

A detailed woodcut illustration. At the top, a winged cherub with curly hair and a serene expression looks down. Below, a king with a beard and a tall, pointed crown sits on a horse, gesturing with his right hand. To his right, another figure in a crown is partially visible. In the bottom left corner, a small, older man with a long beard looks up. The background is filled with intricate line work and shading, suggesting a dramatic scene.

LUTHER AND THE REFORMATION OF THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

ERIC LELAND SAAK

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In 1517, Martin Luther posted his *Ninety-Five Theses*, an act often linked with the start of the Reformation. In this work, Eric Saak argues that the *Ninety-Five Theses* do not signal Luther's break from Roman Catholicism. An obedient Observant Augustinian hermit, Luther's self-understanding from 1505 until at least 1520 was as Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, not Reformer, and he continued to wear his habit until October 1524. Saak demonstrates that Luther's provocative act represented the culmination of the late medieval Reformation. It was only the failure of this earlier Reformation that served as a catalyst for the onset of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. Luther's true Reformation discovery had little to do with justification by faith, or with his *Ninety-Five Theses*. Yet his discoveries in February 1520 were to change everything.

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Preface

This is not the Luther book that I thought I would write. While the focus of my scholarly work has been the late medieval Augustinian tradition, Luther has always been there, at least in the background. One of my major arguments for the need to revisit the late medieval Augustinians has been that the scholarship to date has interpreted the Augustinian tradition in light of Luther. This has, in my view, warped our understanding of both the late medieval Augustinian tradition and that of Luther's early development. In my own scholarly career, Luther has had a place of greater significance than my published work witnesses, though Luther did have a major role in my *High Way to Heaven*.¹ Going back to my graduate school days, I wrote an early draft of a dissertation on Luther and Melancthon, submitted to my advisor, the late Heiko A. Oberman. I then realized that I had gone to graduate school and gone to study with Oberman to research the late medieval Augustinians, and that was what I needed to do first and foremost. The late medieval Augustinian tradition is still the major focus of my work. I had grandiose plans for writing a number of works culminating in Luther. I have not reached that point; my work on the late medieval Augustinians is far from what I had planned and saw as needed before then returning to Luther. Thus this book is in many ways premature. Yet knowing how life unfolds, at least to an extent, I felt that I should do Luther now, rather than wait for the perfect time which would never, most likely, come. Luther was, after all, a late medieval Augustinian himself and so the present work fits very well indeed within my overarching research program. Luther has as much to reveal about the late medieval Augustinian tradition as does that tradition about Luther, and both these perspectives are central to my reading of

¹ E. L. Saak, *High Way to Heaven. The Augustinian Platform between Reform and Reformation, 1292–1524*, SMRT 89 (Leiden, 2002), pp. 618–673.

Luther. I do feel that I have things to say about Luther that most likely no one else will, and that those things are important to put on the table for the far broader discussions that are and will be taking place surrounding the 500th anniversary of the *Ninety-Five Theses*. Thus I dare to enter the fray and present Luther as I know him, as Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, as he presented himself before and after the posting of his most famous theses that represent the culmination and transformation of the Reformation of the later Middle Ages.

As indicated above, this present work had its origins in my graduate school days. It is not, however, a completion or rewriting of that first dissertation in any way, shape, or form. Luther has always been there. This has been a book that I have carried with me for quite a while and it has been a relief finally to let it go. My wife, Anja, was the major catalyst for doing so now, and to her I am most grateful. Her encouragement and prompting, as well as her love and support, led to my finally focusing sufficiently to say what I have to say about Luther, at least in part. My sons, Jonas and Hugo, put up with my preoccupation and took an active interest in what their father was up to, and to them as well I am grateful.

My understanding of Luther was certainly formed significantly by my graduate training under Oberman, and to him my debt is more than I can fathom. I had though already as an undergraduate begun research on Luther and gave a paper at the Phi Alpha Theta conference back in 1985 on Luther and Augustine, so some of my training with Luther was due to my undergraduate advisor, the late Ernst Koenker, a Lutheran pastor himself, a student of Wilhelm Pauck at Chicago, and Professor of History at the University of Southern California; a man for whom I had and have such great affection that it is only matched by my respect. Others have certainly shaped my understanding of Luther along the way, though the list would be too long to mention them all here together with the precise influence they have had and the precise reasons I am grateful. I should though at least mention the following: Robert Bast, Curtis Bostick, Robert Christman, Peter Dykema, John Frymire, Andrew Gow, Brad Gregory, Sigrun Haude, Jonathan Reid, and Jeff Tyler, who sat through many a long night in Tucson with me, offering comments and perspectives, as well as continued discussion in such venues, in particular cases, as Tübingen, Mainz, and Eckeby, and with whom conversations have continued. My gratitude is deep and sincere. Special thanks are due to Robert Christman for reading early drafts of chapters, and especially to John Frymire, who read in detail the entire manuscript with unparalleled depth

and erudition. John's indefatigable efforts to Erasmify my Lutheresque prose surely have not always been successful, and thanks are due him as well for reminding me of the possessive plural of Latin nouns. What errors or infelicities remain cannot be attributed to anyone other than to myself and my own Saxon peasant ignorance and stubbornness.

Also meriting my gratitude for various reasons are the late Thomas Martin OSA, Karl Gersbach OSA, Martijn Schrama OSA, Robert Guessetto OSA, Mauricio Saavedra OSA, the Institut Patristicum Augustinianum and the Collegio Santa Monica in Rome, Bernard Rolls OSA, and John Grace OSA. My gratitude is extended as well to the IUPUI School of Liberal Arts, the IUPUI University Library and its staff, the University Library at Indiana University, Bloomington, the University of Kentucky Library, and the Hildesheim Dombibliothek. My students at IUPUI likewise are deserving of special thanks, as they have, over the years, suffered to hear much of the vision presented below in lecture courses, and their interest and questions have helped me articulate what I have at times only previously sensed.

All translations in the work below are mine, unless otherwise noted. When I have given a translation of Luther, I offer the Latin or German text in the notes; when I am paraphrasing from Luther, or making reference to his work, I simply give the *WA* or *AWA* reference (see [list of abbreviations](#)). I have translated Latin titles into English, though leave Luther's first lectures on the Psalms in the Latin (*Dictata super Psalterium*, or simply *Dictata*), and the same for his second series of lectures on the Psalms (*Operationes in Psalmos*, or simply *Operationes*); the Latin is presented in the notes, or on occasions where helpful, in parentheses. I make no attempt to cite all relevant scholarship, nor to engage all relevant scholars; to do so would expand this present volume beyond all practicality. I simply cite those works from which I have drawn, and only occasionally enter scholarly debate.

The work is intended for Luther scholars, for scholars of the later Middle Ages and Reformation, and in general, and for all those who have an interest in Luther and his historical context. If at times it seems I am addressing one group of potential readers alone, my apologies, and please simply bear with me. I certainly do not mean to alienate anyone either from a received sense that I am being too general and talking down or too arcane and specialized. It is hoped that, even given the broadly intended various audiences, this book might indeed be for all. It does, though, I hope, get the point across. At least I have tried. One can never really

come to an understanding of Luther, and no matter how thoroughly one reads, no matter how broadly in the tradition and context one reads, one is, in the end, left with the clear realization, whether one is Catholic, Protestant, or otherwise, that Luther himself had on his deathbed: *We are beggars, this is true!*

Abbreviations

- Aeg.Vit. *Ep.* *Giles of Viterbo, OSA, Letters as Augustinian General, 1506–1517.* Ed. Claire O'Reilly. *Fontes Historiae Ordinis Sancti Augustini, Series Altera: Epistolaria aliique fontes* 3. Rome: Institutum Historicum Augustinianum, 1992.
- Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* *Aegidii Viterbiensis O.S.A. Registrum Generalatus, 1514–1518.* 2 vols. Ed. Albericus de Meijer. *Registra Priorum Generalium* 18. Rome: Institutum Historicum Augustinianum, 1984.
- ARG *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
- AWA *Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe*
- BhTh *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie*
- Brett Marsilius of Padua, *Defender of the Peace.* Trans. Annabel Brett. *Cambridge Texts in Political Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Const. ref. Al.* Johannes von Staupitz, *Constitutiones OESA Pro Reformatione Alemanniae,* ed. Wolfgang Günter, in Lothar Graf zu Dohna and Richard Wetzel, eds., *Johann von Staupitz, Sämtliche Schriften, Abhandlungen, Predigten, Zeugnisse, 5: Gutachen und Satzungen,* 103–360.
- CR *Corpus Reformatorum*
- Lombard Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae.* *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum* 4–5. 2 vols. Grottaferrata, 1971, 1981.
- Marsilius, *Def.pac.* Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis.* Ed. Richard Scholz. 2 vols. Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1932. Trans. Annabel Brett, Marsilius of Padua,

- Defensor Pacis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Matsura Martin Luther, *Erfurter Annotationen 1509–1511*, ed. Jun Matsura, *AWA* 9. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2009.
- MW* *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, 6 vols. Ed. Robert Stupperich et al. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1952–5.
- OGHRA* *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*. Ed. Karla Pollmann et al. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Scholz Richard Scholz, ed., Marsilius von Padua, *Defensor Pacis*. 2 vols. Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1932.
- SHCT Studies in the History of Christian Traditions
- SMRT Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions
- SuR Spätmittelalter und Reformation
- SuR.NR Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe
- VF* *Jordani de Saxonia, Liber Vitasfratrum*. Ed. Winfridus Hümpfner and Rudolph Arbesmann. Cassiciacum 1. New York, 1943.
- WA* *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 61 vols. Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1883–1990.
- WABr* *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel*. 16 vols. Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1930–80.
- WAT* *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden*. 6 vols. Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1912–21.

Introduction

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. This event has been seen as having started the Reformation. There are good reasons for considering it so, for it was only with the publication and spread of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* that Luther became well known. The date 31 October 1517 does mark the beginnings of the case of Luther. Yet moving beyond the symbolic, Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* cannot be seen historically as the beginnings of Luther's break from Rome or of his theological breakthrough. At the time, Luther was not the Reformer; he was an obedient Observant Augustinian hermit. The 500th anniversary of this event is an apt time to reconsider Luther's early development and try to return to a historical understanding. Thus this book.

The present work is not another biography of Luther. Nor is it a study of the early Reformation in Germany. And yet in some ways, it is both. It is an extended essay on Luther and his context, in which I put forth an interpretation, a vision, and perhaps some insights. Martin Luther was one of those figures who has become larger than life. The legendary quality of Luther began shortly after his death when for Lutherans, Luther had become "incombustible."¹ Luther has been credited with having ushered in modernity, and with having split the unified Church; he has been seen as God's anointed and as the Devil incarnate. Confessional orientation has fueled the debate since the sixteenth century, and while scholars, Catholic, Protestant, and otherwise, have worked toward recovering the historical Luther,² views of what Luther became are still usually determinate for

¹ Robert Scribner, "Incombustible Luther: The Image of the Reformer in Early Modern Germany." *Past and Present* 110 (1986), 38–68.

² See e.g. Franz Posset, *The Real Luther. A Friar at Erfurt and Wittenberg* (St Louis, MO, 2011). While Posset rightly emphasizes the influence of St Bernard on Luther, he greatly over-states his case and does not reveal "the real Luther" but his own interpretation of Melancthon's later interpretation of Luther. In this light, for Posset, "Luther did not develop his theology as a continuation of a medieval Augustinianism, Ockhamism, or *German* mysticism ... the historical Luther's theology is

understanding his early development, conditioning the interpretation from a teleological perspective, even if unconsciously. In treating Luther's early development, scholars have looked for evidence for where and when he began developing his Reformation theology either as the beginnings of his discovery of the Gospel and fight against Rome, or as the beginnings of his heresy. Luther, however, viewed himself differently.

Luther's self-understanding from 1505 until at least 1520 was as Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, which was how Luther most often signed his name in letters of this period. Luther, moreover, continued to wear the habit of an Augustinian Hermit until October 1524.³ On 1 September 1520, Luther, in a letter to Spalatin concerning his situation and the controversy within the OESA about this, signed his name for the last time as "Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian."⁴ On 17 September 1521, in another letter to Spalatin, Luther signed his name as "Martin Luther, Augustinian" for the last time with a reference to his monastic allegiance,⁵ though writing to Gabriel Zwilling, a fellow Augustinian hermit, on 17 April 1522 Luther signed his name simply as "Brother Martin Luther."⁶ Thereafter Luther's signature was simply "Martin Luther." It would be another two and a half years before Luther took off his habit. In short, Luther considered himself an Augustinian hermit, and signed his name as "Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian," until September 1520,⁷ continuing to wear his habit for four

a rearticulating of Bernard's theology ... the center piece of the historical Luther's doctrine of justification is identical with the one of Saint Bernard." Posset, *The Real Luther*, p. 127. Misunderstandings and errors abound in this work, with the result that Posset's portrait is a significant move away from an historical understanding of "the real Luther"; cf. the review by Timothy Wengert in *Catholic Historical Review* 98/4 (2012), 808–810.

³ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 660.

⁴ *WABr* 2.180,18–19. In letters thereafter Luther's usual signature was simply as "Martin Luther, Augustinian" (e.g. *WABr* 2.195,33–34), though we also find him signing his name as simply "Brother Martin Luther" (*WABr* 2.202,42). On 10 December 1520 Luther, writing again to Spalatin, signed off simply as "Martin Luther" (*WABr* 2.234,18), though five days later in another letter to Spalatin, Luther again signed his name as "Martin Luther, Augustinian" (*WABr* 2.236,19). On 24 March 1521, Luther signed his name for the penultimate time as "Martin Luther, Augustinian" (*WABr* 2.293,19), and his signature simply as "Martin Luther" becomes common thereafter.

⁵ *WABr* 2.392,36–37. On 13 July 1521, Luther writing from the Wartburg signed his name as "Martin Luther, hermit (*eremita*)," which is probably a reference to his stay in the Wartburg, rather than to his Order; *WABr* 2.359,135.

⁶ *WABr* 2.506,21.

⁷ On 31 December 1516, Luther signed his name as *Frater Martinus Eleutherius Augustinanus*, *WABr* 1.83,58; he did so again in the beginning of November 1517, also in a letter to Spalatin, *WABr* 1.118,15. He continued to sign his name as *Eleutherius* until his letter to Spalatin of 24 January 1519; *WABr* 1.310,13. He did not, though, do so uniformly. Thus in his letter to Spalatin of 11 November 1517, written after he had started using *Eleutherius*, Luther again signed his name simply as *Frater Martinus Luther Augustinensis*; *WABr* 1.124,25–26. While at times this reference to "Luther the Free" has been taken as an indication of a new attitude in Luther's self-understanding (cf. Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther. Rebell in einer Zeit des Umbruchs* (Munich, 2012), pp. 144–179, ch. II: "Eleutherius – Die

more years. Even after his so-called Reformation Breakthrough, and even after he began his campaign against Rome, Luther's self-understanding and identity was that of a faithful, Observant Augustinian hermit. This presents a challenge both to traditional Protestant scholarship, which has identified Luther's theological "discovery of the Gospel" with his break from Rome, and to Catholic scholarship, which has sought the origins of his deviance, seeking to identify when Luther strayed from the path.

Thus the first of the four major theses of this book is that Luther made his discovery of passive righteousness, developed his hermeneutical and exegetical principles, and began his opposition to the papacy as the seat of diabolical incursions in the Church, as a faithful, obedient, Observant Augustinian hermit. Whereas Luther's "Reformation Breakthrough," traditionally referred to as his Tower Experience (*Turmerlebnis*), his break from Rome, and the emergence of his evangelical theology have been seen as a unity, when we come to understand Luther as Luther understood himself as an Augustinian hermit we begin to see that these three events were distinct occurrences. As will be argued later, Luther's theological discovery of passive righteousness did not entail his opposition to Rome, any more than did his *Ninety-Five Theses*. This is not to claim that there was nothing new with Luther. There was indeed, and what transpired in the course of the 1520s to 1530s and beyond fundamentally and profoundly transformed Europe. This change, however, the onset of early modern Europe, cannot be seen as having been initiated by Luther's "Reformation Breakthrough," or, except perhaps catalytically, by his *Ninety-Five Theses*.

A corollary, perhaps, of the first major thesis is the second: an investigation of Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian reveals as much about the late medieval Augustinian tradition as does the late medieval Augustinian tradition about Brother Martin. For over a century scholars have debated the extent to which Luther developed his Reformation theology based on a late medieval Augustinianism, and if he did so, how such an Augustinianism was communicated to Luther.⁸ Did Luther develop his Augustinian theology based on the influence of his late medieval Augustinian brothers, the theologians of the OESA, or did he do so based on his own reading of Augustine himself? This debate has been obscured by a lack of clarity over

Geburt des freien Luther"), it is simply Luther adopting the Greek spelling of his name, as indicated as well by his use of Greek letters in the last two occasions it appears, as did Philip Schwarzerd, referring to himself as "Melanchthon." If such naming can be so taken, then Luther again became an "unfree" Augustinian monk after 1519, and was not uniformly free even during the period he used the Greek rather frequently.

⁸ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 683–708.

the meaning of the term “late medieval Augustinianism” to begin with. What did it mean to be “Augustinian”?⁹ How is the label to be applied and on what bases?¹⁰ In this light, the present work seeks to contribute to our understanding of the late medieval Augustinian tradition by analyzing Luther’s Augustinianism in its theological, religious, political, and intellectual context, and the late medieval history thereof.

This understanding comes into clearer relief with the third major thesis of this book: Luther was a product of and contributor to the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. Traditionally scholars have made a significant distinction between late medieval reform, and early modern Reformation. The point then has been to determine the lines of continuity. Due in large part to the work and influence of Heiko Oberman, Luther and the Reformation must be seen in the context of the later Middle Ages. Yet our view of Luther’s late medieval context is blurred when we adopt the ahistorical conceptual distinction between “late medieval reform” and “early modern Reformation.” The sources themselves, from the mid-fifteenth-century anonymous treatise, *The Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*, to Staupitz’s new *Constitutions* for the Augustinian Observance – *for the Reformation of Germany*, issued in 1504, are clear in their call not only for “reform in head and members,” a call harking back to the context of the Great Western Schism (1378–1415), but also for the urgency with which they call for reformation.¹¹ Karl Barth’s phrase *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* of 1947, taken up by Hans Küng and reform circles in Vatican II, may be a twentieth-century formulation, but articulates in many ways the history of Christianity itself, which has consistently moved through waves of decline and renewal. A *re-forming* of the Church on a fundamental level did not take place until the disruptions of the sixteenth century, despite Giles Constable’s argument for the Reformation of the twelfth century, which was, in Constable’s eyes, a true Reformation, “a watershed in the history of the church and of Christian society as well as of monasticism and religious life.”¹² Only in the aftermath of Luther do we find the end of medieval Christendom and the emerging new paradigm of state churches and early modern Christianity, Catholic and Protestant.

⁹ See Saak, “Augustinianism.” *OGHRA* 2: 596–599.

¹⁰ See Saak, *Creating Augustine. Interpreting Augustine and Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012).

¹¹ Cf. Gerald Strauss, “Ideas of *Reformatio* and *Renovatio* from the Middle Ages to the Reformation.” In Thomas A. Brady Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds., *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600. Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, II. *Visions, Programs and Outcomes* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 1–30.

¹² Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 325.

Heinrich Bullinger, the first historian of the Reformation, saw the events of his day representing the “ending of religion” and “the onset of Christian reformation,”¹³ a demarcation that has been adopted by Catholic and Protestant theologians and historians ever since. Bullinger, though, was no objective observer. Theological considerations were primary, and they have remained so, even when secularized and submerged, in the scholarship to date. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages was not the Reformation of the sixteenth century in all its various and diverse manifestations, yet Reformation it was, and only a theological interpretation, such as Bullinger’s and his Catholic and Protestant followers extending to Heiko Oberman and beyond, can distinguish Reformation and Reformation.

The calls for fundamental change, the evolving modes of increasing lay piety, the upsurge in anticlericalism, the emergence of new theological directions, and the political turmoil of the fourteenth through early sixteenth centuries legitimately should be conceived not simply as reform, but as attempts at Reformation, representing a watershed as significant as that of the twelfth century. Luther’s Reformation, if we can use the term, was part and parcel of the late medieval Reformation, even as it brought forth a true break and new departures that were indeed fundamentally different from the Reformation that had been attempted before. Thus Heiko Oberman suggested that we should view Luther’s Reformation as a counter-Reformation, a reformation in opposition to the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages:

It is not reasonable to expect that this term [*scil.* Counter-Reformation] can be successfully eliminated, but it is important to realize that the Council of Trent gathered in the fruits of a Reformation movement which received its major impetus in the later Middle Ages. Whereas Luther claimed that this was not a reformation of doctrine and that without a preceding reformation of doctrine no moral reformation could be expected, the Protestant Reformation deserves the title Counter Reformation insofar as the pre-Tridentine Reformation was rejected.¹⁴

No one, to my knowledge, has taken up for analysis this provocative thesis, even as it is generally recognized that there were late medieval movements for reformation; the overwhelming majority of scholarship treats such phenomena as background or precursor to later developments.

¹³ Heiko A. Oberman, “*The Impact of the Reformation: Problems and Perspectives.*” In idem, *The Impact of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1994), pp. 173–200, 174.

¹⁴ Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation. The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents* (Philadelphia, PA, 1966), p. 40.

Conceiving of Luther's Reformation as a counter-Reformation, however, likewise points to the fact that all previous reformations, or attempts at reformations, whether that of the twelfth century or that of the later Middle Ages, failed. Luther's Reformation as a Counter-Reformation signifies the failure of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. Yet failure succeeded failure, for depending on how one might define success, the Reformation, as commonly understood, too failed. The fourth major thesis of this book is the failure of the Reformation.

In 1978, Gerald Strauss initiated considerable scholarly controversy when he subtly transposed one of the major questions facing Reformation historians from Cochlaeus to Harry McSorley – “Was Luther right or wrong?” – by asking “Was the Reformation a success or failure?”¹⁵ Strauss concluded that the Reformation was indeed a failure, a position he later reasserted and defended: “the Reformation must be said to have failed *if* (and I stressed the *if*) it is understood as a serious endeavor to Christianize people – all people or at least most – in a meaningful, as opposed to merely perfunctory way and if it is agreed that the Lutheran pedagogical enterprise was the heart of this Christianizing mission.”¹⁶ Yet the Christianizing mission was not a new endeavor of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. If the Lutheran Reformation failed, underscoring Strauss's *if* here, it did so as a continuing failure, continuing on the heels of the previous failure of the reformation that had been pursued and called for before Luther had entered the monastery.

Brad Gregory has been the most recent advocate of the failure thesis, presenting his vision with broad strokes and erudite insights of the unintended impact the Reformation has had, and still has, today.¹⁷ While I do not agree with Gregory's account in all respects, his grand theory is one to which I heartily ascribe, and see this present work contributing to his endeavor. It takes a very different approach from Gregory's *Unintended Reformation*, and focuses on the details of Luther's own world. Yet the general perspective Gregory presents and the one that here follows are, at least in my view, complementary.

That the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages or the Reformation of the sixteenth century failed should really not come as a surprise. Humans

¹⁵ Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning. Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore, MD, 1978).

¹⁶ G. Strauss, “The Reformation and its Public in an Age of Orthodoxy.” In R. Po-Chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca, NY, 1988), pp. 194–214, 195.

¹⁷ Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA, 2012). See also [Chapter 8](#) of this volume.

have always resisted, in various ways, being Christianized “in a meaningful, as opposed to merely perfunctory way.” Strauss’s *if* here is all important for failure is based on one’s concept of what success would, or should, be. Moreover, Luther himself saw failure all around him, and was far more surprised by the degree of success, brought about, in Luther’s eyes, by the Word of God. The understanding of the Reformation as a failure was a sixteenth-century concept, a sixteenth-century fear, as much as it was a late medieval concept, that nevertheless did not dissuade Luther and his right-hand man Philip Melancthon from doing everything they could to fight the forces of Satan.¹⁸

Yet the question of failure presupposes an “it” that failed, or succeeded, in various degrees, whether that be the true “Christianization” of society and the arrival of the Kingdom of God based on true doctrine and the rediscovery of the Gospel, or the emancipation of the lower classes based on Christian freedom and equality before God.¹⁹ Without a concept of “Reformation,” the question of its success or failure is pointless. Reformation, even in the sixteenth century, was in no way a single, univocal, agreed upon phenomenon. Geneva was not Wittenberg, Münster was not Rome, London was not Zurich.²⁰ Scholars have approached the Reformation based on their theological, social, political, or philosophical presuppositions of what the success of such developments would have been, which then informs the historical representation of the developments themselves. I surely am not immune from such, nor do I pretend to be, as history itself can never truly be objective but is always, necessarily, a creation of those writing it. It is so, however, not simply as fantasy or fiction. The sources that remain force us to seek ever anew to listen to the past, to strive to hear the lost, silenced voices, even if we necessarily can only do so with our own ears and understanding as we turn to the past in attempts to understand our present and ourselves. Thus the fourth major thesis of the present work illumines the third, the very concept of Reformation itself, which provides the historical context for the first two theses, which together will allow for, or so the argument runs, a more historical understanding of the late medieval Augustinian hermit, Brother Martin Luther.

¹⁸ Cf. Oberman, “The Impact of the Reformation,” pp. 175–183. Oberman did not address Strauss’s “if,” but rather based his analysis on the concept of the Reformation having failed by cutting itself off from its original popular support and caving in to the political will of the princes.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ As Oberman argued, “‘the Reformation’ is a misleading, unclear collective cover-name for a whole series of movements.” *Ibid.*, p. 180.

The chapters that follow detail the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages in presenting evidence and arguments for the four major theses of this book. While the entire work concerns the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, for the most part, we begin by setting the stage. Here we find the renewed urgency for reformation in the wake of the Schism, and the increase in prophecies for reformations to come. Such prophecies, though, rarely, if ever, turned out as foreseen, any more than did attempts at reformation follow an intended, hoped for plan, when politics was as important to reformation as was theology and religion. Nevertheless, the Augustinian pastoral theology, the Augustinians' attempt to Christianize their world, in Strauss's terms, or what I have referred to as aspects of late medieval "religionization,"²¹ is placed within the more general catechetical endeavor of the later Middle Ages and the urgency to reform Church and society. Such urgency led to the emergence of what Berndt Hamm has termed *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, loosely translated as a theology of piety, which tried to alleviate religious anxiety by stressing that Christians simply needed to do their best to love God, transforming thereby, at least in part, the late medieval economy of salvation (Chapter 1). This was the theology Luther attacked, and in which he had been trained, even though it was not the only late medieval theological tradition, even within Luther's own Order. Augustinian theology had been developing from its foundations in the works of Giles of Rome in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to form a genuine mendicant theology that then fused with a renewed emphasis on Augustine himself. The extent, however, to which Luther was aware of this theological tradition within his own Order, even after he entered the Augustinian cloister in Erfurt and started living as an Augustinian, is questionable. Moreover, not all Augustinian theology was formulated as an attack against a perceived Pelagian threat. This is seen in the works of Jordan of Quedlinburg (d. 1380), who like Luther advocated a rather strict understanding of predestination within the context of a pastoral, catechetical theology (Chapter 2). It was then this Augustinian theology, the crisis the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages faced and strove to address, and Brother Martin's avid reading of Augustine, that provided the context, though not the cause, for Luther's transformation from being an Observant Augustinian friar to becoming a reformer. It was

²¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 722–735; idem, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages*, I. *The Exposition of the Lord's Prayer of Jordan of Quedlingburg*, OESA (d. 1380). *Introduction, Text, and Translation*, SMRT 188/T&S 6 (Leiden, 2015), pp. 18–25.

within this context that Luther developed his theology and made what later has been referred to as his Reformation Breakthrough (Chapter 3). As I have discussed in brief, Luther's Reformation Breakthrough, or as he referred to it, his discovery of passive righteousness, was not, as I will argue, equated with his Reformation theology, or his break from Rome, nor even with his Augustinianism. This will become evident as we examine Luther's ways of thought during his early period of development (Chapter 4), as well as his pastoral endeavor. This was the context, in light of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, in which we should read his *Ninety-Five Theses*, rather than as the beginning of his campaign against Rome. All the while, Luther was an Augustinian and had been developing an anti-Pelagian theology. As an Augustinian, Luther stood in a tradition of theologies based on predestination, from Giles of Rome and Jordan of Quedlinburg, to Johannes von Staupitz (Chapter 5). It was not Luther's Augustinianism, however, that led to his break from Rome. It was his understanding of Church (Chapter 6). Luther's campaign against Rome only began after 1520, when he indeed had his Reformation discovery or discoveries in close succession which he referred to as the "woe of the world." This then, namely February of 1520, was the beginning of Luther's break from Rome (Chapter 7). Yet he still wore his Augustinian habit, and still considered himself a faithful, Observant Augustinian hermit.

Luther did become a reformer, but his reformation program as a program against Rome was the result of a transition that was not completed fully until he finally took off his habit, until he no longer considered himself an Augustinian. The controversy that embroiled Brother Martin was finally to shatter the Christendom that had been crumbling during the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. That Reformation had failed. The Reformation on which Luther embarked, as did all of Europe, after 1520, likewise failed. Such failure, though, Brother Martin did not foresee, even if he feared it (Chapter 8). He himself referred to the plight in which he found himself as the controversy took its course as a tragedy.²² That it was. And that is the story of the book that follows, a story of the ending of a world.

It was, however, likewise the beginning of a world, a new world, the world of early modern Europe. As Oberman wrote,

we would not dedicate our professional lives to the study of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation if we held that in the case of

²² WA 1.92,9–12.

Renaissance humanism, of Catholic reform, or of the Reformation, the “end” is to be identified with ultimate failure. It may have been the end of the *erga*, the amazing events of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but that does not spell the end of the *genomena ex anthrōpon* – of what was unleashed by these events, their outcome, and that heritage which Herodotus saw as being shaped by Greeks and barbarians alike.²³

And we would not dedicate our lives thus, if we allowed the outcome, the impact, to determine our understandings of the events themselves. This has all too often been the case with respect to Brother Martin for historians and theologians alike. Luther has been seen in the light of what he unleashed, in all its multiple shades and hues, which has blinded us to the vision that Luther had of himself and of his world. That vision has been lost in all the confessional debate. It is a vision I hope to recapture, at least in part, here: the vision of Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. *Sic incipiat tragodia* – Thus let the tragedy begin.

²³ Oberman, “The Impact of the Reformation,” p. 200.

The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages

In the church of Santa Maria della Misericordia in Bologna, there is a fresco depicting Augustine giving his *Rule* to four Observant Augustinian hermits. The fresco dates to 1510. At some point thereafter, the depiction of the four friars was painted over, leaving only Augustine visible. When the church was restored in 1931, the whitewash was removed, restoring the image of the four brothers, one of whom, the one closest to Augustine himself directly gazing at the *Rule* being presented, is believed to be Brother Martin Luther.¹ Luther had embarked on his journey to Rome in 1510, and had stayed in Bologna on the way. He did so as part of the delegation selected to be sent to Rome by the observant branch of the OESA in Saxony to oppose the proposed union of the observants and the conventuals under the vicarship of Johannes Staupitz.² Staupitz, the vicar general of the Observance of the Saxon-Thurigian province, the only Observant province in the Empire, had issued new constitutions for the Observance in the province in 1504 and had done so as the title itself expressed “for the Reformation of Germany.”³ If Reformation was to come, as it must, the Observance was the last hope. Reformation was not something Brother Martin initiated. Reformation had been an ongoing endeavor for two hundred years when Luther knocked on the door of cloister of the observant Augustinian hermits in Erfurt. The later Middle Ages were already an Age of Reformation, an Age of Apocalyptic urgency, an Age of Prophecy, an Age of Catechesis, teaching Christians what they needed to know, an Age of Augustine and of the Augustinians, Augustine’s true sons and heirs, an Age of Crisis. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages was the world Martin Luther entered, the world in which he had been born, and the world to which he would contribute – and transform.

¹ www.cassiciaco.it/navigazione/iconografia/pittori/quattrocento/costa/regola.html

² See Chapter 5.

³ *Const. ref. Al.*

Reformation, as Heiko Oberman put it,

was as popular in the Middle Ages as *democracy* is today – and it meant as many things to as many people. Everyone was for it, as all the sources attest. But that did not explain how *reformations* – today we would speak of *reforms* – were to look and how they could be implemented ... [Reformation] could challenge the Church as such or seek to stir up a religious order. Then *reformation* meant return to original ideas. The Church was to emulate the model of the early Christian Community, to be united again in love; or a monastic community was to regain sight of the original, authentic principles of the founder of their order.⁴

A return to original ideas though was not simply a nostalgic hope to regain a lost golden age. The term “reform” seems to undermine the urgency of the endeavor, to belittle what was involved as if “reform” was something less than “reformation.” In the eyes of the early fourteenth-century political philosopher, Marsilius of Padua, the situation was far more dire than the diminutive “reform” relates. Marsilius had argued in his *Defender of the Peace*, dedicated to Emperor Lewis of Bavaria in the context of Lewis’s fierce conflict with Pope John XXII, that the papacy should be abolished. Marsilius, as George Garnett has argued, was an “apocalyptic prophet,”⁵ for whom

the pope is elided with “that great dragon, that old serpent” who is deservedly called “the devil and Satan” in the Book of Revelation. It was as if sin itself had been perfected, through the agency of the papacy, in order to destroy it. This was why Constantine’s terrible mistake had been providentially ordained. It had been necessary, if fallen man was ultimately to be saved. For Marsilius, the resulting apocalyptic crisis could have only one outcome: the reversal of the second fall of the Roman Empire and, ultimately, the wiping out of the effects of original sin. In other words, Louis’s victory in his conflict with John XXII – which was providentially inevitable – would mean that man could at last be perfected in both temporal and spiritual terms. It would mark the apotheosis of human history and, by implication, herald the Last Judgement.⁶

Marsilius did not call for reformation. Nor did he advocate reform. He did though argue a position that entailed the overturning of the medieval political structure – at least with respect to the Church.⁷ In doing

⁴ Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New York, 1992), p. 50; originally published as *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin, 1982).

⁵ George Garnett, *Marsilius of Padua and “the Truth of History”* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 154–159.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁷ See [Chapter 7](#).

so, he was implicitly arguing against the hierocratic papal theory that had been constructed by the Augustinian hermits James of Viterbo and Giles of Rome.⁸

Giles of Rome had given the Order of Hermits of St Augustine (OESA) its platform. The OESA had been founded by Pope Alexander IV,⁹ and Giles and his Order firmly adhered to the papal political position. Yet the Augustinians' platform also included a new definition of theology, based on the works of Giles, whereby theology was an affective knowledge (*scientia affectiva*), as distinct from the speculative knowledge (*scientia speculativa*) of the Dominicans and the practical knowledge (*scientia practica*) of the Franciscans,¹⁰ the Augustinians' two biggest competitors. Giles was his Order's most influential theologian.¹¹ Born c. 1245, Giles began study at Paris in 1260. He studied under Thomas Aquinas from 1269 to 1272 and lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard during the academic year 1272–3. He achieved the *magisterium* in 1285, receiving his Order's first chair in theology at Paris, and at the General Chapter of the OESA in Florence in 1287, Giles was named the Order's theologian. Thereafter all theologians of the OESA were to follow and defend the doctrines of Giles based on the works he had already written or would write.¹² Though later theologians of the Order, such as Gregory of Rimini, did not follow Giles in all aspects, Giles remained a formidable influence and served as the theological point of departure.¹³ In 1292, Giles was named Archbishop of Bourges by Pope Boniface VIII. Shortly thereafter, Giles became embroiled in the political conflict between Boniface and Philip IV of France, making a significant contribution to late medieval political thought with his *On Resigning the Papacy* (*De renunciatione pape*, 1297) and *On Ecclesiastical Power* (*De ecclesiastica potestate*, 1302), while he had already authored the most widely disseminated “mirror for princes” in the later Middle Ages, his *The Governing*

⁸ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 58, and [Chapter 7](#) of this book.

⁹ Saak, “In Search of Origins: The Foundation(s) of the OESA.” *Analecta Augustiniana* 75 (2012), 5–24.

¹⁰ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 356–368.

¹¹ See Saak, “Giles of Rome.” *OGHRA* 2: 1047–1049.

¹² E. Esteban, “Acta Capitulorum Generalium et Provincialium.” *Analecta Augustiniana* 2 (1908), p. 275.

¹³ See Jordan of Quedlinburg, *Liber Vitasfratrum* 2,22, ed. Winfridus Hümpfner and Rudolph Arbesmann (New York, 1943), pp. 235–238; Damasus Trapp, “Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century. Notes on Editions, Marginalia, Opinions and Booklore.” *Augustiniana* 6 (1956), 146–274. The capitular stipulation specifically stated *omnes ordinis nostri lectores et studentes* were to defend the doctrines of Giles. This did not mean that they had to follow Giles in all respects in a strictly normative way. *Lectores* here could also include university *magistri* who had left the university and were teaching in regional *studia*; see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 368–382.

of *Princes* (*De regimine principum*, c. 1280), composed for Philip IV at the request of his father, Philip III.¹⁴ Giles, however, supported Boniface against Philip in becoming, together with his confrère James of Viterbo,¹⁵ one of the foundational authors of late medieval hierocratic papal theory, and thereby established papal hierocratic theory as part of his Order's platform.¹⁶ In addition, we find a predecessor to if not a source of Ockham's famous razor, when Giles in his final revisions (*Ordinatio*) of his commentary on book II of the *Sentences*, completed in 1309 and dedicated to Robert d'Anjou, King of Naples, argued: "it is useless to posit more when less is sufficient" (*frustra sit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora*).¹⁷ In so many ways, the Augustinian ideology of Giles's political theology set the agenda not only for the later reception of Augustine, but also for opponents to papal hierocratic theory. The impact of Giles's Augustinian ideology and the platform he established for his Order set forces in motion that led to Marsilius's apocalyptic urgency, and that can be traced throughout the later Middle Ages into the early religio-theological development of Brother Martin Luther.

The extent, nevertheless, to which Giles was indeed normative for his Order beyond the mere title is still left for future research to determine. Damasus Trapp made the important distinction in the theology of the late medieval OESA between the followers of Giles, including the ultra-Aegidians, and the new Augustinian school (*schola Augustiniana moderna*), initiated by Gregory of Rimini based on an epistemological and methodological shift; Giles and his followers focused on the knowledge of universals (*cognitio rei universalis*) and a logico-critical attitude, whereas the *schola Augustiniana moderna* adhered to a knowledge of particulars (*cognitio rei particularis*) and a historico-critical attitude.¹⁸ There is little question that Gregory of Rimini represented a shift in the theological approach within the late medieval OESA, but this should not be taken as Giles having been left behind.¹⁹ Giles's works were published repeatedly in the

¹⁴ See Charles F. Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum. Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275–c. 1525* (Cambridge, 1990).

¹⁵ See Saak, "The Life and Works of James of Viterbo, OESA." Forthcoming in *The Brill Companion to James of Viterbo, OESA*, eds. Antoine Côté and Martin Pickavé (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers).

¹⁶ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 19–41. For Giles, see also Elmar Krüger, *Der Traktat "De Ecclesiastica Potestate" des Aegidius Romanus. Eine Spätmittelalterliche Herrschaftskonzeption des Päpstlichen Universalismus* (Cologne, 2007).

¹⁷ Aegidius Romanus, *In Secundum Librum Sententiarum*, 1,6 (Venice, 1482), fo. 17va.

¹⁸ Damasus Trapp, "Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century," pp. 146–274.

¹⁹ See Saak, *Creating Augustine. Interpreting Augustine and Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012).

late fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and between 1683 and 1696 Fridericus Nicolaus Gavardus published Giles's works in six volumes, together with additional questions arising from his own time.²⁰ In the mid-eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIV (1740–58) confirmed Giles as the “the most grounded doctor” (*doctor fundatissimus*), a title already given Giles in the sixteenth century by his editor Angelus Rocca. Giles's Augustinian platform was, in its late medieval development, to have a significant impact: with the emergence of another apocalyptic prophet, the Augustinian platform was in the sixteenth century to transform European life, culture, and politics for ever. Before the explicit calls for reformation became deafening in the wake of the Great Western Schism, the later Middle Ages had already entered a phase of reformation that cannot be dismissed as something less than what would come after.

Reform, Reformation, and Prophecy

Albrecht Dürer depicted the urgency of reformation as never before in his woodcut of 1497/98, giving graphic representation of plague, war, famine, and death, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.²¹ The faithful of Christendom, however, did not need to gaze at images to know the signs of the times. Plague, war, famine, and death were realities experienced all around them. The four horsemen had been loosed, and were riding rampant. The Great Western Schism had only made matters that much worse. The Church had become first a two-headed, and then a three-headed monster. Hell had been opened. If there was any hope left, reformation was needed as never before.

In the later Middle Ages, religion was not a matter of individual taste, of individual choice. While there were certainly many religions within the one faith of Christendom, religion as such was simply a duty, a civic and moral duty, incumbent upon all, as it had been for Cicero: paying what was owed to God, to one's parents, and to the state.²² And the divine creditor was coming to collect. Fear and anxiety are powerful motivators. We must do better. We must do more. The steam from the horses' nostrils can

²⁰ *Theologia exantiquata iuxta orthodoxam beatissimi ecclesie magistri Augustini doctrinam a doctore fundatissimo B. Ægidio Columna Ord. Er. Eiusdem S.P., S.R.E. Card. Aquitaniae Primate, & Archiepiscopo Bituricensi expositam, Additis questionibus nostro tempore exortis, & recentiorum ordine congruentius disposito* (Naples, 1683–96).

²¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art: www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/336215

²² See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 710–722.

be felt on the back of our necks. If the institution and the powers that be will not bring about reformation, we need to do so ourselves. We need to reform ourselves. We need to be truly religious. We must pay our debts. The religiosity of the later Middle Ages has been characterized as a “piety of achievement” (*Leistungsfrömmigkeit*),²³ and that it was. It was not so, however, in the sense of the later so-called Protestant work ethic, but in that of being driven on, of necessity, and of urgency, lest one be trampled under the hoofs of the riders’ horses which were ever so close and getting closer. Reformation was not a choice; it was not an option. It was an absolute necessity, recognized by monastics, laity, and theologians, before the great beast would show itself, before Christ would return to end it all.

The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, though, had not simply been a response to impending doom. As will be seen in more detail in this volume, the late medieval catechetical endeavor sought to Christianize society, and had been doing so long before the emergence of the Catechism. Or perhaps better said, the late medieval catechetical endeavor sought to religionize society, whereby, in the words of Jordan of Quedlinburg, every Christian was to be a saint.²⁴ The religious life was no longer restricted to cloistered monks, nuns, and friars. Indeed, as Bernd Moeller argued over forty years ago, Germany in the fifteenth century was the most pious it had been, exhibiting a flourishing of devotion, and of literacy; the Empire in fact was the most literate territory in Christendom, and religious literature proliferated.²⁵ Catechetical and pastoral works of the fourteenth century were copied with increasing frequency in the fifteenth century to instruct laity and clergy alike, and circulated together with the proliferation of new products. Hermann of Schildesche, just for one example, an Augustinian hermit and younger contemporary of Jordan’s, composed his *Handbook for the Simple Parish Priest* (*Manuale sacerdotum*) in the mid-fourteenth century. This was a text that circulated with nine distinct dedications to the major bishops and archbishops of the Empire, and is still extant, though unedited, in over 200 manuscripts, the overwhelming majority of which date from the fifteenth century.²⁶ If

²³ Bernd Moeller, “Luther und die Städte.” In Bernd Moeller, Heinrich Lutz, and Erwin Iserloh, *Aus der Lutherforschung. Drei Vorträge* (Opladen, 1983), pp. 9–26.

²⁴ Saak, “Quilibet Christianus. Saints in Society in the Sermons of Jordan of Quedlinburg, OESA.” In Beverly Mayne Kienzle et al., eds., *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons*, ed. FIDEM, Textes et études du moyen âge 5 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1996), pp. 317–338. On the concepts of “religion” and “religionization,” see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 710–735.

²⁵ Bernd Moeller, “Piety in Germany around 1500.” In Steven Ozment, ed., *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 50–75.

²⁶ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 352–353.

the production of religious literature was on the rise, it was because there was a market for it, even if that market had been created by the producers themselves in the preceding century. The fifteenth century was the high point of medieval religious devotion, represented by the observant reform movements in the religious orders and by the *Modern Devotion* (*Devotio Moderna*) among the laity.²⁷ There is little wonder why that was the case: Christendom was in crisis, the last days were at hand, and Christ was coming soon in judgment, and the clergy, from the parish priests to the popes themselves, were not doing their jobs. Christendom was failing. Hand in hand with the upsurge in religious devotion was a rise in anti-clericalism to levels not heretofore seen.²⁸ If Brother Martin Luther should be hailed as having been an apocalyptic prophet, he was by no means the first. The world was coming to an end.

The Schism-Shocked Later Middle Ages

In the mid-fourteenth century, in the aftermath of the papal-imperial conflict between Pope John XXII and Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, tensions were running high. John XXII had established the papacy fairly well in Avignon after his predecessor Clement V had moved there in light of the turmoil surrounding Boniface VIII and Italian politics at the time. The non-residency of bishops had been one of the abuses within the Church that had been decried since the time of Gregory VII in the late eleventh century, and here was the pope, the Bishop of Rome, residing outside his dioceses. The Augustinian hermit Augustinus of Ancona asked the question explicitly whether the pope was required to live in Rome, and answered that, as head of the universal Church, the pope could live anywhere. However, as Bishop of Rome and as pastor of his flock, he was required, even by necessity, to be resident in Rome.²⁹ It is questionable how closely John XXII actually read Augustinus's *Summa*, for the entire work is an attempt to push the limits of papal power, and to warn of the boundaries thereof. Petrarch referred to the Avignonese Papacy as the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church," an epitaph that would be used as well some 150 years later. Moreover, in 1347 plague arrived on the continent, decimating the population as never before or since, hitting Italy

²⁷ John Van Engen, *The Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008).

²⁸ Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman, eds., *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, SMRT 51 (Leiden, 1993).

²⁹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 109–112.

especially hard in 1348, having arrived as northern Europe had recently recovered from the Great Northern Famine. War was plaguing England and France and would continue to do so for over 100 years, while the later fourteenth century saw the beginning of peasant uprisings that would continue and increase in frequency. The worst, though, was yet to come. In 1377, Pope Gregory XI finally managed to return to Rome, ending the papal non-residency after sixty-eight years. But then he promptly died. Whereas there had been disputed papal elections before, and anti-popes of various sorts were not unknown, what transpired after Gregory XI's death was like nothing before. The split election of 1378 resulted in both claimants to the See of St Peter receiving sufficient political support for each to have a basis for his legitimacy. The Great Western Schism was to last until 1415, shaking the already cracking Christendom,³⁰ deepening the widespread crisis that brought into question the very foundations of society.

Reform in head and members became the slogan of the day. The Church had to do something. After the election of the Roman Pope Urban VI and the Avignonese Pope Clement VII all of Europe fell under the ban from one pope or the other. The Council of Pisa in 1409 attempted to end the debacle, but only made it worse with the election of John XXIII. Now there were three popes, and the Church was a growing hydra. With the support of Emperor Sigismund, and ecclesio-political theorizing by scholars in Paris, the Council of Constance was perhaps the final chance for amelioration, the final chance for reformation of a situation that surpassed all previous experience.

The decree *Haec sancta* put an end to the matter. In 1415, the Council put an end to papal monarchy all together by proclaiming the General Council as the head of the Church, governing for Christ, while the pope would serve as the CEO. The Council fathers at Constance further issued the decree *Frequens* to ensure ongoing conciliar oversight: after Constance closed, another general council was to meet in five years; after that council closed, a following council would meet seven years thereafter; upon the closing of the second post-Constance council, a general council would meet in ten years, and then every ten years in perpetuity. Constance likewise dealt with other reform matters, including the issue of heresy, at least with respect to the problems brewing in Bohemia.³¹ Master John Hus of the University of Prague, after having received safe conduct to the Council

³⁰ See Joëlle Rollo-Koster and Thomas M. Izbicki, eds., *A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378–1417)*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 17 (Leiden, 2009).

³¹ See Philip H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance, 1414–1418*, SHCT 53 (Leiden, 1994).

from Emperor Sigismund himself, was burned at the stake for heresy in 1415.³² As legend had it, Hus prophesied that while they may burn this goose, a reference to his own name in Czech, a swan would arise whom they would not be able to burn. A reformer was coming. It is doubtful the Council fathers gave it much thought. They had, after all, set the Church on new foundations. Only upon completing their business did they go on to elect the new pope, the new CEO of the Church, Martin V. The Council closed its proceedings in 1418; a job well done.

The next council, in keeping with *Frequens*, met in Pavia in 1423. Matters seemed to be progressing well, and the council fathers returned home in 1424. Seven years later, the next general council met in Basel. Pope Martin V, not entirely satisfied with his newly defined role, had begun to reassert papal privilege and authority, which was then continued even more so by his eventual successor Eugenius IV. Eugenius could not prevent the Council of Basel from meeting, but he could rule over it, and that he did. The papacy had re-emerged as the head of the Church (*caput ecclesie*). Basel ended with Eugenius transferring the Council to Florence, while some of the die-hard conciliarists stayed on in Basel, holding to the letter of the law laid down in Constance. No one really had the stomach for a new schism, and though the rump Council of Basel held on until 1441, no one really listened.³³ Twenty-one years later, in 1462, Pope Pius II issued his Bull *Execrabilis*, in which he condemned appeals to a council, and asserted the pope as the only one who could give any council legitimacy. Conciliarism was dead.

The next council after Basel met in 1512, the Fifth Lateran Council. Lateran V, not dissimilar from Constance itself, had a host of issues to deal with, including renewed threats from the Turks. The prior general of the OESA, Giles of Viterbo, preached to the Council fathers that the holy must not be changed by humans, but that humans are to be changed by the holy, and praised Pope Julius II for having saved the Church.³⁴ Immediate needs there were, and Julius effectively dealt with them, at least for the moment. No longstanding reformation though was undertaken. No sense or recognition of what was coming seems to have

³² See Matthew Spinka, *John Hus. A Biography* (Princeton, NJ, 1968); Thomas Krzenck, *Johannes Hus. Theologe, Kirchenreformer, Märtyrer* (Zurich, 2011); Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus. Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London, 2011); idem, *The Trial of Jan Hus. Medieval Heresy and Criminal Procedure* (Oxford, 2013).

³³ See Joachim W. Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire. The Conflict Over Supreme Authority and Power in the Church*, SHCT 13 (Leiden, 1978).

³⁴ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 1–2.

been present, and an anonymous treatise published and printed shortly thereafter ridiculed Julius for his failure, for his exclusive attention to temporal matters, for which he was to be excluded from heaven itself. Erasmus of Rotterdam may have been joking and having fun in his *Julius Exclusus*, as perhaps was Sabastian Brant in his *Ship of Fools*,³⁵ along the lines of a sixteenth-century John Stewart and his *Daily Show*, but there was seriousness underneath. Tremors had been felt for quite some time, some having been rather severe, but the fault line was about to crack wide open.

Counciliarism was an experiment that lasted a mere forty-eight years. It was a dangerous doctrine anyway, and the monarchs of Europe were relieved to see it go. Representative government was not in their best interest, nor in that of the Emperor, even if reining in the power and influence of the papacy may have been. That too had been part of the problem with Marsilius of Padua's *Defender of the Peace*. Though overtly an imperial defense, the theory Marsilius espoused was that the *legislator*, even as embodied in an emperor, derived its power from the communion of the citizens (*communio civium*), or the most worthy part thereof (*valentior pars*).³⁶ Christendom was not ready for constitutional, representative monarchy. Popes and princes may have been at odds, but kings and emperors shared a basic understanding with the papacy as to the natural hierarchy established by God in nature and in society. Not everyone, though, necessarily agreed.

In the wake of the Council of Basel, an anonymous cleric composed a treatise that was to have long-lasting impact, the *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*. This treatise went beyond simple calls for reform in head and members to call for a fundamental reformation of the Church and the state. Princes, ecclesiastical and secular, had failed. They had failed to bring about a true reformation, one that was ever so needed, so desired. "Think of how things stand nowadays," the anonymous author lamented,

the sacred Council [of Basel] undertook reform of all that stood in need of reform in spiritual and secular society, from its head to the least of its members. The Council's decrees told the highest personages what needed to be accomplished, what they should do and what they should leave off doing. But are they concerned? Not at all. They show (forgive the expression) their

³⁵ *The Julius Exclusus of Erasmus*, trans. Paul Pascal; introduction and notes, J. Kelley Sowards (Bloomington, IN, 1968); Sabastian Brant, *Ship of Fools*, trans. Edwin H. Zeydel (New York, 1944; Dover reprint edition, 1962).

³⁶ See [Chapter 7](#).

arse to the Council and wish no reformation. Thus simony and greed continue to reign from the thrones of the mighty.³⁷

Such complaints were echoed by the Grievances of the German Estates presented to Charles V at Worms in 1521, the same Imperial Diet where Brother Martin made his stand.³⁸ Here too the Estates objected to the selling of indulgences.³⁹ Already as early as Nicholas of Cusa's legatine mission to the Empire in the mid-fifteenth century we find the assertion that

if pope and curia were to reform themselves, or if a general council were to bring about a universal reformation of the Church, there would be no difficulty in reforming every Christian in his own estate. It is therefore most sensible, as well as most necessary, for the pope to decide that he must forthwith convoke a general council of the entire Church, as he is sworn to do.⁴⁰

A decade after this, Pope Pius II condemned calls for and appeals to a general Council, nullifying the decrees of Constance and nailing conciliarism firmly in its coffin. According to *Frequens*, a council should have met in 1449. It was not to be. The author of the *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund* would not have been surprised. The reformer to come simply hadn't appeared yet, though he was coming indeed. After having set forth a comprehensive program for reformation in Church and in society, the author presented a prophecy in the form of a vision Emperor Sigismund received in 1414. God's new order would be established by Frederick of the New Land (Lantneuen), who would impose reformation from above:

and he shall bring peace to the empire and all its lands and regions ... His work will go speedily. Though stern at first, his rule will grow mild; he may appear strange to us but will become familiar. Eternal life lies before us. Whoever craves it must join his cause. King and emperor do not admonish you: it is God, our Creator, who utters the prophecy. For the wicked, hell is always open, but the faithful are called to heaven. Let us but bring order and obedience to our land and we shall soon overcome the heathens. This will happen. All men await his coming. The time is near. It shall be fulfilled.⁴¹

³⁷ *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*, in Gerald Strauss, ed. and trans., *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation. A Collection of Documents Selected, Translated and Edited* (Bloomington, IN, 1971), pp. 3–31, 5.

³⁸ From the *Reichstagsakten*, in Strauss, *Manifestations*, pp. 52–63.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴⁰ *Die Gravamina der deutschen Nation gegen den römischen Hof*, in Strauss, *Manifestations*, pp. 48–52, 51–52.

⁴¹ *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*, in Strauss, *Manifestations*, p. 31.

Reformation was coming. Reformation was needed. The time was urgent. Something must be done.

Not long after Basel, in the summer of 1459, Nicholas of Cusa published his *General Reformation*, which detailed the need and urgency of, and a program for, reformation. Starting off by explicating the theological point of departure, Cusa wrote:

Thus the union of the faithful in him is his church, whose head [he is]. Whoever lives and moves in this faith, that this Jesus Christ, voracious son of the virgin Mary, indeed is the Truth, having *the word of eternal life*. This is the faith, giving all sanctity, knowledge and justice; and it beautifies anything. Whoever believes this truly keeps his commandments indeed and does not sin. For he vanquishes evil, the world and its desires, knowing there is no life except in Christ's promises and that no one is justified except the one justified by the merits of his death. Here he can say with the apostle [that] he knows nothing *except Christ and him crucified*, in whom is attained supreme, complete knowledge, that is faith, by which the just man lives.⁴²

The prelates of the Church are the Church's eyes, but if the eyes grow dark, the entire body is left in darkness. This was the problem Cusa saw: the Church was in darkness.⁴³ Cusa then gave fourteen rules for visitors to ensure the health and light of the Church. Reformation was a return to origins and original form, whereby Christians are to be brought back to the original form they had in baptism, prelates should be brought back to their original form when they became prelates, and kings, princes, priests, and religious similarly.⁴⁴ Such a reform was to be headed by, led by, and instituted by the pope as the ultimate father, in conjunction with the cardinals, his brothers.⁴⁵ If the pope and the curia could themselves return to their original form, this would make possible, through the instrument of visitors and visitations, the reformation of the Church as such.⁴⁶ For Cusa, this was a possibility, and a much needed one to return light to enlighten the body of Christ, which must start with the eyes.

Yet in the early years of the sixteenth century, a reformer was still expected, reformation was still an urgent necessity, and prophets continued the call, continued to prophesy what was coming. The earthquake

⁴² Nicolas Cusanus, *Reformatio generalis*, as trans. by Morimichi Watanabe, in idem, *Concord and Reform. Nicholas of Cusa and Legal and Political Thought in the Fifteenth Century* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 201–216, 202.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 204–205.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 210–211.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 211–216.

that was the Schism had multiple aftershocks. It was almost like Humpty Dumpty who had fallen from the wall and could not be put back together again, no matter how hard one tried. Reformation was needed, was called for, and we only lessen and belittle the efforts and the urgency by referring to it as reform.⁴⁷ After the Schism, Christendom would not be the same, and calls for reformation increased in frequency, pitch, and tenor.

The Prophetic Voice

Brother Martin's call for reformation was certainly not a voice crying in the wilderness; it was part of a chorus of a prophetic chorale chanting the urgency of reformation. Frederick the Wise may not have been the "Frederick of the New Land" as the reformer to come, prophesied by Emperor Sigismund, who would impose reformation from above by force, and neither was Brother Martin, but reformation was expected, looked for, longed for when Brother Martin was ordained in 1507. Reformation would come, it would happen.

In 1501, Johannes Kannengeter preached in Hildesheim.⁴⁸ At the time, the city was under the ban, which had been imposed the previous year and continued until 1503.⁴⁹ Kannengeter rebuked the Hildesheimers for their lack of religious fervor and moral character, which the preaching of the Gospel would ameliorate. He called for the two endowed cathedral preachers to be doctors of theology, who would teach and preach God's word.⁵⁰ The ban was the judgment of God against the Hildesheimers.⁵¹ "For several years," Kannengeter preached,

⁴⁷ Watanabe translated Cusa's *Reformatio generalis* as General Reform; Oberman recognized the problem, noting that "competing movements emerged from which only confessional partisanship withholds the designation *reformatio* as if it were a badge of honor to which only Luther is entitled." Oberman, *The Two Reformations. The Journey from the Last Days to the New World*, ed. Donald Weinstein (New Haven, CT, 2003), p. 62. Yet Oberman then falls into the traditional distinction of that between late medieval reform and then sixteenth-century reformation. Immediately following the quoted sentence, we find Oberman's continuation: "In fact Luther so clearly rejected the emerging late-medieval program of reform that despite the power of entrenched tradition his Protestant movement might be better termed a Counter Reformation. Certainly it was counter to the reform position in the medieval debate ..." *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63. Oberman had previously written: "But that did not explain how *reformatio*s – today we would speak of *reforms* – were to look and how they could be implemented." *Luther*, p. 50. Even though he was far more aware of the issue than most scholars have been, Oberman still falls under his own critique with respect to the use of the term *reformatio* and confessional partisanship.

⁴⁸ Karl Euling, ed., *Chronik des Johan Oldecop* (Tübingen, 1891), p. 8,1–12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3,9–19. Apparently the city was placed under the ban for improper action in legal processes; see Adolf Bertram, *Geschichte des Bisthums Hildesheim* (Hildesheim, 1899–1925), vol. I, p. 451.

⁵⁰ Oldecop, *Chronica*, p. 8, 14–22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9,1–5.

you have not served the Lord God in the churches ... It is true, gentlemen, it is true! I see before my eyes and feel in the pit of my stomach a heavy and bitter general reformation at hand. And if you in time are unwilling to shape up, the ban will remain and God's anger and destruction will be upon you. And then think back on my words and teaching, that I warned you and did so only for the sake of your souls' salvation.⁵²

Kannengeter, "full of evangelical teaching," taught the Hildesheimers to believe the twelve articles of faith, to keep the Ten Commandments, to honor the seven sacraments, to avoid the seven deadly sins, to follow the seven works of mercy, not to betray the faith in Christ, to arm themselves against evil spirits, against the flesh and evil men with the shield of faith, and to live with moderation,⁵³ a catechetical program that had been pursued in Europe for over 150 years. Kannengeter became known as a prophet throughout Hildesheim,⁵⁴ and apparently had an effect, since when the ban was lifted in 1503, Oldecop reported on the immense joy; everyone was eager to hear mass, and the piety, religiosity, and obedience of the Hildesheimers became legendary.⁵⁵

Yet twenty years after Kannengeter had preached the urgency of reformation to the burghers of Hildesheim, the Augustinian friar, Arnoldus Cancrinus was still doing so. About Cancrinus, nothing much is known and nothing much can be known. He has been as ignored by modern scholars as he was by the chroniclers of his age.⁵⁶ Cancrinus was Suffragan

⁵² "Gi hebben nu rede itliche jare here godde in der kerken nicht gedeinet ... Nemet ware, leven hern! nemt war! Ik se vor ogen und fole in minem gemote eine sware und bittere gemeine reformation vor handen. Unde wille gi ju bi tiden nicht beteren, so wart de ban und torn des hern over ju fallen und tonichte maken. Und denne gedenket miner wort und lere, dat ik ju gewarnet und de sake juwer zele zalicheit alleine wol gemeinet hadde!" *Ibid.*, p. 9,11–22.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9,24–35.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9,37–10,1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5,8–16. The preaching of Kannengeter was not mentioned by Hennig Brandis in his *Diary*; Ludwig Haenselmann, ed. *Hennig Brandis' Diarium. Hildesheimsche Geschichten aus den Jahren 1471–1528* (Hildesheim, 1896), pp. 63–73, nor was the interdict.

⁵⁶ Cancrinus is not mentioned by Ulrich Knapp, ed., *Ego Sum Hildensemensis. Bischof, Domkapitel und Dom in Hildesheim 815 bis 1810*, Kataloge des Dom-Museums Hildesheim 3 (Hildesheim, 2000), pp. 189–195; nor by J. Gebauer, *Geschichte der Stadt Hildesheim* (1922; reprint Hildesheim, 1994), vol. I, pp. 288–358; nor by Hans Wildefuer, the mayor of Hildesheim (d. 1541) in his *Chronica der Bischöffe zu Hildensheimb von dem ersten Bischöffe so im Jahr nah Christi unsers Herrn und Heylandes Geburts, 814*; see Udo Stanelle, *Die Hildesheimer Bischofschronik des Hans Wildefuer*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für historische Landesforschung der Universität Göttingen 25 (Hildesheim, 1986); nor in the *Annales* of Johann Oldecop (d. 1574); see *Chronik des Johan Oldecop* (see n. 48 of this chapter); nor by Hennig Brandis in his *Diarium* (see n. 55). In the *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Hildesheim*, there are three *Urkunden* that mention Cancrinus, all of which concern his attempt to secure an indulgence of eighty days for those saying five *Pater Nosters* and *Ave Marias* and participating in the remembrance of Christ's Passion (nr. 518), and an indulgence of forty days for those participating in the masses dedicated to the memory of Christ's Passion in the St Andreas Church in Hildesheim (nrs. 550 and 559). These date from 1512 to 1517. See *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Hildesheim*, vol. VIII,

Bishop of Hildesheim from 1512 to his death in 1524.⁵⁷ He did not play a significant role in the introduction of the Reformation.⁵⁸ He was not an explicit opponent of Luther as such.⁵⁹ He was an insignificant figure in an insignificant locale; Hildesheim was not at the forefront of sixteenth-century developments.⁶⁰ Cancrinus would have been entirely forgotten had it not been for a text written in his own hand in 1523, his *Testament*, extant still today in a single autograph manuscript in codex 735 of the Cathedral Library of Hildesheim. In this work, Cancrinus offers us precious insight into reformation and early modern Catholicism.⁶¹

Cancrinus's *Testament* is itself a testament to the catholic response as Lutheranism was beginning to make headway in Europe. It is not, as such, polemical and bears, perhaps, closest resemblance to Berthold Pürstinger's *The Burden of the Church (Onus Ecclesiae)*,⁶² or Kaspar Schatzgeyer's

ed. Richard Doebner (Hildesheim, 1901), nr. 518, pp. 455–456, dated 19 March 1512; cf. nr. 550, pp. 485–486; dated 12 August 1516 and nr. 559, pp. 490–491, dated 6 March 1517 (hereafter cited as *UBH*). In 1965, Adolar Zumkeller published the first and only study of Cancrinus; Zumkeller, "Das Wirken des Augustiner-Weihbischofs Arnold Cancrinus (gest. um 1524) im Bistum Hildesheim am Anfang der Glaubensspaltung." *Augustinianum* 5 (1965), 469–521, and gives an exhaustive table of contents, pp. 477–487; see also A. Kunzelmann, *Geschichte der Deutschen Augustiner-Eremiten, V. Die Sächsische-Thüringische Provinz und die Sächsische Reformatorkongregation bis zum Untergang der Beiden* (Würzburg, 1974), pp. 375, 520. Cancrinus was Weihbischof of Hildesheim during the provincialates of the Saxon-Thuringian Province of Hermann Dreier (1511–1514), Gerhard Hecker (1514–1520), and Tielemann Schnabel (1520–1523). Kunzelmann notes that Cancrinus "wohl aus dem Gebiet der sächsischen Provinz kam, wenn man auch nicht weiß, aus welchem Kloster er stammte." Kunzelmann, *Geschichte*, p. 375.

⁵⁷ C. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica medii aevi* (Münster, 1910), vol. III, p. 367.

⁵⁸ For an excellent survey of the Reformation in Hildesheim, see Jochen Bepler, "Die reformation in Hildesheim." In Ulrich Knapp, ed., *Ego Sum Hildensemensis* (Hildesheim, 2000), pp. 189–195. For a more extensive treatment, see J. Gebauer, *Geschichte der Stadt Hildesheim*, vol. I, pp. 288–358.

⁵⁹ Cancrinus certainly argued against Luther's teaching, but never mentioned him explicitly in his *Testamentum*. Peter Müller, however, claimed that Cancrinus not only was "Einer der stärksten Widersacher der neuen Lehre," but also that Cancrinus should be named among the "nicht geringe Zahl herausragender Gegner Luthers." See Peter Müller, *Bettelorden und Stadtgemeinde in Hildesheim im Mittelalter. Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Bistums Hildesheim* (Hanover, 1994), vol. II, pp. 291, 298; see also p. 382.

⁶⁰ A good illustration of the marginal role of Hildesheim is that in the *Handbook of European History*, Hildesheim appears only once, at vol. II, p. 362, as a passing "quotable quote" from the prince-bishop in 1545; in Euan Cameron's *The European Reformation* (Oxford, 1991), Hildesheim appears also once, on p. 233 together with Nuremberg and Basel as cities that hosted mock processions of the crucifixion (Nuremberg, 1525, Basel, 1529, and Hildesheim, 1543). Yet a good deal of excellent scholarship has been produced by local scholars (see e.g. the works cited in nn. 55 and 56).

⁶¹ Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, cod. 735; see *Handschriften der Dombibliothek zu Hildesheim*, Zweiter Teil, Beschrieben von Renate Giermann und Helmar Härtel unter Mitarbeit von Marina Arnold (Wiesbaden, 1993), pp. 53–57.

⁶² See Manfred Schulze, "Onus Ecclesie: Last der Kirche – Reformation der Kirche." In Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman, eds., *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 317–342; Michael Milway, "The Burden and the Beast. An Oracle of Apocalyptic Reform in Early Sixteenth-Century Salzburg." Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 1997.

Dogmatic Investigation of the Divine Scriptures for Reconciling Conflicts (*Scrutinium Divinae Scripturae pro conciliatione dissidentium dogmatum*), from which Cancrinus drew heavily.⁶³ The *Testament*, though, is less formal; it is a personal document. It presents us with a unique perspective on the pastoral attempt at the local level to treat the very questions that were being debated at the time: on the freedom of the Christian, on the relationship between faith and works, on communion in both kinds, on the power of the clergy, on the role of monks, and on it goes.⁶⁴

In his *Testament*, Cancrinus stated he was the Bishop of Misene and Suffragan of Hildesheim.⁶⁵ In the city's charters (*Urkunden*), he appears three times, each dealing with the same issue, namely, his securing an indulgence for his flock for meditating on the Passion.⁶⁶ There is no doubt that Hildesheim was the context for the *Testament*. Aside from mentioning his title as Bishop of Misene, Misene makes no other appearance in the work. Hildesheim is mentioned and Cancrinus included sermons explicitly given in Hildesheim. The work is explicitly dated to the third feast of Pentecost in the year 1523, written at Hildesheim.⁶⁷

Cancrinus's *Testament*, in quarto format, contains many marginalia in addition to the text itself.⁶⁸ One has the impression that the text was originally composed to be read, at least in part, by an audience, and there are not infrequent addresses to the reader him or herself.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the work remains a very personal one, which includes a statement of Cancrinus's final general confession.⁷⁰ This was a text Cancrinus wrote for himself, though with an outlook on the broader ecclesiastical perspective,

⁶³ On Schatzgeyer, see Erwin Iserloh, "Kaspar Schatzgeyer." In *Katholische Theologen der Reformationszeit* (Münster, 1984), vol. I, pp. 56–63.

⁶⁴ For the contents of the *Testamentum*, see Zumkeller, "Das Wirken," pp. 477–487; Zumkeller further notes: "Das *Testamentum* des Arnoldus Cancrinus – darin zeigt sich das etwas enttäuschende Ergebnis unserer Untersuchung – is keine selbständige Auseinandersetzung mit Luthers Lehre." *Ibid.*, p. 519.

⁶⁵ Cancrinus began his work with the following: *In nomine domini, amen. Ego Arnodus Cancrinus stultissimus virorum Misiensis episcopus ac hildesiane ecclesie suffraganeus inutilis, vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.* Cancrinus, *Testamentum*, Hildesheim, Dombibliothek cod. 735, fo. 4^r (hereafter cited as *Test.*).

⁶⁶ See n. 56 of this chapter.

⁶⁷ 1523 *Hildesemensis feria tertia pentacoste. Test.*, fo. 295^r.

⁶⁸ The hand of the marginalia and the hand of the text are the same. There is, however, a later hand, dating to the eighteenth century, which also added marginal comments.

⁶⁹ *Test.*, fo. 4^r; on fo. 17^r in the bottom margin, after prayers in *defensionem Marie*, one reads the following instructions: *Verte duo folia precedentia et dic: mecum sit dei caritas, etc., quam quidem efficacissimam benedictionem tibi impetrabit veraciter a sanctissima trinitate purissima virgo Maria dei genitrix gloriosissima.* His reference is found on fo. 14^r. Both of these examples, and these could easily be multiplied, indicate that Cancrinus was addressing a reader aside from himself.

⁷⁰ *Test.*, fos. 84^r–94^r.

perhaps as a collection of notes to be worked out later, at least in part, in more formal detail.⁷¹ It is certainly not a complete, polished work, when we find Cancrinus's own corrections and additions as well as his marginalia.⁷² In any case, the context in which Cancrinus composed his manuscript is clear: the last days were at hand.

Cancrinus presents a view of world history that was rather idiosyncratic, if not entirely unique. He used the standard division of the three ages of the world, but interpreted them rather differently. For Cancrinus, the first age began with creation and lasted until the flood. This, in itself, is not revolutionary, but he continued. The second age began with Noah and would last until the year 1524.⁷³ In other words, Cancrinus is writing just at the end of the second age. The third age, then, will begin in 1524 and will consist of tribulations, ending only with the Last Judgment.⁷⁴

Cancrinus continued by explaining the source of his scheme. The second age will end only with the effects of a great conjunction of the planets. This Cancrinus took from Johann Virdung, a mathematician and astrologer, who prophesied great calamities for the year 1524.⁷⁵ According to Virdung, as Cancrinus read him, on 10 March 1524, at 10:11 p.m., there would be a great conjunction of all the planets in the constellation of Pisces, which would signify death, war, rebellion, unheard of atrocities, and many other calamities.⁷⁶ There would be great cold, rain, hail, and

⁷¹ See e.g. his *Ad amorem predictorum illustrationem ex superabundanti compendiosus hic sequitur de munditia cordis tractatus*, fos. 48^r–50^r.

⁷² See e.g. his *Sermo de penitentia*, fos. 39^r–45^r.

⁷³ *Tradiderunt antiqui in suis antiquitatibus quod Deus optimus maximus revelavit Ade prothoplasto tria secula. Primum incepit a creatione et duravit usque ad diluuium generale. Secundum vero ab eiusdem modi calamitate incipiendo durabit usque ad impletionem effectuum magne coniunctionis omnium planetarum que erit anno 1524. Test.*, fo. 278^r.

⁷⁴ *Et ab illo tempore incipiet tertium seculum et duravit usque ad generalem conflagrationem mundi que erit in fine mundi tempore extremi iudicii. Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ex quodam nova pronosticatione magistri Joannis Virdung de hassetfurt mathematici articule per ordinem qui sequuntur sunt excerpti. Test.*, fo. 279^r. The source to which Cancrinus is referring is Johann Virdung, *Prognosticon super novis stupendis ... coniunctionibus magnis ...* Oppenheim, 1521. I have not yet seen this work. The authors of the catalogue of the manuscripts in the Dombibliothek Hildesheim note: "Text von Cancrinus sehr freies Exzerpt." *Handschriften der Dombibliothek zu Hildesheim* (as in n. 6), p. 57. Zunkeller notes this section of the work in his listing of the contents, but makes no mention of Cancrinus's apocalypticism or his prognostications. On Virdung, see Max Steinmetz, "Johann Virdung von Haßfurt, sein Leben und seine astrologischen Flugschriften." In Hans-Joachim Köhler, ed., *Flugschriften als Massenmedium der Reformationszeit* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 353–372, and Andrew Gow, *The Red Jew. Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200–1600* (Leiden, 1994), p. 143. Virdung, and consequently Cancrinus, stood on the crest of a wave of late medieval astrological and apocalyptic expectation; see Robin Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis. Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, CA, 1988), pp. 27–28.

⁷⁶ *Anno domini 1524: decinnia die mensis martij post meridiem hora x xi minuta in piscibus erit coniunctio omnium planetarum cadentium pro maiori parte in octava domo scilicet mortis, que eiusdem coniuxta traditionem astronomorum significat mortem et perditionem inauditam et equidem*

horrible winds.⁷⁷ Images of dragons and other terrible signs would appear in the sky and the tail of a horrible comet would scathe the earth, signifying unheard of evils coming to human kind.⁷⁸ Cancrinus then explained the cause of these disasters: religious controversies over the catholic faith and the institution of ways of living foreign to Catholicism, resulting then too in political turmoil, on account of which a great multitude of people will suffer terribly.⁷⁹ These signs signify, Cancrinus clarified, an impending general lack, whereby because of the great wars that will occur, agriculture will be impeded, resulting in famine and the most pernicious death, for humans, as well as for the fishes in the rivers, the birds of the air, and the animals of the earth.⁸⁰ A great multitude of evil men will attack cities, villages, and castles, sparing no one because of age or sex, filling the world with blood, with all mercy gone.⁸¹

The Passion of Christ is the theme that received the most attention from Cancrinus in his *Testament*, and regarding his own original contribution, the Passion takes primacy of place. The Passion in Hildesheim was a public event. On 12 August 1516 the City Council confirmed and made known that Heinrich Kamer, vicar of the altar of St Katherine in the Cathedral and the senior members of St Andreas Church had made the provisions that from that time on the largest bell of St Andreas would ring out the *Ave Maria* five times, three times a day, in the morning, mid-day, and evening, in memory of Christ's Passion, his five wounds, and the Virgin Mary. Each time, all the people of Hildesheim were to pause

horrendam multorum hominum incendia domorum crudelia bella, rebellionis subditorum contra suos superiores, novas et inauditas infirmitates et multas alias calamitates quibus hic mundus flagellabitur propter malignam generis humani. Test., fo. 279^v.

⁷⁷ *Item eiusmodi coniunctio significat intensissem frigus estum ariditatem et sterilitatem terre. Item significat superabundantiam pluvie et diluvia in certis regionibus. Et erit ventus horribilissimus quia vehementissimus, tonitrua et choruscationes cum emissionibus grandinum et lapidum in tantum erunt ut homines cogentur fugere ad speculatas montium. Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Item erunt horribiles impressiones aeris scilicet dracones et similes incensiones per regionem aeris volantes. Et ista coniunctio causabit horrendam quamdam cometam cuius cauda tanget multas terras et habebit cursum suum per xii signa celi quod erit presagium multorum malorum inauditorum. Test., fo. 279^v.*

⁷⁹ *... ut sunt magnatorum deiectio inventio et institutio extranei modi vivendi strages multa hominum propter fidem catholicam controversia spiritualium, scilicet clericorum et religiosorum. Et discordia maxima erit in regnis ac aliis principatibus mundi sic quod immensa hominum multitudo miserabiliter cruciabitur. Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Item dicitur quod supradicta coniunctio significat in multis terris magnam caristiam futuram. Et quod propter magna bella impediatur agricultura. Item ex tanta caristia causabitur maxima fames ex qua sequetur pernitiosissima mortalitas hominum. Item pisces morientur in fluminibus et volucres et animalia in terris ex malis impressionibus celi. Test., fos. 279^v–280^r.*

⁸¹ *Item congregabitur maxima multitudo hominum pessimorum qui non parcent nec ulli prorsus ordini sexui et etate. Et devastabunt civitates, opida, villas et castra et implebunt terram sanguine humano omni misericordia semota. Test., fo. 280^r.*

and meditate on Christ's Passion, his wounds, and Mary, and to say five *Ave Marias* and five *Pater Nosters*, for which they would receive eighty days indulgence, forty coming from Bishop Johannes, and forty coming from the Suffragan Bishop, Arnoldus, and this indulgence was to be valid from that time on.⁸² Cancrinus's effort to help make the Passion public in Hildesheim in 1516 makes his sermon on the Passion of 1523 all the more powerful, when he began by claiming that Christ was being crucified anew.⁸³

In so many ways, Cancrinus's sermon on the Passion is as typical of late medieval Passion piety as can be.⁸⁴ He goes through the betrayal of Christ, the flagellation of Christ, and the death of Christ, showing then too how at each point Christ is suffering the same today by "bad Christians." Thus he argued: "For there are many who eat Christ when they receive his body and nevertheless they thus greet Christ, embrace Christ, kiss Christ, and sit with him at the table betraying him all the while like Judas, when they return to their sins and cast Christ out of their hearts and welcome in the devil."⁸⁵ And when expositing Christ's flagellation, Cancrinus explained: "Today those beat Christ in the head who persecute the Church's prelates; they beat him in the face who disturb the contemplatives, who are the more beautiful part of the church, in their quiet; they beat him in the neck who interrupt preachers in their sermons; they beat him in his body who molest the followers of the active life, who are weaker, in going about their business."⁸⁶ Commonplaces are commonplaces, but being so does not rob them of their meaning or impact. There was a tradition of devotion to the Passion in Hildesheim, and the time,

⁸² *UBH*, nr. 550, pp. 485–487, dated 12 August 1516.

⁸³ *Sermo in quo ostenditur quomodo prohdolor hodie sine intermissione passio domini renovatur et ob id nunc mundus acriter affligitur*. *Test.*, fo. 30^r.

⁸⁴ Cf. Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 467–583.

⁸⁵ *Multi etiam tamen Christum comedunt, quando corpus Christi recipiunt et tamen ad similitudinem Iude Christum sic salutatum, sic amplexatum, sic osculatum, sic in mensa associatum proditorie tradunt dum ad peccata redeunt et Christum de corde expellunt, et diabolum introducunt*. *Test.*, fo. 31^r.

⁸⁶ *Flagellant autem Christum hodie in capite qui persequuntur prelatos ecclesie; flagellant in facie qui contemplativos qui sunt pulcior pars ecclesie perturbant in sua quiete; flagellant in collo qui predicatorum eius impediunt a divino sermone; flagellant in corpore qui activos infirmiores molestiant in sua operatione*. *Test.*, fo. 34^r; cf. *Quintum est occisio, habuit autem Christus quedam vulnera, que fuerunt sibi occasio mortis. Primo enim fuit flagellatus in tantum ut inter flagella alius exspirasset, deinde fuit in pedibus et manibus perforatus et tandem cum iam esset mortuus in latere vulneratus. Per corpus Christi intelliguntur illi de ecclesia qui adsunt infirmi et temporalibus auferuntur ... Per manus intelliguntur activi, isti occiduntur cum in suis operationibus impediuntur ... Per pedes intelliguntur contemplativi qui suis orationibus totam ecclesiam sustentant. Istos illi occidunt qui orationes ne in ipsis effectum habeant impediunt, sunt etiam in ecclesia quidam mortui sicut viri perfecti ... Istos illi occidunt qui eos conturbare non desinunt ... nulli dubium dominum crucifigunt qui eum in suis sacerdotibus persequantur. Ideo ira dei eos involuet et puniet*. *Test.*, fos. 36^r–37^r.

place, and setting of restating traditional themes gives new meaning to the traditional and the common. The relevance of the Passion narrative to Cancrinus was not one of remembering a past event, but was a visceral strategy in the present. As he exhorted his canons in Hildesheim, the Passion offered the model for the Christian life.⁸⁷

The Passion was so central to Cancrinus because for him the world was in turmoil and the last days were at hand. This was not simply the result of his appeal to horoscopes. Towards the very end of his *Testament*, Cancrinus strung together a number of biblical passages dealing with persecution and the coming of the last days. He found himself in the midst of a most inhumane war waged by various new doctrines and the only refuge he could find was in scripture. Here too the quotations were commonplace, yet in the context Cancrinus gave them, they assumed new meaning in his present.⁸⁸

In this context, it was not the princes alone who were to blame, as it was for the anonymous author of the *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*. Before the preface to his *Testament*, Cancrinus included a note in which he argued that

no member of the clergy, or a knight, or anyone else of whatever status should debate the Christian faith in public ... because [in doing so] not only do they often come to false expositions against the faith, but also from such arguments the mysteries to be venerated are profaned by Jews and pagans. Therefore, if a member of the clergy dares to debate matters of religion in public, he will be removed from the clergy. If a knight does so, he will be removed from military service. Regarding others, however, if free men do so, they will be driven from this most holy city and will be subject to strong judgment and fitting punishments, but if slaves do so, they will be beaten most severely.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Induere Iesum Christum, nihil aliud est quam ad exemplar eius vivere, hinc 1 Johannis 2 scribitur: qui dicit se in Christo manere, debet sicut ille ambulavit et ipse ambulare (1 Jo 2:6). Et Exodi 25: inspicere et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est (Ex 25:40). Christus dicitur mons propter eminentiam virtutis et sanctitatis, quibus in hac vita omnem creaturam excellebat. Venerabiles domini et viri spectabiles istud certe exemplar tanquam speculum inspicere debemus, ut sic Christi exemplis conformemur ac in omnibus operibus nostris ipsum imitemur, quia dicitur 1 Petri 2: Christus passus est pro vobis, vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigia eius (1 Pt 2:21). Exhortatio ad canonicos, Test., fo. 220^v.*

⁸⁸ The passages he cites are: Rom. 15:4, Deut. 13:4–5, 2 Par. 20:12, Ps. 54:23, Ps. 90:3–7, 11–16, Matt. 24:11–13, 1 Cor. 11:19, 2 Cor. 11:11, Eph. 6:11–17, 2 Tim. 3:1–5, 2 Tim. 3:12, Act. 14:22, Heb. 10:36, 1 Pet. 5:8–9, 2 Pet. 2:1, 2 Pet. 2:2–3, 2 Pet. 3:3, 1 John 2:18–19, Ids. 18–21, Apoc. 2:10–11, and Apoc. 3:21. Cancrinus, *Test.*, fos. 288^r–289^v.

⁸⁹ *Nemo clericus vel militaris vel alterius cuiuslibet conditions de fide christiana publice turbis coadjuvatis et audientibus tractare conetur ... quia non solum contra fidem vere expositam veniunt, sed etiam iudeis et paganis ex huius certamine prophanant veneranda misteria. Igitur si clericus erit qui publice tractare de religione ausus fuerit, a consortio clericorum removebitur. Si vero militia preditus sit, cingulo*

There is little question here that Cancrinus was responding to Luther's influence. In fact, much of his treatment of theological concepts in the *Testament* touched directly on "Lutheran" issues, though for the most part Cancrinus was simply cutting and pasting from Schatzgeyer's *Scrutinium*, which had been published in 1522.⁹⁰ Yet in their basic position it is noteworthy how close Luther and Cancrinus – or Schatzgeyer – actually stood. For both Augustinian friars, reformation was the work of God alone. Cancrinus was clear: "we sincerely admit that the reformation of the interior man is only the work of God, and that no creature by its own powers is able to attain to even a worthy preparation."⁹¹ The chasm becomes apparent, however, with what comes next, since Cancrinus immediately added that "with first grace having been received, however, man is able to cooperate with God."⁹² Here Cancrinus was following in the medieval scholastic tradition reaching back at least to Lombard in making the distinction between operating and cooperating grace, which then developed into the further distinction between grace given gratuitously (*gratia gratis data*), and sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*).⁹³ In other words, Cancrinus was espousing an economy of grace that Luther rejected,⁹⁴ regardless of how close their points of departure might have been. Cancrinus was still working with the scheme of sanctification preceding justification, whereas Luther's major revolution was placing justification before sanctification. Both Luther and Cancrinus could agree on the point of departure – reformation is the work of God alone – and on the need for Christians to do good works in society, yet their respective economies of grace between the point of departure and the social manifestations thereof were worlds

spoliabitur. Ceteri etiam huius criminis rei, si quidem liberi sint, de hoc sanctissima urbe repellantur pro vigore iudicario etiam competentibus suppliciis subiugandi. Si vero servi, serverissimis animadversionibus plectentur. Test., fos. 2^v–3^r. Cf. Nota quod laici non debent curiose scrutari secreta fidei sed adherere implicite quia hoc spectat ad clericos, iuxta illud Iob 1: Et boves arabant et asine pascebantur iuxta eos (Iob 1:14), quod exponit Gregorius quod asine id est simpliciter debent esse contenti doctrina suorum maiorum. Test., fo. 229^r.

⁹⁰ Zumkeller has identified the sections of Cancrinus's *Testament* that are borrowed from Schatzgeyer, at least for the most part, in his index of the work's content; see Zumkeller, "Das Wirken," pp. 481–483. Cancrinus also drew from Schatzgeyer's *Replica contra periculosa*. Cancrinus was clear that he was including material not his own: *Sequuntur certe informationes divinitus mihi misse, in quibus mea instruitur rusticitas. Test., fo. 98^r.*

⁹¹ *Fatetur ingenue interioris hominis reformationem solius dei opus esse, nullamque creaturam vel ad idoneam preparationem viribus suis posse pertingere ... Test., fo. 140^v.*

⁹² ... *prima autem gratia percepta, hominem deo cooperari posse. Ibid.*

⁹³ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 398–408. In the Augustinian tradition, the relationship and significance of the two forms of grace could be seen differently, whereby, according to Jordan of Quedlinburg, sanctifying grace was *gratia gratis data*; see *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 408–412.

⁹⁴ See later.

apart.⁹⁵ The understanding of the Christian life was at stake, and for that Cancrinus had a very clear answer: Christian life is to be the imitation of Christ in conforming oneself to God's will: that was reformation.⁹⁶

The world did not end in 1524. Yet Brother Arnoldus's *Testament* has its importance not because it was a unique oddity, but rather because it was so common, revealing the tenor of the times, as apocalyptic expectation from England to the Empire⁹⁷ was increasingly prevalent in the wake of schism-shocked Europe. It was not "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" that was the refrain, but "Prepare Ye the Coming of the Anti-Christ, the end of the World, and Christ's Return in Judgment." This was a world filled with *Anfechtungen*, a world Brother Martin shared, even if he may have been more sensitive than most, at least than most of whom we have heard. And the pastors and theologians of the age did their best to respond to the fears of the time, to relieve the anxiety, to preach Christ's love and Christ's mercy. The papacy even put the treasury of merit at the disposal of this pastoral mission by repeatedly proclaiming indulgences. Such efforts, such pastoral care, helped some to be sure, eased some consciences, as well as enriched Roman coffers. Brother Martin was not convinced. He sensed something superficial, something wrong in the endeavor, not unlike his contemporary, the Bishop of Chiemsee, Berthold Pürstinger, who completed his *The Burden of the Church* in 1519, though it was not published until 1524.⁹⁸ The Church was in dire straits, as it had been for quite a while, as testified by the preaching of Geiler von Kaiserburg in Strassburg's Cathedral in the later fifteenth and on into the early sixteenth century.⁹⁹ In time, Luther would discover that the anti-Christ had arrived already, unknown, unrecognized, that much of the very endeavor itself to help ease the anxieties of the faithful was a satanic ruse, set forth by the Antichrist himself. That discovery would take other measures, other

⁹⁵ Cancrinus does not use the terms *meritum de condigno* and *meritum de congruo*, which developed based on *gratia gratum faciens*; by "doing what is in one" *viatores* could merit grace *de congruo*, which would be *gratia gratum faciens*.

⁹⁶ *Unde qui ad culmen vere perfectionis vult pervenire, ille debet sibi in omnibus virtutibus et moribus proponere istud clarissimi speculum sanctitatis et exemplar virtutum, nam ad hoc Christus incarnari voluit, ut nos preiret in via virtutum et suo exemplo doceret nos legem vite et discipline ut sicut ad eius imaginem facti sumus sic ad morum eius similitudinem et virtutum immitemur . . . quantum sic imaginem eius in nobis quam per peccatum deformamus, reformemus. Test.*, fos. 220^v–221^r.

⁹⁷ See Curtis Bostik, *The Antichrist and the Lollards. Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England*. SMRT 70 (Leiden, 1998).

⁹⁸ See Schulze, "Onus Ecclesiae," pp. 317–342.

⁹⁹ See Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "You hate us priests": Anticlericalism, Communalism and the Control of Women at Strasburg in the Age of Reformation." In Dykema and Oberman, *Anticlericalism*, pp. 167–207, 174–185.

tactics, and still lay in the future for Brother Martin as he began studying theology in Erfurt in 1509. The prophecies of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages were to come true, even if not as prophesied, even if not as expected or even desired. Reformation was to be imposed from above, and by force, but in 1512, upon receiving his doctorate in theology from the University of Wittenberg, Brother, Dr Martin Luther, unbeknownst, was still on the precipice as the earth was quaking under his feet.

Catechesis and Pastoral Theology

The attempt to Christianize society had been an ongoing endeavor when Brother Martin first preached to his parishioners in Wittenberg in 1511/1512. After the Christianization of Europe, which had occurred by 1000, when, according to John Van Engen, everyone in Europe was Christian, with the exception of the Jews,¹⁰⁰ a new process began that sought to teach the people what being Christian actually meant. In the early Middle Ages, being Christian was receiving Christian baptism and attending Christian worship. Beginning in the eleventh century, though, the emphasis shifted to focusing on how to be a Christian, how to live a Christian life, a process I have referred to as religionization.¹⁰¹ Though in the Middle Ages there was no catechism, as Luther produced for the evangelicals in 1529, there was an upsurge in the composition of catechetical texts, focused on teaching the basic doctrines of the faith as contained in the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Articles of Faith.¹⁰² Yet the Passion of Christ served as perhaps the most important catechetical tool, with treatises from the Pseudo-Bonaventure, Simon Fidati of Cascia, Jordan of Quedlinburg, Ludolph of Saxony, Marquard of Lindau, Thomas a Kempis, Ulrich Pinder, and Johannes von Paltz, forming the foundation of the late medieval passion piety from the late thirteenth century to the early sixteenth, as seen as well in Cancrinus's *Testament* and the religious life of Hildesheim.¹⁰³ The Passion was not

¹⁰⁰ John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem." *American Historical Review* 91/3 (1986), 519–552.

¹⁰¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 722–735.

¹⁰² Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I*, pp. 18–25.

¹⁰³ See Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages*, II. *The Meditations on the Passion of Christ of Jordan of Quedlinburg, OESA (d. 1380) – Text, Translation, and Commentary* (forthcoming Brill Academic Publishers); Stephen Mossman, *Marquard von Lindau and the Challenges of Religious Life in Late Medieval Germany. The Passion, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary* (Oxford, 2010); on Jordan, Pinder and the late medieval Passion treatises, see too Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 535–543; for the Passion in general in the later Middle Ages, *ibid.*, pp. 467–583, 821–828.

just for mystics or religious, but was intended for all Christians, serving, as Jordan put it, as Christians' exemplar for living the Christian life.¹⁰⁴ The catechetical focus produced and went hand in hand with a renewed emphasis within academic theological circles on pastoral theology and a theology of piety (*Frömmigkeitstheologie*), providing what Berndt Hamm referred to as the normative centering of late medieval pastoral theology.¹⁰⁵ What has so often been seen as having been initiated by the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Chancellor of Paris, Jean Gerson, had been preceded by the catechetical endeavor clearly evidenced within the Order of Augustinian Hermits, who advocated a Christocentric affective theology (*theologia affectiva*) based on love, in keeping with the Augustinian theological tradition as set forth by Giles of Rome.¹⁰⁶ With the shock of the Schism and its aftermath, the observant movement, in its broadest sense, produced a corresponding theology of the late medieval Reformation that focused on religion and piety in attempt to help ease the fear and anxiety. If the last days were at hand, how was one to escape judgment? How was one to escape hell? What was necessary for the average Christian, the Christian who was not a member of a reformed congregation, or even a member of the modern devotion?

Answers to such questions were given in late medieval sermons and pastoral literature, from the early fourteenth-century Franciscan *A Bundle of Virtues and Vices* (*Fasciculus Morum*), to the very popular sermons and catechetical works of the Dominican, Johannes Nider.¹⁰⁷ The author of the *A Bundle of Virtues and Vices*, which was composed shortly after 1300, organized his entire work around the seven virtues and vices.¹⁰⁸ Thus humility combats pride; patience and meekness, wrath; charity, envy; poverty, avarice; swift busyness (*occupacionis*), sloth; soberness, gluttony; and chastity, lust.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, the anonymous Franciscan exhorted,

let us act like the good soldier who advances fearlessly against his enemies until they fall overcome by confusion and yield with shame ... Thus you,

¹⁰⁴ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 476–505.

¹⁰⁵ Berndt Hamm, "Normative Centering in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Observations on Religiosity, Theology, and Iconography," *Journal of Early Modern History* 3 (1999), 307–354.

¹⁰⁶ Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I*, pp. 22–25.

¹⁰⁷ For Nider, see Thomas Brogol, "Yeglichs Näch Sín Vermugen: Johannes Nider's Idea of Conscience." In Sigrid Müller and Cornelia Schweiger, eds., *Between Creativity and Norm-Making. Tensions in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 61–76.

¹⁰⁸ *Fasciculus Morum. A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, ed. and trans. Siegfried Wenzel (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), I.1.1.1, p. 32; hereafter cited as *FM*.

¹⁰⁹ *FM* I.1.2, p. 36.

soldier of Christ, when you are to fight against the devil, do not hesitate to arm yourself with the sign of the cross and with holy thoughts, for it is written: "Holy thoughts will save you." Also put the shield of the cross before you so that, as long as our enemy does not desist from injecting his exalted thoughts, we may endeavor to resist with all eagerness until he is confounded and retreats. And above all else, do not desist from giving your heart to Christ.¹¹⁰

Humility and charity were the primary ways to combat the forces of Satan leading one to vice, or as Jordan of Quedlinburg put it, the Christian life was a battle against the devil, a *pugna continua*, and good works, as he wrote in his *Opus Jor*, his second series of sermons according to the liturgical calendar (*De tempore*), "ought to be placed before all other weapons [used to fight the devil] as the king's standard."¹¹¹ Works of love reign supreme for the devil fears nothing more than love.¹¹² Jordan's younger confrère, Antonius Rampegolus, agreed. In his handbook for preachers, his *Biblical Figures (Figure Bibliorum)*, composed originally in 1354 and went through many revisions and editions, printed repeatedly until 1848, the devil opposes love, "because among all the other goods, he hates love most of all, and therefore he does his best to extinguish it."¹¹³ One fights the devil with charity, humility, and good works; in short, by doing one's best to live the Christian life. Such was the anti-diabolical theology of the catechetical and pastoral endeavor of the late medieval Reformation, a theology indeed of piety, devotion, and moral achievement, and one espoused as well by the university masters. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages as such was one that was undertaken in the midst of the battle between God and the Devil.

¹¹⁰ *FM* 1.1.3, p. 40,29–37; trans. p. 41.

¹¹¹ ... *diabolus ... fidem, spem, caritatem et bona opera laborat auferre, sed debet quilibet resistere de fide scutum facere, de spe galeam, de caritate lanceam, opera autem debet ponere super omnia arma tamquam regis insignia.* *Jor. Opus Jor*, sermo 114; Vat. Bib., MS Vat. lat. 448, fo. 191^{va}.

¹¹² *Impugnatus autem eum [scil. diabolus] per bona opera, quae sibi sunt a tota specie contraria et maxime per caritatem, quia ut dicit Hugo in Expositione Regulae, "nihil est quod ipse diabolus tantum timeat quantum caritatis unitatem."* [(Ps.)Hugh of St Victor, *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Augustini* 1 (PL 176.883C).] Jordanus de Quedlinburg, *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 437B (ed. Strassburg: Georg Husner, 1483); all further citation of Jordan's *Opus Postillarum* will be to this edition, cited by sermon number and section as the edition is unpaginated and unfoliated.

¹¹³ ... *et in hoc sibi oppositus est diabolus, quia summe pre omnibus bonis odio habet caritatem, ideo plus ad ipsius extinctionem conatur.* Antonius Rampegolus, *Figure Bibliorum*, De caritate (Cologne: Dominican Convent, 1505), fo. 28^r. On Rampegolus, see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 529–535, pp. 594–618.

Doing One's Best

The twelfth-century *Vision of Tnugdál* presented a graphic image of the afterworld that seeped within the consciousness and unconsciousness of Europe over a century before Dante's great *Comedia*. This was a text that together with the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, saints' lives, and the *Elucidarium* of Honorius of Autun was used as a catechetical work for the mission to Iceland.¹¹⁴ Tnugdál's soul experienced the tortures and terrors of hell, and glimpsed the blessed splendors of heaven, as well as seeing the regions reserved for those not yet perfectly good and those not yet perfectly evil. The moral of the story, so to speak, was to reform your life to escape hell, that you might rejoice in the bliss of heaven. The *Vision of Tnugdál* presented a similar tale, though in another genre, which indeed was ancient, able to be traced back at least to Plato's Myth of Er, with which he ended his *Republic*.¹¹⁵ Here though the point was to teach the common people to be good citizens, for thus they would escape eternal punishment. While Plato did not include the beings of God the Father or Satan, the *Vision of Tnugdál* did. The Christian, back on earth, lived between these two extremes in a region of uncertainty as to which would be his or hers upon death, theologically explicated magisterially and still unsurpassedly in the early fifth century by Augustine and his *The City of God*. It was only in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that the dichotomous bipolar afterworld gave way to a three-fold other-worldly geography, with purgatory emerging as the place between heaven and hell, a holding pen of purgation for those not yet ready to enter bliss.¹¹⁶ It must have been a comfort, a way to ease the harshness of the binary opposition facing each of us in the life to come.

The theological developments after the Condemnations of 1277 presented academic justifications for the popular, religious anxiety. It was, after all, a Franciscan, William of Ockham, who was instrumental in the emergence of a "theology of contract" based on the promise of the self-binding God in the *pactum dei* not to deny His grace to those who do what is in them (*facientibus quod in se est, deus non denegat gratiam*). While Ockham certainly was no Pelagian arguing that one can merit one's

¹¹⁴ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture. Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János M Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), p. 35.

¹¹⁵ Plato, *Republic* 14; trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 368–379; see Alan E. Berstein, *The Formation of Hell. Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca, NY, 1993).

¹¹⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, IL, 1986).

salvation based on one's own works without the aid of grace, contemporaries were not all that convinced, even as Ockham's followers were careful to distinguish between full merit (*meritum de condigno*) and half-merit (*meritum de congruo*), and to ensure that God's grace was not ignored. As the scriptures affirmed, Jesus stands at the door and knocks. If anyone hears his voice and opens the door, he will come in and eat with that person, and they with him (Rev. 3:20). The question was though, is God's grace to be equated with Jesus standing there calling and knocking? If so, then is it up to us to listen and open the door ourselves? Or, even if we hear his voice, can we, on our own, open the door, or do we need divine assistance, divine grace, to do so? Perhaps we can only want to open the door, but are completely unable, so that God's grace has to open it for us, not merely help us do so? The answers to these questions represent, when it comes down to it, the theological spectrum of the later Middle Ages with respect to the issue of justification, which theologians attempted to answer by speculating on what humans can do without God's grace (*ex puris naturalibus*), and where God's grace is to be found, whether it is simply God's general grace of creation and conservation (*gratia gratis data*) that should be sufficient for us on our own to open the door, or whether we first have to become pleasing to God with sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), which only God gives. No late medieval theologian, no medieval theologian period, was a self-proclaimed Pelagian whereby humans can, if they only will, on their own open the door themselves, since even after the Fall, humans still are in the same position as Adam and Eve, able to sin or not to sin. This was the position that was condemned in 418, and to this extent, Augustine's position that after the Fall humans cannot not sin held sway. That was all fine and good, and generally accepted. The question was, being sinful beings, what can we do? Can we, as sinners, open the door? And that question had a variety of answers.

The position of just doing what we can, of doing what is in us, and doing our best to do so, became the general theological position, for if we just do our best to love God above ourselves and our world, God will not deny us His grace, which is not only an infused grace into our souls, but is also a sacramental grace, likewise infused into our souls through external means. The more frequently therefore we partake of the Church's sacraments (confession, the eucharist), the more grace we can receive. It is there being offered, it is there for the taking.¹¹⁷ We just have to open the

¹¹⁷ Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology. Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, MA, 1963).

door, so to speak. Such a theology became more prevalent and accepted after the Schism, with the rise in apocalyptic expectations, and the increasing urgency of calls for reformation. Academic theology, in this sense, was becoming increasingly pastoral theology, designed to ease the anxiety of existing caught between the eternal ends of heaven and hell, of God and the Devil, when especially the Devil was trying his best, using all means at his disposal, to lure the faithful, and drag them to his camp in the cosmic, ultimate battle.

The Church, however, was fighting back. It did so not only by the catechetical and preaching endeavors, but also by providing additional means of grace. The Treasury of Merit was doctrinally established in 1343 by the bull of Clement VI, *Unigenitus*. In 1476, indulgences were first applied to souls already in purgatory by Sixtus IV in his bull *Salvator noster*.¹¹⁸ While one can criticize and condemn the Renaissance papacy, as did its contemporaries, from one perspective the popes were trying to ease believers' minds and consciences, trying to help them fight the battle with Satan, to avoid eternal damnation, and even to limit the time in purgatory, as evidenced too in *The Mine of Heaven (Coelifodina)* of the Augustinian hermit Johannes von Paltz, published in 1502, and its vernacular version, *Die himmlische Fundgrube*, that had already been published in 1490.¹¹⁹ It was, though, a slippery slope from pastoral care of concern to economic profit: just do your best, do what you can, and God will not deny his grace; thus go to confession, receive communion, and acquire indulgences, offered for works of satisfaction, for good works, or for contributing to good causes, works of mercy, giving alms, donating to the building of St Peter's; for every coin that in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs. It was attractive; it made sense, even if the Dominican Tetzel was a slimy scum-bag in everyone's view, categorized right up there with the very worst, or best, used-car salesman. Even Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony, with all his relics worth over a million years off of purgatory forbade Tetzel from preaching in his territories. Competition perhaps, but also principle was involved, as well as politics, with Frederick having opposed Albrecht of Brandenburg's financing his multiple archbishoprics with indulgences. Relics were the proven "power sources" of the saints; Tetzel was simply going too far. He was turning pastoral care

¹¹⁸ For the text of *Unigenitus*, see B.J. Kidd, *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation* (Oxford, 1911), pp. 1–3; for the text of *Salvator noster*, *ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

¹¹⁹ See Berndt Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts. Studien zu Johannes von Paltz und seinem Umkreis*, BhTh 65 (Tübingen, 1982), pp. 110–111; Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 470–471.

into economic profit, profit for the papacy in Italy and profit and political advantage for Albrecht in Germany. While the economy of salvation was real, with grace being quantified, this was an abuse. As one of the best textbooks on the Reformation put it,

Since hell was not the preferred option, the church and its theologians developed a whole set of practices and exercises to assist people to avoid it. The irony was that in attempting to provide security in an insecure world, the church largely mirrored the new urban and economic developments that exacerbated human insecurity. Suspended between hope and fear, the individual had to achieve his or her goal through a whole system of quid pro quo services that reflected the new ledger mentality of the urban burgher absorbed in the developing profit economy. Taken as a whole, Christendom at the end of the Middle Ages appeared as performance-oriented as the new business enterprises of the day.¹²⁰

Such an approach contributed to what Jean Delumeau has referred to as the “collective guilt complex” of the later Middle Ages.¹²¹ It was though guilt in the technical, theological sense that was at issue; due punishment (*poena*) could be forgiven, or lessened, but the guilt (*culpa*) remained, remained as the prick of the conscious asking whether one really had done one’s best. Given the conditions of the times, however, what else could one expect? Unless we modernize it all and psychologize it all, we have to realize that, for the individuals of the later Middle Ages, pastors, peasants, burghers, monks and nuns, wives and daughters, popes, and princes, reformation was the only means of fighting Satan who was so raging, and of appeasing God’s wrath, and knowing which was which was rather difficult. Heaven and hell were real, and purgatory was not all that much of a consolation. The Last Judgment was real. God was real, the Devil was real. And the reality they experienced daily was being caught as players in the midst of it all, trying to conform themselves to God’s will, trying to be on God’s side, trying to love and follow the commandments, for only in that way could real reformation come about.

Jordan of Quedlinburg was not only one of the most important and influential authors of catechetical works of the later Middle Ages; he was also his Order’s most prolific preacher, composing more sermons, extant in more manuscripts, than any other Augustinian friar,¹²² surpassed only by Brother Martin Luther, though only after Luther had left the OESA

¹²⁰ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford, 1996), p. 60.

¹²¹ Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear. The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th–18th Centuries*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York, 1990), pp. 296–303.

¹²² Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I*, pp. 4–7.

and the Catholic Church completely. Jordan's works were, moreover, as popular in the fifteenth century, if not more so, as they had been in the fourteenth.¹²³ For Jordan, the Christian life consisted in one of progress. Drawing on the three stages of Christian life derived originally from Pseudo-Dionysius, Jordan argued that the believer must progress from the state of beginners (*incipientes*), to that of those making progress (*proficientes*), before finally reaching the state of the contemplatives (*contemplativi*).¹²⁴ Good works and the acquisition of the virtues are what affect the development. One can only make progress in the Christian life, and fight the devil, by following God's will, which is revealed most of all in the Ten Commandments.

In his first collections of sermons, his *Model Sermons for the Liturgical Year (Opus Postillarum)*, Jordan gave a radical interpretation of the Law. In expositing the parable of the sower of Matthew 13, Jordan inverted the interpretation found in his source, the *Commentary on Matthew* of Jordan's teacher and confrère Albert of Padua. Albert had explained the thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and one hundred-fold yields very traditionally, whereby the first is that of the married, the second that of the chaste, and the third that of the virgins; or, the thirty-fold yield is that of the doctors, the sixty-fold that of the martyrs, and the one hundred-fold that of the apostles; or, the thirty-fold yield was that of observing the old law, the sixty-fold that of observing the new law, and the hundred-fold, that of observing the monastic counsels. Jordan followed Albert for the first interpretation, but inverted the order for the second and third. For Jordan, the apostles yielded a thirty-fold harvest, the martyrs a sixty-fold, and the doctors a hundred-fold, but then he continued. The hundred-fold yield Jordan equated with observing the old law, the sixty-fold with observing

¹²³ Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I*, pp. 34–51.

¹²⁴ ... deus est sicut motor primus, q quo virtus motiva derivatur in animam, sicut a quodam fonte paterno, a quo fluit gratia in animam per quam deus movet liberum arbitrium ad se amandum et virtuose operandum. Hec autem notio dei in anima triplex est secundum triplicem statum: incipientes movet ad culpe compunctionem et peccatorum dolorosam rememorationem; proficientes movet ad profectus spiritualis continuum progressionem; sed contemplativos movet ad divine dulcedinis internum degustationem. Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 11A. This three-fold scheme stems from Ps. Dionysius' *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* (PG 3.369–584), yet Jordan most likely took his description of the three-fold stages of the Christian's progress from either Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Secunda Secundae* q. 186, art. 1, ad 3; Giles of Rome's *Tractatus de laudibus divine sapientie* (ed. Rome, 1555; reprint Aegidius Romanus, *Opuscula I*, Frankfurt, 1968), fo. 31^r; or Henry of Friemar's *Tractatus de adventu verbi in mentem*. Markus Wriedt has pointed to this well-known schema in the works of Johannes von Staupitz, which Wriedt traced back to Hugh of St Cher, Johannes Gerson, Dionysius the Carthusian, and Augustinus Favaroni; M. Wriedt, *Gnade und Erwählung. Eine Untersuchung zu Johann von Staupitz und Martin Luther*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 141 (Mainz, 1991), p. 223.

the new law, and the thirty-fold with observing the counsels. Jordan elevated the observance of the old law above that of the new.¹²⁵

When I first read Jordan's treatment of this parable, I thought that it must have been a scribal error that had inverted the exposition, or simply a mistake on Jordan's part getting the sequence mixed up. Yet Jordan's interpretation is witnessed in both the manuscript tradition and the printed edition of 1483, so that even if he had intended otherwise, his text speaks clearly. Moreover, there are sufficient theological reasons in Jordan's sermons to defend his claim that the observance of the old law should be placed above that of the new. As already mentioned, Jordan argued that God's will was revealed most of all in the old law, which Christians must follow in their battle against the vicious incursions of Satan. Moreover, Jordan, in keeping with his view of this parable, put forth an equally radical interpretation of justice, of that which makes one just. Jordan was not concerned with how the Christian can find a righteous God, a secure, safe path (*via securior*) for the Christian to follow,¹²⁶ but rather with being just and doing that which is just, which he defined as paying what one owes, based on Matthew 18:28: Pay what you owe (*Redde quod debes*).¹²⁷ All sin, for Jordan, was equated with debt, so that debt was the more encompassing category. When one does not render what one owes, one sins.¹²⁸ There are four creditors whom Christians must pay. To God, one owes religion; to oneself, self-governance; to one's neighbor, love; and to the devil, resistance and battle.¹²⁹ There is a single standard of justice, defined as paying

¹²⁵ *Notandum autem quod Matthei tertio decimo [Mt. 13:18–23] magis explicite agitur de huiusmodi fructibus ubi dicitur quod alius centesimus, alius sexagesimus, alius trecesimus. Primus est virginum; secundum continentium; tertium coniugatorum. Vel primus est doctorum; secundus martirium; tertius apostolorum. Vel primus datur per observantiam legis veteris; secundus per observantiam legis nove; tertius per observantium consiliorum ... Unde Matthei 19 dicitur: vos qui reliquistis omnia et secuti estis me, centuplum accipietis [Mt. 19:29]. Jor. Opus Postillarum, sermo 137G. Cf.: Nota quod triplex ponitur fructus istius seminis, scilicet trecesimus, sexagesimus et centesimus. Primus est coniugatorum; secundum continentium; tertius verginum. Vel primus est doctorum; secundus et martirium; tertius apostolorum. Vel primus datur propter observantiam antique legis; secundum propter observantiam nove; tertius propter observantium consiliorum. Albert of Padua, *Expositio Evangeliorum Dominicalium* (ed. Venice: A. de Rotwil et A. de Corona, 1476), fos. I–2^b.*

¹²⁶ Cf. Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, pp. 247–303.

¹²⁷ *Introducitur autem hic virtus iustitie cuius est reddere unicuique debitum suum. Et hec est eius propria ratio prout describitur et a philosophis et iurisperitis. Jordani de Quedlinburg Expositio Orationis Dominice*, 7, p. 158,179–181.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 148,21–150,34.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150,35–69; cf. *Sciendum quod quaedam debemus deo supra nos, quaedam nobisipsi intra nos, quaedam vero proximis nostris iuxta nos, quaedam etiam diabolo, qui est infra nos. Jor. Opus Postillarum, sermo 436A; Postremo videndum quod debemus diabolo, qui infra nos est ipse et satellites eius scilicet peccata et vitia. Et ... debemus ei tria scilicet inimicitiam, resistantiam et pugnam. Jor. Opus Postillarum, sermo 437B.*

all one's debts, which moreover is the same standard of justice by which Christians will be judged in the final judgment, when Christ will ask one whether one has paid all one's debts. The basis for determining whether one has paid all one's debts is the old law, the God of the Old Testament who demands of his followers strict obedience. This is Jordan's view of justice, and of justification. It is unrelenting and cannot be fulfilled, but it is what he holds up as the standard for all who are at war with the devil, as should be, he asserts, every preacher, as well as every confessor in the confessional.¹³⁰ Fulfilling the old law, good works, and merit comprise for Jordan the standard of justice the Christian must meet in order to fight the devil, and to achieve justification before God, and thus to gain eternal salvation. In his view of justification, Jordan was not semi-Pelagian, but was seemingly thoroughly Pelagian, espousing a doctrine of justification by works alone, based on fulfilling the old law, the revealed will of God. Such was needed, however, if Christians were effectively to fight the forces of Satan, for in such a battle, each and every Christian could not be satisfied simply with doing one's best; in Jordan's view, each and every Christian had to be a saint.

Becoming Saints: A Theology of the Holy

“For the conversion or emendation of the faithful, the examples of the saints are most beneficial, dearest sister ... [for] God set forth the virtues of the saints for our example, so that by following in their footsteps we might be able to attain to the kingdom of heaven.”¹³¹ Thus wrote the late twelfth-century Cistercian, Thomas of Froidmont, to his sister Marguerite in his *Book of Living Well* (*Liber de modo bene vivendi*).¹³² In this treatise, Thomas implicitly – if not explicitly – expressed the dichotomy common to his age between the “saints” and the “average” Christians, a dichotomy

¹³⁰ *Redde quod debes, Matthæi 18 [Mt. 18:28]. Licet haec verba parabolice dicta fuerint a servo debitum a suo converso atrociter extorqueute, mystice autem haec verba possunt accipi ut dicenda a summo iudice ad quemlibet hominem in morte vel in iudicio extremo rationem ab ipso iudicialiter exigente ... ad praesens tamen accipi possunt ut dicantur a quolibet praedicatore et doctore vel etiam confessore fideles ad redditionem sui debiti fideliter exhortante dicendo cuiuslibet: redde quod debes.* Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 436A.

¹³¹ *Ad conversionem vel emendationem fidelium multum exempla sanctorum prosunt, soror charissima ... posuit Deus virtutes sanctorum ad exemplum nostrum, ut per vestigia ipsorum pervenire possimus ad regna coelorum.* Thomas of Froidmont, *Liber de modo bene vivendi, ad sororem* 16,42 (PL 184.1226B).

¹³² For Thomas, see L.E. Leladreue, *Notice sur l'abbaye de Froidmont* (Beauvais, 1870), pp. 512–514 (*Mémoires de la société académique d'archéologie, sciences & arts* 7); M. Standaert, Thomas de Beverley, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 15 (Paris, 1991), cols. 780–783.

that would only intensify in the later Middle Ages, whereby, in the words of Richard Kieckhefer, the saint is “exalted and put on a pedestal, in such a way that he or she can no longer serve effectively as a model. The otherness of the saint arised partly from the sheer fact of glorification.”¹³³ In the sixteenth century, however, the reformers placed “the burden of saintly individualism upon every believer,”¹³⁴ by replacing the cult of the saints with the “Communion of Saints,” the body of true believers,¹³⁵ or the elect, as defined by John Calvin in the first edition of his *Institutes* of 1536.¹³⁶ This shift in saintliness has been seen not only as a Protestant refutation of medieval models of holiness, but also as the origins of early modern radical, indeed revolutionary, political thought. “The saints,” argued Michael Walzer, “were responsible for their world – as medieval men were not – and responsible above all for its continual reformation.”¹³⁷

Yet these characterizations – the saints as the “other,” the extraordinary, and medieval Christians as passive, non-participants¹³⁸ – are called into question by the sermons of Jordan, in which we find a radical democratization of the concept of who was, or was supposed to be, a saint. In Jordan’s view, each and every Christian was to be a saint, and as such, to be a source of divine charity and grace, leading those not as far along in the religious life back to the soul’s origin and end, union with God. As he affirmed in a sermon specifically addressed to the cloistered, in which he compared the religious (*religiosi*) to the stars, “the religious, indeed every Christian (*quilibet Christianus*), ought to be bright and shining, so that he might show forth the light of God’s grace, received from Christ, the

¹³³ Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls. Fourteenth-Century Saints and their Religious Milieu* (Chicago, IL, 1984), p. 190.

¹³⁴ Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell, *Saints and Society. The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago, IL, 1982), p. 241.

¹³⁵ Cameron, *The European Reformation*, pp. 134, 145; cf. John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 95–96.

¹³⁶ *Primum credimus sanctam ecclesiam catholicam, hoc est universum electorum numerum, sive angeli sint, sive homines (Eph. 1, Col. 1); ex hominibus sive mortui, sive adhuc vivant ... unam esse ecclesiam ac societatem et unum Dei populum cuius Christus, Dominus noster, dux sit et princeps, ac tanquam unius corporis caput; prout in ipso divina bonitate electis sunt, ante mundi constitutionem, ut in regnum Dei omnes aggregarentur ... Sancta etiam est, quia quotquot aeterna Dei providentia electi sunt, ut in ecclesiae membra cooptarentur, a Domino omnes sanctificantur.* Jean Calvin, *Christianae religionis Institutio*, II (Basel, 1536); P. Barth and W. Niesel, eds., *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta* 1 (Munich, 1936), p. 86.

