 133-4.

¹²⁸ *In II Sent.*, d. 39. a. 2. q. 3 resp.

The term Bonaventure uses to describe *synderesis* as a ruler is *praesidentia dominii*, and in the penultimate distinction of the second book of his *Commentary*, he expands on the nature of the ruler, which provides us with a fuller picture of the simile Bonaventure uses. Leadership comes from that by which a leader rules, Bonaventure thinks. In one sense it refers to the virtue or power, by which a ruler excels over others and in that sense, the leadership exercised is derived from God. But leadership can also derive from what Bonaventure calls *modus deveniendi* or *permanendi*, that is, the way by which someone comes into power or remains in power. A leader may come into power by means of justice (*iustitia*), cunning (*astutia*) or violence (*violentia*). If the ruler comes into power and stays there through justice, then the power is from God with respect to both the person in power and the subjects. But there are of course rulers whose power derives from various forms of usurpation, by cunning or violence. In such cases one has to make the distinction between the will of the ruler and the merits of the subjects. The usurper may be a sinful person, but his rule may be God's way of testing the good and punishing the evil subjects. So, although all power derives from God, there are thus just and unjust rulers. 'But', Bonaventure adds, 'because no one is so unjust that he also does not have a bit of justice in him, and therefore there is no power which can be said to not proceed from God.' ('Quia vero nunquam est ita iniustus ex una parte quin sit iustus ex altera, ideo de nulla potentia praesidendi dici potest quod non procedat a Deo').¹²⁹ In other words, the king must under all circumstances be obeyed. *Synderesis*, as the king in the soul and always just, must at all times be obeyed as well. *Synderesis*, seen as the *praesidens dominii*, guides

¹²⁹ *In II Sent.*, d. 44. a. 2. q. 1. resp.

the soul because of its rectitude, just as the righteous leader rules his kingdom with the power given by God and according to justice. Reason may rebel because of error, and (deliberative) will because of obstinacy, just as subjects may unjustly rise up against their king and the power derived from God, because they fail to see that this order is just.

We saw previously how heretics and people who did not fit into prevalent sexual ethics were grouped together, because their action was said to hinder *synderesis* or put its precepts into practice in the wrong way. Now we see *synderesis* almost personified as a king against whom the lower powers of the soul do well not to rebel. The rebellion of reason against *synderesis* happens through the blindness of error (*obcaecatio erroris*) and the impious obstinacy (*impietatis obstinatio*) of the will. The blindness of error that places reason in opposition to *synderesis* has a very strong resemblance to how *synderesis* was put out of action in heretics due to their blindness (*tenebra obcaecationis*) which inverts good and evil. Both heretics and rebellious reason are described as blind and in grave error.

The soul is here a microcosm of the well-ordered society: a good king rules justly and is well obeyed, and *synderesis* rules the powers of the soul by leading them to the good. Bonaventure is not the first to posit the idea of *synderesis* as a ruler, but the allegory becomes very potent through the terminology he employs. The connection between the body politic and the hierarchy of the soul also has a political significance: since all power is from God, even when the ruler is unjust, he must be obeyed under the general principle that ‘God must be obeyed’. But the will to do so and the desire to avoid breaking that rule is one of the definitions of *synderesis* — to seek the good and abhor evil. *Synderesis*’ function applies to general rules, but does not apply to particular rules. The subordination of the

powers of the soul to *synderesis* and the correct application of first principles are the preconditions for being a good citizen and a good Christian. Failure to do so makes the lower powers of the soul into rebels, and one risks one's good standing in the body politic and the Church as the body of Christ. Deviance in the form of heresy, rebellion or non-normative sex does not fit into this intersection between soul, society and Church.

We see something quite similar in Thomas Aquinas' discussion of *synderesis*. To explain how *synderesis* relates to conscience, Aquinas uses the metaphor of a king who appoints an official to act in his place. If the official declares something to be the king's will, although in fact that is a lie, the good subject does well to follow the ruling in the belief that it is the king's wish. To disobey conscience's application of the rules of *synderesis* is therefore always an evil, although the deed itself may be objectively good.¹³⁰ An erring conscience thus binds the moral subject to act according to it, but that does not mean that acting according to it is not sinful either in situations when conscience comes to a conclusion that is objectively sinful, e.g., fornication. A revision of conscience is thus necessary. In other words: one can be subjectively justified in performing an act that is objectively evil. One does not follow an erring conscience because one believes it to be wrong, but because one believes to it be right in its application of the first principles revealed by *synderesis*.¹³¹ Herein lies a potential for anarchism: a person is subjectively justified in embracing, e.g., a heresy, or to live a life of fornication. The metaphor of the king and his servant means that one must always

¹³⁰ For Aquinas' view on the binding nature of an erring conscience, see *Super II Sent.*, d. 39 q. 3 a. 2. for his example of the king, se ad 3. See also *De ver.*, q. 17 a. 4.

¹³¹ Cf. *De ver.*, q. 17. a. 4 resp.

obey conscience, just as one would always and in all circumstances obey the king and his representative, i.e., be a good and orthodox subject. The juxtaposition of the imperative to obey conscience and that of being a good subject appears to be an attempt to solve some of the problems raised by the binding force of the individual conscience. The metaphor can be thought of as functioning as a caveat against some of the conclusions that could be drawn from Aquinas' discussion of *synderesis* and conscience. Apart from this metaphor, Aquinas does not offer any solution to how the individual should relate to Christian society in the case of an erring conscience other than the need to examine one's conscience.

4. *Synderesis* and Damnation

We have so far seen how *synderesis* was thought to function among the living members of the Church and those who were thought to have left the Catholic faith. We now turn to the afterlife and the function of *synderesis* among the damned. Both these questions sprang from the idea that *synderesis* could not be lost or extinguished. But how does it function in Hell? If *synderesis* is an appetite for the good and detestation of evil, or knowledge thereof, then what use is there for it among the damned? They have no use of its moral guidance, since damnation is final and eternal. Did *synderesis* remain in Cain only in his earthly life or was it with him even in Hell?

4.1. From Langton to Alexander Neckham

Stephen Langton appears to have been the first to raise the issue of *synderesis* and damnation and to have formulated the solution that became the standard. Langton argued in his *Quaestiones theologiae* that *synderesis* existed among the damned, but because persuading the soul to seek the good is only an accidental feature of

it, that particular aspect of *synderesis* was extinguished, although it remained a substantial part of the soul — like a candle which remains when it is extinguished. Langton also considers an argument by analogy, that since concupiscence (*fomes peccati*) was extinguished in the Virgin Mary following the Annunciation, therefore *synderesis* (which is implied is the opposite of concupiscence) is extinguished in the damned. To this Langton replies, following Lombard, that concupiscence was not wholly done away with, but debilitated to such an extent that Mary had no inclination to sin. Likewise, *synderesis* remains in the damned, but its function to stimulate the soul to seek the good is taken away, since it is an accidental feature of *synderesis* for Langton. The point of this argument is that *synderesis* as such is an inalienable part of the soul and thus cannot be lost, but it can lose some of its functions.¹³²

The image Stephen uses for how *synderesis* functions among the damned, that of an extinguished candle, resonates with the liturgy of excommunication. In many medieval rites of excommunication, the presiding bishop and twelve priests each throw a candle on the ground and stamp on them to extinguish the light.¹³³

¹³² Stephen Langton, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 112. Lottin also includes a different solution posed by Langton to the issue in an extension to the collection of *Quaestiones* which is preserved in only one manuscript. Here Langton considers *synderesis* as an accidental feature of reason, and thus by implication something that can be lost. See Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 114-15. Among all the medieval scholastic writers listed in Lottin, no one appears to have used this solution. The only writer who argues something similar is William of Auvergne, who thinks that *synderesis* is a function reason that can be lost. Given William's antipathy to the entire previous discussion regarding *synderesis* and the fact that Langton's alternative solution only survives in one manuscript, Langton is unlikely to be the source of William's discussion. Cf. William of Auvergne, *De anima, Opera*, ii, pp. 219-20.

¹³³ As an example, one may quote the eleventh-century excommunication ritual preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 422, p. 14, where one finds the formula: 'et sicut extinguuntur iste lucerne ita iaceant eorum anime in inferno

Extinguishing the lights was seen as a foreshadowing of what would happen to the excommunicate at the Day of Judgement when he or she was to be thrown into Hell. In some cases, when an excommunicate was carried in funeral procession (if at all) the body was preceded by acolytes with extinguished candles.¹³⁴ The dead person had lost his or her moral guidance and there was no hope beyond the grave. It may well be these symbolic uses of the candle (*candela* or *lucerna*) to which Langton alludes here. *Synderesis* no longer persuades the soul to seek the good, just as the excommunicate person failed to seek full communion with the Church, whilst alive.

Although the notion of *synderesis* remaining among the wicked such as Cain is an integral part of Jerome's gloss, Langton was the first to bring up the question of the fate of *synderesis* among the damned and this discussion shows the need to understand what features separate the souls of the living and the damned. As we shall see, in particular in Chapter six, this development had long-lasting effects.

Langton's contemporary and fellow student, Peter of Capua (d. 1214), followed his lead in his *Summa theologiae* (completed by ca. 1190), whilst adding that *synderesis* was not extinguished even in the Devil, which widened the field to discussing *synderesis*' function not only among the damned, but also among the demons. Langton had asked the question of whether *synderesis* remained in the

extincte cum diabolo et angelis eius nisi resipiscant et ad emendacionem congruam ueniant' ('and just as these lights are extinguished, let these souls lie extinct in Hell with the Devil and his angels, unless they come to their senses and come to do fitting reparation').

¹³⁴ Dante's account in *Purgatorio* of how the archbishop of Cosenza had the body of the excommunicate Manfred disinterred and carried to the banks of the river Verde, accompanied by acolytes carrying extinguished lights is one striking, albeit later, example, see Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. & transl. R. Kirkpatrick (3 vols., London, 2006-2007), ii, 3. 124-132

Devil and the damned, but in his solution he limited himself to addressing only the issue of *synderesis* among the damned in general.¹³⁵ With Peter of Capua, new questions were thus being asked, which in time would lead some scholastics to distinguish between how *synderesis* remained among the damned, the demons and in the Devil.

In his *Summa theologiae* (1213-15), Geoffrey of Poitiers makes an addition to Langton's solution to the question of *synderesis* and concupiscence. Geoffrey agrees with Langton that, unlike concupiscence, *synderesis* is a substantial aspect of the soul which cannot be taken away from it.¹³⁶ But Geoffrey makes an important contribution: he considers the nagging remorse of conscience to be nothing else than *synderesis*, which he then uses to apply to the idea of damnation: 'Unde patet solutio huius obiectionis secundum quam dicitur *synderesis* extingui in dampnatis, cum eos remordeat conscientia de malis perpetratis' ('Wherefore the solution to this objection is clear, according to which *synderesis* is said to be extinguished among the damned, because conscience nags them for their wicked deeds.'). He then adds the penultimate verse of Isaiah: 'vermis eorum non morietur et ignis non extinguetur' ('their worm shall never die and the fire shall not be extinguished').¹³⁷ *Synderesis* is here an aspect of the experience of Hell, the knowledge that one has sinned. This echoes to some extent

¹³⁵ Peter of Capua in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 110 n. 2. 'Nam illa superior scintilla rationis que *synderesis* a Ieronimo uocatur nec etiam in Chayn, imo nec in diabolo potuit extingui' ('For this higher spark of reason, which is called *synderesis* by Jerome, could not be extinguished in Cain nor in the Devil'). Stephen Langton, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 112.

¹³⁶ Geoffrey of Poitiers, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 116.

¹³⁷ Geoffrey of Poitiers, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 118. Cf. Is. lxvi. 24.

what Peter of Poitiers had already said, that no one is so evil that reason does not nag him.¹³⁸ The introduction of the idea of *synderesis* as the ‘worm of conscience’, as an aspect of the suffering of the damned, will later be an important part of the vernacular appropriation of the concept. *Synderesis* may not spur the soul on to do the good or to detest evil, but it remains as an eternal self-reproach. Geoffrey then adds briefly what its function shall be for the blessed: ‘sed usum habebit in patria, contemplari Deum’ (‘but it will have a function in heaven – to contemplate God’), which will be the topic of a later section.¹³⁹

Alexander Neckham (1157-1217) notices in his *Speculum Speculationum* the equivocal use of *synderesis* to sometimes refer to the ‘spark of higher reason’ and sometimes to higher reason itself. *Synderesis*, for Alexander, means spark (*scintilla*) and this spark of goodness has been extinguished in the Devil, whilst higher reason remains. The Devil remains capable of discerning good from evil, but is incapable of either loving God or himself. Although the Devil knows he is evil and worthy of his punishment, Alexander thinks, his conscience does not nag him because he neither bemoans his faults nor makes penance for them.¹⁴⁰

Alexander of Hales’ *Gloss on the Sentences* (ca. 1223-27) argues that the grave sinner has lost the sense of goodness, but *synderesis* still speaks up against evil. Alexander passes over the damned souls in Hell, and focuses on the Devil in whom *synderesis* has lost all of its function of stimulating the doing of good and abhorring evil. As in Philip’s *Summa de bono* and the *Summa duacensis* (see

¹³⁸ Peter of Poitiers, *Sententiae*, 2, c. 4. (ii, p. 170).

¹³⁹ Geoffrey of Poitiers, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 118.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Neckham, *Speculum Speculationum*, ed. R. M. Thomson (Oxford, 1988), 4.13.6.

below), *synderesis* is thought to function in the sense that it speaks against the evil of the punishment *per se*. There is a difference between those still on their journey through life (*viatores*), who can lose *synderesis* as the instinct to seek the good but not as that which speaks against evil, and those who are damned.¹⁴¹

Neither William of Auxerre nor Hugh of Saint-Cher nor Roland of Cremona or the (later) anonymous master in MS Paris, BnF, lat. 14726, show any interest in how *synderesis* functions among the damned, but pass by the question in silence.

Although William of Auvergne firmly believes that *synderesis*, as a function of the soul more than a power, can be extinguished (particularly in those who have lost their reason), he does not comment on its being or non-being among the damned.¹⁴²

4.2. Philip the Chancellor and the *Summa duacensis*

The question returns in Philip the Chancellor's *Summa de bono* where he deals with the question of *synderesis* and Hell in the part of his treatise where he investigates whether or not it can be extinguished, the same section in which he also deals with its function among the heretics. He begins his response by saying that one must distinguish between the damned and those who are still on their journey through life.¹⁴³ He then goes on to describe first the case of heretics, i.e., those who are alive but may have lost the use of *synderesis*, and then the case of

¹⁴¹ Alexander of Hales, *Glossa*, 2. 40. 4. Echoing Philip (and Geoffrey) the argument for the case that *synderesis* remains is Is. lxvi. 24, 'vermis eorum non morietur' and against is Bernard's *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, that the damned, if given the choice, would prefer the sin, to undergoing the just penalty for it.

¹⁴³ *De bono*, i, p. 203.

¹⁴³ *De bono*, i, p. 203.

the damned. The first argument in favour of *synderesis* being able to be extinguished draws on the opposition between *synderesis* and concupiscence (*fomes*): since the Virgin was freed from the latter through special grace, thus *synderesis* should be able to be completely extinguished in some of the reprobate such as in the Antichrist, due to the accumulation of sin.¹⁴⁴ Philip uses his distinction between habits and habitual potency to respond to this argument: concupiscence as a habit and an inclination to evil can be extinguished, as in the case of Virgin Mary. What is implied in this argument, but not entirely expanded, is that *synderesis* as a *potentia habitualis* and thus an innate part of the soul cannot be extinguished even in the epitome of evil.¹⁴⁵

The question of the damned is most poignantly expressed in Philip's treatment of the case of Dives and Lazarus in Lk xvi. Because the rich man still wished that his brothers escape his fate, the *Glossa* sees it as an act of spiritual charity. Philip first cites the passage in Luke as an argument for the position that *synderesis* was not extinguished in Dives. But he then elaborates this somewhat. Firstly, there is a distinction in *synderesis* between the instinct to the good and the abhorrence of evil, as we saw in Langton. *Synderesis* is extinguished in both these aspects in the Devil and the damned. But it survives in a third aspect, which pertains to the evil of the penalty itself. Once more, Philip refers to the *Glossa* which states that the penalty of Dives is partly the knowledge of Lazarus (*cognitio pauperis*) whom he had frowned upon, and the memory of his own brothers, so that he is tormented even more by the knowledge of lost salvation and the future punishment of his brothers. Like Geoffrey of Poitiers, Philip connects the remaining aspect of

¹⁴⁴ *De bono*, i, p. 203.

¹⁴⁵ *De bono*, i, pp. 203-4.

synderesis to Is. lxvi. 24, 'their worms shall never die' ('vermis eorum non morietur'). The detestation of evil is to some extent still alive in the experience of suffering ('habent ergo displicentiam mali in collatione ad penam', 'they therefore have the dislike of evil in relation to their punishment'). The evil of the punishment is why Dives wants to warn his brothers, lest they join him in eternal suffering.¹⁴⁶ What Philip tries to emphasise here is that the damned can only see their own suffering and are incapable of seeking the good. The good intention of Dives for his brothers cannot free itself from the horizon of eternal pain, to seek the good for its own sake. *Synderesis* can thus only inform the damned that sin equals pain, instead of culpability and providing inspiration to seek the good. This obstinacy of the heart is emphasised in the final paragraph of Philip's discussion of Hell, where he responds to an objection which cites Bernard to the effect that the damned have knowledge and desire for the good. Philip cites the next lines in Bernard:

Nollent omnino puniri; iustum est autem puniri que punienda gesserunt.
Quare mala est voluntas que iustitie non concordat [...] non vere penitent
qui non tam dolent se sibi vixisse quam hoc ipsum iam non posse.¹⁴⁷

They do not at all wish to be punished, but it is just that those punishable acts they have committed be punished. Therefore, the will that does not agree with justice is evil [...] They do not truly repent who do not mourn the way they have lived their lives as much as the fact that they no longer can live in this way.

The damned suffer, but they are not in concord with justice and truly repent. Instead, they have an understanding of the evil they suffer themselves. There is a slight contrast between Philip's view of *synderesis* and Geoffrey of Poitiers' and

¹⁴⁶ *De bono*, i, pp. 203, 205. Cf. *Glossa ordinaria*, iv, pp. 199.

¹⁴⁷ *De bono*, i, p. 205. For a modern critical edition of this quotation, see Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, in *SBO*, iii, p. 188.

Alexander Neckham's harrowing view of *synderesis* in Hell as an eternal self-reproach. Philip's view is that *synderesis* among the damned is only the awareness of pain, but no reproach, since that aspect of it is gone — a form of *incurvatus in se* — whereas Geoffrey and Alexander retain the notion that *synderesis* brings with it some sense of culpability and regret.

As in his discussion of *synderesis* as a *potentia habitualis*, Philip's solutions here have been very influential. Lottin notes that in the *Summa halensis*, the section on *synderesis* in Philip's *Summa de bono* is reprised in its entirety, without additions.¹⁴⁸

The *Summa duacensis*, by contrast, takes the view that there are different levels of how *synderesis* ceases to function. If, the anonymous author wonders, *synderesis* is not extinguished in Cain, nor in the damned, nor in the Devil, what is the difference between how *synderesis* operates among the wicked? In a person such as Cain, *synderesis* is extinguished in its drive to the good of beatitude, i.e., Cain has lost his instinct for what should have been his final destination, had he not committed fratricide. It still stimulates him to lesser goods, and speaks against both sin and the evil suffered during punishment. *Synderesis*, our author continues, remains in the damned human soul as the instinct that speaks against the evil of sin and the evil of the suffering experienced by the damned. In the Devil, however, *synderesis* is extinguished apart from the experience of suffering as evil. The act of sin pleases him, wherefore *synderesis* cannot be said to speak against the evil of sin.¹⁴⁹ As in Dante's *Inferno*, there is a gradation among the wicked, and among the souls suffering in Hell. The damned souls know they have

¹⁴⁸ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 180.

¹⁴⁹ *Summa duacensis*, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 161-2.

sinned, and will continue to know that for eternity, which is part of their pain, together with the evil of suffering, whilst the Devil only experiences suffering since the other functions of *synderesis* have been lost.

4.3. Bonaventure and the Worm of Conscience

In his discussion of whether *synderesis* can be extinguished, Bonaventure thinks that obstinacy of the heart prevents *synderesis* from its task of stimulating the doing of good and here uses the damned as his example, ‘qui adeo sunt in malo confirmati ut nunquam possint ad bonum inclinari’ (‘who are so stuck in their evil ways so that they are never able to be inclined to the good’).¹⁵⁰ The damned thus have, in Bonaventure’s words, ‘an eternal impediment’ to the functioning of *synderesis* in stimulating to the good, and in that respect *synderesis* has been extinguished. But *synderesis* can still fulfil its role in speaking against evil and in this function, Bonaventure says, almost with delight, ‘maxime vigebit in damnatis’ (‘it is highly functional among the damned’), but only with regard to the evil of the punishment, not because it agrees with divine justice. Here, Bonaventure clearly follows the solution offered by Philip which had been repeated in the *Commentary on the Sentences* by one of Bonaventure’s teachers Odo Rigaud.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 2. resp.

¹⁵¹ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 2. resp. ‘Unde remurmurabit synderesis in damnatis contra culpam, in relatione tamen ad poenam’ (‘Wherefore *synderesis* speaks against the sin in the damned, but in relation to the punishment’). Odo Rigaud in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 202, ‘sed tamen vigeat quantum ad actum qui est remurmurare malo in comparatione ad penam, et ex hoc actu est in damnatis conscientie vermis’ (‘but it remains alive with regard to the act of speaking against evil in relation to the punishment. In this regard, it is the worm of conscience among the damned’).

Bonaventure also makes ample use of the idea of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience. Bonaventure develops this image to describe the psychology of sin and the spiritual suffering of the wicked. The worm of conscience first appears in his third question on *synderesis* (whether one can be deprived of it through sin). Bonaventure thinks that although the whole body must suffer as a result of the sins of the will (*voluntas*), it is the will which will be most punished. The worm of conscience will therefore primarily afflict the will, as the source of the sin.¹⁵²

However, it is towards the end of the fourth book, where Bonaventure writes with gusto about the sufferings in Hell before the Final Judgement, that we see *synderesis* and the worm of conscience return. After having determined that this worm is not material but spiritual, Bonaventure proceeds to discuss its nature. To understand what the image of a worm of conscience means, Bonaventure looks at two aspects of it: its origin and its action. A worm, Bonaventure thinks, originates from putrefaction and eats that from which it comes. He thus creates an analogy between the worms breeding in a decomposing corpse and the spiritual worm growing in a dead soul. The worm grows from the putrefaction of sin (*ex putrefactione peccati*). Sin becomes putrefaction, Bonaventure thinks, when the soul has come to find its final rest in it ('et tunc peccatum dicitur putridum quando anima in eo requiescit finaliter'). The spiritual pain (*dolor*) that is experienced in sin arises from the clash of the two aspects of the will: the natural will (*voluntas naturalis*), to which *synderesis* relates, and the deliberative will (*voluntas deliberativa*). When conscience dictates that something ought not to have been done ('factum esse indebitum'), these two clash in the sinner: the natural will

¹⁵² *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 3. resp. ad 3.

(*synderesis*) agrees with conscience and detests the evil, whereas it pleases the deliberative will. Without this clash, which comes about through the knowledge of sin in both deliberative and natural will, there is no worm of conscience.¹⁵³ Put simply: the worm of conscience is that nagging feeling (natural will) that one ought not have done what one consented to do (deliberative will). Bonaventure interestingly brings up the case of heretics and those who think that they have done well by sinning as examples of those who are unaware of their sin, and thus lack the worm of conscience. He continues by mentioning the sinners whose delight in sin is so strong that it absorbs the *motus* of the natural will so that it gives its consent to sin and therefore lack the resistance between natural and deliberative will. In other words, the effects of natural will cannot be felt because the soul is so wrapped up in sinful delight. Likewise, those who repent of their sins in life (and thus, whose natural and deliberative will are both in agreement with conscience that a sin has been committed) also lack the worm of conscience.¹⁵⁴ What Bonaventure is trying to address is how a conflict in the soul can arise, to delight in a sin, yet at the same time know that one ought not to have done it.

In the afterlife, however, there is no escaping: there the worm of conscience can grow freely from the putrefaction of sin, because then the sin of all the damned shall remain perpetually in their souls and they shall fully know their sins. As a result of the sinful souls seeing their sins in plain sight, ‘there will be a clash because of the obstinacy of the deliberative will and the murmur of *synderesis*’ (‘*ibi erit obiatio propter voluntatis deliberativae obstinationem et synderesis*

¹⁵³ *In IV Sent.*, d. 50 p. 2. a. 2 q. 2. resp.

¹⁵⁴ *In IV Sent.*, d. 50 p. 2. a. 2 q. 2. resp.

remurmurationem’). Whereas natural will could be overcome by the delights of sin in life, and thus fail in its task, the delights have now been replaced by bitter punishment and the action of *synderesis* in speaking against evil has been fortified: ‘and therefore this worm will nag and punish in a marvellous way’.¹⁵⁵

Bonaventure follows the distinctions drawn in the *Summa duacensis*, in the degrees in which *synderesis* is extinguished among the damned. In its function to stimulate to the good, *synderesis* is entirely extinguished in the infernal population. The demons, because of their wickedness, have also lost it as the force which makes the soul shun evil. *Synderesis*’ remaining function among the damned is to speak against an evil act that has been done, not because it is a sin or lacking in moral goodness (*inhonestum*), but because they are punished on account of their sins. Because the demons do not sense the bitter punishment as intensely as the damned souls, before the final judgement, they also do not have remorse in the same way as the damned.¹⁵⁶ He adds, however, another, fourth, aspect in which *synderesis* remains, and that is as a murmur against an evil act because it went against the dictate of conscience (‘quia indebitum’). Bonaventure introduces his addition here as a hypothesis and potential development (‘sane tamen posset dici’) of how *synderesis* could be thought to function among the damned. This development appears to be in response to a problem implicit in the notion that *synderesis* only speaks against the evil of punishment. Since punishment is a particular evil, and not the generality, to which *synderesis* would

¹⁵⁵ *In IV Sent.*, d. 50 p. 2. a. 2 q. 2. resp. ‘Et ex hoc vermis mirabiliter rodens et puniens’.

¹⁵⁶ *In IV Sent.*, d. 50 p. 2 a. 3 q. 2 ad 4. Bonaventure does not expand on this, but it seems that it is only the demons who have lost this second function of *synderesis*.

normally relate, *synderesis*' function should rather be seen in light of the dynamic of a guilty mind as outlined above. It does not mourn over sin as the cause of punishment (that is a function of the deliberative will), but it considers moral goodness (*honestum*).¹⁵⁷ Since *synderesis* is extinguished as the inspiration to seek the good, this can only refer to the knowledge that one has failed with regard to one's own conscience and is forever stuck in the clash between deliberative and natural will.

Bonaventure then ends by saying that *synderesis* is God's instrument by which he tortures (*ad flagellandum*) the wicked, and that the remorse (*remorsio*) *synderesis* creates is more intense in human souls than in demons because in human souls the two aspects of the will perpetually resist one other.¹⁵⁸ Implicit in this statement is that humans, since they are endowed with greater powers of moral discernment, will also be punished more severely. It is the human capacity for knowing that one has done wrong that creates this worm, the unresolved inner conflict that will never be resolved because the damned souls cannot free themselves from their predicament, and cannot repent.

The interest in how *synderesis* fares among the damned appears around 1200 and enters the debate at several instances prior to Bonaventure. The question is by no means as central as the question regarding what part of the soul, if any, it pertains to. The notion of eternal damnation posed questions regarding the continuity of the essential properties of the soul of those who are still alive and the soul of those damned to perpetual suffering. The results differ, but what they tell

¹⁵⁷ *In IV Sent.*, d. 50 p. 2. a. 3. q. 2. resp. ad. 4.

¹⁵⁸ *In IV Sent.*, d. 50 p. 2. a. 3. q. 2. resp. ad. 4.

us is that there is often a psychological aspect to the thirteenth-century understanding of Hell, apart from that of physical suffering.

5. Conclusion

This chapter set out to describe the early history of *synderesis* in scholasticism, not from a philosophical point of view, but from the perspective of conceptual and cultural history. I have attempted to show how the concept was in constant flux, always open for discussion and redefinition. This conceptual history cannot be disentangled from the culture and historical developments in which the concept was debated. Apart from the discussion of how *synderesis* was related to reason and the will, I have highlighted two themes that can be divided into the categories of how *synderesis* was thought to function in the living (*in viatore*), who had left the faith, and the diseased, whose unhappy souls did not find salvation.

Although the issue of heresy and *synderesis* was never a formal question of its own in the treatises on *synderesis*, instead usually treating it under the question whether *synderesis* can sin or be extinguished, it does reveal anxieties about heresy. The turn to a psychological and cognitive understanding of heresy was preceded by the need to understand the psychology of damnation and how the damned souls differed from the demons and the Devil in their sufferings in Hell. This issue was first addressed by Stephen Langton, but gained more and more prominence in the 1220s onwards together with the question of heresy. The idea of *synderesis* as the ‘worm of conscience’ that nags the soul for its past transgressions came about in the early 1200s but was significantly developed by Bonaventure. This idea, and in particular Bonaventure’s discussion of it, will be of great importance when we turn to the vernacular uses of *synderesis*, in Guillaume de Deguileville in particular, in Chapter six.

From the 1230s onwards we also begin to see the emergence of the view that relates *synderesis* to the will (*voluntas*), rather than to reason. *Synderesis* becomes less about the knowledge of good and evil and more about the will or desire to seek that good. This is a crucial development, because not only does it create one of the dividing lines of scholastic debate on *synderesis* in the years after Aquinas and Bonaventure, it also makes it possible to understand *synderesis* in terms of desire. As we will see in the following chapter, there is a thin line between the desire for the moral good and the desire for God, a line that was crossed when *synderesis* became a concept in Bonaventure's affective mysticism.

Chapter Three. A Spark of *Synderesis*: Bonaventure's Development of *Synderesis* in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*

1. Introduction

On 2 February 1257, Bonaventure was elected Minister General of the Franciscan order. He had to leave his academic position in Paris to devote himself fully to his new role as leader of the order. This is the time when we can see a shift in his writing from the texts written for academic purposes at the University of Paris to spiritual and mystical texts. One of his most famous texts is the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (ca. 1259-60) in which he describes in six steps the journey of the mind into God. These steps correspond to six powers of the soul, of which *synderesis* is the highest. Here, *synderesis* does not function as a moral-psychological concept, but as the power of the soul that unites it to God. Bonaventure drew his new understanding of *synderesis* from the mystical writings of Thomas Gallus (ca. 1200-1246). This chapter will analyse how *synderesis* functions in the *Itinerarium* and how Bonaventure appropriated Gallus' interpretation of the concept and fitted it into his own framework. In particular, I focus on how *synderesis* operates in the *Itinerarium* compared to Bonaventure's definition of the concept in the *Commentary*. In a case study, I then study how *synderesis* as a supra-rational power relates to the ineffability topos of the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*, where the soul briefly transcends itself to reach mystical union. Some scholarship on Bonaventure, in particular between 1920 and 1950, and including Étienne Gilson's *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure*, posits that Bonaventure's 'thought' was in general static and did not develop in any considerable way — a notion

recently shared by Christopher Cullen, which led him to outline Bonaventure's thought without any regard to chronological order.¹ This overall stability may characterise some of the more fundamental parts of Bonaventure's theology — his idea of exemplarism (the notion that the universal forms are to be located in God, and more specifically Christ, as *logos*), for instance. But one may say similar things of the general outlines of Thomas Aquinas's theology without considering his thought static. What this chapter will demonstrate is that Bonaventure *did* change his mind considerably on the nature of *synderesis*, that it is an object of study for historians of ideas, and that this has implications for how we should understand the *Itinerarium* and the nature of Francis' stigmata in early Franciscan history.

There are several examples of development in Bonaventure's thinking on certain matters. Ewert Cousins has highlighted the development of a more Christocentric worldview after the *Itinerarium*.² Zachary Hayes has argued that the *Itinerarium* represents a deepening of Bonaventure's Trinitarian doctrine, which was taken even further in his final work the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*.³ In a piece written several years after his overview of Bonaventure's thought, Cullen discusses Bonaventure's changing attitude towards Aristotle and Aristotelianism between the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the fierce rejection of certain

¹ C. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford, 2006), p. xii. Cf. E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure* (London, 1938), p. 35.

² E. H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago, 1978), pp. 136-7. See also Z. Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (New York, 1981), p. 7.

³ Zachary Hayes, 'Bonaventure's Trinitarian Theology', in J. M. Hammond, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and Jared Goff (eds.), *A Companion to Bonaventure* (Leiden, 2014), 189-245, at pp. 201-2.

elements of Aristotelianism in the *Collationes*.⁴ The influence of Gallus on Bonaventure is clear from other passages, especially chapter four of the *Itinerarium*, as Denys Turner has noted.⁵ Bonaventure's mystical writings from the late 1250s onwards gave him an opportunity to develop themes found in Gallus and other mystical writers.

It will be argued in this chapter that Bonaventure's appropriation of Gallus' interpretation of *synderesis* happened during his transition to Minister General, which became an impetus for an entirely new sort of writing – his mystical writing.

Some scholars have over the past few decades noted, usually in passing, that Bonaventure took over Gallus' use of *synderesis scintilla*. This chapter will attempt to explain what no one has done so far: to explain when, where, why and how Bonaventure appropriated *synderesis scintilla*, and how, more precisely, it relates to his previous understanding of it.⁶

2. The Link to God: *Synderesis* and Mysticism

Despite the fact that *synderesis* mainly belongs to scholastic moral psychology, it also has a mystical undertone which comes to the surface at several occasions in

⁴ Christopher Cullen, 'Bonaventure's Philosophical Method', in Jay M. Hammond, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and Jared Goff (eds.), *A Companion to Bonaventure* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 121-63, see especially pp. 126-7.

⁵ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 122.

⁶ One may mention A. Solignac, 'Synderesis', in *DS*, xiv, p. 1409, von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus*, p. 317, and most recently D. Lawell, '*Spectacula contemplationis* (1244-46): A Treatise by Thomas Gallus, *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 76 (2009), p. 257 fn. 24. Davis, 'Force of Union', pp. 43-4.

the scholastic treatises, and dominates in the texts of Thomas Gallus. Though it is clear that the schoolmen did not conceive of *synderesis* as a force of mystical union, there are some passages in their argumentation that open the question of the relationship between *synderesis* and God. The very notion of a part of the soul by which the soul gains pure illumination, untainted by matter, leaves the possibility for a unitive aspect of the soul. It may be that this possibility was implicit in the connection Jerome makes between *synderesis* and the Pauline notion of the spirit which intercedes with ineffable groans (*gemitibus inenarrabilibus*).⁷ We see the first instance of a vaguely mystical sense in Geoffrey of Poitiers ('sed usum habebit in patria, contemplari Deum', 'but it will have a function in Heaven – to contemplate God'), followed by Alexander Neckham.⁸ William of Auxerre's idea that *synderesis* is the image of God in the soul, by which it sees God, and through God sees the natural law, implies a capacity by which the soul connects to God.⁹ Similarly, Roland of Cremona believes that one of the functions of the higher intellect is to contemplate the persons of the Trinity.¹⁰

In his investigation into the relationship between *synderesis* and reason, Philip the Chancellor brings in the *Glossa* on Heb. iv. 12 ('vividus est sermo Dei', 'for the Word of God is living') which discusses how *spiritus* works as a synonym for *ratio* and can be divided into higher and lower reason ('sic etiam videt quomodo spiritus a se dividatur, dum vel in Deum inhiat de divina usia cogitans, vel inferius

⁷ Cf. Rom. viii. 26.

⁸ Geoffrey of Poitiers, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 118.

⁹ *Summa aurea*, ii, p. 301.

¹⁰ Roland of Cremona, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 131-2.

celestia considerat, vel in terra inferius de mundanis recte agendis pertractat.’ ‘in this way he also sees how the spirit is in itself divided, when it either gazes at God with eagerness and contemplates the divine substance, or when it considers the heavenly things below God, or when it deals with how to act correctly regarding worldly matters further down here on earth.’¹¹ Philip does not really delve further into this gloss, but the notion of *synderesis* as *ratio* or *spiritus* which is hungering for God and considers the divine substance (*divina usia* is a Latin version of the Greek *theia ousia*), does leave the possibility of *synderesis* as something capable of mystical experience. This resembles Roland of Cremona’s thought that *synderesis* as identical to *intellectus* is capable of comparing and thus understanding the relations of the persons in the Trinity. Gauthier of Chateau-Thierry briefly alludes to the mystical potential of *synderesis* when he says ‘Conscientia enim deliberat, non synderesis, sed solum tendit in Deum’.¹² He does not dwell on this and his main occupation is the role of *synderesis* in finding moral knowledge.

None of the above mentioned authors place any focus on *synderesis* as somehow *capax Dei*, but are only concerned with *synderesis* from a moral point of view. But there appears to be a vague analogous link between understanding the natural law as laid down by God, and contemplating God himself.

It is in the writings of Thomas Gallus (ca. 1200-1246), the Victorine abbot of Vercelli, that we see *synderesis* as a mystical force of union. It first appears in Gallus’ commentary on Is. vi.1 ‘Vidi Dominum sedentem’, written around 1216, and recently edited by Declan Lawell. In one of his final works, the collection of

¹¹ *De bono*, i, p. 196. Cf. *Glossa ordinaria*, iv, p. 429.

¹² Gauthier of Chateau-Thierry, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 191.

commentaries on the works of pseudo-Denys, Gallus follows his fellow Victorine, Richard of St.-Victor (d. 1173), in conceiving of a hierarchy of powers of the soul which step by step leads the soul to union with God. Unlike Richard, however, Gallus does not believe that *intellectus* is the highest of these powers. Gallus thinks that in the books of pseudo-Denys, there is an even more profound way of knowing God which the pagan philosophers did not know about. Here, Gallus has added the concept of a spark, now referring to *synderesis scintilla*:

Putavit enim summam vim cognitivam esse intellectum, cum sit alia que non minus excedit intellectum quam intellectus rationem, vel ratio imaginationem, scilicet principalis affectio, et ipsa est scintilla synderesis que sola unibilis est spiritui divino, sicut tetigi in expositione illius visionis Is. 6a ‘Vidi Dominum sedentem’.¹³

He, [Richard] thought that the highest cognitive power is the intellect, although there is another which exceeds the intellect no less than the intellect exceeds reason, or reason exceeds the imagination, that is to say, the principal affect, and that is the spark of *synderesis*, which alone can be united to the divine spirit, a topic which I dealt with in my commentary on the vision of Isaiah vi. 1. ‘I saw the lord sitting’.

It is also clear that this mystical capacity is thought to exceed all rational powers of the soul,

Istud ergo sapientie negotium sensus, imaginationis, rationis, intellectus tam practici quam theorici usus et officia suspendit, et excludit omnem intellectum et omne intelligibile, et ens et unum transcendit, speculum et enigma nescit, unde ‘non aufertur’ [Lk. x. 42].¹⁴

This occupation with Wisdom suspends wholly with sense, imagination, reason, practical and speculative intellect, and excludes the entire intellect and all that is intelligible, and transcends ‘being’ and ‘the one’, it knows nothing of ‘mirrors’ and ‘enigmas’, wherefore ‘it is not taken away’.

¹³ *Explanatio*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Explanatio*, p. 5.

It is this power, Gallus thinks, which unites the soul to God and fulfils the hopes of mystical union contained in the Song of Songs and which is occasionally reached.¹⁵ In what could be an echo of the moral-psychological discussions of *synderesis*, Gallus calls it the *optima portio Marie*. As we have seen, some scholastics had argued that since the saved (for which Mary is the prototype) lacked *fomes peccati*, so also the damned lack its counterpart *synderesis*. Taken to its logical conclusion, *synderesis* must have been thought to be perfected in Mary, who lacked the inclination to sin. By referring to the erotic mysticism of the Song of Songs, Gallus implicitly points back to his own commentaries on the famous text, in which he occasionally employs the term *synderesis scintilla*.¹⁶

It has been argued that the idea of a spark of *synderesis* represents the notion that the soul has a supra-rational capacity, *synderesis*, which is able to pierce the darkness surrounding God, but that it must be ignited by God's grace, as when the hammer strikes the anvil. When that happens, a spark is emitted which allows the soul to transcend itself.¹⁷ *Synderesis*, Lawell points out, represents the human aspect of the journey of the mind to God. In the end that is not enough for bringing the soul into union. For that to happen grace is needed and *synderesis* can thus be seen as both active and passive. *Synderesis* must come into touch with the divine for it to be ignited.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Explanatio*, p. 5.

¹⁶ See. e.g. *Explanatio*, p. 5. See also Thomas Gallus, *Commentaires du Cantique des Cantiques. Texte critique avec introduction, notes et tables*, ed. Jeanne Barbet (Paris, 1967), pp. 218-19.

¹⁷ D.A. Lawell, *Ne de ineffabili penitus taceamus: Aspects of the Specialized Vocabulary of the Writings of Thomas Gallus*, *Viator*, 40 (2009), pp. 151-84, at p. 155.

¹⁸ Lawell, 'Ne de ineffabili', pp. 162-3.

Gallus' concept of *synderesis* and its spark, *synderesis scintilla*, comes with a set of concepts which according to Declan Lawell are more or less interchangeable: *apex affectionis*, *principalis affectio*, *apex mentis*.¹⁹ These accompanying concepts make it clear that Gallus' understanding of *synderesis* is more affective than intellectual, his aim is an *affective* mystical union of the soul and God.

What we see here is a radically different understanding of the concept of *synderesis*, so different that one must ask: is this even the same concept, or is it a homologism? Given that *synderesis* as a word is a corruption of the Greek *syneidesis*, and that it does not have any meaning in the West outside of Jerome and his reception, this can be Gallus' only source. Considering too that several other authors also considered some aspect of *synderesis* as relating to God and the understanding of the Trinity, one should see Gallus' understanding of *synderesis* as part of a spectrum, rather than a completely different concept.

3. Bonaventure and the *Itinerarium*

In the prologue to the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure describes how he arrives at Mount La Verna in Tuscany around September-October in 1259, where Francis, according to the legend, had seen a six-winged seraph, after which he received stigmata. Bonaventure describes how he sat down to rest and think about the way of contemplation by which the soul ascends to mystical ecstasy. Suddenly, the image of Francis and the seraph came to his mind, and he realised how he could

¹⁹ Lawell, '*Ne de ineffabili*', p. 167-74. For an overview of the history of these concepts and their origin in Classical philosophy, particularly Stoicism, see E. von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus*, pp. 309-85.

find that way. 'For the six wings of the seraph can be taken to signify the six steps of the soul', he writes. The steps come in three main stages, where the mind considers the physical world, the soul, and the concept of God. Having gone through these steps, the soul then rises to mystical ecstasy, the experience beyond all language. It is clear from the beginning of the text that Bonaventure is writing with the Franciscan order as his primary audience, formulations such as 'beatissimus pater noster Franciscus' ('our most blessed father Francis') leaves us in no doubt about that.

