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THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOLASTICISM ON LUTHER

A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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Approved by

J. Theodore Mueller

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The Influence of Scholasticism on Luther

To sketch the influence of scholasticism and of the scholastics on Luther would require much more time for research than is possible for this paper. Moreover, even to make a selection of scholastics and to determine all the points in which they influenced the hero of the Reformation would call for a greater opus than this pretends to be. It is my purpose, therefore, to consider three scholastics only, namely, Occam, Biel, and Gerson, and to take cognizance of just a few of the ways in which their teachings had an effect on the life and teachings of him whom God chose as His instrument through whom we might be permitted to have His Word in its truth and purity.

Perhaps it is well that we first try to get a panoramic view of scholasticism of Luther's time. Scholasticism, as we call it, was really philosophy which, prior to the Reformation "was identical with the system of Aristotle as modified by mediaeval theology."*

> "The problem of scholasticism was to work out a system of thought that would square with the dogma of the church, in other words, harmonize science and faith. What we call science today was included in philosophy then. The assumption of the mediaeval thinker was, either that the truths of religion are rational--that

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* Hiltner, Philosophy and the Reformation, in the Kirchliche Zeitschrift vol. 57, No. 1, p. 8.

> reason and faith agree and that there can be no conflict between divine revelation and human thinking; or, that even though some of them may transcend human reason, they are, none the less, guaranteed by faith, which is simply another source of knowledge. True religion and true philosophy were considered the same. In scholasticism, philosophy and theology hadmerged into a complete system of thought. It embraced all branches of human knowledge--the greatest synthesis ever known. Aristotle was so readily accepted because he more than any other thinker could be used to strengthen the prevailing system."*

Such was the influence of mediaeval thinking under which Luther grew up as a student at Erfurt. Now, Lindsay claims that although the scholasticism which was taught represented what were supposed to be the advanced opinions--those of John Duns Scotus, William of Occam, and Gabriel Biel, rather than the learning of Thomas Aquinas and other great defenders of papal traditions, yet the older scholastic was adhered to in "discussion of all kinds of verbal and logical subtleties" and in "minute distinctions and the intricate reasoning based upon"** old scholastic formulae and phrases. "The prevailing course of study furnished an imposing intellectual gymnastic without much real knowledge." Hiltner, on the other hand, emphasizes the fact that at Luther's time the great philosophical systems of the Middle Ages were alreadyin a process of dissolution. Thomas Aquinas in his herculean effort, Summa,

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* Hiltner, op. cit., p. 8 ff.
** Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, I, 55.

had tried to combine in a consistent and unified system "all the ancient pagan knowledge found in the works of Aristotle, that high priest of human reason, with the doctrines and truths of divine revelation as found in Scripture and the works of the ancient church fathers."* But Duns Scotus, although not entirely repudiating Aristotle, showed that some doctrines are not accessible to reason. This rivalry between the Thomists and the Scotists later developed into an argument between the realists and nominalists. The tenet of the realists that the objects of sense perception, the visible things, are founded on higher realities gave the scholars of the church a marvelous foundation on which to erect the ecclesiastical super-structure, for according to the realists the Church could be considered "such an abiding entity over and above the visible members who compose it. The nominalists maintained that general concepts or universals are not real in the scholastic sense, but mere abstractions of the thinking mind, mere names and words for particular things. Under the influence of nominalism, the fundamental principles, from which scholasticism had started out, were abandoned."** The goal of scholasticism, the rationalization of faith, the union of philosophy and

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* Kuiper, The Formative Years, p. 109.
** Hiltner, op. cit., p. 8 ff.

theology seemed to be reached in Aquinas, but then came Scotus and especially also Occam, who claimed that the content of faith was inaccessible to faith. Thus began the disintegration of scholasticism. Smith, in pointing out that the old mediaeval course of study no longer prevailed, compared the change which the universities of the sixteenth century underwent with that which they are experiencing in the twentieth.*

Although the University of Paris had condemned nominalism in 1340 it was freely taught in the universities of Germany. The schools which followed and taught the nominalism of William of Occam, the great Franciscan doctor of the 14th century, were known as "modernists" over against the Thomists and Scotists. The University of Erfurt was thoroughly "modern." In fact, so was the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. The Augustinians specialized in the writings of Biel, Occam, Gerson, and other nominalists. It was not without good reason that the convent at Erfurt was so completely nominalistic. For Occam's apt disciple in Germany was Gabriel Biel. Biel had been professor at the University of Tuebingen. There John Nathin and Johann von Staupitz had been among his students. Staupitz later became the Vicar General of the Augustinians and exerted a powerful influence on Luther. The former was Luther's theological

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* Preserved Smith, Martin Luther, p. 6.

preceptor in the monastery. This same Occamist nominalism in which Luther was steeped at the convent had already been taught him by Professors Trutvetter of Eisenach and Bartholomew Arnoldi of Unsingen at the Erfurt university. From them Luther learned to take the side of Occam in this and other questions against the Thomists and Scotists. "Luther retained this predilection for Occam's philosophy long after he differed with him in theology. In the endless controversy, for instance, over the reality, outside the mind, of universals or abstract ideas, apart from the mind conceiving them, he was, as a student, the votary of the Nominalism of Occam, who believed that they were mere generalisations of the mind, against the various forms of Realism represented by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus."*

Of the three scholastics selected for consideration in this paper, Occam is the most important and had the greatest influence on Luther, so we shall consider him first.

Ockham, more generally known as Occam, was born late in the 13th century in the village of Ockham in the county of Surrey, England. He was named for his birthplace which is spelled Bocheham in Doomsday book, but Ockham in a 1483 inscription on an urn in the church at Ockham.**

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* Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation, I, p. 21.
** William of Ockham, De Sacramento Altaris, edited by Bruce Birch. Introduction, p. xi.

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Luther was greatly influenced by Occam and gave him words of praise upon occasion. In the Tischreden Luther once said of him, "Occam fuit prudentissimus et doctissimus, sed defuit ei rhetorica."* On another occasion he calls him "my master." "Occam, magister meus, summus fuit dialecticus, sed gratiam non habuit loquendi."** In the Responsio ad condemnationem doctrinalem per Lovan. et Colon factam. 1520, Luther refers to himself as a modernist or Occamist. "Non est quaestio, quid didicerint, audierint, legerint, senserint unquam, sed quibus firmamentis ea muniant. Alioqui, cur et meae sectae resisterem, scilicet Occanicae seu Modernorum, quam penitus imbibitam teneo, si verbis voluissem aut vi compesci? Sed satis haec."*** In 1538 (Tischreden) he said of Occam: "Studiosus methodi Occam ingeniosissimus erat; illius studium erat res dilatare et amplificare in infinitum."**** Again: "Occam solus intellexit dialectiacam, das es lige am definire et dividere vocabula, sed non potuit eloqui."***** Luther upon his return to Erfurt from Wittenberg in the autumn of 1509 was to lecture on Lombard's Sentences. That Luther took great pains in preparation for these lectures is seen from the notes on the margins of the books which he used for this purpose. Somehow these books found their way to the Zwickau municipal library where they were discovered in 1889.