¹³⁷ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), p. 12.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

true sun, in exterior good works.”¹³⁹ If the traditional medieval model of the saints can be labeled as “exemplary sanctity,” and the Protestant, early modern model as “revolutionary sanctity,” Jordan’s model of the saints, I would suggest, can be termed “transformational sanctity.” This model of sanctity has been overlooked by medievalists, who generally have focused on saints’ *vitae*, canonization processes, and cults, as well as by Reformation scholars, who are still often all too quick to ignore continuities in their search for the origins of modernity, and/or theological orthodoxy.

In Jordan’s sermons we do not find discussions of the scholastic formulations “from pure nature” (*ex puris naturalibus*) or “to do what is in one” (*facere quod in se est*). The problem Jordan faced, however, was that, left on their own, humans cannot fulfill the law, for they don’t even know what it is that they owe. Nevertheless, the absolute standard of justice remains as the call to battle against the devil. It is, however, only by the grace of God that Christians begin to realize precisely what it is that they owe, the extent thereof, and their inability to meet the requirements. Thus they must pray, *Forgive us our debts*, which Jordan associated with the beatitude of weeping. It is only by the grace of God that Christians can even recognize what it is that they owe, a knowledge given, according to Jordan, by the gift of knowledge (*donum scientie*), and the extent to which they are, on their own, incapable of meeting their debts.¹⁴⁰ Grace reveals what it is that Christians owe as well as the fact that they cannot pay their debts, and thus they weep, and Christ will console their weeping.¹⁴¹ It is only here that one begins to recognize Jordan’s thoroughly Augustinian theology, thoroughly consistent with that of Giles of Rome. This was a theology that appears not so much as one that was the precursor to Luther, as it was a theology that echoed beforehand that of Calvin. The only way out of the condemnation of the law, God’s absolute standard of justice, for Jordan, as for Calvin, was the mercy of God and the doctrine of election and predestination.

That humans are not able to fulfill the law on their own, was, for Jordan, the result of the Fall. Original sin had so marred human nature that the sinner, in and of himself, is the daughter of Babylon, the destroyer of the order of nature, the abuser of all creation, of all scripture, and of

¹³⁹ *Sic debent homo religiosus et quilibet christianus esse clarus et luminosus ut lumen gratie dei a Christo vero sole acceptum ostendat in bono opere exteriori.* Jordanus de Quedlinburg, *Opus Dan*, sermo 256A ad religiosos (Strassburg, 1484), without foliation.

¹⁴⁰ *Jor. Expositio Orationis Dominice* 7, p. 158,186–202.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ed. Saak, p. 158,203–160,219.

all grace.¹⁴² Humans are captive to sin. “By ourselves we are weak and fragile,” Jordan lamented in the sermons comprising his *Meditations on the Passion of Christ* (*Meditationes de passione Christi*), “and devoid of all good, unless we are held by the right hand of God.”¹⁴³ Never certain of his own righteousness, one must “never think himself to be safe from the devil ... man is wretched and fragile, certain of nothing except the death of Christ alone.”¹⁴⁴ For Jordan, as for his fellow Augustinians after him, Brother Arnoldus and Brother Martin, the foundation of theology was a theology of the cross.

Such a theology of the cross entailed taking original sin very seriously indeed. After having detailed the wonders of the state of nature before the Fall in his *Model Sermons*, Jordan was clear about the effects of original sin. Echoing Augustine, Jordan assured his audience that,

free will certainly remains after the Fall, but it is depraved and rotten, because with sin came the difficulty to do the good and the propensity to do evil. With his free will before the Fall, man was able to sin and able not to sin; but after the Fall, man is able to sin and not able not to sin. The image of God in the soul also remains after the Fall, but afterwards, it is a deformed image.¹⁴⁵

After the Fall, Jordan affirmed, humans can only wallow in sin, for without the direct help of God (*auxilium dei*), they are incapable of doing anything else. Humans cannot prepare themselves for grace without grace. God is the active partner, moving one’s free will by the grace of divine

¹⁴² *Significanter autem anima peccatrix dicitur filia Babilonis et confusionis, quia ipsa est eterna confusione digna, qui totum ordinem divine dispositionis deordinavit. Peccator enim quantum in se est deordinatio est omnium naturarum. Est enim abusor omnium creaturarum, omnium scripturarum, omnium gratiarum, contemnit etiam per peccatum consortium divinarum personarum et ideo omnium deordinator ex verbis merito filia Babilonis, id est, confusionis appellatur.* Jordani de Quedlinburg, *Opus Jor*, sermo 84, Vatican City, MS Pal. Lat. 448, fo. 152^b.

¹⁴³ ... nos ex nobis esse infirmos et fragiles, ac omni bono vacuos, nisi dextera dei nos manu teneat. Jordani de Quedlinburg, *Meditationes de passione Christi*, art. 34, Basel UB, MS B.V. 26, fo. 23^{va}.

¹⁴⁴ nunquam ... se puteat securus de diabolo ... homo miser et fragilis, certe de nullo nisi solum de morte Christi.” *Ibid.*, fo. 39^{vb}; cf.: “... quia enim pena, quam peccator debet sustinere, excedit vires eius, ideo ordinavit deus ex magna misericordia ut pro eo et cum eo primo satisfaciat meritum passionis Christi, qui per suam passionem non solum mundum redemit, sed etiam suum meritum pro peccatoribus satisfaciit. *Jor. Opus Jor*, sermo 104, Vatican City, MS Pal. lat. 448, fo. 180^{tb}; ... ut videlicet petamus eruari a potestate diaboli quia expellatur ab anima nostra ... petamus non confidentes de meritis nostris, sed de sola misericordia dei. *Jor. Opus Jor*, sermo 97, Vatican City, MS Pal. lat. 448, fo. 171^{ra}.

¹⁴⁵ Remansit quippe liberum arbitrium sed depravatum et imminutum, quia per peccatum difficultatem recipit ad bonum et pronitatem ad malum. Prius enim homo per liberum arbitrium poterat peccare et non peccare, sed post potuit peccare et non potuit non peccare. Imago etiam dei remansit in anima post peccatum, sed quasi deformata. *Jor. Opus Postillarum*, sermo 7B; cf. Augustine, *De correptione et gratiae* 12 (PL 44.936) and *De civitate dei* 22,30 (CCSL 48.863,52–864,73).

agency.¹⁴⁶ In replying, perhaps, to the scholastic formula *facientibus quod in se est, deus non denegat gratiam*, Jordan asserted that everything one does from oneself, not having been moved by God is sin, and is as nothing at all.¹⁴⁷

Good works, for Jordan, certainly are possible, but they are so as gifts of God. As he asserted in the *Model Sermons*, Jordan viewed good works not as something humans performed or achieved, but as gifts of God (*dona dei*) of which humans were to be faithful administrators. “We owe stewardship,” Jordan affirmed,

of those goods conceded to us, for God did not give us those goods, which we have from Him on account of our merits, or so to say, on account of our beautiful hair, but on account of His own goodness and for His service. For example: princes and lords concede some goods to their men in the feudal pact so that their men might be able to do some services for them or

¹⁴⁶ “... homo enim per se labi in peccatum potest, sed per se surgere non potest sine auxilio gratie dei ... Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 131, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 215^b; *Hic cadunt due questiones. Prima, utrum homo possit se preparare ad gratiam sine gratia. Secunda, utrum ex necessitate detur gratia se preparanti ad gratiam. Ad primam respondeo, quod gratia dicitur duplex: uno modo, ipsum habituale donum infusum anime a deo; secundo modo dicitur gratia auxilium dei moventis animam ad bonum. Primo modo accipiendo gratiam preexigitur aliqua preparatio ad eam, quia nulla forma introduci potest nisi in materia disposita. Et hec preparatio paulative, quandoque fit subito, quia ut dicitur Ecclesiastici 1<1>: facile est in oculis dei honestare pauperem [Sir. 11:23]. Et in hanc preparationem non potest homo sine gratia, secundum modum dictum. Sed ad istam secundo modo dictam non requiritur aliqua preparatio ex parte homini quasi preveniens divinum auxilium, scilicet potius quecumque preparatio in homine esse potest, est ex auxilio dei moventis animam ad bonum. Dicitur ergo homo se preparare ad gratiam, scilicet habitualem in quantum movetur eius liberum arbitrium a deo per gratiam prevenientem, que non dicitur donum sed dei auxilium movens animam ad hec preparatoria ... Ad secundum questionem respondeo, quod preparatio homini ad gratiam potest considerari dupliciter. Uno modo ut a libero arbitrio et sic nullam necessitatem habet ad gratie consecutionem, quia donum gratie excedit omnem preparationem virtutis humane. Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod est a deo movente et tunc habet necessitatem ad illud ad quod ordinatur a deo, non quidem coactionis sed infallibilitatis, quia intentia dei deficere non potest. Unde Johannes sexto: Qui audit a patre meo et didicit, venit ad me [Jo. 6:45]. Sequitur secundum scilicet motus divina per gratiam; hoc significatur per angelum qui movebat aquam. Hic motus dicitur fuisse vel propter sacrificia, que in illa piscina abluabantur vel propter lignum crucis quod in ea dicitur iacuisse a tempore Salomonis usque ad tempus Christi et tunc incepit super nature; sed certum est quod angelus fecit talem motum et ex illa aqua vim sanativam habuerit. Signat autem iste motus aque motum illum, quo deus movet liberum arbitrium per gratiam. Unde sicut aqua illa ex se non habet vim illam sed ex motu angeli, sic actus liberi arbitrii ex se vim merendi non habet, sed movente per gratiam ut dictum est.” Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 99, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 173^b–174^m; *Sed an ista preparatoria preveniant gratiam et an ista possumus sine gratia, dicendum quod gratia dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo dicitur habituale donum, quod est principium operis meritorii. Alio modo dicitur gratia auxilium gratuitum dei interius animam moventis sine bonum propositum inspirantis. Primo modo non oportet presupponere aliquod aliud donum habituale in anima quia sic procederetur in infinitum. Secundo autem modo gratia procedit tale habituale donum, nam sine divino auxilio, quo movetur liberum arbitrium ad bonum, non possumus nos preparare ad gratiam. Ibid.*, sermo 247, fo. 382^b.*

¹⁴⁷ ... considerandum est quod omne, quod quis facit ex se ipso non ex deo motus, peccatum est et nichil. Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 103, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 179^b.

might pay a certain debt from them. Therefore, the goods which we hold from God are not to be considered given to us from God as our own, but rather for our use so that we might be administrators and stewards of them, rather than our own lords.¹⁴⁸

Even though I have not found the exact formulation explicitly in the works of Jordan that was put forth by his younger confrère of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth century, Antonius Rampegolus, in his *Biblical Figures*, Jordan would certainly have agreed: “grace alone frees man.”¹⁴⁹

Based on Augustine’s two cities, Jordan argued that the saints, the good, and the just, “ought to give Christ the greatest thanks because they were called by Christ out of the entire degenerate mob and chosen by grace from the number of the damned.”¹⁵⁰ Moreover, if Gregory of Rimini merited the title “torturer of babies” (*tortor infantium*), it is one he could have shared with Jordan. Unbaptized babies Jordan associated with the damned and condemned to hell,¹⁵¹ followed closely on their heels by mothers who kill their infants before baptism. In doing so, they deprived the angels of

¹⁴⁸ ... *debemus pensionem deo de donis nobis concessis. Non enim deus dedit nobis bona illa, quae habemus ab eo, propter nostra merita vel secundum modum loquendi, propter nostros pulchros capillos, sed propter suam bonitatem et ad suum servitium. Exemplum de principibus et dominis qui hominibus < suis > concedunt alia bona in foedum ut de ipsis faciant ei certam servitiam vel certam pensionem de eis solvant. Igitur bona, quae tenemus a deo, non reputemus nobis data < a deo > ut propria sed tamquam ad usum concessa ut eorum simus administratores et dispensatores potius quam domini. Jor. Opus Postillarum, sermo 436A; ... debet omnia bona sua ab eo [scil. deo] recognoscere sicut vassalus infeudatus a domino suo. Quidquid enim boni habemus totum dei est, nec quicquam nobis proprium usurpare vel vindicare possumus nisi peccata. Ibid., sermo 402B. Similar statements were made by the Augustinians Hermann of Schildesche, Johannes Zachariae, and Johannes Dorsten. See Adolar Zumkeller, *Erbsünde, Gnade, Rechtfertigung und Verdienst nach der Lehre der Erfurter Augustinertheologen des Spätmittelalters* (Würzburg, 1984), pp. 289, 378.*

¹⁴⁹ ... *sola gratia liberat hominem*. Antonius Rampegolus, *Figure Bibliorum*, De diabolo, Uppsala, UB, MS 162C, fo. 33^{ra-b}; cf. Augustine, *Confessiones* 8,5,10 (CCSL 27.119,8-12); for Rampegolus, see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 529–535, 594–618.

¹⁵⁰ ... *ut iusti plurimum deo regratiantur quia quod boni sunt non habent a natura sed a divina gratia ... debent ergo iusti Christo plurimas gratias agere quod de massa tota corrupta vocati sunt a Christo et electi per gratiam de numero pereuntium*. Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 72, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 133^{rb}; ... *non totum genus humanum damnatur, sed aliqui eliguntur ad salutem qui valde pauci sunt respectu multitudinis damnatorum*. Ibid., sermo 248, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 385^{ra}. Jordan’s pastoral teaching of predestination, however, is seen in his comment that the statement that one predestined is able to be damned is true *in sensu diviso*, though it is not *in sensu composito*: *Ut in errorem mittantur si fieri potest etiam electi, hoc dicit, quia predestinatio licet sit certa non tamen tollit libertatem arbitrii. Ista enim propositio, “Predestinatus potest damnari,” falsa est in sensu composito; in sensu diviso, vera est.* Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 456A.

¹⁵¹ In discussing the effects of Christ’s Passion, Jordan lists one as freeing the patriarchs, among others, from limbo, but then adds: *Damnati autem et pueri non baptizati huius meriti capaces non fuerunt. Ideo tales non liberavit sed in statu suo reliquit*. Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 143, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 234^{rb}.

great good and sent the souls of their children straight to hell, and they themselves were not far behind. “Oh God,” Jordan lamented, “how greatly will they be tortured.”¹⁵² Many are called, Jordan affirmed, but only few are chosen, the few, the elect, the predestined, who were so before foreseen merits. Justification by grace alone (*sola gratia*) before foreseen merits (*ante prevista merita*) was the Augustinians’ position from Giles of Rome and Gregory of Rimini to Alfonsus Vargas, Jordan, and Rampegolus, and with few exceptions, such as Gregory and Hugolino of Orvieto,¹⁵³ was not as such associated with a campaign against the modern Pelagians (*contra Pelagianos modernos*).¹⁵⁴ Grace, for Jordan, was what enabled the sinner to perform good works and to rise above fallen nature. Grace, all grace, for Jordan, was infused grace (*gratia infusa*), a gift from God, which Jordan equated with the scholastic grace given gratuitously (*gratia gratis data*). In effect, Jordan redefined the scholastic sacramental grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) over a hundred years before Staupitz did so as that grace that makes God pleasing to humans.¹⁵⁵ Thus we pray *Pater Noster*, as a capture of good will (*captatio benevolentie*), not of God’s good will, but of our own, for we are already pleasing to God, and we pray for God’s kingdom to come, not that we might come to the kingdom, but that the kingdom might come to us. God had sent his Son to die for human sin. It was sinful humans who needed to learn not to find a pleasing God, but to recognize the loving Father. Yet this could only be effected by grace, and all grace, including the infused gifts of God, was given *gratis*.¹⁵⁶

Only with the grace of God could humans perform good works and fight the devil. No one can take confidence in one’s works, for no one, from the infant who has lived for only a day, to the just and the saint, is free from sin.¹⁵⁷ No one can ever pay all that one owes. Thus the saint as well as the sinner must recognize their dependence on God, and be

¹⁵² *Infelices mulieres, que partum impediunt vel suffocant sine baptisate ... quantum bonum angelis auferant ... et quantum maledictionem incurrunt ... O deus quantum cruciabitur, qui puerum non baptizatum interficit et animam ad infernum mittat.* Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 65, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 124^{ra-b}.

¹⁵³ Cf. Christoph Burger, “Gregor, Hugolin und der junge Luther.” *Augustiniana* 52 (2002), 335–351.

¹⁵⁴ Saak, “The Reception of Augustine in the Later Middle Ages.” In Irena Backus, ed., *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West* (Leiden, 1997), vol. I, pp. 367–404, 396.

¹⁵⁵ David Steinmetz, *Misericordia Dei. The Theology of Johannes von Staupitz in its Late Medieval Setting*, SMRT 4 (Leiden, 1968), pp. 84–85.

¹⁵⁶ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 394–466.

¹⁵⁷ *Circa quod considerandum quod nullus, quantumcumque magni meriti, de su is iustitiis presumere debet ... nullus enim scire potest pro certo an opera sua vera sint an iusta; falsa enim iustitia multos deceptit ... nostrae iustitiae purae non sunt sed semper habent aliquid maculae ... Nemo est absque peccato, nec infans cuius est unius diei vita super terram. Item nec quicumque iusti et sancti sunt sine peccato.* Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 374B.

thankful, and humble. Humility, indeed, reigns supreme, for Jordan went beyond even his own Order's emphasis on the insufficiency of works to argue for a fourteenth-century version of *simul iustus et peccator*: "And this is the argument: that a humble sinner is better than someone just, but proud, because by the very fact that a sinner humbles himself, he is already no longer a sinner, and the just person, by the very fact that he is proud, is already no longer just."¹⁵⁸ It is only the humble sinner, who confesses himself as such, who is truly the saint. And here we see again the Augustinian nature of Jordan's theology: the saints are those who have been chosen by Christ from the degenerate mob of the damned, the *massa perditionis*. Jordan's combination of grace and predestination with an emphasis on works and the law, was not that of a semi-Pelagian, but was that of a Calvinist, almost two hundred years before Calvin.

Jordan was not in search of the merciful God. He already knew the loving Father. The question his theology addressed was, once one recognizes God's love revealed in Christ, once one already knows the loving Father, now what? How does one live in a world situated on the battlefield between God and the devil? In this light, Jordan's doctrine of grace and predestination was a call to arms, in a battle that was fought with works of love. He was Augustinian enough to know well that he preached to a mixed audience (*corpus permixtum*) amongst which one found many sinners, who also could be saints. Predestination was the work of God, not a mark of the Church, which was in a corporate battle with the forces of Satan.¹⁵⁹

Yet we would misunderstand Jordan if we did not recognize what is perhaps the major focus of his theology, and that which distinguishes it from all comparisons with the theology of Luther, or that of Calvin: Jordan's view of the return to God.¹⁶⁰ For Jordan, Christians are resident aliens (*peregrini*) in the world, making their way back to their homeland. For Jordan, Christian life was lived in the ongoing battle between God and the devil as the faithful made their way home, for which Jordan provided his readers with a "road map."¹⁶¹ Not only did Jordan explicate the

¹⁵⁸ *Et hic est argumentum: quod melior est peccator humilis quam iustus superbus, quia eo ipso quod peccator se humiliat, iam non est peccator, et iustus eo ipso quod superbit, iam non est iustus.* Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 376A; cf.: *In hoc evangelio [Lc. 18:9–14] commendatur virtu orationis et ostenditur quia in qua consistat summa totius humane perfectionis. Et introducitur hic duo homines: unus iustus et alter peccator. iustus, quia nescivit orare, fuit reprobatus; sed peccator, qui scivit orare, fuit iustificatus.* Jor. *Opus Jor*, sermo 256, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 396^{th-v2}.

¹⁵⁹ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 436–444.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 445–465.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 455–462.

theology of this road map, but he also provided his theology with a philosophy of the holy.

Jordan's *Sermons on the Saints* (*Opus Dan*), his last sermon collection, which was composed sometime between 1365 and 1380, may, on the surface, appear as the least philosophical of his works. Yet here we find a treatment of the saints that exceeds what one might expect from hagiographic homiletics. Most often, the saints themselves fading into the background, giving Jordan the opportunity to treat the particular exemplary characteristics of the saint, and/or the biblical text for the day, religiously, theologically, or philosophically. For example, in his three sermons on St Agnes, we find very little dealing with the story of Agnes herself. Rather, in the first sermon, Jordan expounds the mystical meaning behind each letter of Agnes's name. Thus "A" stands for the pinnacle of doctrine and wisdom; "G," as the seventh letter of the alphabet, stands for perfect love; "N" stands for humility, and on it goes. In treating these themes, Jordan cites Aristotle, Pseudo-Dionysius, Vegetius, Augustine, Seneca, Isidore, Gregory the Great, and Canon Law. Yet there is more here than meets the eye. In discussing the extent to which Agnes represents the height of charity, Jordan claims that the height of charity would be union with God, which, as Christ's spouse, Agnes enjoyed. He then made the following argument, drawing from book 12 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "And because the extent to which something approaches the one first principle, is the same extent to which it receives more greatly the first principle's influence, as is had from book twelve of the First Philosophy, therefore blessed Agnes is most perfectly mentioned in this case due to the great union of charity she had with God."¹⁶² In book 12 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presented his argument for the "unmoved first mover," after having spent books 9 through 11 dealing with movement and change. It was not to the Song of Songs that Jordan appealed, or at least not to the Song of Songs alone, but to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to describe the exalted status of Agnes as the Bride of Christ (*sponsus Christi*), a saint whom later Brother Martin upheld as representing the Rule of Christ.¹⁶³

Although Agnes certainly was a special case, the principles involved in Jordan's discussion he applied to Christians as such, namely, the process by which a sinner is changed into a saint, or what I earlier called

¹⁶² *Et quia quanto aliquid ad unum primum principium appropinquat, tanto de eius influenza magis recipit, ut habetur ex sententia prime philosophie lib. xij, ideo perfectissima innuitur beata Agnes ex unione magne charitatis quam habuit circa deum et e converso. Jordani de Quedlinburg, Opus Dan, sermo 46, fo. 68^r (Paris, 1521).*

¹⁶³ Luther, *De votis monasticis* 3, WA 8.615,4–11.

his doctrine of “transformational sanctity.” In his sermon on the conversion of Paul, we find additional explication of Jordan’s understanding of change. Here Jordan claims that there are three primary modes of change, namely, change by art, nature, and grace. There is, nevertheless, a fourth mode of change: superabundant grace and God’s mercy, and this fourth type of change was in effect in Paul’s conversion. Whereas in the normal occurrence of things, a sinner is changed into a righteous person by means of grace,¹⁶⁴ with change resulting from superabundant grace a sinner is changed immediately into one perfectly just, and Paul was changed immediately from a persecutor of the faith into an Apostle.¹⁶⁵ The words Jordan used to describe such change were “suddenly” (*repente*), and “a jump with no intermediary” (*per saltum omisso medio*). Whereas Jordan’s older confrère, Alfonsus Vargas, had in his commentary on the *Sentences* posited not only an intuitive cognition, but also a superintuitive cognition resulting from the grace of illumination enabling one to see as the mind of God, and whereas Gregory of Rimini had posited the need for a special help of God (*auxilium speciale dei*) for all meritorious acts, Jordan here sets forth a superabundant grace required for instantaneous change. One begins to get the impression that if we can talk about an “extra-dimension” in Calvin’s theology,¹⁶⁶ we can talk about a “super dimension” in that of the late medieval Augustinians. Though theologically here we are talking about a “super dimension” in the realm of grace, that should not obscure the philosophical foundation thereof, namely, in this case, instantaneous change.

Jordan’s most explicit discussion of instantaneous change is found in his sermon on the conception of the blessed Virgin. Here Jordan followed Giles of Rome often word for word: Mary was conceived in original sin, but in an imperceptible amount of time, was freed from it. The philosophical issue here was one of the instant, and it is book 8 of Aristotle’s *Physics* that Jordan cites, affirming that opposites cannot exist simultaneously. Yet Jordan seems to go beyond Giles’s treatment, as well as that of Thomas Aquinas, in responding to the attempt to preserve instantaneous change whereby opposites would indeed exist in the same instant of time,

¹⁶⁴ ... sic quotidie peccator mutatur in virum iustum. *Opus Dan*, sermo 49, fo. 72^r.

¹⁶⁵ Est ergo quarta mutatio que fit ex superabundanti gratia et misericordia dei secundum fortitudinem brachii sui et hec fit per saltum omisso medio in iustitiam perfectam. Et talis non est secundum legem communemque in multis est eam reperire, qualis fuit in Paulo qui repente de persecutore factus est Apostolus. *Ibid.* Thomas speaks of *abundantia gratiae*, *Summa Theologiae* 3, q. 27, art. 3, ad 2.

¹⁶⁶ See Heiko Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin.” In idem, *The Dawn of the Reformation. Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 234–258.

but not in the same instant of nature, a position Norman Kretzman and Paul Spade have called “Quasi-Aristotelianism”:¹⁶⁷

And therefore some say that although the Virgin was conceived in original sin, nevertheless in the same instant in reality although in another sign of the instant, she was cleansed by grace. But neither is this position able to stand, because due to the repugnance of guilt and grace it is impossible that in the same instant a soul is in reality able to be simultaneously under guilt and under grace. Therefore it is more probable as others say that the Virgin was freed from original sin and sanctified not in the same instant in which she was infected with original sin, but in the very next instant, as is possible for nature, and in this way it appears that divine providence preserved the Virgin in purity, because even though in the shortest space of time possible, which was unperceivable, God allowed the Virgin to be in original sin, how much greater it was that God cleansed her by grace.¹⁶⁸

The term *signa instantis* is found in the Quasi-Aristotelian Landulf Caraccioli’s (d. 1351) commentary on the *Sentences*, and this seems to be the position Jordan is refuting. Jordan did not uphold the immaculate conception for theological reasons alone, but even more so for philosophical reasons: for Jordan, an immaculate conception was philosophically impossible based on book 8 of Aristotle’s *Physics*.

When Jordan talked of Paul being converted by a superabundant grace *repente* and *per saltum omisso medio*, it was an instantaneous change, but one, like the Virgin’s conception, that did not take place in the same instant, but in successive instants. Nevertheless, in good Aristotelian fashion, there was no last instant that Paul ceased being a persecutor, but only a first instant that he began being an apostle, a philosophical position Jordan substantiated by citing the classic treatment once again in book 8 of Aristotle’s *Physics*. This instant of change is not only a change in the state of being, but also a change of direction. Jordan likened Paul’s conversion to the river Jordan, which flows back from a given point, which

¹⁶⁷ Norman Kretzman, “Continuity, Contrariety, Contradiction, and Change.” In Norman Kretzman, ed., *Infinity and Continuity in Ancient and Medieval Thought* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), pp. 270–296; Paul Vincent Spade, “Quasi-Aristotelianism.” In Kretzman, *Infinity and Continuity*, pp. 297–307.

¹⁶⁸ *Et ideo alii dicunt quod licet concepta fuerit in originali, in eodem tamen instanti realiter: licet in alio signo instantis fuit emundata per gratiam. Sed nec hoc stare potest, quia propter repugnantiam culpae et gratiae impossibile est quod in eodem instanti realiter anima simul sit sub culpa et gratia. Et ideo alii dicunt probabilius quod non in eodem instanti quo fuit per originale infecta, sed in alio instanti proximo, sicut nature possibile fuit, est per gratiam purgata et sanctificata, et in hoc apparet quam sollicite divina providentia beatam virginem in puritate servaverit, quia licet tempore brevissimo et quasi imperceptibili ipsam in originari permiserit, quantotius tamen fieri potuit ipsam per gratiam emundavit.* Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, ser. 12, fo. 18^r.

is God's doing: "Certainly He who changes the flow of the river Jordan so that it flows back (*retrorsum*) physically, turned Paul around (*retrorsum*) spiritually."¹⁶⁹ The flow of the river Jordan *retrorsum* was a central image for Jordan, symbolizing the religious life, and he began all three of his major sermon collections with such an image. Given this image, and given his discussion of the four modes of change, we find that Jordan combined instantaneous change with change over a continuum.

The point of conversion, or baptism as Jordan seems to indicate, takes place instantaneously, and yet, as he also affirmed, one changing from a sinner into being righteous is a daily occurrence that takes place according to the third mode of change, change resulting from grace. Jordan combined instantaneous change resulting from superabundant grace with change over a continuum resulting from regular grace.¹⁷⁰ Jordan repeatedly throughout his sermons employed the three-fold scheme of the Christian life as being that of beginners, those making progress, and the perfect, with those progressing representing the middle stage (*medium*) omitted in the case of Paul.

Such progress, however, is not without instantaneous change, for in each successive state, there is no last instant of ceasing to be. Though Jordan nowhere I have yet found discussed the instant of change from being an *incipiens* to becoming a *proficiens*, it would seem he would have advocated again a purely Aristotelian model of change over time, which also seems fitting with his position that what affects the change is an infusion of grace, which elevates the ontological status of the soul, bringing

¹⁶⁹ *Nempe qui Iordanem fluentem deorsum mutavit ut flueret retrorsum materialiter: ipsum Saulum repugnantem convertit retrorsum spiritualiter. Opus Postillarum, sermo 49, fo. 72'.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ad secundam dubitationem dicendum quod licet plura requirantur ad iustificationem impii, omnia tamen sunt simul tempore sed quia ordine nature unum est prius alio, ideo successive fieri describuntur. Naturali enim ordine in iustificatione impii primum est gratie infusio, secundum motus liberi arbitrii in deum, tertium motus liberi arbitrii in peccatum, quartum remissio culpe, que tamen omnia a deo fiunt uno instanti. Sic in proposito certum est quod deus potuit illum cecum statim uno momento perfecte sanare, sed successive facere voluit ut designaret qualiter nos peccatis obscurati spiritualiter ordine quodam reducatur ad lucem. Unde dicit glossa et est Bede, Quem verbo totum simul deus curare poterat, paulatim curat, ut magnitudinem humane cecitatis ostendat, que vix et quasi per gradus ad lucem redeat et gratiam suam nobis indicat per quam singula perfectionis incrementa adiuvat. Unde licet deus uno instanti possit peccatore sanum facere, exemplum de latrone, regulariter tamen ad conversionem nostram ex parte nostri plura successive requiruntur videlicet peccati cognitio, peccati displicentia, constrictio, confessio, et satisfactio, que nobis sunt successiva, sed deus potest supplere omnia in uno momento. Igitur quando aliqui sic auxilio gratie prevenientis in tantum illustrati fuerint, ut peccata sua saltem in grosso conspiciant ut locum habeat dicendi eis premissum, cum diveritis, Deinde cetera mala que ex peccato nascunt considerantes, demum ad perfectam cognitionem omnium suorum defectuum illuminatione habitualis gratie perducentur quod designat in eo quod post omnium istorum malorum considerationem subiungitur, que legit intelligat, ut ibi dicitur. Jord. Opus Postillarum, sermo 458D.*

it nearer the first principle, as Jordan defined grace in his *Model Sermons*, and as we already saw in the case of St Agnes. Indeed, Jordan equates the status of predestined souls with divine ideas, the status and function of which were hotly debated in the universities. Predestined souls were created eternally simultaneously with the Word. Yet there is not a univocal, but an equivocal relationship between the divine ideas in the divine mind and the ontological status of souls.

Jordan affirmed that the process by which sinners are changed into being sons of God occurs through superabundant grace, and becoming sons of God is the theme of Jordan's *Treatise on Divine Filiation* (*Tractatus de filiatione divina*), or sermons 50–52 of his second collection of model sermons (*Opus Jor*). Here we find Jordan refuting erroneous positions on the soul's divination, and he explicitly attacks the heresy of the Free Spirit. The proper relationship between the soul and the divine idea is one of exemplarism. The exemplars exist in the mind of God, whereas created beings exist as images thereof. The *imago dei* in the human soul, however, in keeping with the equivocal relationship, is not a similitude of being, but of image in the Trinitarian Augustinian triad of will, reason, and memory. Conformity to the exemplar nevertheless is the means to effect the infusion of grace elevating the ontological status of the soul. Whereas the exemplar, for example, of a tree in nature, Jordan asserts, exists in the divine mind, the exemplar of the human soul has been revealed. The crucified Christ is the exemplar for humans, as Jordan laid out in detail in his *Meditations on the Passion of Christ*, or sermons 189–254 of his *Model Sermons*. By conforming one's soul to the exemplar of Christ, one's soul is elevated to higher ontological status of being by drawing nearer the first principle, which exerts an increasing influence in direct proportion to the level of elevation and conformity, and here Jordan has left the Aristotelian world behind and has entered that of a Neoplatonic and Thomistic Augustinianism, which Jordan took from his Order's theologian, Giles of Rome. The conformity is effected through the image's mimesis of the exemplar, which results in a succession of instantaneous changes in the soul's state of being brought about by the infusion of superabundant grace, rendering the sinner a son of God as one progresses over time from the states of the *incipientes* to that of the *proficientes* and the *perfecti*. Jordan has combined an Aristotelian physics of motion and change with a Neoplatonic Augustinian metaphysics. While his philosophy of the holy cannot as such be seen as having proposed doctrines of philosophical importance, one cannot adequately understand his sermons without taking careful note of their philosophical foundations. An

Aristotelian physics and metaphysics of motion and change provided the philosophical foundation of Jordan's theology of the holy and his understanding of transformational sanctity, a sanctity that was to effect reformation in this world.

The justification of the impious, Jordan explained, happens in a single moment with respect to God. However, in the course of nature we find succession, and thus God desires that there be progression, even though God is able to effect justification instantaneously as well, as the thief on the cross proves. In the natural, usual progression, there is first of all the infusion of grace. The movement of the free will towards God comes second, followed though by sin, which first must be recognized, and then despised, which then leads to the remission of guilt in contrition, confession, and satisfaction, all of which are designed to show us how great is our sin and blindness.¹⁷¹

In three sermons of his *Model Sermons* on Luke 17:19, *Rise, and go, for your faith has saved you*, Jordan spelled out the steps by which the soul returns to God.¹⁷² The human soul is equated with the leper of the Gospel passage due to the defect of original sin, and thus these words are spoken to all, regardless of the state of being, for the *incipientes* are to rise from actual sin; the *proficientes*, from laziness; and the *contemplativi* are to rise from a withdrawn quietude.¹⁷³ In relating the *Rise* of Luke with that

¹⁷¹ ... dicendum quod licet plura requirantur ad iustificationem impii, omnia tamen sunt simul tempore. Sed quia ordine nature unum et prius alio, ideo successive fieri describuntur. Naturali enim ordine in iustificatione impii primum est gratie infusio; secundum, motus liberi arbitrii in deum; tertium, motus liberi arbitrii in peccatum; quartum, remissio culpe, que tamen omnia a deo fiunt uno instanti. Sic in proposito certum est quod deus potuit illum cecum [Mic. 8:22–26] statim uno momento perfecte sanare, sed successive facere voluit ut designaret q ualiter nos peccatis obscurati spiritualiter ordine quodam reducamur ad lucem ... quem [scil. cecum] verbo totum simul deus curare poterat, paulatim curat, ut magnitudinem humane cecitatis ostendat, que vix et quasi per gradus ad lucem redeat et gratiam suam nobis indicat, per quam singula perfectionis incrementa adiuvat. Unde licet deus uno instanti possit peccatorem sanum facere, exemplum de latrone, regulariter tamen ad conversionem nostram ex parte nostra plura successive requiruntur videlicet peccati cognitio, peccati displicentia, contritio, confessio, et satisfactio, que nobis sunt successive, sed deus potest supplere omnia in uno momento. Igitur quando aliquo sic auxilio gratie prevenientis in tantum illustrati fuerint, ut peccata sua saltem in grosso conspiciant ... deinde cetera mala que ex peccato nascunt considerantes demum ad perfectam cognitionem omnium suorum defectuum illuminatione habitualis gratie perducentur quod designat in eo quod post omnium istorum malorum considerationem subiungitur. Jor., *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 458D.

¹⁷² Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermones 394–396; cf. sermones 458–460.

¹⁷³ Omnis enim anima propter infectionem peccati originalis leprosa est, sed mundatur per lavacrum baptismi. Sunt autem fideles per baptismum regenerati in triplici differentia. Quidam enim sunt in peccatis actualibus iacentes; alii sunt a bono opera torpentes; tertii sunt quieti contemplationis vacantes. Hos singulos dominus alloquitur in verbis premissis dicens cuilibet secundum statum suum, Surge et vade, ubi duo iubentur. Primo iubetur surgere cum premitit, Surge. Sed quia non sufficit viatori surgere sed oportet eum ambulare, ideo secundo iubetur procedere et ambulare cum adiungitur, et vade. Primo ergo isti iubentur surgere et hoc tripliciter secundum eorum triplicem statum. Surgere inquam a peccatis

of the Song of Songs 2:10, and the *itinerarium* of Habakkuk 3, Jordan explained that there are nine journeys the soul must take to progress from its origin in God in order to arrive back at its end in God. The first is that of the soul's creation; the second, the soul's conversion; the third, humiliation; the fourth, self-knowledge; the fifth, self-denial; the sixth, self-renunciation; the seventh, the imitation of Christ; the eighth, contemplation; and the ninth, reunion, signified by the *Come*, whereby Christ says to the soul *come outside of me, come before me, come from me, come into yourself, come outside of your self, come from yourself, come after me, come to me, and come into me*.¹⁷⁴ Such a return to God was not, for Jordan, a substantive union, which was the heresy of the Free Spirit, against which Jordan had written a treatise now lost.¹⁷⁵ Humans, as he clarified in his *Treatise on Divine Filiation*, are to become sons of God not by nature, but by adoption whereby the union is one of love, effected by grace.¹⁷⁶ It was only by the redemptive act of Christ that humans can pray, *Abba, pater*.¹⁷⁷ Jordan's theology of *theosis* was based firmly in his theology of the cross. The Passion of Christ was the Christian's exemplar, which must

quantum ad primos; surgere a torpore quantum ad secundos; et surgere a quiete quantum ad tertios. Jor. Opus Postillarum, sermo 394A.

¹⁷⁴ Vade. Quid non sufficit deo sponso anime eam surgere nisi etiam vadat, ideo postquam dixit Surge, adiunxit et Vade. Sic etiam in Canticis ubi dicit Surge, addit propera [Ps. 2:10], *qualiter autem ad iussione[m] sponsi anima ire et properare debeat. Circa hoc sciendum quod animam ad perfectionem tendentem antequam finem sue peregrinationis attingat, oportet ire novum itinera, ut sic circumitum faciendo demum redeat in suum principium a quo profluxit ... Primum iter animae est in sua creatione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade extra me." Secundum iter est in sua conversatione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade coram me." Tertium iter est in sui humiliatione, et quantum ad hoc dicit "Vade a me." Quartum iter est in sui consideratione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade in te." Quintum iter est in sui abnegatione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade a te." Septimum iter est in Christi immitatione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade post me." Octavum iter est in dei contemplatione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade ad me." Nonum iter anime est in sui cum deo unione, et quantum ad hoc dicit, "Vade in me." Et sic completo circumitu isto anima redit in suum principium. Jor. Opus Postillarum, sermo 395A. Jordan then continued with explications of each of the journeys in this and in the following sermon.*

¹⁷⁵ Romana Guarieneri, "Il movimento del Libero Spirito." *Archivio Italiano per la storia della pietà* 4 (1965), 351–708; Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA, 1972).

¹⁷⁶ Sermons 50–52 of Jordan's *Opus Jor* are designated in the Vatican manuscript as a *Tractatus de filiatione divina*, Pal. lat. 448, fos. 97^{vb}–106^{ra}: *Nos vero esse quidem possumus in eis [scil. persone Trinitatis] unum, unum tamen cum eis esse non possumus quia unius substantie nos et ipsi non sumus, sic autem in nobis vel nos in illis ut illi unum sunt in natura sua, nos autem unum in nostra. Sunt quippe ipsi in nobis sicut deus in templo, sumus autem nos in illis sicut creatura in creatore suo. Ideo addit in nobis quod unum efficitur fidelissima caritate gratie dei tribuendum esse, non nobis. Ista ergo unio accipienda est secundum conformitatem affectum et transformationem amoris.* Jor. *Tractatus de filiatione divina, Opus Jor*, sermo 51, Pal. lat. 448, fo. 101^{va}. For Jordan's *Opus Jor*, see also Giordano di Quedlinburg *Opus Jor. Registrum Sermonum, Tabula Contentorum Secundum Ordinem Alphabeti*, ed. Nadia Bray. Centro di cultura medievale della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa 13 (Pisa, 2004).

¹⁷⁷ Jor. *Expositio Orationis Dominice* 1, p. 76,67–69.

be followed to return to one's origin and end, union with God. Before that time, the human soul suffers inquietude, even in contemplation, as it continues to fight the battle with Satan, until one finally returns home and is no longer an alien, but is embraced by God on the eighth day, the final Sabbath, and the final image of Augustine's *The City of God*, with which Jordan closed his *Model Sermons*, when we will finally be at rest, in perfect peace, and when we will perfectly love and praise God, in the end, without end.¹⁷⁸

I have, here, been abbreviating, perhaps at times far too much so, but it would necessitate a separate study to explicate in full Jordan's philosophy of the holy. The point I would like to make, though, is that fundamental philosophical doctrines that were debated in the universities by likes of Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Prosper of Reggio, Gregory of Rimini, Alfonsus Vargas, Landulf Caraccioli, and even Marsilius of Inghen, and Martin Luther appear as applied philosophy in Jordan's sermons, and as such, the philosophy of Jordan's sermons was not peripheral to his practical theology, but served as its very foundation. To interpret late medieval sermons, the philosophy thereof must be taken into account, and to interpret philosophy in the later Middle Ages, the "philosophy in the flesh"¹⁷⁹ of sermons must be considered as well. Only thereby can we gain a deeper understanding of the religious, cultural, and intellectual world of the later Middle Ages, and consequently come to recognize the philosophical, as well as the religious, theological, and cultural significance, of late medieval sermons. Moreover, had Luther known Jordan's sermons, and he certainly could have as they were readily available in multiple printings, Luther may have seen how Aristotle could be well used indeed for theology, when applied correctly and understood aright. Jordan's drawing from Aristotle's *Physics* may have led Luther to the same text for help in treating Trinitarian theology, as we will see later,¹⁸⁰ and eventually for understanding instantaneous change, which humans, as subjects, receive from their object, Christ. It may have helped him see more precisely just how faith and reason could harmonize, and the dangers arising from a misunderstanding, and misapplication, of Aristotle himself, and how Aristotle could indeed be useful for the highest theology. This, however, is pure speculation, with evidence lacking, though we can say that, in the

¹⁷⁸ Jor. *Opus Postillarum*, sermo 460; cf. Jor. *Expositio Orationis Dominice* 2, p. 94,168–196,170; Aug. *civ.* 22,30 (CCSL 48.866,145–148).

¹⁷⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, 1999).

¹⁸⁰ See [Chapter 3](#).

mid-fourteenth century, Jordan espoused a thoroughly Augustinian pastoral theology that he harmonized with Aristotelian physics in his attempt to describe the Christian life as one based on humility and God's predestination and grace within the context of a theology of holiness based on his theology of the cross developed in the battle between God and the devil.

It would be easy, though, to view Jordan as a typical example of late medieval, semi-Pelagian, *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, as did essentially Martin Elze in a very superficial reading of Jordan's *Meditations on the Passion of Christ*.¹⁸¹ Such an interpretation, however, misses the mark. The original controversy between Augustine and Pelagius and his followers concerned pastoral as much as academic theology. At some point, however, the names of the participants became abstracted to signify theological positions, rarefied into the substantive nouns of "Augustinianism" and "Pelagianism" existing in the realm of theological debate when pastoral theology was often ignored, though always lurking underneath. Throwing around theological labels to damn one's opponents somehow got away from the pastoral issue of how the Christian is to live a Christian life. The relationship between predestination, grace, and good works, doctrines placed in an order of which Jordan would have approved, was based on how one viewed the effects of the Fall, and the impact of original sin. Jordan was clear: the Fall of Adam and Eve had distorted all of creation, and even if free will remained, humans on their own could only wallow in sin, unable to do otherwise. In our portrayals of the theology of the later Middle Ages, that of Jordan should not be overlooked, as it has been for too long. *Sentences* commentaries were wonderful intellectual constructs, but the flesh and blood of theology is to be found in the pastoral theology designed for teaching, in Jordan's terms, what it is exactly that humans owe God in the battle between God and the devil. In the trenches, the labels had little or no meaning; the issue signified by the "-isms" did indeed. One would err if one refrained from describing Jordan's theology as *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, as much as one would were one to claim it as semi-Pelagian. Jordan knew the lay of the land, and that the Christian lived in the ontological tension of being an alien, caught between nature (*esse nature*) and glory (*esse glorie*), which only grace (*esse gratie*) could bridge, and even so, only partially as long as the battle continued. In such a cosmic conflict, good works were essential, as the weapons to fight the forces of Satan. What distinguished

¹⁸¹ Martin Elze, "Das Verständnis der Passion Jesu im ausgehenden Mittelalter und bei Luther." In K. Scholder et al., eds., *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation. Festgabe Hanns Rückert zum 65. Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 127–151.

the theology of Jordan from that of his younger confrère, the teacher of good works (*doctor operum bonorum*), Brother Martin Luther, was not the issue of Pelagianism or anti-Pelagianism, but rather the historical context and philosophical presuppositions, not to mention personal style. Times had changed indeed from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century, yet the battle remained, as did the fundamental questions. What Brother Martin had to fight so hard to discover, Jordan already knew: the righteous, loving God, evidenced most of all, most similar to Luther, in Jordan's theology of the cross. The question to which Jordan addressed his sermons was: now what? Having realized that the Christian is the adopted son of God, predestined for glory, a member of the eternal city of God, what now in the temporal campaign against the diabolical? Jordan offered a moral answer, though one not without theological implications, whereas Luther proposed a theological answer, though one not without moral implications. Somehow for both Augustinian hermits, not to mention Calvin, to reduce the issues to the academic realm of substantive adjectives fails to capture the depth and the import of the historical situation. Brother Martin lived in the last days, which for Jordan lay still in the future.¹⁸² Yet both friars were intimately involved in their societies, concerned most of all for the salvation of the souls of their flocks and in preserving the majesty of God and the lordship of Christ. This too Jordan could assert was something that Christians should be taught.

The challenge of Pelagius must never be forgotten, nor dismissed as a heresy long since condemned to oblivion, used only to stigmatize one's adversaries. It must be struggled with ever anew, with ever new answers to the issues it raised, for it penetrates to the very heart of the Christian life, and how one is to live *coram deo*. Such answers were given, which merit remembering not only as historical artifacts, but also in the ongoing discussion, in the sermons of Jordan, a fourteenth-century Augustinian friar, a son of Augustine, who upheld divine love as the unifying, healing, and salvific factor of the Christian life lived between God and the devil, when it is infinitely difficult to know or to recognize the demarcation of the forces within the *corpus permixtum*, aside from the eternal, Augustinian doctrine of divine love revealed in the cross of Christ. As such, Jordan's theology was a theology of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, even as it has rarely been given a place in our portrayals

¹⁸² Jordan composed sermo 455 of his *Opus Postillarum*, the first of three sermons, 455–457, comprising his *Expositio de Antichristo*, in 1365, in which he affirmed that the Antichrist had not yet made his appearance.

of the late medieval theological landscape. Our understanding of late medieval theology has been shaped, more than by any other factor, by our understanding of the theological context in which Luther developed his theology, which he opposed to the medieval theological tradition – *as he knew it*. Jordan's theology, as the Augustinian theology in general of the later Middle Ages stemming from Giles of Rome, was it seems a theology unknown to Brother Martin even after he sought God's mercy in the Erfurt cloister, even after he received his formation and began teaching the Bible in Wittenberg, and even after he began living, or so it seemed, the Augustinian life, following Augustine's religion.

Reformation and the Augustinians

On 18 May 1517, Brother Martin Luther wrote triumphantly to his confrère Johannes Lang that “our theology and Saint Augustine continue to prosper and reign in our university.”¹⁸³ Such jubilation expressed itself four months later in the opening theses of Luther's ninety-seven against scholastic theology, in which he asserted: “To say that Augustine spoke excessively against heretics is to say that Augustine lied almost everywhere.”¹⁸⁴ Not only Luther's early theology, but Wittenberg theology as such was Augustinian theology, in keeping with the University's patron saint, St Augustine.

The excitement Brother Martin expressed over Augustine in 1517, however, had not come unprepared. Augustinian theology had been developing within the Order of Hermits of St Augustine for over two hundred years. Among the saints Jordan treated, one in particular stood out. Jordan devoted sermons 129 to 151 of his *Sermons on the Saints* to Augustine, as well as treating Augustine's translations in sermons 59 and 185. Whereas all other doctors of the Church could be compared to stars, Jordan eulogized, only Augustine was worthy of comparison with the sun.¹⁸⁵ Jordan's estimation of Augustine was so great that he claimed: “blessed Augustine can be called the city of God ... just as whatever is necessary for life can be had

¹⁸³ *WABr* 1.99,8–9.

¹⁸⁴ *WA* 1.224,7–8.

¹⁸⁵ ... [*Augustinus*] *ceteros ecclesie doctores tam ingenio quam scientia vicit incomparabiliter. Unde cum alii doctores assimilentur stellis, ipse soli comparatur.* Jordan of Quedlinburg, *Opus Dan*, sermo 59D. This image Jordan quoted from the *Legenda Aurea*, c. 124; Th. Grasse, ed., 1890; reprint Osnabrück, 1969, pp. 548 and 560. Jordan did not, however, simply repeat previous praise; for Jordan, Augustine had renewed the apostolic life; see Saak, “Ex vita patrum formatur vita fratrum: The Appropriation of the Desert Fathers in the Liber Vitasfratrum of Jordan of Quedlinburg, OESA (d. 1380).” *Church History and Religious Culture* 86 (2006), 191–228.

in the city, so in blessed Augustine can be found whatever is necessary for salvation.” Jordan even went so far as to claim that Augustine’s teaching held such weight “that nothing in divine scripture is secure that is not confirmed by his authority.” Augustine was not, however, an isolated saint, but was the city on the hill, letting his light shine on all people. As such, Augustine founded his Order of Hermits, who were to be imitators “of our Father Augustine” and to follow Augustine as “the exemplar and rule of all our actions.” Thus not only Augustine, but also his Order was to be the city of God.¹⁸⁶

While much scholarly sweat and blood has gone into debating the question as to the extent to which Luther inherited a late medieval Augustinianism, the focus has been primarily, if not exclusively, on a renewed late medieval anti-Pelagianism abstracted from the more general context of Augustinian theology as such in the later Middle Ages.¹⁸⁷ Yet the late medieval Augustinian hermits had been seeking to be the City of God by transforming their world through preaching and teaching, evident in the production of sermons, biblical handbooks, preaching aids, and catechetical literature. Such theological production, though, has been seen as part of a general late medieval pastoral literature, and therefore not as specifically Augustinian.¹⁸⁸ It has not entered discussions of Augustinian theology in the later Middle Ages any more than has the theology of Giles of Rome, with the basis for defining Augustinian theology being a strong anti-Pelagianism. Yet as just detailed, Jordan’s pastoral theology and theology of the holy was thoroughly anti-Pelagian, even as it emphasized the command to fulfill God’s will.

Whereas previous scholarship has evaluated a late medieval theologian’s Augustinianism based on his proximity to the historical Augustine and consequently, based on the modern interpreter’s own interpretation of Augustine, the approach I am advocating here is to recognize that historically speaking what unified the likes of Giles of Rome, Gregory of Rimini, Jordan of Quedlinburg, and Arnoldus Cancrinus was not their proximity to Augustine, but their membership in the late medieval OESA, the social system that gave meaning to the term “Augustinian” in the later Middle Ages. The same applies for such Augustinians as Johannes von Paltz and Martin Luther.¹⁸⁹ Amongst the various imaginings of Augustine in the

¹⁸⁶ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 430–436.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 683–701.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 347–356.

¹⁸⁹ See Saak, “Paltz, Johannes von.” *OGHRA* 3: 1494–1495. “Martin Luther.” *OGHRA* 3: 1341–1346.

later Middle Ages, only that of Augustine's religion (*religio Augustini*) as embodied within the OESA can legitimately lay claim to represent a historical Augustinianism that is not conditioned or determined by the theological positions and interpretations of modern scholars.

The attempt to identify a unified late medieval Augustinianism has failed to recognize the plethora of Augustines in the later Middle Ages, and therefore, the plethora of Augustinianisms. This has obscured the recognition of the only historically legitimate referent for the term "late medieval Augustinianism," namely, the *religio Augustini* and the imaginings of Augustine of the social group that gave meaning to the term "Augustinianian." Or perhaps stated in other terms, the historical Augustinianism as here described was that which gave Augustine his being in the later Middle Ages.¹⁹⁰ Without the historical Augustinianism of the later Middle Ages, Augustine would have remained simply the label given to a number of texts that various scholars cited as having various levels of authority. Augustine would have remained dead and buried in Pavia.

In this light, late medieval Augustinianism had an impact beyond late medieval theology. It was one component of the general Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, as was the *Frömmigkeitstheologie* that Brother Martin considered to have been Pelagian. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages can be characterized in part by competing theologies, of which the Augustinian was one, though one that has been marginalized and narrowed to have had an importance only to the extent that it influenced, if it did, Luther's developing Reformation theology. It was the historical Augustinianism of the OESA, which included its catechetical and pastoral endeavor, that gave Augustine his late medieval being and effected a re-embodiment of Augustine himself, thus breathing life into dead bones. It was a creative endeavor. It was a political endeavor. It was a theological endeavor. And it was a religious endeavor. The re-embodiment of Augustine in the later Middle Ages transformed late medieval culture and society, and provides the only historically legitimate referent for the descriptive term "late medieval Augustinianism."¹⁹¹

It was not, however, the only component of the Reformation. Whereas the late medieval Augustinian tradition looked to the pope as the instrument of reformation, the opposing imperial ideology sought to curtail the influence of the papacy, and indeed, in its most radical form, that of Marsilius of Padua, to do away with the papacy all together, in the context

¹⁹⁰ See Saak, *Creating Augustine*.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 222–228.

of an apocalyptic expectation. Such prophetic calls for reformation only became increasingly urgent in the wake of the Schism. A reformation, if it had not yet come about, was imminent, and would be imposed against the wills of the unreformed. Institutionally and personally, reformation was not just called for and expected. Attempts to bring about reformation on all levels of society should not be dismissed or relativized simply because they were ultimately not able to do this. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages failed. It failed to transform society, Church and Empire, kings, peasants, and cities. Yet the endeavor continued. It was an ongoing struggle, an ongoing battle, an ongoing attempt to bring about reformation in a world that was crumbling, besieged by plague, famine, war, and death, by abuses of power, and the inertia of the powers that be to do anything much about it, or so it seemed. As such, this Reformation lacked focus. It lacked unity. It lacked a rallying point. It was diffuse and multiform, not coordinated. Yet the storm was raging. And in a storm near Stotternheim, a young master of arts was nearly struck by lightning on 2 July 1505. He survived, having made a vow to become a monk. It was a vow he would keep.

CHAPTER 2

Seeking God's Mercy: Living the Augustinian Life

When Martin Luther knocked on the door of the observant Augustinian hermit cloister in Erfurt in 1505, he started a process that was to change him forever. After discussions with the prior, and examination to ensure that he was free to join the Order – not married, not running from the law, etc. – Luther was asked to begin the ritual formally accepting him as a novice by answering the question of what he was seeking. He was to reply: “God’s mercy, and yours.”¹ After further prayers and instructions, Luther dressed himself in the habit of a novice. He was then handed over to the master of novices who would oversee his formation in the Order, teaching him to become an Augustinian hermit of the Observance. A year and a day later, in 1506, Luther took his solemn vows, being dressed in the habit of the Order that was to make him a new man in Christ, putting off the old man inherited from Adam.² Two hundred and fifty years after the foundation of the Augustinian hermits in 1256,³ Luther became an Augustinian, he became Brother Martin Luther. He was to remain such for eighteen years, wearing the habit until 9 October 1524. As significant as his transformation was, as symbolic as the habit was, Brother Martin was aware of the medieval dictum, also repeated within his own Order, that “the habit does not make the monk.”⁴ What then did? What did it mean to be an Augustinian?

Being an Augustinian

How one was to be an Augustinian was not a question with an easy answer. Members of the Order had been seeking to define what it meant

¹ *Const. ref. Al.* 15, p. 186,9–14; Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 631–637.

² Saak, *High way to Heaven*, pp. 632–636.

³ Saak, “In Search of Origins: The Foundation(s) of the OESA.” *Analecta Augustiniana* 75 (2012), 5–24.

⁴ *VF* 1,20, p. 72,71–72; Saak, *Creating Augustine*, p. 210.

to be an Augustinian for the previous two hundred and fifty years. If an answer had arisen, it was one forged in conflict. The Order of Hermits of St Augustine had been created by the pope. It was an artificial construct, bringing together disparate groups of hermits following Augustine's *Rule*. Unlike the Franciscans and Dominicans, who were well established before the hermits came into being, the Augustinians did not have a charismatic founder to give them their identity and self-understanding.

Even the popes had difficulties in knowing how to refer to the new Order, the Order's title only becoming firmly set from 1327.⁵ Augustine's *Rule* and its dictum of living with one heart and soul in God, based on Acts 4:32–35, provided the foundation, articulated by Giles of Rome in his general letter to the Order upon his becoming prior general in 1292 that emphasized the common life, adherence to the papacy, and the need for schools.⁶ Pope Alexander IV had directed the "little brothers of St. Augustine" to the cities, to win souls by preaching to and teaching the people.⁷ In this light, the OESA, like its two biggest competitors, was an evangelical order.

Debate over Augustine's heritage, and who spoke for it, who embodied it, became, as Kaspar Elm described it, a late medieval *cause célèbre*.⁸ At issue was whether the hermits were Augustine's first and original monastic order, or if this pedigree was to be ascribed to the Augustinian canons. The canons, as the hermits pointed out, were established only in the eleventh century. The hermits, on the other hand, though founded by Alexander IV in 1256, actually traced their origins to Augustine himself. As Pope John XXII asserted in his Bull *Veneranda Sanctorum* of January 1327, the hermits were the true sons of their "leader, teacher, father, and head," St Augustine.⁹ Such a determination led to conflict, controversy, and intellectual combat that became more than simply a squabble between two late medieval monastic groups. It was a controversy over Augustine's heritage. The hermits, due to their support of Boniface VIII and John XXII in their conflicts with Philip IV of France and Lewis of Bavaria respectively, had the papacy on their side, and had become the architects of papal hierocratic theory.¹⁰ Their attempts to prove their origins as the original

⁵ Saak, "In Search of Origins," 20.

⁶ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 21–22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 282–286; Saak, *Creating Augustine*, p. 216.

⁸ Kaspar Elm, "Augustinus Canonicus-Augustinus Eremita: A Quattrocento Cause Célèbre." In Timothy Verdon and John Henderson, eds., *Christianity and the Renaissance. Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento* (New York, 1990), pp. 83–107.

⁹ Saak, "In Search of Origins," p. 19.

¹⁰ See [Chapter 7](#).

monastic foundation of Augustine led them to intense study of Augustine's writings. It further served as the catalyst for the hermits' creative reconstruction of Augustine's biography, portraying Augustine as the founder of their Order, including their discovery, or forgery, of the *Sermons to his Brothers in the Hermitage* (*Sermones ad fratres suos in eremo*), which gave textual witness to the hermits' argument. And finally, the hermits effected a true renaissance of Augustine that had been forged in papal–princely conflict and yielded a new Augustine scholarship based on a return to the sources of Augustine (*ad fontes Augustini*), which in the works of Gregory of Rimini initiated a renewed campaign against the modern Pelagians.¹¹

Creating a group identity and coherence was not an easy task, especially in wake of the Black Death and declining standards. The prior general of the Order in the mid-fourteenth century, Gregory of Rimini, had to deal with brothers fighting each other, gambling, and living with local women, as well as appointing candidates to Paris to study theology.¹² Given the state of discipline and obedience, there is little wonder that Brother John of Basel felt the need to ask what it was after all that made one a true son of Augustine. His fellow Augustinian, Brother Jordan of Quedlinburg, provided the answer in his work, the *Lives of the Brothers* (*Liber Vitasfratrum*), completed by 1358 and sent to Gregory, for approval. Gregory died before he had the chance officially to sanction Jordan's work, but Jordan's *Lives of the Brothers* became the accepted "handbook" for being an Augustinian for the rest of the Middle Ages and beyond. While there is no explicit evidence that Luther studied Jordan's *Lives of the Brothers* as part of his formation in the Order, it is very likely that he had done so, for this was essentially a commentary on the Order's *Rule* and *Constitutions* and there was nothing else like it. Jordan explicitly intended his work as a mirror, so that any brother could, by reading it and comparing his life with the examples given, determine whether he was indeed living the life of an Augustinian. While Jordan offered numerous examples of brothers of outstanding holiness, the primary standard for living the Augustinian life was Augustine himself, who was to be the Order's rule and exemplar. The OESA was simply to be the embodiment of Augustine.¹³

Augustine, for Jordan and his Order, represented a new form of religious life, combining the active life of a bishop with the contemplative life

¹¹ Saak, *Creating Augustine*, pp. 23–55; Saak, "The Augustinian Renaissance: Textual Scholarship and Religious Identity in the Later Middle Ages." *OGHRA* 1: 58–68.

¹² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 315–344.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 267–315.

of a hermit. This combination not only was the highest form of Christian perfection, according to Augustine of Ancona, but was also, as Jordan phrased it, not simply the perfect life (*vita perfecta*), but the most perfect life (*vita perfectissima*). Jordan then offered a redefinition of the contemplative life itself. Rather than the distinction between the active life as the cure of souls and the contemplative life as the inner life of contemplation, Jordan considered all endeavors that pertained to the soul as comprising the contemplative life, whereas those pertaining to the body comprised the active life. Thus preaching, teaching, hearing confessions, and administering the sacraments were for Jordan part of the *vita contemplativa*, whereby the most perfect life was to remain in contemplation with God alone and then to bring the fruits of contemplation to the people, both of which together formed the contemplative life.¹⁴ The Augustinians' pastoral endeavor was itself a contemplative life of preaching and teaching based on the model of Augustine.

The Augustinians' claim to lead the most perfect life put them squarely opposed to the Franciscans, who also asserted their religion as the highest form of Christian perfection. The Franciscans and Augustinian hermits had been at odds from early on, starting already in the late thirteenth century at least. The Franciscan ideal of poverty had been a major player in the papal-imperial conflicts between John XXII and Lewis of Bavaria, with the Augustinians defending the papal position. Conflict with the Franciscans continued, and was by no means strictly on the theoretical level. On 26 June 1509, Giles of Viterbo wrote to Brother Federicus of Perugia to settle the controversy in Perugia between the Augustinians and the Franciscans, and if needed, to expel the Augustinians involved.¹⁵ Convents, patronage, and privileges were at stake,¹⁶ and Brother Martin Luther was squarely involved as well, as seen in the Franciscan Disputation at Wittenberg in 1519.¹⁷ If the Augustinians were going to make their claims to represent the highest form of Christian perfection in living the most perfect life stick, they needed to put their words into actions by living according to their ideals, as well as securing political support and protection. They needed to be the embodiment indeed of their leader, father,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 282–284.

¹⁵ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,278, p. 118.

¹⁶ See e.g. Gabriella Erdély, *The Register of a Convent Controversy (1517–1518). Pope Leo X, Cardinal Bakócz, the Augustinians, and the Observant Franciscans in Context*. *Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae* 1 (Budapest and Rome, 2006).

¹⁷ *WA* 59.606–697.

teacher, and head; they needed to be the true sons of Augustine, and they needed papal and princely privilege.

Not all members of the Order, however, grasped the importance of Jordan's definitions of the Augustinian life. Gregory of Rimini's *Register* clearly documents the lack of obedience, observance, and living up to the ideals of the Order in the wake of the Black Death.¹⁸ Reform of the Order was first and foremost reform of the individual. Friars needed to live up to the ideals. That many were not doing so is attested by the section on "The Religious" (*De religiosis*) in the *Biblical Figures* of the Augustinian hermit, Antonius Rampegolus (d. c. 1422). Rampegolus asserted that the three mendicant orders, the Franciscans, Dominicans, and the Augustinians, were related to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who survived the fiery furnace and to whom God gave the knowledge of understanding Chaldean. To the mendicant orders, God gave the understanding of the scriptures, and the friars were to teach the people God's truth. Yet here, Rampegolus asserted, he was not talking about all the friars, but only the perfect and the good, who truly lived the religious life. Such observant brothers should therefore be kept separate from the friars of depraved morals and life. This need for separation, articulated in the later fourteenth century, provided the foundation for the observant movement, which administratively separated reformed, truly observant congregations from the unreformed. The truly religious were the last hope for the Church, and such separation was institutionalized in the OESA beginning with the Congregation of Lecceto in 1387.¹⁹ Less than a century later, the Augustinian Conrad of Zenn was still arguing for the need for personal reform, strict adherence to the ideals of the Order in his *On the Monastic Life* (*Liber de vita monastica*).²⁰ By this time, though, the observance was well institutionalized,²¹ receiving privileges from dukes and princes, and becoming the basis for the territorial Reformation of the Princes. Throughout the fifteenth and on into the sixteenth century, reformation was constitutive of territorial princely politics.²² Thus on 24 January 1476,

¹⁸ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 315–344.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 594–618.

²⁰ See Hellmut Zschoch, *Klosterreform und monastische Spiritualität im 15. Jahrhundert. Conrad von Zenn, OESA (d. 1460) und sein Liber de vita monastica*, BhTh 75 (Tübingen, 1988); and Adolar Zumkeller, "Der *Liber de vita monastica* des Conradus de Zenn O.E.S.A. (d. 1460) und die Spiritualität der Spätmittelalterlichen *Observantia Regularis*." *Revista Agustiniana* 33/101 (1992), 921–938.

²¹ Cf. James D. Mixson and Bert Roest, eds., *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond* (Leiden, 2015).

²² See Manfred Schulze, *Fürsten und Reformation*, SuR.NR 2 (Tübingen, 1991).

Duke Wilhelm of Saxony wrote to the City Council of Gotha concerning their apparent leniency with respect to disobedient, unreformed members of the OESA Observance, and strongly exhorted the Council not to suffer such lack of obedience, precisely because Duke Wilhelm had undertaken the reformation of the Augustinian cloisters in his territories with great effort, which he did not want to be forgotten, nor that his efforts might come to naught. The Council was thus instructed to capture and punish those not conforming to the princely, territorial stipulations for reformation, which had been placed under the authority of the provincial prior of the OESA Observance, Andreas Proles.²³ Such efforts for reformation, on the part of the hermits themselves, culminated in Proles's successor, Johannes von Staupitz, and his *Constitutions* of 1504 "for the Reformation of Germany." Again, Staupitz's *Constitutions* did not forge new paths. The emphasis is on obedience and observance of the *Rule*, following the ideals of the Order, which had been the foundation of the Order's religious life since Giles of Rome, even before the first *Constitutions* of the Order had been formulated in Regensburg in 1290. Reformation was a program of religionization, attempting to ensure that members of the Order truly followed Augustine's religion and were thereby truly the sons of Augustine.

The need for new *Constitutions* for the observant congregation of Saxony was already expressed by Staupitz's predecessor, Simon Lindner. The Order's *Regensburg Constitutions* of 1290 were not available uniformly throughout the Order, and there were issues of coherence between the *Regensburg Constitutions*, the supplement thereto of Alexander of San Elpidio (1308), the *Additions* thereto of Thomas of Strassburg (1348), and various decrees of general chapters. The Italian observant congregations had already issued several sets of constitutions for the specific groups involved, and the German observants recognized the need for such as well.²⁴ As Staupitz put it in his prefatory letter to the members of the Saxon congregation, such constitutions were needed since the "venerable fathers, religious, and the brothers beloved of God are unsure which parts

²³ Herzog Wilhelm an den Rat in Gotha, Gesamtarchiv zu Weimar, in Th. Kolde, *Die deutsche Augustiner-Congregation und Johann von Staupitz. Ein Beitrag zur Ordens- und Reformationsgeschichte* (Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1879), IV, 10, pp. 426–427. For Proles, and late medieval Observant reform in general, see Ralph Weinbrenner, *Klosterreform im 15. Jahrhundert zwischen Ideal und Praxis. Der Augustinereremit Andreas Proles (1429–1503) und die privilegierte Observanz*, SuR.NR 7 (Tübingen, 1996).

²⁴ *Const. ref. Al.*, pp. 123–139.

of the *Constitutions* of our Order are to be observed by them, and which can be omitted.²⁵

The new *Constitutions* followed by and large the content of the *Regensburg Constitutions*, while incorporating the *Additions* and clarifying specific points.²⁶ As the original *Constitutions* of the Order, Staupitz's new version consisted of fifty-one chapters, beginning with the celebration of matins:

On hearing the first bell (*signo*), all brothers quickly rise for matins, and fortifying themselves with the sign of the cross, go to the church with the proper demeanor. Before going in, they sprinkle themselves with holy water, and after entering the church, they bow deeply and reverently before the main altar. Then they proceed to stand in their assigned place. And this same manner of entering is to be followed for all the divine offices ... During the service, the cantors, whom we wish to be obeyed in all respects without any opposition, let the brothers know when to rise to sing the responses.²⁷

The district vicar was responsible for ensuring that the divine office was properly celebrated,²⁸ and ordained brothers who did not know how to read, should be taught, otherwise they were deprived of their clerical tonsure and their vote in chapter.²⁹ Lay brothers, on the other hand, could simply say an "Our Father" for their divine hours.³⁰

After matins, chapter was celebrated, with the brothers entering two by two and bowing to the cross before taking their places. Chapter was the time for the brothers to confess their sins publicly, and to bring to the chapter negligent brothers who had not emended their errant ways. Sometimes a sermon would be given, with the brother preaching genuflecting before the prior to receive the prior's blessing.³¹ Brothers must not be late to chapter, nor to prayers or meals, without the prior's permission,

²⁵ *Dudum desiderastis determinari ad unum, reverendi ac venerabiles patres, religiosi et deo dilecti fratres, necivistis enim, quid de constitutionibus ordinis servandum vobis esset quidve dimittendum. Const. ref. Al. 1, p. 149,9–11.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

²⁷ *Audito primo signo, ad matutinas festinent surgere omnes fratres et, munientes se signo crucis, honeste ac debite atque compositae adeuntes ecclesiam. Antequam ingrediantur, aqua benedicta se aspergant, et ingressi inclinent ante maius altare profunde et reverenter. Postea vadant stare in locis suis ordinate. Et hic idem modus intrandi ad omnes horas alias servandus est ... In matutinis autem cantores moneant fratres surgere ad responsoria decantanda, quibus volumus in his et aliis ad eorum officium spectantibus sine contradictione aliqua oboediri. Const. ref. Al. 1, pp. 155,3–156,18.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 156,19–22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 157,34–36.

³⁰ *Const. ref. Al. 2, p. 158,4–40.*

³¹ *Const. ref. Al. 3, pp. 161,5–164,84; 4, pp. 165,4–166,42.*

and if a brother was late, he would be subject to punishment.³² Being late, however, was considered simply as a light offense (*levis culpa*), along with disturbing the peace in church, in the dormitory, or in the cells; reading or singing other than the prescribed text during the divine office; making fun of others; leaving the cloister without permission; sleeping in choir; not putting books or vestments back in their proper places after use; using vain or shameful words; being negligent in fulfilling your duties, and the like.³³ One had to learn how to hold one's tongue, for strict silence was to be observed in the choir, in the dormitory, in the cloister, in the refectory, and in one's private room, except in case of need, such as for the master of novices.³⁴ Breaking the rules of silence was considered a serious offense (*gravis culpa*), as was arguing in the presence of seculars; fighting with other brothers within the cloister or without; lying; sowing discord among the brothers; speaking with a woman in private other than when hearing confessions; breaking imposed fasts and other similar infractions.³⁵ For such, three days of discipline within the chapter and three days of fasting were imposed, and if one complained about the penalty, another day would be added.³⁶ An even more serious offense (*gravior culpa*) was contumaciousness and manifest rebellion against one's prior, remaining disobedient, and all mortal sin. Such offenses must be confessed publicly in chapter, and if one were found guilty, one must rise and remove his habit for as long as the prior deemed needed; he was not allowed to eat at the common table, but must sit on the ground, eating only coarse bread and water; he was not to receive the kiss of peace or hold offices within the cloister until he was reconciled with the prior and his brothers, and had served sufficient punishment.³⁷ If one committing such a grave offense was not repentant, but remains incorrigible, he commits thereby the most serious offense, and is cast out of the Order. Having been thus dismissed, he cannot return unless he submit to the discipline of the Order and serve a prison term of at least two months.³⁸

The responsibility for enforcing such obedience and discipline was that of the prior and then the provincial vicar. Visitations were stipulated once a year for each cloister of the congregation. The appointed visitors were to

³² *Const. ref. Al* 5, p. 167,5–27.

³³ *Const. ref. Al* 47, pp. 307,3–308,34.

³⁴ *Const. ref. Al* 11, pp. 179,5–180,45.

³⁵ *Const. ref. Al* 48, p. 309,3–19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310,20–27.

³⁷ *Const. ref. Al* 49, pp. 311,3–312,45.

³⁸ *Const. ref. Al* 50, pp. 313,3–314,44.

spend three days examining the practice of the given cloister, investigating how sick brothers were cared for, how novices were instructed, the quality of the food, whether fasts were observed, whether silence was maintained, how the cloister dealt with brothers' associations with women, whether brothers retain their own property, proper attendance at chapter, whether daily mass is neglected, whether the prior is caring, whether the church is clean and the holy office is properly celebrated, and whether the dormitory, infirmary, and physical plant are well provided for, correcting lapses and negligence. Problems were to be reported to the vicar general, who was responsible for addressing such concerns that the visitators themselves could not.³⁹ If the visitors found conditions at a given monastery too serious indeed, such as a brother instigating schism, rebellion against the prior, revealing the secrets of chapter to non-members, committing serious offenses, and causing scandals, the visitors were to denounce those guilty of such to the vicar and could recommend that the offending brother(s) be relocated.⁴⁰

The *Constitutions* themselves do not address the issue of reformation as such. Reformation was simply adherence to the rules and stipulations set forth in the *Constitutions* and in St Augustine's *Rule*. In effect, the Observant congregations were supposed to be no more observant or obedient than were the conventual houses. There were no extra stipulations for the Observance. Observant houses were simply dedicated to the attempt to enforce the *Rule* and *Constitutions*, and when such were not being followed, to seek reformation of obedience and living the religious life. At issue was the religionization of the Order, for which force and privilege were needed. The Order in Staupitz's time, in Germany and in general, was not living up to its ideals, or even the basic rules and regulations, as the *Register* of the prior general, Giles of Viterbo, makes painfully clear. The *cantus firmus* of Giles's *Register* is the need for reformation, the call for reformation, and the attempts to introduce and ensure reformation. During his generalate, a reformation did indeed come about, or at least began to emerge, but that reformation was very different indeed from the one Giles had hoped for, and the one for which Giles spent so much of his time and energy fighting.

Giles of Viterbo was a well-known, beloved, and respected figure in his own day. In his funeral oration for Giles, Lorenzo Grana, Canon of the Lateran and Bishop of Segni, claimed:

³⁹ *Const. ref. Al.* 34–35, pp. 255,4–261,68.

⁴⁰ *Const. ref. Al.* 34, pp. 256,34–257,40.

Very rightly in every state, commonwealth, empire, and especially in those of our religious orders, the perpetual and abiding memory is cherished of those who through their spiritual and intellectual gifts have shone forth brilliantly by their skill in letters, scholarship, and language. Those who have combined honor, probity, and holiness with great learning and eloquence, who have behaved humanely, liberally, and generously toward all good men, who through their personal virtue have been held dear by kings, peoples, and nations, opening the way for themselves to the highest honors, who have not hesitated to put their life in serious danger for the liberty and safety of all, who throughout whole days and nights have poured over, preserved, and preached the law of the Lord, then Cardinal Giles, in whom we beheld all these virtues gathered together in one man, will be venerated by all posterity, and cherished eternally.⁴¹

Funeral orations in general were, and often still are, occasions for hyperbole and demonstrating rhetorical eloquence in the grand style, yet Bishop Grana hit on most of the points that scholars today still see as having been embodied in Giles. He, like his contemporary Thomas More, was a “man for all seasons.”⁴²

Giles was elected prior general of his Order two years after Staupitz’s *Constitutions* were issued, and reformation was still very clearly a major priority. In his famous opening address to the Fifth Lateran Council in 1512, Giles asserted that “the holy is not to be changed by humans, but humans by the holy.”⁴³ For Giles, this statement encapsulated reformation, and it was reformation that was central to Giles’s endeavors as prior general. It was also reformation in the Church at large, and the urgent need therefore, that Giles put before the Council fathers. Cupidity, heresy, raging against law, authority, and the majesty of the Church, force, rape, adultery, incest, and all sorts of evils were seeking to pervert the holy into the profane, attacking the ship of St Peter to the point that it was in danger of sinking beneath the waves.⁴⁴ It was quite a challenge Giles presented, and the Council responded, though not as foreseen by Giles.

⁴¹ Lorenzo Grana of Rome, *Funeral Oration for Cardinal Giles of Viterbo*, OESA, trans. in Francis X. Martin, *Friar, Reformer, and Renaissance Scholar. Life and Work of Giles of Viterbo, 1469–1532* (Villanova, 1992), pp. 191–201, p. 201.

⁴² In addition to Martin just cited, see also John W. O’Malley, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform. A Study in Renaissance Thought*, SMRT 5 (Leiden, 1968); and most recently Myriam Chiabò, Rocco Ronzani, and Angelo Maria Vitale, eds., *Egidio da Viterbo. Cardinale Agostiniano tra Roma e L’Europa del Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno Viterbo, 22–23 Settembre 2012, Roma, 26–28 Settembre 2012* (Rome, 2014).

⁴³ ... *quod homines per sacra immutari fas est, non sacra per homines* ... Giles of Viterbo, *Oratio Prima Synodi Lateranensis habita*, in *Egidio da Viterbo, Orazioni per il Concilio Lateranense V*, eds. Fabio Troncarelli, Giulia Troncarelli, and Maria Paola Saci (Rome, 2012), p. 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Four years later there was a movement amongst the Council fathers to go perhaps to the extreme of disbanding the mendicant orders all together as the greatest perpetrators of the problems, or at least to subject them once again to episcopal control. In such a situation, Giles, according to John O'Malley, had three options: he could allow the OESA "to be reformed directly by the papacy, as was *de facto* happening to the Franciscans ... hand over the reform to a particular observant congregation within the order, as the Dominicans were doing," or he "could undertake a reform which would be under the general and call for the cooperation of the whole body."⁴⁵ He chose the third option, though the reformation of the Order was an endeavor he had undertaken and a goal for which he had been striving from the moment he assumed his Order's highest office, if not before. Reformation was urgent, even before Giles had laid out his case to the Council in his opening address.

In a letter addressed to the provinces of the Order, dated 21 August 1508, Giles exhorted:

Our Lord Jesus Christ has warned us that it is wrong to break the commandments, whereas, he also teaches, anyone who keeps them enters into life. It follows that anyone who despises the commandments is hurrying toward death. Now a person who consents to the death of his brother is to be judged a murderer. We are resolved, then, to try every approach, and attempt whatever is within our power, to avert a death which would be both yours and ours.⁴⁶

Giles was moved, even compelled to fight for reformation because the lack thereof had dishonored religious life as such, and especially the Order's founding father, St Augustine:

What moves us to this resolution? The dishonor done to religious life and to our holy father Augustine moves us, for the misdeeds of an army are always attributed to its leader and commander, and a ruler who fails to correct the sins of evil men in his city is himself suspect of sin and evil-doing. We are moved too by public opinion, which thinks and speaks of us as the most degraded of men. The frequent quarrels between priests of our Order move us also, quarrels which spring from one source alone – our willingness to condone claims to private property in defiance of our law ... Another sight which moves us is the wretched poverty of the monasteries

⁴⁵ O'Malley, *Giles of Viterbo*, p. 157; see also Nelson H. Minnich, "Egidio Antonini da Viterbo, the Reform of Religious Orders, and the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517)." In Chiabò et al. eds., *Egidio da Viterbo*, pp. 217–267.

⁴⁶ Giles of Viterbo, *Circular Letter to the Provinces of the Order on the Common Life*, 21 August 1508; in Aeg. Ep. 156, pp. 267–269; 268, 3–8; trans. in Martin, *Friar, Reformer*, p. 384.

... When each person looks after his own interests he neglects the common good; exclusive concentration on one's own affairs always tends to the detriment of the public weal. Finally it is the decline of sacred studies and the arts which moves us ... Such, then, are our motives ...⁴⁷

The common life was to be the foundation of reformation, which was so dearly needed. Holy religion, living the life as established by Augustine, was Giles's life blood, and this he strove to instill in his Order:

With the Lord's help we shall expend all our labor, zeal, and loving care to bring this about. Calling God to witness, therefore, together with the Blessed Virgin, our holy father Augustine, all the angels and saints and all humankind, we command you, the prior, in virtue of holy obedience, on pain of being adjudged a rebel and deprived of your office, that in this your monastery or province you establish the common life in such a way that, as ordained in the Rule, nothing whatever shall be called anyone's own, but everything held in common among you. To the brethren, of whatever rank or status, we command, under the same penalties and also on pain of being stripped of their degrees if they hold any, or of suspension from the priesthood if they hold no degree, that as soon as they have heard our injunction in this present letter and the command of our father Augustine, they give up everything and within the space of three days free themselves for the unconditional observance of the three vows. Let them take care to live in the future in a way conducive to their salvation, of which they seemed to be unmindful when they neglected their vows. We do not rely on our own judgment in issuing these commands, but act in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. If there be any who will not listen, we shall not tolerate them; but we shall embrace as sons and brothers those who obey.⁴⁸

We do not know Brother Martin's response to this letter, nor that of his provincial vicar, Staupitz, for that matter, but such was the view and orders of the prior general when Brother Martin was a newly established lector in his Order's cloister in Erfurt.

There are 2,265 entries in Giles's *Register*. A few entries give evidence of Giles's efforts as prior general. He worked hard. On 23 August 1514, Giles was still doing business at 11:00 p.m., receiving "most humanely" Master Deodatus of Siena.⁴⁹ On 14 September 1514, Giles noted that at 4:00 p.m. he left Cyminia for Nespesum, where he arrived at 11:00 p.m.⁵⁰ He spent the entire next day traveling on horse to Baccano, arriving in the evening

⁴⁷ Aeg. Ep. 156, pp. 268,10–269,37; trans. in Martin, *Friar, Reformer*, pp. 384–385.

⁴⁸ Aeg. Ep. 156, p. 269,38–60; trans. in Martin, *Friar, Reformer*, p. 385.

⁴⁹ Aeg. Vit. Reg. 2,134, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Aeg. Vit. Reg. 2,157, p. 69.

“with great suffering.”⁵¹ On 24 April 1515, he again was still at work in Siena at 11:00 p.m.,⁵² and on 29 April 1515, he was in Florence, working with the cloister of San Gallo to instigate reformation before returning to Santo Spirito at 9:00 p.m.⁵³ The following day he left Florence for Scarparia, where he spent the night, before arriving in Bologna at noon on 2 May.⁵⁴ On 12 May 1515, Giles was in Rimini, preaching a sermon on peace, and then from 15 to 17 May he preached for three days in Pisa.⁵⁵ While such entries are very sporadic in his *Register*, they do give insight into his daily life, which he spent dealing with issues of reformation in the Order, preaching, and traveling.

Reformation was the major theme Giles dealt with as prior general. The majority of entries in his *Register* concern introducing reformation in a given cloister or province. Giles placed the responsibility of reformation on priors, provincials, and individual masters, while also taking personal responsibility. Thus on 10 March 1509, Giles wrote to Master Simon of Cittaducale and Master John Paulo of Patavine entrusting them with the responsibility for the reformation of their respective cloisters, ensuring the common life. On the same day he also wrote to Master Gregory, the prior at Naples, and to Master Anthony of the province of Cologne that they would oversee the efforts of reform in their respective locations.⁵⁶ On 31 March 1509, Giles wrote to the prior of the cloister in Milan, instructing him to “compel all to reformation.”⁵⁷ On 2 June 1509, Giles wrote to the newly installed provincial of the March of Ancona instructing him to institute reformation.⁵⁸ Giles likewise himself wrote letters exhorting reformation. Thus on 18 July 1516, Giles sent “letters of reformation” to the Province of Sardinia and the following day sent “letters of reformation” to the cloister in Castrum Plebis.⁵⁹ The situation throughout the Order was

⁵¹ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,158, p. 70.

⁵² Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,370, p. 119.

⁵³ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,375, p. 119.

⁵⁴ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,376, p. 129; 2,377–2,378, p. 120.

⁵⁵ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,388, 2,390–391, p. 122.

⁵⁶ *Magistro Simoni de Civitate Ducali ut reformationis incumberet et vite communi, quam omnino et integre servari faceret ... Magistro Gregorio priori Neapolitano ut modum vite communi quem institutum exequi faceret ... Magistro Iohanni Paulo Patavino, ut reformationi incumberet totus ... Magistro Antonio Consilii provincie Colonie hortamur ad reformationem ...* Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,162, p. 82; cf. Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,227, p. 99.

⁵⁷ *Ad priorem Mediolanensem ut compelleret omnes ad reformationem ...* Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,188, p. 89.

⁵⁸ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,252, p. 108; cf. *Reg.* 1,227, p. 99.

⁵⁹ *Dantur littere reformationis ad universam provinciam Sardiniae ...* Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,500, p. 156; *Dedimus litteras reformationis ad conventum nostrum de Castro Plebis ...* Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,503, p. 157.

dire, for as Giles wrote to his hermits in Siena, urging them again to reformation, the entire Order was threatened with ruin.⁶⁰

Reformation, for Giles, consisted of following Augustine's *Rule* and the Order's *Constitutions*, based primarily on living the common life. Thus on 27 October 1515, Giles confirmed the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of Castella (Spain), and the election of Brother Francis de la Parra as provincial, instructing Brother Francis to "urge his brothers to the obedience of religion and the observance of the Constitutions."⁶¹ Two weeks previous, Giles had written to the convent at Campania that it "should adhere to the reformation and the common life."⁶² Already in 1508, in his circular letter already quoted of 21 August, Giles commanded the priors of the Order, under the threat of losing their office, with God, the blessed Virgin, our divine Father Augustine, and all saints, angels, and human beings as witness, "that you establish in your monastery or province the common life just as is commanded in the Rule."⁶³ In an undated letter confirming the election of an unidentified provincial prior and the acts of the provincial chapter, Giles detailed the prior's responsibilities in eight points, which he considered to have constituted reformation: the prior was to ensure (1) weekly confessions of the brothers and the solemn celebration of mass and the divine office; (2) silence in the dormitory, refectory, choir and during public prayers; (3) proper care for the habits and vestments of the brothers, so that they might be clearly distinct from seculars; (4) the proper use of acquired goods; (5) that no one receive the title of master or bachelor without a letter of confirmation from the prior general; (6) that no brother or cloister should have dealings or relations with anyone who is under suspicion of evil doings; (7) that no one should be promoted to the priesthood or other holy orders without being of legally permissible age and having made public solemn profession; and (8) that each month the provincial write to Giles to report on the state of reformation in the province, detailing what has been done, and what yet needs to be done.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Patres Senenses ad reformationem novis litteris hortamur, tanquam eos qui soli in toto ordine ruinam minantur* ... Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,414, p. 133.

⁶¹ *Confirmamus fratrem Franciscum de la Parra provincialem electum in provincia Castellae, ac etiam acta capituli moventes precipientesque ut fratres cogat suos ad religionis obedientiam et constitutionum observationem.* Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,47, p. 147.

⁶² *Scriptissimus ad conventum Campanae, ut reformationi hereat et comuni vitae.* Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,469, p. 145.

⁶³ *Tibi igitur priori mandamus in meritum sanctae obedientiae et sub poena rebellionis et officii tui priuationis, atque Deo, beata Virgine, Diuo Patre Augustino, santisque omnibus et angelis et hominibus in testimonium uocatis praeicimus, ut in monasterio uel prouincia ista tua uitam communem instituas, ita ut sicut in regula praeceptum est.* Aeg.Vit. Ep. 156, p. 269,44–49.

⁶⁴ Aeg.Vit. Ep. 163, pp. 275,2–276,60.

Giles had already set forth his program for reformation from the very beginning of his assuming leadership of the Order at the general chapter at Naples when he was elected as prior general in May 1507; Giles asserted thirty decrees, which were confirmed by the general chapter, though no original copy of these decrees has survived.⁶⁵

His precepts and exhortations, though, were not always followed in practice. On 30 October 1509, Giles instructed the visitors of the Province of Toulouse to visit the cloister in Geaune for none of the brothers there, including the prior, gave any evidence of religion or reformation.⁶⁶

On 7 December 1509, Giles had to deal with Brother Michael of Milan who had committed murder and thus was condemned to prison,⁶⁷ and on 28 February 1510, Giles commanded the prior of the cloister in Siena to imprison Brother Philipp for what he had stolen.⁶⁸ On 4 November 1514, Giles instructed the convent of Isclano to expel Brother Paschal unless he finally learned to live honestly.⁶⁹ At times extra force was needed, as for the case of Brother Aegidius of Castellinis, which Giles entrusted to Master Stephen Zoalio; Brother Aegidius was to be forced to return to the Order and make satisfaction, and Master Stephen could if needed bring in secular authorities to help.⁷⁰ Brother Nicholas, prior of the convent in Pavia, was likewise given the authority by Giles to use the secular arm to enforce discipline on 3 June 1515.⁷¹ Masters Pierre Gervais and Antoine Pulcher, visitors to the French Province, were given the authority by Giles in his letter of 24 September 1511 to use secular force as well to ensure reformation, and were to send Giles frequent and detailed reports on the progress.⁷²

Giles took a very personal interest in his Order's reformation and its progress. On 14 September 1509, Giles wrote to the provincial of Pescara, ordering him to compel Brother Dominic of San Angelo to travel to meet with Giles within fifteen days, and if he didn't comply, he would be deprived of his vote in chapter, his religious and academic degrees, and would be suspended from saying mass and participating in the divine office.⁷³ Giles was concerned for the Order and how best to deal with all

⁶⁵ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,26, pp. 30–34; 33; *Ep.* Introduction, p. 24.

⁶⁶ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,402, p. 152.

⁶⁷ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,441, p. 163.

⁶⁸ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,524, p. 183; 1,526, p. 184; cf. 1,461, p. 168.

⁶⁹ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 2,200, p. 79.

⁷⁰ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 2,38, p. 37.

⁷¹ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 2,409, p. 131.

⁷² *Aeg. Vit. Ep.* 191, pp. 320–321.

⁷³ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,359, p. 140.

the problems and the lack of observance. Thus early in his generalate, on 11 March 1509, he asked for a copy of the *Register* of his predecessor, Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358),⁷⁴ who had to deal with similar issues, to the point that I have elsewhere referred to Gregory as the founder of the Augustinian observant movement.⁷⁵ One hundred and fifty years after Gregory had tried with all he had to bring about the reformation of the Order, though “reformation” was not a word Gregory used, Giles was still faced with many of the same problems.

This did not, however, mean that there were no bright spots. On 4 January 1515, Giles wrote to Master Angelo, praising him for how well he was governing the cloister in Perugia.⁷⁶ On 22 July of the same year, Giles likewise praised Master Sigismund, the prior of the convent in Rome, for vigorously (*magno animo*) instituting reformation there.⁷⁷ Giles deeply cared for his brothers, and was open to their individual needs. Thus on 11 July 1508, Giles gave permission to Brother Clemens of Carpi to refrain from eating meat, and no one should dare force him to do so.⁷⁸ On 28 October 1515, Giles gave permission for “one of the brothers of our religion” to find a place where he could live alone as a hermit.⁷⁹ Brother Jerome of Spilembergo received permission from Giles on 13 February 1515 to receive a “leave of absence” to care for his mother.⁸⁰ Brother Francisco de Andria was excused by Giles on 19 April 1515 from the usual daily routine of the Order on account of his age,⁸¹ as was the previous year Brother John of Milan, who was not to be forced to participate in night offices or in masses.⁸² On 27 May 1515, Giles allowed the nephew of Brother Benedict of Verona to be accepted into the Order, if the brothers agreed, even though he was under the age of 10.⁸³ No reason for the dispensation is given, but we cannot rule out the possibility that Brother Benedict’s nephew had been orphaned, and Giles was allowing Brother Benedict to care for his family, as he had Brother Jerome for his mother, and as he had done as well for Brother John on 18 June 1509 to take care of his parents.⁸⁴

⁷⁴ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,163, p. 83.

⁷⁵ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 325.

⁷⁶ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,262, p. 93.

⁷⁷ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,423, p. 136.

⁷⁸ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,114, p. 66.

⁷⁹ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,472, p. 147.

⁸⁰ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,303, p. 104.

⁸¹ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,365, p. 117.

⁸² Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,198, p. 79; dated 2 November 1514.

⁸³ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 2,401, p. 125.

⁸⁴ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,269, p. 114.

One of Giles's major concerns, and a major plank in his reformation platform, was education. Lectors, bachelors, and masters were central for the Order's progress, but they had to be worthy. On 28 October 1509, Giles wrote to confirm Brother Sifridus de Spira as provincial of the Renisch-Swabian Province, designating him as a lector, to reform the province, and confirmed as well graduates if they have been found worthy "in a rigorous exam."⁸⁵ On 8 January 1515, Giles warned Brother Gaspar, prior of the monastery in Perpiniani, to stop using the title of master, which he had usurped, or he would face punishment.⁸⁶ Giles's *Register* often indicates that he confirms a given brother in the office of lector, or in the degree of bachelor or master. Thus on 27 May 1515, Giles confirmed fourteen friars "in the dignity of the magisterium."⁸⁷ On 2 June of the same year, Giles licensed eight brothers, who had been examined by three brothers, as lectors who were previously cursors.⁸⁸ The following day Giles "created" Brother Ambrose de Bruna from the Bavarian Province, previously a lector, as a formed bachelor (*bachalarius formatus*), and made Brother Matthew of Genoa a "formed lector" (*lector formatus*).⁸⁹ Academic study, for Giles, was one of the means to combat the collapse of religion he saw all around him, as he wrote to Master Paulo da Genazzano, regent master of studies in the Augustinian cloister in Naples on 24 July 1506. Therefore Master Paulo was to ensure a rigorous and strenuous program of studies, of reading, of lecturing, of disputing, of questioning, which must never be relaxed, and must never cease, for the forming of young minds.⁹⁰ The same letter, as he noted in a postscript, Giles also sent to the convent in Paris.⁹¹ A religious life of discipline, virtue, and good morals, combined with education and knowledge, formed the foundation of Giles's platform for the reformation of the Order, for, as he wrote to

⁸⁵ Aeg. Vit. *Reg.* 1,400, p. 152.

⁸⁶ Aeg. Vit. *Reg.* 2,266, p. 94.

⁸⁷ Aeg. Vit. *Reg.* 2,402, pp. 125–126.

⁸⁸ Aeg. Vit. *Reg.* 2,409, p. 130.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁹⁰ *Studioso namque homini nihil studiis carius nihil prorsus antiquius esse potest. Siqua nobis in hac rerum acerbitate consolatio superest, ea plane est quod cum diuini cultus et collapsae prope religionis reparatione sacrarum litterarum studiis quam maxime fieri poterit consultum iri speramus ... Age igitur tu, cuius non uulgaria studia claraque rudimenta mortales in spem magnam adduxerunt. Depone curas omnes, alia omnia relinque, dede, da, dca animum mentemque prorsus omnem huic uni rei, ut egregius, ut summus, ut admirabilis, tua in academia appareas. Colledge bonos iuuenum animos, lege, disputa, lectitare, disputare, manum horis omnibus conserere iube. Semper insta, semper roga, semper quaere, numquam relaxare a studiosis conflictibus animi, numquam cessare, numquam receptui cani patiari. Omnia demum age quae sgtrenuum imperatorem in erudiendo, luctando, disponendo armisque exercendo exercitu, decere existimabis.* Aeg. Vit. *Ep.* 15, pp. 91,3–92,37.

⁹¹ *Easdem litteras scripsimus conuentui Parisino et adiecimus pauca quae sequuntur.* *Ibid.*, p. 93,49–50.

the cloister in Padua on 24 February 1507, “ignorance is the commander (*comes*) of sin.”⁹² Though Giles did not use the term reformation in this particular letter, he asserted in an undated letter conferring the master’s degree that “religion without learned masters is as heaven without stars.”⁹³ On 15 June 1516, Giles wrote to confirm the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Province of Hungary, commanding the provincial to abide by the Acts and to undertake the reformation of the province, and to establish a *studium* for the province.⁹⁴ Learning and education were part and parcel of reformation. Hence perhaps Giles’s expressions of such exuberance and joy on 2 August 1508 at the discovery of books and letters of Hugolino of Orvieto, prior general of the Order from 1368 to his death in 1371, in the cloister’s library in Orvieto, which gave a clear account of the Order’s history.⁹⁵ As already noted, Augustine held a place of special importance in the Order for Giles, and on 6 July 1515, Giles wrote to Master Ambrose of Naples, a true supporter of reformation, to give him the task of composing an index of Augustine’s works (*tabula Augustini*), though such an index, if it had been composed, is no longer extant.⁹⁶ Augustine, for Giles, was the standard of the Order, which was comprised of Augustine’s true sons, as had been the case since the early fourteenth century, if not before, as Giles wrote to the vicar of the Spanish congregation of Augustinians in an undated letter, though one most likely written in 1507 or 1508. Augustine, Giles reminded the vicar,

stood out as an unconquered defender of the Christian faith. He was by far the most learned of all learned men, and on account of the threefold light of his teaching he has with good reason been compared to the morning star, to the full moon, and to the very source of light, the sun. He taught his family and posterity so faithfully to reflect this great light that, so far from the darkness of night engulfing it, not even a hint of darkness should ever be found among them.⁹⁷

⁹² ... *ignorantia est peccati comes*. Aeg.Vit. Ep. 52, p. 133,6. See this entire letter for Giles’s exhortation to pursue discipline, virtue, and knowledge, though Giles did not refer to reformation in this particular letter.

⁹³ *Si deessent in ordine docti uiri, deessent qui tuerentur, qui illustrarent, qui ipsam propagarent religionem, et talis esset religio sine eruditris magistris sicut caelum sine sideribus*. Aeg.Vit. Ep. 222, p. 343,2–4.

⁹⁴ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,478, p. 149.

⁹⁵ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 1,118, pp. 67–68. Giles’s report though does not give any more information on the Order’s origins and history than was readily available in Jordan of Quedlinburg’s *Liber Vitasfratrum*, which Giles, one would assume, surely knew. Precisely what books of Hugolino were discovered however are not mentioned by Giles.

⁹⁶ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,419, p. 134.

⁹⁷ Aeg.Vit. Ep. 91, p. 191,2–8; trans. in Martin, *Giles of Viterbo*, p. 367.

Giles needed to write because the Spanish Augustinians “have spurned us, dashed our high hopes, and played false to our trust in a way we could have never anticipated. You write me letters which Saint Augustine would hardly expect from his enemies, let alone from his sons.”⁹⁸ Giles did not explicitly exhort the Spanish Augustinians to reformation, but this letter exemplifies the problems Giles faced and the urgent need of reformation that is so clearly present throughout his letters and throughout his *Register*.

St Augustine and the religious life he established, or the religious life that created itself as the religious life Augustine established,⁹⁹ was the model, or as Jordan of Quedlinburg had put it, Augustine was the rule and exemplar for the Order's religion.¹⁰⁰ This Giles followed as well. This was the ideal. It was often though not the reality in practice. Living the Augustinian life was a process and a constant struggle, on the individual level as well as for the Order as such. Reformation was needed, urgently needed, in the early years of the sixteenth century, as it had been throughout the later Middle Ages, but for Giles, as well as for Staupitz, reformation was truly following the *Rule* of Augustine and the Order's *Constitutions*, it was truly living the Augustinian life as Augustine's true sons and heirs. The program of reformation Giles strove to instill was one based on religionization, on the means and structures provided for living the Augustinian life, which in its essentials had already been laid out in the platform set by Giles of Rome in the late thirteenth century. Such a life, though, did not guarantee entry into heaven. This was not works righteousness, as the Augustinian theologians from Giles of Rome on knew so clearly. Grace was the foundation of living the Augustinian life. The religious life as a member of a religious order provided one the opportunity of living a life of greater perfection, of greater holiness, than was possible for the laity, based on the ontology of the hierarchy of Being, as Augustine of Ancona explained the degrees of Christian perfection in his *Comprehensive Treatment of Ecclesiastical Power* (*Summa de potestate ecclesiastica*).¹⁰¹ Justification was not at issue, for each Christian, in whatever state one was in, still faced the issue of justification for him or herself based on how they lived the life of their status. James of Viterbo explicitly addressed the question of whether the religious were more holy than the laity, and the answer he gave was that, as a state of being, yes, the religious

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 191,13–17; trans. in Martin, *Giles of Viterbo*, p. 367.

⁹⁹ See Saak, *Creating Augustine*, pp. 195–221.

¹⁰⁰ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 187–188.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–156.

state was more holy, more perfect, but a layman who lived his or her life as intended, was more perfect than was the religious who was negligent, who did not fulfill his obligation, who did not sufficiently follow his religion.¹⁰² For Giles, if the Order could indeed bring about reformation, everything else would fall into place, for as Giles preached to the Council Fathers at the Lateran, the holy must not be changed by men, but men must be changed by the holy. In Giles's times, men, at least those comprising his Order, had not been sufficiently changed by religion, and that was the problem, that was the cause of the need for reformation, and that is what Giles strove to achieve. In this context too, Giles's efforts to effect reformation, to bring about reformation, failed. Reformation was still to come. It was still something to be achieved. There was no greater symbol of that failure, and the failure of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages in general, than one of Giles's own, an observant German friar from Saxony, Brother Martin Luther.

Luther's Religionization

Giles's *Register* and his *Letters to the Order* reveal the state of the Order Luther was entering when he knocked on the door of the cloister in Erfurt in 1505. He was to become an observant Augustinian hermit, embodying the most perfect life of his Order, although this did not mean, as we have just seen, that all members of the Order lived the most perfect life most perfectly. Reformation for the Order was the continual struggle to religionize its members, not all of whom were obedient, consciously or otherwise. Years later, Giles reportedly commented in a letter to Cardinal Attanagio da Corneto, who had brought up the monstrosity that Luther had become, that had he, Luther, "truly been one of us, he would have stayed with us."¹⁰³ This is one of the only comments or mentions of Luther found in Giles's *Letters* and *Register*. In 1508, Giles had mentioned Luther as one of six lectors in Erfurt, together with Doctors Johannes von Paltz and Johannes Nathin, and prior Winand of Ditenhofen.¹⁰⁴ Though Giles had not, most likely, met Luther in 1510, as Giles refused to receive the

¹⁰² James of Viterbo, *Quodlibet III*, q. 24; James of Viterbo, *Disputationes de quolibet*, ed. E. Ypma, 4 vols. (Würzburg, 1968–75), vol. III, pp. 233–238; 237, 142–155. On James, see E.L. Saak, "The Life and Works of James of Viterbo, OESA."

¹⁰³ *Refuerendissime Domine, si fuisset ex nostris, mansisset nobiscum*. As cited by Clare O'Reilly, in *Giles of Viterbo, Letters as Augustinian General, 1506–1517* (Rome, 1992), p. 34. O'Reilly cited this from D.A. Gondolfo's *Additione al dispaccio istorico* (Mantua, 1695), and does not give a text of the letter. I have not been able to locate a copy of this work to verify the reference.

¹⁰⁴ Aeg.Vit., *Reg.* 1.99, p. 62.

delegation from Germany,¹⁰⁵ in some way Luther returned having been converted to Staupitz's reform efforts to combine the observant and conventual branches of the Order in Saxony, a plan shared by Giles. Based on his *Letters* and *Register*, Giles took little notice indeed of his young straying sheep in Germany. He had bigger problems to deal with.¹⁰⁶ This is not to say, though, that Germany and the observant congregation of Saxony were not in Giles's sights. On 23 April 1509, Giles wrote to Staupitz, since he, Giles, was not able to come to Germany himself, exhorting him to govern peacefully and with holiness (*pacifice et sancte*).¹⁰⁷ On 22 July 1509, Giles confirmed Brother Jerome de Feltro as a bachelor of theology, and Brother John Little as lector, both of whom were from the province of Saxony.¹⁰⁸ On 3 February 1510, Giles confirmed permission for Brother Conrad of the Saxon province to return to his home cloister in Würzburg.¹⁰⁹ On 25 June of the same year, Giles confirmed Staupitz in his office of vicar of the observant congregation in Germany and as prior provincial of the Saxon province.¹¹⁰ On 3 February 1515, Giles appointed Master Hermann of Herford as the presider of the chapter meeting of the Saxon province.¹¹¹ Giles too was aware of problems north of the Alps. On 31 May 1516, Giles confirmed Brother Anthony as vicar of the Cologne province, exhorting him to lead the reformation of the province, and especially of his own monastery, for, as Giles had heard, "no vestige of religion remained."¹¹² The Cologne province had been a problem for a while. On 17 August 1493, Prior General Anselm of Montefalco commanded the provincial of Cologne to reform the convent in Ghent in keeping with the regular life, and to do so by Easter, otherwise he would entrust such reform to the vicar of the Saxon province.¹¹³ Giles was not oblivious to the problems, in Cologne or in Saxony. On 25 May 1510, Giles wrote to the fathers of the observant congregation of Germany, exhorting them to peace and love and not to make changes while their vicar, Staupitz, was

¹⁰⁵ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 1,811, p. 258. For the Saxon Congregation of the Augustinians, including the Observants, see Kunzelmann, *Die sächsische-thüringische Provinz und die Reformkongregation bis zum Untergang der beiden*.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Aeg.Vit. *Ep.*, Intro. pp. 32–34.

¹⁰⁷ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 1,210, p. 95.

¹⁰⁸ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 1,304, p. 126.

¹⁰⁹ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 1,499, p. 177.

¹¹⁰ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 1,644, p. 218.

¹¹¹ Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,293, p. 101.

¹¹² ... *ubi religionis nullum iam audivimus remansisse vestigium*. Aeg.Vit. Reg. 2,488, p. 151.

¹¹³ *Documents pour servir à l'histoire médiévale de la province austuinienne de Cologne. Extraits des registres des prieurs généraux (1357–1506)*, eds. Norbert Teeuwen and Albéric de Meijer (Héverlé-Louvain, 1961), nr. 1006, p. 289.

in Rome.¹¹⁴ On 16 October 1512, Giles had written to eleven provinces, including the province of Saxony-Thuringia, exhorting them to reformation for not all provinces had yet undertaken reformation, which was an urgent necessity.¹¹⁵ On 4 July 1516, Giles wrote to an unidentified province expressing the urgency of reformation as never before. Pope Leo X had sent Giles on a mission to Emperor Maximilian which was intended to help the mendicant cause in light of the increasing opposition to the mendicant orders at the Fifth Lateran Council. To preserve their privileges and independence, the Augustinians had to reform. This was not, as Giles put it, simply a matter of exhorting reformation; the Order was being compelled to undertake reformation. For Giles, this was war, and unless the Order reformed itself with a “most true and severe reformation,” the Order itself was in jeopardy.¹¹⁶ Six months later, in January of 1517, Giles wrote a letter to the entire Order, reporting on the developments of the Council. There was not much time. The Order was facing a major crisis: “the situation,” as Giles put it, “is at boiling point.”¹¹⁷ Later that same year, Brother Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses in Latin on indulgences, announcing a public debate at the University of Wittenberg. Perhaps Giles had been right. Perhaps Brother Martin had indeed never really been “one of us.” Perhaps Brother Martin had not been sufficiently “religionized” in the religion of his own Order.

Luther's Formation

With the crisis facing the Order, there is little wonder that Giles was not all that concerned with an academic disputation. Perhaps though he should have seen it coming. If Brother Martin had not joined the Order at the height of its religious observance, the same was true for the Order's academic prowess, despite Giles's emphasis on education. The new Augustinian school (*schola Augustiniana moderna*), according to Trapp, came to an end with John of Basel, when “the Schism destroyed

¹¹⁴ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,612, p. 209; cf. Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,644, p. 218, dated 25 June 1510, [note 1](#), where the fuller text of Giles's letter is given.

¹¹⁵ Aeg.Vit. *Reg.* 1,982, pp. 319–320.

¹¹⁶ *Nunc causa multo maior exhorta est, quae ad id negotium nos non adhortatur tantummodo, sed compellit. Nam Lateranensis synodus a Iulio coepta, a Leone X iam triennio tractata, ita nos angit, ita nobis bellum indixit, ut nisi reformatione uerissima seuerissimaque nos emendemus et Dei hominumque fauorem et auxilium imploremus, actum de priuilegiis, actum de libertate, actum de uniuersa religione iam sit.* Aeg.Vit. *Ep.* 232, p. 348,14–20.

¹¹⁷ *Feruent enim ita omnia ...* Aeg.Vit. *Ep.* 259, pp. 376,2–381,137; p. 381,119–120; trans. in Martin, *Giles of Viterbo*, p. 359.

academic standards at Paris.¹¹⁸ Already in 1326, the prior general, William of Cremona, had extended the initial period of probation in the Order by proclaiming that newly professed brothers should remain under the guidance of an older brother until they reached the age of 20, for the lack of sufficient formation was the greatest threat to the Order's religion.¹¹⁹ Brother Martin was 23 years old when he took his final vows, vowing obedience to God, to Mary, and to the prior general of the Order.¹²⁰ He no longer needed such continued guidance, at least technically. He began studying for the priesthood, for which, according to Giles, a brother needed to have been at least 22.¹²¹ Brother Martin, who was already a master of arts upon entering the Order, was ordained in 1507 at the age of 24. A year later Brother Martin was already a lector, as noted by Giles of Viterbo in his *Register*. The following year, Brother Martin was a bachelor of the Bible (*baccalaureus biblicus*), and three years later, at age 29, he became a master of theology, the highest degree attainable. He was now Brother Dr Martin Luther, although there is no extant letter of Giles confirming such, and Brother Martin took his vows as teacher of the Holy Scriptures very seriously indeed. Yet in comparison to the pre-Schism requirements and stipulations for the various levels of academic progress within the Order, Brother Martin's training was meager indeed.

In the pre-Schism Order, five years of study at a general school (*studium generale*) of the Order was required for the title of lector, conferred after examinations in logic, philosophy, and theology, as well as of the candidate's moral character.¹²² This was preceded by three years of philosophy study at a local school (*studium particulare*) of the Order, from which members already possessing the master of arts were exempt. After receiving the degree of lector, an Augustinian hermit was then required to spend three years teaching before being sent to one of the Order's general schools associated with a university to begin theological studies. Only after an additional five years of study at a general school would a candidate receive his first theological university degree, the bachelor of the Bible (*baccalaureus biblicus*). An additional two years of study was required before one read the *Sentences* as a bachelor of the *Sentences* (*baccalaureus Sententiarum*), and only four years thereafter could the candidate be presented to the Chancellor for promotion and inception as a master of

¹¹⁸ Damasus Trapp, "Hiltalinger's Augustinian Quotations." *Augustiniana* 4 (1954), 412–449, 424.

¹¹⁹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 372.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 635.

¹²¹ E.g. Aeg. Vit. *Reg.* 1,251, p. 108; 1, 200, p. 92; 1, 261, p. 112.

¹²² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 254, 376–377.

theology. Thus it took, at least by stipulation, sixteen years of study and lecturing, not counting the three years of teaching required between the lectorate and beginning university theological study, to become a master of theology.¹²³

Careers of the Augustinian masters of theology in the early fourteenth century seem to have adhered to this general pattern, though information on specific dates for many, if not most of the Augustinian *magistri*, are lacking. James of Viterbo, for example, entered the OESA around the age of 15. He received early education in Viterbo, before being sent to Paris to study in 1278, when he began studying for the lectorate. In 1283 he had completed the stipulated five-year course of study, and then returned to Viterbo to teach in the Order's *studium* there. He returned to Paris in 1285 and incepted as his Order's regent master in Paris in 1292, after Giles of Rome had been elected as the Order's prior general.¹²⁴ While James's course of study did not conform precisely to the statutes, he nevertheless spent twelve years studying theology in Paris, five for the lectorate and another seven for the master's. Thomas of Strassburg may have been a lector already when he represented the Rheno-Swabian province of the Order at the general chapter meeting in Venice in 1332. He read the *Sentences* in Paris 1335–7, and became master of theology in 1337, at least five years after his lectorate.¹²⁵ Gregory of Rimini, born c. 1300, studied in Paris from 1323 to 1329 and obtained the lectorate. He then taught in Bologna, Padua, and Perugia, before being sent back to Paris in 1341, when he gave his lectures on the *Sentences*, incepting then as regent master at Paris in 1345.¹²⁶ Though Gregory became a master of theology after only four years in Paris, he had previously spent five years in Paris studying for the lectorate and then taught for twelve years before continuing his theological studies. All we know for sure about Alfonsus Vargas, who read the *Sentences* at Paris directly after Gregory in 1344–5, is that he received the *magisterium* in 1347, three years after his lectures on the *Sentences*.¹²⁷ Hugolino of Orvieto studied logic and natural philosophy for three years in Orvieto before going to his Order's general school either in Rome or in Perugia to study theology during the years 1332–4. In 1334 the provincial chapter of the Roman province sent Hugolino to study in Paris during the years 1335–8. After passing his examinations in logic, philosophy,

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 376–377.

¹²⁴ Saak, "The Life and Works of James of Viterbo"; Saak, "James of Viterbo." *OGHRA* 3: 1201–1203.

¹²⁵ Saak, "Thomas of Strassburg." *OGHRA* 3: 1803–1805.

¹²⁶ Eckermann, "Gregory of Rimini." *OGHRA* 2: 1075–1077.

¹²⁷ Saak, "Alfonsus Vargas." *OGHRA* 2: 508–509.

and theology, he was promoted to the lectorate. In 1338 he was back in Orvieto, lecturing on the *Sentences* at his order's general school. At the general chapter in Milan in 1343, Hugolino was sent back to Paris to complete the reading of the *Sentences*, which probably took place in 1348–9. He remained a bachelor of theology (*Bachalarius praesentatus*) in Paris during the years 1351–2, though a petition was submitted to Pope Clement VI for Hugolino to be granted early promotion to the *magisterium*, which took place the end of August 1352.¹²⁸ Hugolino had spent six years studying for the lectorate, followed then by five years of teaching, before returning to Paris for another four years before his master's. Johannes Klenkok received his early education in Germany, though it is impossible to determine the precise location. He began theological studies, after his preparatory education, in 1349, becoming a lector in 1351. He then, most likely, was sent to Paris, where he received his bachelor's training and degrees, before moving to Oxford in 1354, reading the *Sentences* in 1356–7, and ascending to the *magisterium* in Oxford in 1359, eight years after his lectorate.¹²⁹ And we know John of Basel was studying theology at the general school of the Augustinians at the curia in Avignon in 1357, and then only was promoted to the *magisterium* fourteen years later in 1371.¹³⁰ In other words, even if the careers of the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Augustinians do not conform precisely to the Order's and the university's stipulations, the time spent studying theology at Paris, or Oxford, was extensive. Brother Martin, in comparison, was promoted to the lectorate the year after his ordination, and only two years after having taken his solemn vows in the Order. One year later he was a bachelor of the Bible, and three years thereafter a *magister*. Compared to his fourteenth-century confrères, Luther's theological training appears almost scandalous. According to the Statutes of the University of Paris of 1215, “no one shall lecture at Paris [*scil.* in Faculty of Theology] before his thirty-fifth year and unless he has studied for eight years at least ... and has attended lectures in theology for five years before he gives lectures himself publicly.”¹³¹ Luther began lecturing in the Theological Faculty at Wittenberg at the age of 29, after having “attended lectures in theology” for only three years.

¹²⁸ Eckermann, “Hugolino of Orvieto.” *OGHRA* 2: 1165–1167.

¹²⁹ Christopher Ocker, “Johannes Klenkok: A Friar's Life, c. 1310–1374.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 83/5 (1993), 19–33.

¹³⁰ Zumkeller, “Der Augustinertheologe Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel (d. 1392) Über Urstand, Erbsünde, Gnade und Verdienst.” *Analecta Augustiniana* 43 (1980), 57–162, 60; Venicio Marcolino, “John of Basel.” *OGHRA* 3: 1224–1225.

¹³¹ *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, I, 78–79; as cited and trans. in Lynn Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1944, 1975), pp. 27–30, 29.

Brother Martin, though, was not unique. His career as a theology student can almost be considered as representative of his age. As Berndt Hamm noted, all the leading Augustinian doctors of theology at Erfurt in the second half of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century entered the Order as masters of arts.¹³² Their theological training began simultaneously with their becoming Augustinians. Moreover, they did so in the midst of declining standards and the lowering of requirements in context of the endeavor to push “converts” quickly toward promotion.¹³³ Thus Johannes Dorsten received his doctorate in theology after only six years of study, and Johannes von Paltz was promoted to the *magisterium* after only two years. Brother Martin's own provincial prior, Johannes von Staupitz, received his master of arts in 1489 in Cologne. Between 1490 and 1495, Staupitz entered the OESA, and in 1497 was sent by the Order to Tübingen, receiving the degree of bachelor of the Bible (*baccalaureus biblicus*) in October 1498, and was bachelor of the *Sentences* (*baccalaureus Sententiarum*) less than three months later, beginning his lectures on the *Sentences* on 10 January 1499, ascending to the *magisterium*, as David Steinmetz noted, “in, one must say, a remarkably brief time,” by 6 July 1500.¹³⁴ Staupitz himself had only three years of theological study. Brother Andreas Hoffrichter of Münnerstadt took a bit longer, becoming lector, as noted by Giles of Viterbo, in 1509. He then was promoted to the *magisterium* under Brother Martin Luther in Wittenberg on 9 September 1515, six years after his lectorate,¹³⁵ but even here Brother Andreas had nowhere near the training and experience of his fourteenth-century confrères.