The six steps do not only correspond to the six wings of the seraph; they also correspond to the six powers of the soul, which Bonaventure enumerates: *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *ratio*, *spiritus*, *intellectus*, *intelligentia* and *apex mentis seu synderesis scintilla*. Humanity has these powers by nature, Bonaventure says, but they have been corrupted by the Fall, and need to be restored by grace and purged through justice (*iustitia*), the exercise of knowledge (*scientia*) and perfected in wisdom (*sapientia*).²⁰ Just as the six steps on the journey of the soul is grouped into three main stages, seeing God in the world (*extra se*), in the soul (*intra se*) and in the two concepts of God as One and Good (*supra se*) so are the six powers of the soul arranged under three principal aspects: *sensualitas seu animalitas*, *spiritus* and *mens*.²¹

²⁰ *Itin.* 1.6. For an overview of the sources from which Bonaventure may have drawn for his six steps, see Cf. S. F. Brown, 'Reflections on the Structural Sources of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*', in Ghita Holmström-Hintikka (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy and Modern Times* (Dordrecht and London, 2000), pp. 1-16.

²¹ *Itin.* 1.2, 1.4.

But Bonaventure does not follow this neat set of correspondences throughout his text. The final two steps are grouped under *intelligentia*, as the first paragraph of the sixth chapter clarifies.²² Like Gallus, Bonaventure was not entirely consistent in his terminology. In his early commentary on Isaiah, *Vidi Dominum*, Gallus uses the term *synderesis* for the same purpose he would later use *synderesis scintilla*. Bonaventure, in his early works, uses the term *synderesis* in his discussion on conscience; later, he uses *synderesis scintilla* in its mystical function, and even later, in a homily, he uses the word *synderesis* but for a mystical purpose, and not to discuss morals, as one might first be led to believe. *Synderesis*, being a third declension noun with identical nominative and genitive endings, remains seemingly unchanged by the addition of *scintilla*, but has actually changed into the genitive: a spark of *synderesis*.²³

4. A Change of Mind: Bonaventure's Development of the Concept of *Synderesis*

We now face two quite different ways of thinking about *synderesis*. One way is mainly concerned with morals and ethics, in which *synderesis* helps and motivates the soul to understand or do what is good and to avoid evil. The other way is to understand *synderesis* as the affective capacity of the soul, above the intellect,

²² *Itin.* 6.1. 'elevandus est oculus intelligentiae' ('the eye of *intelligentia* must be raised').

²³ Declan Lawell expands on the use of the use of genitive in the case of Gallus: 'The genitive is not attributive, as if denoting a quality or attribute inherent in the soul's *synderesis*. Rather it is predicative – the spark is predicated of and associated with *synderesis*, emerging from it after "scintillating" contact with the Other.' Lawell, '*Ne de ineffabili*', p. 156.

which allows the ego to transcend itself in the *excessus mentis*, the mystical rapture that is the goal of the *Itinerarium*.

Both of these notions are present in Bonaventure's writing, but at different periods of his life. But to that, one must add that Bonaventure seems to merge together some of the scholastic notions with those of Gallus in the *Itinerarium*. Before moving on to analyse the implications of Bonaventure's notion of *synderesis scintilla* in the *Itinerarium*, it is appropriate to highlight how Bonaventure changes his position and how he engages with earlier scholars.

4.1. From Commentator to Spiritual Guide.

In the *Commentary*, Bonaventure defines *synderesis* in the following way: 'Et sic, ut proprie loquamur, synderesis dicit potentiam affectivam, in quantum naturaliter habilis est ad bonum et ad bonum tendit' ('And thus, *synderesis*, properly speaking, refers to the affective power, insofar as it is by nature oriented towards the good and tends towards the good'). The emphasis on *synderesis* as an affective capacity lays the ground for the idea of *synderesis* and the 'spark of *synderesis*' (*synderesis scintilla*), as we see it in the *Itinerarium*, where it transcends reason and speaks more to the heart than to the mind.

In 1257, the year Bonaventure became Minister General of the Franciscan Order, and about five years after the completion of his *Commentary*, he wrote his short overview of theology, the *Breviloquium*. In this treatise, he covered most of the essential parts of his theology and, once more, comments on the notion of *synderesis*. God has given mankind, he says, a fourfold help for living rightly, two come from nature and two from grace. A human has by nature the rectitude of conscience to judge correctly, and *synderesis* to desire, or wish, correctly, which also stimulates the soul towards the good ('cuius est remurmurare contra malum

et stimulando ad bonum’).²⁴ This is in essence the same, albeit a more simplified, position as the one he took earlier in his *Commentary on the Sentences*. Only two years later he wrote the *Itinerarium*, in which he now added *scintilla* to *synderesis*:

Iuxta igitur sex gradus ascensionis in Deum, sex sunt gradus potentiarum animae per quos ascendimus ab imis ad summa, ab exterioribus ad intima, a temporalibus ad aeterna, scilicet sensus imaginatio, ratio, intellectus, intelligentia et apex mentis seu synderesis scintilla. Hos gradus in nobis habemus plantatos per naturam, deformatos per culpam, reformatos per gratiam; purgandos per iustitiam, exercendos per scientiam, perficiendos per sapientiam.²⁵

Therefore, corresponding to the six steps of the ascent into God, there are six steps of the powers of the soul, through which we ascend from the lowest to the highest, from the outer to the inner, from the temporal to the eternal, namely sense, imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence and the apex of the mind or *synderesis scintilla*. We have these inner steps placed inside us by nature, deformed by [original] sin, reformed by grace. They must be purged by justice, trained by knowledge and perfected by wisdom.

As in his *Commentary* and in the writings of his masters, *synderesis scintilla* is a naturally endowed capacity (*vis* or *potentia*) of the soul, although its functioning has been damaged by the Fall. Bonaventure has in the *Itinerarium* departed from Philip’s synthesis of *synderesis* as a habit and power, by calling it only a power. The fact that he adds *scintilla* to *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium* speaks in favour of him being influenced by Gallus. However, Bonaventure retains Jerome’s idea in the *Itinerarium*, that *synderesis* was not extinguished by sin, but that it had been damaged.²⁶ It is worthwhile to call to mind that this need is there from the very beginning, in Bonaventure’s insistence that one cannot rise up from the fallen

²⁴ *Brev.* p. 2. c. 11.

²⁵ *Itin.* 1.6.

²⁶ *Itin.* 1.6. Cf. *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q.2.

state without grace. What is most noteworthy, however, is that *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium* is now treated entirely separately from any discussion of conscience or morals, unlike what we saw in the *Commentary* and the *Breviloquium*.

Conscience is not mentioned in any way in relation to *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium*. Whereas earlier, in the *Commentary* and *Breviloquium*, *synderesis* was concerned with God and neighbour, in the moral sense, it is now only concerned with God in a spiritual and mystical sense, since it only comes into play at the very end of the *Itinerarium*, where the theme of *excessus mentis* and God as *summum bonum*, dominate.

Apart from the addition of *scintilla*, Bonaventure also equates *synderesis* with *apex mentis*, the apex of the mind, in the *Itinerarium*. This is another term we find in the works of Gallus, together with *synderesis* and *synderesis scintilla*.²⁷ For Gallus, the apex of the mind is the tip, which can pierce through the chasm between God and creation.²⁸ The word *mens* has been used both for soul and for the highest principal aspect of it (the other two being *animalitas/sensualitas* and *spiritus*), under which *synderesis* is categorised.²⁹ *Synderesis* now operates at a higher level than the previous five powers, *sensus*, *imaginatio*, *ratio*, *intellectus*

²⁷ *Explanatio*, p. 869. “Formantes intellectuale ipsorum”, scilicet summum et intimum mentis apicem qui dicitur synderesis’ (“Shaping the intellectual part of them” that is, the highest and innermost top of the mind, which is called synderesis’.)

²⁸ Lawell, *Ne de ineffabili*, p. 168.

²⁹ *Itin.* 1.4. ‘Secundum hunc triplicem progressum mens monstra tres habet aspectus principales. Unus est ad corporalia exteriora, secundum quem vocatur animalitas seu sensualitas; alius intra se et in se, secundum quem dicitur spiritus; tertius supra se, secundum quem dicitur mens’ (‘According to this threefold progress, our mind has three main aspects. One pertains to the exterior and corporeal, wherefore it is called *animalitas* or *sensualitas*, another pertains to what is inside the soul, and within it, wherefore it is called *spiritus*, the third pertains to what is above it, wherefore it is called *mens*’).

and *intelligentia*. Its position above all rational and cognitive powers reflects the idea in the scholastic discussions of *synderesis* that it is ‘natural’, i.e., intuitive and non-deliberative. In the seventh chapter of the *Itinerarium* where the ecstasy of the soul is described, Bonaventure uses another term, *apex affectus*. This was interpreted by Henry Duméry as ‘la plus haute puissance de l’âme, la plus unitive (...) Il renvoie à la source indivise de l’espri, en deçà de la différenciation des fonctions spirituelles’ (‘The highest power of the soul, the most unitive... It refers to the undivided source of the spirit, above the differentiation of the spiritual functions’).³⁰ Duméry thus places *apex affectus* at a higher level than the six powers of the soul and would thus suggest that there is a seventh. One way of solving this problem is to look at how Gallus uses *synderesis* and if he uses any synonyms. Lawell’s study of Gallus’ vocabulary shows us that not only was *synderesis scintilla* more or less interchangeable with *apex mentis*, but also with the term *apex affectionis*, of which we may consider *apex affectus* a variation.³¹ The term *apex affectionis*, or very similar forms are more common than *apex mentis* in Gallus’ *Explanatio*, particularly the commentary on *De divinis nominibus*.³² This also means that desire in its affective meaning becomes the highest point of the soul. Indeed, desire is for Bonaventure both the beginning and the end of the journey to God.³³

³⁰ H. Duméry, *Itineraire de l’Esprit vers Dieu. Introduction, traduction et notes* (Paris, 1960), p. 103 n. 3.

³¹ Lawell, ‘*Ne de ineffabili*’, pp. 167-174, see especially p. 169. For examples in Gallus, see for instance *Explanatio*, pp. 5, 13, and pp. 771-772.

³² See for instance, *Explanatio*, pp. 5, 154, 238, 240, 371, 483, 786, 869.

³³ Cf. *Itin.*, prol. 3, ‘Non enim dispositus est aliquo modo ad contemplationes divinas, quae ad mentales ducunt excessus, nisi cum Daniele sit *vir desideriorum*.’ (‘He is not prepared in any way for the divine contemplations which lead to the mental ecstasies unless he like Daniel is “a man of desires”’.)

In other words, the *Itinerarium* presents *synderesis* as the highest capacity of the soul, which operates at the end of the text as the power uniting the soul to God, or as Gallus would put it, is *unibilis spiritui divino*.³⁴ The imagery of fire dominates the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*, which is the level of the Seraphim (traditionally interpreted as ‘fiery’ by Jerome and the *Glossa*), where *synderesis* is ‘ignited’ and emits its spark and allows the soul to transcend itself in ecstasy.³⁵ The soul is inclined towards God, but for the final act of *excessus mentis*, it needs help.

Si autem quaeras, quomodo haec fiant, interroga gratiam, non doctrinam; desiderium, non intellectum; gemitum orationis, non studium lectionis; sponsum, non magistrum; Deum, non hominem; caliginem, non claritatem; non lucem sed ignem totaliter inflammantem et in Deum excessivis unctionibus et ardentissimis affectionibus transferentem.³⁶

If you wonder how this is to be brought about, ask grace, not doctrine; desire, not the intellect; the groan of prayer, not devotion to reading; the groom, not the teacher; God, not man; the darkness, not clarity; not light, but the fire which completely inflames and transfers you into God by means of the ecstatic unctions and the most ardent affections.

Here, at the end of the soul's pilgrimage, it is God's fire (‘ignem totaliter inflammantem’) which ignites *synderesis* so that it sparks and allows the soul to transcend itself. *Synderesis* thus only emits its spark, *synderesis scintilla*, when it is acted upon. As was pointed out earlier in this chapter, at the core of Gallus’

³⁴ Thomas Gallus, *Super Mystica Theologia*, p. 4.

³⁵ *Glossa ordinaria*, iii, p. 13. Jerome, *S. Eusebii Hireonymi Stridonensis presbyteri commentariorum in Abacuc prophetam libri duo*, ii, PL, xxv, 1309. Regarding the Seraph as ‘fiery’, see also Hugh of St. Victor, *Commentariorum in hierarchiam coelestem s. Dionysii Areopagitae secundum interpretationem Joannis Scoti ad Ludovicum regem Francorum, filium Ludovici grossi*, vi, PL, clxxv, 1125.

³⁶ *Itin.* 7.6.

notion of *synderesis* was the idea that it is ‘activated’ by contact with God, like the anvil that is struck by the hammer and emits sparks. *Synderesis* and its spark thus represents both human and divine action. The idea mentioned previously, that *synderesis* is both active and passive, echoes to some extent what Bernard of Clairvaux in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs* said about the kiss of the bride: the soul cannot know God, but God stoops down to the level of humanity to impart a kiss; in this kiss, God is known because he is loved.³⁷ It is also worth noticing that Bonaventure makes use of the language of the *Song of Songs* in this quotation (‘sponsum, non magistrum’) giving further emphasis to the affective nature of the mystical experience.

4.2. A Synthesis of Thoughts

It is possible to see traces of Bonaventure’s previous scholastic notions of *synderesis* at work in the *Itinerarium*. According to the first chapter, the six stages of the mind’s journey to God correlate to the six faculties of the soul, leading up to the seventh step.³⁸ But in the sixth chapter, Bonaventure tells the reader to lift the eye of *intelligentia* to see the goodness of God.³⁹ By contemplating God as the highest good, *summum bonum*, the mind may come to understand God as a Trinity. So it is following this contemplation of God as the highest good that

³⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, in *SBO*, i, p. 41. ‘Felix tamen osculum, per quod non solum agnoscitur Deus, sed diligitur Pater, qui nequaquam plene cognoscitur nisi cum perfecte diligitur’ (‘Oh joyful kiss, by which God is not only known, but the Father is being loved, who is never fully known except when he is perfectly loved’).

³⁸ *Itin.*, 1.6.

³⁹ *Itin.*, 6.1. See McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)* (New York, 1998), p. 107, for a diagram that reflects this relation between the chapters and the powers of the soul.

synderesis comes into play and emits its spark. While Bonaventure's previous notion of *synderesis* was first and foremost concerned with moral good and inclined the soul towards that, one must not play off moral and supernatural good against one another, but rather see them in an analogous sense. The *intelligentia* of the soul has grasped God's goodness and now the soul can act upon it, *synderesis* can incline the soul toward God. Since *synderesis scintilla* and *intelligentia* are grouped together under the principal aspect of the soul Bonaventure calls *mens*, it would seem logical to see the sixth chapter and the seventh in a continuum — consideration of the good will eventually lead to the action of *synderesis*.

Bonaventure's new development of *synderesis* also seems to be in line with his argument in the *Commentary* (echoing Alexander of Hales) that the soul must have a point of contact with the light of illumination sent forth from God. *Synderesis* functions here as that contact point between God, 'who lives in an inaccessible light' and the contemplative soul.⁴⁰ Since the levels of the *Itinerarium* corresponding to the powers of of reason (*ratio*, chapter three), intellect (*intellectus*, chapter four) and intelligence (*intelligentia*, chapters five and six) have been transcended, we find in chapter seven a mode of reasoning which is not subject to rational scrutiny, but builds upon and, as in Gallus, surpasses it.⁴¹ The scholastic form of reasoning which we find in the previous chapters is not present in the seventh, reflecting the suprarational activity of *synderesis*. This is a point we will return to later when examining the linguistic aspects of the seventh chapter.

⁴⁰ Cf. I Tim. vi. 16.

⁴¹ Cf. *Explanatio*, pp. 4-5.

The idea, proposed in Bonaventure's *Commentary*, that *synderesis* first and foremost belongs to affect, has explanatory value in showing how he could transfer the concept from its moral-theological context into an affective mystical force of union.⁴² We shall therefore turn to the concept of goodness as the object of *synderesis* in the *Commentary* and compare it with how goodness and *synderesis* operate in the *Itinerarium*.

4.3. Case Study: *Synderesis* and the *Bonum Honestum*

Can we be certain that a change actually did occur between the completion of the *Commentary* and the *Itinerarium*? A recent doctoral dissertation from Harvard University has laid more emphasis on the continuity of Bonaventure's concept of *synderesis* between the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the *Itinerarium*. Its author, Robert Davis, goes into impressive depth to bring out all the nuances of Bonaventure's thought on *synderesis* in distinction 39 of the second book of his *Commentary*. His aim is to discuss Bonaventure's vocabulary of affect and to see how it is put to work in the *Itinerarium* and the *Legenda s. Francisci*. In discussing Gallus' use of the term, Davis rejects Lawell's insistence that one must distinguish between the use of *synderesis* in ethics and the use of it among the mystics. Instead, he claims, *synderesis* as placed above *ratio* and as capable of union with God resonates both in the *Commentary* and the *Itinerarium*.⁴³ He makes this point by arguing that the point of Bonaventure's *Commentary* and of the *Sentences* by Peter Lombard was to restore humanity's lost rectitude,

⁴² Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 39 a. 2. q. 1. resp.

⁴³ Davis, 'Force of Union', pp. 43-44. Cf. Lawell, '*Ne de ineffabili*', p. 153.

understood in both moral and metaphysical senses – humanity has fallen into sin and can no longer look upwards to God, a theme which returns in the *Itinerarium*.⁴⁴ The (re-) discovery of God is the goal of the *Sentences* and the *Commentary*, and regaining this rectitude, and eventually union, with God.⁴⁵ I would argue that whilst *synderesis* in the two texts exists on a continuum, a strong identification of the ethical aspect of *synderesis* with the connotation with mystical union it has in the *Itinerarium* is not sustainable for two main reasons.

Firstly, a too strong emphasis on continuity overlooks the change in terminology: from *synderesis* to the spark of *synderesis* (*synderesis scintilla*) which does not occur elsewhere in Bonaventure's writings. If there is no significant development of the concept between the *Commentary* and the *Itinerarium*, why change the terminology at all? It also overlooks the implications of the fact that Bonaventure makes *synderesis* synonymous with the concept *apex mentis*. This term is used only once and in passing in the *Commentary*, as a synonym to *superior portio rationis* used by the Church Fathers, but never as a synonym for *synderesis*, or in explicit relation to it or to conscience.⁴⁶

Secondly, and more importantly, I do not think it is possible to identify the *summum bonum*, towards which *synderesis scintilla* propels the soul in the

⁴⁴ *Itin.*, 1.7.

⁴⁵ Davis, 'Force of Union', pp. 44-52.

⁴⁶ *In II Sent.* d. 24 p. 2 a. 1 q. 1. 'Sed contra: a. Ieremiae 2, 16: *Filii Memphes et Taphnes constupraverunt te usque ad verticem*. Si ergo vertex, secundum quod Sancti exponunt, dicitur ibi apex mentis sive superior portio rationis, videtur quod et illa habeat per peccatum construari et foedari.' ('Moreover, the people of Memphis and Tahpanhes have broken the crown of your head.' [NRSV] If therefore the top of the head, following the exegesis of the Holy Fathers, is called the tip of the mind or the highest part of reason, it seems that this must be able to be crushed and defiled by sin').

Itinerarium, with the *bonum honestum* as the goal of *synderesis* in the *Commentary*. The key to understanding the difference in how *synderesis* operates in the *Commentary* and the *Itinerarium* respectively is in the proper object of its activity. In his *De officiis*, Cicero, who is used as the source of discussions on *honestum*, lists the many interpretations of *honestum* according to different philosophical schools. The Peripatetics, for instance called it the highest good (*summum bonum*), whereas the Stoics named it the only good (*solum bonum*).⁴⁷ We see the same equation of the *honestum* with the virtues in William of Conches' *Moralium dogma philosophorum* in the twelfth century.⁴⁸ Augustine drew a parallel between the difference between *bonum honestum* and *bonum utile* on the one hand, and what is to be enjoyed for its own sake (*frui*) and what is to be used (*uti*) on the other. Augustine argued that everything in this world has an instrumental value; it may be used (*uti*) to reach that which alone may be enjoyed (*frui*) for its own sake – God. *Honestum*, Augustine says, following Cicero, is what is to be sought after for its own sake but Augustine's further definition of *honestum* is of particular interest:

Honestatem voco intelligibilem pulchritudinem, quam spiritualem nos proprie dicimus; utilitatem autem, divinam providentiam. Quapropter, quanquam sint multa pulchra visibilia, quae minus proprie honesta appellantur; ipsa tamen pulchritudo, ex qua pulchra sunt, quaecumque pulchra sunt, nullo modo est visibilis.⁴⁹

I call *honestum* an intelligible beauty, which we properly call 'spiritual'; we call *utile* the divine providence. For that reason, however many beautiful and visible things there are, which are not

⁴⁷ See for instance Cicero, *De officiis, De virtutibus*, ed. K. Atzert (Leipzig, 1923), *De officiis*, 3.2-3

⁴⁸ William of Conches, *Das Moraliun Dogma Philosophorum des Guillaume de Conches*, ed. J. Holmberg (Uppsala, 1929), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *S. Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi de diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus liber unus*, 1. 30. *PL*, xl, 19.

appropriately called *honestum*, the beauty itself, from which they draw their beauty is in no way visible.

While the term has a very clear association with the virtues and moral philosophy, the quotation from Augustine shows that *honestum* can be taken in a much more general and spiritual sense. It seems easy, like the Peripatetics in Cicero's account, to equate *bonum honestum* with *summum bonum*. Bonaventure's teacher John of La Rochelle, for instance, conflated the two terms in his *De divisione multiplici potentiarum animae*.⁵⁰ But this is clearly not how *bonum honestum* is understood in the *Commentary*. According to the *Commentary*, *synderesis* drives the soul to *bonum honestum*, and together with conscience, it has the natural law as its proper object.⁵¹ But one has to look to the first book of the *Commentary* to see how Bonaventure understands *bonum honestum*. Here, Bonaventure provides us with an important distinction, which we will be able to use in better understanding the discussion on *synderesis* in the second book. The first distinction of Peter Lombard's first book of the *Sentences*, and Bonaventure's *Commentary*, is devoted to Augustine's discussion of what may be used (*uti*) and what may be enjoyed (*frui*).⁵² Bonaventure generally agrees with Augustine's position that only God is supposed to be enjoyed (*frui*), but poses the question whether there are other things that may be enjoyed.⁵³ As an example of this, he paraphrases Cicero, who in the *De inventione* says that virtue is *honestum*, which

⁵⁰ John of La Rochelle, *Tractatus de divisione multiplici potentiarum animae*, ed. P. Michaud-Quantin (Paris, 1964), p. 98.

⁵¹ *In II Sent.* d. 39 a. 2 q. 1. resp. On the moral good as the object of the affection, see R. P. Prentice, *The Psychology of Love According to Bonaventure* (New York, 1957), pp. 49-54.

⁵² *I Sent.* d. 1 c. 2-3, *In I Sent.* d. 1 a. 1-3.

⁵³ *In I Sent.* d. 1 a. 3 q. 1-2.

by its own force pulls us towards it.⁵⁴ Bonaventure solves the question by posing two understandings of enjoyment (*frui*): one may enjoy something in its proper sense ('*proprie accepto frui*'), i.e., one may find delight and rest (*quietudo*) in it. One may also enjoy something in its general sense ('*communiter accepto frui*'), meaning that one may find delight but not the final rest of the soul in it.⁵⁵ One may thus enjoy some things in this world and not only see them as instruments, as long as one does not stay there, but continue on the pilgrimage towards God. With this distinction, Bonaventure moves on to answer the objections raised against the position that God alone may be enjoyed, the fourth of which is whether virtues should be enjoyed for their own sake. Bonaventure agrees with Cicero that the virtues are a *bonum honestum*, but once more he introduces a distinction: one may speak of *bonum honestum* as the pure good (*pure bonum*), and of the good in which the likeness (*similitudo*) to this pure good shines forth. Only the pure good, i.e., God, may be enjoyed in the proper sense of the word as a *bonum honestum*, but one may enjoy the goods of the virtues in the general sense of the word 'to enjoy'. Understood as resembling the goodness of God, the virtues have a certain beauty, by which they attract us towards them ('*habent pulchritudinem, qua nos delectant et alliciunt*').⁵⁶ This understanding of *honestum* as beauty resonates with

⁵⁴ *In I Sent.* d. 1 a. 3 q. 2 ad 4. Cf. Cicero, *Rhetorici libri duo qui vocantur de inventione*, ed. E. Ströbel (Leipzig), 1915, 2. 52: 'nam est quiddam, quod sua vi nos adliciat as sese, non emolumento captans aliquo, sed trahens sua dignitate, quod genus virtus, scientia, veritas. [...] nam, in primo genere quae sunt, honesta appellabuntur.' ('For there is something, which attracts us to itself by its own power, capturing us effortlessly, and which draws us to it by means of its own dignity, to which virtues, knowledge and truth belongs[...] for that which belongs to the first category shall be called noble [*honestum*]').

⁵⁵ *In I Sent.* d. 1 a. 3. q. 2 resp.

⁵⁶ *In I Sent.* d. 1 a. 3. q. 2. ad 4.

Augustine's discussion of the topic that was cited earlier, and shows that it is only by a subtle distinction that the conflation John of La Rochelle had made does not have to result in confusion. If one were to stay there, however, finding not only delight but also final rest, the virtues would lose their beauty, and also their function. Quoting Augustine, he says that when virtues refer only to themselves, they become prideful and puffed up.⁵⁷ The spiritual goods of the virtues are thus to be enjoyed, with delight, but without finding one's final rest from the spiritual pilgrimage — that can only happen in God.

Having thus established how Bonaventure thinks of *bonum honestum*, we may now apply this to his discussion of *synderesis*. It is quite clear that *bonum honestum*, as it is dictated and outlined by the conscience, and to which *synderesis* attracts the soul, can only be understood in the second sense of the word – as having a likeness to the pure good, and in which it is permissible to feel delight but no rest. The object of *synderesis* thus stands in analogy to God, but it is not God, and therefore *synderesis* cannot have a unitive function in the *Commentary*.

By understanding how *bonum honestum* and *synderesis* relate to each other in the *Commentary*, one can easily see how Bonaventure developed his thought. In this context, Gallus' suggestion that *synderesis* is the unitive force lies close at hand. One must only shift the focus from *bonum honestum* as a likeness of the pure good to the highest good. When that happens, *synderesis* becomes, as Gallus says in his third commentary on the Song of Songs using its cognate term *scintilla*

⁵⁷ *In I Sent.* d. 1 a. 3 q. 2. ad 4. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 19. 25, (ii, p. 696).

apicis affectualis, a participation in the highest goodness.⁵⁸ But *synderesis* can only be so in potency in the *Commentary*; it remains within the sphere of ethics.

It is noteworthy that the obvious difference between the use of *synderesis* and *synderesis scintilla* in Bonaventure has very often passed unnoticed by scholarship.⁵⁹ For instance, one of the great Bonaventure scholars, Jacques-Guy Bougerol, conflates the two meanings of *synderesis* in his *Lexique Saint Bonaventure*. In the article on *synderesis*, Bougerol treats it merely as the moral appetite for the good.⁶⁰ In the article on *apex mentis*, he elaborates on this point: ‘Sommet de l’esprit ou “synderesis scintilla”. C’est la puissance de l’âme, la come d’où s’lance le passage mystique vers l’union. C’est la conscience ou pods naturel ou graveté de l’âme qui l’attire vers le bien et éloigne du mal: la syndérèse est ce qui pousse au bien’. (‘The tip of the spirit, or *synderesis scintilla*. It is the power of the soul, the highest point from which it launches into the mystic journey towards union. It is the conscience, or the natural weight, or the gravity of the soul, which draws it towards the good and distances it from the bad. *Synderesis* is that which drives it towards the good’).⁶¹ In this article, *synderesis* is associated with the *apex mentis* as the mystical power of the soul, but at the same time, it is described as a motivation to do what is good. By first identifying *apex mentis* and *synderesis* with each other, through the *Itinerarium*, he then reads the moral

⁵⁸ Thomas Gallus, *Commentaire*, p. 120.

⁵⁹ For examples of where this difference has been noticed, see for instance the most recent case in Lawell, ‘*Ne de ineffabili*’, p. 153. Solignac’s discussion of *synderesis* is divided into two parts: *synderesis* as it was used in scholastic texts and *synderesis* in mysticism. Solignac, ‘Synderesis’, in *DS*, xiv, p. 1407-12. Bonaventure’s dependence on Gallus in the *Itinerarium* has been noticed before, see e.g. Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p. 122.

⁶⁰ J.-G. Bougerol, *Lexique Saint Bonaventure* (Paris, 1969), p. 125.

⁶¹ Bougerol, *Lexique*, p. 19.

connotations of *synderesis* in the early Bonaventure into the term *apex mentis*, which is used only once in the *Commentary*, and never in relation to *synderesis*.⁶² The result is an anachronism. This conflation of terms and meanings can only occur under the presumption that *synderesis* in the *Commentary* and the *Itinerarium* are the same and by letting the overall stability of Bonaventure's thought overshadow the smaller, but significant, changes he makes to his concepts.

4.4. Further Indications of an Influence from Gallus

Lawell's very detailed study of the spiritual vocabulary of Thomas Gallus shows that he used the term *apex mentis* in a mystical context, and that there was a great fluidity between it and *synderesis scintilla*, as well as other terms such as *apex affectionis*. All concepts refer to a peak of the affection for Gallus (*apex* can mean the peak of anything, e.g., *apex intelligentiae*) and are nearly interchangeable.⁶³ This 'affective' understanding of *synderesis*, and the synonymity with *apex mentis* in the *Itinerarium*, make it possible to understand the change in terminology in chapter seven of the *Itinerarium*, where Bonaventure says: 'In hoc autem transitu, si sit perfectus, oportet quod relinquuntur omnes intellectuales operationes, et apex affectus totus transferatur et transformetur in Deum' ('In this transition, if it is to be perfect, it is necessary that all the intellectual operations are left behind and the entire summit of the affect is turned and transformed towards God'). The

⁶² *In II Sent.* d. 24 p. 2 a. 1 q. 1 ad 1. It is worth noticing here that in his response to this objection, he does not even use the term. Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 24 p. 2. a. 1 q. 1. ad 1.

⁶³ Lawell, '*Ne de ineffabili*', pp. 169-70.

apex affectus — strikingly similar to Gallus’ *apex affectionis* – is, I believe, more of a nuance and clarification of *synderesis* than an introduction of a different concept, as Duméry would have it.⁶⁴

Interestingly, Lawell points to the possibility that Richard of St. Victor may have influenced Gallus to develop the notion of *apex mentis* in terms of mountain imagery, with the important difference that Richard emphasises the *intelligentia*. ‘Mons magnus et altus, [sc. est] plena cognitio rationalis spiritus. Omnium mundanarum scientiarum cacumina mons iste transcendit, omnem philosophiam, omnem mundi scientiam ab alto despicit’ (‘The high and great mountain is the full knowledge of the rational spirit. This mountain transcends all the heights of worldly knowledge, and looks down upon all philosophy, and all knowledge of the world.’) The mountain imagery, he points out, was common in early medieval monastic literature.⁶⁵ The *apex mentis*, and therefore also *synderesis scintilla*, would in this case be beyond ‘omnem philosophiam, omnem mundi scientiam’ as a supra-rational faculty. In his third commentary on the Song of Songs, Gallus expounds on the use of Mount Carmel in the Song (Cant. vii. 5 ‘Caput tuum ut Carmelus’ — ‘Your head is like Mount Carmel’). The head is thought to represent the order of Seraphim, because it is the highest part of the body, and receives and distributes nourishment to the rest of the body. Likewise, the head is compared to Carmel, because it, too, is high and fruitful and provides goods to those below. This place alone, Gallus ends, contains *synderesis*.⁶⁶ This identification of the

⁶⁴ Cf. Duméry, *L’Itinéraire*, p. 103, n. 3.

⁶⁵ Lawell, ‘*Ne de ineffabili*’, p. 177. Cf. J. Leclercq, *Études sur le vocabulaire monastique du moyen âge* (Rome, 1961), pp. 91-3.

⁶⁶ Lawell, ‘*Ne de ineffabili*’, p. 159. Thomas Gallus, *Commentaire*, pp. 218-219. ‘CAPUT TUUM UT CARMELUS, [...] Carmelus ergo, propter eminentiam et

highest point of the body, the mind, the top of the mountain and *synderesis* gives a very interesting nuance to the topography of the *Itinerarium*. We may call to mind that Bonaventure's meditation on Francis' vision takes place at the same mountain, La Verna, where the saint received the stigmata. The heights of contemplation achieved with the saint is here associated with the place and *synderesis*.

What adds to the likelihood of an influence from Gallus is the fact, pointed out by Lawell, that there is a marked similarity between the *Itinerarium* and Gallus' *Spectacula contemplationis*.⁶⁷ The ascent of the mind to God in six steps is here nearly identical to the *Itinerarium*, albeit shorter. Like Bonaventure's way of seeing God *extra se*, *intra se* and *supra se*, Gallus envisions it with the similar terms *in imaginatione*, *in ratione* and *in intellectu*, which is developed into six steps.⁶⁸ Most important of the similarities is the notion of the hierarchised soul, following the angelic hierarchy, which shall be analysed in greater detail in next chapter. This is not conclusive evidence, as it is possible that both Gallus and Bonaventure independently drew inspiration from Richard of St. Victor who was the first to imagine the journey in six steps — an elaboration of Hugh of St. Victor's three-step model in *De tribus diebus*.

ubertatem et nominis interpretationem dicitur, quia omnibus aliis ordinibus eminentior est et de eius plenitudine omnes accipiunt, et solus retinet synderesis scintillam.' 'YOUR HEAD IS LIKE MOUNT CARMEL[...] "Carmel", therefore, because of its eminence and fertility and the interpretation of the name, because it is more eminent than all other orders, and all other orders receive from its abundance, and this place alone retains the spark of *synderesis*.'

⁶⁷ Lawell, *Spectacula contemplationis*, pp. 249-285.

⁶⁸ Lawell, *Spectacula contemplationis*, p. 257.

On a closer examination of Gallus' work, one may also notice the recurring triad of *natura - industria - gratia*. We find this triad once more in the *Itinerarium*, applied similarly to the ascent of the soul, but it cannot be found in the *Commentary*, adding further to the likelihood of an appropriation of Gallus' interpretation of *synderesis* later in the 1250s.⁶⁹

But if *synderesis scintilla* has taken on a unitive force instead of an ethical one, it must relate to that good which may not only be enjoyed with delight, but also in which the mind finally comes to rest from its long pilgrimage, as outlined in the *Commentary*. If that is so, *synderesis* cannot relate only to the sixth chapter, as Bonaventure outlined in the introduction, but must carry over into the final chapter, where it unites, delights and gives the soul its longed-for peace. It cannot only stand in relation to the *summum bonum* of chapter 6, but it must be drawn towards it and united with it, which is the topic of the seventh chapter. Here, I think Davis is entirely correct in describing *synderesis* as a motion, as something which acts, but also is acted on, not entirely different from Bernard of Clairvaux's notion of *amor*.⁷⁰ As outlined in the previous sections, *synderesis scintilla* must not only grasp the goodness of God, but also see his goodness and beauty – 'quae nos delectant et alliciunt' ('by which he delights and attracts us'), as he put it in the *Commentary*.⁷¹ This means that *synderesis scintilla* cannot be confined to one chapter, which is also confirmed by the affinity between its synonym *apex mentis* and the *apex affectus*, which appears in the seventh chapter.

⁶⁹ The term *industria* - the only with a less general meaning - occurs only twice in the *Commentary*, and only with regard to whether or not one sins actively and consciously. See *In II Sent.*, d. 32 dub. 2. and *In II Sent.* d. 43 a. 2 q. 1.

⁷⁰ See for instance Davis, 'Force of Union', pp. 43, 60, 72.

⁷¹ *In I Sent.*, d. 1 a. 3 q. 2 ad 4.

What we have seen so far are the many indications that something has happened to Bonaventure's understanding of *synderesis*. It seems to be clear that a development took place at some point during his career. But when and where did this development take place, and was this something that lasted?

4.5. When and Where did Bonaventure Develop *Synderesis*?

Between the *Commentary* around 1252, and the *Breviloquium* in 1257, there is no evidence of a substantial change in Bonaventure's notion of *synderesis*. But in the two years that led up to the writing of the *Itinerarium*, his first two as Minister General, we see a significant change. The *Breviloquium* and the *Itinerarium* thus give us a rough *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* of Bonaventure's reconsideration of *synderesis*. During these two years, it is reasonable to assume that Bonaventure appropriated the thought of Gallus, because of the development of *synderesis* to *synderesis* with the new function that comes with it. But where did he encounter the texts of Gallus? There are two main candidates: Paris and Vercelli. The Franciscans had established a *studium generale* in Vercelli in north-western Italy in 1228, and there seem to have been good relations between the Victorines and the Franciscans there.⁷² Timothy Johnson's recent article on the

⁷² On the Franciscans and Victorines in Padua, see G. Théry, 'Saint Antoine de Padoue et Thomas Gallus', *La Vie Spirituelle Supplément*, 37 (1933), pp. 94-115; J. Châtillon 'Saint Anthony of Padua and the Victorines', *Greyfriars Review*, 8 (1994), pp. 347-80. A third, but a bit more unlikely influence is one of Francis' original companion Giles of Assisi (d. 1262), who also was close to Gallus. A possible influence from Gallus can be seen in ch. 13 of the *Dicta Beati Aegidii Assisiensis*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (Quaracchi, 1939), pp. 48-50, and was first observed by G. Théry, 'Thomas Gallus et Egide d'Assise. Le traité "De septem gradibus contemplationis"', *Revue Néoscholastique de Philosophie*, 36 (1934), pp. 180-90.

historical circumstances of the prologue to the *Itinerarium* gives us some very important information on Bonaventure's movements before and after his visit to La Verna and builds on Bougerol's dating of Bonaventure's *sermones de tempore*. Based on Bonaventure's sermons, we can deduce that between his election as Minister General on 2 February 1257 in Rome and the composition of the *Itinerarium*, he travelled between France and Italy at least twice, with Vercelli situated on the way between. Johnson notes that the sermons place him back in Paris on 6 January 1258, i.e., a year after his election in Rome, and Rouen for Christmas the same year. In 1259, we see him in Saint-Omer in July and on 27 July in Arras in Northern France. About two months later, he began to think out and write the *Itinerarium* at Mount La Verna in Italy.⁷³ Considering the distance, Bonaventure must have been constantly on the move, on foot, in August and September. He then at some point turned north again, and stayed in Provence and Languedoc over the winter and spring, before the general chapter of Narbonne in May 1260, where he was commissioned to write the new *vita* for Francis, the *Legenda s. Francisci* (more commonly known as the *Legenda maior*). It is possible that Bonaventure, as Minister General, spent time in Vercelli, on his journeys on foot between the provinces, to keep himself up to date on the state of

⁷³ T. Johnson 'Prologue as Pilgrimage, Bonaventure as Spiritual Cartographer', *Miscellanea Francescana*, 106-7 (2006-7), pp. 445-464, at pp. 455-6. On the dating of Bonaventure's sermons, see Bonaventure, *Sermons de tempore*, ed. J.-G. Bougerol (2 vols., Paris 1990), pp. 435-8. On the theme of 'journey' and the place of the *Itinerarium* in this context, see also L. J. Bowman 'Itinerarium; The Shape of the Metaphor', in *Itinerarium: The Idea of Journey, A Collection of Papers Given at the Fifteenth International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan*, Leonard J. Bowman (ed.) (Salzburg, 1983), pp. 3-33.

one of the Franciscan *studia*, and that he became more acquainted there with the writings and thoughts of Gallus, whose writing career was based in Vercelli.

It is also possible that Bonaventure appropriated Gallus' use of *synderesis* while in France, most likely in Paris, during 1258, the year after completing the *Breviloquium*.⁷⁴ We know that the Franciscans in Paris were not wholly unfamiliar with the works of Gallus, since they had a version, now lost, of Gallus' *Extractio* written in 1238. It is a paraphrase of the Dionysian corpus, which Bougerol characterises as 'ni un commentaire, ni un nouveau texte' ('neither a commentary, nor a new text').⁷⁵ Bougerol points out that the *Extractio* relies on John Saracen's translation of pseudo-Denys that had undergone some correction in the version owned by the Franciscans in Paris. This text seems to have been in the convent before Bonaventure, since Alexander of Hales used it — as did Bonaventure in his last text *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*.⁷⁶ Although we find a term cognate to that of *synderesis* — *summus affectionis apex* — the *Extractio* cannot be the link for the transmission of Gallus' interpretation of *synderesis* to Bonaventure, since the term does not occur in this text.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the *Extractio* shows us that, as in Vercelli, there were affinities between the

⁷⁴ As Johnson points out, following Bougerol, Bonaventure seems to have opted for staying in Paris during the winters to dedicate himself to preaching and writing. Johnson 'Prologue as Pilgrimage', p. 449, Cf. Bonaventure, *Sermons de tempore*, p. 22.

⁷⁵ J.-G. Bougerol, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Bonaventure* (Tournai, 1961), p. 80.

⁷⁶ Bougerol, *Introduction*, p. 80.

⁷⁷ For the term *summus affectionis apex*, see, Thomas Gallus, *Extractio*, in *Dionysiaca: recueil donnant l'ensemble des traductions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'aréopage, et synopse marquant la valeur de citations presque innombrables allant seules depuis trop longtemps*, ed. P. Chevalier (2 vols., Paris, 1937), i, p. 696.

Franciscans and Victorines. This impression is strengthened by the letters of Adam Marsh, which shows that he sent commentaries on works of pseudo-Denys, and asked for Gallus' *Explanatio* on the *Mystica theologia* and *De angelica hierarchia* in 1242-1243. Some of his last letters show that he was also in contact with Bonaventure in 1259.⁷⁸ We do not have the full correspondence between Marsh and Bonaventure, but it is a possibility that Bonaventure was inspired to read Gallus by their mutual acquaintance.

If Paris is the place where Bonaventure encountered the concept, the Victorine library is the most likely candidate, as they are the most likely to have had copies of their *confrère*. However, no text of Gallus survives from there that contains the term *synderesis*.⁷⁹

4.6. Why did Bonaventure Develop and then Abandon *Synderesis*?

But a development from *synderesis* to *synderesis scintilla* in the late 1250s is not necessarily wholly straightforward. In his mystical treatise *De triplici via*, written around the same time as the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure uses the term *synderesis* together with conscience to discuss the purgation of the soul and does so by imitating court procedure.

In huiusmodi autem meditatione tota anima debet esse intenta, et hoc secundum omnes vires suas, scilicet secundum rationem, *synderesim*, conscientiam et voluntatem. Nam in huiusmodi meditatione ratio percunctando offert propositionem, synderesis sentendiando profert definitionem, conscientia testificando infert conclusionem, voluntas

⁷⁸ Adam Marsh, Letters 87, 166, 167, in *The Letters of Adam Marsh*, ed. C. H. Lawrence, (2 vols., Oxford, 2006-2010) i, pp. 218- 22, ii, pp. 396-400.