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* Tischreden, I, 137.
** Ibid., II, 516.
*** Scheel, Dokumente, p. 16.
**** Ibid., p. 144.
***** Dokumente, p. 86.

References in the marginal notes show that Luther did much additional reading, among which were the works of Occam. He notes at one point, "Vide Occam hac dis. q. 8. dubio 2. ubi satis ingeniose concordat et exponit verba b. Augustini."* At another place he reminds himself, "Dist. 23 c. 7 zum Ganzen: vide Ackam q. 1. prolo. paululum ante Z."**

Much of Luther's distaste for Aristotle was acquired through Occam. Luther often speaks in no uncertain terms concerning "the heathen Aristotle." One of his milder comments on the Stagyrite reads: "Aristoteles ist mir so wol bekant, als dir und deinis gleichen, ich hab ihn auch geleszen unnd gehoret mit mehrem vorstand, dan sanst Thomas odder Scotus, des ich mich on hoffart rumen, and wo es nodt ist, wol beweiszen kan .... Doch mocht ich gerne leiden, das Aristoteles bucher von der Logica, Rhetorica, Poetica behalten, odder sie in ein andere kurtz form bracht nutzlich geleszen wurden, junge leut zuuben, wol reden und predigen, aber die Comment und secten musten abethan ..... Aber itzt leret man widder reden noch predigen drausz,und ist gantz ein disputation und muderei drausz worden."*** Already at the university of Erfurt Aristotle's influence on Luther was weakened. No longer was he the infallible authority he had been, for "Occam and his school, in opposition to the older scholastics, insisted on the antagonism of reason and faith and

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* Weimar, IX, 29 ff.
** Ibid.
*** Weimar, VI, 458.

on the futility of attempting to demonstrate the truth of Christian doctrine by dialectics. Rational knowledge, they held, is limited to what is demonstrable by reason, whereas the knowledge of faith is based on revelation and ecclesiastical authority, and is not capable of rational proof, though, being based on revelation, it is the most certain."* Also in the field of philosophy Aristotle had lost some ground at Erfurt. In his notes on the early lectures we find Luther calling those "shameless chatterers"** who say that Aristotle is not in disharmony with the Christian faith. When Luther was charged with attacking the scholastics he replies in a letter to his Occamist instructor, Prof. Trutvetter, that in writing against the scholastics he was doing only what had been permitted to Trutvetter and others. The letter, written in May, 1518, reads in part:

> "Sine ergo mihi licere id idem in Scholasticos, quot tibi et omnibus licitum fuit hucusque: volo sequi, si per Scripturas aut ecclesiasticos Patres meliora fuero doctus, sine quibus volo Scholasticos audire, quoad sua firmaverint ecclesiasticis dictis, et ab hac sententia nec tua autoritate (quae apud me certe gravissima est), multo minus ullorum aliorum deterreri propositum est."***

Any possible weakening influence which Occam might have on Aristotle at Erfurt was to Luther's good, for Thiel thus summarizes Aristotle's effect on Luther:

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* Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 23.
** Weimar, IX, 27, in Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 24.
*** Enders, Briefwechsel, I, 190.

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"Es geht ihm, wie es all den sehnsuechtigen, gequaelten Seelen des Mittelalters ging: die kalte, nuechterne, ueberlegene Logik dieses zivilisierten Intellektes bezwingt seinen redlichen Verstand und jagt ihn in Abgruende des Zweigels hinein."*

A more important and far-reaching influence of the Invincible Doctor on the great Reformer lies in the doctrine of free will, and man's ability in virtue of this freedom to do what he wills. This teaching of Occam which somewhat reflects Duns Scotus was welcomed with open arms by Luther in his early years. Under Nathin at Erfurt Luther had learned the old scholastic doctrine of works. But after thoroughly imbibing the idea of doing good works Luther is surprised to learn that good works do not depend solely on man after all, but their final worth lies in the hands of God, who is pure, arbitrary Will. God made the world solely for His own pleasure; "his will made right and wrong; and finally his arbitrary choice alone conditioned man's salvation. But in this latter particular, having promised to consider certain actions as meritorious, he has put in each man's power to obtain his favor by performing these acts, and his acceptance of man is sealed by the Sacraments of the Church."** Thiel puts it thus:

"Die guten Werke, lernt er sehr bestuerzt, haengen nicht allein von Menschen ab, sondern viel mehr von der Gnade Gottes: wenn diese fehlt, dann sind sie fast umsonst getan! Der Mensch kann gute Werke tun so tadellos und ansehnlich, wie man sie irgend nur verlangen mag, so ist er laengst noch nicht gerecht vor Gott, so sind seine Werke laengst noch nicht im Angesichte Gottes wohlgefaellig. Dazu muss erst der Mensch in einem uebernatuerlichen Ganden stande stehen, dazu musz ihm Gott selbst die Gnade eingegossen haben, die einen neuen Menschen aus ihm macht und

* Thiel, Luther, I, 164.
** Smith, op. cit., p. 13.

eine wahre Gottesliebe in ihm wirkt."*

Luther could never learn to love a God like that. "Was ist das anderes, als dasz Gott, ein Tyrann und Stockmeister, mehr von dir verlangt, als du vollbringen kannst?"** "When I looked for Christ it seemed to me as if I saw the devil."***

So Luther, looking so very earnestly for a gracious God and peace for his sensitive conscience and acute sense of sin turns to the "modern" scholasticism of Occam. Here the emphasis is on man's love toward God, for man can love God, even by nature without grace, if he only so wills! Thiel pictures it graphically:

> "Die Moderen nun geben sich mit den ersten Gnadenstufen gar nicht lange ab, sondern gehen gleich aufs Ganze, auf die Gottesliebe der Gerechten. Sie behaupten, dasz man diese Liebe auch mit natuerlichen Kraeften lernen koennte, und beweisen es mit diesem einwandfreien Argument: 'Ein junger Gesell gewinnt ein Maegdlein lieb, die doch eine Kreatur ist, die liebt er so heftig, dasz er sich und sein Leben fuer sie aufs Spiel setzt. Ebenso liebt ein Kaufmann Geld und Gut so fleiszig, dasz er sich unzaehligen Gefahren unterwirft, allein darum, dasz er etwas gewinnen moege. Da man also die Kreaturen so grosz liebt, die doch weit unter Gott sind: wievielmehr kann ein Mensch Gott lieben, der das hoechste Gut ist! Darum kann man mit den bloszen natuerlichen Kraeften Gott ueber alles lieben.' Mit diesem Argument, so jubelt Luther, sind alle Sophisten ueberwunden! Und wenn auch manche von den Allerneuesten wieder Bedenken haben, so sieht er jetzt doch einen Weg, den Stand der Gande praktisch zu erproben."****

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* Op. cit., p. 156.
** Ibid.
*** Smith, op. cit., p. 13.
**** Thiel, op. cit., p. 159 f.