In the significant lessening of requirements for the doctorate in theology in the fifteenth century, what seems to have been a major step that was skipped in the Augustinian theologians' education was the stage of the lectorate, as seen in the careers of Dorsten, Paltz, and Staupitz. As Ypma noted, in the fifteenth century the office of lector itself ceased to be strictly an academic title and increasingly began to be conferred as an honorary reward for service.¹³⁶ The masters seemingly tried to fill the gap left by the lectorate, which had provided the learned core of the Order's teachers, by focusing more exclusively on pastoral, as distinct from speculative,

¹³² Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, p. 59.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Steinmetz, *Misericordia Dei*, p. 4; see also Adolar Zumkeller, “Johannes von Staupitz und die Klösterliche Reformbewegung.” *Analecta Augustiniana* 52 (1989), 22–49.

¹³⁵ *Aeg. Vit. Reg.* 1,258, p. 110.

¹³⁶ E. Ypma, “La promotion au Lectorat chez les Augustins et le De lectorie gradu d'Ambroise de Cora.” *Augustiniana* 25 (1975), 412–414.

theology, in keeping too with Hamm's identification of a late medieval *Frömmigkeitstheologie* in light of a rapid decline in traditional scholastic question literature.¹³⁷ Thus whereas in the fourteenth century Thomas of Strassburg, Hugolino of Orvieto, Johannes Klenkok, John of Basel, and Angelus Dobelinus produced surviving commentaries on all four books of Lombard's *Sentences*, from the fifteenth-century Augustinians only Jacques Le Grand and Augustinus Favaroni left extant works on all of Lombard. And while there remain extensive commentaries on the first, or first two books of Lombard from Gregory of Rimini and Alfonsus Vargas, in the fifteenth century only William Becchi commented on book 1 of the *Sentences*, though commentaries on book 4 are extant from Andreas de Saxonia, Gottschalk Hollen, and a Frater Nicholas,¹³⁸ pointing to a shift of interests from epistemological and soteriological questions to those concerning ecclesiology and the sacraments, suggested as well by the alternative title of Hollen's commentary as a *Treatise on the Sacraments* (*Tractatus de sacramentis*). One can only conclude that Trapp was right. Yet it was not only the scholastic scholarly standards of Paris that were victims of the Schism; scholarly scholastic standards in general fell by the wayside.

This, then, was the theological climate in which Luther was trained, one that was marked by the lack of theological rigor in general, and within the OESA in specific, reflected in the shift away from a focus on doctrine to a pastoral theology of piety and devotion. In this light, how do we evaluate Brother Martin's theological training? Was he immersed in the writings of his Order's theological *magistri*? Did he receive a specifically Augustinian theological training? Did he even know the theological traditions within his own Order? Did he even know the works of his own Order's founder? At least with respect to this last question, we can answer in the affirmative: Brother Martin did know the works of Augustine, or at least some of them, at least to some extent.

Luther and Augustine

"I defend Augustine not because I am an Augustinian," Brother Martin wrote to Georg Spalatin in October of 1516, "before I read his works, he did not mean anything to me."¹³⁹ We do not know when Brother Martin first read Augustine, but we do know that he was reading him in 1509, the

¹³⁷ Hamm, *Frömmigkeitstheologie*, p. 179.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *WABr* 1.70,19–21.

year he began his university theological studies as an Augustinian hermit. The earliest texts of Luther we have are his marginal notes on Augustine's *Minor Works (Opuscula)*, *On the Trinity (De trinitate)*, and *The City of God (De civitate dei)*. Luther's marginal notes on all these texts are rather sparse, and in no way approach a full commentary. They are, however, revealing of the texts he was reading, and give insight into his earliest theological perspectives, which included a fierce opposition to Aristotle, when he wrote in the margin of Augustine's *The City of God* 19, 4: "But I wonder all the more at those of our times who most impudently boast that Aristotle is not disharmonious with the catholic truth."¹⁴⁰ Even more revealing are his comments on Augustine's *On the Life and Customs of the Clergy (De vita et moribus clericorum; Aug. serm. 355)*. Here Brother Martin lashed out against Jacob Wimpfeling's assertion that Augustine had lived neither as a hermit nor as a canon, but was a secular priest and bishop, denying in particular the authenticity of the *Sermons to his Brothers in the Hermitage*.¹⁴¹ These two sermons had been part of the *Sermons to his Hermits (Sermones ad heremitas)*, as Luther referred to them, from the earliest collections of Jordan of Quedlinburg and Robert de Bardis, and had been foundational in the Order's creation of their own identity.¹⁴² Though these two sermons are authentic sermons of Augustine, Luther here was likewise defending his Order's claims of origins, exhibiting an adherence to the Order's mythic ideology. If in 1516 Luther could claim that Augustine had not meant anything to him before he began reading Augustine, Luther had begun reading Augustine at least as early as 1509 when he likewise displays an adherence to the Augustinian tradition over and above a direct reading of Augustine's works. This begs the question then of just how "Augustinian" was Luther anyway?

Brother Martin's early marginal notes on Augustine are found in a copy of Augustine's *Minor Works (Opuscula plurima)*, published by Martinus Flach in Strassburg in 1489. The volume contains thirty-four texts of Augustine and Possidius's *Life of St Augustine*.¹⁴³ Of these thirty-four texts, we find Luther's marginal glosses on fourteen, with those on the *Confessions* by far the most extensive. Twenty-two of the thirty-four texts are pseudo-Augustine writings, and of the fourteen texts Luther glossed, eight are pseudo-Augustine. He was, though, aware of the spurious nature

¹⁴⁰ *Sed multo mirior nostratium qui Aristotelem non dissonare catholice veritati impudentissime garriunt.* Matura, p. 645,16–17; WA 9.27,22–24.

¹⁴¹ Matura, pp. 217,15–219,1; WA 9.12,7–18, 16–18.

¹⁴² Saak, *Creating Augustine*, pp. 81–137.

¹⁴³ Matura, pp. 150–152; WA 9.4.

of some. Thus Brother Martin commented on *On the Cognition of the True Life* (*De cognitione verae vitae*): “This book is in no way from blessed Augustine, as is clear from the style and manner, since it is verbose”;¹⁴⁴ and to *On the Determinations of the Orthodox Faith* (*De diffinitionibus orthodoxae fidei*), Brother Martin noted: “this book is not blessed Augustine’s.”¹⁴⁵ Brother Martin however accepted the authenticity of *On the Spirit and the Soul* (*De spiritu et anima*) since “the same words and meanings Augustine placed in various authentic works of his,”¹⁴⁶ and though he did not gloss *A Letter On Faith to Peter* (*De fide ad Petrum*; the twentieth text in the *Opuscula*),¹⁴⁷ he did seem to accept the work as genuine in his marginal notes to Lombard’s *Sentences*.¹⁴⁸

With the exception of his marginalia to the *Confessions*, *On Christian Teaching*, and *On True Religion*, Brother Martin’s notes on the *Minor Works* are scant indeed, often simply a single comment, such as his detailing the organization of *On the Care of Those Dying* (*De cura agenda pro mortuis*) by noting questions, responses, corollaries, exempla, and the like.¹⁴⁹ Yet these notes do give evidence that Brother Martin was assiduously studying Augustine as he was beginning his theological studies in Erfurt, which is abundantly clear in his marginal notes to Augustine’s *On the Trinity* and *The City of God*, which Luther made in his copy of Johannes Amerbach’s edition of both texts of 1489.¹⁵⁰

A similar source erudition is found in Brother Martin’s marginalia to Lombard’s *Sentences*.¹⁵¹ Here we find an affinity with Augustine that goes beyond explicit knowledge of Augustine’s works. On the front fly-leaf of Brother Martin’s copy of Lombard,¹⁵² Luther claimed that “Augustine can never be praised enough,”¹⁵³ and in annotating the *Sentences* 1, dist. 9, Brother Martin asserted that “I would say that the father is not the father except from the son, or from filiation, unless blessed Augustine has

¹⁴⁴ *Hic liber nullo modo est beati Augustini utpatet ex stilo et modo quia verbosus est.* Matsura, p. 169,14–15; WA 9.6,10–11.

¹⁴⁵ ... *iste liber non esse b. Aug.* Matsura, p. 242,29; WA 9.14,29.

¹⁴⁶ *Ego credo eum librum sic esse b. Aug. Sicut liber sapientie Salomonis i.e. quod sunt verba et sententie eius hic collecte. Nam eadem verba et sensa ponit b. Aug. in variis suis libris.* Matsura, p. 239,7–9; WA 9.14,23–25.

¹⁴⁷ Matsura, p. 217,5–12.

¹⁴⁸ E.g. marg. *Sent.* I, dist. 27; Matsura, p. 350,11; WA 9.49,11–38.

¹⁴⁹ Matsura, pp. 160,4–168,25.

¹⁵⁰ Matsura, pp. 561–563; WA 9.15–27.

¹⁵¹ See Pekka Kärkkäinen, “Martin Luther.” In Philipp W. Rosemann, ed., *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2010), vol. II, pp. 471–494.

¹⁵² Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiarum libri IV* (Basel, 1489); see Matsura, pp. 251–254.

¹⁵³ ... *et nunquam satis laudato Augustino* ... Matsura, p. 258,5–6; WA 9.29,5–6.

said otherwise.”¹⁵⁴ Martin gave evidence of first-hand knowledge of eighteen works of Augustine, of which only two, *A Letter on Faith to Peter* and *On True and False Penitence*, are pseudo-Augustine, as can be seen in his providing chapter references to Augustine’s works cited by Lombard, whose *Sentences* were themselves in so many ways a compendium of Augustine. Thus, for example, glossing *Sent.* 2, dist. 9, c. 4, Brother Martin noted to Lombard’s *ut tradit autoritas*: “from Augustine book 15 *On the Trinity* chapter 23. I think, though, that Augustine stated as such in his *Confessions*,”¹⁵⁵ and to *Sent.* I, dist. 35, c. 5, whereas Lombard simply cited *Augustinus super Genesim*, Brother Martin noted: *5 c. 6 alii c. 18*.¹⁵⁶ Thus Luther exhibited a source erudition with respect to Augustine’s works, at least to some extent, of a kind that Damasus Trapp noted among the OESA’s late medieval new Augustinian school (*schola Augustiniana moderna*), filling in imprecise references in Lombard with specific citations. Also noteworthy is Brother Martin’s apparent increased knowledge of Augustine’s anti-Pelagian works. Of the eighteen works of Augustine Luther gives evidence of direct knowledge, either by citing or by including book and/or chapter references omitted by Lombard, three are anti-Pelagian works (*On the Predestination of the Saints*, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, and *On Corruption and Grace*). This contrasts with the absences of any genuine anti-Pelagian work in Brother Martin’s copy of Augustine’s *Minor Works*. This seeming shift to Augustine’s anti-Pelagian works is likewise evident in Brother Martin’s lectures on Romans, and we know that by October 1516 he had on his desk volume VIII of the Amerbach edition of Augustine’s *Complete Works* (*Opera omnia*), which contained the anti-Pelagian works.¹⁵⁷ Yet an emphasis on Augustine’s anti-Pelagian works is not evident in Brother Martin’s first biblical lectures in Wittenberg, his *Dictata super Psalterium* (1513–15).

From this we can establish that when Brother Martin began lecturing on the Bible at Wittenberg in 1513, he had already read rather intensively a number of Augustine’s works, but perhaps of even greater importance, he evidenced an adherence to the authority of Augustine not only as a Church Father, but also as the founder of his own Order, despite his claim to the contrary to Spalatin. This reverence for Augustine is clearly evident

¹⁵⁴ *Ego nisi aliter diceret b. Augustinus, Ego dicerem quod pater non est pater nisi ex filio siue filiatione.* Matura, p. 301,17–18; WA 9,38,28–29.

¹⁵⁵ *Aug. 15. tri. 23. puto autem quod in Confessionibus hanc dicit sententiam.* Matura, p. 426,13–14; WA 9,63,11–12.

¹⁵⁶ Matura, p. 382,3; WA 9,55,29.

¹⁵⁷ WABr 1.70,8–16.

in Brother Martin's very first lecture. Luther interpreted the "Blessed is the Man" (*Beatus vir*) of Psalm 1:1 as Augustine.¹⁵⁸ Yet Brother Martin's reliance on Augustine did not stop there. Augustine was the overwhelming authority for Luther for his entire *Dictata*. Whereas the names of Cassiodorus, Jerome, Bernard, and Lyra make occasional appearance, Augustine is cited 252 times. Perhaps not surprisingly, references to the *Exposition of the Psalms* (*Enarrationes in psalmos*) are by far the most frequent, though Brother Martin never cited the work by title, nor did he give explicit reference to the work, though on rare occasions he did mention the psalm Augustine was expositing.¹⁵⁹ The citations are never exact quotations (*pace* the editors of the *WA*), but paraphrases or summaries, at times staying more closely to Augustine's wording and at times rather free, or simple references to Augustine. Thus in his comment in his commentary on Psalm 67 Brother Martin noted: "as blessed Augustine expounded it as well,"¹⁶⁰ and that on Psalm 75: "as blessed Augustine beautifully expounded it."¹⁶¹ In a marginal gloss on Psalm 103:16–17, Brother Martin reduced Augustine's extensive explication of "nesting sparrows in the cedars of Lebanon" to the following: "Blessed Augustine: sparrows, that is, the poor, and in our day the religious nest in the cedars of Lebanon, that is, in the riches of the world."¹⁶² Here Luther took liberties to interpret "sparrows" (*passeres*) as "the poor" (*pauperes*), which can though be extrapolated from Augustine's text. He then reduced Augustine's more extensive explication of "cedars of Lebanon," which included nobility, wealth, and honors, to "worldly riches." One cannot say that Brother Martin was unfaithful to Augustine's text, but he did give it his own twist. These examples, moreover, could be multiplied extensively.

Nevertheless, Augustine's *Exposition of the Psalms* was Brother Martin's primary guide for his own exegesis of the Psalms. The only other works of Augustine Luther cited were *On the Trinity*, *Confessions*, and *On Order* (*De ordine*), all of which Brother Martin cited by book and chapter with some exceptions;¹⁶³ Augustine's *Rule*, which Brother Martin cited once by name¹⁶⁴ and once without reference;¹⁶⁵ and *The City of God*, which he

¹⁵⁸ *WA* 3.26,28–30; Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 672–673.

¹⁵⁹ E.g. *WA* 4.259,26–27.

¹⁶⁰ ... *ut ibidem b. Augustinus exponit*. *WA* 3.391,3.

¹⁶¹ ... *ut pulchre exponit b. Augustinus*. *WA* 3.522,36.

¹⁶² *WA* 4.169,19–21; cf. Augustine *en. Ps.* 103, sermo 3,16; *PL* 37, col. 1371–1372.

¹⁶³ One does find a marginal gloss on Psalm 35 giving reference to *De spiritu et littera*, but as the editors note this gloss was added by a later hand; *WA* 3.200,32–33.

¹⁶⁴ *WA* 3.263,30; *Preceptum* 7,3 ed. Verheijen, p. 436,229–30.

¹⁶⁵ *WA* 4.388,3–5; *Præceptum* 1,3; ed. Verheijen, p. 418,7–8.

cited once without giving the title simply as: "as blessed Augustine said concerning the dead."¹⁶⁶ Brother Martin did not though slavishly follow Augustine and at times made explicit his departure, such as when expositing Psalm 119 he noted: "Blessed Augustine expounded this entire psalm morally, but we do so prophetically."¹⁶⁷ Luther once cited a *Sermon on a Martyr* (*sermo de uno martyre*) of Augustine, but the citation has not been found in Augustine's works (by the editors or by myself).¹⁶⁸ In Brother Martin's next series of lectures, he would be more precise with his Augustine citations, and cite from a rather different, and revealing, *corpus* of Augustine's works.

After having finished the Psalms, Martin began lecturing on Romans in 1515. Once again, no other authority aside from scripture is cited anywhere near as frequently as Augustine: Brother Martin cited Augustine 123 times, from twenty-one different works.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, as already mentioned, the anti-Pelagian works now dominate. Of Martin's 123 Augustine citations, fifty-nine are to anti-Pelagian works, and *On the Spirit and the Letter* is the most frequently cited authority, cited twenty-six times. This is followed by Augustine's *Exposition of Certain Propositions from the Letter to the Romans* (*Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos*) with twenty-one citations, and then *Against Julian* (*Contra Iulianum*) with twenty. Brother Martin was mostly consistent in giving book and chapter references, a clear change from his citation of Augustine in his *Dictata*. This is especially the case for the anti-Pelagian works. Martin also cited Augustine more literally and accurately than in the *Dictata*. In commenting on Romans 7:6, Martin cited twelve lines from Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, [chapter 4](#).¹⁷⁰ He began following Augustine word for word, but then continued by condensing and summarizing Augustine's text.¹⁷¹ In his Romans commentary, Luther evidences a more intensive and broader knowledge and use of Augustine than he had in his *Dictata*, while focusing especially on the anti-Pelagian works, which provided the background for the first thesis of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*

¹⁶⁶ ... *ut de defunctis dicit b. Augustinus*. WA 4,239,10–12; Civ. 21,27.

¹⁶⁷ WA 4,393,40–41.

¹⁶⁸ WA 4,274,26.

¹⁶⁹ See WA 56.L1 for the *Register* of cited authorities, which also lists citations for which the editors have given parallels in the notes though Luther did not actually cite the work; I have counted only Luther's explicit citations.

¹⁷⁰ WA 56,336,29–337,8.

¹⁷¹ PL 44, cols. 203–204.

(1517): "To say that Augustine spoke excessively against heretics is to say that Augustine lied almost everywhere."¹⁷²

In September of 1516, Brother Martin held a disputation at Wittenberg for the promotion of Bartholomew of Feldkirchen to the degree of bachelor of the *Sentences*. The question concerned the powers and will of man without grace.¹⁷³ Here again, Augustine's anti-Pelagian works dominate, with Martin citing from *Against Julian*, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, and *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*; the only other work of Augustine cited is *On the Trinity*. Moreover, as Martin wrote to Brother Johannes Lang in October 1516, during the disputation a controversy broke out over the authenticity of Augustine's *On True and False Penitence*.¹⁷⁴ Brother Martin denied that Augustine was the author, even though Gratian and Peter Lombard cited the work as genuine.¹⁷⁵ *On True and False Penitence* was the thirteenth text in Brother Martin's copy of Augustine *Minor Works*, though he did not write any marginalia to it at the time;¹⁷⁶ he did, however, give evidence of his knowledge of the work in his notes on Lombard, seemingly accepting the work as genuine.¹⁷⁷ The importance here is that in 1516 Augustine was being debated in Wittenberg, and that Luther fiercely denied Augustine's authorship of *On True and False Penitence*, a work he had in 1509 used to give a precise reference for Lombard's more general citation of Augustine, indicating Brother Martin's more developed knowledge of Augustine; seven months later, on 18 May 1517, Martin wrote again to Lang triumphantly that "our theology and Saint Augustine continue to prosper and reign in our university."¹⁷⁸ By this time, however, it was predominantly the anti-Pelagian Augustine. Though Augustine does not appear in Luther's theses against indulgences of 31 October 1517, Brother Martin did appeal to Augustine in his *Resolutions on the Disputation over the Power of Indulgences* (*Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*) of 1518. Here Augustine is cited sixteen times, to nine different works, including *Against Julian*, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, and *On Nature and Grace*. At the disputation held at the OESA's general chapter meeting in Heidelberg in April 1518, Augustine again comes to the fore when Brother Martin set forth that he will determine the *paradoxa* by

¹⁷² WA 1.224,7–8.

¹⁷³ WA 1.145–151.

¹⁷⁴ WABr 1.65–67.

¹⁷⁵ WABr 1.65,24–28.

¹⁷⁶ WA 9.4.

¹⁷⁷ E.g. WA 9.82,21–22.

¹⁷⁸ WABr 1.99,8–9.

appeal to Paul, and then to Augustine, Paul's "most faithful interpreter."¹⁷⁹ Martin here cited *On the Spirit and the Letter, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, and *On Corruption and Grace*. From his lectures on Romans to the emergence of the indulgences controversy, Brother Martin was increasingly relying on the anti-Pelagian Augustine.

From the beginning of his formal academic theological training to the outbreak of the indulgences controversy, Brother Martin evidences an increasing knowledge of Augustine's works, and an increasing erudition. Moreover, he had likewise been developing a theological Augustinianism focused on Augustine's anti-Pelagian works, corresponding with his increased Augustine scholarship. Such was completely in keeping with his Order's academic and pastoral theological traditions, from Giles of Rome and Gregory of Rimini, to Jordan of Quedlinburg. The question arises, therefore, as has been debated for over a century, to what extent did Luther develop his Augustinian theology based on the late medieval Augustinian theological traditions, and to what extent did he do so independently thereof, based simply on his own reading of Augustine? The first point to make in addressing this problem is that this is not an either/or, mutually exclusive contrast. There is no question Brother Martin was reading Augustine, and was reading him rather intensively. There is no question Brother Martin was developing an Augustinian theology. There is no question that such can be found in the theological traditions of the OESA. There is, however, a question regarding the extent to which Brother Martin was steeped in the theological traditions of his own Order, and therefore the extent to which his developing theology was a product of a late medieval Augustinianism. Brother Martin was indeed an Augustinian, but the question we must pose is to what extent had he been sufficiently religionized in his Order's own religion, the religion of Augustine? We have already seen that Brother Martin's religious and theological formation was meager at best, at least compared to his late medieval forebears. Did this have an impact on his developing Augustinian theology? Had Brother Martin been more thoroughly religionized in his own Order, would he have had his theological discovery? Living as an Augustinian, had Brother Martin imbued his own Order's understanding of seeking God's mercy?

Before, however, we can treat such questions in new light, we first need to address the issue head on of Brother Martin's theological discovery, traditionally seen as his "Reformation Breakthrough," which he had, by all

¹⁷⁹ WA 1.353,8–14.

counts, living as an Augustinian hermit. Whether or not such a breakthrough represented the point when Brother Martin began to be Luther the Reformer, however, is another question, and one we will meet in the [following chapter](#). Only then will we be in a position, after as well having analyzed Luther's general "ways of thought," to evaluate more historically the assertion of Brother Martin's prior general that Luther had never truly been "one of us," even when he had entered the Order seeking God's mercy, even when he had sought to live the Augustinian life.

Discoveries and Breakthroughs

On 18 May 1517, Brother Martin Luther wrote triumphantly to his confrère Johannes Lang that “our theology and Saint Augustine continue to prosper and reign in our university with God bringing this about.”¹ Such jubilation expressed itself four months later in the opening thesis of Luther’s ninety-seven against scholastic theology, in which he asserted: “To say that Augustine spoke excessively against heretics is to say that Augustine lied almost everywhere.”² Luther’s early theology was an Augustinian theology, in keeping with the University’s patron saint, St Augustine. Despite his lack of schooling, the Augustinian hermit, Martin Luther developed a new Augustinian theology, which traditionally has been seen as having had something to do as well with his so-called “Reformation Breakthrough,” his “Discovery of the Gospel,” or his “Tower Experience” (*Turmerlebnis*). This discovery has been seen as the point when Luther became, or at least began to become, the Reformer, turned his back on Rome, and started down the path of evangelical Protestantism. Or conversely, it has been seen as the point when Luther erred, strayed from the true path of the Church, and entered into heresy. Luther’s Tower Experience demarcates the papist Luther from the evangelical Luther, affecting the interpretation of his early works accordingly. Thus it remains a central point of contention for scholarship, Catholic as well as Protestant.

In living the Augustinian life, Brother Martin had numerous discoveries and breakthroughs. In his preface to the 1545 edition of his Latin works, Luther recounted one of his major discoveries, his discovery of passive righteousness, and did so within the context of the history of his developments from at least the time of the onset of the indulgences controversy through his second lectures on Psalms, his *Operationes in Psalmos*

¹ *Theologia nostra et S. Augustinus prospere procedunt et regnant in nostra universitate Deo operante.* WABr 1.99,8–9.

² *Dicere, quod Augustinus contra haereticos excessive loquatur, Est dicere, Augustinus fere ubique mentitum esse. Contra dictum commune.* WA 1.224,7–8.

of 1519. The interpretation of this preface has been perhaps the central text for efforts to discern when Luther became the Reformer and began his campaign against Rome, yet no definitive answer has emerged. Indeed, as Heiko Oberman claimed,

In the past this Preface has been molded in so many directions and Luther scholars have deduced from its few pages so many different Luther-figures that a usage of these passages in our times has almost become *the* characteristic of unscientific Luther research.³

In this light, revisiting the question of when Luther had his so-called Reformation breakthrough, or his Tower Experience, may seem to be beating the proverbial dead horse, and my treatment here may indeed fall into the category of “unscientific Luther research,” but when we come to understand Luther as an obedient, observant Augustinian friar, rather than as the future Reformer or Heretic to be, his early discoveries and breakthroughs appear in different light. Consequently, a new look at his preface is merited, if not required, in attempt to return to a more historical understanding of Luther and Luther’s own self-understanding.

Luther’s Tower Experience Revisited

The precise date of Luther’s Reformation Breakthrough as the point when Luther became the Reformer has defied scholars. The traditional date of 31 October 1517 and Luther’s posting of his *Ninety-Five Theses Against Indulgences* may have lasting symbolic value, but fails to penetrate to the actual historical development, and seemingly contradicts Luther’s own dating of his theological discovery as having occurred only after the indulgence controversy began. As Martin Brecht put it: “When Luther became involved in the indulgence controversy he was not yet ‘evangelical’.”⁴ That indeed has been the point; to determine when Luther truly became evangelical. The waters, however, have been muddied by not sufficiently distinguishing between Luther’s theological breakthrough and his break with the pope. To be truly evangelical, Luther had to have made his discovery of the Gospel and to have broken with the papacy, for how could the genuine evangelical Luther have still been an avowed papist? This is the confessional dilemma, which equates his discovery of the Gospel, as

³ Oberman, “*Iustitia Christi and Iustitia Dei: Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification.*” In idem, *Dawn*, p. 109.

⁴ Martin Brecht, *Luther. Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532*, trans. James L. Schaff (Minneapolis, MN, 1990), p. 221.

determined on evangelical bases, with his break from Rome. Thus an early dating of his theological breakthrough, to 1514 or 1516, allows for an evangelical Luther who then, on the basis of his newly found Gospel, launched an all-out campaign against Rome. A later dating, to 1518 or 1519, requires that one accept that Luther's *Lecture on Romans*, as well as his *Ninety-Five Theses*, were works of an obedient, catholic monk, rather than the new, evangelical reformer. The "evangelical Luther" and the "papist Luther" seem to be contradictory, and it poses problems, or at least discomfort, on both sides of the confessional debate when one suggests that the papist Luther was also the evangelical Luther, and that Luther's break from Rome was distinct from his discovery of the Gospel. Yet this is the very point I hope to make: Luther made his great discovery as a catholic, as a *Roman* catholic, theologian.

This statement, though, loses some of its shock value perhaps when a later dating for Luther's Tower Experience is advanced, namely, in 1518 or 1519. Such a time-frame allows for a continued development, whereby Luther first had the theological insights, worked out their implications, and then saw that this entailed his break with the pope. Thus the intimate relationship between his theological insight and his attack on Rome can be preserved, with the only problem being having to assign Luther's works up until 1518 at the earliest as being pre-reformatory, or pre-evangelical, when the Gospel had not yet been fully discovered.

This though is indeed the majority of current opinion. Martin Brecht dated Luther's discovery to the spring of 1518,⁵ and Oberman essentially agreed. Oberman argued that

Luther's theology cannot be reduced to a single point; his work was invigorated and stimulated by the joy of discovery. But this job was more than mere intellectual satisfaction because questions of life and death were at stake. Between 1513 and 1519 he experienced a series of breakthroughs of this kind, although none as significant as that of the understanding of God's righteousness and justification by faith.⁶

Oberman claimed that in his lectures on Romans 3, at the very beginning of 1516, one finds already the "voice of the 'Reformation exegete,'" but that it was only in 1518 that Luther had sufficiently developed his understanding of justification by faith to do away with the need for contrition, and by 1519, with the publication of his lectures on Galatians, "the Reformation

⁵ Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, pp. 226–231. Brecht also claims that a 1518 dating has in the past two decades come to the fore (p. 222).

⁶ Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 165–166.

'discovery' of justification by faith has been clearly expressed and worked out."⁷ Moreover, both Oberman and Brecht agree that Luther's own account in the central document for trying to date Luther's Reformation discovery, his autobiographical sketch in his preface to the edition of his collected works of 1545, refers to 1518/1519 as the time when he made his breakthrough.⁸ This was a discovery, according to Oberman, that "was not only new, it was unheard-of; it rent the very fabric of Christian ethics,"⁹ for "what is completely new about Luther's discovery is that he sees God's righteousness as inseparably united and merged with the righteousness of Christ: already *now* it is received through faith."¹⁰ This is then the discovery that Oberman finds in Luther's Romans commentary in embryo already in 1516, but that was only fully developed in 1518/1519, which was, according to Oberman, when Luther himself dated his discovery as seen in his preface of 1545.

For Brecht, Luther had already in his first commentary on Psalms argued that justification was a prerequisite for righteous actions, and continued to undermine confidence in one's own works in his commentary on Romans. Brecht, though, sees these developments as being squarely within the late medieval theology of humility, rather than harboring the new evangelical teaching, which was only achieved in 1518, as, Brecht argues, Luther himself affirmed in his autobiographical preface.¹¹ Thus, Brecht and Oberman are in concord regarding the dating of Luther's breakthrough as well as on its essential content, even if their respective portrayals of Luther's development through 1518/1519 leaves room for further debate, not to mention their respective interpretations of the location of Luther's discovery, to which we will return later. Moreover, they both associate Luther's discovery, the righteousness of God, with Luther's full realization of that discovery's consequences, thereby equating the discovery itself with Luther having worked through and worked out its implications, which preserves being able to equate Luther's discovery with Luther the evangelical who then launched his assault on Rome. And they both base their arguments on Luther's autobiographical sketch of 1545.

More recent scholarship adopts the Brecht/Oberman perspective in emphasizing process, rather than a particular moment of discovery.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152; Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, pp. 225–230.

⁹ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 154.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹¹ Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, pp. 228ff.

Berndt Hamm writes: "Insofar as Luther mentioned such cognitive-affective discoveries and breakthroughs [he] gives information about essential progress on a very complex and continuing theological path of discovery, which led him to a new comprehensive understanding of Christian faith."¹² And Albrecht Beutel asserts that: "The debate as to whether Luther experienced his Reformation breakthrough in 1514/1515 or somewhat later, in 1518, which has not been settled as yet, loses more and more of its importance when Luther's Reformation theology is not looked at as a sudden event, which might even have occurred overnight, but rather as a complex developmental process spreading out over several years, furthering sudden insights on a continuous basis."¹³ Robert Kolb agrees, in arguing that: "most historians now recognize that no single 'experience' whether in a tower or not, determined Luther's way of thinking. Instead, it is better to speak of an evangelical maturation rather than a dramatic breakthrough ..."¹⁴ To revisit the question then may seem not only tedious, but also one that goes against the prevailing scholarly opinion.

When, however, we distinguish Luther's discovery as he related it in his preface of 1545, from his break from Rome, and from the mature Reformation theology, i.e. the point by which he had become "sufficiently evangelical," we can look at the evidence anew, and in this light, the question that must be posed is whether Luther himself equated his core discovery with his full realization of that discovery's implications? Accepting 1518/1519 as the date of the latter, can that be taken as comprising the former, or do we need to look for an earlier date within Luther's ongoing theological development between 1509 and 1519? And was 1518/1519 indeed the date Luther himself assigned to his core discovery, as both Brecht and Oberman claimed? To answer such questions, we need to turn to Luther's own account, his famed autobiographical sketch of 1545.

¹² "Indem Luther solche kognitiv-affektiven Entdeckungen und Durchbrüche erwähnt, gibt er Auskünfte über wesentliche Fortschritte auf einem sehr komplexen und kontinuierlichen theologischen Erkenntnisweg, der ihm zu einem neuen Gesamtverständnis des christlichen Glaubens führte." Berndt Hamm, *Der frühe Luther. Etappen reformatorischer Neuorientierung* (Tübingen, 2010), p. 28.

¹³ Albrecht Beutel, "Luther's Life." In Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 3–19, 7; cf. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'Ubošmír Batka, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford, 2014), which does not treat the question of Luther's "breakthrough" or "Tower Experience" at all, though does have chapters dealing with the issue of Luther's continuity and discontinuity with the medieval theological traditions.

¹⁴ Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther. Confessor of the Faith* (Oxford, 2009), p. 42; cf. Schilling, *Martin Luther*, pp. 144–152.

Luther's Account

Luther's preface to his collected works of 1545 is not a text that makes a clear, easy interpretation forthcoming. It has been scrutinized exhaustively as the key to dating Luther's Reformation discovery of God's righteousness and justification by faith. It is most tempting to ask of it a precise, historical account, yet such desires on the part of historians and theologians tend to make it into another type of document than it actually is. Luther was not writing an autobiography, nor was he detailing his own theological development. He was writing a preface for the first edition of his *Opera Omnia*. This may be a banal observation, but it points to the need to pose the question of whether this document reveals Luther's development twenty-five years previous to its composition, as much as it does his perspective in 1545.

Luther's point in writing his preface was to caution the reader that in his opinion, as of 1545, his early writings were filled with many errors resulting from his adherence to the papacy, opinions, and ideas which he later held as the highest blasphemy and abominations.¹⁵ Indeed, at the very beginning Luther affirmed that he would prefer that his works would fade away into oblivion, making way for better ones, such as, he noted, Melancthon's *Theological Common Places (Loci Communes)*.¹⁶ He was allowing his works to be published, lest after his death someone would edit them anyway, someone who would not know anything about "the causes and time of the events that transpired," thus causing even more confusion.¹⁷

His preface is dated 5 March 1545. On 18 February 1546, only nine months later, Luther died. In March 1545, Satan was raging indeed, as Luther affirmed to close his preface. Throughout Luther's life "the issue is not morality or immorality, it is God and the Devil,"¹⁸ and this cosmic battle is as well the context of his 1545 preface.¹⁹ Luther had been waiting for the last days for over twenty-five years, and in 1545 they had not yet arrived. He was, nevertheless, firm in his conviction that they were increasingly approaching; the devil raged more severely now than ever, since his time was now so short.

¹⁵ WA 54.179,34–36.

¹⁶ WA 54.179,2–14.

¹⁷ ... qui prorsus nescirent causas et tempora rerum gestarum, et ita ex una confusione fierent plurimae ... eorum improbitas, ut edi permitterem. WA 54.179,14–18.

¹⁸ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 155.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154–156.

Scholars would be most grateful and helped, had Luther gone back through all his early works and detailed precisely what he considered erroneous, and what he found still of value, much as did Augustine in his *Reconsiderations (Retractationes)*. He didn't. But, as mentioned, he was clear that he considered his adherence to the papacy to have been filled with blasphemy and abomination. That is what he wanted his readers to know, that and the general course of events. Luther's preface is not a detailed history of his own early development; it is a warning to the reader, and a continued exhortation to fight the devil. If his autobiographical reflections of 1545 only yield with difficulty a precise reconstruction of his historical development, he is not to fault, for that was not what he was intending.

That Luther's retelling of the events of the early Reformation movement cannot be taken as an exact report is indicated in his preface when he wrote that Pope Leo X sent his nuncio Karl von Miltitz to Luther in 1519 to reconcile him with the papacy and to bestow the Golden Rose on Frederick the Wise.²⁰ Already by 25 September 1518, Wittenberg was aware that Miltitz was going to play a part in the controversy. Miltitz was appointed papal nuncio on 15 October 1518 and in mid-November left Rome for Wittenberg. By 18 December, he was in Nürnberg, and arrived in Wittenberg the day after Christmas. However, Luther's meeting with Miltitz did not take place until 4 January 1519.²¹ Luther's account of 1545 is thus accurate regarding his own discussions with Miltitz, but does not represent the precise details of the occurrence. This is not to undermine Luther's memory, or his account, but rather to indicate that Luther is not giving a step-by-step historical time-line, though scholars have sought to find in his preface the precise chronological account of his having become the Reformer, which Luther's own warning about his own papist past occasioned, allowing for his Reformation Breakthrough to be equated with his break from Rome. This association is what must be questioned in order to come to a historical understanding of Luther's early development.

Luther's account of his Reformation discovery, found towards the end of his preface after he had recounted the events from the onset of the Indulgences controversy of 1517, comprises thirty-seven lines of text in the Weimar *Ausgabe*, of the 245 lines of his preface, or 15.1 percent.²² The account is inserted directly after Luther discussed his meeting with

²⁰ WA 54.184.12–185.11.

²¹ Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, pp. 266–267.

²² WA 54.185.12–186.21.

Miltitz, and is framed by Luther's mention of his beginning his second lectures on the Psalms, his *Operationes in Psalmos*. This places his discovery in the year 1519. Having finished with his treatment of Miltitz, Luther then wrote:

In the mean time, in that same year, I had already returned to interpret the Psalter anew. I was confident in doing so, because I would have been more experienced after having treated St Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and that which is to the Hebrews at the University.²³

He then launched into recounting his discovery:

I had been held captive by a strange burning desire to understand Paul in his letter to the Romans, but up until that point, not a cold-bloodedness of my heart, but a single phrase stood in my way, which is in [chapter 1](#): "The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel."²⁴

The word "up until that point," *hactenus*, is key here. To what point was Luther referring? It is clear that the immediately preceding temporal reference is to 1519, after he had begun interpreting the Psalter for a second time. However, it could also be taken as referring to the time of his lecturing on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. Rhetorically, Luther is regressing in time here, having begun in 1519, and then going back to his having lectured on Paul. That his point of departure is after he had already begun lecturing on the Psalms is indicated by the formulation "In the meantime, I had already returned ..." (*Interim eo anno iam redieram...*), but he then mentions his having lectured on Paul, and then continues by using a past perfect verb, *captus fueram*, "I had been held captive." This past perfect tense follows his previous use of the past perfect for "I had already returned," *iam redieram*, which then is followed by the next verb in the subjunctive past perfect, "I had treated," *tractassem*, required to indicate previous occurrence after the indicative past perfect *redieram*. Theoretically, the following past perfect, *captus fueram*, could indicate a further temporal regression, so that Luther was referring to the time before he had lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. It seems, though, more likely that the *captus fueram* is intended to parallel the same temporal sequence as the *redieram*, so that Luther is saying that he had

²³ *Interim eo anno iam redieram ad Psalterium denuo interpretandum, fretus eo, quod exercitator essem, postquam S. Pauli Epistolas ad Romanos, ad Galatas, et eam, quae est ad Ebreos, tractassem in scholis.* WA 54.185,12–14.

²⁴ *Miro certe ardore captus fueram cognoscendi Pauli in epistola ad Rom., sed obstiterat hactenus non frigidus circum praecordia sanguis, sed unicum vocabulum, quod est Cap. 1: Iustitia Dei revelatur in illo.* WA 54.185,14–17.

been held captive up till the point that he had returned to already having begun his second series of lectures on the Psalms. Yet Luther could have used the perfect or imperfect following a past perfect verb to recount the historical development, so that this instance of a double past perfect could be reference to a time previous to the temporal sequence preceding, which in this case is his having lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. One is left to choose between the parallel construction of *redieram ... captus fueram*, and the increasing regression, since in the former case, Luther could have written *redieram ... captus eram*, or *captus fui*.

The precise reference to Luther's use of grammatical tenses is not, however, the only difficulty posed by this section of his text. After having gone through his discovery, Luther then returned to his second lectures on the Psalms, but here as well we run into an indication of the lack of precise clarity. To begin his discussion of his breakthrough, Luther had clearly stated that, during the time of his discussions with Miltitz, he had already begun to lecture on the Psalter anew, which he then follows by his account of his breakthrough. This seems to indicate, depending on how *hactenus* is interpreted, as well as the past perfect verbs, that he made his discovery only *after* having already begun his second series of lectures on the Psalter. Yet when he returns, thus closing the frame of his account of his discovery, he writes: "Having been more completely armed with these considerations, I began to interpret the Psalter a second time ..." ²⁵ Here Luther is clear that his discovery occurred *before* he had begun his *Operationes in Psalmos*, whereas he first claimed that he already had begun lecturing on the Psalms (*iam redieram*) and then gave the account of his breakthrough. The point to be made is that Luther was far from unambiguous regarding the precise temporal sequence of his development in terms of the chronology of his discovery.

This moreover places Martin Brecht's dating of Luther's breakthrough in question. Brecht claimed that Luther had already made his discovery by 28 March 1518, as seen in his sermon *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, which, according to Brecht, is in keeping with Luther's "own account." ²⁶ Yet Luther's own account, as Brecht would have it, is that he made his discovery only after having lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, taking the adverb *hactenus* in its apparent sense. Luther concluded his lectures on Hebrews on Easter 1518, which was on 26 March 1518. Thus, either Luther made his discovery directly upon finishing his

²⁵ *Istis cogitationibus armatior factus coepi Psalterium secundo interpretari ...* WA 54.186,21.

²⁶ Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 229.

lectures on Hebrews, on 26 or 27 March, or Brecht's dating cannot be maintained. Luther seems to claim that he made his discovery either before he began his second series of lectures on the Psalms, that is, after his lectures on Hebrews, or after he had already begun, which he did in the Winter semester of 1518. Both possibilities render Brecht's dating unlikely. Brecht's argument is based on a theological interpretation of Luther's works. There is good reason to do so, but Brecht claimed that his reconstruction is in keeping with Luther's account historically as seen in his preface of 1545.

The reliability of Luther's own words as given in 1545 is further called into question by a passage that gives additional information. In his preface, Luther actually gave two differing accounts of his discovery. The account just discussed, which has been the basis of the debate, is actually the second account given by Luther. The first appears a page previous in the Weimar *Ausgabe* to the classic account. Here, Luther had been discussing his dispute with Eck, and brings the story up to the Leipzig debate.²⁷ He then confessed that it was difficult to extract himself from the custom of habit, namely, his adherence to the pope, and he cited Augustine's *Confessions* as support: custom, if it is not resisted, becomes necessity. This, however, is not an exact citation. The reference is to the *Confessions*, 8.5, where Augustine is speaking of his lust as the last chain that bound him. For Augustine, his lust had indeed become a necessity: "From a perverse will came lust, and slavery to lust became a habit, and the habit, being constantly yielded to, became a necessity."²⁸ Luther is clear that the "last chain" that had bound him was his adherence to the pope, which his reference to Augustine underscores. In this context, Luther gave another temporal sequence of him extricating himself, in which his discovery of justification by faith plays a part:

I, who had already at that time most diligently read and taught the holy writings privately and publicly for seven years, so that I remembered virtually all of them, and then had drawn out the beginnings of the knowledge and faith of Christ, namely, that we are made just and are saved not by works, but by the faith of Christ, and then finally that, about which I am speaking, that the pope is not the head of the church by divine law, I had already defended in public, although I did not see the consequence,

²⁷ WA 54.183,1–20.

²⁸ *cui rei ego suspirabam, ligatus non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate. velle meum tenebat inimicus; et inde mihi catenam fecerat et constrinxerat me. quippe voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini, facta est consuetudo, et dum consuetudini non resistur, facta est necessitas.* Aug. Conf. 8.5.

namely, that the pope is necessarily from the devil. For what is not from God, is necessarily of the devil.²⁹

Here Luther once again seems to give 1519 as the date of his discovery. He had been discussing Leipzig and his debate with Eck, which took place on 24 and 27 June 1519. He then stated that he had at that time already, *iam tunc*, taught the scriptures for seven years. This places his teaching as having begun in 1512, the year he received his doctorate. Is this though what Luther was actually claiming? In other words, what is the chronological reference for those seven years?

We know that Luther did not begin his first theological lectures in Wittenberg until 1513, with his first series of lectures on the Psalms. If we date the seven years from the beginning of his *Dictata*, then he had his discovery in 1520. No one has argued that it was this late. The seven years, though, combined with his clarification that he had taught privately and publicly, could very well be referring to his having taught the Bible in the Wittenberg Augustinian general school (*studium generale*) as distinct from the university, which he most likely indeed would have done as a lector, even before having received his doctorate.

Moreover, his account of the chronology muddies the waters even further. The point of departure is clearly 1519, by which time he had already taught for seven years, and then, *deinde*, he had discerned the beginnings of his reformation theology, justification by faith, and then thereafter, had defended in public that the pope was not the head of the Church by divine law, although he had not yet realized the full extent of his position, namely, that the pope was from the devil. Luther's discovery of the pope as the Antichrist can be dated to 24 February 1520, as we know from his letter to Spalatin.³⁰ Before the Leipzig debate, Luther had published his *Resolutions on the Thirteenth Thesis concerning the Power of the Pope*. In this work Luther was responding to Eck's revised list of theses set forth for the debate, which is dated 14 March 1519. Thus by this account, Luther had made his discovery of justification by faith by 14 March 1519, but only after he had already lectured on the Bible for seven years.

These seven years pose the problem, for if Luther was referring to his teaching at Wittenberg in the university as a doctor of theology, those

²⁹ *Ego, qui iam tunc sacras literas diligentissime privatim et publice legeram et docueram per septem annos, ita ut memoriter paene omnia tenerem, deinde primitias cognitionis et fidei Christi hauseram, scilicet, non operibus, sed fide Christi nos iustos et salvos fieri, denique id, de quo loquor, papam non esse iure divino caput ecclesie, iam defendebam publice, tamen id quod consequens erat non vidi, scilicet papam necessario esse ex diabolo. Quod enim ex Deo non est, necesse est ex diabolo esse.* WA 54.183,25–184,3.

³⁰ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 627, and [Chapter 7](#) in this book.

seven years would be counted from 18 October 1512, the date of Luther's doctorate, at the earliest, and extend to October 1519. This dating, however, contradicts his statement that he had made his discovery before he had publicly defended the position that the pope was not the head of the Church by divine law, not to mention it surpassing the *iam tunc* reference to 24 and 27 June 1519 and the Leipzig debate.

The seven years, though, could refer to the time when he received his bachelor's degree in theology, on 9 March 1509, whereupon he was required to read the Bible cursorily at the university.³¹ This time-frame would then place the end of the seven years in March of 1516. If this were the case, then thereafter Luther made his discovery. Yet an even earlier date is not excluded. Luther claimed that he had taught the Scriptures privately and publicly. If his private teaching referred to his teaching the Augustinians in the Order's *studium*, independent from the university, he could have done so as a lector from the time of his ordination in the summer of 1507.³² This reference, that he had already read and taught for seven years, *legeram et docueram*, could then mean that the seven years extended from 1507 until 1514, and thereafter he made his discovery.

On the surface, this passage does not seem to cause that many problems, since it could be read as Luther claiming that, at the time of the Leipzig debate, he had already lectured for seven years on the Scriptures, and had thereafter already made his discovery, even if only in its core, and had then publicly defended his position regarding the pope not being the head of the Church by divine law, though he had not realized even in Leipzig all the consequences thereof, namely, that the pope was of the devil. This reading could well harmonize with his later rendition, whereby he had made his discovery at the very end of March 1518, or sometime thereafter. If, however, we read it as a precise account, it seems that Luther is saying that, in late June 1519, he had already taught the scriptures for seven years, which would date back to June 1512, three and a half months before he received his doctorate, and then, only after that time, that is, after having lectured on the Scriptures for seven years, did he make his discovery, or in other words, after the end of June 1519. This, however, cannot be the historical account, since we can date securely the publication of his *Resolutions* against Eck's theses to March 1519. In other words, the *terminus a quo* of his seven years of teaching is very ambiguous.

³¹ See Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 93; cf. Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 368–382 for the OESA's educational system.

³² Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 91.

Already in late June 1519, *iam tunc*, Luther had taught for seven years, and he used the past perfect tense, *legeram et docueram*; this then is followed by the temporal adverb *deinde* and another past perfect, *hauseram*. The historical record disallows the seven years referring to the seven years previous to late June 1519, yet without a *terminus a quo*, we have no way of determining precisely which seven years Luther is meaning, except for the sequence that he had first lectured on the Bible for seven years and then made his discovery. As already mentioned, this could be interpreted with a *terminus a quo* of 1509 or of 1507, but then it would seem strange that Luther would have said seven years, rather than ten or twelve with his clear reference, *iam tunc*, to late June 1519, especially since the *terminus ad quem* of his discovery would then have been 1514 or 1516, directly as he was lecturing either on the Psalms or on Romans. In short, we cannot reconstruct the precise date, or even the precise space of time, for when Luther made his discovery based on his account of 1545. If we interpret some of his statements as precise temporal indications, we have to then explain away others, or interpret them in another fashion. Luther's preface does not allow for a precise historical reconstruction of his Reformation Breakthrough based on his own words. Attempts to discern Luther's chronological development must, necessarily, remain "unscientific."

This is not, however, to say that we cannot take Luther at his word. We can, and we must. What I would claim, though, is that we cannot try to make Luther say something that he is not saying, namely, trying to find in his preface of 1545 an exact date of his Tower Experience. What Luther is clear about is that by 1519, by both accounts of his breakthrough given in his preface, he had already come to his new interpretation of the righteousness of God. Thereafter, he had defended in public the position that the pope was not the head of the Church by divine law, but only later did he come to realize what this entailed, namely, that the pope was of the devil. This was the "last chain" that bound him. This was the entire point of his preface, to warn his readers that he had made progress, and that his early writings contained many errors, due to his adherence to the pope, that he later and at that time, in 1545, viewed as blasphemy and abomination. Who would read his early works must do so with "a grain of salt," and realize that until 1519 at the very earliest, or actually a bit later, his works were filled with his reverence for the pope, which he then, in 1545, considered as blasphemous. He wanted to give his readers a general account of what had transpired, which he did by tracing the course of events from the indulgence controversy beginning in 1517 to 1521.³³

³³ Thus Oberman's comment that 1519 marks the boundaries of Luther's preface is not strictly accurate.

What we have in his preface is a precious account of how Luther viewed his early development in 1545, not a history of his inner development itself. His discovery of the righteousness of God was an important step, but the detailed and exact recounting thereof was not what Luther was relating, nor was that his intent. What we can take as historical fact is Luther's view of the importance of his discovery, and the general sequence, namely, that it had occurred by 1519, and thereafter came his realization of the pope being of the devil. Moreover, his discovery came after he had striven to crack the nut of Paul's Letter to the Romans. We can also take Luther at his word regarding the content of his discovery, which he himself distinguished from his break from Rome, and his testimony that he developed further thereafter; his discovery was justification by faith, the very first things, *premitias*, regarding the knowledge and faith of Christ. His discovery was not the same as his working out its implications, nor equated with his break from Rome.

In the classic text of Luther's account of his Reformation breakthrough given in his preface of 1545, we find an additional indication of its chronological occurrence. Luther is clear throughout that his discovery was the proper interpretation of the "righteousness of God":

Thus far I had striven day and night in meditation on the meaning of the words, namely, "The Righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel," just as it is written, "The just lives from faith," and there I began to understand the righteousness of God as that by which the just lives from the gift of God, namely, from faith, and that this was the meaning that the righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, namely, a passive righteousness, by which the merciful God justifies us through faith, just as it is written: The just lives from faith. Here I felt myself to be completely reborn, and to have entered into paradise itself through its open doors. There, continuing further, another face of the entire scriptures appeared to me. Thereafter I ran through the scriptures, as I could remember, and brought them all together analogously, even with other words, so that the work of God is that which God works in us, the strength of God, is that by which he makes us powerful, the wisdom of God is that by which he makes us wise, [and the same with respect to] the fortitude of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God. For with such great hate that I hated the phrase "the righteousness of God" previously, with such great love I extolled that phrase, the sweetest of all to me. Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate of paradise. Afterwards I read Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, where I came upon beyond hope that even he interpreted the righteousness of God similarly, as that by which God dresses us when he justifies

us. And although this was still stated imperfectly, and did not explain every thing clearly about imputation, nevertheless it was pleasing that the righteousness of God was taught as that by which we are justified.³⁴

Luther asserted that his discovery was that God's righteousness is a passive righteousness, that by which God makes the sinner righteous, through faith, as a gift. Moreover, he had found his key for interpreting all of scripture, and here we could find further indications for the dating of his experience. Earlier I discussed the opening of this account in Luther's preface, namely, that he began in 1519 when he had already begun once again to lecture on the Psalter, only after having lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. He was confident in being able to do so since he had gained experience in these previous lectures. I then pointed to the ambiguous nature of the adverb *hactenus*, "up until that point," whereby it could refer to the time before Luther lectured on Romans, or, more likely on the surface, to 1519. As Luther retold his discovery in the passage just quoted, it was not only a personal discovery, and it was not only a theological discovery; it was also an exegetical discovery, that which opened the entire scriptures to him anew. Luther did not say that he was confident in his ability to interpret the Psalter because he had discovered the key for interpreting the scriptures. He had confidence because he was more experienced, more practiced, after having lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. It could very well be that, having discovered his exegetical key, that which showed him a new meaning of the entire scriptures, Luther then began working through that discovery exegetically in his lectures on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, which then gave him confidence to do so with the Psalms. It seems strange that he makes no mention of his new exegetical discovery as the basis for his confidence in interpreting the Psalter anew, but only points to his previous experience. Further,

³⁴ *Donec miserente Deo meditabundus dies et noctes connexionem verborum attenderem, nempe: Iustitia Dei revelatur in illo, sicut scriptum est: Iustus ex fide vivit, ibi iustitiam Dei coepi intelligere eam, qua iustus dono Dei vivit, nempe ex fide, et esse hanc sententiam, revelari per evangelium iustitiam Dei, scilicet passivam, qua nos Deus misericors iustificat per fidem, sicut scriptum est: Iustus ex fide vivit. Hic me prorsus renatum esse sensi, et apertis portis in ipsam paradisum intrasse. Ibi continuo alia mihi facies totius scripturae apparuit. Discurrebam deinde per scripturas, ut habebat memoria, et colligebam etiam in aliis vocabulis analogiam, ut opus Dei, id est, quod operatur in nobis Deus, virtus Dei, quo nos potentes facit, sapientia Dei, qua nos sapientes facit, fortitudo Dei, salus Dei, gloria Dei. Iam quanto odio vocabulum "iustitia Dei" oderam ante, tanto amore dulcissimum mihi vocabulum extollebam, ita mihi iste locus Pauli fuit vere porta paradisi. Postea legebam Augustinum de spiritu et litera, ubi praeter spem offendi, quod et ipse iustitiam Dei similiter interpretatur: qua nos Deus induit, dum nos iustificat. Et quamquam imperfecte hoc adhuc sit dictum, ad de imputatione non clare omnia explicet, placuit tamen iustitiam Dei doceri, qua nos iustificemur. WA 54.186,3–20.*

after having related his discovery, Luther then returned to his beginning to lecture on the Psalms by affirming that he was more armed, *armatior factus*, to do so. The passive perfect *armatior factus* rhetorically relates to the passive perfect *exercitator essem*, and both carry military connotations. And both Luther used as the context for his beginning, or having already begun, his *Operationes in Psalmos*. The question then, in keeping with the military imagery, is whether Luther was first more practiced, and then more armed, or was he first more armed, and in his new armor became more practiced by having lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews? It would seem that the imagery would imply that Luther was more practiced with his new armor, which would then place his discovery before he lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, and provide the sequence for interpreting *hactenus*, namely, up until that time, that is, the time before he had lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, which then provided him with his practice, preparing him for a second series of lectures on the Psalms, the monastic biblical book above all, which Luther wanted to take on anew. His entire preface is placed in the context of the battle with the devil, his as well as that of all Christendom, so that one should not be surprised to find Luther using military imagery to do so; he was both more armed, and more practiced in his exegesis, and thus returned to the Psalms, all placed in his battle against Satan.

Such an interpretation might be tempting, and even persuasive, but it is certainly not conclusive. However, in the passage quoted, Luther gave another temporal signpost for his discovery: it occurred before he had read Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*. Luther had read *On the Spirit and the Letter* already by 1516 at the latest, for on 19 October 1516, Luther wrote to Spalatin concerning Luther's differences with Erasmus, particularly over the interpretation of righteousness. No one, Luther claimed, who had read Augustine's works against the Pelagians, particularly *On the Spirit and the Letter*, *On Merits and the Remission of Sins*, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, and *Against Julian*, all of which were available in volume VIII of the Amberbach edition of Augustine's *Complete Works*, which Luther had on his desk, could agree with Jerome that Christian righteousness was equated with works, ceremonies, and observances. Moreover, in interpreting the scriptures, Luther asserted that he preferred Augustine to Jerome to the same extent as Erasmus preferred Jerome to Augustine.³⁵ Already in his commentary on Romans 1:17 in 1515, Luther clearly interpreted the righteousness of God as passive righteousness, as

³⁵ *WABr* 1.70,4–32.

that by which God makes sinners righteous, and cited *On the Spirit and the Letter* as proof.³⁶ Thus it seems clear that Luther in 1545 was indicating that he had made his breakthrough by 1515.

Martin Brecht, however, who, as we have seen, dated Luther's discovery to March 1518, claimed that Luther's preface does not refer to the first time Luther read *On the Spirit and the Letter*; after his made his discovery, Brecht asserted, in 1518, Luther then reread *On the Spirit and the Letter* based on Karlstadt's newly published commentary.³⁷ If Luther had made his discovery only in March 1518, and then reread Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, how could he have claimed that he turned to Augustine and "beyond hope" (*praeter spem*) found that Augustine interpreted the righteousness of God similarly? That he already knew in 1515. To claim that Luther's discovery, as related in his preface of 1545, occurred in 1518 is to claim that in 1518 Luther had forgotten what he had written in his commentary on Romans three years previously, as well as his issue with Erasmus over the priority of Augustine over Jerome. Luther expressed his surprise in finding that Augustine agreed with him, beyond hope, which seems very strange indeed if such were the case in 1518. If we take Luther at his word, without twisting the text to fit a desired result, the most clear and firm statement Luther gave for the temporal sequence of his discovery is that it occurred before he had read *On the Spirit and the Letter*, namely, by 1515. Such a dating then would make sense of the military imagery of Luther first having been newly armed, and then practiced in the interpretation of scripture with his lectures on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, before turning anew, and with confidence after having been more practiced, to interpret the Psalter, whereby the *hactenus* would indeed be referring to the time before Luther had lectured on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, but after the time he had lectured on the Psalms the first time, his *Dictata*, which Luther did not mention at all in his preface. One should work from clarity to solve the ambiguity, and not twist the clarity to fit the interpretation one wants to see for theological reasons. Brecht's dating is not in keeping with "Luther's own account."

Dating Luther's discovery to 1515 can solve the ambiguity in his preface more easily than can a 1518 date. We have Luther's clear comment that he read *On the Spirit and the Letter* after his breakthrough. To date his breakthrough to 1518, one has to claim that Luther had forgotten his earlier use

³⁶ WA 56.171,28–172,8.

³⁷ Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 226. For Brecht, Luther's *postea legebam*, is "he read anew," which goes beyond Luther's account.

thereof, and then to reinterpret Luther's statement to his having *reread* Augustine's text. The ambiguity in his account results from the temporal sequence, which, in both versions in his Preface, begins in 1519. With a firm date of 1515 for the discovery, the *hactenus* of the second account, the "classic account," can be seen as referring to the time before he began lecturing on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, and the "seven years" can be seen as referring to his teaching privately in the Augustinian *studia* at Erfurt and Wittenberg as a lector from the time of his ordination. In both accounts Luther is working progressively backward in time, which causes the difficulty in interpreting his temporal sequences and his use of the past perfect tense. The *iam tunc* of his first account clearly refers to 1519 and the time of the Leipzig debate, by which time he had already lectured on the scriptures for seven years. He does not give a *terminus a quo*, but the *deinde* introducing his discovery could very well offer a *terminus ad quem*, namely, his discovery itself, so that what Luther is saying is that he had taught the Bible privately and publicly for seven years and then made his discovery, and then thereafter had defended in public his position that the pope was not the head of the Church by divine law, all of which had already occurred by 1519 and Leipzig, though only later did he fully come to terms with his position, namely, that the pope was of the devil. Brecht himself goes beyond Luther's "own account" in dating his discovery to 28 March 1518 and Luther's sermon on *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, without having noted that interpreting Luther's *hactenus* as referring to the time after his lectures on Hebrews would entail that Luther made his discovery on 27 March 1518. A 1518 dating of Luther's discovery entails far more text-twisting than does a 1515 dating, which only means having to interpret Luther's preface as having rhetorically dealt with progressively earlier events.

This is not to say, however, that in 1515 Luther had realized, much less worked out, all the implications of his discovery, as he himself attests. This fact takes on added importance, as well as offering further temporal evidence, when we note the ambiguous nature of the Latin pronoun "this" (*hoc*). In his account, Luther wrote that after he read Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, the righteousness of God was not stated perfectly, and not all the implications of imputation were made clear, but that it was pleasing nonetheless that passive righteousness was taught. The American edition of Luther's works translates the passage as follows: "Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly, it nevertheless

was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught."³⁸ The question here is the referent for Luther's *hoc adhuc sit dictum*. The translators imply that the *hoc* refers to Augustine, and explicitly make Augustine the subject of the following verb *explicitet*. Yet the construction of the phrase makes it far more likely that the *hoc* is also the subject of the verb *explicitet* (... *hoc adhuc sit dictum ac ... explicitet*), as I have translated the sentence. Thus, we must ask, whether the *hoc* indeed refers to Augustine.

The adverb *adhuc* gives a clue. The force of *adhuc* is one of a limit within a temporal sequence, translated as "still," "up to that point," "heretofore." Luther had been narrating the sequence of his discovery, which then was followed by his finding a similar interpretation in Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*. He was not giving an account of Augustine's theological development, nor of the history of passive righteousness. He was narrating his own development, referring to his understanding of the term (*vocabulum*) "the righteousness of God" (*iustitia Dei*). The *hoc* is the pronoun standing for *vocabulum*. What Luther is saying is that, still at that time, after his discovery, and after he had read Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, he, Luther, still had not explicated perfectly the righteousness of God or explained clearly all the implications regarding imputation, but that he was happy that the righteousness of God was being taught, namely, in his lectures on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, which had given him sufficient exercise with his new armor that he could then confidently return to the Psalms. Luther is referring to his own development, as he had previously in his preface when he mentioned that he had mined the beginnings, *primitias hauseram*, of the knowledge and faith of Christ. Seeing all the implications of his discovery was distinct from the discovery itself, and Luther wanted to warn his readers that this was the case, and that even after his discovery he still was making progress. Luther's mature evangelical Reformation theology is not the basis for determining the date of Luther's discovery, nor to be equated with the discovery itself. Nor is Luther's discovery of passive righteousness to be equated with his Reformation Breakthrough, or with his break from Rome. Luther's Tower Experience, as related in his preface of 1545, had occurred by 1515, at a time when, by his own account, Brother Martin was still an avid papist, at least in his own mind some thirty years after the event itself.

³⁸ LW 34, p. 337.

Passive Righteousness

As argued here, 1515 is the *terminus ad quem* for Luther's Tower Experience, which is not to say that it is a definitive date. In trying to determine more precisely when Luther made his discovery, we need to turn from his explicit comments in his preface, to finding their referent in his works. Luther is clear that his discovery was that the just "live by the gift of God, namely, from faith and that this is the meaning, that the righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, namely, a passive righteousness, by which the merciful God justifies us through faith."³⁹ This was the discovery that made Luther feel reborn, allowing him to enter into paradise through open gates, and which offered him his exegetical key to the Scriptures. It should also be noted that Luther claimed that this discovery was when he began to have this understanding of God's righteousness, *coepi intelligere*, and not when he had finally worked through all its dimensions and implications. Thus, where we find Luther first advocating a passive righteousness is a good indication of his discovery.

That Luther had early on made his discovery, and that he testified to his development thereafter, is seen in his letter of 8 April 1516 to Georg Spenlein, an Augustinian in Memmingen. Spenlein had matriculated at Wittenberg in the summer of 1512. Here Luther wrote that he wanted to find out whether Spenlein viewed the righteousness of Christ as being one's own righteousness,

for in our age, the temptation of presumption rages in many, and especially in those, who strive to be just and good with all their own powers, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, which is given to us most generously and freely in Christ, they seek in themselves for as long as they do well until they might have the trust of standing before God, as if decked out with their virtues and merits, which is impossible to come about. When you were in Wittenberg, you were of this opinion, or even more so, this error; even I was too, but now I fight against this error, though I have not yet conquered it.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Iustus ex fide vivit, nempe ex fide, et esse hanc sententiam, revelari per euangelium iustitiam Dei, scilicet passivam, qua nos Deus misericors iustificat per fidem.* WA 54.186,4–7.

⁴⁰ *Caeterum quid agat anima tua, scire cupio, utrumne tandem suam pertaesa propriam iustitiam discat in iustitia Christi respirare atque confidere. Fervet enim nostra aetate tentatio praesumptionis in multis, et iis praecipue, qui iusti et boni esse omnibus viribus student; ignorantes iustitiam Dei, quae in Christo est nobis effusissime et gratis donata, quaerunt in se ipsis tam diu operari bene, donec habeant fiduciam standi coram Deo, veluti virtutibus et meritis ornati, quod est impossibile fieri. Fuisti tu apud nos in hac opinione, imo errore; fui et ego, sed et nunc quoque pugno contra istum errorem, sed nondum expugnaui.* WABr 1.35,15–23.

Here Luther had already made his discovery, yet was still working through it. In his sermon of 24 February 1517, Luther equated the “righteousness of Christ” with the “righteousness of God”:

Know therefore, that our righteousness, virtue, wisdom is Christ himself, made for us by God, in whom God the Father placed all his own wisdom, virtues, righteousness, so that they might become ours. This is to know the Son. Further know that the Father in his mercy attributes to us the righteousness of his own Son, that is, his own righteousness, because the righteousness of the Father and of the Son is the same, the same life, the same virtue, given to us. This is to know the Father of Christ.⁴¹

Luther ended his sermon by lashing out against indulgences, their sellers, and those who rely on them, for indulgences rely on a servile righteousness. This, Luther claimed, was the “danger of our time,” a “darkness greater than the Egyptian! How secure we are in all our worst evils.”⁴² He was beginning to see some of the implications of his discovery, and eight months later, posted his *Ninety-Five Theses Against Indulgences*.

Luther's discovery, as he described it in 1545, is already present at the very beginning of his commentary on Romans, which he began in November 1515. He stated his position from the outset:

The whole point of this letter is to destroy, cast out, and disperse all wisdom and righteousness of the flesh ... for God does not want to save us by our own, but by an external righteousness and wisdom, which does not come from us, nor is born from us, but which from elsewhere comes into us, not one that originates in our earth, but one that comes from heaven.⁴³

In commenting on Romans 1:16, Luther interpreted the power of God not as his own power in Himself formally, but as that power by which he makes us powerful,⁴⁴ and then in the following verse, the understanding of which had been his obstacle, Luther explained:

⁴¹ *Scite itaque, quod iustitia, virtus, sapientia nostra sit ipse Christus a Deo nobis factus, in quem posuit Deus Pater omnem sapientiam, virtutes, iustitiam suam, ut nostra feret. Hoc est nosse Filium. Deinde scite, quod Pater misericordia sua nobis reputet iustitiam Filii sui, i.e. suam ipsius, quia eadem est iustitia Patris et Filii, eadem vita, virtus nobis donata. Hoc est nosse Patrem Christi.* WA 1.140,8–13.

⁴² *O pericula nostri temporis! ... O tenebras plusquam Aegyptiacas! Quam securi sumus in omnibus pessimis malis nostris!* WA 1.141,37–38.

⁴³ *Summariū huius epistolae est destruere et evellere et disperdere omnem sapientiam et iustitiam carnis ... Deus enim nos non per domesticam, sed per extraneam iustitiam et sapientiam vult salvare, non que veniat et nascatur ex nobis, sed que aliunde veniat in nos, non que in terra nostra oritur, sed que de celo venit.* WA 56.157.2–158,13; ad Rom. 1:1.

⁴⁴ WA 56.169,28–170,12.

In human teaching, the righteousness of humans is revealed and taught, that is who and how one is and becomes just in his own eyes and in those of men. But in the Gospel alone is revealed the righteousness of God, that is who and how one is and becomes just before God, through faith alone ... for the righteousness of God is the cause of salvation, and to repeat, “the righteousness of God” is not to be taken as that by which God himself is righteous in Himself, but that by which we are justified by Him, which is through the faith of the Gospel. Wherefore blessed Augustine in the eleventh chapter of *On the Spirit and the Letter*. Therefore it is called the righteousness of God because by imparting righteousness, he makes us just, just as the salvation of the Lord is that by which he saves us.⁴⁵

Here already we find precisely the discovery that Luther described in 1545. The righteousness of God is that by which he makes sinners righteous, through faith, which Augustine held as well in his treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*. In his lectures on Romans, Luther had not yet used the term *iustitia passiva*, but the concept is clearly there. In his preface of 1545, Luther did not say that his discovery was passive righteousness as such, but that the just live by the gift of God, that is, he explained, from faith, and the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which God justifies the sinner through faith. Luther surely clarified in 1545 that such righteousness was passive (*scilicet passiva*). God is the active partner; the sinner is the passive recipient. This is confirmed by his first account of his discovery found in his preface, namely, that after having taught the scriptures for seven years, he then drew out the beginnings of the knowledge and faith of Christ, *primitias cognitionis et fidei Christi*, namely, Luther clarified, that one is not justified by works, but is justified and saved by the faith of Christ. Luther had already made his discovery by 1515, before he began lecturing on Romans.

Two years previous, however, we find Luther espousing a very different position when he began his first lectures on Psalms. In his *Dictata*, Luther defined righteousness (*iustitia*), as giving one one’s due, or as giving to one what is one’s,⁴⁶ which was a general medieval interpretation, and is found in Thomas Aquinas and in Jordan of Quedlinburg.⁴⁷ Here Luther stands

⁴⁵ *In humanis doctrinis revelatur et docetur iustitia hominum, i.e., quis et quomodo sit et fiat iustus coram se et hominibus. Sed in solo evangelio revelatur iustitia Dei, i.e., quis et quomodo sit et fiat iustus coram Deo per solam fidem ... Iustitia enim Dei est causa salutis. Et hic iterum “iustitia Dei” non ea debet accipi, qua ipse iustus est in seipso, sed quo nos ex ipso iustificamur, quod fit per fidem evangelii. Unde b. Augustinus c. 11 de spi. et lit.: Ideo iustitia Dei dicitur, quod impertiendo eam iustos facit. Sicut Domini est salus, quo salvos facit. WA 56.171,27–172,7.*

⁴⁶ *Iustitia autem dicitur redditio unicuique quod suum est. WA 3,91,10–11.*

⁴⁷ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 454–462; Jordan of Quedlinburg, *Expositio Orationis Dominice* 7, pp. 148–160.

squarably in the Augustinian tradition, emphasizing the grace and faith required for true humility, which renders one just before God, and comes close to a passive understanding when in the commentary on Psalm 17:26 he cited Galatians 2:20 and argued: "In that way the apostle said that Christ resides in our hearts, because then it is said in us, and according to Isaiah [26:12], the Lord works all our works and qualities in us."⁴⁸ He further equated confidence in one's own righteousness with idolatry, claiming that such is the view too of all heretics "because being ignorant of true righteousness, namely in pure faith, they place their own righteousness before themselves as a spiritual idol and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God."⁴⁹ He then launched out against the monastic observant movement, which included the observant branch of his own Order, whose conflict with the conventuals when Staupitz tried to unite the two branches under his own leadership had occasioned Luther's trip to Rome in 1510.⁵⁰ Luther claimed that such "do not truly understand that they are justified in Christ alone, not in their own works."⁵¹ It is, nevertheless, still the anger of God that preoccupies Luther. In his comments on Psalm 31, Luther explained that

no one is not a son of anger and therefore is in need of his sins being forgiven. This, however, does not come about except through Christ: therefore, no one will be saved on his own, but only through Christ ... Further, "The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, etc."; the meaning is: no one knows that the wrath of God would be upon all and that all would be left standing in their sins before God, but through his Gospel, He Himself revealed from heaven both how we are saved from that wrath, and through which righteousness we are freed, namely, through Christ.⁵²

Here we see what Oberman referred to as Luther's discovery of the "righteousness of Christ" (*iustitia Christi*) as distinct from his discovery of the

⁴⁸ *Eo modo quo Apostolus dicit [Gal. 2:20], quod Christus habitat in cordibus nostris. Quia tunc loquitur in nobis et omnia opera et qualitates nostras in nobis operatus est dominus secundum Isaie. WA 3.127,11–13.*

⁴⁹ *Horum studia et idolatriam imitantur omnes heretici. Quia ignorantes veram iustitiam, scilicet pure fidei, suam statuunt sibi in idolum spiritule et iustitie dei non subiiciuntur. WA 3.154,32–34.*

⁵⁰ *WA 3.155,5–15.* The OESA Observant Congregation of Saxony was known as the "Privileged Observance"; see Weinbrenner, *Klosterreform im 15. Jahrhundert*, and [Chapter 5](#).

⁵¹ *Quia vere non intelligunt, quod in solo Christo, non in suis operibus iustificentur. WA 3.155,17–18.*

⁵² *... nullus est non filius ire et itaque eget, ut sibi remittantur. Hoc autem non fit nisi per Christum: Ergo Nemo ex se, sed per solum Christum salvus erit ... Item "Iustitia dei revelatur in eo etc." Sensus est: Nullus hominum scivit, quod ira dei essent super omnes et quod omnes essent in peccatis coram eo, sed per Evangelium suum ipse de coelo revelavit et quomodo ab ista ira salvi fereremus, et per quam iustitiam liberaremur, scilicet per Christum. WA 3.174,11–20.*

“righteousness of God” (*iustitia dei*).⁵³ Sinners stand before an angry God, but because of Christ, they can be saved. The righteousness of Christ is what placates the wrathful God, which Luther claimed was revealed in Romans 1:17. Clearly, Luther had not yet made his great discovery.

When Luther came to explicating Psalm 84, however, we find a shift, which merits quotation at length. In commenting on Psalm 84:11, Luther wrote:

When God flagellates his own saints, anger and mercy come together at the same time with truth, wherefore Psalm 118: *you humble me in your truth*, because at the same time He gives good to the soul and evil to the flesh, both of which He had beforehand promised and threatened. And in doing so, He is truthful. In the same way it can be said about this verse: *Righteousness and peace kiss each other*, because it is just when God returns good and evil as merited. But when he repays good, then there is righteousness and peace. When, however, He repays evil, then there is righteousness and turmoil. But I do not accept this in this way here ... Even more so, although all this may be true, nevertheless I think that this is not the chief meaning of this verse. Therefore let us look for other ways of understanding it. Christ, therefore, is true mercy and truth, over against mercy and vanity, which the flesh gives, because man vainly is merciful only to his flesh, just as soft parents spare their own sons and the delicate spare their own bodies being merciful of its weakness, but in vain and not in truth. But Christ is true mercy, because through him God is merciful to souls, even in raging against the flesh and everything carnal. Further, true mercy is against deceitfulness and false mercy, by which the Jews and heretics are merciful to their own souls, even if they are not to their own bodies, because they do many and great things for the salvation of their soul, but it is deceitful and false, because they fabricate such mercy for themselves from their own senses. Christ, however, is mercy and truth, because he truly gives good to the soul. Further, it is against natural mercy, which certainly is not to be spurned, but it does not suffice, or rather, it is a figure of this spiritual mercy. Such are all works of external mercy, by which man is merciful to man or to a cow. For just as man is merciful to man, so God the Father has shown His own true mercy beyond that cloud and figure, by which He is nevertheless merciful. Thus now Christ is our righteousness and our peace, which God has given to us. And through him, God has justified us and thus we have peace. For before Christ, there was no peace, because neither was there righteousness for us, but impiety, and therefore, turmoil, “because there is no peace for the wicked” [Is. 48:22]. For insofar as we would have righteousness from the law, peace and righteousness

⁵³ Heiko Oberman, “*Iustitia Christi* and *Iustitia Dei*: Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification.” In *idem, Dawn*, pp. 104–125.

do not kiss, at least not the peace of God, for even before men, there is no peace except for those who live justly, because civic law punishes the unjust. And nevertheless, this is scarcely a figure of the righteousness and peace which is in the city of God, which is true righteousness and true peace, because it comes from preceding mercy and truth, that is, from the true grace and mercy before God.⁵⁴

Eric Vogelsang pointed to the first part of this passage as being the first place in Luther's works where he argued against the traditional view of righteousness.⁵⁵ Here Luther has gone beyond the view that the righteousness of Christ offers mercy to the sinner in order to stand before God. It is not only the mercy and righteousness of Christ that Luther advocates here, but that Christ's mercy and righteousness is *our* mercy and righteousness that God has given. God is no longer the angry God. He is now the merciful God, who gives his righteousness and mercy as a gift to sinners, wherefore sinners can now stand justified before God, the merciful God. There is no longer turmoil, but rather peace, true peace, even *coram Deo*. Luther had found his righteous and merciful God. He had made his breakthrough.

This may, however, seem to be claiming Luther's breakthrough on grounds of content, finding a theological statement or doctrine that

⁵⁴ *Quando deus suos sanctos flagellat, simul ibi sibi obviant ira [et] misericordia, et veritas. Unde ps. 118: "In veritate tua humiliasti me." Quia simul dat bonum anime et malum carni, quorum utrumque olim promisit et minatus est. Et sic implens verax est. Eodem modo dicendum de illo: "Iustitia et pax osculate sunt." Quia iustus est, quando reddit bonum vel malum promeritum. Sed quando reddit bonum, tunc est iustitia et pax. Quando autem malum, tunc est iustitia et turbatio. Sed sic non puto hic accipi ... Immo omnia predicta licet vera sint: tamen puto, quod pro principali sensu versus huius non sint. Ideo alias acceptiones videamus. Christus itaque misericordia et veritas est contra misericordiam et vanitatem, quam dat caro. Quia homo vane miseretur tantum carni, sicut molles parentes parcunt filiis suis. Et delicati parcunt corpori suo miserentes eius teneritati, sed in vanitate et non in veritate. Sed Christus est misericordia vera: quia per ipsum deus miseretur animabus, etiam seviendo in carnem et omnes carnales. Item est misericordia vera contra mendacium et falsam misericordiam: quo Iudei et heretici suis animabus miserentur, etiam corpori non miseri. Quia multa faciunt et magna pro salute anime, sed mendacium et falsum est, quia ex suo sensu sibimet misericordiam fingunt talem. Christus autem est misericordia et veritas, quia vere bona dat anime. Item est contra naturalem misericordiam, que quidem non est reprobata, sed non sufficit, immo est figura misericordie huius spiritualis. Talia sunt omnia misericordie opera externis, qua homo homini vel pecori miseretur. Sicut enim homo homini miseretur: ita deus pater exhibuit animabus nostris misericordiam suam veram ultra illam umbram et figuram, qua et ipse nihilominus miseretur. Sic nunc iustitia nostra Christus est et pax nostra, quam deus nobis dedit. Et per illam nos iustificavit, et ita pacem habemus. Ante ipsum enim non fuit pax, quia nec iustitia nobis, sed impietas, et ideo turbatio. "Quia non est pax impiis." Nam quantumcumque iustitiam habuerimus ex lege: pax non osculabatur eam, saltem pax dei. Nam et coram hominibus pax non est nisi iis, qui iuste vivunt. Quia lex civitatis punit iniustos. Et tamen hec est vix figura iustitie et pacis, que est in civitate dei, que est vera iustitia et vera pax, quia venit ex misericordia et veritate precedente, id est ex vera coram deo gratia et misericordia. WA 4.15,25-16,28.*

⁵⁵ Erich Vogelsang, ed., *Luthers Werke in Auswahl*, vol. V (Berlin, 1963), p. 173, note to line 33.

apparently approximates that which he explicitly claimed in 1545 to have been his breakthrough. And indeed, on this basis we find even earlier statements in the *Dictata* that on the surface approximate a position of passive righteousness (*iustitia passiva*). Thus in his treatment of Psalm 70, Luther distinguished between human righteousness and judgment, and the judgment and righteousness of God. He concluded by noting: “For this is called the judgment of God: just as the righteousness, or virtue, or wisdom of God: that is, that by which we are wise, powerful, just and humble or are judged.”⁵⁶ These then are the among the same attributes Luther mentioned in 1545 as those he began to understand passively after making his breakthrough and then going through scripture from memory.⁵⁷ However, he placed this type of passiveness, and it is a beginning of a passive understanding, in the context of self-judgment, not explicitly in terms of that which God effects in us, of that by which God’s judgment judges us to be such.⁵⁸ Moreover, in treating Psalm 83, Luther made a confession. The text he is commenting on is Psalm 83:2: “My heart and my flesh exult in the living God.”⁵⁹ He then boldly affirmed: “That emotion (*affectus*) of those words is unknown to me. Therefore there is little wonder if I exposit it less worthily than it deserves.”⁶⁰ The gracious, merciful God, the God in whom righteousness and peace, true righteousness and peace, which he has given us through Christ, kiss and embrace each other, was still unknown to Luther when he commented on Psalm 83. When he explicated Psalm 84, however, there they are, and Luther did not offer a caveat, or a disclaimer, that he did not know such emotion. In the gloss on Psalm 85, Luther again explained the passiveness of God’s attributes, as he had in Psalm 70, but this time there is a marked difference; now these are the attributes that God effects in us: “Therefore the power and fortitude of God, is that by which he makes us strong and victors.”⁶¹ The power of God and the fortitude of God Luther had explicitly mentioned in 1545 as corollaries to his understanding of the righteousness of God, as that by which God makes us righteous, strong, powerful, etc. The verbal action is now that of God, in Luther’s treatment of Psalm 85,

⁵⁶ *Hoc enim vocatur Iudicium dei: Sicut Iustitia vel virtus, vel sapientia dei: id est quo nos sapientes, fortes, iusti et humiles vel iudicati sumus.* WA 3.465,33–35.

⁵⁷ WA 54.186,10–13.

⁵⁸ *Sic “si nos ipsos iudicaremur, non utique a domino iudicaremur.”* WA 3.465,31–33.

⁵⁹ *Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum.* WA 3.643,32.

⁶⁰ *Ignotus est mihi iste affectus verborum istorum: ideo non mirum si parum digne illa exponam.* WA 3.643,32–34; cf. WA 3.549,30–35; WA 3.537,2–6.

⁶¹ *Igitur potentia et fortitudo Dei est, quo nos fortes et victores facit.* WA 4.22,36–37.

and in his preface of 1545. Just as he later noted in his Genesis commentary, it is God who, through his effective Word, spoke (*dixit*); in 1545 no less than in December of 1514 in his comments on Psalm 85, God is the one who acts (*facit*). Luther made his discovery in commenting on Psalm 84 in December 1514.

There is also other corroborating evidence. We must remember that what we are trying to discover is the time of Luther's discovery as he described it in 1545, without equating that discovery with Luther having worked out all its implications. We are not looking for the first evidence of Luther's mature, evangelical theology, for as he himself attests, he made his discovery before having realized all its implications, and he equated his discovery with only the beginnings of his recovery of the Gospel. The discovery itself was what Luther claimed opened the gates of heaven to him, that by which he felt that he had entered paradise. He also claimed, in a Table Talk, that "the holy spirit gave me this realization in the cloaca,"⁶² that is, that the holy spirit gave him his realization while Luther was in and/or on the toilet. Martin Brecht has interpreted this statement as follows:

Some of the Table Talks locate this experience of discovery in the tower. For this reason we speak about Luther's "tower experience." Others mention more specifically the cloaca tower, or simply the cloaca. As we know, Luther's heated study room was located in the third floor of the cloaca tower. No matter how much the conception of Luther making his reformatory discovery while on the privy may accord with the fantasies of polemicists, psychologists, and even theologians, it is really much more probable that he attained his insight at his desk while about his exegetical work. That the older Luther himself took a certain pleasure in locating the generalized spot of the discovery more specifically in the cloaca tower is something that cannot entirely be ruled out.⁶³

Brecht here has tried to sanitize Luther, relegating Luther's body and bawdy language to the "old Luther," whereas surely the young reformer would have made such a monumental discovery only hard at work behind his desk pouring over the scriptures. While such a purified, and puritanical reading of Luther may fit well with the Luther image of Lutheran piety, it refuses to come to terms with the historical Luther himself, and thus turns a blind eye to a central element of Luther's meaning. Heiko Oberman, against whose position Brecht was arguing, has shown that it

⁶² Oberman, *Luther*, p. 155.

⁶³ Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 227.

was not only the “old” Luther, but the “youngest” Luther as well who used scatological language.⁶⁴ As Oberman explained it:

There is a dignified way out: by cloaca Luther did not mean the toilet, but the study up in the tower above it. That, however, would be to miss the point of Luther’s provocative statement. The cloaca is not just a privy, it is the most degrading place for man and the Devil’s favorite habitat. Medieval monks already knew this, but the Reformer knows even more now: it is right here that we have Christ, the mighty helper, on our side. No spot is unholy for the Holy Ghost; this is the very place to express contempt for the adversary through trust in Christ crucified.⁶⁵

The cloaca, the toilet, associated with feces and the devil, is “the most degrading place for man,” and it is precisely there, in all our degradation, that Christ comes to us, that that Holy Spirit works its miracles of grace. In his treatment of Psalm 84:12, “Truth arises from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven,” Luther argued forcefully against those who try to turn the verse on its head, by claiming that righteousness originates on earth, and truth in heaven. This is a complete perversion, resulting from the desire to rely on one’s own righteousness, which then lifts one up to heaven. Righteousness is said to be from heaven, *de celo*, to show that it is not our righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, which we receive as ours from God’s promise. “Therefore,” Luther affirmed,

Christ came down to earth, so that he might raise us up to heaven. He comes to us where we are, so that he might lead us to where he is. But the promise makes for him coming to us. Therefore truth arises from the earth, because it was promised that he would come to us. And thus truth is complete. But his righteousness, which is in heaven, makes it possible that we come to him. And thus through truth he comes to us, and through righteousness, we come to him. And what a marvelous mixture. Therefore, those who do not want to be in heaven, are not justified, because righteousness does not originate from the earth, but remains in heaven, and looks down from heaven, choosing and drawing to itself only the elect.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Heiko Oberman, “*Teufelsdröck*: Eschatology and Scatology in the ‘Old’ Luther.” In *idem*, *The Impact of the Reformation*, pp. 51–68.

⁶⁵ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 155. Oberman’s point about Luther and the cloaca is well taken and is essential for understanding Luther’s theology. Recent archeological research, however, has indicated that the tower of Luther’s study was a different tower than the cloaca tower, which would then disallow the locational association of Luther’s discovery with his being on the toilet; see Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther*, p. 124.

⁶⁶ *Ideo enim venit Christus in terram, ut nos exaltaret in coelum. Venit ad nos ubi sumus, ut duceret ad se ubi est ipse. Sed quod ad nos venit, promissio fecit. Ideo de terra oritur veritas. Quia promissum fuit, ut ad nos veniret. Et sic expleta est veritas. Sed quod nos ad eum venimus, iustitia facit eius, que est in coelo. Et sic per veritatem ipse ad nos, per iustitiam ipsi ad eum. Et inde mira mixtura. Qui ergo*

Here we see Luther claiming that Christ comes down to us, to where we are. The locational imagery must not be overlooked. Luther did not say here that we are all on the toilet, but he did affirm that Christ “dirties” himself by coming to us, rather than drawing us to where he is, in heaven. He comes to us first, “where we are,” in order to lead us to where he is. It is a great perversion to turn the passage around, whereby righteousness is in on earth and truth is in heaven. The truth of the matter is that truth is on earth, which is the admission and recognition of the condition in which we find ourselves, and here, Christ comes. Christ comes to us where we are, wherever we are, even on the toilet, that most degrading place. When read in light of Luther later claiming that the Holy Spirit gave him his discovery while he was on the toilet, we can almost hear the water flushing in this passage on Psalm 84. Moreover, here we find as well the *Fröhliche Wechsel*, the *mira mixtio*, whereby Christ takes on our nature and gives us his. And this is the meaning of righteousness and mercy embracing and kissing each other. Righteousness is only given to those who want to be in heaven; by the giving of righteousness, Christ leads the sinner to where he is, in heaven. In 1545, Luther claimed that his discovery opened the gates of heaven, and that in his discovery, he felt that he had entered paradise. In commenting on Psalm 83, Luther confessed that he had never known the emotion of his heart and body exulting in the living God; in his exposition of Psalm 84, Luther had entered paradise.

There is further evidence for dating Luther's Tower Experience to December 1514. In his sermon on Christmas Day 1514, we find almost a giddy Luther, a Luther who made statements seemingly completely contradictory to everything he had said previously as well as afterwards, and an exposition that reveals the heart of his understanding of passiveness, for on Christmas Day 1514, in his sermon on John 1:1, Luther claimed that the philosophy of Aristotle was “beautiful” and “useful for the highest theology.” In this sermon one finds Luther's understanding of passiveness, and the understanding of passive righteousness Luther equated with his Reformation Breakthrough, his Tower Experience that opened for him the gates of paradise.

noluerunt esse in coelo, non sunt iustificati. Quia non iustitia de terra orta est, sed manet in coelo et prospicit de coelo eligens et electis tantum sese tribuens. WA 4.17,31–42. Brecht pointed to this exposition with respect to Luther's Galatians commentary by noting that here “Our righteousness comes down from heaven: the righteousness of the law, however, wants to rise to heaven. No longer is righteousness interpreted as tribulation, but as faith.” Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 288. While for Brecht, Luther in his Galatians commentary still had not had his Reformation Breakthrough, he had made development with respect to passive righteousness, which we see already in his comments of his *Dictata* in 1514 here cited.

To see how this was so, and to try to understand his enthusiasm for Aristotle in 1514, we need to go into greater depth with respect to Luther's relationship to Aristotle. In doing so, we will find that it was not as an Augustinian that Luther made his theological discovery, at least not as such, and it was not from reading Augustine either, or even Paul, for that matter. When it comes down to it, Brother Martin made his theological discovery, the one he described in 1545 as having opened the gates of paradise to him, and which has for ever so long been seen as his Reformation Breakthrough, as an Aristotelian, basing himself on the philosophy of Aristotle.

Pulchra Haec Philosophia: Luther and Aristotle

In his sermon preached in Latin most likely to the Wittenberg Augustinians on Christmas Day 1514, Brother Martin Luther discussed the opening of John's Gospel, and claimed: "See how fittingly Aristotle might serve theology in his own philosophy, even if not as he wished, but better understood and applied,"⁶⁷ and towards the end of the sermon he exclaimed: "This philosophy [i.e. Aristotle's] is beautiful, but understood by a few. It is useful for the highest theology."⁶⁸ Yet less than three years later Brother Martin seemingly summed up his view of "The Philosopher" in thesis 50 of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* of 1517: "In short, all Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light."⁶⁹ From the very beginning of his theological studies, Brother Martin appeared to be staunchly against Aristotle when in a comment in his notes on Peter Lombard of 1509/10, Brother Martin claimed that "theology is heaven, even more so, is the reign of the heaven; man, however, is earth and his speculations are smoke,"⁷⁰ and in his notes on St Augustine's *The City of God*, dating from the same period, we further find that he argued that many most impudent "big-mouths" hold that "Aristotle does not disagree with the catholic truth."⁷¹ Here Luther offered evidence of a critique of Aristotle from the very beginning of his theological study, a critique that was in keeping with the critique of Aristotle found in Brother Martin's fellow late medieval

⁶⁷ *Vide quam apte serviat Aristoteles in Philosophia sua Theologiae, si non ut ipse voluit, sed melius intelligitur et applicatur.* WA 1.28,19–21.

⁶⁸ *Pulchra haec Philosophia, sed a paucis intellecta, altissimae Theologiae utilis est.* WA 1.29,27–28.

⁶⁹ *Breviter, Totus Aristoteles ad theologiam est tenebrae ad lucem.* WA 1.226,26.

⁷⁰ ... *theologia est celum, immo regnum celorum, homo autem terra et ejus speculationes fumi.* WA 9.65,14–16; Matsura, pp. 435,18–436,1.

⁷¹ *Sed multo mirior nostratium qui Aristotelem non dissonare catholicae veritati impudentissime garrunt.* WA 9.27,22–24; Matsura, p. 645,16–17.

Augustinian hermits,⁷² and one that has been seen as further evidence that, by placing himself with Augustine over against Aristotle, Luther had rejected the entire scholastic tradition – both the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna*.⁷³ Thus, the degree to which Luther departed from Aristotle becomes the measuring stick of his break from his scholastic past. How then do we explain his exuberance over Aristotle's philosophy and its usefulness for the highest theology in his Christmas Day sermon of 1514?

In an early article, Heiko Oberman used Luther's *Disputation* and specifically thesis 50 as his point of departure for interpreting Luther's marginal notes of 1509/10. Oberman concluded that: "Not merely the 'young Luther,' but the 'youngest Luther,' even *before* beginning his career as a professor, as a biblical exegete, and eventually as a Reformer, has on points which later prove to be cornerstones in the structure of his thought become independent of the nominalistic tradition in which he was reared."⁷⁴ The major point to which Oberman referred is Luther's denial – already in 1509/10 – of the efficacy of the principle of "doing what is in one" (*facere quod in se est*) in relation to human reason, which Oberman found in the works of Robert Holcot, William Ockham, and Gabriel Biel. The Ockhamism of Biel was indeed the tradition in which Luther was reared. Hence, by rejecting the central nominalist doctrine of the *facere quod in se est*, at least in a restricted sense,⁷⁵ Luther appears independent from such a tradition. Nevertheless, as Oberman has demonstrated, Luther himself must be seen as a nominalist.⁷⁶ It was the nominalists' clear distinction

⁷² See Adolar Zumkeller, "Die Augustinertheologen Simon Fidati von Cascia und Hugolin von Orvieto und Martin Luthers Kritik an Aristoteles." *ARG* 54 (1963), 15–37; W. Eckerman, "Theologie gegen Philosophie? Anfragen an Luther." *Augustiniana* 34 (1984), 244–262; Karl Heinz Zur Mühlen, "Luthers Kritik am scholastischen Aristotelismus in der 25. these der 'Heidelberger Disputation' von 1518." *Luther Jahrbuch* 48 (1981), 54–79; Helmar Junghans, "Die probationes zu den philosophischen Thesen der Heidelberger Disputation Luthers im Jahre 1518." *Luther Jahrbuch* 46 (1979), 10–59; Friedrich Nitzsch, *Luther und Aristoteles* (Kiel, 1883); and Siegfried Wollgast, *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, 1550–1650* (Berlin, 1988), p. 129. More recently Theodor Dieter has offered the most thorough and complete analysis to date of Luther's use and knowledge of, and attitudes toward Aristotle in his study *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles. Eine historisch-systematische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001). Cf. [Chapter 4](#) of this volume, "Luther's Ways of Thought."

⁷³ Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 121, 158–161.

⁷⁴ Heiko A. Oberman, "Facientibus Quod in se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam: Robert Holcot, O.P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology." In *Dawn*, pp. 84–103, p. 97 and 103.

⁷⁵ Oberman has shown that the *facere quod in se est* was applied both to the will and to the reason; *ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

⁷⁶ Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 119–123. See also Graham White, *Luther as Nominalist. A Study of the Logical Methods Used in Martin Luther's Disputations in the Light of their Medieval Background* (Helsinki, 1994).

and separation between the realm of God's revelation and the realm of human reason that was central to Luther's development. If, however, we take a different approach than that offered by Oberman, we find that there may be another context for interpreting Luther's early development. Rather than Luther against Aristotle, this context is precisely the reverse: Luther as an Aristotelian.

Luther's Disputation Against Scholastic Theology: A Closer Look

I do not mean to deny the importance of Luther's fiftieth thesis in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* – "In short, all of Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light." I do, however, hope to show that this statement should not be taken unqualified as representative of Luther's thought 1509–1517. Oberman was certainly correct in noting the importance of thesis 46: "A logic of faith is invented in vain, an intermediate supposition (*suppositio mediata*) exceeding the term and number";⁷⁷ and that of thesis 47: "No syllogistic form in divine terms is valid."⁷⁸ Equally important, however, is thesis 48: "Nevertheless, it does not therefore follow that the truth of the article of the Trinity opposes syllogistic form."⁷⁹ This thesis is an indication that more is involved here for Luther than an all-out attack against Aristotle and his scholastic successors.⁸⁰ The "Aristotelian Luther" of his Christmas Day 1514 sermon not only praised Aristotle, noting the philosopher's usefulness for the highest theology, but also discussed the proper use of the syllogism and Aristotle for illuminating the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸¹ This sermon will thus serve as an interpretive window for seeing what lies behind theses 47 and 48. The point of departure, however, will be Brother Martin's earliest Trinitarian theology as culled from his notes on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. In these notes we find that in 1509 Luther had already developed basic philosophical principles for dealing with the relationship between the divine essence and the divine persons, principles based on terminist analysis, that became the foundation for his sermon of 1514 and for his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*.

⁷⁷ *Frustra fingitur logica fidei, Suppositio mediata extra terminum et numerum.* WA 1.226,19.

⁷⁸ *Nulla forma syllogistica tenet in terminis divinis.* WA 1.226,21. Cf. Oberman, *Dawn*, p. 98. The use of Aristotle's syllogistic for discussing the persons of the Trinity comprised the late medieval "crisis of logic," which will be discussed in more detail below.

⁷⁹ *Non tamen ideo sequitur, veritatem articuli trinitatis repugnare formis syllogisticis.* WA 1.226,22–23.

⁸⁰ Cf. Dieter, *Der junge Luther*, pp. 378–430.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 346–377.

Pertinent passages of Luther's treatment of the Trinity are found in his notes on book I of the *Sentences*, distinctions 4, 7, 9, 21, 24, 25, and 33. In his comments on distinction 4, [chapter 2](#), Luther responded to the question: "Whether God generates God?" by referring to Pierre d'Ailly's *Sentences* commentary book I, q. 5, art. 1, in which, according to Luther, d'Ailly accepted as true the proposition: "God generates another God, just as three persons, and one generates another."⁸² This leads to the conclusion that there are three gods. However, because such a conclusion was deemed heretical by the Church, it may not be used in theology.⁸³ Without explicitly opposing d'Ailly at this point, Luther proceeded to explain how the statement, "God generates God" (*Deus genuit deum*) is to be understood.

Luther's solution consisted in the proper emphasis placed on the terms of a qualifying phrase, resulting in the following valid proposition: "God the Father generates God who is not the Father, who is God," and "God the Father generates God, who is not God who is the Father."⁸⁴ The error of positing three gods results from an erroneous understanding of the term "father." In distinction 9 Luther explained that "father" is a relative term because "a father is not a father except from his son, or from bringing forth sons."⁸⁵

Luther's understanding of "father" is further clarified in distinction 21, in which he discussed the proper distribution of the syncategorematic exclusive term "only" (*solus*). This is based on a distinction between an essential term (*nomen essentiale*) and a personal term (*nomen personale*). A true exclusive proposition is formed when the exclusive "only" (*solus*) modifies an essential term (*nomen essentiale*) in the subject and distributes to the predicate. However, if "only" modifies a personal term (*nomen personale*) in the subject with an essential term (*nomen essentiale*) in the predicate, the proposition is always false. Thus the proposition "Only God is the Father, creates, is adored, generates, etc." is true but the proposition "Only the Father is God, creates, etc." is always false.⁸⁶ The important point to note

⁸² *Deus genuit alium deum: sicut tres personae: et una genuit alteram.* Matsura, p. 282,14–16.

⁸³ *Cameracensis q. 5 art. 1, concedit has esse veras, sed non in usum trahendas: tres sunt dii: Deus genuit alium deum: sicut tres personae: et una genuit alteram. Nam illae sunt negatae ab Ecclesia propter veritatis hereticorum utpater ex Aug. li. v. c. ix.* Matsura, pp. 282,14–283,1; *WA* 9,34,13–17.

⁸⁴ *Deus pater genuit deum qui non est pater, qui deus est, and Deus pater genuit deum qui non est deus, qui pater est.* Matsura, p. 283,9–20; *WA* 9,34,19–20.

⁸⁵ *Ego dicerem quod pater non est pater nisi ex filio siue filiatione.* Matsura, p. 301,17–18; *WA* 9,38,28–29.

⁸⁶ *Igitur quodcumque ponitur a parte subjecti nomen essentiale cum signo "solus": tunc quodcumque praedicatum sit, vera est exclusiua ut: solus deus est pater, creat, adoratur, generat, etc. Quodcumque autem a parte subjecti ponitur nomen personale et a parte praedicati nomen essentiale, semper est falsa propositio ut: solus pater est deus, creat, etc. Quando autem signum ponitur a parte praedicati, tunc si solus adhaeret praedicato, nihil novi facit, quam is non esset exclusiua. Usu tamen communi etiam si*

here is that for Luther “father” is a relative personal term (*nomen personale*) that does not supposit for an essential term (*nomen essentiale*).

Although Luther did not explicitly draw on supposition theory, it is most helpful for understanding his distinction between essential and personal terms. In distinctions 24 and 25 Luther treated the proper signification of such terms. Discussing “person” (*persona*) and “essence” (*essentia*), Luther stated that “person” is a “common term” (*nomen commune*) and “essence” is a “common thing” (*res communis*).⁸⁷ In divinity, “person” is a “common term” (*nomen commune*) and signifies the divine substance (*substantia deitatis*).⁸⁸ However, “person” does not supposit for the divine substance because it is common to a plurality (i.e. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and plurality, or multiplicity as Luther stated in distinction 24, is denied to essence.⁸⁹ Thus the term “father,” as a personal term (*nomen personale*), signifies the divine essence but cannot supposit for the divine essence. If the proper supposition is not strictly followed, the result will be a false proposition such as: “The Father is the Son,” a fallacy Luther treated in distinction 33.

In this distinction Luther responded to the proposition: “The Father is the Son” (*pater est filius*). Once again supposition theory aids our understanding of Luther. Although Luther rejected the proposition if it is taken to mean that the three persons of the Trinity are three essences,⁹⁰ he did allow for the proposition to be true. The key term is “essence.” Since “father” signifies the divine essence as does “son,” the father is the son with respect to their common essence. The divine essence is the source of their identity.⁹¹ However, if “father” and “son” were to supposit for the divine essence, the proposition would be false, implying two divine essences. This error can be avoided by the proper qualification of the terms. Luther posited the following syllogism: “A person is the essence; another person is the same; therefore a person is a person, or something that is the same.”⁹² The “something that is the same” (*quod idem*) ensures that

ponatur a parte praedicati, determinat vel copulam vel subjectum ut: pater est solus deus. Si illa tantum valet: pater est id quod est solus deus, est vera. Si autem valet: pater est solus i.e. pater est seorsum vel singulariter deus, est falsa et tunc est eadem cum illa: Solus pater est deus. Matsura, p. 336,13–24; WA 9.46,29–47,2.

⁸⁷ Matsura, p. 345,27–28; WA 9.48,23–24.

⁸⁸ Matsura, p. 345, 29–30; WA 9.48,25–27.

⁸⁹ Matsura, p. 342, 30–35; WA 9.48,10–13.

⁹⁰ Matsura, p. 374,27–28; WA 9.54,3–4.

⁹¹ Matsura, p. 374,1–6; WA 9.54,6–11.

⁹² *Sic: persona est essentia; persona alia est eadem; igitur persona est persona: siue quod idem est.* Matsura, p. 375,9–14; WA 9.54,12–16.

the inference is understood according to the significative function of the terms, namely, that “in which they cohere” (*in qua conveniunt*).⁹³ If the qualification is not present, the way is open for a suppositional understanding of the argument and the confusion of personal and essential terms resulting in falsehood.

The proper distinction between a personal term (*nomen personale*) and an essential term (*nomen essenziale*) is the basis on which the question “Whether the Father is able to generate?” (*utrum pater potuit generare*) is answered, a question that Luther treated in distinction 7. The danger of this question was that if the father – as God – was able to generate, and if the son – as God – was able to generate, the result would be two gods.⁹⁴ Luther once again pointed to the distinction between personal and essential terms. The ability to generate (*posse generare*) is the very definition of the relative term “father” as mentioned where the father is the father from bringing forth sons (*ex filiatione*); it does not refer to that which “father” signifies (*significatum*), i.e. the divine essence. Thus, there is no limitation of the divine essence’s capabilities (*posse*) which could be posited if “son” supposits for the divine essence, since “son” is not able to generate. Thus Luther wrote: “The Father is able to generate and the Son not; therefore the Father is able to be the Father and the Son is not able to be the Father, and this is true.”⁹⁵ The clear distinction between personal and essential terms is the all important factor for correctly explaining the relationship between the divine essence, the Father, the Son, and the ability to generate (*posse generare*).

In Luther’s treatment of the Trinity in his notes on Lombard we see the philosophical foundation upon which he built his attack on the modern logicians in his sermon of 1514. This in turn is the lens through which we need to interpret theses 47 and 48 of Luther’s *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. Thus, we can paraphrase Oberman: not only the young Luther, but the youngest Luther, had already formulated philosophical principles that became the basis for his refutation of his scholastic predecessors. In turning to his sermon on the Prologue of John’s Gospel we will see how these principles were applied.

⁹³ Matsura, p. 375,14; *WA* 9,54,16.

⁹⁴ Matsura, p. 293,9–294,1; *WA* 9,37,31–35.

⁹⁵ *pater potest generare et filius non, igitur pater potest esse pater et filius non potest esse pater, et hoc est verum*. Lombard, I *Sent.* d. 7 c. 1; Matsura, p. 293,11–13; *WA* 9,37,8–10.

Luther began his discussion of John 1:1 by establishing that the Word is none other than the Son of God.⁹⁶ Since the Evangelist wrote not only “In the beginning was the Word,” but added, “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” a treatment of the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit was necessary. The problem lay in preserving both the unity of the divinity and the distinction between the divine persons. Luther asserted that: “whatever is God, this is the Father, and whatever is God is itself the Son,”⁹⁷ echoing the “that which is the same” (*quod idem*) of his notes on Lombard. He then lashed out against the modern logicians:

Hence, this supposition of the modern logicians, which they call complete, ought to be despised: for I did not say “whoever is God, is the Father or the Son,” so that I would mix up the persons, but “whatever,” that is, the entire nature of God, “is the Father and is the Son,” so that I might defend the unity of the [divine] substance. For “whatever” signifies and distributes not personality, but essentiality, “whoever,” on the other hand, signifies and distributes personality, of which the latter term is masculine and the former is neuter, just as someone and something.⁹⁸

This passage offers no surprises for someone who is familiar with the traditional reading of Luther’s *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. However, what immediately follows does indeed, especially if sufficient attention is not paid to thesis 48. Luther directed thesis 47, which denied the validity of syllogistic for divine terms, and thesis 48, which claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity does not oppose the syllogism, against the late fourteenth-century theologian, Pierre d’Ailly, with whose position Luther was already familiar in 1509. In continuing the quoted passage from his 1514 sermon, Luther attacked the position of d’Ailly and claimed that he, Luther, can preserve both the truth of the Trinity *and* the truth of syllogistic. Luther did this not by dismissing the validity of Aristotle, or by claiming that logic and faith pertain to two separate realms, but rather, by putting forth a first figure syllogism in the mood *Darii* that indeed is valid in divine terms (*in terminis divinis*):

⁹⁶ WA 1.20,7–13.

⁹⁷ ... *quicquid est Deus, hoc est Pater, et quicquid est Deus, id ipsum est Filius*. WA 1.21,37–38.

⁹⁸ *Unde hic contemnenda suppositio modernorum logicorum, quam vocant completam: non enim dico “quisquis est Deus, est Pater vel Filius,” ut personas confunderem, sed “quicquid,” i.e., tota natura Dei, “est Pater et Filius,” ut unitatem Substantiae asseram: “quicquid” enim non personalia sed essentialia significat et distribuit, “quisquis” autem personalia, quorum hoc generis masculini, istud neutrius, sicut alius et aliud*. WA 1.21,38–22,3.

Hence it is evident that [the modern logicians] do not sufficiently understand their own logic when they claim that “whatever is God, is the Father” is false. For they conclude “but the Son is God, therefore the Son is the Father.” But this is a fallacy of the figure of speech and a personal term is taken up under an essentially distributed term. Wherefore a far better means is able to be attributed [to solving this problem], by which the truth of the article [of faith] and the truth of the rules of syllogistic are preserved, than that attributed to it by the Bishop of Cambrai [Pierre d’Ailly], that is, because every syllogism consisting of divine terms, which results in a false conclusion, most certainly errs according to the fallacy of equivocation or the fallacy of the figure of speech. And here it comes about that not all divine propositions are able to be given syllogistic form, and if they are, they yield this fallacy, such as: “every Father generates, the essence of God is the Father, therefore the essence generates.” Here it is obvious, since an essential term is subsumed under a personal term and therefore there is no conclusion of the distributive term. Why is there any wonder, therefore, if the conclusion is false? So even there: “no divinity generates, but every person is divine, therefore no person generates.” But it ought to be concluded thus: “but that divinity A is divine, therefore that divinity [namely, that divinity A] does not generate.” And in the first example, “but that Father [namely, that Father who is the first person of the Trinity] is a father, therefore that Father generates.” But these [principles] pertain more generally to logic. Here, however, [logic] is brought in for the illumination of that phrase, “God was the Word.”⁹⁹

When placed in the context of the late medieval crisis of logic concerning the universality of Aristotelian syllogistic to be discussed in more detail later, on the basis of this passage, Luther in 1514 would appear to hold the position that Aristotelian formal logic is indeed universally valid. He did not say, as he would almost three years later, that “every syllogism of divine terms ... most certainly errs according to the fallacy of equivocation or the fallacy of the figure of speech,” but rather qualified his

⁹⁹ *Unde patet, quod nec suam logicam satis intelligunt, quando hanc falsam asserunt “quicquid est Deus, et Pater.” Subsummunt enim “sed Filius est Deus, ergo Filius est Pater.” Sed est Fallacia Figurae dictionis et sub termino essentiali distributo subsumitur terminus personalis. Unde multo melior modus potest assignari, quo salvetur veritas huius Articuli et regularum Syllogisticarum, quam a Cameracense assignatur, iste scilicet, quod omnis Syllogismus ex terminis divinis, qui infert conclusionem falsam, certissime peccat secundum Fallaciam equivocationis vel Figurae dictionis. Et hinc fit, ut non omnes propositiones divinae possint intrare formam Syllogisticam, et si intrant, faciunt hanc Fallaciam, ut: “omnis Pater generat, Dei Essentia est Pater, ergo Essentia generat.” Manifeste patet, quoniam subsumitur sub termino personali terminus essentialis, atque ita non fit subsumtio termini distributi. Quid ergo mirum, si falsum concludatur? Sic etiam ibi: “nulla divinitas generat, sed omnis persona est divinitas, ergo nulla persona generat.” Sed sic debuit subsumi: “sed ista divinitas A est divinitas, ergo ista divinitas non generat.” Et in priori sic: “sed iste pater est pater, ergo iste pater generat.” Sed haec ad Logicam pertinent latius, hic autem pro illius orationis luce “Deus erat verbum” adducta. WA 1.22,3–21.*

statement: “Every syllogism consisting of divine terms, *which results in a false conclusion* [emphasis mine], most certainly errs according to the fallacy of equivocation or the fallacy of the figure of speech.” With the revealed truth of the Trinity being a given, Luther could use a formal syllogism to describe that truth. What Luther attacked is the opinion that a valid formal syllogism contradicts revealed truth. Since seemingly Aristotle’s logic is indeed universally valid, if it contradicts the truth of scripture the error is not to be found in the rules of logic themselves, but rather in the application of the rules, namely, in the fallacy of equivocation or in the fallacy of the figure of speech, both of which result from improper supposition.

Luther’s solution to the problem was not out of step with those of his scholastic predecessors. However, in the latter part of his sermon of 1514 Luther did introduce an application of Aristotle to the doctrine of the Trinity that, to my knowledge, is indeed new. Hester Gelber argued that Duns Scotus was the first to move the discussion of the Trinity from the realm of epistemology to the realm of logic.¹⁰⁰ In this sermon, Luther appears to be moving the discussion from Aristotelian logic to Aristotelian physics and psychology.

Luther began by invoking Aristotle’s physics of motion, whereby the motion of a moveable subject and the subject – in so far as it is moveable – are identical.¹⁰¹ Thus, “the birth of an animate being is the animate being itself in so far as it is an animate being (*in quantum huiusmodi*), because birth is the act of living in so far as it is a living being (*in quantum huiusmodi*).”¹⁰² Claiming that according to Aristotle motion is the very essence of God (*motus est ipsa essentia Dei secundum Aristotelem*)¹⁰³ Luther used such analysis to describe the relations of the divine persons.

Luther pointed to the parallel between St Augustine’s Trinitarian analogy of mind, memory, and will, or mind, knowledge, and love, and the “Trinity of motion” of the subject, the motion, and rest:

the thing, motion, and rest are one and three, because as long as a thing exists, it has the capability of being moved, and thus motion proceeds

¹⁰⁰ Hester Gelber, “Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300–1335.” University of Wisconsin PhD dissertation 1974, pp. 88, 102, and 207. As cited by Michael H. Shank, “*Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand.*” *Logic, University, and Society in Late Medieval Vienna* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), p. 65.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Dieter, *Der junge Luther*, pp. 276–377.

¹⁰² ... *nascencia animati est ipsum animatus in quantum huiusmodi, quia est actus vivi in quantum huiusmodi.* WA 1.27,25–26.

¹⁰³ WA 1.27,23.

from its being, not in as much as it is, but because as long as the thing is, it is moveable, from which mobility motion proceeds; rest and the end of motion, however, arise from both motion and mobility. For thus there occurs in every motion that as the part acquired ceases to be acquired, and then mobility would be rest, even so the same thing in respect to the end which it seeks, is moved, but in respect to that which it acquires, it is rest. Wherefore, with respect to itself it is both moved and is quiet, it is always beginning and stopping, it is always in the beginning and in the end. So it is in divinity, when God is always moved and at rest (if the reader will allow the expression of such great matters in unworthy words), the Son proceeds by moving and the Holy Spirit proceeds by being at rest. Because the Holy Spirit is the end of the emanation of God, or even more so, while motion always proceeds from the Father, that is, the motion which is the Son, rest is always achieved from both, in which both the mobility and the motion is fulfilled. But that eternal motion is there, and so is the eternal rest. See how fittingly Aristotle might serve theology in his own philosophy, even if not as he wished, but better understood and applied.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ *Videmus itaque quomodo in qualibet re et creatura multipliciter elucet processio verbi ex Patre, licet non aequaliter in omnibus. Nam motus rei inanimatae imperfectissime quidem id ostendit, quia parva est multiplicatio ista, qua idem multiplicatur, quando in multa movetur, non tamen nulla. Sicut autem motus est ipsa essentia Dei secundum Aristotelem, qui dicit, quod [motus] sit actus mobilis in quantum huiusmodi, Similiter est dicendum, quod multo magis nascentia animati est ipsum animatum in quantum huiusmodi, quia est actus vivi in quantum huiusmodi. Accipio autem nascentiam vel incrementum propter penuriam nominum hic pro omni actu animati, sicut motus est omnis actus inanimati et sensus sensitivi, cogitatio rationis, verbum intellectus. Igitur sicut motus non tantum localem significat, sed etiam alias species, quibus res ipsa multiplicat in seipsa, ut albedo, quantitas &c., ita nascentia hic sit nutritio, augmentatio, generatio, quae est actus ipsius vivi vel ipsum vivum, non in quantum est arbor, lignum, herba, sed in quantum huiusmodi, i.e., vivum, secundum Philosophiam Aristotelis. Ita sensatio est non nisi ipsa essentia sensitivae rei, i.e., est actus sensitivi in quantum huiusmodi. Sic verbum est intellectus ipse in quantum huiusmodi. Quae omnia ex identitate motus cum mobili facile intelliguntur, quia omnia illa quidam motus sunt, ut dictum est. Ita ergo et Filius Dei est ipsa essentia Dei, et esse divinum est ipsum verbum, solo scilicet illo ineffabili et superintelligibili motu ab eo descendens. Ulterius etiam id perpende, quod omnis res motu et non secundum esse attingit terminum ad quem, vel saltem non in quantum est, sed in quantum mobile est attingit. Sic sensualis natura non per esse, sed per potentiam sentiendi pervenit ad sensibile vel sensationem. Ita ratio, ita intellectus, ita Deus non per esse, sed per producere suum sese multiplicat. Hoc est, quod essentia nec generat nec generatur. Quare sequitur, quod B. Augustinus optime dicit, quod mens, memoria, voluntas, seu mens, notitia, amor sunt una vita et tres vitae. Sic, si in re inanimata diceret, res, motus, quies sunt unum et tria, quia dum res est, iam apta est moveri, et sic ex esse fluit motus, non in quantum est, sed quia, dum res est, est mobilis, ex qua mobilitate fluit motus, ex utroque autem, motu et mobilitate, oritur quies et finis motus. In omni enim motu sic fit, ut pars acquisita cesset acquiri et sit ibi quies mobilis, et ita eadem res respectu termini quem quaerit movetur, sed respectu eius quem acquisivit quiescit. Quare sibi et movetur et quiescit, sibi incipit semper et desinit, sibi est in principio et fine semper. Ita in divinis fit: ubi semper Deus movetur et quiescit (parce, lector, verbis indignis tantae rei expressione), movendo filius, quiescendo Spiritus Sanctus procedit. Quia Spiritus Sanctus finis est emanationis Dei, imo dum semper ex Patre profluit motus, i.e. filius, semper ex utroque provenit quies, in qua et mobile et motus finitur. Sed motus ille aeternus est ibi, ita et quies aeterna. Vide quam apte serviat Aristoteles in Philosophia sua Theologiae, si non ut ipse voluit, sed melius intelligitur et applicatur. WA 1.27,18–28,21.*

Based on his adherence to Aristotelian logic and physics as seen in this sermon, it may be most appropriate to say that in 1514 Luther was an Aristotelian.

How are we to understand, therefore, not only his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, but also the comment in his notes on Peter Lombard of 1509/10 where he claimed that “theology is heaven, even more so, is the reign of the heaven; man, however, is earth and his speculations are smoke”?¹⁰⁵ And how do we interpret his notes on St Augustine’s *The City of God* in which Luther claimed that many most impudent “big-mouths” hold that “Aristotle does not disagree with the catholic truth”?¹⁰⁶ An answer may be found by placing Luther’s discussion of the validity of the syllogism consisting of divine terms in the context of the late medieval crisis in logic. What was Luther attacking and from what source or sources did he draw?