⁷⁹ *Le catalogue de la bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Saint Victor de Paris de Claude de Grandrue 1514*, ed. Véronika Gerz-von Buren, Raymond Hubschmid, and Catherine Regnier (Paris, 1983), p. 30.

praeeligendo defert solutionem. Verbi gratia, si quis velit meditari circa viam purgativam, debet ratio quaerere, quid debeat fieri de homine, qui templum Dei violaverit; synderesis respondet, quod aut debet disperdi, aut laments poenitentiae purgari; conscientia assumit: Tu es ille: ergo vel oportet te damnari, vel poenitentiae stimulis affligi; deinde voluntas praeeligit, scilicet, quia recusat damnationem aeternam, assumit voluntarie poenitentiae lamenta.⁸⁰

In this form of meditation, it is necessary that the whole soul is attentive and that it is so with regard to all its powers, that is, reason, synderesis, conscience and the will. For in this form of meditation, by earnest inquiry, reason offers a problem, by discernment, synderesis provides the possible solutions, by testifying, conscience brings the conclusion, and, by choosing, the will introduces the solution. For instance: if someone wishes to meditate on the purgative way, reason must ask what is to happen to the person who has violated the temple of God, synderesis answers that he must either die or be purged by the tears of penance. Conscience accepts that “you are that person” therefore you must either be damned or be scourged by the goads of penance: thereafter the will chooses, that is, because it is unwilling to accept eternal damnation, it takes upon itself the laments of voluntary penance.

The function of *synderesis* here is somewhat different from that of the *Commentary*. Here, it gives the potential solutions to a moral problem, but lacks the affective, motive, force it had in Bonaventure’s moral thinking in the *Commentary*. *Synderesis* is here also fundamentally different from the mystical interpretation of *synderesis*, and that is in a text that, like the *Itinerarium*, is a guide to meditation and contemplation written around the same time. In *De triplici via*, *synderesis* defines the alternative answers to a proposition, but does not have a prominent role in the text as a whole.

What makes *De triplici via* so interesting in comparison with the *Itinerarium* is the differences one can see between two almost contemporaneous spiritual texts. Both are written sometime between 1259 and 1260, but are directed to different

⁸⁰ Bonaventure, *De triplici via*, in *Opera*, viii, 1. 19.

audiences: *Itinerarium* is written primarily with a Franciscan audience in mind, whereas *De triplici via* addresses an unnamed or hypothetical individual, a *tu*, whom the context defines as an ordained minister, possibly even a bishop or pope. One passage addresses a person who dispenses doctrine, indulgences, and the Eucharist (indulgences were the prerogative of the papacy, but were delegated to bishops and priests to some degree).⁸¹ *De triplici via* also uses the pseudo-Dionysian *via negativa*, but it does not have the rhetorical bravura we see at the end of the *Itinerarium*. Furthermore, it does not mention Francis and the stigmata, which sets it further apart from the *Itinerarium*, despite other similarities that one can observe.

The date of composition of *De triplici via* and its use of *synderesis* should cause us to pause and question the stability of these concepts. *Synderesis* does not have the function we see in the *Itinerarium*, leaving us with two options: either there was an even more drastic shift, in a matter of months, in changing the concept from *synderesis* as we see it in *De triplici via* to *synderesis scintilla*, or Bonaventure used *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium*, only to move on to the definition we see in *De triplici via*. It is also interesting to note that *synderesis* only appears one more time, in one of the *Sermones de tempore*, noted down by Bonaventure's

⁸¹ Cf. Bonaventure, *De triplici via*, 1.12. 'per quam te fecit dispensatorem doctrinae, dispensatorem indulgentiae et dispensatorem eucharistiae; in quibus omnibus secundum plus et minus dispensantur verba vitae' ('by which he has made you a dispenser of his doctrine, a dispenser of his indulgence, and a dispenser of the Eucharist, all in which, to greater and lesser extents, the words of life are being dispensed'). On indulgences in the Middle Ages, see e.g., Jan van Herwaarden, *Between St. James and Erasmus: Studies in Late-Medieval Religious Life: Devotion and Pilgrimage in the Netherlands* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 86-122.

companion, Marco de Montefeltro and dated to either 1253 or 1269.⁸²

Bonaventure uses the image of a rainbow for meditating on the incarnation. The rainbow touches both heaven and earth, he says. With two feet, the rainbow touches the earth, while its top (*vertex*) touches heaven.

Sic Christus natus in terra ut viator elevatur in caelum, ut comprehensor et spiritu et carne calcabat mundum et synderesi habitabat caelum.⁸³

Likewise, Christ was born on Earth as one travelling through life and was raised into heaven. As the one embracing everything, he walked the earth in spirit and flesh, and through *synderesis* he inhabited heaven.

Here, *synderesis* is applied to Christ who in spirit and flesh walks the earth, but inhabits the heavens through *synderesis*. The triad *carnis*, *spiritus* and *synderesis* is here not wholly unlike Bonaventure's division of the soul (*mens*), into *animalitas seu sensualitas*, *spiritus* and *mens*, from which the six powers derive, the last of which is *synderesis*. It is the *vertex*, which pierces through to heaven, and is therefore very similar to *apex mentis*. The way *synderesis* is applied here is obviously in its mystical function, whereby one 'inhabits heaven', i.e., in a way similar to how *synderesis* functions in the *Itinerarium*, but not how *synderesis* functions in the *Commentary*, the *Breviloquium* or *De triplici via*. It is only similar to these three in form, but not in function. After this instance in the last quotation, there is no more explicit mention of *synderesis* or *synderesis scintilla* again, not even in Bonaventure's most famous mystical treatise after the

⁸² Bonaventure, *Sancti Bonaventurae sermones de tempore*, ed. J.-G. Bougerol (Paris, 1988), p. 145

⁸³ Bonaventure, *Sermones de tempore*, p. 145.

Itinerarium: the Collationes in Hexaëmeron.⁸⁴ The *Collationes* were a set of lectures held in the spring of 1273, for the Franciscans in Paris, to counter the threat from the Averroist faction, and a mystical text, where Bonaventure could very well have used *synderesis*, but chose not to.

One reason why Bonaventure dropped the term could be that it had too many theoretical and academic connotations that did not entirely suit his new mission as Minister General. This would explain why this last instance of *synderesis* comes up where it does: in a sermon for the Franciscan convent in Paris, who would have no problem relating to what he talked about. This model could explain the occurrences in the *Itinerarium* and *De triplici via*, as last attempts at integrating his advanced scholastic vocabulary into the new genre he had to use as Minister General. It does not explain, however, why *synderesis* is absent from the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* in 1273. Given the topic and the setting, Bonaventure could have used *synderesis* in the *Collationes* to express his mysticism, but did not do so, in spite of his references to Gallus in that text.

What we see here, then, is an experimenting with concepts where they acquire new meanings in each text. Bonaventure seems to be trying out a new way of

⁸⁴ There are only two oblique references that can be found: *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, in *Opera*, v, *visio* 2. coll. 2.4' Si ergo illa animalia volantia alas suas demittunt cum audiunt modicam vocem quomodo ergo nos audiemus tonitruum si scintillam vix apprehendimus'; ('If those flying animals spread their wings when they hear a faint sound, how shall we hear the thunder, if we barely can hear the spark?'). and Bonaventure, *Sancti Bonaventurae sermones dominicales*, ed. J.-G. Bougerol (Grottaferrata, 1977), *Sermo* 22. 13: 'O deus si modica scintilla de illo torrente tantae dulcedinis dilapsa et distillata menti humanae ita perfecte inebriat quid erit quando anima totaliter absorbebitur et inebriabitur in illo pelago infinitae felicitatis'. ('Oh, God, if only a tiny spark would fall from that torrent of such great love and make its way into the human mind so that it becomes completely inebriated, what shall it then be when the mind is completely absorbed and inebriated in that ocean of infinite joy').

thinking and writing, suitable for his new role as Minister General, but at the same time compatible with his scholastic background. Bonaventure could simply have appropriated Gallus' notion of *synderesis* in a text and context where it seemed appropriate, only to change it on other occasions.

Interestingly, the waning of the term *synderesis* in Bonaventure's writing follows a pattern similar to what we see in Thomas Aquinas during the 1260s. While *synderesis* as a term once held quite a prominent position in his thinking, it became less and less important for Thomas after his *Quaestiones disputatae* of 1257-1259.⁸⁵ It remains, even in the *Summa theologiae*, but occupies a much smaller space, and always in relation to morals. But while Aquinas' discussion of *synderesis* remains within the context of moral psychology, Bonaventure manages to apply it in areas where Aquinas never ventured. To some extent, this decreasing interest on the part of Aquinas and Bonaventure's experimentation can be explained by the fact that both as young academics had to comment on the thirty-ninth distinction of Lombard's first book of the *Sentences* in light of later scholastic discussion of this distinction. When this task had been fulfilled, they were not bound in the same way to discuss it. In addition, in the case of Aquinas, Crowe argues that Aquinas' growing scepticism regarding the Augustinian theory of illumination and his increasing use of Aristotle's empirically based ethics may have played a part in the diminished use of the term *synderesis* in the *Summa*.⁸⁶ 'But', Crowe continues, 'if *synderesis* were better abandoned as a term, the underlying reality need not necessarily be renounced.'⁸⁷ Aquinas' discussion of

⁸⁵ Crowe, 'The Term *Synderesis*', pp. 242-243.

⁸⁶ Crowe, 'The Term *Synderesis*', pp. 244-5.

⁸⁷ Crowe, 'The Term *Synderesis*', p. 245.

natural law in particular, Crowe argues, allowed him to continue using what *synderesis* had previously signified without using a term associated with an epistemological theory he had increasingly distanced himself from.⁸⁸

Holding the highest office of the Franciscan order, constantly occupied with the administration of a growing and increasingly fragmented order, and always being on the move apparently did not stop Bonaventure from reevaluating his ideas. Rather, his new stage in life may have given him the possibility of thinking beyond the confines of academia and his old teachers.

It is thus possible not only to say that Bonaventure changed his mind substantially on some matters, but also when and possibly where. What we see, then, is a more nuanced and dynamic Bonaventure, someone whose thought is not so static after all.

5. Case study: *Synderesis Scintilla* and the Ineffability Topos

So far, this chapter has tried to demonstrate the development of *synderesis scintilla* in the *Itinerarium*, and show that it is thought to be a supra-rational and affective capacity. The remainder of this chapter will briefly investigate how this works on a more practical level in looking at how the function of *synderesis* is reflected in Bonaventure's language. I will therefore show how *synderesis* is linked to Bonaventure's apophaticism in the seventh chapter. This part of the *Itinerarium* directly concerns the ineffability topos. Instead of only analysing the ineffability topos as a literary device, I will treat it as closely linked to *synderesis*, and therefore as historically contingent.

⁸⁸ Crowe, 'The Term *Synderesis*', p. 245.

In the *Itinerarium*, there is a difference between what can be called Bonaventure's scholastic style and his higher, rhetorical style. The former is used when describing the world as created and organised by God. It is characterised by precision, a predictable syntactic structure and didacticism. At the end of the first chapter of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure contemplates the testimony of the world to God's power, wisdom and goodness. It is a systematic treatment of the qualities of the world (such as order, multitude and beauty), each receiving a definition, introduced by *secundum*, and each quality in turn being related to God's power, wisdom and goodness. Here, Bonaventure relies upon his scientific/scholastic terminology and the treatment is directed at the intellect, not the heart.⁸⁹

The scholastic style predominates throughout the *Itinerarium*, but the higher style can be found at some points in the text, especially at the end of some of the chapters, for instance at the end of chapter one as an appeal to the reader to move on on the journey.⁹⁰ In contrast to this, the higher style which he starts to employ fully in the seventh chapter involves the use of antithesis, anaphora, alliteration, assonance and prose rhythm together with a more hypotactic structure. At the end of the *Itinerarium*, when the contemplative soul has considered the physical world and its principles, the soul, and the concept of God, all that remains is mystical ecstasy. When Bonaventure arrives at the encounter with God, he uses the higher style:

Quoniam igitur ad hoc nihil potest natura, modicum potest industria,
parum est dandum inquisitioni, et multum unctioni; parum dandum est
linguae, et plurimum internae laetitiae; parum dandum est verbo et
scripto, et totum Dei dono, scilicet Spiritui sancto; parum aut nihil

⁸⁹ *Itin.*, 1.14

⁹⁰ See e.g. *Itin.*, prol. 4 and 1.15.

dandum est creaturae, et totum creatrici essentiae, Patri et Filio et Spiritui sancto.⁹¹

Since nature is of no help in this regard, and effort only little, little importance should be given to inquiry, and much to unction; little importance should be given to the tongue, and much more to inner joy; little importance should be given to word and script, and all to God's gift, that is, the Holy Spirit; little or no importance should be given to creation, and all to the creative being, that is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Compared to the other parts of the *Itinerarium*, there is a considerable shift in style here, since Bonaventure has drawn close to what cannot be described. At this point, the author is at pains, and in conflict with the limits of language, to represent the mystical experience.⁹² The paragraph is constructed in pairs beginning with *parum est dandum* and *et totum/plurimum*. Each pair has a rhyme between the antithetical concepts (*inquisitioni-unctioni, linguae-laetitiae, verbo/scripto-dono, creaturae-creatrici essentiae*), which creates a stronger emphasis on the difference between this world and the divine. The first three pairs balance the workings of the intellect and the charismatic gifts of the Spirit.

There is also an arrangement that leads up to a climax, beginning with *parum est dandum* and *et multum*, which goes over to *plurimum* and ends with two pairs where *totum* is used. The final part of this arrangement has an even stronger emphasis, with *parum aut nihil* and *et totum*. At this point, his use of antithesis is also very strong, with *creatura*e on the one hand and *creatrici essentiae, Patri et*

⁹¹ *Itin.* 7. 5

⁹² One should use the term 'experience' with great caution here. As Denys Turner has pointed out, medieval apophatic mysticism did not think of experience in our modern psychological understanding as 'feeling' or 'emotion'. It is rather the absence of feelings and emotions that is the true apophatic experience. Cf. Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God*, p. 4.

Filio et Spiritui sancto on the other. The command to leave the words and fully commit oneself to the Spirit resonates with Gallus' notion of *synderesis* as *unibilis spiritui divino*, where *synderesis* reaches the point beyond language and unites to its proper object. The contrast and the climax are emphasised with the use of anaphora, with *parum* on the first side of the construction, while the other part changes from *multum* to *plurimum* and *totum*. This use of antithesis (with slight variation) can also be found shortly thereafter, which also emphasises the need for divine help.⁹³ The movement from the worldly to the otherworldly here reflects the movement of *synderesis* which begins in the soul, but reaches its fulfilment beyond itself.

In the final paragraph of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure abandons the use of antithesis and turns to crescendo before he is forced to fall silent. Beginning with a quotation from Ex. xxxiii:20 'Non videbit me homo et vivet' ('No man shall see me and live'), the *Itinerarium* ends thus:

Moriamur igitur et ingrediamur in caliginem, imponamus silentium sollicitudinibus, concupiscentiis et phantasmatis; transeamus cum Christo crucifixo ex hoc mundo ad Patrem [Jn. xiii. 1], ut, ostenso nobis Patre, dicamus cum Philippo: Sufficit nobis [Jn. xiv. 8]; audiamus cum Paulo: Sufficit tibi gratia mea [II Cor. xii. 9]; exsulemus cum David dicentes: Defecit caro mea et cor meum, Deus cordis mei et pars mea Deus in aeternum [Ps. lxxii.26]. Benedictus Dominus in aeternum, et dicet omnis populus: Fiat Fiat [Ps. cv. 48]. Amen.⁹⁴

Let us die, then, and enter into the darkness, let us impose silence upon all our unrest, desires and phantasms. Let us go with the

⁹³ *Itin.* 7.6.

⁹⁴ *Itin.* 7.6. The theme of a mystical death of contemplation returns later in brother Leo's *Vita* of Giles of Assisi, one of Francis' earliest companions, (written between 1261 and 1270), who said that while he once shared Francis' vision of a martyr's death in Tunisia, he instead opted for the 'death of contemplation'. *Vita beati fratris Egidii in Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli, sociorum S. Francisci*, ed. Rosalind B. Brooke (Oxford 1990), pp. 304-49, at p. 346. Cf. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 77.

crucified Christ 'from this world to the Father' so that, when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip 'We are satisfied'; so that we may hear with Paul 'My grace is enough for you'; so that we may exult with David and say 'My flesh and heart fail me, you are the God of my heart and God is my inheritance forever. Blessed be the Lord forever, and all the people will say: May it be, may it be. Amen'.

This passage is based upon an arrangement that reaches a climax, going from *transeamus* to *exultemus*, followed by a quotation from the Psalter – a typical end of medieval texts and sermons.⁹⁵ It is possible that this quotation signifies a change from the words of the world and that of human beings to the words of the Spirit. The journey of the soul has at this point reached its end and the soul must enter the realm where ordinary language is incapable of expressing the experience of the soul. Instead, the words given by the Holy Spirit in the Psalter are used to represent the interior response of the contemplative soul as it is drawn into the life of God. Bonaventure has thus gone from word and script (*verbo et scripto*) to give all to God's gift: the Holy Spirit (*Dei dono, scilicet Spiritui sancto*). Bonaventure has also stopped giving attention to intellectual investigation (since *synderesis* transcends that), and given all his attention to the unction (the charismatic gift of God), left the world behind and devoted himself entirely to God the creator. The paragraph based upon antithesis quoted earlier is thus not only an exhortation to the reader, but something the author follows at the end of his text when he abandons human language.

The references to the Biblical authors should not only be seen as textual references: all the authors are also inhabitants of the sacred realm, into which the contemplative now moves. By ending with the Psalter's words of praise, he lets

⁹⁵ Ps. lxxii (lxxiii). 26; cv. (cvi). 48.

the voice of the contemplative join in a symbolic way the choir of heaven in singing God's praise.

Bonaventure's antithetical constructions lead over to the prayer formulated by pseudo-Denys in the *Mystica Theologia*, which is characterised by paradox. The quotation is a conscious attempt to be incomprehensible. It contains contradictory terms such as *caligo superlucens* (supershining darkness) and *silentium docens* (instructive silence), meant to point to God's complete incomprehensibility and the end of language.⁹⁶ It therefore points forward to the end, where Bonaventure calls the reader to impose silence on all solitudes, concupiscence and imaginings, and to enter the darkness instead, i.e., allow *synderesis scintilla* to operate and not the efforts of the mind.⁹⁷ The fact that Bonaventure quotes pseudo-Denys after the antithetical crescendo analysed in the previous section, shows that the rational order of the world has now been left behind. Shortly after this quotation, Bonaventure says that if one wonders how one should ascend from the world to God, one must ask for grace, not doctrine, desire, not intellect, etc.⁹⁸ Once again there is an antithetical opposition between this world and God, which frames the pseudo-Dionysian quotation. This emphasises once more that the language of paradox does not correspond to the world and the rational capacities of the human soul, but is situated above them, mirroring the fact that *synderesis* moves beyond rationality. The emphasis on grace for this step also resonates with what has been said so far about *synderesis*, that it is both active and passive, reaching out to the *summum bonum* and receiving.

⁹⁶ *Itin.* 7.5. Cf. pseudo-Denys, *M.T.*, 997.

⁹⁷ Cf. *Itin.*, 7.6.

⁹⁸ *Itin.*, 7.6.

In my view, it is Bonaventure's development of the concept of *synderesis* which ultimately accounts for the presence of pseudo-Denys' prayer to the Trinity at the end of the *Itinerarium*. In a recent book on Bonaventure, Dillard describes the prayer of pseudo-Denys as the description of the fulfilment of contemplation after the soul has come to 'a Christocentric comprehension of the Trinity'. Ewert Cousins interprets the passage within the framework of the coincidence of opposites, a term he has borrowed from the later mystic Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). Cousins argues that chapters five and six of the *Itinerarium* explore the coincidence of opposites in the description of God, leading over to the coincidence of opposites that is Christ incarnate, the God-man – a paradox that leads over to the quotation from pseudo-Denys.⁹⁹ As is clear from this chapter, I agree in general with the reading of the seventh chapter of the *Itinerarium* as a continuation of the contemplation of Christ in chapter six. What these interpretations overlook, however, is how the final chapter relates to *synderesis* as a desire for the highest good (i.e., God and God's manifestation in Christ) and how the soul is drawn into an ecstasy that transcends the other powers of the soul (and ultimately *synderesis* itself as it emits its spark) and also the power of description. The prayer of pseudo-Denys is not a description of God as much as a mimetic representation of the inner process of the mind at the final step, beyond discourse. This prayer foreshadows the linguistic breakdown of the *Itinerarium*, when Bonaventure must surrender and become silent.

⁹⁹ Peter S. Dillard, *A Way into Scholasticism: A Companion to St. Bonaventure's The Soul's Journey into God* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 164. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, pp. 108-9.

6. Conclusion.

This chapter set out to explain what others have noted in passing: that Bonaventure appropriated Gallus' mystical notion of *synderesis scintilla* and integrated this into his previous reflections on the moral-theological concept of *synderesis*. This is likely to have happened between 1257 and 1260, i.e., following his elevation to Minister General of the Franciscan order which meant that the focus of his intellectual activity had changed. But Bonaventure did not simply take over an idea. I have shown here how *synderesis scintilla* relates to his previous, moral-psychological, understanding of *synderesis*, by analysing how *synderesis* relates to the noble good (*bonum honestum*) in the *Commentary* and how *synderesis scintilla* relates to *summum bonum* in the *Itinerarium*. We thus see at the same time a radical shift and continuity. Ideas do not float around in the air but take concrete form in, and are transmitted through, conversations and books. In the history of ideas, it is often tempting to construct a causal link between two ideas, without accounting for the historical and material circumstances of the transmission of an idea. I have pointed to Vercelli and Paris as the most likely places where Bonaventure appropriated Gallus' use of *synderesis*, but conclusive evidence is lacking.

Synderesis scintilla functions in the *Itinerarium* as a unitive force, i.e., it brings about the mystical union that is the purpose of the text. As such, *synderesis* and its spark also underpin the ineffability topos of the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*. It therefore also shows how a concept related to theology and philosophy interacts with the literary forms of expression particular to the mystical genre.

If there is something this chapter has hoped to demonstrate it is that concepts are not always stable, not even among the scholastics. Such interpretations are also tempting for the historian of ideas in trying to explain the 'thought' of a

certain person. Very shortly after the *Itinerarium*, we see the term *synderesis* come up again, in the mystical treatise *De triplici via*, but now in a moral-psychological function that does not correspond to its previous uses in the *Commentary* or the *Breviloquium*. What we see here, then, is a highly fluid concept, the meaning of which cannot be grasped by only looking at its definition, but also to see how it functions in the intellectual, theological and political context of the *Itinerarium*, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Four. The Function of *Synderesis* in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*

1. Introduction

As the previous chapter showed, the concept of *synderesis* is intimately connected with how Bonaventure conceptualises the mystical union with God in the *Itinerarium* and its link to the apophatic discourse. The *Itinerarium* is, however, not only a statement of the soul's journey to God in general, but of *Francis'* journey to mystical union. Bonaventure describes in the prologue how he sat down at Mount La Verna to contemplate the mind's journey to God, when suddenly he came to think of the miracle of Francis' reception of the stigmata.¹ Bonaventure is thus signalling that Francis offers a particular and concrete way of seeking union with God. This way ended in Francis' case with his reception of the stigmata. Because Bonaventure assumes that *synderesis* is an innate power and present in all humans, it is implied that Francis' way to mystical ecstasy involves the operation of *synderesis* and is a way that can be travelled by every human being. The *Itinerarium* gives us a unique insight into how such an abstract concept as *synderesis* functioned, and it is therefore necessary to focus on the *Itinerarium* and the themes to which *synderesis* relates.

I intend to show how *synderesis* relates to the theme of microcosmism, and to the concept of the highest good (*summum bonum*) which we encountered first in the previous chapter. These seemingly disparate themes come together in Francis

¹ *Itin.*, prol. 2.

and his body that has been transformed through the operation of *synderesis*. Francis' stigmata become a visible sign of the mystical union brought about by *synderesis*. In discussing the stigmata, it is important to situate Francis and his miraculously transformed body in the context of the intense criticism the Franciscan order and the cult of Francis faced in the thirteenth century, as well as in the Joachite apocalyptic interpretations of Francis. Many followers of Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202), particularly Franciscans, believed that the world was drawing near its end and that a new age, the age of the Spirit, would begin in 1260 and that Francis was the herald of this new age.

Bonaventure wrote the *Itinerarium* in only a few years after the secular masters of Paris had launched a ferocious attack on the mendicants and their way of living. Producing a coherent vision of who Francis was and how he came to receive the stigmata was crucial to Bonaventure's early years as Minister General, and this need is a key to understanding how *synderesis* operates in the *Itinerarium*. For the first time in Franciscan literature, Bonaventure outlines a spiritual psychology that made it possible for his contemporaries to understand how such an extraordinary event came about.

The mendicant controversy and the Joachite movement are topics that could easily be expanded into a dissertation in its own right. The purpose of this chapter is, however, not to be an exhaustive description of these topics, but to show how *synderesis* operates in the historical context of the *Itinerarium*.

2. Microcosm and Macrocosm

Apart from telling about the journey to mystical union with God, the *Itinerarium* also tells the story of how humanity, the microcosm, gradually unites itself to and reflects the macrocosm. Previous scholarship has to some extent studied the theme

of microcosmism in Bonaventure's work, but has largely overlooked how this concept functions throughout the *Itinerarium*.² Bonaventure only mentions the *minor mundus* once, in chapter two, but I would like to argue that the idea runs thematically through the entire text, up to the point where *synderesis* unites the soul with God. This puts *synderesis* at the pinnacle of a process which it brings to completion. The union with God in the *Itinerarium* is from this perspective not only a question of individual experience, but of restoring humanity, albeit briefly, to the state where there is harmony between microcosm and macrocosm. This section will first describe the first stages in which microcosm and macrocosm come to relate to each other, ending with a description of how this theme relates to *synderesis* at the end of the *Itinerarium*. Bonaventure builds up a set of correspondences throughout the *Itinerarium*, where *synderesis*, the highest point of the soul, corresponds to the highest point in the celestial hierarchy, the Seraphim. But *synderesis* also transcends this hierarchy when it reaches that stage when it is 'activated' by grace and emits its spark, *synderesis scintilla*. As the soul is united to God, it briefly imitates Christ, which in the case of Francis resulted in his stigmata.

Denys Turner points out that the *Itinerarium* relies heavily on two traditions, the Augustinian focus on the interior life of the soul, and on the hierarchized world-view of pseudo-Denys. Bonaventure approached these two traditions mainly through the lens of Hugh of St. Victor. In humanity's prelapsarian state, humanity could 'read' the book of Creation, i.e., it was able to see God's

² See in particular J. McEvoy, 'Microcosm and Macrocosm in the Writings of Bonaventure', in Collegium S. Bonaventurae (ed.), *S. Bonaventura 1274-1974* (5 vols., Grottaferrata, 1973-1974), ii. pp. 309-43.

reflection (*simulacra*) in the world through three ‘eyes’: the eye of the flesh perceived the created world as God’s vestiges, the eye of reason, which observed the soul as God’s image; and the eye of contemplation through which the soul could see God in and above itself. This triad forms the three main steps of the *Itinerarium*: the first two chapters considers God in the world (*extra se*), the second pair considers God in the soul (*in se*) and the third pair considers the concepts of God as Good and One (*supra se*). Bonaventure has elaborated somewhat on Hugh’s scheme by introducing the terms *vestigia*, *imago* and *similitudo* – vestiges of God are to be found in the world, his image in the rational soul and his likeness in the souls that have been reformed by grace and restored to their godlikeness.³ These three main steps are in turn divided into seeing God through (*per*) and in (*in*) the object considered. God can thus be seen through the world and *in* the world (chapters one and two), or through his image in the soul, or in the reformed soul (chapters three and four).⁴

Because of sin, however, humanity is not able to read the book of Creation. It has become blinded and is unable to see God’s splendor. In Bonaventure’s words:

Secundum enim primam naturae institutionem creatus fuit homo habilis ad contemplationis quietem, et ideo posuit eum Deus in paradiso deliciarum. Sed avertens se a vero lumine ad commutabile bonum, incurvatus est ipse per culpam propriam, et totum genus suum per originale peccatum, quod dupliciter infecit humanam naturam, scilicet ignorantia mentem et concupiscentia carnem; ita quod excaecatus homo et incurvatus in tenebris sedet et caeli lumen non videt nisi succurrat gratia cum iustitia contra concupiscentiam, et scientia cum sapientia contra ignorantiam.⁵

³ Turner, *The Darkness of God*, pp. 102-8.

⁴ *Itin.*, 1.5.

⁵ *Itin.*, 1.7. Hugh of St. Victor uses a similar image in his introduction to *De archa Noe*, but does not link it to the notion of micro- and macrocosm. See Hugh of St. Victor, *Hugonis de Sancto Victore De archa Noe; Libellus de formatione arche*, ed. P. Sicard, CCCM 176, 176A (2 vols., Turnhout, 2001), i, pp. 4-5.

According to the creation of our first nature, [the first] man was created oriented towards the peace of contemplation, and therefore God put him in the paradise of delights. But turning himself away from the true light towards the changeable good, he was turned in on himself by his own sin, and his entire race with him through Original Sin, which infects human nature in a two-fold way, that is, the mind through ignorance, and the flesh by concupiscence. Thus humanity became blinded and turned in on itself and sits in darkness and does not see the light of the heavens unless grace comes to its aid with justice against concupiscence, and knowledge with wisdom against ignorance.

Because of ignorance and concupiscence, humanity has become blinded to God. Humanity is curved in on itself in its sinful selfishness, and cannot see the skies. It is preoccupied with the *commutabile bonum*, as opposed to the highest good (*summum bonum*) that is God. This idea resonates with twelfth-century humanism and Classical thought. It was commonly believed in the neo-Platonic movement of the twelfth century that humanity as microcosm had lost touch with the true model for its existence — the macrocosm. By raising one's gaze to the stars and by observing the laws of nature guiding the perfect motions of the celestial bodies, it was believed that humanity could begin to regain the state it once had before the Fall.⁶ In fact, Bonaventure correlates the six days of the creation of the macrocosm to the six steps of the soul to God, where it finds its Sabbath rest (*sabbatum quietis*).⁷ Both God's act of creation and humanity's quest for God end up at the same state: rest, *quies*. The seventh step corresponds in this

⁶ See for instance Plato, *The Timaeus of Plato*, ed. R. D. Archer-Hind (London, 1888), 47 b-c.

⁷ *Itin.*, 1.5: '[...] ut, sicut Deus sex diebus perfecit universum mundum et in septimo requievit; sic minor mundus sex gradibus illuminationum sibi succedentium ad quietem contemplationis ordinatissime perducatur' ('so that, just as God perfected the entire world in six days and rested on the seventh, so the microcosm is led in a most orderly fashion along six steps of succeeding illuminations to the rest of contemplation').

scheme to the seventh day in which the new and redeemed pilgrim, exemplified by Francis, finds its peace with God and achieves the Edenic state that was once lost.

This description of the human condition is placed in the first chapter, at the very beginning of the mind's journey into God, and forms a dramatic antithesis to the exulting soul at the end of the journey. *Homo incurvatus in se*, sitting in the darkness of his self-chosen exile, is the radical opposite of the illuminated soul stretching out toward its creator. *Synderesis*, and the scintillation brought about by God, functions as the opposite of this broken state. As the tip of the mind (*apex mentis*) it stands at the intersection of the terrestrial and celestial realms. A vestige of Bonaventure's moral psychology can be found here in the terms describing the soul sitting in darkness, ignorance and concupiscence through which it has become blinded are quite similar to the blindness (*tenebra obcaecationis*) and lasciviousness and delight (*lascivia delectationis*) mentioned in the *Commentary* as the factors that can disable *synderesis*.⁸

Taken more precisely, however, the microcosmism of the *Itinerarium* draws from the idea that the human being, taken in its totality, constitutes an overlap between the world of angels (because it has intellect) and the physical world (through the body). It is, as Turner notes, because of these two properties that humans are capable of reading the book of Creation, of seeing God's message through the symbols he has left in the world. But the relation between microcosm and macrocosm is also predicated on the Aristotelian notion that the soul in some way is all things, that is to say, that by coming to know an object, the soul

⁸ *In II Sent.* d. 39 a. 2 q. 2 resp.

becomes the object in a manner of speaking. This is particularly true of the second chapter of the *Itinerarium*.⁹ Taken as a whole, Turner points out, the human being thus represents everything, from the lowest in terms of matter (the four elements) to the highest point, ‘at the summit of the human *mens*, the intellectual capacity which exists in pure form in the angels.’¹⁰

The subject of the fourth chapter of the *Itinerarium* is how the human soul, reformed through grace, can interiorise the angelic hierarchy, to become an *anima hierarchizata*. As Turner points out, Bonaventure has evidently borrowed this theme from Gallus.¹¹ This chapter follows the consideration in the third chapter of seeing God through the soul as his image (*per imaginem suam*). But the soul, distracted by worries, sense images and concupiscence (*sollicitudines, phantasmata, concupiscentiae*), cannot enter itself. Once more, it lies down in desperation, unable to enter into itself as the image of God.¹² It is only through the infused theological graces of faith, hope and charity that the soul may enter itself and there ‘find delight in the Lord within itself’ (‘et in se delectetur in Domino’), Bonaventure argues.¹³ When this happens, the soul regains the five spiritual senses by which it perceives Christ, as the Bride sees the Bridegroom in the *Song of Songs*.¹⁴ When the soul delights in the spiritual sensation of Christ and through this comes into a form of ecstasy, it becomes ‘hierarchised’, i.e., by its conformity

⁹ Turner, *Darkness of God*, pp. 119-20.

¹⁰ Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 121.

¹¹ Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 122.

¹² *Itin.*, 4. 1. Ideo totaliter in his sensibilibus iacens, non potest ad se tanquam ad Dei imaginem reintrare ‘It lies down in the world of the senses so completely that it cannot come in to itself as to the image of God.’ Notice that these are the same mental objects Bonaventure urges the reader to silence in chapter 7. 6.

¹³ *Itin.*, 4.2.

¹⁴ *Itin.*, 4.3.

to the Heavenly Jerusalem it is ready to (in the following chapters) ascend towards it.¹⁵ This hierarchisation, Bonaventure argues, arranges the soul in a way that corresponds to the nine order of angels:

Sic etiam gradibus novem ordinum insignitur, dum ordinate in eo interius disponitur nuntiatio, dictatio, ductio, ordinatio, roboratio, imperatio, susceptio, revelatio, unctio, quae gradatim correspondent novem ordinibus Angelorum, ita quod primi trium praedictorum gradus respiciunt in mente humana naturam, tres sequentes industriam, et tres postremi gratiam. Quibus habitis, anima intrando in se ipsam, intrat in supernam Ierusalem, ubi ordines Angelorum considerans, videt in eis Deum, qui habitans in eis omnes eorum operatur operationes.¹⁶

Our spirit is thus adorned with nine levels, when it has within itself the following arranged: announcing, dictating, leading, ordering, strengthening, commanding, receiving, revealing, and anointing. These correspond to the nine orders of angels so that the first three of these levels in the human mind correspond to nature, the three following to industry, and the final three to grace. Having reached these levels, the soul by stepping into itself steps into the Heavenly Jerusalem, where it considers the order of angels and sees God in them, he who lives in them and works in all their operations.

The triad *natura-industria-gratia* is taken from Gallus, and underpins the three main stages of the soul's journey to God in the *Itinerarium*. The order of angels, with the Seraphim at the top has come to correlate to the way the reformed soul operates. The final concept that Bonaventure lists, *unctio*, corresponds to this highest level, the angels who were normally interpreted as *ardens* (fiery). The concept of *unctio* returns briefly in the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*, 'interroga [...] non lucem, sed ignem totaliter inflammantem et in Deum excessivis unctionibus transferentem.' ('ask [...] not for light but the fire that inflames totally and carries you into God with excessive unctions').¹⁷ This occurs at the place in

¹⁵ *Itin.*, 4.4.

¹⁶ *Itin.*, 4.4.

¹⁷ *Itin.*, 7.6.

the *Itinerarium* where *synderesis* would be ‘actuated’ by God’s grace and emit its spark. In other words: *synderesis* as the summit of the mind corresponds to the summit of the hierarchy of angels – the same kind of angel that Francis saw in his ecstasy at Mount La Verna when he received the stigmata. But the idea of a spark of *synderesis* implies a moment of transcendence, when it goes beyond the Seraphim to briefly unite with God.

In the final paragraph of the sixth chapter, that is to say, just before the *Itinerarium* begins to describe the state of ecstasy, Bonaventure begins to describe Christ in terms that resonates with the theme of microcosmism. Christ is here described as that which brings together the highest and the lowest (*summus et imus*) at the same time, the alpha and the omega, in whom human nature has been exalted and united to God. This final contemplation before chapter seven emphasises how the soul reaches the sixth step, compared to the sixth day, after which nothing else remains than the Sabbath day (*dies requiei*) when the mind finds its peace.¹⁸

We find here as the central theme Christ incarnated, the highest and the lowest, Creator and created. Christ, being God and the exemplary cause of all things created, is also part of matter, the lowest part of Creation. Although God technically stands above Creation, this theme resonates with the microcosmism that runs through the *Itinerarium*: the highest joins itself to the lowest.

As Christ united the highest and the lowest, so does now humanity, through the action of *synderesis*, bring heaven and earth together, albeit briefly and imperfectly. Through this event, humanity truly reaches that *quies*, or *pax*, as all

¹⁸ *Itin.*, 6. 7. We will return to this passage later in this chapter.

things come together. ‘Harmony’ appears to be the appropriate term for what is going on here. This harmony is emphasised even at the structural level of the text. The first four chapters of the *Itinerarium* concern the human soul and the world and the three last chapters concern God. In biblical and Christian numerology, the number four often signifies the world (e.g., the four winds, the four corners of the earth, the four cardinal virtues, the four humours, etc.) whereas the number three signifies God (e.g., the Trinity, the three theological virtues). Taken as a whole, the *Itinerarium* has seven chapters, excluding the prologue – the number of fulfilment and completion. The gradual convergence of micro- and macrocosm we see in the *Itinerarium*, which reaches its highest point in the union between God and the soul through *synderesis*, is emphasised through the very structure of the text. The soul has thus reached the antithesis of the fallen state described in the first chapter of the *Itinerarium*. No longer preoccupied with temporal goods (*commutabile bonum*) and turned in on itself (*incurvatus in se*), it has found the highest good.

Francis stands at the very centre of this intersection between micro- and macrocosm in the *Itinerarium*. Francis is stamped by the image of Christ who is the expressive likeness of the Father and the exemplary cause of the world. It is at this highest point of *excessus mentis* through *synderesis* that Francis quite literally becomes the image of God through the stigmata. It is therefore to Francis we now must turn, to Bonaventure’s example of how *synderesis* could unite the soul to God.

3. Francis and the Highest Good

3.1 The Highest Good and the Search for Peace

The union between the soul and God, and the coming together of micro- and macrocosm appears to bring about a state of completion, harmony, and peace.

This state also coincides with how Bonaventure relates *synderesis* to the notion of the highest good (*summum bonum*). The previous chapter began to describe the relation between Bonaventure's concept of *synderesis* and how it relates to the topic of the sixth chapter, which was God as the highest good. Chapters six and seven are arranged in such a way that the chapter dealing with the highest good immediately precedes that where *synderesis* becomes active. This, together with the fact that in the *Commentary*, the role of *synderesis* was to affectively attract the soul to the moral good (*bonum honestum*), seems to suggest that *synderesis* and the highest good relate to each other in the *Itinerarium*.

In the first distinction in the *Commentary*, Bonaventure discusses what is to be enjoyed (*frui*) and follows the distinctions Augustine made in *De doctrina christiana* and *De trinitate*.¹⁹ Enjoyment can be understood in the common sense as to using something with joy ('*frui est uti cum gaudio*').²⁰ In a second, and more proper sense, it can be understood as to clinging on to a certain thing out of love for it, for its own sake ('*frui est amore inhaerere alicui rei propter se ipsam*').²¹ Finally, paraphrasing Augustine, Bonaventure says that enjoyment can be understood as 'to wilfully find rest in those things that have been understood ('*frui*

¹⁹ *In I Sent.*, d. 1 a. 2 q. unica.

²⁰ Augustine, *De trinitate libri xv*, 10. c. 11. 17 (i, p. 330.)

²¹ Augustine, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De doctrina Christiana; De vera religione*, ed. Klaus- D. Daur and Josef Martin, *CCSL* 32 (Turnhout, 1962) 1. c. 4. 4. (p. 8.)

est quiescere in cognitis voluntate propter se delectata’). This final definition is the most appropriate, Bonaventure thinks, because it includes both rest (*quietatio*) and delight (*delectatio*).²²

As we saw previously, Bonaventure made a distinction between enjoyment (*fruitio*) of the moral good and that of the highest good. The moral good could be enjoyed in the common sense of the word (*communiter accepto frui*), with delight (*delectatio*) as long as one did not find the final rest of the soul there (*quietatio, requies*). Only when the soul attains the highest good can it find both peace and rest. Fittingly, the seventh chapter is suffused with the concept of peace – *requies* and *pax*, thus indicating that the soul has united with the highest good. In his heading for the chapter, Bonaventure writes ‘...in quo requies datur intellectui.’ (‘in which rest is granted to the intellect’).²³ In the first sentence we see a number of references to the concept of peace:

His igitur sex considerationibus excursis tanquam sex gradibus throni veri Salomonis, quibus pervenitur ad pacem, ubi verus pacificus in mente pacifica tanquam in interiori Hierosolyma requiescit [...] tanquam etiam sex diebus primis, in quibus mens exercitari habet, ut tandem perveniat ad sabbatum quietis.²⁴

Having gone through these six considerations, like the six steps to the throne of the true Solomon, by which one reaches the peace, where the truly peaceful man rests in a peaceful mind, as in an interior Jerusalem [...] and like during the first six days of Creation, in which the mind must be put to work so that it may reach the rest of the Sabbath.

Unlike the *Commentary*, the concept of peace (*pax*) has here replaced that of *quietatio*, whereas *requies* (or *quies*) remains. The reason for this is that the *Itinerarium* is written primarily for a Franciscan audience and likely refers to

²² *In I Sent.*, d. 1 a. 2. q. unica. Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate*, 10. c. 10. 13 (i, p. 327).

²³ *Itin.*, 7.

²⁴ *Itin.*, 7. 1.

Francis' famous greeting *pax et bonum* ('peace and goodness be with you').