So Luther avidly studied Occam. Melanchthon in his introduction to the Wittenberg (1546) edition of Luther's works writes: "Diu multumque legit scripta Occam."* He enters into a thorough consideration of Occam in true Luthereseque fashion. He wants to understand completely this idea of loving God. He learns that man can love God because man's will is essentially free. In fact, because man has a free will, he can do anything. This conviction, says Boehmer, was firmly ensconced in Luther already when he entered the monastery in 1505. At that time he was firmly persuaded:

> "Man can do all that he wills. He can, for instance, fulfill the Ten Commandments to the last letter, if only he wants to; he can love God with his whole heart, with his whole soul and with all his powers, if only he want to; he can even force his reason to believe that black is white, in fact, he can create in himself every imaginable concept, sensation and feeling, moral and immoral passion, and do this at any time, unhampered and completely, if only he uses his will. For, because the will is the all-determining psychic force it is itself determined by nothing, never weakened or strengthened, increased or decreased at any time by any good or evil deed. On the contrary, it remains ever unchanged, the same in quantity and quality; like the needle of a compass it always returns to its characteristic stabile balance, no matter how often it is diverted in the direction of 'good' or in the direction of 'evil.'"**

Smith states:

> "The fundamental thesis of the Occamists was that man can do anything he will ....

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* Dokumente, p. 199.
** Boehmer, Martin Luther, p. 73 f. 9

> The cloister adopted this view and held that by a man's own acts, asceticism, prayer, and meditation, he could prepare his soul for union with God."*

Since Occam says so, it must be true. Therefore Luther goes about diligently setting himself to will the good and to do what was in him so that he might prepare his soul for union with God. He himself said in a later year:

> "Nam prius didiceram Meritum aliud esse congrui, aliud condigni, facere hominem quod in se est ad obtinendam gratiam, posse removere obicem, posse non ponere obicem gratiae, posse implere praecepta dei quoad substantiam facti, licet non ad intentionem praecipientis .... voluntatem posse ex puris naturalibus diligere Deum super omnia."**

But Luther's attempt to earn salvation fails. His sensitive conscience will not let him rest. He is never sure that he has done enough. In his "attempt to reconcile the teaching of his Occamist professors with his personal experience of sin and his high moral and religious ideal"*** Luther suffers excruciating tortures of conscience. "Interim mihi sufficit quod carnifex illa conscientiarum theologastria cui totum debeo, quod mea conscientia patitur."**** Recollections of this caused Luther to remark in 1533:

> "Ja, sie haben jre luegen (die Papisten, die froemichen) noch weitter auffgeblasen und geleret, Das ein mensch kuendte wol aus eigen krefften on Gottes gnaden die gebot Gottes halten. Und mein meister Occam schreibt, Es sei nirgent jnn der Schrifft

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* Op. cit., p. 12.
** Weimar, II, 401, in Mackinnon, I, p. 77.
*** Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 78.
**** Weimar, II, 401.

> gegrund, das ein sonderliche gnade oder gabe not sey, zu erfuellen Gottes gebot, Und brusteten sich mit dem spruch Sanct Hieronymi: Wer da sagt, das Gott unmuegliche gebot gegeben habe, der sey verflucht. Jie waren wire aller erst gut gesellen, das wir hoereten, unser Frey wille were so frissch und gesund, das wir kuendten Gottes gebot halten on Gottes gnaden, quo ad substantiam facti, so viel zum werck gehoeret. Das man sie aber jnn ganden muste halten, das war ein ubergebot und auf saltz, da mit uns Gott uber seine gebot beschweret und brandschetzet. Die fromesten unter jnen lereten also .... Man mueste Gottes gnaden haben zu erfullung Goettlicher gebot, Aber man kuendte dennoch solche gnade wol aus eigen wercken, wenn einer thette, so viel an jm ist, erlangen .... Sage mir: wo bleibt hie Christus, unser Heiland und stettiger mittler fuer Gott? Wo bleibt vergebung der sunden? Ist das nicht ein rechter Juedischer, Tuerckisscher und Pelagianisch glaube?* 10

When we understand Occam's teaching on free will, Boehmer points out, we can see why Luther

> "tortured himself incessantly 'to do sufficient good works to win a merciful God,' and that at times like a mad and haughty saint, he believed to have 'done his part.' For he knew no other view than this that man was able and obliged to earn 'grace' by his own power. Furthermore, we then see that the promises of grace in Scriptures and in the liturgy could make no impression upon him, no matter how tempting and consolatory they might sound. The word 'grace' necessarily always called to his mind first of all the spiritual 'ornament' by which God was said to give to good works the character of merit,and he was firmly convinced that this 'spiritual ornament' also must first be deserved."**

As lecturer on the Sentences of Lombard Luther still "shared the Occamist doctrine that the divine decree by which God

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* Dokumente, p. 109-110. Kleine Antwort, Herbst 1533, in Weimar, 38, 160.

** Op. cit., p. 79.

predestines and elects to salvation is conditioned by His foreknowledge and leaves room for the exercise of free will,"* but by 1515 in the Lectures on Romans Luther is calling these scholastics "hog-doctors." By that time Luther understood not only the impossibility of ever being sure that he had done enough to merit the grace of God, but he also had gained an insight into the viciousness of Occam's tenet that God is arbitrary in His will, that "God is pure, arbitrary will. He had created the world solely for his own pleasure; his will made right and wrong; and finally his arbitrary choice alone conditioned man's salvation."** In other words, man must do all he can to earn justification, but even after he has done all in his power, the final decision as to the merit of those deeds lies in the arbitrary will of God.