Luther the Scholastic

The crisis in logic of the fourteenth century centered on the universality of Aristotelian formal logic, and has received monographic treatment.¹⁰⁷ If the rules of syllogistic stated by Aristotle were not valid in every circumstance, the formal nature of logic would be denied. In the inference – A is B; C is A; therefore C is B – when the variables are replaced by terms signifying the Trinity, it yields the following conclusion: The divine essence is the Father; the Son is the divine essence; therefore the Son is the Father. This conclusion contradicts revealed truth. Even though both the major and the minor premises are true, the conclusion is false. In divine terms, the universal validity of Aristotle’s rules of syllogistic seemingly do not hold and therefore logic cannot be formal.

Various attempts were made to meet this challenge with the majority of theologians drawing on the doctrine of fallacy from Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations* to prove that the inference is not a valid syllogism at all, thereby preserving the formal nature of logic. Thus Ockham asserted the absolute universality of the syllogism, solving the fallacious paralogism by taking recourse – in this unique instance alone – to Duns Scotus’s formal

¹⁰⁵ ... *theologia est celum, immo regnum celorum, homo autem terra et ejus speculationes fumi*. Matsura, p. 435,18–436,1; WA 9.65,14–16.

¹⁰⁶ *Sed multo mirior nostratium qui Aristotelem non dissonare catholicae veritati impudentissime garriunt*. Matsura, p. 645,16–17; WA 9.27,22–24.

¹⁰⁷ See n. 100. See also Gelber’s *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason: Three Questions on the Nature of God* by Robert Holcot, O.P. (Toronto, 1983).

distinction.¹⁰⁸ Robert Holcot, on the other hand, speaking for the minority opinion, claimed that Aristotle's syllogistic did not hold for theological truths, but what was needed in addition to natural logic, was a supernatural logic of faith (*logica fidei*).¹⁰⁹ Moving from fourteenth-century Oxford to sixteenth-century Wittenberg, we find Luther still addressing the problem of the relationship between Aristotle's logic and Trinitarian theology.

Placing Luther within the context of this late medieval debate is problematic because he treated the issue in the context of refuting false opinions rather than giving a theoretical exposition. In addition, in his sermon of 1514 his attack on Pierre d'Ailly is not overly helpful since neither d'Ailly nor any other theologian would have accepted unqualifiedly the position Luther refutes, namely, that the Son is the Father. Nevertheless, this debate is the proper context for interpreting both this sermon and theses 45–50 of the *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. Hence we will proceed on the basis of circumstantial evidence and offer some probable conclusions that will help us better understand Luther's thought.

As I have mentioned, Luther lashed out against d'Ailly in his Christmas Day sermon of 1514 and directed theses 47 and 48 of his *Disputation, contra Cameracensem*. Theses 47 and 48, however, are seemingly contradictory. How can it be that no syllogistic form holds in divine terms and that the Trinity does not oppose syllogistic form? Further, how can d'Ailly be said to hold both positions? Beginning with thesis 48, according to Alfonso Maierù, in his answer to the question posed in his *Sentences* commentary book I, q. 5, art. 3 – the classical place for discussions of the syllogism with divine terms – d'Ailly made a distinction between conclusions appearing as true and existing as true. A syllogism that yields a false conclusion, such as “the Son is the Father,” but which is valid formally, known as a paralogism, is true in appearance, but it is not true in existence. This led d'Ailly to assert that such conclusions must be purely believed to be false.¹¹⁰ It is faith that tells us that paralogisms are either materially or formally defective; this is not evident to reason. As we have seen, in 1509 Luther was aware of d'Ailly's solution of the proposition “God generates God” (*deus genuit deum*), which according to Luther d'Ailly accepted, although acknowledging that it was counter to the teaching of the Church.¹¹¹ This

¹⁰⁸ See Philotheus Boehner, *Collected Articles on Ockham* (St Bonaventure, NY, 1958), pp. 365–366, and Shank, *Unless You Believe*, pp. 67–68.

¹⁰⁹ See Shank, *Unless You Believe*, pp. 74–79, and Oberman, *Dawn*, pp. 84–103.

¹¹⁰ A. Maierù, “Logique et Théologie trinitaire: Pierre d'Ailly.” In Zenon Kaluza and Paul Vignaux, eds., *Preuve et raisons à l'Université de Paris. Logique, ontologie et théologie au XIV^e siècle* (Paris, 1984), pp. 253–268, 206.

¹¹¹ Matsura, p. 282,14–283,1; *WA* 9.39,13–16.

position places the formality of logic and the doctrine of the Trinity in opposition. In his notes on Lombard, Luther explained the proper understanding of the phrase: “God the Father generates God” (*Deus pater genuit deum*), whereas in 1517 we find not explanation, but condemnation of the apparent contradiction of faith and reason expressed in thesis 48 of his *Disputation*.

How, then, are we to understand thesis 47, especially in light of Luther’s use of a first figure syllogism to explain the relationship between the divine essence, the Father, and the Son in his 1514 sermon? A possible key is found in thesis 49: “If syllogistic form holds in divine [terms], the article of the Trinity will be known and not believed.”¹¹² In book II, [chapter 3](#) of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle equated scientific knowledge with demonstration.¹¹³ Demonstration proceeds from principles known in themselves, to lesser known conclusions, or, as he states at the outset of the work, reasoning “makes use of old knowledge to impart new.”¹¹⁴ For Luther, the doctrine of the Trinity is known in itself through revelation. There is no new knowledge about the Trinity that can be attained outside belief, and thus demonstration concerning the Trinity is invalid, which Luther asserted in thesis 47. But now what do we do with thesis 48 and Luther’s valid syllogism *in terminis divinis* in his sermon on John 1:1?

Returning to the *Posterior Analytics*, this time to book II, [chapter 8](#), based on a distinction between definition and demonstration, Aristotle argued that there can be no demonstrative syllogism of essential nature, but that essential nature can be exhibited through the syllogism.¹¹⁵ For Luther, the doctrine of the Trinity concerns the essential nature of the divine essence and the proper relationship between the persons is part of the definition of the Trinity. Thus, there is no demonstrative syllogism in divine terms that is valid, and yet, the doctrine of the Trinity can be exhibited through a demonstrative syllogism which Luther did on Christmas Day 1514. Both thesis 47 and thesis 48 are in keeping with Aristotle’s logic.

Luther posited his first figure syllogism not to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, but rather to illustrate that the doctrine of the Trinity is not opposed to the rules of syllogistic. The error lies not in the rules of formal logic, but in trying to make demonstrable what can only be believed. The rules governing the syllogism are indeed universally valid. Thus, thesis 46

¹¹² *Si forma syllogistica tenet in divinis, articulus trinitatis erit scitus et non creditus.* WA 1.226,24–25.

¹¹³ Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York, 1941), p. 161, lines 9–11.

¹¹⁴ *Analytica Posteriora* I, i, McKeon, *Basic Works*, p. 110, lines 1–6.

¹¹⁵ McKeon, *Basic Works*, p. 169, lines 16–18.

of Luther's *Disputation* – “In vain does one devise a logic of faith”¹¹⁶ – should not be interpreted as evidence for Luther's rejection of the use of logic in theological discourse.¹¹⁷ Rather, when juxtaposed with Holcot's asserting the need for a *logica fidei* since he denied the universality of Aristotle's logic, thesis 46 is further proof that Luther upheld the formal nature of the syllogism; a special logic of faith is superfluous precisely because the rules of Aristotelian syllogistic are universally valid, a position Luther shared with Ockham. In this light, thesis 47 does not negate the validity of logic, but rather protects revealed truths from becoming subject to logical demonstration.

This is also the basis of his attack on d'Ailly. D'Ailly indeed asserted that the error of a paralogism had to be believed, but this did not prevent him from upholding the validity of using demonstration in matters concerning the Trinity. He even went so far as to claim as blasphemous those “who say that it is useless to debate about such matters, but it simply suffices to believe.”¹¹⁸ In this context Luther's thesis 47 directed against d'Ailly should be read in light of thesis 49 and thus thesis 47 should either be taken as a reversal from his position in 1514, or read as “No *demonstrative* syllogistic form holds in divine terms.” The dichotomy here, for Luther, is not so much one between logic and faith, as it is between demonstration and explanation, which, as noted above, is consistent with Aristotle's rules of demonstration in his *Posterior Analytics*.

In the above analysis, Luther appears rather as a moderate in the late medieval crisis of logic. He held the position that the relationship between formal logic and the doctrine of the Trinity was neither one of unqualified opposition, nor one whereby the latter was demonstrated by the former. Moreover, Luther's high estimation of logic continued throughout his career, as can be seen in the his *Disputation on the Phrase: The Word was made Flesh* (*Disputatio de sententia: Verbum caro factum est*) of 11 January 1539, albeit containing an important shift. In this disputation of the “old” Luther, we find him still upholding the universal formality of the syllogism. Thesis 16 of the disputation states: “That expository syllogism: The Father in divine terms generates; the Father is the divine essence; therefore the divine essence generates, is valid,” and thesis 18: “That common

¹¹⁶ *Frustra fingitur logica fidei*. WA 1.226,19.

¹¹⁷ Oberman, *Dawn*, pp. 97–98.

¹¹⁸ *Ideo apparet blasphemia quorundam imperitorum catholicorum, maxime iuristarum praelatorum et aliorum, qui dicunt inutile esse de hac materia disputare, sed sufficit simpliciter credere*. As quoted by Maierù, “Logique et Théologie trinitaire: Pierre d'Ailly,” p. 255. According to Maierù, d'Ailly sought a *via media* between demonstration and fideism (p. 262).

syllogism: The entire divine essence is the Father; the Son is the divine essence; therefore the Son is the Father, is valid.”¹¹⁹ However, theses 17 and 19 qualify their antecedents; thus thesis 17: “And although the premises are true, the conclusion is false, and thus from truth, falsehood follows against the principles of philosophy,” and thesis 19: “But the premises are true, and the conclusion is false, and here the truth is completely in consonant with the truth.”¹²⁰

Whereas in 1514 Luther resolved such paralogisms on the basis of the doctrine of fallacies, in 1539 we find an important shift; the addition of material logic. Responding to the syllogism of thesis 25: “All flesh is a creature; the Word is not a creature; therefore the Word is not flesh,”¹²¹ Luther stated in thesis 26: “In these and similar cases, the form of the syllogism is fine, but the material renders them void.”¹²² In the tenth argument of the disputation, Luther was explicit that he is not denying the formal nature of the syllogism, but the error occurs because of the *materia*.¹²³ The universal formality of the syllogism is preserved, but the paralogism is resolved not by pointing to the fallacy, but by dividing the argument into form (*forma*) and material (*materia*).

This shift should not be understood as Luther rejecting the applicability of logic, or as a widening gap between philosophy and theology. The distinction between the *forma* and *materia* of an argument Luther may very well have learned from Philip Melanchthon. In his *Four Books on Dialectic (Dialectica Libri IIII)* of 1527 Melanchthon wrote:

Here however students should be warned that the question concerning an argument is two-fold, for one thing is required regarding the material of arguments, whereby in each and every case arguments are attributed to things ... and the other requirement regards the form of arguments, namely, that by which the chosen material ought to be brought together in the proper form.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ *Iste syllogismus expository: Pater in divinis generat. Pater est essentia divina. Ergo essentia divina generat, est bonus, and Iste syllogismus communis: Omnis essentia divina est Pater. Filius est essentia divina. Ergo filius est pater, est bonus.* WA 39 II.4,24–25 and 28–29.

¹²⁰ *Et tamen praemissae sunt verae, conclusio falsa, et ita ex vero sequitur falsum contra philosophiam, and Sed praemissae sunt verae, et conclusio falsa, et verum vero hic prorsus non consonat.* WA 39 II.4,26–27 and 30–31.

¹²¹ *Omnis caro est creatura; Verbum non est creatura; ergo verbum non est caro.* WA 39 II.5,5–6.

¹²² *In his et similibus syllogismus est forma optima, sed nihil ad materiam.* WA 39 II.5,7–8.

¹²³ *Nos non damnamus formulas, dicimus, quod pulchre sequeretur non ex vitio syllogismi, sed ex magnitudine materiae.* WA 39 II.18,11–12.

¹²⁴ *Hic autem monendi sunt adolescentes duplicem esse de argumentatione questionem, alias enim de materia argumentorum praecipitur, a quibus rebus in unaquaque causa trabenda sint argumenta ... alias de forma argumentorum praecipitur, videlicet inventa materia qua forma connecti debeat ...* *Dialectica Libri IIII*, (Lyon, 1534), p. 69. See also *Erotemata Dialectices*, CR 13, col. 595.

Thus Luther's shift resulted from his consideration of a logical element with which he was not concerned in 1514. Based on the distinction between form and matter, in 1539 Luther still accepted the universal validity of the formal syllogism.

Thus far in our discussion of Luther's place within the late medieval crisis of logic we have seen the positions Luther attacked, but what were the sources, if any, upon which he drew? Again having to be restricted to circumstantial evidence, we can suggest that consistent with, if not direct sources of, Luther's position were the Ockhamist tradition and the *via Gregorii*.

In Luther's sermon of 1514 the major distinction used for discussing the Trinity in terms of syllogistic is that between essence and person. As already noted, Luther made the distinction between "whatever" (*quicquid*) and "whoever" (*quisquis*), whereby the former signifies essence and the latter person. He pointed to the fact the while "whoever" (*quisquis*) is masculine, and hence refers to person, "whatever" (*quicquid*) is neuter and indicates essence.¹²⁵ Thus, in the valid first figure syllogism which Luther posits, the minor premise introduces the person – "that divinity A" (*ista divinitas A*) and "that father" (*iste pater*). The fallacy of equivocation or the fallacy of the figure of speech, for Luther, is taking an essential term for a personal term. On the basis of the distinction between essence and person, signified by the gender difference, the minor premise must be taken in the personal sense in order for the syllogism to be valid.¹²⁶

Luther was not original in introducing a gender distinction into the discussion of the Trinity. Such a distinction is to be found in the Ockhamist tradition, although not with Ockham himself. The *One Hundred Theological Statements* (*Centiloquium Theologicum*) was perhaps the first treatise in which we find gender distinction in matters of the Trinity. This work had been attributed to Ockham, but Hester Gelber has convincingly argued for the authorship of the Dominican Arnold of Strelley (d. after 1347).¹²⁷ In conclusion 55, Strelley wrote:

¹²⁵ WA 1.22,1–3.

¹²⁶ WA 1.22,14–19.

¹²⁷ See Hester Gelber, "Ockham's Early Influence: A Question about Predestination and Foreknowledge by Arnold of Strelley, O.P." *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* (1988), 255–289. For an analysis of the *Centiloquium* in relationship to Ockham, see Philotheus Boehner, "The Medieval Crisis of Logic and the Author of the *Centiloquium* Attributed to Ockham." In Boehner, *Collected Articles on Ockham*, pp. 351–372. Boehner concludes: "From this short exposition it follows that the historical position of the author of the *Centiloquium* is not in the neighborhood of Ockham, but rather in the neighborhood of Holkot" (p. 372).

But if the line of argument is to be valid, it is fitting that the conclusion is achieved in this way: That father in divine terms generates the son in divine terms; that father in divine terms is this divine essence; therefore someone who is the divine essence, generates the son in divine terms ... Wherefore it is significant to note that when the subject of the conclusion in such material is a personal term, it ought to be resolved with reference to the masculine gender, and when the subject is an essential term, it is to be resolved in the neuter, as is clear from the above example, where the first part of the conclusion is in the neuter, and the second, in the masculine gender.¹²⁸

Luther most plausibly drew on the *Centiloquium* under the presupposition that it was genuinely a work of Ockham (the *Centiloquium* was printed with Ockham's *Sentences* commentary in the Lyon edition of 1495) and on this basis, in his sermon of 1514, after setting forth the gender distinction necessary for forming a valid syllogism, he stated: "Hence it is evident that [the modern logicians] do not sufficiently understand their own logic."¹²⁹ Here, Luther was upholding an Ockhamist position against the errant Ockhamists. In 1514 Luther does not appear to be setting himself in opposition to the entire scholastic tradition, but rather emerges as the defender of the Ockhamist tradition against those who do not sufficiently understand it.

The Ockhamist tradition, however, is not the only background against which Luther's discussion of the Trinity should be viewed. Perhaps of even greater importance for understanding not only Luther's use of a first figure syllogism to explain the relation between the divine essence and the divine persons, but also for his use of Aristotle's physics, is the *via Gregorii*.

The very existence of the *via Gregorii* is controversial. Oberman pointed to the fact that, according to the statutes of the University of Wittenberg, the *via moderna* was referred to as the *via Gregorii*, so named after the fourteenth-century Augustinian hermit and theologian, Gregory of Rimini.¹³⁰ Leif Grane, on the other hand, claimed that Luther's actual knowledge of Gregory only dates from the time of the Leipzig disputation

¹²⁸ *Sed si discursus debeat valere, oportet conclusionem resolvi per hunc modum: Iste Pater in divinis generat Filium in divinis; iste Pater in divinis est haec essentia divina; ergo aliquis qui est essentia divina, generat Filium in divinis ... Pro quo signanter est notandum, quod quando subiectum conclusionis in ista materia est terminus personalis, debet resolvi genere masculino, et quando est essentialis, in genere neutro, sicut patet in resolutionibus statim dictis, quarum prima fiebat genere neutro et secunda genere masculino. Centiloquium Theologicum, conclusio 55, ed. Bohner, in "The Centiloquium Attributed to Ockham (Part IV)." *Franciscan Studies* (1942), 270. See also Shank, *Unless You Believe*, p. 73.*

¹²⁹ *Unde patet, quod nec suam logicam satis intelligunt.* WA 1.22,3–4.

¹³⁰ Oberman, "Headwaters of the Reformation: Initia Lutheri—Initia Reformationis." In idem, ed., *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era. Papers for the Fourth International Congress for Luther Research.* SHCT 8 (Leiden, 1974), pp. 40–88, 73.

in 1519.¹³¹ However, Jun Matura has since discovered previously unknown notes of Luther's dating from his earliest period. In his notes on [chapter 4](#) of Ockham's seventh Quodlibet, *On the Sacrament of the Altar*, Luther wrote: "Gabriel Lect.42 on the Canon. And the same in dist. 17, bk. II of Gregory of Rimini: they hold, against Ockham and Scotus, that in one composite [being] there is only one form."¹³²

This evidence may seem to be sufficient proof against Grane that Luther was acquainted with Gregory well before Leipzig. Such a conclusion, however, is not so readily achieved. In this note Luther first cited Gabriel Biel's *Exposition of the Canon of the Mass*, lecture 42. In this lecture Biel himself cited Gregory's *Sentences* Commentary, book II, distinction 16, question 2, and gave Gregory's conclusion on substance and form in composite beings that Luther noted.¹³³ Biel also refuted the position which he attributed to Scotus and Ockham, namely, that in man, in addition to the form of the intellect, there is also a form of the body.¹³⁴ He did so by using "Ockham's razor" against him, and by claiming that Gregory of Rimini sufficiently solved the problem of the plurality of forms.¹³⁵ Hence, it is possible – if not probable – that Luther took his reference to Gregory directly from Biel.

However, it is not impossible that Luther did have a first-hand knowledge of Gregory. It should be noted that Gregory of Rimini combined his treatment of distinctions 16 and 17 in his Commentary and thus Luther's citing distinction 17 and Biel's citing distinction 16 refer to the same place in Gregory's text. It is not unthinkable that when making his marginal notes on Ockham's *On the Sacrament of the Altar*, Luther drew on two separate sources which applied to the problem rather than merely repeating what he had read in Biel. In any case, he most certainly learned the great importance of Gregory from Biel and perhaps began studying for himself his order's *Doctor Authenticus*.

¹³¹ See Schulze, "Via Gregorii in Forschung und Quellen." In Oberman, ed., *Gregor von Rimini. Werk und Wirkung*, SuR 20 (Berlin, 1981) pp. 1–126, 101.

¹³² *Gabrie lect.42 sup(er) canon Et dis.xvii.li.2. ibid(em) Gre: arym. tene(n)t q(uod) in vno co(m)posito sit vna t(antu)m forma con(tra) occam & scotu(m)*. As quoted by Matura, "Restbestände aus der Bibliothek des Erfurter Augustinerklosters zu Luthers Zeit und bisher unbekannte eigenhändige Notizen Luthers. Ein Bericht." In Gerhard Hammer and Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, *Lutheriana. Zum 500. Geburtstag Martin Luthers von dem Mitarbeitern der Weimarer Ausgabe. AWA 5* (Cologne, 1984), pp. 315–330, 330.

¹³³ Gabriel Biel, *Canonis Misse Expositio*, Pars Secunda, eds. Heiko A. Oberman and William J. Courtenay, *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts Für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 32* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 128 C.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 130 and 131.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131 E.

In addition, in book II, distinction 16 and 17, question 3, Gregory discussed the problem of the plurality of forms in the context of the Trinity whereas Biel did not in lecture 42 of his *Exposition*. For Gregory, accepting the plurality of forms in a composite being would infringe upon the unity of the divine essence.¹³⁶ Further, on the authority of Augustine, Gregory accepts the position that the divine essence and the divine persons can be distinguished by the acts of the divine essence.¹³⁷

This same argument on the basis that a composite being, such as the Trinity, has only one substantive form, is also found in Luther's Christmas Day 1514 sermon on John 1:1. Luther's marginal note on Ockham's *On the Sacrament of the Altar* does show that he followed Biel and Gregory over against Scotus and Ockham. The Trinity is a composite being consisting of three persons, but it has only one substantive form – the divine essence.¹³⁸ As did Gregory, Luther drew on St Augustine's *On the Trinity* and used Aristotle's physics regarding potentiality and actuality as distinct from being itself to describe the relationship between the divine persons and the divine essence. When read in light of Gregory's position, Luther's discussion of the Trinity in this sermon is not only evidence for Luther's Aristotelianism, but also suggests Luther's adherence to the *via Gregorii*, according to which he was to teach at the University of Wittenberg.

Seeing Luther as a follower of the *via Gregorii* also helps us understand his use of the syllogism *in terminis divinis*. We have seen that Luther used the syllogism to explain the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, but attacked the position that the syllogism could demonstrate, establish, or determine the doctrine of the Trinity. He also, however, denied that the doctrine of the Trinity opposed syllogistic form.

Gregory of Rimini put forward an important assertion in arguing against Ockham's position that formal logic is valid except in divinity, as Gregory interpreted Ockham's accepting the formal distinction in this case alone: "To speak in this way is nothing less than to admit that our faith and catholic doctrine are plainly contrary to certain reason, and hence false, and thereby to assert by our own admission that they ought to be condemned."¹³⁹ Luther was standing firmly with Gregory on this issue when he composed, not thesis 47, but thesis 48 of his *Disputation Against*

¹³⁶ *Gregorii Ariminensis OESA, Lectura Super Primum et Secundum Sententiarum, V. Super Secundum (Dist. 6–18)*, eds. A. Damasus Trapp, Venicio Marcolino, and Manuel Santos-Noya. SuR 10 (Berlin, 1979), p. 369,20–31 to p. 370,1–16, p. 373,1–5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 372,17–35.

¹³⁸ *WA* 1.21,31–35.

¹³⁹ As quoted by Shank, *Unless You Believe*, p. 83.

Scholastic Theology: “Nevertheless, it does not therefore follow that the truth of the article of the Trinity opposes syllogistic form.” For Gregory, logic had a purpose and a utility – to defend the faith. As Michael Shank wrote concerning Gregory’s view:

Apologetics is possible only if the rules of reasoning hold also in divinity. Arguments against heretics stand no chance of success if Christians concede at the outset that the accepted rules of reasoning break down in theology ... Inferences had a purpose to serve; if they failed in this respect, they were not worthy of further consideration. Gregory of Rimini did not mention his purpose explicitly here; but the harangue against Ockham suggests an important clue. Utility appears to have been closely tied to the defensibility of the faith.¹⁴⁰

Regarding the necessity of the *utility* of logic, Luther was indeed working within the *via Gregorii*. Luther’s use of the syllogism in divinity was to preserve both the truth of the Trinity *and* the truth of syllogistic. Whereas for Gregory the syllogism *in terminis divinis* was useful and needed to defend to the faith, for Luther, it was to instruct and inform, as he himself stated when he concluded this section of his sermon by writing: “here, however, logic is brought in for the illumination of that phrase ‘God was the Word’.”¹⁴¹ Logic’s place with respect to the articles of faith, for Luther, was by no means demonstrative, but it was educational, or in other words, it bore a certain *praxis*. Even Aristotle’s philosophy was beautiful – and *useful* for the highest theology – provided it was kept within an instructional context. This Luther did indeed for his praise of Aristotle and use of the syllogism in divinity appears in a sermon. If the context was one of determining or demonstrating the articles of faith, it was only the most impious “big-mouths” who denied that Aristotle opposed the catholic truth as Luther stated in his notes on *The City of God*. This anti-Aristotelian statement of Luther, however, should not be taken as evidence for Luther’s unqualified attacks against the entire scholastic tradition. Within the educational context of the *via Gregorii*, Luther appears as the defender of the scholastic tradition and indeed, as an Aristotelian himself.

It may not have been only the *via Gregorii* that influenced Luther and his Aristotelianism. Luther’s use of Aristotle is not so dissimilar from the use of Aristotle found in the sermons of Jordan of Quedlinburg and his *Philosophy of the Holy* as seen in [Chapter 1](#). Jordan’s sermons had been printed and circulated widely in the later fifteenth and on into the early

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83 and 85.

¹⁴¹ ... *hic autem pro illius orationis luce ‘Deus erat verbum’ [Logica] adducta. WA 1.22,20–21.*

sixteenth century. These were indeed sermons that Luther may very well have known, but even if not, they nevertheless reveal essential components of the intellectual world of the late medieval Reformation as Luther was beginning his study of theology at Erfurt.

Faith and Reason

Even if Luther had not been familiar with Jordan's sermons, a Philosophy of the Holy lies behind the instructional context of Luther's application of Aristotle to theology, providing the bridge between thesis 47 and thesis 48 of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. Though for Luther faith and reason were nevertheless by all means distinct, from our discussion in this chapter we can suggest that in 1514 he had brought them far closer together than scholars imply when they portray him as the "nominalist" Luther – who was *therefore* a radical skeptic and fideist – and the "anti-scholastic" Luther, who placed faith *beyond* reason.

Luther's claiming Aristotle's philosophy as being useful for the highest theology does not contradict either his statement in his notes on Lombard, that "theology is heaven . . . man, however, is earth and his speculations smoke," nor theses 43 and 44 of his *Disputation*: "It is an error to say: 'without Aristotle one does not become a theologian'"; and, "But on the contrary, one does not become a theologian unless he does so without Aristotle."¹⁴² The reason for this is found in his sermon of 1514 itself. In this sermon, after showing that the Word is to be identified with Christ, Luther then proceeded to discuss the two-fold nature of the Word. The Word, which Luther illustrated by analogy with the human spoken word, is both internal and external. The internal word residing in the heart, which is more properly called the Word, can only be communicated by the external word. The external word can never be communicated perfectly however, unless it becomes itself the internal Word of the hearer. Luther wrote:

For you are able to move no one's heart by the words you speak as much as your heart is moved internally by your word, just as we are accustomed to say, since others do not wish to receive our advice, pleas, or warnings in their heart, "It does not move him in his heart," i.e., this does not move his heart as it does our own. He would be moved, however, if we were able to send the internal word itself into his heart, but now we send only the

¹⁴² 43. *Error est dicere: "sine Aristotele non fit theologus"; 44. Immo theologus non fit nisi id fiat sine Aristotele.* WA 1.226,14–16.

external word into his heart and even more so he is moved incomparably less by the external word than are we by the internal word itself.¹⁴³

The reason for this discrepancy is that Luther made a distinction between the intellect and the reason, which he said, “seems absurd to many philosophers, but nevertheless, it is in keeping with the scriptures, because according to the scriptures, the intellect is of those invisible and eternal things which bestow blessedness.”¹⁴⁴ The reason operates in the realm of the external word but the intellect, in that of the internal. The intellect is pure potential which only becomes actual when it obtains its object, that is, the Word.¹⁴⁵ But the Word is not only the object of the intellect, it is also its proper act.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, when the Word moves the intellect from potency to act, the intellect becomes the Word – that is, Christ in us (*in nobis*). This “becoming the Word” is not brought about by a substantive change, but rather through faith:

Thus we who are flesh are not made the Word in the sense that we are substantively changed into the Word, but rather because we receive the Word and through faith we unite ourselves to the Word, by which union we are said not only to have the Word, but even to be the Word.¹⁴⁷

Luther made these statements in a sermon, that is, in the realm of the external word. Thus the philosophy of Aristotle could most fittingly serve the explanation of the “highest theology” for Brother Martin as it had for Brother Jordan. Aristotle could not, however, translate Luther’s internal Word into the internal Word of his audience. This could only be brought about by the action of the Word itself, and through faith. Or, as Luther expressed it in his comments on Lombard’s *Sentences*, book III, distinction 24, [chapter 3](#): “Faith, that is, the assent brought about from the hearing, that is the apprehending of the signification or of the meaning of the words, which is heard internally. And this through the Word of Christ,

¹⁴³ *Nam nulli potes per verbum oris cor movere, quantum est cor tuum motum a verbo tuo interius, sicut solemus dicere, quando nostra consilia, quaerelas aut monita alii nolunt corde percipere, Es geht ihm nit zu hertzen, i.e. non movet hoc eius cor sicut nostrum. Moveret autem si ipsum internum verbum possemus in eorum cor mittere, nunc autem solum verbum externum mittimus in eorum cor, imo incomparabiliter minus movetur ab eo quam nos ab ipso interno.* WA 1.23,28–34.

¹⁴⁴ *Distinguo autem intellectualem naturam a rationali, quod multis Philosophis absurdum videtur, sed tamen scripturae consonum, quia intellectus est secundum scripturas invisibilium et aeternorum, quae beatificant.* WA 1.26,25–28.

¹⁴⁵ WA 1.29,22–27.

¹⁴⁶ WA 1.26,4–8.

¹⁴⁷ *Ita nec nos qui sumus caro sic effcimur verbum, quod in verbum substantialiter mutemur, sed quod assumimus et per fidem ipsum nobis unimus, qua unione non tantum habere verbum sed etiam esse dicimur.* WA 1.28,39–41.

that is, through the preaching of Christ which is heard externally about Christ.”¹⁴⁸ Aristotle is perfectly acceptable in the realm of the external word, even in preaching about Christ and about the Trinity. The internal Word, however, is in a totally different realm and, as Luther remarked in his comment on Psalm 84:7 during his first lectures on the Psalms, is to be associated with the Gospel, which is “the Word of God in us.”¹⁴⁹ Theology, in and of itself, that is, as distinct from what can be said about theology, concerns the Gospel and thus the realm of the internal Word. Therefore, based on his distinction between the internal Word and the external word, Luther can praise and use Aristotle in the realm of the latter, while in the realm of the former, he can claim that “one does not become a theologian unless he does so without Aristotle.”

Luther’s praise and use of Aristotle’s physics and logic in his sermon of 25 December 1514 does not lead to a re-evaluation of his views on the relationship between faith and reason. His distinction between the internal and external Word insured that reason and faith were in separate realms. Nevertheless, they were related, since the internal Word could only be communicated – or preached – by the external word. Aristotle could be used to speak *about* Christ and *about* the Trinity. He could not be used in the realm of the internal Word, i.e. he could not effect the understanding, or the intellection, of Christ or the Trinity. It is in this context that Luther put forward thesis 50 of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, “All of Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light.” Even if Luther’s distinction between the internal Word and the external word brought faith and reason into a symbiotic relationship, and one far closer than is usually attributed to Luther, it may not be saying too much to speculate that in this distinction we see the seeds of what will come to fruition in Luther’s commentary on Galatians of 1531/35 as the *Grammatica Theologica*.¹⁵⁰ Within the realm of the external word, Luther could claim that Aristotle’s philosophy was beautiful and useful for the highest theology. The emphasis here must be on the concept of usefulness and usefulness in the context of instruction. This is also the proper context for understanding Luther’s use of the first figure syllogism for illustrating the relationship between

¹⁴⁸ “Fides” i.e. assensus fit “ex auditu” i.e. apprehensione significationis seu sensus verborum, Qui est interior auditus. Et ipse “per verbum Christi” i.e. praedicationem Christi qui est auditus exterior de Christo. Matsura, p. 549,1–4; WA 9.92,28–32.

¹⁴⁹ Quia lex est verbum Mosi ad nos, Evangelium autem verbum dei in nos. WA 4.10,27.

¹⁵⁰ Itaque cum legis in Scriptura de Patribus, Prophetis, Regibus, quod operati sint iustitiam, suscitaverint mortuos, vicerint regna etc., memineris talia et similia dicta secundum novam et Theologicam Grammaticam exponenda esse. WA 40 I.418,21–24.

the divine essence and the divine persons. Luther did not deny the validity of formal syllogistic – even *in terminis divinis* – providing it remained within the realm of instruction and not that of demonstration. In addition, Luther contributed to the discussion of the Trinity by placing it in the context of Aristotelian physics. In this light, Luther can aptly be called an Aristotelian, not so unlike his older confrère Brother Jordan. Even in his notes on Lombard which contain explicit anti-Aristotelian statements, Luther did not refrain from using the syllogism to illustrate his point. Commenting on book II, distinction 30, [chapter 1](#), Luther wrote: “When there is a debate about sin, this syllogism always ought to be noted: Every evil is nothing and; every sin is evil; therefore, every sin is nothing.”¹⁵¹ Further, in the *Dictata* Luther employed the logical rules of contrary propositions.¹⁵² Logic could very well be used *for* faith, that is, for explaining and illustrating – *not* for determining, proving, or demonstrating – for as Luther stated in thesis 46 of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, a logic *of* faith is created in vain.

This same use of logic can be seen in Luther’s works throughout his career and I have already pointed to the disputation of 1539. Concerning Aristotle’s applicability to theology as we have discussed, after closer analysis Luther emerges not as the *German Hercules* of the famous woodcut attributed to Hans Holbein, who demolishes Aristotle along with his scholastic successors, but rather as an adherent of a position within the late medieval philosophical tradition. Only nine years after the publication of Holbein’s woodcut in 1522, however, Luther’s adherence to the universal validity of Aristotle’s syllogistic assumed far different implications when Luther brought Aristotle’s logic on to the battleground of imperial politics.

Eike Wolgast and Mark Edwards have ably treated the causes of Luther’s about-turn regarding the right to resist the emperor.¹⁵³ We must not, however, overlook his justification for having done so as seen in a letter to Lazarus Spengler, written on 15 February 1531. Addressing the

¹⁵¹ *Quando de peccatis disputatur, hic syllogismus semper notandus est: Omne malum est nihil et; Omne peccatum est malum, igitur; Omne peccatum est nihil.* Matsura, p. 473,4–6; *WA* 9.73,6–10. The reference here is assumedly to St Augustine’s negative definition of evil, in that evil is not a positive being.

¹⁵² *His nunc applica regulas logice de naturis oppositarum propositionum.* *WA* 3.290,4–7. Cf. Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, ed. L.M. de Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972). Tractatus I, “De Introductionibus,” p. 6.

¹⁵³ Eike Wolgast, *Die Wittenberger Theologie und die Politik der evangelischen Stände* (Gütersloh, 1977); Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther’s Last Battles. Politics and Polemics, 1531–46* (Ithaca, NY, 1983); see ch. 2: “The Question of Resistance,” pp. 20–37.

question of resistance, Luther framed his reply with the following inference: “Whatever Caesar, or the law of Caesar establishes must be followed; but the law states that in this case it is to be resisted; therefore, [in this case Caesar or Caesar’s law] must be resisted.”¹⁵⁴ Luther conceded the right of determining the truth of the minor premise to the lawyers and responded that, if indeed the minor premise was valid, “we who teach the major, cannot deny the conclusion.”¹⁵⁵ In 1531 it was not only the polemics of Luther the “Princely Publicist,” but the principles of Aristotelian logic as well that prepared the way for the League of Schmalkalden. Consequently, the question of Luther and Aristotle is of central importance not only for the philosophico-theological debates that the “young Luther” initiated, but for the religio-political turmoil in which the so-called “old Luther” found himself as well.

Luther’s attacks against Aristotle must not be taken unqualifiedly. Luther’s Aristotelianism, however, must be seen in its proper context as well. Perhaps Luther’s most revealing statement of his true position on Aristotle is found in thesis 29 of the Heidelberg Disputation (1518): “Who would wish to become an Aristotelian philosopher without danger, must first thoroughly become a fool in Christ.”¹⁵⁶ Having thoroughly become a fool in Christ, Luther can be seen as an Aristotelian.

Heiko Oberman indeed pointed to an important difference between Luther and medieval scholasticism in showing that even in 1509/10 Luther had rejected the use of the *facere quod in se est* in relationship to natural reason. However, Luther’s adherence to a particular vein of late medieval scholasticism – namely, that of the Ockhamism within the *via Gregorii* – should warn us against an unequivocal reading of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. Even though Luther rejected many of the theological principles of this tradition, nevertheless it was a major influence on his philosophical presuppositions.

¹⁵⁴ “Denn weil unsere Lehre spricht: Date Caesari, quae sunt Caesaris, et Caesaris sit, sibi resistendum esse in notorie iniustis, hätten wir sein Recht nicht zu ändern noch zum meistern, und blieben die Sachen auf diesem Syllogismo: Quicquid statuit Caesar seu lex Caesaris, est servandum; sed lex statuit resistere sibi in tali casu; ergo resistendum est etc.” *WABr* 6.37,16–21.

¹⁵⁵ *Nunc maiorem non hactenus docuimus: quod sit obediendum gladio in rebus politicis. Sed minorem nos neque asserimus neque scimus. Quare nec concludam, sed ad iuristas hoc totum reieciimus, ut ipsi videant; nos neque statuere neque consulere neque impellere aut urgere volumus nisi maiorem hanc: Caesari est obediendum. Quod si ipsi minorem probaverint, de quo nihil ad nos, non possumus conclusionem negare, qui docuimus maiorem.* *WABr* 6.37,21–27.

¹⁵⁶ *Qui sine periculo volet in Aristotele Philosophari, necesse est ut ante bene stultificetur in Christo.* *WA* 1.355,2–3.

It was the basic philosophical presuppositions of Luther that led to his discovery of passive righteousness, as he described it in his preface of 1545, which has traditionally been seen as having described Luther's *Turmerlebnis*, his Reformation Breakthrough. This discovery, however, was not a discovery based on Augustine, even as Luther was an observant Augustinian hermit himself. It was only after his discovery, Luther affirmed, that he turned to Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, beyond hope and to his surprise found that Augustine agreed with him. What led to Luther's discovery of passive righteousness was not an Augustinian theology, but rather Luther's discovery of the beauty of Aristotle's philosophy, useful for the highest theology, when correctly understood, as had Jordan, who likewise made good use of Aristotle's physics for his own pastoral theology. Luther's discovery, that which opened heaven to him, had Aristotle as the catalyst. It was Luther the Aristotelian who made his discovery of passive righteousness, based on the physics of the object bringing the subject into being, in an instantaneous change, whereby the sinner became instantaneously, without a point of change, simultaneously righteous. Yet to see how this was so more completely, we need to look further at Brother Martin's early development, going behind his explicit statements to see not just *what* he thought, but also to discern the philosophical principles and presuppositions informing *how* he thought. This will enable us to grasp more completely and more historically Brother Martin's intellectual formation and his own developing philosophy of the holy.

Luther's Ways of Thought

When Brother Martin began his theological studies, he did so by reading Augustine and Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, having already studied Aristotle as part of his Arts course at Erfurt. At Erfurt, he was trained in the tradition of the *via moderna*. Above we saw that Luther's explicit rejection of Aristotle can only be understood properly when seen as conditioned by the late medieval crisis of logic and the *via Gregorii*. When the historical context is recognized, we find that Luther presupposed not only the universal formality of Aristotelian syllogistic, but also Aristotle's physics concerning the relationship between an object and its subject. The historical context is also a prerequisite for grasping not only what Luther thought, but also *how* he thought, his "ways of thought."¹

By "ways of thought" I am not getting at particular philosophical or theological positions Luther advocated, but rather something more fundamental. While we cannot really psychoanalyze figures of the past, trying to understand not only what they thought, but how they thought, how they viewed their world, what made them tick, are crucial questions; we want to get into their minds, as well as their heads and hearts. An academic analysis of their explicit positions does not always reveal what we might most want to know and so we have to look deeper. We have to look between the lines, and try to perceive something that is not explicitly expressed. This is what I mean by "ways of thought."

In commenting on book III, distinction 23 of the *Sentences*, Brother Martin wrote: "Everyone sees his own faith intellectually with the most certain knowledge, whereby one does so not by means of a secondary act, but by means of a primary act, that is, the intellect has one's own faith present most certainly, but not through works."² Later in his career, we

¹ Cf. Jan Aertsen, *Nature and Creature. Thomas Aquinas' Ways of Thought* (Leiden, 1988).

² *Videt quisque intellectualiter fidem suam certissima scientia, hoc est, non actu secundo, sed actu primo, i.e., intellectus habet eam praesentem sibi certissime, sed non per opera.* Matsura, p. 544,1-3.

find in his Galatians Commentary of 1531/35 that Luther asserted that faith is cognition (*fides est noticia*). What might Luther have meant by this, and does his statement that faith is cognition of 1531 have anything to do with his statement of 1509/10 that faith is seen with a most certain knowledge by means of a primary act? These two statements serve as the basis for an analysis of what I would call Luther's "cognitive way of thought." Teasing out what is behind these statements will be our task in this chapter.

Yet Luther's cognitive way of thought combined with his "substantive way of thought," and for Luther the two were indistinguishably intertwined. To reiterate, it is not so much what Luther thought that I am after here, as how he thought. In his *Dictata super Psalterium* of 1513/1515, Luther explained that "in holy scripture, the intellect gets its name more from its object, than from its own power, which is the other way around in philosophy."³ He further gave an explication of his understanding of "substance": "In scripture," Brother Martin clarified,

"substance" (*substantia*) is taken metaphorically, with regard to both its grammatical signification and its physical signification. And this is how it should be understood properly here [Ps. 68:3], not as the philosophers talk about it ... for thus [substance] is said to be all that by which someone exists in their own life, as [for example] the rich man exists through riches, the healthy man, through health, the honored man, through honor, and the man of pleasure, through pleasure, because for as long as there are the latter, so long last the former. And thus substance most properly is a quality or something external, rather than the essence itself of a thing, because scripture does not care at all for the quiddities of things, but only for their qualities. Thus, one has one's substance according to how one is and acts, which if one lacks, one can no longer exist.⁴

These two passages are central for discerning Luther's "substantive way of thought." To get behind these passages and discern Luther's understanding of his own statements will require that we read his early works, the works of Brother Martin Luther, in conjunction with later expositions from the period after he ceased being an Augustinian hermit, to reveal basic underlying

³ "Intellectus in scripturis sanctis potius ab objecto quam potentia nomen habet, contrario quam in philosophia." WA 3.176,3-4.

⁴ "Substantia" [68,3] in *Scriptura metaphorice accipitur tam ex grammaticali quam physicali significatione. Et proprie, non ut philosophi de ea loquuntur, hic accipienda est ... Sic enim dicitur omne illud, per quod quisque [in sua vita] subsistit: ut dives subsistit per divitias, sanus per sanitatem, honoratus per honorem, voluptarii per voluptatem. Quia quam diu sunt tales, quam diu ista durant. Et sic substantia proprie magis est qualitas vel extrinsecum quam ipsa essentia rei. Quia Scriptura nihil curat quidditates rerum, sed qualitates tantum. Et sic qualiter unusquisque est et agit, secundum hoc habet substantiam: qua si caret, iam non subsistit.* WA 3.419,25.

philosophical assumptions which remained with Luther from his earliest days throughout his career. While explicit formulations changed as Luther made the transition from friar to reformer, basic, foundational structures of his thought, his “ways of thought” remained constant. This, in any case, is my argument in this chapter. I begin with Luther’s cognitive way of thought.

Luther’s Cognitive Way of Thought

In 1516 Brother Martin began lecturing on St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians. In the commentary on Galatians 5:5 Luther wrote:

Righteousness is two-fold, namely, of the flesh and of the spirit, of figure and of reality, of shadow and of truth, exterior and interior, old and new, of works and of faith, servitude and freedom, compulsion in fear and leading to joy, enticement by the love of things and a pulling by the love of words. Therefore, to this differentiation it is said: We are, we live and we act in the spirit, i.e. according to the spirit, not according to the flesh, from faith, that is, not from works, and so by acting we long for the hope of that same spiritual righteousness.⁵

Fifteen years later, Luther was to claim a two-fold righteousness (*duplex est iusticia*) as the major theme of Paul’s letter to the Galatians and of his own reformation theology, when for the second time he began lecturing on this epistle in 1531. In the summary of Paul’s argument (*Argumentum Pauli*) prefacing his lectures, Luther wrote:

What ought to be said first of all concerns the argument, that is, what Paul was doing in this epistle. And this is the argument: Paul wants to establish that doctrine of faith, of Grace, of the forgiveness of sins, or of Christian righteousness, so that we might have a perfect understanding and differentiation between Christian righteousness and all other righteousnesses.⁶

A little further on Luther stated: “This is our theology, by which we teach to distinguish accurately [between] these two righteousnesses, the active

⁵ *Duplex est iusticia, scilicet carnis et spiritus, figure et rei, umbre et veritatis, exterior et interior, vetus et nova, operum et fidei, servilis et libera, coacta timore et ducta gaudio, allecta amore rerum et tracta amore verborum. Ad huius ergo differentiam dicit: “nos spiritu” i.e., secundum spiritum, non secundum carnem, “ex fide” i.e., non ex operibus, scilicet sumus, vivimus, et agimus et sic agendo expectamus spem iusticie eiusdem spiritualis. WA 57.98,12–18.*

⁶ *Primum omnium dicendum est de argumento, hoc est, de qua re agat Paulus in hac Epistola. Est autem hoc argumentum: Paulus vult stabilire doctrinam illam fidei, Gratiae, Remissionis peccatorum seu Iustitiae Christianae, ut habeamus perfectam cognitionem et differentiam inter iustitiam Christianam et omnes alias Iustitias. WA 40.1.40,15–19.*

and the passive, so that we do not confuse morals and faith, works and grace, politics and religion.”⁷

Such a differentiation was so important to Luther because it was only passive righteousness (*iustitia passiva*) that offered a consolation for an afflicted and desperate conscience, and this distinction Luther saw as the main theme of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, which he referred to as “my Katherine von Bora.”

Luther's marriage to Katie in 1525 was not the only major event to occur between his first and his last lectures on Galatians. Indeed, in the intervening fifteen years Luther had become the Reformer. The movement which he had initiated by 1531 had not only become politically solidified with the Augsburg Confession of 1530, but had also become divided between the Christians – as Luther saw things – and the servants of Satan, the Anabaptists, and sectarians whom Luther grouped together with the papists in the preface to his Galatians commentary which he wrote for its publication in 1535.⁸

Traditionally 1531 has also marked the beginnings of the “old” Luther. At this time Luther became increasingly embroiled in polemical controversies, as Mark Edwards has capably documented, and his health grew worse. On 26 June 1531, Luther wrote to Wenzeslaus Link, relating to his friend that Satan was so attacking him that his physical strength was uncertain, rendering him incapable of all the tasks and writing that needed to be done, and commented: “perhaps Satan will kill me shortly.”⁹ Here Luther associated illness with the attacks of the devil, which emphasizes the apocalyptic context in which Edwards has placed Luther's polemics and Heiko Oberman his concept of reformation. It also provides the setting for the publication of his Galatians Commentary of 1535. Luther the apocalyptic prophet, however, is likewise the frame of reference for understanding his concept of certitude, which was developing from his earliest theological studies.

The fear that Satan and his servants would over-run the advances of the Gospel is indeed present before Luther became “old.” In a letter to Justus Jonas prefacing his *Exposition on the Prophet Jonah* written in 1526, Luther expressed grave concern for those reformers who wrote many

⁷ *Haec est nostra theologia qua docemus accurate distinguere has duas iustitias, activam et passivam, ne confundantur mores et fides, opera et gratia, politica et religio.* WA 40 I.45,24–26.

⁸ WA 40 I.35,17–32.

⁹ WABr 6.128,1–4.

books, but only dealt with the administration of the Church, writing that he expected:

nothing more certain under their reign than some new Papacy, when Christ will once again be abolished along with all our wisdom, which is the apprehension of the righteousness of faith. For the idea of human righteousness, or the righteousness of works, is fixed in their hearts so pertinaciously that in no way do they seek to separate it from the righteousness of faith, or the righteousness of grace.¹⁰

A two-fold righteousness was at the very core of Luther's theology and relying on passive righteousness (*iustitia passiva*) was the only way to ward off attacks of the devil. It is also therefore the basis of his understanding of certitude, the theme that Luther expounded above all others in his Commentary on Galatians.

Luther's Galatians Commentary is indeed one of his greatest theological works, but for a more complete appreciation of Luther's thought we must not overlook the larger religio-political context – marked by the Diet of Speyer, Marburg, the Diet of Augsburg, and the League of Schmalkalden – or the philosophical context. The situation in which Luther found himself in 1531 called for a highly skilled polemicist as well as theologian – but, it also called for a dialectician.

Logic for Faith: Luther as Dialectician

The title for this section may appear contradictory for Luther, or at least, very un-Luther-like. Luther certainly would never accept a logic *of* faith, but, whereas in [Chapter 3](#) I portrayed Luther – to a certain extent – as an Aristotelian, here I will argue that at the very foundation of his thought stands a definite logic *for* faith; in this sense, Luther was a dialectician indeed.

In his preparatory notes to his Galatians Commentary, Luther was emphatic in writing, "Faith is dialectic."¹¹ This is so, for Luther, because faith pertains to doctrine, and, whereas hope resides in the will, faith is in the intellect (*in intellectu*). This definition Luther repeated in his commentary on Galatians 5:5, writing: "Faith (*fides*), therefore, is Dialectic,

¹⁰ ... et libros scribunt scripturasque explanant, ut si illis solis contingat Ecclesiarum administratio, nihil certius sub ipsorum regno expectes, quam novum quendam Papatum, ubi Christus denuo aboleatur cum tota illa sapientia nostra, que est notitia iustitiæ fidei: fixa enim in eorum cordibus humanæ opinio iustitiæ seu operum sic pertinaciter est, ut eam a iustitia fidei seu gratiæ nullo modo separare queant. WA 19.177,11–18 (printed without line numbers, which I have here supplied).

¹¹ *Fides est dialectica.* WA 40 I.21,31.

which grasps the idea of everything that is to be believed.”¹² To unravel what Luther meant by faith being dialectic will take some doing, but to begin we have a help for understanding what lay behind his statement in the logical works of Philip Melanchthon, to which I have already referred, and for which Luther had the highest regard. In his second work on dialectic, the *Four Books on Dialectic* written in 1527, Melanchthon gave the following definition:

Dialectic is the art of defining, dividing, and arguing. We define, however, when we either interpret the name [of a thing], or exposit what a thing is. We divide when we enumerate the members or the parts of a thing. We argue when we discern by reason some meaning from another.¹³

This is precisely what we see Luther doing in his preparatory notes for his Galatians Commentary where he defines and divides faith (*fides*) and hope (*spes*) on the basis of their subject, office, object, order, and contraries.¹⁴ That Luther may very well have been influenced by Melanchthon here is seen in a Table Talk of 1540, in which Johannes Mathesius reported Luther as saying: “Today many people write [works on] dialectic, but only Philip has [really written] a *Dialectic*, a source from which all the rest draw their own [doctrine], and yet no one equals Philip, still less has any one superseded him.”¹⁵ Luther then added: “For all dialectic consists in division, definition and argumentation ...”¹⁶

Luther also followed Melanchthon in the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric. In his *Rhetorical Elements* (*Elementa Rhetorices*) of 1531 Melanchthon wrote: “But because rhetors are not able to be without a way of teaching, especially in judicial matters, they therefore intermix dialectic with their own work ... Dialectic is so thoroughly intertwined with rhetoric that it is not able in any way to be separated from it.”¹⁷ Luther, who in his preparatory notes to Galatians, equated rhetoric with hope (*spes*), stated in his commentary on Galatians 5:5:

So faith and hope are distinct emotions, for faith is something other than hope, and hope, something other than faith, and nevertheless, on account

¹² *Fides igitur est Dialectica, quae concipit ideam omnium credendorum ...* WA 40 II.28,12.

¹³ *Dialectica est ars definiendi, dividendi, et argumentandi. Definimus autem, cum aut nomen interpretamur, aut quid res fit, exponimus. Dividimus, cum membra aut partes enumeramus. Argumentamur, cum aliam sententiam ex alia ratiocinamur* (Wittenberg, 1534), p. 5.

¹⁴ WA 40 I.21,15–34.

¹⁵ *Plures hodie scribunt dialecticas, sed unus Philippus scripsit dialecticam, ex quo fonte reliqui omnes hauriunt sua, et nemo tamen assequitur Philippum, nedum ut superent eum.* WAT 4.647,6–9.

¹⁶ *Nam tota dialectica versatur in divisione, definitione et argumentatione...* WAT 4.647,13,14.

¹⁷ CR 13, col. 420.

of the great relationship which they have between themselves, they are not able to be separated, because a rhetor without dialectic is able to teach nothing certain, and, vice versa, a dialectician without rhetoric does not affect his audience. But who joins both together, he teaches and persuades. Therefore, just as dialectic and rhetoric exchange with each other their own [unique] functions, so faith and hope.¹⁸

It is in this context that Luther claimed: "faith without hope is nothing, because hope takes by force and conquers evil."¹⁹ Faith, for Luther, was not completely alone (*sola*), for he replaced the love of the scholastic formula, "faith formed by love" (*fides charitate formata*) with hope.

In his Table Talk of 1540, Luther illustrated his understanding of the use of dialectics with the example of faith. After answering basic questions such as the signification of the word itself (*quid nominis?*), Luther gave his definition: "Faith is the gift of God in our soul, through which we apprehend Christ, who was born for us, died for us, and rose from the dead, by which we obtain mercy and eternal life."²⁰ Luther then proceeded to his argument (*argumentatio*): "If therefore, that faith in Christ offers us the forgiveness of sins, therefore it is not by our works, or the cowl, or vows that we are saved. This is a valid consequence from the definition."²¹

Here we see Luther making his distinction between Christian righteousness (*iustitia Christiana*) which is passive (*iustitia passiva*), and righteousness according to the law (*iustitia legis*), or active righteousness (*iustitia activa*), on the basis of dialectic. In addition, Luther's use of the logical theory of consequence for confirming an inference dealing with the issue of justification by faith should not pass unnoticed. Not only his approach to the explication of faith, but his argumentation as well is based on logic. Indeed, in his summary of Paul's argument in Galatians prefacing his commentary, Luther wrote:

For if I wished to teach men the law as their means of being justified before God (*coram Deo*) ... I would mix up these two righteousnesses, the active

¹⁸ *Sicut autem Dialectica et Rhetorica distinctae artes sunt et tamen adeo inter se cognatae sunt, ut altera ab altera separari non possit, Quia Rhetor sine Dialectica nihil firmi docere potest, Et econtra Dialecticus sine Rhetorica non afficit auditores, Qui vero utramque coniungit, is docet et persuadet, Ita fides et spes distincti affectus sunt, fides enim aliud est quam spes et spes aliud quam fides, et tamen propter magnam cognationem, quam habent inter se, divelli non possunt. Ut igitur Dialectica et Rhetorica mutuas sibi invicem operas tradunt, ita fides et spes. WA 40 II.28,15–22.*

¹⁹ ... ita fides sine spe est nihil, quia spes fert et vincit mala. WA 40 I.21,34–35.

²⁰ *Fides est donum Dei in animo nostro, per quod apprehendimus Christum, qui pro nobis natus est et mortuus et resurrexit, per quod assequimur misericordiam et vitam aeternam. WAT 4.648,18–20.*

²¹ *Si igitur illa fides in Christo nobis afferat remissionem peccatorum, ergo non opera nostra, non cuculla, non vota nos salvant. Haec est bona consequentia ex definitione. WAT 4.648,21–23.*

and the passive, and I would be a bad dialectician because I would not be dividing correctly.²²

Luther then further instructed his students “to see to it that you are a good dialectician and divide correctly, and that you do not attribute more to the law than ought to be attributed to it.”²³ Even if Luther rejected the attempt to create a logic *of* faith, at the very base of one of his most fundamental theological positions is one of the first principles of what in his mind is good dialectic. A logic *of* faith is excluded because it does not properly divide and separate what should be divided and separated. Logic should keep to its own realm, and when it does not, it becomes heretical and monstrous. What is needed is a logic *for* faith, which understands how to divide and to categorize properly, and thus, even in his sharp attacks against the “new dialecticians,” we should not fail to hear Luther the dialectician.

It was Luther the dialectician, at least in part, who wrote in his letter to Justus Jonas prefacing his exposition of Jonah, that the “new papists” did not separate righteousness of faith (*iustitia fidei*) from righteousness of works (*iustitia operum*), and thereby they would destroy all our wisdom which is the apprehension of the righteousness of faith. What I have translated as “apprehension of the righteousness of faith,” in Luther’s words is *noticia iustitiae fidei*. This is a loaded phrase, because the word *noticia* has a far deeper meaning than often ascribed to it. Luther’s statement *fides est noticia* is one of the key texts for his cognitive way of thought. Thus to grasp a fuller understanding of Luther’s thought, following his own view of dialectic, we need to ask, what is his understanding of *noticia*?

Quid est Noticia?

When seeking a definition of *noticia*, the first task of a true dialectic according to Luther, I should at the outset state that dictionaries are of little help. *Noticia* is incorrectly, albeit most often, translated as knowledge.²⁴ Thus, in my translation of Luther’s phrase, *noticia iustitiae fidei*, in his letter to Justus Jonas, I chose the word “apprehension,” which,

²² *Nam si velim homines sic docere legem, ut per eam iustificentur coram Deo ... confunderem has duas iustitias, activam et passivam, essemque malus dialecticus, quia non recte dividerem.* WA 40 I.44,19–22.

²³ *Vide ut tum sis bonus dialectus et recte divides neque plus tribuas legi, quam ei tribuendum est.* WA 40 I.50,29–30.

²⁴ Thus in the American edition of Luther’s works Luther’s statement: *Fides igitur est doctrina seu noticia*, is translated as “Faith therefore is teaching or knowledge.” LW 27, p. 22.

although not fully satisfactory, conveys the true sense of the term more accurately than does “knowledge.” Since Luther himself does not discuss the term explicitly as such, in order to shed light on his understanding of *noticia* I will draw on Melancthon and the theologian to whom Luther referred as “my teacher,” William of Ockham. A comprehensive account of Ockham’s view of *noticia*, or of his doctrine of intuitive cognition with which *noticia* is intimately associated, is beyond the scope of this study, yet since Luther was trained in the Ockhamist tradition, in discerning Luther’s understanding of the term *noticia*, Ockham’s understanding may offer insight.

Ockham dedicated the first two questions of the prologue to his *Sentences* commentary to a discussion of *noticia*. I will limit my treatment to three observations regarding Ockham’s doctrine of *noticia* drawn from the first question of his prologue. This procedure is merited not to show mere parallels between Ockham and Luther, but rather because Luther’s comment on Lombard’s *Sentences* book III, d. 23, c. 7, states: “See Ockham, question 1 of his Prologue.”²⁵ It is also significant to note that in this chapter Lombard is quoting book 13 of Augustine’s *On the Trinity* which states: “Faith thus is not seen in the heart, where it resides, by the one whose faith it is, but the most certain knowledge holds it.”²⁶ We will return to this significant passage later, but for now it is important to note that when commenting on the faith that is most certain knowledge (*certissima scientia*), Luther explicitly referred to the first question of Ockham’s Prologue and felt no need to comment further. Thus, with a brief discussion, I will hopefully be able to shed light on Luther’s phrase, *fides est noticia*.

First, one of the central tenets of Ockham’s thought is his distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition, which he discusses in the context of *noticia intuitiva* and *noticia abstractiva*. *Noticia intuitiva* is the means by which a given thing (*res*) is evidently known to be or not to be. Ockham gives the example of the proposition (*complexum*), “Socrates is white.” In order for one to have *noticia intuitiva* of this statement, the evidence must be present, that is, one must be able to see Socrates as being white. This holds true because it is possible to have *noticia intuitiva* of Socrates, and of whiteness, without knowing whether Socrates himself

²⁵ *vide Ockam q. 1. prolo.* Matsura, p. 543,12; WA 9.91,3.

²⁶ *Non sic videtur Fides in corde in quo est ab eo cuius est; sed eam tenet certissima scientia.* Lombard, *Sentences*, vol. II, p. 146,5–7.

is white.²⁷ Socrates must evidently be white to have *noticia intuitiva* of the proposition (*complexum*). Ockham writes: "If Socrates is truly white in himself, that *noticia* of Socrates and of whiteness, by virtue of it being able to be known evidently that Socrates is white, is called *noticia intuitiva*."²⁸ On the other hand, *noticia abstractiva* lacks the evidence. If Socrates is not actually present, one cannot have evident knowledge that Socrates is white. Such a proposition can only be known by *notitia abstractiva*:

Notitia abstractiva, however, is that [*notitia*] by virtue of which it is not able to be known evidently about a contingent thing whether it is or is not. And in that way, *notitia abstractiva* extracts from existence and non-existence, because in and of itself, it is able to be known evidently neither that an existent, exists, nor that a non-existent does not exist, in opposition to *notitia intuitiva*.²⁹

Noticia intuitiva concerns the knowledge of present fact. As Philotheus Boehner wrote: "In the first case [i.e. *noticia intuitiva*] our assent is given through the evidence of the fact; in the second case [*notitia abstractiva*], the force of factual evidence is lacking."³⁰

Second, Ockham makes a distinction regarding the acts of the intellect between an act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*) and an act of judgment (*actus iudicativus*).³¹ This distinction is based on the recognition that there can be two acts of the intellect simultaneously, and Ockham gives the example of Plato knowing Socrates, Plato loving Socrates, and Plato knowing that he loves Socrates.³² The act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*), that is, Plato's knowing Socrates, is distinct from and prior to his act of loving Socrates. Posterior to both these acts is the act of judgment (*actus iudicativus*), that is, Plato's act of knowing that he loves Socrates. Although Ockham does not use this illustration, an act of judgment (*actus iudicativus*) would also be Plato knowing that the proposition

²⁷ Guillelmi de Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica, Opera Theologica*, I. *Scriptum in Librum Primum Sententiarum Ordinatio, Prologus et Distinctio Prima*, ed. Gedeon Gál, with the help of Stephan Brown (St Bonaventure, NY, 1967), prol. q. 1, p. 32,11–15.

²⁸ *Sicut is Sortes in rei veritate sit albus, illa notitia Sortis et albedinis virtute cuius potest evidenter cognosci quod Sortes et albus, dicitur notitia intuitiva. Ibid.*, p. 31,23–25.

²⁹ *Notitia autem abstractiva est illa virtute cuius de re contingente non potest sciri evidenter utrum sit vel non sit. Et per istum modum notitia abstractiva abstrahit ab existentia et non existentia, quia nec per ipsam potest evidenter sciri de re existente quod existit, nec de non existente quod non existit, per oppositum ad notitiam intuitivam. Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁰ Philotheus Boehner, "Notitia Intuitiva of Non-Existents." In *Collected Articles*, p. 269.

³¹ Ockham, Prol. q. 1, pp. 17–18.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 19,19–20,2.

(*complexum*), “Plato loves Socrates,” is true or false, and is distinct from the act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*) of Plato knowing the individual parts of the proposition (*incomplexum*), namely, Socrates himself. The act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*) presupposes a *notitia* of the individual term (*incomplexum*), whereas the act of judgment (*actus iudicativus*) presupposes a *notitia* of the proposition (*complexum*).³³

And third, Ockham is clear that *notitia* is not identical with knowledge, that is, *scientia*. For Ockham, *notitia* is a more encompassing term, which can be associated with cognition in a basic and broad sense. Ockham explains that *noticia* “is greater in scope (*in plus*) than knowledge (*scientia*), or understanding (*intellectus*), or wisdom (*sapientia*), because a contingent proposition is able to be known evidently, and, nevertheless, that *noticia* is neither knowledge (*scientia*), nor understanding (*intellectus*), nor something else of those habits ...”³⁴ Here Ockham is clear that *noticia* is not knowledge (*scientia*), and hence my warning against translating *noticia* as such. *Noticia* is “a knowing,” but it is not knowledge, hence my choice of “apprehension” or “cognition.” *Noticia* is more fundamental and basic than knowledge (*scientia*).

With these observations being made, we now turn to Melanchthon's understanding of *noticia* which he treated at some length in both his *On the Soul (Liber de Anima)* of 1540, and his third work on dialectics, the *Dialectical Questions (Erotemata Dialectices)* of 1547. I have already pointed to the probable influence of Melanchthon's definition of dialectic on Luther's understanding and in [Chapter 3](#), I argued that Melanchthon's division of an argument into form (*forma*) and matter (*materia*) lay behind Luther's treatment of Trinitarian paralogisms in his *Disputation* of 1539. Thus there is good reason for turning to Melanchthon's understanding of *noticia* as a backdrop against which Luther's view appears more clearly in relief. We must not forget, however, that my discussions of Ockham and Melanchthon are only *prolegomena* to Luther.

As with Ockham, a comprehensive discussion of *noticia* in Melanchthon's thought here would far exceed the scope of this presentation, for *noticiae* lie at the very core of Melanchthon's philosophy and theology. I will, nevertheless, extract from his treatment of the *noticiae* for the purpose of our present concerns.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 21,6–10.

³⁴ ... quod notitia evidens est in plus quam scientia vel intellectus vel sapientia, quia propositio contingens potest evidenter cognosci, et tamen illa notitia nec est scientia nec intellectus nec aliquis illorum habituum... *Ibid.*, p. 6,5–8.

The reason I use the plural of *noticia* is because Melanchthon had a three-fold understanding: there were the *noticiae naturales*, *noticia* as the act of understanding (*actus intelligendi*), and *noticia* as habit (*habitus*). Beginning with the second, in the section, “What is *noticia*?” in his *On the Soul*, Melanchthon defined *noticia* as “an action of the mind by which it perceives a thing, as if forming an image of the thing which it knows. Those images or ideas are nothing else except the act of understanding (*actus intelligendi*).”³⁵ With this being said, Melanchthon continued by making the distinction between intuitive and abstractive *noticia* (*noticia intuitiva* and *noticia abstractiva*), which, echoing Ockham, should remind us that Melanchthon was associated with the *via moderna* at Tübingen. Intuitive *noticia* (*noticia intuitiva*) is when the cognition of a present thing is received simultaneously by the senses and the mind, and is similar to the definition of the thing perceived. Abstractive *noticia* (*noticia abstractiva*) concerns the cognition of a thing not actually present, and Melanchthon gives the example of the means of knowing an absent friend.³⁶ *Noticia abstractiva* also concerns the cognition of universals and whatever else is not received immediately by the senses. Both *noticia intuitiva* and *noticia abstractiva* are acts of understanding (*actus intelligendi*).

Regarding the *noticiae naturales*, Melanchthon equated them with the first principles (*principia*) as one of three philosophical causes of certitude (*causae certitudinis*). In his *On the Soul, Beginning Physics (Initia Doctrinae Physicae)*, and his *Dialectical Questions*, Melanchthon included a section, “What are the causes of certitude?” (*Quae sunt causae certitudines?*), which, he says, the Greeks called *Kryteria*.³⁷ Melanchthon listed: (1) universal experience (*experientia universalis*); (2) the first principles (*principia*), which Melanchthon explained are the *noticiae* born with us; and (3) the understanding of order (*ordinis intellectus*), which is the understanding of syllogistic based on rules of consequences (*consequentiae*). These three form the basis of certitude in philosophy. The first principles (*principia*), or the *noticiae naturales*, are the divinely planted seeds of the liberal arts, given to us at birth. In his *Dialectical Questions*, Melanchthon wrote: “just as a light was created in our eyes in order for us to see corporal existence, so in the mind these *noticiae* are as a light by which we

³⁵ ... *Noticia est mentis actio, qua rem adspicit, quasi formans imaginem rei, quam cogitat. Nec aliud sunt imagines illae seu ideae, nisi actus intelligendi.* CR 13, col. 145.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 150.

understand number, order, proportion, and figure.”³⁸ Any further discussion of the *noticiae naturales*, or the causes of certitude (*causae certitudinis*) at this point would take us too far afield, but here we should stress that the *noticiae naturales* are divinely instilled bases of certitude.

We are not completely finished with the causes of certitude, however, because in his *On the Soul*, Melanchthon added a fourth, which is the norm of certitude (*norma certitudinis*) in the Church, that is, divine revelation, which exists “in the books of the prophets and the apostles.”³⁹ The Scriptures, for Melanchthon, as the bearers of God’s revelation, are the basis of certitude which, he says, can be doubted no more than can 2×4 is 8. However, not everyone gives their assent to revelation, and here – now drawing from his *Dialectical Questions* – Melanchthon made a distinction similar to Ockham’s act of apprehension and act of judgment. For Melanchthon, revelation is known, but is only assented to when the Holy Spirit moves the mind to embrace the voice of the Evangelist. This assent, Melanchthon says, is called faith. Thus Melanchthon contrasted the *noticia* as the act of understanding (*actus intelligendi*) of God’s revelation, with the *assentio* of faith.⁴⁰ However, Melanchthon can say, and did, as did Luther, that faith is *noticia* (*fides est noticia*), which brings us to his third understanding of *noticia*, *noticia* as habit (*habitus*).

In book I of his *Dialectical Questions*, Melanchthon presented a lengthy discussion on habits, a discussion of which is once again beyond the scope of this presentation. His basic definition is that a habit (*habitus*) is a comparative quality in man by which the knowledge of an action once performed remains after the performance of the act and provides for the easier and more certain completion of the repetition of the same act. Melanchthon divided habits into habits of the body (*habitus corporis*) and habits of the soul (*habitus animae*). Habits of the soul are two-fold: habits of the intellect (*habitus intellectus*) and habits of the will (*habitus voluntatis*). The importance of this for our purpose is that Melanchthon clarified: “The type of habit, however, that is of the intellect (*habituus intellectus*) is called *noticia*.”⁴¹ Making a further distinction between certain and uncertain *noticia*, Melanchthon lists the certain *noticiae* (*certae noticiae*) of the habit of the intellect (*habitus intellectus*) as: Knowledge (*Scientia*), Art (*Ars*), Prudence (*Prudentia*), and Faith (*Fides*). Faith he

³⁸ ... ut lumen in oculis conditum est ad cernenda corpora, sic in mente quasi lumen sunt hae noticiae, quibus intelligimus numeros, ordinem, proportiones, figuras ... CR 13, col. 647.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, col. 151.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* col. 651.

⁴¹ *Genus autem habituus intellectus vocatur Noticia. Ibid.*, col. 536.

defined as “the *noticia* of certain propositions which we embrace with firm assent on account of the assertion of true testimony.”⁴² It is in this sense that Melanchthon wrote: *Fides est noticia*. Thus faith, as most fundamentally an assent of the will (*assentio*), becomes for Melanchthon a certain *noticia* (*certa noticia*) as an intellectual habit (*habitus intellectus*).

With the backdrop of Melanchthon's and Ockham's understanding of *noticia*, we are now ready to approach Luther's statement *fides est noticia*. As mentioned earlier, Luther himself did not discuss his concept of *noticia*, but with Ockham and Melanchthon as counterweights – to which Luther's understanding bears both similarities and differences – we are able to discern in far more detail Luther's thought than was previously possible, and we will see that the idea of *noticia* is of major importance for Luther's understanding of faith as discussed in his commentary on Galatians: it is the very essence of his cognitive way of thought.

To begin, we can point to a decisive difference between Luther and Melanchthon. Both theologians wrote: *fides est noticia*, but for Melanchthon, as just seen, this statement holds true with faith as an intellectual habit (*habitus intellectus*). As early as his *Operationes in Psalmos* of 1519 Luther denied the existence of habits, calling them human fantasies.⁴³ In its place he put experience: “By living, but even more so (*immo*) by dying and being damned, one becomes a theologian, not by intellection, reading, or speculation.”⁴⁴ Experience (*Experientia*), one of Melanchthon's causes of certitude (*causae certitudinis*), took the place of habits (*habitus*) for Luther, thereby contradicting Melanchthon's understanding of *fides est noticia*.

Nevertheless, *fides est noticia*, for Luther, is “a knowing,” or an “apprehending.” In his commentary on Galatians 5:4, Luther wrote:

And a true cognition of Christ does not debate whether you have done good works contributing to your righteousness, or evil works leading to your damnation, but simply affirms: Whether you have done good works or not, you are not therefore justified, and whether or not you have done evil works, you are not on that account damned.⁴⁵

⁴² *Fides est noticia propositionum certarum, quas firma assensione amplectimur, propter asseverationem testium veracium ... Ibid.*, col. 538.

⁴³ *Nam phantasmata illa puto humana esse, quod aliud sit habitus et aliud actus eius ... AWA 2.317,16–17.*

⁴⁴ *Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo, aut speculando. Ibid.*, 296,10–11.

⁴⁵ *Et vera cognitio Christi seu fides non disputat, utrum feceris bona opera ad iusticiam, aut mala ad damnationem, sed simpliciter ita statuit: Sive feceris bona opera, non ideo iustificaris, sive feceris mala, non ideo dammaris. WA 40 II.19,31–35.*

Further, in his commentary on Galatians 5:5, he asserted: "When therefore by faith in the Word of God I am led out to apprehend Christ and with the complete trust of my heart (which nevertheless is not able to come about without the will), I believe in Him, by this cognition (*noticia*) I am righteous."⁴⁶ It is this *noticia* that indeed is our certitude through passive righteousness (*iustitia passiva*):

For no other consolation of the conscience is as firm and certain as passive righteousness ... Wherefore the afflicted conscience has no other remedy against desperation and death unless it grasps the promise of grace offered in Christ, and this is that passive, or Christian, righteousness of faith.⁴⁷

With Luther's denying the existence of habits and his relying on experience, we come to realize that, for Luther, the *noticia* that is faith is intuitive (*noticia intuitiva*). Ockham had denied the possibility of knowing habits intuitively,⁴⁸ and claimed that the *noticia* received through experience is *noticia intuitiva*.⁴⁹ It is with Ockham's understanding of *noticia intuitiva* that Luther wrote "faith is *noticia*," whereby based on experience (*experientia*), the evidence is truly present – a true cognition known certainly and evidently. Again quoting his commentary on Galatians 5:5, Luther wrote: "Faith has truth as its object, which truth teaches certainly and firmly what is to be adhered to, and it intuits the reality, or the promise, of the Word."⁵⁰

At this point I return to Luther's comments on Lombard's *Sentences*, book III, distinction 23, c. 7.2. The proposition Lombard is discussing is: "That faith concerns those things which are not seen properly speaking, but which are nevertheless seen by the one in whom faith is."⁵¹ In the third section, Lombard explains how faith is indeed seen even though faith is "of those things which are not seen." Lombard claims that faith "is seen by that man not corporally, not in the imagination, but it is seen

⁴⁶ *Quando igitur fide in verbum Dei edoctus apprehendo Christum et tota fiducia cordis (quod tamen sine voluntate fieri non potest) credo in eum, hac noticia iustus sum.* WA 40 II.27,14–16.

⁴⁷ *Nulla enim alia tam est firma ac certa consolatio conscientiarum quam illa passiva iustitia ... Quare nullum remedium habet afflictia conscientia contra desperationem et mortem aeternam, nisi apprehendat promissionem gratiae oblatæ in Christo, hoc est hanc fidei, passivam seu christianam iustitiam.* WA 40 I.41,25–26; 42,26–28.

⁴⁸ Ockham, *Prolog.*, q. 1, p. 69,8–18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41,4–14.

⁵⁰ *Fides habet objectum veritatem, cui certo et firmiter docet adherendum esse, et intuetur in rem verbi vel promissionem.* WA 40 II.26,21–23.

⁵¹ *Quod fides est de his quae non videntur proprie, quae tamen videtur ab eo in quo est.* Lombard, vol. II, p. 145,14–15; see also *ibid.*, p. 146,5–12.

intellectually.”⁵² In commenting on these passages, Luther simply referred to question 1 of Ockham's *Prologue*.

For Ockham, the certitude of *noticia intuitiva* was based on his denying visible species, as Katherine Tachau has described in depth.⁵³ There were no intermediary species (*species in medio*) between the object and the viewer. This is true as well, for Ockham, concerning intelligible species. Ockham's definition of *noticia intuitiva* denied all mediation between what is known and the knower. The question we must ask is, by citing Ockham's *Prologue* at this point in Lombard's text, is Luther's understanding of the faith that is seen intellectually (*intellectualiter*) a *noticia intuitiva* without species (*sine speciebus*)?

Discussing Ockham's attack on sensible and intelligible species, Tachau writes:

If intuition is the means by which we know that an object exists and is present when it is, then, if species really exist, we should have intuitive cognitions of them. But species, Ockham argues, are not known experientially; that is, while we are aware of the visible object when we see it, we are not aware of anything passing from it to our eyes ... there is no need for a species, because intuitive cognition – whether of the senses or the intellect – does not require a “representation” or “image” of the object. Far from requiring representation, in fact, cognition cannot occur via representation, in Ockham's view.⁵⁴

Here we are very close to Luther's position. Returning to the key text for Luther's cognitive way of thought from his notes on Lombard, which is found directly after Luther's reference to Ockham, we see that Luther viewed the most certain knowledge (*certissima scientia*), intellectually (*intellectualiter*), based on the primary act (*primus actus*), namely, *noticia intuitiva*, because the object – in this case one's own faith – is most certainly present: “One sees his own faith intellectually with the most certain knowledge, that is, not by means of a secondary act, but by means of a primary act, that is, the intellect has faith present to itself most certainly, but not through works of the intellect.”⁵⁵ The “not through works” (*non per opera*) excludes abstraction, either from an intuition or from species.

⁵² ... *ab ipso homine videri, non corporaliter, non imaginarie, sed intellectualiter*. *Ibid.*, p. 145,13–14.

⁵³ Katherine H. Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham. Optics, Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics, 1250–1345* (Leiden, 1988).

⁵⁴ Tachau, *Vision and Certitude*, pp. 130–131.

⁵⁵ *Videt quisque intellectualiter fidem suam certissima scientia, hoc est, non actu secundo, sed actu primo i.e. intellectus habet eam praesentem sibi certissime, sed non per opera*. Matura, p. 544,1–3; WA 9.91,4–6.

This text alone is not sufficient proof, although it takes us far in the direction for determining that faith was understood by Luther as a *noticia intuitiva* – without species (*sine specie*); a passage in his *Dictata Super Psalterium* brings us even further. In the comment on Psalm 84:7, the same text in which we find evidence of Luther having had his discovery of passive righteousness as argued in [Chapter 3](#), in discussing conversion Luther wrote: “But that conversion of God is first and most of all that by which God is united with our nature. Second, that by which God is united spiritually with us through faith and charity. Third, through a clear vision.”⁵⁶ This “clear vision” (*clara visio*) is further explained by Luther in his commentary on Romans 1:17 (*Ex fide in fidem*). Arguing “for informed faith is not faith, but more accurately is the object of faith,”⁵⁷ Luther argued: “Therefore the meaning seems to be that the righteousness of God is completely from faith, insofar, however, that in making progress, one comes increasingly not to see the species, but always into clearer faith.”⁵⁸ The clear vision (*clara visio*) is indeed without intermediaries (*sine specie*), based on the most certain presence of the object; this is precisely Ockham’s understanding of *noticia intuitiva*, with which Luther equated faith.

For Luther, the objective truth of faith that is apprehended by *noticia intuitiva* is the cross. In his *Operationes in Psalmos*, after stating that we should not seek to understand earthly things, but those that are above, where Christ is, Luther explained:

This understanding, however, is not that about which philosophers conjecture, but is faith itself ... for this understanding comes from faith, according to the statement (Is. 7:9) *Unless you believe, you will not understand* ... for faith is joined to the soul with the invisible, unutterable, un-nameable, eternal, imperceptible Word of God, and at the same time separates the soul from all things visible, and this is the cross.⁵⁹

“All things invisible” here does not include what is visible intellectually (*intellectualiter*) as Lombard’s text illustrates, and indeed, further on in the

⁵⁶ *Sed conversio ista dei maxima et prima est, qua unitus est nostre nature. Secunda, qua unitur spiritualiter nostro per fidem et charitatem. Tercia, per claram visionem.* WA 4.8,9–11.

⁵⁷ *Fides enim informis non est fides, sed potius obiectum fidei.* WA 56.172,21.

⁵⁸ *Ideo sensus videtur esse, Quod Iustitia Dei fit ex fide totaliter, ita tamen, quod proficiendo non venit in speciem, sed semper in clariorem fidem* ... WA 56.173,7–9; cf. WA 3.149,7–37.

⁵⁹ *Est autem haec intelligentia, non de qua philosophi opinantur, sed fides ipsa ... Hic enim intellectus ex fide venit, iuxta illud <Is. 7:9>, “Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis” ... Conjungit enim fides animam cum invisibili, ineffabili, innominabili, aeterno, incogitabili verbo dei simulque separat ab omnibus visibilibus, et haec est crux* ... AWA 2.107,20–26; 108,1–4.

Operationes, Luther exclaimed: "The cross alone is our theology."⁶⁰ Faith is *noticia intuitiva* of God's promise revealed in the cross of Christ.

Noticia, however, for Luther is not an act of understanding (*actus intelligendi*) nor in any way an assent of the will (*assentio*). Neither does Luther make a distinction between an act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*) and an act of judgment (*actus iudicativus*), because for Luther, the act of judgment is given simultaneously with the act of apprehension based on the intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*). This is true for Luther because although the intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) that is faith is indeed a cognition (*cognitio*), it is not an understanding (*intellectus*) of the mind. In his notes of 1531 on Melanchthon's *Apologia* for the Augsburg Confession, in the margin by where Melanchthon had written that good works were necessary to follow reconciliation because our fearful consciences need external signs of Christ's promise, Luther wrote: "Even more so internal signs (*immo interna*), since our heart does not prove us wrong. We know, that we are sons of God."⁶¹ The *noticia* that is faith for Luther, is not only certain and intuitive, but is also in the heart (*in corde*).

Here we have the second major piece in the puzzle of how to understand Luther's statement: "Faith is cognition" (*fides est noticia*). To return again to the key text of Luther's comments on Lombard book III, d. 23, c. 2, where Luther also referred to Ockham's *Prologue*, the third section of this chapter is where Lombard asserts the intellectual seeing of faith mentioned earlier. The full passage, however, further defines this intellectual seeing (*intellectualiter*): "With these words he evidently meant that faith itself in the human heart is to be seen by humans not corporally, nor imaginatively, but intellectually, even though that faith is of things not present and of those things that are not seen to be."⁶² For Lombard an "intellectual seeing" (*visio intellectualiter*) of faith is indeed possible; not in the mind, but in the heart (*in corde*). Based on experience (*experientia*), faith is an evident knowing of Christ who is presented to us as fact, truly present in our hearts which yields absolute certainty. Thus, Luther's statement, "faith is cognition" (*fides est noticia*), more precisely means that for

⁶⁰ *Crux sola est nostra theologia*. AWA 2.319,3.

⁶¹ *Imo interna, Cum cor nostrum non coarguit nos. Scimus, quod filium [sic!] Dei simus*. WA 30 III.491,11–12.

⁶² *His verbis evidenter traditur fidem ipsam in corde hominis ab ipso homine videri, non corporaliter, non imaginarie, sed intellectualiter; et ipsam tamen absentium et eorum quae non videntur esse*. Lombard, vol. II, p. 146,13–15.

Luther, faith is an absolutely certain intuitive cognition without any intermediaries of the cross and God's promise in the heart.⁶³

There is one catch, however, in our unfolding of Luther's statement "faith is cognition" (*fides est noticia*). For Ockham – and for Luther – intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) is based on experience. The problem occurs when we find Luther seemingly denying that faith as a cognition (*noticia*) can be based on experience (*experientia*). In a Table Talk Luther was reported to have said: "In nature experience is the cause why we hear and precedes the assent; in theology, however, experience follows the assent, it does not precede it."⁶⁴ In this light, have I failed to recognize Luther's explicit teaching of the two kingdoms (*Zweireichslehre*) as stated here and thus entirely misportrayed his meaning of faith as intuitive cognition? Certainly not, but how, then, do we interpret, in the sense of understanding, not in that of explaining away, this statement?

On closer examination we find that Luther had a two-fold understanding of experience (*experientia*). Experience in theology (*experientia in theologia*) is the experience of Christ for us (*experientia Christi pro nobis*), which follows the assent (*assensus*). On the cognitive side, however, there is the experience by which Christ is apprehended. As Luther set forth in his notes on Lombard book III, d. 24, c. 3, glossing the phrase "Faith is from hearing" (*fides ex auditu*), the order is: "sent, preached, heard externally, the internal meaning of the preaching is understood, the assent, invocation, salvation etc."⁶⁵ "In nature," Luther argued as already quoted, "experience is the cause why we hear, and precedes the assent; in theology, however, experience does not precede, but follows the assent,"⁶⁶ precisely because in theology the "cause why we hear" is external to ourselves (*extra nos*), which does not negate the experience of the external hearing of the preached Word of God, the understanding of the internal meaning, or the assent, since experience in theology of Christ for us (*pro nobis*) is on the level of salvation. Luther's way of thought here is indeed faith as an intuitive cognition of the cross in the heart of the believer, although the cause why we hear (*causa cur audiamus*) is outside of ourselves (*extra nos*), namely, Christ with no mediation.

⁶³ Cf. Bengt R. Hoffman, *Theology of the Heart. The Role of Mysticism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Minneapolis, MN, 1998).

⁶⁴ *In natura experientia est causa, cur audiamus, et praecedat assensum; in theologia autem experientia sequitur assensum, non praecedat.* WAT 1.183,25–27.

⁶⁵ ... mittitur, praedicatur, auditur exterius, intelligitur praedicationis sensus interius, assentitur, invocatur, salvatur etc. Matsura, p. 549,6–8; WA 9.92,34–36.

⁶⁶ *In natura experientia est causa, cur audiamus, et praecedat assensum; in theologia autem experientia sequitur assensum, non praecedat.* WAT 1.183,25–27.

This interpretation is confirmed when we realize that in his notes on Lombard – once again on book III, d. 23, c. 7, Luther glossed the phrase concerning the seeing that holds to faith with the most certain knowledge (*certissima scientia*) with the single word: “Intellectually” (*Intellectualiter*).⁶⁷ This in itself does not confirm our assertion of a two-fold understanding of experience (*experientia*) and could still very well precede, rather than be based on the experience of the intuitive cognition. However, in this section Lombard is quoting St Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, book 13. In the same period that Luther composed his notes on Lombard, i.e. 1509/10, he also wrote marginalia on several works of St Augustine, including *On the Trinity*. In these notes we find Luther’s gloss of the exact same passage (*sed eam tenet certissima scientia*), and once again a commentary of a single word: “Experientially” (*Experientialiter*).⁶⁸ This is conclusive proof that for Luther the clear vision (*clara visio*) that is had intellectually (*intellectualiter*) is identical with the clear vision (*clara visio*) had experientially (*experientialiter*) that forms the basis of the experience (*experientia*) of the intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) that is faith, namely, the experience (*experientia*) of Christ *pro nobis* on the level of salvation as given in his gloss of “Faith comes from hearing” (*fides ex auditu*) on book III, d. 24, c. 3 of Lombard’s *Sentences*.⁶⁹

For the final comment I will make regarding Luther’s understanding of *noticia*, we return momentarily to Ockham. Again in the first question of his *Prologue*, Ockham states that it is possible to have an evident knowing, or *noticia intuitiva* of one’s own faith, but not of the faith of someone else,⁷⁰ and as already seen, Luther held this same position. My own faith I know with an intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) by means of an act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*) of the individual term (*incomplexum*), “my own faith” (*fides propria*), and hence can judge my own faith. However, although an act of apprehension (*actus apprehensivus*) of another’s faith is not possible, the individual term (*incomplexum*) “one’s own faith” (*fides propria*) and the individual term (*incomplexum*) “another’s faith” (*fides altera*) are of the same species, namely, faith, and therefore, an act of judgment (*actus iudicativus*) of another’s faith is possible. The

⁶⁷ Matura, p. 543,10–11; WA 9,91,1–2.

⁶⁸ Matura, p. 607,4; WA 9,23,3.

⁶⁹ Cf. Lauri Haikola *Studien zu Luther und zum Luthertum* (Uppsala, 1958), p. 23. Although Haikola does not equate Luther’s understanding of *fides* with *noticia*, the passage he cites does. Haikola quotes from Luther’s lecture on the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah given in 1544, in which he once again claims that *fides* is *noticia*, and is based on *experientia*; WA 40 III.737,39–738,20. See Haikola, *Studien*, p. 23, n. 33.

⁷⁰ Prol., q. 1, p. 42.

intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) of one's own faith (*fides propria*) is the basis for making judgments concerning the faith of another (*fides altera*), and this is precisely what we find Luther doing in the preface to the first edition of his Commentary on Galatians of 1535.

Cain and Abel

In the very first paragraph of his preface, Luther clearly makes the distinction between what I have labeled intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) and the understanding of the mind (*intellectus mentis*) when he writes:

For in my heart that one article reigns, namely, the faith of Christ, from whom, through whom, and in whom all my theological thoughts (*cogitationes*) flow and flow back again day and night. Nevertheless, I do not experience (*experior*) that I comprehend the wisdom of such great height, breadth, and depth except as certain weak and primitive elements, as if fragments.⁷¹

On the basis of his theological thoughts in his heart (*theologicae cogitationes in corde*), though not his comprehension (*comprehensio*), Luther wrote against the Anabaptists and the papists, who, Luther claimed referring to passive righteousness (*iustitia passiva*), “today conspire together in concord against the Church of God attacking this one belief.”⁷² Luther's weapon against these offspring of Satan, who “retained some of his own seed [after the flood] in Noah's third son Ham,”⁷³ is not his own skill at refuting their irreligion, but the words of Paul written in his Epistle to the Galatians.⁷⁴ The Anabaptists are deserving of special mention because in the interlude between Luther's beginning his lectures in 1531 and their publication in 1535, the Heavenly Jerusalem had been established at Münster.

The greater social, religious, and political context must not be ignored in order to understand Luther's commentary on Galatians. Mark Edwards has noted that in Luther's *Against the Assassin at Dresden* of 1531, written in response to Duke George's *Against Luther's Warning to the Germans*, Luther supported his argument with historical examples and “[t]o this

⁷¹ *Nam in corde meo iste unus regnat articulus, scilicet Fides Christi, ex quo, per quem, et in quem omnes meae diu noctuque fluunt et refluent theologicae cogitationes, nec tamen comprehendisse me experior de tantae altitudinis, latitudinis, profunditatis sapientia nisi infirmas et pauperes quasdam primitias et veluti fragmenta.* WA 40 I.33,7–11.

⁷² *Conspirant namque Papistae et Anabaptistae hodie in unam hanc sententiam concorditer contra ecclesiam Dei ...* WA 40 I.36,1–2.

⁷³ *Tamen Satan nihilominus suum semen in Ham tertio filio Noe retinuit.* WA 40 I.34,9–10.

⁷⁴ WA 40 I.35,33–42.

historical evidence Luther added that Holy Scripture testified that the world was either Cain or Abel, either of the children of the devil or of the children of God.⁷⁵ In his *Preface* of 1535, Luther used this same distinction for what should be read as a mini-treatise on Church History. Luther briefly traced the children of God and the children of the devil from Cain and Abel through the flood and the coming of Christ, up to his own day. However, while Satan has always raged, and while men have always been possessed by demons, now, Luther says, men are possessed by other worse demons – *peiores demones!* As Oberman has shown, this same sentiment Luther will apply to the theology of Ockham and the *moderni* to whom he referred in his *Disputation Against the Antinomians* of 1538 as *peiores pelagiani*.⁷⁶ The eternal cosmic conflict had escalated.

It is in this context that we come to realize that Luther's Commentary on Galatians is placed in the very center of his apocalypticism. Just as Satan has reinforced his forces in these last days – and this time with troops from within the Church, most notably the papists, monks, and Anabaptists – so Luther has allowed his Commentary to be published to call his “brothers in Christ” (*fratres in Christo*) into battle against the devil:

Wherefore even I freely put forward my office [as doctor of the Holy Scriptures] and allow this most verbose commentary to be published to exhort the brothers in Christ against the forces and machinations of Satan, who is turned with such great ravings against this pure cognition of Christ, at last finally brought back to life in these last days and final moments.⁷⁷

In this context, Luther's understanding of certitude assumes the full force of all its implications. Luther's Commentary on Galatians, which in 1516 was a scholastic commentary by an Augustinian friar, in 1531 and with its publication in 1535, had become artillery against the devil forged by the apocalyptic prophet.

Certitude

Luther was at constant war with the devil, as he clearly stated in the preface of his Commentary on Galatians. He was also at war with Satan's servants, the papists and false brethren whom he perceived as threatening

⁷⁵ Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, p. 50.

⁷⁶ Oberman, *Dawn*, p. 109.

⁷⁷ *Quare et ego meum officium libenter praesto et hanc commentarium verbosissimum emitti permitto ad excitandos fratres in Christo adversus Satanae machinas et malitiam qui his novissimis et extremis momentis in tantam rabiem versus est contra hanc sanam Christi cognitionem denuo resuscitatem ...* WA 40 I.35,5–9.

passive righteousness (*iustitica passiva*) by mixing up the two-fold righteousness (*duplex iustitia*). This war was not only theological, but political as well, as Edwards has poignantly illustrated. The strength necessary for maintaining this war Luther found in faith in Christ: the source of his certitude that he was a son of God. This faith for Luther was an intuitive cognition, without intermediaries, of the cross in one's heart, and thus, as I hope to have shown, the philosophical context was also an essential factor in the battle between God and the devil.

This battle was no metaphysical abstraction, but deeply embedded within Luther's times, as seen in [Chapter 1](#), and can also be perceived – if we listen closely enough – in Luther's pastoral and filial concerns. The year 1531 was turbulent for many reasons, but especially so for Luther because it was the year of his mother's death. In his last letter to his mother, written on 20 May 1531 while Margarete lay on her deathbed, Luther expressed his confidence in the triumph of Christ:

Christ said: Be comforted, I have overcome the world! If he has overcome the world, so has he also certainly overcome the Princes of the world with all his power. But what is his power except that death, with which he throws us under himself, has been captured for our sins' sake? And now that death and sin are overcome, we may joyfully and with comfort hear his sweet word: Be comforted, I have overcome the world.⁷⁸

This comfort that Luther found in Christ was the certitude of faith, based on the most certain apprehension of Christ in our hearts. This was absolutely necessary for guarding against the renewed attacks of Satan in the early 1530s. It was also this certitude that formed the basis of Luther's attacks on the papists, Anabaptists, and false brethren because the poisonous opinion (*pestilens opinio*) was that “by which they teach that the holy man is uncertain of God's grace and favor. That is the beginning of the reign of Antichrist; thereby is Christ snatched away, for who doubts himself to be in grace, is also uncertain of the divine promises, and is left with nothing by which he might be certain.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ “Er spricht: Seid getrost, ich hab die Welt überwunden. hat er die Welt überwunden, so hat er gewisslich den Fürsten der Welt mit aller seiner Macht überwunden. Was ist aber seine Macht anders denn der Tod, damit er uns unter sich geworfen, umb unser Sünde willen gefangen hatte? Aber nu der Tod und Sünde überwunden ist, mügen wir fröhlich und tröstlich das süsse Wort hören: Seid getrost, ich hab die Welt überwunden.” *WABr* 6.104,32–37.

⁷⁹ ... *qua docent hominem sanctam esse incertam de gratia et favore dei, illa est principium regni Antichristi, damit ist Christus hinweg; qui enim dubitat se esse in gratia, etiam promissiones divinas incertas, et nihil relinquit, quomodo certus.* *WA* 40 1.587,3–5.

Luther's concept of certitude must be seen in its historical context as functioning along the horizontal axis of his social condition.⁸⁰ The vertical axis, however, cannot be ignored lest we fail fully to grasp not only the act, but also the impact of Luther's view of certitude on his thought, unable to perceive the depth present behind his horizontal impact. The vertical axis is as much a part of the necessary historical context as is the horizontal. This depth is not understood in its extent when we ask only what Luther thought about certitude; not the "what," but the "how" of Luther's thought reveals the profundity.

I do not mean to imply that Luther's understanding of faith can be reduced to epistemology. I do claim, however, that Luther's cognitive way of thought regarding the certitude of faith sheds light on what has lain in the dark. By attempting to enter this hidden chamber of Luther's mind, we have not seen a reinterpretation of his understanding of faith, but rather, we have peered into the depths to which his concept of faith penetrated. On the most fundamental level of human mental existence – i. e. perception – we find in Luther's thought faith; Christ himself, without mediation, is present in our heart, which we apprehend with an intuitive cognition that renders our faith certain.

With this understanding of faith, Luther radically departs from the tradition from which he emerged. In this chapter I have argued that Luther, having appropriated Ockham's view of cognition, did not simply apply it to theology, but rather, that Ockham's view of cognition was *how* Luther thought, not *what* he thought; this presupposition formed part of Luther's understanding of faith. It is here that we recognize a divergence between Luther and the Ockhamist tradition represented by Gabriel Biel. Oberman discussed the relationship between "faith and reason with regard to the inner core of faith" in his study of Biel and late medieval nominalism. Oberman wrote: "On the one hand, it is clear that evident knowledge is ruled out; apart from other considerations this kind of acquired faith would not answer the simplest definition of faith – it would be knowledge."⁸¹ Biel clearly distinguished between evident knowledge and faith. For Luther, however, if "evident knowledge" is understood as intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*), as Oberman seems to imply,⁸² then Luther has gone far beyond Biel because as we have seen, for Luther faith

⁸⁰ Cf. Susan Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2012).

⁸¹ Oberman, *Harvest*, p. 79.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

is precisely, on the most fundamental level, an intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*). Faith is a true cognition of Christ and of God's promises, and thus, in a certain way, knowledge and faith are identical for Luther, an identity that makes possible the certainty. What distinguishes this knowledge, not *of* faith, but *that is* faith, from all other knowledge is not the type of knowledge, but the cause. The cause of "knowledge-that-is-not-faith" is in the realm of the rational man (*homo rationalis*), as Luther stated in his *Table Talk* regarding experience (*experientia*): the cause of "knowledge-that-is-faith" is in the realm of the intellectual man (*homo intellectualis*) – the primary act, not by works (*primus actus, sed non per opera*) – and is *extra nos*, i.e. Christ as the object and act of the understanding (*intellectus*), bringing it into being. Here, however, we have moved from Luther's cognitive way of thought behind his understanding of the certitude of faith, to his substantive way of thought, a theme to which I now turn.

Luther's Substantive Way of Thought

On 7 June 1531, Luther wrote to Kaspar Löner and Nikolaus Medler in Hof, who were suffering persecution under the papal official Christoph von Beulwitz:

I read your letters, good brothers, in which you sought my advice on whether one should yield to those cunning enemies of the Gospel among you. I truly think that in no way should you yield, lest you be the hirelings having abandoned your sheep. Therefore, carry on, both of you, in the office received and approved by your Church, bearing all things which ought to be born, until they either cast you out by force, or prohibit you by the order of the prince; otherwise, one ought not to yield to the rages of Satan.⁸³

In this letter, Luther's battle against the devil is clearly perceived, dressed in the garb of one of the major issues of the day facing him: whether it was licit to resist authority. Although in a letter to Lazarus Spengler of 15 February 1531, Luther provided an opening for an affirmative answer to the question by placing the issue in the hands of the jurists,⁸⁴ in his letter to Löner and Medler four months later we find Luther claiming that

⁸³ *Legi literas vestras, optimi fratres, in quibus consilium meum petitis, an cedendum sit hostibus istis vulpinis evangelii apud vos. Ego vero arbitror nullo modo cedendum vobis esse, ne velut mercenarii deseratis oves. Pergite itaque uterque in officio suscepto et ab Ecclesia vestra approbato, ferentes omnia, quae ferre oportet, donec vel vi vos eiiciant, vel mandato proscribant principis; alioqui furori Satanae non est cedendum.* WABr 6.119,3–9.

⁸⁴ WABr 6.37,16–34.

one must not yield to the rages of Satan – unless forced by the princes. This stance provides an added dimension to Luther's second conclusion in his treatise *On the Freedom of the Christian* (*Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*): "A Christian is a servant to all things and subject to everyone."⁸⁵

This proposition carries such weight for Luther as part and parcel of his distinction between the two kingdoms. In his Commentary on Galatians, Luther utilized this distinction with the contrast between doctrine (*doctrina*) and life (*vita*). Echoing his notes of 1509 on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, book II, distinction 12, "theology is heaven, even more so, is the reign of heaven, man, however, is earth and his speculations smoke,"⁸⁶ in his exposition of Galatians 5:10 Luther asserted: "Wherefore, as I am often accustomed to warn, doctrine must diligently be distinguished from life. Doctrine is heaven; life, earth. In life is sin, error, filth, and misery."⁸⁷ Life consists in bearing persecution, even the rages of Satan, if forced by the established authorities. A Christian is a servant, and subject to all, even satanic tyranny.

There is another side, however, to such subjection. In his letter to Löner and Medler, Luther continued by assuring them that they were not alone in suffering such things, but "that is the persecution of us all,"⁸⁸ even though in Wittenberg Luther was free from external persecution. He then offered what must have been the convincing argument for him: "the Gospel is not able to exist and to spread, without persecution."⁸⁹ Indeed, as he stated in his commentary on Galatians 5:12, the rages of Satan are testimonies of the Gospel: "But the whole world is in turmoil. All the better, [for] if it was not thrown into confusion, and if the devil did not so rage and derange all things, we would not have pure doctrine, which those tumults and madneses are not able not to attack."⁹⁰ "All the better" (*bene*), Luther wrote, for it is precisely in the persecution Christians face as subjects, and in this world (*in hoc saeculo*) subjects to its prince, Satan himself, that we can be certain of the Gospel. Precisely because we exist

⁸⁵ "Eyn Christen mensch ist eyn dienstpar knecht aller ding und yderman unterthan." WA 7.21,3–4.

⁸⁶ ... *theologia est celum, immo regnum celorum, homo autem terra et ejus speculationes fumi*. Matsura, p. 435,18–436,1; WA 9.65,14–16.

⁸⁷ *Quare, ut saepe soleo monere, diligenter discernenda est doctrina a vita. Doctrina est coelum, vita terra. In vita est peccatum, error, immundities et miseria ...* WA 40 II.51,32–52,13–14.

⁸⁸ *Est ista omnium nostrum persecution ...* WABr 6.119,10.

⁸⁹ "... *et evangelium absque persecutione esse et crescere non potest ...*" WABr 6.119,12–13.

⁹⁰ *Sed totus mundus turbatur. Bene, si non turbaretur et diabolus non ita saeviret et conturbaret omnia, non haberemus puram doctrinam, quam isti tumultus et furores non possunt non sequi.* WA 40 II.59,16–18.

between God and the devil, in such a battle *we* are subjects, *we* can do nothing, *we* are not victors, *we* are not reformers, “faith is our victory” (*fides est victoria nostra*).

Christians are not, however, left defenseless, for in Galatians 5:5 Paul put forth what Luther named a “new addition” (*nova additio*), which is the means for conquering the devil: while we are servants and subjects, yet we have hope. Hope, for Luther, was intimately associated with the two other theological virtues, faith and love, as detailed in his commentary on the first thirteen verses of the fifth chapter of Galatians, which can legitimately bear the title of Luther's *Enchiridion*. It is in this matrix that we find as well Luther's substantive way of thought.

Luther's “substantive way of thought” is the counterpoint to his “cognitive way of thought.” Although I have treated them separately, for Luther they were indistinguishably intertwined. Luther most likely would not have recognized these two ways of thought, but to reiterate, it is not so much what Luther thought that I am after, as how he thought. In his *Dictata Super Psalterium* of 1513/1515, Luther explained that “in holy scripture, the intellect gets its name more from its object, than from its own power, which is the other way around in philosophy.”⁹¹ He further gave an explication of his understanding of substance. “In scripture,” Luther clarified,

“substance” (*substantia*) is taken metaphorically, with regard to both its grammatical signification and its physical signification. And this is how it should be understood properly here [Ps. 68:3], not as the philosophers talk about it ... for thus [substance] is said to be all that by which someone exists in their own life, as [for example] the rich man exists through riches, the healthy man, through health, the honored man, through honor, and the man of pleasure, through pleasure, because for as long as there are the latter, so long last the former. And thus substance most properly is a quality or something external, rather than the essence itself of a thing, because Scripture does not care at all for the quiddities of things, but only for their qualities. Thus, one has one's substance according to how one is and acts, which if one lacks, one can no longer exist.⁹²

⁹¹ “Intellectus” in scripturis sanctis potius ab objecto quam potentia nomen habet, contrario quam in philosophia. WA 3.176,3–4.

⁹² “Substantia” in Scriptura metaphorice accipitur tam ex grammaticali quam physicali significatione. Et proprie, non ut philosophi de ea loquuntur, hic accipienda est ... Sic enim dicitur omne illud, per quod quisque [in sua vita] subsistit: ut dives subsistit per divitias, sanus per sanitatem, honoratus per honorem, voluptarii per voluptatem. Quia quam diu sunt tales, quam diu ista durant. Et sic substantia proprie magis est qualitas vel extrinsecum quam ipsa essentia rei. Quia Scriptura nihil curat quidditates rerum, sed qualitates tantum. Et sic qualiter unusquisque est et agit, secundum hoc habet substantiam: qua si caret, iam non subsistit. Ps. 68:3, WA 3.419,25–420,2.

These two passages are central for discerning Luther's substantive way of thought and how it informed his interpretation of Galatians 5:1–13, Luther's *Enchiridion*, treating the theological virtues faith, hope, and love. I begin with hope.

Hope: Something New

In his exposition of Galatians 5:5, Luther designated the second part of the verse as “a new addition” (*nova additio*): “we await the hope of righteousness.”⁹³ But, says Luther, the scriptures employ a two-fold understanding of hope. In the first sense hope (*spes*) refers to the thing hoped for; in the second to the emotion (*affectus*) of hoping.⁹⁴ Thus Luther made the distinction regarding hope that is usually applied to faith; he distinguished between “objective hope” (*spes quae*) and “subjective hope” (*spes qua*). When we begin to be justified by faith, so also begins the mortification of the flesh, but we are not at that time perfectly just. What remains is that we become perfectly justified and it is for this that we hope. Thus our righteousness is not yet a reality (*in re*) and until this comes about, we are only righteous in hope (*in spe*).⁹⁵

I will return to this distinction between “in reality” (*in re*) and “in hope” (*in spe*), but here we should note that hope is a corollary, so to speak, of faith. Just as dialectic is not able to be without rhetoric, so, Luther says associating faith with the former and hope with the latter, faith is not able to be without hope, or even as he stated in his preparatory notes to this verse, “faith without hope is nothing.”⁹⁶

Earlier I offered an interpretation of Luther's concept of faith (*fides*). I did not, however, address the question of whether Luther had a two-fold understanding of faith parallel to objective hope (*spes quae*) and subjective hope (*spes qua*). That Luther did advocate an objective faith (*fides quae*) is seen in the very definition “faith is cognition” (*fides est noticia*). In his comments on Galatians 5:5, Luther wrote: “Faith, therefore, is doctrine or cognition.”⁹⁷ With his associating faith (*fides*) with doctrine (*doctrina*) it would appear that here Luther is indeed advocating an objective faith (*fides quae*). Luther wrote: “Faith, therefore, is Dialectic, which comprehends

⁹³ ... sed adiungit: “spem iustitiae expectamus,” quae nova additio est. WA 40 II.23,25–26.

⁹⁴ Spes usu Scripturae dupliciter accipitur, pro re sperata et pro affectu sperante. WA 40 II.23,27–28.

⁹⁵ Sic iustitia nostra nondum est in re, sed adhuc in spe. WA 40 II.24,21–22.

⁹⁶ ... ita fides sine spe est nihil. WA 40 I.21,33–34.

⁹⁷ Est igitur fides doctrina seu noticia. WA 40 II.26,14–15.

the idea of everything to be believed,"⁹⁸ and then shortly thereafter: "faith teaches the truth and defends it from errors and heresies."⁹⁹

Faith as doctrine does not, however, alter the discussion of faith as cognition (*noticia*). The doctrine referred to as faith is precisely the intuitive cognition (*noticia*) of Christ crucified, which reveals the passive nature of righteousness (*iustitia passiva*): "Therefore faith teaches [one] to hold fast to the truth; the object is truth, and Christ, and sets the intellect straight."¹⁰⁰ We have already seen Luther asserting Christ as the object that orders the intellect, and it comprises the substantive way of thought as mentioned, whereas faith as intuitive cognition (*noticia*) pertains to Luther's cognitive way of thought. With faith as doctrine (*doctrina*), we see that Luther does have a concept of objective faith (*fides quae*). Without hope, however, objective faith (*fides quae*) is nothing. Hence we can describe Luther's understanding of the relationship between faith and hope with an equation; for Luther, objective faith (*fides quae*) plus subjective hope (*spes qua*) as a function of objective hope (*spes quae*) yields subjective faith (*fides qua*). It is subjective faith (*fides qua*) by which we are justified *sola fide*. However, this analysis puts Luther's understanding of objective faith in an entirely different light from the traditional interpretation as does his definition of faith as doctrine. Doctrine (*doctrina*) is not the teachings of the Church, but rather: "Doctrine is that we are justified not by works, rituals, sacrifices, and all those worship practices of the Mosaic law, much less by human works and traditions, but we are justified by Christ alone."¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, there is an element of objective faith (*fides quae*) since faith without hope is nothing. Does not this requirement of hope, however, leave a space for human cooperation in justification since subjective hope (*spes qua*) is seemingly our own hope?

Luther would answer this question strongly in the negative. In his *Operationes in Psalmos* of 1519, in his treatment of Psalm 5:12, Luther inserted a lengthy digression entitled "On Hope and the Passions" (*De spe et passionibus*), in which he asserted that hope, as a theological virtue, is not found in our merits but in our sin,¹⁰² and thus, is indeed passive,

⁹⁸ *Fides igitur est Dialectica, quae concipit ideam omnium credendum.* WA 40 II.28,12.

⁹⁹ *Fides docet veritatem ac defendit ab erroribus et Haeresibus.* WA 40 II.30,12–13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ideo fides docet adherere veritati, obiectum est veritas et Christus, et dirigit intellectum.* WA 40 II.26,5–6.

¹⁰¹ *Doctrina est, quod non per opera, ritus, sacrificia et totum illum cultum Mosaicae legis, multo minus per opera et traditiones humanas iustificemur, sed per solum Christum.* WA 40 II.30,18–20.

¹⁰² ... *ita, spes, quae in meritis est, nulla est...ita spei natura non est nisi in peccatis esse.* AWA 288,16–17 and 21.

received only as a gift from God,¹⁰³ for: “Truly, only the passive life is most pure.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, in order to discuss such passiveness in more depth, we will need to delve into Luther's anthropology, drawing from the very beginnings of his developing theology.

Substantive Form: Anthropological Perspectives

Steven Ozment analyzed Luther's early anthropology in depth:

From the foregoing, it is clear that Luther is not primarily concerned with an evaluation of the *quidditates animae* – an enterprise he is apparently content to concede to the philosophers. His concern is with the *vita animae*, and that means *vita totius hominis* in its subjection to the power of sin and the power of God's promises and faith in Christ. He speaks of man *secundum animam* primarily, but not simply, because the philosophical, theological and ecclesiological traditions out of which he thinks, dispose him to do so. He also speaks of man in this way because the terms *anima*, *cor*, *spiritus* and *conscientia* provide him with a kind of anthropological “shorthand” which he can flexibly employ to speak of his overriding concern: the theoretical and existential understanding of the *vita fidei*.¹⁰⁵

It is not my intent to critique Ozment's work here, but I do want to dig a bit deeper to find the source of the passive nature of the life of the soul (*vita animae*) and the entire human being (*totus homo*).

Earlier I referred to notes of Luther dating from his earliest period on chapter 4 of William of Ockham's seventh *Quodlibet*, *On the Sacrament of the Altar*. In these notes Luther wrote: “Gabriel in lect.42 on the Canon. And the same in dist. 17, bk. II, of Gregory of Rimini: they hold against Ockham and Scotus, that in one composite [being] there is only one form.”¹⁰⁶ As already mentioned, in the forty-second lecture of his *Exposition of the Canon of the Mass*, Biel argued against Scotus and Ockham that in man there is only one substantive form, namely the rational soul. Whereas Scotus and Ockham argued that there was a corporeal form and a rational form, Biel countered by claiming that the substantive

¹⁰³ ... *ita in spiritualibus bona gratiae et merita donantur a deo, ut per ea in deum sperare abundantius doceamur.* AWA 290,3–4.

¹⁰⁴ *Sola vero passiva vita purissima est ...* AWA 303,5.

¹⁰⁵ Steven Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis. A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther, 1509–1516, in the Context of their Theological Thought*, SMRT 6 (Leiden, 1969), p. 101.

¹⁰⁶ *Gabrie lect.42 sup(er) canon Et dis.xvii:li.2. ibid(em) Gre: arym. tene(n)t q(uod) in vno co(m)posito sit vna t(antu)m forma con(tra) occam & scotu(m).* As quoted by Matura, “Restbestände aus der Bibliothek des Erfurter Augustinerklosters,” p. 330.

form was designated by the “highest” attributes of a being, and in the case of man, that is the rational soul, under which all other attributes are subsumed. Luther’s note is evidence that he followed Biel in attributing only one substantive form to man.

Luther differed from Biel, however, and from St Thomas Aquinas who was perhaps the most vigorous proponent of the unicity of form, in that rational man (*homo rationalis*) is not the substantive form of humans, simply because reason is not the highest attribute of the soul. In his sermon of Christmas Day 1514 on John 1:1ff, Luther put forth a five-fold hierarchy of creatures: Intellectual, rational, sensate, animate, and inanimate.¹⁰⁷ He then continued by explaining his distinction: “I distinguish, however, intellectual nature from rational nature, which seems absurd to many philosophers, but nevertheless is in harmony with scripture, because according to the scriptures, the intellect is of those invisible and eternal things which bestow blessedness.”¹⁰⁸ This is precisely what we find in Luther’s text from the *Dictata*, when he claimed that in scripture, the intellect takes its name from its object. Thus for Luther, it is not rational man (*homo rationalis*) that is humans’ substantive form, but intellectual man (*homo intellectualis*).

Intellectual man, however, is only a very misleading translation of Luther’s concept of *homo intellectualis*, because two years after his *Dictata*, in his notes on Tauler’s sermons, we find a three-fold division: sensual man (*homo sensualis*), rational man (*homo rationalis*), and spiritual man (*homo spiritualis*).¹⁰⁹ In this light, we come to see that the sphere above reason, the highest attribute of man and his substantive form, so to speak, is intellectual man (*homo intellectualis*) as synonymous with spiritual man (*homo spiritualis*), and may not be all that far from what Ozment has termed the “objective context” in Luther’s anthropology.¹¹⁰ The intellect (*intellectus*), for Luther, thus takes on an entirely different meaning from his scholastic predecessors, as the realm of spiritual man (*homo spiritualis*), concerned with the invisible and eternal – as distinct from rational man (*homo rationalis*). It is this which lies behind, at least in part, Luther’s comment in his Galatians Commentary that “faith is in the intellect.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ WA 1.26,4–8.

¹⁰⁸ *Distinguo autem intellectualem naturam a rationali, quod multis Philosophis absurdum videtur, sed tamen scripturae consonum, quia intellectus est secundum scripturas invisibilium et aeternorum, quae beatificant.* WA 1.26,25–28.

¹⁰⁹ WA 9.103,39–41.

¹¹⁰ Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis*, p. 104.

¹¹¹ *Fides est in intellectu.* WA 40 II.26,11–12.

Luther's distinction between the intellect and the reason in his sermon on John 1:1 is of utmost importance for understanding his concept of passivity. Drawing on Aristotelian physics and psychology, Luther discussed the relationship between a subject and an object. The intellect, as a subject, has the Word as its object. The Word, however, is not only the object of the intellect, it also is its proper act, and thereby, in a certain sense, brings it into being. Thus Luther claimed that the intellect (*intellectus*) becomes the Word, that is, Christ in humans (*in nobis*).¹¹²

God is act, and object. Humans are passive and the subject which undergoes the act. The point of connection is the realm of the intellect (*intellectus*) as spiritual man (*homo spiritualis*). This understanding of passivity is also the prerequisite for grasping Luther's understanding of hope. In his sermon on John 1:1 Luther treated both the intellect and the emotions, or affects (*affectus*), as subjects brought into being only by their objects, which, with regard to intellectual man (*homo intellectualis*), is the Word. In his *Operationes in Psalmos*, his notes on Tauler, and his *Dictata*, Luther associated hope (*spes*) not with the will (*voluntas*), but with the affects (*affectus*), as he did as well in his commentary on Galatians 5:5 by stating that the second understanding of hope, subjective hope (*spes qua*), is understood as referring to the one hoping with one's affects.¹¹³ Agreeing with Ozment that Luther was not primarily interested in the various divisions of the soul (*quidditates animae*), he was nevertheless vitally concerned with the qualities of the soul (*qualitates animae*),¹¹⁴ whereby it is not the intellect, will, and memory triad that has primacy of place, but rather the three-fold division sensual man, rational man, and spiritual man. Hope, as an affect (*affectus*), is in the realm of spiritual man (*homo spiritualis*), which Luther equated with intellectual man (*homo intellectualis*) having the Word as its object and act. Hope, our hope, is only potential, or rather, as nothing, dependent for its existence solely on the act of God. It may not have been a coincidence that Brother Martin's Order had defined theology, from Giles of Rome on, as distinct from the Dominican and Franciscan traditions, as affective knowledge (*scientia affectiva*). The importance Brother Martin gave to *affectus* testifies to this longstanding Augustinian tradition.