Bonaventure builds up to this ending in the prologue where he writes that he prays that by the intercession of Mary and Francis, God may give him and his readers illumination

[...] ad dirigendos pedes nostros in viam pacis illius [Lk. i. 79], quae exsuperat omnem sensum [Phil. iv. 7]; quam pacem evangelizavit et dedit dominus noster Iesus Christus; cuius praedicationis repetitor fuit pater noster Franciscus, in omni sua praedicatione pacem in principio et in fine annuntians, in omni salutatione pacem optans, in omni contemplatione ad ecstaticam pacem suspirans, tanquam civis illius Ierusalem, de qua dicit vir ille pacis, qui cum his qui oderunt pacem erat pacificus [Ps. cxix. 7]: Rogate quae ad pacem sunt Ierusalem [Ps. cxxi. 6]. Sciebat enim, quod thronus Salomonis non erat nisi in pace, cum scriptum sit: In pace factus est locus eius, et habitatio eius in Sion [Ps. lxxv. 3].²⁵

[...] to direct our steps on the road of that peace which transcends all senses. That peace which Francis preached and which our Lord Jesus Christ gave [my peace I leave you my peace I give you]. Our father Francis repeated those words of Christ when he wished peace upon his listeners in the beginning and end of every homily, when he wished peace in every greeting, and in every moment of contemplation desired that ecstatic peace. In this he was like a citizen of that Jerusalem, about which that man of peace who was peaceful towards those who hated peace: ask for [...] For he knew that the throne of Solomon only stands in peace, because it is written: 'He has made peace his place, and his dwelling is in Zion'.

The focus on peace that can be seen in this prologue, especially the 'ecstatic peace', looks ahead to the seventh chapter and situates Bonaventure's concept of the highest good within a distinctly Franciscan context. Indeed, as if imitating Francis' homilies, peace is the dominating concept in the beginning and end. Bonaventure seeks peace in the quiet solitude of La Verna, and peace ends the text in the ecstatic vision of God. It is a peace that comes from leaving all intellectual

²⁵ *Itin.*, prolog. 1.

operations aside, and, in the words of the final paragraph of the *Itinerarium*, the pilgrim dies away and imposes silence on all solitudes, desires and phantasms.²⁶

The references here to Jerusalem point forward to chapter four in which Bonaventure describes how the Heavenly Jerusalem descends into the soul. In his references to Jerusalem in both quotations above Bonaventure alludes to Jerome's interpretation of the Hebrew, *visio pacis*, the vision of peace. Likewise, the presence of Solomon in both these quotations also refers back to Jerome's interpretation of the name as *pacificus*, peacemaker.²⁷

The concept of the highest good, as it is presented in the *Commentary*, also relates to the ineffability topos in the *Itinerarium*. Among the reasons why it is that the soul may only find delight and rest in the highest good, Bonaventure writes:

Et ratio huius est, quia nihil potest animam sufficienter finire nisi bonum, ad quod est. Hoc autem est bonum summum quod superius est anima, et bonum infinitum quod excedit animae vires. Cognitio enim animae naturalis est cognitio non arctata; unde nata est quodam modo omnia cognoscere, unde non impletur cognitio eius aliquo cognoscibili, nisi quod habet in se omnia cognoscibilia et quo cognito omnia cognoscuntur. Similiter affectio eius nata est diligere omne bonum; ergo nullo bono sufficienter finitur affectus, nisi quod est bonum onnis boni et quod est omnia in omnibus. De quo bono Exodi 33, 19 ostendam tibi omne bonum. Hoc autem est summum bonum.²⁸

The reason for this is that nothing can sufficiently satisfy the soul apart from the good, to which it is ordained. This [good], however, is the highest good which is superior to the soul, and an infinite goodness, which exceeds the powers of the soul. For the natural cognition of the soul is not restricted by anything, wherefore it is born to know all things in a manner of speaking, and wherefore its cognition is not fulfilled by anything knowable, apart from that which has in itself all knowable things. And when that thing has become

²⁶ *Itin.*, 7. 6.

²⁷ Jerome, *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis presbyteri, liber de nominibus hebraicis*, *PL*, xxiii, 829, 843, 853. On Jerusalem descending into the soul, see Chapter four, section 2.

²⁸ *In I Sent*, d. 1 a. 3. q. 2.

known, all things are known. Likewise, its affect is born to love all good things, therefore the affect is not sufficiently satisfied by any good thing apart from that which is the good of all good things and that which is all in all things. Of this good, Exodus xxxiii. 19 says 'I shall show you all good things'. This is, however, the highest good.

The soul will never find its fulfilment apart from that which is the highest good, which is the object of the affective power of the soul. Unless it obtains this, it will never be satisfied or have peace. In the *Itinerarium*, it should be pointed out, Bonaventure uses the term *apex affectus*, which in the terminology of Gallus is more or less synonymous with *apex mentis* and *synderesis*.²⁹ The longing for the highest good by the affect described in the *Commentary* thus finds its fulfilment in the *Itinerarium*'s description of the soul's ecstasy.

Declan Lawell has argued that the idea of a 'spark' of *synderesis* (*synderesis scintilla*) suggests that *synderesis* represents the human aspect of the mystical union – the soul strives towards God, but has to be actuated by the Other (God) for it to emit its spark. No effort (*industria*) can bring it to its full potential, only grace – an idea that is echoed at the end of the *Itinerarium*.³⁰ In the *Itinerarium* it appears that this movement begins when the soul has grasped the concept of God as the highest good through the power of the soul known as *intelligentia*. Once grasped, *synderesis* attracts the soul to it and it is actuated by God, whereupon it emits its spark and mystical union is achieved.

²⁹ Lawell, 'Ne de ineffabili' pp. 169-70. Cf. *Itin.*, 7. 4.

³⁰ Lawell, 'Ne de ineffabili', p. 155. Cf., *Itin.*, 7. 5.

3.2. Encountering Christ on the Holy Mountain

In the sixth chapter, Bonaventure describes the concept of goodness in general as that which is *diffusivum sui*, self-giving. It therefore follows, Bonaventure continues, that the highest good is that which is most self-giving: ‘sumum igitur bonum summe diffusivum est sui’ (the highest good is therefore that which is most self-diffusive’).³¹ From this concept, Bonaventure derives an argument for God as Trinity through the constant self-giving of each person. The chapter ends, however, with a consideration of Christ as the manifestation of God’s attributes. Christ’s presence in the final paragraphs of chapter six is hardly a surprise. Although not explicitly stated, God’s self-emptying, his *kenosis*, in Christ is for Bonaventure one of the main signs of his love. Christ crucified, in particular, manifests this love, where the highest becomes the lowest.

In the final paragraph of the sixth chapter, which was discussed above, Bonaventure discusses Christ in a way which not only resonates with the microcosmism of the *Itinerarium*, but also with his thought on Francis’ stigmata and *synderesis*.

In hac autem consideratione est perfectio illuminationis mentis, dum quasi in sexta die videt hominem factum ad imaginem Dei. Si enim imago est similitudo expressiva, dum mens nostra contemplatur in Christo Filio Dei, qui est imago Dei invisibilis per naturam, humanitatem nostram tam mirabiliter exaltatam, tam ineffabiliter unitam, videndo simul in unum primum et ultimum, sumum et imum, circumferentiam et centrum, alpha et omega, causatum et causam, Creatorem et creaturam, librum, scilicet scriptum intus *et* extra [Ez. ii. 9]; iam pervenit ad quandam rem perfectam, ut cum Deo ad perfectionem suarum illuminationum in sexto gradu quasi in sexta die perveniat, nec aliquid iam amplius restet nisi dies requiei, in qua

³¹ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, 7.2. The notion of goodness as *diffusivum sui* summarises the fourth chapter of the *Divine names*. Cf. pseudo-Denys, *De divinis nominibus*, PG, iii, 693-763.

per mentis excessum requiescat humanae mentis perspicacitas ab omni opere qui patrarat [Gen. ii. 2].³²

In this consideration is the perfection of the mind's illumination when, as if on the sixth day of Creation, it sees man made to the image of God. For if an image is the expressive likeness, when our mind contemplates in Christ the Son of God, who is the image of the invisible God by nature, our humanity so wonderfully exalted, so ineffably united, when at the same time it sees united the first and the last, the highest and the lowest, the circumference and the center, the Alpha and the Omega, the caused and the cause, the Creator and the creature, that is, 'the book that written within and without', it now reaches something perfect. It reaches the perfection of its illuminations on the sixth stage, as if with God on the sixth day of creation; nor does anything more remain except the day of rest on which through mystical ecstasy the mind's discernment comes to rest 'from all the work which it has done'.³³

It is after this that chapter seven begins and *synderesis* becomes active. This quotation with its emphasis of the paradox that is Christ incarnate aptly introduces the chapter where the ineffability topos dominates.

One concept which runs through this final paragraph of the sixth chapter is that of the sixth day of Creation.³⁴ The correlation between the sixth step and the sixth day of creation is no coincidence. In the first chapter of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure had compared the six-step journey to the six days in which God created the world and then rested. The Biblical analogies continue: the six steps leading to the throne of Solomon; God called to Moses after he had been in the fog for six days; Christ was transfigured in front of his disciples on a mountain after six days.³⁵ The six steps and the six days lead up to the revelation of God

³² *Itin.*, 6. 7.

³³ Trans. from *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (London, 1978), pp. 108-9.

³⁴ *Itin.*, 7. 5.

³⁵ *Itin.*, 1. 5.

accompanied with rest. As we saw in the previous chapter, the attainment of the highest good (*summum bonum*) was followed not only by delight, but by rest (*quietatio*).³⁶ Like Moses meeting God, and the disciples seeing Christ transformed, Francis had his divine encounter on the top of a mountain, the same mountain on which Bonaventure conceived of this text.³⁷ Francis' transformation signifies the completion of human nature and the fulfilment of its deepest desire for union with God. In doing so, it anticipates the new creation when humankind is restored to its pristine state, as it was on the sixth day of Creation, to which Bonaventure refers frequently in the *Itinerarium*, and which was the fervent hope of medieval microcosmism.

This ending of the sixth chapter suggests that the highest good is for Bonaventure not something faceless. The paradox that lies at the core of the Christian faith is here expressed in the most concise way, which points toward the ineffability topos of the seventh chapter. Christ here unites the highest and the lowest (*summum et imum*), as the one who becomes human through the incarnation, dies and descends into Hell. This is the reason the sixth chapter ends with Christ: he represents God's *kenosis*, his self-giving, to the fullest, and therefore God as the highest good and as the *summe diffusivum sui*. It is after this that the mind falls into ecstasy and desists from intellectual operations. The end of the sixth chapter therefore aptly introduces the next where *synderesis* becomes active. This arrangement can be seen at other instances in the *Itinerarium*, but this instance forms an interesting pattern with the ending of chapters five and seven. In

³⁶ Cf. *Itin.*, 1.4.

³⁷ In his 1255 sermon on Francis, he compares the saint to Moses. See Bonaventure, *De s. patre nostro Francisco sermo v*, in *Opera*, ix, p. 595.

the fifth chapter, Bonaventure introduces the next chapter by linking the concept of God as Being itself (*ipsum esse*) to the concept of goodness and that beatitude consists in seeing this goodness: '[...] quia omnipotens, omnisciens et omnimode bonum, quod perfecte videre est esse beatum, sicut dictum est Moysi: Ergo ostendam tibi omne bonum.' ('[...] because he is allmighty, all-knowing and in all manner of speaking good. To be blessed is to see him perfectly, according to what was said to Moses: 'I shall show you all that is good').³⁸ To have a perfect vision of that *omnimode bonum* is the beatitude to which the *Itinerarium* is meant to guide the reader. The quotation from Ex. xxxiii. 19 not only links chapter five to chapter six, but also to the final paragraph of the entire *Itinerarium*. Before Bonaventure builds up the end with his 'Moriatur igitur et ingrediamur in caliginem' ('Let us die then and enter the darkness'), he says that it is only possible to approach God through death (taken here metaphorically as death from the self and the world) and then quotes Ex. xxxiii. 20 'Non videbit me homo et vivet' ('No one shall see me and live'). That is to say, Bonaventure uses God's words to Moses to describe Francis' encounter with God on Mount La Verna. To approach the highest good and thus reach the fulfilment of all the desires of the soul implies a death from the self in imitation of Christ. As seen above, the reference to Ex. xxxiii. 19 is also used in the *Commentary* to describe God as the highest good in which all desire meets its fulfilment.³⁹ Like the disciples following Christ up to the mountain, and like Moses on Mount Sinai, the pilgrim soul has ascended the holy mountain of contemplation, La Verna, and comes face to face with that which is the highest good.

³⁸ *Itin.*, 5. 8.

³⁹ See section 3.1. of this chapter, and Chapter 2, section 4.3.

Francis achieved the highest union through *synderesis*, and the stigmata are not only the sign of his perfect *imitatio Christi*, in his active life, but also the exterior sign of the inner contemplative union with the highest good. Having seen Christ as Bonaventure describes him in chapter six, Francis was turned into his image through the stigmata. As Bonaventure says in his prologue, the ardent love of Christ had so absorbed the mind of Francis that it appeared in the flesh.⁴⁰ This love is linked here with that love which lifted Paul up to the third heaven and according to Bonaventure is that which made Paul say ‘I am crucified with Christ, it is not I who live, but Christ in me.’⁴¹ Bonaventure thus makes a link between *mens*, of which *synderesis* is the summit (*apex mentis*), and the transformation of Francis’ body, which in turn receives a Pauline subtext. Furthermore, it is important to notice that Francis is first changed from the inside, in *mens*, before the change in his outer appearance. Francis and his stigmata, in other words, embody the action of *synderesis* and the ineffable experience to which the *Itinerarium* guides the reader. The *Itinerarium* is in a way an elaboration of a previous line of thought that appears earlier in Bonaventure’s writings. In his 1255 homily on the stigmata, Bonaventure paraphrases Hugh of St. Victor to describe the stigmata:

Et quoniam ‘tanta est vis amoris’, ut dicit Hugo de Sancto Victore, ‘ut transformet amantem in amatum’; sicut amor Crucifixi in mente eius excellenter et mirabiliter ardebat, sic Crucifixus in specie Seraphim, id est spiritus angelici, incendio amoris ardentissimi, exterius beatis oculis eius apparebat et suis membris sacra stigmata imprimebat.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Itin.*, prolog. 3.

⁴¹ II Cor. xii. 2. Gal. ii. 20. See also Gal. vi. 17 ‘I carry the the marks (*stigmata*) of the Lord on my body.’

⁴² Bonaventure, *De s. patre nostro*, p. 593. Cf. Hugh of St. Victor *Soliloquium de arrha animae*, PL, clxxvi, col. 954.

And because ‘the power of love is so great that it transforms the lover into the beloved’ as Hugh of St. Victor says. Just as the love of the Crucified burned perfectly and wondrously in his mind, so the Crucified appeared before his blessed bodily eyes in the form of a Seraph, that is, of an angelic spirit, through the burning feeling of most ardent love, and impressed the holy stigmata on his body.

In the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure has simply replaced Hugh’s *amor* with *synderesis*, and its synonyms *apex mentis* and *apex affectus* as that which turns the lover into the beloved. The external transformation of Francis’ body thus begins in in the highest point of the soul. In this quotation, Bonaventure alludes to the traditional interpretation of the Hebrew Seraph as *ardens*, which is later echoed in the *Itinerarium* by the *ardentissimum amorem Crucifixi*, through which alone one may reach mystical ecstasy.⁴³

Indeed, like Christ in the previous quotation, Francis has become the ‘liber scriptus intus et extra,’ a book written on the inside and the outside – a book which ‘lets silence speak’ in the words of Thomas of Celano, and tells of the ineffable union with God.⁴⁴ As God wrote on the tablets of stone on Mount Sinai, God writes on Francis’ body on La Verna – a theme Bonaventure continues in the *Legenda s. Francisci*.

Postquam igitur verus Christi amor in eandem imaginem transformavit amantem quadraginta dierum numero iuxta quod decreverat in solitudine consummato superveniente quoque solemnitate archangeli Michaelis descendit angelicus vir Franciscus de monte se cum ferens crucifixi effigiem non in tabulis lapideis vel ligneis manu figuratam artificis sed in carneis memberis descriptam digito dei vivi.⁴⁵

After the true love of Christ had transformed the lover into an image of him [the beloved], having lived forty days in solitude, according to what he had decided, and with the feast of St. Michael being at hand,

⁴³ *Itin.*, prol. 3.

⁴⁴ Thomas of Celano, *Vita secunda sancti Francisci*, in *Analecta*, x, p. 246.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bonaventure, *Legenda s. Francisci*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae in *Opera*, viii, 13. 5.

the angelic man Francis descended from the mountain, carrying on him the image of the Crucified, not formed by hand on tablets of stone or wood, but written with the finger of the living God on his flesh.

As in the above quotation, Bonaventure has returned to the idea of love transforming the lover into the beloved. Having to follow the requirements of genre, Bonaventure sheds his scholastic vocabulary opting for the more general term *amor*, instead of *synderesis*, as that which brings about the transformative union. Francis descends from the holy mountain as the new Moses, carrying the writing of God on his body instead of tablets of stone. His union with the highest good imitates, albeit imperfectly, the union between God and humanity in Christ and thus embodies the paradox of Christianity.

4. ‘And He was Placed as an Example of Perfect Contemplation’

In what we have seen so far, Francis appears as the one who achieved perfection in spiritual life, the person who realised the full potential of humanity. In chapter one, where Bonaventure lists the powers of the soul, he makes the assumption that these are universal and present in all human beings. As McGinn points out, the *Itinerarium* spells out in detail what had already taken place in Francis.⁴⁶ By spelling this out, and by setting out this psychological framework, with *synderesis* playing the most important role, for the mystical journey, Bonaventure has also shown on what grounds imitation is possible. He thereby signals that the perfection that Francis achieved is theoretically possible for others as well.

⁴⁶ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 94.

4.1. Francis as *Exemplum*

Bonaventure's focus on imitation returns later in his *Legenda s. Francisci*, the official *vita* of Francis composed at the behest of the General Chapter. As Jay Hammond and others have pointed out, it was likely the Chapter of 1257 that, apart from electing Bonaventure Minister General *in absentia*, also commissioned the writing of the new *vita*.⁴⁷ How to interpret the life and experience of the saint for a new audience thus appears to have occupied the mind of Bonaventure from the very beginning of his term as Minister General, and is one of the links between the *Itinerarium* and the *Legenda s. Francisci*. Another feature which joins the two texts is the fact that both share a tripartite structure based on pseudo-Denys' concepts of purgation, illumination and perfection. In the *Itinerarium*, the latter stage corresponds to the action of *mens* in chapters five, six and seven, whereas in the *Legenda s. Francisci*, it corresponds to the chapters concerning Francis' stigmata and the final years.⁴⁸ It is this journey through purgation, illumination and perfection that unites these two works structurally, and which the

⁴⁷ J. M. Hammond, 'Bonaventure's *Legenda Major*', in J. M. Hammond, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and Jared Goff (eds.), *A Companion to Bonaventure* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 453-507, at pp. 453-9. Hammond points out that much of the unanimity regarding the year 1260 is circular, the Quaracchi edition and the *Analecta Franciscana* both refer back to the *Annales minorum* (1732), which in turn only assumes that Bonaventure's reference to the urging of the General Chapter concerned that of 1260. Later research has shown, however, that it is more likely that the demand for a new *vita* dates to the Chapter of Rome in 1257. The reform of the Franciscan liturgy, in particular the development of the octave of Francis, occurred during the 1240s and 50s, possibly in 1251 or 1254. The next natural step was to create a new *vita* which followed the new liturgy. During his first three years as Minister General, Bonaventure was working intensely on correcting the current liturgical books, something the Chapter of Narbonne of 1260 asks the ministers to implement throughout the order. This workload explains why the *Legenda* was delayed until after Narbonne.

⁴⁸ Cf. Hammond, 'Bonaventure's *Legenda Major*', pp. 483-7.

Franciscan reader is called to imitate. The notion of Francis as the *exemplum* is explicitly referred to in the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*, where Bonaventure writes regarding Francis:

Quod etiam ostensum est beato Francisco, cum in excessu contemplationis in monte excelso – ubi haec quae scripta sunt, mente tractavi – apparuit Seraph sex alarum in cruce confixus, ut ibidem a socio eius, qui tunc cum eo fuit, ego et plures alii audivimus; ubi in Deum transit per contemplationis excessum; et positus est in exemplum perfectae contemplationis; sicut prius fuerat actionis, tanquam alter Iacob et Israel, ut omnes viros vere spirituales Deus per eum invitaret ad huiusmodi transitum et mentis excessum magis exemplo quam verbo.⁴⁹

Which was revealed to blessed Francis, when the six-winged Seraph appeared to him fixed to a cross, when he was rapt in ecstatic contemplation on the mountain where I thought about these things that I have written down here. I and many others learned about this vision at this same place from his companion who was with him then, when he journeyed to God through the ecstasy of contemplation. And he was placed as an example of perfect contemplation, just as he previously was a perfect example of action, like a second Jacob and Israel, so that God through him may invite all truly spiritual men to the same journey from this world and ecstasy of the mind, more by example than by word.

It is worth noticing here the emphasis on Francis as an *exemplum* not just of the active life, but of the contemplative way that the *Itinerarium* attempts to flesh out. Indeed, Francis' transformed body, recalled for the reader's imagination in the *Itinerarium*, is the way by which God draws 'true spiritual men' to him. As we saw earlier in this chapter, *synderesis* is that which unifies, and assimilates, the lover into the beloved. If *synderesis* represents that inner motion, then Francis and his stigmata, as *exemplum*, is the exterior manifestation of the activity of *synderesis*.

⁴⁹ *Itin.*, 7.3.

By using the term *exemplum*, Bonaventure refers back to a long literary tradition, and hagiography in particular.⁵⁰ Ambrose stated in *De officiis* that the habit of the mind can be seen in the state of the body ('habitus mentis in corporis statu cernitur').⁵¹ The idea of an exterior manifestation of an inner transformation was subjected to another, more far-reaching, Christian interpretation: 'the exemplar', Peter Brown says, 'ceases to be merely a past human paradigm reactivated, by human means, in the present: the 'man of God', the 'righteous man', has a revelatory quality about him.'⁵² The Christian of Late Antiquity was meant to be a reflection of the fullness of the divine image that is Christ. God is made accessible through the holy man, the Christ-carrying man ('ὁ χριστόφορος ἀνὴρ). We see the use of the leader or saint as *exemplum* in Bonaventure through the mediation of Gregory the Great. Bonaventure relates to the *exemplum* tradition first and foremost with regard to the imitation of Christ, and the manner in which clergy should lead and instruct their subordinates. The way of Christian life is better taught, he thinks, by example than by word, and in two sermons he quotes Gregory's *Cura pastoralis* (also called *Regula pastoralis*) to that effect: 'Sit rector operatione praecipuus, ut vitae viam subditis vivendo denuntiet, et grex qui

⁵⁰ Peter Brown, for instance traces the use of the saint as *exemplum* as far back as to the ancient Hellenistic concept of *paideia*, where classical authors expected the qualities of the soul to show exteriorly, through 'reassuringly consistent body-signals—by poise, by tone of voice, even by the control of breathing, and certainly of laughter' or to Late Antiquity such sentiments were picked up by the Fathers, e.g. John Chrysostom, who wished the believer to be marked out by these manners so as to strengthen the faith and resolve of his/her fellow believers. P. Brown, 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', *Representations*, 2 (1983), pp. 1-25, at p. 5.

⁵¹ C. S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), p. 109.

⁵² Brown, 'Saint as Exemplar', p. 6.

pastoris vocem moresque sequitur, per exempla melius quam per verba gradiatur.’ (‘May the guide of souls be preeminent in his work so that he teaches the way of life to his subordinates by living it, and so that the herd follows the voice and manners of the shepherd, and make progress by learning from his example, more than from his words’). In the same sermon, Bonaventure describes how the conduct of the prelate is impressed on the heart of the faithful person by example, as a seal is impressed on wax, because the hearts of subordinates are moved more by the example of good deeds, than by words alone.⁵³ In the *Itinerarium*, it is not subordinates, strictly speaking, who are to be moved, but Francis’ spiritual sons and daughters. The references to Francis, and in particular his spectacularly transformed body, are not an appeal to the intellect, but to the affect. Bonaventure tries in the beginning and end of the *Itinerarium* to draw the reader into the journey and to the mystical ecstasy through the image of Francis.

4.2. Francis’ Body and Ineffability

The use of Francis as an example also helps Bonaventure to illustrate the mystical union that lies beyond language. The paragraphs that follow his mentioning of Francis try, albeit imperfectly as we have seen, to describe the experience Francis

⁵³ Bonaventure, *Sermones dominicales*, *Sermo* 16.8. Cf. *Sermo* 23.3. Et hoc est quia vita praelati imprimatur cordi subditi sicut forma sigilli cerae eo quod plus movent corda subditorum operum exempla quam verba. (And this is because the life of the prelate is impressed in the heart of the subjects as the form of the seal is in wax, because example in action move the heart of the faithful more than words). Gregory the Great, *Sancti Gregorii Magni, Romani pontificis, regulae pastoralis liber, ad Joannem episcopum civitatis Ravennae*, iii. *PL*, lxxvii, 28. The notion of a seal impressed on hot wax is commonly associated with Hugh of St. Victor. This idea of the seal of wax returns in the *Legenda s. Francisci*, 12.12 (p. 542) and 13.9. (pp. 544-5).

had and which the contemplative reader should aim for. The rhetorical example of Francis is therefore in the end a complement to Bonaventure's use of the ineffability topos: Francis manifests the mystical union in ways that words are ultimately unable to ('exemplo magis quam verbo'). The connection between Francis' stigmata and the ineffability topos was made earlier in the second *vita* by Thomas of Celano, which is one of the texts Bonaventure was commissioned to write a replacement for:

Soli datum est nosse, cui soli datum est experiri. Nimirum, etsi sensu quodam illa perciperemus in nobis, nequaquam tantis mirabilibus exprimentis verba suppeterent, rebus quotidianis et vilibus sordidata. Et fortassis ideo in carne debuit aperiri, quia non potuisset sermonibus explicari. Loquatur ergo silentium, ubi deficit verbum, quia et signatum clamat, ubi deficit signum. Hoc solum humanis auribus intimetur, quod nondum per omnia claruit, quare sacramentum illud in sancto apparuit [...].⁵⁴

It was given to him alone to know to whom alone the experience was granted. No wonder, for even if we would have perceived these things in us by means of some sense, no words would suffice to express these wonders, having been defiled by their everyday and vile uses. And perchance it therefore needed to appear in the flesh, because it could not be explained by words. Let therefore silence speak, where words fail, for what is being signified cries loud, where the sign fails. This alone is intimated to the ears of us humans, because it is not yet altogether clear why this sacrament appeared in the holy man [...].

The mystical experience is beyond words and can only be known by the person to whom it is given. Bonaventure echoes this in the *Itinerarium* when he writes 'hoc autem est mysticum et secretissimum, quod 'nemo novit nisi qui accipit' [Rev. ii. 17] ('This, however, is something mystical and something most secret, which "no one knows apart from the one who receives it"').⁵⁵ It can, however, become visible and tangible, and that is the role Francis plays both in the *Vita*

⁵⁴ Celano, *Vita secunda*, pp. 246-7.

⁵⁵ *Itin.*, 7.4.

secunda and the *Itinerarium*. Francis is not only the model, the *exemplum* of perfect contemplation – he is the ultimate signifier, one which surpasses the capacity of words in expressing that which cannot be expressed. What the *Itinerarium* does, together with Bonaventure’s appropriation of Gallus’ theory of *synderesis* is to specify how that transformation begins, and in relation to what part of the human soul. Situating Francis within a psychological framework is partly a help for the reader in understanding this central event in Franciscan history and thus also to see that imitation is indeed possible. But this is also the first attempt in Franciscan literature to ‘explain’ Francis’ stigmata as far as possible. This is of great significance, given the time at which the *Itinerarium* was written, which will be the subject of the two final sections of this chapter.

5. *Synderesis* and the Dialectic of Faith and Doubt

This chapter has so far analysed the function of Francis in relation to *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium*. Bonaventure’s references to Francis at the beginning and end of the text is no coincidence. Francis is set as the example for the reader, as the person who reached that ecstasy to which the *Itinerarium* attempts to guide the soul. But the *Itinerarium* was composed at a critical time in Franciscan history, briefly after the Mendicant Controversy, and around the year 1260 in which it was expected that a new age would be ushered in. During this time, there were doubts voiced both inside and outside of the order as to whether Francis actually had received the stigmata, i.e., whether what for others were a foundational event for the order had actually taken place. The final two sections of this chapter will therefore explore briefly how the *Itinerarium* and *synderesis* relate to these two events. We begin with how the *Itinerarium* and *synderesis* can be seen in relation to some of the doubts expressed regarding Francis and the stigmata.

The questioning of the stigmata that went on during the 1240s and 1250s, and indeed long after that, offers a possibility of reflecting on how supposedly supernatural events were approached. Contextualising the stigmata requires the historian not to take a stance on the metaphysical status of mystical experience, while at the same time accepting that it was an intensely held belief. Steven Justice has argued that instead of seeing medieval miracle accounts as either fraudulent superstition, didactic morality stories or just as phenomena best left to one side, these stories are often engaged in a dialectic between faith and doubt. Miracle stories, he points out, often contains an element of doubt, which in turn is overcome.⁵⁶ This is in fact something that is embedded in the Christian tradition as a whole with Doubting Thomas. Jean-Claude Schmitt has voiced a similar stance in his work on ghosts in the Middle Ages, seeing belief in supernatural events as something that is not something that is stable, but rather a process that is exposed to moments of doubt and questioning. The historian's task according to Schmitt is to study the conditions under which the utterance of belief comes about.⁵⁷ I believe that the *Itinerarium* and *synderesis* fit into this dialectic as it seeks to articulate the belief in one of the foundational events of the order in a way and in a language that has not been used before. The *Itinerarium* is the first and probably only attempt to engage with the event in which Francis received the stigmata using a scholastic technical terminology, and it reveals this tension between faith and doubt within the order and possibly even for Bonaventure

⁵⁶ Steven Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?', *Representations*, 103 (2008), pp. 1-29.

⁵⁷ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago and London, 1998), p. 7.

himself. For Bonaventure, Francis's stigmata were a historical fact, but they needed exploration and explanation and the psychological terminology of the *Itinerarium* has this function of giving greater precision to the mystical way of Francis. As Minister General, Bonaventure was in a unique position to articulate the belief in Francis's vision of the Seraph and reception of the stigmata in an authoritative way. Like his predecessor, he invokes the authority of eyewitnesses in chapter seven when talking about Francis' vision of the Seraph: 'ut ibidem a socio eius, qui tunc cum eo fuit, ego et plures alii audivimus' ('as I and many others have heard from his companion who was with him then').⁵⁸

The General Chapter that elected Bonaventure took place after the Franciscans and Dominicans had emerged victorious from the so-called Mendicant Controversy. This controversy first concerned the status of the mendicant friars within the University of Paris and doubts about their loyalty to the guild of masters as they refused to partake in strike action whilst holding chairs within the university.⁵⁹ In the 1255 sermon that we encountered earlier, given during the Controversy, Bonaventure dwells on the significance of the stigmata. They are for him the divine sign of approval of Francis' teaching and of the Franciscan Rule. Just as popes put their seal on a bull, so God put his seal on Francis. One must be hard of heart indeed, Bonaventure thinks, if one doubts the number of witnesses, the authority of the popes approving the stigmata (together with the threat of

⁵⁸ *Itin.*, 7. 3.

⁵⁹ For a very brief summary of the early stages of the controversy, see A. Traver, 'The Forging of an Intellectual Defense of Mendicancy in the Medieval University', in Donald Prudlo (ed.), *The Origin, Development, and Refinement of Medieval Religious Mendicancies* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 157-95, at pp. 157-63. For a fuller study, see M-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne, 1250-1259* (Paris, 1972).

excommunication for questioning them, he points out) and the sanctity of those who submitted sworn declarations that they had seen and touched the stigmata.⁶⁰ Without going into the various altercations between seculars and mendicants, it appears that such arguments did not convince the leader of the secular masters, William of Saint-Amour. In his response to Bonaventure's *De mendicitate*, he wrote regarding the miracles of Francis that miracles alone do not prove the man holy. Indeed, Christ had warned, he says, that in the final days, false prophets would appear with counterfeit miracles.⁶¹ The relevance of this point for what for the Franciscan leadership and its official narrative was one of the most crucial events in Franciscan history cannot have been lost on Bonaventure.

Although the stigmata could stir up deep feelings of reverence in Franciscan hagiographers and deep scepticism elsewhere, other sources express a more sober approach. Henry of Avranches (d. 1260), the celebrated poet who wrote a *vita* of Francis in hexameter remains reverent – acknowledging the stigmata, but without any particular interpretation of them.⁶² The same is true for Matthew Paris (ca. 1200-1259), a Benedictine, who gives a pious, but relatively brief, account of the stigmata without interpretations in the *Chronica maiora*.⁶³ The Dominican

⁶⁰ Bonaventure, *De s. patre nostro*, pp. 592-93.

⁶¹ William of Saint-Amour, *The Opuscula of William of Saint-Amour: The Minor Works of 1255-1256*, ed. A. Traver (Münster, 2003), p.135. For a brief summary of the altercations between William and Bonaventure in the 1250s, see Traver, 'Defence of Mendicancy', pp. 163-66.

⁶² Henry of Avranches, *Legenda S. Francisci versificata*, in *Analecta*, x, 3 c. 12. vv. 35-61, pp. 478-79.

⁶³ Matthew Paris, *Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani chronica majora*, ed. H. R. Luard (7 vols., London, 1872-1883), iii, pp. 134-5.

sanctorale commissioned by Humbert of Romans between 1254 and 1256 expresses a sober, almost sceptical reverence.⁶⁴

The historical truth of the stigmata was of such importance that the papacy issued nine bulls between 1237 and 1291 to reassert them and the cult of Francis. The first set of bulls were mainly concerned with the Germanic and Slavic territories. On 5 April 1237, Gregory IX (reigned 1227-1241) issued the bull *Confessor Domini* to the faithful in Germany instructing them to be on their guard against those who denied the stigmata. One extreme case of denial of the stigmata came from the bishop of Olomouc, a Cistercian named Robert of England, who went so far as to claim that belief in the miracle was heretical; he was subsequently denounced by Gregory in the bull *Usque ad terminos* (11 April, 1237). In another bull, *Non minus dolentes*, issued on the same day, Gregory also denounced the Dominican preacher Evechardus for accusing the Franciscans of being false preachers. Innocent IV (reigned 1243-1254), never issued any bulls in defence of the Franciscans. His successor, Alexander IV (reigned 1254-1261) resumed the defence of the order with the bull *Benigna operatio* (19 October 1255), addressed to the entire episcopate and which required the bishops to

⁶⁴ *Le sanctoral du lectionnaire de l'office dominicain (1254-1256): édition et étude d'après le ms. Rome, Sainte-Sabine XIV L1: Ecclesiasticum officium secundum ordinem fratrum praedicatorum*, ed. Anne-Elisabeth Urfels-Capot, (Paris, 2007), p. 386. 'In heremitorio quoque quodam vir quidam in Seraphin specie sibi quasi patibulo crucis affixus apparuit qui manibus ejus et pedibus cicatrices quasi stigmata clavorum impressit. In ejus etiam dextro latere, velut lancea perforato, cicatrix obducti vulneris apparebat.' 'A man showed himself to him [Francis] in a certain hermitage, who looked like a Seraph and like someone fixed to the beam of a cross. He marked him with scars on his hands and feet like the stigmata. And on his right side the scar from a healed wound appeared, as if his side had been pierced by a lance.'). On the approaches of the Dominicans to the stigmata in light of the rivalry between the orders, see A. Vauchez, 'Les stigmates de saint François et leurs détracteurs dans les derniers siècles du moyen âge', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 80 (1968), pp. 595-625, at pp. 608-12.

believe in the miracle. He returned to the same matter in the following year with the bull *Grande et singulare* (10 July) and added the threat of excommunication. These two interventions indicate that there was still a certain amount of doubt among members of the hierarchy and that the papacy felt a strong need to intervene. According to the much later and unreliable *Chronica XXIV generalium*, Alexander responded to reports of vandalism in Genoa where the stigmata had been erased from depictions of Francis and asked the archbishop to find and punish the perpetrators. If this report is true, it would not be the only instance of vandalism directed against depictions of Francis. Doubts regarding the stigmata in Castille and León and rumors of effacements of the stigmata from depictions of Francis prompted Alexander to issue the bull *Quia longum* (28 July, 1259) to the bishops of the province and to condemn the religious and secular priests there who publicly denied the stigmata.⁶⁵ The stigmata thus took on a central but highly contested role in the early decades after Francis' death, but it also appears to have a certain geographic distribution in the first couple of years. As Vauchez notes, the first interventions were primarily concerned with German and Slavonic territories that had in general a more traditional spirituality and ecclesiology.⁶⁶ As the case of Robert of England indicates, criticism of the stigmata may reflect underlying tensions between the Cistercians and the Franciscans. The intervention on behalf of the Franciscans in Castille and León could be understood in light of

⁶⁵ Vauchez, 'Les stigmates', pp. 601-4. *Chronica XXIV generalium ordinis minorum* in *Analecta*, iii, p. 279.

⁶⁶ Vauchez, 'Lex stigmates', p. 602.

the tensions between Spain and the papacy in the thirteenth century and the attempts at local reforms.⁶⁷

The bulls from the later part of the thirteenth century fall outside the scope of this chapter, but were partly reiterations of these earlier interventions, and some can be read in the context of the competition between the Franciscans and Dominicans, who claimed that Peter Martyr had received the stigmata. The first Franciscan pope, Nicolas IV (reigned, 1288-1292), launched an inquiry into the behaviour of a local priest in Dieppe, France, who had publicly criticised Francis.⁶⁸ In other words, doubts that were raised against the stigmata may be seen in light of competition between religious orders, and the tensions between local churches and the papacy.

Similar doubts were sometimes harboured by Franciscans as well. Thomas of Eccleston tells us that at the General Chapter of Genoa (1249 or 1251) John of Parma had to call in friar Bonicio to testify to the friars that he had indeed seen and touched Francis' stigmata when the saint was alive. The reason for doing so was 'because many friars across the world doubted' ('quia multi de hoc per orbem dubitabant.').⁶⁹

In the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure articulates the belief in Francis' reception of the stigmata by spelling out the stages of the mystical ascent of the soul, as well as

⁶⁷ On the tensions between the papacy and Spain in the thirteenth century, see Peter Linehan, *The Spanish Church and the Papacy in the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1971).

⁶⁸ Vauchez, 'Les stigmates', pp. 603-4.

⁶⁹ Thomas of Eccleston, *Fratri Thomae vulgo dicti de Eccleston tractatus de adventu fratrum minorum in Anglia*, ed. A. G. Little (Manchester, 1951), p. 74. The oldest manuscript (dating from the thirteenth century) has lost several leaves and does not include this part, see Little's introduction, pp. xi-xii. The three remaining manuscripts, dating from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries, include this passage.

providing the psychological vocabulary to understand that journey. The concept of *synderesis* has a function in this endeavour as it resonates among the scholastically trained audience of the *Itinerarium*, whilst it also integrates the affective mysticism of Gallus, which appeals to those who may have harboured doubts regarding the presence of scholastic thought in Franciscan life.

Bonaventure articulates the experience of Francis in a way that is essentially different from Thomas of Celano's account, partly because of differing contexts and the fact that Thomas was not a scholastic, but also because a scholastic theologian in the 1220s did not have the same theoretical vocabulary to approach the issue. The issues facing the Franciscan order in the 1250s were related, but different from the issues that the order faced in its first two decades. The Franciscan order during Bonaventure's tenure had become increasingly clericalised, i.e., its members were both educated and ordained.⁷⁰ One should not overemphasise this as implying a monumental shift – Francis was, after all, ordained a deacon in order to be able to preach, and one of his closest companion, brother Leo, to take one example, was a priest. He received ordained priests as happily as laymen under the guiding principle that all members were equal.⁷¹ Francis did not forbid education, but he regarded it with suspicion, as a possible way to pride and vainglory. In time, however, he came to accept learning for the sake of the mission of the order. From the earliest days of the order after the verbal approbation of Innocent III in 1209, it had attracted learned men, and the

⁷⁰ On the clericalisation of the Franciscan order, see Lawrence Landini, *The Causes of the Clericalization of the Order of Friars Minor* (Chicago, 1968).

⁷¹ Neslihan Senocak, *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209-1310* (Ithaca, 2012), p. 243.

early expansion of the order targeted university cities such as Bologna, Paris and Oxford.⁷² Under the leadership of Haymo of Faversham (1240-1244), however, the order had begun to recruit mostly from the educated, although it is clear that these recruits were taken not only from the ranks of the theologians, but from many different disciplines.⁷³

By the time Bonaventure became Minister General, the order had expanded greatly and had taken on a number of new functions in society.⁷⁴ This means that when Bonaventure attempted to explore the experience of *beatissimus pater noster*, Francis, he did so to an audience whose number of well-educated and clerical members had increased, although it was not very homogenous, which probably set it apart to some extent from the audience of the *Vita prima* of Thomas of Celano.⁷⁵ Celano was himself well educated, but his *Vita prima* had a wider scope that aimed at promoting the cult of Francis to all people following the

⁷² On learning and the early friars, see Bert Roest, 'The Franciscan School System', in *Franciscan Organisation in the Mendicant Context: Formal and Informal Structures of the Friars' Lives and Ministry in the Middle Ages*, Michael Robson and Jens Röhrkasten (ed.) (Berlin, 2010), pp. 253-279, at p. 255, see also pp. 259-69 on the early Franciscan study houses. See also Senocak, *The Poor and the Perfect*, p. 29, who highlights the activities of Gregory of Napels, who was the French provincial 1223-33, and who worked hard to attract learned men to the order.

⁷³ Senocak, *The Poor and the Perfect*, pp. 76-82, for a brief summary of Haymo's years as Minister General, see *ibid.*, pp. 68-75. In a critique of Landini, Senocak argues (pp. 79-81) that the choice of recruits from many disciplines aside from theology questions the idea that clericalisation was driven by pastoral needs. Instead, it may suggest an attempt to gain prestige and reputation and to give a balance to the large number of illiterate laymen in the order.

⁷⁴ On the tensions caused by the expansion of the order and its mission, see Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis* (University Park, 2001), pp. 1-10.

⁷⁵ It is difficult to estimate the balance between educated clerics and laymen around 1260 and both groups coexisted throughout the thirteenth century, Senocak, *The Poor and the Perfect*, pp. 81-2.

canonization in 1228 (although of course the readership was limited to those who knew Latin).⁷⁶ The fact that it was promulgated by the pope only briefly after he had instructed the bishops of the world to support the cult of the new saint gives it a more universal character.⁷⁷ The differences between the *Itinerarium* and the *Vita prima* have to do with genre: the *Vita prima* belongs to hagiography, whereas the *Itinerarium* cannot easily be catalogued as hagiography or scholastic treatise. The *Itinerarium* is a hybrid, a scholastic study of the mind of a saint. It assumes at the least that one is acquainted with the questions and terminology of scholasticism, while addressing the spiritual needs of the order, especially of those on its radical fringe.

6. Managing Apocalyptic Expectations

The time of composition of the *Itinerarium*, shortly after the mendicant controversy, around the year 1260, gives it an inevitable apocalyptic subtext, which will be the last instance in which this chapter will study the context in which *synderesis* operates.