> "Man must do all he can to earn justification. When man has done his best, God grants his grace to man. But even good works performed in a state of grace have in themselves no merit. To possess merit and entitle a man to salvation these goodworks must be accepted by God. That acceptance depends upon God's arbitrary will."***

No wonder Luther later once remarked, "When I looked for Christ it seemed to me as if I saw the devil." Mackinnon rightly states: "This arbitrariness seems to render all moral values and all moral effort of questionable validity. How could anyone be sure that he is not the plaything of arbitrary omnipotence?"****

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* Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 112. 11

** Smith, op. cit., p. 13.

*** Kuiper, op. cit., p. 113.

**** Op. cit., p. 113. 12

Thus Luther while at Erfurt was caused at times even to doubt the very existence of God. "He (Luther) very rightly revolted against its (nominalistic scholasticism) assumption of an arbitrary God which endangered moral values, its imperfect sense of the power of evil over the heart and the will of man, its prononess to predicate of human effort more than, from the standpoint of a lofty moral and religious ideal, it was capable of achieving, its erroneous and huckstering conception of salvation by merit."* But Luther had been steeped in this doctrine since his studies began, so it was no easy matter for him to shake it off. This was to be a process of years.

> "He grows into his new religious point of view only very gradually, and the old ideals and authorities lose their power over his soul by slow degrees only. It is not until some time in 1515 that he completely succeeds in shaking off the last remnant of the network of the Okkamistic doctrine on salvation which he had torn long before."**

Occam exerted yet another influence upon Luther, towit, in the matter of papal authority. It is true that Luther as late as 1516 in a sermon on Matt. 18, 18 defended the papacy. But Occam's service to Luther is here what it was in many other matters. He did not so much cause the break between Luther and Rome as supply Luther with munitions for the fight. Occam was definitely anti-papal, that is sure. "In a letter of 1323, Pope John instructed the Bishops of

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* Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 78.
** Boehmer, op. cit., p. 84.

Ferrara and Bologna to inquire about the report that in a sermon at Bologna Ockham had upheld his conception of evangelical poverty in opposition to that of the Pope."* Four years later Pope John XXII issued a bull charging Occam with having uttered "many erroneous and heretical opinions." On June 6th another bull followed excommunicating him. In 1331 another bull was issued forbidding anyone to aid Occam, "for he was said to uphold the error of Marsiglio of Padua, who had been condemned for stating that 'the emperor can depose the pope.'"** After Pope John's death Occam continued the fight with Benedict XII and Clement VI and it is generally believed that Occam never became reconciled to the Church, in spite of the fact that some overtures in that direction were made by Clement in 1343.

Occam, who had seconded Marsilius in atreatise, "Eight Questions on the power of the Pope," was a critic and antagonist of the hierarchical system.

> "He already asserted tersely and without equivocation: Popes and councils can err; he declared it an open question whether the monarchical form of government were beneficial to the Church; he denied that the Pope and the clergy had any right whatsoever to mix in secular affairs, and would at most permit the former to count official who in secular matters was quite as much subject to the Emperor as all other men."***

Occam's aim was to "reduce the Papacy to the level of a limited monarchy and to revive the democratic conception

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* Birch, op. cit., xii.
** Birch, op. cit., xiv.
*** Boehmer, op. cit., p. 92.

of the church." To him the Emperor and the general council were above and judges of the pope. "Coronation, he said, was a human ceremony, which any bishop could perform."* He repudiated the alleged donation of Constantine by stating that an emperor had no right to renounce the inalienable rights of the Empire.

Just to what extent this sharp anti-papal attitude of Occam influenced Luther is hard to say, and the authorities vary in their statements. Mackinnon points to the early sermon of Luther mentioned above in which the Papacy is defended and concludes: "It does not appear that at this period of his career Luther concerned himself with this side of the great Franciscan's teaching."** On the other hand Boehmer overshoots the mark by dismissing Luther's terrific struggles of mind and soul thus: "When Prierias and Eck forced him (Luther) to take a stand over against the curialistic point of view he was able to do so in a relatively short time and without experiencing serious inner conflicts."*** Smith, I think has the right idea: "He (Occam) said flatly that popes and councils could err, and remembering this doubtless made the break with Rome easier for Luther."**** Occam's influence, as a whole, on Luther was more negative than positive. He didn't cause the break with Rome, but he helped to make it easier. Occam "was not only the Antichrist but also the

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* Fisher, The Reformation, p. 41.
** Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 24. 14
*** Op. cit., p. 92. 15
**** Smith, op. cit., p. 13.

anti-Catholic among the great thinkers of the Middle Ages, not merely the confessed antipode of mediaeval Christianity but also the sharpest critic of the mediaeval features in this Christianity."* These criticisms of Occam gave Luther weapons with which to fight. Fisher says: "From Occam he derived defenses."** Occam's criticism "offered him a whole arsenal of weapons for the fight against the Catholic dogma, and against the Catholic constitutional and legal system."*** But in regard to his own convictions Luther "attained and was forced to attain them by dint of steady battling against this (Occam's) theological school."**** For example, Occam said that Holy Writ alone is infallible and a Christian has the duty to believe only what is found in the Bible or what can with logical consistency be deduced from its words. But only if Occam at the same time opened to Luther an understanding of Scriptures would that tenet help him. However,

> "in Okkam's eyes the Bible was merely a haphazard collection of non-rational divine oracles;.... he always saw in the teaching of the Church the correct interpretation of these, and .... he believed his own doctrine of salvation in turn to be an accurate rendering of the dogmas of the Church. He was thus in reality not a biblicist, and consequently could never have made one out of Luther."*****

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* Boehmer, op. cit., p. 89. 17
** Op. cit., p. 71.
*** Boehmer, op. cit., p. 94.
**** Ibid., p. 94.
***** Ibid., p. 93-94.

Smith sums it up as well as anyone: "Luther's development is largely a history of his enfranchisement from the Occamist theology. But even after he had freed himself from the oppressive doctrines he bore lasting marks of the apprenticeship in Occam's school."*

II. Biel

Biel is included in Luther's indictment of 1519 which reads: "I know and confess that I learned nothing but ignorance of sin, righteousness, baptism, and the whole Christian life... Briefly, I not only learned nothing, but I learned only what I had to unlearn as contrary to the divine Scriptures."** This does not vitiate the fact that Luther was in many ways influenced by Biel, and it is now our purpose to study some of those streams of influence in not too exhaustive a manner.

Biel was Occam's disciple in Germany and an "enthusiastic propagator of his master's philosophical and theological teachings." But Biel had been touched by the new spirit that was stirring in west Europe.

> "He had studied in a school of the Brethren of the Common Life. The Renaissance had made an impression upon him, and the many voices in church and state and society and in the schools of learning had been heard by Biel with a sympathetic ear. His works are distinguished by clarity and brevity of statement. He hada strong dislike for the empty and barren over-refinements of scholastic dialectic. He still belonged to the old order, but his feet approached the threshold of a new day. With his death in 1495 there passed the last of the scholastics."

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* Op. Cit., p. 13. 21
** Weimar, II, 414.