God is act, but Luther did not rely solely on a philosophical understanding. He drew on the mystical tradition as well. In the digression "On

¹¹² WA 1.29,15–31.

¹¹³ WA 40 II.23,28.

¹¹⁴ WA 3.419,25–31.

hope and the Passions,” Luther further described the coming into being, or the union of subject and object in the intellect (*intellectus*) by mystical matrimony:

Therefore those three virtues are divine, only obtaining their divine object, subject, operator, work, art, and means. For here a husband experiences the mysteries of the marriage bed with his wife, alone with her alone, where in other tasks, matters are conducted through the daughters of Jerusalem or companions.¹¹⁵

The intuitive cognition of Luther's cognitive way of thought based on experience (*experientia*) leads to the hope of his substantive way of thought, which provides the experience (*experientia*) of Christ *pro nobis*.¹¹⁶ The interrelationship of Luther's two ways of thought is the basis of his two-fold understanding of experience, seen here in terms of marital union.

The philosophical and mystical understanding of passivity remained in Luther's thought. Evidence for the philosophical understanding, including the concept of substantive form, can be seen in his postscript to a letter of Melancthon to Johannes Brenz dealing with the issue of justification, written during the middle of May 1531:

And, my dear Brenz, I am accustomed to picture this matter better thus conceived, as though there was no quality in my heart which would be called faith or love, but in the place of these, I insert Jesus Christus, and I say: This is my righteousness, Christ Himself is the quality and he is (as they say) formally my righteousness.¹¹⁷

Hence, for the Christian, it is more accurate to say that the substantive form is neither intellectual man (*homo intellectualis*), nor spiritual man (*homo spiritualis*), but Christ Himself. As Luther affirmed in his commentary on Galatians, “Just as you say that love itself fulfills faith, so we say that Christ is the form of that faith.”¹¹⁸

Luther's equating Christ with the substantive form of the Christian has been discussed by Karin Bornkamm.¹¹⁹ Bornkamm quoted Luther's

¹¹⁵ *Adeo istae tres virtutes sunt divinae tantummodo divinum obiectum, subiectum, operatorem, opus, artem, modum, obtinentes. Hic enim sponsus cum sponsa secreta cubilis capit, solus cum sola, ubi in ceteris operibus per filias Hierusalem aut sodales res geruntur. AWA 293,8–11.*

¹¹⁶ WA 40 III.738,6–13.

¹¹⁷ *Et ego soleo, mi Brenzi, ut hanc rem melius capiam, sic imaginari, quasi nulla sit in corde meo qualitas, quae fides vel charitas vocetur, sed in loco ipsorum pono Iesum Christum, et dico: Haec est iustitia mea, ipse est qualitas et formalis (ut vocant) iustitia mea ... WABr 6.100,49–101,52.*

¹¹⁸ *Sicut vos dicitis Charitatem ipsam imbuere fidem, sic dicimus nos Christum esse formam istius fidei. WA 40 I.229,8–9.*

¹¹⁹ Karin Bornkamm, *Luthers Auslegungen des Galaterbriefs von 1519 und 1531. Ein Vergleich* (Berlin, 1963), pp. 93–99.

comments on Galatians 2:20 where Luther explicitly stated that Christ is his form: "Christ is my form, just as a wall is informed by whiteness. Thus as properly and as inherently as whiteness in a wall, so Christ remains in me and Christ is that life that lives in me and that life by which I live."¹²⁰ Bornkamm associated Luther's view of Christ as the form of faith (*forma fidei*) with the mystical elements in his thought which she also saw in Luther's 1519 Commentary on Galatians.¹²¹ There are, however, additional aspects to Luther's understanding of Christ as the Christian's substantive form. In order to grasp Luther's meaning more completely, it is not to the mystical tradition as much as it is to the Aristotelian tradition that we must return.

Let us begin by recalling two key texts already cited. The first is from his Galatians Commentary and was cited by Bornkamm: "Just as you said that love itself fulfills faith, so we say that Christ is the form of that faith."¹²² Here we see Luther's identification of Christ with the form of faith (*forma fidei*). When we read this text in conjunction with the text from the *Dictata*, we then begin to recognize that more is involved here for Luther than a mystical explanation: "In holy scripture, the intellect gets its name more from its object, than from its own power, which is the other way around in philosophy."¹²³ We have seen that Luther viewed the Word of God (*Verbum Dei*) as the object of the intellect. The object is active, bringing the passive subject into being. In discussing Luther's Christmas Day 1514 sermon on John 1:1ff., we observed that Luther drew on Aristotle's physics of motion for describing the relationship between and object and its subject. Based on the Aristotelian formulation, "insofar as" (*in quantum huiusmodi*), the mover, the motion, and the moved become one, with respect to the motion. It is with this union that Luther equates the Word of God (*Verbum Dei*) and the intellect (*intellectus*).¹²⁴ In his commentary on Galatians, Luther used the formulation "insofar as" (*in quantum huiusmodi*) to refer to the state of being a Christian: "Therefore a Christian, insofar as he is a Christian, is free from

¹²⁰ ... *Christus sit mea forma, sicut paries informatur albedine. Sic tam proprie et inbesive, ut albedo in pariete, sic Christus manet in me et ista vita vivit in me, et vita qua vivo, est Christus.* WA 40 I.283,7–8; Bornkamm, *Luthers Auslegungen*, p. 97.

¹²¹ Bornkamm, *Luthers Auslegungen*, p. 99.

¹²² *Sicut vos dicitis Charitatem ipsam imbuere fidem, sic dicimus nos Christum esse formam istius fidei.* WA 40 I.229,8–9.

¹²³ "Intellectus" in scripturis sanctis potius ab objecto quam potentia nomen habet, contrario quam in philosophia. WA 3.176,3–4.

¹²⁴ *Sic verbum est intellectus ipse in quantum huiusmodi.* WA 1.27,35.

all laws, subject to no law, either internal or external,"¹²⁵ and "A Christian man, insofar as he is a Christian, has no law."¹²⁶ Thus, the union of Christ and the believer, based on Christ as the form of faith (*forma fidei*), is precisely the union of the object and its subject with respect to the motion of coming into being. Christ as the substantive form of the Christian, insofar as one is a Christian (*in quantum Christianus*), brings the passive intellect (*intellectus*) into being and thereby the intellect and the Word are one. The mystical implications of Luther's understanding of Christ as the Christian's substantive form should not be overlooked, and regarding his theology, one can say that this doctrine is drawn from mystical theology.¹²⁷ However, we should not fail to recognize as well Luther's way of thought regarding Christ as the Christian's form; a substantive way of thought based on Aristotle's physics, and "useful for the highest theology."

Luther's substantive way of thought also illumines his understanding of hope. For Luther, hope is passive, based only on the gift of God. His concept of passivity, of the relationship between object and subject with God as the object and act of the intellect, helps to explain what I meant by subjective hope (*spes qua*) being a function of objective hope (*spes quae*). In his exposition of Galatians 5:5, we gain further insight into the passive nature of hope, for in refuting the possibility that hope is our own act, Luther claimed that our hope, our righteousness, is not perceived, not felt:

For in that battle of the conscience, as we know having been taught by experience, the sense of sin, of the wrath of God, of death, of hell, and of all terror, rules forcefully. Then, at that point, it should be said to the tempted one: You, brother, wish to have righteousness perceived, that is, you desire truly to feel righteousness, as you do sin; this will not happen. But your righteousness must transcend the sense of sin and hope that in the presence of God you are just. What this means is that your righteousness is not visible, not perceptible, but it is hoped to be revealed in its own time. Therefore, you must not judge according to the feeling of sin which terrifies and thoroughly disturbs you, but rather, according to the promise and the doctrine of faith, by which Christ, who is your perfect and eternal righteousness, is promised to you. Thus, my hope, as the emotion hoping, is called forth and raised up by faith in the midst of terror and the feeling of sin, so that it might hope that I am just. And then hope, as that which is

¹²⁵ *Ergo Christianus in quantum Christianus, liber ab omnibus legibus, nulli legi subiectus, nec intus, nec foris.* WA 40 I.235,8–10.

¹²⁶ *homo Christianus, in quantum Christianus, nullam habeat legem.* WA 40 I.670,5–7.

¹²⁷ Cf. Hoffman, *Theology of the Heart*, pp. 76–128.

hoped, hopes that that which it does not yet see will be brought to completion and revealed in its own time.¹²⁸

Hope, for Luther, which most fundamentally must be understood as subjective hope (*spes qua*) as a function of objective hope (*spes quae*), is not our proper act, it is not a quality in us (*in nobis*). It is external (*extra nos*), which, as Luther stated in his exposition of Galatians 4:6, is why his theology is certain: "Because it seizes us up from ourselves and places us outside ourselves, so that we might not depend on our powers, conscience, sense, person or works, but on that which is outside us, this is, on the promise and truth of God which is not able to deceive."¹²⁹ Christian hope is based on Christ as humans' substantive form. Christ is the object of the intellect (*intellectus*) and thus is *extra nos*.¹³⁰ The object/subject relationship explains subjective hope (*spes qua*) as a function of objective hope (*spes quae*). Even though Christians truly become the Word and thus Christ is *in nobis*, He is so only insofar as one is a Christian (*in quantum Christianus*), and thus hope remains external (*extra nos*).

Christian hope, Christian righteousness, is *extra nos*, not *in nobis*, or in other words, Christian righteousness is not present in reality (*in re*), but is found in hope (*in spe*), and hope is a gift from God which Christians receive passively. As such, hope is Christians' most powerful weapon against the devil, their *dux belli*,¹³¹ as Luther called it, exhorting the faithful to war against Satan. In this sense, hope is rhetoric, but divine rhetoric (*rhetorica divina*):

When, therefore, with faith in the Word of God, having been led to grasping Christ, and with the full trust of my heart (which nevertheless is not able to come about without the will), I believe in Him, and with this *noticia*, I am just. So, having been justified by faith, or this *noticia*, immediately

¹²⁸ *In illo enim certamine conscientiae, ut experientia docti sumus, fortiter dominatur sensus peccati, irae Dei, mortis, inferni et omnium pavorum. Ibi tum dicendum est tentato: Tu, frater, vis habere iusticiam sensitivam, hoc est, cupis ita sentire iusticiam, ut peccatum sentis; hoc non fiet. Sed tua iusticia non est visibilis, non est sensibilis, sed speratur suo tempore revelanda. Ideo non debes iudicare secundum sensum peccati, quod perterrefacit et perturbat te, sed secundum promissionem et doctrinam fidei, qua promittitur tibi Christus, qui est perfecta et aeterna iusticia tua. Sic spes mea in affectu sperante in mediis pavoribus et sensu peccati provocatur et erigitur fide, ut speret me esse iustum. Deinde spes, pro re sperata, hoc, quod nondum videt, sperat perficiendum esse et revelandum suo tempore. WA 40 II.24,25–25,18.*

¹²⁹ *Quia rapit nos a nobis et ponit nos extra nos, ut non nitamur viribus, conscientia, sensu, persona, operibus nostris, sed eo nitamur, quod est extra nos, Hoc est, promissione et veritate Dei, quae fallere non potest. WA 40 I.589,25–28.*

¹³⁰ See Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, *Nos Extra Nos. Luthers Theologies Zwischen Mystik und Scholastik*, Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 46 (Tübingen, 1972).

¹³¹ *Contra spes dux belli est ... WA 40 II.26,18.*

the devil comes and energetically tries to extinguish faith with sufferings, lies, errors and heresies, force, tyranny, and murder. At that point, illuminating hope seizes onto the reality established by faith, becomes fearless and conquers the devil fighting against faith. In this victory, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit follow.¹³²

Hope, by which we persevere,¹³³ is indispensable for the Christian life, for without hope, we are left with only objective faith (*fides quae*) which is nothing. Christians are indeed justified from faith, but in hope (*in spe*). The new addition (*nova additio*) in Luther's *Operationes in Psalmos* is of utmost importance. Faith, however, is not only dependent on hope, but also, as Paul states in Galatians 5:6, must be put into action through love, and it is to the third theological virtue that I now turn.

Lex Charitatis

In a letter to Nikolaus Hausman of 17 April 1531, Luther claimed that they should work together "according to the law of love."¹³⁴ The law of love (*lex charitatis*) is as fundamental to Christian life as are faith and hope. In his exposition of Galatians 5:6 Luther wrote:

Therefore, just as I said, in this verse Paul fashions the entire Christian life, namely, that internally it consists of faith towards God, and externally, love or works towards our neighbor, so that thus one might absolutely be a Christian – internally, before God (*coram Deo*), through faith which does not require our works, and externally, before men (*coram hominibus*), for whom our faith is worth nothing, but our works and love are.¹³⁵

To be a Christian, one cannot do without love.

What is the nature, therefore, of this law of love, since Luther is very explicit in his comment on Galatians 5:4 that it is impossible for Christ and the Law to reside in the heart simultaneously and if you were to believe this, then it would be the devil and not Christ who was in your

¹³² *Quando igitur fide in verbum Dei edoctus apprehendo Christum et tota fiducia cordis (quod tamen sine voluntate fieri non potest) credo in eum, hoc noticia iustus sum. Sic fide seu hac noticia me iustificato statim venit diabolus et nititur extinguere fidem Dolis, mendacio, erroribus et haeresibus, Vi, tyrannide et caedibus. Ibi spes luctans apprehendit rem fide dictatam, fit animosa et vincit diabolum impugnantem fidem, quo victo sequitur pax et gaudium in Spiritusancto. WA 40 II.27,14–20.*

¹³³ WA 40 II.29,20.

¹³⁴ ... *secundum legem charitatis. WABr 6.77,2–7.*

¹³⁵ *Igitur sicut dixi, totam vitam Christianam Paulus hoc loco pingit, scilicet esse Fidem erga Deum intus et Charitatem seu opera erga proximum foris, Ut sic homo absolute sit Christianus, intus coram Deo per fidem, qui operibus nostris non indiget, foris coram hominibus, quibus fides nihil prodest, sed opera seu Charitas. WA 40 II.37,26–30.*

heart.¹³⁶ Indeed, writing to Gregor Rosseken in Dessau on 28 March 1533, Luther exclaimed that he prays that “the Lord Jesus might allow you to see that divine dialectic, by which it is taught that Christ is other than Moses, the Pope, and the entire world, even more so, He is other and greater than our conscience, which nevertheless, overcomes Moses and the pope.”¹³⁷

Of fundamental importance for understanding the *lex charitatis* is that, for Luther, love, just as faith and hope, is passive. In his postscript to Melancthon's letter to Brenz, Luther asserted that there was no faith or love in his heart, but in their place was Christ. Love, he claimed in a sermon on 1 John 4:16, preached on 16 June 1532, “is not human knowledge, but the gift of the Holy Spirit, and is divine knowledge.”¹³⁸ Love is passive, with Christ – being the substantive form of the Christian – as the act. Works of love naturally follow faith, not because they are the form of faith as the sophists argued,¹³⁹ but because of Christ in us (*in nobis*).

In his comments on Galatians 5:8, Luther claimed that Scripture portrays Christ in two ways: the first one is as gift, the *donum dei*, which is our means of conquering the devil in the time of tribulation, that is, in this life. The other is Christ as model (*exemplum*), which we ought to imitate.¹⁴⁰ In Christians' social interactions (*coram hominibus*), it is Christ the servant that is our example for living the Christian life; truly, a Christian is a servant of all things, subject to everyone. Before God (*coram Deo*), however, in the context of the battle against Satan, Christ as model (*exemplum*) must yield to Christ as gift (*donum*).¹⁴¹ Regarding the sectarians, the pseudo-apostles, the servants of Satan, the gift has pre-eminence, for these are threatening the true teaching (*doctrina*) – as distinct from life (*vita*) – and arguments about love and concord of the Churches are posed by Satan himself.¹⁴²

The Christian life consists of faith, hope, and love, *doctrina* and *vita*, Christ as gift and Christ as model, but the distinctions between them, taught by the divine dialectic (*dialectica divina*), must be maintained at all

¹³⁶ *Ergo impossibile est Christum et Legem simul habitare in corde. Aut igitur legem aut Christum cedere oportet. Si vero in ea persuasione es, Christum et fiduciam legis cohabitare posse in corde, tum certo scias non Christum, sed diabolum in corde tuo habitare sub larva Christi accusantis et perterrefacientis te ac exigentis Legem et opera tua ad iusticiam.* WA 40 II.19,25–30.

¹³⁷ ... *Dominus Ihesus tibi det illam dialecticam divinam videre, qua docetur, Quod Christus est aliud quam Moses, papa et totus mundus, imo aliud et maior squam nostra conscientia, quae tamen superat Mosen et papam.* WABr 6.439,16–18.

¹³⁸ *Charitas non est scientia humana, sed donum spiritus sancti et divina scientia.* WA 36.436,6–7.

¹³⁹ WA 40 II.34,10–39,15.

¹⁴⁰ WA 40 II.42,19–20 and 24,25.

¹⁴¹ WA 40 II.42,29–31.

¹⁴² WA 40 II.52,23–25.

costs. Whether or not the law of love can be viewed as a positive function of the law, I leave to others to debate,¹⁴³ with the single comment that the *lex charitatis* is in no way a prescriptive law; rather, it is descriptive, and descriptive of Christ *in nobis*.

Faith, hope, and love, the Christian life (*vita Christiana*), in this life, which Luther claimed is full of sin, error, filth, and misery, renders the Christian passive, a servant and a subject, even to the rages of Satan, as Luther wrote to Löner and Medler. The Word of God was the only relief that could be had against the hellishness of the times. Luther powerfully stated his view of the conditions of the world in a letter of 26 March 1542 addressed to Jacob Propst, the Lutheran Bishop of Bremen:

Although I do not have the leisure to write many things to you, my dear Jacob, for I am consumed by age and labor: "Old, cold, and miss-shaped" (as it is said), and yet I am not allowed to rest being harassed daily by all the reasons and occasions for writing, I know more than you about the fate of this age. The world is threatened with destruction, this is certain. Satan so rages and the world is so brutish that only this one relief stands firm, the last day is at hand ... Germany is a thing of the past and will never again be what it was. The nobility is concerned for their own rule above everything else, cities make plans against each other, (and on the basis of law). Thus a kingdom divided against itself must meet the army of mad demons, the Turks. Neither are we concerned at all whether we have the Lord's favor, or His wrath, but we would conquer and command the Turks, the demons, God, and everyone else, all by ourselves. Such is the most insane trust and security of ruined Germany. What, however, are we to do? We complain in vain, we cry out in vain. It is only left for us to pray: Thy will be done, for the reign and for the sanctification of the name of God.¹⁴⁴

The plague, the devil, hell, and the Turk were the enemies with whom Luther did constant battle, and were the omnipresent conditions of this life. It is, however, precisely as a subject in this world (*in hoc saeculo*), that the Christian life realizes the glory of its liberty.

¹⁴³ The issue here is whether there was a "third use" of the law (*tertius usus*) for Luther as there was for Calvin.

¹⁴⁴ *Quamquam non vacat multa scribere, mi Iacobe, Sum enim confectus aetate et laboribus: Alt, kaldt, ungestalt (ut dicitur), nec sic tamen quiescere permittor, tot causis et scribendi occupationibus quotidie vexatus, plura scio quam tu de huius saeculi fatalibus. Minatur mundus ruinam, hoc est certum, ita furit Satan, ita brutescit mundus, nisi quod unum hoc solatium restat, diem illum brevi instare ... Germania fuit, et nunquam erit, quod fuit. Nobilitas cogitat regnum super omnia, civitates contra sibi consulunt (et iure). Ita regnum in sese divisum occurrere debet exercitui daemonum in Turcis furentium. Nec nos magnopere curamus, Dominumne propitium an iratum habeamus, per nos ipsos scilicet victuri et imperaturi Tuis, daemonibus, Deo et omnibus. Tanta est pereuntis Germaniae furentissima fiducia et securitas. Reliquum est, ut oremus: Fiat voluntas tua, pro regno, pro sanctificatione nominis Dei.* WABr 10.23,3–19.

The Liberty of the Christian

Liberty. That word that Luther understood so radically differently from both the republican Italian civic humanists as well as from his Swiss contemporaries. Oh yes, Luther did recognize the existence of a civic liberty, but rather than employing it as an honorable, even moral quality in panegyrics, in his exposition of Galatians 5:1 we can detect him almost relegating it to the realm of polemics, when the example of such civic liberty he brings is Caesar's handing over the city of Rome to the pope, by means of which the pope and his clerics became free from all public responsibility, which, as we know, for Luther actually was a sign of papal tyranny.¹⁴⁵ Liberty indeed! In the world it is not liberty that rules, but liberality – the liberty of the flesh (*libertas carnis*), the liberty offered and encouraged by the Prince of the World.¹⁴⁶ No, there is no liberty, at least as understood by many living during the period we term the Renaissance and Reformation. A Christian is not free from any human servitude whatsoever, or even from the power of tyranny.¹⁴⁷ The Gospel itself is also not free, suffering under the hatred and persecution of the world.¹⁴⁸ Even Luther's own concept of liberty is called into question by his own admission – to perceive that liberty, to understand that liberty, to make use of the liberty, is more difficult than Luther is able to say, indeed, it is more easily named than believed, as he stated in his commentary on the first verse of Galatians [chapter 5](#).¹⁴⁹ Even Luther himself was not free, being rather forced by electoral politics to change his position on the question of the right to resist authorities in the face of the League of Schmalkalden, and having to defend his doctrine against the “false brethren” and all others who were in Luther's eyes reintroducing the necessity of human traditions. Such traditions, with the two outstanding examples being circumcision and monasticism, had to be abandoned, as Luther's own experiences as a monk convinced him. In short, Luther wrote in his exposition of Galatians 5:4: “This conclusion, therefore, is final: either do away with Christ, or do away with the righteousness of the law.”¹⁵⁰

Liberty indeed! It could not even be perceived, much less enjoyed. Yet Luther unceasingly fought for its necessity, clinging to the necessity of

¹⁴⁵ WA 40 II.2,29–32.

¹⁴⁶ WA 40 II.3,11–16.

¹⁴⁷ WA 40 II.3,20–21.

¹⁴⁸ WA 40 II.58,26–28.

¹⁴⁹ WA 40 II.4,22–34.

¹⁵⁰ *Est igitur finalis haec conclusio: Aut Christum amitte, aut iusticiam legis.* WA 40 II.20,18–19.

a liberty that could scarcely be experienced. And why? The reason this was true for Luther, the reason Luther was absolutely certain of theological liberty (*libertas theologica*) or spiritual liberty (*libertas spiritualis*), was that such liberty, such freedom, as entirely distinct from all other understandings of liberty, could only be found for Luther in an external realm, *extra nos*. What Christians perceive or feel is the accusation of the law, the terrors of sin, the horror of death, and the wrath of God, but in their place – just as with faith, hope, and love – one must put “the liberty of Christ, the remission of sins, righteousness, life and the eternal mercy of God.”¹⁵¹ This liberty, a passive liberty (*libertas passiva*), the liberty of Christ (*libertas Christi*), is the very essence of the Gospel, that is, it is doctrine (*doctrina*), *not* life (*vita*), and thus, is only present in the conscience.¹⁵² It is Christ who is Christians’ freedom, freedom from death, the devil, sin, the law, and the wrath of God.¹⁵³ Thus, even as the Turks, who were the very instruments of Satan, were drawing ever nearer, which Luther announced to Amsdorf and Jonas in March 1531,¹⁵⁴ Luther was free, and was fighting with all his might to preserve that freedom.

Liberty. In Luther’s exposition of Galatians 5:1–13, we see that he treated this section somewhat as a unified whole, the exposition of the Christian life as liberty, comprised of faith, hope, and love. At the very beginning of [chapter 5](#), Luther claimed that from here to the end of the letter Paul was fiercely defending the doctrine of faith and of Christian liberty against the pseudo-apostles.¹⁵⁵ After discussing faith, hope, and love, Luther returned to liberty and closed his exposition of verse 13 with the following:

Wherefore each and every Christian knows, that he has been established through Christ in his conscience, as the Lord of the Law, of sin, and of death, etc., so that they do not have rule over him. On the other hand, he also knows that his external servitude is imposed on his bodily life so that he might serve his neighbor through love. Those, however, who understand Christian liberty differently, are using the goods of the Gospel for their own ruin and under the name of “Christian,” they are worse idolaters than they were before under the Pope.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ ... *in locum horum ponat libertatem Christi, remissionem peccatorum, iustitiam, vitam et misericordiam Dei sempiternam* ... WA 40 II.4,28–29.

¹⁵² WA 40 II.3,21.

¹⁵³ WA 40 II.5,9–12.

¹⁵⁴ WABr 6.1794–52.

¹⁵⁵ WA 40 II.1,15–19.

¹⁵⁶ *Quare unusquisque Christianus sciat, se per Christum constitutum esse in conscientia dominum legis, peccati, mortis etc., ita quod illa non habeant ius in eum etc. Contra sciat quoque hanc servitutem externam corpori suo impositam esse, ut per charitatem serviat proximo. Qui autem aliter intelligunt*

The Christian life is one of liberty, the *libertas Christi*, but until we see God face to face, we await in hope (*in spe*), having been justified from faith (*ex fide*), serving our neighbor through love (*per charitatem*). The Christian is a servant and a subject, subject to this life, and hence, to the *Princeps Mundi*, Satan, against whom one must “stand fearlessly in the line of battle ... so that [Satan] does not destroy that liberty created for us by Christ.”¹⁵⁷ A Christian is a subject, subjected to the persecution of this life.

We must not forget, however, that other meaning of the Christian as subject. A Christian is a subject, with Christ as the object and act, whereby one's faith, hope, and love are received passively as gifts of God (*dona dei*). The Christian as subject undergoes the act, that is Christ *in nobis*, who is also the Christian's liberty. Only as subject can we fully understand the depth of Luther's meaning when he wrote: “A Christian is a free Lord of all things, subject to no one.”¹⁵⁸

Luther's substantive way of thought is Christ as the object and substantive form of the Christian insofar as one is a Christian (*in quantum Christianus*), bringing the passive intellect into being. Aristotle's physics of motion regarding an object and its subject accounts for how the Christian becomes the Word and, yet, one's righteousness, one's faith, hope, and love, even one's liberty, are not one's own possessions; they are external, *extra nos*. This understanding of passivity Luther equated with doctrine (*doctrina*) in his commentary on Galatians and used it as the basis for attacking all other forms of righteousness, whether they be that of the papists or the false brethren. Thus, Luther's substantive way of thought had a significant impact on both the vertical axis of Luther's theology and on the horizontal axis of that theology's implications.

As early as 1514 Luther claimed that “we not only have the Word, but are even said to be the Word.” In this “becoming the Word” we see the relationship between Luther's substantive way of thought and his cognitive way of thought. In the substantive way of thought, Christ is present as the substantive form of the Christian. In his Commentary on Galatians Luther wrote:

Christianam libertatem, illi fruuntur Evangelii commodis in suam ipsorum perniciem et peiores sunt idololatrae sub nomine Christiano, quam antea sub Papa fuerunt. WA 40 II.64,15–22.

¹⁵⁷ ... *sed fortiter standum in acie contra Satanam, ne auferat libertatem illam a Christo ipsi partam etc.* WA 40 II.2,25–27.

¹⁵⁸ “Eyn Christen mensch ist eyn freher herr über alle ding und niemandt unterthan.” WA 7.21,1–2.

Thus is my formal righteousness: it is not love which informs faith, but the trust of my heart in an object (*rem*) that I do not see, and nevertheless, Christ is present. Therefore faith justifies, we say, because it has that treasure, because Christ is present, although how Christ is present, is not able to be known. Who has true trust in their heart, Christ himself is in that cloud by faith. That is formal righteousness, on account of that faith, one is justified, just as they say, on account of love ... Christ is in that darkness and in that cloud; that is Christ, that is formal righteousness.¹⁵⁹

Christ's true presence is in the "cloud of unknowing," a "cloud of faith," that is not seen with the eyes, but with the heart. The Christian's knowing is passive, based on faith as doctrine (*doctrina*). Christ's presence, however, is known, known most certainly, because based on the true presence of Christ who brings the intellect into being, the Christian has an intuitive cognition (*noticia intuitiva*) of Christ's cross in one's heart, wherefore Luther claimed that faith is intuitive cognition (*fides est noticia*). It is Luther's substantive way of thought that renders the senses and mind useless for perceiving the mystery of faith, and ensures the passive nature of the Christian who fully depends on Christ as act; it is his cognitive way of thought that renders faith absolutely certain, holding in check subjectivity. Faith is certain, Luther wrote, because it is beyond us (*extra nos*). Behind this "extra-dimension," however, are his ways of thought, present in the hidden chambers of Luther's mind. Such ways of thought provided the cognitive structures for the development of his theology as expressed in his Galatians Commentary of 1531, already evidently present in his earliest theological notes, when Brother Martin was just beginning his theological studies. Fundamental structures of Luther's ways of thought of his mature theology were already present in his earliest theological development. Such structures were derived from an Aristotelian philosophy of the *via moderna* conditioned by the Augustinian theological tradition as Brother Martin knew it. Yet little did he know, in 1509, 1512, 1514, or even in 1517, what was in store.

¹⁵⁹ *Sic formalis mea iusticia est, non est charitas quae informat fidem, sed fiducia cordis mei in rem quam non videt, et tamen habet Christum praesentem. Ideo iustificat fides, dicimus, quia habet illum thesaurum, quia Christus adest; quomodo, non est cogitabile. Qui habet veram fiduciam cordis – adest ipse in ipsa nebula, fide. Das ist formalis iustitia, propter istam fidem iustificetur, sicut ipsi dicunt: propter charitatem ... Christus ist in tenebris et nebula illa; das ist Christus, das ist formalis iusticia.* WA 40 1.229,2–13.

Tradition and Innovation: Luther and Medieval Theological Traditions

Brother Martin Luther was an innovative Augustinian theologian as his theology was developing during his early years of theological study and teaching as doctor of theology at Wittenberg, lecturing on Psalms, Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and then on the Psalms for the second time. Yet the question we must ask is, was his theology in keeping with the traditions of medieval theology, or were there aspects of his innovations that moved him beyond the borders of the acceptable, moving him into the realm of heresy?

Brother Martin's early theology was a Christocentric Augustinian theology that was in keeping with his Order's theological tradition, even if Brother Martin was ignorant of that tradition's theology for the most part. Giles of Rome had been foundational for the late medieval Augustinians, but he was not slavishly so, and other Augustinians had been innovators, particularly Gregory of Rimini and those hermits following in his footsteps. Luther was critical of the theology he had been taught, but that is not to be equated with the "entire scholastic tradition." Medieval theology itself had been by no means univocal and static. It is relatively easy to analyze Luther's later theology, his mature, evangelical theology and then read that back into his early theological development, looking for its origins, thereby recognizing his heresy, or his faithfulness to the rediscovery of the Gospel, based on confessional positions. Yet analyzing Brother Martin's theology historically, what theological innovations did he make up until 1520 that could not have been within the medieval theological spectrum, even if on the margins?

If there were aspects of Brother Martin's developing theology that bordered on the heretical, they were certainly not with respect to his doctrine of justification. In 1999, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation issued a Joint Declaration on Justification, which proclaimed:

We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining

salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace.¹⁶⁰

Such a statement was in keeping with the Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent, which too asserted passive righteousness as the basis for justification, arguing that the formal cause of justification "is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just," whereby humans are "said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation ... and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification."¹⁶¹ Though Trent continued by asserting an intrinsic, rather than an extrinsic doctrine, whereby "not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us,"¹⁶² the position that human initiative and human works, the late medieval doctrine of "doing what is in one," as the basis for justification was not in keeping with the Catholic tradition, or if it was, was itself the innovation on the margins. Luther did not become the reformer or deviate from the Catholic tradition with his doctrine of passive righteousness, which was a doctrine continuously present in the medieval tradition, even in the later Middle Ages within Luther's own Order.¹⁶³

One could though claim that Luther did deviate from the tradition with his emphasis on faith alone, so that it was not his position on justification based on passive righteousness as such that was his innovation, but his doctrine of justification *sola fide*. After all, he later added the word "alone" (*allein*) to Romans 3:28 in his German translation of the Bible, which might seem to be an innovation going beyond the boundaries of catholic orthodoxy. Yet Luther's understanding of Paul's meaning in Romans he could easily have found in the standard medieval handbook of biblical interpretation, the *Ordinary Gloss* (*Glossa Ordinaria*) and in Peter Lombard's *Commentary on Romans*, both of which clearly asserted that the basis of justification is "faith alone," whereby humans are justified *sola fide*, without preceding works. The *Gloss* explained Romans 3:28 by noting

¹⁶⁰ Joint Declaration on Justification, 1999; www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html

¹⁶¹ Council of Trent, Sixth Session, Decree Concerning Justification, 7–8, in H.J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Original Text with English Translation* (London, 1941), pp. 33–35; Latin text, *ibid.*, pp. 312–313.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁶³ Cf. Zumkeller, *Erbsünde*, pp. 502–504.

that “works follow one having been justified, they do not precede the one to be justified, but by faith alone without preceding works man become righteous,” which Lombard copied in his *Commentary on Romans* word for word, and then added, “no one therefore counts works as truly good before faith; where there is no faith, there is no good work.”¹⁶⁴ If asserting justification *sola fide* was an innovation, the innovation entered the tradition long before Luther, even if he later developed the implications of the doctrine much further than did his medieval forebears.

Luther did, though, seemingly distance himself from the preceding tradition in his attacks on Aristotle, especially as seen in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* and his assertion that Aristotle was to theology as darkness to light, and that one can only become a theologian without Aristotle. Earlier, though, I argued that Luther made his discovery of passive righteousness based on Aristotelian principles and that basic ways of Luther’s thought, which remained throughout his career, were Aristotelian. Moreover, Luther’s attacks against Aristotle were not, as such, original, as there had been a tradition of critique of Aristotle within Luther’s own Order. In the summer of 1507, Giles of Viterbo compiled his *Index of Aristotle’s Errors* (*Index de Aristotelis erroribus*), in which Giles lashed out against Aristotle in no uncertain terms:

We say that it is you [*scil.* Aristotle] who are alone against the opinion of all who have written rightly against you concerning nature when you dare to imagine to the detriment of humankind that time, motion, the heavens, and the world are one and the same ungenerated thing. For this opinion, unless I am deluded, is nothing other than a lie fabricated against God and against man. It is invidious of human happiness and divine glory. It is a lethal beast ... What else is it than completely and utterly to destroy all religion, worship, and piety?¹⁶⁵

Giles held up Plato against Aristotle, for Aristotle, in “trying to snatch from God authorship in physics, the Idea in metaphysics and dialectics, and finally in ethics human purpose and good,” had in short declared

¹⁶⁴ *Sequuntur enim opera justificatum, non praecedunt justificandum, sed sola fide sine operibus praecedentibus homo fit justus. Glossa Ordinaria ad Rom. 3:28 (PL 114.481); Sequuntur enim opera justificatum, non praecedunt justificandum, sed sola fide sine operibus praecedentibus homo fit justus ... Nemo ergo computet vere bona opera ante fidem, ubi fides non erat, bonum opus non erat.* Peter Lombard, *In epistolam ad Romanos*, 3:28 (PL 191.1365).

¹⁶⁵ Giles of Viterbo, *Index de Aristotelis erroribus*, as quoted and trans. by John Monfassani in “Giles of Viterbo and the Errors of Aristotle.” In Mryiam Chiabò, Rocco Ronzani, and Angelo Maria Vitale eds., *Egidio da Viterbo, Cardinale Agostiniano tra Roma e l’Europa del Rinascimento* (Rome, 2014), p. 163.

“war upon the heavens.”¹⁶⁶ Had Giles read Brother Martin’s critique, he could only have said a loud *Amen*. Luther’s attack against Aristotle and scholastic theology, as he knew it, was not as such a problem. Indeed, it was almost trendy, and certainly was no basis for a charge of heresy.

We do, though, find innovation in Brother Martin’s developing theology. As seen in this analysis of his ways of thought, based on Aristotelian principles, Luther’s understanding of forensic righteousness, of our righteousness being outside ourselves (*extra nos*), with Christ as humans’ substantive form, was indeed an innovation, even if based on traditional principles.¹⁶⁷ Was it though more of an innovation, at least as Brother Martin was developing it up until 1520, than the innovations of St Anselm, Peter Abelard, or William of Ockham? Abelard and Ockham had been censured, to be sure, and particular doctrines they advocated had been condemned, but they did not as such break away from the Church. Even if Brother Martin’s developing theology of forensic righteousness veered toward the heterodox, was it sufficient for the proclamation of heresy?

After 1520 and his break from Rome, Luther certainly continued developing his theology in directions that went beyond the medieval catholic tradition, particularly with respect to the sacraments and his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. What aspects, though, of his theological development up to 1520 were outside the Catholic tradition and thus heretical? Luther became a heretic, based on the tradition, and there is little question about that. But when did his deviation begin? In other words, when, theologically, did Luther really break from the Catholic tradition?

Luther’s break from Rome will be the focus of [Chapter 7](#), and I will argue that it certainly was not an innovation from his early theological development. His *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* was not a rejection of Catholic theology, but one against the theology in which he was trained, and the predominant theology of his times. Brother Martin’s early theology though was very much in keeping with the Augustinian theological tradition, from Giles of Rome on, even if that tradition itself was not one Luther really knew. Luther’s so-called “Reformation Breakthrough,” his Tower Experience, and his discovery of passive righteousness was not a discovery that entailed, or necessitated, a break from the Holy Mother

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166. Luther though was not part of the renewed interest in Plato, even if other members of his Order were. Thus even Gregory of Rimini was associated with Plato in the 1522 edition of Gregory sentences commentary; see Saak, *Catechesis I*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Zur Mühlen, *Nos Extra Nos*, pp. 273–275.

Church, as Brother Martin still referred to Rome in 1519. His ways of thought underlying his theological development were based on traditional medieval philosophical and theological principles, and remained foundational for the rest of his career. His deviation from the Church was not a theological deviation, at least not until after 1520. Brother Martin Luther was an obedient, observant Augustinian hermit, and so was his theology. Yet a break was coming, and it was to change everything. This break, moreover, was based on what was truly indeed his “Reformation discovery.”

Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian

On 18 July 1506, Brother Martin took his solemn vows in the Order of Hermits of St Augustine, vowing obedience to Prior Winand as the representative of the prior general, to Mary, and to God. By donning the habit of the OESA, Brother Martin had become a new man, a new *persona*; he had become a religious, and an Augustinian.¹ He would wear the habit for the next eighteen years.

Just the previous month, Augustinus of Interamna, the prior general of the OESA, died, and it was almost a year later that Brother Giles of Viterbo was elected as Brother Augustinus's successor, confirmed in office at the general chapter in Naples on 21 May 1507. Giles set to work on bringing about a reformation within the Order, a reformation that was sorely needed. Calls for reformation in head and members had been ever more frequent and ever more urgent in the Church at large. A General Council was seen as the only way to set matters right, though getting a Council together was rather problematic, as Pope Pius II had condemned calls for Councils not led by the Pope in 1462, and Pope Julius II was reluctant to lead one. The Turk was threatening Christendom yet again, and something needed to be done. The empire was still suffering from peasant uprisings in the *Bundschuh*, and there had already been uprisings in England, France, and Italy as well. The world was becoming unraveled, and Brother Martin was seeking the mercy of a righteous God. There was never a time when grace was more needed, and Pope Julius was providing such in the Jubilee Indulgence that was still being preached, raising funds thereby for the building of St Peter's. Emperor Maximilian's grandson, Charles, was a mere 6 years old; Johannes Reuchlin's grand-nephew, Philip Schwarzerd was only 9. Johannes Kannengeter had recently preached reformation to the hard-hearted Hildesheimers, who had only three years previously come out from under the ban. Henry Tudor sat on the throne

¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 631–637.

of England, while his 15-year old son, Henry, was Duke of Cornwall, Prince of Wales, and Earl of Chester. Francis Valois had the previous year been betrothed to Claude of Brittany, arranged by his father, Louis XII, King of France. Just four years earlier, Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony had founded his own university in Wittenberg, naming Augustine as its patron saint. And Brother Martin was vowing poverty, chastity, and obedience. As Bob Dylan might have put it, in 1506 the times they were a changin'.

Cloister and Congregation

We do not know much at all about Luther's preparation for the priesthood. He studied Gabriel Biel's *Exposition on the Canon of the Mass*, a work which used, among numerous other sources, Jordan of Quedlinburg's *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, even if anonymously; Biel never cited Jordan.² Brother Martin's provincial prior, Johannes von Staupitz, had directed Brother Martin to do so, and to begin studying theology. Brother Martin was ordained in Erfurt Cathedral on 3 April 1507 by the suffragan Bishop Johannes Bonemilch von Lasphe; on 2 May 1507, Brother Martin celebrated his first mass in the Augustinian Church in Erfurt. That same summer semester, Brother Martin began studying theology in the Order's *studium* at Erfurt under the regent master, Johannes Nathin, and lecturers Leonard Heutleb and Georg Leyser. By early the next year, Brother Martin himself was teaching in the Erfurt cloister, and appears as lector already on 18 April 1508. During the Winter Semester 1508/9, Luther was sent to lecture on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in Frederick the Wise's newly founded University of Wittenberg, as well as to continue his theological studies. On 9 March 1508, Luther was promoted to bachelor of the Bible (*baccalaureus biblicus*), and then in the fall of 1509, having been recalled to Erfurt, promoted as bachelor of the Sentences (*baccalaureus Sententiarum*). By late summer or early fall 1510, Luther was promoted to the degree of a formed bachelor (*baccalaureus formatus*), the final stage of theological study before incepting as a master of theology, becoming thereby a doctor of theology. That would occur on 19 October 1512 in Wittenberg. Brother Martin had written his brothers in Erfurt on 22 September 1512 to invite them to his promotion, naming specifically his former teacher, Georg Leiffer (Leyser).³ Luther had to tread a precarious

² Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I*, pp. 39–49.

³ *WABr* 1.18–19.

diplomatic line. It would be scandalous if he didn't invite them, and he certainly wanted to, feeling very much in their debt. The Most Reverend Father Vicar (*Reverendissimus Pater Vicarius*), Staupitz, had arranged matters.⁴ Luther was simply being obedient. Perhaps his strongest argument though was that their presence would honor the Order's religion and especially the Saxon Observant Congregation.⁵ Tensions, however, were running high. Brother Martin had been one of theirs, so to speak, and now was receiving his doctorate from Wittenberg. No one from Erfurt accepted Brother Martin's invitation.

The rivalry between Erfurt and Wittenberg over Luther's promotion was not an isolated controversy. It was part of the Order's politics at the time, at least with respect to Germany and the conflict between the observants and the conventuals. There had been controversy with the Saxon observant congregation for quite a while regarding its rights and privileges. On 19 April 1505, the German observants were granted the same privileges as the Lombard Congregation of the Observance, confirmed by Pope Julius II, which would have made the Saxon congregation, and its vicar, subject directly to the Pope.⁶ The prior general of the Order, Gratianus of Foligno, had supported the move, but he died in July 1504 and was succeeded by Augustinus of Interamna in September 1505. Staupitz's plans were about to be dashed. Augustinus realized the problem. The vicar of the Lombard congregation was directly answerable to the Pope, independent of the prior general. If the Saxon congregation went this route, the central authority of the Order would be undermined. Augustinus was able to convince Julius II of this, and thus Julius, in his Bull *Nuper Nobis* of 24 March 1506 confirmed that Staupitz had not received permission from the prior general to join the Saxon congregation with the Lombard, and were such a union to take place, it would undermine the Order. Thus the German Congregation must remain in obedience with the prior general.⁷

In response, Staupitz set off for Rome himself to deal with the situation in person, as well as to procure papal approval for Frederick the Wise's new University of Wittenberg. However, on 26 June 1506, Augustinus of Interamna died. He was succeeded by Giles of Viterbo, elected at the general chapter of Naples on 21 May 1507, a chapter meeting at which Staupitz himself may have been present. The new prior general was an

⁴ *WABr* 1.18,18–23.

⁵ *WABr* 1.18,17–18.

⁶ Kunzelmann, *Die sächsisch-thüringische Provinz und die sächsische Reformkongregation*, pp. 449–450.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 451–452.

advocate for the Observance and for the reformation of the Order. He and/or Staupitz devised a plan to deal with the situation. Staupitz would unite in his person the vicarship of both the German observants and the conventuals, leading a general reformation of the Order in Germany.⁸ There was though almost immediate opposition, coming first from the city council of Nürnberg, which was concerned for the freedom of the cloisters. Staupitz marched on, and called for a chapter meeting in Munich on 18 October 1508. Then in 1509, Staupitz tried to incorporate the convent in Cologne into the Saxon reformed congregation.⁹ Cologne had been a problem for a while, and as I have noted, already on 17 August 1493, Prior General Anselm of Montefalco threatened Cologne with having Andreas Proles of the Saxon congregation undertake the reformation of the cloister if they would not do so themselves by Easter.¹⁰ On 14 March 1500, Prior General Gratianus of Foligno made Master Theodor of Caster his vicar in Cologne, assigning to him all authority for the reformation of the cloister, as well as appointing him regent master of the *studium* in Cologne to ensure the reformation of studies.¹¹ Staupitz's attempted incorporation though met with resistance, and by 1509 he had given up hope of bringing it about.

In short, Staupitz was at the center of controversy throughout the German Augustinians, conventuals and observants alike. He needed more support, he felt, and thus went back to Rome in April of 1510 in hope of securing such from the prior general, Giles of Viterbo. Giles backed Staupitz, and his continued plans for bringing about the union of the observants and conventuals, even in the face of opposition. Yet at home, so to speak, Staupitz had a rougher time. The opposition to the proposed union was spreading beyond Nürnberg. Upon Staupitz's return he faced new opposition from the cloisters of Erfurt, Nordhausen, Kulmbach, Sternberg, and Königsberg under the leadership of the district vicar Simon Kayser and the Erfurt professor, Johannes Nathin.¹² Nathin had recruited Luther to the cause, who had probably accompanied him in 1510 to Halle to seek the support of Archbishop Ernest of Saxony. In Nathin's and Luther's eyes, Staupitz's proposed union would undermine the reformation of the observants. Archbishop Ernest did not lend his support, which led Nathin to devise a "Plan B": appeal to the prior general. Brother

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 450–453.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 454–455.

¹⁰ See above, Chapter 2, n. 112.

¹¹ De Meijer and Teeuwen, *Documents*, nr. 1024, p. 295.

¹² Kunzelmann, *Die sächsisch-thüringische Provinz und die sächsische Reformkongregation*, p. 459.

Martin and a companion most likely from Nürnberg or Erfurt were sent to Rome.¹³ As already noted, Giles refused to meet with the delegation, and Brother Martin returned empty-handed.

Yet the opposition to Staupitz's plan, supported by Giles, was strong enough that he realized it could not practically come to fruition, and at the chapter meeting in Cologne in May 1512, not only was Staupitz reconfirmed in his office as vicar, but he announced his setting aside the plan for union, thus repairing his relationship with Nürnberg, which had been strained over the conflict. At the same chapter meeting, Wenzeslaus Link was named prior of the cloister in Wittenberg, and Brother Martin designated as subprior and regent of the Wittenberg cloister *studium*. Nicholas Besler was appointed prior in Nürnberg and Melchior Miritsch from Dresden was named prior at Cologne. Brother Melchior had been one of the leaders of the opposition to Staupitz's union,¹⁴ as had Brother Martin himself. Staupitz was trying to make amends, yet even here he was insufficiently political, or perhaps he was very politically astute indeed, taking measured risks by having Brother Martin first transferred to Wittenberg in the late summer of 1511, and then the following May appointed subprior and regent at Wittenberg, where Staupitz would also have him promoted to doctor to replace himself at the university, a plan Staupitz may have had all along. Little wonder Erfurt was angry. Brother Martin had been a key figure in the opposition to Staupitz, and even if Staupitz's planned union had been effectively blocked, it was so without a true victory of the opposition, and now Staupitz was trying to arrange the dissenters as pawns on his chess board. Brother Martin though had vowed obedience, even as he had become caught up in the Order's politics almost from the moment he had taken his formal vows. The scandal his promotion in Wittenberg caused was far more than bickering over a prize student. That actually was not the issue at all. Brother Martin, in his obedience, had caved in to the opposition. Little wonder no one from Erfurt traveled to Wittenberg for his promotion.

Luther is rather silent on his early years as an Augustinian, at least in his extant letters. On 17 March 1509, Brother Martin had written to Johannes Braun to apologize for not having properly taken his leave when he left Erfurt for Wittenberg to teach philosophy, though he would have preferred theology, which he had already actually begun, having had become a *baccularius biblicus* the previous week.¹⁵ He acknowledged, though, that

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

¹⁵ *WABr* 1.16–17.

human judgment always fails, and that God reigns over us with sweetness even in this world.¹⁶ Then three years later came Luther's letter to Erfurt, inviting his brothers to his promotion. The next letter we have from his hand is from February 1514, addressed to Spalatin,¹⁷ followed then by another letter to Erfurt, dated 16 June 1514. Here Luther had heard of vicious lies being spread about him, particularly by Johannes Nathin, regarding how he had perjured himself by promoting in Wittenberg after having sworn to do so in Erfurt. This was causing a true commotion in Erfurt, still two years afterwards, and Luther wanted to set the matter straight: he did not believe that he had sworn such at all, and he certainly had no ill feelings toward his brothers in the Erfurt cloister or toward the university. In other words, there was no cause for the uproar.¹⁸ Bitter feelings die hard, even for monks, friars, and hermits, and for the hermits in Erfurt, Luther had betrayed them. So much for God's sweet reign.

The controversy with Erfurt did not prevent Brother Martin from being promoted within the Order. The following year in early May 1515 at the chapter meeting in Gotha, Brother Martin was named as district vicar of the Saxon observant congregation, placed in charge of ten monasteries, while Nicolas Besler was named district vicar of the Upper German cloisters. Staupitz stayed for the most part in the south.¹⁹ Brother Martin took his new responsibilities seriously.

He began his new position with a bang. His confrères must have been taken aback. Just before he was elected as district vicar, Brother Martin preached at the chapter in Gotha, taking the text of Psalm 111:5 as his pericope: *He sets forth his words in judgment.*²⁰ The theme he focused on was not justice, or judgment as such. Brother Martin did not launch into a sermon on leadership, or on reformation, or on his newly discovered understanding of passive righteousness. Brother Martin lashed out fiercely against one vice alone, though it was not self-righteousness, gluttony, or sloth; to his brothers assembled in Gotha, Brother Martin preached on detractors, backbiters, slanderers, and those who speak against their own brother. He began pulling no punches: "Happy is he and truly a blessed man, for, when something is to be said, he sets forth in judgment, when

¹⁶ *Sed Deus est Deus; homo saepe, imo semper fallitur in suo iudicio. Hic est Deus noster, ipse reget nos in suavitate et in saecula.* *WABr* 1.17,44–46.

¹⁷ *WABr* 1.23–24.

¹⁸ *WABr* 1.25–26. Luther's letter seemed not to have settled the matter. On 21 December 1514, Luther wrote to the Dean of the Theological Faculty in Erfurt, setting forth his case again; *WABr* 1.29–31.

¹⁹ Kunzelmann, *Die sächsisch-thüringische Provinz und die sächsische Reformkongregation*, p. 471.

²⁰ *WA* 1.44–52.

well considered, what, how, and to whom. Wherefore we are here committed to dissect and cut to pieces that vice worst of all, the vice of detraction.²¹ The detractor, Brother Martin asserted, is a murderer, at least mystically and spiritually, which is worse than corporeally. Humans live a three-fold life: they have their physical life, their spiritual life, and then their reputation, or their public name. The sword of the detractor, namely his tongue, murders all three.²²

While Brother Martin did not directly accuse anyone in this sermon in specific, “bad-mouthing” one’s brothers was a common monastic vice, and one Brother Martin had suffered from himself. It had only been the previous June that Luther had written the Erfurt cloister complaining of the lies and defamation of his character stemming from his having received his doctorate in Wittenberg. The problems continued, for Brother Martin wrote to the University of Erfurt itself in December 1514, again setting forth his case. And now he had his chance. He could rebuke them all publicly, and from a position of authority. He would, in the words of Psalm 50, stand against them, and they should not think him one of their group; he would set their own words against them in having spoken against a brother.²³ If a brother has sinned, there are guidelines in the Gospel for correction; it should not be made public and bantered about, even if what is being said is true.²⁴ Such detractors are simply wallowing around the shit of others, and then they say, “‘Look how he has crapped himself,’ to whom it should be best replied: ‘You can eat this shit,’ because that is what he is truly doing.”²⁵

Brother Martin’s brothers must have been squirming in their seats, but it was not because of the language. Scatological language was common as a device of ridicule, and by no means simply among the lower classes.

²¹ *Disponet sermones suos in iudicio, Ps. III. Felix ille et vere beatus vir: in iudicio enim disponit, quando cogitat, quid quomodo et cui et quando dicendum sit. Unde hic pessimum illud detractionis vitium discerpere et lacerare studeamus.* WA 1.44,3–6.

²² WA 1.44,6–26.

²³ WA 1.47,7–24.

²⁴ WA 1.49,18–27. The Rule and Constitutions likewise gave regulations for correcting errant brothers, which should be done in private, and only if incorrigible, should an errant brother’s faults be made public in the chapter.

²⁵ *Detractor itaque circumfert, nolit ea et habitat in stercoribus humanis sicut upupa semper faciens, ut si quis nudaret aliquem stercore se foedantem, Sebet wie hat sich der beschissen. Cui optime respondendum est: das frisstest. Quia vere comedit talia.* WA 1.50,22–26. Oberman noted this sermon “for understandable reasons has never been translated, or for that matter quoted by Luther scholars.” Oberman, “Teufelsdreck: Eschatology and Scatology in the ‘Old’ Luther.” In idem, *The Impact of the Reformation*, p. 61. Robert Fife, though, did indeed discuss it, though did not quote from the sermon, which he found to resemble the invective of Luther’s “mature years.” See Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther* (New York, 1957), pp. 189–190.

In 1506, the Ingolstadt humanist Jacob Locher published his *Comparison of the Sterile Mule to the Muse*. Locher had been in a bitter controversy with the scholastic theologian George Zingel, and though he emerged victorious, at least institutionally, being reinstated in the University of Ingolstadt to teach poetry, Locher continued asserting his position.²⁶ Locher included woodcuts to illustrate his argument. One of these depicts a mule, labeled as “master” (*herre*) behind whom is a monk student, representing “the scholastic theologian.” A “loquacious magpie” is perched on top of the mule, who is defecating into a basket, held by the student, who is collecting the excrement. The caption reads: “I have gobbled up all the turds” (*Ich hab die feygen fressen*), with the title of the scene being: “The number of the slow is infinite” (*Tardorum infinitus est numerus*).²⁷ While scatological language could indeed be used in the realm of the cartoon and grotesque,²⁸ as it still is, for Brother Martin it also carried additional connotations. It is not, as we might say, just used for “dumb shits” or “shit holes,” but was associated with the devil himself. Detractors are those demons lying in the gutter, waiting to make public one’s own filth, which we, naturally, try to hide and keep private. While human excrement is bad enough, even worse is that of the devil (*Teuffels Dreck*),²⁹ which in 1545 would be graphically portrayed in a woodcut illustrating Luther’s *Against the Papacy at Rome Founded by the Devil* (*Wider das Papsttum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestiftet*), depicting the devil shitting out popes and cardinals. Rather than popes and cardinals, in 1515 what Brother Martin equated with “devil’s shit” was slander, spreading rumors; detractors are traitors, whom the torturer of God, the devil, stirs up eternally bringing forth the plagues of suffering, sadness, fear, and weeping.³⁰ The mouth of the detractor is truly the gateway of hell (*vorago inferni*), which one should flee.³¹ In other words, do not listen to rumors and lies, which was not only a general warning and admonition from the immediately to be elected new district vicar, but also a warning and a rebuke to those who had spread vicious lies and rumors about him in Erfurt and beyond. Brother Martin, as the new district vicar, was not going to put up with it. His

²⁶ See James H. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1984), pp. 185–207.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁸ For the medieval tradition of scatological language as part of the medieval grotesque, see Valerie Allen, *On Farting. Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages* (New York, 2007).

²⁹ *WA* 1.50,4–38.

³⁰ *Detractores sunt proditores, Verräther, quos conturbabit tortor Dei i.e. Diabolus in aeternum in quatuor plagas mundi, quae sunt dolor, tristitia, timor, fletus in inferno.* *WA* 1.51,1–3.

³¹ *WA* 1.51,5–8.

sermon must have made an impression, as it did on the humanist Konrad Mutian, who had heard of the “sharp” sermon given in Gotha, and thus initiated contact with Luther via Johannes Lang.³² From 8 April 1516 to 1 March 1517 we have twenty-three extant letters from Luther’s hand. Nine of these he signed designating himself as vicar; fourteen he signed simply as Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, or a derivative thereof. We find no scatological language. And we find no further admonitions against slander. Nor did he preach on the theme again. Perhaps his sermon of May 1515 finally settled the matter.

The first letter we have from Luther as district vicar, dated 8 April 1516, is to Georg Spenlein, an Augustinian in Memmingen, who had a position of authority in the cloister there. Brother Martin wrote concerning financial matters, before then asking Brother Georg about his understanding of justification. He signed his name simply as “Your Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian.”³³ A week later, on 16 April, Brother Martin wrote to his former teacher in Erfurt, Georg Leiffer, who seemingly was having troubles handling turmoil; perhaps Brother Martin’s sermon at Gotha had not quieted everyone. Brother Martin commiserated, arguing though that “the cause and root of all our lack of peace (*inquietudo*) is exclusively the prudence of our own senses.”³⁴ We must, Brother Martin confirmed, adhere to the most noble relics of the cross, which are spread throughout the world, but the truest relic thereof is the love in our hearts. Embracing such a relic will transform rumors and ill will (*maledictio*) into blessing; injustice into equity; suffering into glory; and the cross we bear into joy.³⁵ Two weeks later, on 1 May, Brother Martin wrote to Johannes Bercken, the prior in Mainz, exhorting him to send Brother Georg Baumgartner to him either in Wittenberg or Dresden, where Luther was at the time. Brother Georg was from the Dresden cloister, but had fled to Mainz in the wake of scandal. Brother Martin, referring to Brother Georg as “my brother,” wanted to recover his lost sheep. Scandals arise, and humans fall continuously, from the time of Adam, who fell, and even St Peter, who fell, Brother Martin reassured. Human failure is no miracle or surprise. To rise from having fallen though is a miracle, as the Lord Jesus teaches us

³² *WA* 1.44,2, n. 2; *WABr* 1.40–41, n. 1; cf. Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, p. 208.

³³ *WABr* 1.33–36.

³⁴ *Certus enim sum et ex mei et tui experientia doctus, imo et omnium quos unquam vidi inquietos, scio, quod sola prudentia sensus nostri causa sit et radix universae inquietudinis nostrae. Oculum enim noster nuquam est valde, et ut de me loquar, huius in quantis me miseriis vexavit, et usque modo vexat extreme.* *WABr* 1.37,10–14.

³⁵ *WABr* 1.37,15–38,25.

and effects with us the good work.³⁶ Luther was doing what he could to be the good shepherd, and signed his name, for the first time, as “Brother Martin Luther, Professor of Theology and Vicar in Meissen and Thuringia of the Hermits of St Augustine.”³⁷ On 29 May, Brother Martin wrote to Johannes Lang, prior in Erfurt, asking him to take inventory of the cloister’s provisions.³⁸ This undertaking, Brother Martin affirmed, would not be laborious, but neither would it be superfluous. He was trying to discern, even if Brother Johannes might not understand at first, whether the cloister was more tavern or guest house than it was a monastery.³⁹ Brother Martin added a postscript relating that he was planning on traveling to Nordhausen the following day, if he was able, as the devil had attacked him with a bout of fever, hoping in any case that God would govern in spiritual and temporal matters without him if need be.⁴⁰ Luther signed off simply as “Brother Martin Luther.” On 25 September 1516, Brother Martin wrote to Michael Dressel, prior, and the senior members of the Augustinian cloister in Neustadt. With suffering, Brother Martin related, he had heard that there was discord in the monastery, that they lived without peace, and without unity, without common cause, and not in keeping with the exhortation of St Augustine’s *Rule* to live with one heart and one soul in God.⁴¹ Brother Martin accepted some of the responsibility for the problems himself, due to his lack of guidance. “He errs, he errs, he errs,” the district vicar lamented, “who presumes to direct himself by his own counsel, not to mention others.”⁴² Prayer was the answer, beseeching God for direction and guidance. No wonder there was no peace, and without peace, one is without Christ and thus walks in death more than in life.⁴³ Therefore, Brother Martin, appealing to holy obedience, removed Prior Michael from his office, for the cause of the discord was dissension between the prior and the brothers, and such is far worse than discord among the brothers themselves. A new prior was to be elected, though Brother Michael should be thanked, and the district vicar made

³⁶ *WABr* 1.39,4–24.

³⁷ *F. Martinus Lutherus, sacrae Theologiae Professor, et Vicarius per Misnam et Thuringiam Eremitarum S. Augustini.* *WABr* 1.39,26–28.

³⁸ *WABr* 1.41–42.

³⁹ *Non sit tibi hoc laboriosum, neque superfluum aestima quaeso, alioquin praeciperem tibi. Nescis forte cogitatum meum. Tali enim modo (nisi me omnis sensus fallit) videbis, an conventus sit plus monasterium, quam taberna vel hospitale.* *WABr* 1.42,20–23.

⁴⁰ *WABr* 1.42,36–43.

⁴¹ *WABr* 1.57,5–8.

⁴² *Errat, errat, errat, qui suo consilio seipsum, nedum alios praesumit dirigere.* *WABr* 1.57,12–13.

⁴³ *WABr* 1.57,13–19.

his gratitude to Brother Michael clear indeed, as clear as his expectations that the brothers of the cloister would do so as well.⁴⁴ Peace and concord must be reestablished. Brother Martin concluded with an admonition to ensure that due care was given for the acceptance and instruction of youths, which should be the first priority of the entire convent. Thereafter Luther asked for their prayers, and passed along the news that the subdeacon in the convent at Magdeburg, Brother Johannes de Busscha, had passed away, as had Father Johannes Kunzel in Dresden. The plague was raging, and Luther, writing from Wittenberg, was expecting deaths there daily. It was the ravages of the plague, at least in part, that led Luther to confess to the custodian of the Praemonstratensian cloister in Leitzkau, George Muscov, in the fall of 1516 that “my life gets closer to hell each day, because daily I become worse and more miserable.”⁴⁵ Brother Martin was struggling. All he did, he told Johannes Lang on 16 October 1516, was to write letters, for he was the convent’s preacher, a reader at table, a parish preacher and priest, regent of the *studium*, vicar, which was, as Luther put it, “eleven times prior,” a collector of alms, a judge in Torgau, a lecturer on Paul, while he was too trying to prepare his lectures on the Psalms for publication, and given all this, “as I already said, the greatest part of my time is taken up writing letters. Sufficient time for me is rare even to celebrate and complete the hours, not to mention my own struggles with the flesh, the world, and the devil. See what a lazy man I am!”⁴⁶

Brother Martin had a point. He was overwhelmed. And this was even before the storm had begun. Three years later, on 3 October 1519, Brother Martin wrote to his vicar, Staupitz, in despair, having felt abandoned: “I hate this terrible life. I fear death, and I am completely devoid of faith. I am filled with other gifts though, which Christ knows how much I don’t want, except to serve him.”⁴⁷ And gifts Brother Martin had indeed. He

⁴⁴ WABr 1.57,20–58,36.

⁴⁵ ... *confiteor enim tibi, quod vita mea indies appropinquet inferno, quia quotidie peior fit et miserior.* WABr 1.60,7–8.

⁴⁶ *Opus est mihi prope duobus scribis seu cancellariis, paene nihil per diem ago, quam litteras scribo; idcirco nescio, an eadem semper repetens scribam; tu videris. Sum concionator conventualis, ecclesiastes mensae, desideror quotidie et parochialis praedicator, sum regens studii, sum vicarius, id est undecies prior, sum terminarius piscium in Litzkau, actor causarum Herzbergenium in Torgau, lector Pauli, collector Psalterii, et illud, quod iam dixi maiorem partem occupare temporis mei, epistolarum scribendarum negotium. Raro mihi integrum tempus est horas persolvendi et celebrandi praeter proprias tentationes cum carne, mundo et Diabolo. Vide, quam sim otiosus homo.* WABr 1.72,4–13. Evidence of Luther’s life as an observant Augustinian drawn from his letters at the time should put his later reflections in question regarding his religious observance and austerity; cf. Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, pp. 92–93.

⁴⁷ ... *vitam odi pessimam, mortem horreo, et fide vacuus sum, aliis donis plenus, quae scit Christus quam non desiderem, nisi ei serviam.* WABr 1.514,51–53; see also Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 644.

was, as he clearly stated it, the district vicar, responsible for ten monasteries,⁴⁸ as well as a parish priest and a university professor, and still a friar himself, a religious, and as such, he was struggling. Each of his various “hats” was a full-time job. Yet his extant letters reveal his pastoral concern for his brothers throughout his district. He was concerned for the financial condition of his monasteries, for the discipline therein, for the peace and concord of the brothers. Little wonder, though, that he felt the need to assume at least some of the responsibility for the discord in Neustadt. He simply did not have the time, the leisure, to do his job the way it needed to have been done. He did not have the time, or perhaps the energy as well, to introduce and enforce reformation, as his prior general was trying to do throughout the Order and had been for almost a decade when Brother Martin was appointed district vicar.

While Brother Martin did appeal, at least obliquely, to the *Rule* of St Augustine and its *one heart and soul in God*, and at times to the *Constitutions*, the term “reformation” is not found in his letters. He never exhorted a single monastery to reformation. He never exhorted a single monastery as such to live more in accordance with the *Rule* and *Constitutions*. There is no religionization attempt seen in Luther’s letters. There is no evidence he attempted to apply Giles of Viterbo’s reformation program to his own district, if he was even aware of it to begin with. Peace, love, concord, following Christ, and prayer are frequent themes, but Brother Martin did not instruct on how practically to put those into practice, at least based on his extant letters. He did, though, treat such theologically in his lectures. Brother Martin may have felt he spent all his time writing letters, but he was also, in addition to all his other tasks and responsibilities, lecturing on Paul at the University of Wittenberg, beginning with Romans shortly after his appointment as district vicar. In addition to being an administrator of his Order, and a parish priest, he was also one of his Order’s theologians at the university.

Luther and the Late Medieval Augustinian Tradition

In Hans Holbein’s famous woodcut of 1523, *The German Hercules*, Brother Martin is depicted, in full cowl with tonsure, with club held high, beating down the scholastic theologians.⁴⁹ In his teeth he holds the end of

⁴⁸ As district vicar, Luther was in charge of ten monasteries; his claim that his position was eleven times prior refers to the ten monasteries and the vicarate itself.

⁴⁹ Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk. Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 2 (Cambridge, 1981), p. 33.

a noose, with the hanged pope dangling therefrom. The Dominican inquisitor, Jacob Hochstratten, is cowering, held by Brother Martin's left hand, about to receive a deadly blow. Already vanquished at Brother Martin's feet are Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, Robert Holcot, and Nicholas of Lyra. There are no Augustinian theologians represented. Neither though are Pierre d'Ailly, or Gabriel Biel, the two theologians Luther singled out frequently in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* of 1517. One cannot, therefore, read Holbein's woodcut as a catalog of Luther's scholastic opponents. Yet it would be misreading as well to see the named figures as representing or symbolizing the entire scholastic tradition, or medieval theology as such, which is true as well for reading his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. There one does not find Luther opposing any Augustinian theologian. Thomas and the Thomists, Scotus and the Scotists, and Ockham and the Ockhamists are clearly opponents, but the founders of what would in the fifteenth century become the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna* cannot be seen as the medieval theological tradition, or even the late medieval scholastic theological tradition as such. The one late medieval theological school that escaped Brother Martin's critique was the Augustinian school of his own Order, represented at Wittenberg by the *via Gregorii*, the "way of Gregory of Rimini" as the designation of Wittenberg's *via moderna*. Though an argument from silence is fallacious, Brother Martin's silence on the theological tradition of his own Order causes one to question the extent to which his silence is very telling indeed: did Brother Martin even know the theologians of his own Order?

We know Brother Martin had a rather good knowledge, at least comparatively, of Augustine himself, at least one that was developing during his early theological studies. We also know that Brother Martin espoused an Augustinian theology, based on an emphasis on the effects of the Fall, humans' inability to contribute to their own salvation, predestination – and predestination in late medieval terms "before foreseen merits" (*ante praevisa merita*) – the primacy of grace, and faith, not works, as the means of receiving Christ in the context of a passive righteousness. The debate thus has been to what extent did Brother Martin develop such a theology based on his own reading of Augustine, and to what extent was such a theology communicated to him by members of his own Order? I have charted Brother Martin's reception of Augustine in his early period, and thus now I need to turn to the other side of the question, so to speak, to ask whether Luther's theology came through the tradition of his Order.

In November 1520, the Dominican Thomas Radinus published an oration against Luther, addressed to the Princes and People of Germany. Radinus's treatise is a lengthy harangue, condemning Luther without evidence or proof.⁵⁰ Luther, according to Radinus, was truly the "plague of theology, the disaster of the Augustinian family, the ruin of Germany, and the venom of the Christian republic."⁵¹ Luther, according to Radinus, considered Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, Duns Scotus, Giles of Rome, Francis Mayrones, Thomas of Strassburg, Augustinus of Ancona, Anthony of Padua, Johannes Capreolus, and six hundred others as magicians (*illusores*), scholastics, as being ignorant of Christ, the wise of the world, the emptiers of Christ's cross, and the sowers of errors.⁵² "Why," Radinus asked, "are not Giles of Rome, Augustinus of Ancona, Thomas of Strassburg revered, the pillars of the Augustinian Order?"⁵³ Luther, in short, was a heretic like Wycliff and Hus.⁵⁴ Radinus accused Luther not only of denying Aristotle and philosophy, but also of rejecting the entire Christian tradition. A heretic indeed.

A response was needed, and one appeared the next February from Wittenberg's recently appointed Professor of Greek, Philip Melanchthon. Melanchthon's reply attempted to be a "tit for tat," even in the title: *An Oration of Didimus Faventinus against Thomas Placentinus for Martin Luther, Theologian* (*Didymi Faventini adversus Thomam Placentinum pro Martino Luthero theologo oratio*). To Radinus's charges, Melanchthon retorted: "You consider it outrageous that Thomas is condemned, but even parricide that Luther, since he himself is from the faction of Augustine, rejects the Augustinians, such as Giles of Rome, Thomas of Strassburg, and I don't know what other ones."⁵⁵ Perhaps Melanchthon was simply being rhetorical. Perhaps, though, he indeed did not know to "what other ones" Radinus was referring. At least Radinus knew who some of

⁵⁰ CR 1.212–262.

⁵¹ *Tu, Tu Martine, Tu vere Theologiae pestis: Tu familiae Augustinianae labes: Tu Germaniae clades: Tu Christianae reipublicae venenum.* CR 1.223.

⁵² *Interim tamen dum Mimi saltant et scena ridet, gloriosus hic vir, qui plausum expectat, insolenter fastidit omnes, Thomam, Bonaventuram, Magnum Albertum, Alexandrum Alesanum, Soctum, Aegidium, Franciscum Mayronnensem, Thomam Argentinensem, Augustinum Anconitanum, Antonium, Capreolum, atque etiam sexcentos tales Illusores, Scholasticos, Christum nescientes, mundum sapientes, Theologiae crucis evacuatores, errorum seminatores appellat.* CR 1.224.

⁵³ *Aegidium Romanum, Augustinum Anconitanum, Thomam Argentinensem, Augustiniani ordinis columnas, cur non reverebatur?* CR 1.225.

⁵⁴ CR 1.248–253.

⁵⁵ *Flagitium censet, Thomam contemni, parricidium vero, Augustinianos a Luthero, cum ex Augustini factione sit et ipse, reiici, Aegidium, item Argentinensem Thomam et nescio quos alios.* Melanchthon, *Didymi Faventini*, MW 1.93,32–35.

the pillars of the Order were, and even if his treatise is one of vituperation, his point that Luther had not honored his own Order's theologians is well taken, though whether Luther had committed such a parricide consciously and knowingly, or based on ignorance bears consideration.

The following June, Melanchthon came to Luther's defense yet again, this time against the Parisian theologians. Here Melanchthon focused on defending Luther and his reading of Augustine to emphasize Luther's orthodoxy against the charges of heresy. The authority of the scriptures, as distinct from the authority of councils and decrees, and as distinct from the interpretations of the schools, was, as Melanchthon put it, "the height of the controversy."⁵⁶ This too was the position Melanchthon put forward in his preface to the second volume of Luther's works of 1546, where he gave a brief biography of Luther. Here Melanchthon claimed that Luther knew thoroughly the *Sentences* Commentaries of Ockham, Pierre d'Ailly, and Gabriel Biel, and was certainly most familiar with the works of Thomas, Scotus, and Jean Gerson, although the works of Augustine Luther knew best. With the exception of Gerson, these are the names Luther had singled out in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* of 1517, defending Augustine against the scholastics. Again, not a single Augustinian theologian is mentioned. Whether Luther had indeed abandoned his own Order's theologians is a question that cannot historically be answered, as there is no evidence that Luther even knew them to begin with, and he nowhere refutes them, or cites them in support or for refutation. Melanchthon certainly offers no indication that Luther had studied, read, or even knew of his Order's theologians. While an argument from silence is always suspect, in this case Luther's and Melanchthon's silence is rather telling indeed.

From his earliest notes we know Brother Martin had, in addition to Lombard and Augustine, studied a volume of the *Minor Works* (*Opuscula*) of Anselm and Bonaventure (*Opuscula Parva*), and Ockham's *On the Sacrament of the Altar*. In addition, he seems to have at least been familiar, to varying extents, with some of the works of Hugh of St Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, Jean Gerson, Pierre d'Ailly, and Gabriel Biel as well as other Church Fathers, such as Ambrose and Jerome.⁵⁷ In 1516 he came across Tauler, and in his *Lecture on Romans* Luther claimed: "I have not found so clear a discussion of the subject of original sin as in Gerard Groot's

⁵⁶ Melanchthon, *Adversus furiosum Parisiensium Theologastrorum decretum Phillipi Melanchthonis pro Lutero Apologia*, *MW* 1.146,12–20.

⁵⁷ Matsura, pp. lviii–cxliv.

treatise *Blessed Is the Man*, in which he speaks not as an arrogant philosopher but as a sound theologian,⁵⁸ testifying to his familiarity with Groote's work. As already discussed, Luther's knowledge of Gregory of Rimini is questionable, and extremely limited at best. Even if Luther was teaching according to the *via Gregorii* at Wittenberg, rather than the *via Guillelmi*, namely the "way of Ockham,"⁵⁹ that did not, in and of itself, entail that he knew Gregory's works, or those of any other member of his Order. There is no evidence in his early notes, or in his biblical lectures, letters, or sermons, that Brother Martin knew the works of Giles of Rome at all, nor those of James of Viterbo, Augustinus of Ancona, Thomas of Strassburg, Alfonsus Vargas, Jordan of Quedlinburg, Hugolino of Orvieto, Johannes Klenkok, Johannes Hiltalingen of Basel, Johannes Zachariae, or Augustinus Favaroni of Rome. Indeed, there is no textual evidence that Brother Martin had read or even knew the works of his own provincial, Staupitz, though it has always been assumed that Staupitz guided Brother Martin personally, and Luther attributed Staupitz with having started the whole matter to begin with. Yet these are the very theologians, certainly with omissions, who formed the late medieval Augustinian tradition of Brother Martin's own Order.

Luther's silence regarding the Augustinian theologians is perhaps also a reason why modern scholars have not only in general ignored the late medieval Augustinians, but also why so often Luther scholars have adopted Luther's own interpretation of the "scholastics." Even Oberman seems to have read the late medieval theologians with Luther's spectacles:

A series of discoveries that proved only retrospectively to be steps in the same direction freed him [*scil.* Luther] from the fundamental notion common to all medieval schools of thought: the righteousness of God is the eternal law according to which He who is unattainably holy will judge all men on doomsday. Then justice will be done, and punishment or reward meted out.

But did the Middle Ages know nothing about the righteousness that Christ grants as a gift? Had no one read the apostle Paul before? Was not Luther's answer that the faithful participated in Christ's righteousness identical with the answer that St Augustine had given in *Spirit and Letter*? Thus twentieth-century critics have tried to dismiss Luther as "superficial" and an "ignoramus." At best, they would, in their ecumenical generosity, grant that he had discovered "for himself" what had always been plain to every good Catholic.

⁵⁸ WA 56.313,13–16; trans. that of LW 25,300.

⁵⁹ See Manfred Schulze, "Via Gregorii in Forschung und Quellen," pp. 1–126.

These critics are right in that St. Paul was generally regarded as “the” apostle in the Middle Ages and that St. Augustine had been thoroughly assimilated in biblical commentaries. But both of them were always understood to say that the Church distributes Christ’s righteousness like the talents that can be increased by hard work and good investment. Christ’s justice does not make a man righteous before God; it puts him in the position to become righteous. At the Last Judgment the righteous God will decide if the faithful have used and truly done justice to Christ’s gift. What is completely new about Luther’s discovery is that he sees God’s righteousness as inseparably united and merged with the righteousness of Christ, already *now* it is received through faith ... Luther’s discovery was not only new, it was unheard-of; it rent the very fabric of Christian ethics. Reward and merit, so long undisputed as the basic motivation for all human action, were robbed of their efficacy.⁶⁰

Oberman may have been right with respect to the Pauline and Augustinian interpretation of Biel, but that is not how Giles of Rome and the late medieval Augustinians saw matters. Luther was not “superficial” or an “ignoramus,” but he did seem to be ignorant of his own tradition, and one readily available to him in Erfurt and Wittenberg, or at the very least, one that was “in the air.” “One does not credit clever people with their follies – what a loss of human rights!” as Frederick Nietzsche put it.⁶¹ It is not a degradation of Luther, or an insult, to say he was ignorant of his own Order’s tradition. Clever he was, but that should not be based on the assumption that he was as magisterial as he has often been portrayed. Being dismissive is not always based on thorough study and knowledge. We should not, based on our own image of Luther, credit him with an erudition he did not have, nor deny Brother Martin his human rights of recognizing his “follies.”

On 5 May 1521, Luther’s fellow Augustinian, Konrad Treger, defended thirty theses in a disputation held during the provincial chapter of the Rhenish-Swabian province. The theses concerned the theme of predestination, and began as clearly as could be: “We clearly accept, as much from the biblical canon as from the infallible knowledge of God, and his unchangeable will, that all mortals are from eternity predestined or reprobate.”⁶² No one, Treger affirmed, gains eternal life based on his own

⁶⁰ Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 152–154.

⁶¹ Frederick Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 178, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 93.

⁶² *Ab eterno predestinatos fuisse aut reprobatos omnes mortales, cum ex Bibliorum canone, tum ex infallibili divina cognitione, atque immutabili ejus voluntate, luculenter accipimus.* Konrad Treger, *Paradoxa* 1, as printed in Zumkeller, “The Augustinian Theologian Konrad Treger (ca. 1480–1542) and his Disputation Theses of May 15, 1521.” In Heiko A. Oberman and Frank A. James,

merits, or is damned because of his own works.⁶³ Neither is salvation or damnation based on observing the commandments,⁶⁴ and Treger dismissed the distinction, peculiar to the doctors as he said, between half merit (*meritum de congruo*) and full merit (*meritum de condigno*).⁶⁵ All our works need the special aid of God, given to us by grace,⁶⁶ echoing here Gregory of Rimini's doctrine of the need for a special help of God (*auxilium speciale dei*) for all good works.⁶⁷ It is unclear if Treger had a direct knowledge of Gregory, though he certainly could have, as the general chapters of the OESA in 1491 and 1497 allowed the Order's *magistri* to study the works of Gregory in addition to those of Giles of Rome.⁶⁸ Treger was in any case accused of supporting Luther, which he fiercely denied, pointing out though that it was not "as if Luther has not taught and written many things that have been taught and written for a thousand years that are also good and useful – as all heretics have done."⁶⁹ Treger by no means interpreted predestination as foreknowledge, whereby the *viator* still had to have sufficient merit to meet the judgment of God's righteousness. Predestination was God's eternal decree, and the number of the elect and damned could not be changed.⁷⁰ This did not though exclude the cooperation of human will, even if the works coming from human free will are nevertheless still faulty.⁷¹

In this paradox, asserting God's eternal predestination as well as human free will and cooperation, Treger was very much in keeping with his Order's theologians from Giles of Rome to Johannes Zachariae. Gregory of Rimini was by no means the exception. Alfonsus Vargas, who read

III, eds., in cooperation with Eric Leland Saak, *Via Augustini. Augustine in the Later Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation. Essays in Honor of Damasus Trapp, O.S.A., SMRT 48* (Leiden, 1991), pp. 130–141, 132.

⁶³ ... *neminem ob sua merita predestinatum, neque aliquem propter sua delicta reprobatum*. Treger, *Paradoxa* 2, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Non igitur quod homo mandata Dei, quantum fieri potest, observat in finem usque, aut alius transgreditur ob hoc vel illus, ille vitam meretur, hic ab ea excluditur*. Treger, *Paradoxa* 5, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ob id ruit hoc commentum (etiamsi peculiare est doctoribus) mereri de congruo et condigno*. Treger, *Paradoxa* 19, *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶⁶ *Per hujus modi autem adjuvamen nos non generalem illam influentiam, aut etiam gratiam Dei assistentem intelligimus, sed specialem Dei motionem, aut verius Deum hec omnia nobis gratis donantem*. Treger, *Paradoxa* 27, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Christoph Burger, "Der Augustinschüler gegen die modernen Pelagianer: Das *auxilium speciale dei* in der Gnadenlehre Gregors von Rimini." In Oberman, ed., *Gregor von Rimini*, pp. 195–240.

⁶⁸ Zumkeller, "Konrad Treger," p. 141.

⁶⁹ As cited by Zumkeller, "Konrad Treger," p. 134.

⁷⁰ *Certus autem et infallibilis est predestinatorum et reprobatorum numerus, nec incrementum illum neque hunc decrementum sumere posse, ex sacris literis compertum habetur*. Treger, *Paradoxa* 8. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷¹ Zumkeller, "Konrad Treger," p. 140.

the *Sentences* at Paris directly after Gregory, argued forcefully based on Augustine for God's predestination. After setting forth the arguments pro and con for the question, "Whether everyone predestined will have been predestined from eternity" (*Utrum omnis praedestinatus ab aeterno fuerit praedestinatus*),⁷² Alfonsus advanced four suppositions in the first article of the question: first, "that God does nothing unknowingly"; second, "that in the knowledge of God, nothing is known whereby God would begin to know something *de novo*"; third, "that whatever God does, he does willingly"; and fourth, "that God is able to will nothing with a new, accidental will." Each of these propositions Alfonsus based on the authority of Augustine.⁷³ Alfonsus then proceeded to refute the position of his confrère Thomas of Strassburg (d. 1357), the only interlocutor to make an appearance. Thomas had argued that the cause of predestination was God's foreknowledge of the viator's use of free will in the act of believing.⁷⁴ Appealing to Augustine,⁷⁵ Alfonsus forcefully argued that "God does not predestine anyone from eternity on account of the act of faith which He foresees,"⁷⁶ nor "on account of future good works which He foresees,"⁷⁷ nor "on account of the good use of free will."⁷⁸ Rather, "whomever God predestines, He predestines mercifully only by grace," without preceding merit.⁷⁹ Zachariae, drawing on Giles, argued in his *Apocalypse Commentary* that

⁷² Alfonsus Vargas Toletani, *In Primum Sententiarum*, dist. 40 and 41, art. 1 (Venice, 1490; reprint: New York: Cassiciacum II, 1952), col. 626,6–8. On Alfonsus, see Saak, "Alfonsus Vargas." *OGHRA* 2: 508–509.

⁷³ *Haec est prima suppositio: quod deus nihil facit ignorans, et haec nulli theologorum aut philosophorum est dubia, et ponit eam beatus Augustinus 5 super Genesim ad litteram c. 18 [Aug., de gen. ad lit. 5.18.36; PL 34.334]. Secunda est, quod nihil novi fit in scientia dei ut de novo aliquid incipiat scire; et hanc etiam ponit beatus Augustinus 4 de trinitate c. 6 et c. 27 [cf. Aug., De trin. 4.1.3; PL 42.888] et in multis aliis locis [cf. Aug., De trin. 15.25; PL 42.1078]. Tertia est, quod deus non nisi volens facit quicquid facit; et hanc etiam ponit Augustinus Enchiridion c. 7 [Aug., enchir. 107; PL 40.276–277]. Quarta est, quod deus nihil potest velle voluntate nova accidente; et hanc ponit 5 de trinitate c. 37 et libro 15 c. 59 [Aug., De trin. 5.16.17; PL 42.922; cf. Aug., de trin. 15.25; PL 42.1078]. Alfonsus, 1 Sent., dist. 40 and 41, art. 1, col. 626,29–37.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, cols. 627,22–628,9; cf. Thomas de Argentina, *Commentaria in IV libros Sententiarum*, 1 Sent. dist. 41 art. 2 (Venice, 1564; reprint Ridgewood NJ, 1965), fos. 112^v–113^r. On Thomas, see Saak, "Thomas of Strasbourg." In *OGHRA* 3:1803–1805.

⁷⁵ Alfons., col. 628,17–18; the reference is Aug. *Retract.* 1.13.8 (PL 32. 605).

⁷⁶ ... deus non praedestinavit aliquem ab aeterno propter actum credendi in eum quae previdit ipse finaliter habiturum. *Ibid.*, col. 628,14–16.

⁷⁷ ... deus non praedestinavit aliquem ab aeterno propter actum credendi in eum quae praescivit ipsum finaliter habiturum; igitur nec propter aliqua bona operatio futura quae praescivit ipsum finaliter facturum. *Ibid.*, col. 628,28–31.

⁷⁸ ... deus non praedestinavit aliquem [cod. aliquam] ab aeterno propter bonum usum liberi arbitrii, in quo cognovit ipsum finaliter duraturum. *Ibid.*, col. 629,35–37.

⁷⁹ ... quemcumque deus praedestinavit, gratis solum et miserabiliter praedestinavit ... ecce nulla merita praecedunt pro quibus eligatur; sed sola gratia praedeterminantis est, ex qua vocatur aliquis et salvatur. *Ibid.*, col. 629,62–630,2.

“to say that someone has or is able to have first grace based on his own merit is not only an error, but is even heretical to assert,”⁸⁰ for God had “predestined all those who would reign with his Son in eternal life before the constitution of the world,”⁸¹ whereby predestination is understood as being not only God’s “proposition of giving someone eternal life, but also includes the preordination and direction by which God guides the predestined here in this present to a life lived in grace and in the future to the reward of glory.”⁸² Once written in the book of life, based on God’s predestination from all eternity, not on one’s merits or demerits, one cannot be deleted therefrom,⁸³ and consequently it is most inappropriate indeed to say that “someone is predestined to eternal life according to the present understanding of justice”;⁸⁴ thus man is not exhorted to procure eternal predestination for himself, but is exhorted to seek the effects of predestination resulting from grace.⁸⁵ Hence, prayers of the devout and of the saints help for realizing the effects of predestination, but have nothing to do with and have no effect on the eternal decree of divine election.⁸⁶ Here, for Zachariae, the “righteousness of God” (*iustitia Dei*), to use Oberman’s terms, precedes and is the basis for the “righteousness of Christ” (*iustitia Christi*). Or in other words, for Zachariae, as for Giles of Rome, Gregory of Rimini, Alfonsus Vargas, Hugolino of Orvieto, John of Basel, Jordan of Quedlinburg, and Konrad Treger, justification precedes sanctification. The “nominalists,” as Oberman called them, interpreted predestination as foreknowledge, and thus made sanctification, or the *iustitia Christi*, the basis for future justification, or *iustitia Dei*. Such an interpretation, however, can in no way be seen as having been “common to all medieval schools of thought.” What may indeed have seemed “completely new” to Brother Martin would not have seemed such at all to other members of

⁸⁰ *Non solum enim erroneum est dicere aliquem habere vel posse habere primam gratiam ex merito suo, immo haereticum est hoc asserere.* As excerpted in Zumkeller, *Ersünde*, p. 547.

⁸¹ *Prædestinavit omnes ante constitutionem mundi regnatos cum Filio suo in vita aeterna.* *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁸² *Nam prædestinatio non tantum dicit propositum dandi alicui vitam aeternam, sed etiam dicit præordinationem et directionem, qua Deus dirigit prædestinatum hic in vita præsentem ad vitam gratiae et in futuro ad præmium gloriae.* *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁸³ *Nam est imaginandum, quod aliquis in libro vitae propter merita scribitur et propter demerita deletur. Sed qui semel venaciter scribitur, numquam inde deletur ... unusquisque prædestinatus est electus ab aeterno non propter futura bona opera, sed ex mera divina voluntate. Nec Deus aliquem prædestinavit aut ad vitam aeternam elegit nisi ex unica misericordia.* *Ibid.*, pp. 557–558.

⁸⁴ *... quod impropria immo impropriissima locutio est aliquem esse prædestinatum ad vitam aeternam secundum præsentem iustitiam.* *Ibid.*, p. 557.

⁸⁵ *Non enim hortatur hominem, ut aeternam prædestinationem sibi procuraret, sed hortabatur hominem, ut effectum prædestinationis, qui effectus est gratiae.* *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 558.

his Order, who also held to a position that justification, as God's eternal predestination, had already been given. The question was, what were the effects? And how does one teach and preach such a doctrine? Christians lived in the world, in time, whereas God's eternal decree was in the atemporal realm of eternity, before the constitution of the world. How do these two modes of existence, the temporal and the eternal, relate, and how does that relation affect how one is to lead a Christian life to begin with? While we may be predestined from all eternity for salvation, and thus already justified, in time we do not know whether we have been or not; we do not know, to use Augustine's analogy, to which city we belong; in time, the two cities are thoroughly mixed, even if somehow interrelated. All we can focus on is the "effects" of predestination, for which our free will, our good works, and the prayers of the devout and saints are indeed an efficacious help. Regarding the question of how one is justified, predestination was the answer for the Augustinians, as it had been for Augustine, yet, as Treger explicitly labeled it, predestination was indeed a paradox. It still is.

In the Middle Ages, including the later Middle Ages, there were no self-proclaimed Pelagians. The position that humans could merit their salvation independently of God's grace had been condemned with Pelagius *cum suis* in 418 and again in 529. Paul and Augustine ruled the day. Yet emphasizing predestination on the pastoral level was, and is, rather difficult. The entire pastoral enterprise is based on humans becoming "better," on humans following Christ and Christ's teachings, on the moral and spiritual improvement of humans, all of which take human effort, human contribution. The different approaches to the "pastoral" and the "systematic" is clearly seen not only in Giles of Rome, but also in Jordan of Quedlinburg, both of whom maintained an emphasis on God's predestination and absolute necessity of prevenient grace, yet likewise held up God's commandments and law as the model for how to live the Christian life in this world, in time, the time before humans reach their merited ends, their predestined ends, which in the temporal realm cannot be known.

The issue that demarcated Luther's developing theology from "the entire scholastic tradition" was not so much his doctrine of justification, as it was his increasing emphasis on the certitude of salvation. Luther collapsed the eternal decree of God into a temporal, knowable pronouncement based on faith. That is what in the Middle Ages was "unheard of," not his doctrine of justification itself, even if his understanding of justification went beyond even the late medieval Augustinian position in its emphasis on

the forensic nature of justification, stressing the external (*extra nos*) aspect thereof, rather than the infused, sanctifying grace of God's predestined justification. Sanctification, for the late medieval Augustinians, was the process of the working out of the effects of one's predestination, not the basis for one's final justification, which was, again for the Augustinians, the basis for sanctification to begin with. Faith in Christ was the only certitude one could have, the only knowledge of salvation one could have, combined with the recognition, the knowledge, and the confession of oneself being a sinner, meriting damnation, as one strove to conform oneself to Christ in a faith informed by love in the process of sanctification. For Luther, sanctification had nothing to do with justification, for as he asserted, "Life is as evil among us as among the papists."⁸⁷ Justification was the point of departure, as it was for the late medieval Augustinians, yet this was combined with disassociating justification from sanctification based on the known certitude of a forensic justification made known in faith, rather than in the effects of predestination in the sanctification process itself. This is not to say though that Luther eschewed pastoral theology for systematic. Quite the opposite was the case. Luther indeed strove to base his pastoral theology and his pastoral endeavor on his "systematic" positions as they were emerging from his own study of and lecturing on the Bible. Luther was primarily neither a systematic theologian nor a pastoral theologian, but a biblical theologian who was nevertheless never able to "sufficiently Christianize" his flock or his colleagues, even as he gained political support, perhaps most importantly of all.

Luther as Biblical Theologian

Brother Martin could not have inherited his developing theology from his Order's theological tradition when he did not even know what that theological tradition was to begin with. Staupitz was certainly an influence, and Staupitz himself wrote a treatise on predestination, though he did not cite his Augustinian forebears therein.⁸⁸ Brother Martin's own life as an observant Augustinian hermit and the vows he took likewise shaped his development. He was, after all, no longer the man he had been. He was a new man in Christ from the moment he donned his habit. His study too

⁸⁷ WAT 3.306; as quoted by Oberman, *Luther*, p. 57.

⁸⁸ Johann von Staupitz, *Libellus de Exsecutione Aeternae Praedestinationis*, eds. Lothar Graf zu Dohna and Richard Wetzel, *Johann von Staupitz Sämtliche Schriften. Abhandlungen, Predigten, Zeugnisse* 2, SuR 14 (Berlin, 1979).

was instrumental, and he had started reading the works of his own Order's founding father intensively at least from the time he had become a bachelor of the Bible, if not already as a lector in his Order. In the fourteenth century, one could only become a lector in the OESA after having heard lectures for five years, during which one would have heard lectures on most of the Bible as well as on Lombard's *Sentences*. At the University of Paris, study of the Bible came before lectures on Lombard and the famed *Sentences* commentaries. Years of additional biblical study after the lectorate was required before one became a master of theology. Brother Martin, as noted above, served as a lector in his Order the year after his ordination to the priesthood, which occurred the year after he took his solemn vows. There is no indication as to whether Brother Martin heard any lectures at all, and there are no extant works from his supposed teachers. It was not Staupitz or any other Augustinian, but Ockham whom Luther called "my teacher."⁸⁹ Brother Martin had to learn it himself. He began with the Psalms.

Blessed is the man, Psalm 1:1 begins, *who does not follow the advice of the wicked*. Brother Martin explained to his students that there are three stages (*gradus*) that lead to heaven, while not following them is the path to hell. The three steps to heaven consist of not following the advice of the wicked, not to remain in the path of sinners, and not to teach evil, for doing so is the path to hell. Each of these three negative "thou shalt nots" include as well corresponding "thou shalt": to resist greatly and to flee from the advice of the wicked; to follow the advice of the righteous; to subject oneself to the justice of God through confession and self-accusation, seeking not one's own justification, but the justice of God; to justify God in self-accusation and humility, and giving thanks to God for all things, which is to stand with the saints; and to teach what is good.⁹⁰ Luther then claimed that this path is best exemplified in the life of St Augustine, his Order's father and teacher. Indeed, as portrayed by Luther, Augustine was the "blessed man" of the psalm.⁹¹

The point was surely not lost on Brother Martin's students, including other Augustinian friars. Walking in the path forged by Augustine was the path Luther set for himself, even as he adopted Augustine's *Exposition of the Psalms* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*) as his primary guide for his own exposition. Yet even here, Brother Martin was going his own way, showing

⁸⁹ WAT 2.516, nr. 2544a.

⁹⁰ WA 3.26,19–28.

⁹¹ WA 3.26,28–27,6. See also Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 672.

independence from Augustine as well as exalting his authority and, as discussed in [Chapter 3](#), while lecturing on Psalms 83 and 84, Brother Martin had his Tower Experience as he described it in 1545, discovering passive righteousness, whereby mercy and justice meet, embrace, and kiss.⁹² “Thus now,” Brother Martin clarified in his lecture on Psalm 84, “Christ is our righteousness and our peace, which God gives to us. And through this, God justifies us, and thus we have peace.”⁹³ Already in his comments on Psalm 84, Brother Martin equated Christ’s righteousness as our righteousness and as that by which God justifies us, equating the *iustitia dei* with the *iustitia Christi*, which Oberman saw as Luther’s “Reformation Breakthrough,” in keeping, in Oberman’s view, with Luther’s preface of 1545 with reference to the year 1518. Similarly, in his comments on Romans 3:17 Brother Martin affirmed that:

therefore the righteousness of God is the more beautiful, the more fetid is our injustice ... since we are not able to be justified from our selves and flee to Him, so that He might make us just, confessing that we are not able to overcome our sin. This He does when we believe His words, for by believing such He justifies us, that is, He counts us as just. Wherefore the righteousness of faith is said to be the effective righteousness of God.⁹⁴

The following year, in his lectures on Galatians 2:16, Brother Martin asserted that

therefore he who believes in Christ, though Christ not only makes satisfaction to all, but also does all things, so that all things are owed to him, since through faith he effectively becomes one with Christ. Therefore this righteousness is called the righteousness of God (*iustitia Dei*), because it is given by God.⁹⁵

In his next series of lectures on Hebrews, Brother Martin explicated the righteousness of God as the faith that unites the believer with God and brings peace. Here Brother Martin cited Psalm 84, whereby justice, or

⁹² See [Chapter 3](#).

⁹³ *Sic nunc iustitia nostra Christus est et pax nostra, quam deus nobis dedit. Et per illam nos iustificavit, et ita pacem habemus.* WA 4.16,20–21.

⁹⁴ *Ideo tanto est pulchrior Dei iustitia, quanto nostra iniustitia fedior ... quando nos ex nobis iustificari non possumus et ipsum accedimus, ut ipse nos iustos faciat confitentes, quod peccatum exuperare non valeamus. Hoc facit, quando verba eius credimus; per tale enim credere nos iustificat i.e. iustos reputat. Unde dicitur iustitia fidei et iustitia Dei effective.* WA 56.221,12–19.

⁹⁵ *Ideo qui in Christum credit, per Christum non solum omnibus satisfacit, sed etiam facit, ut omnia sibi debeant, cum per fidem efficiatur unum cum Christo. Ideo vocatur haec iustitia “iustitia dei,” quia donata a deo.* WA 57.69,23–26 (in WA 57, containing the Nachschriften for Romans, as well as Galatians, and Hebrews, the pagination is separate for each, so that the reference here given for Galatians is found on p. 69 of the Galatians commentary, not p. 69 of the volume as such).

righteousness, and mercy kiss, the passage he expositied in December 1514 with his new understanding of passive righteousness,⁹⁶ as expressed too in Aristotle's beautiful philosophy, useful for the highest theology, in keeping with Brother Martin's ways of thought. This was not though his Reformation discovery; this was the discovery of an observant Augustinian hermit, making his way on the path of righteousness as exemplified in the founder of his Order, the blessed man, St Augustine. If Brother Martin had been steeped in the fourteenth-century theological traditions of his own Order's theologians, it might not have had to have been a discovery at all. Yet Brother Martin did not know his Order's own theological traditions; he was never taught them nor studied them on his own. Thus for him, based on what meager training he did have, and the theology he was taught, it was an earth-shattering discovery indeed.

It was also an exegetical discovery. Melancthon was right: the core of the controversy was the issue of scripture. This though was not a discovery of Luther's, in that scripture had always been the foundation. The question was, as it still remains, what is the relationship between scripture, contemporary interpretations thereof – whether in the sixteenth century or the twenty-first – and the exegetical and theological tradition of interpretation? How were the scriptures to be interpreted? Do the scriptures contain revelation, or are they themselves the revelation? After Luther had launched his attack against the Antichrist and thoroughly set himself against Rome, yet before he had finally taken off his habit, he set himself the task of translating the scriptures into German. Luther's *September Testament* appeared in 1522, completed while in the Wartburg. Here, while Luther did away with the medieval glosses, that of the *Glossa Ordinaria* and that of Lyra, he added his own glosses to ensure the proper interpretation. Moreover, he clearly demarcated the revealed books of the New Testament from those of far more questionable status. Thus Luther numbered the books of the New Testament, but then added, unnumbered, the Letter of James, the Letter to the Hebrews, Jude, and Revelations.⁹⁷ Luther was never a fundamentalist, as no theologian ever had been previously either, in terms of accepting the received text as God's literal, direct revelation. Moreover, *sola scriptura* for Luther did not mean that anyone could interpret the scriptures. His glosses were included to ensure the proper interpretation, and he was soon to experience ever so directly the problems resulting from multiple varying and conflicting interpretation.

⁹⁶ WA 57.187–188.

⁹⁷ Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 117–118.

Sola scriptura for Brother Martin meant that the scriptures were the basis for discerning God's revelation, God's truth, and while tradition could certainly help, any and all theological doctrine must be judged based on scriptural exegesis. As Oberman put it,

As further factor must be taken into account to understand Luther as an interpreter of the Word and defender of the "scriptural principle." The Bible is not a book, it is a whole library of writings extending across two millennia. Despite its variety, however, there is a center from which and toward which it must be interpreted. Luther's definition of this center was soon very popular among Evangelical theologians: "What proclaims Christ" is the point of reference for exegesis. Luther himself clarified this eloquent formula: what impels you to Christ crucified is at the heart of the Scriptures ... the early lectures on the Psalms are irrefutable proof that Luther expected to see the Word of God crystallize out of the words of the Scriptures, a concept that goes far beyond the establishment of a scriptural principle. The precept that the Scriptures alone formed the foundation of theology was already familiar to medieval scholastics, who provided it with a methodological basis and argued about the consequences the principle would have for ecclesiastical tradition. But the scriptural principle could become scriptural practice only once the Bible was discovered to be more than a collection of various kinds of truths and proofs, when it was recognized as having its own message, one which decided about life and death, and thus had to be interpreted out of itself, out of its center ... His growing understanding of the Scriptures led to differences over correct interpretations, then to the theologians' and prelates' dispute, and finally to the conflict in the Church. The clash of opinions had not been provoked by the printed pages alone. The Reformation reached the people because of a surprising conclusion Luther drew from the scriptural principle he had known for so long: the Scriptures must be preached! Because heresies threatened the living apostolic message, it had to be recorded in a book to protect it from falsification. Preaching reverses this process of conservation again, allowing Scriptures of the past to become the tidings of the present.⁹⁸

Luther's "surprising conclusion" that the Scriptures must be preached might not appear quite so surprising if we knew more about biblical scholarship and preaching in the later Middle Ages. While scholarship on late medieval sermon literature is growing, the late medieval preaching endeavor cannot be described at all in general terms, and late medieval biblical scholarship is for the most part *terra incognita*. The sources, however, are abundant. Yet even if Luther's revelation regarding the scriptures and preaching did have late medieval precedents, it was still a revelation

⁹⁸ Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 172–173; cf. Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, pp. 58–61.

for himself as he was lecturing on the Bible in Wittenberg. This principle was what made Luther a biblical theologian, and one in a different vein from an Erasmus or a Melancthon. Moreover, he was so from very early on indeed, at least from the time he began his role as Doctor of the Holy Scriptures in Wittenberg. We find though that even before he began lecturing on the Psalms he had already developed the core idea.

In a sermon composed in 1512, Brother Martin asserted above all else the primary responsibility of priests and pastors, bishops and priors: the exposition and proclamation of God's truth, the word of truth, found in the Scripture. This was a sermon Brother Martin wrote for George Muscov in Leitzkau to be given in the diocesan synod in June 1512, as the Fifth Lateran Council was just getting started after Giles of Viterbo had given the opening address in May, urging for reformation.⁹⁹ Oberman claimed that only after his "Reformation discovery" would "the life of the Church and the life of Christians in the world" become "the theme that guided and shaped all he did and wrote."¹⁰⁰ Yet here already in 1512, Brother Martin focused on matters "concerning the entire Church," at least locally, relating to "the reformation of both states," namely, the clerical and the lay, the major theme of the Fifth Lateran Council and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages in general.¹⁰¹

Luther took as his pericope 1 John 5:4–5: *All that is born from God, conquers the world (Omne quod natum est ex Deo vincit mundum)*. This was his point of departure for "correcting our vices and leading our feet in the way of peace," for our faith is our victory: he "who conquers the world is he who believes that Jesus is the son of God."¹⁰² This is the word of truth that is not being preached. "We are accustomed to wonder," Brother Martin affirmed,

⁹⁹ See [Chapter 2](#) above.

¹⁰⁰ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 154.

¹⁰¹ *Conveniunt autem in communi, ut consulant rebus totius huius ecclesiae, et, ut vocant, pro utriusque status reformatione laborant.* *WA* 1.12,9–11. The editors pointed out that, based on the content of this sermon, it had often been dated much later, at least to 1516, and indeed, it is almost "unbelievable" that it was so early; *WA* 1.8–9. Fife gives the date of 1515; Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, pp. 189–190; Brecht dates it to 1518; Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 88. Brecht also references Johann Haar, "Das Wort der Wahrheit" (*Luther* 47 (1976), 5–22), and then comments: "Haar, however, does not consider the 1512 authorship given in *WA* questionable." Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 493. Brecht gives no evidence or argument for his 1518 dating, nor why the 1512 dating of the editors should be questioned.

¹⁰² *Sanctus Apostolus Ioannes, sermonem hodie nobis facturus pro corrigendis viciis et dirigendis pedibus nostris in viam pacis, in hunc modum de coelo sonans exorsus est: Omne quod natum est ex Deo vincit mundum, haec est victoria quae vincit mundum, fides nostra. Quis est autem qui vincit mundum, nisi qui credit, quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei.* *WA* 1.10,6–13.

that in the people of Christ reigns such great discord, anger, envy, pride, disobedience, licentiousness, gluttony, and everywhere love has grown cold, faith is extinguished, hope removed. I ask us to stop wondering. These things are not wonders. That such is the case is the fault of our prelates and priests. We should rather wonder at how blind they are, how they ignore their own offices, so that those who should serve this birth of the word of truth, completely ignore it, being completely taken up with other temporal things and cares, teaching for the most part fables, as I would say, and human concerns.¹⁰³

Brother Martin put it as clear as he could. Faith alone is our victory, for it is by faith that we are born of God. Only with faith can we fight the devil.¹⁰⁴ Thus it is that

all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved: only he who believes, though, calls: only he who hears the word of Truth, believes: only he, however, who hears the Gospel, hears the word of Truth: only he who hears the priest as the angel of God hears the Gospel. Wherefore the primary and first thing of all is that we strive with all our might to have the Gospel constantly before our eyes, night and day, by which we bring about that we might be born of God, and having been born of God, that we might not sin, and not sinning, that we might be joyous, enjoying the victory, which Jesus Christ might deem worthy to concede to us, the son of God, the author of both the word of Truth and of the faith of our victory, who is blessed for ever.¹⁰⁵

Thus the synod should make its first priority that priests and prelates teach and preach to the people the word of Truth, the pure Gospel, for this, and this alone, is the summation of a true and legitimate reformation.¹⁰⁶ It was

¹⁰³ *Mirari nos solemus, tantam in populo Christi regnare discordiam, iram, invidiam, superbiam, inobedientiam, libidinem, gulam, penitusque frigere charitatem, fidem extinguere, spem evacuare: desistite, quaeso, mirari. Non sunt ista mirabilia. Nostra haec Praelatorum et sacerdotum culpa est. Hi potius admirandi sunt, tam eos esse coecos, tam sui officii oblitos, ut, qui verbo veritatis huic nativitati servire debuerant, aliis intenti verumque temporalium curis suffocati penitus illud omittant: maior vero pars fabulas (ut dixi) docet et humana commenta.* WA 1.12,21–28.

¹⁰⁴ WA 1.16,3–22.

¹⁰⁵ *Ita fiet, ut omnis, qui invocaverit nomen domini, salvus sit: invocatur autem solus, qui credit: credit autem solus, qui audit verbum veritatis: audit autem solus verbum veritatis, qui Evangelium audit: audit Evangelium solus, qui sacerdotum angelum Dei audit. Quare primum et novissimum est, ut omni studio satagamus evangelium commendatissimum habere, nocturna versantes manu versantesque diurna: quo efficiemus, ut ex Deo nascamur, ex Deo nati non peccemus, non peccantes victoria laeti fruamur. Quod nobis concedere dignetur Iesus Christus, filius Dei, auctor et verbi et fidei victoriae, benedictus in aeternum! Amen.* WA 1.17,2–12.

¹⁰⁶ *Quare etiamsi in hac venerabili Synodo multa statueritis, si omnia bene ordinaueritis, et huc manum non apposueritis, ut sacerdotibus populi doctoribus mandetur, quatenus recisis fabulis, quae auctorem non habent, puro evangelio sanctisque evangeliorum interpretibus incumbant, intendant populoque cum timore et reverentia verbum veritatis pronuncient, denique et doctrinas quasunque humanas omittant aut parce cum exposita diversitate earum admisceant, et sic ad nativitatem divinam cooperatis*

with this “scriptural principle” that Brother Martin came to a new understanding, or at least a new understanding for him: that the righteousness of God was to be interpreted passively, as that by which God makes us righteous, which he then saw applied to all the other attributes of God as well. This was the discovery that opened the gates of heaven for him. It was December 1514. He was now more armed for the battle of scriptural interpretation and biblical preaching, the means to fight the devil as he asserted from even before he received his doctorate. He just needed more practice, more exercise, which he was about to begin with his lectures on Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. Then he returned to the Psalms.

Brother Martin’s second series of lectures on the Psalms, his *Operationes in Psalmos*, clearly evidence a new-found confidence, and far more developed exegetical skills. Whereas in his *Dictata super Psalterium* of 1513, Brother Martin confessed that, with his own knowledge and ability, most of the Psalms indeed he still could not understand and was not able to interpret, unless the Lord illumine him,¹⁰⁷ in his *Operationes*, Brother Martin opened with a rhetorical *assertio*:

I know those outstanding theologians are not missing the point who, having grown rigid, accuse me of being arrogant and of the crime of vain glory because in this most splendid of ages I dare to go public and thus publicly make known my expositions of those books of the Holy Scriptures easily the most noble and difficult, namely, the Psalms and the Letters of Paul, especially since among the erudite, I am still very much an infant, and according to others, I am found to be an apostate in abandoning the received wisdom of the glosses of years gone by. He believes truly, who wishes that I would prefer to stay muttering around in my own private world rather than letting my tongue wag publically far and wide. It is believed that I serve God in this, and serve Him together with many others, especially you. I see that one is not a theologians who knows great things and teaches much, but is one who lives a holy and theological life. The more I am alienated from this life, the more my profession displeases me. Wherefore I pray you through our common theology – let those damn me who will and call me whatever names they might want, when I am confronted with it, as intent with more serious matters, might infamy be glory for me, and poverty riches, or if there is something a man is able to excel in hurting another, may these be counted as vulgar temptations – this do and when I am truly oppressed: pray for me, that is, that I might be able

fideliter fuerint: si, inquam, haec non curaveritis studio summo, piis precibus, constanti sero, ego liberime pronuncio, cetera omnia nil esse, frustra nos convenisse, nihil profecisse. Nam hic rerum cardo est, hic legitima reformationis summa, hic totius pietatis substantia. WA 1.13,24–28.

¹⁰⁷ *Fateor enim ingenue me quamplurimos psalmos usque hodie nondum intelligere, et nisi me dominus meritis vestris, sicut confido, illuminaverit, interpretari non posse. WA 3.14,4–6.*

to show myself to Christ as a Christian and that his holy name might be sanctified in me.¹⁰⁸

Thus Brother Martin in his address to his students, prefacing his *Operationes in Psalmos*. He was confident and even defiant, even as we still hear echoes of his lament to Staupitz regarding his unwillingness to enter the fray, except to serve God with the meager gifts he might have. He was more armed and practiced indeed. And more skilled: Brother Martin began with an analysis of the Hebrew. He had become increasingly “radical,” going to the roots, explaining that the “blessed man” is he who loves the law of God, and keeps himself separate from the impious.¹⁰⁹ True piety, true blessedness, is contrasted with impiety just as the law of God is contrasted with the counsels of men. The blessed, or pious man, therefore is he who lives from faith.¹¹⁰ The issue is not about ceremonies, keeping the ceremonial law, but rather about the opinions and beliefs; at the root of the law, at the root of the words of the psalm, are the words of faith (*verba fidei*),¹¹¹ and that is what Brother Martin sought to exposit, just as he had in 1512 focused on the word of truth (*verbum veritatis*) as he began his career as a biblical theologian. Though Brother Martin still referred to Augustine as most holy (*sanctissimus Augustinus*),¹¹² no longer is Augustine the *beatus vir*, as he had been in Brother Martin’s *Dictata*. The *beatus vir*, in 1519 for Brother Martin, is he who lives by faith. Doctrine had triumphed over religion. Yet it was Frederick the Wise, Brother Martin’s prince, who had made this possible, as Luther clearly asserted in his dedicatory preface to Frederick in his published commentary. The sincere theology of Christ, Greek and Hebrew letters, the liberal arts, all triumphing

¹⁰⁸ *Scio non defuturos, optimi theologi, qui arrogantiae, tum iam inveterati eriminis vanae gloriae me accusent, quod hoc florentissimo saeculo ego in publicum prodeō, et ita prodeō, ut librorum sacrae scripturae facile nobilissimorum et difficillimorum me tractatorem ostentem, nempe psalterii et epistolarum Paulinarum, praesertim cum apud eruditos infantissimus, apud alios apostata et discissor a receptis aliquot annorum glossis inveniar. Verum credat, qui volet, et me malle in angulo meo susurrare quam lingua per regiones vagari. Optime mihi conscius sum et ignorantiae et vitae meae pessimae. Creditum est me in hoc servire deo, servire cum multis tum praecipue vobis. Ego hoc video non esse theologum, qui magna sciat et multa doceat, sed qui sancte et theologice vivat. A qua vita quo sum alienior, eo magis mihi displicet mea professio. Quare vos per communem nostram theologiam oro – crimentur me, qui volent et quibus nominibus volent, quando eo mihi res venerit, ut gravioribus intento, ut mihi gloria infamia, divitiae paupertas, aut si quid homini praestare necereve potest, inter vulgares tentationem numerentur – : Hoc vos agite, et ubi vere urgeor, pro me orate, hoc est, ut Christo Christianum exhibere possim et sanctum nomen eius in me sanctificare. AWA 2/II.23,6–25,5.*

¹⁰⁹ AWA 2/II.29,5–14.

¹¹⁰ AWA 2/II.31,15–32,9.

¹¹¹ AWA 2/II.35,12–37,11.

¹¹² AWA 2/II.47,8.

over human opinions, flourished due to Frederick's auspices and guidance.¹¹³ If a Reformation was coming, Frederick would be its father.

Reformation and Theology

In his sermon of 1512 written for George Muscov, Brother Martin made preaching the "word of Truth" the foundation for all attempts at reformation in head and members, for the clergy and the laity. His chastisement of the clergy for being blind, gluttonous, and concerned with worldly affairs was thoroughly in keeping with the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. To this extent, Brother Martin's sermon was likewise in keeping with his prior general's address to the Fifth Lateran Council: the holy must not be changed by men, but men must be changed by the holy. This too Brother Martin could, and did, underscore, but we find a difference in his approach for doing so. Preaching the Gospel was the foundation, rather than obedience and conformity. Reformation and doctrine were inextricably tied together, rather than reformation and religion. On 9 May 1518, Brother Martin wrote to Jodocus Trutfetter in Erfurt, asserting that reformation could only come about with a thorough revolution in doctrine: "I simply believe," Luther stated,

that it is impossible that the Church can be reformed unless the fundamental canons, decretals, scholastic theology, philosophy, logic, as they are now, are completely eradicated and other studies established. Therefore I continue with this meaning that I daily ask the Lord, until it comes about, that once again the most pure study of the Bible and the holy fathers be reinstated.¹¹⁴

The problem Brother Martin faced was that, in his view, the holy had already been changed by humans. This could not be rectified by reforming how one lived. Thus already on 12 October 1516, Brother Martin preached on the *Pater Noster*, interpreting the Christian life as consisting of the beginners (*incipientes*), the ones making progress (*proficientes*), and the perfect (*perfecti*), as had his fellow Augustinian hermit, Jordan of Quedlinburg, almost two hundred years previous. The beginners, according to Luther, are those who begin to try to serve God in their exterior

¹¹³ AWA 2/II.6,10–7,9.

¹¹⁴ ... *ego simpliciter credo, quod impossibile sit ecclesiam reformari, nisi funditus canones, decretales, scholastica theologia, philosophia, logica, ut hunc habentur, eradicentur et alia studia instituantur; atque in ea sententia adeo procedo, ut cotidie Dominum rogem, quatenus id statim fiat, ut rursum Bibliae et S. Patrum purissima studia revocentur.* WABr 1.170,33–38.

lives, by refraining from fornication, avarice, idolatry, and the like, which Luther equated to the Israelites having left Egypt. Those making progress, likened to the Israelites in the desert, are those who try then to rule themselves by their own wisdom and justice, or righteousness, not realizing that God is the one who actually rules, and thus they fall behind even those just beginning. Making progress is striving to realize that God does rule over them, even though this is a process that is continually a battle. The perfect are those who seek the kingdom of God to come, in which God will be all in all, whereby they live their lives completely in accordance with God's reign. But, Brother Martin affirmed, this is not possible in this life.¹¹⁵ Thus when we pray, *Thy Kingdom Come*, we are acknowledging and confessing that we are in exile under the tyranny of the devil, the world, and our flesh.¹¹⁶ Thus praying the *Pater Noster* we begin to recognize the "tragedy of our life," being caught between this world and its ruler and the world to come.¹¹⁷ Religion, for Brother Martin, was external obedience, performing the rituals, "not genuflecting," as he preached on the Ten Commandments on 29 June 1516 in Wittenberg, "to riches and honors."¹¹⁸ Religion could reform external behavior, but did not reach internally to bring about the reformation of the inner man. Reformation could no longer be based on religion; it had to be based on doctrine.