The Mendicant Controversy took a wholly new direction with the appearance of Gerard of Borgo San Donnino's radical treatise *Introductorius in Aeternum Evangelium* in 1254. Gerard offered a radical interpretation of Joachim of Fiore's eschatological teachings that scandalized his contemporaries. Joachim had conceived of the world as going through a series of states, *status*, and the Joachite tradition had predicted that a new age would begin in the year 1260 when two

⁷⁶ The the editors' introduction to the *Vita prima*, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Regis, J. Armstrong, J. A. Hellmann, and William J. Short (eds.) (3 vols., Hyde Park, 1999-2001), i, 174, and note on p. 179.

⁷⁷ *Francis of Assisi*, i, pp. 174-5.

orders of spiritual men (*viri spirituales*) would defeat the Antichrist, who was usually identified as Emperor Frederick II. The death of the emperor in 1250 and the uneventful passing of the year 1260, posed a major crisis for the movement, which nevertheless managed to adapt and reconfigure its teachings. We do not possess Gerard's text, but what can be deduced from contemporary sources (in particular the report of the so-called Anagni Commission) is that he believed in addition to this that the Church and the New Testament would be abrogated and a new Age of the Spirit would ensue.⁷⁸ The secular masters now saw their opportunity to depict the mendicants as dangerous elements. Indeed, some contemporary sources considered the then-Minister General, John of Parma, to be the source of the *Introductorius*.⁷⁹ There were doubtlessly Joachite elements in the Franciscan order and, according to Salimbene of Adam, John himself was a Joachite.⁸⁰ In particular, John shared the belief, as did Bonaventure, that Francis was the angel of the sixth seal 'carrying the seal of the living God' in the Book of Revelation.⁸¹ According to Salimbene, himself a fervent Joachite until 1260, it

⁷⁸ For an overview of Joachim of Fiore and the tradition he inspired, see Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969). See especially part 1, chapter 6, pp 59-70, on Gerard.

⁷⁹ Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 63.

⁸⁰ The *zelanti* sought a greater fidelity to the original focus on poverty and simplicity. The size and level of organisation of this movement in the 1240's and 1250's are uncertain. What is clear is that in the early decades there were a number of Franciscans who were unhappy with several developments in the order. See Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans*, pp. 1-29. On John of Parma, see Salimbene of Adam, *Cronica*, ed. G. Scalia, CCCM 125, 125A (2 vols., Turnhout, 1998-1999), i, p. 451.

⁸¹ Rev. vii. 2. Cf. Bonaventure, *Legenda sancti Francisci*, prologus, 1 (p. 504). 'Ideoque alterius amici Sponsi, Apostoli et Evangelistae Ioannis vaticinatione veridica sub similitudine Angeli ascendentis ab ortu solis signumque Dei vivi habentis astruitur non immerito designatus. Sub apertione namque sexti sigilli vidi, ait Ioannes in Apocalypsi, alterum Angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis, habentem signum Dei vivi.' And so not without reason is he considered to be

was John's Joachite beliefs, as well as (alleged) association with *homines fantastici* (i.e., Gerard) that led to him being removed as Minister General.⁸² One belief particular to the Joachite Franciscans was that Francis, as the angel of the sixth seal, foreshadowed the end of the current *status* and the coming Sabbath age.

The term *virī spirituales* reappears in the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*. God had set Francis as the example of perfect contemplation by which he invites 'true spiritual men', more through example than word.⁸³ The term had become widespread by the thirteenth century, Thomas Gallus uses it on a number of occasions in his mystical writings, and it is likely that he influenced Bonaventure's use of the term.⁸⁴ But, as McGinn points out, the term also likely reflects the ongoing debates over Francis' position in salvation history and in particular the Joachite interpretation of history.⁸⁵ This impression is reinforced by the fact that the *Itinerarium* was written around the apocalyptic year of 1260, only a few years after Gerard's radical interpretations of the *virī spirituales* appeared. What Bonaventure has done is to combine what McGinn calls the two poles of the *Itinerarium*: the vertical pole describing Francis as the *vir hierarchicus* or *vir angelicus* in a Dionysian mysticism filtered through Gallus, and the horizontal

symbolised by the image of the Angel who ascends from the sunrise bearing the seal of the living God, in the true prophecy of that other "friend of the Bridegroom", John the Apostle and Evangelist. "For when the sixth seal was opened", John says in the Apocalypse, "I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God". Translation from *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, p. 181.

⁸² Salimbene of Adam, *Cronica*, i, p. 463.

⁸³ *Itin.*, 7. 3.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Thomas Gallus, *Commentaires*, pp. 83, 96, 104, 128, 163, 192, 198 and *Explanatio*, p. 104.

⁸⁵ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, pp. 94-5.

pole in which Francis appears as the angel of the sixth seal ‘bearing the sign of the living God’ – the herald of the end. The stigmata are the expressive signs of both these aspects. Bonaventure continues to explore this theme more explicitly in the prologue to the *Legenda s. Francisci* as well, showing how closely linked both texts are.⁸⁶ *Synderesis* stands at the intersection of both these poles: *synderesis* is the peak of the soul of the *vir hierarchicus*, i.e., Francis, and having been transformed to this apocalyptic herald, he signifies that a new age is breaking through.

To be a true *vir spiritualis*, one must be a contemplative soul following Francis’ example. In other words, one must aim for that mystical union, through *synderesis*, which made Francis a sign of God’s love. In their summary of the teachings found reprehensible in the *Introductorius*, the Parisian masters listed the potential for insubordination to the Holy See:

Quartus est quod recessus ecclesie Grecorum ab ecclesia Romana fuit a spiritu sancto et per hoc datur intelligi, quod viri spirituales non tenentur Romane ecclesie obedire nec acquiescere eius iudiciis in hiis que dei sunt.⁸⁷

The fourth error is that the Greeks’ secession from the Roman Church was guided by the Holy Spirit and that through this it is to be understood that spiritual men are not obliged to obey the Church of Rome, nor to assent to her decisions regarding the faith.

If this summary is an accurate reflection of Gerard’s teachings, then Bonaventure’s use of the term *vir spirituales* functions as a counterpoint. Instead of disobeying the papacy, a true *vir spiritualis* ought to follow Francis’ example

⁸⁶ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p. 94.

⁸⁷ ‘Die Exzerptsätze der Pariser Professoren aus dem Evangelium Aeternum’, ed. Ernst Benz, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 51 (1932), pp. 415-55, at p. 419.

of total submission to papal authority. Imitation of Francis' mystical way thus precludes doctrinal dissent and insubordination.

The recurring references to *pax* throughout the final chapter of the *Itinerarium* may be a reference not only to the effects of union between *synderesis* and the highest good but also, as Hammond has argued, to the Joachite belief in the age of peace, the Sabbath age, that was to begin in 1260, around the time the *Itinerarium* was composed. It is, he points out, also a call for peace within the order which at that time was fraught with divisions over how to follow Francis' ideal of absolute poverty. Given these divisions, Bonaventure had to come up with a middle way, to balance the factions and to incorporate the radical apocalyptic vision of the Joachites, with a more moderate vision of salvation history.⁸⁸ The peace brought about by *synderesis* does therefore not only resonate with how Bonaventure thinks about *synderesis* and the highest good, but also with the need for peace and balance within the order, as well as a reinterpretation of the Sabbath age of peace after 1260. The Sabbath which Bonaventure has in mind here is that of the soul as it finds God, removing any speculation as to when the age of peace might enter the world.

As we saw earlier, in the fourth chapter of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure thinks that the soul must be renewed by grace and endowed with the three theological virtues of faith hope and charity. When that happens, the Heavenly Jerusalem descends into the soul and the soul is conformed to the angelic hierarchy, with

⁸⁸ This is the general argument of Hammond's doctoral dissertation, Jay M. Hammond, 'An Historical Analysis of the Concept of Peace in Bonaventure's "Itinerarium mentis in deum"', (Saint Louis University, Ph.D. thesis, 1998). For an interpretation of Bonaventure's theology of history as an expression of his moderate Joachimism, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago, 1971).

synderesis standing in a corresponding relationship to the Seraphim. When the soul enters itself, it therefore steps into that holy city and there it gazes upwards and beholds God before it unites with him, as the bride to the bridegroom. The image of Jerusalem descending is taken from the Book of Revelation (Rev. xxi. 2, ‘I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband’). In the new Jerusalem, there shall be no temple, God and the Lamb will be the temple, and God will take his dwelling among mankind.⁸⁹ The joyful end of the *Itinerarium*, where the soul has first entered the Heavenly Jerusalem (Chapter four) and ascended to encounter God face to face in Christ (Chapter six) and now turns all its affections to him with *synderesis*, thus follow the penultimate chapter of the Book of Revelation. In a way, the *Itinerarium* anticipates the end of history, whilst at the same time turning the focus to the individual experience of God as an enactment of the Book of Revelation.

When the soul has reached its highest point and unites with God, it finally regains, albeit briefly, its pre-lapsarian state, where it no longer sits in darkness turned in on itself. Instead, it exults as it encounters God in the Heavenly Jerusalem. The promise of twelfth-century humanism that Paradise could indeed be regained has here received a thirteenth-century articulation. The human soul at the end of the *Itinerarium* has found its way back to its pristine state, and to the Heavenly Jerusalem that has descended into the soul, and where microcosm has been joined to macrocosm. Instead of being *incurvatus in se*, as in the beginning of the text, the soul has finally stretched out towards its creator. Bonaventure puts

⁸⁹ Rev. xxi. 3, 22.

this bold vision before his readers and in particular his order, at the cusp of what was expected to be the dawn of a new age, but does so in the hope of moderating more radical interpretations.

7. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to outline the main aspects of the context in which *synderesis* functions in the *Itinerarium*. This text is often rightfully described as Bonaventure's masterpiece, with a simple, though intricate, structure, and several subtexts in which *synderesis* operates. The *Itinerarium* offers a rare insight into how this otherwise abstract concept could be imagined and put to use and how it can be related to a wide set of themes. I have here outlined how *synderesis* relates to the theme of microcosmism, the concept of the highest good (*summum bonum*), Francis and his stigmata, the mendicant controversy and the apocalyptic interpretations of Francis. Bonaventure offers in the *Itinerarium* something unique: a psychological framework for understanding Francis' experience, thereby making imitation a viable goal. Both Francis and the reader have *synderesis*, by virtue of their human nature. What the former experienced is thus a real possibility for the latter.

The *Itinerarium* tells of how the soul first perceives God as the highest good, after which it is drawn into mystical union. This concept of God is, however, not faceless, but is revealed to the reader in Christ. Consequently, Francis' union with God as the highest good turns, in Hugh of St. Victor's words, the lover into the beloved, when Francis receives the stigmata. Francis' stigmata thus embody the workings of *synderesis* and the ineffable encounter with God.

Francis and his transformation through *synderesis* is placed at the intersection of the human and divine, but also, in the historical context of the *Itinerarium*,

between the former age and what was expected to be the new age of the Spirit, the Sabbath age, that was expected to come in the year 1260. But Bonaventure gives a much wider, humanistic, vision in which the hopes of twelfth-century humanism appear to be fulfilled.

Bonaventure offered his interpretation of the saint using his authority as Minister General, and at a time when the stigmata were seriously questioned and therefore also what Bonaventure saw as the divine stamp of approval of the Franciscan order. Bonaventure's appropriation of Gallus' interpretation of *synderesis* offered him a new way of framing Francis and the stigmata in terms that resonated with the need to imagine Francis anew. The *Itinerarium* was not only conceived of amidst the controversies surrounding the mendicants and the year 1260, but also during Bonaventure's process of writing the new legend of Francis. This fact makes the *Itinerarium* difficult to categorize as it balances not only between scholasticism and mysticism but also between scholasticism and hagiography.

Chapter Five. *Synderesis* after Bonaventure and Aquinas: ca. 1260–1420

1. Introduction

By the time Bonaventure completed his *Commentary*, *synderesis* had become a standard concept and the commentaries on the *Sentences* were the main context in which it was explored. Because Peter Lombard referred back to Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel, where *synderesis* figured, it also became a fixture in medieval academic literature for as long as the *Sentences* was a textbook in the theology faculty in Paris.

This chapter will begin by outlining the main trends in the discussions of *synderesis* in Paris after Aquinas and Bonaventure. This outline ends with the *via moderna* and Ockham who omits the term from his writings, and the reasons why he may have done so. This is not to say that *synderesis* disappears after Ockham, but with the introduction of a new metaphysical framework, the scholastic discussion of *synderesis* moved out of its first, natural, habitat. As Pekka Kärkkäinen has shown in his article on *synderesis* in the Late Middle Ages and the Wittenberg reformers, the discussions kept going well beyond the timeframe of this chapter.¹ But the issues that he points to confirm that, by the turn of the fourteenth century, the two main approaches that are exemplified in this first section remain in place, although there certainly were interesting and original cases.

¹ P. Kärkkäinen, 'Synderesis in Late Medieval Philosophy and the Wittenberg Reformers', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 20 (2012), pp. 881-901.

The selection of scholastic theologians in the first part of this chapter is indicative of the overall trend in the decades following Bonaventure and Aquinas. The discussion about the nature of *synderesis* continued and the scholastics engaged with the different traditions in an eclectic manner. However, no new questions were posed to the concept as such. We saw in Chapter two how several questions were added onto one another, and summarised by Philip the Chancellor and the *Summa duacensis*. After Philip, there are no new questions posed, and with the Angelic and Seraphic Doctors posterity now had two main lenses through which they could interpret the material. It is for that reason it is possible to talk about this period as a period of eclectic stagnation. *Synderesis* was something discussed by the great authorities in the early stages of scholasticism which now could be mixed in various ways, but to which little was added. These new nuances may be interesting in themselves, and, from a philosophical point of view, they may have something to yield for modern discussions of moral psychology which is otherwise so focused on Aquinas; but seen from a historical point of view, there is no real development in the scholastic treatment of *synderesis* that can be contextualised in relation to the wider medieval culture and historical change in the way that could be observed in its early stages. This is not to say, however, that *synderesis* is unimportant. The issue of moral consciousness, agency, and the formation of conscience is of immense importance throughout the Middle Ages and in particular in the wake of the fourth Lateran Council with its emphasis on pastoral care and annual confession. Ultimately, the concept of *synderesis* ends up in pastoral practice. It was pointed out in Chapter two that although it is unlikely that the term *synderesis* is ever to be found in, e.g., inquisitorial protocols, but that the moral psychology of which it was part must to various degrees have informed the practice of the inquisitor. In the same way, it can be argued that *synderesis* must have, to

various degrees have informed pastoral practice, although the term itself would be hard to find. The formation of one's conscience was of tantamount importance in medieval Christianity, and it would be a matter for later research to explore how the concepts of moral psychology were put into practice and communicated to a non-Latinate audience.

The remainder of the chapter looks at how *synderesis* was used outside academic discourse. Naturally, given the very abstract nature of the theory of *synderesis*, it is difficult to draw a hard line between academic and non-academic literature. By 'academic' I here mean the formal treatises that were the main vehicles for scholastic thought on *synderesis*: the many commentaries on Peter Lombard, the *Summae* and the occasional *Quodlibet* and *Quaestio disputata*. Wycliffe's *De decem mandatis*, for instance, is thus taken here to be not an exclusively academic treatise, but intended for a wider, albeit Latinate, audience. Other texts clearly drew from the mystical interpretation of *synderesis*.

Although the two approaches to *synderesis*, seeing it as relating to either reason (or intellect) or the will, predate Bonaventure and Aquinas, it was mainly through the writings of these two that later scholars would approach the topic. Aquinas, as we saw, defined *synderesis* as a habit of the practical intellect, whereas Bonaventure saw it as a habitual power pertaining to the will (*voluntas*). Some masters chose to follow Aquinas or Bonaventure almost entirely on the issue of *synderesis*, whilst others mixed the two approaches rather freely. Although the Franciscan masters were first in seeing *synderesis* exclusively in relation to the will, that did not stop many Dominicans from doing the same in the second half of the thirteenth century. The Dominicans, in turn, were certainly not alone in thinking of *synderesis* as related to reason or the habit of the practical intellect, which was rather the mainstream interpretation of the concept up until Alexander of Hales.

Nevertheless, one particular Dominican, Aquinas, is the main resource for those interpreting *synderesis* this way in Paris after ca. 1260.

For the academic discussion of *synderesis*, this chapter will focus on the developments that occurred in Paris. Lottin's overview lists a few masters in Oxford and in the following centuries it can be found elsewhere as well, principally because wherever Peter Lombard's *Sentences* were used, *synderesis* would be a matter of discussion as well.²

2. *Synderesis* after Aquinas and Bonaventure

Whilst the *Summa duacensis* and Philip the Chancellor summed up much of the discussions of *synderesis* prior to the 1230s and brought some focus to the debate in the following decades, Aquinas and Bonaventure became the two lenses through which the topic was discussed in Paris in the second half of the century. The discussions in the years after Aquinas and Bonaventure kept focusing on whether *synderesis* was a power or a habit, or disposition. As Aquinas pointed out, the distinction between *synderesis* as an (innate) habit of the practical intellect and *synderesis* as a power (i.e., the practical intellect) is of little actual significance.³ In both cases, the result would be the same: *synderesis* allows the soul to grasp the basic principles of natural law. The question whether *synderesis* is a power, a habit or a habitual power appears more and more as a form of discussion for its own sake, as a purely academic practice.

² Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 301-38. For some Late Medieval German cases, see Kärkkäinen, 'Synderesis in Late Medieval Philosophy', pp. 881-90.

³ *De ver.*, q. 16 a. 1 ad 9.

With Alexander of Hales, Odo Rigaud and Bonaventure, it had now become a possibility to see *synderesis* in relation to the will (*voluntas*), which would mean the naturally existing desire to obey the principles of natural law, which in this model had been apprehended by the intellect, or conscience. How these differences would work out practically, in the life of the Christian and in pastoral work is an important question, which falls outside of the scope of this dissertation. It is conceivable that if a pastor saw that untainted and infallible remnant of humanity's pristine state as the part of the will (and therefore an affective power), rather than the intellect, then this would inform his way of approaching his flock, seeking to address the heart, rather than the mind. For those pastors who drew their inspiration from Bonaventure, his interpretation of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience would have provided them with an image that could be put into pastoral practice in the form of sermons. Although the worm of conscience is a topos that exists separately from the doctrine of *synderesis*, Bonaventure's combination of the two gives the idea of a spiritual worm tormenting the damned souls an intellectual underpinning. We will see in the next chapter how this image was used by Guillaume de Deguileville in his moralising *Pèlerinage de l'âme* as an example of how *synderesis* as the worm of conscience was used for moral edification.

The question whether *synderesis* is capable of sin or of being extinguished (normally answered in the negative) remained, but unlike the early thirteenth century, there are no new areas where it was applied. Heresy and damnation, although topics discussed by both Aquinas and Bonaventure in relation to *synderesis*, do not appear in scholastic sources with the frequency it did in the first half of the thirteenth century. In other words: although the discussion of *synderesis* never evoked great feelings or sharp disagreements, it is hard to see any sense of urgency in the academic discussions in the second half of the thirteenth century.

The Parisian masters who followed Bonaventure or Aquinas shared at least one of the following distinguishing features: that conscience is a habit of the practical intellect (as in Bonaventure), rather than an act (as in Aquinas), or that *synderesis* is that habit of the practical intellect (Aquinas); or that *synderesis* is a part of the will (Bonaventure), rather than reason/intellect (Aquinas). Another tell-tale sign is whether conscience is treated before (as in Bonaventure) or after *synderesis* (as in Aquinas and the mainstream before him). This opens up a series of combinations that take their cues from both ways of interpreting *synderesis* and conscience.

An example of how affiliation to a particular order did not by necessity dictate how *synderesis* was interpreted is the Dominican Peter of Tarentaise (ca. 1225-1276), who later became Pope Innocent V. Like Bonaventure, Peter begins with a discussion of conscience and discusses it as part of *intellectus* or *ratio*. The practical intellect, he says, has two *habitus*, one by which it perceives universal principles (i.e., what Thomas Aquinas would have ascribed to *synderesis*), and one by which it pronounces ‘particular sentences’. Drawing on the king-metaphor, the former *habitus* is like an emperor, whilst the latter is a judge who applies rules. Conscience plays this second role for Peter. Likewise, in the realm of the will, *synderesis* relates to the natural and not the deliberative will, in the sense that by its very nature it directs the soul to the good without having to deliberate, a stance completely in line with Bonaventure.⁴

⁴ Peter of Tarentaise, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 236-38.

2.1. Fragmentation of the Debate

In the years after Bonaventure and Aquinas, the unified form of discussion that emerged in the 1230s began to fall apart. The *Summa duacensis* and Philip the Chancellor (1160-1236) had kept the discussion focused on four main questions: whether it is a power or a habit; whether *synderesis* belongs to will or reason; whether it can sin; and whether it can be extinguished.⁵ In the second half of the thirteenth century, discussions of *synderesis* tended to deal with only one or two questions. The Franciscan master William de la Mare (d. 1285), for instance, considers in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (ca. 1274) the question whether *synderesis* could be extinguished, in addition to the issue of whether it belongs to the intellect or to the will.⁶ The Franciscan Simon of Lens (active between 1284 and 1296), working in the Bonaventuran tradition, asks only whether it can sin.⁷ The question that dominated the discussion about *synderesis* during this time was clearly whether it belonged to the will or intellect, and in some cases whether it is capable of erring, or sinning. However, the treatment of *synderesis* together with the concept of conscience, a development from the early 1230s, remained firmly in place. Why this development occurred is in itself an interesting question, to which the source material unfortunately does not give any answers. It may well be that the term *synderesis* was not seen as sufficiently important for a more lengthy treatment, or that Aquinas and Bonaventure were seen as having given the full treatment of the issue, to which later masters would try to add one or two nuances.

⁵ *De bono*, i, pp. 192-205, Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 159-62.

⁶ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 241-45.

⁷ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 252-53.

2.2. *Synderesis* and *Intellectus*

Gauthier of Bruges, a Franciscan, in a *Quaestio* from ca. 1267-69 drew, as Lottin notes, from Peter of Tarentaise's analogy between speculative and practical intellect, but unlike Peter placed *synderesis* in the realm of the practical intellect. As can be seen in some of the earliest texts on *synderesis*, the line between it and the natural law was often quite vague. This vagueness can be seen in Gauthier as well, who thinks that the natural law is 'practicus habitus in intellectu practico a natura insertus quo iudicet quid bonum quid malum, quid faciendum quid vitandum' ('a practical habit in the practical intellect given by nature by which it determines what is good and what is evil'). *Synderesis*, on the other hand, 'ad hoc addit inclinationem ad opus' ('adds to this the inclination to action').⁸

Two of Aquinas' successors to his chair in Paris, Hannibaldus de Hannibaldi (occupying Thomas' position between 1260-62), and Romanus of Rome (1272-1273) followed their predecessor with some minor, but not significant alterations, which indicates that they had no real desire to address the question or add to Aquinas' discussion.⁹ John Quidort (also known as John of Paris), writing his *Commentary* between 1284 and 1286 drew, Lottin notes, from Peter of Tarentaise's discussion, but chooses to follow Thomas Aquinas in interpreting *synderesis* as a habit of the practical intellect.¹⁰

⁸ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 239-240. Cf. Gauthier de Bruges, *Quaestiones disputatae du b. Gauthier de Bruges: texte inédit*, ed. E. Longpré (Louvain, 1928), pp. 99-100.

⁹ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 260-61.

¹⁰ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 265-67. Unlike Aquinas, however, John sees conscience as a habit of the practical intellect, instead of as an act, in reaching particular conclusions.

One anonymous master, whose *Sentences* commentary is preserved in Paris, BnF, MS Arsenal 406 and in part in Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1229 (today the Médiathèque de Grand Troyes) the exact time when this author was active is difficult to tell apart from the second half of the thirteenth century), draws from both Aquinas and Bonaventure in interesting ways. Following Bonaventure's order of exposition, Lottin notes, the author begins with conscience, asking whether conscience is a cognitive or affective power. He goes through the arguments for conscience as an affective power first listed (but rejected) by Bonaventure. He then sides with Aquinas' position in saying that conscience is a conclusion of a syllogism to which *synderesis* provides the major premise. Conscience can, as Aquinas thought, be in error. Unlike Aquinas, however, he does not think of it as an act, but, drawing from Bonaventure, he suggests that it is a habit of practical reason.¹¹ Because he sees *synderesis* as that which gives the major premise, our anonymous author thus sides with Aquinas:

habitus ille [conscientia] est conclusio syllogismi cuiusdam cuius maiorem administrat synderesis, minor autem est superior uel inferior pars rationis. Synderesis enim considerat principia iuris naturalis [...] Iste autem habitus ad rationem pertinet, uel ad cognitionem uel ad intellectum practicum qui habet uoluntatem in actibus suis dirigere.¹²

this habit [conscience] is the conclusion of a syllogism whose major premise is given by *synderesis*, and the minor premise is given by higher or lower reason. For *synderesis* considers the first principles of natural law [...] This habit pertains to reason or to cognition or to the practical intellect whose role it is to direct the will in its actions.

¹¹ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 285-86.

¹² Paris, BnF, MS Arsenal 406 and Troyes, Médiathèque de Grand Troyes MS, 1229, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 286.

The author then asks whether *synderesis* can sin. Following the Thomist understanding of *synderesis* as a *naturale iudicatorium* in which the principles of the natural law are inscribed, it cannot be extinguished, our author thinks. But when explaining whether *synderesis* can sin he draws his examples from Bonaventure: *synderesis* can be hindered in its activity because of the blindness of the mind, as in the heretic, the lustful passions, which dominate the lascivious, or the endurance in obstinacy among the damned.¹³ On the second issue, the author follows Bonaventure: *synderesis* cannot sin but when the lower faculties, over which *synderesis* presides, do not obey it, instead succumbing to sin, *synderesis* is like a knight thrown off his horse. But to answer the one question Bonaventure does not address (whether sin comes through *synderesis*) the anonymous author draws from Thomas, who denies that sin can come through *synderesis* which draws from the (self-evident) principles of natural law, but rather from the *ratio superior* or *inferior*, which can be deceived.¹⁴ That is to say: those powers that provide the minor premise are fallible and deceive conscience in applying the dictates of *synderesis*.

Whoever this author was, he clearly had a desire to synthesise two seemingly contradictory traditions. The lengths to which he goes can seem somewhat contorted. He was not alone, however, in attempting some kind of synthesis. Another anonymous author, whose work is contained in Paris, BnF, MS lat. 15905, asks first what part of the soul *synderesis* belongs to. His solution is in the spirit of

¹³ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 288-89. Cf. *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 2 resp.

¹⁴ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 288-91. Cf. *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 3 resp.

Bonaventure, but Lottin notes that this inspiration comes through Peter of Tarentaise.¹⁵

John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266-1308), a Franciscan, agreed with Aquinas' interpretation of *synderesis* as a habit of the practical intellect. However, knowing the precepts of *synderesis* does not necessarily mean that one follows them (here Duns Scotus disagrees with Aquinas) because as a voluntarist Scotus believes that the will (*voluntas*) is free. The will does, however, have a natural inclination to follow the biddings of *synderesis*.¹⁶

2.3. *Synderesis* and *Voluntas*

Whilst Peter of Tarentaise, and Gauthier of Bruges in particular, maintained some distance from Bonaventure, Lottin points out that it is clear that William de la Mare in his *Commentary* (ca. 1274) had Bonaventure's *Commentary* before him.

Beginning with conscience, he treats it as a habit of the practical intellect, all in line with Bonaventure. But whilst adopting the Bonaventurean position on conscience, he also brings Averroës into his discussion. His discussion of *synderesis* is innovative in that he suggests that it is not so much a power of its own, but the highest point of the soul by which a person both understands and seeks the good. It thus relates both to the habit of understanding the first principles of natural law, and

¹⁵ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 291-2.

¹⁶ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, in *Doctoris subtilis et Mariani Ioannis Duns Scoti O.F.M. Opera omnia, ed Commissio Scotistica* (21 vols., Vatican City), Ord. 2. d. 39 qq. 1-2. Cf. M. Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience: A Political Genealogy of Western Ethical Experience* (London, 2015), p. 62.

the habit of the will that inclines the soul to seek the good. In Lottin's words, it is a 'complex of two faculties'.¹⁷

Perhaps not too surprisingly, Peter John Olivi (1248-1298), chooses to stand out somewhat from his fellow Franciscans. Whilst following the Bonaventuran tradition of seeing *synderesis* as related to the will, he also diverges from it in seeing it as a part of conscience as well. Conscience, for Olivi, relates to both reason and will at the same time. *Synderesis*, as the part of the will that seeks the good and abhors evil thus forms a part of conscience, indeed, it is for Olivi the actual meaning of the work 'spark of conscience'.¹⁸

One of the few truly original moves during the latter half of the thirteenth century is that of Henry of Ghent (1217-1293), a secular master, who followed Bonaventure in interpreting *synderesis*, but who conceived of conscience and *synderesis* as being part of the same faculty, the will. *Synderesis* is, for him, the desire to seek the good in general, as in Bonaventure, whereas conscience desires a particular good.¹⁹ Godfrey of Fontaines (ca. 1250-1306/9), a secular master, later attempted to bring together the thought of Henry of Ghent with Aquinas – *synderesis* gives the major premise of the moral syllogism, as per Aquinas, but, as in Henry, the entire moral syllogism is a result of an initial act of the will, i.e., the desire to obey God. As Lottin summarizes it: 'L'acte de conscience suppose donc

¹⁷ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 241-245.

¹⁸ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 254 and n.2. 'est secundum praedicta quaedam pars habitus conscientiae, idcirco bene a quibusdam dicitur *sinderesis* esse scintilla conscientiae' ('according to what has been said above, [*synderesis*] is a part of the habit of conscience, therefore it has been rightly called "spark of conscience" by some').

¹⁹ Henry of Ghent, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 247.

un acte de volonté et incline à un autre acte de volonté'.²⁰ Henry and Godfrey faced opposition, however, from Bernard of Auvergne (d. after 1307), who chose to defend his fellow Dominican, Aquinas, by briefly summarizing the tenets of the Angelic Doctor.²¹

The anonymous author of Paris, BnF, MS Mazarine 880 (likely to be the Dominican Bernard of Trilia, ca. 1240-1292) stands out from previous masters in arguing that *synderesis* should be seen either as a habit or act, since it is a *judgement* of the practical intellect regarding first principles of natural law.²² The idea of seeing *synderesis* as an act is interesting because habits are formed out of individual acts, and so Aquinas' notion of innate habits would not make sense for some later nominalists. This move, in a way, anticipates how William of Ockham may have thought when dispensing with the idea of *synderesis* altogether.

2.4. The End of the *Via Antiqua*

It should come as no surprise that William of Ockham stands out from the crowd in choosing not to use the term *synderesis* at all. For Ockham, as Baylor points out, the notion of innate habits (as *synderesis* was understood by Aquinas) is a

²⁰ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 268. At the same time, Geoffrey rejects Henry's idea that conscience itself is an act of the will: 'Henri de Gand a confondu deux espèces de jugements. Quand on dit qu'on peut avoir beaucoup de science et peu de conscience, cette proposition n'est vraie que si l'on entend parler de science ou de jugement particulier qui est précisément le jugement de conscience qu'on vient de définir.' Geoffrey, as Lottin notes, in turn inspired Peter of Auvergne's *Quodlibet II* (1298), see Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 269.

²¹ Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 270-72.

²² Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 299.

contradiction in terms, since Ockham thinks that habits are caused by acts ('actus est causa efficiens respectu habitus' 'the act is the efficient cause of the habit').²³

The value of this explanation depends, however, on Ockham seeing *synderesis* as an innate *habitus*, as Aquinas and Scotus did. But, as we have seen, there were several scholastics who believed it to be a power (*potentia* or *vis*), or a habitual power (*potentia habitualis*). Which version Ockham dealt with before rejecting the whole notion of *synderesis* remains uncertain.

Baylor furthermore suggests that the idea of a part of the soul untainted by the Fall as the final point which connected the soul to the divine intellect which had arranged the entire cosmos, does not resonate well with Ockham's view of a radically contingent creation. As a voluntarist, Ockham did not see the moral order as a necessary extension of the divine intellect. It would be within God's absolute power (*potentia Dei absoluta*) to alter the moral order of things.²⁴ The 'eternal' nature of the knowledge provided by *synderesis*, e.g., 'God is to be loved' is therefore made contingent on God's will. God could, in theory, command that humans should hate God instead of loving him, without contradiction.²⁵ Ockham

²³ M. G. Baylor, *Action and Person: Conscience in Late Scholasticism and the Young Luther* (Leiden, 1977), p. 78. William of Ockham, *Guillelmi de Ockham opera philosophica et theologica* ed. The Franciscan Institute (16 vols, New York, 1967-1988), *Quaestiones in III Sent*, q.12 (Theol. vi, p. 397).

²⁴ Baylor, *Action and Person*, pp. 79-80. Baylor continues to explain that Ockham did not believe that because of this contingency, the moral order would be unstable or disconnected from God's wisdom. Against the accusations of positivism that are levelled against Ockham, Baylor points out that Ockham 'did not argue that the only means for knowing the moral principles which ought to guide the practical intellect is through revelation. He asserted, rather, that they were in some measure knowable by reason alone as well', p. 80.

²⁵ Baylor, *Action and Person*, p. 79; Baylor points out, however (p. 80), that whilst this may be no contradiction for God, Ockham thought that obeying such a command would be difficult for a human to do without contradiction.

thus does away with the ontological foundation of conscience as understood by the *via antiqua*.²⁶

But, as Ojakangas points out, just because Ockham does not use the term *synderesis* does not mean that he does not believe in universal moral principles accessible to all rational creatures. Ockham makes this point when saying ‘In moral philosophy, there are many principles that are known per se.’²⁷ Ojakangas notes also that whilst Ockham agreed with Scotus that the will can go against the dictates of right reason (because the will is entirely free), he does not agree with Scotus’ notion that the will has a natural inclination to follow *synderesis*.²⁸ Ockham distinguished between moral science based on principles of a more or less universal nature, on prudence, which was based on principles based on experience and revelation. Prudence, for Ockham, is the correctly informed conscience, or what he called *ratio recta*, and embodies principles that were both universal and specific, making it a bit more of a practical concept than *synderesis*.²⁹ As Baylor rightly points out, the nature of the knowledge that *synderesis* provides is of such a general nature and almost tautological (e.g. ‘the good is to be done’) that its practical use was fairly limited.³⁰

²⁶ Baylor, *Action and Person*, p. 82.

²⁷ Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience*, pp. 62-3. Ockham *In I Sent. III*, q. 11 (quoted in Ojakangas p. 63).

²⁸ Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience*, p. 63, Baylor expands a bit by pointing out that because the will has no innate habits, it cannot be said to naturally choose that which reason present to it as good, as Aquinas would have it, Baylor, *Action and Person*, p. 83.

²⁹ Baylor, *Action and Person*, p. 82.

³⁰ Baylor, *Action and Person*, p. 81.

Ockham also believed that an act according to an erroneous conscience can be virtuous, which is a radical departure from the previous tradition of the *via antiqua*.³¹ In short, Ockham, like Aquinas, believes that to act against conscience is to sin, but he differs from Aquinas (and Bonaventure) when he adds that in some cases one cannot be blamed or expected to be able to correct an erroneous conscience.³²

The fact that Ockham dispensed with the idea of *synderesis* did not necessarily mean that his followers did the same. Gabriel Biel, for instance, whose life and works fall outside of the scope of this dissertation, continued to use the term.³³

With Ockham and the beginning of the *via moderna*, we have come to a fitting end to the survey of *synderesis* in academia. After Bonaventure and Aquinas, we see very little development and no new questions posed regarding *synderesis*. Instead of developments, we see a number of interesting cases of eclectic uses of Bonaventure's and Aquinas' approaches to *synderesis*. Henry of Ghent and Peter John Olivi stand out in particular as examples of scholars who tried to come up with relatively new views of *synderesis* and conscience. Overall, however, it is hard to find any genuine interest in the issue that equals that of the early discussions of *synderesis* that we saw in Chapter two.

With the *via moderna*, we have thus reached the end of our exploration of *synderesis* within academia. But as Chapters two and three demonstrated,

³¹ Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience*, p. 63. Ockham *In III Sent.* q.13. He still agrees with the previous masters in saying that one has an obligation to correct one's conscience, unless it is bound in an 'invincible error'.

³² For an accessible overview of Ockham's views on conscience, see Baylor, *Action and Person*, pp. 70-91.

³³ On Biel, see, Baylor, *Action and Person*, pp. 91-118.

synderesis appears other genres than the formal scholastic treatise. The remainder of this chapter will therefore widen the scope to take into account the various uses of *synderesis* outside of the medieval university.

3. 'Non-academic' Uses of *Synderesis*

Although the late thirteenth-century scholastic theologians had little to add to Aquinas and Bonaventure, that does not mean that *synderesis* disappears. Rather, it transmutes, and can be found in various genres beyond the academic treatise. Authors who had studied at the universities brought their scholastic training into their various non-academic careers and in some of these texts, we may gain a glimpse of how the concept operated outside of academia and the *Commentary* tradition.

3.1. Geert Groote and the Utrecht Dom Tower

Should a citizen obey an unjust law, even if it comes with the highest possible ecclesiastical sanction – excommunication? To this day, the cityscape of Utrecht is dominated by the famous Dom tower – the tall bell tower of Saint Martin's Cathedral. Built between 1321 and 1382, the project attracted some criticism, in particular from the Flemish deacon and preacher Geert Groote (1340-1384).³⁴

Groote is mostly associated with the *Devotio moderna* movement, together with Jan

³⁴ The construction of the church itself began sometime between 1254 and 1288. By the time of Groote, the choir and transept of the church were likely already to a great extent built and decorated enough for services to take place. The plans for the future were, however, extravagant and would require money. R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (Leiden, 1968), p. 126.

van Ruysbroeck, and preached a life of simplicity and against riches. Projects such as the Dom tower were thus likely to incur his wrath. Groote was educated first at Aachen, then in Paris, under a pupil of Ockham, and later taught at Cologne.

In his treatise against the project, written sometime between 1370 and 1382, we see a brief, albeit practical, application of *synderesis* in a genre where it is otherwise highly unusual.³⁵ Groote first quotes the decision of a local synod that commands that all goods obtained from shipwrecks, stolen goods (euphemistically labelled ‘minus iuste quesitorum’ ‘less than justly acquired’), as well as things the city did not know whom to return them to should be handed over to the fund (*fabrica*) for the construction of the church tower.³⁶ This same decision also covered things donated for unspecified pious purposes. Anyone who dared to take any of these goods or to interfere were subject to automatic excommunication (*latae sententiae*). Groote points out that no unjust law can be considered binding. Following Augustine, he says that an unjust law is not a law, and that unjust laws should rather be called acts of violence (‘pocius sunt violencie dicende’). Referring to Aquinas and John of Freiburg’s *Summa confessorum*, Groote argues that there are three main ways in which a law can be considered unjust: with regard to its goal

³⁵ For a good summary of the context of Groote’s treatise, see Post, *The Modern Devotion*, pp. 124-29.

³⁶ Geert Groote, *Geert Grootes tractaat Contra turrim Traiectensem teruggevonden*, ed. R. R. Post (’s-Gravenhage, 1967), pp. 16-18. The constitutions were in fact even more extreme than in Groote’s summary. A priest who was present at the drawing up of wills must report any donation to the building fund to his bishop at the following spring synod, and a quarter of all parish collections and legacies given to the parish must go to the fund. Post notices that the first regulation would be a violation of pastoral secrecy, and the second is a radical interference in the life of the parish as it determined the purpose of the collections, and infringed on the rights of the local priest. Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 127.

(*ex fine*), with regard to its form (*ex forma*) and with regard to the authority or power of the one issuing the law (*ex auctoritate seu constituentis potestate*). A law that is not ordained towards the common good, but towards pointless ends, and merely services what Groote saw as a vanity project built at the cost of the general population falls within the first category. If the law imposes inequality, although still creating something of communal value, it falls short *ex forma*. If the lawmakers overreache their authority or usurps that of another, the law falls short according to the third category.³⁷ It is in his treatment of how the project and its legal protection falls short of the first category that *synderesis* appears. Groote blasted the project for its lack of utility, for falling short of benefiting the common good. Such a project is does not fit *loco nec tempori*, the time and place, which indeed any sane person realises, according to Groote:

[...] ymmo quod secundum naturam impossibilis, quia omnes quos umquam vidi vel audivi homines bone conscience, conversos ad Dominum, propria consciencia et sintilla rationis seu sinderesi, constitutioni et largicioni ad fabricam quam noscunt renunciant et contradicunt.³⁸

[...] or rather it is impossible according to nature, because all people of good conscience that I have ever met or heard, God-fearing people, renounce the rule and reject making donation to the fund in good conscience and with their spark of reason, or *synderesis*.

In other words, natural law as interpreted by good and ordinary Christians trumps the authority of the loal synod. Groote tells that he has consulted many people regarding this project, and has never met anyone who has freely given a large donation to the construction of the tower, and cannot be convinced (*induci*) to

³⁷ Groote, *Contra turrim*, pp. 16-22.

³⁸ Groote, *Contra turrim*, p. 40.

do so. Instead, it is the inner life which compels a person to take the appropriate action:

Naturaliter misericordia movemur, naturaliter sinderesi christianos et precipue miseros plus quam pompas ecclesiasticas parietum diligimus. Cogimur interius plus indigentibus quam habundantibus, si quid super est, si quid largiendum vel in pios usus convertendum est, largiri. In hoc enim naturaliter que legis sunt secundum Apostolum scripte in cordibus nostris facimus. Huic legi nature quis resistet vel possit resistere?³⁹

We are moved naturally by mercy, and *synderesis* naturally makes us love our fellow Christian and in particular those who live in misery, more than pompous church buildings. We are forced from inside to spend more on the needy than on the rich, if we have anything to spare, if indeed something is to be donated or turned over for pious purposes. For in this regard we act naturally according to the law written in our hearts, according to the Apostle. Who resists, or could resist, this natural law?

The dictates of *synderesis* compel the good Christian to care for the physical needs of his or her neighbour, rather than towers, and this urge is stronger than that of obeying man-made laws. In addition, Groote points out that in choosing between the law of God, and the laws of men, the former must always come first. By returning to the term *naturaliter*, Groote appears to hammer in the notion that this tower is something unnatural, as it drains society of the goods needed for sustaining the people that make up society in the first place.

Two evils come from the legislation that Groote attacks: the confusion that arises among the Church's donors, and the delay or total negligence of returning lost property. Whilst many may wish to return lost property, they were, Groote claimed, encouraged by their priests to hand over the property to the Church for the

³⁹ Groote, *Contra turrim*, p. 42.

construction of the tower, whilst their reason and *synderesis* admonish them not to, along with confessors and the examples of the fathers:

[...] a propria vero ratione et sinderesi imperatur eis contrarium et sepe religiosi confessoribus hoc idem ex patrum exemplis et ex earum naturali ratione et inclinacione confirmantibus [...].⁴⁰

[...] the opposite of this is commanded by their own reason and *synderesis*, and very often this same is commanded by confessors confirming it with the examples of the Fathers and with their own natural reason and inclination [...].