Biel was for a time professor at Tuebingen. There John Nathin and Johann von Staupitz were among his enthusiastic students. So it stands to reason that Biel's writings were found in text-book form at Erfurt. Luther studied him diligently, as a few references will show. On March 31, 1518, Luther wrote to Staupitz for the first time after posting the Theses. In that letter Luther calls this to Staupitz's attention:

> "... I read the scholastics with judgment, not as they (the opponents) do, with closed eyes. Thus the apostle commanded: 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' I do not reject all that they say, nor do I approve all. But it is a habit of these babblers to take a part for the whole, to make a conflagration out of a spark, and an elephant out of a fly. But with God's help I care nothing for these scarecrows. They are words; words they will remain. If Duns Scotus, Gabriel Biel, and their ilk had the right to differ from St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Thomists, in turn, have the right to contradict the whole world.....why do they not accord me the same right over against them that they claim for themselves over against each other?....."*

When Luther returned to Erfurt in 1509 and prepared for his lectures on the Sentences, Biel was among the works to which he referred. In the "Randbemerkungen" we find this notation with Dist. 15. c. 13: "Cur pater no dicitur missus: Deficiente connotato deficit et suppositio est commune dictum. Sed missio supponit pro temporali processione connotando aeternam ut dicit Gabriel. Ideo no potest convenire

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* Dau, The Great Renunciation, p. 65.

patri." And again a marginal note to Dist. 30. c. 14: "Zum ganzen Kapitel: Hoc quod Magister hic dicit de multiplicatione naturae negat Gabriel cum alliis." Melanchthon, speaking of Luther's development, says: "Gabrielem et Cammoracensem pene ad verbum memoriter recitare poterat."* From an interesting letter which Luther wrote on Spalatin on November 11, 1517, we see Luther already opposing the scholastics and, in this letter, especially Biel's twofold distinction of ignorance. The pertinent part of the letter reads:

> ".... As regards ignorance, the truth of the matter is this: the schoolmen have taught that in any matter, especially such as concerns salvation, there may be a twofold ignorance: one is affected and crass, as when a person purposely and with a labored effort acts in such a manner that it is seen he wants to be ignorant; the other is insuperable, as when a person so acts that with all that he can do he cannot become knowing. Of the former they say that it increases sin: of the latter, that it leaves a person entirely without guilt.
>
> Against these scholastics, as you see, I have proposed my thesis (Thesis 35 f. of the series debated Sept. 4th, at the disputation of Franz Guenther for the degree of bachelor), and my meaning is briefly this: To us every kind of ignorance is utterly insuperable, but to the grace of God no ignorance is insuperable; for we can do nothing of ourselves, while by the grace of God we can do all things....."**

Luther here shows acquaintance with Biel from whom he evidently got this distinction in the kinds of ignorance; for although Lombard makes the distinction in Sentent., lib. II,

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* Dokumente, p. 199.
** Dau, op. cit., p. 45.

dist. 22, c. 9 sq., it was Biel who fully elaborated it:

> "Distinguitur ignorantia in ordine ad voluntatem tanquam ad causam. Et sic ignorantiarum quaedam est affectata, quaedam crassa et supina, quaedam invincibilis..... Ignorantia affectata est, qua voluntas vult nescire sive non vult scire acto positivo. Sicut de quibusdam dicitur: Noluit intelligere, ut bonum ageret; et alibi: Recede a nobis, scientiam viarum tuarum nolumus.-- Ignorantia crassa et supina est ignorantia, quae consequitur negligentiam inquirendi scienda.....ib. Conclus. 1: Ignorantia invincibilis....simpliciter excusat a peccato, non solum in tanto, sed in toto.-- ib. Conclus. 3: Ignorantia affectata praecedens eorum, quae homo scire tenetur, peccatum gravat atque auget."*

That Luther even studied Biel's sermons is evident from a statement he makes in his lectures on the Psalms (1513-1516):

> "Hinc recte dicunt Doctores,[1] quod homini facienti quod in se est, deus infallibiliter dat gratiam, et licet non de condigno sese possit ad gratiam preparare, quia est incomparabilis, tamen bene de congruo propter promissionem istam dei et pactum misericordie.
>
> ..... Unde sicut lex figura fuit et preparatio populi ad Christum suscipiendum, ita nostra factio quantum in nobis est, disponit nos ad gratiam...."**

To the word "Doctores" the Weimar edition gives the footnote:

> i) Gabriel Biel Sermones de festivitatibus Christi Serm. 14: "statuit Deus, ut omni ad se convertenti et quod in se est facienti peccata remitteret et simul adiutricem gratiam infunderet." Serm. 48: "facientibus quod in se est Deus nunquam deficit in necessariis ad salutem."

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* Briefwechsel, I, 128.
** Weimar, IV, 262.

Of all the teachings of Biel probably the one dealing with penance and contrition gave Luther the most trouble. According to Biel the will has an essential freedom, by virtue of which it can "even without grace achieve the good after, as well as before, the fall. This good includes even the acquired virtues of faith, hope, and love."* Of course, the fall has made this performance somewhat difficult, but, says Biel, "Liberty is an essential of the will and the difficulty of eliciting a good act does not lessen its liberty."** Accordingly, man has the possibility and duty to hate his sins and to love God above all things. Merely to confess one's sins and to show a certain measure of fear of hell and purgatory in order to receive absolution from the father confessor is not enough.

> "The so-called 'contrition of the gallows,' or the sorrow over the evil external consequences of sin alone never brings about a change in the attitude of God, and even confession and priestly absolution make no difference in this. For those these latter are useful and necessary, one must not forget that the priest in the confession remits only the penances imposed by the Church and a part of the temporal penalties of sin, never the eternal punishment of wrong-doing."***

Only by hating sin and the will to sin can one remove the obstacle. Add to that a good movement towards God elicited by his own free will and man can merit de congruo, the

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* Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 74.
** Scheel, II, 357, in Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 75.
*** Boehmer, op. cit., p. 75.

first grace in turning toward God. In other words, Christ's suffering, though the principal merit on which grace is conferred, does not suffice by itself. With the merit of Christ there always concurs a certain operation of merit on the recipient of grace.

On the average monk this doctrine would have little effect, but Luther was no average monk. He had "a particularly delicate and sensitive conscience, and an unusually keen and live sense of truth." So he never ceased worrying about his sin, for when he examined himself conscientiously he never found as much humility and love of God as Biel demanded. Though he fulfilled all the monastic duties with punctuality, though he buffeted his body with feverish zeal, though he froze in his cell, though he starved himself until he was a skeleton, he could not attain that perfect hatred for sin and love toward God. Thus was Luther plunged into the terrible doubts and troubles of conscience about which he speaks so impressively and emphatically later on. Biel's doctrine of penance, says Boehmer, helped make up the "external impetus which set in motion this strongest and most sensitive chord of his inner self and for a long time kept it in a state of quivering excitement and susceptibility."* In his "Bericht" on the Leipzig Debate Luther harks back to these days when Biel was rubbing his conscience raw:

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* Op. cit., p. 81.