Jordan would have agreed with much of Brother Martin's exposition, but would have claimed that becoming perfect is possible in this life, even if rare, and even if conditioned by the fallen, imperfect state we are in. Perfection, for Jordan, was the *vita perfecta*, or rather, the *vita perfectissima* of Augustine's religion. Even the perfect remain sinners, and are perfect only by confessing themselves as sinners, as they make their way back to their origin and end in God, finally finding peace on the eighth day. To this extent, God's kingdom will come indeed only after the end of history, when we are no longer pilgrims, when we are no longer in time. The question Jordan sought to answer was, once we have been justified, based on God's election and predestination, now what? How do we live our lives in the world? How do we put into effect our predestination, if we are indeed predestined, for we cannot actually know. God's kingdom, thus, is not only the future kingdom to come, but is also the kingdom of our souls as

¹¹⁵ WA 1.93,11–32.

¹¹⁶ WA 1.93,32–35.

¹¹⁷ WA 1.92,6–42; *Quod si ita est, qui est unquam inventus, qui tantis titulis, tantis verborum viribus nostrae vitae Tragoediam expressit, sicut hic unus exprimit in sola oratione ista brevissima?* WA 1.92,9–12.

¹¹⁸ *Quae est enim religio, non flectere genua divitiis et honoribus etc.* WA 1.399,17.

we fight the devil. In this battle, we make progress, from beginners (*incipientes*), to an intermediate level (*proficientes*), and finally to perfection (*perfecti*), as we seek to return to God, whereby every Christian is called to be a saint, is called to be holy, in the battle against sin and Satan.

For Brother Martin, there is no such return, because Christ was about to return to us, to end it all in the final apocalyptic. The *perfecti*, are not holier than the *incipientes*, the beginners. Whereas for Jordan, these three stages represent the process of sanctification, for Brother Martin they were three stages in the recognition of God's coming kingdom and our own insufficiency, transferring the process from the religio-anthropological to the cognitive-theological. As Oberman put it,

Luther was by no means indifferent to the general decline of morals, but moral rearmament is not the primary goal of his reformation. Luther had precisely this difference in mind when he formulated the statement found so objectionable through the ages – to his contemporaries and today's Catholics and Protestants alike: "Life is as evil among us as among the papists." The heart of the Reformation is the recovery of sound doctrine – only true faith will lead to the renewal of life. Here Luther reveals his own vision of "reformation" – as unusual in his own day as it is troublesome for modern times.¹¹⁹

Luther could agree with his fourteenth-century Augustinian brothers concerning the infallibility and immutability of God's predestination. Yet whereas Johannes Zachariae spoke of the effects of one's predestination, for which the prayers of the saints were a help, Brother Martin identified the signs of election as being three stages, from being content with the will of God and not complaining about it; being then resigned to God's will, even if one is not one of the elect; and then finally resigning oneself to hell for the will of God.¹²⁰ Already in his opening salvos in his *Lectures on Romans*, Brother Martin made clear that our righteousness is something that has to be done away with, expunged from our minds, and from our consciousness, for our righteousness, our justice, our justification is outside of us, external to us, extrinsic and foreign, for our righteousness is Christ himself. This is the righteousness of God that the Gospel reveals and is accepted and acknowledged by faith alone. It is a passive righteousness, on our part, with God as the active agent, bringing about our being as righteous, as justified, with Christ as our substantive form, which we can access only by faith in the revelation itself.¹²¹ In this context,

¹¹⁹ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 57.

¹²⁰ WA 56.388,4–28.

¹²¹ WA 56.157,2–159,24.

the individual believer, the individual Christian, is rendered almost irrelevant. The issue is one of doctrine, not religion. "Luther," according to Oberman,

horizontalized Christian ethics: he transferred its goal from heaven to earth. Good works are not required for salvation but crucial for surviving in a threatened world ... Hence it is not a question of Luther initiating or bringing on the reformation. From his point of view, all he or any Christian can do is to initiate reforms to better the world to such an extent that it can survive until the moment when God will put a final end to our chaos. This view of life-during-the-Last-Days makes Luther so difficult to understand for people in the modern world; he virtually provokes an interpretation that permits the old opponents to write him off as "medieval" and the modern supporters to style him as a spokesman for progress.

The fact that Luther cannot be classified either as medieval or modern may also explain his special gift of presenting anew the original Christian message of the imminent dawning of the Kingdom, vivid and vital, real and realistic for the people of his time. From today's perspective, his linguistic skills were sketchy, and he lacked the necessary scholarly tools. But in his ability to show how to live a Christian life between-the-times, he was centuries ahead of today's most advanced theological scholarship.¹²²

Living "between the times" was something Brother Martin's fellow Augustinians, at least of the fourteenth century, knew very well indeed. If Luther was "centuries ahead" of theologians today in this respect, he certainly was not in comparison to his fourteenth-century co-religious. Luther, though, was not proposing how to live "between-the-times" at all. For him, he was living in the end of times, when the final conflict had already begun. Jordan, as well as Giles and the other late medieval Augustinians, knew too that morals had nothing to do, as such, with salvation. They knew too that predestination did not, as such, entail sanctification, and that salvation was based on the atemporal, eternal justification of the predestined, not on the process of sanctification of those still fighting the battle in this life. For Luther, justification was now, based on faith and extrinsic righteousness, whereby our righteousness is outside ourselves, for our righteousness is Christ alone. With his emphasis on doctrine over religion, with his shift in emphasis from the faith of the Church, the extrinsic *fides quae*, to the individual faith of the believer, the intrinsic *fides qua*, and his increasing emphasis on the certitude of salvation in the knowledge of Christ crucified as the righteousness of the Christian, which

¹²² Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 80–81.

remains *extra nos*, Brother Martin had gone beyond the medieval tradition indeed, including that of the Augustinians.

Was, then, Giles of Viterbo right? Had Luther never really been “one of us,” namely, had Luther never truly been an Augustinian? While one can understand Giles’s response, his attempt to distance the Order from its errant brother, such a question is no more a historical question than is that of whether Luther was right or wrong. Luther was an Augustinian, and had been since donning the habit in 1506 in taking his solemn vows, vowing obedience to God, to Mary, and to the prior general of the Order. Hindsight, as the proverbial wisdom has it, is always 20/20. Protestant scholars have read back into Luther’s early development to find the origins and evolution of his evangelical theology; Catholic scholars have done the same to discern the seeds of his errors. While Catholic and Protestant scholars both might be bothered by Luther’s claim, as Oberman asserted, that the lives of Protestants were as evil as those of the Catholics, no Augustinian at the time would have given it a second thought. What else would one expect? Augustine too would have agreed. The issue between Augustine and the Donatists, or between Augustine and the Pelagians, was not an issue of morals, but of doctrine, and it was not that Augustine and the Orthodox lived better lives! That was Augustine’s point. Pelagius was the moralist. Only a Pelagian could find Luther’s comment about the morality of the lives of those in the respective camps “troublesome,” and certainly not counter to the late medieval Augustinian theological tradition!

What would have been seen as troublesome was Brother Martin’s associating reformation with doctrine. Giles of Viterbo had put it very well indeed: the holy must not be changed by men, but men by the holy. Luther would have agreed. Thus, for Giles, the problem lay not in the holy itself, or even in its interpretation, but in how men were being affected by it. For Giles, men were not being changed by the holy, and that was the problem. That was the reason reformation was so needed, so urgent. Brother Martin, though, viewed matters a bit differently: the holy, *sacra*, had already been changed by men, for the holy was the revelation of the Gospel itself and that had been tampered with, not just interpreted, but interpreted away. Thus reformation could not be focused on Christians and how best to live the Christian life; it had to be based on doctrine. This was a position we find in embryo already in 1512 in his sermon composed for George Muscov, but only then explicitly so in 1518.

Theology, academic and pastoral, had failed in the wake of the Schism, as had the Augustinian theology as represented by Johannes von Paltz.

The *Frömmigkeitstheologie* in aftermath of the Schism led to a frantic attempt to save people, keeping them in the pews, so to speak, and easing their consciences in the context of turmoil and uncertainty, when the world was falling apart. This was the theology that Brother Martin attacked, and from an Augustinian perspective, rightly so! Whereas the anonymous author of *The Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund* had prophesied a coming future reformer, as king and priest, who would enforce reformation from above, Luther advocated for making reformation based on a complete overhauling of doctrine, without, however, having been sufficiently trained in or knowledgeable of the tradition of his own Order. Sanctification was no longer the basis for reformation, and Luther divorced sanctification from justification all together. The late medieval Augustinians knew too that justification was based on predestination and was *extra nos*, based on Christ's cross, but such an extrinsic righteousness had an intrinsic effect: *extra nos* was, as for Luther, *pro nobis*, but that entailed a corollary: *pro nobis* entailed *in nobis*. Sanctification was based on justification, though still distinct, but was so, to use Scotus's terms, only formally. Justification, as God's predestination, was atemporal, eternal, whereas sanctification was the working out of the effects of justification in time, *in hoc saeculo*. For the late medieval Augustinians, as for Augustine himself, there was an ontological relationship between justification and sanctification, between the Church triumphant and the Church militant, though one that resulted in an ontological tension of inquietude, not knowing, in this life, to which city one belonged. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, for the Augustinians, preserved this tension, keeping together, somehow, God's atemporal predestination and justification with temporal sanctification. Some theologians, though, had, for theological, philosophical, or pastoral reasons, broken this tension asunder, making thus sanctification the basis for a future justification, interpreting God's eternal, atemporal predestination as God's foreknowledge of temporal succession, resulting in a Pelagian, or what later would be termed a "semi-Pelagian" position. The Gospel had indeed been perverted, or so it seemed to the young Augustinian doctor of theology at Wittenberg, who was soon to become a district vicar for the German Augustinian observants. Especially after having had a theological discovery in December of 1514 of passive righteousness, whereby the just live by faith having been made just, or righteous by the act of God in Christ becoming the Christian's substantive form, bringing the subject, the believer, into being, Brother Martin saw the need to counter such perversion, culminating in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*. Yet what Brother Martin saw

as the entire scholastic tradition was only a part thereof; his own Order's theological tradition as it had traditionally been espoused and articulated seems to have passed him by. It was not, as older Catholic scholarship used to assert, that if Luther had only known Thomas better he would not have attacked and destroyed the Church; but we can ask, if Luther had known his own Order's theological tradition, would he have adopted the same positions? If he had spent five years studying for the lectorate, and at least then three years teaching, before starting his university theological studies, which would have taken him at least eight years of further study before incepting himself as regent master, how would history have been different? Would it have been different at all? Though Luther did not know or study his Order's theologians, he did study the works of his Order's founder. Brother Martin studied Augustine assiduously, and defended his Order against detractors such as Wimpfeling. It was precisely because he was an Augustinian that he had a problem with the "un-Augustinian" theology he had been taught. Doctrine must return to the fore; doctrine must be restored, for the Gospel was being perverted. The devil was behind it all, and as Brother Martin's forebears knew, the devil was an insidious enemy indeed. Reformation, therefore, had to begin with doctrine and the proper understanding of the Gospel. Christians should not be led to believe that a more secure way to heaven is simply to receive the sacraments, accept the grace distributed by the Church, and obtain indulgences for extra security. The only security Christians have, the only certitude of one's salvation one could have is Christ, our justification extrinsically, who remains *extra nos*, for the last days are at hand. There was simply insufficient time to factor in doctrines of sanctification when Armageddon was on the doorstep. One should certainly do good works, but living a Christian life had nothing to do with justification, which was thoroughly in the hands of God. Even Konrad Treger, Luther's contemporary fellow Augustinian, knew this. So much for the "horizontalization of ethics": Luther's ethics were battlefield ethics in a battle the outcome of which Luther already knew: Faith is our victory! Luther thus collapsed the eternal into the temporal with respect to justification.¹²³

Luther was indeed a "man between God and the devil," as had been his late medieval confrères, but his was not a theology between eternity and

¹²³ Luther did certainly recognize the differing temporal modes, arguing that nothing is contingent with God, but contingency only applies for our life, in time; *WA* 56.383,11–24. Luther though emphasized the eternal justification of God, "accessed" by faith, rather than the contingent effects thereof worked out in time.

temporality; the ontological tension was lost, perhaps in the other extreme to the Pelagian option of his opponents. There is with Brother Martin no discussion of the gift of perseverance, Augustine's *donum perseverantiae*, which is the grace and gift needed to live the Christian life in the realm of unknowing, not knowing one's final destination and end; Augustine's anti-Pelagian work *On the Gift of Perseverance* is not one Brother Martin ever mentioned or cited.¹²⁴ Luther wanted certitude and increasingly so, for certitude was being preached and sold, even though, in his eyes, it was a false certitude, a false hope, that was perverting true Christian hope and true Christian certitude. Here, in his increasing emphasis on the certitude of salvation, offered by faith alone that effects an extrinsic righteousness, in the context of the battle against the devil, we find Brother Martin, having made reformation based on doctrine, beginning the transformation of the late medieval Reformation in leading Christianity in its first steps, even if premature, on the path from religionization to confessionalization.

Even so, much of Brother Martin's theology was thoroughly in keeping with the late medieval Reformation and the late medieval Augustinian tradition, even with his innovations. He was a late medieval Augustinian friar, as he considered himself, as was Jordan of Quedlinburg before him, and as such has as much to reveal about the late medieval Augustinian tradition as that tradition has to reveal about him. So much scholarly effort has gone into the endeavor to try to identify the source and origin of Brother Martin's Augustinianism as the key to his Reformation theology. Yet it was not his Augustinianism, or even his theology, at least not as such, that caused, or even led to, what has traditionally been known as The Reformation! The storm was about to hit.

¹²⁴ On *De dono perseverantiae*, see Volker Henning Drecoll, "*De praedestinatione sanctorum et de dono perseverantiae*." In *OGHRA* 1:375–379. These two works had originally been composed as two books of one work, but they often circulated as two separate works, and were printed as such in the Amerbach edition. Since Luther did know *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, he may have been familiar as well with *De dono perseverantiae*, though he does not cite it.

Mother Church and the Pope

The second decade of the sixteenth century was determinative for much of what came thereafter. It still has an impact, even if unrecognized. Henry VIII had just become King of England on 21 April 1509. Giovanni di Lorenzo de Medici became Pope Leo X on 9 March 1513. Francis I ascended to the throne of France on 1 January 1515. Charles V became Holy Roman Emperor on 28 June 1519, having been King of Spain since 23 January 1516. Hernando Cortez claimed Mexico for the Crown of Spain in March 1519 in the process of destroying the Aztec Empire, having already been involved in Cuba, while Ferdinand Magellan set sail in search of the Spice Islands on 20 September 1519. Martin Luther was threatened with excommunication on 15 June 1520. And for the central part of the decade, the Fifth Lateran Council was in session, from 1512 to 1517.¹

On 18 July 1511, Pope Julius II issued *Sacrosanctae Romanae Ecclesiae*, calling for a general ecumenical council to meet at the Lateran beginning on 19 April 1512. The Council was officially opened on 3 May. The need was clear, and the expressed tasks facing the Council as detailed in the Bull were to combat heresy, to ward off incipient schism, to reform the morals of the clergy and the faithful, to provide for peace and concord within Christendom, and to prepare for holy war against the Turk.² Christendom was being threatened, from without as well as from within, and Julius was desirous to maintain his authority as the head of Christendom, as Christ's vicar, who should be the one to direct coordinated efforts, efforts which had been undermined by the religious politics of Emperor Maximilian, of Louis XII of France, and indeed of a number of the cardinals themselves.³ Thus Julius, seeking to uphold the apostolic authority of the papacy,

¹ See Nelson H. Minnich, *The Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17). Studies on its Membership, Diplomacy and Proposals for Reform* (Aldershot, 1993).

² Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles d'après les Documents Originaux*, VIII/1, trans. H. Leclercq (Paris, 1917), p. 301.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 284–297.

likewise declared the convocation that had been called on 16 May 1511 to meet in Milan to be an illegitimate council and all its acts to be null and void.⁴ Councils could not be called without papal authority. Julius had to rein in the potential schismatics, threatening to destroy the Church, or at least the papal leadership thereof. This was the period, after all, that Francis Oakley termed the “Era of National Churches,”⁵ and Julius wanted to put an end to such decentralization. His successor, Leo X, was successful in having the Council approve his Bull *Pastor Aeternus Gregem* in its eleventh session on 19 December 1516, which proclaimed the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges of 1438, promulgated at the Council of Basel, granting large concessions to the French Church, null and void,⁶ despite the Concordat of Bologna agreed to earlier that year. In doing so, *Pastor Aeternus* harkened back to the Bull *Laetentur Caeli* of the Council of Florence of 6 July 1439 proclaiming reunion between the Latin and Greek Churches with the stipulation that the pope held primacy throughout the entire world as the successor to Peter and Christ’s vicar, responsible for governing the Church universally with the fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*).⁷ If the Church was going to survive the crisis, it could only do so with centralized, papal leadership, leadership Giles of Viterbo, the Augustinian prior general, had praised Julius so effusively for having already exercised.⁸ Yet the urgency remained, not only for reform from within, but also for unity with respect to the Eastern Church, and for protection against invading forces from without, with the Turk threatening more each day.⁹ Emperor Maximilian recognized the danger, and thus allied with Pope Leo for the purpose of defending against the Turk, even promising on 5 August 1518 (the Council closed 16 March 1517) to join with the pope to proceed against Luther.¹⁰ Maximilian too recognized the need for Christendom to set its affairs in order, politically as well as religiously, and the Council had been expressly for that purpose. In the eleventh session, which opened on 19 December 1516, Pope Leo X put forward a decree, approved by the Council, that the pure preaching of the Gospel was central for reform,

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 300–301; Minnich, *Fifth Lateran Council*, II.

⁵ Francis Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1979), pp. 71–79.

⁶ *Pastor aeternus*, in Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 37th edition, ed. Petrus Hünermann (Herder: Freiburg im Breisgau, 1991), nr. 1445, pp. 485–486.

⁷ *Laetentur Caeli*, in *ibid.*, nr. 1307, p. 451.

⁸ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 1–2; cf. Minnich, *Fifth Lateran Council*, IV.

⁹ See Petro B.T. Bilaniuk, *The Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517) and the Eastern Churches* (Toronto, 1975).

¹⁰ Cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, pp. 247–248.

and that preachers were to be well qualified to ensure such. Reform had to start with the Gospel. The Council so decreed it.¹¹ The acts and decrees of the Fifth Lateran Council though were not, understandably, ready for immediate distribution and implementation, and there was resistance, and not insignificant resistance, at least from France. In so many ways, the Fifth Lateran was an abortive Council, despite the efforts of the Council fathers, or of Leo.¹² Emperor Maximilian died on 12 January 1519. Charles V, now King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, inherited more than his grandfather's office and title; he inherited his grandfather's problems and politics. How to manage? Seven and a half months after the close of the Council, Brother Martin posted his *Ninety-Five Theses Against Indulgences*. Matters were now, at least with respect to the Empire, in the hands of Charles, leaving one to wonder what might have been, had the Fifth Lateran been given a chance, had the Fifth Lateran been implemented, before a German Augustinian hermit forced the issue, and in the historical, religio-political context, forced Pope Leo's hand, as well as that of the young Emperor.

Brother Martin Luther, Heretic

On 19 April 1521, Brother Martin stood before Emperor Charles V in the Reichstag in Worms. The 21-year-old Emperor had to render his verdict on whether this Augustinian friar had gone beyond the pale of orthodoxy and thus should be condemned as a heretic. Brother Martin had been given a hearing, and on German soil. He was open to reviewing his published works and would recant what he found had been perhaps stated inappropriately. This approach, however, was not allowed. Brother Martin had to acknowledge the works laid before him as his, and then was either given the option to recant them all as a whole, *in toto*, or not. No longer was there the option for the censorship and possible condemnation of individual positions, as had been for the cases of Peter Abelard in the twelfth century, for the condemnations of 1277, for Marsilius of Padua and the condemnations of nominalism in the fourteenth century, culminating in the condemnations of 1347 of Nicholas of Autrecourt and John of Mirecourt. The Schism was felt here as well. Jan Hus was burned

¹¹ Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, VIII/1, pp. 524–528. For an English trans. of the decree on preaching, see www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum18.htm

¹² On the Council as such, see Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, VIII/1, pp. 297–565; for the problems of the implementation of the Acts of the Fifth Lateran and the aftermath thereof, *ibid.*, pp. 548–620.

at Constance; Joan of Arc was burned just before the Council of Basel; and Luther was seen as another Hus. Not censorship and condemnation, but holocaust was the tenor of the day, with the shift having occurred from condemning heretical statements and positions to condemning the heretic him or herself.¹³ The political context was simply too tense. Reform decrees had been issued at the Fifth Lateran. The Church was setting itself in order. And now this case would just not go away. Brother Martin awaited the verdict of the Emperor, who was to be the last medieval emperor of Christendom, though that was not yet known on that day in Worms.

Charles was in an awkward spot. Himself not a theologian, he was faced with a case that had already gone far beyond the question of a single friar and his orthodoxy. Brother Martin had already a great deal of support, secular and otherwise; moreover, complaining about the abuses regarding indulgences, or even the pope for that matter, certainly was nothing new. The anonymous author of *The Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund* had considered indulgences to be simony, arguing that “Indulgences – as I love God – are terrible simony and sin.”¹⁴ In 1457, Martin Mair had complained that “New indulgences are approved day after day for one purpose only: their profits to Rome.”¹⁵ Shortly before, in 1451 on the occasion of Nicholas of Cusa’s mission to Germany, an anonymous cleric or monk offered his view of the conditions of the German Church:

The worst crooks, however, pimps and prostitutes not excepted, are to be found among the familiars of cardinals. Such riffraff used never to disgrace Germany, but the pope tolerates them now. The pope and the Italians are not satisfied with the enormous sums brought to Rome during the Jubilee Year; they now send us a cardinal empowered to take what remains of our fortune through the sale of Jubilee Indulgences. How, under such circumstances, can the faithful believe in the good intentions of the pope and Rome? Have they not been cheated innumerable times before, paying out good money for the conversion of the Bohemians and the restoration of the Greeks, neither of which events ever took place? Furthermore, why should Germans be victimized when Italians make huge profits by pocketing the proceeds from the Jubilee Year and by not contributing anything themselves? Is this how the legate plans to reform German clerics and German millers, butchers, and cooks? To be sure, if pope and curia were to

¹³ Heretics had been burned previously, though there seems to have been a heightened effort to condemn heretics, rather than to censure doctrines, in the wake of the Great Schism. See Fudge, *Trial of Jan Hus*, esp. pp. 86–115.

¹⁴ *The Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*, in Strass, *Manifestations of Discontent*, p. 6.

¹⁵ Martin Maier, *Letter to Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, in *ibid.*, p. 38.

reform themselves, or if a general council were to bring about a universal reformation of the Church, there would be no difficulty in reforming every Christian in his own estate. It is therefore, most sensible, as well as most necessary, for the pope to decide that he must forthwith convoke a general council of the Church, as he is sworn to do.¹⁶

No council was called, and some ten years after this anonymous letter, Eneas Silvius, now Pope Pius II, condemned calls for a council in his Bull *Execrabilis*. The German Estates had had enough, and at the same meeting of the Reichstag where Luther waited for the imperial verdict, the Estates had already presented the Emperor with a list of 102 *Gravamina*, among which was number 22:

We also regard it in the highest degree objectionable that His Holiness should permit so many indulgences to be sold in Germany, a practice through which simple-minded folk are misled and cheated of their savings. When His Holiness sends nuncios or emissaries to a country, he empowers them to offer indulgences for sale and retain a portion of the income for their traveling expenses and salaries . . . Bishops and local secular authorities also get their share for helping with the arrangements for the sale. All this money is obtained from poor and simple people who cannot see through the curia's cunning deceptions.¹⁷

Though the list refrained from directly attacking papal power as such, virtually no other entity was spared, and the critique was harsh indeed. The Church, from the unlearned parish priests to the cardinals and papal nuncios, was thoroughly corrupt. The Emperor should know. The list of *Gravamina* presented at Worms in 1521 represents, together with Brother Martin, the culmination of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. No action was taken at Worms regarding the list of grievances. Charles though had to render his verdict.

It did not make sense to him. Charles was indeed in a difficult position. Yet he was able to get to the heart of the matter: Luther was to be condemned, not for his critique of indulgences, nor for his questioning the divine nature of the papacy or of the pope's power, nor for his theology of justification by faith, nor for his exegetical approach to biblical interpretation in eschewing received tradition, but rather for one thing alone – his claiming that the Church had been in error for the past millennium and that he alone was right. “My predecessors,” Charles began,

¹⁶ *A Clergyman's Criticism of Rome*, *ibid.*, pp. 48–52, pp. 51–52.

¹⁷ *Gravamina of the German Estates*, *ibid.*, pp. 52–63, p. 57.

the most Christian Emperors of the German race, the Austrian archdukes, and dukes of Burgundy, were until death the truest sons of the Catholic Church, defending and extending their belief to the glory of God, the propagation of the faith, the salvation of their souls. They have left behind them the holy Catholic rites that I should live and die therein, and so until now with God's aid I have lived, as becomes a Christian Emperor. What my forefathers established at Constance and other Councils, it is my privilege to uphold. A single monk, led astray by private judgement, has set himself against the faith held by all Christians for a thousand years and more, and impudently concludes that all Christians up till now have erred. I have therefore resolved to stake upon this cause all my dominions, my friends, my body and my blood, my life and soul.¹⁸

That was on 19 April. The official condemnation was issued over a month later, on 26 May 1521, as an Edict of the Reichstag in Worms, which did not go into the details of why Luther was being banned, but rather simply asserted that he had cut himself off from the Church and was to be considered a heretic, and should not be harbored or supported in any way, but was to be apprehended and arrested. Charles, though, had hit the nail on the head.

Charles was no blind advocate of the pope, even as he did view himself as the defender of Christendom. A few years after Worms, Charles would experience another shock to his imperial system when the pope supported Francis I, King of France, in a war against Charles, which led to Charles's troops sacking Rome in 1527. Charles had appealed to the Council of Constance in his verdict against Brother Martin, the Council that had made the pope essentially the CEO, rather than the monarch, of the institutional Church, with the Council having supreme power, held directly from Christ, serving as the "board of directors." Constance was in so many ways an "anti-papal" Council, as it had to have been by necessity to end the Schism. Its decrees, *Haec Sancta* and *Frequens*, had served as the foundations for conciliarism, which then was only deemed heretical by Pius II in *Execrabilis*, which reasserted papal supremacy, effectively returning the papal position to the *status quo ante* and Pope Boniface VIII's bull, *Unam Sanctam*.¹⁹ Charles was not condemning Luther for having disagreed with the pope, or for having attacked papal authority, or even for having denied the divine nature of the papacy. Nor had *Execrabilis* much

¹⁸ Kidd, *Documents*, nr. 43, pp. 85–86.

¹⁹ *Defensorium Obedientiae Apostolicae et Alia Documenta*, eds. and trans. Heiko A. Oberman, Daniel E. Zerfoss, and William J. Courtenay (Cambridge, MA, 1968), "Introduction: The Twilight of the Conciliar Era," pp. 3–59, 3–7.

of a reception, and for the most part, most of Christendom did not take much notice.²⁰ The decrees of the Fifth Lateran Council may have been ringing in Charles's head, but so were the *Gravamina*, and the German tradition of opposition to Rome going back at least to the *Acceptation of Mainz* of 1439. Yet Luther, in Charles's understanding, had claimed that even Constance had erred, that Councils, even "anti-papal" Councils, could err and had done so, and then where was authority? If there was no supreme head in the earthly Church, aside from Christ as the *caput ecclesiae*, which all agreed, how was truth to be determined at all? Where was the Church's authority to be found?

A "headless" Church had been met before. Whenever there was a papal vacancy, the Church was, at least momentarily, without a head. At times the matter became acute, as after the death of Clement V in 1314, when the Church suffered a vacancy for two years during which all the political leaders of Europe weighed in on the problem, beseeching the cardinals to elect someone, even if a compromise, for the Church without a head was suffering.²¹ The Schism itself was a crisis in this fashion, with not one, but first two and then even three heads. The Church had become a hydra. That crisis finally had been solved, but here, this Augustinian friar was denying, or so it seemed, that there was any authority in the Church aside from Christ, and his, that is, Luther's, own interpretation of what the Gospel was intended to be, and what it meant, and on this basis had dared to assert that popes *and councils* had erred, and seemingly had claimed that all popes and councils for the past 1,000 years had been in error. He just could not be correct. He must be wrong. He must therefore be separating himself from the Church, which put him in a different category than all the complaints against the Church, than all the complaints against the hierarchy and the pope, than all the *Gravamina* that had been presented. This was not simply schism, which though it could provoke; this was separatism; this was *singularitas* in its ultimate form, that monastic vice that made one feel special, that made one feel unique, that made one feel that one stood out from all the rest. Yet in this case, this *singularitas* was not simply a vice; it was heresy. It had to be condemned.

Brother Martin, though, had a point that was not, at least theoretically, unheard of. The fourteenth-century Augustinian hermit, Augustinus of Ancona, had written in 1326 the most extensive explication of ecclesiastical power to date, and had sent his work, his *Comprehensive Treatment of*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 126–128.

Ecclesiastical Power (*Summa de potestate ecclesiastica*), to Pope John XXII, who was in bitter conflict with Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, whose theorist, Marsilius of Padua, had called for the abolition of the papacy all together in his *Defender of the Peace*. In his *Comprehensive Treatment*, Augustinus treated the question of the pope's infallibility, which had been raised by the radical Franciscans, in the imperial camp, in their battle against John, holding up the infallibility of the pope to support their claim that the Franciscan way of life was the highest form of Christian perfection, as confirmed by the Bull *Exiit* of Pope Nicholas III in 1231. John had condemned the statement that Christ and the Apostles owned no property as heretical in 1323, for it was up to the pope to be the final interpreter of scripture, and Christ, after all, was Lord of all. Thus John had condemned an infallible decree, which could only be the workings of the Antichrist.²² In his refuting, at least implicitly, Marsilius's arguments, Augustinus argued for a "fallible, infallible pope," whereby the pope was infallible as long as he didn't err. The Church itself though was truly infallible, for Christ would not abandon his Church and even if everyone fell away, if everyone lapsed into heresy, except for only one faithful believer, that faithful believer would be the Church.²³ Augustinus did not discuss this possibility further, and simply was trying to make the point that the Church as such was infallible and would always be infallible, even if the pope erred, even if the whole Church had erred – with the exception of one faithful catholic. And there was Brother Martin, standing against the entire Christian tradition, fashioning himself as the one faithful believer in the midst of an errant Church. Though there is no evidence that Luther had read Augustinus's *Comprehensive Treatment*, or knew its arguments at all, his stance in Worms had at least been theoretically posited almost two hundred years previously in the most radical work on papal hierocratic theory that had ever been written. Brother Martin's stance was a stance for the infallibility of the Church, embodied in one true catholic. So be it.

A world in which the individual is sovereign, in which the individual sets her or himself up as the authority for determining what is true, what is valid, what is right, even if only for him or herself, is a world that is nasty, poor, brutish, and short, a world of the survival of the fittest, as so eloquently illustrated by Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes's

²² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 67–68.

²³ ... *quod ecclesia non potest errare, quia si unus solus catholicus remaneret, ille esset ecclesia*. Augustinus of Ancona, *Summa de potestate ecclesiastica* 20.6 (Rome, 1479), fo. 75th; cf. Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 124–125.

answer to that dilemma was to establish the absolute authority of the Leviathan, of the State, to which individuals must surrender their individual sovereignty, their individual authority, in order to live in peace, in order to get what they want and need to begin with. Absolutism and individualism are the two opposite extreme poles on the spectrum of where authority lies, with each easily falling prey to the devolved forms of tyranny and mob rule democracy, Hobbes's state of nature. What has traditionally been known as the "Age of Absolutism" was dawning a century after Luther made his stance at Worms, with the problem of individualism lurking below the surface. At Worms we do not find the beginnings of Enlightenment individualism, and Luther's appeal to conscience was not a modern construct, but rather reverting to common medieval moral psychology: an errant conscience would sin doubly if it went against itself, for the conscience contains the *synteresis*, the spark of divinity in humanity, telling us right from wrong. Though Luther had, by 1521, abandoned the concept of the *synteresis*, his appeal to conscience was nevertheless one very much in keeping with medieval conventions. The problem was that he could not be convinced, as he put it, from scripture that he was wrong. The problem was one of conflicting interpretations.

Conflicting interpretations are the food on which historians, and theologians, live. If the answers had already been discovered, already known, we would not have much to do: we would simply pass along the received truth. The discipline of hermeneutics and postmodern theories have made clear that the interpreter is not an objective observer, but that, much as Heisenberg's uncertainty principle for nuclear physics, the position of the observer conditions, if not determines, what can be observed. Brother Martin was convinced he was right. He knew it in his bones, and was prepared to stake his life on it, on his position as Doctor of the Holy Scriptures. One cannot accuse Martin of a lack of integrity. The question is, then, was he? How do we, as modern interpreters, interpreting within the malaise of previous conflicting interpretations, come to the point of decision, or do we? Do we, historically speaking, *have* to answer the question of whether Luther was, ultimately anyway, right or wrong? Can we do so without our own confessional beliefs, Catholic, Protestant, atheist, or otherwise, conditioning our interpretation? Even so an astute and magisterial interpreter of Luther as Heiko Oberman let his own Protestant proclivities seep through, even as he relished iconoclastically smashing the idols of traditional Lutheran Luther scholarship. Oberman wrote:

Why did Luther become more than an original thinker and a fascinating witness to a vanished world? He was able to become the Reformer of the Church because he was prepared to test his discovery against the Scriptures and ultimately to anchor it there. Only thus could it achieve lasting value for him and lay claim to validity for the whole Church.²⁴

Oberman here started out in his own voice, but then his voice becomes blurred with that of Luther. Luther is now *the Reformer* of the Church, even though Oberman argued throughout that Luther never saw himself as the reformer, and certainly not by 1521 as he stood before the Emperor. In hindsight, Luther most likely would agree with Oberman here, namely, that he did become the Reformer of the Church and he did so because he grounded his theology in Scripture, which thus had validity for the whole Church, effectively reforming the Church. This passage is based on the assumption that the Reformation that Luther unleashed did indeed reform the Church, and did so because of Luther's biblical theology. Oberman passed almost undetectably from description to causation.

Interpreting Luther, as interpreting the scriptures and indeed as all interpretation, is risky business, and threatens to reveal as much about the interpreter as it does about what is being interpreted. In such a condition, in such a textual condition, how are we to judge and/or determine what is the right interpretation? We either have to appeal to our own authority, our own reason, our own knowledge, our own experience; or to an external authority, which we follow simply based on what we feel most closely adheres to our own views anyway. Harry Truman made famous the phrase, "The buck stops here." There has to be some place where the buck stops, especially in cases of conflicting interpretations. Luther was convinced he was right, but this meant that either he would succeed in convincing others of his position, as he in fact did, or then everyone else remained in the wrong. It was not only the Catholics who ended up disagreeing with Luther. His success in his stance at Worms and its early aftermath soon gave way to the failure of the movement as such, which Oberman saw as a sign, for Luther, that only convinced him more of his rightness: the devil attacks all the more viciously the more the truth of the Gospel is preached. Failure is what Luther expected, at least failure in human terms and categories, because it was precisely failure that signified the success of the Word. Yet Oberman saw that failure as a worldly success as well, the success by which Luther became the Reformer of the whole Church and thus more than a curious antiquarian oddity. Are not there

²⁴ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 153.

remnants, even if hidden and transformed, of a Protestant triumphalism even in Oberman's interpretation? Are the categories "success" and "failure" even valid to begin with for historical analysis, for historical interpretation? By using such have we not already implicitly, if not explicitly, moved from historical to theological interpretation?²⁵ Can such ever be avoided?

Charles V had rather significant political reasons for not condemning Luther. Brother Martin had, after all, considerable support. On 8 February 1521, Aleander wrote: "At present, all Germany is in commotion: nine out of every ten cry 'Luther,' and the tenth, if he does not care for what Luther says, at least cries, 'Death to the Court of Rome!'"²⁶ On 25 April, just a week after Charles's verdict, Gaspar Contarini wrote:

I cannot tell you how much favor he [Luther] enjoys here [in Worms], and which is of such a nature that, on the Emperor's departure and the dissolution of the Diet, I suspect it will produce some bad effect, most especially against the prelates of Germany. In truth, had this man been prudent, had he restricted himself to his first propositions, and not entangled himself in manifest errors about the faith, he would have been, I do not say favored, but adored by the whole of Germany. I was told so at Augsburg by the Duke of Bavaria and many others, and I see the same by experience.²⁷

Charles's decision was not politically expedient, at least not for himself. He did not though come to his verdict for political reasons, but based on his earnest attempt to make the right decision as a Christian Emperor, the head of Christendom, who was responsible for the Church as well as the State, as emperors had been, at least in their own eyes, since Constantine. How would history have been different had Charles approved Luther? How would history have been different had Luther, like Hus, been burned? Would either outcome have been caused by Luther's anchoring his theology in the Scriptures? Charles based his decision on what he believed to have been right. And the consequences of conflicting interpretations took a new departure.

²⁵ A Protestant triumphalism has marred the scholarship, as has a Catholic demonization. Whereas the latter is no longer the foundation of Catholic Luther scholarship, nor is the former waved as a banner quite so boldly as in centuries past, confessional positions remain determinative, often slipped in unaware. Thus James Nestigen mused: "Like many a young theologian, as he [*scil.* Luther] worked with the assigned sources, he came to the conviction that the Catholic tradition had missed the heart of the biblical witness." Nestigen, "Approaching Luther." In Donald K. McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 240–256, 240.

²⁶ Kidd, *Documents*, nr. 41, p. 82.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, nr. 46, p. 89.

The story is well known: Brother Martin was kidnapped by Frederick the Wise, his prince, on the way home from Worms. Brother Martin received political protection. Was this caused by his biblical theology? Giles of Rome had argued that the pope was the final court of appeal for the interpretation of Scripture, and thus when there were conflicts, the pope had the final word. Marsilius of Padua argued that the papacy should be abolished, yet retained an ultimate source of authority, the council of the faithful, the council of the entire Church, which, for Marsilius, was co-terminous with the legislator of the state, for with respect to Church affairs, only the legislator, the council, had coercive authority. Even if Marsilius limited the scope of what could, or should, be coerced, all coercive force was to be exercised by the council. Yet that a final court of appeal was needed, was required, was a position on which both Giles and Marsilius agreed. Luther, much as Marsilius, claimed that neither council nor pope had the authority to determine the truth. Only the Scriptures did. Yet the Scriptures, as the Christian tradition from the very beginning has made clear time and time again, do not, despite Reformation claims, interpret themselves. Humans must interpret the Scriptures, and even if one can accept that humans, at least at times, do so with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, human interpretation is fallible. This Luther was denying, claiming that his interpretation was the true one, adopting a position, even if unknowingly, like that of the mystics who claimed they had a direct revelation from God. Perhaps they did. Some though still were burned as heretics, for setting themselves in opposition to the authority of the Church, claiming individual, divine truth. Brother Martin was cast in the same position. If the “mystic” Brother Martin – who dared to put forward his own interpretation of God’s truth, of God’s revelation, who dared to stand as the one faithful catholic, confronting the authority of the Catholic Church and its interpretations of scripture and of its own tradition – was to escape the flames, coercive authority was still needed, political authority and political protection still required. The truth, recognized or not, could still be burned. In so many ways, in so many historical ways, it was Frederick the Wise, not Luther, who was the father of the Reformation.

Luther's Early Ecclesiological Thought

What happened at Worms, and all that had led up to it, cannot be reduced to the traditional binaries of Scripture versus Tradition, of Bible versus Pope, or of Faith versus Works. Charles did not condemn Luther,

to repeat myself, for his theology, nor for his critique of the pope. Charles condemned Luther for having claimed that the Church had erred for over a thousand years and for holding the position that he, Brother Martin, was alone right. Charles condemned Luther for asserting his own authority while dismissing the authority of the Church, irrespective of practice, irrespective of abuses and corruption. Had he not done so, had he not defied the authority of the Church as such, he would have, most likely, as Contarini put it, been adored by all of Germany. At issue was the authority of the Church, and the Church led by the pope as its earthly head. Yet on 30 May 1518, Brother Martin sent Staupitz his *Resolutions of the Disputation on the Power of Indulgences*, with a dedicatory letter to Pope Leo X. Pope Leo most likely received the work in the later half of June. Brother Martin threw himself at the Pope's feet, offering him "all that I am and have. Vivify, kill, call, rebuke, approve, reject, as it pleases you: I acknowledge your voice as the voice of Christ speaking and ruling in you."²⁸ The first week of the following January, Brother Martin again made an appeal to Pope Leo:

Now, most blessed Father, before God and with all his creation as my witness, I did not, nor do I want today, in any way to assault or pull down with any type of deceit, the sovereignty of the Roman Church or that of your holiness. Wherefore I confess as thoroughly as possible that the sovereignty of this Church is above every other authority, and nothing whatsoever in heaven or on earth is to be placed before it, aside from Jesus Christ, the one Lord of all. And your holiness should not believe any evil connivers who would fabricate anything different about this Martin ... for there is one thing alone that I seek: that our Mother, the Roman Church, might not be polluted with the filth of a foreign avarice, and that the people might not be seduced into error and learn to set indulgences before love. About everything else, I could not care less.²⁹

Less than two years later, Brother Martin stood condemned by the Emperor and the Reichstag for having separated himself from the Church,

²⁸ *Quare, Beatissime Pater, prostratum me pedibus tuae Beatitudinis offero cum omnibus, quae sum et habeo. Vivifica, occide, voca, revoca, approba, reproba, ut placuerit: vocem tuam vocem Christi in te praesidentis et loquentis agnoscam.* WA 1.529,22–25.

²⁹ *Nunc, Beatissime pater, coram Deo et tota creature sua testor me neque voluisse neque hodie velle Ecclesiae Romanae ac Beatitudinis tuae potestatem ullo modo tangere aut quacunq[ue] versutia demolina. Quin plenissime confiteor huius Ecclesie potestatem esse super omnia nec ei praeferendum quicquam sive in caelo sive in terra praeter unum Iesum Christum dominum omnium. Nec Beatitudo tua ullis malis dolis credat, qui aliter de Martino hoc machinantur ... Nam id unicum a me quaesitum est, ne avaritiae alienae feditate pollueretur Ecclesia Romana, mater noster, neve populi seducerentur in errorem et charitatem discerent posthabere indulgentiis. Caetera omnia, ut sunt neutralia, a me vilius aestimantur.* WABr 1.292,31–293,45–49.

for having claimed that the Church had erred for the previous millennium. At issue was not justification by faith alone. In January 1519 by all counts Brother Martin had had what has traditionally been considered to have been his "Reformation Breakthrough," and after such, whether his Tower Experience took place in 1518 or in December 1514, Brother Martin asserted so strongly that his one care was for Mother Church, led by the Pope as the embodiment of the voice and rule of Christ. What had happened? Somehow, it had something to do with the Church.

Heiko Oberman claimed that

it can be said that from his first lectures on the Bible to the end of his life, Luther's view of the Church remained unchanged and central to his convictions. The Church is visible, but as a suffering communion of Christians. It is endowed with great riches, which are accessible only through faith. It is unique and unified, but scattered all over the world. Bishops and doctors are its servants, allowing the Gospel to be preached in sermon, sacrament, absolution of sins, praise of God – and martyrdom: as in the days of the early Church so will it be till Judgment Day. Persecution and pressure will increase, and yet the adversary will not be able to vanquish the Church.³⁰

Luther would have most likely accepted this interpretation and formulation of his understanding of the Church, at least for the most part. Yet, at least for the most part, so would have, or could have, as such, Giles of Rome and Marsilius of Padua. The Church, though, was a far more complex concept, and whether Brother Martin's understanding thereof underwent no change at all from 1505 to 1546 must be questioned.

Evaluating Luther's early ecclesiology would be much easier had he composed a treatise *On Ecclesiastical Power* or *On the Power of the Pope*, or the like. He did not. Thus we are left with trying to reconstruct his understanding of the Church from explicit and implicit comments he made in a variety of texts. Even so, a comprehensive account would require a separate study.³¹ Nevertheless, we can perceive Luther's complex understanding of the Church, and the role of the pope therein. To do so, we need to follow a chronological, and contextual, approach, rather than attempting to evaluate Luther's early positions based on his later reflections. Luther claimed that he had been an "arch-papist," which Scott Hendrix interpreted, together with Luther's other later reflections on his early years as an Augustinian hermit with respect to his adherence to Rome, as "insane,"

³⁰ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 270.

³¹ See my planned work, *Augustine's Church*, vol. III. *The Two-Headed Augustine? Ecclesiology and Justification in the Reformation*.

and after noting that Brother Martin had studied Gabriel Biel's *Exposition on the Canon of the Mass*, noted that "Biel is not a rabid papist."³² Hendrix's study is a balanced, most valuable examination of Luther's views of the pope and the papacy from 1505 to 1546, yet reveals his Lutheran, and ecumenical, sympathies. What would an "insane," "rabid" papist have looked like? Who had ever been such? Hendrix though attempts to show that Luther's true views were far more nuanced and/or ambivalent than his later reflections lead one to believe. Up until 1517 anyway, Luther's works "do not allow one to pin on Luther a papalist or a conciliarist label," but do reveal "that Luther's feelings about the papacy were at best ambivalent."³³ According to Hendrix, "Luther's attitude toward the papacy did not undergo radical shifts but progressed through finely differentiated states until he became absolutely convinced that the papacy would not fulfill its pastoral duty."³⁴ And even in its ambivalence, we find, in Hendrix's account, Luther "the Reformer" throughout. From his early sermons and biblical lectures, Luther's ecclesiology

can definitely be labeled "Reformation." The church which arose after Luther's break with the papacy was able to base itself on this principle: the true church is the place where Christians are fed by the faithful preaching of the word. Although not every element of Luther's later ecclesiology is contained in his earliest writings, the theoretical basis for the continuation of the church apart from the papacy is present. To this extent, Luther's early theology is Reformation theology, in spite of the fact that Luther in 1517 had no intention of establishing a new church in opposition to the papacy.³⁵

This too will have to be questioned because late medieval theorists, beginning perhaps with Marsilius of Padua, likewise could envision the Church without the papacy, which did not, as such, make their theology, or political theory, Reformation. Moreover, "Reformation" here is defined implicitly simply as "non-papal" or "non-Roman," which then assumes "Reformation" as being "Protestant" with its origins and success found in its independence of, opposition to, or rebellion against Rome. More was going on than anti-papal or anti-Roman sentiment. Yet Brother Martin's shift from January 1519 to the spring of 1520, his shift from his appeal to the authority of Mother Church with the pope as embodying the voice

³² Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy. Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia, PA, 1981), pp. 2–21, 4, 5, and 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

of Christ to the papacy being the very seat of the Antichrist itself was far more earth-shattering and cataclysmic than a progression "through finely differentiated states." This perspective is lost with attempts to find "Luther the Reformer" in his early development with respect to his ecclesiology, or with respect to his theology, which obscure the historical, and personal, development of a late medieval Augustinian hermit as the events of his times were unfolding before his eyes. Mother Church, for Brother Martin, was not simply an outer skin of an onion which only had to be gradually peeled off to find remaining the core of the true Reformer who had been there all along. Mother Church was herself the core for Brother Martin, as she had been throughout the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, as she had been for over a millennium previously, as she had been for the founder of Brother Martin's Order. It was not ambivalence when Brother Martin preached in 1516 to his congregation at Wittenberg that he affirmed as strongly as he was able that "all the works and merits of Christ and of the Church are in the hands of the Pope,"³⁶ through whom Christ spoke and reigned.

One of Brother Martin's earliest works, and the very first work selected to begin the Weimar edition, was a work dealing with the Church and its rights, privileges, and responsibilities for granting asylum.³⁷ Here we find Brother Martin treating the juridical character of the Church, for the Church was indeed too, whatever else it might have been, a juridical institution. In this context, Luther gave the secular arm leeway, for "the defense of those guilty who flee to the Church is not equitable, just, or legitimate," for it would be to act "against justice" (*contra iustitiam*) as well as "against the holy canons" (*contra leges et sacros canones*).³⁸ Such though should not be subject to the death penalty, or other corporeal punishment, so that the honor of the Church might be preserved and thus ecclesiastical judges should seek to ensure the safety of their life and limbs.³⁹ They should, though, be subject to

³⁶ *Sed concordemus, quantum possumus: omnia opera et merita Christi et Ecclesiae sunt in manu Papae* ... WA 1.67,31; see also later.

³⁷ WA 1.1–7. This is Luther's *Tractatulus de his qui ad Ecclesias confugiunt, iam iudicibus secularibus quam Ecclesie Rectoribus et Monasteriorum Prelatis perutilis*. The editors note this treatise was first published in 1517 without an author's name given, and then again in 1520 with Luther as author. Yet they note: "Zu einem Zweifel an ihrer Echtheit, haben wir keinen Grund." WA 1.1 They further suggest: "Wir werden schwerlich irren, wenn wir unser Schrift entstanden sein lassen, ehe Luther sich ganz der Theologie zuwandte." WA 1.2. Yet even if this treatise were to be dated closer to its publication date of 1517 than to Luther's first years of theological study or even before, it still shows Luther's understanding of the Church as a juridical institution.

³⁸ WA 1.6,25–7,2.

³⁹ WA 1.7,3–15.

punishment, as long as it is monetary or some other form of satisfaction, rather than corporeal punishment.⁴⁰ Yet murders, adulterers, and rapists were excluded from ecclesiastical protection.⁴¹ Free Christians who rightly sought sanctuary in churches were to provide for their own expenses either from their own means, or by work; if though they were not able to work and did not have means to provide for themselves, the church should provide for them as for the poor.⁴² Ecclesiastical sanctuary though does not apply to clerics or religious, whom ecclesiastical judges can discipline, including assigning prison sentences, providing the sentences are not excessively long or harsh. The Church, in other words, was to deal with its own “criminal clerks,” which had been at issue since the origins of the universities, and indeed the Augustinians had their own prisons and put them to good use.⁴³ Brother Martin showed his adeptness with legal reasoning and sources, basing his treatment on the canonists, and particularly on the decretalists Hostiensis and Panormitanus. Panormitanus, or Nicolas de Tudeschi, had, in his *Treatise on the Council of Basil* (1442), though not a work Brother Martin cited, argued that both a pope and a general council can err, adhering to a conciliarist position. Panormitanus had been named cardinal by the anti-Pope Felix V in 1440, aligning himself with the Council against Eugenius IV.⁴⁴ When Brother Martin asserted that popes and general councils can and have erred, he was by no means the first to have done so, even if he did not know of Panormitanus’s argument in this regard. It was, in any case, a legal argument, and juridical argument was familiar to Brother Martin from his early career, as this early treatise demonstrates. The Church may have been many things, but it was, perhaps first and foremost, a legal, juridical institution.

It was, though, by no means only a legal, juridical institution. The Church, for Brother Martin, was a divinely instituted entity, containing all of Christ’s power. In a sermon preached on 1 August 1516 on the classic text of Matthew 16:18, Brother Martin affirmed that

⁴⁰ WA 1.7,10–13.

⁴¹ WA 1.4,20–32.

⁴² WA 1.7,24–26.

⁴³ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 315–344, for Gregory of Rimini’s registers detailing prison sentences for certain cases.

⁴⁴ See Knut Wolfgang Nörr, *Kirche und Konzil bei Nicolaus de Tudeschis (Panormitanus)* (Cologne, 1964). Luther continued to appeal to Panormitanus as support for his position; e.g. WA 1.656,32–33. Prierias had pointed to Luther’s appeal to Panormitanus, who was, according to Prierias, a satanic rebel and schismatic; WA 2.53,15–22.

had Christ not given all his power to man, no church would have been perfect, because there would have been no order, since anyone might wish to say that he has been touched by the Holy Spirit. Thus heretics, and thus whoever sets up his own principle and there would be as many churches as there would be heads. Therefore Christ wanted to exercise his power only through humans and as handed over to humans, so that all might be brought together in unity.⁴⁵

The Church, therefore, is an institution embodying Christ's power, which Christ has given to the Church for order and unity. He has done so to combat the powers of the world and of hell, which rise up against the Church, though they will not prevail. Whoever, therefore, separates himself from this order and unity is a schismatic, and thus "obedience is better than the sacrificial offerings of fools, who do not know what evil they do."⁴⁶ The unity of the Church, the oneness of the Church, was a major theme for Brother Martin. The Church, as he wrote in his first lectures on Psalms (*Dictata super Psalterium*), is one, as the waters of Psalm 32(33) were one, gathered into one skin.⁴⁷ Though there are various gifts, there is, as he affirmed in his *Lectures on Romans*, one Church, one faith, one baptism, one spirit, one Lord, and one God.⁴⁸ And this one Church was to be obeyed, precisely because it was one: the Church was a juridical institution for Brother Martin, but as such it was still the one Church of God, which was not able to err, as he preached on the third commandment to his congregation in Wittenberg in 1516.⁴⁹

Throughout his *Dictata*, Brother Martin rather consistently glossed the temple and the synagogue as the Church.⁵⁰ Yet we also find the Church as the body of Christ,⁵¹ and Brother Martin traditionally made the distinction between the Church triumphant and the Church militant. Thus Christ's throne is in the Church (*in Ecclesia*), and those inhabiting Zion

⁴⁵ *Nisi Christus omnem potestatem suam dedisset homini, nulla fuisset Ecclesia perfecta, quia nullus ordo, cum quilibet vellet dicere, se ex Spiritu S. tactum. Sic fecerunt Heretici, ac sic quilibet proprium principium erigeret essentque tot Ecclesiae quot capita. Itaque nullam potestatem vult exercere nisi per hominem et homini traditam, ut omnes in unum congregaret.* WA 1.69,11–16.

⁴⁶ *Hanc autem potestatem adeo confirmavit, ut contra eam suscitaret omnem potestatem mundi et inferni, sicut dicit: portae inferni non praevalerunt adversus eam, quasi diceret 'pugnabunt et excitabuntur, sed non praevalerunt', ut notum fiat, hanc potestatem a Deo esse et non ex hominibus. Qui se ergo ab hac unitate et ordine potestatis subtrahunt, nihil est quod sibi plaudunt de magnis illuminationibus et miris operibus, ut nostri Piccardi et alii Schismatici stque Capitosi. Melior est enim obedientia quam victimae stultorum, qui nesciunt, quid mali faciunt.* WA 1.69,16–24.

⁴⁷ WA 3.183,24–28.

⁴⁸ WA 56.451,20–22.

⁴⁹ ... *ecclesia non potest errare* ... WA 1.444,17–18.

⁵⁰ E.g. WA 3.66,2; WA 3.101,7–8; WA 3.74,23–24; WA 3.148,224; and WA 3.150,16–17.

⁵¹ E.g. WA 3.113,40; WA 3.115,37; WA 3.131,16.

are those who comprise the Church triumphant and the Church militant,⁵² over which Christ reigns. The Church militant is “the land of those living in this age,”⁵³ comprised of the faithful,⁵⁴ and to this extent, forms as well, together with the angels, the Church triumphant, although hidden in this world.⁵⁵ God has indeed destroyed the literal understanding and its defenders “so that with his fingers a heavenly spirit and a new Church might be instituted, decorated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and established for eternity. Therefore even now I will not look at the earthly and the literal, but will look for your heavens in the spirit, after the literal observers of the law have been destroyed.”⁵⁶ The true Church is the truly faithful, the elect, who shine forth, but internally, spiritually; in this world, though, they are obscure and cast aside.⁵⁷ Thus in commenting on Psalm 26(27), Brother Martin explained that

The “tabernacle” is the Church or the body of Christ, which mystically understood is also the Church. And in this tabernacle every faithful Christian is hidden. This hiddenness ought not to be understood carnally, because the saints certainly are placed on the candelabrum. But neither is it to be understood that all its glory is in the soul alone, but thus because man is said to be hidden with respect to his internal qualities in that which one does not see from a carnal or secular perspective, namely, that the spiritual man withdraws himself from secular life, morals, and conversations ... Therefore “to be hidden” is nothing other than not to deal with living carnally, which even men of the world well see, even though they do not live how the spiritual live. Therefore the “hiddenness” of the Church is faith itself, or the spirit, which is the same, because the saints live in faith and in the spirit, that is, in the knowledge and love of the invisible, just as carnal men do not live in faith, but in common reality and not in the spirit, but in the flesh. Therefore they are not hidden, but manifest, wallowing around in visible things. And note that the Church is protected not in open, manifestly visible things, in which even more so they devolve to the will of tyrants and evil, though now popes (*pontifices*) want most of all to be defended in the open tabernacle of the Devil, that is, of the world, in visible things. But the Church is defended in spiritual matters, that thus

⁵² WA 3.84,17–26.

⁵³ ... *Ecclesia, que est terra viventium in hoc seculo.* WA 3.102,17.

⁵⁴ ... *hereditatem meam mihi (id est populum fidelem, Ecclesiam meam)...* WA 3.106,11.

⁵⁵ WA 3.114,16–23.

⁵⁶ *Sensus ergo est, quod dominus destruxit literam litereque defensores et emulatores, ut celestis spiritus et nova Ecclesia digitis dei, donis spiritus santi ornata et fundata in eternum institueretur. Igitur iam non videbo terram et literam, sed celos tuos in spiritu, potsquam destructi fuerunt observatores literales.* WA 3.82,14–18.

⁵⁷ WA 3.103,7–10.

are not able to be taken away from it or to be hurt in those things because spiritual goods of faith are unconquerable and eternal.⁵⁸

In a sermon of 26 December 1514, Brother Martin clarified that invisible things are those things that are in God alone, whereas visible things are everything not in God, including such as wisdom, virtues, and the gifts of grace. Though such are not sensual, corporeal, or carnal, they do lie within the realm of the visible and thus heretics and the proud focus on them, loving them as if in doing so they are loving God.⁵⁹ The visible and invisible were related then with the external and the internal, whereby the internal was the realm of the spirit and soul, whereas the external was the realm of the body, even when that included virtues and gifts of grace.

Brother Martin's distinction between internal and external, moreover, was equivalent to that between the Church triumphant and the Church militant. The Church triumphant was invisible and spiritual, whereas the Church militant was comprised of the visible and worldly, which, though, was not in and of itself equated with the carnal, for even the gifts of grace and virtues exist in the visible, external realm. In glossing the temple of Psalm 26(27), which Brother Martin associated with "God's Church or the soul," he explained that "our life is hidden with Christ in God" in his tabernacle, "that is in his humanity or in the faith of his humanity," a faith that is covered in the tabernacle, whereby the soul is exalted according to the spirit, not according to the flesh.⁶⁰ In a marginal gloss, Brother Martin explained that the phrase "in the faith of his humanity" is better interpreted as "in the congregation of his Church."⁶¹ In a marginal gloss on the "gates of death" of Psalm 9:15, he explained that "the Church is always militant and triumphant in this life. This life is nothing

⁵⁸ "Tabernaculum" est Ecclesia vel corpus Christi, quod tamen mystice etiam est Ecclesia. Et in isto absconditur quilibet fidelis. Que abscondio non debet intelligi carnaliter, quia sancti utique sunt positi super candelabrum. Sed nec sic, quod omnis gloria eius sit in sola anima, sed sic quia homo dicitur interior et absconditus eo quod non vivit seculariter et carnaliter. Scilicet quod subtrahit sese a vita, moribus et conversatione mundi . . . Igitur "Abscondi" est nihil aliud nisi non concurrere cum viventibus carnaliter, quod utique carnales bene vident. Sed tamen quomodo vivant spiritualiter, non vivunt. "Absconditum" ergo Ecclesie est ipsa fides seu spiritus, quod idem est. Quia in fide et spiritu vivunt, id est in cognitione et amore invisibilium. Sicut carnales non in fide, sed in re vivunt et non in spiritu, sed in carne. Ideo non sunt in abscondito, sed in manifesto, voluntur in rebus visibilibus. Et nota, quod Ecclesia protegitur non in manifesto in rebus visibilibus, immo in illis derelinquitur ad voluntatem tyrannorum et malorum, licet nunc pontifices maxime defendi velint in manifesto tabernaculi Diaboli, id est mundi, in visibilibus rebus. Sed in spiritualibus defenditur, ita quod illa non possunt ei auferri aut noceri in eis, quia sunt invicta et eterna bona spiritualia fidei. WA 3.150,16–151,4.

⁵⁹ WA 1.36,15–32.

⁶⁰ . . . templum eius Ecclesiam eius vel animam . . . in tabernaculo suo i.e. humanitate sua vel fide humanitatis eius . . . WA 3.148,15–149,2.

⁶¹ Melius autem in Ecclesie sue collegio. WA 3.148,35.

except a gateway to the future.”⁶² In glossing Psalm 45(46): 5, *There is a river whose streams make glad the City of God*, Brother Martin equated the City of God with the Church, which is infused with the Holy Spirit.⁶³ Though in his marginal gloss he primarily interpreted this psalm as relating to the early Church (*primitiva Ecclesia*), he did assert that the Church, as the City of God, would not fail, and could not be moved from faith and truth, though the visible, militant Church, with respect to externals could indeed be moved from faith and truth and be killed.⁶⁴ The true Church is the internal Church, which Brother Martin equated with the “horn of Christ” of Psalm 17. The Church is Christ’s horn just as Christ is the Church’s horn; Christ, the Church, and God share in one power, one horn, which understood tropologically is the faith of God, Christ and the Church, since faith is our victory,⁶⁵ the victory of the City of God.

Yet Christ does not reign visibly, or corporeally, in the visible, militant Church, even though the seat of judgment is his, as Brother Martin explained in his exposition of Psalm 121:5; the true king is the true possessor of the chairs of judgment, but he reigns, corporeally and visibly through his vicars, the priests and bishops. In the future, when all government and offices will cease, the true king will reign himself over all his subjects directly; now, though, he rules through his vicars externally, and through faith internally, for in this world the reign of Christ is through faith in the believer (*in nobis*).⁶⁶ Christ defends his Church, rendering it immovable and eternal, against Jews, heretics, and tyrants, who are not able to extinguish the faith of Christ’s Church, which is its foundation.⁶⁷ Thus the Church, according to the body, the visible, external aspect of the Church, is gathered into one as the waters of Psalm 32(33), so that it can be seen and known in a given place as the congregation of the saints, or the Church manifest, yet according to the spirit, or internally, the Church is found in its treasures, and treasures that are hidden; thus the Church is most fundamentally founded in invisibles, which cannot be seen, but only believed.⁶⁸ The spiritual, internal Church is hidden, whereas the visible Church according to the body (*caro*) is manifest.⁶⁹ Thus “the Gospel,

⁶² ... *quia semper Ecclesia est militans et triumphans in hac vita. – Hec vita est non nisi porta ad futuram.*
WA 3.85,27–28.

⁶³ WA 3.265,18–20.

⁶⁴ ... *non ideo Ecclesia commovebitur, scil. a fide et veritate, licet secundum corpus moveatur et occidatur.*
WA 3.265,23–25.

⁶⁵ WA 3.120,3–38.

⁶⁶ WA 4.403,29–404,18.

⁶⁷ WA 3.166,11–24.

⁶⁸ WA 3.184,1–30.

⁶⁹ WA 3.203,13–24.

which is the wisdom and power of God, establishes the Church," as Brother Martin explained in his *Lectures on Romans*.⁷⁰

As such, the Gospel must be preached, which is, according to the Brother Martin, the responsibility of the bishops, whose office itself is to preach, as he explained in a sermon on the feast of St Martin (11 November) in 1516.⁷¹ Brother Martin had taken for his text Luke 11:34, *Your eye is the lamp of your body*, and had explained that our eye is not only within us, but also outside us, for if we consider our eye to be completely our own, we do not recognize that God is the one who should direct our sight, which God does internally. The eye of God, therefore, should be what guides us, for if we allow ourselves to be guided by God's light, we will not stray from the path, whereby illumination comes internally from outside us and reveals the eye of sight.⁷² Thus tropologically our eye is literally our bishop and priest, who is not within us, but outside us, though is among us, and who is constituted by God. The Church, therefore, founded on the Gospel, has bishops as the shepherds leading the blind, for illuminating the faithful, and thus the bishop is most of all a preacher, though he himself, in and of himself, is blind, receiving sight from God.⁷³ Such sight makes understanding possible, and understanding of heavenly, eternal, spiritual, and invisible things is revealed by faith alone for the eye cannot see, nor the ear hear, nor can such enter the heart, for this is the wisdom and understanding that is hidden in mystery and in the covering of faith, which is to know the incarnate Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit, as Brother Martin explained in a marginal gloss on Psalm 31(32).⁷⁴ Wherefore, Brother Martin clarified in a marginal gloss on Psalm 47(48), "Outside the Church there is no true knowledge of God."⁷⁵

The true knowledge of God is internal, spiritual, hidden to the outside world, and is based on the faith of the illumined soul, forming the Church triumphant. Yet it is the corporeal, manifest, and militant Church that makes the internal, spiritual understanding possible through the preaching of the Gospel, God's Word as Christ, who himself reigns and directs his Church but does so manifestly through bishops and priests, though also internally in the souls of believers. Based on the relationship, the intimate relationship, between the hidden and manifest Church, or

⁷⁰ *Euangelium enim, quod est sapientia et virtus Dei, Ecclesiam constituit.* WA 56.165,26–27.

⁷¹ ... *hoc est enim officium Episcopi, praedicare.* WA 1.100,33.

⁷² WA 1.100,14–24.

⁷³ WA 1.100,25–35.

⁷⁴ WA 3.172,19–29.

⁷⁵ WA 3.268,37–38.

the triumphant and militant Church, bishops, priests, and all prelates are to be obeyed. Together the hidden and manifest Church is one, unified in the Gospel and a common affect and understanding. As Brother Martin argued in his *Lectures on Romans*, the Church makes attention to the perceptible realm obligatory, not though because the visible realm is in and of itself of importance, but because it makes possible the internal, invisible understanding, which the manifest Church cannot command or control. The external, visible Church can though and must provide the occasion for the internal, hidden, invisible understanding, which itself is not in the power of the external, visible Church.⁷⁶

Yet the internal illumination is not one that is strictly of the intellect in terms of the faculty of the soul. In his commentary on Psalm 118, Brother Martin explained that the illumination we receive from the Word is a “practical,” affective knowledge, for “being led by the light you are led through experience rightly in the way.”⁷⁷ Left on our own, we do not know the way, or even where we are, but “nevertheless my feet as if seeing a light, thus go certainly on the right way, for thus faith does not illumine the intellect, even more so, it blinds it, but faith illumines the affects, for faith leads the affective part of the soul, by which it is saved, and this happens through the hearing of the Word.”⁷⁸

Here we find Brother Martin not only adhering to his Order’s tradition of theology as affective knowledge in the tradition of Giles of Rome, but also see at work his “ways of thought” as discussed in [Chapter 4](#). The Word is heard externally, which as such cannot penetrate to the internal hearing of the Word, except by grace, whereby the internal, spiritual man receives the Word and even becomes the Word, brought into Being by his substantive form, Christ, the understanding of which comes from experience, which is faith. Thus the preaching of the Word is foundational, for without the preaching of the Gospel, even the spiritual man cannot hear the external Word that can become internal and is equated with faith, an experiential cognition and knowledge of the heart within the believer. Understanding Brother Martin’s ways of thought reveals his understanding of the Church in its manifest, or external, and hidden, or internal,

⁷⁶ WA 56.468.18–23

⁷⁷ ... iam velus educto lumine per experientiam duceris in via recte. WA 4.356.35–36. Luther continued: Multo enim illuminatiores sunt in fide practici quam speculativi, ut etiam philosophus dicit in metaphisicis, quod expertus certius operatur. WA 4.356.36–38.

⁷⁸ Ego quidem erro et nescio, ubi sim, et tamen pedes mei quasi viderent lumen, ita certo eunt rectam viam. Sic enim fides non intellectum illuminat, immo excecatur, sed affectum: hunc enim ducit quo salvetur, et hoc per auditum verbi. WA 4.356.22–25.

dimensions, which again he equated with the Church militant and the Church triumphant. Oberman's description of Luther's understanding of Church is thus correct with respect to the internal, hidden, invisible triumphant Church; Oberman, however, ignored the visible, manifest, militant Church that was central for Luther, and indeed, necessary for the internal hearing of the Word. Though Brother Martin distinguished between the juridical, jurisdictional, and administrative functions of the Church, and the spiritual, pastoral, and theological functions, they did intermix, for preaching, the sacraments, and religious life in general comprised as well the visible, militant Church, though the true triumphant Church was within the individual believer. At the apex of the visible, militant Church was the pope, in whose hands Christ had placed all his power. To dismiss, or ignore, the visible, militant Church from Luther's understanding of the Church, and thus claim that his understanding never changed throughout his life, is to misunderstand Brother Martin's early ecclesiology, and consequently, his early development.

Oberman was right, however, in his description of Luther's understanding of the Church as embattled. In glossing Psalm 24 (25), Brother Martin identified the psalm's "my enemies" with Jews, tyrants, heretics, and bad, or anti-Christians.⁷⁹ These are the enemies we find throughout his *Dictata* which are attacking the Church, for they comprise the "valley of death" of Psalm 22(23).⁸⁰ These are the enemies against whom Christ will protect his Church, ensuring that it will not fail or be moved. Yet, though the triumphant, invisible, hidden, and internal Church indeed cannot err and is impervious, the militant, manifest, visible, and external Church can be moved and even killed. It was not the Jews or even the infidels whom Brother Martin saw as the gravest threat, but the enemies from within, the *mali christiani*, or the anti-Christians, and the heretics, who endangered the militant Church itself. In his sermon of 15 February 1517 on the sower who goes out to sow seeds of Luke 8, Brother Martin divided Church history into three ages of persecution. The first was that of the persecution of tyrants; the second the persecution of the cunning wisdom of heretics; and the third and newest persecution was the persecution of the laziness and lukewarmness of hypocrites.⁸¹ Brother Martin though had already put forward this three-fold scheme in the preface to his *Dictata*: the Church,

⁷⁹ WA 3.142,19–25.

⁸⁰ WA 3.140,1–2; cf. WA 3.148,3–9; WA 3.643,6–7.

⁸¹ WA 1.136,17–20; cf. Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 250–271.

as Christ himself, is suffering the persecution of tyrants, heretics, and of impious Christians and princes of the Church.⁸²

Brother Martin viewed the priests and prelates (*pontifices*) of his day as looking for protection not in the invisible, spiritual realm of faith, but in the tabernacle of the devil, namely, in the visible manifest world.⁸³ In his exposition of Psalm 4, Brother Martin lamented that there are many in the Church today “who fight for their own ceremonies and are zealous for the vanity of external observance, prating forth and extolling their own great titles and are concerned only for their own character and appearance; they are the new and more obstinate hypocrites.”⁸⁴ In his sermon on the third commandment, preached to his congregation in Wittenberg in 1516, Brother Martin warned his flock that, although the Church cannot err, “anyone is able to err in his own devotion, since even many prophets, saints and similarly kings have erred, [which] for us is a warning and a terror.”⁸⁵ The prelates of the Church are the strength (*virtus*) of the Church, providing they devote their hearts to their office.⁸⁶ Few, however, did so, as it seemed to Brother Martin, for in his *Lectures on Romans* he castigated the clergy, and the higher clergy especially, for being concerned only with externals, and those “invaders” of the Church’s liberties, faculties, and laws, while not only leaving unpunished their own pomp, ambition, luxury, and bickering, but even cultivating it. Moreover, they allow unlearned, stupid, and inept men to become priests and bishops. Thus knowingly, they destroy the Church by promoting the worst sort of men, and thus are truly the instruments of Satan.⁸⁷ No wonder the Gospel wasn’t being preached, with the result that believers were wandering and straying from the truth, being caught up in the snares of the devil by focusing their attention on externals, on rites and practices, rather than on what those rites and practices signify and what they express. As he lamented in his sermon on the third commandment, the Gospel was being ignored, even as it was so closely associated with the eucharist itself,

⁸² WA 3.13,14–332.

⁸³ WA 3.150,27–151,4.

⁸⁴ *Usque hodie iste versus arguit plurimos in Ecclesia, qui certant pro suis ceremoniis et zelant pro vanitate observantie exterioris, loquuntur et iactantur titulos magnos et compunguntur in habitu et specie tantum, novi et multo pertinaciores hypocrite.* WA 3.61,15–18.

⁸⁵ ... *quilibet autem potest in sua devotione errare, Cum et multi prophetae, sancti, reges similiter erraverunt, nobis in monitionem et terrorem.* WA 1.444,18–19.

⁸⁶ *Et sic est verbum ad prelatos Ecclesie, ut cor suum ponant ad officia sua ... quia status prelatorum est ipsa virtus Ecclesie, ad quem maxime est cor et tota intentio adhibenda, quia eo salvo Ecclesia salva est et contra.* WA 3.269,28–33.

⁸⁷ WA 56.478,26–479,22.

so that Christ's words, *Do this in memory of me*, is as if he said: "Do not celebrate mass unless you preach the Gospel."⁸⁸ Yet the Gospel was rarely being preached, and the priests were at fault. The sheep were being abandoned. And Brother Martin lashed out against the abuse he saw.⁸⁹

What gave him the right to do so? What gave him the authority to chastise his colleagues, his fellow priests, and friars so? What gave him the permission to rebuke his superiors? He addressed these questions head on, even if not explicitly, when in his *Lectures on Romans*, after again bitterly criticizing bishops and priests, he asserted:

I beseech however that no one should imitate me in these matters which I speak urged by suffering and from the requirement of my office. For the application of the doctrine that is taught to life is the most important of all for understanding. Likewise, I carry out my office of teaching by apostolic authority. It is my task to address whatever I will see that has not turned out right, even with respect to the most sublime of issues.⁹⁰

One thing that can be said of Brother Martin, to use an American colloquialism, even if rather crude, but one that gets to the matter perhaps better than any other way of putting it: he had balls. Brother Martin was standing up and calling things as he saw fit, pointing out the errors and problems, without fear of whose skin he might be getting under. He did so with appeal to his apostolic authority. Here Brother Martin was appealing to his office as Doctor of the Holy Scriptures, but that was not all. He had begun his *Lectures on Romans* with asserting that the entire purpose of the letter was to expunge self-righteousness, asserting passive righteousness and the fact that all our righteousness comes from Christ and is not our own.⁹¹ "Surely many are found," Brother Martin explained,

who hold goods on the left, that is temporal goods, as nothing and seek well to wipe them out, on account of God, as the Jews and heretics. But those who want to consider goods on the right, that is spiritual goods and righteous works, as nothing on account of acquiring the righteousness of

⁸⁸ *Quotienscunque haec facietis, in meam memoriam facietis, q.d. Non celebrabitis missam, nisi praedicetis euangelium.* WA 1.444,35–36.

⁸⁹ WA 1.444,24–145,34.

⁹⁰ *Obscuro autem, ne [quis] me in istis imitetur, que dolore cogente et officio requirente loquor. Nam pro intelligentia valet plurimum Applicatio presentis vite ad doctrinam, que docetur. Simul quia autoritate Apostolica officio docendi fungor. Meum est dicere, quecunque videro non recta fieri, etiam in sublimioribus.* WA 56.480,3–7.

⁹¹ WA 56.157,2–159,24.

Christ, are few, for even the Jews and heretics are not able to do so. And yet unless this happens, no one will be saved.⁹²

He then turned to the text of Romans:

I do not believe that those to whom Paul wrote, whom he called beloved of God, those called, and saints, were such that because of the contentiousness among them it was necessary that the Apostle made himself their mediator and concluded that all are sinners. Even more so, because if they were Christians, they already knew this from faith. Rather, I believe that he wrote for the faithful that they might have the testimony of such a great Apostle of his own faith and doctrine against the Jews and the people of Rome who were still non-believers and gloried in the flesh against the humble wisdom of the faithful, among whom it was necessary for the believers to live and to hear things contrary to the faith and to talk about them amongst themselves ... Therefore we see in the text, which up until the line, "For the power of God is the Gospel, etc.," contains exemplary doctrines more than speculative, because it teaches in the first place by Paul's own example how any prelate ought to conduct himself with respect to his subjects.⁹³

Brother Martin then continued to discuss Paul's position as a servant of Jesus Christ and as an apostle.⁹⁴ An apostle, he explained, "is the supreme legate of God and the highest ranking angel of the Lord's army, that is of Jesus Christ's army."⁹⁵ Apostles are ministers of God, but not all ministers are apostles.⁹⁶ Moreover, there were three categories of apostles who do not deserve the title for they were not called. These are first the pseudo-apostles, who do the devil's work. Then there are those who came into their apostolate for ambition and their own gain, and of these there are a unique number in the Church today, he affirmed. And third, there are

⁹² *Inueniuntur Sane multi, qui sinistraria bona i.e. temporalia propter Deum nihil reputent et bene perducunt, ut Iudei et heretici. Sed qui dextraria i.e. bona spiritualia et opera iusta velint nihil reputare propter Christi Iustitiam acquirendam, pauci sunt. Hoc enim Iudei et heretici non possunt. Et tamen nisi fiat, nemo saluabitur.* WA 56.159,17–22.

⁹³ *Et ut ad Epistolam Veniamus, Non ego credo, Quod ii, ad q uos scribit, quos et dilectos Dei, Vocatos, sanctos appellat, tales fuerunt, Vt propter eorum contentionem necesse fuerit Apostolum se medium facere et concludere, quod omnes peccatores sint; Immo Si fuerunt Christiani, hoc iam ex fide cognouerunt. Id autem credo potius, Quod ad occasionem fidelium Scripserit, vt haberent tanti Apostoli testimonium sue fidei et doctrine contra Iudeos et Gentes Rome adhuc incredulos et in carne gloriantes contra humilem sapientiam fidelium, quos necesse tunc fuit inter eos conuersari et audire et loqui inuicem contraria ... Igitur textum Videamus, qui vsque ad illud "Virtus enim Dei est euangelium" etc. magis continet doctrinas exemplares quam speculatuas. Quia docet primo suo Exemplo, quomodo se equilibet prelatus habere debet erga subditos.* WA 56.159,25–160,14.

⁹⁴ WA 56.161,30–164,14.

⁹⁵ *Qui est supremus Legatus Dei et summus Angelus Domini exercituum i.e. Ihesu Christi.* WA 56.163,29–30.

⁹⁶ WA 56.162,32–34.

apostles, or those claiming themselves to be apostles, who entered into their office by force, or who were set up as apostles by force, and these, though not as bad as the pseudo-apostles, are worse than the second group, and indeed are the greatest danger of all.⁹⁷ None of these were called, and being called is the foundation of being an apostle. As such, Paul was set aside for the Gospel by God, to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, and thus given over entirely to preaching the Gospel, whereby other apostles may have been selected out by God for other works, Paul's apostleship was to preach and teach the Gospel.⁹⁸

In appealing to his own apostolic authority, Brother Martin was implicitly, even if not explicitly, associating himself with Paul, having been set aside by God to preach and teach the Gospel, for the Gospel was the power of God, and God's ministers, God's prelates, were the power of the Church. They must not be ashamed of the Gospel, and anyone who does not believe truly is ashamed of the Gospel. For prelates, being ashamed of the Gospel is being afraid or too weak to preach the truth.⁹⁹ The Gospel must be preached, and taught, by apostles to fight the forces of Satan in the pseudo-apostles, the ambitious, those seizing an apostolate, the Jews, the schismatics, and the heretics, and against unworthy priests and bishops. And this was what Brother Martin set as his task from his opening salvos in his *Lectures on Romans*.

The Gospel, though, for Brother Martin was not simply a matter of textual interpretation. Indeed, the Gospel could not be equated with any of the particular texts known as Gospels. After expositing Paul's office and salutary commentary, Brother Martin explained that "the 'Gospel' is not only what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote," but

the Gospel is the word of the incarnate, suffering, and glorified son of God. Therefore the Gospel of God is indeed what any apostle, whether Mathew or Thomas, wrote or taught with whatever words or languages. For the Gospel does not refer to a certain number of books or authors taught, since what all apostles teach is the same ... Nor is it necessary that the Gospel of Luke is understood to be the reference when Paul said: "according to my Gospel," as if Luke wrote what Paul preached, or that Luke wrote and Paul preaches. But he said "my" because he preached what was the word of God concerning His son, as he said here.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ WA 56.163,2–21.

⁹⁸ WA 56.164,15–165,15.

⁹⁹ WA 56.170,26–171,10.

¹⁰⁰ "Euangelium" non est solum, quod Mattheus, Marcus, Lucas, Iohannes Scripserunt ... Quia Expresse dicit, Quod Euangelium sit verbum de filio Dei incarnato et passo et glorificato. Hoc ergo quicumque siue Mattheus siue Thomas Scribat aut doceat, quibuscunque etiam verbis aut linguis, ipsum est

Here Brother Martin made the distinction between the Gospel and the written text, whereby the Gospel cannot be limited to the written text, but is as well the preached word of God. This was the foundation for his later position that works of God can be used as authority in place of scripture, thus, as Heiko Oberman put it, opening up the canon to continued revelation. Such an appeal must be certain, yet when it is, the acts of God, God's continued revelation, are as authoritative as the written text.¹⁰¹

How though could Brother Martin be certain of such? How could Brother Martin be certain he was teaching and preaching the Gospel, independently of a given biblical text? How could Brother Martin be certain he was teaching and preaching the Word of God not limited to, or "behind" the written words of scripture?

The answer to such questions we have already met in [Chapter 4](#) detailing Luther's "ways of thought." Faith, for Brother Martin, was an intuitive cognition, in the heart, without mediation, of Christ crucified, whereby Christ himself became the substantive form of the believer, and thus one's righteousness, all one's goods and virtues, were external, *extra nos*. The distinction between the external word and the internal word Brother Martin had already made in his notes on Lombard's *Sentences*, and in his *Dictata* had claimed that "substance" is external, whereby the rich man is rich by riches, and consequently the Christian man is Christian by Christ. Likewise, the Gospel is the internal word that is heard in the external preaching of the Scriptures. The binaries internal/external and Gospel/Scripture are simply two binaries of Brother Martin's ways of thought that permeated his theological development. They are related as well to others, such as visible/invisible, Law/Gospel, letter/spirit, carnal/spiritual, and as we have already seen here above, the Church militant/Church triumphant and indeed his "two kingdoms" teaching in general, including the binary of philosophy/theology. Such binaries though are not opposites, placed in contradiction, at least not as such. While the law is opposed to the Gospel, many of the other binaries are complementary rather than oppositional. They do indeed form paradoxes,¹⁰² or at least seeming paradoxes, but the internal/external binary, like many of the others based thereon, is

Euangelium Dei. Non enim refert, quot libris aut quot auctoribus doceatur, cum idem sit, quod omnes docent . . . Nec illud necesse est de Euangelio Luce intelligere, quod ait: "Secundum Euangelium meum," quasi Lucas scripserit, quod Paulus predicauerit, aut quod ille Scripserit, hic predicauerit. Sed "meum" dicit, Quia ipse hoc predicauit, Quod erat uerbum Dei "de filio suo," ut hic dicit. WA 56.169,12–26.

¹⁰¹ Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, p. 59.

¹⁰² Jane E. Strohl, "Luther's Spiritual Journey." In McKim, *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, pp. 149–164.

rather “two sides of the same coin,” so to speak, and is related too to the distinction between sign and thing signified, which had already formed the basis for Lombard’s definition of a sacrament as a visible sign of an invisible grace, based on Augustine.¹⁰³ With his Ockhamist training in the *via moderna* at Erfurt, Brother Martin learned a cognitive understanding for distinguishing between sign and thing signified whereby signs do not have an ontological relationship with the things signified, but signify *ad placitum*, by convention, yet he still adhered to “a very standard, realist, semantics, which was in many respects similar to the semantic theories of his scholastic sources,”¹⁰⁴ which allowed for the holding together, even if paradoxical, of the binaries.

Though there was, for Brother Martin, no ontological relationship between a sign and the thing signified, such a relationship in many cases was more than convention. The bread and wine in the eucharist could not be substituted for other elements, yet they do not in and of themselves confer the grace received in the sacrament, which is based on faith, and the recognition given by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual understanding of invisible things, heavenly, spiritual things, comes from faith alone (*per solam fidem*) through the Holy Spirit, as Brother Martin explained in a marginal gloss on Psalm 31(32),¹⁰⁵ and it is this working of the Holy Spirit that gave certitude to one’s faith, known in one’s heart intuitively. Without such knowledge, or cognition, humans remain idolaters, for as Brother Martin preached on the first commandment to his congregation in Wittenberg, “all sons of Adam are idolaters” even if not by worshipping golden calves. Idolatry applies as well to those who worship the creature rather than the creator in fearing punishment and trusting in external rites. Thus religion is simply genuflecting to riches and honors, adoring God in the corporeal and carnal, remaining in the realm of externals until healed “by grace in the faith of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁶ Until such a healing is realized, religion, for Brother Martin, seems to be equated with those most pertinacious hypocrites who fight for their own external observance, ceremonies, and titles, zealous for their own righteousness, as he lashed out in his commentary on Psalm 4.¹⁰⁷ Yet were such rites and observances, fasts, rules, and prayers done away with by the pope – as the pope can, Brother Martin affirmed – and all were left in their own liberty to do as they pleased, all churches

¹⁰³ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, dist. 1, c. 2, vol. II, p. 232,3–7.

¹⁰⁴ White, *Luther as Nominalist*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁵ WA 3,171,31–172,29.

¹⁰⁶ WA 1,399,11–27.

¹⁰⁷ WA 3,61,14–19.

would be empty within a year.¹⁰⁸ Here, in his *Lectures on Romans*, Brother Martin was making direct reference to the religious, members of religious orders, having addressed the question of whether it was a good thing to become a monk,¹⁰⁹ but was also directing his comments against superstitious piety in general, which he was not willing to tolerate.¹¹⁰ The inner disposition, the love of Christ, is the true substance of religion, just as the internal faith is the true efficacy of the sacraments. Priests, therefore, “are not authors of the remission of sins, but ministers of the Word in the faith of the remission of sins,” as he asserted in thesis 23 of his *Disputation for Seeking the Truth and Consoling the Fearful Conscience* of 1518.¹¹¹ His thesis 42 asserts: “The sacraments of the new law are not efficacious signs of grace, which is sufficient in the recipient not putting up a barrier.”¹¹² Who receives the sacraments without faith, receives only fictions and receives the sacrament to his judgment, for unlike the sacraments of the old law, those of the new are not carnal, but are the justifications of the spirit.¹¹³ As he explained in his sermon on the virtue of excommunication of 16 May 1518,

The communion of the faithful is two-fold, one internal and spiritual, the other external and corporal. The spiritual communion is one faith, hope, and charity in God. The corporal communion is participation in the same sacraments, that is, participation in the signs of faith, hope, and charity, which nevertheless further extends to the communion of things, uses, conversation, custom, and other corporal interactions.¹¹⁴

And thus too the binary of the Church militant and Church triumphant, forming together the one Church, the one communion of the faithful, even if two-fold.

Such binaries at times were relations of signs and things signified but in a sacramental relation. Though there was no ontological relationship between the eucharistic elements and the internal efficacy of the sacrament, there was a sacramental relationship rendering the elements more

¹⁰⁸ WA 56.499,20–32.

¹⁰⁹ WA 56.497,18–498,12.

¹¹⁰ WA 56.499,10–15.

¹¹¹ WA 1.631,33–34.

¹¹² *Sacramenta nove legis non sic su ut efficacia gratie signa, quod satis sit in percipiendis non ponere obicem.* WA 1.632,33–34.

¹¹³ WA 1.632,34–39.

¹¹⁴ *Est autem fidelium communio duplex: una interna et spiritualis, alia externa et corporalis. Spiritualis est una fides, spes, charitas in deum. Corporalis est participatio earundum sacramentorum, id est signorum fidei, spei, charitatis, quae tamen ulterius extenditur usque ad communionem rerum, usus, colloquii, habitationis aliarumque corporalium conversationum.* WA 1.639,2–6.

than simply signs signifying by convention. And since the churches would be empty if all were left to one's own freedom, rules and requirements and rites are needed,¹¹⁵ to ensure the preaching of the Gospel, externally, so that the external word could have the opportunity for being understood internally by means of the internal Word and the working of the Holy Spirit, bringing into being the substantive form of the Christian, God's Word itself. Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms was not that of the reformer, but of the Augustinian hermit, Brother Martin Luther,¹¹⁶ evident already in his earliest works as his ways of thought, which were part and parcel of his nominalist training while he was yet still, as he later called himself looking back, an "archpapist."

That he certainly was not. Yet the pope and the papacy had a central role in Brother Martin's early ecclesiology. The pope could, Brother Martin asserted, do away with all rites and rules – *sicut potes!* As the recipient of Christ's power, the pope could do a great deal, even though Christ's vicars for Brother Martin were the priests and bishops, with the Gospel as the power of the Church. The problem was that the Church's prelates, the very ones who were supposed to be the Church's power and strength, were focused more on the visible, corporeal, carnal, and external aspects of their offices, rather than on the invisible, internal, ministerial, and spiritual. And at the base of it all, at the foundation of the focus on the externals, the carnal, the corporeal, was an unrecognized Pelagianism. Pelagianism, in the form of the dictum "to do what is in you" (*facere quod in se est*), was thoroughly subverting the Church.¹¹⁷ Yet, as he preached on the first commandment to his Wittenberg flock, today we have even worse than the Pelagians (*peius quam Pelagiani*)!¹¹⁸ The Gospel was not being preached and, by apostolic authority, Brother Martin assumed the prophetic role, based on the certitude of his faith and ways of thought, to set things right, if he only could, to combat the forces of Satan at work in the Church. Perhaps there was still hope, hope for reformation, but one that would have to be based on doctrine, not simply on practice. For such, the militant, external Church was central, and at its summit, as at the summit of the political realm one finds the emperor, was the pope.

The pope for Luther was an integral, foundational component of his understanding of Church. Yet the problem of authority remained. Brother

¹¹⁵ WA 56.499,24–26.

¹¹⁶ Cf. David Steinmetz, "Luther and the Two Kingdoms." In idem, *Luther in Context* (Bloomington, IN, 1986), pp. 112–125.

¹¹⁷ WA 56.502,14–503,12.

¹¹⁸ WA 1.426,22–427,14.

Martin may have based his certitude to speak out on his apostolic authority, but later, when the pope was no longer there to act as the spokesperson, or even mouthpiece, for Christ's words and Christ's reign, what, or who, was? The Church as Oberman described it was indeed part of Brother Martin's understanding, but only a part, and when such a significant part as the papacy was rejected, what did that mean for the concept itself? For Luther, from the beginning the Church was based on the divine, invisible truths of Christ, God's Word, that were to be preached, but without order, without unity, where was the authority to be found to fight the forces of Satan and sin?

This was Luther's dilemma in his later years, in the years after his break, represented by his "false brethren."¹¹⁹ Luther continued facing the question he faced at Worms: was he alone right? And he continued asserting his own understanding, based on his apostolic authority, as the true understanding of Christ's voice, of Christ's reign, and of Christ's church. Though Luther may have asserted the external and objective, and regardless of how he interpreted the lack of unity, the lack of agreement as the result of continued and increasing satanic machinations, were Christ's voice and Christ's reign now being exercised through Luther? If so, and even if he could assert that it was not his power, but that of Christ, had that not been the case as well with the pope previously in Luther's understanding? Had Brother Martin not appealed to the pope as the mouthpiece of Christ in opposition to false teaching? If we replace Luther's understanding of the pope with his own understanding of his own interpretation of the Gospel, do we not, in fact, get more or less the same understanding of Church? What made Luther's interpretation "right" and Zwingli's "wrong," in Luther's eyes, of the words: *hoc est corpus meum*? Was this the Bible interpreting itself? How did Luther believe that he spoke for the Gospel and Zwingli did not with respect to the interpretation of these words of Scripture? Was it not conflicting interpretations and the power struggles and the struggles of and for authority that led to the breakdown of Marburg and the League of Schmalkalden? The power of words (*vis verborum*) and the struggle for their interpretation was not simply a component of late medieval philosophical grammar, or a new grammar of theology; the power of words and the struggle for their interpretation – including the little word "is" – led to civil war, the crumbling of Christendom, and the emergence of early modern Europe, all of which

¹¹⁹ Mark U. Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford, CA, 1975).

came about precisely because the Bible did not, and could not, interpret itself! With good reason Luther could be seen as the “Pope of Wittenberg.”

The Problem of Indulgences

All this still lay in the future for Brother Martin as he ascended the pulpit to preach to his Wittenberg flock on 24 February 1517, yet again on the problems of indulgences. He had done so already the year before. On 27 July 1516, the tenth Sunday after Trinity, Brother Martin began by asserting that indulgences “are the merit itself of Christ and his saints and therefore are to be received with all reverence,” yet they have fallen subject to “the ministry of avarice.”¹²⁰ The true understanding of indulgences are not being taught; they are simply being proclaimed and people are urged to give their money to acquire them, being thus left in their ignorance.¹²¹ Indulgences do not, Brother Martin affirmed, confer grace, but only the forgiveness of punishment and imposed satisfaction and it is foolishness to believe that plenary indulgences forgive all sin.¹²² It should be known, he continued, that the grace of indulgences is two-fold, namely, the grace of the forgiveness of punishment or imposed satisfaction, and infused grace, or in other words, external and internal grace. The forgiveness of temporal punishment imposed by a priest, or remaining to be worked out in purgatory, has nothing to do with lessening concupiscence or the sickness of the soul, nor does it increase love or any other interior virtue, which is the real point as without internal healing and virtue no one can enter the Kingdom of God, for flesh and blood will not possess the Kingdom of God. No one knows how much time in purgatory might be needed for this, nor does the pope have the authority to lessen time in purgatory, except by the application of the intercession of the entire Church.¹²³ It is absurd to claim that the pope can free souls from purgatory, for if this were possible, the pope would be cruel not to do so freely rather than charging a fee to enrich the Church.¹²⁴ Such external forgiveness, however, has nothing to do with the internal infusion of the grace of forgiveness, which “is an interior illumination of the mind and an inflammation of the will, which is an eternal emanation, just as the rays of the

¹²⁰ *De indulgentiis: quae profecto, etsi sint ipsum meritum Christi et sanctorum eius ideoque omni reverentia suscipiendae, tamen teterrimum factae sunt ministerium avaritiae.* WA 1.65,9–11.

¹²¹ WA 1.65,11–17.

¹²² WA 1.65,18–23.

¹²³ WA 1.65,24–33.

¹²⁴ WA 1.66,1–9.

sun, in the soul, which does not cease on account of a plenary external indulgence.”¹²⁵ This internal infusion of grace is what cures concupiscence, which is a cure that must continue until death.¹²⁶ The pope, moreover, has no authority, or power, over the internal realm, even though, Brother Martin asserted, as much as he was able, that “all the works and merits of Christ and his Church are in the hands of the pope,”¹²⁷ which the pope applies in a three-fold manner: first as satisfaction; second, as a help; and third as vows or sacrifices of praise.¹²⁸ With respect to satisfaction, the pope offers indulgences, which he grants to the living, whereby a sinner can ask the Holy Father to order the works and prayers of the Church for his sins, and then all celebrating masses, praying, fasting, working and all engaged in other activities pleasing to God do so for your sins, and thus penance and satisfaction is done away with for you, and this is a plenary indulgence.¹²⁹ Yet such a plenary indulgence does not suffice for you, because you still need the internal, infused healing grace.¹³⁰ Thus the pope acts as an intermediary and intercessor, not having the power or authority to cure the souls of the living, and with respect to souls in purgatory, has no power or authority over them either, and thus it is not really proper to call indulgences granted by the pope indulgences, for it is not the pope, but God who forgives and frees. Yet God will not spurn the prayers of his Church, when Christ prays with it, and thus prayers and petitions offered by the pope and the Church, together with Christ, are truly efficacious indeed, and such indulgences are certainly most useful to be granted and received.¹³¹ This is the proper and true understanding of indulgences that Brother Martin strove to teach his congregation.

Yet the problem did not go away. A few months later, on 31 October 1516, Brother Martin again preached against indulgences, this time in a sermon treating Zacheus on the text of Luke 19:8.¹³² Brother Martin began by noting that Christ is either something (*aliquid*) or nothing (*nihil*), and to those for whom Christ is something, everything else is nothing, and likewise to those for whom Christ is nothing, everything else is grandiose.¹³³

¹²⁵ *Infusio est interior illuminatio mentis et inflammatio voluntatis, quae est aeterna emanatio, sicut radii solis, in animam, nec cessat propter plenariam remissionem.* WA 1.66,9–11.

¹²⁶ WA 1.66,11–15.

¹²⁷ *Sed concordemus, quantum possumus: omnia opera et merita Christi et Ecclesiae sunt in manu Papae* ... WA 1.67,31–32.

¹²⁸ WA 1.67,33–36.

¹²⁹ WA 1.67,36–68,2.

¹³⁰ WA 1.68,2–8.

¹³¹ WA 1.68,8–69,2.

¹³² WA 1.94,7–99,28.

¹³³ WA 1.94,8–9.

Zacheus reveals to us what it is to want to see Jesus and who he was. There are though two ways one wants to see Jesus. The first is to want to see Jesus in seeking one's own righteousness. The other, as for Zacheus, is wanting to see what Jesus is since Zacheus knew that he himself was a sinner, and thus as nothing. Yet Zacheus did not want to be seen by Jesus. He thus hid himself just to see Jesus as he was passing by. Yet Jesus stopped and saw Zacheus, and addressed him, telling him he was coming to his house. Zacheus was rather taken aback, because though he wanted to see Jesus, he did not want to be seen by Jesus and thus though he wanted to seek Jesus out, he also did not want to seek Jesus out. This is the spiritual way of wanting to see Jesus, for thus "God is sought while He is not sought, praised while He is not praised, loved while He is not loved, beseeched while He is not beseeched, has one knocking on His door while no one is knocking, while one is fleeing Him, one is running to Him. See all these most wondrously in Zacheus."¹³⁴ This is truly wanting to see Christ, for otherwise, one is only seeking Christ to prove one's own righteousness and goodness, using Christ as a witness thereof. This tension between wanting Christ and not wanting Christ reveals the innermost prayer, which is deeper within us than our thoughts. This is true prayer, which God can hear, though humans cannot, for "God listens to that depth of desire of our inner most heart, which is above all thought."¹³⁵ Therefore God only asks about what is in the interior and heart of man, so that someone who does and gives all things without doing so from his heart accomplishes nothing. Thus it was faith that distinguished Abel from Cain, for faith is in the depth of the heart. Consequently, all offerings offered without one's heart are vain and lies, through which we glorify ourselves. Not living from the depths of one's heart, one always errs, is angry, lacks rest, seeks vanity, loves lies and mistakes confusion with glory.¹³⁶ Christ therefore is the one who reveals our contradictions, which not even our heart recognizes, unless Christ reveals it to us.¹³⁷ Zacheus knew he was not worthy of keeping company with Christ, and thus hid himself, yet Christ revealed the depth of his heart's desires, which he dared not desire, for he was not worthy of such desire.¹³⁸ Yet

¹³⁴ *Sic autem Deus quaeritur dum non quaeritur, laudatur dum non laudatur, diligitur dum non diligitur, petitur dum non petitur, pulsatur dum non pulsatur, dum fugitur ab eo curritur ad eum. Quae omnia in Zachaeo vide mirabilissime.* WA 1.95,27–30.

¹³⁵ *Sed Deus illum intimi cordis fundum desiderii, quod est supra omnem cogitationem, exaudit.* WA 1.95,35–36.

¹³⁶ WA 1.96,9–26.

¹³⁷ WA 1.97,4–28.

¹³⁸ WA 1.97,29–40.

this is the right heart, these are the interior depths of man. Wherefore Christ says: Today health is achieved for this house by God; here, here is a righteous one, because this is my house ... And thus through this one example Christ wanted to heal all from their mortal illness, although there are those who heaped abuse on this sort of medicine, wherefore he concluded: for the son of man came to seek out and to save what had been dead. He did not come to glorify those already righteous and saved; he wanted that those be offended, not so that they might fall, but so that they might come to recognize themselves since they were full of self glory and self love.¹³⁹

Self-glory and self-love are the sickness which every one suffers until the end of the world, unless healed by grace, for otherwise, one seeks only one's own good, even in seeking Christ.¹⁴⁰ This vice, Brother Martin then asserted, "reigns most strongly of all in our own time when the people, who ought to be led out of that vice, are led into it by seducers, fabricators, etc. Such are those who preach indulgences."¹⁴¹ Though the pope's intention is right and good, based on what he has written, there is much confusion, for penance is two-fold, consisting of the sign and the thing itself. The thing itself is that interior penance of the heart, which is alone true penance. The sign is exterior penance, which usually simply covers up a fictitious internal penance. Indulgences only concern the private satisfactions imposed by priests, and thus frequently work against true inner penance, for true interior penance is true contrition, true confession, and true satisfaction in the spirit. When a penitent is truly and most purely displeased with himself in all things he has done, and efficaciously converts to God and acknowledges his guilt and confesses to God in his heart, then through his hating of himself, he punishes and puts himself to death internally, he therefore satisfies God. For a true penitent wishes, if it were able to come about, that all creation would see his sin and hate it, and is prepared to be crushed under foot by all. He does not seek indulgences and forgiveness of punishments, but the imposition of punishments. Yet fear of punishments and self-love is the perversion that is most frequent, which actually hates the righteousness of God and loves one's own

¹³⁹ *Hoc est rectum cor, haec sunt interiora hominis. Unde dicit Christus: Hodie salus huic domui facta est a Deo, hinc hinc iustus, quia haec est domus mea ... Et sic per unius Exemplum voluit omnes a morbo sanare, licet illi abusi sint medicina huiusmodi, unde et concludit: Venit enim filius hominis quaerere et salvum facere, quod perierat. Non venit florificare iam iustos et salvos: voluit ipse eos offendi non ut caderent, sed ut se ipsos agnoscerent, quoniam pleni erant gloria amore sui.* WA 1.97,40–98,11.

¹⁴⁰ WA 1.98,12–14.

¹⁴¹ *Regnat autem potissimum nostro tempore, ubi populus per seductores, fabulatores etc. in istud vitium ducitur, qui debuit potius reduci. Quales sunt qui indulgentias praedicant ...* WA 1.98,14–16.

righteousness, and thus seeks indulgences. True penance does not seek indulgences, but rather crosses.¹⁴²

Brother Martin started out with the story of Zacheus, to whom surely all in his congregation could relate. Then he focused on the issue of self-love and knowing Christ, turning then to the innermost depths of one's heart, where faith is, which only Christ knows, in keeping with his ways of thought and his binary of internal/external, visible/invisible. Then, almost surreptitiously, he brought up penance and thus indulgences, and discussed in what true penance consisted, striving to teach his hearers that preachers of indulgences are leading them astray. True penance, in short, was Brother Martin's theology of the cross. It was, and is, a powerful sermon, yet Brother Martin's congregation still did not get it.

A few months thereafter, on 24 February 1517, just as the Fifth Lateran Council was about to wrap up its business and close, doing so with a decree on preaching the Gospel, Brother Martin again took up indulgences to conclude his series of sermons on the Ten Commandments.¹⁴³ The occasion was the Feast of St Matthew and Brother Martin took his text from Matthew 11:25: *You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and have revealed them to the little ones.* "Man," Brother Martin began, "hides his own things so that he might deny them; God hides his own things so that he might reveal them ... Two things are to be asked here: Who are the wise and understanding from whom those things are hidden? And the second, what are those things that are hidden?"¹⁴⁴ The wise and understanding here being referred to, Brother Martin explained, are those who want to see themselves as such, but are not, whereas the little ones are those who do not see themselves as wise but as foolish and lacking wisdom and understanding, seeing themselves as completely empty and knowing nothing at all.¹⁴⁵ What is hidden are Christ himself and God the Father, for as Christ said,

All things are handed over to me from my father and no one knows the Son except the Father, neither does anyone know the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son wishes to reveal it. The cognition of God and of Christ, therefore, of the Father and of the Son, are hidden, in which the wise and saints puff themselves up most of all, just as John said: and they

¹⁴² WA 1.98,37–99,17.

¹⁴³ WA 1.138,12–141,38.

¹⁴⁴ *Abscondisti ea sapientibus et intelligentibus et revelasti parvulis, Matth. 11. Homo abscondit sua ut neget, Deus abscondit sua ut revelet ... Duo hic quaeruntur: Quid sint sapientes et intelligentes, quibus absconduntur ista? Alterum quae sint illa abscondita?* WA 1.138,12–19.

¹⁴⁵ WA 1.138,20–31.

make these things for themselves (in killing you they think they are presenting themselves in obedience to God), because they know neither the Father nor me [John 16:3]. Therefore they think they are showing their obedience to God, because they are wise and intelligent, not as the little ones, and therefore the wise, because these things are hidden from them, know neither the Father nor the Son.¹⁴⁶

What, therefore, Brother Martin asked, are the knowledge of God, true wisdom, righteousness, truth, and virtue? They are not in us, he clarified, but are outside us (*extra nos*), in Christ, in God. Thus we are made as the little ones, foolish, sinners, liars, sick, and vain, while all things are given by Christ. All our knowledge is nothing, except what is revealed to us by God and God's Son,¹⁴⁷ a revelation that comes from outside us, externally, penetrating to the innermost hidden depths of our hearts, known only to God.

All our knowledge, our righteousness, comes from Christ and is Christ's, not our own, and our efforts to achieve such are vain. Striving to understand, to know, striving to be righteous and wise will never ease our consciences, and will never provide satisfaction for our sins, and such attempts are simply building a house of straw.¹⁴⁸ All our works and attempts to be righteous and to make satisfaction for our sins, our attempts to purge our sins, are not a horror of sin, but are a horror of the punishments of sin. Yet to come to Christ and to leave oneself completely "is a great cross" to bear, for sin remains and the punishment of our conscience remains, regardless of how much satisfaction we make, regardless of how much we work to make ourselves just, which is a servile righteousness.¹⁴⁹

This is then where Brother Martin launched into an attack on indulgences: "The spreading of those indulgences," he argued,

simply bring to perfection this servile righteousness, which accomplish nothing except that the people learn to fear, to flee, and to be terrified of the punishment of their sins, not though of the sin itself. Therefore the fruits of indulgences are felt to be small while they produce a great security

¹⁴⁶ *Ad secundum respondetur quod ista abscondita sint ipse Christus et Deus Pater. Sed statim ipse resolvere dicens: Omnia mihi tradita sunt a Patre meo et nemo novit filium nisi Pater neque Patrem quis novit nisi Filius et cui Filius voluerit revelare. Igitur cognitio Dei et Christi, Patris et Filii, haec sunt abscondita, in quae impingunt maxime sapientes et sancti, Sicut dicit Iohannes: Et haec facient vobis (occidendo arbitraturi se obsequium praestare Deo), quia non noverunt Patrem neque me. Ideo enim arbitrantur se obsequium praestare Deo, quia sunt sapientes et intelligentes, non parvuli. Ideo autem sapientes, quia haec abscondita, nec Patrem nec Filium cognoscunt.* WA 1.139,25–33.

¹⁴⁷ WA 1.139,33–140,7.

¹⁴⁸ WA 1.140,8–26.

¹⁴⁹ WA 1.140,27–141,21.

and licenses for sinning. Thus no one would want to obtain those indulgences even free of cost if they did not fear the punishment of sins. People rather should be exhorted that punishment of sin should be loved and the cross embraced.¹⁵⁰

Indulgences, rather than offering freedom from sin and punishment, actually increase sin by giving it license, and thereby make empty Christ's cross.¹⁵¹ If indulgences are to be allowed at all, they are only for the meek and humble, for the infirm, given in faith, and not to scandalize those needing to be humbled in coming to the cross, for meekness is only found in punishment and in the cross, whereas indulgences give security and freedom from punishment, doing away with the cross, whereby no one will be meek or humble. This, Brother Martin exclaimed, "is the danger of our times. O the sleeping, snoring priests! O a darkness greater than the Egyptian! How we are secure in all our very worst evils!"¹⁵²

Something had to be done. The prelates of the Church were asleep, unaware, or ignoring the danger. They must be woken up. The people must be taught, and Brother Martin was doing his best. He had been trying. Beginning in 1516, he had been preaching on the Ten Commandments;¹⁵³ he had preached on the Lord's Prayer;¹⁵⁴ and he had preached repeatedly against indulgences. Yet more was needed. It was not just abuses that were at issue. That had been known for a long time, and Brother Martin's critique of indulgences was in this sense not new at all. The issue was not religion, but doctrine, and doctrine was a matter for the university, for the professors of theology. Brother Martin's campaign against indulgences had been a pastoral endeavor, an attempt to teach his flock, yet he needed to deal with the matter on the academic level as well, on the level of doctrine. This issue should be brought to the faculty of theology. There should be discussion of the doctrine of indulgences, not just critique of the practice and how Germany was being fleeced by Rome, though that too was at issue. Especially in light of the new Wittenberg Augustinian theology, a theology of grace, a theology of love, a theology that penetrated the inner

¹⁵⁰ *Adhuc servilem iustitiam mire perficiunt ipsae effusiones indulgentiarum, quibus nihil agitur quam ut populus discat timere, fugere, horrere poenam peccatorum, non autem ita et peccata. Ideo parum sentitur fructus indulgentiarum, sed magna securitas et licentia peccandi. Ita sane ut, nisi timerent poenam peccatorum, nullus vellet optare gratis istas indulgentias, Cum potius populus ad poenam amandam esset exhortandus et crucem amplectendam.* WA 1.141,22–28.

¹⁵¹ WA 1.141,28–30.

¹⁵² *O pericula nostri temporis! O stertentes Sacerdotes! O tenebras plus quam Aegypticas! Quam securi sumus in omnibus pessimis malis nostris!* WA 1.141,37–38.

¹⁵³ WA 1.398–521.

¹⁵⁴ WA 1.89–94.

core of the believer – and the anthropological function of the heart, the *cor*, was as fundamental for the theology of Augustine as it was becoming for that of one of his late medieval sons, Brother Martin – a theology that dealt not with the intellect, but with the affects, as it had been developed by Giles of Rome, an anti-Pelagian theology that stood opposed to all attempts at self-justification, this theology should be the basis for critiquing indulgences, a theology that focused on the internal, hidden, invisible, spiritual nature of humans and their God and savior, hidden to the wise, of which the externals, the realm of the visible, served at best as a sign, but could well be perverted, and believers were being led astray by the workings of the devil and his pseudo-apostles, indulgences, not just the practice, but the doctrine behind them as well, should be discussed, should be investigated, should be debated. Christians had to be taught.

When Brother Martin posted the ninety-five theses of his *Disputation for the Declaration of the Power of Indulgences* to the door of the Wittenberg Church on 31 October 1517, he, unknowingly, began the final stage of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages.¹⁵⁵ It was to be an academic debate, discussion, and investigation of the efficacy of indulgences, and the Latin theses were based to a large extent on Brother Martin's previous preaching against indulgences, and his biblical commentaries. Brother Martin repeatedly and consistently asserted that his intent was not to attack the pope, claiming on 30 May 1518 in his letter to Staupitz accompanying his *Explanations of his Ninety-Five Theses*, and beseeching Staupitz to send the work along to Pope Leo X, that “for thus the slickest men, taught by the most crass shrewdness, since they are not able to deny those things that I have said, conjure that the power of the Highest Pontiff has been injured by my disputations.”¹⁵⁶ His *Explanations* themselves were prefaced with his letter to Leo X, already cited, in which Brother Martin prostrated himself at Leo's feet, offering all he had and all of himself, recognizing Leo's judgment to be the voice of Christ speaking through Leo.¹⁵⁷

Yet despite Brother Martin's protestations, his theses were certainly read as implicitly, if not explicitly, denying and limiting papal power, to the extent that Johannes Eck claimed that Luther's theses threatened to “confound the entire order of the Ecclesiastical hierarchy,”¹⁵⁸ and twice made

¹⁵⁵ *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*, WA 1.233–238.

¹⁵⁶ *Sic enim suavissimi homines, crassissima astutia instructi, cum negare non possint ea, quae dixi, fingunt Summi Pontificis potestatem laedi mei disputationibus*. WA 1.526,30–32.

¹⁵⁷ WA 1.529,22–25.

¹⁵⁸ WA 1.295,27–28.

allusions to the Hussite nature of Brother Martin's positions.¹⁵⁹ Within five months of the posting of the theses, the debate was no longer over indulgences as such, and certainly was not over the doctrine of justification. The controversy turned on the central pin of papal power.

When Eck wrote his *Obelisci* in early 1518 refuting Brother Martin's theses, the theses had already come under critique and suspicion. Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz had received a copy of the *Theses* and had turned them over to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Mainz for an opinion.¹⁶⁰ The University rendered its judgment on 17 December 1517, stating that the theses, or some of them, did limit papal power, but since it was not permitted to judge or debate issues of papal power, they could not, or would not, render a clear verdict. The *Theses* were then sent on to Rome, with Pope Leo receiving a copy in early 1518.¹⁶¹ The Dominican Johannes Tetzel, who had been preaching the indulgence in the region, issued counter-theses on 20 January 1519 at the meeting of the Saxon Dominicans, though the rebuttal, consisting of 106 theses, had been composed by Conrad Wimpina of the University of Frankfurt. By March, a copy of these theses had reached Wittenberg. Students responded with a public burning of the theses in the marketplace. Though Brother Martin did not approve of the actions,

several days later he published in German *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*, which was designed to explain his position on indulgences in a way better suited for public consumption than the *Ninety-Five Theses* had been. Luther did not mention papal authority in the treatise but concentrated on refuting the opinion of the new scholastic doctors.¹⁶²

At about the same time, Brother Martin received a copy of Eck's *Obelisci*, which had been published in early 1518, though Luther did not receive a copy until after the first week of March. Brother Martin's reply, his *Asterisci*, was completed by the 24th. To thesis 25: "Such power the Pope has with respect to purgatory in a general sense, every bishop and parish priest has with respect to his own dioceses or parish church in a specific sense,"¹⁶³ Eck noted: "A frivolous proposition, throwing into confusion the

¹⁵⁹ WA 1.302,14–16; 305,6–7.

¹⁶⁰ Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy*, 33.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 34–35.

¹⁶³ Thesis 25: *Qualem potestatem habet papa in purgatorium generaliter, talem habet quilibet Episcopus et Curatus in sua diocesi et parochia specialiter.* WA 1.234,25–26.

entire order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is able to be disproved on many grounds.”¹⁶⁴ Brother Martin took offense:

Thus nevertheless, as the grounds are Eck’s, that is, not scholastic. But who would bear such insidious and harsh rashness of such manifest weakness and ignorance? The insolence and presumption daily conquers patience. He judges everything and understands nothing. I, with the universal Church, deny that papal power with respect to the keys extends to Purgatory, as is evident from the previous theses and clearly shown in the following, which that obelisk should consider.¹⁶⁵

In thesis 26, Brother Martin had explicitly denied that the pope possessed the power of the keys: “The Pope does well indeed that he gives forgiveness to souls, not by the power of the keys (which he does not have), but by means of intercession.”¹⁶⁶ It is questionable whether this would have cleared matters up for Eck, or whether he would have accepted Brother Martin’s position that the pope does not have the power of the keys, or that such power at least does not extend to purgatory. Brother Martin tried to explain:

But Eck, with a furious mind thinking evil of me, would want to be able to incite the entire Church to hate me, and to do so with his falsehoods and lies. Who would believe that such virulence could be had from a theologian? Therefore I said that the powers are “similar.” I did not say that a bishop and a curate have “equal” power as the pope does over purgatory, because they do not have the jurisdiction of the keys there or the power of law, but rather the power of men, not of commanding, but of working. This is that the pope is able to intercede for the souls in purgatory by the beseeching and prayer of the entire Church in general, and this a bishop is able to do in a special sense with respect to his own dioceses and a curate with respect to his own parish, just as in the day of souls, in common days and in offerings for the dead. And certainly it was not my intent that they would be tricked by that word “power” in this thesis of mine. Yet it would be nice if by such rash judgment they themselves would be mocked sufficiently that they might learn and then with fear and without

¹⁶⁴ *Frivola Propositio, totum ordinem Hierarchiae ecclesiasticae confundens, quae ex multis fundamentis reprobari potest.* Eck, *Obeliscus XI*, WA 1.295,27–28.

¹⁶⁵ *Sic tamen, ut fundamenta sint Eckiana, idest, non scholastica. Quis vero tam pertinacem et assiduam temeritatem ferat tam insignis inertiae et inscitiae? Vincit patientiam diuturna insolentia et praesumptio. Omnia iudicat, intelligit nulla. Ego cum universa Ecclesia nego esse clavibus in Purgatorium potestatem, sicut ex praecedentibus et clare ex proxima sequenti Positione patet, Quod debuit obeliscus ille advertere.* WA 1.295,30–35.

¹⁶⁶ Thesis 26: *Optime facit papa, quod non potestate clavis (quam nullam habet) sed per modum suffragii dat animabus remissionem.* WA 1.234,27–28.

foreign haughtiness treat these matters and to learn before they teach, and to listen before they judge.¹⁶⁷

Brother Martin here was reacting to Eck's claim that his thesis was "frivolous" and undermined the entire hierarchy of the Church, yet it seems that he responded to all his opponents at that time, switching from the singular to the plural at the end. Brother Martin was feeling attacked, and attacked unfairly. One can only wonder whether such virulence was to be found in Eck's dismissal, or in Brother Martin's response. Moreover, it is questionable whether Eck had indeed misunderstood Brother Martin's position. What was the issue for Eck? Why did he claim that Luther's thesis threw the entire hierarchy into confusion?