This causes serious moral confusion among the people, as well as the delay or total negligence of the return of lost property – with serious spiritual consequences. Some persevere, nevertheless, and stand up against unjust rules, in spite of the threat of excommunication ‘nam vincit naturalis ratio, vincit sinderesis, quia internus iudex est consciencia [...]’ (‘for natural reason wins, *synderesis* wins, because conscience is the inner judge’).⁴¹ If *synderesis* is taken to stand in apposition to *naturalis ratio* here, Groote alludes to the interpretation of *synderesis* as natural reason as distinct from deliberative reason, an interpretation that is reinforced by the term *scintilla rationis* which he used earlier. He has thus sided with the tradition of interpreting *synderesis* in relation to reason or *intellectus* over that of Bonaventure.

The obedience due to ecclesiastical superiors thus means nothing, as individual parishioners were fully capable of judging whether such a project is a worthwhile pursuit or not. Placing the focus on the individual conscience and *synderesis* over that of ecclesiastical authority in the case of a building project such as the Dom tower also resonates with some of the sentiments regarding authority following the

⁴⁰ Groote, *Contra turrim*, p. 42.

⁴¹ Groote, *Contra turrim*, p. 44.

Black Death. The failure of the Church and its intercession to stay the wrathful hand of God weakened ecclesiastical authority in general. The urgent need to replace deceased clergy with new blood often meant admitting less educated and morally lax candidates to holy orders, which further accelerated the decline of the Church's authority.⁴² When a third of the European population had fallen victim to this great calamity, insistence on expenses of this kind must have appeared somewhat misguided, and the primacy of individual conscience and *synderesis* became more important. Indeed, if the text was written after the Great Schism began in 1378, it could be taken to signify the increased crisis of ecclesiastical authority at the end of the fourteenth century.

We saw previously, in Chapter two, how the theory of *synderesis* also came with a measure of social control. In this case, we see how the theory is utilised for the purpose of popular dissent. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, suggested in his discussion on the binding force of an erring conscience (see above), using the metaphor of a king and his unjust representative, that the ordinances made by a servant in lieu of the king ought to be followed, even if they do not actually represent the will of the king. For Aquinas, one would be (subjectively) justified in doing something objectively wrong if that is the commandment of one's conscience – although one is also culpable for neglecting to form that conscience properly. The metaphor he uses balances that possibility with the assumption that one would also always obey the king and his servants, i.e., be a good Catholic citizen. In the case of

⁴² Cf. W. J. Dohar, “‘Since the Pestilence Time’: Pastoral Care in the Later Middle Ages”, in G. R. Evans (ed.), *A History of Pastoral Care* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 169-200, at pp. 183-95.

Bonaventure, we saw something similar when he discussed the concept of *praesidentia*, a discussion that is separate from that of *synderesis*, but which is a concept he uses to show how *synderesis* works. A king should always be obeyed, Bonaventure thought, even if the king was a usurper or a tyrant, because that may be God's way of testing the faithful.⁴³

The metaphors taken from the idea of a body politic to rein in the potential for anarchy if the theories of *synderesis* and conscience were to be taken too far, appear to be done away with in Groote's treatise. Instead of, as in Aquinas' example, always obeying one's conscience, just as one would obey the erroneous ordinances of the king's servant, Groote argues that the citizens must follow the urgings of reason and *synderesis* against the immoral rules of their bishop – even if it results in excommunication. The link between moral psychology and the hierarchical body politic has been broken. Instead, Groote has an eye to what is *bonum commune* – that which contributes to the physical and spiritual welfare of the population in general. This appears to be the first time that *synderesis* is used to voice opposition to a hierarchical exercise of power.

Some doubts have been raised as to whether Groote actually made this text public or not.⁴⁴ Be that as it may, the text shows how a popular preacher like Groote worked from a different basis and could apply the theory of *synderesis* differently. What we see here, then, is the application of a moral-psychological term outside of its normal ideological habitat, by a preacher of inner conversion and repentance.

⁴³ On the king-metaphor, see Chapter two, section 3.3.2.

⁴⁴ Groote, *Contra turrim*, pp. 11-14. see also Post, *The Modern Devotion*, p. 129.

3.2. John Wycliffe's *De mandatis divinis*

In John Wycliffe's *De mandatis divinis* (ca. 1374-75) *synderesis* makes a brief appearance when he discusses the commandments against coveting the house, property and wife of one's neighbour. He treats these commandments as means for a more profound love of neighbour in one's attitudes (*in mente*). Wycliffe thinks that since the commandment against false witness teaches the love of one's neighbour in word and deed, it is fitting that the next two deal with loving one's neighbour in one's mind.⁴⁵

One of the problems Wycliffe considers in his discussion of wrongful sexual desire is whether one ever acts with full consent, and therefore whether it is possible at all to commit a mortal sin. Against this thesis, he first articulates the position that it is impossible to commit a mortal sin, because natural reason and *synderesis* resist such a thing. Wycliffe mockingly rejects this thesis.⁴⁶ Instead, when someone acts without external coercion, Wycliffe argues, one can consider him or her to act with the full consent of the will, even it is still possible to occasionally feel discomfort at the act:

Et sic videtur mihi quod committi potest fornicacio cum continua displicentia operis pro tempore, quo displicens culpabiliter operatur; ut sagittans vel dimittens molarem dampnabiliter per declive montis habet continue displicenciam in casu pro tempore quo facinus perpetratur. Sic contingit voluntatem imperare sensibus, qui involuti in delectacionibus moveant organa, sinderesi renitente, et tamen propter defectum originis actus talis est in casu dampnabilis.⁴⁷

And thus it seems to me that fornication can be committed with a constant displeasure with the act during the time in which the person commits the sinful act with displeasure; just as the person who shoots

⁴⁵ John Wycliffe, *Tractatus de mandatis divinis accedit Tractatus de statu innocencie*, ed. J. Loserth and F. D. Matthew (London, 1922), p. 434.

⁴⁶ Wycliffe, *De mandatis*, pp. 440-1.

⁴⁷ Wycliffe, *De mandatis*, p. 441.

an arrow or rolls a grinding stone down the slope of a mountain with resulting damage must feel a constant displeasure in the fall of the object during the time in which the misdeed is being perpetrated. Thus it falls upon the will to command the senses, which moves the organs, having been wrapped up in sensual delight, whilst *synderesis* struggles against, and yet because of the defect of its origin, such an act is in this case harmful to the soul.

One can thus commit an act, whilst also in one's heart of hearts knowing that the act is wrong. The underlying definition of *synderesis* thus likely comes from the Bonaventurean tradition that interpreted it as part of the will. Wycliffe's solution to the problem of consent and mortal sin echoes Bonaventure's interpretation of *synderesis* as part of the will, and, more specifically, the natural will (*voluntas naturalis*) which desires the moral good without even deliberating. For Bonaventure, deliberative will is the part of the will that consents to an act and the tension between natural and deliberative will is that from which the worm of conscience grows.⁴⁸ Wycliffe's discussion looks back to the discussion about whether *synderesis* could sin, or if it could be incapacitated or extinguished. To use Roland of Cremona's metaphor, it is like the mind of a paralysed man whose body does not obey his mind's commands.⁴⁹ This state is brought about by the lower powers being led astray by sense perception – in this case, improper glances leading to lustful thoughts.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Wycliffe relates his discussion of the commandment against adultery, in which he discusses *synderesis*, to the body politic. Wycliffe writes regarding the commandments 'do not commit adultery' ('non moechaberis') and 'do not steal' ('non furtum facies'), 'Nam prevaricacio

⁴⁸ On the worm of conscience, see Chapter two, section 4. 3.

⁴⁹ Cf. Roland of Cremona in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, pp. 133-4.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mt. v. 28 where Christ teaches that the sin of adultery begins with improper glances.

istorum plus sensibiliter perturbat rempublicam' ('For the frequency of these crimes disturbs the commonwealth in a very tangible way').⁵¹ Because thievery, adultery and fornication were considered sins that threatened the medieval social fabric, living a life of inner harmony, where *synderesis* and the rest of the soul are not in tension but perfectly aligned, is by extension the basis for a healthy society. The stability of the body politic is thus dependent on the multiple microcosms of which it is made up.

3.3. *Chronicon rhythmicum*

Another example of how *synderesis* began to be simplified and 'popularised' can be found in the anonymous *Chronicon Rhythmicum*, a somewhat disorganised short chronicle in verse, written sometime after 1268. In one piece, referring to the conflicts between Pope Innocent IV and Emperor Frederick II, *synderesis* appears in an acrostic forming the name of the Pope. The author has obviously struggled to form the acrostic, at the expense of the Latin, which makes it impossible to translate in its entirety. In the passage that is most crucial for our purposes, however, the author is clear. The author extolls the pope, whose name he hopes that *synderesis* shall mark down with a shining rubric: 'Iure favet fronesis patri tam clementi,/Notat quem synderesis tytulo fulgenti.' ('Prudence justly favours such a merciful father, whom *synderesis* marks out with a shining rubric.').⁵² The notion of *synderesis* as a

⁵¹ Wycliffe, *De mandatis*, pp. 435-6. On *synderesis* and the body politic, see Chapter two, section 3.3.2.

⁵² *Chronicon rhythmicum Austriacum*, ed. W. Wattenbach, in *MGH, Scriptores*, 25 (Hannover, 1880, repr. Suttgart, 1964), pp. 349-68, at ll. 539-549.

Iure favet fronesis patri tam clementi,
Notat quem synderesis tytulo fulgenti.

scribe who notes down one's name or good deeds in a book, is something that recurs later in vernacular literature which is the topic of the next chapter. The idea resonates in particular with the scene in Rev. xx. 12 ('And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done.')

As Ojakangas points out, in patristic literature, conscience was the book in which deeds were recorded for God to read – which is how Ambrose, Origen and Augustine interpreted the Scriptural passage above.⁵³ Innocent IV is thus marked down with a 'splendent title' in a book, here likely alluding to the Book of Life, which becomes a strong condemnation through juxtaposition of the supposedly evil Emperor Frederick II (who is described in no subtle terms with his own acrostic in the following lines). Unfortunately, the *Chronicle* moves between various subjects and does not dwell on this part which leaves us without any further clues as to from where the chronicler had appropriated the concept.

Although only a brief appearance, *synderesis* here exhibits a function not usually attributed to it in scholastic literature, that of a note-taker who marks down deeds and misdeeds. What we see here, thus, in all its simplicity is a departure from its traditional moral-psychological function, and a way in which *synderesis* could operate outside of its natural habitat. Here it functions more as something that

Nominis discrecio prebet spem gementi.
 Omen das terrigenis, pater Innocenti
 Corde carens carie carmina cunctare:
 Erus eris eligans dyogenizare,
 Nota meque dubium statum declarare.
 Cleri tu presidum, speculum solare,
 Incunctanter diceris iubar salutare.
 Virtutum progressibus, vox veri, vos veneramur.
 Sydus sincerum modulamen suscipe verum.

⁵³ Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience*, pp. 31-2.

remembers past deeds and misdeeds, rather than a force that helps the soul know what to do.

3.4. *Distinctiones theologiae*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 55

In the thirteenth century and throughout the Late Middle Ages, *synderesis* occasionally appears in the genre of *Distinctiones theologiae*. These books belong to an understudied area of medieval literature. In effect, they function as theological dictionaries with often very brief entries. Their ownership and usage are still a mystery.

In Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 55 (written in the middle of the fourteenth century), for instance, we encounter *synderesis* in an extremely boiled-down fashion, which in all brevity tells of how the idea of *synderesis* was disseminated outside of the *Sentences* tradition.

Sinderesis est vis anime motiva que super est nata figi in superioribus naturaliter et stimulans ad bonum ac abhorrens malum, et in istis numquam errat neque scilicet sinderesi esse peccatum. Sciendum et quia synderesis non extinguitur totaliter, et in diabolo et in dampnatis, remanet non in eis animis actus eius. Synderesis in quantum ad instinctum boni et quantum ad displicentiam mali culpe absolute considerate extincta est et in diabolo et dampnatis sed vero quoad culpa comparata ad penam: sic non est in iis extincta sinderesis in huiusmodi remanens eis ad penam, ys ultimus ‘vermis eorum non morietur’ habent igitur displicentiam mali in collatione ad penam.

Synderesis is a motive power of the soul, which is above it and which is born to be fixed on higher things by virtue of its nature. It stimulates to seek the good and abhorrs evil and in these matters it never errs, nor is *synderesis* capable of sin. It should be known that *synderesis* is not completely extinguished in the Devil or the damned, [but] its activity does not remain in them. *Synderesis*, as the instinct for the good and dislike of the evil of sin, speaking in absolute terms, is extinguished both in the Devil and the damned. But as to the dislike of sin in relation to their pain, *synderesis* is not extinguished, but merely remains for their suffering. Isaiah’s final line [says] ‘their worms shall never die’. They therefore have the dislike of sin in relation to their pain.

The entry uses the older term *vis anime*, instead of *potentia* – the more common term after Philip the Chancellor. In addition, the author uses the commonplace definition *stimulans ad bonum et abhorrens malum*. The main concern of this entry is, however, the question of its function among the damned. As the knowledge and abhorrence of the evil of the punishment they undergo as a result of their sins, a solution proposed by Philip, *synderesis* remains active in both the Devil and the damned.⁵⁴ This idea is in turn explicitly related to the penultimate line of Isaiah and (indirectly) the idea of the worm of conscience – a connection first made by Geoffrey of Poitiers in the early thirteenth century.

The interesting bit about this entry is that there is no reference whatsoever to the other main points that had developed in the discussion about *synderesis* in the century after Lombard. Since there are no editions, let alone digitalized manuscripts, of the countless *Distinctiones theologiae* it is impossible to gauge the frequency by which *synderesis* appears in this genre, at least within the scope of this dissertation. What entries such as this tell us, however, is that below the surface of the ongoing tradition of commentaries on the *Sentences*, the concept appears to stagnate and become simplified.

These ‘non-academic’ uses of *synderesis* have in common that they presume that the audience is relatively familiar with this quite abstract concept. With the exception of the *Distinctiones theologiae* above, each occurrence of the concept in these sources come without even an attempt at defining them.

⁵⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 55, p. 374.

4. *Synderesis* in the Mystical Literature of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

The first chapters of this dissertation has emphasised how *synderesis* operated on a continuum between moral psychology and mysticism. The remainder of this chapter will return to the mystical interpretations of the concept favoured by Thomas Gallus and Bonaventure in his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. Like the scholastic discussions, *synderesis* continued to linger on in medieval culture, but without any particular development. What is interesting to note here, however, is the fluidity of the concept as it is used as a moral-psychological and mystical concept simultaneously.

The idea that some part of the soul retained its primordial innocence and uprightness is something that naturally opened up the possibility not only for moral behaviour, but also for mystical communion with God. This ambiguity lingers on and is occasionally embraced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although the occurrence of the term *synderesis* itself is relatively rare.

4.1. Hugh of Balma's *Viae Sion lugent*

In the *Mystica theologia* of Hugh of Balma, also known as *Viae Sion lugent*, there is an explicit reference to Gallus' *Explanatio*, where he outlines the hierarchy of the soul with *synderesis* at the highest point. *Viae Sion* was for long thought to have been written by Bonaventure, which is reflected in earlier editions of Bonaventure up to and including Peltier's edition in 1866. The identity of this author has never

been firmly established.⁵⁵ On the issue of *synderesis*, Hugh aligns himself with Gallus's interpretation of *synderesis* and uses the various synonyms that Gallus proposed, in particular *apex affectus*. Hugh envisions the soul rising to God 'ut, remoto omnis imaginationis, rationis, intellectus vel intelligentiae exercitio, per unionem ardentissimi amoris id sentiat in praesenti quod intelligentia capere non sufficit' ('so that having done away with the working of all imagination, reason, intellect or intelligence, the soul senses in the present moment, through the union of the most burning love, that which intelligence cannot').⁵⁶

Nam quandoque vis intellectualis multa de divinis participat, maxime quando theoriis diviniioribus illustratur. Sed quia alia vis est in mente multo ista eminentior, cuius motibus mens ignita erigitur ad sapientiam profundiorum, tum ratione superioris apicis ipsius adfectivae, tum ratione ardoris ipsam superius erigentis, qui super omnes habitus gratuitos et infusos ratione suae importunae extensionis et dignitatis in rationali spiritu obtinet principatum. Unde doctor egregius, commentator Vercellensis super *Mysticam Theologiam*, sic dicit.⁵⁷

For sometimes the intellectual power of the soul participates in many divine things, and in particular when it is illuminated by divine rays. But because there is another power in the mind which is much more eminent, by whose movements the mind is lit up and stretched out to a more profound wisdom, partly by the high apex of the affection, partly by that fire which lifts it higher up, that fire which rules over all other habits given by grace and those infused, by virtue of its incessant reaching out [to God] and by virtue of its dignity. For this reason, the

⁵⁵ It is occasionally suggested he was Hugh of Dorche, prior of a monastery between Lyon and Geneva, but this has not been proved definitively. For a summary of the problem, see Dennis D. Martin, *Carthusian Spirituality: The Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo de Ponte* (New York, 1997), pp. 9-12.

⁵⁶ Hugh of Balma, *Théologie mystique*, ed. F. Ruello and J. Barbet (2 vols., Paris, 1995), p. 136, see also pp. 138-40, "'Mysticas" enim "visiones" appellat ipse Dionysius in tota philosophia sua quae transcendit omnis entis considerationes, quando intellectiva cognoscit ex ipso adfectu praecedente, nec e converso.' ('For Denys called "Mystical visions" throughout his entire philosophical works that which transcend thinking about all (created) things when the intellect knows from the affect which precedes it, instead of the other way around.')

⁵⁷ Balma, *Théologie mystique*, pp. 144-46.

most worthy doctor, the commentator from Vercelli said this regarding the *Mystical theology*.

Then follows a direct quotation of Gallus' outline of the powers of the soul, which, as Solignac points out, shows that Gallus' text had by then already been spread among the Carthusians: 'Putavit enim [philosophus] summam vim cognitivam inesse intellectui, cum sit alia [...] scilicet principalis adfectio: et ipsa est scintilla synderesis, quae sola Spiritui sancto est unibilis'. (For the philosopher considers the highest cognitive power to be in the intellect, although there is another, that is, the principal affection: and this is the spark of *synderesis*').⁵⁸ For this reason, he continues, the highest affect of the mind does away completely with the workings (*officium*) of the intellect.⁵⁹ This quotation is the only occasion in which *synderesis* occurs. Unlike Bonaventure, who attempted to briefly illustrate the nature of the mystical union in the *Itinerarium*, Hugh rules out this possibility.⁶⁰

Hugh notes that there are two ways of apprehending God: through the intellect, whereby God is seen as truth, and the affect, where God is attained as the (highest) good. Accordingly, there are two ways to God: contemplation, *solum coelestia contemplari*, and that of affect,

quando scilicet, igne Spiritus Sancti desuper immisso, anima flammigeris adfectionibus ad solum Deum aspirans ipsum solum desiderat, ut sibi per strictiorem amorem intimus uniatur' Et haec

⁵⁸ Balma, *Théologie mystique*, p. 146. Cf. *Explanatio*, p. 4. Aimé Solignac, 'Synderesis', in *DS*, xiv, 1407-12, col. 1409.

⁵⁹ Balma, *Théologie mystique*, p. 146.

⁶⁰ Balma, *Théologie mystique*, 'Et haec cognitio ideo "mystica" vocatur, [...] tum quia ita occulte consistit in corde, ut nec stilo nec verbo ad plenum valeat enodari' ('And this form of knowledge is called "mystical" [...] partly because it is hidden in the heart in such a way that it cannot be fully expressed with neither pen, nor word').

dicitur “optima portio Mariae” quae ardebat desiderio ut dicitur in Ioanne.⁶¹

when, that is, the fire of the Holy Spirit having been sent down from above, the soul desires God alone, longing for him with burning affections, so that he is joined to him (God) even closer by an even stronger love. And this [part of the soul] is called the *optima portio Mariae*, which burns with desire, as it is said in the Gospel of John.

The notion of *synderesis* as the *optima portio Mariae* is taken straight from Gallus, and will return again in Jean Gerson’s writings.⁶² The fire imagery inherent in the idea of a ‘spark’ of *synderesis* is here made explicit: the Holy Spirit ‘ignites’ the highest, affective, part of the soul, whereupon mystical union is achieved, a theme Hugh returns to later:

Unde ipse Spiritus Sanctus per ignem amoris tangit et inflammat supremum adfectivae apicem et indicibiliter, sine omni cogitatione vel rationis discurtione, ad se trahit. Unde, sicut lapis suo pondere trahitur et fertur naturaliter ad suum centrum inferius, sic apex adfectus suo pondere directe et sine aliqua obliquateione, immediate absque omni praevia, vel concomitante cogitatione, sursumfertur in Deum. Unde illa potentia, quae est adfectus et supremum in spiritu hominis Spiritui Sancto immediate amoris vinculo est unibilis.⁶³

Therefore the Holy Spirit ineffably touches and inflames the highest peak of the affect through the fire of love, with no effort on the part of cognition or reason, and draws the soul to him. Wherefore, just as a stone is pulled and carried to its center below by its own weight, so the peak of the affect is carried up toward God by means of its own weight, directly, without any turns, immediatly and without anything going before it, or without any concomitant thinking. For this reason, this power, which is the affect and the highest point in the human spirit, is capable of union with the Holy Spirit without any intermediary, through the bond of love.

⁶¹ Balma, *Théologie mystique*, p. 206.

⁶² Gallus, *Explanatio*, p. 5.

⁶³ Balma, *Théologie mystique*, p. 216.

The notion here of the highest point of the soul being *Spiritus Sancto unibilis* makes it clear that it is indeed *synderesis* that Hugh is talking about. The fire-imagery is used to show that just as fire rises naturally upwards without any help, just as a stone falls naturally to the ground, so does *synderesis* rise up to God – a thought that echoes some of the Stoic origins of the concept.⁶⁴

The idea that *synderesis* has a *pondus*, a natural attraction to its proper place, in the way that a stone falls to its natural place, has its origins in Aristotelian physics, but seen through an Augustinian lens. Augustine discusses *pondus* in relation to *amor*, ‘Pondus non ad ima tantum est, sed ad locum suum. Ignis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis’ (‘“weight” does not only fall downwards, but to its place. The fire goes up, and the stone goes down.’).⁶⁵ Bonaventure describes *synderesis* by using the term *pondus* in the *Commentary*, to describe how it attracts the soul to the moral good (*bonum honestum*). The combination of *synderesis* and *pondus* in the *Commentary* and the occurrences of the term here to describe the action of *synderesis* suggest that Hugh has been influenced by Bonaventure in his reading of Gallus. If that is the case, then Hugh’s use of *synderesis* marks an interesting intersection where the mystical interpretation of *synderesis* (from Gallus) is combined with the moral-psychological interpretation (from Bonaventure’s *Commentary*). He would not be the only author to do so, but signals a tendency that can be seen in Meister Eckhart and Jean Gerson (see below).

⁶⁴ Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* d. 39 a. 2 q.1. ‘[...] affectus habet naturale quoddam pondus dirigens ipsum in appetendis’ ([...] the affect has a certain natural weight directing it regarding things that are to be sought after.’). Robert Davis gives an excellent reading of the concept of *pondus* from Aristotle to Bonaventure; see Davis, ‘The Force of Union’, Chapter two, pp. 72-108.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones*, 13.9.10 (p. 246).

Together with Bonaventure, Hugh's *Viae Sion lugent* is the clearest case of Gallus' interpretation of *synderesis* being used in Medieval Latin literature. One may also point to the Middle English *Cloud of Unknowing*, which shows clear influences from Gallus, particularly in its fourth chapter, but which refrains from using the concept of *synderesis* explicitly.⁶⁶

4.2. Meister Eckhart

In his *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, Eckhart comments on Gen xxv. 1 and 23, on Abraham's marriage to Cetura and, later, God's answer to Isaac's wife Rebekah as to why her twins struggled in the womb ('There are two nations in thy womb'). Of the five interpretations Eckhart suggests, the fifth contains an allegorical reading of the two peoples: they represent the seeds of virtues and vices: the *fomes peccati* and *synderesis* as the *intellectus principiorum* (later defined as *habitus principiorum*).⁶⁷ The idea of a seed of virtue refers back to Stoicism, and in particular Cicero and Seneca who are both quoted in Eckhart. With the reference to Seneca, in particular, Eckhart gives an interpretation of *synderesis* that has a subtext that blurs the distinction between moral psychology and mysticism and it is worthwhile to first quote the passage in Seneca in full:

Miraris hominem ad deos ire? Deus ad homines venit, immo quod est proprius, in homines venit: nulla sine deo mens bona est. Semina in

⁶⁶ The description of the soul's sudden rise up to God like 'a sparkle from the coal' is the clearest and most interesting point where Gallus has influenced the author. Cf. Alastair Minnis, 'Affection and Imagination in "The Cloud of Unknowing" and Hilton's Scale of Perfection"', *Traditio*, 39 (1983), pp. 323-66, at p. 330, and n. 28.

⁶⁷ Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die lateinischen Werke*, ed. Konrad Weiss et al. (6 vols., Stuttgart, 1936), i, pp. 669, 672. Eckhart refers back to Origen who thinks that the two peoples refer to the good and evil that proceed from the heart (cf. Mt. xii. 34-5.).

corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt, quae si bonus cultor excipit, similia origini prodeunt et paria iis ex quibus orta sunt surgunt [...].⁶⁸

Are you surprised that humans journey towards the gods? God comes to us humans, or rather, into us humans: no mind is good without God. The divine seeds are sown into human bodies, and if the good cultivator of the soul captures these, they bear fruits similar to their origin and being similar to those thing from which they came, they strive upwards [...]

The seeds of virtue, in Eckhart equated with *synderesis*, is in this passage the key for the return of the soul to its divine origin. Although Eckhart omits the first two sentences, this passage evokes some of the mystical interpretations of *synderesis* that were proposed by Gallus and later Bonaventure in the *Itinerarium*.

Then, commenting on Mt. xii. 27-8, on the parable of the seeds and the tares, he says that the seeds of vice are the *fomes carnis*, but that the seeds of virtue are *synderesis*, citing Isaiah i. 9 ‘nisi dominus exercituum reliquisset nobis semen, quasi Sodoma fuisset’ (‘If the Lord had not left us with the seeds for a [future] army we would have been like Sodom’).⁶⁹ The morally decadent life without the guidance of *synderesis*, or its misapplication, is thus in a way compared to Sodom and sodomy, a link that is very similar to earlier discussions of how *synderesis* was thought to be put out of function by sexual sin.⁷⁰ Having repeated the commonplace that *synderesis* speaks against evil and inclines the soul to the good, as well as the reference to the penultimate line of Isaiah, that ‘their worms shall never die’, Eckhart then adds the etymology Albert the Great gave for the term: *synderesis*

⁶⁸ Seneca, *L. Annae Senecae ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, ed. L. D. Reynolds (Oxford. 1965), 73. 16 (p. 224), quoted in Eckhart, *Lateinischen Werke*, i, p. 671. Eckhart omits the first two sentences.

⁶⁹ Eckhart, *Lateinischen Werke*, i, pp. 671-72.

⁷⁰ See Chapter two, section 3.3.1.

appears to him to mean ‘quasi sine haeresi, id est divisione a bono. Vel synderesis a syn-, con-, et haereo, quasi semper cohaerens bono’ (‘as if it means “without heresy”, that is, separation from the good. Or *synderesis* as from *syn* –, “with”, and *haereo*, [clinging to] as if it meant always clinging to the good’).⁷¹ Whilst a fanciful interpretation of the idea of something that guides the soul to the good, it does in a way relate to how previous masters related the term to heretics. Unlike previous masters, who generally thought that *synderesis* remained in the souls of heretics, although its precepts were misapplied, Eckhart appears to imply here that the existence of *synderesis* among heretics is an impossibility. In an earlier passage in the same text, Eckhart brings up the topic of *synderesis* and damnation. Unlike most other scholastic masters, Eckhart appears to argue that *synderesis* remains intact among the damned, i.e. it does not only speak against evil, but still stimulates the soul to seek the good.⁷²

In the homily ‘Homo quidam fecit cenam magnam’ preached in Middle High German, Eckhart relates *synderesis* to his central concept of *vüncelîn der sêle* (*scintilla animae*, spark of the soul). Reflecting on the parable of the man who prepared a great feast and sent a servant to invite people in, Eckhart offers a number of explanations and in his third explanation he interprets the servant as that *vüncelîn*, created and endowed by God:

Ze dem drittem mâle sô ist, als mich bedünket, dirre kneht daz vüncelîn der sêle, daz dâ ist geschaffen von gote und ist ein licht, oben îngedrucket, und ist ein bilde götlicher natûre, daz dâ ist kriegende

⁷¹ Eckhart, *Lateinischen Werke*, i, p. 672.

⁷² Eckhart, *Lateinischen Werke*, i, p. 634 Eckhart paraphrases pseudo-Denys to this effect: ‘[...] “in daemonibus naturalia manent integra” et splendida’, the natural properties of the demons remain complete and splendid’. Cf. *Dionysiaca*, i, pp. 281-2.

alwege wider allem dem, daz götlich niht enist, und enist niht ein kraft der sêle, als etlîche meister wolten, und ist alwege geneiget ze guote; nochdenne in der helle dâ ist ez geneiget ze guote. Die meister sprechent: daz leiht ist sô natiurlich, daz ez iermermê ein kriegen hât, und heizet sinderesis und lûtet als vil als ein zuobinden und ein abekêren. Ez hât zwei werk. Einez ist ein widerbiz wider dem, daz niht lûter enist. Daz ander werk ist, daz ez iermermê locket dem guoten – und daz ist âne mittel îngedrucket der sêle – nochdenne den, die in der helle sint. Dar umbe ist ez ein grôz âbentspîse.⁷³

Thirdly, it seems to be that this servant is the spark of the soul, which is sent there from God, and he is a light imprinted on the soul from above and an image of the divine nature, which always struggles against that which is not of God. This is a power of the soul, as some masters teach, and always inclines the soul towards the good. Indeed, even in Hell it inclines the soul to the good. The masters say: the light is a natural light that [...] and it is called *synderesis* and inclines the will towards an adherence [to the good] and to turn away [from evil]. It has two tasks. One task is to give remorse for that which is unclean. The other is to always strive for the good – and this is imprinted in the soul [by God] without any intermediary – even in those who are in Hell. Above [in Heaven] there is a great feast.

In a very condensed form, Eckhart articulates the basic moral-psychological understanding of *synderesis*. He diverges, however, from the *Liber parabolarum*, where he defined *synderesis* as a habit, by defining it here as a power (*kraft*). Furthermore, he defines *synderesis* as something that remains intact among the damned in Hell, still seeking the good, which is quite unique in the history of the concept. This vernacular text thus confirms the somewhat ambiguous passage in the *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, where Eckhart appears to take the same stance.

But the identification of *synderesis* with *vûnkelîn*, which in turn is related to the idea of a high point of the soul (i.e. *apex mentis*) and the idea of a *grunt der sêle* (ground of the soul, *fundus animae*, or *abditum mentis*) blurs the lines between

⁷³ Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke*, ed. J. Quint and G. Steer (5 vols., Stuttgart, 1958-), i, pp. 332-4.

moral psychology and mysticism.⁷⁴ For Eckhart, this *grunt* is the locus of the mystical union, where the ground of the soul meets the ground of God.⁷⁵ The birth of God in the soul, which is the result of the union of the ground of God in the ground of the soul, is possible because both the core point of the soul (spark of the soul or of reason, *scintilla*, etc.) and God share the same nature. In some of Eckhart's vernacular sermons, this spark is described as being 'far above where the powers of intellect and will burst forth', instead of being compared to the angels, it is 'formed like God' and offers immediate (*âne mittel*) knowledge of God.⁷⁶ Being the highest part of the soul, it contains all that God has created and will create:

Dâ nie zît in enkam, dâ nie bilde in geliuhtete, in dem innigsten und in dem hœhsten der sêle schepfet got alle dise werlt. Allez, daz got geschuof vor sehs tûsent jâren, do er die werlt machete, und allez daz got noch geschaffen sol über tûsent jâr, ob diu werlt sô lange bestât, daz schepfet got in dem innigsten und in dem hœhsten der sêle.⁷⁷

There, where time never entered nor image shined in, in this innermost and highest part of the soul, God creates this whole world. Everything that God created six thousand years ago when he made the world and everything he will yet create in a thousand years (if the world lasts that long), all this he creates in the innermost and in the highest of the soul.

⁷⁴ As Wolfgang Riehle puts it 'the fact that the point of the soul and the ground of the soul could become synonymous, interchangeable concepts in the mysticism of Eckhart and his followers is clear when we remember that for them, as for their model the pseudo-Dionysius, in the realm of the spiritual above and below are one and the same thing. Thus Master Eckhart, although he has the *unio* take place in the ground of the soul, speaks of the soul being like God in its higher part, its *ratio superior*: "diu sêle ist gebildet nâch gote an irme obersten teile." Hence for him the higher, intellectual part of the soul can become the place of the mystical *unio*, and this gives rise to his famous metaphor of the "houbet" of the soul.' Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London, 1981), pp. 153-54.

⁷⁵ Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, p. 154.

⁷⁶ Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience*, p. 55.

⁷⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Deutschen Werke*, ii, pp. 95-6. Translation from Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn, transl. E. Borgstâdt and F. J. Tobin (New York, 1986), Sermon 30, p. 292.

As in many masters before Eckhart, *synderesis* and its synonyms relate the microcosm to the macrocosm. But, as Ojakangas points out, whether it is ground of the soul (*grunt der seele*), spark, or a power, or a light, these names all fail to describe that highest part. Indeed, ‘part’ of the soul is also a misnomer, as Eckhart says he cannot point to where it is.⁷⁸ Like the God to whom it is supposed to unite the soul, the highest part of the soul participates in his ineffability.

As we saw in Chapter three, Bonaventure moved freely between two interpretations of *synderesis*, the moral-psychological and the mystical, but kept the two separate. What we see here in Eckhart is the presence of both a moral-psychological and mystical interpretation at the same time, because of the identification of *synderesis* with the mystical *vünkelîn*. Two interpretations of the concept thus seem to converge and coexist. This is a tendency that returns even more clearly in Jean Gerson’s use of *synderesis* in his homily for the feast of the birth of Virgin Mary.

4.3. The Virgin Mary and *Synderesis*: Jean Gerson’s Homily for the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary

Although mainly working within a nominalist framework, Jean Gerson (1363-1429)’s discussion of *synderesis* signals a return to the *via antiqua* in general, and Bonaventure in particular with his *De mystica theologia*. In this piece, written in the first decade of the fifteenth century, but revised up until the year of his death,

⁷⁸ Ojakangas, *The Voice of Conscience*, p. 56. Just before the quotation above Eckhart says that whenever he speaks of ‘the innermost’ (*daz innigeste*) he means ‘the highest’ (*daz hœhste*) and vice versa, Eckhart, *Deutschen Werke*, ii, p. 95.

Gerson lists six powers of the soul, arranged in two main categories: cognitive and affective.⁷⁹ Highest among the cognitive powers, we find the intellect, what he calls *intelligentia simplex*, the simple intelligence, and highest among the affective category we find *synderesis*. Gerson defines *synderesis* in a way that is reminiscent of Bonaventure:

Synderesis est vis animae appetitiva suscipiens immediate a Deo naturalem quamdam inclinationem ad bonum, per quam trahitur insequi motionem boni ex apprehensione simplicis intelligentiae presentati. Quemadmodum namque se habet intelligentia respectu veri primi et certi, ita synderesis respectu boni finalis sine mixtione malitiae simpliciter praesentati. Quoniam simplex intelligentia sicut non potest dissentire talibus veritatibus, cognitione habita quid termini significant, ita non potest synderesis nolle positive principia prima moralia dum sibi per intelligentiam ostensa sunt.⁸⁰

Synderesis is an appetitive power of the soul which receives from God without mediation a certain natural inclination to the good, through which the soul is compelled to move towards the good, following the understanding of the good by the simple intelligence. For in the same way as the intelligence relates to first and certain truths, so also *synderesis* relates to the final good in a simple way, without any taint of malice/evil. Because just as the simple intelligence cannot disown the kind of truths it has apprehended, having grasped what the terms signifies, so *synderesis* cannot not desire the first moral principles when they have been shown to it by intelligence.

⁷⁹ This text originated as a lecture series, delivered in Paris in 1402-3. It was later complemented by *De theologia mystica practica* in 1407, and the two texts were later combined into one in 1408. Gerson later revised it in 1422, 1423 and around 1429, Jean Gerson, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (10 vols., Paris, 1960-1973), iii, p. xii. For an excellent summary of Gerson's list, see Steven E. Ozment, *Homo spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509-16) in the Context of their Theological Thought* (Leiden, 1969), pp. 59-64.

⁸⁰ Gerson, *De theologia mystica lectiones sex*, in *Œuvres complètes*, iii, p. 260.

Gerson thus clearly sides with the view that *synderesis* is the desire for the good that the intellect has grasped, but he also uses a number of *synonyms* that indicate that he is influenced by Gallus' interpretation of the concept. Gerson lists a number of synonyms that up until then had been used in the various scholastic discussions: *habitus practicus principiorum, scintilla intelligentiae, stimulus naturalis ad bonum, instinctus indelebilis*. Some of these reflect both the Thomist and Bonaventurean traditions, but he also lists two that can ultimately be traced back to Thomas Gallus: *apex mentis* and *portio virginalis animae*.⁸¹ In the same treatise, Gerson uses one of Gallus' (and Bonaventure's) synonyms for *synderesis*, but without referring back to *synderesis*: 'Theologia mystica est sapientia, id est sapida notitia habita de Deo, dum ei supremus apex affectivae potentiae rationalis per amorem conjungitur et unitur' ('Mystical theology is wisdom, that is, a wise knowledge of God when the highest peak of the affective rational power is joined and united to God through love'). Later in the treatise, he uses the term *affectionis scintilla menti cognata*, when speaking about the *raptus* or *excessus mentis*.⁸²

It is, however, the synonym *portio virginalis animae* which is of most interest here. It is a variation of the term *optima portio Marie*, and was used by Gallus in the *Explanatio*, and was occasionally also used in scholastic discussions.⁸³ In a way, it encapsulates the idea that there is a part of the soul that has remained pure. In fact, Gerson returns to the concept of *synderesis* in a homily for the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (also named *Jacob autem*, after its incipit), delivered

⁸¹ Gerson, *De theologia mystica*, p. 261.

⁸² Gerson, *De theologia mystica*, pp. 274, 284.

⁸³ Gallus, *Explanatio*, p. 5. See also Chapter three, section 2.

on 8 September 1416, at the Council of Constance. This homily offers us a sense of how the concept *synderesis* could be used outside of purely speculative discussions.

Towards the end of the homily, Gerson considers the subject of how Christ is born in the soul of the believer. When that happens, the soul becomes ‘verbigena, hoc est verbum generans et mater Dei’ (‘the conceiver of the Word, that is to say, it gives birth to the Word and becomes the Mother of God’):

Itaque consideratur in anima rationali indivisibili quidem substantialiter, portiuncula quaedam virginalis quae nec obnoxia potest esse violationi. Haec appellatur quandoque a doctoribus synderesis, quandoque apex mentis, quandoque scintilla rationis, quandoque naturalis instinctus ad bonum. Hanc autem synderesim nec ipsi violatores et construptores animarum demones corrumpere possunt etiam in inferno quin ad bonum stimulet et ad malum remurmuret.⁸⁴

Thus in the rational and indivisible soul something called the little portion of its virginity which cannot be infringed. This is sometimes called *synderesis* by the learned masters, sometimes the peak of the mind, sometimes, the spark of reason, sometimes the natural instinct to the good. Not even the violators and debauchers of the soul, the demons, can corrupt this part, not even in Hell, so that it does not urge the soul to seek the good and speak against evil.

Gerson continues with linking it to the worm of conscience, detailing the psychological suffering in Hell with more flair than had been seen hitherto in scholastic literature:

Hinc nascitur acerbissimus ille vermis qui non morietur. Hinc rixa discerpens et dissipans, supra quam cogitari potest, animam infelicem, dum synderesis impellit ad dilectionem Dei sed reprobata voluntas toto odiorum conatu resilit in adversum. Sed ad quid ista de synderesi? Certe ut ostenderemus eam semper virginem esse quae dum caret obumbrante et foecundante Spiritu Sancto manet infeliciter sterilis; dum autem adest idem Spiritus visitans, gratificans et foecundans, fit ipsa verbigena, hoc est verbum pariens et hoc sine corruptione quia non ex sanguinibus corporalium phantasmatum, neque ex voluntate carnis desideriorum sensualium, neque ex voluntate viri hoc est ex potestate liberi arbitrii,

⁸⁴ Gerson, *In festo nativitatis b. Mariae virginis*, in *Œuvres complètes*, v, p. 359.

sed ex Deo est quicquid hic natum est. Nec tamen excluditur synderesis rationisque consensus; sed dum nuntiatrix gratia afflatu secreto et intimo veluti clauso super animam ostio suggerit adventum verbi in mentem, respondet synderesis humili genuflexione: ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum [Lk. i. 38].⁸⁵

From this the worm of conscience that never dies is born. This worm rips the unfortunate soul apart and scatters it around with its contests, more than can ever be conceived, when *synderesis* forces the soul to love God but the reprobate will strive in the other direction with the might of all its hatred. But what purpose does this talk of *synderesis* serve? Clearly, so that we may show that it always remains a virgin, which remains sterile in the absence of the Spirit that would otherwise overshadow it and make it bear fruit. But when the Spirit is present to it, it becomes the conceiver of the Word, that is to say it gives birth to the Word and does so without corruption, because what is born here is not born of the blood of bodily phantasms, nor from the will of the flesh striving for its sensual desires, nor from the will of the man, that is to say from the power of the free will, but from God. And *synderesis* and the consent of reason is not shut out, but when the grace of the Annunciation with its secret and intimate breath over the soul, when the doors have been shut, brings to the mind the news of the advent of the Word, *synderesis* humbly genuflects and responds: ‘see I am the handmaiden of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word’.

The line between moral psychology and mysticism is completely blurred here. Christ is mystically born in the soul through *synderesis*, which at the same time is the inclination to the moral good and the foundation of the psychological suffering in Hell.

The bifurcation of the operation of *synderesis* – leading either to the spiritual birth of Christ in the soul, or to the spiritual schizophrenia of Hell – brings the Final Judgment into the minds of the Fathers of the Council of Constance. The terms *violatores et constupratores animarum* should probably not only be taken to refer to

⁸⁵ Gerson, *In festo*, v, pp. 359-60. *clauso ostio* is a reference to Mt vi. 6. ‘But when you pray, go into your chamber and, having shut the door, pray to your Father in secret.’

the demonic powers of the Underworld trying to lure the soul in, but also as a jibe against Jan Hus and his followers. The previous year, Hus had been executed during the Council. The term *constuprator animae*, which literally means ‘the debaucher of the soul’, in particular plays on the notion of the ‘virginity’ of *synderesis*. Gerson’s use of the term may point back to Jer. ii. 16, ‘filii quoque Mempheos et Taphnes constupraverunt te usque ad verticem’ (‘For the sons of Memphis and Taphne have destroyed you up to the crown of your head’), which was often used in discussions of whether *synderesis* be extinguished. The verb *constuprari* appears in Bonaventure’s discussion of *synderesis* where he asks whether one can be deprived of it through sin, and the *Summa* attributed to Alexander of Hales referred back to this line in Jeremiah in its discussion of heresy.⁸⁶ The interpretation of Elizabeth as lower reason who, by turning to earthly things is occasionally damaged in her soul (‘unde quodammodo violatur’) puts a link between how lower reason is deceived and the term *violatores* in the above quotation. As we saw in Chapter two, the early discussions of *synderesis* brought up how it was that the soul was led astray by heresy through lower reason, deceived through phantasms.