"Denn zuvor hatte ich gelernt, dasz das Verdiesnt nach Billigkeit (congrui) ein anderes sei als das nach Recht (condigni), dasz der Mensch thun koenne, so viel an ihm ist, um die Gnade zu erlangen, dasz er den Riegel entfernen koenne, dasz er vermoege, der Gnade den Riegel nich vorzuschieben, dasz er die Gebote Gottes erfuellen koenne nach dem Wesen der That (quo ad substantiam facti), aber nicht nach der Absicht des Gebietenden, dasz der freie Wille win Vermoegen habe nach beiden Seiten hin in den Dingen, die einander widersprechen, dasz der Wille aus rein natuerlichen Kraeften Gott ueber alles lieben koenne, das man von Natur die Ausuebung der Liebe, der Freundschaft haben koenne, und dergleichen ungeheuerliche Ding, welche insgemein als die ersten Grundsaetze der scholastischen Theologie vorgetragen werden, und womit sie die Buecher und Aller Ohren angefuellt haben."*

Biel exerted further influence on Luther through his book on the Canon of the Mass. Luther's "profession" probably took place in September, 1506. Then Staupitz directed him to study theology towards preparation for the priesthood and eventually a position as theological teacher in the interest of the Order. This preparation for the priesthood included a study of Biel's book. Luther was very zealous in this study, for Biel introduced him to the doctrine underlying the mystery of the Mass. Since the priest "makes the body of Christ," the importance of the priesthood was stressed and careful instructions were given relating to the scrupulous observance of all details in the rites. Everything was considered essential to the efficacy of the Mass and forgetting to observe a certain rule was a "more or less grave

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* St. Louis, XV, 1160.

offence." In 1538 Luther recalled that in his earlier years Biel had been so highly regarded that he overshadowed the authority of Scripture.

> "Gabriel scribens librum super canonem missae, qui liber meo judicio tum optimus fuerat; wenn ich darinnen las, da blutte mein hertz. Bibliae autoritas nulla fuit erga Gabrielem. Ich behalte noch die bucher, die mich also gemartert haben."*

Such a regard for Biel must, of course, result in a high estimate of the Mass. It did. Luther says he would have fought to keep it.

> "Liber de abroganda missa est satis durus, scriptus contra adversarios blasphemos, non est pro incipientibus, qui scandalizantur. Den wer mir fur 20 jaren di mesz hette sollen nemen, der solt auch mit mir zuhauff (Khum.: zu kampff) komen sein, nam ego toto pectore illam adorabam. Et tamen fundamentum missae et totius papatus nihil aliud est quam quaestus et lucrum."**

In the discussion of Occam it was pointed out that he had some anti-papal influence on Luther. Biel, however, though a disciple of Occam, did not share the ecclesiastical tendency of his master, and no doubt helped make of Luther the thorough going papalist which he was in the early period. Biel injected into Luther the "profound reverence for the authority of the Church and the devotion to the Pope which the Augustinian Order in particular exemplified."*** Biel's emphasis on the Mass would tend to

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* Dokumente, p. 144.
** Tischreden, III, 566-567.
*** Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 45.

this "papalism" which Luther expresses in his early works. Witness the early sermon (1516) on Matt. 18, 18 in which Luther insists on the divine institution of the Papacy as an essential of the Church and on its supreme power, against which no other power of earth or hell can prevail.

> "Wo Christus nicht alle seine Macht dem Menschen gegeben haette, so waere keine vollkommenen Kirche, weil also keine Ordnung waere, sintemal ein jeder sagen wuerde, er sei vom Heiligen Geist geruehret. So haben es die Ketzer gegemacht; und auf solche Art wuerde ein jeder seine eigenen Grunadsaetze aufrichten, und waeren so viel Kirchen, als Koepfe sind. Es will also Christus keine Gewalt ueben auszer durch Menschen, und so dem Menschen uebergeben ist, auf dasz er also all in eins bringe. Diese Gewalt aber hat er so befestigt, dasz er wider dieselbe erregte alle Gewalt der Welt und Hoelle, wie er sagt Matth. 16, 18.: 'Die Pforten der Hoelle sollen sie nicht ueberwaeltigen'; als wollte er sagen: Sie werden streiten und aufgebracht werden, aber sie sollen nicht abliegen, damit kund werde, dasz dises Gewalt sei von Gott, und nicht von Menschen. Die sich nun entziehen der Einigkeit und Ordnung dieser Macht und Gewalt, die ruehmen sich vergeblich ihrer groszen Erleuchtungen und sonderlichen Werke, als da sind unsere Picarden, und andere Sectirer und Schismatiker. Denn Gehorsam ist besser als das Opfer der Narren, denn die wissen nicht, was sie Boeses thun."*

In those early years Luther, in defense of the Pope, would have been willing to assist in the extermination of anyone who might endeavor to destroy obedience to the holy father. So he himself says in the preface to his collected works (1545):

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* St. Louis, XII, 1726.

> "Et sciat, me fuisse aliquando monachum, et papistam insanissimum, cum istam causam aggressus sum, ita ebrium, imo submersum in dogmatibus papae, ut paratissimus fuerim, omnes, si potuissem, occidere, aut occidentibus cooperari et consentire, qui papae vel una syllaba obentientiam detrectarent."*

As was the case with the Occamistic teachings, Luther did not cast off his Bielistic garment with one sudden move. The process was a gradual one. Not at once could Luther refer to "die vielkoepfige Schlange, deren Haeupter die Thomisten und Skotisten und Gabrielisten sind, den seichten Komoedianten, in dessen Wassern lauter Froesche schwimmen..."** However, a number of interesting facts come to us from 1516 which show that Luther by that time had quite accurately analyzed Biel. In September he wrote to Lang and gave Biel credit for what he had written but pointed out that when he spoke of grace, faith, hope, and charity, he pelagianized as much as Scotus:

> "Dicito ergo istis mirabundis aut potius mirabilibus theologis, mecum non esse disputandum, an Gabriel haec, an Raphael ista, aut Michael ista dicat. Scio, quid Gabriel dicat, scilicet omnia bene, praeterquam ubi de gratia, charitate, spe, fide, virtutibus dicit: ubi cum suo Scoto, quantum pelagizet, non est, ut per literas nunc proferam."***

A second incident which shows to what extent Luther had broken with Biel comes to us through a student's Bachelor thesis. On September 4, 1516, one of Luther's students,

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* Dokumente, p. 186-187 (cf. Weimar 54, 179-187).
** Thiel, op. cit., p. 169.
*** Enders, I, p. 55.