Eck did not respond to Brother Martin's *Asterici*, though the two would meet in Leipzig the following year, when the issue of papal power would again come to the fore. Yet Eck had a point, at least based on the hierocratic theory as it had developed from James of Viterbo, Giles of Rome, and Augustinus of Ancona. To claim that the pope can intercede for souls in purgatory as a bishop can for his own dioceses and as a curate can for his own parish was, in Eck's view, perhaps, simply stating the obvious, and thus rather "frivolous." The point though was one of jurisdiction. Whether the pope's jurisdiction extended to souls in purgatory could be debated, Brother Martin limiting the pope's power over souls in purgatory to one of intercession and then likening, even if not equating, that power with a bishop's or a parish priest's was not clear with respect to the extent of papal jurisdiction. To claim that a bishop or a parish priest could intercede for the souls of their flock was likewise "frivolous," stating the obvious. The confusion came in regarding the hierarchy of jurisdiction, whereby the pope, in hierocratic theory, had jurisdiction over the entire Church, including dioceses and parishes. A bishop's or a curate's power of jurisdiction came from the pope, who had received his jurisdiction of the universal Church directly from Christ. As Brother Martin himself explained it, the pope did not have jurisdiction over souls in purgatory,

¹⁶⁷ *Sed Eckius furiosa mente mihi malum cogitans, vellet, ut totam Ecclesiam in odium mei concitare posset, atque id non nisi falsis et a se conceptis mendaciis. Quid crederet esse tantam virulentiam in Theologo. Igitur ego dixi similem esse potestatem, non dixi tantam Episcopo et Curato cum Papa in Purgatorium, Non quod Jurisdictionem clavium ibi haberent aut potestatem Iurium, sed potestatem virium potius, Non imperandi, sed operandi. Hoc est, quod Papa potest generali totius Ecclesiae suffragio et oratione pro eis intercedere, hoc Episcopus potest speciali suae diocesis et Curatus saue parochiae, sicut fit in die animarum, in diebus communibus et in parentationibus. Et non erat quidem votum meum, ut isto verbo "potestas" in hac Positione mea illi luderentur. Placet tament ita contigisse temerariis iudicibus, ut seipos irriserint, ut discant deinceps cum timore ac sine supercilio aliena tractare et discere antequam docere, audire antequam iudicent. WA 1.296,3-15.*

and thus what was the jurisdiction of bishops and priests aside from intercession? Was this not indeed putting the jurisdictional hierarchy of the entire Church into question? Brother Martin seems to have missed Eck's point, or simply not to have seen the point about the question of jurisdiction. Even with his explanation that he had not said "equal," but "similar," Eck's point remained.

Brother Martin offered a much longer explication of his thesis in his *Explanations*, which had been completed on 5 March 1518, shortly before he received a copy of Eck's *Obelisci*. Thesis 25 had already come under attack, as he asked his adversaries to bear such tortures as he suffers when he hears things preached in the Church of Christ that had never been written or decreed, as they have offered such blasphemies to make him worthy of a thousand deaths.¹⁶⁸ He did not though go more in depth into his intent than he did in his reply to Eck, explaining that the Pope's power with respect to purgatory was with respect to intercession (*per modum suffragii*), and explicitly noted that he was not treating the power of jurisdiction (*potestas jurisdictionis*), though he would do so, by denying it with respect to purgatory, in the following thesis, namely, thesis 26.¹⁶⁹ This could, however, help explain his strong reaction to Eck's dismissal of thesis 25 as "frivolous," namely, it had already been a point of contention and Eck had touched on a sore spot.

Brother Martin spent much more time on explicating thesis 26, which concerned the power of the keys and the extent to which the pope, by the power of the keys, had jurisdiction over purgatory, which Luther denied.¹⁷⁰ He began by addressing Hostiensis's point that if the pope could empty purgatory, but did not do so, he would be cruel and addressed the explanation of his opponents that the pope can do so, but should not do so lest he act rashly against divine righteousness.¹⁷¹ Augustine of Ancona had argued the same, but explained his answer by making a distinction within the keys between the key of power and the key of knowledge, and while the pope did have the key of power sufficient to empty purgatory, as possessing all the power of Christ, he did not have Christ's perfect knowledge and thus, lacking sufficient knowledge, dare not empty purgatory for if he were to do so, which he could, Augustine affirmed, he would err, not in the use, but in the abuse of his power.¹⁷² Brother Martin did not

¹⁶⁸ WA 1.572,27–34.

¹⁶⁹ WA 1.573,6–574,14.

¹⁷⁰ WA 1.574,26–29.

¹⁷¹ WA 1.574,31–35.

¹⁷² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 106–138.

refer to Augustinus and seems to have been unaware of his work. Nor did Brother Martin mention the key of knowledge. Rather, he argued that if the pope could empty purgatory, he should do so because it would be an act of charity and divine justice would never rebuke an act of charity.¹⁷³ His point was simply that the pope did not have the power over souls in purgatory aside from intercession, for though all merits and good works of living Christians are in the hands of the pope within the Church militant, the pope can apply such treasure by means of forgiving satisfactions imposed, by means of intercession for the dead, or for the praise and glory of God, but this is the same for every bishop with respect to his own dioceses.¹⁷⁴ The way though that the keys function in the hands of the pope Brother Martin admits he does not fully understand, for given that they do not extend to purgatory, but can be applied only for the living within the militant Church the keys of the Church would be worth nothing at all aside from what the Church does even without the keys.¹⁷⁵ Neither did the distinction, also made by Augustinus of Ancona, between the pope as pope and the pope as an individual,¹⁷⁶ make any difference for brother Martin, for, as he asserted,

What pleases or displeases the pope doesn't matter to me. He is a man just as everyone else: there have been many highest pontiffs, whom not only errors and vices, but even portents pleased. I hear the pope as pope, that is as he speaks in the canons and according to the canons. Otherwise I would be forced to say with those knowing Christ poorly that the horrific bloody deeds Julius II committed against the Christian people were certain benefices of a pious pastor gathered for the sheep of Christ.¹⁷⁷

Leo X scarcely would have been comforted by Brother Martin's explanation, nor by his assertion that the pope is a man who can err in faith and morals and it is for a council to determine matters of faith though councils have disagreed, as had been the case with the question of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin.¹⁷⁸ Even so, Brother Martin concluded his explanation of his thesis with a call for a general council

¹⁷³ WA 1.579,18–22.

¹⁷⁴ WA 1.580,8–19.

¹⁷⁵ WA 1.580,21–33.

¹⁷⁶ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 122–123.

¹⁷⁷ *Me nihil movet, quid placeat vel displiceat summo Pontifici. Homo est, sicut et caeteri: multi fuerunt summi pontifices, quibus non solum errores et vicia, sed etiam portenta placuerunt. Ego audio Papam ut papam, id est ut in Canonibus loquitur et secundum Canones loquitur, ne forte cogar cum quibusdam male Christum cognoscentibus dicere, quod Iulli Secundi horrenae caedes in Christianum populum fuerint quaedam beneficia pii pastoris in oves Christi collata.* WA 1.582,19–26.

¹⁷⁸ WA 1.582,35–583,12.

to determine the question of the extent of the pope's jurisdiction with respect to purgatory, for until such a determination is made, it is not heresy to disagree with the position of the pope, though he feared that "our age is not worthy to be given such a council, but rather we merit to be deluded by our works of error."¹⁷⁹

Did Brother Martin really think that Leo would agree? Did he think that Leo would see the problem and approve of his theses? Did he think he would accomplish anything with his praise of Leo personally in his explanation of thesis 25 while he called Rome a true Babylon, together perhaps with his prostrating prefatory letter?¹⁸⁰ Any hierocrat of the previous two hundred years would have read Brother Martin's *Explanations*, as the theses themselves, as a grave offense, as a frontal attack, an attack, though perhaps not equal to, dangerously close to being in the category of that of Marsilius of Padua, even if they might have agreed that indulgences cannot be applied to souls in purgatory, which had been a rather recent determination.

Leo was not moved, in any case, and in early summer of 1518, summoned Luther to Rome. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Brother Martin had, in fact, attacked the pope and the papacy, even if not by intent, and had done so with a rhetorical brashness and venom that far surpassed that of his opponents. Or perhaps it would be better to say that Brother Martin had not attacked the pope as he understood the papacy, but rather the false understanding of the pope's position and power that he felt was being advocated by his opponents, even though such an understanding was the current one and had been the traditional hierocratic position, and, from all we can tell, was the position in which Leo conceived of himself as the successor to Peter. It was no longer a debate, a question to be discussed and determined. This was a theological, political, ecclesiastical, and rhetorical war, and Brother Martin was not about to back down. And neither was Emperor Maximilian, who denounced Luther as a heretic to Leo on 5 August 1518. Too much was at stake, Christendom itself, to risk a rupture with Rome after the negotiations at the Fifth Lateran Council. This had to be quelled. The problem was, it wasn't.

With the publication of his theses and the first round of opposition from Tetzl and Eck, Brother Martin took his case to the people. It was no longer strictly an academic debate. In mid-March of 1518, Brother Martin

¹⁷⁹ *Sed timeo, nostrum saeculum non sit dignum donari nobis tale, sed potius ut operationibus erroris illudamur, sicut meruimus.* WA 1.584,17–19.

¹⁸⁰ WA 1.573,17–25.

published, in German, his *Sermon on Indulgence and Grace*, which he may have originally preached on the day he posted his theses.¹⁸¹ At the same time, during Lent of 1518, Brother Martin published, in German, his *A Short Explanation of the Ten Commandments*,¹⁸² and then in Latin *A Short Instruction for the Confession of Sins*.¹⁸³ On 17 March 1518, Brother Martin preached in German on John 9 and the man born blind,¹⁸⁴ explaining that “he, who does not see and acknowledge the hidden holiness of God is blind, and thus the blind man of this Gospel is only a figure of that other blindness, which is in the soul.”¹⁸⁵ Christ showed us this holiness on his cross, and this is so holy that it cannot be contained in monstrances.¹⁸⁶ The heart is the true monstrance. Therefore seek God not in wood, or gold, or silver, but in the holiness of Christ’s cross: “oh you poor Christ, o you impoverished St Peter, do you not have any other inheritance than wood, stone, silver and gold, that you are the most needy of all?”¹⁸⁷ At the same time Brother Martin preached, also in German, on the raising of Lazarus of John 11,¹⁸⁸ and warned that Peter’s holiness came from his confession of Christ for, directly thereafter, he fell into hell with Jesus’s rebuke, *Get behind me Satan*.¹⁸⁹ In January 1519, he published his *A Short Instruction on How one should Confess* in German.¹⁹⁰ In February appeared in German his *Lesson on Valid Articles Assigned and Ascribed to Him by his Detractors*,¹⁹¹ in which he treated the saints, purgatory, indulgences, the commands of the Church, good works, and the Roman Church. In April appeared his *German Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer for the Simple Laity*,¹⁹² as well as his sermon in German on the Passion of Christ.¹⁹³ Brother Martin was seeking to teach as pastor and professor, going beyond the walls of the classroom, following in the footsteps of his fourteenth-century Augustinian confrères, such as Jordan of Quedlinburg and his *Exposition of the Lord’s*

¹⁸¹ WA 1.239–246.

¹⁸² WA 1.247–256.

¹⁸³ WA 1.257–265.

¹⁸⁴ WA 1.267–273.

¹⁸⁵ “Der da nicht sihet und erkennt Gottes verborgen heiligkeit, der is blind. Und darumb dieser in diesem Evangelio ist allein ein figur der andern blindheit, die in der seelen geschicht.” WA 1.269,24–27.

¹⁸⁶ WA 1.271,1–9.

¹⁸⁷ “O du armer Christus, o du elender sanct Peter, hastu kein ander Erbteil, denn holtz, stein, silber und gold, so bistu der aller dürfftigist.” WA 1.271,38–40.

¹⁸⁸ WA 1.273–277.

¹⁸⁹ WA 1.276,35–40.

¹⁹⁰ WA 2.59–65.

¹⁹¹ WA 2.66–73.

¹⁹² WA 2.74–130.

¹⁹³ WA 2.131–142.

Prayer and Meditations on the Passion of Christ,¹⁹⁴ a part of the late medieval catechetical endeavor of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages.

In his *Lessons on Valid Articles*, Brother Martin taught his flock that the commands of God are to be followed above the commands of the Church. The commands of the Church are to be followed, but one must distinguish between the Church's commands, and God's, and if there is a conflict, one must obey God's commands before those of the Church, which he explained was the basis for his opponents to claim that he had attacked the papacy. Yet the Church's commands are human commands, such as fasting on Friday, which have obscured God's commands, which perhaps a Council could again reveal,¹⁹⁵ for when "God's commands remain, then are the Church's commands nothing other than a shameful covering and though they make a good appearance externally, internally there is nothing good in them."¹⁹⁶ The pope, though, should by all means be obeyed, for the Roman seat has been honored by God above all others, having given its blood, from St Peter and St Paul and forty-six popes, and a hundred thousand martyrs, to conquer hell and the world. Whether the state of the Roman Church today, though, is similar one cannot really say, though there is no reason to tear or separate oneself from the Church. Scholars should be the ones to discuss the power of the Roman seat, with the confidence that Christ will not allow his Church to be wounded in its internal foundation of love, humility, and unity.¹⁹⁷ Brother Martin's *Lessons* were in fact an epitome of his theology for the laity, an epitome of his German theology. Christians should be taught.

On 4 June 1518, Brother Martin had printed a copy of *A German Theology* by the fourteenth-century German mystic, Johannes Tauler, together with his own preface.¹⁹⁸ This was a work, Brother Martin explained, that, though perhaps simple in language, was rich in godly wisdom, to the point that he claimed "it is for me, after the Bible and St. Augustine, the book from which I have learned and continue to learn more than from any other what God, Christ, man, and all things are."¹⁹⁹ He heartily recommended it to his Wittenberg colleagues, thanking God

¹⁹⁴ See Saak, *Catechesis in the Later Middle Ages I*, pp. 18–30.

¹⁹⁵ *WA* 2.71,2–29.

¹⁹⁶ "Wan aber gottis gepot nach bleybt, szo is der kirchen gepot nit anders, dan eyn schedlicher schand deckel und macht aussen eyn guten scheyn, do inwendig nichts guts ist." *WA* 2.71,23–24.

¹⁹⁷ *WA* 2.72,31–73,21.

¹⁹⁸ *WA* 1.375–379.

¹⁹⁹ "... ist myr nehst der Biblien und S. Augustino nit vorkommen eyn buch, dar auss ich mehr erlernt hab und will, was got, Christus, mensch und alle ding syn." *WA* 1.378,21–23.

that in the German tongue I can hear and find my God in this book in a way that I, and you together with me, have not found previously in works in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. May God grant that this book become well-known, so that we will find that German theologians without doubt are the best theologians, Amen.²⁰⁰

If “turning Swiss,” as Tom Brady argued, was an option for the imperial cities in the later development of the Reformation,²⁰¹ here, in the wake of the indulgences controversy, Brother Martin had “turned German.” After having received the summons to Rome on 7 August 1518, Brother Martin wrote to Spalatin the following day, asking him to intercede with Elector Frederick and to ask Dr Johann Pfeffinger if he might intercede with the pope to have the case transferred to Germany, and to notify Staupitz of the situation.²⁰² Twenty days later, on 28 August, Brother Martin again wrote to Spalatin about his case, and asserted: “I will never be a heretic.”²⁰³ He appealed for Frederick’s help, for “I therefore do not sufficiently see by what way I would be able to escape those intended censures without the prince’s help.”²⁰⁴ After having met with Cardinal Cajetan in Augsburg in October and having received a copy of Cajetan’s letter to Frederick reporting on his findings and beseeching Frederick to hand Luther over to Rome based on his academic writings as well as his German sermons, which were at least in part damnable, being against the doctrine of the Apostolic see,²⁰⁵ Brother Martin himself wrote directly to Frederick.²⁰⁶ He had though gained another ally, for on 29 August 1518, Philip Melanchthon gave his inaugural lecture as Professor of Greek at Wittenberg on reforming studies. Though he did not know it at the time, Melanchthon would be not just a supportive colleague, but his right-hand man, who would become known as the “Teacher of Germany” (*Praeceptor Germaniae*). In his letter to Frederick, Brother Martin noted that he had received a copy of Cajetan’s letter to Frederick, which he received “reverently and with gladness” (*reverenter et hilariter*), and then asserted that “one thing

²⁰⁰ “... das ich yn deutscher zungen meynen gott also höre und finde, als ich und sie mit myr alther nit funden haben, Widder in lateynischer, kriechischer noch hebreischer zungen. Gott gebe, das disser puchleyn mehr an tag kumen, zso werden wyr finden, das die Deutschen Theologen an zweyffell die besten Theologen seyn, Amen.” *WA* 1.379,8–12.

²⁰¹ Thomas A. Brady, *Turning Swiss. Cities and Empire 1450–1550* (Cambridge, 1985).

²⁰² *WA.Br* 1.188,4–25.

²⁰³ *Hereticus nunquam ero. WA.Br* 1.190,21.

²⁰⁴ *Ego adhuc non satis video, qua via possim censuras illas intentatas evadere, nisi princeps auxilio mihi fuerit. WA.Br* 1.190,16–17.

²⁰⁵ *WA.Br* 1.234,66–82.

²⁰⁶ *WA.Br* 1.236,1–246,419.

alone I ask of your most illustrious magnificence, that the splendor of your most merciful greatness might do away with this sordid, blabbering little Dominican.”²⁰⁷ Cajetan had, according to Brother Martin, not only dealt with him unfairly and wrongly, but in doing so and in requesting Frederick to hand him over to Rome, was implicitly killing Frederick’s princely authority and rule itself, and besmirching the entire Saxon bloodline setting it in opposition to the highest pontiff.²⁰⁸ Christ’s voice though will be heard, for he was not so buried that then or now he was and is not able to speak through an ass, and even if the Apostles and their successors were to remain silent, the very wood and stone would cry out with his voice (cf. Luke 19:40).²⁰⁹ Brother Martin, therefore, urged Frederick not to send him to Rome, for doing so would be as good as committing murder, spilling Christian blood, for in Rome not even the pope himself is safe.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, Frederick should adhere to the Church and the pope, but if he, Martin, were to be handed over, without being shown authorities to convince him of his error, being damned without evidence, neither the pope, nor the Church, nor Frederick himself, nor Cajetan himself for that matter, would be honored.²¹¹ Given his reverence for Frederick, his reign, his house, and as a Christian prince, Brother Martin would though prepare to leave Wittenberg, to be exiled, which would be better than to be sent to Rome.²¹²

Brother Martin was indeed making a plea for the Germans and Germany against the unjust actions of the crass Italians and Romans, who sang like boys.²¹³ He had already distinguished and opposed, in part, the Germans from the Italians in his response to Sylvester Prierias’s *Dialogue*, written against Luther that appeared in the second half of June of 1518. Martin received his copy on 7 August. His response was published on 31

²⁰⁷ *Unum solum ab Illustrissima Celsitudine tua precatus fuero, ut sordidum hunc et mendicum fraterculum splendor magnitudinis tuae clementissimae toleret balbutientem.* *WA.Br* 1.236,11–14. Luther’s use of the diminutive *fraterculum* was a “tit for tat”; Cajetan, in his letter to Frederick, had concluded by exhorting Frederick not to allow “one little friar,” *unum fraterculum*, to get in the way of the negotiations that had been made in Augsburg with regard to preparing the defense of Christendom against the Turks, and thus bring ignominy on his house; *WA.Br* 1.235,85–88; cf. Oberman, *Luther*, p. 16.

²⁰⁸ ... *litteris suis Reverendissimus Dominus Legatus oblique mordet Illustrissimam Dominationem tuam ... nunc vellet Reverendissimus Dominus Legatus tuae Illustrissimae Dominationi maculam inurere totique sanguini domus Saxonicae, et in invidiam Summi Pontificis vocare ...* *WA.Br* 1.,244,354–245,369. Here Luther too was echoing Cajetan’s letter to Frederick.

²⁰⁹ *WA.Br* 1.245,369–372.

²¹⁰ *WA.Br* 1.244,345–350.

²¹¹ *WA.Br* 1.245,373–381.

²¹² *WA.Br* 1.245,383–246,399.

²¹³ *WA.Br* 1.243,292–295.

August. According to Brother Martin, Prierias had not refuted his theses at all, but had simply spouted sayings of St Thomas at him, without scriptural or patristic authority.²¹⁴ True penance, Brother Martin retorted to Prierias, and true theology were not pleasing to him, though perhaps foolish philosophy was. “I do not know,” Brother Martin mused, “whether Thomistic theology has ever grasped this true Theology, for it is Pauline, not Peripatetic.”²¹⁵ In replying to Prierias argument that his fifth thesis concerning the pope’s power only to forgive penance imposed by him was heretical, Brother Martin retorted:

Against my fifth proposition, where I said that punishments are not forgiven through indulgences unless they are punishments imposed by the will of a priest or by the Canons, you say that I have poorly understood the nature of the Church (*factum Ecclesiae*) and dissent from the saints, and therefore my conclusion, in your judgment, is heretical. Here, if I were to ask you, who are those saints and what is the nature of the Church (*factum Ecclesiae*), I do not see what you say, except that you name St Thomas, with whom I refer you to my first and second points above. For I do not grasp how in that word of Christ: *Whatever you loose*, etc., a privilege was given to Peter. For it was not a privilege, but a general law and it was given indisputably not to Peter alone, but it was given completely to all priests and to the entire Church. Why therefore do you with your Thomas attribute that privilege only to Peter, and thus so ascribing it, call it a privilege? Or if Peter is able to forgive the punishments of purgatory by virtue of this word, why is not every priest not able to do so? Is that any way to interpret the Gospel?²¹⁶

Brother Martin was pleased that Prierias, even if begrudgingly, admitted that his seventh thesis was true, namely, that God forgives the guilt of no one who is not subject to a priest, yet then continued to point out that there were diverse opinions on this amongst the Thomists, and that “the Thomists and your sect of friars in Germany zealously detest this conclusion of mine. I do not know though whether you have one Thomas

²¹⁴ WA 1.647,29–34.

²¹⁵ *nescio enim, an Thomistica Theologia hanc Theologiam unquam senserit: Paulina est enim, non Peripatetica.* WA 1.652,34–36.

²¹⁶ *Contra quintam propositionem meam, ubi dixi, per indulgentias non remitti poenas nisi arbitrio sacerdotis vel Canonum impositas, dicis me circa factum Ecclesiae male sentire et Sanctis dissentire, ideo conclusionem meam tuo iudicio haereticam esse. Hic si te interrogem, qui sint illi Sancti et quod factum Ecclesiae, non video quid dicas, nisi quod Sanctum Thomam nomines, cum quo te remitto ad fundamentum meum primum et secundum. Nam ego non capio, quomodo in isto verbo Christi: Quodcumque solveris etc. Petro sit datum privilegium. Non enim privilegium, sed lex generalis et irrefragabilis data est non Petro tantum, sed omnibus prorsus sacerdotibus et toti ecclesiae. Cur ergo tu cum Thoma tuo id soli Petro arrogas, et ita arrogas, ut privilegium appelles? Aut si Petrus potest huius verbi virtute solvere poenas purgatorii, cur non et quilibet sacerdos? Est iste modus interpretandi euangelii?* WA 1.655,3–15.

in Italy and another in Germany, though perhaps you want me to suspect that neither do the Thomists understand Thomas, nor Thomas the Thomists.”²¹⁷ On 1 September 1518, Brother Martin wrote to Staupitz that the matter had become serious, it was not a game, and that there were those in Germany who could see through the Roman ploys, for the Romans considered the Germans to be their “stupid gluttons.”²¹⁸

Frederick replied to Cajetan that if Brother Martin was truly condemned as a heretic, he would do his duty as a Christian prince and hand him over, but since there were highly respected theologians who agreed with Luther, the matter needed to be determined, and as a prince who exercised his authority established by God, it was his duty to oversee the case. To hand over Luther would be abandoning his duty as a Christian prince and would infringe upon his sovereignty. Even as Brother Martin was packed and ready to enter his exile, the Elector sent word that he should stay. Frederick was not going to be a pawn of the Italians. The turmoil that Brother Martin’s theses against indulgences had begun was part of the larger imperial, German, and indeed European politics.²¹⁹ Frederick was exercising his office as had princes before him, princes who had felt it their duty, their God-given duty, to ensure the religious life of their territories, princes who considered it their duty to ensure and institute reformation. Frederick was in this sense a typical German prince of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. Brother Martin knew as much, and positioned himself as a German theologian, called to the chair of theology of a German prince’s university, preaching to his flock in German, and asserting that German theologians were the best theologians. By “turning German,” Brother Martin had laid the foundation for what would later, in 1523, become one of his most famous images: the *German Hercules* of Hans Holbein the Younger. Brother Martin was transforming, with Melancthon’s help, the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages into a “German event.”²²⁰

For Brother Martin, though, his “turning German” was not what the issue was about. It was a strategy, an appeal, consciously made or otherwise, but it was not the central issue. Brother Martin was not by primary

²¹⁷ *Contra conclusionem septimam ... Gratias ago, quod aliquando licet cum opprobrio, veracem me confiteris. Sed id admirror, quid acciderit vobis Thomistis, ut tam diversum sentiatis. Hanc enim meam conclusionem Thomistae et tuae sectae fratres in Germania miro zelo detestantur. An alium habeatis Thomam in Italia et alium in Germania, ignoro, Nisi forte mihi suspicionem facere vultis, quod nec Thomistae Thomam, nec Thomas Thomistas intelligat.* WA 1.660,1–9; cf. WA 1.674,24–28.

²¹⁸ ... nos Romani tanquam bardos et buccones suos ... WABr 1.94,13–19, 18.

²¹⁹ Oberman, *Luther*, pp. 13–24.

²²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 13–49.

intent defending German interests against Italian incursions. His was not simply a list of *Gravamina*. Neither was he trying to save his own skin, so to speak, nor to further his reputation. For Brother Martin, the very Gospel itself was at stake. The very Gospel itself was being covered up, ignored, and threatened with burning by Roman officials who were dangerous indeed. Pope Leo could not know the situation. Thus, as Paul had appealed to Caesar, Brother Martin made his appeal to the pope, officially and legally appealing his case directly to Leo, to a better informed pope, on 16 October 1518.²²¹ He did so in writing, witnessed by a notary, as a formal appeal, as he was not, so he argued, able to go to Rome, for to do so was too dangerous in the present situation; many, even Pope Leo himself and many cardinals, are not safe traveling in Rome, even with a safe conduct and in the light of day.²²² Moreover, he was not physically able to make the trip, even if in doing so he would not be placing himself in mortal danger, and then too, he did not have the means for such a trip, as he was a mendicant friar, having no possessions of his own.²²³ Danger, health, and financial resources were the causes Brother Martin cited for not being able to go to Rome, and thus his official appeal, having asked for the intercession in the matter from Elector Frederick.²²⁴

In the document itself, Brother Martin did not touch on papal power. He asserted that it was licit to debate indulgences, as the doctrine of indulgences had not been determined by the Church, and his opposition to indulgences and how they were being preached was an attempt to prevent the people from being seduced into thinking that buying indulgences would gain them their salvation.²²⁵ He explicitly asserted that he had not disputed or debated “on faith, nor on morals, nor on God’s precepts or those of the Church, but on indulgences,”²²⁶ and on the matter of indulgences his examiners, or rather judges, were unqualified to make a determination. Since Dr Prierias, he pointed out, a Dominican and Master of the Sacred Palace, that is, the Inquisitor, “was only trained and brought up in scholastic theology, and less experienced in the Holy Scriptures, as is apparent from a variety of his writings, and since this material requires the most learned judges in Scripture and patristics, it is not possible to

²²¹ WA 2.28–33.

²²² WA 2.31,11–18.

²²³ WA 2.31,18–26.

²²⁴ WA 2.31,26–33.

²²⁵ WA 2.28,32–29,31.

²²⁶ *Et licet ego non de fide, non de moribus, non de praeceptis dei aut ecclesiae, sed de indulgentiis (ut dixi) disputarem ...* WA 2.29,31–33.

presume that he is able to judge in the matter or able to judge correctly.” In short, he is not capable of judging the case, and Brother Martin’s other judge, Hieronymus de Ghinutiis, Bishop of Ascoli, may be learned in cases of civil law, but such a case, as it concerns the charge of heresy, falls outside his professional competency.²²⁷ Thus the legal basis for Brother Martin’s appeal: His judges to this point have not been qualified to judge on a matter that is, in any case, licit to debate, namely, the issue of indulgences, since it had not been given a definitive definition by the Church. Therefore Brother Martin appealed to “the most holy in Christ father and lord, our lord Leo X, whose clemency and observance of truth and justice is most worthily celebrated through the whole world,”²²⁸ recognizing, as Brother Martin had already in a personal letter sent to Leo accompanying his *Explanations* in August of 1518,²²⁹ “his voice as the voice of Christ presiding in him.”²³⁰

His appeal fell on deaf ears. Little surprise there. Leo may have smiled at the hyperbole of his magnificence, virtue, and innocence, but surely would not have been swayed by the arguments of one who had already referred to him as a Daniel in Babylon,²³¹ who had asserted in his face so to speak that the pope is a man who can and has erred and had argued strenuously that Christ did not give the keys to Peter, but to the Church as such. No wonder Brother Martin’s appeal, as he put it, met with contempt.²³² Having received no satisfaction, Brother Martin took the next step, one he had advocated already in his *Explanations*: he officially, and legally, on 10 December 1518, appealed to a General Council, a step that had been deemed heretical by Pope Pius II.²³³ He again asserted his willingness to be shown his errors, but as that had not been done, in his mind,²³⁴ it was his right to appeal to a council for a council was above the

²²⁷ *Denique cum idem reverendus pater solum in scholastica Theologia sit institutus et enutritus parumque in scripturis sanctis, ut apparet ex suis scriptis variis, exercitatus, et haec materia iudices quaerat in sacris literis et ecclesiasticis Patribus instructissimos, non praesumi potest, eum vel posse recte iudicare, Reverendus vero in Christo pater dominus Hieronymus episcopus & merito timetur alteri collegae suo adhaerere (quod pace ac reverentia ac citra iniuriam dictum volo) et qui patri Sylvestro ob professionis theologicae nomen facile iudicium redderet, atque ipse qui in causis aliis civilibus et huiusmodi satis idoneus esset, haec autem, cum sint de fide et haeresi (ut adversarii dicunt) extra suae professionis modum esse satis intelligatur, atque ideo mihi utrique suspectissimi.* WA 2.30,37–31,11.

²²⁸ ... sanctissimus in Christo pater et dominus dominus noster Leo X, ut cuius clementia et veritatis et iustitiae observantia per totum orbem dignissime celebratur ... WA 2.31,33–34.

²²⁹ WA 1.529,25.

²³⁰ ... et vocem eius vocem Christi in ipso praesidentis agnoscam... WA 2.32,27.

²³¹ WA 1.679,5–6.

²³² WA 2.39,13–14.

²³³ WA 2.36–40.

²³⁴ WA 2.39,13–31.

pope in matters of dispute regarding the faith,²³⁵ appealing thus to a better informed pope.²³⁶ He again too repeated his argument about his unqualified judges, namely Prierias, and Prierias's Thomistic, Dominican bias.²³⁷ While Brother Martin did not consider his appeal an attack on the pope, the papacy, or papal power, it was implicitly so in the context of the power struggles between pope and council that had ravaged Christendom in the Schism and its aftermath, extending to the Fifth Lateran Council and its attempt to ward off and render invalid the Council of Pisa of 1511, which once again had threatened schism.²³⁸ It was not the most politically astute decision, and Frederick himself was against its publication, though he was too late in expressing his opposition to Spalatin to prevent it from going to press.²³⁹

Brother Martin had, in his *Appeal*, asserted again that he intended nothing against the power of the pope,²⁴⁰ though he invoked Paul rebuking Peter in defending the truth of the Gospel as an example to be followed by true Christians, for even Peter had fallen, and Paul had rebuked Peter to his face. Earlier I noted that Brother Martin adopted Paul's apostolic authority for asserting the truth of the Gospel, and here he was even more explicit in his assuming a Pauline stance, and one specifically against Peter. It was, though, not Leo himself who was at fault, but his officers and councilors. Leo, as Martin had asserted in his reply to Prierias, was a Daniel in Babylon. In his letter to Leo of 1520, accompanying his treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*, Brother Martin was more explicit in equating Leo with Daniel in the lion's den.²⁴¹ Even though this was after his great discoveries of 1520, which I will treat in the [following chapter](#), having placed Leo in Babylon already beforehand was almost equivalent. This was an image, as Oberman argued, that Luther later applied to himself, as well as to other religious of times past such as St Bernard, who lived in the lion's den of monastic vows.²⁴² The true saints had been those who had lived according to the spirit of God, not based on obedience to the vows, making here the same distinction we have seen above between external religious observance and internal spiritual faith. The Gospel was being attacked to be sure, but not by Brother Martin himself, nor by Pope

²³⁵ WA 2.36,22–32.

²³⁶ WA 2.39,12.

²³⁷ WA 2.38,13–36.

²³⁸ Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, VIII/1, pp. 269–335.

²³⁹ WA 2.34.

²⁴⁰ WA 2.37,2–6.

²⁴¹ WA 7.5,33.

²⁴² Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, pp. 57–58.

Leo. It was Leo's advisors and minions, and the whoredom of Roman Babylon which led Martin to place Leo together with himself in the lion's den. The pope, the true pope, was a pastor, as was every true bishop, and indeed every true priest, for the pope does better, Brother Martin asserted in countering Prierias, in establishing one good priest in a parish church than he would do if he issued all indulgences at the same time.²⁴³ Brother Martin was coming to the pope's defense against his evil ministers who wanted to make him into an Emperor.²⁴⁴ It was not the pope, but his curia that was the problem, as Brother Martin asserted in his preface to the publication of his *Lectures on Galatians* of 1519.

Brother Martin lectured on Galatians in 1516–17, and then revised his original text and published it in September 1519. In his preface, addressed to his Wittenberg colleagues, Peter Lupinus and Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, Brother Martin ironically recounted, in brief, his struggles to that point, claiming: "For I, being wondrously stupid and erring most gravely, had measured sins and errors by divine commandments and the holy Gospel of Christ. Those friends of mine, however, for the glory of their own wisdom measured any genre of work only by the power of the pope and by the privileges of the Roman Church."²⁴⁵ Brother Martin, following the lead of the German princes at the Reichstag in Augsburg of 1518, clearly distinguished the Roman Church from the Roman curia, and it was the latter that was the problem.²⁴⁶ While the Roman Church should be honored and obeyed and no one is permitted to resist it, "Princes, kings, and who ever is able" should resist the Roman curia, which would be far more pious than fighting against the Turks themselves.²⁴⁷ Brother Martin was not being ambiguous when he affirmed that he honored the Roman Pontiff and his decrees to such an extent "that no one is superior to him, with the only exception being the prince of this vicar, Jesus Christ, our Lord and the Lord of all. His word I place before the words of his vicar, so that I would not hesitate at all to judge all deeds and sayings of His vicar based on His word."²⁴⁸ Brother Martin had, at the same

²⁴³ WA 1.683,29–30.

²⁴⁴ WA 1.677,29–36.

²⁴⁵ *Ego enim mire stultus et errans gravissime peccata et errores metiebar mandatis divinis et sacrosancto euangelio Christi. Illi vero amici mei pro gloria sapientiae suae non nisi potestate Papae et Privilegiis Rhomanae Ecclesiae metiuntur quodlibet operis genus.* WA 2.445,17–21.

²⁴⁶ WA 2.448,3–449,15.

²⁴⁷ *Nulla modo ergo Rhomanae ecclesiae resistere licet: at Rhomanae Curiae longe maiore pietate resisterent Reges, Principes et quicumque possent quam ipsis Turcis.* WA 2.448,27–449,2.

²⁴⁸ *Porro, optimi viri, ut vobis serio dicam, ego Rhomam Pontifici eiusque decretis eum honorem habeo, quo nullus est superior, nec excipio nisi principem huius Vicarii, Iesum Christum, dominum nostrum*

time, asserted in his defense of his articles condemned by Johannes Eck published on 30 September 1519 that all who had Peter's faith were princes and vicars of Christ.²⁴⁹ Peter could not pass down his apostleship that he received from Christ, but only his episcopacy, which he himself had established. Thus Peter's successors are less than Peter had been, as they do not have Peter's apostleship from Christ, and indeed, the Roman Pontiff does not have more from Peter than any other bishop instituted by Peter.²⁵⁰ For Brother Martin, Peter's successors were not Peter, they were far less than Peter. For Brother Giles of Rome, Peter and his successors had been one and the same.²⁵¹ This Brother Martin did not know, and, it seems, had not been taught.

Perhaps Brother Martin was feeling a bit freer in the summer and early fall of 1519, or least that the noose around his neck had been loosened, at least a bit, and thus the irony, for the previous January Emperor Maximilian had died, and his successor had not yet been elected. The papal-Italian and imperial-German political situation was in turmoil, and diplomacy was more expedient than condemnation. Pope Leo wanted to avoid at all costs the election of Maximilian's grandson, Charles, King of Spain, and courted Frederick the Wise as a potential candidate. Yet Brother Martin's position as articulated in his preface to his Galatians Commentary concerning his placing the Word of Christ above the words of the pope, and judging the latter by the former was not as such a new assertion of evangelical theology, but was in keeping with the vows he took upon entering the OESA. Brother Martin had not vowed obedience to the Church, nor to the pope, but he had vowed obedience to his Order, to Mary, and to God. There was no ambiguity: when the pope, or his curia, issued decrees, or preached, contrary to God, contrary to God's Word, contrary to the Gospel, God's Word was to be followed. Brother Martin's obedience was to God and the Gospel before it was to the pope, or even the Roman Church. Against the machinations of Pope Leo, Charles was crowned in Aachen as Roman Emperor on 23 October. Now, perhaps, the controversy could, and would be settled once and for all. Now perhaps a council could be held, as he had called for in his *Appeal*.

et omnium. Huius verbum ita praefero Vicarii verbis, ut nihil dubitem secundum ipsum iudicare de omnibus et dictis et factis Vicarii. WA 2.446,38–447,3.

²⁴⁹ WA 2.632,1–7.

²⁵⁰ WA 2.638,5–14.

²⁵¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 31–32.

Brother Martin had appealed to Leo yet again at the time that Maximilian had died, asserting as strongly as he could that his one concern was that the Gospel not be obscured by preaching that led people to believe that indulgences should be preferred to love, together with his devotion to Mother Church and Pope Leo, whose authority he placed nothing above, except that of Christ. Brother Martin received a response from Leo on 29 March, not though with respect to Brother Martin's letter, about which Pope Leo remained silent. Pope Leo reached out to Brother Martin in response to the report of Karl von Miltitz who had met with Brother Martin in Spalatin's home in Altenburg, and had passed along to the pope that Brother Martin was prepared to recant. Leo wrote to his "beloved son" Martin Luther, and expressed his joy over the assumed developments.²⁵² Brother Martin though was not about to capitulate, nor to go to Rome. Whereas in the later fourteenth century, according to Brother Martin's elder confrère, Antonius Rampegolus, the present life in the body is the Babylonian captivity, as he interpreted the first chapter of Daniel, and the Holy Spirit had chosen the Observant Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinian hermits to teach the people the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures, thus revealing to them the way of salvation,²⁵³ for Brother Martin Rome itself was Babylon, and Pope Leo, as well as Brother Martin himself, were held captive in the lion's den. The Gospel itself was in danger, and Brother Martin, assuming Pauline apostolic authority, was combatting all enemies, in defense of Pope Leo and Mother Church, the true Church of Rome, Christ's own body, which though was hidden, internal, and invisible, whereas the visible, external, and manifest militant Church was being perverted by the Roman curia.

Yet how did one know what Christ's Word, what Christ's voice, what Christ's Gospel actually was? What was one to do if the Holy Spirit's chosen instruments for teaching the Gospel disagreed, as certainly seemed to be the case with Brother Martin, Augustinian standing against his Dominican opponents? Appeal could not be made to the external word, the written text, except as a sign of the internal word. Brother Martin would recant if he could be convinced by Scripture. It was not, though, as if his opponents, even his Dominican, Thomist opponents, did not cite Scripture. How was one to interpret such words as "do penance" (*poenitentiam agite*), "the keys of heaven" (*claves celorum*), and "this is my body" (*hoc est corpus meum*)? Conflict of interpretation was the issue, which

²⁵² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 623.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 614–615.

Brother Martin interpreted as his opponents not showing him evidence from Scripture to convince him of his errors. Brother Martin knew better. Brother Martin knew the internal, hidden Word illumined by the Holy Spirit. Luther argued that the internal word was “objective,” based on Christ as the Christian’s substantive form and thus outside ourselves, but it was the inner word illumined by the Holy Spirit that made this known, and if someone didn’t get it, it was because he had not been so illumined. Luther could *not* have been corrected from Scripture because it was not Scripture that was at issue, but its interpretation, and Luther’s interpretation was based on the internal Word, on the Gospel itself, that could not be equated as such with the Scriptures, even as the Scriptures were the only access to it as God’s revelation. No one questioned that the Scriptures were God’s revelation. The problem was, what was that revelation? What did it mean? How was it to be applied? This could not be had from Scripture itself. Luther’s setting Paul against Peter was explicitly going against the tradition, fashioning himself, moreover, in the role of Paul, rebuking Peter, or at least a Peter ill-informed, as he had already done in his lectures on Romans. Luther accepted the authority of the Roman Church and of the pope, but when the pope and/or his councilors, were wrong, the Gospel was the be all and end all, the final authority. The Gospel, that is, as Brother Martin knew it. Despite his respect for the papacy, for the pope, and for the Roman Church, despite his appeals to its authority and his endeavor to preserve it and honor it, despite his early ecclesiological views, and despite his sincere intent, Luther had indeed attacked the Church. Popes and councils could, and had, erred. Peter himself had fallen, and even if he picked himself up again, even if he repented, he was capable to doing so again, and this his successors should acknowledge. The Gospel must be defended. As the Oxford scholar, Thomas Bradwardine, had in the mid-fourteenth century composed his *magnum opus*, *The Case of God Against the Pelagians* (*De causa dei contra Pelagianos*) to come to the defense of God’s majesty and omnipotence, so now was Brother Martin, based on his own Augustinian anti-Pelagian theology defending the *causa dei* against the diabolical incursions of the pseudo-apostles, the devil’s minions, found most of all perhaps in the Roman curia, and was doing so to defend the Gospel, Mother Church, and the Pope. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages had failed.

Four months after Charles was crowned Roman Emperor, Brother Martin was to have two shocking discoveries that were to change everything. Little did he know in the winter of 1519 what was coming. Despite his claims, at issue was not his attack on indulgences, or Italian fleeing

of Germany, grievances that had been openly expressed for a century or more. It was not about justification by faith. It was about the Church. Brother Martin was about to have his Reformation Breakthrough, and Worms was just around the corner. A new world was dawning.

*The Woe of the World:
Luther from Friar to Reformer*

In mid-February 1520, Brother Martin wrote to Spalatin:

One thing I am able to do, namely, to pray for God's mercy. An insight has been given to me into the signs of the turbulence to come unless God refrains Satan. I saw his most contrived thoughts for evil against me and many others. But what should you expect? The word of piety has never been able to be expositied without raging storms, uprisings, and danger ... therefore either peace and tranquility in this matter are to be despaired, or the word is to be denied. It is the Lord's war, who does not come to bring peace. You therefore be warned not to hope that Christ is spread around in your lands with peace and sweetness, Christ whom you see has fought with his own blood and after him with the blood of all the martyrs.¹

Despite his assertions to recant if he were to be shown his errors based on evidence from the Scriptures, despite his appeals to Pope Leo, his hope for the Holy Father to champion his case and the case of the Gospel, Brother Martin saw the writing on the wall. Approximately two days previous, on 12 February, Brother Martin had written to Spalatin asserting that his case was now entirely in the hands of God alone and that he and his supporters had been snatched up in it all.² The word he used was *rapimur*, the passive plural form of the verb meaning to seize, to pillage, to carry off, the word used in the mystical tradition for the mystical experience that one's soul undergoes; the word used for the rapture of the Apocalypse. Brother Martin was no longer in control, especially after the shock he had just had. In his letter to Spalatin on 14 February, Brother Martin continued the above quoted passage with the following:

¹ *Unum possum, orare scilicet Dei misericordiam. Data est mihi notio futurae alicuius insignis turbulae, nisi Deus Satanam prohibuerit. Vidi cogitationes eius artificiosissimas in malum et meum et multorum. Quid vis? verbum pietatis nunquam sine turbine, tumultu, periculo tractari potuit ... Aut ergo desperandum est de pace et tranquillitate huius rei, aut verbum negandum est. Bellum Domini est, qui non venit pacem mittere. Tu ergo cave, ne speres Christum in terra promoveri cum pace et suavitate, quem vides proprio sanguine pugnasse, et post eum omnes martyres.* WABr 2.41,12–42,22.

² WABr 2.39,21–22.

Unaware, I have all along both taught and held all the doctrines of Johannes Hus, and so even has Johannes Staupitz. In short, we are all Hussites without knowing it. And then too, so are Paul and Augustine, Hussites to the letter. I implore you just to look at the horrific black hole into which we are entering, without a Bohemian leader or teacher. I am too dumbfounded to even know what to think, seeing such a terrifying judgment of God among men that the true Gospel is considered worthy of being damned, having been torched so blatantly in public for over a hundred years, and that no one can admit it. It is the woe of the world!³

Brother Martin had just read Hus's treatise *On the Church (De ecclesia)* and was shocked to the marrow that he agreed with the heretic; he agreed with Hus, who had been burned at the Council of Constance. He was shocked that Hus's teaching was simply that of the Gospel, that of Paul and Augustine, that too of Staupitz. They were all Hussites. The Gospel had been declared heresy and had been burned at the stake. That was the shock.

Brother Martin had been associated with Hus and the Bohemians for a while. Early in the controversy, Eck had mentioned the Bohemians in connection with Luther,⁴ as had Prierias.⁵ And then at Leipzig, Eck had explicitly accused Brother Martin of holding positions of Hus, as well as those of Wycliff and Marsilius of Padua.⁶ Luther had always denied it, dismissed it. He had always asserted that he was not a heretic and would not be one.⁷ At Leipzig he had tried to distance himself from Hus and the Bohemians, claiming that he did not want nor was he able to defend them, but that he was putting forth the case of the Greek Church of the past fourteen hundred years, and if the Bohemians agreed with the Greeks, that did not concern him.⁸ In his *Explanations of his Positions Taken at Leipzig*, Brother Martin admitted that Hus's argument that the pope is not the head of the Church by divine law was wrongly condemned, but otherwise, many other articles of Hus had been rightly damned.⁹ Hus

³ *Ego imprudens hucusque omnia Iohannis Hus et docui et tenui. Docuit eadem imprudentia et Iohannes Staupitz, Breviter: sumus omnes Hussitae ignorantes. Denique Paulus et Augustinus ad verbum sunt Hussitae. Vide monstra, quaeso, in quae venimus sine duce et doctore Bohemico. Ego prae stupore nescio, quid cogitem, videns tam terribilia Dei iudicia in hominibus, quod veritas evangelica apertissima iam publice plus centum annis excusa, pro damnata habetur, nec licet hoc confiteri. Vae terrae!* WABr 2.42,22–30.

⁴ WA 1.305,6–7.

⁵ WA 2.51,22–25

⁶ WA 2.275,8–33.

⁷ Writing to Spalatin on 28 August 1518, Brother Martin asserted: "*Hereticus nunquam ero.*" WABr 1.190,21.

⁸ WA 2.279,4–280,23.

⁹ WA 2.405,19–406,30.

was still a heretic in Brother Martin's eyes, even if one of his teachings was true. But now Brother Martin, having actually read his work, stood with Hus, as did Staupitz, Augustine, and Paul. It was a shock along the lines of a patriotic American who finally reads Karl Marx and realizes that he, or she, was actually a Marxist, a communist, and had been all along, as had been Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. But it was more than that. It was a shock resulting from the realization that everything he believed, everything he had fought for, everything he had taken as holy and good had in reality been the instruments of burning the truth, of killing Hus, of silencing the Gospel of Christ. And Brother Martin had been given a revelation of the foreboding signs of Satan's evil plans. Brother Martin's shock was of cosmic proportion. On 12 February, things looked pretty bad for Brother Martin. It was all in God's hands. Now, on 14 February, the rug had been pulled out from under him. Hope was gone. The Gospel had been proclaimed heresy. The Gospel had been burned. Truth had been obliterated. Truth had been the holocaust. Brother Martin didn't even know what to think. It was the woe of the world indeed.

Brother Martin had not fallen into heresy. He had not lapsed. It was not that in the course of the controversy he had indeed moved into the realm of heresy and thus was found out. The shock was that he was a Hussite and had always been one, from the beginning, along with Paul and Augustine and Staupitz. Brother Martin had already been a Hussite when he *began* his theological studies, when he entered the monastery. Against all that he had assumed, and asserted, this was the revelation, at least in his own eyes; this was the shocking discovery. The question we therefore must ask is, was he? Was Brother Martin a Hussite, and had he been one all along? Was indeed Brother Martin's view of the papacy and the Church already beyond the pale of possible medieval positions?

Brother Martin's Ecclesiology in Context

It is a common assumption one often meets in one's students, in the popular media, in some religious circles, and at times, in some ways, even in academic representations, that the Church in the Dark Ages was thoroughly in the hands of the pope, who was infallible, and who ruled with an iron fist; no one thought for themselves, but only believed what the Church told them to believe, and if they did not do so, if they dissented, if they questioned, they would be burned at the stake; and it was only then when Martin Luther came along and stood up for

the individual, stood up to the tyranny of Rome, and armed with the truth of the Bible, toppled the pope and the authority of Rome and of Rome's Church, allowing for liberty and free thought, for truth to win out, the truth of the individual against oppressive, controlling, and all-encompassing, mind-numbing dictatorial authority that Europe started to be free, tolerant, open, and thus modern. Not all that infrequently I am asked by students: when did Europe become Christian rather than Catholic? Christianity is seen as being something other than being Catholic. While I can smile at the ignorance, the troublesome point is that such a position is still out there, as is the one about Columbus proving the earth was round. It is rather a rousing condemnation of our educational system that such misunderstandings are still so prevalent. They are, by my experience, by no means the majority, but just the fact that they are there at all signifies the depth of the problems we face daily as we strive to teach our students. If only it had been so, would perhaps have been some popes' response. Pope Boniface VIII would have had a much easier time of it had it been that way, had he not been questioned, had he not been argued against, dismissed, mugged by French troops who were to bring him bound in chains back to Paris to stand trial for heresy.

Such an assumption, in its crass and crude form or in more subtle, underlying forms couched within a superficial pseudo-scholarly veneer, warps and twists our understanding of the past, and thus of our present. The Middle Ages were not "dark," and there had never been a time when popes ruled without conflict, without dissent, without opposition. Papal monarchy aptly describes the papal political position from the time of Innocent III to Leo X, having had its origins perhaps already in Gregory VII, but no pope was an absolute ruler, even if we can find in papal hierocratic theory the theoretical origins of absolutism. There were in the Middle Ages, even at the height of papal assertions, positions of dissent, of opposition; there was a spectrum of competing political positions. There was not a direct correlation between political theory and practical reality, which is a truism in politics that is as valid in the banal rhetoric of election campaigns – if in such political theory is to be found at all – as it was for the conflicts between what has so often been misleadingly referred to as the medieval "crisis of Church and State." For both the papal and the imperial parties, Church and State, if we can even use such terms, were two sides of the same coin, the coin that was Christendom. There was no conflict as such between the State and the Church. There was significant conflict over power and its proper spheres and the extent of its

use between clerical power and lay power. That was the issue: what was the proper relationship between clerical, spiritual power, and lay, temporal power? We should not read back into the past such modern fictional constructs as "Church" and "State" and their separation, and expect to have any historical grasp on, understanding of, or insight into the institutions, religio-politics, or the philosophical and theological explications of Christendom.

The ecclesio-political thought of the Middle Ages was polarized between imperial positions and papal positions. No single position ever had hegemony. From the time of Charlemagne, Christendom was a geo-political entity defined by the boundaries of Christian worship, the continuation of the Roman Empire, and since the time of Constantine and then Theodosius, of the Christian Roman Empire. In that context, Church and State were synonymous. The struggle and conflict existed over who was to rule Christendom, who was to have the last word, the pope or the emperor, the bishop or the prince? Was clerical power to reign supreme, or was lay power to have the final say? Was Christendom primarily a spiritual entity or a temporal entity? Various positions had been offered and defended, with the conflict over investiture and lay control of the Church in the eleventh century providing an illustration of the issues involved, symbolized in the positions of Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII. From Gregory VII to Innocent III in the thirteenth century, papal monarchy had emerged as the papal platform, which did not mean that the imperial position was defeated or relegated to one of insignificance. The Augustinian hermits James of Viterbo and Giles of Rome had formulated at the beginning of the fourteenth century the papal hierocratic theory as never before in the context of Pope Boniface VIII's conflict with King Philip IV of France. The papal-imperial conflict continued with Pope John XXII and Emperor Lewis of Bavaria in the 1320s, with the Augustinian Augustinus of Ancona writing for Pope John his *Comprehensive Treatment of Ecclesiastical Power*, the most extensive and thorough treatment of hierocratic theory that had been written. Augustinus in many ways represents one extreme of the ecclesio-political spectrum. The other extreme, the imperial extreme, was not, however, to wither away.

Writing in response to the Augustinian political front of James and Giles was Marsilius of Padua, whose *Defender of the Peace*, completed by 1324, was dedicated to Emperor Lewis of Bavaria. It was the most radical political work of the Middle Ages. As already mentioned, Eck had accused Brother Martin of following Marsilius, together with Wycliff and Hus.

Brother Martin did respond to the Wycliff and Hus charge, but ignored Marsilius. Though there is no evidence Brother Martin knew Marsilius, he probably would have been glad if he had, finding in his work arguments to support his position indeed.

Marsilius divided his work into three Discourses, with the second, by far the longest, dedicated to issues of the Church, whereas the first treated the origins of political authority. The third Discourse summarized Marsilius's position and arguments. The majority of scholarship dealing with Marsilius has focused on the first Discourse and the extent to which Marsilius presented an Aristotelian, natural theory of the state. Yet reading the *Defender of the Peace* from the perspective of the third Discourse offers another view. I referred earlier to George Garnett's argument that Marsilius was an apocalyptic prophet.¹⁰ In this light, Marsilius's *Defender of the Peace* was not so much a radical theory of the State as it was a radical theory of the Church.

Discourse III is by far the shortest of the work, and has been in general dismissed and/or ignored as a simple summation of what came before. It consists of three chapters, and in the first, Marsilius himself stated his intent for the third Discourse as a summary.¹¹ The second chapter is a listing of forty-two conclusions, while the third and final chapter addresses the title of the treatise itself and how it ties into the work as a whole, as stated in the beginning of the work, as well as in [chapter 1](#) of Discourse III.¹² Marsilius is fastidious in giving cross-references to Discourses I and II, as indeed he is throughout the work,¹³ which not only gives the impression of, but also ample evidence for Marsilius having conceived and composed the work as a whole, having sketched it out in minute detail. This is not a polemical treatise guided by *animus* that takes on new dimensions and proportions as it develops. The *Defender of the Peace* is a meticulously planned work – Marsilius did not compose the treatise until he had the entire argument well in mind. In this light, Discourse III can serve as a

¹⁰ See [Chapter 1](#).

¹¹ The chapter heading reads: *De rememoracione principaliter intentorum et determinatorum dictione prima et secunda, et ditorum cum dicendis consequencia quadam*. Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.1, p. 602,2–4. He then restated his position in the first chapter itself; *ibid.*, p. 603,2–8; cf. Brett, p. 546.

¹² In the opening chapter of the work, Marsilius set out the goal of peace, and how he sought to counter the *lites* that inhibit that goal; Marsilius, *Def.pac.* I.1, pp. 1–10, asserting in Discourse III that the Roman bishop's interference in temporal affairs was the cause of all the discord; Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.1, p. 602,5–11.

¹³ Throughout Marsilius refers the reader to previous chapters relating to the matter he is currently discussing, yet he also alerts to reader to more complete coverage and argumentation in chapters yet to come; see e.g. Marsilius, *Def.pac.* I.9,9, p. 16,9–12.

guide to the entire work as such, in terms of Marsilius's overall argument and goal.

Marsilius began [chapter 2](#) of the third Discourse by asserting five conclusions pertaining to what is necessary for salvation. The first asserts:

To gain eternal beatitude, it is necessary to believe only divine or canonic Scripture to be true, and what follows from it by necessity, and the interpretation of it that has been made by a common council of the faithful, if this would need to be duly asserted to anyone. The certainty of this was given in and can be taken from chapter 19 of the second discourse, sections 2 through 5.¹⁴

The very first conclusion Marsilius gave concerns what is necessary to believe for salvation. This is his point of departure, and he explicitly stated that of all his conclusions, this is his first. He then continued by asserting that only a general council of the faithful, or its more weighty part, can determine the interpretation of the Scriptures and the articles of faith,¹⁵ before claiming that no one, based on Scripture, can be compelled to follow the commands of divine law.¹⁶ Conclusions 3 and 4 assert that only the precepts of evangelical law, and what can be derived therefrom by right reason, are necessary for salvation; and that only a general council, or a Christian legislator, can make dispensations from divine law.¹⁷

Two points are to be noted here. First, Marsilius's primary conclusion, with which he starts, is, to repeat myself, what is necessary for salvation. Second, if there are disputes about what that necessity is, based on the interpretation of scripture or what can be derived therefrom, it is only the

¹⁴ *Harum autem inferendarum conclusionum hanc primam ponemus: Solam divinam seu canonicam scripturam, et ad ipsam per necessitatem sequentem quamcumque ipsiusque interpretationem ex communi concilio fidelium factam veram esse, ad eternam beatitudinem consequendam necesse credere, si alicui debite proponatur. Huius siquidem certitudo est et sumi potest 10^a secundae, ex 2^a in 5^{am}.* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.1, p. 603,19–26. I have modified the trans. of Brett to be, in my view, more accurate to the text; cf. Brett, p. 547.

¹⁵ Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.2, p. 603,27–604,3.

¹⁶ Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.3, p. 604,5–7.

¹⁷ Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.4–5, p. 604,8–19. Here, for the first time in the third Dialogue, though extremely prevalent throughout the work, we find the term *fidelis legislator*. This is most commonly translated, including by Brett, as “faithful legislator,” though in this case Brett renders it “faithful human legislator”; see Brett, p. 548. I have translated it “Christian legislator.” The point being, Marsilius used *Christi fideles* and *fideles* as virtually synonymous. The *fidelis legislator* is not simply a faithful legislator, but a Christian legislator, which gives a different tone at times to Marsilius's text. A non-Christian legislator could be a faithful legislator if he, or it, were faithful to the *communio civium*. That is not Marsilius's point. The impact of his argument is lost thereby, since he is predicating his argument on a Christian legislator. This interpretation is confirmed by Marsilius's discussion of the *legislator infidelis*; see Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.17.15, pp. 370,3–371,3. It is clear here that for Marsilius the *legislator fidelis* is a Christian legislator, and the *legislator infidelis* is a non-Christian legislator.

general council of the faithful, and/or the Christian legislator, that can make the determination, and the same is the only body that can make dispensations from divine law, though no one can be compelled by temporal force, based on the Scripture itself, to obey divine law.

In Marsilius's assertion that believing the revelation of scripture is the only necessity for salvation, he gave the cross-reference to Discourse II, chapter 19.¹⁸ Marsilius opened that chapter with the assertion:

that we are not bound, of necessity of eternal salvation, irrevocably to believe or confess any writing other than those Scriptures that are called "canonic," or what necessarily follows from them, or – where the sense of Holy Scripture is doubtful – those interpretations or decisions that have been made through a general council of the catholic faithful; especially in those matters where an error would incur eternal damnation, such as are the articles of the Christian faith.¹⁹

He then stated that the truth of the Scriptures comes from the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and in cases of conflicting interpretations, or of doubt, the determinations of the general council are to be believed as being led by the Holy Spirit. Enforcing adherence to such truths is up to the Christian legislator or the general council, whose determinations are to be taught and promulgated by the clergy.²⁰ Here Marsilius came face to face with the sticky question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, namely, in those cases of interpretation that are determined by the general council, what is one to do if the determinations of general councils are themselves in conflict, and what weight is to be given previous determinations of general councils in the determination of the Christian truth? Marsilius did not address these questions as such, and indeed, he made only sparse references to conciliar decrees as authorities in his work. The reason therefore is most likely Marsilius's ecclesiology itself; based on his definition of a general council, that is, the community of the faithful (*communio fidelium*), there had never been a truly general council. On the one hand, for Marsilius, only the canonical Scriptures are necessary for salvation; yet on the other hand, when the truth of the

¹⁸ Marsilius, *Def.Pac.* III.2, p. 603,21–26.

¹⁹ ... *quod nullam scripturam irrevocabiliter veram credere vel fateri tenemur de necessitate salutis eterne, nisi eas, que canonicè appellantur, vel eis que ad has ex necessitate sequuntur, aut scripturarum sacrarum sensum dubium habentium eis interpretationibus seu determinacionibus, que per generale fidelium seu catholicorum concilium essent facte, in hiis preserteim, in quibus error dampnationem eternam induceret, quales sunt articuli fidei Christiane.* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.19.1, p. 384,20–31; trans. Brett, p. 360.

²⁰ Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.19.3, p. 386,1–16.

Scriptures is in doubt, the general council is to determine what the necessary truth is. Marsilius never addressed the possibility of conflicting conciliar decrees, even of councils of his own definition. The Holy Spirit will guide the council to the eternal truth.²¹

Given the necessity of the general council and/or the Christian legislator to determine what is indeed necessary for salvation, Marsilius then was faced with how that general council and/or Christian legislator is comprised, which he addressed in conclusion six of Discourse III: "That only the universal body of the citizens or its prevailing part is the human legislator: chapters 12 and 13 of the first discourse."²² In a Christian context, which is the context Marsilius was dealing with in Discourse III as is evident from his point of departure, that human legislator, the universal body of the citizens, is comprised of "ecclesiastics," or in other words, the Church, for Marsilius had already equated the entire body of citizens (*universitas civium*) with the entire body of the faithful (*universitas fidelium*) in Discourse II, chapter 2. In defining the *ecclesia*, Marsilius first noted that the term according to the Greeks signifies "the congregation of the people under a single rule."²³ He then continued to give other definitions of the *ecclesia* before offering the most true and most proper definition:

Again, in another signification – the truest and most proper of all according to the original application of the term or the intention of those who originally applied it, even if it is not so widespread or consistent with modern usage – this term "church" is said of the universal body of faithful believers who call upon the name of Christ, and of all the parts of this body within any community, even the household. And this was the original application of the term and its customary usage among the apostles in the early church ... And therefore all the faithful of Christ, priests and non-priests alike, are and should be called churchmen [*ecclesiastici*] according to this truest and most proper signification.²⁴

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Legislatorem humanum solam civium universitatem esse aut valentiorum illius partem: xxii^o et xiii^o prime.* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.6, p. 604,20–21; Brett, p. 548.

²³ *Hec itaque prosequentes dicamus, quod hoc nomen ecclesia vocabulum est ex usu Grecorum, significans apud ipsos, in hiis que ad nos pervenerunt, congregationem populi sub uno regimine contenti.* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.2.2, p. 143,18–21.

²⁴ *Rursum, secundum aliam significationem dicitur hoc nomen ecclesia, et omnium verissime ac propriissime secundum primam impositionem huius nominis seu intentionem primorum imponentium, licet non ita famose seu secundum modernum usum, de universitate fidelium credentium et invocantium nomen Christi, et de huius universitatis partibus omnibus in quacumque communitate, eiam domestica. Et hec fuit impositio prima huius dictionis et consuetus usus eius apud apostolos et in ecclesia primitiva ... Et propterea viri ecclesiastici secundum hanc verissimam et propriissimam significationem,*

In a Christian context, the Church and State for Marsilius are co-terminous.²⁵

This is a given for Marsilius, and he does not reassert such in Discourse III. Rather, he turns in conclusions 6 through 11 to discuss the boundaries of the human legislator, before in conclusions 12 through 16 dealing primarily with the Christian legislator, the *legislator fidelis*. Conclusion 17 asserts the equality of priests, whereby any hierarchy within the clergy exists solely due to the determination of the *legislator*, and then conclusions 18 through 41 present the extent of the jurisdiction of the *legislator fidelis* with respect to religious practice, over against the clergy, including marriage laws, the status of notaries, and who is legitimately able to teach.²⁶ Conclusion 42 is simply a catch-all conclusion asserting that there could be many other conclusions not contained in the forty-one just given, as well as submitting his argument to the judgment of the general council of the faithful.²⁷ Conclusions 12 through 41 of Discourse III concern primarily the power, authority, and role of the *legislator fidelis*, whereas only conclusions 6 through 11 treat the *legislator humanus* as such. In other words, leaving aside conclusion 42, thirty-five of the other forty-one conclusions in Discourse III concern either what is required for salvation (conclusions 1 through 5) or the power, authority, and role of the Christian legislator.

The implicit distinction he draws in Discourse III between the human legislator and the Christian legislator reflects differing modes of living, namely, the sufficient mode for living well in the temporal realm based on the material, formal, and efficient causes, and what is required for living well with respect to eternal salvation, which also impinges on, or is useful for, living well in the temporal realm, based on the final cause.²⁸ The Christian legislator is the human legislator under the guise of a Christian state. Religion is central to all states, but only the Christian religion is the true religion, and therefore only the Christian state can be directed to the final cause of the state with respect to eternal salvation.²⁹

sunt et dici debent omnes Christi fideles, tam sacerdotes quam non sacerdotes. Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.2.3, pp. 144,22–145,13; Brett, pp. 145–146.

²⁵ Cf. Gewirth, *Marsilius of Padua and Medieval Political Philosophy* (New York, 1951), vol. I, pp. 300–301.

²⁶ Marsilius *Def.pac.* III.2.17–41, pp. 606,8–611,13

²⁷ Marsilius *Def.pac.* III.2.42, p. 611,14–19.

²⁸ Marsilius *Def.pac.* I.6, pp. 28,25–34,11.

²⁹ *Verum quia gentiles et omnium relique leges aut secte, que sunt aut fuerunt extra catholicam fidem christianam, aut que ante ipsam fuit Mosaicam legem, vel que ante hanc fuit sanctorum patrum credulitatem, et generaliter extra traditionem eorum, que in sacro canone, vocata Biblia, continentur, non recte senserunt de Deo, ut quia humanum ingenium secuti sunt aut falsos prophetas vel doctores errorum,*

The vast majority of Discourse III is dedicated to conclusions concerning what is necessary for salvation, how that is determined, and how the Christian legislator is to govern the state with respect to religion insofar as the eternal mode of existence in the future life is also useful for life in the temporal realm.

The radical step Marsilius took was to define the clergy as a function of the state. In the twelfth conclusion of Discourse III, Marsilius asserted:

That to determine the persons, their qualities and number for the offices of the state, and thus all other civil matters, belongs solely to the authority of the Christian prince in accordance with the laws or approved customs: chapter 12 of the first discourse and 15 of the same, sections 4 and 10.³⁰

He had already determined that the priesthood was simply one of the offices of the state in Discourse I, [chapter 5](#):

We have so far put forward, by way of preliminaries, a global account of the parts of the city; and we have said that it is in their action and perfect mutual intercommunication (not subject to any impediment from outside either) that the tranquility of the city consists. We now take up the subject of these parts again, so that through a richer elucidation of them (from their activities or ends as well as from the other causes appropriate to them) the causes of tranquility and its opposite might be further clarified. We shall say, then, that the parts or offices of the city are of six kinds, as Aristotle said in Politics VII, [chapter 7](#): agriculture, manufacture, the military, the financial, the priesthood and the judicial or councilor. Three of these, viz. the priesthood, the military and the judicial, are parts of the city in an unqualified sense, and in civil communities they are usually called the notables. The others are called parts in a broad sense, in that they are functions necessary to the city according to the opinion of Aristotle in Politics VII, [chapter 7](#). And the multitude of these is usually called plebian. These,

ideoque nec de futura vita ipsiusque felicitate vel miseria, nec de vero sacerdotio propterea instituto recte senserunt. Locuti tamen sumus in ipsorum ritibus, ut eorum a vero sacerdotio, Christianorum scilicet, differencia et sacerdotalis partis necessitas in communitatibus manifestius appareret. Marsilius, *Def.pac.* I.5,14, p. 28,7–20; cf. Marsilius, *Def.pac.* I.5,10, p. 25,17–28.

³⁰ *Personas et ipsarum qualitatem ac numerum ad officia civitatis, sic quoque civilia omnia determinare, ad principantis fidelis auctoritatem secundum leges aut probata consuetudines tantummodo pertinere: (12^a prime et 15^a, 4^a et 10^a).* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.12, p. 605,13–17. Here I have translated *principans fidelis* as Christian prince; cf. Brett, trans., p. 549. There is nothing in this conclusion that specifically requires the prince to be Christian, i.e. *fidelis*, as Marsilius's cross-references make clear. In his cross-references no mention is made of the *principans fidelis*, but rather simply the *principans*; Marsilius, *Def.pac.* I.15.10, p. 92,5–15. In Discourse III, conclusion 12, Marsilius began detailing the authority and power of the Christian prince or legislator (*principans/legislator fidelis*), while his cross-references ensure that the same principle is valid for the non-Christian prince or legislator. The point Marsilius is making is that the Christian prince/legislator has authority over all offices of the state, including those pertaining to the clergy.

then are the more familiar parts of the city or realm, to which all the others can appropriately be reduced.³¹

This was the decisive step. Based on Aristotle, and the material, formal, and efficient causes of the state, Marsilius categorized the priesthood as a fundamental, indispensable, and intrinsic function of the state, regardless the type of priesthood being discussed. Religion is integral to all civic society, and as such, the priesthood is an integral office of the state (*officium civitatis*). The same holds true for Christian priesthood, which is the only true priesthood of the only true religion, based not on reason, but on revelation. That revelation does not alter the fundamental function of the priesthood in the state. Even the Christian priesthood – which serves the only true, revealed religion, that religion that reveals the final cause of human existence, of individuals and of the *communio civium* – is still, nevertheless, a function of the state, subject to the *legislator humanus*, which in a Christian state is the *legislator fidelis*. Here Marsilius has made the spiritual subject to the temporal under the mode of being of the temporal realm and the material, formal, and efficient causes of the state, necessary for living well. A greater contrast to papal hierocratic theory as it had developed in terms of papal monarchy from Innocent III to John XXII cannot be imagined, though Marsilius's position would not have been radical, but reasonable and in accordance with the theory of the *Eigenkirchen* of the early Middle Ages.³² If Marsilius espoused a radical new view, he did so in keeping with the pre-Gregorian position.

In this light, only the state has coercive power, as Marsilius asserted in conclusion 15 of Discourse III:

That by the authority of the legislator only he who exercises the office of prince has coercive jurisdiction, in both goods and persons, over every individual mortal person of whatever condition they may be, and over

³¹ *Postquam premissus est a nobis totalis sermo de partibus civitatis, in quarum actione ac communicatione perfecta invicem nec extrinsecus impedita tranquillitatem civitatis consistere diximus, ut earum ampliori determinatione, tam ex operibus seu finibus quam aliis appropriatis causis ipsarum, cause tranquillitatis et sui oppositi manifestentur amplius, de ipsis resumentes dicamus, quod partes seu officia civitatis sunt sex generum, ut dixit Aristoteles 7^o Politice, capitulo 6^o: agricultura, artificium, militaris, pecuniativa, sacerdotium et iudicialis seu consiliativa. Quorum tria, videlicet sacerdotium, propugnativa et iudicialis, simpliciter sunt partes civitatis, quas etiam in communitatibus civilibus honorabilitatem dicere solent. Reliqua vero dicuntur partes large, ut quia sunt officia necessaria civitati secundum Aristotelis sententiam 7^o Politice, capitulo 7^o. Et solet horum multitudo dici vulgaris. Sunt igitur hee partes famosiores civitatis seu regni, ad quas omnes alie convenieter reduci possunt.* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* I.5.1, p. 20,6–23; Brett, pp. 22–23.

³² See Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006).

every collective body of laypersons or clergy: chapters 15 and 17 of the first discourse, chapters 4, 5, and 8 of the second.³³

As a function of the state, the clergy has no coercive power that is not granted it by the legislator. The Marsilian state is a lay state, but one that is governed by ecclesiastics, that is, the *communio fidelium* that is synonymous with the *communio civium*. The state and the church are one and the same with the power and authority of government residing with the laity.

In this light, the true radical nature of Marsilius's *Defender of the Peace* comes to the fore. While scholars may legitimately continue to debate the extent to which Marsilius advocated a natural, secular state based on the sovereignty of the people, the true force of his argument and his major intent was to present a radical redefinition of the Church, though one he felt harkened back to apostolic times, and one that was not so different from the pre-Gregorian Church. The primary cause of turmoil was the clergy usurping coercive jurisdiction or power from the lay leaders, setting themselves up as a class above the non-ordained. For Marsilius, all true believers are ecclesiastics, and as such, comprise the *communio fidelium*, which is the general council of the Church, wherein the sovereignty of the Church lies, the same sovereignty as that of the *communio civium*, the Marsilian legislator. The priesthood is an office, or function, of the state, the same as the military or the garbage collector. Both are subject to the civic legislator.

When the interpreter analyzes the *Defender of the Peace* by beginning with Discourse I, especially when the context in which Marsilius placed Discourse I is ignored, a natural, secular interpretation of the state is a most understandable outcome. Only when the entire treatise is read in light of Discourse III does the true nature of Marsilius's work appear, whereby the major concern he sought to address is presented in Discourse II. Discourse I then appears as a requisite pretext of Discourse II, whereby Marsilius was primarily concerned to re-establish the Church on lay grounds since the entire cause of the lack of peace is the usurpation of coercive jurisdiction by the clergy; to do so he focused on the material, formal, and efficient causes of coercive jurisdiction/power that then are applied to the state as such, whether in a republican form or in an imperial form. Marsilius was concerned with the origins and structures

³³ *Super omnem singularem personam mortalem cuiuscumque condicionis existat, atque collegium laicorum aut clericorum, auctoritate legislatoris solummodo principantem iurisdictionem, tam realem quam personale, coactivam habere: (15^o et 17^o prime, 4^o, 5^o ac 8^o secunde).* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.2.15, pp. 605,28–606,3; Brett, p. 550.

of power, not with the forms of government, and whether those origins and structures of power were primarily, originally, and theologically in the temporal, secular, realm of the laity, or in the spiritual, eternal realm of the clergy. Based on the fact that the truth of the eternal realm was based on revelation, and not reason as such, all temporal jurisdiction, that is, political power, resided in the realm of the laity, that is, the material, formal, and efficient causes of the state and its *bene vivendi*. Yet the final cause is also useful for living well within the temporal realm, and therefore, the temporal rulers, or the *pars principans*, are by definition the ones to determine how that eternal realm is to be useful in this world (*in hoc saeculo*). A secular view of the state indeed, but one that is first and foremost an ecclesiology, since in a Christian state the *communio fidelium* is synonymous with the *communio civium*.

That was Marsilius's solution to the problems he saw in his society, and he constructed his political theory accordingly, whereby based on Aristotle, the priestly function of the non-Christian state was likewise subject to the *communio civium*, Marsilius's *legislator*. Thus Marsilius submitted his work to the judgment of a general Church council, his own *communio fidelium*.³⁴ What we find in Marsilius is not a disjunction between "the Church" and "the State," but between reason and revelation, whereby the rational analysis of political power according to the material, formal, and efficient cause is valid independently of revelation and the final cause, a revelation that Marsilius asserted in no uncertain terms was the revelation of the truth of Christianity,³⁵ which concerns only the eternal, spiritual realm of the *bene vivendi*, though is useful for "living well" in the temporal realm. In this light, the *legislator humanus* is the *legislator fidelis*. A warped, diabolical ecclesiology was the cause of the lack of peace in Marsilius's Italy,³⁶ which Marsilius combatted by espousing a radical redefinition of that ecclesiology, to place ecclesiology on rational and revealed grounds. Thus Marsilius's apocalypticism: the devil had infiltrated the very structures of the Church.

Pope John XXII condemned six articles drawn from the *Defender of the Peace* in 1328, based on the treatise of William of Cremona, the prior

³⁴ Marsilius *Def.pac.* III.3, p. 613,5–16.

³⁵ Cf. Lester Field, *Liberty, Dominion, and the Two Swords. On the Origins of Western Political Theology (180–398)* (Notre Dame, IN, 1998). Marsilius opposes the Gelasian theory of the two powers, and does not cite Gelasius, positively or negatively, at all in the entire *Defensor Pacis*. Gelasian theory had been the basis of medieval political thought, but here Marsilius has gone beyond the two-swords theory to advocate only one sword, the sword of coercive power wielded by the *legislator*.

³⁶ Marsilius *Def.pac.* II.25,79, p. 473,9–23; II.26.13, p. 502,6–15; p. 510,1–6.

general of the OESA, whom John had asked to offer a refutation of the identified articles.³⁷ Yet Marsilius was not subjected to a heresy trial, for he had the protection of Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, and had accompanied Lewis on his march on Rome and the establishment of the anti-Pope Nicholas V. When Lewis retreated back north of the Alps in 1330, Marsilius was still with him and stayed for the rest of his life with Lewis at court in Munich. While Marsilius's *Defender of the Peace* supported Lewis's position, it did not spawn a widespread movement. There was no real social basis for the development of a "Marsilianism." Indeed, the *Defender of the Peace* had limited influence, at least until it was rediscovered by Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell, translated into English, and used as a theoretical foundation for the Act of Supremacy in 1534, declaring Henry VIII, King of England to be the head of the Church of England, Marsilius's *legislator fidelis* transformed.

Yet Marsilius's *Defender of the Peace* represents one extreme in the political theory of the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. While Marsilius did not use the term "reformation" as such for what he was attempting to accomplish, he was advocating a radical re-forming of the entire ecclesiastical structure and its relationship to lay power. In doing so, he was implicitly replying to and refuting the other political extreme, an Augustinian front supporting the papal position, and expressed most emphatically in the treatise of the Augustinian hermit, Giles of Rome, *On Ecclesiastical Power* (*De ecclesiastica potestate*).

Giles of Rome had been elected prior general of his Order in 1292. Giles composed his *On Ecclesiastical Power* a decade later, dedicated to Boniface VIII, in the context of Boniface's fierce conflicts with Philip IV of France. Having previously been close both to Boniface and to Philip, Giles sided squarely with Boniface, placing his Order behind papal policy and theory, having written in 1297 his *On Resigning the Papacy* (*De renuntiatione pape*) defending the legitimacy of Boniface's election.³⁸ Giles had been appointed Archbishop of Bourges before the conflict broke out, and his support of Boniface was well received: Boniface increasingly granted the OESA privileges in response to Giles's support, and Boniface used Giles's *On Ecclesiastical Power*, at times word for word, for his *Unam Sanctam*.³⁹

³⁷ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 59–63.

³⁸ See Aegidius Romanus, *De renuntiatione pape*, ed. John R. Eastman, Texts and Studies in Religion 52 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 229–237 (hereafter cited as: Aeg.Rom. *De renun.*).

³⁹ For all of the above, see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 16–41.

Giles began his work by pointing to the necessity for Christians of not being ignorant “of those things which build up faith and morals,” for such “will be condemned by God in the future and not in the least acknowledged by the Lord.”⁴⁰ Giles repeated his major purpose in writing the work in chapter 12 of part 2:

As wise men have noted, however, an end imposes a necessity upon those things which are ordered to that end. Thus, if the end of a saw is to cut hard material, it is necessary that it be made of iron and have teeth, for it would not otherwise be adapted to the cutting of hard material. And the end of this work is the education of all the faithful or of the whole Christian people; for it is expedient for the whole people to understand ecclesiastical power lest, through such dangerous ignorance, they be ignored by the Lord at the future judgment.⁴¹

As we have seen, Marsilius opened Discourse II by asserting what was necessary to believe for salvation, namely the canonical Scriptures, an assertion we can read as a direct response to Giles.⁴² Moreover, the entire purpose Marsilius set himself was to restore peace, and Giles had the same goal, namely, that peace is essential for the well-being of the temporal and spiritual realm:

First, therefore, we shall discuss the question of peace, for the sake of which the Church must particularly concern herself ... Therefore, just as, among natural phenomena, it rests with the general heavenly power to attract things in order to prevent discontinuities, so in the government of men will it rest especially with the heavenly and ecclesiastical power, which

⁴⁰ *Quoniam, ut Apostolus protestatur, “Si quis autem ignorat, ignorabitur,” id est, ut glossa exponit, a Deo in futuro reprobabitur et a Domino minime cognoscetur, velut in evangelio legitur, quod malis et ad sinistram stantibus “Nescio vos” Dominus est dicturus: ne ergo in iudicio ignoremur a Domino, et ne reprobemur ab ipso, summo opere debemus ignorantiam fugere, et potissime illorum nescientiam, ut glossa exponit, que fidem edificat atque mores.* Aegidius Romanus, *De ecclesiastica potestate* 1.1, ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson, *Giles of Rome’s On Ecclesiastical Power. A Medieval Theory of World Government* (New York, 2004), p. 4; trans. p. 5; hereafter cited as Aeg.Rom. *De ecl.pot.*

⁴¹ *Sed, ut sapientes notaverunt, finis imponit necessitatem hiis que sunt ad finem, ut si finis serre est secare fura, necesse est quod sit ferrea et dentata, quia aliter non posset apte dura secare. Finis autem huius operis est omnes fideles sive totum populum Christianum erudire quia toti populo expedit scire ecclesiasticam potestatem, ne per tam periculosam ignorantiam ignoraretur a Domino in futuro iudicio.* Aeg. Rom. *De ecl.pot.* 2.12, p. 188; trans. pp. 189–191.

⁴² In his discussion of papalist responses to the *Defensor Pacis*, and specifically that of the Augustinian William of Cremona, Thomas Turley argued that William “repeated old arguments that were part of a different discourse, the discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of ecclesiology that was current at the turn of the fourteenth century. Marsilius had attacked these in Discourse I of the *Defensor Pacis* – especially the views of William’s fellow Augustinians Giles of Rome and James of Viterbo.” Turley, “The Impact of Marsilius: Papalist Responses to the *Defensor Pacis*.” In Moreno-Riaño, *The World of Marsilius of Padua* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 47–64, 51. Yet here it is clear that Marsilius is also dealing with Giles in Discourse II.

is Catholic and universal, to draw factions and their disputes together, lest wars arise, and lest peace, which is the bond of love which unites the faithful, be destroyed, so that the ecclesiastical prince may fully govern and rule them ... What is said in the decretal *Novit*, therefore, was well said: that even though the Supreme Pontiff can rebuke every Christian for every mortal sin – so that if any dispute concerning any temporal matter whatsoever is brought forward together with an allegation of a crime, the Church will be able to intervene in this dispute by reason of criminal sin – she must nonetheless do this especially when that criminal sin militates against the peace and can stir up wars among the peoples. And this is made clear by an example drawn from natural phenomena: that, although the heaven cooperates in the production of every effect, it is nonetheless given especially to the force of heaven to ensure that the concord and unity and conjunction of inferior things be not impeded. Thus, even though the ecclesiastical power could – that is, could fittingly – intervene in any temporal dispute whatsoever by reason of an allegation of criminal sin, the Church must nonetheless do this especially when the crime is detrimental to the peace by which the faithful are bound to one another and united and conjoined.⁴³

Before Marsilius had asserted peace as the primary purpose and goal of civic life, Giles had already done so. Yet what would ensure peace was the point of contention. For Giles, the Supreme Pontiff was the Defender of the Peace, and after stating the need for Christians not to be ignorant of ecclesiastical power in the opening paragraph of his treatise, Giles asserted:

⁴³ *Primo ergo agemus de pace, propter quam precipue debet se intrmittere Ecclesia ... Sicut ergo in naturalibus res trahere ne discontinuentur, spectat ad virtutem celestem et generalem, sic in gubernacione hominum trahere partes et litigia parcium, ne fiant guerre et ne tollatur pax, que est vinculum caritatis que unit fideles, ut princeps ecclesiasticus possit eos plene gubernare et regere, precipue spectabit ad potestatem celestem et ecclesiasticam, que est Catholica et universalis ... Bene ergo dictum est quod dicitur in illa decretali Novit: quod, etsi Summus Pontifex de quolibet peccato mortali potest corripere quemlibet christianum, propter quod, si deferebatur quecumque questio de quibuscumque temporalibus cum denunciacione criminis, racione peccati criminalis poterit Ecclesia de illa questione se intrmittere, precipue tamen hoc debet facere cum illud criminale peccatum militat contra pacem et potest populorum guerram suscitare. Quod patet ex exemplo inducto in naturalibus. Quia, licet celum cooperetur ad produccionem cuiuslibet effectus, specialiter tamen attribuitur virtui celesti agere ne concordia et unitas et coniunccio istorum inferiorum impediatur. Sic et, si potestatis ecclesiastica per denunciacionem cuiuslibet peccati criminalis posset, id est deceret eam, de quacumque questione temporalium se intrmittere, precipue tamen decet Ecclesiam hoc facere cum crimen est contra pacem, per quam fideles ad invicem concordant, uniuntur et coniunguntur.* Aeg.Rom., *De eccl.pot.* 3.6, pp. 334–336; trans. pp. 335–337. James of Viterbo likewise asserted peace as a primary goal of the governance of the Church, yet placed such peace in the eternal context, or rather, the Augustinian context, whereby true peace can never be achieved in the temporal realm, but only in the heavenly realms: James of Viterbo, *De regimine Christiano*, 1.4, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson, *James of Viterbo De Regimine Christiano. A Critical Edition and Translation* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 50–60; trans. pp. 51–61. Hereafter cited as Jac.Vit. *De reg.*

Now it rests with the Supreme Pontiff and his fullness of power to ordain the articles of faith and to establish those things which seems to belong to good morals. For were a question to arise concerning either faith or morals, it would rest with him whose purpose and reason this is to give a definitive judgment and to establish and ordain most firmly what Christians should believe and toward which side the faithful should lean in the matters under dispute. But because those things which are of faith, and also those which are of morals, must be held by the universal Church, consequently, then, and properly, where dissensions or questions can arise over morals or faith, it rests only with the one who has attained to the summit of the whole Church to bring such disputes to an end and to resolve the questions which emerge. And because only the Supreme Pontiff is known to be such a one, it will rest with him alone to set such questions and related issues in order when they arise. Thus, teachers can compose treatises and handbooks of faith and morals by way of instruction, but it will pertain to the Supreme Pontiff alone to declare what must be held as authoritative where dispute or question might arise. And so if, as the glosses of the masters indicate, he who is ignorant of matters pertaining to faith and morals will be ignored and will receive a sentence of condemnation from God at the Last Judgment, we do well to compose a treatise concerning the power of the Supreme Priest according to the small measure of our knowledge, and to seek out the truth from what is said on the foregoing subject in the works of saints and teachers lest, through ignorance, we be ignored and finally judged by the Lord.⁴⁴

Marsilius, on the other hand, after having started Discourse II with the knowledge necessary for salvation, continued by asserting that in cases of question or disputed interpretation it was only the general council that could make such determinations. He was here following Giles, yet whereas Giles asserted the Supreme Pontiff as the court of last appeal, Marsilius stated the same of the *legislator* of the *communio fidelium*. Thus,

⁴⁴ *Nam ad Summum Pontificem et ad eius plenitudinem potestatis spectat ordinare fidei symbolum et statuere que ad bonos mores spectare videntur. Quia, sive de fide sive de moribus questio oriretur, ad ipsum spectaret diffinitivam dare sententiam ac statuere nec non et firmiter ordinare quod Christiani sentire deberent et in quam partem eorum unde sunt orta litigia esset a fidelibus declinandum, cuius causa et ratio hec existit. Nam quia que sunt fidei, et etiam que sunt morum ab universali Ecclesia sunt tenenda, exinde igitur et merito, unde dissensiones seu questiones oriri possent de moribus vel de fide, ad illum solum spectat huiusmodi lites dirimere et questiones exortas dissolvere qui est totius Ecclesie apicem assecutus. Et quia solus Summus Pontifex noscitur esse talis, ad solum ipsum spectabit de exortis talibus et circumadiacentibus ordinare. Possunt itaque doctores per viam doctrine de fide et moribus tractatus et libellos componere; sed quid sentencialiter sit tenendum, ubi posset lis vel questio exoriri, ad solum Summam Pontificem pertinebit. Quare, si de pertinentibus ad fidem et mores, ut glosse diffiniunt magistrales, qui ignorat ignorabitur et a Deo in finali iudicio reprobacionis sententiam sorcietur, bene se habet de potestate Summi Sacerdotii iuxta modulum nostre sciencie tractatum componere, et per dicta canonis sanctorum atque doctorum de prefata materia veritatem perquirere, ne per ignoranciam ignoremur et a Dmoino finaliter iudicemur. Aeg. Rom. De eccl. pot. 1.1, p. 4; trans. p. 5.*

before continuing along Giles's lines of argument, Marsilius first had to defend his position, which he did in Discourse I. By the time Marsilius reached the opening of Discourse II, he had already dealt with the central point in his treatise, namely, that the Supreme Pontiff, or any other bishop or priest, has no coercive power, and Marsilius returned to the point in [chapter 3](#) of Discourse II.⁴⁵

Yet Giles's *On Ecclesiastical Power* might not have been the only Augustinian treatise Marsilius had in mind to refute in his *magnum opus*. The other central intertext for Marsilius was the Augustinian James of Viterbo's *On Christian Rule (De regimine Christiano)*.⁴⁶ *On Christian Rule*, likewise dedicated to Boniface VIII, has traditionally been considered to have been composed between 5 December 1301 and 11 October 1303, though more recent scholarship has argued for dating the treatise to the time when James was still in Paris, before he left for Naples, thus by the year 1300.⁴⁷ James was appointed Archbishop of Naples on 3 September 1302, the highest ecclesiastical office in the realm of Robert d'Anjou.⁴⁸ Though Giles's *On Ecclesiastical Power* is more well known, James's *On Christian Rule* enjoyed considerable prestige in its own day, with the Augustinian Alexander of San Elpidio appropriating James's work as the basis for his own *On Ecclesiastical Power*, as did the Franciscan Alvaro Pelayo for his *The Lament of the Church (De planctu ecclesiae)*.

The major point for James was that the Church is a kingdom, the kingdom of Christ:

First, then, we must consider that the Church is most rightly, truly and aptly called a kingdom ... That the Church may be called a kingdom is shown by the Apostle at 1 Corinthians 15, where, speaking of Christ, he says: "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father" ... But the kingdom of Christ is called the whole of creation in one sense, and the Church in another. For it is according to the power of divinity that the whole of creation is called the kingdom of Christ; but the Church is called the kingdom of Christ according to the property of faith that comes from Him and through which He reigns over

⁴⁵ Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.3, pp. 152–158; cf. *Def.pac.* I.10, pp. 47–51.

⁴⁶ By "intertext" here I am meaning a text Marsilius had in the forefront of his mind and intended to refute in his *Defensor Pacis*, though one he never cites; it is a presumed text, or an assumed text, to which Marsilius is replying.

⁴⁷ Dyson, *James of Viterbo*, pp. xvii–xviii; Saak, "The Life and Works of James of Viterbo," forthcoming in *Brill's Companion to James of Viterbo*.

⁴⁸ See *L'État Angevin. Pouvoir, culture et société entre XIIIe et XIVe siècle*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 245 (Rome, 1998); Ronald G. Witt, *The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge, 2012).

the faithful themselves ... This ecclesiastical kingdom is called the kingdom of Christ because He Himself is the founder and ruler of this kingdom and because He Himself has purchased it with his blood. It is called the kingdom of Christ both inasmuch as He is God and inasmuch as He is man.⁴⁹

The monarch of that kingdom on earth is the vicar of Christ, the pope.⁵⁰ Yet James constructed his argument based on the Aristotelian hierarchy of the family, the village, the city, and the kingdom,⁵¹ as did Marsilius, though James cited Augustine as his authority and came to a very different conclusion. For James, the sovereign of the kingdom is the vicar of Christ, whereas for Marsilius, it is the human legislator. James likewise asserted the importance of peace for the kingdom. Peace is the fourth condition that renders the Church as one, the first three being the unity of wholeness, the unity of similarity, and the unity of direction.⁵² Marsilius surely had James in mind when composing his *Defender of the Peace*, though it was still Giles who served as his major opponent.

In addition to the arguments set forth here for Giles being Marsilius's primary silent interlocutor, there are two issues that seem to confirm as much: the priesthood's temporal jurisdiction (*potestas jurisdictionis*) and apostolic poverty, the latter of which was not dealt with by James. In the fourteenth conclusion of the second chapter of Discourse III, Marsilius asserted "That no bishop or priest, as such, has any principate or coercive jurisdiction over any clergyman or layperson, even if that person is a heretic."⁵³ This was the major point of his entire treatise and throughout Marsilius argues against the clergy's power of jurisdiction (*potestas jurisdictionis*), claiming that if the clergy as such, or a particular bishop, namely, the bishop of Rome, should exercise a power of jurisdiction, he does so only from the authority of the general council or Christian legislator, so that all power of jurisdiction, all coercive authority belongs to

⁴⁹ *Primum igitur considerandum est quod ecclesia rectissime, uerissime et conuenientissime regnum dicitur ... Quod autem Ecclesia regnum dicatur patet per Apostolum prima ad Cor. xii', ubi, loquens de Christo, ait: "Deinde finis cum tradiderit regnum Deo et Patri" ... Sed aliter dicitur regnum Christi omnis creatura et aliter ecclesia. Regnum enim Christi dicitur omnis creatura secundum potestatem diuinitatis; ecclesia uero dicitur regnum Christi secundum proprietatem fidei que de illo est et per quam regnat in ipsis fidelibus ... Hoc autem ecclesiasticum regnum dicitur regnum Christi quia ipse huius regni est institutor et rector, et quia ipsum suo sanguine acquisiuit. Dicitur autem regnum Christi et in quantum Deus et in quantum homo.* Jac.Vit. *De reg.* 1.1, pp. 6–14; trans. pp. 7–15.

⁵⁰ Jac.Vit. *De reg.* 1.1, p. 16.

⁵¹ Jac.Vit. *De reg.* 1.1, p. 12.

⁵² Jac.Vit. *De reg.* 1.3, p. 50.

⁵³ *Principatum seu iurisdictionem coactivam supra quemquam clericum aut laicum, eiam si hereticus extet, episcopum vel sacerdotem in quantum huiusmodi nullam habere.* Marsilius, *Def.pac.* III.2.14, p. 605,24–27; Brett, p. 550.

the Christian legislator, even if exercised by a particular bishop, and the Christian legislator can revoke such power as deemed necessary.⁵⁴ The only power a priest, or bishop, has essentially is the power to effect the sacraments, the power resulting from his ordination (*potestas ordinis*).⁵⁵ This distinction, between the clergy's power of ordination (*potestas ordinis*) and power of jurisdiction (*potestas jurisdictionis*), is the central point of Marsilius's treatise, rejecting any power of jurisdiction inherent in the clergy.

Though Giles did not use this distinction for his argument in his *On Ecclesiastical Power*, he had previously done so rather extensively in his treatise defending Boniface VIII's election, *On Resigning the Papacy*.⁵⁶ Perhaps the central issue that makes Giles's *On Resigning the Papacy* more than simply a polemical work defending Boniface is Giles's treatment of the distinction between the pope's power of ordination and power of jurisdiction. Such a distinction can be traced back at least to the twelfth century and Gratian's *Decretum*,⁵⁷ yet with Giles it becomes the foundation of his ecclesiology. Indeed, as he wrote in chapter 10 of the work:

Those [powers] therefore are distinct, [namely] those that are the power of ordination, which concern the character or the perfection of character, which the simple bishop has, and those that are the power of jurisdiction, the plenitude of which that pope has in the papacy. Therefore beyond the simple episcopal order, consequently a character or the perfection of a character is not imprinted in the being of a primate or a patriarch in becoming an archbishop or a metropolitan. Indeed, on this distinction the very core of the present issue greatly depends, because those things that are of order are not able to be taken away or to cease to be, but those things that are of jurisdiction are able to be taken away and to cease to be, therefore we desire to declare more completely how in the papacy beyond the simple episcopacy a character or the perfection of character is not imprinted, but only the full jurisdiction of power is acquired from this.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Marsilius argues this throughout Discourse II; see e.g. Marsilius *Def.pac.* II.22.11, p. 430,9–21.

⁵⁵ Marsilius *Def.pac.* II.15.2, pp. 326,15–328,15.

⁵⁶ Giles based much of his argument on the distinction between the pope's power of ordination and his power of jurisdiction, even if not always explicitly stated. For an explicit treatment, see Aeg. Rom., *De renun.* 10.5, pp. 229–237. Augustinus of Ancona is credited with having used the distinction between the pope's *potestas ordinis* and *potestas jurisdictionis* to its fullest extent; see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 72–84, 132–143.

⁵⁷ Brian Tierney, *Foundations of Conciliar Theory. The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 31–36.

⁵⁸ *Distincta ergo sunt ea, que sunt ordinis, que respiciunt caracterem vel perfectionem characteris, que potest simplex episcopus, et ea, que sunt iurisdictionis, cuius plenitudinem habet papa in papatu. Ergo ultra simplicem ordinem episcopalem, et per consequens in esse primatem seu patriarcham ad esse archiepiscopum seu metropolitanum non imprimitur caracter nec perfectio characteris. Verum quia ex hoc dicto multum dependet tota materia presentis negocii, quia ea que sunt ordinis, non possunt tolli nec desinere*

It is essential to grasp these terms to understand Giles's argument. While the distinction as such was not original with Giles, what he made of it was.

The power of ordination is granted in the sacrament of ordination. The power of jurisdiction is given in the confirmation of the individual in his ecclesiastical office. In this light, the distinction is that between the sacramental nature of an ecclesiastical office and the governmental administration of the office. The distinction applies to all ecclesiastical offices. The parish priest receives his power of ordination, namely, the power to consecrate the elements in the eucharist and to perform the other sacraments incumbent upon his office, in his ordination, whereas the parish priest's power of jurisdiction is his administrative power to govern the parish. The sacrament of ordination impresses a stamp upon the soul (*caracter*), thereby forever changing the nature of the soul of the one ordained. Upon ordination, the soul is changed ontologically, and as such, the "character" remains even after death. Even a priest who has fallen into heresy and has been defrocked still possesses the ontologically altered soul of the ordained, and could still effect the sacraments. Such a priest, however, would have lost his power of jurisdiction, the legal status giving him the authority to administer the sacraments for his parish and to govern the parish. Whereas the power of ordination is the sacramental power of the office, the power of jurisdiction is the legal and administrative governing power of the office.

Giles goes further to equate the power of the papacy with the power of jurisdiction:

And so that this might be very clear, we should say that if someone who is elected as pope is neither a priest nor a bishop, he would not be able to do those things that pertain to ordination, because he would not be able to consecrate the body of Christ, nor to confer ordination. Nevertheless, he would be able to do all those things pertaining to his jurisdiction, such as conferring prebends, honors, and other things of this nature.⁵⁹

Moreover, for Giles, the papacy contains the "fullness of power" (*plenitudo potestatis*), and thus the papacy has "all jurisdiction,"⁶⁰ which includes

esse, ea vero, que sunt iurisdictionis, tolli possunt vel desinere esse, ideo volumus perfectius declarare, quomodo in papatu ultra episcopatum simplicem non imprimatur caracter nec perfectio characteris, sed solum ex hoc acquiritur plena iuridicchio potestatis. Aeg. Rom. De renun. 10.5, p. 233.

⁵⁹ *Et ut hec magis pateant, dicemus, quod, si electus in papam non sit nec sacerdos nec episcopus, non poterit ea, que sunt ordinis, quia non poterit conficere corpus Christi nec poterit conferre ordines; poterit tamen ea, que sunt iurisdictionis, ut poterit conferre prebendas, dignitates et alia huiusmodi facere.* Aeg. Rom. De renun. 10.5, p. 232.

⁶⁰ *Papatus vero omnem iuridiccionem continet.* *Ibid.*, p. 230.

jurisdiction over temporal affairs and offices.⁶¹ In this light, though Giles does not say so explicitly, if someone were elected as pope who was neither a priest nor a bishop, that individual would still have the papal *plenitudo potestatis*, and truly be pope, even when that person was not the bishop of Rome.

An explicit argument to this end was formulated by Giles's younger confrère, Augustinus of Ancona, though the basic principle is already there in Giles.⁶² It was, moreover, highly likely that Marsilius had Augustinus's position in mind as well. Augustinus first developed his position on the papacy as identified with the pope's power of jurisdiction (*potestas jurisdictionis*) in two early Quodlibetal Questions, which bear the titles today of his *On the Power of the College of Cardinals* (*De potestate collegii*) and his *Treatise on the Two-Fold Power of Prelates and the Laity* (*Tractatus de duplici potestate praelatorum et laicorum*), both dated to c. 1315, when the former rector of the University of Paris in 1313, namely Marsilius of Padua, was most likely still in the city and may very well have been present at Augustinus's disputations.⁶³ Augustinus later based his hierocratic theory on this distinction in his *magnum opus*, his *Comprehensive Treatment of Ecclesiastical Power*, written in 1326 to counter the position of Marsilius, but it had already been put forward in the political context of the papal vacancy of 1314.⁶⁴ Giles as well as Augustinus argued positions that Marsilius found inimical, requiring refutation, and when Giles and Augustinus were joined with James, it was a formidable Augustinian front against which Marsilius directed his *Defender of the Peace*.

Though James and Augustinus espoused positions Marsilius fiercely attacked, Giles appears as his primary opponent for another issue central to Giles's position, which Marsilius devoted much space in his *Defender of the Peace* to refuting, was that of the right of the clergy to possess property, which was not a major issue for James and only became a major issue for Augustinus in his *Comprehensive Treatment*. Whereas Giles in his *On Ecclesiastical Power* developed the theory of the lordship of grace (*dominium gratie*), Marsilius countered by espousing the Franciscan view of apostolic poverty. For Giles, the pope, as the successor to Christ, rules

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 231–232.

⁶² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 132–134.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126–132.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 106–156; see also Saak, "The Episcopacy of Christ: Augustinus of Ancona, OESA (d. 1328) and Political Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages." *Questio* 6 (2006), 259–275. The most extensive treatment of the Augustinian political theology to date is Thomas J. Renna, *The Conflict between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire during the Early Avignon Era, 1300–1360* (Lewiston, NY, 2013).

over Christ's kingdom on earth and all temporal and spiritual goods are subject to the the command of the Supreme Pontiff.⁶⁵ Thus all lordship (*dominium*) is through the command of the Supreme Pontiff, and no one can justly possess ownership without the pope's stamp of approval, which extends to the ownership of inheritances as well:

... we wish to show that there is no lordship with justice, whether it be a lordship over temporal things or (and here there is more possibility that doubt may arise) over lay persons, except under the Church and as instituted through the Church. For we shall prove by arguments and authorities that for a man to be carnally begotten does not suffice to enable him to be the lord of anything or to possess anything with justice unless he is also spiritually regenerated through the Church; so that the man who is begotten of a carnal father cannot with justice succeed to a paternal inheritance, and cannot with justice acquire lordship of the paternal estate, unless he is also regenerated through the Church.⁶⁶

This contrasts completely with Marsilius's argument that the clergy, priests, and bishops, are to follow Christ's example on earth and accept a humble and poor position. "Christ and his apostles," Marsilius asserted,

on their way through this world taught and observed the status of poverty and humility. Moreover all the faithful should hold as certain that every teaching or counsel of Christ and the apostles was in some way meritorious in respect of eternal life. So it seems in every way appropriate to inquire into their poverty, what it was, of what nature, and how great, so that it should not be concealed from those on the same journey who wish to imitate them.⁶⁷

Marsilius advocated a Franciscan "poor use" (*usus pauper*),⁶⁸ to refute the claims of the clergy to any inherent right to *dominium*,⁶⁹ before continuing

⁶⁵ Aeg.Rom. *De eccl.pot.* 2.4, pp. 92–94.

⁶⁶ ... volumus declarare quod nullum est dominium cum iusticia, sive sit dominium super res temporales sive super personas laicas, de quo magis posset dubium exoriri, nisi sit sub Ecclesia et per Ecclesiam institutum. Probabimus enim rationibus et auctoritatibus quod non sufficiet quod quicumque sit generatus carnaliter, nisi sit per Ecclesiam regeneratus spiritualiter, quod posit cum iusticia rei alicui dominari nec rem aliquam possidere, ut hic homo qui est a patre carnali generatus, nisi sit per Ecclesiam regeneratus, in hereditatem paternam non potest cum iusticia subcedere nec dominium rerum patrum poterit cum iusticia obtinere. Aeg.Rom. *De eccl.pot.* 2.7, p. 130; trans. p. 131.

⁶⁷ ... Christum et ipsius apostolos viatores statum paupertatis et humilitatis docuisse atque servasse; certumque tenendum sit fidelibus, doctrinam seu concilium omne Christi et apostolorum eterne vite meritorium aliquantulum exiitisse; convenienter utique inquirendum videtur de ipsorum paupertate, que, qualis, quantave fuerit, ne imitari volentes eosdem hanc lateat viatores. Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.12.1, pp. 263,17–264,4; trans. Brett, p. 249.

⁶⁸ On the issue of "poor use," see David Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty. The Origin of the "Usus Pauper" Controversy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

⁶⁹ Marsilius, *Def.pac.* II.13, pp. 275–300. On Marsilius's "Franciscan" position, see Gabrielle Gonzales, "The King of the Locusts Who Destroyed the Poverty of Christ: Pope John XXII,

on to attack the claims of the papacy's plenitude of power. The clergy, for Marsilius, priests and bishops alike, even the bishop of Rome, were to be the imitators of Christ and thus submit themselves to a humble and poor state, leaving all *dominium* to the general council or the Christian legislator.

At issue here is not only an ecclesiology and political theory; Giles and Marsilius likewise diverge with respect to the Christ to whom they are referring. For Giles, it is the triumphant, risen Christ, the Lord of All, who is the model for constructing the relationship between Christ and his imitators, whereas for Marsilius, it is the human, suffering Christ. Moreover, Giles's position of the necessity of a lordship of grace (*dominium gratie*) is based on his interpretation of the effects of the Fall; original sin has marred human kind, and thus only through regeneration, which is effected through the sacraments of the Church, can an individual justly hold property or office. A sinner, someone outside the Church, is in a state of sin so that he or she has no right of possession, since he or she has not rendered what is owed and made reparation to the Church, and thus to God. Marsilius, on the other hand, treats the effects of the Fall only in terms of eternal salvation and the final end. Regarding the material, formal, and efficient end of civic life, original sin plays no part in Marsilius's theory; for Giles, it is his point of departure.

A further major discrepancy is that Giles based his argument on the final cause or end of civic life, whereas Marsilius, as stated repeatedly above, focused on the material, formal, and efficient causes. Yet Giles did

Marsilius of Padua, and the Franciscan Question." In Moreno-Riaño, *The World of Marsilius of Padua*, pp. 65–88. Gonzales, however, makes a rather odd statement. She claims: "Right from the start of Discourse II, Marsilius listed three enemies: the Roman bishop, the secular clergy, and the Dominicans – the three primary opponents of the Franciscans" (pp. 78–79). Gonzales cites *Def. pac.* II.1.24 (p. 79, n. 32), yet no such section is to be found in chapter 1 of Discourse II, which contains only five sections. The passage to which she refers is *Def. pac.* II.1.1, where Marsilius does indeed mention three enemies, the first two of which are indeed the Roman bishops and the secular clergy. There is, though, no mention of the Dominicans. Concerning the third enemy, Marsilius writes: *Reliquus autem et tercius veritatis hostis infestus huic doctrine impedimentum grande prestabit: livor siquidem horum etiam, qui etsi nos vera dixisse crediderint, quia tamen huius ver sentencie pre se alium explicatorem intelligent, eidem detraccionis dente clandestino lacerando vel presumptionis clamoso latratu, adurentis invidie id ipsis nequissimo suadente spiritu, se opponent.* Marsilius, *Def. pac.* II.1.1, p. 139,7–14. While one could read the references here to "teeth" and to "noisy barking" as implying the *Domini canes*, there is nothing explicit to read it as such, and whereas Gonzales claims that the Dominicans were the "primary opponents of the Franciscans" (*ibid.*, p. 79), I would argue that the Augustinians are here being referenced, since they too were "primary opponents of the Franciscans"; see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 25–27, 235–237. Gonzales gives no text or author to which such a reference might have referred, or to support her assertion, whereas the parallels with Giles's *De ecclesiastica potestate* are highly suggestive of the Augustinian front which Marsilius is primarily attacking.

not, as such, explicitly appeal to the final cause. Rather, drawing from Dionysius, Giles established a hierarchy of subordination of the temporal realm to the spiritual, whereby the spiritual has primacy.⁷⁰ Moreover, Giles based his argument for the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal and the right of the Church to have *dominium* of all *temporalia* on Augustine, as did James of Viterbo,⁷¹ whereas Marsilius did not cite Augustine at all in his argument for a poor Church.

From such comparisons and contrasts, it becomes increasingly clear that Marsilius composed his *Defender of the Peace* as a direct attack on the Augustinian front represented by Giles of Rome, James of Viterbo, and Augustinus of Ancona in their advocating the universal *dominium* of Christ's vicar regarding both *temporalia* and *spiritualia*. The Augustinian *dominium gratie* stood in direct opposition to Marsilius's own Augustinianism. Marsilius countered the Augustinian ordered hierarchy with a functional analysis of office, whereby the function of the priesthood was to perform the sacraments, while the Christian legislator, together with the general council of the *communio fidelium*, was to govern the Church. Or in other words, Marsilius advocated a lay Church over against a clerical Church. In so doing, Marsilius appealed to Augustine to prove that his proposed re-formation of the Church was in keeping with established authority. He argued against the political Augustinianism that was developing in the works of Giles, James, and Augustinus.⁷²

⁷⁰ Aeg.Rom. *De eccl.pot.* 1.4, pp. 18–20.

⁷¹ Aeg.Rom. *De eccl.pot.* 2.4, p. 90; Aeg.Rom. *De eccl.pot.* 2.7, p. 136; cf. Jac.Vit. *De reg.Christ.* 1.1, pp. 16–20.

⁷² Henri Arquillière coined the term “political Augustinianism,” which he defined, drawing from Mondonnet and Gilson, as a tendency “absorber l'ordre naturel dans l'ordre surnaturel. Cette propension est à l'origine de ce que j'ai appelé l'*augustinisme politique*. C'est même, à mon sens, ce qui en constitue l'essence.” Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme Politique*, pp. 38–39. As such, “political Augustinianism” would aptly describe not a but *the* major tendency in medieval thought. On a more specific level, the political side of Augustinianism, in any case, has also been seen as defined by adherence to the doctrine of the dominion of grace, whereby all temporal authority is held from the pope. Such a teaching originated with James of Viterbo and Giles of Rome in the early fourteenth century, and can be traced through Richard Fitzralph and John Wycliff; see William J. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), pp. 307–311; and Gordon Leff, *Richard Fitzralph* (Manchester, 1963). This position van Gerven termed “political Augustinianism narrowly defined,” see P. Raphael Van Gerven, *De Wereldlijke Macht van den Paus Volgens Augustinus Triumphus* (Nijmegen, 1947), pp. 39–42. It could legitimately be argued that if political Augustinianism is to be defined as adherence to the political thought of Augustine, there was very little, if any, political Augustinianism in the Middle Ages. In any event, regardless of the validity of the term, and regardless of how it is defined, political Augustinianism is not currently a heatedly debated issue. In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, “political Augustinianism” appears only once, as a rather vague reference to the affirmation of “the divine origin of kingship in positive terms.” Janet Nelson, “Kingship and Empire.” In J.H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350–c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 211–252, 248.

Though Augustinus of Ancona had been involved in the debates over papal authority early on, his major work, the *Comprehensive Treatment of Ecclesiastical Power*, was only completed in 1326, dedicated and sent to Pope John XXII. If Marsilius's *Defender of the Peace* was implicitly a response to the Augustinian front of James and Giles, Augustinus's *Comprehensive Treatment* was an implicit refutation of Marsilius. It has been seen as perhaps the most outstanding articulation of papal hierocratic theory,⁷³ yet in a major handbook of medieval political thought, Augustinus is barely a name dropped,⁷⁴ and in her overview, Janet Coleman not only ignores Augustinus, but the Augustinians as well, when she claims:

A good deal of what is recognized as later medieval political theory, to say nothing of the distinctive influence of developments in fourteenth-century philosophy and theology on European political thinking well beyond the sixteenth century, was the consequence of the intellectual efforts of Franciscans and Dominicans.⁷⁵

Yet the manuscript and printed traditions of Augustinus's *Comprehensive Treatment* stand as witness to the insufficiency of our understanding of late medieval political thought when his influence is ignored.⁷⁶ While in

⁷³ See Walter Ullmann, *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages. An Introduction to the Sources of Medieval Political Ideas* (Ithaca, NY, 1975); Michael Wilks, *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Later Middle Ages. The Papal Monarchy with Augustinus Triumphus and the Publicists*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 9 (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 2 and 407.

⁷⁴ Burns, *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, pp. 356, 364, and 640.

⁷⁵ Janet Coleman, *A History of Political Thought. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2004), p. 79.

⁷⁶ There are at least forty-seven extant manuscripts of the *Summa*, see P. B. Ministeri, "De Augustini de Ancona, OESA d. 1328) Vita et Operibus." *Analecta Augustiniana* 22 (1951/52), 7–56, 148–262, 209–211; cf. Adolar Zumkeller, *Manuskripte von Werken der Autoren des Augustiner-Eremitenordens in mitteleuropäischen Bibliotheken*, Cassiacum 20 (Würzburg, 1966), nr. 141, pp. 77–78. The printings are Augsburg 1473, Cologne 1475, Rome 1479, s.l. c. 1484, Venice 1487, and then four successive Roman editions between 1582 and 1585. Questions 6, 7, 22, 23, and 63 of Augustinus' *Summa* have been trans. by A. S. McGrade in Arthur Stephen McGrade, John Kilcullen, and Matthew Kempshall, eds., *The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts*, vol. II. *Ethics and Political Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 418–483. For Augustinus, in addition to the works already cited, see Ugo Mariani, *Scrittori politici agostiniani del secolo XIV* (Florence, 1927); E. Van Moé, "Les Ermites de St. Augustin au début du XIVe siècle: Agostino Trionfo et ses théories politique." *Extrait. Ecole nationale des chartes. Positions des thèses soutenues par les élèves de la promotion de 1928 pour obtenir le diplôme d'archiviste paléographe* (Paris, 1928), pp. 102–115; X.P.D. Duijnsteet, *'S pausen Primaat in de latere Middeleeuwen en de Aegidiaansche School*, I (Hilversum, 1935); II–III (Amsterdam, 1936–9); Van Gervan, *De wereldlijke macht van den paus*; and Jürgen Miethke, *De potestate Papae. Die päpstliche Amtskompetenz im Widerstreit der politischen Theorie von Thomas von Aquin bis Wilhelm von Ockham*, SuR.NR 16 (Tübingen, 2000), pp. 170–177; for a critique of Miethke's interpretation of Augustinus, especially regarding Augustinus's knowledge of Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor Pacis*, see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 743–748, and for a critique of Wilks, *ibid.*, pp. 43–138 and *passim*.

no uncertain terms, Augustinus was upholding and furthering his Order's platform in placing the Order's fate in the hands of the papacy, he was likewise simultaneously writing a treatise for John XXII that sought to circumscribe papal power. He was striving to push the limits for John, and to let him know just how far he could go. Thus in Question 32, article 3, Augustinus asked whether the pope can empty purgatory. He answered that theoretically the pope can, because the pope has on earth all the powers of Christ. Yet were the pope to do so, he would err since he could not do so with sufficient knowledge of God's will; or in other words, emptying purgatory would be an abuse of papal power, not a use.⁷⁷ Likewise, Augustinus posed the question of whether the pope is by necessity obligated to reside in Rome. On the one hand, Augustinus replied, the pope is certainly not constrained to reside in Rome, yet on the other, with respect to his flock, the pope is indeed obligated, even by necessity, to reside in Rome.⁷⁸ When we remember that Augustinus wrote this treatise for John XXII, who was residing in Avignon, Augustinus's conclusions read as a sharp rebuke and warning.

Nevertheless, there is little question that Augustinus exalted the papacy. The pope possesses all of Christ's powers. He is the final interpreter of scripture.⁷⁹ He can make or break princes, kings, and emperors.⁸⁰ Moreover, the pope resides at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of Christian perfection. In the third part of his *Comprehensive Treatment*, Augustinus gave a lengthy discussion of Christian perfection, beginning with Christ and the Apostles and the early church, before turning to questions concerning the extent to which offices and states within his contemporary church evidence perfection. For Augustinus, the pope exists in the highest state of Christian perfection, surpassing all other bishops or priests, and all religious.⁸¹ "The pope," Augustinus argued, "is not in the state of acquiring perfection, but he holds the highest level in the state of the already perfect."⁸²

However, Augustinus wants the pope never to forget that he is still a bishop, and when speaking of Christ's reign, though Augustinus does frequently use the title *vicarius Christi* and *caput ecclesie* to refer to the

⁷⁷ Augustinus de Ancona, *Summa de potestate ecclesiastica*, q. 32, art. 3, (Rome, 1479), fo. 113^{ra-va}; hereafter cited as Aug.An., *Summa*, with foliation given to the Rome 1479 edition.

⁷⁸ Aug.An., *Summa*, q. 21, art. 2, fos. 75^{va}–76^{ra}.

⁷⁹ Aug.An., *Summa*, q. 67, art. 2, fos. 201th–202^{ra}.

⁸⁰ Aug.An., *Summa*, qq. 35–41, fos. 119th–137^{ra}.

⁸¹ Aug.An., *Summa*, q. 101, fos. 279th–284^{ra}.

⁸² *Papa autem non est in statu perficiendorum, sed in statu perfectorum supremum gradum tenet.* Aug.An., *Summa*, q. 101, art. 2, fo. 280^{ra}.

pope, it is not the "papacy of Christ" that Augustinus delineates, but the "episcopacy of Christ."⁸³ Christ's church is an episcopal church, and it is as such that the pope is the first among equals, just as Peter was the first among the Apostles. Though his status, power, and authority are unparalleled, the pope is first and foremost a bishop.