⁸⁶ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2 q. 3. ad 2. For Bonaventure, the term *vertex animae* refers to higher reason and not *synderesis*. The ‘destruction’ or ‘debauchery’ of this highest part refers in particular to the sin of apostasy (*infidelitas*) and to give up hope in salvation (*desperatio*) and other sins that are opposed to the three theological virtues of faith hope and charity. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica*, 2 p. 2. inq. 3 tract. 8. q.1. tit. 3. cap. 2. (iii, 741), ‘Ad ultimum vero dicendum quod, licet multiplex sit divisio, tamen illa est principalis ubi destruitur fundamentum christianae religionis: tunc enim constupratur ipsa anima usque ad verticem.’ (‘To this final objection I say that although there are many forms of division, this [heresy] is the worst, because through it the foundation of the Christian faith is destroyed. For then the soul is destroyed up to its peak’).

The primary subtext of these terms is, however, that of sexual morality; but as we have seen previously, the line between heresy and deviance from the strict sexual mores of the Church was very thin and often blurred.

Gerson emphasises that the *fomes peccati* had no power in Mary and Joseph ('cum Maria plena gratia fomitem reprimente mansit Joseph repletus gratia' 'Joseph was filled with grace and lived with with Mary, who was full of that grace which held concupiscence in check,').⁸⁷ It was a recurring feature, particularly in the early discussions of *synderesis*, that *synderesis* and *fomes peccati* were each other's radical opposites. Indeed, Mary was often used as a case where *fomes peccati* was extinct.⁸⁸ Being able to overcome the *fomes peccati* was the foundation for Mary and Joseph living together in perpetual chastity.⁸⁹ Gerson thus builds up a correspondence between Mary as *semper virgo* (to use the term used by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553), and *synderesis* as *semper virgo* in the above quotation.

As in the case of Eckhart, it is here very difficult to uphold a strict, theoretical, division between *synderesis* as a knowledge of moral principles, or the desire to follow them, and *synderesis* as a mystical power that unites the soul to God. As I argued in Chapter three, a distinction can, and sometimes must, be upheld, but the analogous relation between the moral good and God as the highest good will always make that distinction less clear.

⁸⁷ Gerson, *In festo*, p. 353.

⁸⁸ Cf Stephen Langton, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii, p. 112.

⁸⁹ Gerson, *In festo*, p. 351.

5. Conclusion

In the century that followed Aquinas and Bonaventure, very little new happened to the discussion of *synderesis* in the academic setting of the university. Aquinas and Bonaventure had produced a set of ideas that subsequent theologians seemed to have used in a pick-and-mix fashion. The issue of *synderesis* for speculative theology no longer seems to be of much importance and the force of the differences between the two great Franciscan and Dominican masters appears to have sometimes been lost on their successors.

Instead of new questions being asked about *synderesis*, we see a remarkable amount of eclecticism between the two approaches to the concept created by the Angelic and Seraphic Doctors. The main issue at hand was whether *synderesis* belonged to the intellect or to the will, whilst the style of the full treatise that crystallised at the time of Philip the Chancellor began to fragment. Perhaps the reason why we see the continued life of *synderesis* amid this stagnation is that it was part of the tradition of commenting on Peter Lombard. The *Commentaries on the Sentences* are the main sources for studies on *synderesis* because of Peter Lombard's brief reference to Jerome. It is indicative that its occurrences outside of the *Commentaries* tradition are relatively rare. Because of this reference, *synderesis* was something that had to be commented on, whether one wanted to or not. After Aquinas and Bonaventure, scholastic theologians may simply have perceived that the concept had been interpreted exhaustively and that what remained to do, for the sake of commenting, was to pick sides, synthesise or to find a few new nuances. This does not, however, mean that the concept is meaningless. After Lateran IV, in particular, the question of pastoral care and guidance, as well as the formation of one's conscience were highly relevant topics with real implications.

Nevertheless, *synderesis* continued to have a life of its own. The term appears, both in its moral-psychological and in its mystical function, in several non-academic treatises during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but once more there is very little sign of any dynamism driving the concept in any particular direction. The one exception to this verdict is Geert Groote whose use of *synderesis* reveals how it could be conceived of in relation to wider society as a means of justifying and fomenting popular dissent against ecclesiastical authority. Whilst the scholastic masters never discussed *synderesis* as a mystical power in a scholastic treatise, later authors, such as Eckhart and Gerson clearly linked the two together, which questions any strict division between moral psychology and mysticism.

These occurrences outside of strictly academic literature reveal a simplified idea of *synderesis*, partly as the ‘worm of conscience’ and as a note-taker. It is, however, these two forms of understanding *synderesis* that become popular in vernacular literature, to which we now turn.

Chapter Six. *Synderesis* Personified: Late Medieval Vernacular Appropriations of *Synderesis* ca. 1350-1450

1. Introduction

From the decades around 1350 to ca. 1450, *synderesis* appears in a shape that had hitherto not been seen at all: as a character in medieval vernacular literature. In most instances, *synderesis* personified has a very marginal function, but its existence at all reveals the extent to which aspects of the scholastic discussions of *synderesis* were appropriated. None of the vernacular authors make any reference to a scholastic master, but where it is possible, I shall attempt to highlight the aspects of scholastic thought on *synderesis* that have been appropriated.

In the scholastic treatises we see some metaphors for *synderesis*: as an abbot ruling over a monastery, as a secular ruler, and as a knight. These images were, however, always a means of illustrating how a highly abstract notion of the soul's moral reasoning functions. In this chapter, we will see how, from around a century after Bonaventure's *Commentary*, the image takes over, as *synderesis* becomes an allegorical person. The dominating imagery is that of the worm of conscience, and this chapter will argue that it is Bonaventure's discussion of the worm that has been appropriated. It is very rare that *synderesis* in these contexts has the primary function ascribed to it by the scholastic masters, of giving the soul the main precepts of the natural law to be applied by conscience. Given the moralistic and didactic nature of most of these texts, this may not be too surprising. The appropriation of scholastic terminology in these popular vernacular texts can to some extent be branded as a form of 'vernacular theology'. This term signifies, as Nicholas Watson puts it, 'any kind of writing, sermon, or play that communicates

theological information to an audience.’ This term, he argues, unites texts of various genres usually treated in isolation from one another whilst also highlighting the specific intellectual content of these texts and its linguistic context.¹ Some of the texts that this chapter deals with, do, however, fall outside of the scope of theology *per se*, such as Chaucer’s *Physician’s Tale*. They do nevertheless engage with what is in essence a theological concept for the purpose of moral formation of their audience.

This chapter will consider first and foremost the *Pèlerinage de l’âme* (*Âme*) by Guillaume de Deguileville and its fifteenth-century English translation *The Pylgremage of the Soule* (*Soul*), where *synderesis* takes a prominent position. De Deguileville’s book was enormously popular in Europe during the Late Middle Ages and was translated into several languages. Regarding de Deguileville, this chapter will limit itself to study the original French version and the early fifteenth-century Middle English translation. A survey of *synderesis* in all vernacular translations of *Âme* falls outside the scope of this chapter, but by studying the case of one translation, we can gain some insight into the issues that arose when making *Âme* available to new audiences and, crucially, how it affects how *synderesis* is made to appear.

Synderesis plays a very important role in the first book of the *Âme*, a role that is not paralleled by any other occurrence in the vernacular texts of the Late Middle Ages. For this reason, this chapter will focus on de Deguileville in particular. In addition to de Deguileville, I will also examine a number of French and Middle

¹ N. Watson, ‘Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitution of 1409’, *Speculum*, 70 (1995), pp. 822-64, at pp. 823-4, n. 4.

English occurrences of *synderesis*. Although there are only a limited number of cases where *synderesis* appears in Late Medieval vernacular sources, this chapter will not be an exhaustive list of all occurrences to the point of tediousness. What I aim to do here, instead, is to point to some of the various ways that *synderesis* can appear in vernacular texts outside of academic discourse and what aspects of the scholastic debates that have been appropriated. In most sources, *synderesis* is only mentioned in passing. In some sources, such as *Amoryus and Cleopes*, it does not serve any real function and has therefore been left out of this chapter. Other sources refer to certain synonyms for *synderesis*, such as the idea of the spark (*scintilla*). Such is the case with *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which makes a reference to the idea of the mystical encounter with God that is momentary, instantaneous, ‘like a sparcle fro the cole’ which is clearly inspired by Gallus.²

2. *Synderesis* as the Worm of Conscience in Guillaume de Deguileville’s *Le pèlerinage de l’ âme* and its Middle English Translation

2.1. Authorship and Translation

From the twelfth century to the end of the Middle Ages we see a long series of dream-visions recounting the journey of a soul, an Everyman, through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. Dante’s *Divina Commedia* is the most eminent example of this genre, but examples abound: the Monk of Eynsham, the *Visio Tnugdali*, and the

² Minnis, ‘Affection and Imagination’, p. 330.

Visiones Georgii, to name a few. In the fourteenth century we find the book *Le pèlerinage de l'âme* (*Âme*), written by the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Guileville (1295-ca. 1358).³ We know relatively little of the author. He entered the Cistercian abbey of Chaalis, north of Paris, in 1316 and one copy of a prose version of the *Âme* tells us that he eventually became its prior, which is difficult to establish with certainty.⁴ The *Âme* was probably written towards the end of Guillaume's life, around 1355. We know Guillaume's authorship through an acrostic consisting of the initial letters of each stanza in lines 1593-1784 forming the name Guillermus de Deguilevilla. This section is the so-called Epistle of *Grace-Dieu* in which *synderesis* figures. The first book of the *Âme*, in which *synderesis* plays an important role, tells the story of a man who passes away. Upon his death his soul departs from his body and is taken to heaven where it is to stand trial. The soul then faces Satan, the accuser, who begins the proceedings against him. But since the prosecutor is the Father of Lies, his presence at the court is called into question. Instead he calls in *synderesis*, the worm of conscience, to handle the prosecution. The soul barely passes the trial, thanks to divine grace, but must travel through Purgatory before being admitted into Heaven.

³ The *Âme* can be found in Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le pèlerinage de l'ame de Guillaume de Deguileville*, ed. Jacob Stürzinger (London, 1895). Stanley Leman Galpin attempted to outline the possible sources Guillaume used, but focused primarily on vision literature and did not comment on the issue of *synderesis*. See S.L. Galpin, 'On the Sources of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de l'âme*, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 25 no. 2 (1910), pp. 275-308, and, for de Deguileville's previous *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, H. W. Gewande, *Guillaume de Déguileville: Eine Studie zum Pèlerinage de vie humaine* (Berlin, 1927).

⁴ For an overview of the life of Guillaume, see E. Faral, *Guillaume de Digulleville, Moine de Châalis* (Paris, 1952), pp. 1-11.

Together with Guillaume's two other books, *Le pèlerinage de la vie humaine* (*Vie*) and *Pèlerinage de Jhesuchrist*, the *Âme* was enormously popular in fourteenth-century Europe. There are seventy-five extant manuscripts containing one or more of these texts in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and England, and it was translated into several vernacular languages in the fifteenth century.⁵ In the *Âme*, *synderesis* is well represented throughout the first book, and given the widespread circulation of this text it is possible that this is the source of several other, much briefer, vernacular representations of *synderesis*.

The *Âme* was probably translated to Middle English around 1413, and was printed by William Caxton in 1483.⁶ The French text is written entirely in verse, but the Middle English translation is a *prosimetron*, consisting of both prose text (which dominate) and verse. Some of these verse translations were made independently and were circulated as separate texts.

The authorship of the Middle English translation is disputed. John Lydgate and Thomas Hoccleve have both been suggested as the translators. The attribution to Lydgate is likely due to a mistake during the compilation of quires in Caxton's workshop.⁷ Some have suggested Hoccleve as the translator.⁸ The identification of

⁵ *Soul*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁶ *Soul*, pp. xxi-xxv.

⁷ *Soul*, p. xxvi. The mistake was discovered by W.L. Hare in his *John Lydgate's "Pylgremage of the sowle" Printed by William Caxton at Westminster, June 6th, 1483; a Hitherto Unknown Copy* (London, 1931), p. 4.

⁸ Furnivall argued in favor of Hoccleve's authorship of the *Soul* in his edition of Hoccleve's work, see Thomas Hoccleve, *Hoccleve's Works. The Regement of Princes and Fourteen Minor Poems*, ed. Frederick James Furnivall (Millwood, N.Y, 1988), p. vii. McGerr points out that this attribution is based on one MS only and not authoritative, cf. *Soul*, p. cxii. For the reference to Lady Joan, see Hoccleve, *Hoccleve's Works*, p. 8: 'Ceste Compleynte paramount feut translate au commandement de ma dame de Hereford, que dieu pardoynt!'.

Hoccleve as the translator of the whole *Soul* is a contentious issue, but it is possible that he translated at least some of the verse-sections (such as the *Epistle of Grace-Dieu*, where *synderesis* appears). The identity of the translator(s) is not of any particular relevance for this chapter, and I shall not go into any further detail on this matter, and only return to it briefly in the case of the *Epistle of Grace-Dieu*, which shows some minor discrepancies from the rest of the translation.

The authorship of this text must therefore remain a riddle, but one thing is for certain, and that is that there existed independent vernacular translations of sections of the *Âme*. For these reasons, and because of internal evidence that will be discussed in due course, I will treat the *Epistle* separately from the *Âme* and *Soul*, treating it as a possibly independent Englishing of the French *Epistle*, whilst leaving the question of its authorship aside.

As with so many other translations into Middle English, the *Soul* is an example of ‘Englishing’ a text, i.e., it is not only translated, but also slightly adapted for the new audience. Some sections of the *Soul* address the issue of heresy, which, as Nievergelt notes, could reflect an anti-Lollard agenda.⁹ Unlike the *Âme*, the Middle English version is to a large extent written in prose. The sections in which *synderesis* appears are, however, largely a faithful translation and I will treat these two versions interchangeably on this subject and comment on the differences where necessary.

⁹ Marco Nievergelt, *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spenser* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 36.

2.2. The Role of *Synderesis* in the *Âme* and *Soul*

The first twelve hundred lines in *Âme* and the corresponding first eighteen chapters in *Soul* tell the story of a dream in which the narrator ('the Pilgrim') falls asleep and appears to be dead, whilst his soul is subject to a struggle between Satan and the Pilgrim's guardian angel. Satan claims his soul because of his many sins, whereas the angel wishes to give the man a proper hearing. They decide to take the soul to St. Michael for judgement. Michael gathers a host of saints and St. Peter to sit in judgement and hear the case of the soul of the Pilgrim, and many other souls accompanied by their respective guardian angel speak for the defence with demons speaking for the prosecution. After the brief defence of the Pilgrim's guardian angel, Satan launches a harsh attack on the Pilgrim. The angel then falls silent and asks the Pilgrim to speak for himself or to find someone who can. In desperation, the Pilgrim then makes a long plea for mercy, but St. Michael is reminded that the time for pleas and mercy is over and now is the time for justice, where merits and sins are weighted against each other. In a last-ditch attempt to save himself, the Pilgrim then questions the suitability of a prosecutor who is himself eternally condemned, chased out of heaven and a known liar, author of falsehood and extremely biased. Satan protests against this line of attack and defends his presence at the court, and goes on to call his main witness, who never lies, and who knows more about the words, deeds and innermost thoughts of the accused than the accuser does: *synderesis*.

Adonc se monstra devant moi
Une vielle qui en recoi
Deles moi s'estoit tenue
Et que pas aperçëue
N'avoie qui moult hydeuse
Me fu et moult monstrueuse.
Forment elle me rechignoit
Et ses gencives me monstroït,
Car des dens elle n'avoit nuls

Fors que uses et tous rompus.
 Quant je l'aperçu et la vi,
 Tresgrandement fu esbai,
 Mesmement car sens corps estoit
 Et sous sa teste rien n'avoit
 Fors une queue seulement
 Qui sembloit estre proprement
 De ver, mes grosse moult estoit
 Et bien grant longueur ell'avoit.¹⁰

Thanne com ther forth byfore me an olde oon þat ful oftetyme hadde hid h[ir]self, I was ful sore abasshed, for he was wonder lothe and foul to loke vpon. For he hadde vpon h[ir]self no flessch at al, ne no body hadde he vnder [t]his hede, but only a tayl, which s[e]mede the tayl of a worme and was despitous of leng[th] and gretnesse.¹¹

Synderesis, whose own appearance is almost demonic, has here become the stand-in for the accusing demon. Instead of facing an external accuser, the soul has to answer to itself. Edmond Faral notes, regarding the appearance of *synderesis* at the trial, that Honorius *Augustodunensis* had written in his *Elucidarium* that, on the day of Judgement, each soul will have their own conscience as their judge.¹² The Devil calls on *synderesis* because it knows the ‘the innerste of thy thought’, whereas the Devil only knows of sins that show themselves ‘by signes of thy werkes and of thy wordes withouteforth.’¹³ *Synderesis* thus represents the full knowledge of sin, from the evil impulse and desire for a sinful act to its completion

¹⁰ *Âme*, ll. 1199-1216.

¹¹ *Soul*, 1.19, p. 26.

¹² Faral, Guillaume Degueville, p. 49, n. 6. Cf. Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarium sive dialogus de summa totius christianae theologiae*, ii. 14, PL clxxii, 1167.

¹³ *Soul* 1. 18 pp. 25-6. Cf. *Âme*, ll. 1187-1192. ‘Car tes pensees scet tresbien,/ des quelles ne scaï nulle rien/ Forst par conjectures sens plus/ Selon le[s] fais que j’ai scëus./Tes fais, tes dis tresproprement/Sai, mes non plus, don’t sui doulent.’

and is in a much better position to accuse the soul. Ironically, the Father of Lies has to rely on the ultimate truth-teller.

There is one small but significant difference between the Old French and the Middle English, which deserves to be highlighted. *Synderesis* in the Old French is referred to as a 'she', in keeping with the grammatical gender of *synderesis* in Latin. The Middle English version, however, uses the masculine gender to describe *synderesis*. Although *synderesis* is not described in relation to higher reason here, this change of gender may indirectly reflect the scholastic comparison of higher reason with man (Adam), and lower reason with woman (Eve), who was deceived by the serpent and who represents carnal delight.¹⁴ Having been called in to handle the prosecution, for the first time in the history of the concept *synderesis* begins to speak:

La vielle a moi parla ainsi
'Pour toi accuser vien ici.
En tous lieux je sui creable,
Nulle fois je ne di fable;
Je scai quanquë onque pensas,
Quanquë as dit et fait tu as
De rien ne me pues excepter,
Contredire ne refuser.
Je ai bonne renommee
Et moult t'ai este privee,
De tes fautes t'ai avisie
Souvent par tresgrant charite,
Pour ce que ton bien vouloie
Et ton salut pourchacoie.
Pour tes meffais et tes mesdis
T'ai si souvent mors et repris
Que tous mes dens en sont uses

¹⁴ See e.g. Gauthier, René A., 'Le traité *De anima et de potenciis eius* d'un maître dès arts (vers 1225). Introduction et texte critique', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 66 (1982), pp. 3-55, at p. 55. This author distinguishes between *synderesis* and higher reason, but as we have seen, this distinction was not always upheld and it is conceivable that *synderesis* was imagined in these terms.

Et tous rompus et tous quasses.
 Si dur as en tous temps este,
 Et si rebours et obstine
 Que pour mordre *ne* remordre
 Ne t'ai peu [de] mal destordre,
 Si que drois est que m'en plaigne
 Et quë em portes la paine;
 Et te dëusses recorder
 Que, quant jadis te vi aler
 La sauvage beste vëoir
 Que on gardoit en .i. manoir.¹⁵

To me this lothly beste bygan for to speke and seide in this wise: 'I am come', quod he, 'to accusen the which am nought acustomed to make fables ne to telle lesynges; but in alle places I am byleued of trouthe. I knowe wel apertly alle thy thoughtes, thy dedes, and thy wordes, from the firste tyme þat euere þu haddest discrecioun andn verrey vnderstindyng. Thou myst azenst me make non exepcioun ne azenseye me of no word, tha I am sure ynogh I am so knowe þat I shal ben byleued better than thyself here in þis court. And ful priue haue I be at alle tymes with the. Ful oftentymes haue I warned the of thy misgouernance as thilke that loueth the, awaytinge thy profite and procurynge thy hele. I haue ful oftentimes, for thy misdeds and thy misgouernance of wordes and of thoughtes, vndertake the and ful sore biten the, so ferforth þat alle my teeth haue ben wasted and broken. So harde and obstinat hat ben thy wikkede herte þat, for no sore bityng that I koude sette vpon the, ne myghte I nat azen turne the of thyn vnthriftynesse.'¹⁶

Synderesis was once upon a time the friend and guide of the soul, but now, when the soul stands in judgment, it has turned into the representative of the prosecutor. It has gnawed the soul so much that it has lost its teeth, since it first came to the soul when the Pilgrim came to the age of discretion. In general, boys were thought to have reached the age of discretion at the age of fourteen, and girls at the age of twelve. This was the age thought most appropriate for first confession. According to the fourth Lateran Council's twenty-first canon (1215) *omnis utriusque sexus*,

¹⁵ *Âme*, ll. 1217-1244.

¹⁶ *Soul*, 1.19, p. 26.

every faithful person is then required, at a minimum, to confess annually to the parish priest, or obtain his permission to confess elsewhere.¹⁷ The reference to ‘thoughtes dedes and wordes’ is a clear reference to the *Confiteor* – the confession of sins at the beginning of the liturgy, in which sins of thoughts, words and deeds were confessed.¹⁸

There are many aspects here where Guillaume’s conception of *synderesis* appropriates scholastic discussions of it, but some instances of departure. *Synderesis* is seen here as that moral guiding light which has been commonplace in the scholastic tradition from Anselm of Laon and the decretists onwards. It never lies, i.e., it is never wrong, which is an idea which strongly resembles the identification of *synderesis* with the Aristotelian notion of *intellectus*, and the motto *intellectus semper verus*, which was introduced in the 1220s, most likely with William of Auxerre. The concept of *synderesis* as *semper verus* always referred to its capacity to grasp general axioms of the natural law, whereas here the concept has been transferred to mean a general inability to lie. However, this passage clearly states that *synderesis* has been with the soul from the age of discretion, which differs somewhat from the scholastic notion of *synderesis* being innate. This does not necessarily mean that *synderesis* is not there from birth, but more likely means that it becomes active at the age of discretion.

The most striking similarity between *synderesis* in *Âme* and that of the scholastics is, however, the idea of *synderesis* as a worm. In the first chapter we saw how Geoffrey of Poitiers introduced the penultimate line from Isaiah, ‘vermis

¹⁷ Lateran IV § 21, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, i, p. 245

¹⁸ *Âme*, ll. 1221-2. ‘Je scai quanquë onque pensas,/Quanquë as dit et fait tu as’.

eorum non morietur', as a way to understand how *synderesis* functions among the damned. *Synderesis* is what nags the mind of the damned, the constant reminder of one's sins. In some cases in the later discussion, it was seen as the knowledge of the evil of the punishment the damned soul underwent (*displacentiam mali comparatam ad penam*), but not necessarily as knowledge and acknowledgement of the divine justice that had been meted out. The concept of *synderesis* as a worm of conscience appears first in Philip the Chancellor's *Summa de bono* in an argument that is put forward against the notion that *synderesis* is extinguished ('Vermis autem ille est conscientie'). This is then alluded to in John of La Rochelle's *Summa de vitiis*. Odo Rigaud uses the term *conscientie vermis* when explaining how the damned are aware of the moral evil of their suffering.¹⁹ Bonaventure, as we have seen, makes ample use of it in his *Commentary*.

The notion of a worm of conscience stretches outside of the scholastic debates on *synderesis*, however. Within the Cistercian tradition in which de Deguileville worked one may find two eminent authors who use the idea of the worm. In one of Aelred of Rievaulx's sermons we find the idea that the worms of conscience arise from one's sins and always accuse the soul and gnaw (*corrodunt*) at it.²⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, another Cistercian, writes regarding the penultimate line in Isaiah ('vermis eorum non morietur et ignis eorum non extinguetur'), that there are two

¹⁹ *De bono*, p. 203. John of La Rochelle, in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, p. 177. Odo Rigaud in Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*, ii p. 202.

²⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermo* 102. 9, in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Aelredi Rievallensis sermones lxxxv- clxxxii: collectio Radingensis*, ed. Gaetano Raciti, *CCCM* 2C (Turnhout, 2012), p. 88. A formula almost identical to Aelred's can be found in Herman von Rein, *Hermannii De Runa Sermones Festivales*, ed. Edmun Mikkers, Joseph Theuws, and R. Demeulenaere, *CCCM* 64 (Turnhout, 1986), *Sermo* 7. 4, p. 27.

evils that the damned feel: the worm gnawing conscience and the fire that burn the body.²¹ Examples can be multiplied of instances where medieval authors describe the psychological sufferings of the damned as *vermis conscientiae*. The scene in the *Âme* where *synderesis* is introduced, however, displaces the idea of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience; it takes *synderesis* as the worm of conscience out of Hell and places it in the scene where the soul is judged for its behaviour, for which I have not been able to find any precedent.

The most likely inspiration for *synderesis* as the worm of conscience in this instance is Bonaventure's discussion of *synderesis* and Hell in the fourth book of his *Commentary*. Every other reference to *synderesis* as the worm of conscience is very brief. Bonaventure is the master who makes the most of this idea in his final book of his *Commentary*. Here, *synderesis* functions as that which punishes the soul, through the knowledge of having done an unworthy deed, in the afterlife before the Final Judgement. The soul has received its verdict after death, but is still awaiting the resurrection of the body and the Final Judgement. In the meantime, *synderesis* gnaws away as the soul undergoes its spiritual punishment.

Synderesis then proceeds to accuse the Pilgrim:

Et quë em portes la paine;
 Et te dëusses recorder
 Que, quand jadis te vi aler
 La sauvage beste vëoir
 Que on gardoit en .i. manoir
 Et que tu donnas ton argent
 Pour vëoir la tant seulement,
 Je t'avise des lors et dis:
 S'en toi ëusses bon avis,
 Toi meïsmes regardasses
 Et plus loing de toi n'alasses

²¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententiae* 1.1. in *SBO* vi. 2, p. 7.

Ja sauvage beste vëoir,
Car asses l'estoies de voir.²²

‘So is it right þat I peyne vpon the and þat thou [b]ere thy peyne right as thou hast wilfully deserued. Bythenke the now whan I saugh the on a tyme gon to a certeyn place for to se and byholde a merveillous beste and ʒave thy moneye only for that sight. That tyme spak I to the, ʒif þu now recorde, þat I ʒay such conceil and seide, “ʒif that thou were awised,” quod I, “as by resoun þou oughtest, thou shuldest haue gon no further for haue byholde a wonderful beste but to thyn own persone, and there myghtest þu se a foule, mishape monstre of thyn owne soule more mervailous þan that other.”’²³

The soul here stands accused of the sin of vain curiosity, *vana curiositas*. The Pilgrim had at one point in life gone to see a ‘merveillous beste’ (‘sauvage beste’) and even paid to access the spectacle. Instead of devoting himself to God, the Pilgrim is stuck in the world of sensations, in the cheap pleasures and excitement of the circus. This echoes Augustine’s stance in the tenth book of the *Confessions*, where Augustine tells that even though he does not visit the circus any more, it may happen that when he travels he sees a dog chasing a hare in the field, just like the circus. His attention may be drawn towards the chase and if he does not lift his mind from this event to higher things or if God does not correct his erring mind he would grow empty and weak (‘uanus hebesco’).²⁴ A few paragraphs earlier, Augustine questioned the behaviour of people who thronged to see, out of pure curiosity, things that are contrary to pleasure and delight — not to endure something, but out of desire to experience and know (‘non ad subeundam molestiam, sed experiendi noscendique libidine’).²⁵ The Pilgrim has behaved in a

²² *Âme*, ll. 1241-1253

²³ *Soul*, 1.19, pp. 26-7.

²⁴ Augustine, *Confessiones*, 10.35.57 (p. 186).

²⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones*, 10.35.55 (pp. 184-5).

similar way: he has sought the experience of seeing an exotic animal, but he has failed to raise his mind to higher things. Instead of coveting the sight of a monstrosity, the Pilgrim should tend to the appearance of his own soul, which has turned into a ‘merveilleous beste’ in its own right — now reflected in the monstrosity of *synderesis*.²⁶ Instead, the Pilgrim should have followed *synderesis*’ advice to seek sacramental absolution from a priest.²⁷ This antagonism between the demands of *synderesis* and the desire for exotic sensory experiences echoes the scholastic discussions where the activity of *synderesis* is impeded by the lower reason, or the less abstract knowledge that is based on phantasms.

Synderesis continues by saying that the Pilgrim ought to have listened to Lady Penance. For she told the Pilgrim that a worm was growing in his heart that only contrition could root out. It was Lady Penance who had called *synderesis* the worm of conscience, because she knew how *synderesis* nags those who do wrong against themselves, i.e., who sin, and who do not take action to root it out. Since the Pilgrim has not used the tools of Lady Penance (the hammer of contrition, the besom of confession and the rods of punishment) to root out the worm of conscience, it has instead grown, ‘biterly prickynge’ (‘bien poignant’). If the Pilgrim had not made his conscience so large, i.e., generous, there would have been no need for *synderesis* to have grown to its present monstrous size, and if his

²⁶ A similar sentiment was expressed centuries later by Victor Fournel who discussed the art of *flânerie* in his *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*. He distinguished between the flaneur who maintains a detached relationship to the environment he observes, whereas the ‘gawker’ the *badaud*, loses him or herself (and thereby also becomes an impersonal creature) in whatever is observed. Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* (Paris, 1858), p. 263.

²⁷ *Âme*, ll. 1254-1263. *Soul*, 1.19, p. 27.

conscience would have been straight, the tail of *synderesis* would not have needed to have grown so much ‘for in a place streite, of nature may no thyng ouerpassen mesure in wexing’ (En lieu estroit par nature/Ne croist rien sus la mesure’).²⁸

The French line in which *synderesis* tells that she bites and torments those ‘qui a eux mesmes font tort’, which in Middle English is translated as ‘to bite and rounge tho that wrongen hemselven’.²⁹ The French text is likely a reference to the concept of the sinful person as *incurvatus in se*, turned in on him/herself, which has a much deeper resonance in the Augustinian theological tradition than to ‘wrongen hemselven’ does.

The reference to Lady Penance is somewhat obscure in the context of the *Âme* and *Soul* as she does not appear there. Instead, this refers back to de Deguileville’s earlier *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine (Vie)*, where Lady Penance appears with her attributes – the hammer of contrition, the besom of confession and the rods of punishment. The *Âme* only mentions the hammer of contrition, whereas the *Soul* mentions all three attributes, and thus compensates somewhat for the fact that the English audience did not have access to the *Vie*. In this text, written ca. 1330-31, and later translated to Middle English verse by John Lydgate in 1426, de Deguileville describes the worm of conscience as cruel and biting, (‘si cruel est et poignant’) whom the Pilgrim should smite with the mallet of Lady Penance.³⁰

²⁸ *Âme* ll. 1268-1294, *Soul*, 1.20, p. 27. The French text does not include the besom and the rod.

²⁹ *Âme*, ll. 1279-80. *Soul*, 1.20, p. 27.

³⁰ Guillaume de Deguileville, *Le pèlerinage de vie humaine de Guillaume de Deguileville*, ed. J. J. Stürzinger (London, 1893), ll. 2155-2172.

It is therefore clear that de Deguileville already as early as 1331 conceived of the worm of conscience as it would appear in the *Âme*, written over twenty years later. *Synderesis*' function here is in telling the soul that it has performed an act which ought not to have been done and which now has come back to punish it. This fits well with the scholastic discussion, and in particular Bonaventure's, of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience. As we saw in Chapter two, *synderesis*' function among the damned is to tell the soul it has performed an act against the dictates of conscience, it has done something that is *indebitum*. Whilst deliberative will may have consented in doing what is *indebitum*, natural will (*synderesis*) does not consent and the pain caused by this spiritual schizophrenia is the effect of the nagging of *synderesis*. In a similar way, the soul has here assented to do something (deliberative will) which *synderesis* has advised against (natural will). The reference to Lady Penance and the hammer of contrition, and in the Middle English, the besom of confession and the rods of punishment echoes Bonaventure's thought that the worm of conscience can only grow under certain circumstances. Since a natural worm grows out of putrefaction, Bonaventure thinks, thus the worm of conscience must be born out of the putrefaction of sin. If one is aware of having sinned, then the worm of conscience may begin to grow out of it. Heretics, as we saw, were unaware of their sin and thus lacked the worm. If one had sinned in life and was aware of this, *synderesis* might turn into this worm of conscience, but there were means of getting rid of it in the form of penance. The tension between deliberative and natural will may, Bonaventure argued, be resolved by those who show true penance (which begins with contrition and is fulfilled with confession and accepting acts of satisfaction – 'punishment'). Once that tension had been undone, the worm had nothing to grow from. It is in the light of this theory of *synderesis* that we should then understand the accusation *synderesis* makes against

the Pilgrim who ought to have sought absolution from a priest, instead of seeking sinful pleasures.

The idea that the worm of conscience can grow out of the ‘putrefaction’ of the soul due to its sins is, as we have seen, by no means unique to Bonaventure but is part and parcel of the medieval reception of Augustine’s remarks on the worm of conscience in *De civitate Dei*.³¹ Nor is the idea that *synderesis* is this worm of conscience unique to Bonaventure. Bonaventure’s *Commentary* is, however, where the idea is most elaborated and receives its full psychological depth together with his interpretation of *synderesis*. The large overlap between Bonaventure’s doctrine on *synderesis* in the *Commentary* and the function of *synderesis* in the *Âme* and the *Soul* make it likely that this is de Deguileville’s main inspiration.

The Pilgrim then attempts the same line of defence as he did against Satan: the worm of conscience is of such a foul nature and not fit to accuse someone who is made in the image and likeness of God. *Synderesis* points out that that would have been valid, if only the Pilgrim would have kept his soul in the image and likeness of God and not deformed it. Instead, the soul has become deformed by many sins and wicked acts, vain and evil words and many horrible and shameful thoughts which have not been disclosed in confession, but which has always been seen and noted by *synderesis*. *Synderesis* then promises to show the court that the soul is indeed ‘moche more fouler and horrible þan am I. For in me is ther no maner of euel, byt

³¹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 21. 9 (ii, pp. 774-5). See for instance Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermones*, *Sermo* 102. 9 (p. 89): ‘Cadavera sunt peccata, vermis prava conscientia, quae oritur de peccatis, quae semper hominem accusat’ (‘The dead bodies represent sins, the worms the evil conscience, which is born out of sins, which always accuses man’).

that thy self hast caused.’ If the Pilgrim thinks that *synderesis* is ugly, then that is of his own making. *Synderesis* claims to have worked hard and spent all its time to help the soul but received no thanks and is therefore now fully entitled to accuse the Pilgrim.³²

Satan acknowledges that *synderesis* knows much more than he about the misdeeds of the soul and asks him to take care of the prosecution whilst he take notes, a scene often depicted in manuscript illustrations (see below). *Synderesis* then proceeds to tell the court of everything wicked the Pilgrim had done in life, which the author says is far too much to recount.³³ As the accuser of the soul, *synderesis* appears almost as a demonic version of God as that which in Augustinian terms is *intimior intimo meo* – closer to me than I am to myself.

The Pilgrim, being asked by the judge to respond to the accusations, is unable to defend himself apart from one instance when he blames the natural frailty of the soul following the Fall. He once more questions the presence of Satan as a scribe, since from the time the Pilgrim knew the difference between good and evil, he has laid traps for the Pilgrim and been so close to him that the Pilgrim does not think that he has always had entirely free choice.³⁴ Instead, Satan has deceived the soul:

Si y met je addiction,
Car ce mauvais tabellion
Qui ores a mes maux escriis
M’a en tous temps si de pres prins
Que pas n’ai eü grant lesir
De bien deles le mal choisir.
Une foismal pour bien monstre
M’a, autre fois envelope
M’a mal en semblance de bien

³² *Âme*, ll. 1295-1344, *Soul*, 1.20, pp. 27-8.

³³ *Âme*, ll. 1353-1378, *Soul*, 1.21, pp. 28-9.

³⁴ *Âme*, ll. 1379- 1410, *Soul*, 1.21, p. 29-30.

En tel maniere que, quant rien
Mal au premier ne savoie,
Decëu je me trouvoie.³⁵

But with many subtile dece[y]tes he bilappede the euyl vnder
semblaunce of good and somtyme closede the good vnder colour of
euyl, that I ne couthe not clerely wite whiche I shulde sette to myn
hande. And so ful oftetyes ther I nought purposede ne thoughte vpon
euel at the begynyng, I was deceyued and brugt therynne or I myghte
haue leysur to beseen myself.³⁶

When the Pilgrim had set his mind to mend his ways by penance, he says, Satan had let him to sloth, so that he never sought the right way. Whatever good intent there may had been in his heart, it had swiftly been replaced with a less good intent by Satan.³⁷

We see in the above quotation an echo of the scholastic question ‘*utrum possit synderesis precipitari*’ – whether *synderesis* can be paralysed or put out of function. Bonaventure, as we saw in Chapter two, believed that the activity of *synderesis* can be impeded by the blindness of error (*tenebra obcaecationis*), which entails the blurring or inversion of good and evil.³⁸ Here, the setting is the same, the soul is deceived by Satan to believe that evil is good and good is evil and therefore pursued a morally wrongful action. Meanwhile, presumably, *synderesis* nags and urges the soul to seek the good and has now returned to accuse the soul for failing to do so.

The second excuse the Pilgrim offers is that he was trapped in the delights of the world:

Et di encor(e) sire juge,

³⁵ *Âme*, ll. 1425-1436.

³⁶ *Soul*, 1.21, p. 30.

³⁷ *Soul*, 1.21, p. 30.

³⁸ *In II Sent.*, d. 39 a. 2. q. 2. resp. Cf. Chapter two, section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

Que je tien a mon refuge
 Que le monde qui la jus est
 A este contre moi moult prest.
 Il m'a ses houneurs monstrees,
 Ses vanites, ses denrees
 Ou mon corps qui la jus pourrist
 Maintes fois deliter me fist,
 Et aussi li fis deliter
 Par ma folie et encliner.
 L'un l'autre decëu avon,
 Quant ensemble nous estion,
 Le monde moult nous promectoit
 Que point donner ne nous vouloit.
 Et s'aucune fois il donnoit,
 Tantost apres il retoloit.
 Il est tel de sa nature
 Que nul n'y puet vie pure
 Mener, se n'est par Grace Dieu
 Qui a seignourie du lieu,
 Si ques aucune excusance
 Doi avoir, quant a l'instance
 D'autrui ai fait ma folie
 La quelle ie ne ni(e) mie.³⁹

And also, Sire Iuge, that wikked World byneth ha alwey ben my greuous enemy. For he hat me shewed his richesse and his vanites, his hono[r]s and his wrecchednesse, and made my flessch, that now lith and rotheth, gretly deliten therynne; so that by my foly that oon of vs – that is to sayen, body and soule – han often deceyued eyþer other while we were togidre. This false World byhyghte vs moche thyng whiche that he wolde nought 3eue. And 3if so were that he had any tyme parfourmed his promisse, no doute ful [so]one after he withheeld it. And sothely, of such natur he is, þere is no wight that may lede a sure ne a clene lyf except souereyne grace, þat moche hath to medle therwith.⁴⁰

This second excuse bears some resemblance to what Bonaventure thinks is the second cause of *synderesis* not functioning properly: *lascivia delectationis*. The soul of the Pilgrim has become so immersed in worldly and ephemeral pleasures, that it has forgotten its purpose in life. The ways of the flesh, which is now rotting

³⁹ *Âme*, ll. 1461-1484.

⁴⁰ *Soul*, 1.21, p. 30.

away, stand in stark contradiction to the way that *synderesis* suggested whilst the Pilgrim was still alive.

Lady Justice then intervenes to make clear that these excuses carry no weight, since the Pilgrim always had the Law of Moses and Christ for his guidance, as well as the examples of saints, hermits and anchorites. Instead, the Pilgrim has allowed that ‘the wrechede body, that oughte to have ben seruant, hat had the soueraynte and maistry ouer the soule, that shulde haue bem maistre and souerayn.’ Indeed, the Pilgrim had the help and guidance of Lady Grace-Dieu who, even as the Pilgrim lay sick in his bed sent him her letters to which he had paid no notice. Lady Justice says that she had collected these letters and thus begins to read from one of these, to show how the Pilgrim has rejected divine grace, whereupon follows the section called the *Epistle of Grace-Dieu sent to the Sike Man*.⁴¹

2.2.1. The *Epistle of Grace-Dieu* and its Translation

As mentioned in the previous section, the authorship of the *Soul* is still unclear. A case has been made for Hoccleve’s authorship of at least the poems, which remains inconclusive. In the case of the *Epistle of Grace-Dieu*, one fact that may speak in favour of a separate translator (Hoccleve or someone else) of this text is that *synderesis* here stands in the feminine, whereas the *Soul* described *synderesis* as masculine.⁴² Whoever translated this poem followed de Deguileville’s gendering of *synderesis* instead of following the pattern of the other occurrences of *synderesis* in the *Soul*. Although the Middle English version of this part of the *Âme* can only be

⁴¹ *Âme*, ll. 1489-1592, *Soul*, 1.22, pp. 31-2.

⁴² There is one exception: *Soul*, 1.20, p. 27: “ȝif thou haue mynde,” she saide’.

found in the manuscripts that contain the *Soul*, the possibility of a separate authorship suggests that this part, and the representation of *synderesis* could have circulated independently.

In the *Epistle*, Grace, ‘quen and heuenly princesse,’ speaks in twenty-six stanzas to a man who finds himself in mortal peril. Malady, the servant of death, has got hold of him and Grace intervenes to advise the man on how to get well again. Having been with him at times when he was unaware of her presence, and searching through his conscience, Grace chastises the man for his negligence and his lack of self-governance, which has brought him to his present state. He has since an early age left sobriety behind, and been devoted to lust. Grace believes that the nature of this malady requires phlebotomy, thereby stressing the somatic nature of moral decadence. In addition, the body suffers from corrupt humours and must be attended to, lest death grab hold of it. Grace then urges the man to turn to himself and see his wretchedness, and with tears cleanse himself from his sins as soon as possible, for death shows no pity.⁴³ Death’s messengers, Age and Malady wait eagerly, and for that reason Grace says:

Mainte fois t’ai ammouneste.
Privatim et manifeste
Que tousjours fusses apreste
Te tibimet facto teste.
Rien fait par toi n’en a este,
Synderesis hoc penes te
Le dit que en a enqueste
Et scit modum rei geste.
Vers moi qui sui ta miresse
Appetens tibi prodesse
Mesprens de fausse promesse,

⁴³ *Âme*, ll. 1593-1624. *Soul*, 1.22. pp. 32-3.