Francis Gunther, arraigned the scholastic theology in a public disputation for the degree of Biblical Bachelor. Gunther, as Luther's mouthpiece, categorically asserted the views of Augustine on free will and grace against the teaching of Biel and others. In this thesis the Luther-instructed Gunther insisted that man "like a bad tree, cannot do otherwise than will and do evil. He hasno choice in the matter, since he is not free, but a captive..... It is absurd to say that, because erring man can love the creature above all things, he can, therefore, love God above all. This is a figment of Scotus and Biel."*

September 25th finds Luther presiding over the disputation for the degree of Sententiarius by candidate Bartholomew Bernhardi, another of his students. Here again, Bernhardi, obviously stating the convictions of his tutor, contends that man is totally incapable of keeping the commands of God without grace, that without grace he cannot even prepare himself for grace, because the human will is not free, but enslaved by sin. Mackinnon points out that the significance of these two theses lies in this that they were Luther's "public manifesto against the teaching of the Nominalist school in which he had been trained--of his old teachers Trutvetter and Unsingen, and other followers of Gabriel Biel."**

The fountain-head of the differences between Luther and Biel is found in the doctrine of non-sacramental penance.

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* Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 278.
** Op. cit., p. 275.

Biel claimed that the elements of this penance "consist in a 'change of attitude' in man which necessarily in turn brings about a change in the attitude of God, that is, it causes God to cancel the threatened sentence and to again regard the sinner as fit for eternal salvation."* Biel contended that man must effect the change. Luther said it was God who brought it about. And so it was, as Boehmer writes, that only after Luther had overcome this deadly fundamental idea of Biel "was he able to draw honey even from this poisonous flower. Not until then did Biel's criticism of the Church's doctrine of penance become important and valuable to him as a means by which he might break and throw aside the hollow shells of the old dogma which had been left over in this process of criticism."**

III. Gerson

After his ordination in 1507 Luther again became a pupil and as "cursor" in the Erfurt convent studied the masters of "modern theology" under John Nathin of Neuenkirchen, an able and severe master, who made Luther read long passages from Gerson until he had committed them to memory. Later while teaching at Wittenberg Luther continued to read Gerson. Melanchthon remarks, "Diligenter et Gersonem legerat."***

Gerson (born 1363) was called thus after his birthplace, Gerson, a hamlet near Rethel in the Ardennes.

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* Boehmer, op. cit., p. 91.
** Op. cit., p. 91.
*** Dokumente, p. 199.

His real name was Jean Charlier. By a multitude of references to Gerson, Luther shows an intimate acquaintance with the Frenchman. When Luther worked through Tauler's sermons he made numerous marginal notes. One reads: "Nu seind dreh Ding hie. Das ain:

tria	(Sensus) (ratio) (Men vel apex mentis) (sive Syntheresis)	Vide Gerson in mystica theologia"*

In the Tischreden of November, 1531, Luther took occasion to refer to Gerson's three truths: "Gerson tres veritates: poenitere, emondare vitam, confiteri."** Smith says that a book, Epistolae sancti Hieronymi, in the Boston Public Library has what is "apparently an autograph of Luther."*** It is a quotation from Gerson: "In floreno litis no est obolus caritatis. Gerson."

It is interesting to note that Luther not only read Gerson but also made use of him in his early lectures. Lindsay points out that Luther's theological lectures differed from those of the scholastic theologians because he was practical minded.

> "He believed that theology might be made useful to guide men to find the grace of God and to tell them how, having acquired through trust a sense of fellowship with God, they could persevere in a life of joyous obedience to God and His commandments."****

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* Dokumente, p. 261.
** Dokumente, p. 73.
*** Op. cit., p. 475.
**** Op. cit., p. 208-209.

It stands to reason that he would, in preparation for his lectures on the Pauline Epistles and Psalms, use commentaries which emphasized the practical use of religious principles. "He made some use of the commentaries of Lyra, but got most assistance from passages in Augustine, Bernard, and Gerson, which dealt with practical religion." Gerson is also quoted by Luther in various sermons. In a Lenten sermon of 1518 Gerson is quoted approvingly: "Darumb sind ir auch viel unsinnig worden, als Johan Gerson sagt, das sie sich haben duencken lassen einer sei ein Wurm, der ander eine Maus usw."* Again, in the Adventspostille of 1522: "Da beicht man und lest sich leren, absolviren und furen, wo die heiligen beichtveter hin wollen....Sihe, das tzeichen kan auch niemant leucken....das ihr vile drob toll unnd wansinnig worden sind, wie auch Gerson schreibt."** Luther again cites Gerson in condemning the Carthusians' habit of abstaining from meat.

> "Carthusiani habent legem, ne per omnem vitam gustent carnem..... Hoc quidem est sine dispensatione urgere legem, et oblivisci, quod omnium legum finis sit dilectio: Igitur Gerson et alii hanc severitatem merito improbarunt."***

In March, 1532, Luther mentions Gerson as a theologian of the conscience. "Duplices sunt theologi, scilicet viri conscientiae, Wilhelmus Parrhisiensis et Gerson....."****

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* Dokumente, p. 24.
** Ibid., p. 24-25.
*** Dokumente, p. 137 (Weimar, 42, 504).
**** Ibid., p. 87.

Gerson had such a great appeal for Luther because he concerned himself chiefly with the spiritual conflicts. Most of the divines, including Augustine, when dealing with the struggle of the awakened soul, laid most stress on that part of the conflict which comes from temptations of the flesh. But, as Lindsay remarks, "Luther, during his soul-anguish in the convent, was a young monk who had lived a humanly stainless life, sans peur et sans reproche."* In 1532 Luther said: "Solus Gerson scripsit de tentatione spiritus, alii omnes tantum corporales senserunt, Ieronimus, Augustinus, Ambrosius, Bernhardus, Scotus, Thomas, Richardus, Occa."** From the same year: "Gerson primus est, qui rem aggressus est, quod attinet ad theologiam; ille etiam expertus est multas tentationes."*** Because he himself had experienced spiritual temptations, Gerson was well able to offer comfort to others in the same predicament. When forgiveness of sins was conditioned on contrition, confession, and satisfaction, Gerson wrote that transgression of the traditions and commands of the Church was not a mortal sin unless done with malice aforethought. Luther mentions this when speaking of the confession.

> "In confessione auriculari apud papistas opus tantum externum respiciebatur. Da war ein solch lauffen, das man sich niemer kont sat beichten....Wir machten die beichtveter muede, so machten sie vns bange suis

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* Op. cit., p. 208-209.
** Ibid., p. 85.
*** Ibid., p. 88.