Augustinus's Order was founded by a bishop, and by a bishop who had also been a monk, a fact neither the Franciscans nor the Dominicans could claim. The "episcopacy of Christ" is a most fitting label for Augustinus's ecclesiology, and it is one that is also inherently Augustinian. This became increasingly explicit when Augustinus discussed the most perfect form of religious life. Here, for the first time, Augustinus made the argument that the most perfect form of religious life, the most perfect *religio*, is that of Augustine. Augustine's *Rule*, and consequently his Order, embodied the most perfect Christian life.⁸⁴ Augustinus was coming dangerously close to the position he was attempting to refute, namely, that the Franciscan life was the most perfect Christian life. John XXII recognized the implicit challenge to his authority the Franciscan ideal posed and had, by 1323 in *Cum inter nonnullos*, proclaimed that ideal heretical.⁸⁵ Was not Augustinus's position as undermining of papal authority as the Franciscan? Not really. Though Augustinus asserted the *Rule of St Augustine* as the most perfect form of Christian life, the religion of Augustine (*religio Augustini*) was the most perfect life of a religious bishop.⁸⁶ Rule (*regula*) and religion (*religio*) were distinct, with the former expressing and codifying, though not identical with, the latter.⁸⁷ The Franciscan religion, the ideal behind the *Rule*, was absolute poverty. This John XXII could not support and claim primacy within the church. The religion behind the *Rule of St Augustine* was the ideal of the holy bishop. This John could very well support and defend in asserting his own authority, and thereby give legitimacy and credence to Augustinus's claims for his Order, without having to actually be a member of the OESA. Augustinus's argument, his ecclesiology of the episcopacy of

⁸³ *Totius autem status episcopalis et ecclesiastice hierarchie capus est episcopatus Christi ad quem omnes episcopatus et prelationes omnes ecclesiastici ordinis reducuntur.* Aug.An., *Summa*, q. 88, art. 1, fo. 248^{va}.

⁸⁴ *Sicut nulla regula potest esse perfectior regula apostolorum, sic nulla regula potest esse perfectior regula beati Augustini, que non aliud essentialiter content quam apostolorum documenta.* Aug.An., *Summa*, q. 97, art. 5, fo. 270^{vb}.

⁸⁵ See Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350. A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages.* SHCT 6 (Leiden, 1972).

⁸⁶ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 142–156.

⁸⁷ On the late medieval concept of *religio* and its distinction from *regula*, see Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 710–735.

Christ, intimately linked the status and authority of his own Order with that of the pope – and vice versa. And John was most appreciative. He sent Augustinus one hundred gold florins, and announced an annual gift of ten gold ounces for Augustinus to continue to write books.⁸⁸ What he may not have realized, however, is that in doing so, he was legitimizing and authorizing a greatly expanded Augustinian platform, far surpassing that of Giles of Rome. The consequences were to have lasting effect.

Michael Wilks claimed that Augustinus “alone amongst the publicists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries gives a really complete and adequate account of the maturer stages of papal-hierocratic doctrine,”⁸⁹ and based on his *Comprehensive Treatment*, that “the ‘Babylonian captivity’, often regarded as being in fact the nadir of the medieval papacy, was in theory its crowning triumph.”⁹⁰ Here Wilks gives the impression that hierocratic theory was divorced from political reality. In this light, Augustinus, as well as his nemesis, Marsilius of Padua, appear as armchair theorists, divorced from the realities of fourteenth-century *Realpolitik*. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Giles of Rome had already brought the Order into the fray. In 1296, with his treatise *On Resigning the Papacy*, Giles threw his weight, and that of the OESA, behind Boniface VIII in his conflict with Philip the Fair, and then in 1302, Giles sent Boniface his *On Ecclesiastical Power*, on which, as I have mentioned, Boniface based his *Unam Sanctam*. This was no mere war of words, as Anagni made clear. A little over twenty years later, Augustinus of Ancona was to become even more involved in the fierce battles between John XXII and Lewis of Bavaria. With John spending two-thirds of his income on armies to fight Lewis,⁹¹ and with Augustinus providing the justification for John doing so, Augustinus’s *Comprehensive Treatment* was no product of an ivory tower.

To read Augustinus’s *Comprehensive Treatment* historically, we must do so in conjunction with Marsilius of Padua’s *Defender of the Peace*, and vice versa. What Augustinus was to John XXII, Marsilius was to Lewis. Augustinus composed his treatise while serving as court chaplain to Robert d’Anjou, King of Naples and papal vicar in Italy. Marsilius dedicated his work to Lewis, proclaiming him as the “defender of the peace,” and shortly after its completion, Marsilius joined Lewis’s court, and

⁸⁸ Archivio Vaticano, Regesti di Giovanni XXII, Reg. Vat. 113, fo. 293^v, Epistola 1720, as printed by Ministeri, *De vita et operibus*, p. 238.

⁸⁹ Wilks, *Problem of Sovereignty*, p. 2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

⁹¹ Norman Housley, *The Avignon Papacy and the Crusades, 1305–1378* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 250–251.

accompanied him on his campaign to Rome. The *Defender of the Peace* was completed in 1324; the *Comprehensive Treatment* in 1326. John was certainly aware of the *Defender of the Peace*, which was issued in the same year as Lewis's *Sachsenhausen Appeal*, and even if he had not read it himself, he did commission William of Cremona, the prior general of the OESA, to write a refutation of six articles culled from the work. William's reply became the basis of John's condemnation of the *Defender of the Peace* in his Bull, *Licet iuxta doctrinam*.⁹²

Both William and Augustinus had first-hand knowledge of Marsilius's work.⁹³ I do not mean to imply that Augustinus wrote his *Comprehensive Treatment* as a direct response to the *Defender of the Peace*. I would argue, however, that the *Defender of the Peace* provided Augustinus with the catalyst to finish his major work on ecclesiastical power and to send it to John. Augustinus had been intimately involved in matters of ecclesiastical political theory since even before his time as a master at Paris in 1313–15.⁹⁴ In 1315, in the context of the papal vacancy that eventually resulted in the election of John, and the imperial vacancy that resulted in the election of Lewis, though one disputed between Lewis and Frederick of Austria, Augustinus held a *Quodlibet* in Paris on the power of the papacy, the college of cardinals, and the laity. Here Augustinus had set forth the basic doctrine for distinguishing between the pope's power of jurisdiction and power of ordination that he would greatly expand and elaborate upon in his *Comprehensive Treatment*.⁹⁵ As already noted, it is likely that Marsilius was still in Paris in 1315 and may very well have been present at Augustinus's *Quodlibet*. In his *Defender of the Peace* we find a rather vague reference that may indeed be referring to Augustinus's *Quodlibet*. In the second Discourse, chapter 16, Marsilius wrote:

Peter did not, therefore, decide the above-mentioned doubts concerning the faith of his plenitude of power, which some people dream up and attribute to the bishop of Rome, though they are "masters of Israel." For these people have proclaimed in unwritten dogmas that he, of himself alone, can decide doubts concerning the faith (which Peter never dared); which is openly false and in clear disagreement with Scripture.⁹⁶

⁹² Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 60–65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 744–747.

⁹⁴ Richard Scholz, *Die Publizistik zur Zeit Philipps des Schönen und Bonifaz' VIII. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Anschauungen des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1903), pp. 172–189.

⁹⁵ Augustinus's *Quodlibet* exists in two treatises, his *Tractatus brevis de duplici potestate prelatorum et laicorum* and his *De potestate collegii mortuo papa*, edited in Scholz, *Die Publizistik*, pp. 486–508; see also Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 128–134.

⁹⁶ *Non ergo determinavit Petrus supradicta dubia circa fidem de plenitudine potestatis, quam quidam sompniantes quamvis magistri in Israel habere dicunt Romanum episcopum, qui pronunciauerunt in*

One does indeed find such an argument in Giles's *On Ecclesiastical Power*, but that for Marsilius was scarcely "unwritten dogmas."⁹⁷ In his question *On the Two-Fold Power*, Augustinus made a very similar argument,⁹⁸ and this *Quodlibet*, for Marsilius, could certainly still have been unwritten. The deeper one reads in the *Defender of the Peace*, the clearer it becomes that Marsilius was replying to the Augustinian religio-political doctrine of the OESA.⁹⁹ And the more closely one reads Augustinus's *Comprehensive Treatment*, the more one sees that Augustinus always had in the back of his mind, and often in the forefront, the *Defender of the Peace*, even if he had begun compiling his *Comprehensive Treatment* years before "push came to shove." Behind, and in front of, both works was the imperial-papal battle between Lewis and John, for which Marsilius and Augustinus provided the ideological "lines in the sand."

The political impact of Augustine in the later Middle Ages, or at least the politicization of Augustine, was not confined to particular texts or doctrines of the Bishop of Hippo. It was also conditioned by the political struggle for the saint's identity.¹⁰⁰ The question of who Augustine was became itself highly politicized. In 1465 in Milan, controversy broke out over how Augustine should be portrayed on the cathedral being newly built, namely, in the habit of an Augustinian friar or that of an Augustinian canon. This conflict ended up involving Pope Sixtus IV and Gian Galeazzo Visconti.¹⁰¹ In its larger context, the *causa Augustini* would continue into the sixteenth century, including with Brother Martin Luther. Yet the origins of this debate are to be found some 140 years earlier in the conflict we have just been discussing, namely, the political, ideological, and military battles of Lewis of Bavaria and John XXII, with the Augustinians squarely in the middle.

There is no evidence that Brother Martin had read or even knew of Marsilius's *Defender of the Peace*, or the works of James, Giles, and Augustinus. Yet Brother Martin's ecclesiological perspectives bore close similarities to Marsilius. Luther too held that the papacy was a human

non scriptis dogmatibus, ipsum per se solum, quod non ausit Petrus, qua que circa fidem dubia sunt, determinare posse. Quod falsum apertum est et scripture dissonans palam. Marsilius of Padua, *Def.pac.* II.16.5, pp. 341–342; trans. Brett, p. 323.

⁹⁷ Aeg.Rom, *De eccl.potest.* I.1, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Augustinus de Ancona, *Tractatus brevis*, pp. 486–501.

⁹⁹ James of Viterbo wrote his *De regimine Christiano* contemporaneously with Giles's *De ecclesiastica potestate*; see H.-X. Arquillère, *Le plus ancien traité de l'Église. Jacques de Viterbe 'De regimine Christiano' (1301–1302. Étude des sources et édition critique* (Paris, 1926).

¹⁰⁰ See Saak, *Creating Augustine*.

¹⁰¹ See Elm, "Augustinus Canonicus."

construct, not a divinely established entity. As he argued in his refutation of Eck's thirteenth thesis proposed for the Leipzig debate, Christ did not give the keys to Peter, but to the entire church.¹⁰² The pope's office, as shepherd who was to feed Christ's sheep, was to preach and teach the Word of God, and herein consisted the primacy of Peter. If a pope does not preach and teach the Word, his office is completely empty.¹⁰³ Brother Martin distinguished between the "person of the Church" and the "primacy of the Church," whereby Peter received the keys from Christ in the person of the Church based on his faith confession, but not in terms of Peter being identified with the Church. The rock upon which Christ would build his Church was not Peter himself, but Peter's faith.¹⁰⁴ Peter handed on the episcopacy, not the apostleship of Christ, and in this sense, Peter was equal to all other bishops, even though he held a primacy of honor, though not a primacy of power.¹⁰⁵ Based on divine law, the pope is not superior to a bishop, nor a bishop to a priest,¹⁰⁶ which was Marsilius's major point as well.

Pointing to similarities between Marsilius and Luther is not to suggest any sort of influence, which would be dubious indeed with the lack of evidence. Nor is there any direct evidence that Brother Martin had read the political works of a colleague of Marsilius, who was together with him at Lewis's court in Munich, having joined the campaign against John XXII, and having done so as a loyal Franciscan, who had, with his Minister General Michael of Cesena, and fellow Franciscan, the lawyer Bonagratia of Bergamo, fled Avignon to join Lewis, namely, Brother Martin's own self-proclaimed teacher, William of Ockham.¹⁰⁷ We do know that Brother Martin had studied Ockham's *On the Sacrament of the Altar*, and had been trained in the Ockhamist tradition at Erfurt. If Brother Martin had studied any fourteenth-century political works at all, which is highly doubtful, those of Ockham have more likelihood as having been the ones, or at least among the ones, Luther read than virtually any other.

Ockham's ecclesio-political work was not as radical as Marsilius's. Ockham did though present arguments very similar as well to those of Luther, even if within a different context and with a different purpose.

¹⁰² WA 2.194,2–10.

¹⁰³ WA 2.195,16–28.

¹⁰⁴ WA 2.629,1–637,19.

¹⁰⁵ WA 2.638,5–20.

¹⁰⁶ WA 2.240,2–4.

¹⁰⁷ For Ockham, see Arthur Stephen McGrade, *The Political Thought of William of Ockham. Personal and Institutional Principles* (Cambridge, 1974); and Takashi Shogimen, *Ockham and Political Discourse in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2007).

Ockham had argued, as had Augustinus of Ancona, that the entire Church could fall into heresy, in which case the true Church, the true faith would be preserved in a single faithful believer, even if that believer was a baptized infant.¹⁰⁸ In his *Breviloquium*, Ockham argued fiercely that the pope does not have the plenitude of power (*plenitudo potestatis*) over temporal matters and to claim such is a heretical statement, placing the entire Church in danger for it would entail an intolerable servitude.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in his *On the Power of Emperors and Popes*, Ockham asserted that the Empire did not receive its authority from the pope, for the Roman Empire predated the establishment of the papacy, and therefore had not received its authority from the papacy; thus neither did it receive its authority from the papacy after the papacy's establishment. The same applies as well to the King of France or other kings.¹¹⁰ In general,

what concerns the laws and liberties of the laity and clergy, of the religious and of the seculars, I think that with respect to all things in this category which are found contrary neither to good morals nor to those things which are taught in the New Testament, no Christian without guilt and without reasonable and manifest cause deserves to be coerced by the Pope ... And this is the liberty of the evangelical law, which is put forth in the Holy Scripture.¹¹¹

In his *Breviloquium* Ockham had argued that the evangelical law is the law of perfect liberty, which though does not entail that all servitude is illegal or against the Gospel, but does mean that the pope, who in this respect does not have the fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*), cannot legitimately impose a servitude,¹¹² for the pope “does not have the power of establishing laws in all respects that are not against divine law or natural law; therefore the pope does not have a fullness of power either in the temporal realm or in the spiritual.”¹¹³ In short, according to McGrade,

¹⁰⁸ McGrade, *Political Thought*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁹ Ockham, *Breviloquium*, 2.3; William of Ockham, *Opera Politica*, IV, ed. H.S. Offler, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi XIV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 80–260, 114–115.

¹¹⁰ Ockham, *De Imperatorum et Pontificum Potestate* 19; *Opera Politica*, IV, pp. 279–355, 312–313.

¹¹¹ *Ut autem generaliter explicetur, quae spectant ad iura et libertates aliorum laicorum et clericorum, religiosorum et saecularium, puto quod huiusmodi sunt omnia illa, quae hec bonis moribus nec hiis, quae in Novo Testamento docentur, inveniuntur adversa, ut ab huiusmodi nullus Christianus sine culpa et absque causa rationabili et manifesta per papam valeat coerceri ... Et haec est libertas evangelice legis, quae in sacris litteris commendatur.* Ockham, *De Imperatorum et Pontificum Potestate*, 9, *Opera Politica*, IV, pp. 300–301.

¹¹² Ockham, *Breviloquium*, 2.4; *Opera Politica*, IV, pp. 115–116.

¹¹³ *Praeterea, papa non habet potestatem condendi leges in omnibus, quae neque sunt contra ius divinum nec contra ius naturale; ergo non habet talem plenitudinem potestatis neque in temporalibus neque in spiritualibus.* Ockham, *Breviloquium*, 2.6; *Opera Politica*, IV, pp. 121–122.

“Ockham’s work signals the end of political Augustinism and the hierocratically inspired descending thesis of government with its resulting program of molding society from above.”¹¹⁴ As Janet Coleman has argued,

Since legitimate political power can only be exercised over free individuals, Ockham affirmed that any authority which attempted to deny what is, in effect, their psychological liberty by requiring behaviour that was contrary to scripture or reason was illegitimate. His focus on the supremacy of the individual Christian conscience followed from his interpretation of the New Testament. And it was this method and this focus, on the bedrock of scripture and the individual’s reason and will, which would shake the foundations of later medieval theology until and beyond the Protestant Reformation.¹¹⁵

If Brother Martin had not read Ockham’s political works, he was nevertheless standing very much in the Ockhamist tradition, which had provided him with his ways of thought, even if not his explicit ecclesiological positions.

A thorough and comprehensive analysis of Luther’s ecclesio-political thought in comparison with late medieval theories is beyond the scope of this present work, though such an undertaking would be most welcome.¹¹⁶ The point to be made here is that Luther’s position on the papacy and on the Church was not a new development never before heard. Attempts to limit papal hierocratic theory had been asserted since the early fourteenth century, not to mention critiques against papal abuse. Marsilius’s position was condemned, and Ockham was condemned as well. Both had the protection of Lewis of Bavaria, though neither had been the focus of a popular movement. Hus too was condemned, and burned, largely for positions drawn from his *Treatise On the Church* (*Tractatus de ecclesia*), the work that Brother Martin had read in the early weeks of 1520 that gave him such a shock. Hus was the focal point of a popular movement, a fact which played into his condemnation as well. What Hus lacked, though, was the political protection and support enjoyed by Marsilius and Ockham, and then as well by Brother Martin, despite Emperor Sigismund’s safe conduct.

¹¹⁴ McGrade, *Political Thought*, p. 221.

¹¹⁵ Coleman, *Political Thought*, p. 192.

¹¹⁶ Previous work has approached Luther as the Reformer, or the Reformer to be, rather than as an Augustinian Hermit in the context of the late medieval Reformation. See Hendricks, *Luther and the Papacy*, and his discussion there of previous scholarship on the theme, pp. ix–xii, and then more recently, Kurt-Victor Selge, “Ekklesiologisch-heilsgeschichtliches Denken beim frühen Luther.” In Kenneth Hagen, ed., *Augustine, the Harvest, and Theology (1300–1650). Essays Dedicated to Heiko Augustinus Oberman in Honor of this Sixtieth Birthday* (Leiden, 1990), pp. 259–285.

Like Marsilius and Ockham, Hus denied that the pope had a fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*), though the term appears only once in his *Treatise*,¹¹⁷ a work completed in 1412–13 occasioned by the preaching of indulgences being sold in Prague for the crusade against King Ladislaus of Naples, as supporter of the Roman Pope, Pope Gregory XII, called for by the Pisan Pope, Pope John XXIII.¹¹⁸ Hus believed the indulgences were a gross abuse, and his opposition brought him into religio-political conflict, in which he denied that the pope was the head of the Church (*caput ecclesie*), for only Christ is the head of the Church.¹¹⁹ The Church, the holy Catholic Church, for Hus was defined as the mystical body of Christ, which was in opposition to the Church of the evil (*ecclesia malignancium*), which is the body of the devil, who is the head of that Church (*corpus dyaboli, cuius ipse est caput*).¹²⁰ The holy Catholic Church consists of all the predestined for salvation,¹²¹ though in this life the institutional Church contains both the predestined and the foreknown (*presciti*), who are those not predestined, even if members of the institutional church, and thus “no one foreknown is a member of holy mother Catholic Church.”¹²² Here Hus was drawing on Augustine’s understanding of the two cities, and Augustine’s position that in this life the institutional church is a “mixed body” (*corpus permixtum*) of the heavenly and earthly cities, though Hus did not cite Augustine’s *The City of God*, but his *Exposition of the Psalms* and *On the Trinity*, and much of his text here he took from Wycliff’s treatise *On the Church*.¹²³ Wycliff too had argued against the hierocratic papal position, and became the focus of a popular, and, in part, apocalyptic, movement with the Lollards, and Wycliff too lacked significant political backing, though he was only burned as a heretic posthumously.¹²⁴ Hus, though, was no slave to Wycliff. As Hus’s editor, Harrison Thomson, argued, aside from borrowed quotations from Scripture, the Fathers, canon law, and other sources, the amount of material Hus “cut and pasted”

¹¹⁷ Hus, *Tractatus de Ecclesia*, 33; S. Harrison Thomson, ed., *Magistri Johannis Hus Tractatus de Ecclesia* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 234.

¹¹⁸ S. Harrison Thomson, *Tractatus*, pp. xiii–xvi; Matthew Spinka, *John Hus’ Concept of the Church* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), pp. 109–110. Spinka’s work is still the best treatment to date of Hus. See also his *John Hus. A Biography*.

¹¹⁹ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 13, p. 107.

¹²⁰ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 6, p. 40.

¹²¹ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 1, p. 3.

¹²² ... *nullus prescitus est membrum sancte matris ecclesie katholice*. Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 4, p. 23.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–29.

¹²⁴ Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation. Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988); Curtis Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards. Apocalypticism in Late Medieval England*. SMRT 70 (Leiden, 1998).

from Wycliff, though using it in his own way, "would be very small indeed, perhaps in the neighborhood of one twentieth of the whole."¹²⁵ Moreover, we find in Hus a version of Brother Martin's doctrine of the justified sinner being simultaneously righteous and a sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*), as we did as well with Jordan of Quedlinburg, when Hus argued that a member of the holy Catholic Church is "at one and the same time both righteous and unrighteous, faithful and unfaithful," for even Peter and Paul had fallen and thus the righteous (*iusti*) are so "according to the grace of predestination and they are not righteous according to present grace."¹²⁶

According to present grace, the pope can legitimately be called the head of the Church, in the sense that the pope can be said to be the head of the Roman Church. As such, though, the Roman Church cannot be equated with the holy Catholic Church.¹²⁷ "It should be noted," Hus argued, "that the Roman church is properly called the congregation of the faithful of Christ under the obedience to the Roman bishop, just as the Antiochene church is called the congregation of the faithful of Christ under the bishop of Antioch, and thus too with regards to Alexandria and Constantinople."¹²⁸ This is a position very similar indeed to the one Brother Martin adopted at the Leipzig debate with Eck, when he argued that the true Church can be found in the individual churches, whether that be churches at Rome, Paris, Magdeburg, Alexandria, or Constantinople.¹²⁹

Hus, as did Luther, distinguished between the true, holy Church of Christ, and the institutional churches in this world. Christ, for Hus, is the head of the Church, and is so in a two-fold sense. Intrinsically, Christ is the head of the Church according to his humanity, whereas extrinsically he is the head of the Church according to his divinity. Intrinsically, Christ rules as head of the Church over the temporal and spiritual goods of his flock, as a king of the Church, whereas extrinsically, Christ reigns as head of the Church over his subjects, in their own nature, combining thus his own two natures as the head of his own spouse, the universal Church, consisting of all the predestined.¹³⁰ In this life, though, except through

¹²⁵ Thomson, *Tractatus*, p. xxxiii.

¹²⁶ ... *quod idem simul et semel sit iustus et iniustus, fidelis et infidelis ... Et sic idem homo est iustus ex gracia predestinationis et iniustus ex vicio deperdibili, qualis fuit Petrus in negando Christum et Paulus persequendo ipsum ... Petrus et Paulus erant iniusti, ergo secundum presentem gratiam non erant iusti, et verum concluditur sicut ver conceditur, quod erant iusti secundum predestinationis gratiam et non erant iusti secundum presentem gratiam.* Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 4, pp. 27–28.

¹²⁷ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 7, p. 51.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹²⁹ WA 2.258,322–259,34.

¹³⁰ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 4, p. 21.

revelation, the militant Church cannot know who is or who is not a member of the true Church, for those who might seem to be members of the Church based on present righteousness may not be members of the true Church at all according to predestination.¹³¹ It was the faith Peter humbly confessed that was the rock on which Christ would build his Church, not Peter himself personally,¹³² and in this sense Peter was indeed Christ's vicar and pontiff of the Church. Every vicar of Christ can be truly Christ's vicar when such a confession is made and when he follows Christ in morals and character, and only such a vicar receives the keys of the kingdom.¹³³ Even so, every vicar of Christ can err, as did Peter, and thus only Christ remains as the head of the Church, for only Christ is incapable of error.¹³⁴ If the seeming vicar of Christ does not follow Christ, however, he is no longer truly Christ's vicar, even if he seems such, but is rather the vicar of the Antichrist.¹³⁵ Thus to be Christ's vicar, one must fulfill the office of Christ's vicar, the office of Peter and the Apostles, consisting in teaching, baptizing, caring for the sick, casting out demons, and celebrating the eucharist,¹³⁶ for one who does so, who conforms himself to Christ, caring nothing for worldly wealth and power, adhering to Christ's command to feed his sheep, is truly the vicar of Christ and successor of Peter.¹³⁷ Thus all bishops of Christ's Church who conform themselves to Christ are Christ's vicars.¹³⁸ As Hus asserted, "all the archbishops, patriarchs, and bishops at the Council of Pisa, who knowingly defined and condemned Pope Gregory XII as a heretic were and now are true successors of the apostles, and they were other than a pope or cardinals,"¹³⁹ placing his arguments squarely within the conciliar conflict which had occasioned the composition of his *Treatise on the Church* in the first place.

True vicars of Christ, Christ's true clergy, rest in their own head, Christ himself, whereas those who do not do so are clergy of the Antichrist, who completely, or for the most part, rely for their power on human laws and the law of Antichrist, even if they portray themselves and are taken for

¹³¹ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 5, pp. 38–39.

¹³² Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 9, pp. 67–68.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹³⁴ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 13, p. 107.

¹³⁵ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 14, p. 113.

¹³⁶ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 15, pp. 120–121.

¹³⁷ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 14, pp. 112–113.

¹³⁸ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 15, p. 126.

¹³⁹ *Item omnes archiepiscopi, patriarche et episcopi in concilio pisano, cognoscentes et diffinientes et condemnantes Gregorium XII papam tanquam hereticum, illi fuerunt et nunc sunt veri successores apostolorum, et illi sunt alii quam papa et cardinales.* *Ibid.*, p. 126.

true clergy of Christ and his Church.¹⁴⁰ Prelates of the Church have an instrumental or ministerial power given to them, but they do not have the power to forgive sins, to bind and loose, which only God has, for the keys that Christ gave to Peter and his successors are a spiritual power and a knowledge of the Gospel. Hence the two keys, which are to be used pastorally, not jurisdictionally.¹⁴¹ To attempt to use them otherwise, to use the keys as jurisdictional, legal weapons, is to serve not Christ, but Antichrist.

When reading Hus's *Treatise on the Church* in light of Brother Martin's early ecclesiology, one can be surprised to realize that Brother Martin had not read Hus before early 1520. Many of Hus's positions are expressed, even if in different words and contexts, in Luther's own works. There is little wonder he was associated with Hus from early on. Yet Brother Martin's view of the Church bore similarities as well to that of Ockham and Marsilius. Marsilius, Ockham, and Hus had all been condemned, and had been so directly or indirectly with their opposition to the papacy and/or the current pope. Even though Marsilius argued for the abolishment of the papacy, he did not, at least that we can know, reject Lewis of Bavaria's establishing Nicholas V as pope after having proclaimed Pope John XXII deposed. Nor did Ockham, who nevertheless was not as radical as Marsilius in this respect. The papacy was under attack for the entire late medieval period, and the Schism only made matters worse. It was not the papacy, but the Council of Constance that burned Hus, the Council that had asserted itself as the highest authority within the Church. The Council though still viewed the Church as a juridical institution, whereas Hus, as did Brother Martin, defined the true Church as the predestined, or the elect, the faithful believers, even recognizing and accepting the legal, visible, juridical, militant Church on earth. "These two concepts," argued Spinka, "were basically irreconcilable."¹⁴² Yet one can see the two positions as simply emphasizing the two natures of the Church which was very common, and indeed was even the position of Brother Martin as seen in [Chapter 6](#). The Church as the body of believers, the militant Church, was not, necessarily, irreconcilable with the Church as the City of God, the triumphant Church. Neither Hus nor Luther equated the two; neither argued that the visible, militant Church was, or should be actually, the same as the invisible, triumphant Church. Authority was the real issue, for Hus's position, as Brother Martin's, implicitly, even if not explicitly,

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁴¹ Hus, *Tract. de eccl.* 10, pp. 76–82.

¹⁴² Spinka, *John Hus' Concept of the Church*, p. 395.

undermined the authority of the Church, whether that authority was considered to be found in its fullness in a council or in the papacy. Basing authority on the Gospel, on revelation, rather than on its determination, claiming individual authority over against institutional authority was the problem, even if not articulated in such terms explicitly. Truth cannot do much without institutionalized power, and if there is a conflict, power wins out, for the question is precisely that of Pilate, *What is Truth?* That we haven't figured out yet. As Hus asserted: "Therefore, faithful Christian, see the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, adhere to the truth to death ..." ¹⁴³ The Truth can be lost sight of, can be lost, though not killed or obliterated, for as the hierocrat Augustinus of Ancona, the "pseudo-Conciliarist" William of Ockham, and Brother Martin all agreed, the entire Church could fall away, but Christ would not abandon his Church and the Church would in that case still exist, even if only in one faithful Christian. The one faithful Christian, upholding the Truth, upholding the Church, in the face of general apostasy, in the face of general heresy, was a theoretical possibility widely acknowledged as such and, implying that popes and indeed councils could err, was by no means a completely novel position to take when Brother Martin admitted such at Leipzig and at Worms. Brother Martin may have been on the margins of the ecclesiological positions advocated during the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, but he was not on the margins alone.

He was, though, not on the margins on the papal side of things. He was in no way a hierocrat. He was, therefore, in no way a representative of his own Order's ecclesiological position. His views bore more similarities to Ockham, or even Marsilius, than they did to Giles of Rome, James of Viterbo, or Augustinus of Ancona, whose works he did not know and did not read, at least based on the extant evidence. He may, though, have read them. He may have read Marsilius, as Prierias suspected, or Ockham, or Augustinus. One cannot after all legitimately build an argument on silence. Nevertheless, he had referred to the pope and the papacy as the leader of the visible, militant Church, the Church of the externals, as the minister of Christ who would and could preserve the Gospel, who would and could serve as the institutional power defending the Truth, who stood for the bastion, even the last bastion, of orthodoxy, of Truth itself. And now he had discovered that he stood outside that institutional guarantee of Truth, and that he always had; that Staupitz, Augustine, and Paul did as well; they were all Hussites, all heretics, and always had been. The

¹⁴³ As quoted by Spinka, *John Hus' Concept of the Church*, p. 384.

Gospel itself had been proclaimed heretical. This was indeed the woe of the world! And this was the first part of Luther's Reformation Discovery, his Reformation Breakthrough. Another followed closely on its heels.

The Throne of Antichrist

When Brother Martin read Hus's *Treatise on the Church*, he surely would have taken note of Hus's distinction between the true clergy of Christ, and the clergy of the devil, the clergy of the Antichrist; between the vicars of Christ who conform themselves to Christ in their morals, in their acts, thoughts, and deeds, and the vicars of the devil who do not, who rely on jurisdictional force and human laws. Hus, even more explicitly than many in the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, lived too between God and the devil. Ten days after his letter to Spalatin relating his shock at being a Hussite, Brother Martin wrote to Spalatin again with another shock, another horror. "I have in my hands," Brother Martin related,

from the printing house of Dominicus Schleupner, Lorenzo Valla's refutation of the Donation of Constantine, published by Hutten. Good God! You would be amazed how in God's judgment not only such impure, such crass and naked lies of such massive Roman darkness or Roman iniquity have lasted through the ages, but also how they have prevailed and been handed down in Canon Law, one following after the other, lest some sort of the most horrible beast imaginable be kept from infecting the articles of faith. I am so overwhelmingly horrified in the very depths of my being that I can scarcely no longer doubt that the pope is that very Antichrist which, as commonly known, the world has expected, since it all fits, how he lives, what he does, what he says, and what he proclaims.¹⁴⁴

The world had changed for Brother Martin. The pope, who was the mouthpiece of Christ himself, whose authority exceeded all earthly authority, with the exception of Christ alone, the Holy Father, the vicar of Christ governing Holy Mother Church, the Roman Church, the Church of Peter and of Paul, which Brother Martin had been trying to defend, support, and protect all along, had now been revealed as the seat of Antichrist.

¹⁴⁴ *Habeo in manibus officio Dominici Schleupner Donationem Constantini a Laurentio Vallensi confutatum per Huttenum editam. Deus bone, quantae seu tenebrae seu nequitiae Romanensium et quod in Dei iudicio mireris per tot saecula non modo durasse, sed etiam prevaluisse ac inter decretales relata esse tam impura tam crassa tam impudentia mendacia inque fidei articulorum (nequid monstrosissimi monstri desit) vicem successisse. Ego sic angor, ut prope non dubitem papam esse proprie Antichristum illum, quem vulgata opinione expectat mundus, adeo conveniunt omnia: quae vivit, facit, loquitur, statuit.* WABr 2.48,20-49,29.

Luther went on the offensive.¹⁴⁵ He reissued his appeal for a council, in an updated form, and issued a version thereof as well in German,¹⁴⁶ appealing to the German princes, as he did with his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, which was planned in early June. A better informed Pope Leo now is not simply being appealed to against diabolical advisors, the Roman curia; Pope Leo himself is to blame for his tyranny¹⁴⁷ and is associated, in the Latin version, omitted from the German, with the Antichrist, for *Exurge Domine* had recently been issued.¹⁴⁸

Yet on 6 September, as he was still working through the shock of the Antichrist's discovery, Brother Martin wrote to Pope Leo again, this time in German, sending him his *On the Freedom of a Christian*.¹⁴⁹ Here Brother Martin referred to Leo, the holy father Leo, as a sheep amongst wolves, as Daniel in the lion's den, and as Ezekiel amongst the scorpions.¹⁵⁰ Yet the tenor of this letter is so radically different from Brother Martin's letter to Leo less than two years previous, in early January 1519. Now it was not the authority of "our Mother, the Roman Church" that Brother Martin was seeking to defend. Now the Roman Church, or at least the Roman See (*Romischen stuel*) or Roman Court (*Romischen hoff*), Luther had attacked, finding it worse than Sodom, Gomorrah, or Babylon ever was.¹⁵¹ Rome had been the most holy of all, but now it had become a stinking pit of damnation.¹⁵² God's anger had been unleashed on Rome,¹⁵³ and Luther was writing to Leo not to appeal to his holiness or authority, but as a warning; his letter is a pastoral letter, trying to save Leo from the destruction to come, sending him thus his treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*.¹⁵⁴

Yet one can only wonder why Brother Martin was so shocked at the revelation that the *Donation of Constantine* was a forgery. None of Brother

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy*, pp. 95–120. Hendrix is the best brief guide to the complex history of the events of 1520, even as he both softens Luther and tries to preserve Luther as the reformer who had been such all along. Thus it was only with his reading of Hus in February 1520 that Luther, according to Hendrix, "dropped all the reservations about being identified with Hus," whose "taint of schism and heresy . . . had thus far deterred Luther from a full endorsement . . ." implying that Luther had known Hus previously and in distancing himself from Hus was simply being "political." Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁶ WA 7.75,8–82,25; for the German, WA 7.85,2–90,15.

¹⁴⁷ WA 7.80,23–35; cf. WA 7.88,20–89,20.

¹⁴⁸ WA 7.80,29; cf. WA 7.88,20–89,4.

¹⁴⁹ WA 7.3,4–11,14.

¹⁵⁰ "Inn desz fiezstu, heyliger vatter Leo, wie eyn schaff unter den wolffen, und gleych wie Daneil unter den lawen, unnd mit Ezechiel unter den scorpion." WA 7.5,32–33.

¹⁵¹ WA 7.5,8–1.

¹⁵² WA 7.5,23–31.

¹⁵³ WA 7.5,37–38.

¹⁵⁴ WA 7.11,4–13.

Martin's opponents had held up the *Donation* as the basis for papal jurisdiction in temporal affairs, much less for papal power as such. It was not, as such, a matter of contention, though Hutten's publishing Valla's treatise was very much an attempt to get up the pope's nose, so to speak. Marsilius of Padua had questioned the document's authenticity already in the early fourteenth century, and for Marsilius, even if it was genuine and valid, it entailed that jurisdiction over the empire was Constantine's to begin with and his rightful possession, and thus what he had given, he could take back. Augustinus of Ancona, implicitly responding to Marsilius, likewise did not give the *Donation* much importance, for the proper understanding of it, according to Augustinus, was that Constantine was giving back to Pope Sylvester what he had usurped, namely, lawful jurisdiction over the Christian Empire, which had by right belonged to the pope all along. The importance of the *Donation* was to prove that Constantine was the first legitimate emperor, who recognized papal right and jurisdiction and restored the proper, divinely established relationship.¹⁵⁵ The *Donation* was rather a problem to deal with for both extremes of the ecclesio-political spectrum, and by no means was appealed to as foundational for papal supremacy, or papal power of any type. Neither Marsilius nor Augustinus would have experienced the shock that Brother Martin did had they discovered that the *Donation* had been a forgery. For Augustinus, as for Giles of Rome and James of Viterbo, the pope's jurisdiction had been established by Christ before and independently of the empire and political authority, and was not in any way derived from the emperor. For Marsilius, the pope's jurisdiction was completely a human, political convenience, derived from the emperor and/or the powers that be that are established by God, and thus can be abolished without impinging upon divine law. For neither position was the *Donation* a major issue. What then was behind Brother Martin's reaction?

As seen in [Chapter 6](#), Brother Martin's position was neither that of Marsilius, nor that of Augustinus. The papacy for Brother Martin was not a divinely established office as the continuation of Christ's Petrine foundation of his Church and the pope was not the head of the Church with the Church understood as the invisible Church triumphant on earth. Yet the papacy was established by Christ's commission to Peter to feed his sheep, and thus the pope was Christ's vicar in terms of his ministerial function in leading the visible, militant Church. Thus it was to the pope that Christ gave his fullness of power instrumentally while such power

¹⁵⁵ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 90–93.

remained Christ's and not as such that of the pope. As such the pope, like general councils of the Church, could indeed err and the temporal jurisdiction of the papacy was a human institution that was subject, as were all visible, external things, such as religion, knowledge, and the external exercise of virtue, to corruption when the external, visible, and corporeal took precedence over the hidden, internal, invisible, and spiritual. Yet the spiritual, hidden, internal, truth of the Gospel, the internal Word, was only made possible by the corporeal, manifest, external Word. The pope was essential in this light to the Church as the guarantor ministerially and instrumentally of the external Word, as were all bishops, even as the Bishop of Rome held primacy of place in terms of honor and tradition, though was not essentially superior to the Bishop of Constantinople, the Bishop of Alexandria, the Bishop of Jerusalem, or any other bishop, all of whom served the militant Church in a similar capacity as did the Bishop of Rome, making possible the presence of the true, invisible, triumphant Church manifest on earth which was one, holy, and catholic.

In this light, the shock Brother Martin experienced was not that the temporal jurisdiction of the papacy had been based on a forgery, but that the pope had lied in the attempt to gain temporal power, having thus focused on the corporeal, and indeed carnal dimensions of the manifest militant Church, using human laws and power for temporal gain, denying Christ and Christ's true Church. Implicit in Brother Martin's understanding was the three-fold understanding of the pope that had been explicated by Augustinus, namely, the pope as an individual Christian holding a Church office, the pope as the Bishop of Rome, and the pope as the pope. Popes had been called the Antichrist before, and Brother Martin surely knew as much. Pope John XXII had been identified as the Antichrist in Lewis of Bavaria's *Sachsenhausen Appeal*, calling for a council to depose the pope, the Antichrist revealed. What though was so shocking to Brother Martin was not that the pope was the Antichrist, but that the papacy was. The papacy, the pope as pope, not the pope as individual, or even as bishop of Rome, was not sitting on St Peter's throne; that was the medieval Pope as Antichrist critique; the pope as pope, the papacy, was sitting on his *own* throne and *that* throne was the throne of the Antichrist. The entire papal Church was the structure of the Church of Antichrist. That which had been seen as the very mouthpiece of Christ, to whom Christ had given his power, was a diabolical lie. That was Brother Martin's horror. It had all been based on a lie, and a lie that had then also burned the Gospel publically, pronouncing it as heresy, as in the case of Hus, Brother Martin's most recent shock before that of 24 February. Now Brother

Martin's response was, "Good God ... I am so horrified" (*Deus bone ... ego sic angor*)!

Now the world had changed. Brother Martin had always lived in a world between God and the devil. He had all along expected the last days and saw signs of the times that they were upon him. The selling of indulgences was not merely a mistake, though Brother Martin so hoped it had been, a mistake that could be rectified, ameliorated; an abuse that could have been cleaned up with debate and teaching. After 24 February 1520, there was a new departure, a new urgency, a new intensification. Brother Martin's entire understanding of the Church had been wrong. The holy Mother Church of Rome had now been revealed as the Church of the Antichrist. There had been no ambivalence in Brother Martin's ecclesiology, even if there had been complexities very much in keeping with the complexities of late medieval doctrines, even as Martin's understanding differed. The pope had never been a straightforward univocal construct. In January 1519 Brother Martin had written to Pope Leo asserting his obedience and his defense of holy Mother Church, seeing Leo as the mouthpiece of Christ. In June 1520, Brother Martin wrote to the holy father Leo, now no longer as the pope, but as the pope as an individual Christian, one who was as Daniel in the lion's den in a diabolic pit worse than Sodom, Gomorrah, and Babylon all together. The curia had already been associated with Babylon, even as the pope was still seen as the voice of Christ. Now the papacy itself was even worse than Babylon, and Pope Leo as a fellow Christian had to be warned. This cannot be seen as simply a progression to a new "finely differentiated" stage in Luther's attitude.¹⁵⁶ And Brother Martin went on the attack: on 26 June appeared in German his *On the Papacy at Rome Against the Famous Romanists in Leipzig*, in which he publically identified the pope with the Antichrist;¹⁵⁷ at this time, Brother Martin had already been planning his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, which appeared in print on 18 August; on 6 October appeared his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*; on 16 November *The Freedom of a Christian* was published in German, which he had already sent to Pope Leo in September. Leo cannot have been moved. On 15 June, *Exurge Domine* had been promulgated, which Brother Martin received on 10 October. On 10 December, it was set to the flames along with canon law in Wittenberg. The Rubicon had been crossed. This had been indeed Brother Martin's Reformation Breakthrough. The Reformation of the

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy*, p. xii.

¹⁵⁷ WA 6.322,17–19; cf. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy*, pp. 104–105.

Later Middle Ages was no more. The Protestant Reformation had begun. Thus Brother Martin stood before Charles V and the imperial Reichstag in Worms. Hus had prophesied that though they might roast this goose, “in a hundred years they will hear a swan sing, which they will not be able to silence.”¹⁵⁸ This was prophetic indeed.

Brother Martin in Exile

In mid-December of 1518, Staupitz had written Brother Martin from Salzburg: “I would wish that you would leave Wittenberg at your convenience and that you would join me, so that we might live and die together. Thus it should be: having abandoned the desert, let us follow Christ.”¹⁵⁹ Brother Martin wrote to Staupitz on 3 October 1519 and mentioned that he had received a book by Hus, but that he had not yet read it.¹⁶⁰ His Reformation Breakthrough, his Reformation Discovery, was still on the horizon, and yet Staupitz had already felt that they had both gone into exile, having left the desert, the desert of the Order of Hermits of St Augustine. Staupitz was in his own exile in Salzburg, seeing that the cross of Christ was the only hope left, if there was hope at all, for the world had turned against the truth. He implored Brother Martin to follow him.¹⁶¹ Two months earlier, Staupitz had released Brother Martin from his vow of obedience. In August 1520, at the meeting of the general chapter of the Saxony-Thuringian congregation of the observant branch of the OESA, Staupitz resigned as vicar general. He requested and received a transfer to the Benedictines. Brother Martin felt abandoned.¹⁶² In August 1520, Brother Martin had had his discovery and was doing all that he could to defend the Gospel against the Antichrist and his minions in Rome. On 3 January 1521, Brother Martin was excommunicated. On 24 March 1521, Brother Martin wrote to an unidentified brother. He mentioned his upcoming appearance in Worms, and that he would be expected to recant, and that he did:

They are working to get me to recant many articles, but my recantation will be this: previously I said that the pope is the vicar of Christ, now I recant

¹⁵⁸ As quoted by Oberman, *Luther*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁹ *Placet mihi, ut Wittembergam ad tempus deseras meque accedas, ut simul vivamus moriamurque. Expedi ita fieri, quatenus deserti desertum, sequamur Christum.* WABr 1.267,9–12; cf. Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 643–644.

¹⁶⁰ WABr 1.514,27–29.

¹⁶¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 643.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 645–670.

and say: the pope is the adversary of Christ and the apostle of the devil. That most heinous and sacrilegious impiety by which they openly damn Christ has compelled me to this.¹⁶³

On 4 May, Brother Martin was condemned at the Reichstag in Worms, and whisked away to the Wartburg by Frederick the Wise, where he stayed until 1 March 1522, in hiding, in exile, unknown at first even to his colleagues in Wittenberg. Here, in his exile, Luther was transformed. He began translating the New Testament. In November 1521 appeared his *Judgment Against Monastic Vows*, a work that accepts monastic life as a valid life for the individual, as a Christian school, but one that should not be based on vows, should not be based on compulsion; *On Monastic Vows* overturned what had been the foundation of monastic life from its very beginning.¹⁶⁴ As Heiko Oberman wrote:

However, if we want to do more than merely chronicle Luther's doctrinal positions, we must discover what exactly caused him to change his mind on such an essential issue as the monastic life. In general terms, we know that it occurred sometime during those two decisive years of mounting confrontation, between the end of 1519 and November 1521 ... The dialectic of 1519, softened by the "not yet" (*adhuc*), has grown into the clarion call for full mobilization and become the platform for resistance. The demonic threat of "these last days" forecast by Saints Peter and Paul first dawned on him horribly in February 1520, and he spelled it out in November 1521.¹⁶⁵

February 1520 was the turning point. The apocalyptic prophet was mobilizing the forces. Now more than ever, Christians must be taught. Luther stopped signing his name as Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, and on 9 October 1524, Luther put aside his habit.¹⁶⁶ He was no longer an Augustinian hermit.

In the ninety-third of his ninety-five theses against indulgences, Brother Martin had asserted: "All those prophets do well who proclaim to the people of Christ: 'the Cross, the Cross', and there is no Cross," a thesis he did not further clarify or explain in his *Explanations*.¹⁶⁷ In his exile, the cross

¹⁶³ *Laborant, ut revocem multos articulos, sed revocatio mea erit ista: papam prius dixi esse Christi vicarium, nunc revoco, et dico: papa est Christi adversarius et apostolus diaboli. Hoc me cogit illa scleratissima et sacrilega impietas, qua Christum aperte damnant.* *WABr* 2.293,13–17.

¹⁶⁴ Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, pp. 48–53; cf. Saak, "Luther and the Monastic World of the Later Middle Ages," forthcoming in Derek Nelson and Paul Hinlicky et al., eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther* (Oxford, 2017).

¹⁶⁵ Oberman, *The Two Reformations*, pp. 51–52, cf. "24 February 1520: the day the Reformation began." Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, p. 628.

¹⁶⁶ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 659–670.

¹⁶⁷ *Bene agant omnes illi prophetae, qui dicunt populo Christi "Crux, crux," et non est crux.* *WA* 1.628,20–22.

was there indeed. It was one that Luther would bear himself, as did all Christendom. The last days *were* at hand. Luther had had his Reformation Discovery. The Antichrist had been revealed. Preparations were being made for Armageddon. A new world was dawning, one we now call early modern Europe. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages had failed.

The Failure of the Reformation

In the woodcut *Luther Winesack*, Luther is portrayed as a drunken sot, whose belly is so huge he has to carry it in a wheelbarrow, having married a nun, Katie, who is still in her habit, holding a child labeled as *sola fide*.¹ The image was produced in the late sixteenth century to discredit Luther, a renegade monk who ran off with a renegade nun, fathering children left and right without thought or concern, as a degenerate. This was the image that encapsulates the view of Luther having destroyed Christendom, every bit as sinister, even if more comic, in part, as Cochlaeus's representations, and interpretations, of the horrors that Luther had caused, a monstrous seven-headed Luther.² It is not a pretty picture. Luther's own failure as a monk, as an observant Augustinian, was based on an underlying moral depravity that led to his theology and the havoc it caused, revolting against the established authority of God's vicar. Even Staupitz, whom Luther had credited with having started it all, felt that Luther had gone too far,³ and a fellow Augustinian, Bartholomew Arnoldi von Usingen, one of Luther's previous teachers, wrote fiercely against Luther and the Lutheran position, seeing therein the machinations of Satan.⁴ Two other Augustinian hermits, on the other hand, as many in the Wittenberg cloister, followed Luther and for their deviance became the first two martyrs of the Reformation in 1523. Luther had countered the cry, *Pax, pax et non est pax* with his *crux, crux, et non est crux*, and yet in the wake of Luther's transformation from friar to Reformer, while certainly peace was increasingly being extinguished, the cross certainly was not, and in so many ways, all of Europe, by necessity, began to live under the cross, with peace, understanding, and toleration increasingly being extinguished

¹ Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, p. 225.

² See Peter Newman Brooks, *Seven-Headed Luther: Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary 1483–1983* (Oxford, 1983). Cochlaeus's image appeared in 1529.

³ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 658–659.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 621–622.

in the name of the purity of doctrine. So often the Reformation has been seen as the beginnings of religious toleration, overcoming the oppressive authority of Rome. It was, however, the opposite: the Reformation was the beginning of an increasing lack of toleration, formulated officially in the so-called Peace of Augsburg and its formulation of “whose the reign, his the religion” (*cuius regio, eius religio*). Diversity there was; tolerance there was not. Catholics and Protestants both burned the radicals, and the witch hunts were heating up as never before. R.I. Moore’s thesis that with increasing centralization of authority Christendom became in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries a persecuting society is even more valid with respect to the sixteenth century: with the crumbling of Christendom and the growth of state authority and confessionalization, Europe became a persecuting society as never before, harkening the onset of absolutism, civil war, and the last gasps of feudal structures. Early modern Europe, for all the intellectual advances, was not a period of toleration, peace, tranquility, and individual rights, except perhaps for the elite few, who tried, forcefully and violently, to keep the lid on the boiling pot that then exploded in the Age of Revolutions. This eventually gave way to an age of apathy when religious conviction was seen as a relic from the past and the omnipotence of the individual, religiously, socially, politically, and morally yielded an amorphous democracy of malaise when polity has been forgotten, not to mention the origins of it all, leaving us to seek out enemies against whom to fight, needing our “other,” our instruments of Satan, whom we still endeavor to combat, though never looking to the evil that remains within – the unintended effects of the failed Reformation.⁵

Ends and Beginnings

On 26 March 1542, Martin Luther powerfully stated his view of the conditions of the world in a letter addressed to Jacob Propst, the Lutheran Bishop of Bremen:

Although I do not have the leisure to write many things to you, my dear Jacob, for I am consumed by age and labor: “Old, cold, and miss-shaped” (as it is said), and yet I am not allowed to rest being harassed daily by all the reasons and occasions for writing, I know more than you about the fate of this age. The world is threatened with destruction, this is certain. Satan so rages and the world is so brutish that only this one relief stands firm, the

⁵ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*; see also later.

last day is at hand ... Germany is a thing of the past and will never again be what it was. The nobility is concerned for their own rule above everything else, cities make plans against each other (and on the basis of law). Thus a kingdom divided against itself must meet the army of mad demons, the Turks. Neither are we concerned at all whether we have the Lord's favor, or His wrath, but we would conquer and command the Turks, the demons, God, and everyone else, all by ourselves. Such is the most insane trust and security of ruined Germany. What, however, are we to do? We complain in vain, we cry out in vain. It is only left for us to pray: Thy will be done, for the reign and for the sanctification of the name of God.⁶

The plague, the devil, hell, and the Turk were the enemies with whom Luther did constant battle, and were the omnipresent conditions of this life. In 1542, in so many ways the Reformation had indeed failed and Luther could only pray *Thy Will Be Done*. Less than five years later, Luther had died, leaving on his bedside a note on which he wrote: "We are beggars, this is true."⁷

Little did Luther know what he would be facing in the years to come when, with his approval, the University of Wittenberg appointed a new professor of Greek in 1518. Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian hermit and professor of theology at Wittenberg, had been working on curriculum reform and eagerly looked forward to a young scholar coming to assume the newly established position, the great-nephew of the famous German humanist, Johannes Reuchlin. Luther could not know in the spring of 1518 how close a colleague he would be. Failure seemed far away.

On 29 August 1518, Wittenberg's new Professor of Greek, Philip Melanchthon, delivered his inaugural address, *On Reforming Studies (De Corrigendis Studiis)*, in which he set forth his vision of education. Such a vision was firmly grounded in the humanities (*studia humanitatis*). Education, for Melanchthon, was nevertheless built upon logic, or dialectics, which Melanchthon called a certain method, equated with Aristotle's

⁶ *Quamquam non vacat multa scribere, mi Iacobe, Sum enim confectus aetate et laboribus: Alt, kaldt, ungestalt (ut dicitur), nec sic tamen quiescere permittor, tot causis et scribendi occupationibus quotidie vexatus, plura scio quam tu de huius saeculi fatalibus. Minatur mundus ruinam, hoc est certum, ita furit Satan, ita brutescit mundus, nisi quod unum hoc solatium restat, diem illum brevi instare ... Germania fuit, et nunquam erit, quod fuit. Nobilitas cogitat regnum super omnia, civitates contra sibi consulunt (et iure). Ita regnum in sese divisum occurrere debet exercitui daemonum in Turcis furentium. Nec nos magnopere curamus, Dominumne propitium an iratum habeamus, per nos ipsos scilicet victuri et imperaturi Tuis, daemonibus, Deo et omnibus. Tanta est pereuntis Germaniae furentissima fiducia et securitas. Reliquum est, ut oremus: Fiat voluntas tua, pro regno, pro sanctificatione nominis Dei. WABr 10.23,3–19.*

⁷ Heiko A. Oberman, "‘Wir sein Bettler. Hoc est verum’: Bund und Gnade in der Theologie des Mittelalters und der Reformation." *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 78 (1967), 232–252.

categories.⁸ This was to have major importance for Melanchthon's later development which would distance him from the educational tradition of Italian humanism and Rudolph Agricola. In this oration we also find early glimpses of Melanchthon's associating a humanist reform of studies with ecclesio-theological reform, when in his emphasis on the appropriateness of words (*proprietas sermonis*) he points to the usefulness of the humanities for understanding the mysteries of the sacraments.⁹ Indeed, as Karl Hartfelder most eloquently summarized a century ago in his still unsurpassed study of Melanchthon, the humanist program Melanchthon proposed was designed for the educated man

to be able to write a sentence as beautiful and as vigorous as Cicero, and to be able to compose Latin verse as sonorous as Virgil and Horace. Wittenberg students were to learn Greek, Latin, and Hebrew in order to converse with Paul, and thereby be able to strip themselves of the old Adam, putting on in its place, the new man.¹⁰

For Melanchthon a humanist educational reform was the necessary precursor to ecclesiastical reform. Virgil and Cicero were preliminaries to Paul. A thorough knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew – the humanists' ideal of the trilingual man (*homo trilinguis*) – was a prerequisite to the Word of God. As he wrote in his preface to Luther's *Operationes in Psalmos* of 1519, it was the Greek, Latin and Hebrew scholarship of such humanists as Wolfgang Capito and Melanchthon's own great-uncle Johannes Reuchlin, among a list of others, that "enabled good minds to be called back to evangelical studies."¹¹ The humanities (*studia humanitatis*) were the prerequisite to evangelical theology. Luther was captivated.

⁸ *MW* 3.35,4–17.

⁹ *MW* 3.41,37–38.

¹⁰ ... welcher das höchste Ideal des gebildeten Mannes darin gesehen, Perioden schreiben zu können, so schön und schwungvoll wie Cicero, und lateinische Verse dichten zu können so klangvoll wie Virgil und Horaz. Griechisch, Lateinisch und Hebräisch sollen die Wittenberger Studenten hauptsächlich dazu lernen, damit sie, mit Paulus zu reden, de alten Adam ausziehen und dafür einen neuen Menschen anziehen können. Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae* (Berlin, 1889; reprint Nieuwkoop, 1964), pp. 66–67.

¹¹ *Erasmus Roterodamo debemus cum Graecae tum Latinae linguae studium, debemus item, ut pleraque omittam, illustratam novi testamenti lectionem, debemus et Hieronymum Capnioni praeter multa cedunt Hebraica. Suae cum in Graecis tum Hebraeis laudes sunt Volgango Fabricio et Ioanni Icolampadio. Aliquot frigidas scholae sententias Andreas Carolostadius pari fide et cura confutavit. Et quid singulos commemoro? Passim ab optimis quibusque multa scribuntur, quibus bonae mentes revocari ad evangelica studia possint.* Philip Melanchthon, *Theologiae Studiosis*, in Martin Luther, *Operationes in Psalmos*. AWA 2 (Cologne, 1981), pp. 18–20. Cf. Luther, *An die Ratsherrn aller Städte deutsches Lands, dass sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen* (1524), WA 15.27–53.

The humanities were, for Melanchthon, not only the prerequisite for the good theologian, but for the good citizen as well. “For what other thing brings greater utility to all human kind than letters?”¹² Melanchthon asked in his *In Praise of New Schools* (*In laudem novae scholae*) of 1526. It is the study of letters that provides the foundation for law and religion, the two pillars of the well-governed state.¹³ Without learning forming virtue, humanity, and piety, the morals of the people will degenerate into barbarity.¹⁴ To ensure the proper civic life (*vita civilis*), moral philosophy was to be taught in the schools¹⁵ which would instill humanity (*humanitas*): “Therefore, this doctrine [*scil.* moral philosophy] properly should be called *humanitas*, since it correctly shows the civil way of living to every age. Those who are ignorant [of such doctrine] are only slightly above the beasts.”¹⁶

It was in this context of pedagogy that Melanchthon saw the necessity for the schools. In his plan for the reorganization of the University of Frankfurt, *On Re-establishing the Schools* (*De restituendis scholis*) of 1540, Melanchthon equated restoring education with restoring the Church.¹⁷ The Church could not exist without schools and true doctrine would not last long without scholars working for the Church.¹⁸ Although Church, School, and State were distinct realms for Melanchthon, they were intimately related. In this light, Melanchthon did indeed strive “to Christianize” his students, just as he attempted “to civilize” them, and he based his endeavor on his educational program. However, similar to Luther, Melanchthon realized that “to Christianize” was beyond the capability of the *studia humanitatis*. Philosophy was necessary for Christian theology, but it could not bring about an understanding of Christian theology or an assent to the doctrines of Christian faith.

Melanchthon himself was aware of this gap, and he placed the blame not on the schools or his educational program, but rather on the morals and religiosity of German parents. In his *Declamation* of 1526, *On the*

¹² *Quae enim alia res maiores utilitates toti generi humano affert quam litterae?* MW 3.64,31–32.

¹³ MW 3.64,35–65,6.

¹⁴ MW 3.65,24–30.

¹⁵ MW 3.155,17–18 and 155,25–26.

¹⁶ *Atque haec doctrina proprie vocanda est humanitas, ac recte et civilem vivendi rationem ostendit omnibus aetatibus, quam qui non norunt, parum admodum distant a bestiis. Praefatio in Officia Ciceronis* MW 3.85,24–27.

¹⁷ For the relationship between Melanchthon’s educational program and his program for reform, see Heinz Scheible, “Melanchthons Bildungsprogramm.” *Ebernburg-Hefte* (1986), 181–195.

¹⁸ ... *quare ut ecclesias restituere, ita et scholas instaurare debent; numquam enim vera ecclesia sine scholis aliquibus fuit, ac ne potest quidem diu conservari doctrina, nisi scholastici coetus adiungantur ad ecclesias.* MW 3.108,13–16.

Miseries of Teachers (De Miseriis Paedagogorum), Melanchthon lamented the frightful conditions in which teachers had to work and which they fought to overcome: “See, I beg, how wretched is our condition!”¹⁹ In the eyes of the Teacher of Germany (*Praeceptor Germaniae*), as Melanchthon later became known, Germany was the worst of all fronts. This was true, according to Melanchthon, not because German youths were ignorant of Cicero – that was an ill that could be rectified with diligence – but because they were ignorant of religion, and the root of this evil lay not in the barbarisms of neologisms, but in the German home life. German parents, “many of whom call themselves Evangelicals,” were not teaching the precepts of Christian doctrine and life, but rather “are teaching the contempt of religion.”²⁰ How are boys to be taught when they come to school bearing the worst morals based on the most disgraceful examples?²¹ In addition, teachers have no respect, for “if a boy does something right, the teacher is given no praise, but if he errs, the teacher is accused.”²² Such was the state of German education in 1526 as perceived by Melanchthon.

Gerald Strauss claimed that the Reformation failed because its pedagogical enterprise did not “Christianize” all people.²³ Here we see that Melanchthon turned Strauss’s view on its head. For Melanchthon, the failure *preceded* the education and thus in Melanchthon’s view it is not the failure of the Reformation’s pedagogical enterprise that is reflected in the visitation reports, but the conditions of the *un*-educated. Melanchthon was painfully cognizant of the un-educated but based on his distinction between education and Christianization, he was as aware as was Luther that the external endeavor could only give the opportunity for and supplement, not determine, the internal impact. The failure that Strauss pointed to, Melanchthon recognized as the result of original sin, out of which no one could be led (*educatus*), as was possible for ignorance, except by the Holy Spirit. For Melanchthon, it was not merely the failure of education, but rather, the failure of Adam. Melanchthon could only point to the

¹⁹ *Videte quaeso quam misera conditio nostra sit.* CR II.129.

²⁰ *Pugnamus ergo cum ingeniis puerilibus, quae per sese ferocissima sunt, praesertim in Germanis et domestico usu corrupto. Videte enim istos bonos parentes, quorum multi se Evangelicos vocant, cum in ea aetate prima esse tradendae religionis cura debeat, hi ne quidem sacras preces, Decalogum et hoc genus alia domi docent, plerique parentes contemptum religionis docent.* CR II.127.

²¹ *Et tamen in scholas quotquot fere mittuntur, pessimos mores, turpissima exempla adferunt, ut refingendi sint de integro. Est autem difficilius, prava quae semel insederunt, dedocere, quam recta docere.* CR II.127.

²² *Si quid recte fecit filius, nihil laudis adscribitur praeceptor. Si quid peccavit, accusatur praeceptor.* CR II.129.

²³ See my Introduction.

ultimate necessity of overcoming this failure, the rest was out of his hands. In this light, Melanchthon could admit that the Reformation was indeed a failure; it did not reform original sin.²⁴

Luther agreed. In his sermon on the fourth commandment, held on 5 October 1516, Brother Martin lamented that “all peoples, especially the Jews, bring up their children more diligently than do Christians. Thus the Church too has a bad time of it, because all its power consists in the next generation, who are neglected in their early years, just as a garden in Spring time. Therefore, Christian children are to be educated in the erudition of the Lord.”²⁵ The causes of the failure though were not simply ones of parents and teachers. The eternal cosmic conflict had escalated.

On 25 April 1535, Luther wrote to Wenzeslaus Link:

I think, or rather even more so I am certain, that the papacy is the kingdom of the devil, sent into the world by God’s wrath. But no other kingdom is more fitting for the world. The world wants to have the devil for God. Now I see the reason why God has permitted that abomination to arise and to be exalted above God: the world wants it so.²⁶

Less than two months later, Luther began lecturing on Genesis, in which he affirmed:

Accordingly we see the cleansed church harshly placed in danger by the word of Satan. Sacramentarians, Anabaptists, and other fanatic teachers have risen up who perturb the Church with various temptations. And they excite internal vexations. This God allows, not because he wants the Church to be abandoned or lost, but, as the book of Wisdom says, these battles confront the Church and the pious, so that they might emerge victorious and learn by using wisdom, since wisdom is more powerful than all ... For when the Gospel is purely preached, then humans have the certain rule of their faith and are able to avoid idolatry. But precisely there Satan tries his hand in various ways and tempts, how he might lead humans from the word or how to pervert the word. Thus in the Greek church, even in the time of the Apostles, various heresies rose up: one denied that Christ was the son of God, another that he was the son of Mary, just as today the Anabaptists impiously deny that Christ received something from the flesh

²⁴ For Melanchthon’s view of the effects of the Fall and the continued affects of original sin, see *CR* 13.170 and *CR* 21.669.

²⁵ *Omnes gentes, praesertim Iudaei, diligentius instituunt pueros suos quam Christiani. Ideo et ecclesia pessime habet, quia tota eius vis consistit in successoribus, qui in prima aetate negliguntur, sicut hortus in verno tempore. Igitur in eruditione domini sunt educandi.* *WA* 1.450,10–14.

²⁶ *Cogito, imo certus sum, papatum esse regnum Diaboli per iram Dei in orbem missum. Sed nullum regnum aptius fuit mundo. Die Welt will den Teufel zum Gott haben. Video nunc causas, cur Deus permiserit istam abominationem surgere et exaltari super ... Deum: die Welt will’s so haben.* *WABr* 7.181,13–17.

of Mary. And even in the time of Basil the heretics attempted most of all to deny that the Holy Spirit was God. We see the examples of the same in our day, when after purer teaching of the Gospel has shown forth, opponents of many types have shown their faces. This is not to say that other temptations have vanished, since Satan still seeks to excite fornication, adultery, and similar disgraces. But this temptation, when Satan attacks the Word and works of God, is long, heavier and more dangerous, and is part and parcel of the Church and the saints.²⁷

With his Genesis Commentary Luther sought with all his might to reveal the diabolical incursions into the divine. He directed his counter-offensive *contra omnes* – against the papists, the sacramentarians, and the Anabaptists, for indeed, “all fanatic spirits follow the reason of Satan.”²⁸ Luther did not stop with accusation, but showed precisely how his enemies were infected by satanic rhetoric. Just as Satan tempted Eve by introducing his own insidious words to the word of God, so does the Church follow Satan by adding its own words: “for Satan added another, new word, just as up until now has been the custom in the church.”²⁹ And just as Satan tempted Eve with a question, phrased with a negative, so did Arius: “Do you really think that Christ is God, who clearly said: The Father is greater than I?”³⁰ And the sacramentarians: “Do you really think that bread is the body of Christ and wine the blood of Christ?”³¹ And the Anabaptists: “water is not able to reach the spirit or soul, but only the bare skin.”³² Thus “all heretics are in the beginning led astray by Satan by the

²⁷ *Ad hunc modum videmus Ecclesiam repurgatam verbo assidue periclitari: Excitantur Sacramentarii, Anabaptistae et alii fanatici Doctores, qui Ecclesiam exercent variis tentationibus. Accedunt etiam interinae vexationes. Haec ita permittit Deus fieri, non quod constituerit Ecclesiam aut deserere, aut perire velle, sed, sicut Sapientia dicit, Illa certamina Ecclesiae et piis obiiciuntur, ut vincant et ipso usu discant, quoniam omnium potentior est sapientia . . . Quando enim Euangelium pure praedicatur, tunc homines certam fidei suae regulam habent, et idolatriam cavere possunt. Sed ibi Satan varia conatur et tentat, quomodo aut a verbo abducatur homines aut depravet verbum. Ita in graeca Ecclesia etiam Apostolorum tempore excitatae sunt variae haereses: Alius negavit, Charistum esse filium Dei, Alius negavit eum esse filium Mariae, Sicut Anabaptistiae hodie impie negant Christum de carne Mariae aliquid sumpsisse. Ac Basilii temporibus praecipue conati sunt Spiritum sanctum negare, quod Deus sit. Eadem exempla nostra aetas etiam vidit, ubi, postquam purior Evangelii doctrina illuxit, impugnatore operum et verbi Dei non unius generis exorti sunt. Non quidem cessant aliae tentationes, quod sollicitat Satan ad scortationem, adulteria et similia flagicia. Sed haec tentatio, cum Satan verbum et opera Dei petit, longe est gravior et periculosior et propria Ecclesiae et Sanctorum.* WA 42.109,18–110,37.

²⁸ *Hanc rationem Satanae sequuntur omnes Fanatici spiritus.* WA 42.115,10.

²⁹ *... addit aliud et novum verbum, sicut adhuc solet in Ecclesia.* WA 42.110,22–23.

³⁰ *Sic Arius: Putas ne, quod Christus sit Deus, qui clare dicit: Pater maior me est?* WA 42.115,10–11.

³¹ *Sicut Sacramentarii: Putas ne, quod panis sit corpus Christi et vinum sanguis Christi?* WA 42.115,12.

³² *Aquam non posse attingere spiritum seu animam, sed nudam cutem.* WA 42.121,2.

word *forte*, and afterwards turn *forte* into a negation; they progress from deserters of God to persecutors of God.”³³ Therefore, Luther summarized:

For truly the source of all sin is disbelief and doubt, since it falls away from the Word. Indeed, the world is full of doubt and disbelief and therefore remains in idolatry, denies the truth of God, and creates a new God. A monk is an idolater, for thus he imagines: if he will have lived according to the Rule of Francis or Dominic, [he will have found] the way to the kingdom of God. This, however, is to fashion a new God and to become an idolater, because the true God proclaimed the way to the kingdom of heaven as believing in Christ. Therefore, faith [in God’s word] having been lost, the monk follows disbelief and idolatry, which transforms the glory of God into works. The Anabaptists, sacramentarians, and papists are the same, they are all idolaters. Not because they worship rocks or pieces of wood, but because they worship their own imaginations, having left God’s word behind.³⁴

The raging bull lashed out against all whom he judged were infected with Satan’s venom.

It was not only the pestilence of plague that had, by 1535, reached Luther’s own door, but the diabolical pestilence of doubt as well. In the climate that produced the Wittenberg Concord, one had to be wary; the Gospel must not be sacrificed for political expediency, as Luther warned Landgraf Phillipp of Hesse in a letter dated 30 January 1535.³⁵ Danger was without and within: “We see many of those who in the beginning gave thanks to God with us for the revealed Word not only to have fallen away, but now even stand against us.”³⁶ It was precisely to reveal the root of the matter – not only originally with Eve, but also in the world around him – that Luther set as his task in his Genesis Commentary. Doubt was the source of all heresy and idolatry, indeed, it was the source of all evil, both in the Garden in Paradise, and in the paradise lost of sixteenth-century Europe. This was a social and moral imperative for Luther, for in 1535 the

³³ *Omnes cum initio ad particulam “Forte” a Satana abducti sunt, postea ex “Forte” faciunt negativam “Non”: ex desertoribus Dei etiam fiunt persecutores Dei.* WA 42.118,1–3.

³⁴ *Vere enim fons omnis peccati est incredulitas et dubitatio, cum verbo disceditur. His quia mundus plenus est, ideo manet in idolatria, negat veritatem Dei et fingit novum Deum. Monachus et idolatra. Sic enim imaginatur: Si secundum regulam Francisci aut Dominici vixerit, eam esse viam ad regnum Dei. Hoc autem est fingere novum Deum et fieri idolatram, Quia verus Deus pronuntiat viam ad regnum coelorum esse, si credas in Christum. Amissa igitur fide sequitur incredulitas et idolatria, quae transfert gloriam Dei in opera. Sic Anabaptistae, Sacramentarii, Papistae, omnes sunt Idolatrae. Non quod lapides aut ligna adorent, sed quia adorant cogitationes suas relicto verbo.* WA 42.112,20–29.

³⁵ WABr 7.157,1–158,18.

³⁶ *Et exempla ante oculos sunt. Qui nobiscum initio gratias Deo agebant pro revelato verbo, horum multos videmus non solum cecidisse sed etiam nunc adversari nobis.* WA 42.117,36–38.

forces of Satan were winning: *The world wants to have the devil for its God (Die Welt will den Teufel zum Gott haben).*

But this had always been the case, even before Luther commented on Genesis, or Galatians, and before Melanchthon had joined the fray in developing his Reformation philosophy and educational program. Despair and critique were nothing new with Luther and Melanchthon. The fight against sin, plague, the devil, hell and political powers who seemed to do nothing about it had been a constant for two hundred years. Before Luther and Melanchthon were even born, the Reformation had already failed. Even before Luther and Melanchthon, Christians had not been sufficiently Christianized in any meaningful way. It was, after all, a battle against sin and Satan, against death and the devil. It was more than a matter of education. The late medieval lament, "In the midst of life, we die," seemed to rule the day. Yet Luther and Melanchthon kept fighting with all their might, for as Luther saw things, turning the lament on its head, it was only in the midst of death that we live.³⁷

This was the world Luther had entered when he knocked on the door of the Augustinian cloister in Erfurt in 1505 and became Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, seeking God's mercy in the face of death. It was not the Reformation that Luther initiated that failed, but the Reformation into which he came as an Augustinian hermit that had already been failing despite the strenuous efforts to Christianize that had been going on for a century and a half at least, including the endeavors to mobilize the political powers to aid God's cause. Martin Luther, as all of us, came into a world he did not create, vowing obedience to God, to Mary, and to his Order. The later Middle Ages was already an Age of Reformation, an age that was formed and shaped, in part, by Brother Martin and his fellow Augustinian hermits.

The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages had failed, but not for lack of effort. Luther's Reformation failed, if, with the all important if, it is seen as an attempt to Christianize significantly the flock of Christ. Religionization failed and the Age of Confessionalization was dawning, as perhaps foretold by the anonymous author of the *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund*: Reformation could only come about from above, introduced by force, as all of Europe was to experience in the wars of religion. Once reformation is seen as having to be forced from above, we have already entered confessionalization, with religionization left by the wayside except as an instrument of confessionalized territorial politics.

³⁷ Oberman, *Luther*, p. 330.

Religionization and Confessionalization

In [Chapter 1](#), we met the Augustinian hermit, Arnoldus Cancrinus, and his reformation perspectives as seen in his *Testament*. Though there is no explicit evidence that Cancrinus had read Luther, Luther was “in the air.” In 1519, Bernhard Rottert from Marburg wrote to a cleric in Hildesheim asking for copies of Luther’s works, and specifically, the Latin version of his explication of the Lord’s Prayer, since he had only seen it in German.³⁸ Rottert wrote to a “venerable father” (*venerabilis pater*) in Hildesheim, but his letter offers evidence that Luther was known in the city, as does the work of Johann Oldecop, who had studied with Luther for two years in Wittenberg. Oldecop published pamphlets (*Flugschriften*) against Luther and preached against his teaching in the St Andreas Church in Hildesheim.³⁹ Moreover, on 8 June 1524, the city council outlawed all adherents of the *Martinianer*, punishable by death by drowning, if the guilty was a religious, and by burning, if not,⁴⁰ and in 1525 the city council banned Luther’s works and ordered a search, so that they might be burned.⁴¹ Six years later, Urbanus Rhegius published his *A Letter of Consolation to all Christians in Hildesheim* (*Trostbrieff an alle Christen zu Hildesheim*), urging the Hildesheimers to bear patiently and courageously under the cross.⁴² Cancrinus was certainly aware of Luther, even if he chose not to name him as an opponent.

Lutheranism in Hildesheim was introduced in 1542. On Sunday, 27 August, the burghers of Hildesheim accepted the Lutheran teaching of “God’s word” and joined the League of Schmalkalden, the day Johann Oldecop claimed “Hildesheim lost all hope.”⁴³ On Friday, 1 September,

³⁸ Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, cod. Ps 21; see also Bepler, “Die Reformation in Hildesheim,” p. 192. Bepler presents an excellent photograph of this letter on p. 191.

³⁹ Bepler, “Die Reformation in Hildesheim,” p. 192.

⁴⁰ *UBH*, nr. 710, pp. 572–573.

⁴¹ Adolf Bertram, *Die Bischöfe von Hildesheim. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Denkmäler und Geschichte des Bisthums Hildesheim* (Hildesheim, 1896), pp. 116–117.

⁴² Urbanus Rhegius, *Trostbrieff an alle Christen zu hildesheim, die umbs Evangeliums willen yetzt schamch unde verfolgung leyden. Mitt Auslegung des 123 Psalmen, yetzt zu diser gefärlichen zeyt fast tröstlich durch Urbanum Regium zur Zell in Sachssen 1531* (Augsburg, 1531). The same year Rhegius wrote a *Sendbrieff* to a friend in Hildesheim, though he does not give a name: *Sendbrieff: Warumb der ytzige zanck im glauben sey von zweyerley frümkeyt. Vom rechten Gottes dienste. Unde menschen satzungengen/lan einen güten freunde zu hildesheim durch Urbanum Regium, 1531* (Nürnberg, 1531). The *Sendbrieff* received two other editions in 1531, in Leipzig and in Magdeburg. For Rhegius, including an extensive listing of his manuscripts and published works, see Maximilian Liebmann, *Urbanus Rhegius und die Anfänge der Reformation*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 117 (Münster, 1980).

⁴³ “Des folgden dages, und was sondach, de 27 dach Augusti, kemen de von Hildensem alle tohope.” Oldecop, *Chronica*, p. 221,4.

Johannes Bugenhagen preached the first evangelical sermon in the St Andreas Church; his theme was “Do penance.” On Saturday, Johannes Wynckel preached, and then on Sunday, the Suffragan Bishop, Dr Balthasar Faneman, preached a two-hour sermon in the Cathedral against the new teaching.⁴⁴ The Lutheran pastors sat through the entire sermon, and, according to Oldecop, when they returned home,

they despaired, for they had not imagined that so learned a man with such boldness would be here, and said amongst themselves that if they were to preach God’s word here and accomplish anything good, they would have to denounce the Suffragan and forbid his preaching in the cathedral church. From this it followed that the city council of Hildesheim, on the evening of the Nativity of Mary, sent word to the Suffragan that his preaching was forbidden, and the same message was sent to the cathedral chapter, that they would keep anyone from preaching in the Cathedral for fourteen days until further notice. And now, in the year 1563, such notice still has not been given.⁴⁵

The attempt to keep Hildesheim obedient to the Old Faith and to the Emperor had failed. On 18 February 1543, Hildesheim was officially included in the League of Schmalkalden,⁴⁶ and on 26 September 1544, Bugenhagen published the new Church Ordinance.⁴⁷

It was, however, not a battle lost without a fight. Under the leadership of Mayor Hans Wildefuer (1526–41), Hildesheim had tried to secure its safety against Lutheran incursions. On 3 February 1528, Charles V had presented the Mayor, the city council, the citizens, and the commune of the city of Hildesheim with an imperial coat of arms, for the service Hildesheim had rendered,⁴⁸ and on 18 August 1530, Charles further secured the city’s

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 222,23–223,5.

⁴⁵ “De lutherschen predicanten weren stille und bleven den sermon all ut in der domkerken. Do se wedder in ore huser gekomen were, hadde se vortzaget gewesen; wente see hadden sik eines sodan gelarden mannen und konheit nicht hir vormodet und gesecht: ‘schullen se hir goddes wort predigen und wes gudes beschaffen, so motem den sffraganeum vorwisen und henfurder dat predigen in dem dome vorbeden.’ Darut folgende, dat de rat to Hildensem ore gesanten von stunt am avende nativitatis Marie an den wigelbischof senden und leten ome dat predigen vorbeden. Und dem domcapitel ok anseden, se scholde sich 14 dage entholden und nemande predigen laten, up en wider bescheit. Und dat bescheit hebben de von Hildensem anno 1563 noch nicht ingebracht.”

Ibid., p. 223,5–18.

⁴⁶ *UBH*, nr. 867, pp. 704–706.

⁴⁷ Emil Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI Jahrhunderts*, VII/II/2/1 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1980), pp. 829–884. See also Bepler, “Die Reformation,” p. 189. Hans-Georg Aschoff, “Das Bistum Hildesheim von seiner Gründung bis zur Säkularisation: Ein Überblick.” In *Ego Sum Hildensemensis*, pp. 11–24, 17. On the original publication of the *Kirchenordnung*, see Margaret Zimmermann, “Johannes Bugenhagens Christliche Kirchenordnung.” In Herbert Reyer, ed., *Aus Casten, Capsulen und Regalen. Historische Dokumente aus dem Stadtarchiv Hildesheim*, Quellen und Dokumentationen zur Stadtgeschichte Hildesheims 12 (Hildesheim, 2002), pp. 52–54.

⁴⁸ *UBH*, nr. 783, pp. 623–625, 623.

privileges.⁴⁹ On 14 April 1533, Duke Henry the Younger of Wolfenbüttel took the Hildesheimers under his protection for their obedience to the Old Faith and the Empire, while ensuring their traditional privileges.⁵⁰ Two years later, on 30 March 1535, Hildesheim allied with Lüneburg, signing a mutual defense treaty valid for ten years.⁵¹ A further alliance was concluded between Hildesheim and the Archbishop of Bremen on 27 March 1538,⁵² and on 7 May 1542, Hildesheim renewed its alliance for another ten years with Göttingen, Hanover, Northeim, Einbeck and Hameln, forming a mutual defense and support union, a treaty that had its origins in 1500.⁵³ Wildefuer had constructed a powerful and wide-ranging defensive network. Yet it proved to be of no avail, when Wildefuer died in December of 1541, and shortly thereafter the League of Schmalkalden defeated Duke Henry and then turned its sights on Hildesheim.⁵⁴ It was only under the strong-arm tactics of the League that the burghers of Hildesheim decided to join the cause on 27 August, just three and a half months after they had felt they had secured their position beyond doubt: a political, far more than a religious or theological decision.

The burghers of Hildesheim were well acquainted with religio-political conflict. The events of the 1530s must not have appeared to them as all that extraordinary. From the second half of the fifteenth century and the *Bischofsfehde*,⁵⁵ Hildesheim was in constant turmoil. Then in 1519 began what became known as the *Größe Stiftsfehde*, pitting the city council, the commune, the cathedral chapter, and the Bishop of Hildesheim against Duke Henry of Wolfenbüttel and Duke Erich of Calenberg. As well as long-standing conflict between the territorial princes and the Bishop and

⁴⁹ *UBH*, nr. 812, pp. 647–649; cf. *UBH*, nr. 811, pp. 645–647.

⁵⁰ *UBH*, nr. 835, pp. 662–667.

⁵¹ *UBH*, nr. 838, pp. 667–671.

⁵² *UBH*, nr. 848, pp. 680–681.

⁵³ *UBH*, nr. 862, pp. 694–700. The original alliance was made on 2 January 1500 between Hildesheim, Magdeburg, and Braunschweig; *UBH*, nr. 412, pp. 346–347; on 17 January 1504, the alliance was expanded to include Magdeburg, Braunschweig, Hildesheim, Göttingen, and Einbeck; nr. 455, pp. 394–398; on 17 January 1514, Hanover had joined the alliance; nr. 531, pp. 463–468; on 17 January 1524, Goslar joined; nr. 705, p. 570; ten years later, on 17 January 1534, the same parties extended the alliance for another ten years; nr. 836, p. 667. There was also an economic union between these Hanseatic cities, which shared common monetary units; see *UBH*, nr. 427, pp. 360–361, and nr. 428, pp. 361–362; the economic relationship reached back to the twelfth century; see Jürgen Köppke, *Hildesheim, Einbeck, Göttingen und ihre Sadtmark im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen zum Problem vom Stadt und Umland* (Hildesheim, 1967). See also Hennig Brandis' *Diarium*; Brandis was present at the negotiations in 1500; Brandis, *Diarium*, pp. 162–163.

⁵⁴ On the League's defeat of Henry, see Franz Lau and Ernst Bizer, *A History of the Reformation in Germany to 1555*, trans. Brian A. Hardy (London, 1969), pp. 175–176.

⁵⁵ Gebauer, *Geschichte der Stadt Hildesheim*, pp. 123–147.

city of Hildesheim, at the core of the *Fehde* was the financial debt of the Bishop and the cathedral chapter.⁵⁶ Yet the conflict was in no way simply one of difference of opinion over finances. It was an intense civil war, which was only brought to a close by the intervention and mediation of Cardinal Elector Albrecht, Archbishop of Magdeburg and Mainz, and Duke George of Saxony.⁵⁷ Though Hildesheim won the early victory at the Battle of Soltau in 1519,⁵⁸ by 1521 the city itself was in danger and the city council mobilized the citizenry.⁵⁹ Moreover, the city council forbade anyone from leaving the city.⁶⁰

Brother Arnoldus presented a grim picture in his *Testament*, darker even than the fear expressed by Bartholomew von Usingen in the wake of Luther.⁶¹ For Cancrinus, the turmoil was of cosmic proportion, and the princes were to blame most of all. Whereas princes were supposed to fear God, protect their subjects, and administer justice and mercy, there are many who “are working against the Church of Christ and its ministers,” and by doing so they have become “similar to the princes of the Jews who conspired against Christ ... Rulers are fighting amongst themselves with the result that a wretched turmoil will follow amongst their subjects, for just as when there is turmoil in the atmosphere, so then is there turmoil on earth.”⁶² The princes are being irreverent, not caring for the holy or the worship of God, lacking devotion and thus have become similar to the devil.⁶³ “How distant,” Cancrinus lamented, “are such princes from those early Christian princes who exalted the Church of God to such a great extent on account of divine worship.”⁶⁴

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 288–289; Aschoff, “Das Bistum Hildesheim,” p. 17; Bepler, “Die Reformation,” p. 190.

⁵⁷ *UBH*, nr. 692, pp. 560–562, dated 13 May 1523; Pope Adrian IV, however, had already written to Hildesheim to exhort peace; *UBH*, nr. 678, pp. 550–551, dated 18 December 1522. On the document of the treaty ending the *Siftsfehde*, see Herbert Reyer, “Der ‘Quedlinburger Rezess’ von 1523. Das Ende der Hildesheimer Stiftsfehde.” In Reyer, *Aus Casten, Capsulen und Regalen*, pp. 42–43.

⁵⁸ Gebauer, *Geschichte der Stadt Hildesheim*, pp. 153–154.

⁵⁹ *UBH*, nr. 627, pp. 528–529; nr. 634, p. 532.

⁶⁰ *UBH*, nr. 628, p. 529, dated 14 August 1521; cf. nr. 633, p. 531; nr. 635, p. 532; cf. *UBH*, nr. 617, p. 522.

⁶¹ Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 621–622.

⁶² *Ad principes pertinet ut bene se habeant ad deum, bene inter se, bene ad subditos, bene circa iustitiam, bene circa misericordiam, bene circa usum potentie ... Notandum igitur quod interdum quidam et multi istorum principum faciunt aliquam contra ecclesiam Christi et ministeros eius; similes in hoc principibus iudeorum qui contra Christum conspiraverunt ... Et ex hoc sequitur turbatio miserabilis in eorum subditis, sicut quando turbantur superiores partes aeris, turbantur inferiores partes terre. Test., fos. 243^v–244^r.*

⁶³ *Test.*, fo. 244^r.

⁶⁴ *O quantum distant hiis tales principes ab illis primitivis principibus Christianis, qui tantum sublimaverunt ecclesiam dei propter cultum divinum extollendum. Ibid.*

Cancrinus had served Hildesheim during the great *Stiftsfehde* and knew political turmoil first hand. It was not, however, the princes alone who were to blame. On a note included before the preface to his *Testament*, Cancrinus argued that “no member of the clergy, or a knight, or anyone else of whatever status should debate the Christian faith in public.”⁶⁵ Here Cancrinus is addressing his own city, yet not without eyes on the broader European developments. The Knights Revolt was in its final stages as Cancrinus penned these lines and Luther’s doctrines were being openly, and heatedly, debated. Christ was being crucified anew,⁶⁶ but for Cancrinus this was not the traditional association of human sin with the continuous torturing and crucifixion of Christ as a catechetical instrument;⁶⁷ this was not a *continuatio*, but a *renovatio passionis Christi*. Christ was once again, as if for the first time, being tortured and crucified.⁶⁸ Yet all hope was not gone. Even with the turmoil of the present conditions, and even with the impending doom almost upon him, Cancrinus offered his flock a consolation: “God omnipotent, who in this life is exorable to our compunction and emendation, will be able to temper all influence of evil stars. Therefore, while we still have time, let us do good works.”⁶⁹

Let us do good works: this is the central theological message of Cancrinus’s *Testament*. Indeed he began his section *De fide, sicut dignum* by asserting: “Faith alone does not suffice without the righteousness of works.”⁷⁰ In his treatment of Christian liberty, Cancrinus asserted that the major issue of contention is the interpretation of justification by faith, based on Romans 1:17. Those who do not understand this statement correctly, delude themselves, setting themselves up as equal to God.⁷¹ If human works were not subjected to the law, one would not be able to sin, since sin is the deviation from divine righteousness. It is absurd to think that Christians are free from the law because if they were, there would

⁶⁵ *Nemo clericus vel militaris vel alterius cuiuslibet conditions de fide christiana publice turbis coaduwatis et audientibus tractare conetur ... Test., fos. 2^v–3^r. Cf. Test., fo. 229^r.*

⁶⁶ *Test., fos. 30^r–37^v.*

⁶⁷ See Saak, *High Way to Heaven*, pp. 470–561.

⁶⁸ *Test., fo. 30^r.*

⁶⁹ *Consolatio. Supradicte calamitates fient in partibus stagnalibus marinis et circa alia magna flumina situatis. Verum deus omnipotens qui in hac vita est exorabilis ad compunctionem nostram atque emendationem omnem malorum astrorum influentiam poterit temperare: ergo dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum. Test., fo. 281^r; cf. Test., fo. 38^v.* That there was speculation about the end times and the arrival of false prophets, especially when the false prophets were considered to have been the Lutherans, is clearly seen in Urbanus Rhegius’ *Sendbrieff*: Urbanus Rhegius, *Sendbrieff*, fo. c ii^r. Cf. Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, pp. 19–53.

⁷⁰ *Non sufficit sola fides sine iustitia operum. Test., fo. 103^v.*

⁷¹ *Test., fo. 129^{r-v}.*

be no sin and no righteousness since righteousness is to conform oneself with the divine will: “the more one conforms to the divine will, the more righteous one is.”⁷²

Life in this world was a time for penance, for God in his mercy did not cast Adam and Eve into hell, though he could have done so with justice, but cast them into a valley of tears for them to do penance. God is merciful, Cancrinus tries to emphasize, and is more ready to forgive than to punish.⁷³ “But there are many,” Cancrinus laments,

who denigrate the place as much as the time, and even more so, the manner and order of penance . . . Truly there are few who truly do penance with respect to contrition, confession, correction, restitution, and the satisfaction imposed, and therefore there are many who are as demons, who after they have sinned, never do penance. It is a thing of wonder, or even more so, a wretched thing, that when humans become physically ill, right away they are concerned to seek a cure; when they become sick in their souls and most seriously so, they do not seek a cure, but leave themselves thus to go to their deaths.⁷⁴

When Bugenhagen preached on 1 September 1542 to the Hilidesheimers, his theme, “Do Penance,” was something they certainly had heard before, yet it is unlikely that he drew the consequences Cancrinus had eighteen years previous. After emphasizing the importance of prayer, fasting, and the giving of alms, Cancrinus continued to argue that those who insufficiently pray, fast, and give alms feel that salvation is by faith alone. In Cancrinus’s view, however, they are as wrong as can be, and he gives yet another litany of scriptural passages that stress the need to keep God’s commandments, to follow the law, and to do good works.⁷⁵ It is an evil and obstinate generation, Cancrinus laments, because nothing moves people to penance, even though there are abundant exhortations.⁷⁶ Cancrinus ended his sermon with fire and brimstone, making clear to his flock that once in hell there was no longer the opportunity to do penance.⁷⁷ Yet after

⁷² . . . *ut quanto divine voluntati conformior, tanto iustior est.* *Test.*, fos. 129^v–130^r.

⁷³ *Test.*, fo. 39^{r-v}.

⁷⁴ *Sed sunt multi qui tam locum quam tempus immo et modum et ordinem penitentiae vilipendunt . . . Revera pauci sunt qui vere penitentiam agant quo ad contritionem quo ad confessionem quo ad correctionem quo ad restitutionem et quo ad satisfactionem iniunctam et ideo sunt multi velut demones, qui postquam peccaverunt nunquam egerunt penitentiam. Mira immo miserabilis res est, infirmantur homines in corpore et statim querunt sollicitè remedia; infirmantur in anima et gravissime, et non querunt remedia, sed dimitunt se sic ire ad mortem.* *Test.*, fo. 39^v.

⁷⁵ Cancrinus’s scriptural proof texts are: Matt. 28:19–20, Gal. 6:16, 1 Pet. 2:2, 1 John 2:4, 1 John 2:6, Apoc. 14:13, Apoc. 20:12, Matt. 7:19–20, Jer. 31:16, Matt. 20:8, and Matt. 16:27. *Ibid.*, fos. 41^r–42^r (*in marg.*).

⁷⁶ *Test.*, fo. 40^{r-v}.

⁷⁷ *Test.*, fo. 41^r; cf. *Test.*, fos. 231^v–233^v.

having tried to put the fear of God into his audience, he came back to his major theme, the mercy and love of Christ.⁷⁸ For Cancrinus, reformation was the only hope, the only way perhaps to assuage God's wrath and the signs of impending doom, the coming of the antichrist and the last days. Cancrinus's, as had been Kannengeter's, was a prophetic voice.

Shortly before his death, Mayor Hans Wildefuer wrote:

Only the omnipotent God and the pure, spotless virgin Mary (who is the special patron and protector of the Stift) have given us the grace that this church and city of Hildesheim, as his beloved bride, has, beyond all human reason, remained free from the Lutheran and other evil sects or heresies that have come to light, even though the other cities in the region, which are drunk with such heresy, would love to have our city join them.⁷⁹

Under the leadership of Wildefuer, the city council worked long and hard to prevent Lutheran doctrine from taking hold, though the earliest prohibitions of "Lutheranism" (*Martinscher Handel*) date to two years before Wildefuer's election as *Bürgermeister*.

The concerns of the city council extended beyond preventing heresy. In 1518, the council banned foreign beggars in Hildesheim,⁸⁰ and in 1520 made it obligatory for unemployed clergy and students to enroll themselves in school.⁸¹ The latter was not simply an attempt to limit vagrancy, but also to promote education, and in 1528, the city council took the responsibility upon themselves to provide eight pounds a year from the income derived from the gift of 100 guildens from Ludolf Suring, scholar of the Holy Cross Foundation, to provide for the education of eight poor boys from the city in perpetuity.⁸² Hildesheim had been a center for the early humanist movement in northern Germany, particularly connected with the Bursfelder Reform,⁸³ and while one cannot call Cancrinus a humanist, he did argue for letters being the foundation of all knowledge,⁸⁴ appealing

⁷⁸ *Test.*, fos. 44^v–45^r.

⁷⁹ "Allain hat in got der almechtig und die rain, unbefleckt iungfraw Maria (die ain sondere patronin und beshirmerin des stieffts ist) die gnad gethon, das diese kirch und die stat Hildeßhaim von den itzigen lutherischen und andern bosen secten oder ketzereyen scheinbarlich und uber aller menschen vernunft gnediglich (als sein geliebte braut) noch bis da her verwart und rain blieben ist, wiewol die andern umbligenden ster (die mit sollicher ketzerei truncken seind) gern diese stat auch an irem raen gehapt." Stanelle, *Die Hildesheimer Bischofschronik des Hans Wildefuer*, p. 203.

⁸⁰ *UBH*, nr. 572, pp. 500–501.

⁸¹ *UBH*, nr. 617, p. 522, dated 30 October 1520.

⁸² *UBH*, nr. 793, pp. 632–634, dated 1 October 1528.

⁸³ See Helmar Härtel, "Humanismus und Klosterreform. Zur Bearbeitung der *Regula Benedicti* (Dombibliothek Hildesheim Hs. 703) durch Henricus Angelonius aus Clus." *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Heimatkunde im Bistum Hildesheim* 52 (1986), 23–33. Bernhard Gallistl, "Schule, Bücher und Gelehrsamkeit am Hildesheimer Dom." In *Ego Sum Hildensemensis*, pp. 213–238.

⁸⁴ *Test.*, fo. 241^r.

to Cicero, Pythagorus, Plato, Erasmus, and Eusebius as his authorities, concluding, echoing Melanchthon, that education was the number one priority for youth.⁸⁵ He was quick to add, however, that learning alone is not sufficient. Learning must lead to a good life, and indeed a good life is primary.⁸⁶ Girls too should be educated and dedicate themselves to learning, following the models of Sts Catherine, Cecilia, Lucia, and Agatha.⁸⁷ Youth, however, should not only be studious, but also obedient, compliant, religious, dedicated to virginity, and should avoid the frivolous pitfalls of the young.⁸⁸

To preserve the integrity and security of Hildesheim, the city council was busying itself not only with internal affairs, but also with political alliances. In surveying the political network of Hildesheim, aside from the treaties allying the city, the nobility, and the bishop dating to 1502,⁸⁹ there were three basic alliances Hildesheim formed: the first was with a core group of other Hanseatic cities;⁹⁰ the second was between Hildesheim and its territorial princes;⁹¹ and the third was treaties made between Hildesheim and other cities and princes.⁹² This third group captures our attention because it was only after the onset of the threat of Lutheranism in 1524 that Hildesheim “branched out” and made alliances with Duke Otto of Harburg in 1525, with the city of Lüneburg in 1535, and with the Archbishop of Bremen in 1538. On 27 March 1538, Christopher, the Archbishop of Bremen, and the city of Hildesheim signed a treaty “to praise God the Almighty and to further and honor the holy Christian faith, the majesty of the Roman emperor, and the holy empire, to maximize the benefit to our subjects, our citizens and the common good.”⁹³

⁸⁵ *Test.*, fo. 241^{r-v}.

⁸⁶ *Test.*, fo. 241^r.

⁸⁷ *Test.*, fo. 242^v. St Cecilia may have had a special impact on the young women of Hildesheim, as Cecilia's relics were present in the Cathedral. In the Dommuseum there is a bust reliquy of St Cecilia dating to the fourteenth century; Inv. Nr. DS 39.

⁸⁸ *Test.*, fos. 241^r–242^f.

⁸⁹ *UBH*, nr. 438, pp. 381–382, dated 7 May 1502; nr. 439, pp. 382–383, dated 9 May 1502.

⁹⁰ See n. 53.

⁹¹ *UBH*, nr. 517, pp. 454–455, dated 27 January 1512; nr. 716, pp. 576–578, dated 15 September 1524; nr. 731, p. 587, dated 4 August 1525; nr. 835, pp. 662–667, dated 14 April 1533.

⁹² *UBH*, nr. 738, pp. 589–593, dated 24 November 1525; nr. 838, pp. 667–671, dated 30 March 1535; nr. 848, pp. 680–681, dated 27 March 1538.

⁹³ “Wir Christoffer von gots gnaden ertzbischof zu Bremen, administrator des stifts Verden, hertzog zu Braunschweig und Luneborch etc., und wir burgemaister und rath der stadt Hildensem bekennen vor uns und sunst aallermeniglich, das wir uns godt dem almechtigen zu lobe, dem heiligen christlichen glauben, Romischer keiserlicher mayestet und dem heiligen reiche zu meherunge und ehre, unsern unterthanen und mitburgern und gemeinem nutz zum besten mith einander vereinigt ...” *UBH*, nr. 848, pp. 680–681, dated 27 March 1538; p. 680.

The Archbishop promised to provide Hildesheim in times of need with fifty horses and 200 foot soldiers, and Hildesheim responded by promising the Archbishop 300 well-rested soldiers.⁹⁴ The stipulation that the treaty was to “further and honor the holy Christian faith,” however, is the only indication in these later treaties that the alliance was religious as well as political. The exception is Duke Henry of Wolfenbüttel, of Hans Worst fame,⁹⁵ taking Hildesheim under his protection almost as a reward for the city’s vigilance in maintaining the traditional faith and its obedience to the empire.⁹⁶ Yet neither the treaty with Duke Otto nor with Lüneburg mentions religion, while claiming mutual fidelity to Charles and the empire in establishing relationships similar to the one Hildesheim had formed with Archbishop Christopher. Moreover, when Hildesheim allied with Lüneburg in 1535, Lüneburg was a Protestant city and had been since 1530.⁹⁷ The same was true the year before when Hildesheim renewed its alliance with Goslar, Magdeburg, Braunschweig, Göttingen, Hanover, and Einbeck on 24 November 1534:⁹⁸ Hildesheim was the only Catholic city in the alliance, which was again the case on 7 May 1542 when Hildesheim allied with Göttingen, Hanover, Einbeck, Northeim, and Hameln.⁹⁹ Both in 1534 and in 1542 the treaties explicitly mention mutual aid and support for difficulties arising for a member city as a result of religious conflict, including being placed under interdict,¹⁰⁰ and this was at the same time that Mayor Hans Wildefuer was giving thanks to God who had in his grace spared Hildesheim from heresy. Although he was dead by 1542, in 1534 Wildefuer was still at the helm and Hildesheim allied itself with cities drunken with heresy wanting Hildesheim to join them. How are we to understand this disjunction between the Mayor’s rhetoric and Hildesheim’s political practice?

At first sight, it might appear that Hildesheim was moving ever closer to the Protestant camp. As a Catholic city, it agreed to support and defend its allies, Protestant allies, should they be placed under the ban. Yet we must realize that the Protestant cities were likewise allying themselves with a Catholic city and promising aid in times of religious conflict, which

⁹⁴ *UBH*, nr. 848, pp. 680–681.

⁹⁵ *WA* 51.461–572.

⁹⁶ *UBH*, nr. 835, pp. 662–667, dated 14 April 1535; p. 662.

⁹⁷ See Hans-Walter Krumwiede, “Kirchengeschichte. Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirche von der Reformation bis 1803.” In Hans Patze, ed., *Geschichte Niedersachsens*, III/2. *Kirche und Kultur von der Reformation bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim, 1983), pp. 12–259, 17–19.

⁹⁸ *UBH*, nr. 836, p. 667, dated 17 January 1534.

⁹⁹ *UBH*, nr. 862, pp. 694–700, dated 7 May 1542.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 696.

was far more than moral support; Hildesheim was to provide 300 knights, Göttingen 165, Hanover 155, and Einbeck, Northeim, and Hameln 60 each, to come to the aid of the beleaguered city.¹⁰¹ Theoretically, there could have been Protestant knights militarily defending a Catholic city against other Protestants, and Catholic knights defending a Protestant city against other Catholics. In short, both sides were trying to factor out the issue of religion from their political alliance, to neutralize it, which was a strategy not very common in the sixteenth century, though surely more common than in our portrayals. Three months later, however, after the League of Schmalkalden defeated Duke Henry, rather than putting up a fight and calling in its allies, Hildesheim capitulated. Yet that was as still an unforeseen, even if feared, event in May of 1542, when Hildesheim pulled off its coup in securing external military support for itself independent of the religious question, while still championing the Old Faith within its walls, working to make Hildesheim a clean, respectable, and staunchly catholic city.

Arnoldus Cancrinus did not live to see the failure of the reformation he strove so strenuously to effect, nor did Hans Wildefuer, for that matter. There was no foregone conclusion that Hildesheim would turn Protestant. The Reformation of Hildesheim did not begin in 1524 with the recognizable influence of “Lutheranism” in the city: the Reformation of Hildesheim had been an ongoing endeavor at least from the preaching of Kannengerter until the very end, the capitulation to political pressure. In the 1520s, Cancrinus saw the imminent need for reformation, for the end was at hand. Yet reformation was possible, if amelioration of the individual could be brought about, if conformity to God’s law could be effected. Cancrinus’s perspective was not a backward look to an idealized past, but was presentist and futuristic to the core. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages in Hildesheim, based on religionization, only cracked under political and military force to yield to confessionalization. We err when we take the model of the Protestant Reformation and make it normative for reformation as such, so that then the reformatory attempts that do not fit the model do not deserve the recognition and are relegated to attempts to return to an idealized past, to attempt to reform. For Cancrinus and the burghers of Hildesheim there was no question of an idealized past, a golden age to which they were trying to return.¹⁰² The only hope Cancrinus saw was a reformation of the individual in the immediate

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 695.

¹⁰² *Cf. n. 8.*

present. And it was this same program that the Hildesheim city council was following in its attempts to purify and protect the city. The Protestant Reformation reformed structures as a means of reforming the individual; the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages sought to reform individuals which would in and of itself reform the structures. In the conflict and tension between programs of reformation based on religionization and confessionalization, confessionalization won out, even eventually on the Catholic side. What Cancrinus and Hildesheim have to tell us, is that the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages was based on religionization, which continued as a vibrant and vital aspect of early modern Catholicism that has been ignored, and which cannot be fully grasped or described by referring to the civic culture of the later Middle Ages as a “society of religious achievement” (*religiöse Leistungsgesellschaft*).¹⁰³ To come to a greater historical understanding of early modern Catholicism, and therefore to a greater historical understanding of early modern Christianity, we must get beyond even an unacknowledged Protestant triumphalism, even in its secularized form, in our political and social histories as much as in our religious and intellectual ones, whereby the goal has been to show the processes by which the Protestant Reformation was introduced in a given city, and even if treating the set-backs and struggles along the way, the stories have climaxed with the final victory of the winners.¹⁰⁴ The Reformation of

¹⁰³ Bernd Moeller, *Luther-Rezeption. Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze zur Reformationsgeschichte*, ed. Johannes Schilling (Göttingen, 2001), p. 63.

¹⁰⁴ For Berndt Hamm, “Reformation” as such was by definition a break from what had come before: “Unter ‘Reformation’ verstehe ich jenen Vorgang in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts, der bei aller Vielfalt unterschiedlichster Strömungen darin seine Eigenart und Kohärenz hat, daß er einen Bruch mit dem mittelalterlichen System von Kirche, Theologie und Frömmigkeit bedeutet.” Hamm, *Bürgertum und Glaube. Konturen der städtischen Reformation* (Göttingen, 1996), p. 15. Cf. Hamm, “The Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire.” In Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds., *Handbook of European History 1400–1600. Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation* (Leiden, 1994–1995), vol. II, pp. 193–227, 193. The most thorough treatment of the religio-political matrix of sixteenth-century Germany, Thomas Brady’s *Protestant Politics. Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) and the German Reformation* (Leiden, 1995), still takes as its focus Protestant politics. In Brady’s nuanced and erudite study, “catholic politics” is limited essentially to the Empire and the “old guard.” Echoing and emphasizing Rublack’s argument that the Peasant Wars of 1525 were the crux of the matter, Brady focuses on the south Germany cities and their political maneuverings to defend their liberty as they sought to establish the “Godly community.” Even if in some, or even in many, respects, the “winners” ended up also being “losers,” they were so as distinctively different from what had come before, and as distinctively Protestant: “The fate of Protestant Politics in the German Reformation, therefore, was an outcome of the intersection of a social and religious movement, the Reformation, with a structure, the Holy Roman Empire.” Brady, *Protestant Politics*, p. 378. There have, though, certainly been studies to the contrary, perhaps the most famous being Gerald Strauss’s “failure thesis” as present in his *Luther’s House of Learning and Hans-Christoph Rublack’s Gescheiterte Reformation. Frühreformatorische und protestantische Bewegungen in süd- und westdeutschen geistlichen Residenzen* (Stuttgart, 1978). In Rublack’s portrayal, the Peasants’ War was the decisive point: “Nach 1525 unterdrückten die Fürstbischöfe

the Cities was not strictly a Protestant phenomenon. For Cancrinus and the burghers of Hildesheim, the stakes were as high as could be imagined. The last days were at hand, and only by the power of God could a true reformation take place. Yet such a reformation had failed, and Hildesheim's programs of religionization yielded to the political pressure of an emerging Protestant confessionalization in the League of Schmalkalden. For all the theological conviction, for all the personal faith and beliefs, the Reformation was, when it came down to it, a political event.

What Might Have Been – And Still Be?

Failure was all around. As Brad Gregory has written,

Judged on their own terms and with respect to the objectives of their own leading protagonists, medieval Christendom failed, the Reformation failed, confessionalized Europe failed, and Western modernity is failing, but each in different ways and with different consequences, and each in ways that continue to remain important in the present. This sums up the argument of the book.¹⁰⁵

The basis for the general failure Gregory has pointed to was, and remains, the inability to answer the “Life Questions” in a way that sticks. Such questions include:

“What should I live for, and why?” “What should I believe and why should I believe it?” “What is morality, and where does it come from?” “What kind of person should I be?” “What is meaningful in life, and what should I do in order to lead a fulfilling life?” These questions and others like them are Life Questions: they are serious questions *about* life, with important implications *for* life. Although not everyone asks them explicitly, everyone answers them at least implicitly. All people think *something* is true, some things are right and others wrong, some things are meaningful or at least seem like they could be. And the ways in which people try to live are usually related to what they think they should live for, at least insofar as they have the economic means to do so in stable political circumstances. Although some sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists seem to think otherwise, the findings of the natural sciences cannot answer the Life Questions – about the sort of person one *should* become and the sort of life one *should* lead, concerning what one *should* value and what one *should* prioritize. One must look elsewhere for answers.¹⁰⁶

die frühreformatorische Bewegung.” *Gescheiterte Reformation*, p. 125. The fate of catholic politics in the German Reformation, especially that of the cities, remains for future investigation.

¹⁰⁵ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, p. 365.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Yet one can only ask, if it all was and has been a failure, what would have success looked like? How would Europe have been different, and how would Europe be different, had the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages, or the Protestant Reformation, succeeded? Could Europe have been reformed had the Reformation succeeded? Could humans have been changed by the Holy? Is not “success” simply the dream of a longed-for Utopia?

In the course of the sixteenth century, Europe was radically transformed, whether it *should* have been or not. Was such transformation a success, or a failure? Was it “good” or was it “bad,” two other adjectives we often associate with success and failure; failure is “bad”; success is “good.” Yet how too in this sense is “good” or “bad” to be defined and on what basis? Is “new” always necessarily “improved”? Is not another human universal, implicitly or explicitly, that all humans seek the good and seek to avoid the bad at least as they define the terms for themselves? Are therefore the answers to such questions not already givens to the extent that what is “good” or “bad,” a “success” or “failure,” cannot be determined without appeal to pre-judgments? Can we ever interpret strictly with description, or does interpretation necessitate value-laden pre-judgments? Can a Protestant ever say that Luther was, ultimately, wrong, or a Catholic that Luther was, ultimately, right?

The failure of the Reformation of Later Middle Ages was symbolized by Luther taking off his habit in 1524, though already in 1520 with his attack on Rome that failure was inevitable. Thereafter comes not so much reformation, as revolution, the overturning not just of the church in head and members, but of late medieval Christendom itself. Early modern Reformation was revolutionary, reforming social and political structures, within which we find the emerging state Churches, whether of Zwingli’s Zurich, Luther’s Wittenberg and Electoral Saxony, Calvin’s Geneva, or Henry VIII’s England. The Age of Confessionalization was about to begin, prepared for by Luther’s own increasing emphasis on certitude and basing reformation on doctrine, unleashed by the last hope for the late medieval Reformation, a reforming of individuals and institutions within the given structures. In the course of the later 1520s and 1530s, the structures themselves became reformed, revolutionized, and a new Europe emerged. Luther was part of this development. He had not begun that way. It was not what he had intended.

In some ways, Giles of Viterbo had been right: Brother Martin had never, truly, been an Augustinian, even if he considered himself as such. He had never thoroughly become sufficiently religionized with his Order’s

religion, even as that religion unceasingly strove to institute reformation for itself, recognizing the lack of standards, the lack of religionization, as so clearly evidenced in the registers of the prior generals from Giles of Rome to Giles of Viterbo. It was though Luther's own understanding of his being an Augustinian that was of historical importance. From early on, he followed *his* understanding of the religion of Christ (*religio Christi*) rather than the religion of Augustine (*religio Augustini*). Yes, he had vowed obedience to Christ first and foremost, but failed to grasp the extent to which Augustine's religion provided the means of living Christ's religion. Religion, in general, for Luther, was in the realm of externals, for the weak, and not essential, for Christ was the substantive form of the Christian; Christ was essential; the hidden, invisible, spiritual, true, and triumphant Church was essential, not the militant, visible Church; the spirit, not the letter; and religion, for Luther, even the religion he had assumed, and even the visible Church led by St Peter's successor who was an instrument of Christ's voice itself until February 1520, was in the realm of the letter. This does not mean, though, that Brother Martin had all along been a "proto-Protestant," a reformer just waiting to happen. Luther's early theology was very much in keeping with the late medieval Augustinian theological tradition, including its pastoral theology, even though this was a theology Luther did not know, was not taught, and did not learn. Was he original? Yes. Was his originality "Protestant"? Only in hindsight, and only from a theological perspective. Could he have remained within the Catholic Church? There was nothing early on that placed him outside the pale, that made him a heretic. If Pope Leo had accepted his theses, which would not have necessitated Leo accepting his ecclesiology, or his view of the pope, or his view of bishops as the vicars of Christ, he could have, for there had been late medieval theologians and theorists, at least some, who would have agreed with his ecclesiology. Was he a Hussite? Yes, but that realization, that he had always been, and so had Staupitz and Augustine and Paul, indicates that his understanding, even *before* he began his theological study, agreed with Hus, that Hussitism, so to speak, was not unknown, even if unnamed, unrecognized, unlabeled, in the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages. This was an understanding he was not taught. It is one he grew up with so to speak. He surely was not alone, the single, unique swan of Hus's prophecy, at least historically seen. Would Luther, or Hus, have been burned had they lived and worked in the early fourteenth century? Were not for them the political factors more determinative than the theological, as they were for the introduction of Protestantism in Hildesheim? The critique certainly was medieval,

attacking abuses, anticlericalism, faulty priests and bishops, stressing the need for preaching, and doing so within an apocalyptic context. Even if Brother Martin's critique brought new shades to light in the abuses, with a style indeed uniquely his own, this does not mean that he was therefore already Protestant or a heretic from the get go. There *were* problems in the Church. This was widely acknowledged, and comes as no surprise today. Luther could have remained. The schism could have been avoided. The Reformation of the Later Middle Ages could have been a success, and the Fifth Lateran Council could have become known as the great Council of Reformation, restoring Christendom. It wasn't, and history got out of hand. Forces were set in motion, and Christendom was soon to be no more. *This is the way the world ends, this is the way the world ends, this is the way the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper.*

The world of late medieval Christendom, however, did end with a bang, or a series of bangs; it was not, though, a single event; it was not a theological discovery, or a nailing of theses for academic debate. But the ending of a world it was none the less, which is not to say that it was not necessary, or a good thing, which though can only be claimed based on theological or philosophical positions, not historical ones. We don't have alternatives; we do not know how things would have turned out had Luther stayed, so to speak, an observant, faithful, Augustinian hermit, even one of his times, times that had made someone like Brother Martin even possible with the lack of training, the lack of religionization, the general decline in standards, at least compared to the first half of the fourteenth century. Standards began declining with the plague, and only got worse with the Schism and its aftermath. Had though Brother Martin remained, had he recanted, had he put his understanding in historical perspective, while still fighting with all that was in him, as Staupitz advised, to defend and to preach the Gospel, how would the world have been different? Had Pope Leo supported Brother Martin, recognized the widespread abuse that had been protested for long before Brother Martin spoke out, and joined the endeavors to bring about a general reformation, how would the world have been different? We can never know. We can go on asking an infinite number of "what if" questions, and we will never have answers. The Reformation happened, and we are left trying to figure it all out.

If the Reformation failed, if the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages failed, as did every such movement since, because it did not ultimately provide answers to Life Questions, would success have meant that somehow someone would have figured it all out, that someone would have

found the meaning to human existence, that then every one else would have accepted as the answer to all the “shoulds” in the questions of what should we believe, what should we do, how should we live? Did not Brother Martin find the answers for himself? Had not Giles of Viterbo, Jordan of Quedlinburg, Marsilius of Padua all found such answers for themselves? If so, what would it have taken to have made such answers the answers valid for everyone? Would education and rhetoric, preaching and teaching, have been enough? Or would have political support been needed as well, political pressure, political force to enforce the correct answers, even if not everyone would have agreed? Would not the dissenters have had to have been “compelled to come in” and join? Would not success have had to have been based, necessarily, on the totalitarianism of an absolute state? Yet that answer too failed, if we are to follow Gregory.

Somehow the Life Questions have always been, and remain, individual questions, questions whose answers cannot become general, cannot become the basis for worldly success. What historical value then can such questions concerning the Reformation’s success or failure possibly offer? The search for individual meaning defies general, unified meaning, even when, or perhaps especially when, such a general, unified meaning is imposed from without. Neither history nor historians, any more than scientists or philosophers, can discover or offer the answers to the Life Questions, based as they are on the quest for an absolute, universal Truth. If the discovery of such answers for oneself is the basis for determining success or failure, then Brother Martin was a success indeed, even if his success was not based on his self-designation of being an Augustinian.

Stephen Hawking wrote that if we were to come to a complete unified theory, that harmonizes quantum mechanics, gravity, and relativity, we would know the mind of God.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps, perhaps not. Perhaps if we were ever to come to a complete unified theory of Reformation that harmonizes individual perception and belief, human action, soul, social and economic structures and forces, theology, religion, and politics, we too would know the mind of God. Perhaps we will only be able to tell if the Reformation was a “good thing” or a “bad thing,” a success or a failure, once history is over and done with, when all will be an eternal present, when we will really, truly know, when we will see face to face. Perhaps only then, whatever we might find in store for us, will success be at all possible, that we will only then perhaps know the meaning of it all and

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time from the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York, 1990), pp. 173–175.

the meaning of life and the answers to our Life Questions, even if too late. Until then, we still walk in darkness, yearning to know, yearning for light, thinking all too often that we have found it, glimpsed it, seen it, ever with hope of success, even within our failure, by necessity. Until then, Brother Martin and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages still have much to teach us, and still merit being heard, being investigated, being questioned, along with all the silent voices, all the silenced and erased late medieval Augustinians, making painfully clear that *we* are the ones who deserve to be challenged, who deserve to be questioned, who need to be changed by the holy, as we continue asserting our self-assured righteousness and the certainty of our own pre-judgments we mistakenly even unknowingly present as knowledge, as our morals and lives remain as bad as those of the past. Failure indeed. We are only left with our mere, meager attempts at understanding. And theologically, we are left only with the option that the Augustinian hermits, Brother Jordan and Brother Martin both saw, advocated, taught, and asserted: with almost two centuries separating them, inhabiting as they did two very different, but intimately related worlds – the world pre- and post-Schism, though together comprising the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages – both Augustinians realized that the only thing we really can do, in this endeavor between life and death, success and failure, when death and failure in this world are both inescapable, is to pray: *Thy Will Be Done*.

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