Nam promiseras expresse
Quē iroies a confesse,
Et ultra tibi p[r]eesse
Ne lairoies ta baiasse,
Sed cogeres hanc subesse.⁴⁴

How ofte haue I warned the byfore –
Omwhile apert, somtyme preuely –
That redy schuldest thou haue ben euermore?
Witnesse upon thyself! I say the why:
Thou myght the nought excusen vtterly.
Sinderesis, she knoweth euerydel.
Sche wol be thyn appellour. Wite it weel!
Anentes me, that alwey wolde thy prow,
Ful folily thou hast thyself mistake.
For thou byhitest – this wostow wel ynow –
That al thy foly woldest thou forsake,
And woldest thyselfen verrey clene make,
Puttynge Flessch vnder subieccioun,
To be gouerned after thy resoun.⁴⁵

Grace works in many ways to preserve the soul and have it continuously prepared for death. He should look at himself and see that he cannot get away with his deeds because *synderesis* knows everything he has done. Like divine grace, *synderesis* here becomes a character, here a ‘she’, someone who has a particular role to play in the drama of the soul’s journey to heaven or hell. The role ascribed to *synderesis* is that of the *appelloure*, the accuser, and it has no resemblance to *synderesis*’ usual function to stimulate to the good and abhor evil, or reveal the natural law. The only part of the scholastic discussion of *synderesis* that it can relate to, as in the rest of the *Âme* and *Soul*, is that of the worm of conscience, and in particular Bonaventure’s expansion of the discussion. *Synderesis* keeps track of misdeeds so it can later accuse the soul of the departed.

⁴⁴ *Âme*, ll. 1649-1664.

⁴⁵ *Soul*, 1.22, p. 34.

Grace asks rhetorically whether the Pilgrim is so morally pure that there is nothing in him to weep for and goes on to say that it displeases her bitterly that he cannot see his own wretchedness, his sins, misdeeds and lack of thriftiness.⁴⁶ Given the setting of this letter, these lines point ahead to the on-going trial of the Pilgrim where he through *synderesis* finally must face up to his failures. In the remainder of the *Epistle*, Grace admonishes and encourages the Pilgrim to see his wretchedness, and return to the path of salvation.⁴⁷

2.3. The Letter of the Law, Intention and Mercy

The Pilgrim's refusal of the offer in Grace's letter nullifies his defence in Lady Justice's eyes. Had the Pilgrim lived at the time of Nero, Maximian and Diocletian, it would not be certain that he would not abandon the Christian faith. Had he met Arius and his followers, he might have defected to heresy.⁴⁸ These accusations echo to some extent the discussions of how *synderesis* functions among the heretics. The general consensus among the scholastics was that *synderesis* remained active among heretics but that its general precepts had been misapplied and thus failed in its purpose to lead the soul to salvation. Here, the Pilgrim's refusal to heed the guidance of *synderesis* and help from divine grace, had led him to such a state of moral depravity that he has left himself open to the suggestion that he may not had been able to resist the temptation of heresy in the days of Arius. The Old French and Middle English versions match here, but given the potential anti-Lollard

⁴⁶ *Âme*, ll. 1689-1696. *Soul*, 1.22, p. 34.

⁴⁷ *Âme*, ll. 1696-1784, *Soul*, 1.22, pp. 34-6.

⁴⁸ *Âme*, ll. 1785-1822. *Soul*, 1.23, pp. 36-7.

purpose of the *Soul*, this accusation takes on a further dimension for its intended audience. Reason and Truth concur, with the latter adding that the Pilgrim has not undergone true penance with proper contrition and regret, but rather feigned penance to avoid social exclusion.⁴⁹ The Devil triumphantly calls for the Pilgrim to be given to him, but Lady Mercy intervenes, arguing that, although sinful, the Pilgrim still has good in him; no human is perfect. Justice objects that Christ did not die for sinners to go about continuing their sins after they have been forgiven, but that, once cleansed, they may keep themselves clean. Christ never intended to save sinners after they have died. Mercy responds that the Pilgrim always intended to fulfil his pilgrimage through life and at the very end repented of his sins.⁵⁰

After a debate (the nature of which differs somewhat between the French and Middle English translation), St. Michael then orders Justice to bring forth her scales to weigh the staff and bag of the Pilgrim against the writ of the Devil, containing the accusations made by *synderesis*. To his great dismay, the Pilgrim's staff and bag weigh but little, compared to the Devil's writ, and to make things even worse, *synderesis* jumps onto the scale as well – a motif often represented in manuscript illustrations.⁵¹ But Mercy then manages to persuade Michael to delay his judgement until she has returned from Heaven, whence she obtains a Charter of Pardon from Christ himself. In this Charter, Christ states that he grants the Pilgrim salvation for the sake of his final repentance before death, but that this is a special grant and not something one ought to trust instead of repenting and seeking absolution in life.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Âme*, ll. 1853-1900. *Soul*, 1.24-5, pp. 37-8.

⁵⁰ *Âme*, ll. 1902-2096. *Soul*, 1.26-29, pp. 39-43.

⁵¹ *Âme*, ll. 2211-2282. *Soul*, 1.29-31, pp. 43-8.

⁵² *Âme*, ll. 2289-2465. *Soul*, 1.32, pp. 49-51.

Reason, Truth and Justice debate whether this Charter is valid for this particular pilgrim and complain to Michael who calls the court to reconvene. Lady Justice once more brings out her scales to demonstrate the sinfulness of the Pilgrim. Lady Mercy then puts the Charter of Pardon on the scale along with the Pilgrim's staff and bag, whereupon the scale swings in the Pilgrim's favour. After a debate, the court decides to let the Pilgrim escape eternal damnation and instead be purged of his sins in Purgatory.⁵³

The scenario is in its general outline similar to a story in the fifth canto of Dante's *Purgatorio* in which the excommunicated Buonconte da Montefeltro dies with the name of Mary on his lips, praying for deliverance. A demon attempts to take the soul to Hell but it is snatched away by an angel, because of the sinner's final act of repentance, whilst the demon protests loudly.⁵⁴

Synderesis may thus still be unerring, and may tell the entire truth regarding the Pilgrim's sins, but God is entirely free to override the judgement that would naturally follow from that truth, based on the Pilgrim's intentions. It is not as if the Pilgrim's final act of contrition has changed his nature; the Pilgrim is, as *synderesis* testifies, in a state where his sins have deformed his nature and turned his soul into a monstrosity, reflected by *synderesis*. Instead of being judged in accordance with his many sins, he is acquitted in spite of them. In some ways, this scenario foreshadows the forensic theory of justification and doctrine of salvation *sola gratia* of the Reformation.

⁵³ *Âme*, ll. 2467- 2596, *Soul*, 1. 33-35, pp. 51-5.

⁵⁴ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, ii, 5. 85-108. Similarly, when Mercy puts her case to the court, she adds that the Pilgrim has prayed to Mary for assistance, and that Christ cannot deny the requests of his mother, which in turn is acknowledged in the charter, *Âme*, ll. 2007-2034, 2377-2385, *Soul*, 1. 27, p. 41, 1. 32, p. 49.

The power of *synderesis* is thus broken, not only by God's voluntaristic overriding of Truth Justice and Reason, but also by the fact that the Pilgrim's last intention was to be reconciled with God, although he did not obtain sacramental absolution. The emphasis on the intention of the penitent reflects the ethical discussions in the twelfth century. In his fourth book of *Sentences*, Peter Lombard asks whether one may obtain the remission of sins without confession and penance, if one may confess to God directly and if, in an emergency, one may confess to a layperson. Lombard's solution is that as long as there is a genuine desire and intention (*votum*) to seek sacramental absolution, as well as contrition of heart, God forgives the sins of the penitent, even if confessed to a layperson, where there is no priest available.⁵⁵ Indeed, in lamenting the lacking pastoral qualifications of many priests, Lombard says that if it is impossible to find a good priest, one could go to a companion (*socius*).⁵⁶

Lombard's stance moderates the contritionist views of, for example, Peter Abelard, who thought that contrition alone absolves the soul. The *Âme* and *Soul* open the possibility of obtaining that grace, but make it very clear that it is an exception: no one should ever delay going to their parish priest for confession, and one may not go on sinning with the plan of making a final act of contrition.

There appears to be a tension in the *Âme* and *Soul* between the idea that contrition may bring about salvation, and the existence of *synderesis*. According to *synderesis*, the Pilgrim should not have had to face his accuser, if he had only

⁵⁵ *IV Sent.*, d. 17. c. 1. 13.; *IV Sent.* d. 17. c. 3. 8; *IV Sent.* d. 17. c. 3.2. For a more thorough discussion of Lombard and penance, see P. W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford and New York, 2004) pp. 159-168.

⁵⁶ *IV Sent.*, d.17. c. 4. 6.

brought himself to confession. But if a final act of contrition may obtain the grace of forgiveness, *synderesis* would not need to appear, as the conditions in which the worm of conscience grows are taken away. This paradox is allowed for the sake of dramatic tension and the didactic purposes of the text, but this also explains why the soul must go through Hell and Purgatory: the soul is still tainted by its sins, but may nevertheless, through the grace of God, enter Heaven at the end of its purgation.

The focus of the *Âme* and *Soul* on how the desire for forgiveness may in the end suffice in a situation where sacramental absolution was unavailable reflects the urgent pastoral questions that arose during the Black Death, when circumstances did not allow for the fulfilling of canonical obligations. With the inability of a decimated clergy to serve the sacramental needs of a population undergoing a cataclysm, the possibility arose of bypassing confession to obtain the grace of forgiveness. Pastoral creativity during the Black Death in England included for example the granting of faculties to lay people to hear confessions *in extremis*. Deacons sent by Ralph, bishop of Shrewsbury, to distribute the Eucharist among the sick were not given the faculty to give unction; instead, faith had to suffice.⁵⁷

2.4. Manuscript Illustrations of *Synderesis*

Since Guillaume provides an elaborate description of *synderesis* and since the trial of the soul takes up several lines and chapters there are some illustrations of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience in the surviving manuscripts. Overall, illuminators have struggled with what to do with *synderesis*: should it be depicted

⁵⁷ Dohar, 'Since the Pestilence Time', pp. 181-2.

as a worm and how should it be gendered? If one should not depict it as a worm, then how shall it be identified? In some manuscripts, both English and French, *synderesis* is represented as a hybrid between human and worm. In some French manuscripts, it is sometimes depicted as a woman, whose hair extends into a worm-like tail, stretching from the head to the ground. This is the case in two manuscripts (see next page figure 1 and 2). In figure 3, *synderesis* is clearly depicted as a hybrid between worm and old lady (*vielle*), standing before the court to accuse the Pilgrim. *Synderesis* can be seen enumerating with her fingers the sins of the Pilgrim. The artist has tried to show *synderesis*' gums, where the teeth ought to have been, but because of the Pilgrim's sins, *synderesis* has now worn out her teeth. The image diverges somewhat from the text in that the Devil is not represented here as the notary, but merely sits in a corner. The image of *synderesis* as a *vielle*, an old lady, can also be found in Paris, BnF, MS français 12465 (figure 4). However, instead of depicting *synderesis* with hair that turns into a worm, or the body of a worm, she is here depicted with the worm coming out of her mouth, like a tongue, to accuse the Pilgrim, who cringes in fear.

In two Middle English translations, the monstrosity of *synderesis* appears clearly. In the first case, Melbourne, State Library of Victoria, MS 096/G94 (figure 5) *synderesis* is depicted as a lizard-like creature with feet and tail, but no arms and a human head, reading his accusation. Unlike many other depictions, it appears nearly genderless here. The Middle English translation contained in New York, New York Public Library, MS Spencer 19 depicts *synderesis* as a worm with the head of a bearded man, whose body has contorted itself into a knot (figure 6). This illustration is probably meant to reflect the twisted mind of the Pilgrim, who had been admonished by Lady Penance that 'for in a place streite, of nature may no thyng ouerpasse mesure in wexing' (En lieu estroit par nature/Ne croist rien

sus la mesure’).⁵⁸ The colour of *synderesis* here matches that of the Devil, showing their affinity.



Figure 1: Paris, BnF, MS français 9196 fol. 89ra.

Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Figure 2. MS Gibbs, 5, fol. 94. Reproduced in J. Stürzinger’s edition, see *Âme*, p. 45 (current location unknown).

⁵⁸ *Âme* ll. 1268-1294, quotation at l. 1293, *Soul*, 1.20, p. 27.



Figure 3. London, British Library, Add., MS 38120, p. 249. Reproduced in J. Stürzinger's edition, see *Âme*, p. 45.



Figure 4. Paris, BnF, MS français 12465 fol. 97^{ra}

Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Figure 5. Melbourne, State Library of Victoria, MS 096/G94 fol. 110r.



Figure 6. New York, New York Public Library, MS Spencer, 19. fol 22r.

Most of these manuscript illuminations represent *synderesis* to various degrees as a hybrid between human and worm. To depict human nature, destined for divinity, fused with the lowest and most unpleasant of creatures is in a sense a *monstrum*. Like the cynocephaloi and other fantasy creatures which inhabit the terra incognita, *synderesis* is the monster that has grown to its hideous size in the forgotten recesses of the Pilgrim's conscience. Indeed, *synderesis* tells the Pilgrim how he should not have gone to see a marvellous beast to satiate his curiosity, and now has to face the monstrosity of his own conscience. Whereas *Âme* uses 'sauvage beste' to describe both beast and *synderesis*/soul, the translator has emphasised the monstrosity of the soul by calling it 'a foule mishape monstre of thyn owne soule more mervailous þan that other.'⁵⁹ The union of two natures, human and worm, in these manuscripts becomes a form of parody on, and inversion of, the Incarnation: Christ united two natures to bring humanity to salvation, the Pilgrim has nurtured a monstrous being depicted as worm and human, which will bring him to eternal damnation. Given that *synderesis* is meant to be innate in every human being, these illustrations serve the meditative purpose of reflecting on one's own sins and the 'mysshapen monstre' of one's soul, the possibility of imminent death and the trial of the soul.

⁵⁹ *Âme*, ll. 1241-1253. *Soul* 1.19, p. 27.

3. Other Occurrences of *Synderesis* as the Worm of Conscience in Vernacular Literature

Whilst no other medieval vernacular text assigns such a great role to *synderesis*, and which so consciously appropriates the scholastic discussions, there are a few other allusions to the notion of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience up to ca. 1450 which merit some attention.

There are some cases where the worm of conscience figures, but not in connection to *synderesis*. *The Prik of Conscience*, for instance, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century and erroneously attributed to Richard Rolle, lists in its sixth part the pains of Hell. The tenth pain is the ‘gnawing within/of conscience’. The damned souls suffer from worms feeding off their bodies and the worms of conscience biting them within, whilst they complain of having set their hopes on worldly goods.⁶⁰ Yet there is no reference to *synderesis*, nor does the wording in this passage suggest an appropriation of the fusion between the two concepts that we saw in *Âme and Soul*.⁶¹

The same can be said in the case of Lydgate’s *Life of St. Albon and St. Amphibalus*. In the section where St. Amphibalus is tortured and mocked, a pagan asks him to call for his God to help him, or better, to ask the pagan gods for assistance.⁶² Amphibalus rejects this proposal. All pagan gods are actually the fiends of Hell, as are the tyrants who deify themselves, knowing they are mortal.

⁶⁰ *Prik of Conscience*, ed. J. H. Morey (Kalamazoo, 2012), part vi, ll. 567-611.

⁶¹ The closest one comes is ll. 604-606 ‘That withinne hem shal gnaw and byte/For thay hadde here on vanyté deliyte/And for that conscience stird hem nought.’

⁶² John Lydgate, *Saint Albon and Saint Amphibalus*, ed. G. F. Reinecke (New York, 1985), ll. 1002-1045.

They are now surrounded by eternal fire and pain which is never quenched 'nor the worme ded of ther conscience'.⁶³ There is not enough here to warrant the conclusion that *synderesis* and the worm of conscience have been fused.

A stronger case can be made regarding Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It is well known that Chaucer had read de Deguileville and indeed even translated and adapted a part of *Vie* into English in his famous *ABC*.⁶⁴ In the Physician's Tale in the *Canterbury Tales*, it is possible to see yet another occurrence of de Deguileville's influence. The Physician tells of a corrupt judge, Apius, who catches sight of a beautiful young girl (Virginia) and is overwhelmed by lust as the Devil enters into his heart. The judge comes up with a plot to pervert the course of justice by having his companion (Claudius) claim that the girl was his lost bondsman and should be returned back to him (and in turn to the judge). The girl's father (Virginius), rather than having his daughter subjected to sexual slavery, kills her and shows the judge her severed head. Upon this, an angry mob that had begun to suspect the judge of foul play bursts into the courtroom and throws the judge in jail where he commits suicide.⁶⁵ The tale ends with a moralising epilogue:

Her may men se how synne hath his merite

⁶³ Lydgate, *Saint Albon and Saint Amphibalus*, ll. 1046-1071.

⁶⁴ H. Phillips, 'Chaucer and Deguileville - the "Abc" in Context', *Medium Aevum*, 62, (1993), 1-19, G. R. Crampton, 'Chaucer's Singular Prayer', *Medium Aevum*, 59, 2 (1990), 191-213, See also S. Reames, 'Mary, Sanctity and Prayers to Saints: Chaucer and Late Medieval Piety', in H. Phillips (ed.), *Chaucer and Religion* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 81-97, at 89-93. K. G. Stevenson, 'Medieval Reading and Rewriting: The Context of Chaucer's *ABC*', in André Lascombes and Michel Bitot (eds.), *"Divers Toyes Mengled": Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Culture. Études Sur La Culture européenne au moyen âge et à la renaissance: en hommage à André Lascombes* (Tours, 1996), pp. 27-42.

⁶⁵ Chaucer has adapted the tale of Virginia from Livy and Jean de Meun, see Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*, ed. D. Poirion (Paris, 1974), ll. 5556-5697.

Bewar, for no man woot how God wol smyte
In no degree, ne in which maner wise
The worm of conscience wol agryse
Of wicked lyf, though it so pryve be,
That no man woot of it but God and he;
Wer that he be lewed man or lered,
He not how soone that he may be afered.
Therefore I rede yow this counseil take:
Forsakith synne er synne yow forsake.⁶⁶

No one knows when death shall come and how the worm of conscience ‘may wince at a wicked man’s life and sins’, although it knows fully what all the soul’s secrets are already.⁶⁷ Best, then, to abandon sin altogether to avoid having to face the worm of conscience. The description of the worm of conscience as *pryve* to the wicked life of the soul is, I believe, a direct reference to what *Synderesis* says in the *Âme*: ‘Et moult t’ai este privee’.⁶⁸ To turn away from sin, i.e., repent and confess, rids the soul of this concern – just as *synderesis* reprimanded the Pilgrim for never seeking sacramental absolution, or the ‘hammer of contrition,’ when there still was time, instead allowing *synderesis* to grow into a monstrous reflection of the sinful soul.⁶⁹ Marta Powell Harley has suggested that the Physician’s Tale be read as an allegory on the soul (Virginia) as ‘a complex of corruptible virtues ever threatened

⁶⁶ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. L. A. Coote (Ware, 2002), p. 461.

⁶⁷ In Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. D. Wright (Oxford, 2011), p. 323. Marta Powell Harley notes that all translations treat *agryse* as a passive noun; see M. Powell Harley, ‘Last Things First in Chaucer’s Physician’s Tale: Final Judgement and the Worm of Conscience’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 91 (1992), 1-16, at p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Âme*, l. 1226.

⁶⁹ As Powell Harley notes, the call to reject sin ‘is well chosen here, given the preceding allusion to the worm of conscience, for the worm embodies the sin that the individual must forsake, while simultaneously representing the witness most capable of forsaking the soul at judgment.’ Powell Harley, ‘Last Things First’, p. 9

by the vices,' and of the governance of the soul.⁷⁰ Virginia, the perfection of virtue, faces the possibility of becoming a *thral* (slave, servant) to the vices of Apius.

Like the martyrs, she subjects her body to violence rather than shame, which may be an echo of Christ's words in Mk. ix. 43-46, that it is better to maim oneself of the part of the body that sins (hand, feet or eye) than to go to Hell whole. The epilogue leaves the literal level of the tale for a reflection on the final judgment and the possibility of suffering from the worm of conscience.⁷¹

The judge had sinned in thought (lust) words (lies) and deeds (perversion of justice) – all those points which *synderesis* claims to have full knowledge of in *Âme*. The beginning of his sin consisted of seeing the young girl, whereupon he lost all sense of morality. Instead of following Christ's strict advice, Apius indulges in his lust that is born out of sight and thus condemns himself.⁷² Chaucer does not refer back to the classical scholastic question of how *synderesis* could be put out of order (*impediri*), but we see here how the judge's sin begins *in fantasia* and, as in Bonaventure's *Commentary*, is then overwhelmed by *lascivia*.⁷³ As the servant and upholder of truth who wilfully lies, the judge has, through death, lost his social privileges and must face the ultimate truth-teller. If de Deguileville is Chaucer's

⁷⁰ Powell Harley, 'Last Things First', p. 15.

⁷¹ Powell Harley, 'Last Things First', pp. 1-16, the reference to Mk. ix is at pp. 14-15, n. 55.

⁷² Cf. Mt. v. 28. 'You have heard how it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say this to you, if a man looks upon a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell.' Unlike the same strict advice in Mk. Christ does not refer to Isaiah. Cf. Mk. ix.48. 'where their worm will never die nor their fire put out.'

⁷³ Cf. Chapter two, section 3.3.1.

source for the worm of conscience, it is undoubtedly an ironic twist that it is a judge who has to face *synderesis*/the worm of conscience in a court setting.

The idea of the worm of conscience as *pryve* to the soul's secrets, returns in the *Revelation of Purgatory* (ca. 1422): '... ffor wel I wote þat þe worme of conscience is most pryve both her and ther.'⁷⁴ This description, and the fact, noticed by Harley, that the dream vision takes place on the night before St. Lawrence's feast, as in *Soul*, could in turn be taken as a sign of an influence from the Middle English translation of de Deguileville.⁷⁵

Martin Le Franc's (ca. 1410-1461) *Le champion des dames*, in which the author intervenes in the famous *Querelle des dames* and responds to the misogyny of the *Roman de la rose*, mentions *synderesis* briefly, in a way which indicates a possible dependency on de Deguileville:

Sinderesis le poignant ver,
Tant soit l'en orgueilleux ou glout,
Parecheux, envieux, aver,
Tant se mesconnoisse on par tout,
Elle fait jeter ung sanglout souvent
Dont on estraint les dens.
Ainsy celui qui d'amer bout
peut bien avoir ung peu de sens.⁷⁶

However proud or gluttonous, slothful, envious, or greedy a person is, however much he does not know himself, *synderesis*, the biting worm, often forces out a sob which makes him clench his teeth. So the person who suffer from love can certainly get a bit of sense.

⁷⁴ *A Revelation of Purgatory by an Unknown, Fifteenth-Century Woman Visionary: Introduction, Critical Text, and Translation*, ed. M. Powell Harley, (Lewiston, 1985), p. 65, and note on p. 103.

Harley points to *Soul* as a source, but does not specify. I believe the use of *pryve* is one key aspect of such an attribution. Cf. Harley, 'Last Things First', p. 7.

⁷⁵ *A Revelation of Purgatory*, pp. 55, 99.

⁷⁶ Martin Le Franc, *Martin Le Franc, Le champion des dames*, ed. Robert Deschaux (5 vols., Paris, 1999), ll. 14072-14080 (iii. p. 126).

This is a case of deliberate engagement with the scholastic discussions of *synderesis*, more precisely the question *utrum possit synderesis impedi*. A lover engaging still maintains a spark of his reason. In the scholastic discussions, *synderesis* was often thought to be overthrown when the lower senses were led astray. In Bonaventure's discussion, as we have seen, the worm of conscience grows out of the conflict between natural will instinctively speaking against the evil choices of deliberative will. However, as we saw in Chapter two, Bonaventure thought that this tension between the two aspects of the will, out of which the worm of conscience grows, has been done away with among those who are so consumed by lust that they do not realise that they are sinning.⁷⁷ According to this model, it is possible to see this passage as reflecting the temptation of love and desire, but without having reached that stage where the lover is consumed.

In Henri Baude's (ca. 1415- after 1491) *Dictz moraulx pour faire tapisserie* – a collection of short moralising stories and mottos – *synderesis* reappears as the worm of conscience. As the title indicates, these stories were meant for artistic representation.

The text contains several alliterations and puns, which do not easily lend themselves to translation. It tells first of a man who makes scythes (*faulx*), saying 'I will gain more, if I am not mistaken, [...] forging falsely'. The term *faulx* is a pun on both falsehood and the crooked shape of the scythe.⁷⁸ Another man who makes

⁷⁷ Cf. Chapter two, section 4.3.

⁷⁸ Henri Baude, *Henri Baude, Dictz moraulx pour faire tapisserie*, ed. Annette Scoumanne (Paris, 1959), p. 132. 'Ung homme qui forge un faulx/ Je gaigneray, si

arrows (representing the straight, instead of crooked ways) says to himself that when each person performs their task correctly all things will go well (straight).⁷⁹ Two persons thus stand in antithesis to each other. Then ‘A woman, who from the waist down has the shape of a snake and whose name is *Synderesis*’, says that justice (*le droit*) will run its course (thus alluding to the straight line of the arrow) and prevail, whereas falsehood will ultimately fail.⁸⁰ The latter is probably an allusion to the idea that *synderesis* will at the end of one’s life reveal all of one’s falsehoods.

The *Dictz* is the last instance in which *synderesis* appears as the worm of conscience within the time period this dissertation considers. There are, however, plenty of references to this concept throughout the early modern period and into the eighteenth century. Baude’s use of *synderesis* functions as a good endpoint, however, in showing how far a concept can be taken from its origins. The idea of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience first appeared in Geoffrey of Poitiers, some 250 years earlier. In this time, it has undergone a radical transformation – from a scholastic concept known to few and signifying the psychological suffering in Hell, to a character pronouncing judgments over the soul and *bon mots*, a character which is often the subject of artistic representation.

je ne faulx,/ plus qu’a faire froit, forger faulx.’ I am deeply grateful to Dr. Jonathan Morton and Charlotte Cooper for helping me to navigate this difficult text.

⁷⁹ Baude, *Dictz moraulx*, p. 132. ‘Ung autre qui fait une fleche/ Quant chascun fera ce qu’il doit,/toutes choses iront a droit.’

⁸⁰ Baude, *Dictz moraulx*, p. 132. ‘Ung femme qui est depuis la seinture a bas serpent et a a nom *Synderesis* et dit/Le droit aura cours et vaudra/et le faulx, a la fin, faudra.’

4. Other Occurrences of *Synderesis* in Vernacular Literature

The Abbey of the Holy Ghost, written in the second half of the fourteenth century, which advises laywomen on how to live a contemplative life outside of a monastery. It tells of how it is founded in ‘a place that es called *Conscyence*’.⁸¹ The *Abbey* is often accompanied by a second text, called *The Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, which relates the main outline of salvation history. According to Nicole Rice, the *Abbey* was probably first written in French, but later translated into English to accommodate what she calls the ‘spiritual ambitions’ of the English bourgeoisie.⁸² The *Charter*, in which we find *synderesis*, and which accompanies the *Abbey* in eighteen manuscripts is of English origin, according to Emily Steiner.⁸³ In the preamble, the *Charter* tells that God the Father is the founder of the *Abbey*, whereas the Holy Spirit is the warden and visitor. Referring back to the *Abbey* the author tells that the abbey held twenty-one ‘gostly ladies’, among whom charity reigns as abbess, wisdom as prioress, and meekness as sub-prioress.

Nevertheless, the *Abbey* can never be safe unless it has charters and deeds to protect it from the Devil. At the Fall, the Devil invaded the *Abbey* and stole its

⁸¹ Richard Rolle, *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 321.

⁸² N. R. Rice, ‘Spiritual Ambition and the Translation of the Cloister: The Abbey Charter of the Holy Ghost’, *Viator*, 33 (2002), 222-60; at p. 224, she defines it as ‘a desire for the highest distinctions in the religious realm: assurance of salvation in the next life, and the possibility, in this life, of seeing and experiencing personal closeness to God through contemplation.’

⁸³ Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 97, n.7. Cf. Julia Boffey, ‘The Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost and Its Role in Manuscript Anthologies’, *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), pp. 120-30, at p. 122.

Charter. Now, the author writes a book that he calls ‘the Chartre of the abbeye of the holy gost’, in which he proposes to tell of how the abbey was first founded, invaded and destroyed, and how the abbess and the convent driven away only to be restored by Christ. The Charter ends with telling how God places his four ‘daughters’ – Mercy, Truth, Righteousness and Peace – in the abbey.⁸⁴ After the preamble comes the actual ‘Charter’ with the usual formula ‘Sciant presentes et futuri’, proclaiming that God has granted to Adam and Eve and to their heirs ‘a lytel precieuse place þat is clepid Conscience’. This gift is placed in the soul:

‘by-twixen a place þat is clepid Resoun, þe whiche knoweþ good & wykke, on þat o sydde, and a place þat is I-clepid Synderisys, þe whiche steriþ a man to good & grucchiþ aȝens wykke, on þat oþere sydde; whos on ende is fastened be þe grace of god, þorou whiche euerey man may don wel ȝif he wylle; & þe oþer ende liþ in ioye & merþe of þe soule, [ȝif] hi be clene out of þe filþe of synne.’⁸⁵

The *Charter* gives us very little information that can serve as a clue as to what notion of *synderesis* the author had in mind when writing this. One clue that is given here is how *synderesis* is placed in relation to conscience. In imitation of donation charters, *synderesis* functions here, together with reason, as the outer limit of the ‘geographical’ location of the land of the abbey/conscience.

This symbolic placement of conscience between reason and *synderesis* echoes the discussion of conscience and *synderesis* in Philip the Chancellor, who defined conscience as the joining together of *synderesis* (providing the major premise) and reason (providing the minor premise). When reason is paired with *synderesis*, conscience arises.⁸⁶ It appears that the author of the *Charter* took a similar view on

⁸⁴ Rolle, *Yorkshire Writers*, pp. 337-8, 362.

⁸⁵ Rolle, *Yorkshire Writers*, p. 339.

⁸⁶ See Chapter two, section 2.

synderesis, but given the sparse information the author has given, which precise author he is drawing on must remain a mystery.

Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*, a collection of moralizing tales of famous men who fell from the pinnacle of power and achievement, was one of his most celebrated texts during the Middle Ages. It was later translated to French by Laurent of Premierfait twice (one translation more free than the other) and had widespread fame in Western Europe. This translation was in turn translated into Middle English by John Lydgate.

At the end of the second book of the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate recounts the story of Hostilius, king of Rome, who after many successes grew lazy and omitted to sacrifice to Jove who in turn struck him with his lightning. Lydgate then adds a long comment on Rome and its decline which he ascribes to their worship of false gods. He points out that Rome was based on slaughter, murder, and robbery (II 4463), and then mockingly asks where the signs of its grandeur, its emperors, generals, poets, and philosophers are now. After having pursued this topos for nine stanzas, he urges Rome to lay down its 'pride and presumption, pompous boast and increase of its dominion'. It ought to confess its outrageous behaviour and lay down its boast and reject its false gods and instead turn to the true God. In the stanza immediately before he mentions *synderesis*, he specifically urges Rome to reject Venus, 'the fals derisioun', Diana 'the fals transmutacioun, now bright, now pale, now cleer[e], now drepyng', blind Cupid 'the fraudulent mokkyng. Moreover, it must free itself from Iuno, Bacchus Proserpina and Lucina.

Voide off Circes the bestiall poisoun,
Off Cirenes the furious chauntyng;
Lat nat Medusa do the no tresoun,
And fro Gorgones turne thi looking;
And let Sinderesis ha[ue] the in kepyng,
That Crist Iesu may be thi medicyne

Geyn such raskaile to saue the fro ruyne!⁸⁷

The sudden introduction of *synderesis* here goes against Lydgate's praise of Laurent de Premierfait's principle in his foreword that an accessible language is to be preferred, without strange terms that are not understandable.⁸⁸ Although more abstract terms such as *ymaginatioun* occur in *The Fall of Princes*, they are much more common than *synderesis*, which requires specialist knowledge. To suddenly throw in a technical term such as *synderesis* thus appears to be a conscious choice. Nigel Mortimer has suggested that the use of *synderesis* here signifies Lydgate's engagement with canon law and the notion of the 'virtuous pagan'. 'In appealing to this legal concept', Mortimer writes, 'Lydgate seems to claim that the Romans' natural sparks of reason will inevitably lead them to Christ: the medieval dilemma of the virtuous pagans has been solved.'⁸⁹ Whilst I do not think that *synderesis* alone was thought capable of leading a pagan Roman to Christ, the reference to the concept here does undoubtedly resonate with the notion of the virtuous pagans, and their capacity to grasp the natural law. Mortimer situates *synderesis* within the overall context of the second book of the *Fall of Princes*. Yet the immediate context of this occurrence does, I believe, give us some additional information about how *synderesis* functions here, which complements Mortimer's reading.

⁸⁷ John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (London, 1924), ll. 4558-4564.

⁸⁸ Cf. Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ll. 78-84. Upon whos book in his translacioun/this seid Laurence rehearsith in certeyn,/and holdith this in his opynioun,/such language as open is and pleyn/is more acceptid, as it is offte seyn,/than straunge termys which be nat undirstande,/namly to folkis that duellyn up-on lande.

⁸⁹ Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes: Narrative Tragedy in Its Literary and Political Contexts* (Oxford, 2005) p. 93.

Having *synderesis* at the end of this list of pagan gods of whom many are associated with perception, deceit and lust echoes the scholastic discussions of how *synderesis* stands in opposition to *sensualitas*, and the errors and moral pitfalls that come through senses and through lust. Venus and Cupid represent those passions, which in scholastic thought can overtake *synderesis*, whereas Diana's changing shape deceives the senses, the basis for a misapplication of *synderesis*. The songs of the Sirens lure the sailor off course. Circe, the archetype of witchcraft, transforms things from one shape to another, whilst Medusa and the Gorgons transform whoever they look at into stone. In this pagan world where everything is in flux, the mind can be deceived by appearances and passions. Amongst such great uncertainty, it is necessary to tread carefully, to keep the general precepts of *synderesis* and apply them with outmost care and avoid deception.

The recurrent theme throughout these stanzas is that Rome's moral ruin underlies its actual historical ruin. Only through conversion, and by holding fast to the guidance of *synderesis* can Rome be saved. Its contemporary relevance is emphasised when Lydgate says: 'resorte ageyn with will and hool menyng / to hym that is Lord off thordres nyne, /which meekli deide to saue the fro ruine'. This cannot refer to the Rome of Antiquity since it cannot turn back to the God it had never believed in. Instead, it must refer to the Rome of Lydgate's own time. It must turn away from lust and debauchery and find its moral core again. But cities do not have *synderesis*, individuals do. The moral conversion of each citizen, through a proper application of the dictates of *synderesis* is what will save Rome from ruin. In

other words, Lydgate's use of *synderesis* in his envoy to Rome emphasises the connection between the individual conscience and the body politic.⁹⁰

5. Conclusion

As this chapter shows, the concept of *synderesis* was not confined to scholastic discussions, but appears in various forms in Late Medieval vernacular literature, which is yet another testimony to the plasticity of this concept. The most popular use of *synderesis* here is as the worm of conscience, which gnaws the souls of the damned. In most cases of vernacular appropriation, it is near impossible to establish with certitude exactly whose definition of *synderesis* has been appropriated. In the case of de Deguileville, however, I have argued that Bonaventure is the most likely source for de Deguileville and thus also for anyone emulating the latter.

The transformation of *synderesis* into a character in spiritual and moralizing texts also implies a new audience. Whilst the early discussions were written primarily by and for a clerical audience, later vernacular sources show that the concept of *synderesis* is now employed for a wider audience, including lay, female and bourgeois, motivated by 'spiritual ambition' and consumers of what has become known as 'vernacular theology.' The new role of *synderesis* also resulted in the many creative attempts to depict this abstract concept for the purpose of describing the monstrosity of a conscience burdened by sin.

The concept has thus come a long way from its original use in Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel; its enigmatic nature has lent itself to a series of

⁹⁰ For an overview of this theme in the thirteenth century, see Chapter two, section 3.3.2.

interpretations over the course of three centuries which shows continuities as well as innovations. It will continue to capture the imaginations of intellectuals in the following centuries, well into the Early Modern era.

Conclusion

This dissertation has analysed *synderesis* on a continuum between scholasticism, mysticism and vernacular literature, and shown that far from being a static concept of medieval moral psychology, *synderesis* appears as a dynamic and changing concept during the three centuries this dissertation has considered. *Synderesis* first appears as a misreading of *syneidesis* in the manuscript tradition of Jerome's *Commentary on Ezekiel*. The continued existence of the concept in medieval culture was secured through Peter Lombard's reference to Jerome in his *Sentences*. Although there is a great deal of dynamism in the many commentaries written on Lombard's work during the first century after it first appears, this dynamism eventually abates somewhat in scholasticism after Aquinas and Bonaventure. This is not to say that *synderesis* was unimportant. The formation of one's conscience is arguably one of the most important aspects of Christian life. The deepened understanding of moral psychology coincided with the pastoral reforms of the fourth Lateran council and reflects the pastoral concerns of the theologians of the thirteenth centuries.

The many references to heresy appearing in treatises on *synderesis* in the 1220s were hardly an accident, but reflected the growing anxieties of the Catholic Church regarding religious dissent following the Albigensian Crusade. Intentional or not, a developing moral psychology had the effect that it also medicalised dissent in the sense that it attempted to locate where in the psychological and cognitive processes heretics had come to the wrong conclusions and gone astray.

Chapters one and three in particular have traversed the lines between history and intellectual history by analysing the uses of *synderesis* in relation to historical

factors such as the rise of popular heresy and the criticism directed against the Franciscan order and the cult of St. Francis. The contrast between how *synderesis* was discussed at the University of Paris and by popular, but educated, preachers like Geert Groote, a topic of Chapter five, for the purposes of conscientious dissent highlights how the articulation of an idea cannot be separated from its social settings.

It is often all too easy to think of the history of ideas as one idea following the other, and to look away from the circumstances in which ideas were transmitted. The account for how and when Bonaventure appropriated Thomas Gallus' interpretation of *synderesis* in Chapter three has highlighted how ideas and their transmission cannot be disconnected from their material circumstances. Often when we are dealing with medieval intellectual history such an account is not possible to make. The times and circumstances under which the *Itinerarium* was conceived, and the sources accounting for Bonaventure's whereabouts prior to and following his sojourn at Mount La Verna, make it possible to hypothesize when and where he encountered the texts of Thomas Gallus, although a definitive account remains impossible.

The different forms *synderesis* takes in Bonaventure's writings between the years 1252 and 1260 suggest that Bonaventure kept returning to this concept and that its definition was never something static or given. By comparison, Aquinas' discussions of *synderesis* between his *Commentary* and the *Summa theologiae* only reveal a decreasing interest in the concept, but no radical reorientation. Bonaventure, who has sometimes been described as unchanging, is in at least this instance a thinker capable of revising his ideas.

Bonaventure's use of *synderesis* in the *Itinerarium* gives us a rare glimpse of how the concept could function in a text, rather than merely being the subject of

abstract speculation. By comparing how Bonaventure defines *synderesis* in his *Commentary* and how it operates in the *Itinerarium*, Chapter three demonstrates how one may conceive of a continuum between scholasticism and mysticism on which *synderesis* can be placed, even if one must sometimes uphold a distinction between the moral-psychological and mystical interpretations of the concept. In the *Commentary*, *synderesis*' function was to stimulate the soul to seek the moral good (*bonum honestum*) which stands in an analogous relationship to God as the highest good (*summum bonum*). In the *Itinerarium*, the soul first perceives God as the highest good whereupon it is attracted to it and achieves mystical ecstasy through grace. As a power that operates beyond the level of reason, *synderesis* also functions as the conceptual basis for the ineffability topos in the *Itinerarium*. Bonaventure's idea of the mystical union with God is first and foremost inspired by Francis of Assisi, whose successor he was as the head of the Franciscan order. Francis' stigmata are the physical exterior signs of an inner, mystical, transformation. Francis' body thus embodies the ineffable encounter with God brought about by *synderesis*. However, by setting up a psychological framework for the mystical journey, Bonaventure finds a way of articulating a belief that had come under increasing pressure during the Mendicant Controversy.

Lastly, we have seen *synderesis* appear in the vernacular literature of the Late Middle Ages, most prominently in Guillaume de Deguileville's *Le pèlerinage de l'âme* and its Middle English translation. What once was the divine and angelic side of humanity has here been turned into a monster which stands in for the Devil in accusing the soul before the court of heaven. The monstrosity of *synderesis* mirrors the distorted nature of the sinful soul, a feature which can be seen in several manuscript illustrations. Once the guide of the soul, *synderesis* has now become its accuser, the worm of conscience which has grown inside in the

putrefaction caused by sin. I have argued that the most likely source of inspiration for de Deguileville is Bonaventure's discussion of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience. This does not mean, however, that Bonaventure's interpretation of the concept has been taken over in its totality. The transmission of ideas rarely means that an idea has been taken over in its totality, but that they are transformed as they are put to use in new contexts.

De Deguileville is by far the most prominent case of vernacular appropriation, but we do also see *synderesis* in several other vernacular texts during the Late Middle Ages where aspects of the scholastic discussions of *synderesis* can be seen. The texts that I have discussed in Chapter six do not form part of an exhaustive list of occurrences of *synderesis*, but serves to describe how scholastic abstract thought intersected with the nascent and dynamic vernacular literature of the Late Middle Ages.

By approaching *synderesis* from the point of view of conceptual history, rather than philosophy or theology, this dissertation has widened the field of study to include far more diverse sources than the formal scholastic treatise. In doing so, it has made it possible to appreciate the intellectual contents of sources that would not normally fit into a handbook of medieval philosophy. In other words, conceptual history offers a concrete way of being interdisciplinary as a medievalist that avoids some of the vagueness that is often associated with this trend. My contribution here lies in pointing at the many facets of the concepts used by philosophers and exemplifying how a philosophical concept and the discussions of it are culturally and historically embedded and never static. I therefore hope that this dissertation can benefit scholars fully committed to one discipline, be it philosophy, theology, history or literature.

These five chapters have outlined how a concept can operate in different contexts and how its development and use has to varying degrees been influenced by historical events and trends. The focus of this dissertation has nevertheless remained in the realm of abstract thought. For the purpose of future research, I would like to propose the concept of *synderesis* (and conscience) as categories that were operative, even if not clearly articulated, in medieval source material. The analysis of how *synderesis* was thought to function among heretics, in particular during the second quarter of the thirteenth century, raises questions about how moral psychology could be a part of inquisitorial procedures. Apart from the study of the repression of heresy, the attempts to locate heresy in cognitive processes have obvious affinities with the history of madness, as a case where deviance and dissent are medicalised. The cure of souls required a refined knowledge of the psychological processes in which sin could arise and a study of how these concepts influenced pastoral practice and pastoral handbooks would be of great interest. The depictions of *synderesis* as the worm of conscience are an invitation to scholars to study not only the intersection between scholastic philosophy and vernacular literature, but also between scholasticism and medieval art.

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