> conditionalibus absolutionibus: Ego absolvo te per meritum Domini nostri Hiesu Christi propter contritionem cordis, confessionem oris, satisfactionem operum tuorum et intercessionem sanctorum etc. Die conditio richtet alles vnglueck an. Nam haec omnia fecimus timore Dei, ut justificaremur obruti infinitis traditionibus humanis. Quapropter Gerson coactus est laxare frena conscientiis. Is primus coepit emergere ex illa captivitate scribens transgressionem traditionum et mandatorum ecclesiae non esse peccatum mortale, nisi fieret contumaciter. Haec vox etsi infirma tamen multas conscientias erexit."*

When one came to the altar with scruples of conscience, Luther offered the advice of Gerson.

> "Consulo, quod et Johannes Gerson aliquoties consuluit, ut aliquando cum scrupulo conscientiae quis accedat ad altare seu sacramentum, videlicet non confitens, si immodestius vel biberit, dixerit, dormierit aut aliud quid foecerit aut horam unam aliquam non oraverit. Vis scire, quare id consulator? Audi: Ut homo discat in dei misericordiam plus fidere quam in suam confessionem aut diligentiam."**

Gerson offered comfort to those who were in doubt concerning the many almost impossible fasts imposed by the Church.

> "Deinde dicebat de rigido papistarum ieiunio, quo miserrima caedes et corruptio inventutis facta est.....Ideo Gerson coactus est scribere consolationem afflictis, ne desperarent, quia ieiunantes minus peccarent in excessu quam defectu, quia defectus extingueret naturam. Tales tenebrae fuerunt in papatu, ubi neque decalogus neque symbolum neque oratio dominica decebatur aut sciendum putabatur."***

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* Dokumente, p. 127.
** Ibid., p. 16 (Weimar, 6, 166).
*** Ibid., p. 149.

Luther often quoted Gerson's advice, that the best way to avoid the temptations of Satan is to disregard them as one would a barking dog. If that procedure is followed the dog will both desist from biting and cease his barking.

> "Aliud. Gersonis consilium saepe citatum a Doctore Martino Luthero. Gerson scribit nulla ratione melius evitari posse tentationes Sathanae quam per contemptum sicut si canem latrantem praetereundo contemnas, no solum non mordebit, sed etiam latrare desinet."*

At one place he praises Gerson as a "vir optimus" because of the comfort he offered to troubled souls.

> "Gerson solus sub papa consolatus est conscientias dicens: Act, es mus nicht alles ein todsunde sein, quod fit contra papam, den tscheplir nicht an haben, horas nicht beten etc. Et aliquot liberavit a desperatione. Fuit vir optimus. Nec tamen eo pervenit, ut consolaretur christianos per Christum et promissiones. No tulit legem sed extenuavit dicens; Ach, es mus nicht alles sze hart sund sein!"**

In regard to the Papacy, Gerson had an anti-papal influence on Luther similar to that of Occam. In fact, Gerson got much of his ammunition against the papal system from Occam, his master.

> "All clear-sighted men perceived that the one obstacle to reform was the theory of the papal monarchy..... Luther's attacks on the Papacy were not stronger than those of Gerson and d'Ailly, and his language was not more unmeasured than that of their common master, William of Occam."***

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* Dokumente, p. 163 (Tischreden V Nr. 5693).
** Ibid., p. 85-86.
*** Lindsay, op. cit., p. 254.

Gerson, like D'Ailly, had an episcopal idea of the Papacy. He agreed that the Pope was the primate, but claimed that the bishops got their authority and grace for the discharge of their office not from the Pope, but from the same source as he did. Gerson's aim "was to reduce him to the rank of a constitutional instead of an absolute monarch." For his attitude Gerson was condemned by the Pope, as Luther once remarked: "Gerson damnatus est propter Diabolum, papam, quem dixit concilio subiectum esse."* And again in 1542:

> "Ir wist nicht, in quantis tenebris fuerimus sub papatu. Gerson ist der beste; der fieng an, wiewol er nicht gar gewisz war, wo er darin war, idoch kam er dohin, das er die distinction funde in hac quaestione, utrum in omnibus sit obtemperandum potestati papae: Quod scilicet non esset peccatum mortale non obtemperare, vnd hieng doch hinan: Si non fieret ex contemptu. Er durffte sich nicht derwegen, das er den risz hett gar her durch gethan. Doch war es den leuten etwas troestlichs; drumb nenneten sie in doctorem consolatorium, vnd daucht sie viel sein. Er ist daruber auch condemnatus. Drumb hies mich der cardinalis zu Augspurg auch ein Gersonisten, cum a papa appellarem ad concilium Constantinum."**

In a lengthy discussion on Luther and Gerson in the Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte Dresz very ably summarizes the relationship between the two men. We can close this brief sketch in no better way than by noting the main points as given by him.

> "Luther hat seine Anschauung von der besonderen Art der religbesen Funktion

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* Dokumente, p. 174.
** Ibid., p. 172.

fortgebildet, bis er sie in seinem Begriff des Glaubens tiefsinnig und einfach zugleich darstellen konnte. Gerson blieb bein dem ueberlieferten Verstaendnis des Glaubens als der gehorsamen Hinnahme der durch die kirchliche Autoritaet dargebotenen dogmatischen Saetze."....."Die psychologie Gersons ist bestimt durch das scala-Schema, diese charakteristische Art, in Stufen zu denken, die wir im Neuplatonismus, in der Mystik, im Katholizismus und Idealismus finden, und die sich so grundsaetzlich unterscheidet von dem Denken in Totalitaeten, das in Luthers totus homo-Idee den repraesentativen Ausdruck gefunden hat.....Man wird vielleicht unter Berufung auf die groszen Zusammenhaenge wie auch auf einzelne Aeuszerungen sagen duerfen, dasz Luthers in ihrer Entwicklung ja zu beobachtende Umdeutung all der uebernommenen Begriffe und Ideen theologisch moeglich war auf Grund seines Verstaendnisses der Gerechtigkeit Christi, waehrend bei Gerson trotz der grundsaetzlich-theoretischen Orientierung des Gedankens vom Gegensats an der Christologie die Beziehung der konkreten Existenz des einzelnen Menschen vor Gott auf Christus fehlt und der Mensch seiner mehr oder minder groszen, an Hand der geistlichen Exerzitien in humiliatio und accusatio sui sich darstellenden frommen Virtuositaet ueberlassen bleibt."*

Let this then conclude our sketch on scholasticism's influence on Luther. No one is more conscious of its defects than the author. Its brevity precludes an exhaustive study. For the same reason the discussion was limited to three scholastics, Occam, Biel, and Gerson. Even then, not all the points of contact with Luther were investigated. But in spite of the obvious weaknesses and failings this is an honest work containing many hours of honest toil. As such let it stand.

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* Drosz, Gerson und Luther, Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte, LII Band, Heft I, pp. 137, 144, 160.

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